1
2021

Filozofski vestnik

BADIOU
POLITICS AND ACTION
ECHOES

Filozofski vestnik

Založba ZRC

ISSN 0353 4510
Letnik/*Volume* XLII
Številka/*Number* 1
Ljubljana 2021

Filozofski vestnik

ISSN 0353-4510

Programska zasnova

Filozofski vestnik (ISSN 0353-4510) je glasilo Filozofskega inštituta Znanstvenoraziskovalnega centra Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti. Filozofski vestnik je znanstveni časopis za filozofijo z interdisciplinarno in mednarodno usmeritvijo in je forum za diskusijo o širokem spektru vprašanj s področja sodobne filozofije, etike, estetike, poli tične, pravne filozofije, filozofije jezika, filozofije zgodovine in zgodovine politične misli, epistemologije in filozofije znanosti, zgodovine filozofije in teoretske psihoanalize. Odprt je za različne filozofske usmeritve, stile in šole ter spodbuja teoretski dialog med njimi.

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Filozofski vestnik je vključen v: Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Current Contents / Arts & Humanities, EBSCO, IBZ (Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriften), The Philosopher's Index, Répertoire bibliographique de philosophie, Scopus in Sociological Abstracts.

Izid revije je finančno podprla Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije. Filozofski vestnik je ustanovila Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti.

Aims and Scope

Filozofski vestnik (ISSN 0353-4510) is edited and published by the Institute of Philosophy of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Filozofski vestnik is a philosophy journal with an interdisciplinary character. It provides a forum for discussion on a wide range of issues in contemporary political philosophy, history of philosophy, history of political thought, philosophy of law, social philosophy, epistemology, philosophy of science, cultural critique, ethics, and aesthetics. The journal is open to different philosophical orientations, styles and schools, and welcomes theoretical dialogue among them.

Three issues of the journal are published annually. The second issue is a special issue that brings together articles by experts on a topic chosen by the Editorial Board. Articles are published in English, French, or German, with abstracts in Slovenian and English.

Filozofski vestnik is indexed/abstracted in the Arts & Humanities Citation Index; Current Contents / Arts & Humanities; EBSCO; IBZ (Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriften); The Philosopher's Index; Répertoire bibliographique de philosophie; Scopus; and Sociological Abstracts.

Filozofski vestnik is published with the support of the Slovenian Research Agency. Filozofski vestnik was founded by the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Filozofski vestnik

ISSN 0353-4510

Naslov uredništva
Filozofski vestnik
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Korespondenco, rokopise in recenzentske izvode pošiljajte na naslov uredništva.
Editorial correspondence, enquiries and books for review should be sent to the Editorial Office.
Revija izhaja trikrat letno. | *The journal is published three times annually.*
Letna naročnina: 21 €. Letna naročnina za študente in dijake: 12,50 €.
Cena posamezne številke: 10 €. | *Annual subscription: €21 for individuals, €40 for institutions. Single issues: €10 for individuals, €20 for institutions. Back issues are available.*

Naročila sprejema
Založba ZRC
p. p. 306, 1001 Ljubljana
Tel.: (01) 470 64 65
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Orders should be sent to
Založba ZRC
P.O. Box 306, SI-1001 Ljubljana, Slovenia
Phone: +386 (1) 470 64 65
E-mail: narocanje@zrc-sazu.si

Oblikovanje | *Design*: Pekinpah
Tisk | *Printed by*: Cicero Begunje
Naklada | *Print run*: 380

Filozofski vestnik | Volume XLII | Number 1 | 2021 | 153–180 | DOI: 10.3986/FV.42.1.07

Lana Zdravković*

The Concept of Emancipation as Political Action (Marx, Arendt, Rancière)

Emancipation is one of the basic concepts at the junction of politics, philosophy, and political theory. This text attempts to rethink the concept of emancipation and how it is structured as political action, while describing its historical origins and how it is further understood by the three important political philosophers: Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt, and Jacques Rancière. All three of them – specifically and with substantial differences – understand politics as a space for political action that leads to emancipation in the name of equality.[1]

In order to determine the historical origin of the concept in more detail, I will rely upon its elaboration within the school of "conceptual history" (*Begriffsgeschichte*), which deals with the historical semantics of terms and sees the etymology of and the change in the meaning of terms as forming a crucial basis for a contemporary cultural, conceptual, and linguistic understanding, "which allows us to detect the persistence, change, and novelty which are conceived diachronically along the dimension of meanings and through the spoken form of one and the same word."[2] Then I will, in greater detail, link this "pre-history" with Marx's, Arendt's, and Rancière's understanding of the concept of emancipation, and see how they differ and are related to each other. Furthermore, I will attempt to consider what theoretical conclusions about the concept of emancipation we can take from these relations.

I conclude with some critical questions regarding the different uses, understandings, and political potential of the concept of emancipation while taking into consideration the fact that concepts, too, have inherent political dynamics

[1] This article is a result of the research project J5-1749 "The break in tradition: Hannah Arendt and conceptual change", financed by the Slovenian Research Agency. I would like to thank Vlasta Jalušič for her extremely meticulous reading of the text and precious insights, advice, and help building its argumentation.

[2] Maria Pia Lara, *The Disclosure of Politics: Struggles over the Semantics of Secularisation*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2013, p. 46.

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that refer to their clarity, power, and use. I am particularly interested in how the concept of emancipation is perceived today, who the subject of emancipation is, what the method and final goal of emancipation is, and, finally, how this understandings can help us in the present time when it seems that we need emancipation more than ever.

Historical Overview of the Concept of Emancipation

The early conceptualisation of emancipation – as Reinhart Koselleck develops in his work – can already be found in antiquity.[3] Derived from *ē manu capere*, which literally means "to take from one's hand," *ēmancĭpo/ēmancĭpatio* in the Roman Republic was attached to the legal act that allowed the *pater familias* to release his son from father-related governance, enabling him to become independent and self-sustaining in a civil law sense *sui generis*. As a *têrminus téchnicus* of ancient Roman law, emancipation was therefore linked to a father's authority and the generational hierarchy: only a father could emancipate a son and not vice versa; emancipation could be – but not necessarily – allowed and certainly not claimed. So, at the very beginning, there is an absolute and obvious connection between nature and law.

