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Last War or a war to make the world safe for democracy:
Violence and Right in Hannah Arendt*

Before I even begin explaining this complicated title (in the title each word negates Hannah Arendt's "position" and engagement) and before I try to explain her use of the word violence /*Gewalt*/, I would like to tell you a few words about a certain difficulty that defines my text. The difficulty lies in the sources and traces, which are at our disposal when we evoke somebody's engagement, life or the position of a certain man or group. We, I am certain, represent the last generation of readers (I do not like the word "researchers") who still cannot freely consult (place in front of them, at the exact moment necessary and anywhere) everything that is the object of their interests. In a few years, no doubt, all archives and different testimonies will be completely accessible online, and in that way centuries old intellectual constructions and foolishnesses will be erased in only seconds. Imagine how many texts, on Hannah Arendt for example, today look very weak and hastily written only because at the time they were written their authors did not have all her *Journals*¹ or her book *Was ist Politik?* in front of them. Paradoxically if you do not read German, today it is easier to comprehend her understanding of politics or war if you read Portuguese rather than English. The book *O que é politica?* was translated and published by Reinaldo Guarany in Brazil in 1999, while the English, incomplete, version appeared only last year (*The Promise of Politics*²). Please excuse my bad pronunciation, excuse me for not addressing you in your own language and also for not being able to use the advantages of the Portuguese language, in comparison to the English language (and not only English) when terms

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¹ H. Arendt, *Denktagebuch, 1950-1973*, München-Zürich, Piper, 2002.

² Jerome Kohn (Ed.), New York, Schocken Books. The text "Introduction into Politics" (pp. 93-204) was translated into English by John E. Woods. Before this there was an unpublished translation by Robert and Rita Kimber.

that are applied to the word violence³ are in question.

This year I am living in Aberdeen, Scotland and working at the “Centre for Modern Thought”. This is, I remind you, the University where Hannah Arendt held two series of Gifford Lectures in 1973 and 1974 (in the last several years these lectures have been held in Edinburgh, but the “Centre” is trying to return them to Aberdeen). As you already know the lectures from 1974 were interrupted because she suffered a nearly fatal heart attack. As I was preparing this text I tried to acquire an audio recording of the first series of lectures, as well as the second. I was interested in her references to Kant’s legal writings and the first places where Kant appears - before the idea for the third part of the book *The Life of the Mind* (“Judging”)⁴ came to light - in Hannah Arendt's analysis. Why “Judging”? How does Kant get into the picture? More precisely, I was interested in the moment of union of her readings of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, the merging of the analysis of those celebrated fragments on power, violence and war (§ 28 and §83) with her “theory of difference” between violence and power (this is the picture I refer to). Arendt’s lectures which we today know under the title *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (first published in 1982)⁵, and in which she shows a reserve (today so celebrated but also unjustified) towards Kant’s legal and political works, are held for almost a decade during which she did her research on violence which culminated in the book *On Violence* in 1970.⁶ It is very strange, but Kant rarely appears in Arendt’s texts on politics or war, revolution, etc. (for example in the book *On Violence* he is mentioned only once, p.27; in the book *On Revolution* twice⁷). Since I was unable to obtain what I expected in Aberdeen (and what is not in Washington’s archives) all I can do is present to you my suspicion and a few questions to which I have no answers: therefore, did Kant, in the end, partially shake Arendt’s very strict and unwavering opinion concerning (un)justified violence,

³ Everything that Arendt was trying to do in her texts, realizing that there is a big problem with the German word *Gewalt*, various translators, into English, were very precisely trying to shatter and destroy. The translator of the text “Einführung in die Politik” did not translate *Gewalt* as violence, as Arendt did, but with a couple of different words: “force”, “brute force” and vary rarely “violence”. Thomas McCarthy, the translator of Habermas’s 1977 text “Hannah Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power,” also translates Habermas’s word *Gewalt* as force or *force*, while Arendt uses the word violence in the English language. The confusion occurs when Arendt’s other books are cited, in which she, in original English, uses the word “force”. In one of the last great systematic texts about violence Etienne Balibar tries to think the meanings of the word *Gewalt* analyzing various ‘Marxists’ texts. It is interesting that he completely avoids Hannah Arendt’s text (*Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*, Hrsg. W. F. Haug, Band 5, Hamburg, Argument Verlag, 2001).

