This is the accepted manuscript version of the following article:

Jussi Backman, "Modernity in Antiquity: Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy in Heidegger and Arendt," *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy* 24:2 (2020): 5–29, available in final form at https://doi.org/10.5840/symposium202024210.

Modernity in Antiquity: Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy in Heidegger and Arendt

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This article looks at the role of Hellenistic thought in the historical narratives of Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt. To a certain extent, both see—with G. W. F. Hegel, J. G. Droysen, and Eduard Zeller—Hellenistic and Roman philosophy as a "modernity in antiquity," but with important differences. Heidegger is generally dismissive of Hellenistic thought and comes to see it as a decisive historical turning point at which a protomodern element of subjective willing and domination is injected into the classical heritage of Plato and Aristotle. Arendt, likewise, credits Stoic philosophy with the discovery of the will as an active faculty constituting a realm of subjective freedom and autonomy. While she considers Hellenistic philosophy as essentially apolitical and world-alienated—in contrast to the inherently political and practical Roman culture—it nonetheless holds for her an important but unexploited ethical and political potential.

L'article examine le rôle de la pensée hellénistique dans les récits historiques de Martin Heidegger et Hannah Arendt. Dans une certaine mesure, tous les deux voient, avec G. W. F. Hegel, J. G. Droysen et Eduard Zeller, la philosophie hellénistique et romaine comme une « modernité dans l'antiquité », mais avec des différences importantes. Généralement, Heidegger dédaigne la philosophie hellénistique et finit par la considérer comme un tournant historique décisif qui introduit un élément protomoderne de volonté et de domination subjective dans l'héritage de Platon et Aristote. De même, Arendt attribue à la

philosophie stoïque la découverte de la volonté en tant que faculté active constituant un domaine de liberté et d'autonomie subjectives. Même si elle considère la philosophie hellénistique comme fondamentalement apolitique et aliénée du monde—à l'inverse du caractère fondamentalement politique et pratique de la culture romaine—cette pensée détient néanmoins pour elle un potentiel éthico-politique important et sous-exploité.

1. The Invention of Hellenism as Protomodernity: Droysen, Hegel, Zeller

In a preface to the 1843 edition of his *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, Johann Gustav Droysen notes that the period between the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE and the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE—a political and cultural epoch for which he introduces the term "Hellenism"—was generally regarded as "a great gap, as a dead spot in the history of humanity, as a loathsome deposit of all kinds of degeneracy, putrefaction, lifelessness."[1] In the eyes of the classicists of Droysen's day, the three centuries separating the classical era of the Greek *polis* from the classical era of Latin literature were, at best, an intermediary age of imitation, conservation, and dissemination of classical culture. In contrast to this notion of Hellenism as a "medieval period of antiquity," Droysen portrays it as a "vital link in the chain of human development"—as the "*modern age of antiquity*" (*moderne Zeit des Altertums*), an age of disenchantment and loss of cultural innocence, but also one of great political and intellectual progress.[2]

I thank the guest editors Frederik Bakker, Antonio Cimino, and Elena Nicoli for the opportunity to contribute, and Ville Suuronen and the anonymous referees for wonderfully helpful comments. Financial support was provided by my Academy of Finland research project, *Creation, Genius, Innovation: Towards a Conceptual Genealogy of Western Creativity* (2018–23; decision number 317276).

[1] Johann Gustav Droysen, "Vorwort zur Geschichte des Hellenismus II" [1843], in *Kleine Schriften zur alten Geschichte, Vol. 1* (Leipzig: Veit & Co., 1893), 300. Cf. Jürgen Busche, "Hellenismus," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, Vol. 3,* (ed.) J. Ritter (Basle: Schwabe & Co., 1974), 1050–53.

[2] Droysen, "Vorwort," 299–300, 307–308, 313.

The perception of Hellenism as an intermediate period of stagnation has also long applied to its philosophy.[3] The Neoplatonism of the late imperial age bolstered the canonic supremacy of Plato and Aristotle. Of the main Hellenistic schools of thought, Epicureanism, with its materialist ontology and hedonistic ethics, was outright rejected by pagan and Christian Neoplatonism. The philosophical ideals of the ancient skeptics were equally incompatible with the emerging alliance between philosophy and theology, in the service of which individual skeptical arguments found at most an instrumental role.[4] Stoic ethics and ontology were more favourably received by Christian thinkers, but mainly because Stoic terms such as *logos* and *pneuma* had developed into a kind of intellectual *lingua franca* of the Roman world.[5] By contrast, Renaissance humanists, for whom the works of Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca, and Sextus Empiricus again became standard reading, espoused a renewed lively interest in all aspects of Hellenistic thought, and the late medieval and early modern crisis of Aristotelianism and rational theology contributed to a revival and reappropriation of skepticism in the sixteenth century.[6] Immanuel Kant, whose "Copernican Revolution" in many ways made modern skepticism redundant as a living philosophical movement, still shows a lively engagement with Hellenistic ethics.[7]

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[3] For a concise overview of the reception of Hellenistic philosophy in the later tradition, see A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 232–48.

[4] See Charles Bolyard, "Medieval Skepticism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2017 Edition)*, (ed.) E. N. Zalta, [https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/skepticism-medieval/], accessed June 25, 2019.

[5] See Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, Vol. 2: Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

[6] See J. Miller and B. Inwood, eds., *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17–43.

[7] See Daniel Doyle and José M. Torralba, "Kant and Stoic Ethics," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Stoic Tradition*, (ed.) J. Sellars (London: Routledge, 2016), 270–83.

It was G. W. F. Hegel, however, who, in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, cemented the notion that Stoicism, Epicureanism, and skepticism constitute a separate and independent episode in ancient thought in which the individual "unhappy consciousness" seeks intellectual release from the alienating and oppressive external world of universal Roman imperialism.[8] In Hellenistic philosophy, the initial harmony of consciousness with the world, its "being at home" characteristic of earlier Greek philosophy,[9] is ruptured; "wisdom" (*sophia*) no longer means insight into the ideal structures of the world but becomes synonymous with the harmony of the individual with herself and her autonomy from the vicissitudes of the external world. Thus, Hegel, too, sees philosophical Hellenism as a kind of "modernity of antiquity"—as a dialectical move towards the self-reflective and autonomous modern subjectivity. Hegel's view was echoed by Eduard Zeller in his extensive and highly influential history of Greek philosophy (1844–52), which portrays Hellenistic thought as a "withdrawal of the human being onto herself, her internal disposition, her own willing and thinking, the deepening of self-consciousness," due to the loss of political freedom and amounting to "a restriction and isolation, and the loss of lively interest in the external world."[10] It is the Hegelian-Zellerian reading that has, above all, shaped our contemporary understanding of Greek philosophy from Aristotle to Plotinus.[11]

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[8] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke, Vol. 19: Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, Vol. 2* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), 401–403, tr. by E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson as *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. 2: Plato and the Platonists* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 371–73.

[9] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke, Vol. 18: Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, Vol. 1*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), 171–79, tr. by E. S. Haldane as *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. 1: Greek Philosophy to Plato* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 149–55.