Thus, in antiquity, emancipation takes place outside the political community, in the private sphere of the family. By widening its meaning in the Middle Ages, the concept gradually loses its special Roman law meaning of a one-layer legal act performed by the *pater familias* and becomes generally accepted as a mark of the naturally available condition of civil law autonomy after approaching the age of twenty-five years. Linguistic use of the expression, consequently, becomes more flexible.

Finally, during the Enlightenment, i.e. in the late 18th century, emancipation separates itself from the limited civil law understanding to be established as a philosophically, politically, and socially potent notion that gains a "revolutionary conceptual potential."[4] The crucial semantic novelty emerges. To that

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3 Reinhardt Koselleck, "The Limits of Emancipation: A Conceptual-Historical Sketch", trans. T. S. Presner, in Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, pp. 248–263.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 252.

point, the strictly transitive use of the concept – which supposes an authority that can allow emancipation (according to the arbitrary will of that authority) – transforms into a reflexive one, which corresponds to the development of the Enlightenment's ideals that address an individual's capability to think and act. Impossible to imagine within the old Roman tradition, self-emancipation became crucial during the Enlightenment, meaning first of all self-liberation from any kind of authority. Since then, emancipation as a concept could not be understood without involving notions of exploiting, repressing, and disrespecting, therefore without an understanding of the existing condition as a condition of inequality that should (and can) be changed through resistance.

It was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with his famous opening sentence of *The Social Contract* (1762): "[m]an is born free, and everywhere he is in chains,"[5] who gave the concept of emancipation a crucial role within the philosophical struggle for equality. For him, the transition from the "natural" to the "civil" condition is an inevitable slip into the condition of inequality that has to be faced within the political community. To emancipate oneself progressively means to completely abolish obedience, to appropriate unsuitable liberties as one's own, to break the existent rules. As self-empowering was excluded from the legal language, it had to be constructed against the law, norms, and customs. From then on, emancipation could not be imagined without the concepts of revolution, freedom (*Freiheit*) and equality.

Bringing into question the domination of both god and human allows for the construction of the thinking and acting political subject who finds his or her own liberation power only within him- or herself. Immanuel Kant, in his *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment* (1784), was the first who sketched out the historical-philosophical dimension of that liberation which leads to independence. Even though he did not describe enlightenment as emancipation but rather as "man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage,"[6] he defined the capability to use one's own intellect without anyone's guidance as the ultimate political gesture. By making a separating line between the free (public) and pri-

5 Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. G. D. H. Cole, London, Independently Publishing, 2020, p. 3.

6 Immanuel Kant, "*What Is Enlightenment?*", trans. M. C. Smith, Columbia University Online Library, http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html, accessed 22 May 2021.

vate use of mind, and with the battle call *Sapere aude!*, he opened up the space for autonomous thinking and acting as a crucial condition for the emancipation process.

The French Revolution (1789) was one of the most significant events that emanates the idea of emancipation as a struggle against domination in praxis. Influenced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment and rationalist natural law, it put into force two basic liberal principles: freedom and equality. *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen* (1789) proclaims a single set of individual and collective rights for everyone to be universal and valid in all times and at all places, which is clear already from the first paragraph: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good." Inspired by the American Revolution (1765) and the *United States Declaration of Independence* (1776), which claims that "[...] all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," it also linked the concept of emancipation and that of revolution as an important method of changing forms of governance into a more democratic one.

Since 1830 onwards, emancipation has been

> employed everywhere: first, in order to acquire individual and personal equal rights with respect to pregiven civil and legal conditions. Second, it was used for the purpose of making possible equal rights for groups: classes, social strata, women, particular churches and religious groups, entire peoples. Third, emancipation aimed at freedom of rule and equal rights for all of humanity, for the world, or for the emancipating time, as one could empathetically say then.[7]

But – and here Koselleck sees the limit of the concept – the more concretely the concept was linked to a certain group, the harder it was to achieve. Social, economic, religious, or natural obstacles, being hard to overcome in a purely legalistic way, were accumulated wherever Catholics, Jews, women, slaves, workers, etc., requested equality. Emancipation, in order to be effectual, thus needs to be thought as something that is a repeatable demand.[8] Hence, eman-

7 Koselleck, "The Limits of Emancipation", p. 255.

8 Lara, *The Disclosure of Politics*, p. 140.

cipation is an obvious example of ambiguity that Koselleck claims is necessary for a concept to be clear. Marx, Arendt, and Rancière will offer different answers to that ambiguity.

However, it is clear that from the 19th century on, emancipation has established itself as an ultimate request to, in principle, abolish any kind of domination of people over people. Power can now only be accepted as the self-rule of those who are emancipated, and emancipation is increasingly understood as a process of liberation – from legislative, social, political, and economic dependences – which creates the hope that, by the abolishment thereof, there will be an era without domination (*Herrschaft*), which became the counter concept of emancipation. The concept gained the status and shape of a slogan, "a catchword, one that admittedly presupposed or evoked a minimal consensus about the equal rights of all human beings"[9] and that could be appropriated by the socialist viewpoint (in favour of common property as a potential means of abolishing economic domination), the liberal viewpoint (in favour of the rule of law and individual liberty), or by the radical-democratic viewpoint (in favour of the sovereignty of the people).[10]

In the following chapter, I will focus on the theorisation of the concept of emancipation in the works of Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt, and Jacques Rancière, authors who were thinking about emancipation on different levels and to different extents, according to their understanding of politics itself, giving the concept a different place and value in their works but still taking it as an important concept for thinking politics, the political subject, and the political community.

K. Marx, H. Arendt, J. Rancière

K. Marx: Emancipation as Revolution

It was Karl Marx who took the concept of emancipation as a guiding concept for the class analysis of society and developed it as the central concept of the 19th century, contrasting it with the concept of domination and understanding it as the struggle of one class over the other in the name of generic humanity. "The claim that emancipation presupposed the critical question of domination was

9 Koselleck, "The Limits of Emancipation", p. 255.

10 *Cf. ibid.*

brand-new and unique in the history of concepts, and it was Marx who gave it its full sense of disclosure."[11] Marx's potent theorisation made the concept of emancipation more comprehensive among the general population, who could recognise it as a potential framework to express their demands for equality at every (economic, political, cultural) level.