⁴ I am referring to the *Appendix*, which can be found in *The Life of the Mind*, Volume II, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978, pp. 260-261.

⁵ Ronald Beiner (Ed.), Chicago, Harvester Press, 1982.

⁶ I am using an edition by Allen Lane and Penguin Press (London).

violence which creates even more violence and war which has no “meaning”)?⁸ Is it possible to follow the genesis of the “Ninth Session”⁹ in which Arendt analyzes Kant’s sentences on war which brings progress, serves culture and leads to peace? Why did Arendt never further develop Kant’s dictum on peace as a “regulator” of war and conflict, which can constrain violence */die Gewalt einzudämmen/* (why didn’t she clear it up, from Clausewitz’s complicated construction between *Ziel* /goal/ and *Zweck* /end/ to which she dedicated a few pages in the introduction to politics?)?¹⁰ What can we find in Hannah Arendt’s unpublished notes and lectures, and what did her discovery of a new horizon in Kant, and progress as a norm for the judging and appraisal of violence, do to the justification of violence?

I could formulate my main question in another way: I am interested in what exactly it was that Arendt read of Kant’s legal works (I mean specifically his lectures, his sketched lectures on the metaphysics of morals and anthropology) so that I could reconstruct her resistance to Kant?

I would like to pause quickly at this question which I have determined as the most important. Therefore, I am interested in what Arendt read of Kant, how she read it and why she hesitated to think of her "theory" concerning violence with Kant. Let us leave a side, for a moment, the context of this question. I think that the connection between texts, entwining of texts and leaving some texts unread,¹¹ most importantly conditions and dictates writing ("theory" or "position") and

⁷ H. Arendt, *On Revolution*, London, Penguin Books, 1990 (1963), p. 54 i 229.

⁸ Why is war so "brutally" discarded from political space in Hannah Arendt’s opinion and how to understand, in this context, this very important text which was published in the journal *Aufbau* (November 14, 1941) “The Jewish Army – the Beginning of a Jewish Politics?” (now translated and published in *The Portable H.A.*, London, Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 46-48)? Or the text “Papier und Wirklichkeit” from April 10, 1942 (*Aufbau*), in which peace is directly dependent on war : “Der nicht im Krieg ist, auch nicht im Frieden“?

⁹ *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, pp. 51-58.

¹⁰ “For the goal of all force is peace – the goal, but not the end, since it is by the goal that we must judge all individual uses of force, applying Kant’s dictum (in *Perpetual Peace*) that nothing should be allowed to happen in war that would make a subsequent peace impossible. The goal is not contained within the action itself, but, unlike ends, neither does it lie in the future. If it is at all achievable, it must remain constantly present, and precisely during times when it is not yet achieved. In the case of war, the function of the goal is obviously to constrain force;” *Was ist Politik?*, S. 132; *The Promise of Politics*, p. 198. All the fragments in this book which were written between 1956 and 1959, and later became part of a book on revolution and a book on violence, can be read as an arrangement of different political texts which Arendt considers, which she either accepts or rebuffs. The problem is that the names of the authors of these texts are hidden from us: Bodin, Schmitt, Heidegger (Arendt manipulates a couple of his seminars - one of them recently published), Jünger (mentioned once), Simone Weil...

¹¹ Hannah Arendt is surely responsible for the great mystery in connection with her knowledge of Benjamin’s text from 1921 “Zur Kritik der Gewalt”. In the texts published up to now she does not mention him or leave readers in any doubt that she knows him. However responsibility also lies with different keepers (policeman) of the archives, but also on some readers who force connections between the texts and who construct detective fables. Beatrice Hanssen (*Critique of Violence*, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 16) speaks about Benjamin’s text as being “conspicuously absent” from the book *On Violence*, because it does not accept the later reception of Benjamin’s text

produces new contexts. I will repeat and emphasize - texts, not events or quasi-pseudo events. Texts as events produce contexts and events, and new texts. I will not complicate things further or remain at the term "event". That would be a great undertaking. For now it is enough to remember the words of Hannah Arendt and see how she approaches and understands events in her own time. What does she do, what does she want? Why does she want to *distinguish* (*distinguer, distinguer*, as Ricœur says¹²) and make order (order among terms, order among texts)? Why is her answer to events, her responsibility for those same events, manifested with the creation of distinctions and differences?