[10] Eduard Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung, Vol. 3.1: Die nacharistotelische Philosophie* [1852], 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Fues, 1865), 18–19, tr. by O. J. Reichel as *The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 25; trans. mod.

[11] For Heidegger's remarks on Hegel's and Zeller's renderings of Greek philosophy, see Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 22: Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* [1926], (ed.) F.-K. Blust (Frankfurt: Klostermann,

In what follows, I will not attempt to evaluate the historical adequacy of this reading, but will rather study some of its repercussions within Continental thought. I will first show that the role allotted to Hellenistic philosophy in what is perhaps the most philosophically ambitious narrative of the history of philosophy since Hegel—that of Heidegger—is thoroughly informed and shaped by the Hegelian approach. Even though some of the founding concepts of phenomenology were borrowed from Hellenistic thought (notably, Husserl's concept of *epochē*[12]), Heidegger's philosophical background in scholasticism and in the tradition of Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg and Franz Brentano, whose doctoral dissertation *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle* (1862) he claims to have read while in grammar school,[13] gave his historical orientation a strongly Aristotelian focus. From his very earliest lecture courses, Heidegger sees the post-Aristotelian neglect of the question concerning being *qua* being as an immediate decline and deterioration. While he showed some interest in Augustine and Neoplatonism,[14] the centuries following Aristotle's death appear to have remained for him a kind of philosophical lacuna. Moreover, his engagement with Nietzsche in the 1930s leads him to regard the "Romanization" of Greek philosophy as a profound transformation that inserts a

1993), 22, tr. by R. Rojcewicz as *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 18. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

[12] On the Heideggerian use of the term *epochē*, see Martin Heidegger, "*Der Spruch des Anaximander*" [1946], in *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 5: Holzwege* [1935–46], (ed.) F.-W. von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977), 337–38, tr. by J. Young and K. Haynes as "Anaximander's Saying," in *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 254. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

[13] Martin Heidegger, "*Mein Weg in die Phänomenologie*" [1963], in *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 14: Zur Sache des Denkens*, (ed.) F.-W. von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2007), 93, tr. by J. Stambaugh as "My Way to Phenomenology," in *On Time and Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 74.

[14] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 60: Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens* [1920–21], (ed.) M. Jung, T. Regehly, and C. Strube (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1995), 157–299, tr. by M. Fritsch and J. Gosetti-Ferencei as *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 113–227. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

protomodern and prototechnical element of willing, domination, and manipulation into the heritage of Plato and Aristotle. To this extent, Hellenistic-Roman philosophy is, for Heidegger, as it was for Hegel and Droysen, a modernity within antiquity.

Heidegger's lectures on Plato and Aristotle in the 1920s were perhaps the most immediately influential part of his teaching activities, as is shown by the strong focus on Greek philosophy among his students, including Karl Löwith, Helene Weiss, Jacob Klein, Leo Strauss, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans Jonas, and Hannah Arendt. To be sure, none of these accepted Heidegger's readings of Greek thought uncritically and all went in some respect beyond him in terms of classical scholarship. Yet among Heidegger's philosophical heirs, only Jonas, with his studies of Gnosticism and late antiquity,[15] and Arendt came up with independent and positive evaluations of Hellenistic and Roman thought[16]—Rémi Brague mentions Arendt as a "very brilliant exception" to the generally depreciating evaluation of Roman experience in Heidegger and the entire modern philosophical tradition.[17] I will show that in Arendt's view, Roman political ideals—which never really assumed the form of a political philosophy—were based on an "antimodern" reverence for tradition and authority that, paradoxically, provided a classical model for the great modern political revolutions. On the other hand, Arendt's reading of Stoicism—of Epictetus, in particular—to a certain extent adopts Heidegger's view of Roman Hellenistic philosophy as a key prelude to the modern metaphysics of

[15] Hans Jonas, *Der Begriff der Gnosis* (Göttingen: Hubert, 1930); *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem: Ein philosophischer Beitrag zur Genesis der christlich-abendländischen Freiheitsidee* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930); *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, Vol. 1–2* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934–54); *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958).

[16] On Heidegger's most prominent Jewish pupils, see Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); see in particular 70–100, where Wolin also points to the importance of Stoicism for Löwith.

[17] Rémi Brague, *Europe, la voie romaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 44–45, tr. by S. Lester as *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2002), 30–31.

the willing subject. Unlike Heidegger, however, Arendt assigns key originality and ethico-political importance to this Stoic discovery of the autonomy of the will as an entirely independent function of thinking.[18]

[18] That Roman thought is for both Heidegger and Arendt a prelude to modernity is also suggested by Eliane Escoubas, "L'exposition du 'qui': La cité grecque chez H. Arendt et M. Heidegger," *Kairos*, vol. 2 (1991): 51–68, especially 59. For further discussions of Heidegger's and Arendt's relationship to Hellenistic and Roman thought, see Eliane Escoubas, "Heidegger, la question romaine, la question impériale: Autour du 'Tournant'," in *Heidegger: Questions ouvertes*, (ed.) M. Richir and E. Escoubas (Paris: Osiris, 1987); Barbara Cassin, "Grecs et romains: Les paradigmes de l'antiquité chez Arendt et Heidegger," in *Ontologie et politique: Hannah Arendt*, (ed.) M. Abensour et al. (Paris: Tierce, 1989), tr. by J. Barnes as "Greeks and Romans: Paradigms of the Past in Arendt and Heidegger," *Comparative Civilizations Review*, vol. 22, no. 22 (1990): 28–53; Franco Chiereghin, "Der griechische Anfang Europas und die Frage der Romanitas: Der Weg Heideggers zu einem anderen Anfang," in *Europa und die Philosophie*, (ed.) H.-H. Gander (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1993); Jacques Taminiaux, "Athens and Rome," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, (ed.) D. Villa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Franco Volpi, "Heidegger et la romanité philosophique," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2001): 287–300; Kosmas Raspitsos, *Die Latinisierung des Griechischen: Übersetzung, Verstehen und Sprache im Ausgang von Martin Heidegger und Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013); Golfo Maggini, "Europe's Double Origin: 'The Greek' and 'The Roman' in Hannah Arendt's Phenomenological Genealogy of Europe," *Phenomenology and Mind*, vol. 8 (2015): 224–37; Joy Connolly, "The Promise of the Classical Canon: Hannah Arendt and the Romans," *Classical Philology*, vol. 113, no. 1 (2018): 6–19; Andrew Benjamin, "Redressing the Metaphysics of Nudity: Notes on Seneca, Arendt, and Dignity," *Classical Philology*, vol. 113, no. 1 (2018): 39–52. For general comparative studies of Heidegger and Arendt, see Jacques Taminiaux, *La fille de Thrace et le penseur professional: Arendt et Heidegger* (Paris: Payot, 1992), tr. by M. Gendre as *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker: Arendt and Heidegger* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997); Dana R. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Page references for Cassin's article, separated by a slash, will be first to the French original, then to the English translation.