Already in his early text *On the Jewish Question* (1844)[12], where he critically approached *The Jewish Question* and *The Capacity of Present-day Jews and Christians to Become Free* by Bruno Bauer from the same year, Marx differentiates between political and general human emancipation, clarifying this distinction together with his critique of religion, arguing that Bauer is mistaken in his assumption that in a "secular state" religion will no longer play a prominent role in social life; we can see from recent history and the present how right he was. Political emancipation is subordinated to human emancipation, as it is an emancipation of bourgeois society from politics and the bourgeois state from religion, not of the human as such. "The political emancipation of the Jew, the Christian, and, in general, of religious man, is the emancipation of the *state* from Judaism, from Christianity, from religion in general."[13] However, this process, according to Marx, still does not bring about real human emancipation. "The limits of political emancipation are evident at once from the fact that the

[11] Lara, *The Disclosure of Politics*, p. 68.

[12] A number of scholars and commentators regard *On the Jewish Question* as anti-Semitic; *cf*. Paul Johnson, "Marxism vs the Jews", *www.commentarymagazine.com*, accessed 22 May 2021; Joshua Muravchik, *Heaven on Earth: The Rise and Fall of Socialism,* San Francisco, Encounter Books, 2003, p. 164; Hyam Maccoby, *Antisemitism and Modernity: Innovation and Continuity,* London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 64–66; Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1999, p. 112; Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism*, Mahwah, Paulist Press, 2004, p. 168; Marvin Perry, Frederick M. Schweitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present,* London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 154–157. However a number of others disagree; *cf.* David McLellan, *Marx before Marxism,* New York, Harper & Row, 1970, pp. 141–142; Jonathan Sacks, *The Politics of Hope*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1997, pp. 98–108; Iain Hampsher-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought*, New Jersey, Blackwell Publishing, 1992, p. 496; Wendy Brown, "Rights and Identity in Late Modernity: Revisiting the 'Jewish Question'", in A. Sarat, T. Kearns (Eds.), *Identities, Politics, and Rights,* Michegan, University of Michegan Press, 1995, pp. 85–130; Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik, "Karl Marx as a Philosopher of Human Emancipation", *Poznan Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities*, 60 (1998), pp. 355–368.

[13] Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question,* Marxist Internet Archive, [1844], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/, accessed 22 May 2021.

state can free itself from a restriction without man being really free from this restriction, that the state can be a *free state* without man being a *free man*."[14]

For Marx, political emancipation does not abolish alienation; on the contrary, it is exactly the omnipresent condition thereof. As it is about the emancipation of the state and not man; man lives alienated, from himself, from other people, and from the society in a politically emancipated state. "The perfect political state is, by its nature, man's species-life, as opposed to his material life."[15] As political emancipation supposes a rupture between state and society, it ruptures human life into two: the private one (the individual) and the public one (the citizen). Contrary to that, human emancipation means reducing the human world and relations to the human himself.

> *All* emancipation is a *reduction* of the human world and relationships to *man himself*. Political emancipation is the reduction of man, on the one hand, to a member of civil society, to an *egoistic, independent* individual, and, on the other hand, to a *citizen*, a juridical person. Only when the real, individual man re-absorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a *species-being* in his everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognized and organized his 'own powers' as *social* powers, and, consequently, no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of *political* power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished.[16]

Marx's concept of human emancipation is based on his critique of Hegel's understanding of the bourgeois modern state, which "makes abstraction of *real man*, or satisfies the whole of man only in imagination."[17] Through his critique of religion, he also constructs a critique of Hegel's metaphysics that idealistically claims that mind is capable of gaining universal conclusions that are completely independent of material experience, and, in general, of the mystification

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

17 Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1843], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/, accessed 22 May 2021.

of Hegel's philosophy, "which descends from heaven to earth."[18] He intervenes with dialectical materialism, which flips the existing dialectics: "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."[19] If the nature of individuals depends on the material conditions, human emancipation is only possible by intervention into those conditions. Or, in the spirit of historical materialism, which is the application of dialectical materialism to society's historical development: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."[20]

Marx conceives his dialectical materialism with his appeal "*that man is the highest essence for man* – hence, with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, abandoned, despicable essence."[21] Therefore, he cannot think human emancipation separate from the historical class analysis of capitalistic society, which is a society of inequality in which capitalists, as the ruling class, which owns the means of production, establish their existence by exploiting the working class or proletariat, which owns nothing except its own bodies i.e. the labour force. And as the "proletariat has nothing to lose but its chains,"[22] overall human emancipation can only be achieved by the proletariat's organised rebellion i.e. a revolution in which "the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat."[23] What is significant is that Marx almost entirely linked the concept of emancipation to the concept of revolution. As the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, which are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, revolutionary ideas also emerge from certain material relationships.[24] Revolution is constructed as a class struggle of the pro-

18 Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1845], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/, accessed 22 May 2021.

19 *Ibid*.

20 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1852], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/, accessed 22 May 2021.

21 Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.

22 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1848], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/, accessed 22 May 2021.

23 *Ibid*., p. 601.

24 *Cf.* Marx, *The German Ideology*.

letariat or "revolutionary class,"[25] but in the name of the liberation of the whole of humankind. The struggle of the proletariat as a "a class with *radical chains*, a class of civil society, which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates, a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering and claims no *particular right* because no *particular wrong*, but *wrong generally,* is perpetuated against it,"[26] is the only struggle capable of achieving real universal human emancipation, as the proletariat "cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society, which, in a word, is the *complete loss* of man and hence can win itself only through the *complete re-winning of man*. This dissolution of society as a particular estate is the *proletariat*."[27]

In the spirit of the famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach – "Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."[28] – with the recursion to the generic notion of the human and its constitution as an emerging subject of his own history, Marx's concept of emancipation gains the character of a mundane-historical and philosophically deducted term of salvation that is constructed as revolution. Not just any kind of revolution, but the communist one: "Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things."[29] The communist revolution is therefore an intervention in the material conditions of labour and Marx believed that economic change would bring equality as well. "The class making a revolution appears from the very start, if only because it is opposed to a class, not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society; it appears as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class."[30]

In that sense, the communist revolution differs from the bourgeois revolutions of the 18th century, where the bourgeoisie acted revolutionary in its struggle against the aristocracy and clergy, yet it replaced feudalism with capitalism and put itself, as the ruling class, into a counterrevolutionary role. That is why the

25 *Ibid*., p. 59.
26 Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.
27 *Ibid*.
28 Marx, *The German Ideology*.
29 *Ibid*., p. 41.
30 *Ibid*., p. 47.

communist i.e. proletarian revolution is antibourgeois and in the first place social, as it supposes, above all, a radical change of the economic system, therefore, the abolishment of capitalism and not its transformation.