I will first count the "events": Arendt usually thinks of all important events (the First World War, the Russian Revolution, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, the bombing of German cities) in the context of Lenin's prediction for the 20th century as the century of violence.¹³ The events (is a certain amount of violence a precondition for an event to even be an event?) are Decolonization, the crisis on the Middle East, student riots, the Cold War and the threat of a Third World War, the first terrorist attacks, the crisis in Cuba, assassinations in America, the war in Vietnam etc. At the end (for me the end is the last version of Arendt's text on violence and the year when it was finished, 1969¹⁴) president Lyndon B. Johnson formed the "National Advisory Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence" (1968-69). The Word "prevention", mentioned above, represents a government's and state's response to violence, which is in one way or another produced by that same state. More than thirty years later, after a similar chain of events and extreme violence, an identical answer by the same state and the same words can be found in "The

which in fact begins with Derrida (Markuse deserves the credit for the reprinting of "Zur Kritik der Gewalt" in 1965). On the other hand it is completely incomprehensible that some important documents about the relationship between Benjamin and Arendt were published only a few months ago (*Arendt und Benjamin: Texte, Briefe, Dokumente*, Hrs. Schöttker, Detlev/ Wizisla, Erdmut Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2006. Some of the letters have already been published in the journal *Text und Kritik* No. 166-167 (2005), S. 58-66.). The secret of Arendt's "reception" of Benjamin's text is not solved in this book. Furthermore, it is inconceivable that in Arendt's lectures and notes which are found in her archive and were published as *Was ist Politik? Fragmente aus dem Nachlass*, Ursula Ludz could find no mention of the name Carl Schmitt (his name is mentioned in a couple of fragments on just war in her *Journal* from 1952). Arendt's interpretation of the term *Nomos* in Greek texts is in direct connection with her reading of Schmitt's book *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum* (Cf. *Was ist Politik?*, S. 102-123; *The Promise of Politics*, pp. 172-190). The only book which deals with the relationship between Schmitt and Arendt is Enrique Serranos Gómez book, *Consenso y conflicto: Schmitt y Arendt: la definición de lo político*, Colombia, Universidad de Antioquia, Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 2002.

¹² P. Ricœur, "Pouvoir et Violence", *Ontologie et politique*, Paris, Tierce, 1989, p. 141.

¹³ This prediction also opens the book *On Revolution*, p. 11 and the book *On Violence*, p. 3.

¹⁴ The first abridged version of the book *On Violence* was published as "Reflections on Violence" in the *Journal of International Affairs*, winter 1969, pp. 1-35. An identical version was immediately reprinted in the *New York Review of Books*, February 27, 1969, pp. 19-31. From here on I will cite this last version.

National Security Strategy of the United States of America” (another president signed it twice, September 2002 and March 2006).¹⁵

The names of the presidents and these documents are completely accidental and we should not strongly exaggerate the authenticity of the hand that signs one document or institutionalizes a new government commission. That could be (and was) Hannah Arendt’s first answer to the violence which was occurring: the state is “unproductive” and a parasite (“parasitical phenomenon” /*parasitäre Erscheinung*/).¹⁶ “The state” first of all expresses (and strengthens) certain words which can paradoxically very often come from the left. The concept of prevention (preemption is a variation of this word) is one of the most sophisticated ways by which the most aggressive violence can be justified or by which the most horrible means can be used to prevent social riots. All these years, it was completely unnecessary to search through Kant’s lectures and works looking for this institution so we could find a series of legal political documents (Kant-Achenwal-Wolff-Thomasius-Pufendorf-Grotius-Gentili-Legnano-Ulpianus etc.) which would justify preventive war - a defensive war which is actually an offensive war par excellence. It would have been enough to listen to the just and pacifists because they concern themselves with what Arendt will immediately stop doing – legitimizing violence as a political act.