2. Heidegger and the Romanization of the Greek Beginning

In Heidegger's early work—his lecture courses and writings from 1919–32 belonging to the context of the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*—the historical narrative is heavily focused on Aristotle, to whose works a considerable part of Heidegger's efforts were dedicated. As Theodore Kisiel has shown in detail,[19] the project of fundamental ontology initially emerged from an earlier project that Heidegger, in a research plan from 1922, designated with the working title "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle."[20] For the earlier Heidegger, it is in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that the Greek approach to the question concerning the being of beings—being *qua* being, *to on hē on*—reaches its culmination. Pre-Socratic and Platonic thought are seen first and foremost as a preparation for the Aristotelian take on the question, which Heidegger seeks to reappropriate in terms of a temporal elaboration of *Dasein*'s understanding of being.

Accordingly, post-Aristotelian philosophy represents, for Heidegger, mainly an obfuscation and oblivion of Aristotle's ontological achievements. From this period, we find in Heidegger only a handful of sporadic and generally disparaging references to Hellenistic thought, which he characterizes as "essentially practical" and as subjugating science to the "service of immediate life."[21]

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[19] Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[20] Martin Heidegger, "Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation)" [1922], in *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 62: Phänomenologische Interpretationen ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik*, (ed.) G. Neumann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2005), 341–419, tr. by J. Veith as "Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation," in *The Heidegger Reader*, (ed.) G. Figal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 38–61.

[21] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 56/57: Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* [1919], 2nd ed., (ed.) B. Heimbüchel (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1999), 18, tr. by T. Sadler as *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2008), 17.

Hellenism "flattens out" classical concepts such as *logos* or *theōria*[22] and consists in an essentially "scholastic" (*schulmässig*) compilation of past work under pedagogical titles such as "logic."[23] As such, Hellenism amounts to a "decline, weakening, and deformation of scientific philosophy through world-views and religion";[24] it is an era in which the "questionable and open nature of the central

[22] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 63: Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)* [1923], (ed.) K. Bröcker-Oltmanns (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988), 21–22, tr. by J. van Buren as *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 17; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 27: Einleitung in die Philosophie* [1928–29], (ed.) O. Saame and I. Saame-Speidel (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1996), 169–70; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 40: Einführung in die Metaphysik* [1935], (ed.) P. Jaeger (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1983), 135–36, 143, tr. by G. Fried and R. Polt as *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 133–34, 143. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

[23] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 18: Die Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* [1924], (ed.) M. Michalski (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2002), 9, tr. by R. D. Metcalf and M. B. Tanzer as *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 9; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 21: Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* [1925–26], (ed.) W. Biemel (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976), 4–5, tr. by T. Sheehan as *Logic: The Question of Truth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 3–5; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 25: Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* [1927–28], 3rd ed., (ed.) I. Görland (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1995), 11, tr. by P. Emad and K. Maly as *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 8; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 26: Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* [1928], (ed.) K. Held (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1978), 4, tr. by M. Heim as *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 4; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 29/30: Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit* [1929–30], (ed.) F.-W. von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1983), 53–56, tr. by W. McNeill and N. Walker as *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 35–37; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 55: Heraklit* [1943–44], 3rd ed., (ed.) M. S. Frings (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1994), 225–28, tr. by J. G. Assaiante and S. M. Ewegen as *Heraclitus: The Inception of Occidental Thinking and Logic: Heraclitus' Doctrine of the Logos* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 171–73. *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 29/30* is hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GA 29/30. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

[24] Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 22*, 21/17.

problems left by Plato and Aristotle" is lost[25] and "living questioning dies out" (GA 29/30, 53/35). In particular, the centuries during which Aristotle's technical or "esoteric" works were mostly inaccessible until their alleged compilation by Andronicus of Rhodes in the first century BCE are to be regarded as a "decline of ancient philosophy" (*ibid.*, 56/37).[26] The few Hellenistic contributions cited by Heidegger, such as the Stoic theory of affects, are denied any real originality with regard to Aristotle.[27] While Heidegger draws on the early Christian "experience of factical life" as expressed in the Pauline epistles,[28] he blames the introduction of systematic Christian theology for the relegation of philosophy to a position of subservience to a religious "worldview" (*ibid.*, 63–65/42–43, 68–69/45).[29] The earlier Heidegger's stance on Greek philosophy after Aristotle is summed up in his 1926 course on ancient philosophy (which, in a characteristic way, only discusses the Pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle):

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[25] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 3: Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* [1929], (ed.) F.-W. von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1991), 8, tr. by R. Taft as *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 5.

[26] It should be noted that Heidegger sees in Neoplatonism, by contrast, a certain "reappropriation of the scientific [*i.e.*, Platonic-Aristotelian] epoch"; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 22*, 21/17.

[27] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 20: Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* [1925], (ed.) P. Jaeger (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1979), 393, 418–20, tr. by T. Kisiel as *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 284–85, 302–303; Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* [1927], 18th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001), 139, 199, tr. by J. Stambaugh as *Being and Time*, (tr. revised) D. J. Schmidt (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 135, 192.

[28] Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 60*, 67–156/47–111.

[29] See also Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 19: Platon: Sophistes* [1924–25], (ed.) I. Schüßler (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1992), 254–56, tr. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer as *Plato's Sophist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 175–77; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 27*, 389.

> Scientific apex of ancient philosophy: Aristotle. He did not solve all problems, but he advanced to the limits which Greek philosophy could reach, given its general approach and its problematics. He unified in a positive way the fundamental motifs of the previous philosophy; after him, a decline.[30]

In the early 1930s, this narrative is somewhat modified as Plato is designated as the founder of hierarchical "ontotheological" metaphysics and the Pre-Socratics—first and foremost, Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides—are allotted a more independent role as pre- or protometaphysical thinkers of the "first beginning" or "inception" (*Anfang*) of Western philosophical thought.[31]

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[30] Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 22*, 22/18. See also Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 23: Geschichte der Philosophie von Thomas von Aquin bis Kant* [1926–27], (ed.) H. Vetter (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2006), 3; GA 29/30, 53/35.

[31] Heidegger's concept of "ontotheology" makes its first appearance in his 1930–31 course on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*; Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 32: Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* [1930–31], 3rd ed., (ed.) I. Görland (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1997), 140–46, tr. by P. Emad and K. Maly as *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 97–101. The notion of Plato, especially of the Platonic Idea of the Good, as the foundation of Western metaphysics proper emerges in the 1931–32 course on the *Republic* and the *Theaetetus*; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 34: Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* [1931–32], 2nd ed., (ed.) H. Mörchen (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1997), 100–12, 173, 327–28, 331, tr. by T. Sadler as *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and Theaetetus* (London: Continuum, 2002), 73–81, 126, 233–34, 236. Heidegger's renewed interest in the Pre-Socratics as a "first" or "initial" beginning or "inception" (*Anfang*) of Western philosophy first becomes evident in his 1932 course on Anaximander and Parmenides; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 35: Der Anfang der abendländischen Philosophie: Auslegung des Anaximander und Parmenides* [1932], (ed.) P. Trawny (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2012), 48, 97–100, tr. by R. Rojcewicz as *The Beginning of Western Philosophy: Interpretation of Anaximander and Parmenides* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 37, 74–76.