> The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot take its poetry from the past but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped away all superstition about the past. The former revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to smother their own content. The revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead in order to arrive at its own content. There the phrase went beyond the content – here the content goes beyond the phrase.[31]

For Marx, communism differs from all previous ideologies as it is internally revolutionary, "it overturns the basis of all earlier relations of production and intercourse, and for the first time consciously treats all natural premises as the creatures of hitherto existing men, strips them of their natural character and subjugates them to the power of the united individuals."[32] Only in such a context can one completely emancipate oneself and achieve the state described by the motto: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."[33]

Karl Marx made an important, complex, and comprehensive contribution to the history of thinking the concept of emancipation, as self-liberation from domination, exploitation, and inequality. In his early works, emancipation has an analytical meaning, while in the later ones it became a motive, programme, and the goal of human action. Still, his linking of human emancipation to historical class analysis, where the classes are understood essentially, does not give space for real universal human emancipation in a political sense. As his understanding of politics is economic in nature, he understands emancipation just as a social matter, overlooking that revolutionising the material conditions and seizing the means of production, thus changing the mode of economic production, does not necessarily lead to achieving political emancipation in terms of freedom and equality. This is what the next two thinkers will try to grasp.

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31 Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

32 Marx, *The German Ideology*.

33 Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1875], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/, accessed 22 May 2021.

H. Arendt: Emancipation as a Precondition for Politics

Hannah Arendt does not develop the concept of emancipation exhaustively in any single work, but elaborates on it in several – including *The Human Condition* (1958), *Between Past and Future* (1961), and *On Revolution* (1963) – while relating it to concepts such as revolution, liberation, politics, action, new beginning, and especially freedom. Already in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), she is occupied with concern for rescuing human action and politics from what she, together with Kant, named "radical evil", i.e. the production of superfluous people and the abolition of plurality and humanity as such, which in her opinion is the goal of the totalitarian form of government, with the concentration camp as the paradigmatic place for totalitarianism.[34] Her understanding of the concept of emancipation needs to be seen in this light.

Like Koselleck, Arendt elaborates the concept of emancipation within the historical context and as a differentiated concept: as a quest for equality, rebellion against domination, and demand for justice. For her, emancipation is basically "liberation from" any kind of tyranny, while liberation and freedom are not considered to be the same. Opposing the liberal definition of freedom as "freedom of choice" or an act of "free will", she rather connects freedom with the radical equality of acting humans, which is her perception of politics as such. There-

[34] Even though Arendt herself abandoned the concept of "radical evil" introduced in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and since the introduction of the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) she used the concept of the "banality of evil" to explain that thoughtlessness is rather banal than radical – and consequently most of her interpreters have done the same – Zoran Kurelić never gave up using the concept of radical evil, understanding it as crucial for her entire work. "Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism and concentration camps led her to believe that totalitarianism unleashed a type of absolute evil which is exactly the opposite of what human life is. This is why she calls it radical." (Zoran Kurelić, "Does the World Need Humanity", *Filozofski godišnjak* – Glasnik Instituta za filozofiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu, 21 (2008), p. 123) This kind of evil is the opposition of humanity as such as "the idea that everything is possible makes the end of humanity possible" (Zoran Kurelić, "Telos of the Camp", *Croatian Political Science Review*, 46 (3/2009), p. 151), and thus is always radical for Kurelić, who lucidly uses the concept of radical evil also for creative interpretations and theorisations of other contemporary phenomena in the field of politics, philosophy, and art (*cf.* Zoran Kurelić, "Raining Snakes", *Croatian Political Science Review*, 49 (1/2012), pp. 24–40; Zoran Kurelić, "From Hellholes to Hell: On Political Agency in Purgatory", *Croatian Political Science Review*, 56 (3–4/2019), pp. 137–153.). For an analysis of radical evil in Arendt and Kant, *cf.* Richard J. Bernstein, "Reflections on Radical Evil: Arendt and Kant", *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 85 (1–2/2002), pp. 17–30.

fore, for Arendt, freedom represents the crucial concept that enables the emancipation of people striving in political action. It is based on the human capacity to initiate the beginnings of something new together with others: "[t]he *raison d' être* of politics is freedom and its field of experience is action."[35]

Yet such moments of action – when freedom appears – are not very common in human history. Moreover, there are no guarantees that political action and thus freedom would appear at all – on the contrary, there is a tendency towards its extinction, especially with the emergence of elements of total domination. Politics as such is an inter-human phenomenon and also "infinite improbability,"[36] a kind of "worldly miracle"[37] only humans are capable of "producing" when they act together, which is a part of her wider conceptualisation of the human condition or *vita activa*.[38] One of the key works in which Arendt explores how politics as freedom emerges and constitutes a new beginning, a new government and its institutions, is emancipatory action, is her book *On Revolution*.

Through the analysis of two historically important revolutions, the American (1776) and French (1789) Revolutions, she rethinks the basic elements of action that bring about politics, at the core of which is the notion of freedom. For Arendt, revolution as a concept and event does not exist before the Modern Age (starting at the end of the 18th century); it is the only struggle that aims not towards liberation (negative freedom), as in the case of insurrection, but rather towards the constitution of a new political body (positive freedom). Unlike Marx, who distinguishes between social and bourgeois revolutions, for her the distinction between a political revolution whose aim is "freedom for all" and a social revolution whose aim is liberation from an oppressive government or poverty, is crucial. Contrary to Marx, who claims that the state apparatus and classes are to be abolished via revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, Arendt sees exactly the act of a new beginning, "an act of establishing" – constitutional act, permanent institutions, and the framework of the state as a key revolutionary

35 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought,* New York, The Viking Press, 1961, p. 146.