Any rational person would agree that violence is not legitimate unless the consequences of such action are to eliminate a still greater evil. Now there are people of course who go much further and say that one must oppose violence in general, quite apart from any possible consequences. I think that such a person is asserting one of two things. Either he's saying that the resort to violence is illegitimate even if the consequences are to eliminate a greater evil; or he's saying that under no conceivable circumstances will the consequences ever be such as to eliminate a greater evil. The second of these is a factual assumption and it's almost certainly false. One can easily imagine and find circumstances

¹⁵ It is really possible to compare, in one completely different way, events from thirty years ago and new events occurring after the collapse of the Soviet Empire (the crisis of state sovereignty, wars and humanitarian interventions, “catastrophic non-interventions, Israeli wars and Palestinian terror, the 9/11 attacks and several wars in connection with the endless “war on terror”). Just as the reconstruction of the old middle-aged doctrine of just war (Michael Walzer’s Just War Theory) represented a “theoretical solution” for the crisis in the seventies, Davor Rodin today suggests new *Ethics of War* and the emergence of “asymmetric war”. Cf. “The Ethics of War: State of the Art”, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2006, pp. 241-246. Hannah Arendt’s target in 1952 was Carl Schmitt, but she instead hit Walzer and Rodin: “In fact, there cannot be a just war /*gerechten Krieg*/, because that would mean that people are capable of comparing sorrow which comes from war with its content /*ob das Leid des Krieges mit seinem Inhalt kommensurabel ist*/. But that is impossible. (...) Justice can only exist within law. However each war occurs outside law, including a defensive war, in which I am forced to cross the edges, borders, of law /*auch ein Verteidigungskrieg, in dem ich eben gezwungen bin, den Rahmen – den Zaun des Gesetzes zu überschreiten*/. H. Arendt, *Denktagebuch, 1950-1973*, S. 243.

¹⁶ *Was ist Politik?*, S. 76; *The Promise of Politics*, p. 149.

in which violence does eliminate a greater evil (...) So I can't accept a general and absolute opposition to violence, only that resort to violence is illegitimate unless the consequences are to eliminate a greater evil.¹⁷

Today, it is truly possible to reconstruct all these transformations in argumentation which contribute to violence and violent actions, into true crimes and murders which are carried out in the name of the state, but also against state institutions. It seems that the state (or government or cabinet or secret service of a state) is quite frequently only an agent of the passage (“*passage à l’acte*”) of these different “intellectual” voices (discourses¹⁸) into real acts of violence. The uniqueness of this agent consists of the “power” to stay anonymous and apart from any responsibility.

What does Arendt’s vision (“too absolutistic vision” (Chomsky)¹⁹) consist of then and how can violence be stopped?

Arendt begins with texts. Responsibility (or a lack of responsibility and manufacturing violence) is, before anywhere else, found in texts. When she reads Sartre or Fanon (“reading these irresponsible grandiose statements”²⁰), when she recognizes the power of hypocrisy and muddling of arguments, when she recognizes “the power of indifference” in the use of words and concepts in contemporary and older texts, she simultaneously believes in the living text, in the power of texts to recognize and stop *die Stummheit der Gewalt*. The greatest evil and uniqueness of violence is muteness, an aphasia of violence which begins, writes Arendt in April of 1953, when one speaks to no one, does not talk, but rather one speaks “about” (*über*)... logical thought always leads to violence /*Logisches Denken führt daher immer in Gewalt*/, logic leads to violence

¹⁷ This is a part of Noam Chomsky’s intervention in the debate on the legitimacy of violence in the Theatre of Ideas in New York, December 15, 1967 (In the book *On Violence*, Arendt mentions this discussion, which she was herself a part of, on page 79). In 1971 Alexander Klein published an integrated text in the book *Dissent, Power, and Confrontation*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1971, pp. 95-133. Chomsky’s quote is found on page 107. It seems that after this debate Hannah Arendt definitely began writing her text on violence and gave up on the idea that violence can have legitimacy. It is interesting that after nearly 30 years E. Balibar, in the text “Violence: idéalité et cruauté” which was read at the Collège de France in Paris and at Cornell University in the winter 1995, repeats Chomsky’s arguments and speaks of a legitimate violence, about “une contre violence préventive”.