Nonetheless, Aristotle retains his position as the "first end of the first inception," as the culmination of the development ensuing from the Pre-Socratic beginning.[32]

> The great begins great, sustains itself only through the free recurrence of greatness, and if it is great, also comes to an end in greatness. So it is with the philosophy of the Greeks. It came to an end in greatness with Aristotle.[33]

In the mid-1930s, Heidegger begins to associate the Hellenistic decline of Greek philosophy with the Romanization and Latinization of Greek thought. The process of translation into Latin which became so formative for Christian, medieval, and ultimately modern philosophy, Heidegger emphasizes here, was nothing "arbitrary and innocuous" but rather "the first stage in the cordoning off and alienation of the originary essence of Greek philosophy."[34] "R*oman thinking takes over the Greek words without the corresponding and equiprimordial experience of what they say, without the Greek word*."[35] It is

[32] On Aristotle as the "first end of the first inception," see Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 65: Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* [1936–38], (ed.) F.-W. von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989), 211, tr. by R. Rojcewicz and D. Vallega-Neu as *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 165; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 68: Hegel* [1938–42], (ed.) I. Schüßler (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1993), 50, tr. by J. Arel and N. Feuerhahn as *Hegel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 40. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

[33] Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 40*, 18/17. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 45: Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte "Probleme" der "Logik"* [1937–38], (ed.) F.-W. von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1984), 220–21, tr. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer as *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 184–85. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

[34] Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 40*, 16/14. Cf. *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 45*, 68–69/62, 100/89, 105/93.

[35] Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" ("The Origin of the Work of Art") [1935–36], in *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 5*, 8/6.

here, in the Roman and Christian reappropriation of the Greek legacy, that the great transformation of what Heidegger sees as the essence of Greek thought—namely, the determination of the human being in terms of being—into the modern determination of being in terms of self-conscious subjectivity sets in motion. This process of metaphysical modernization has thus been underway "not only since modernity but since late antiquity and since the rise of Christianity."[36] As Heidegger plainly puts it in his 1938–40 monograph *The History of Beyng* (*Die Geschichte des Seyns*),

> The first metaphysical, yet still concealed beginning [*Beginn*] of modern *subjectivity* is already found in the Christian, Augustinian interpretation of the ideas; indeed earlier still in the Hellenistic, Roman "Stoic" distortion of the entire truth of Greek "being" [*Seins*].[37]

Accordingly, the roots of the humanism—that is, anthropocentrism—of modern metaphysics go back to the Roman Republic, to the Ciceronian ideal of civilized *humanitas* whose roots, in turn, lie in Hellenistic notions of education, *paideia*. Renaissance humanism is thus first and foremost a *renascentia romanitatis*, a rebirth of Romanity.[38]

The Christian doctrine of divine creation and the accompanying notion of reality as a realm of rational planning and projection is a precondition for the modern metaphysics of subjectivity and for

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[36] Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 40*, 146/146.

[37] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 69: Die Geschichte des Seyns* [1938–40], (ed.) P. Trawny (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1998), 159, tr. by J. Powell and W. McNeill as *The History of Beyng* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 137.

[38] Martin Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'" [1946], in *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 9: Wegmarken* [1919–61], (ed.) F.-W. von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976), 320, tr. by F. A. Capuzzi as "Letter on Humanism," in *Pathmarks*, (ed.) W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 244. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

the mathematization of nature that initializes the modern era.[39] More generally speaking, as Heidegger explains in his 1941 essay "Metaphysics as the History of Being," it is the alliance of "the politically imperial element of Romanness [*Römertums*], the Christian element of the Roman church, and the Romanic element [*das Romanische*]" that founds modernity by becoming "the origin of that fundamental structure of the modernly [*neuzeitlich*] experienced reality called *cultura* ('culture')."[40] For Heidegger, the Latin translations of Greek concepts incorporate un-Greek, Roman, and "imperial" connotations of an actively produced and manipulated reality that signal the metaphysical emergence of the Christian divine creator as the primal cause of all things and, later, of the modern self-conscious human subject that relates all things to herself as objects and actively "cultivates" the human cultural world. As a result of this implicit metaphysical Romanization,

> all Western history since is in a manifold sense Roman, and never again Greek. Every subsequent reawakening of Greek antiquity is a Roman renovation of a Greece already reinterpreted in a Roman way. The Germanic character of the medieval period, too, is Roman in its metaphysical essence, because it is Christian. (GA 6.2, 413/13; trans. mod.)

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[39] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 41: Die Frage nach dem Ding: Zu Kants Lehre von den transzendentalen Grundsätzen* [1935–36], (ed.) P. Jaeger (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1984), 109–12, tr. by W. B. Barton, Jr. and V. Deutsch as *What Is a Thing?* (South Bend, IN: Gateway Editions, 1967), 109–11. Cf. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 65*, 132/104.

[40] Martin Heidegger, "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins" [1941], in *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 6.2: Nietzsche, Vol. 2* [1939–41], (ed.) B. Schillbach (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1997), 412, tr. by J. Stambaugh as "Metaphysics as History of Being," in *The End of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 12–13; trans. mod. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GA 6.2. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

Or, as Heidegger puts it in notes dating perhaps from the late 1930s, while Western metaphysics in his sense "unfolds" with Plato and Aristotle, it is "consolidated" and attains its essence only in Romanity.[41]

Since the fundamental impetus of philosophical modernization is thus Roman and not Greek, and since Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power is to be regarded as the completion and end of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity, Heidegger points out that it is only natural that Nietzsche should himself admit (in *Twilight of the Idols*) that the Greeks could never be for him what the Romans were.[42] For Heidegger, Nietzsche's "inverted Platonism" is still an extreme modern form of Platonism, animated not by a Greek but by a fundamentally Roman and Machiavellian voluntarism and imperialism (GA 6.2, 221/165).[43]

These two Roman roots of modernity, voluntarism and imperialism, are closely interconnected. In Heidegger's eyes, modern metaphysical voluntarism—the Schellingian and Nietzschean metaphysics of the will as the fundamental essence of subjectivity—is ultimately based on the Latin rendering of the Aristotelian *energeia* ("being-at-work" in the sense of being finalized and completely functional) as *actus* or *actualitas* (in the sense of the German *Wirklichkeit,* something actively "put into effect") through which reality comes to be seen as the domain of divine creation and of human

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[41] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 76: Leitgedanken zur Entstehung der Metaphysik, der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft und der modernen Technik* [ca. 1935–55], (ed.) C. Strube (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2009), 5.

[42] Heidegger, "Der europäische Nihilismus" [1940], in GA 6.2, 221, tr. by F. A. Capuzzi as "European Nihilism," in *Nietzsche, Vol. 4: Nihilism,* (ed.) D. F. Krell (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 165. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung oder Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt* [1889], in *Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 6*, 2nd ed., (ed.) G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 155, tr. by J. Norman as *Twilight of the Idols, or How To Philosophize with a Hammer*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, (ed.) A. Ridley and J. Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 224–25.