36 *Ibid*., p. 170.

37 *Ibid*.

38 *Cf.* Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 12–17.

achievement guaranteeing the people's emancipation in terms of gaining and maintaining their rights – as political beings, i.e. citizens.

The most important thing in a revolution is thus the establishment of a new political body that guarantees freedom; the French Revolution did not succeed due to pressure arising from the misery of the people, while the American Revolution, having in mind the better economic position of the soon-to-be states, did. A problem arises, according to Arendt, if the core of the revolution is not liberation from tyranny, but from urgency; so instead of the people's misery and mercy for unhappy people, loving freedom is the only relevant aim of the revolution. As the goal of the American Revolution was to establish freedom and that the revolutionary government would found the republic through a constitutional assembly, Arendt understood the American Revolution, which resulted in the production of a constitution, as an example of a successful revolution. On the other hand, she criticised the French revolutionaries for transforming the quest for freedom and new political institutions into social question (economic inequality, poverty) – and, by doing so, sacrificing freedom to the imperative of urgency, i.e. necessity. As "the whole record of past revolutions demonstrates beyond doubt that every attempt to solve the social question with political means leads into terror, and that it is terror which sends revolutions to their doom,"[39] Arendt shows how the French Revolution ended up in Robespierrian terror or a "despotism of freedom"[40] instead of establishing institutions that should guarantee equality. The same critique applies to the concept of revolution of Marx – "the greatest theorist the revolutions ever had"[41] – as well as all the other revolutions that followed the French pattern and put urgency, i.e. necessity, foremost.

> No revolution has ever solved the 'social question' and liberated men from the predicament of want, but all revolutions, with the exception of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, have followed the example of the French Revolution and used and misused the mighty forces of misery and destitution in their struggle against tyranny or oppression.[42]

39 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, London, Penguin Books, 1963, p. 112.

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 112. Here we can also mention the "velvet revolution" and others that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which resulted in the end of "communist rule" in many countries around the world, including in Central and Eastern Europe. (*Cf.* Vlasta Jalušič

Arendt to a great extent developed her argument through a critical attitude toward Marx, with whom, in her opinion, our tradition of political thought – which had its definite beginning with Plato and Aristotle – came to a definite end.[43] In a polemic with three of Marx's well known claims, which she called paradoxes, i.e. "labour created man," "violence is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one," and the famous last thesis on Feuerbach: "the philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; the point is, however, to change it," she tried to show the great perplexities that he himself had anticipated and which remained insoluble according to his own terms.

> If labour is the most human and most productive of man's activities, what will happen when, after the revolution, 'labour is abolished' in 'the realm of freedom', when man has succeeded in emancipating himself from it? What productive and what essentially human activity will be left? If violence is the midwife of history and violent action therefore the most dignified of all forms of human action, what will happen when, after the conclusion of class struggle and the disappearance of the state, no violence will even be possible? How will men be able to act at all in a meaningful, authentic way? Finally, when philosophy has been both realized and abolished in the future society, what kind of thought will be left?[44]

Although Arendt understands Marx as one of the crucial thinkers of the "break in tradition" – together with Nietzsche and Kierkegaard – as regards those who have attempted to think against the Western political tradition, she claims that he has consciously overturned its hierarchy, and has finally fallen back to use its own tools.[45] Marx too, like Hegel, sees world history as a continuous process that is determined from the future, and by overturning Hegel he "jumps" from theory to action, from contemplation into work. However, according to Arendt, with this political action, he becomes more theoretical than ever. Like Koselleck, Arendt is critical of Marx's procedural way of thinking within the horizon of the philosophy of history and indicates how this eschatological perspective leads to violence, the acceleration of social "development", and to terror. Marx sees

and Mirt Komel, "Misliti revolucijo po Hannah Arendt ali politična znanost o ustanavljanju novih oblik vladavine" (Afterword), in Hannah Arendt, *O revoluciji*, Krtina, Ljubljana 2017, p. 336.)

43 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 17.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

the social revolution as the core of the emancipation of humans, while he considers violence – as a powerful emanation of the will – to be a crucial assistant in bringing about social change. Arendt was a great critic of that idea and the Marxist "glorification of violence."[46]

What she identifies as the biggest inconsistency in Marx's thought is that while he puts hope in a new human political actor, i.e. the proletariat, he pleads for the abolishment of the state, public space, and politics. On the one hand, he is planning for the social emancipation of labour and the working class (the whole society becomes a society of workers), while on the other he hopes to abolish labour as a necessity and establish the condition of liberation from labour and work. With this, according to Arendt, the core of revolution as an event in which – in modern times – politics as the free action of the many again emerges, is lost and replaced by the philosopher's lead. Instead, a society of labourers and consumers emerges, which does not have an interest in politics and human action. Against the Marxian hope that a free society of humans emancipated from wage labour and labour as such would be established as a special realm of freedom, an anti-political society of consumers replaces the society of labourers. Again, as before in the course of the Western tradition, political action is replaced by other modes of human activity and therefore put in danger of becoming extinct. She believed that in Marx's ideal society two different concepts, i.e. the classless society and the stateless society, are inextricably combined and because of that the abolition of labour is at the same time an abolition of politics. That is why she questions positing communism as the utopian goal of history, which can lead to a rule of terror.

Criticising the French Revolution, Arendt is also critical of Rousseau, who inspired it, maintaining that equality is not natural, people are not born free and equal, but they can become so within a political community where they guarantee the existence of equality to each other as responsible citizens. She contrasts the ancient and modern understandings of equality:

[46] Arendt, *On Revolution,* p. 19. (For a more accurate understanding of Arendt's critique of violence and the distinction between violence and power, *cf.* Vlasta Jalušič, "Zmešnjava pri vprašanju nasilja: oblast in nasilje pri Hannah Arendt", *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, 24 (180–181/1996), pp. 27–53.)