¹⁸ The fascination with violence and power earlier manifested itself in the form of a great hurry of the philosopher to help and lead rebellious and terrorist actions against the state (Cf. Interview with Sartre concerning his discussions with Andreas Baader, December 1974, *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 632, 2005). Today, when the governments of certain states are asking for the help of their residents by denouncing suspicious citizens, philosophers feel called on to, as quickly as possible, legitimize wars in the name of security, to justify state violence and forced preventive measures of “protection” and observing of citizens.

¹⁹ *Dissent, Power, and Confrontation*, p. 119.

²⁰ *On Violence*, p. 20; “Reflections on Violence”, p. 21.

because logic talks to no one and speaks about nothing /*Logik spricht niemand an und redet über nichts*/. Logic prepares violence /*So bereitet sie die Gewalt vor*/.²¹ Two years earlier in a letter to Jaspers from March 4th, 1951, Arendt writes that philosophy certainly has a part in the responsibility for all that has occurred in this century. “Its responsibility lies in that western philosophy has never had a clear concept of the political /*dass diese abendländische Philosophie nie einen reinen Begriff des Politischen gehabt hat.../...*”²² In the description of her project “Introductions into Politics” which she sends to the Rockefeller Foundation in December 1959, she suggests “a critical re-examination of the chief traditional concept and conceptual frameworks of political thinking (...) By criticism, I do not mean 'debunking'. I shall try to find out where these concepts came from before they became like worn-out coins and abstract generalizations.”²³ There exists another significant addition, which Arendt needs in order to further increase the self-responsibility of the philosopher who is argumentative, who is a “rational person,” who uses abstract generalizations and whose sentences are always logically correct.

(...) we are all beneficiaries of past violence in this country. I think we all can immediately agree on one point: namely, that a great crime was committed by this country and that we are now and have been paying the price for this crime. And it is interesting to see how very long it takes a country to pay back such really fundamental crimes. Many little crimes history forgets, but such a fundamental crime as chattel slavery has, as we know now, enormous, long-lasting consequences. But to say that we are the beneficiaries of this past violence is an interpretation which I could challenge on many grounds.²⁴

Violence has already been carried out, before any new violence and before any possible violence, before any new act which makes it legitimate. We should immediately forget the country Arendt speaks of (this could be absolutely any country) and the crime which is found in the foundations and roots of this country. Let us leave aside, for now, that which is perhaps most important and which will always, in this way or that, decide about the future of violence. Let us leave aside that which is always impossible to leave aside. Here I refer to the grand and dangerous words used by Arendt in this debate from 1967: “paying,” “price,” “history which forgets,” “benefits,” “fundamental and little crimes.” Besides, with these words violence has always, up to now,

²¹ *Denktagebuch, 1950-1973*, April 1953, S. 345.

²² The quote is found in “Kommentar der Herausgeberin” (Ursula Ludz), *Was ist Politik?*, S. 144.

²³ “Projektbeschreibung”, *ibid*, S. 200.

²⁴ *Dissent, Power, and Confrontation*, p. 115.

replenished and continued. I am interested - this is why I began with all those questions concerning Kant and Arendt, this is why the title of this text contains two words which Arendt never puts next to each other (Violence and Right) - I ask myself, where is this “past violence,” of which Arendt speaks of, found, and how is it recognized? Is it hidden, institutionalized and “forgotten” within the power of one country?²⁵

With this question Hannah Arendt’s intentions should be quite clear in respect to the violence which for Arendt represents the greatest challenge of the 20th century. The responsibility of Hannah Arendt (and not only her) in front of violence consists of: (1) the responsibility of the philosopher (logician) Hannah Arendt who as such creates violence, (2) the culpability of citizen H. Arendt who is the beneficiary of this same violence which she as a philosopher prepared (keep in mind, this citizen is in fact a resting soldier; *beneficium* means a privileged soldier) and (3) the penitence of the critic (and not a simple debunker) H. Arendt, whose task is the reconstruction of power and the differentiation of violence from power- violence would in this way be transformed into perhaps the “power of nonviolence”²⁶. I repeat, this task (3), of which she breathlessly writes in her project for the Rockefeller Foundation, which she prepared several years later, is envisioned to begin with great texts of western thought and to continue in the archives.