[43] See also Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 96: Überlegungen XII–XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939–1941)*, (ed.) P. Trawny (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014), 199, tr. by R. Rojcewicz as *Ponderings XII–XV: Black Notebooks 1939–1941* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 157.

activity (GA 6.2, 410–20/10–19).[44] "The Romanization [*Romanisierung*] of this basic Greek metaphysical word [*sc. energeia*] enacts a completely uprooting reinterpretation of the concept of being in such a way that the Roman interpretation determines modern metaphysics."[45] It is in this Roman ontology of effectuation—implicit in the definition of cause (*causa*) as the ground of an effecting (*ratio efficiendi*) articulated by Cicero[46]—that the modern concept of causality, with its emphasis on the "efficient cause" whose role remains rather marginal among Aristotle's four causes, is rooted.[47]

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[44] See also Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 49: Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus* [1941], (ed.) G. Seubold (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1991), 101; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 70: Über den Anfang* [1941], (ed.) P.-L. Coriando (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2005), 76; Heidegger, "Der Spruch des Anaximander," 371/280; Heidegger, "Vom Wesen und Begriff der *Physis:* Aristoteles, *Physik* B, 1," tr. by T. Sheehan as "On the Essence and Concept of *Physis* in Aristotle's *Physics* B, 1" [1939], in *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 9*, 286/218; Heidegger, "Hegel und die Griechen," tr. by R. Metcalf as "Hegel and the Greeks" [1958], in *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 9*, 437/330–31; Heidegger, "Seminar in Le Thor 1968," in *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 15: Seminare* [1951–73], (ed.) C. Ochwadt (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1986), 311, tr. by A. Mitchell and F. Raffoul as "Seminar in Le Thor 1968," in *Four Seminars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 25. Cf. Raspitsos, *Die Latinisierung des Griechischen*, 17–23.

It should be noted that the earliest Latin translations and commentaries of Aristotle, those of Marius Victorinus (fourth century CE) and Boethius (sixth century), use both *opus*/*operatio*, "being-operative," and *actus* to render *energeia*; the former is arguably closer in sense to the root of the term—*ergon*, "work," "function"—emphasizing "being-at-work" rather than "being-active." See Kristell Trégo, "Substance, sujet, acte: La première reception latine d'Aristote: Marius Victorinus et Boèce," *Les Études philosophiques*, vol. 101, no. 2 (2012): 233–56. Cf. Jean Beaufret, *Dialogue avec Heidegger: Philosophie grecque* (Paris: Minuit, 1973), 122–45, tr. by M. Sinclair as *Dialogue with Heidegger: Greek Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 97–118, 150.

[45] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 66: Besinnung* [1938–39], (ed.) F.-W. von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1997), 195–96, tr. by P. Emad and T. Kalary as *Mindfulness* (London: Continuum, 2006), 172.

[46] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De partitione oratoria*, in *On the Orator, Book 3; On Fate; Stoic Paradoxes; Divisions of Oratory*, (tr.) H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), 394, §110.

[47] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 10: Der Satz vom Grund* [1955–56], (ed.) P. Jaeger (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1997), 147–51, tr. by R. Lilly as *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 99–101.

The "imperial" character of Roman thought is elaborated in greatest detail in Heidegger's 1942–43 Parmenides course, which presents his most extensive account of the "Romanization" (*Romanisierung*) of Greek philosophy as a "transformation of the essence of truth and being."[48] Empire, *imperium,* is literally a domain under command (*impero*) and domination (*dominium*, lordship), that is, subject to planning (*impero* comes from *in* + *paro*, "prepare, make provisions").[49] Referring to the sense of the Roman term for divinity, *numen*, as divine will, and to Roman *ius*, right or justice, as a cognate of *iubeo*, "to command, to order," Heidegger underlines the imperative and dominant nature of Roman conceptuality, reflected in the Latin antonym for truth, *falsum*, the false, the deceptive in the sense of tripping or causing to fall (*fallo,* "to deceive"), derailing, cheating (GA 54, 57–67/39–45).[50] In contrast to the Greek *alētheia*, literally "unconcealment," the Latin term for truth, *veritas*—which Heidegger debatably asserts to be a cognate of *aperio*, "to open," and *operio*, "to cover," deriving from the Proto-Indo-European root **wer-*, "to cover, enclose, protect" (*ibid.*, 69–71/47–48)[51]—would mean precisely that which is closed, shut off, secured and ascertained against downfall and defeat. *Verum*, the true, is fundamentally equivalent to *rectum*, the upright, the straight. This alleged Roman connection between truth and uprightness thus serves to consolidate the understanding of truth as correctness (*orthotēs, rectitudo*), as correct directedness of the intellect to reality and correspondence or equivalence (*homoiōsis, adaequatio*) to things as they are, the roots of

[48] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 54: Parmenides* [1942–43], 2nd ed., (ed.) M. S. Frings (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1992), 62, tr. by A. Schuwer and R. Rojcewicz as *Parmenides* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 42. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GA 54. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation. Cf. Escoubas, "Heidegger, la question romaine"; Cassin, "Grecs et romains," 22–26/33–38.

[49] Michiel de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 446–47.

[50] Cf. de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin*, 199–200.

[51] See de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin*, 46, 668, where he supports the derivation of *aperio* from PIE **wer-*, "to cover," but derives *veritas* from a similar but different Proto-Indo-European root which originally designated "truth."

which Heidegger traces to Plato. Through the influence of Roman imperial thought and Judeo-Christian religiosity, this correctness then becomes understood as an orientation towards the *ultimate* truth—God the creator as the ultimate source of all beings—and thereby intertwined with moral justification (*iustificatio, Rechtfertigung*) as conformity to divine commands and as receptivity to divine grace (*ibid.*, 67–79/45–54). The point of this complex genealogy is to uncover the "Roman" essence of Nietzsche's notion of "justice" or "righteousness" (*Gerechtigkeit*) as conformity to the imperatives of the will to power, understood metaphysically as the fundamental and constitutive meaning-generating dynamic of all reality—and, thus, to disclose the "Roman" lineage of modern metaphysics as a whole.

> Truth is, in the West, *veritas*. The true is that which, on various grounds, is self-asserting, remains above, and comes from above; that is, it is the command. But the "above," the "supreme," and the "lord" of lordship may appear in different forms. For Christianity, "the Lord" is God. "The lord" is also "reason." "The lord" is the "world-spirit." "The lord" is "the will to power." And the will to power, as expressly determined by Nietzsche, is in essence command. In the age in which the modern period finds its completion in a historical total state of the earth, the Roman essence of truth, *veritas* as *rectitudo* and *iustitia*, appears as "righteousness" [*Gerechtigkeit*]…. The Roman *veritas* has become the "righteousness" of the will to power. The circle of the history of the essence of truth, as metaphysically experienced, is now closed. (*Ibid.*, 77–78/53; trans. mod.)