> Isonomy guaranteed equality, but not because all men were born or created equal, but, on the contrary, because men were by nature not equal, and needed an artificial institution, the *polis,* which by virtue of its *nomos* would make them equal. Equality existed only in this specifically political realm, where men met one another as citizens and not as private persons. The difference between this ancient concept of equality and our notion that men are born or created equal and become unequal by virtue of social and political (that is, man-made) institutions can hardly be over-emphasized. The equality of the Greek *polis,* its isonomy, was an attribute of the *polis* and not of men, who received their equality by virtue of citizenship, not by virtue of birth. Neither equality nor freedom was understood as a quality inherent in human nature, they were both not given by nature and growing out by themselves; they were, that is, conventional and artificial, the products of human effort and qualities of the man-made world.[47]

Drawing on the Aristotelian understanding of the relation between the human and the political and on the presupposition that it is only within a political community that human beings can realise a fully human life by distinguishing themselves through public action, she constructed one of her crucial arguments, i.e. that there is nothing natural about politics. In Arendt's view, we become equal only as political beings, i.e. members of a political community, that is, as citizens, and it is only by virtue of this artificial equality that respect for persons, regardless of who they naturally are, can be expected. That is why, for her, "the right to have rights"[48] is the most important emancipatory demand. Arendt thus considers political revolution to be the key political event of modern times, in which freedom as political collective action, representing a novel start in the human struggle for equality, could appear again. Emancipation, thus, can happen only if it is political and with the goal of creating a political community (state) among political subjects (citizens), who have the right to have rights.

J. Rancière: Emancipation as Radical Equality

Jacques Rancière is a radical thinker of emancipation who presupposes the equality of anyone with anyone else; his concept of emancipation requests

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47 *Ibid*., pp. 30–31.

48 The concept is especially developed in the famous ninth chapter "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man" (within Part Two: Imperialism) in Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1973, pp. 267–305.

thinking the whole of the political problematics in light of the equality-inequality relationship and, for him, emancipation is actually equated with politics itself; he speaks of the politics of emancipation as a synonym for politics as such.

Already in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (1987), part of his early "archaeological period," he developed the potent concept of emancipation based on the innovative method of "universal teaching,"[49] which allows teaching others something that you do not know – axiomatically presupposing that "all men have equal intelligence."[50] Claiming that emancipation means exactly "becoming conscious of equality of *nature*,"[51] Rancière turned the Cartesian formula of equality upside down. "Descartes said, 'I think, therefore I am'; and this noble thought of the great philosopher is one of the principles of universal teaching. We turn his thought around and say: 'I am a man, therefore I think.' The reversal equates 'man' with *cogito*. Thought is not an attribute of the thinking substance; it is an attribute of *humanity.*"[52] Of course, it would be empirically wrong to claim that all intelligence is equal, but "the problem isn't proving that all intelligence is equal. It's seeing what can be done under that supposition."[53]

Intellectual emancipation – understood as a process in which the schoolmaster does not explain what is considered the ultimate truth and does not expect people to learn by purely repeating what they hear, but as a process of encouraging people to use and develop their own intelligence in their own way, and that is exactly why the schoolmaster can be ignorant – is Rancière's starting point for demanding political equality. "*Equality* and *intelligence* are synonymous terms, exactly like *reason* and *will*. This synonymy on which each man's intellectual capacity is based is also what makes society, in general, possible. The equality of intelligence is the common bond of humankind, the necessary and sufficient condition for a society of men to exist."[54] All his later politics of emancipation, which presupposes equality, rested on this possibility: "It is true that we don't

[49] Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, trans. K. Ross, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1991, p. 18.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

know that men are equal. We are saying that they *might* be. This is our opinion, and we are trying, along with those who think as we do, to verify it. But we know that this *might* is the very thing that makes a society of humans possible."[55]

In another early book, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth Century France* (1981), Rancière develops a critical polemics with traditional Marxist essentialisation of the class struggle, developing a new concept of revolution as not purely a revolution of forms of government (the political aspect) and the distribution of wealth (the social aspect), but a revolution within the distribution of the sensible, i.e. aesthetic revolution. In order to challenge this claim, Rancière invested a decade of his life in studying the neglected archives of the creativity of the 19th-century French working class. He confirmed his assumption that in the time envisaged for only reproducing the body for work, workers appropriated time that they did not have and used it for education, reflection, and imagination – for doing what was not intended to be done – and thereby emancipated themselves. By breaking certain rules of decency, which were supposed to apply to a certain class, by expressing a voice that was not supposed to be theirs, and by imitating gestures for which they were not supposed to have time, workers were expressing a rich political potential that was never noticed within the usual perception of the working class by Marxian theoreticians and historians. By showing that the working class has no special common denominator, that it is not such and such "by itself", Rancière is eager to claim that every emancipation emerges from breaking the rules of the dominant order.[56]

In one of his later works, *Disagreement. Politics and Philosophy* (1995), a part of his "aesthetics of politics" project, he develops his thesis on intellectual eman-

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] This critique of Marx will subsequently be more developed, as Rancière takes Marx as a crucial representative of the metapolitical understanding of politics, where "politics is understood as a lie about the reality that is called society" (Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. J. Rose, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 83) and goes together with his critique of Marx's metapolitical understanding of emancipation as something that happens outside of politics. Rancière defines metapolitics as the scientific accompaniment of politics, which places itself at the ultimate position of truth and the only one that is able to see beyond ideology as "false consciousness" (*ibid.*, p. 85). Together with archipolitics and parapolitics, metapolitics, for Rancière, is just one of the three historical attempts of "political philosophy" to abolish politics itself (*cf. ibid.*, pp. 61–95).

cipation, understanding it as "a modern term for an effect of equality,"[57] which proclaims the "equality of anyone at all with anyone else,"[58] opening with that a certain "scandal of politics."[59] Emancipation is thus "political interlocution,"[60] where people understand each other as equal; it is a political situation that enables the "equality of whoever with whomever,"[61] which can arise anywhere and everywhere, but it is never given in advance and in any pre-given identity, situation, or category.