Today, we must be interested in the Foundation’s decision not to finance this project of reconstructing the concept of the political because the consequences of this decision are quite different. First, Arendt delayed a task which is today as active as it was fifty years ago. It is precisely the urgent need for such a book today which leaves us hoping as well as saddened,

²⁵ In the book *On Revolution*, when Arendt writes about Machiavelli she quickly explains “the task of foundation” (the setting of a new beginning), which as such seemed to demand violence and crime (Romulus slew Remus, Cain slew Abel) (pp. 38-39). It is quite difficult to establish the status of this “past violence,” especially when one knows that Arendt paid no attention to violence which funds a sort of order (right, or community), nor to the right to carry out violence, that is; legal violence. I don’t think that there is any real possibility for any sort of “left over” violence which is not swallowed and digested by a power. A similar difficulty appears in Habermas forced introduction of Johan Galtung’s term “Strukturelle Gewalt” (from 1971), which is impossible to incorporate into Hannah Arendt’s “theory of difference.” “Hannah Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power“, *Social Research* 44/1 (1977), pp. 3-24 (“Hannah Arendts Begriff der Macht” *Merkur* (1976), No. 341, S. 946- 961.

²⁶ The “power of nonviolence” refers to Gandhi and it is a concept in which Arendt believes in for a very long time. In November 1952 she writes that Gandhi is a true example of a situation in which power managed to defeat violence *Denktagebuch, 1950-1973*, S. 273. In a debate in TFI 1967 she speaks of Mr. Gandhi’s “enormous power of non-violence”: “There’s no doubt that non-violence can be defeated, as every power can be defeated, by violence. But if the republic were to use violence in order to break non-violent power, it would somehow be breaking the very foundations on which it rests. It would be exactly in the situation in which, for instance, the English were confronted with non-violence by Mr. Gandhi – an enormously powerful movement... *Dissent, Power, and Confrontation*, p. 124. However, in the final text on violence from 1969 Gandhi’s role is made completely relative and all importance is removed from it. Cf. *On Violence*, p. 53.

because were such a book written when it was supposed to be, perhaps we would have seen a reduction of violence in the second half of the last century. Furthermore, fragments concerning the politics of Hannah Arendt remain discarded and un-systematized, haphazardly compiled and published in the forms of small books and lectures. Finally, it has been impossible to reconstruct her first sketches of projects, her unordered notes, because everything was late and because the “politics of archives” are always obscure */der Dunkelheit der Archive*²⁷ and fundamentally unacceptable.

When I, for example, questioned Arendt’s reading of Kant it seemed to me that the importance of Kant for her engagement was greater then it now seems. I thought, at the same time, that I could easily show you that there was not only deconstruction (mine or Hannah Arendt’s²⁸) in the source of my questions, nor the genetics of the text, nor the archeology of texts and connections between texts, nor the usual scholarly analysis which every philosopher (and of course, not only the philosopher) applies during the reading of a text: namely, while we read- we recognize texts we have already read within the work we are reading, and we put aside what looks to us new and unfamiliar.

With my question concerning the traces of Kant in Hannah Arendt (this could also be Schmitt, Heidegger or Hegel for example) I wish to (1) anticipate a great technological change which will strengthen the importance of the (*hyper*) text, ease the finding of texts within other texts and reevaluate the “right” of the reader or author to not understand, to reduce or fantasize, and in accordance with that, (2) I wish to insist on the instability and “violence” of the word “position” - Hannah Arendt’s “position” for example (or Arendt’s “understanding” of violence, Arendt’s “comprehension” of violence, or the impossible task found in the title, “Violence and Right in Hannah Arendt”).

Arendt hesitates in her texts and discussion on violence, and this is the first condition for discontinuing violence. Hesitation is her resistance. Hesitation is perhaps that which enables thinking. With Arendt there is no solution to the “problem” of violence, there exists no definite end to, or allowance of, certain forms of violence, just as there is no final text. There exists a last

²⁷ “The obscurity of archives”. I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, § 61, *Practical Philosophy*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 488.