According to this narrative, in modernity, "righteousness" as orientation towards and compliance with the transcendent divine will is "secularized" into orientation towards and compliance with the essence of one's own immanent subjectivity. The divine creator as the ultimate truth is replaced by subjectivity in the form of the Hegelian world-spirit or the Nietzschean will to power. Accordingly, since Descartes, self-consciousness becomes the path of access to the ultimate

truth, the most indubitable, secure, and unfailing perspective that admits of no falsity, deception, or error whatsoever—that is, the ultimate form of *certainty* which, in the metaphysical heritage of the Roman *veritas*, emerges as the essential criterion of truth (GA 6.2, 421–29/19–26). The "completion of the Roman essence of truth" as certainty, in the metaphysics of Hegel and Nietzsche, constitutes the "proper and hidden historical meaning of the nineteenth century" as the century of the completion and end of metaphysical modernity (GA 54, 86/58). In the age of total technical manipulation and mastery of things ushered in by this completion of metaphysics, the implicit protomodernity of Hellenistic-Roman thought fully unfolds.[52]

3. Arendt and the Roman Discovery of the Will

Arendt's philosophical debt to Heidegger has often been exaggerated. As a student, she only spent three semesters in Marburg in 1924–26, attending three of Heidegger's lecture courses as well as several of his seminars.[53] Karl Jaspers, with whom she finished her dissertation, was a more important

[52] It should be noted that as Jean-François Mattéi has pointed out, the later Heidegger's famous figure of the "fourfold" (*Geviert*) of sky, earth, mortals, and divinities, intended as a postmetaphysical alternative to the "enframing" or "setup" (*Gestell*) configuring the technical world, seems to have been borrowed from the Stoic understanding of the *kosmos* as a composition (*systēma*) of the sky, the earth, gods, and human beings, attributed by Diogenes Laertius to Posidonius and by Joannes Stobaeus to Chrysippus of Soli, but prefigured already in Plato's *Gorgias*. See Jean-François Mattéi, *Heidegger et Hölderlin: Le quadriparti* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), 18–19; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum, Vol. 2*, (ed.) H. S. Long (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 7.138; Joannes Stobaeus, *Anthologium, Vol. 1*, (ed.) C. Wachsmuth (Berlin: Weidmann, 1884), 1.21.5; Plato, *Gorgias*, in *Platonis opera, Vol. 3*, (ed.) J. Burnet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 507e6–508a4. Heidegger himself refers, in passing, to this conception of the *kosmos*; Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 42: Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)* [1936], (ed.) I. Schüßler (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988), 46, tr. by J. Stambaugh as *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 26.

[53] The lecture courses personally attended by Arendt were *Plato's Sophist* (1924), *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (1924–25), and *Logic: The Question of Truth* (1925). She also attended Heidegger's seminars on

intellectual and moral influence,[54] and in many ways, Arendt was also an intellectual autodidact. During the most formative years of her independent career, her contact with Heidegger was broken. Nonetheless, there are two main aspects of Heidegger's work which appear to have had a particular impact on her. In 1969 she recalls the electrifying effect of the earlier Heidegger's phenomenological readings of ancient philosophy, which she was able to follow *in situ* in the context of his 1924–25 course on Plato's *Sophist* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[55] In the same text, she also points to the discovery of Nietzsche's will to power as the culmination of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity

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Descartes's *Meditations*, Hegel's *Logic*, and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. See Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, *Briefe 1925–1975 und andere Zeugnisse*, 3rd ed., (ed.) U. Ludz (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2002), 27, 48, 50, 268, 276, tr. by A. Shields as *Letters 1925–1975* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2004), 18, 35, 37, 222–23, 228. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

[54] For indications of Jaspers's manifold influence on Arendt, especially in his activity as a public thinker, see Hannah Arendt, "What Is Existential Philosophy?" [1946/48] and "Dedication to Karl Jaspers" [1948], (tr.) Robert and Rita Kimber, and "Concern with Politics in Recent European Thought" [1954], in *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, Totalitarianism*, (ed.) J. Kohn (New York: Schocken, 1994), 182–87, 212–16, 428–47; Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: A *Laudatio*" [1958], (tr.) C. Winston and R. Winston, and "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?" [1957], in *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 71–94. Cf. Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, "Existentialism Politicized: Arendt's Debt to Jaspers," in *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*, (ed.) L. P. Hinchman and S. K. Hinchman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 143–78.

In the present context, it is interesting to note that in the introduction to his unfinished grand history of philosophy, *The Great Philosophers* (1957; the English edition was edited by Arendt), Jaspers abandons the standard classification of philosophers according to historical epochs and specifically points to the "Hellenistic age," traditionally deemed an "unfertile and subordinate" period, as a questionable construction of an "educated class"; Karl Jaspers, *Die grossen Philosophen, Vol. 1* (Munich: Piper, 1957), 43, tr. by R. Burch, F. Hild, and H. Wautischer as "Introduction to *The Great Philosophers*," *Existenz*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2017): 13–49, here 21.

[55] Arendt and Heidegger, *Briefe 1925–1975*, 191/161.

as the later Heidegger's key insight;[56] this insight is studied in detail by Arendt in the second volume of *The Life of the Mind*.[57]

The first Heideggerian element in Arendt's thought—the tendency to understand our present modes of thinking and conceptualizing in terms of the entire Western philosophical tradition and the attempt to trace this tradition phenomenologically back to the original Greek experiences underlying it, first and foremost as articulated by Plato and Aristotle—is manifested already in Arendt's 1929 doctoral dissertation on love in Augustine, even though her choice of topic already here manifests her predilection for Roman thought. Here, Arendt seeks to "make explicit what Augustine himself merely implied" and to "grasp what lies beneath" the contradictions in Augustine's text, rather than integrate them into a coherent system.[58] The same phenomenological-hermeneutic approach underpins the quest, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), to identify "the subterranean stream of Western history [that] has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition,"[59] continued in the historical analysis of *The Human Condition* (1958) aiming to "trace back modern world alienation…to its origins."[60] The latter work explicitly focusses on Greek political thought, portraying twentieth-century totalitarianism as a manifestation of the "murderous consequences" inherent in the "degradation of politics into a means to obtain an allegedly 'higher' end," a tendency which, according to Arendt's account, characterizes the entire tradition of Western political philosophy since

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[56] *Ibid*.

[57] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind, Vol. 2: Willing* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1981), 172–94. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as LOTM 2.

[58] Hannah Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin: Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation* (Berlin: Springer, 1929), 2, 6, tr. by J. Vecchiarelli Scott and J. Chelius Stark as *Love and St. Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 4, 7.

[59] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* [1951], 3rd ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1979), ix.

[60] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [1958], 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 6. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as HC.