Starting from Aristotle's claim in *Politics* that man is a political animal because he has the power of speech to express thoughts (*lógos)*, unlike all the other animals that only use a voice to express pain or pleasure (*phōnē)*, Rancière ultimately develops an understanding of politics as a conflictual (dissensual) process,[62] which even before enabling perception of the useful and the harmful, good and evil, the just and the unjust, inevitably enables the organisation of a *pólis* as a community of equals. Namely, *lógos*, which is giving orders, in the first place presupposes that those who have to obey understand those orders, so – and here is the initial contradiction – it presupposes the equality of those who obey with those who are giving orders. "Inequality is, paradoxically, possible only on the bases of equality, which undermines any natural order."[63] That is why disagreement as a philosophical concept, for Rancière is constitutive for politics itself. Politics for Rancière, therefore, emerges as a "constitutive wrong,"[64] when the poor, those without any virtue, demos, etc., or "part of those who have no part,"[65] require that they be considered an equal part of the political community.

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57 *Ibid*., p. 51.

58 *Ibid*., p. 30.

59 *Ibid*.

60 *Ibid*., p. 74.

61 *Ibid*.

62 This is the core of his eighth thesis on politics, where he explains that the essence of politics is dissensus, not as a confrontation between interests or opinions, but as the distance of the sensible from itself. "The principal function of politics is the configuration of its proper space. It is to disclose the world of its subjects and its operations. The essence of politics is the manifestation of dissensus, as the presence of two worlds in one." (Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics", *Theory & Event*, 5 (3/2001), p. 10.)

63 Rancière, *Disagreement*, p. 31.

64 *Ibid*., p. 37.

65 *Ibid*.

> Politics does not happen just because the poor oppose the rich. It is the other way around; politics (that is, the interruption of the simple effect of domination by the rich) causes the poor to exist as an entity. The outrageous claim of the demos to be the whole of the community only satisfies in its own way – that of a *party* – the requirement of politics. Politics exists when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part.[66]

Any regime of domination – defined by Rancière as "police"[67] – defines who is and who is not visible in the common space and if the voice that comes out of the interlocutor's mouth should be understood as meaningful speech or as noise – and, consequently, who should and who should not be included – "counted"[68], as Rancière puts it – in a political community's order. The essence of the police is not repression, but the distribution of the sensible.

> The police is, essentially, the law, generally implicit, that defines a party's share or lack of it. But to define this, you first must define the configuration of the sensible – in which one or the other is inscribed. The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being and ways of saying; and sees that those bodies are assigned by name by a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and sayable and sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise.[69]

Politics, on the other hand, occurs as antagonistic towards the police and reconfigures the political space as a space of equals; it enables an encounter – which is never given in advance – between two different heterogeneous processes, the police logic and the logic of equality. Understood as an "open set of practices driven by the assumption of equality between any and every speaking being and by the concern to test this equality,"[70] political activity is "whatever shifts a body from a place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business of being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once

66 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
67 *Ibid.*, pp. 43–45.
68 *Ibid.*
69 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
70 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise."[71]

Politics is thus possible only as a consequence of the emancipatory process, when those who are "not counted in a space of politics,"[72] those without a given name and thus invisible, take possession of speech, make themselves visible and perform an "improper counting of the parts of the whole community."[73]

> Politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, the contradiction of two worlds in a single world: the world where they are and the world where they are not, the world where there is something 'between' them and those who do not acknowledge them as speaking beings who count, and the world where there is nothing.[74]

For Rancière, emancipation is – as also elaborated in *Politics, Identification and Subjectivization* (1995) – just a second name for politics itself. It is the process of a specific political subjectivisation, which presupposes the logic of heterology,

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71 *Ibid*., p. 45. The amalgamation of the wrong and politics, as postulated by Rancière, is critically analysed by Jelica Šumič-Riha, who emphasises that the fundamental wrong, inseparable from politics for Rancière, is in fact another name for politics as such, which in fact does not allow any clear conclusion about the possibilities of the political in situations here and now (*cf*. Jelica Šumič-Riha, "Aisthesis Politike (Afterword)", *Nerazumevanje*, Ljubljana, Založba ZRC, 2005, pp. 187–188). A similar critique of the antagonistic image of politics in the light of the broader French post-structuralist and post-Heideggerian philosophical thought, which originates from Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida and is carried out within or in connection with Schmitt's understanding of the political, is developed also by Vlasta Jalušič (*cf*. Vlasta Jalušič, "Vaditi politično mišljenje v posttotalitarnih časih" (Afterword), in Hannah Arendt, Med preteklostjo in prihodnostjo: šest vaj v političnem mišljenju, Krtina, Ljubljana 2006, p. 259). For a direct comparison between Schmitt's friend/enemy and Rancière's politics/police distinction as constitutive of the political as such, *cf*. Panu Minkkinen, "Rancière and Schmitt: Sons of Ares?", in M. L. Lerma, J. Etxabe (eds.), *Rancière and Law*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2017, pp. 129–149.

72 Rancière, *Disagreement*, p. 25.

73 *Ibid*.

74 *Ibid*., p. 42.

the logic of the other, the construction of the self as the other.[75] In other words, the process of subjectivisation is a process of disidentification or declassification.[76] Rather than the solid identity, it is *in-between*: between several names, statuses, and identities; between humanity and inhumanity, citizenship and its denial; between the status of a man of tools and the status of a speaking and thinking being. Political subjectivisation is the enactment of equality – or the handling of a wrong – by people who are together to the extent that they are between. It is a crossing of identities, relying on a crossing of names: names that link the name of a group or class to the name of no group or no class, a being to a nonbeing or a not-yet-being. It always involves an impossible identification, an identification that cannot be embodied by he or she who utters it.[77]

This is exactly why Rancière is critical of Arendt's implicit commitment to political capacity as a given quality or destination, which lies at the heart of her separation of the social and the political, public and private, freedom and necessity, which is precisely what is always at stake in politics for Rancière. This commitment to the idea of "pure politics," which is not to be contaminated by private or social life is, for Rancière, only another form of policing politics, or "archipolitics,"[78] as inherent in the traditional understanding of contemporary democracy, unable to think politics outside the *arche*, i.e. governance. With two examples, i.e. the question of the poor in *On Revolution* and the question of the stateless in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Rancière criticises Arendt's political purism based on the opposition between two forms of life: one that is capable of politics, and the other only doomed to reproduction.[79] Although some pose the question of whether Rancière is "a closet Arendtian"[80] or describe him as an

[75] *Cf.* Jacques Rancière, "Politics, Identification and Subjectivization", in John Rajhcman (ed.), *Identity in Question*, New York and London, Routledge, 1995, p. 60.