²⁸ To truly undertake a “critical re-examination of the chief traditional concept and conceptual frameworks of political thinking” the help of different experts is necessary. In the book *On Violence* (p. 43) Arendt cites Alexander Passerin d’Entrèves: “The only competent guides in the jungle of so many different meanings are the linguists and the historians. It is to them that we must turn for help.”

text- I have said that for me this is the version from 1969 - but this is certainly not the “final” text nor an imaginary text she attempted to write. Because of this it seems that the genesis (generation, but corruption as well) of an idea, for example the figure of “nonviolence,” is more important than what Arendt writes about Gandhi’s engagement in her final work. In order to experiment with this genetic strategy in relation to her “position” on violence, keeping in mind the two great reserves which I have been trying to explain this whole time (“I don’t have “all” her manuscripts “in front of me”); and the other misgiving, my text is a sketch not the last or final text), I attempted to find her originality by examining those forms of violence (or those thoughts on violence) which she negates. Similarly I was interested, as in the case of Gandhi, to search for the form of violence which she approves of - and then suddenly leaves. Therefore, just as in the case of violence “and” right, or the theory of “just war,” Hannah Arendt negates the validity of any sort of “militant democracy” /*Streitbare Demokratie*/.²⁹ There is no sufficient reason for a *war to make the world safe for democracy*³⁰, and justification for war against war or the last war against war, or violence against violence (*vim vi repellere licet*) is plausible³¹.

The notion of a “last war,” also found in the title of this text, is mentioned in several geopolitical texts by Franz Rosenzweig, who wrote them during the First World War on the Southern Front, in Macedonia and Serbia. The “last war” is just another war which is necessary for every possible war to be prevented. Despite the fact that I am modifying the meaning of Rosenzweig’s concept, in question is a war which bases its justification on it being the last war, therefore preventing any succeeding or possible war. The problem is, of course, that the last war can last forever (the “war against terrorism,” like the war against the *Devil*, as you know has no border in time). The problem is that such a war can be repeated and that it is usually the last war several times. Hannah Arendt leaves no room for the possibility of one such war or for one such last and extreme use of violence³². But if we free the concept of “last war” of the extreme word “war,” and put in its place “violence,” if we try to, at any cost, defend the imaginary literal word “last”

²⁹ This is Karl Löwenstein term. Cf. “Militant Democracy and Fundamental Rights”, *The American Political Science Review*, 1937, p. 417 and p. 638.

³⁰ *Denktagebuch, 1950-1973*, S. 217.

³¹ *Dissent, Power, and Confrontation*, p. 100.

³² The readiness for the use of extreme violence is explained well in the following fragment from December 1967: “The atom bomb: We invented it because we dealt with the devil and were afraid the devil would know how to make it. We used it against an ordinary enemy. We wished to keep it when there were enemies but no devils – and promptly, to justify this, we invented a Devil. The danger now – we become the devil. The model of all violence.” *Denktagebuch*, S. 672-673.

(“last violence”), then it would be possible to speak of Marx and the violence of a revolution in the way Hannah Arendt understands it. This is not a permanent revolution, but rather, the last, successful and all encompassing revolution. This is not a “last war” but a last war of liberation .

Because revolution wants not to exchange rulers, not to exchange hunters, but to abolish hunters and persecutors and oppression altogether.³³

I think that this could be the model, the only model, of violence which is justifiable for Arendt and which satisfies her criteria for justification. More precisely, revolution in her interpretation and modification of Marx, revolution as the last violence which puts an end to any future violence, is the model by which she measures the justification of any particular violence. In comparison to this violence which ends all violence and injustice, which is in reality above any justification, every other violence is unjustified for Arendt; she finds fault in every other form of violence. I think that we are missing more precise criteria and the system of rules which Arendt uses to distance and differentiate her hypothetical (revolutionary) violence and specific brute force (or brute violence) which we find in history.