Plato and Aristotle (HC, 229). While the "prephilosophical" political culture embodied by Pericles saw the *polis* as an egalitarian public realm of free and spontaneous speech and action evaluated not in terms of its results but of its inherent, "aesthetic" quality and worth (*ibid.*, 192–207), Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* regard politics mainly as an instrumental sphere of governance ultimately geared towards creating a framework for the philosophical life of contemplation as the most complete and self-sufficient form of human flourishing (*ibid.*, 220–30). In a manner strongly reminiscent of the later Heidegger's narrative of the Greek beginning and contemporary end of metaphysics, Arendt, in *Between Past and Future* (1961), describes the Western tradition of political philosophy as beginning with the Platonic attempt to impose philosophical standards upon public life and ending with the Marxist conversion of political philosophy into a revolutionary movement of social transformation.[61] This end does not, however, signify an end to the "world-alienation" of political philosophy, but rather its culmination in ideological social engineering which, in its extreme totalitarian form, threatens to destroy the shared human world of common sense and tradition altogether.

In spite of these affinities, there are certain elements in the Arendtian historical account that differ decisively from that of Heidegger. The narrative is neither unilinear nor monolithic; there are several important exceptions in the history of philosophy to the general alienation of philosophers from political action. The most notable of these exceptions are the Socratic ethics of conscience that Arendt discovers in Plato's earlier dialogues[62] as well as Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, in which Arendt finds Kant's true "political philosophy."[63] Both of these were to form the background for Arendt's

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[61] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* [1961], 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1993), 17–18. Cf. Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, (ed.) J. Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2005), 81–92.

[62] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind, Vol. 1: Thinking* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1981), 166–93. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as LOTM 1.

[63] Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* [1970], (ed.) R. Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 9.

unfinished theory of judgment (LOTM 1, 215–16).[64] An even more important difference with regard to the Heideggerian approach is Arendt's evaluation of Roman thought. Despite her emphasis on the Greek prephilosophical *polis* ideals, it is the Romans that are for her "perhaps the most political people we have known," imbued with an "extraordinary political sense" (HC, 7, 59). This, however, is partly because of the Romans' general disregard for political *philosophy* and for theory in general; their "only great philosopher" in the canonic sense was Augustine (*ibid.*, 59).[65] The political ideals and the state religion of the Romans were based upon an overriding sense of the authority of the tradition that undermined the role of critical thinking and intellectual innovation; the founders and predecessors, *maiores,* were inherently superior to the more recent ones, and reverence for the interpersonal dimension superseded the theoretical pursuit of truth for its own sake.[66] As a result of this general "anti-intellectualism," the Romans had little influence on political *theory* as such.[67] Thus, in Arendt's reading, rather than simply a "modernity in antiquity," Roman political culture was fundamentally *anti*modern in the sense of being conservative and backwards-looking. Paradoxically, however, it was precisely this specific type of conservatism that was picked up by the Enlightenment revolutionaries, for whom political progress ultimately consisted in a retrieval and institutional preservation of a lost beginning—in stark contrast to the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century, which precisely sought to dissolve all stable political institutions and constitutions into a restless and violent total mobilization of humanity. The Roman focus on political acts of foundation—the notion that "all decisive political changes in the course of Roman history were

[64] For outlines of Arendt's theory of judgment, see Ronald Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," in Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 89–156, 164–74; Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, "Arendt's Theory of Judgment," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, 245–60.

[65] See also Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 126, 166–67; *The Promise of Politics*, 53–54.

[66] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 124, 224–25.

[67] Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, 86.

reconstitutions, namely, …retrievance of the original act of foundation"[68]—makes the political praxis exemplified by Roman history the paradigmatic model for modern revolutions and their projects of political (re)constitution (LOTM 2, 210–14).[69]

However, in spite of their fundamentally antitheoretical and political disposition, the Romans did, according to Arendt, make one decisive contribution to Western intellectual history, a contribution of crucial importance to the unfolding of modern thought. This contribution was due to the influence of Hellenistic philosophy—Stoicism, in particular—and was a central concern for Arendt in what became her last major intellectual project, namely, addressing the problem of the ethical and political function of *thinking*, and of the conversion of thinking into action, that emerged from her analysis of Adolf Eichmann's "banal" totalitarian evil as consisting in a profound thoughtlessness, a striking lack of moral reflection (LOTM 1, 3–6). The discovery attributed by Arendt to Roman thinkers was essentially connected to the theme to which Arendt dedicated the second volume of her final, unfinished *magnum opus*, *The Life of the Mind*: willing, with its increasingly central role in modern philosophy. In a letter to Heidegger of July 26, 1974, Arendt notes that in her work, she has "assumed that Greek antiquity recognized neither willing nor the problem of freedom (as a problem)" and announces her intention to study the conceptual genealogy of the will starting from the Aristotelian *proairesis*, choice or preference.[70] In the finalized volume on willing, she specifies her claim to say that the concept of will does not properly emerge in classical Greek but rather in Hellenistic, Roman, and Christian culture. Within theology, it was essentially discovered by the apostle Paul in the context of the perceived discord between the spiritual will to live in accordance with the law and the sinful inability of the flesh to do so (LOTM 2, 18, 63–73).

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[68] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* [1963], 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1990), 207–208.

[69] See also Arendt, *On Revolution*, 196–214. Cf. Connolly, "The Promise of the Classical Canon"; Miriam Leonard, "Arendt's Revolutionary Antiquity," *Classical Philology*, vol. 113, no. 1 (2018): 53–66.

[70] Arendt and Heidegger, *Briefe 1925–1975*, 250/211.

However, it is a near contemporary of Paul, the Stoic teacher Epictetus, whom Arendt credits with the discovery of the will in terms of rational argument. Epictetus, a former slave in Rome, identified as a philosopher, but in the Hellenistic-Stoic vein philosophy meant for him the art of living one's life. In the art of living, it is not discursive reason (*logos*) as such but the "will" in the sense of rational choice (*proairesis*) that is supreme; the key to human flourishing is to choose *not* to pursue that which is not in one's power and to focus one's will on the attainment of an indifferent tranquility (*ataraxia*) with regard to the vicissitudes of the external world. Faced with worldly fortunes and misfortunes, all human beings are slaves, and freedom is only to be found within the self, in the ability to choose to make oneself mentally and spiritually invulnerable to external domination (*ibid.*, 73–84).[71] Already in *The Human Condition*, Arendt describes the Hellenistic philosophical schools as varieties of "ancient world alienation…inspired by a deep mistrust of the world and moved by a vehement impulse to withdraw from worldly involvement…into the security of an inward realm in which the self is exposed to nothing but itself" (HC, 310). This was a project based on the identification of freedom and individual, subjective sovereignty (*ibid.*, 234) and constitutes, Arendt points out, a conceptual reversal of the ancient notion according to which "man could liberate himself from necessity only through power over other men and he could be free only if he owned a place, a home in the world."[72] World-alienation is thus symptomatic of the loss of Roman political liberty in the imperial age.

It is only in *The Life of the Mind*, however, that Arendt gives the Stoic discovery of the will a positive historical role as a specific "Roman answer" to the question "what makes us think?"—an

[71] It should be noted that in 1965–66, Arendt makes the rather different claim that Epictetus's idea of freedom does not yet represent a shift from mere desire to will in the proper sense, but only a shift in the object one's desire; Hannah Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy" [1965–66], in *Responsibility and Judgment*, (ed.) J. Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2003), 114–15. See Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.1.23, 1.17.21–24, 1.29.2, 1.39.1, 2.16.1, 2.22.20, 3.1.40–42, 3.5.7, 4.5.12, in *Epicteti dissertationes ab Arriano digestae*, (ed.) H. Schenkl (Leipzig: Teubner, 1916).