[76] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 67.

[77] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 62.

[78] Rancière, "Politics, Identification and Subjectivization", p. 63.

[79] *Cf.* Jacques Rancière, "Who is the subject of the rights of man?", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103 (2–3/2004), pp. 297–310, and Mustafa Dikeç, "Beginners and Equals: Political Subjectivity in Arendt and Rancière", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 38 (1/2013), pp. 78–90.

[80] Andrew Schaap, "Enacting the Right to Have Rights: Jacques Rancière's Critique of Hannah Arendt", *European Journal of Political Theory,* 10 (1/2011), p. 37.

"anti-Arendtian Arendtian,"[81] as they both have in common opposition to understanding politics as domination, hierarchy, and governance, and "argue for a politics that overcomes determination through the purely social (economics, competition, life sustainment),"[82] the differences persist.

> Firstly, in Arendt's ontological understanding of politics, which is opposed to Rancière's dealing with the political as a process; secondly, in Arendt's understanding of the human as a speaking animal, whereas Rancière sees the human as a literate animal; and, thirdly, in Rancière's critique of political philosophical anthropocentrism, to which Arendt still professes.[83]

Moreover, Rancière's critique of Arendt's inability to recognise the political agency of the poor and the stateless points to "the vicious circularity of her conception of politics."[84] Thus, "whereas Arendt views 'the human' in human rights ontologically as a life deprived of politics, Rancière views 'the human' polemically as the dismissal of any difference between those who are qualified to participate in politics and those who are not."[85] Rancière's understanding of emancipation is radically different than Arendt's, as for her it is just a first (although crucial) step (liberation) toward politics (freedom), while for Rancière emancipation is already and simultaneously politics itself, which is manifested through the political action of a political subject (who is and can be anyone) and can arise anywhere and at any time.

For Rancière, thus, intellectual emancipation connects social and political emancipation, i.e. it is before and after them, it is their cause and consequence. Happening only in the name of a certain social or political wrong, i.e. the denial of the equality of a certain group, class, or individual, emancipation, the heterological enactment of the self as the other, is a process of counting the excluded one into the whole, which then always has universal consequences.

81 Ivana Perica, "The Archipolitics of Jacques Rancière", *Krisis. Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, 49 (1/2019), p. 16.

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid.*

84 Schaap, "Enacting the Right to Have Rights", p. 29.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Emancipation as Political Action

We have seen how the concept of emancipation has changed over historical time from passive to active (reflexive), and since the Enlightenment and the French Revolution became the ultimate generator for achieving the liberal values of freedom and equality. As one of the key concepts that presupposes an understanding of politics as a process of constructing a political community of equals, it never occurs by itself, but is inevitably intertwined with human action. This self-liberating process presupposes that the action of any political subject is emancipatory only if it is oriented towards the idea of the equality of/for all. In other words, political action is emancipatory only if it is simultaneously particular (in the name of a certain group, identity, or individual) and universal. Koselleck warns that the more concretely the concept of emancipation was linked to a certain group, the harder it was to achieve emancipation. Marx, Arendt, and Rancière showed – with substantial disagreements, however – that emancipation can be achieved exactly through the politically constructed action of a certain group that has universal premises. Their different understanding of political action – as emancipation – derived from their different conceptualisations of politics itself.

For Marx, who thinks politics through economy, changing the modes of production is the ultimate emancipatory action which can (and should) be carried out by the oppressed working class. The social emancipation (revolution) of the proletariat is therefore for him the ultimate political action, which is revolutionary and leads to a classless society and the abolishment of the capitalistic production condition, but also to generic human emancipation. Leaving the social sphere outside the political conception as not only redundant but also harmful, Arendt on the other hand, understands politics as a space where politically active individuals and collectives act together, believing that only stable institutions (guaranteed by law, the constitution, and the state) of a political community established on non-violent principles guarantee freedom. Emancipation can therefore happen only as political emancipation (revolution) by political beings – citizens. Exclusion from citizenship is, for her, exclusion from politics. The sense of politics is the freedom that we experience through our activity. For Rancière, emancipation and politics are synonyms, so, for him, politics can exist only as a politics of emancipation, which manifests itself as the assumption of the equality of anyone with anyone else; this is the core of his conception

of intellectual emancipation (the revolution of the sensible). Politics is an encounter of two opposite processes, domination and equality, so it is always a *tópos* of a certain wrong. Unlike the proletariat or citizen, for Rancière, there is no certain pre-given name for the political subject as emancipation manifests itself as political subjectivisation, as a process of deindividualisation and declassification. Unlike revolution or the act of beginning, for Rancière, there are no protocols for emancipation prescribed in advance. It can happen anywhere and be done by anyone.

On the example of these three authors, we can see that thinking emancipation is a complex process combining social, political, and intellectual processes of self-transformation that leads to the transformation of politics as such. Social justice is necessary, but it does not necessarily lead to political equality. Political equal rights are necessary, but having rights does not always mean having the possibility (power) to exercise (enforce) them. The emancipation of women, refugees, Black people, or the working class can have universal consequences only if it leads to the abolishment or redefinition of the concept of patriarchy, nation state, racism, and capitalism/imperialism. Only in this manner can emancipation, although it happens in the name of some community, group, or individual excluded from the regime of equality, always be carried out in the name of the equality of everyone at the same time and in such a way that is always universal, no matter how particular it can be.

It seems that, in today's time, emancipation has become equated with equality and the struggle to achieve it on the social, political, and intellectual levels. As we are still facing patriarchy, racism, nationalism, and capitalism/imperialism, it remains a crucial concept in rethinking common life as a political life based on equality and the methods to achieve it. It is the basis for every political community and political subject. As identity is multiple, also emancipation could happen only as an intelligent and multi-layered process of combined social (equal payment, decent employment, no exploitation), political (equal rights), and intellectual (demanding to be treated equally in every sphere of life) emancipation. And the most important imperative of emancipation is that it is not enough if I am emancipated if not everyone is emancipated.

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