All that I wish to do, at the end of this presentation, is to mention several opening conditions of one possible preamble to a text concerning violence which should bring us closer to Hannah Arendt’s unfulfilled project. It seems to me that she managed to reveal the primary conditions of one system which revises the concept of violence and which promises an end to violence:

1. Freedom and Life. “It is only possible to lead wars for freedom, only freedom has something to do with violence.”³⁴ In the following years, in her writings on politics, Arendt speaks of the protection of life and freedom through violence, but also of the threat of violence on freedom and life (I remind you that Benjamin’s “divine violence” protects and gives life). The entwining of the words “life”, “freedom” and “society’s life” is very difficult to understand. Two sentences from this time are especially difficult. In the first, Arendt speaks of a question which she doesn’t wish to analyze at the time:

For now let us set aside the question whether this decrease in violence in the life of society /*des Gewalttätigen im Leben der Gessellschaft*/ is in reality to be equated with a

³³ *Dissent, Power, and Confrontation*, p. 100.

³⁴ *Es kann nur Kriege für die Freiheit hat irgendetwas mit Gewalt zu tun* (1952). H.Arendt, *Denktagebuch, 1950-1973*, S. 243.

gain in human freedom.³⁵

The second sentence is also never repeated or thought:

The violence is sometimes necessary for the defence of politics and those provisions for sustaining life */Lebensversorgung/* that must first be secured before political freedom is possible.³⁶

2. Necessity. Arendt introduces this concept into her political fragments as analogous to the concept of violence, and later as contrary to freedom. Necessity rules the life of society, but, in the same way, life is under the coercion of necessity.³⁷ Despite the fact that Arendt doesn't mention this concept in her writings on violence, in the book *On Revolution* necessity is the first justification for war (or the first sign that a war is just), or, as Arendt says, still not seeing a difference between "justify" and "legitimate", "necessities are legitimate motives to invoke a decision by arms."³⁸

3. Bio-politics. Necessity introduces an organic coercion (life and the "organic body" pressures the subject and he leans towards the emancipation from that which is necessary for him³⁹) and the power of a biological moment into political theory. For Arendt, one of the first sources and justifications of violence is the appearance of biological metaphors and analogies in the thoughts of a community.

Nothing, in my opinion, could be theoretically more dangerous than the tradition of organic thought in political matters by which power and violence are interpreted in biological terms. (...) The organic metaphors with which our entire present discussion of these matters, especially of the riots, is permeated – the notion of "sick society", of which riots are symptoms, as fever is a symptom of disease – can only promote violence in the end.⁴⁰

4. Justification and Legitimacy. In the book *On Revolution* one very important sentence represents the seed of a future difference which Arendt also never systematically "justified."

³⁵ *Was ist Politik?*, S. 74; *The Promise of Politics*, p. 148.

³⁶ *Ibid*, S. 77; p. 151.

³⁷ *Ibid*, S. 74-75; pp. 148-149.

³⁸ *On Revolution*, pp. 12-13, 64, 113.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 114.

⁴⁰ *On Violence*, p. 75.

A theory of war or a theory of revolution, therefore, can only deal with the justification of violence because this justification constitutes its political limitation; if, instead, it arrives at a glorification or justification of violence as such, it is no longer political but antipolitical.⁴¹

Clearly provoked by the December 15th, 1967 debate, “The Legitimacy of Violence...,” Arendt, in order to once more affirm her “theory of difference,” for the first time explicitly speaks of the “difference” between justification /*die Rechtfertigung*/ and legitimacy /*die Legitimierung*/ in her Journals in January 1968 (the fragment is called “Theses on Violence”)

Violence is never legitimate, but it can be justified. The original justification of violence is power (law as institution of power). Violence is always instrumental, power is essential.⁴²

The final attempt to uncover this difference with the help of time (past-future) terminates with the well known stance that in self-defence no one questions the use of violence, because danger is present, and “the end justifying the means is immediate”.⁴³

At the end we must add, to all the above mentioned preconditions for new thoughts on politics and violence, three great themes about which Arendt was the only one to write in the last century: hypocrisy, the secret service and political manipulation. But, nevertheless, “violence is no help against manipulation”.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *On Revolution*, p. 19.

⁴² *Denktagebuch, 1950-1973*, S. 676.

⁴³ *On Violence*, pp. 51-52. This fragment was modified in the first versions of this text. “Reflections on Violence”, p. 26.

⁴⁴ *Denktagebuch, 1950-1973*, S. 676.