[72] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 148.

answer that deviates decisively from the classical Greek answer of Plato and Aristotle according to which philosophy starts from sheer disinterested wonder before beings and culminates in theoretical contemplation, as well as from the "Socratic" answer according to which what makes us think is our desire to be in concord with ourselves (LOTM 1, 141–51, 166–93). Citing Hegel's remark that the general purport of Hellenistic philosophy was to render the soul indifferent to the real world, Arendt notes that the experience from which this conception of philosophy ultimately arises is not wonder at the presence of a meaningful reality but rather *fear* in the face of a hostile and unpredictable reality—a fundamental *discord* between the human being and her world. Such an experience is certainly not exclusively Roman, but it finds its first important expression in the Roman appropriation of Hellenistic thought, starting in the final tumultuous period of the Roman Republic with Lucretius and Cicero, culminating at the height of the imperial age with Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, and finding its final climax at the end of the empire with Boethius. The merciless twists and turns of fortune and the fragility of political freedom threaten public participation and action, so all-important for traditional Roman culture, with an ultimate futility; the philosophical remedy against and consolation for this threat is to be found in what Michel Foucault would call "technologies of the self,"[73] that is, in ways of turning away from the shared world towards self-control and self-constitution through rational willpower (*ibid.*, 151–62). "Philosophy is called upon to compensate for the frustrations of politics and, more generally, of life itself…. To think along these lines means to act upon yourself—the only action left when all acting in the world has become futile" (*ibid.*, 160–61).

For Arendt, this Hellenistic and Roman discovery of the will, of willpower in the sense of the capacity of thinking to move the agent to autonomous action, has an absolutely central significance for the key question of *The Life of the Mind* concerning the ethico-political relevance of thinking for

[73] Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self" [1982], in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, (ed.) L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16–49.

action: "Could the activity of thinking as such…be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually 'condition' them against it?" (*ibid.*, 5). The target of Arendt's critique of modern voluntarism is precisely its insufficiently radical approach to the will; with the exception of John Duns Scotus, Arendt points out, even the thinkers who admit the existence of free will or go so far as to grant the will primacy over the intellect have been reluctant to face the fundamental *contingency* and *unpredictability* inherent in the concept of willing as a future-oriented faculty of freedom (LOTM 2, 3–51, 195–96). Something that is willed freely is never willed necessarily; future-oriented projects are chosen without constraint and can always be given up, they can always fail, and in any case their results and outcomes are never entirely predictable. In this sense, Arendt maintains, even Nietzsche, for Heidegger the metaphysician of the will *par excellence*, renounces the key condition for willing, namely, the open-endedness of time (*ibid.*, 158–72). The Nietzschean eternal recurrence of the same as the basic self-referential dynamic of the will to power, its unceasing generation of change and novelty, is a cyclic movement that takes place only for its own sake and is ultimately devoid of any inherent aim or purpose, and therefore never attains anything *genuinely* new.

In this sense, modern voluntarism has, in fact, forfeited the true legacy of the Roman spirit of active freedom, recapitulated in Augustine's dictum "*Initium…ut esset creatus est homo*"[74]—the human being was created in order for there to be a beginning, a free initiative, or rather, as Arendt reads it, in order for there to be as many potential initiatives for new, unpredictable, and contingent projects as there are human beings (HC, 177; LOTM 2, 18, 108–10, 158).[75] In order to truly grasp this human spontaneity, this capacity for freely initiating new ventures, another faculty of the mind must be studied, one equally ignored by the entire philosophical tradition: the faculty of judgment, the inherently ethical and political ability of thinking to produce opinions on the value of particular acts (LOTM 2, 195–217). Just as Kant, in order to bridge the gap between his first and second critiques,

[74] Augustine, *Aurelii Augustini De civitate Dei libri XXII, Vol. 1*, (ed.) B. Dombart (Leipzig: Teubner, 1877), 12.21.

[75] See also Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 479; *On Revolution*, 211; *The Promise of Politics*, 59, 126.

between objective experience and the moral will, between the true and the good, needed a third critique on the judgment of taste, on the experience of beauty as the sensory manifestation of the good, Arendt needs a third volume on judgment to bridge the gap between the two previous volumes of *The Life of the Mind* on thinking and willing—to show in what way thinking, in the form of moral self-reflection or "conscience," can guide the will and convert into action. Alas, her untimely death left this final volume unwritten.

Conclusion

The Hellenistic-Roman discovery of the will as a way of relating to a world experienced not as harmoniously meaningful but as hostile and unpredictable, as a faculty oriented to the open future rather than the given present and aiming at active transformation and implementation rather than receptive contemplation of truth, initiates the philosophical development leading to the modern metaphysics of subjectivity—which, according to Heidegger, culminates in the late modern metaphysics of the will and in the Nietzschean will to power as a ceaseless reconfiguration and revaluation without ultimate end or purpose. In this sense, for Heidegger and Arendt as for Hegel, Droysen, and Zeller, Hellenistic thought is a type of protomodernity in antiquity, the discovery of an autarkic realm of inner selfhood, of the freedom of subjectivity as opposed to the compulsion of external things. In short, the modern, Kantian subject as the tragically split citizen of the realms of noumenal freedom and phenomenal necessity[76] would have its roots in Roman Hellenism. On this point, as we have seen, Hegel, Heidegger, and Arendt are fundamentally agreed, with Hegel and Arendt emphasizing that this transformation hinges on the dwindling of classical civic liberty.

[76] See Immanuel Kant, *Der Streit der Facultäten* [1798], in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 7* (Berlin: Reimer, 1907), 70, tr. by A. W. Wood and G. di Giovanni as *The Conflict of the Faculties*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, (ed.) A. W. Wood and G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 289.

Nonetheless, in contrast to Heidegger's dismissive and deploring stance towards Hellenism, there is a reason to read Arendt, alongside Foucault's later studies on the Hellenistic and Roman "care of the self,"[77] as part of the twentieth-century rehabilitation of Hellenistic thought. For Arendt, the Stoic philosophy of the will is not simply the starting point for a now-exhausted metaphysical path ending in closure. Rather, the discovery of the will as a human capacity for making fresh starts, for engaging in unforeseen and unpredictable new ventures on the basis of free judgment, holds for Arendt a decisive potential for understanding the ethical and political relevance of thinking—a potential that the modern metaphysics of the will has failed to properly recognize and develop, but one that is resurfacing in the contemporary closure of the metaphysical tradition.

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[77] See Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité, Vol. 3: Le souci de soi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), tr. by R. Hurley as *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: The Care of the Self* (New York: Pantheon, 1986); Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet: Cours au Collège de France (1981–1982),* (ed.) F. Gros (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2001), tr. by G. Burchell as *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).