

Modern and Postmodern Crises of Symbolic Structures

Essays in Philosophical Anthropology

Edited by

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Czechoslovakia after 1989 through Arendt's Eyes: From Pariahs to Strong Men

Dagmar Kusá and James Griffith

Abstract

Dissident circles during the Czechoslovak communist regime were organized in semi-private islands of resistance. They saw themselves as a parallel *polis* in line with Arendt's notion of political action by pursuing "life in truth," authentic experience, and ultimately freedom. The heroes of these circles were that society's pariahs. In their quest for authenticity, they turned to the past to find meaning, to understand the nature of their communities and the needs for political action towards the future. As such, they sought what Heidegger would label authentic public interpretations. After 1989, these heroes shaped and adapted to the constitutional design of the new *polis* and often experienced a transformation from pariah to inauthentic hero to at least the potential to become strong man, maintaining varying degrees of authenticity.

In another piece,¹ we examined the process by which Czechoslovakia abandoned state communism, popularly dubbed the Velvet Revolution, in terms of Hannah Arendt's understanding of revolution. Minimizing the importance of violence for her definition while emphasizing freedom as distinct from liberty, novelty and historical progression, we found that the Velvet Revolution can be understood as neither a revolution nor a modern or postmodern event for Arendt. Because the changes brought about, especially the process by which privatization was introduced into the economy, ignored unequal starting points in terms of access to state-management institutions; because the unequal allocation of retribution for participation in the state security system ("lustrations") focused on its participants more than on its architects; and because of the retreat of intellectuals back to their unpolitical work, the Czechoslovak experience of 1989 both allowed for more continuity with than break from the past at the same time that it confused the expansion of liberty—a

¹ Dagmar Kusá and James Griffith, "Czechoslovakia in 1989 through Arendt's Eyes: An Immodern Non-revolution," *Sociološki Pregled / Sociological Review*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2019, pp. 787–811.

condition for political action and speech—for freedom as action and speech. In this way, it cannot be considered a revolution for Arendt. In addition, because of a criminalization of the previous regime that effectively erased its existence, the Velvet Revolution cannot be considered modern. Yet, because of a resistance to ideas for forms of government not already associated with Western liberal democracy and an infatuation with its grand historical narrative, the Velvet Revolution cannot be considered postmodern. We thus named it an “immodern event,” both negating modernity and remaining an event within it.

Here we will continue this examination, looking at what occurred in Czechoslovakia after 1989 through Arendt’s concepts, now focused on her figures of hero, conscious pariah (of whom we discern three types in the Czechoslovak experience), *schnorrer*, and strong man, adding Václav Havel’s greengrocer to this list. We then look at how the old system’s pariahs became the new order’s heroes and then strong men.

1 Natality and Action

At first glance, Petr Pithart’s insistence on the importance of political parties over and above Havel’s party-less democracy² is one of the ways the Velvet Revolution fails to be an Arendtian revolution. Comparing parties with councils in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revolutions, she writes that both, along with revolutions, are distinctly modern phenomena. However, councils “always emerged during the revolution itself,” while parties are institutions to grant popular support for action as “the prerogative of government.”³ For Arendt, to disregard, as Pithart did, systems like councils as naïve and romantic is to favor “the utopia of theoreticians and ideologies” over an organization “which begins from below, continues upward, and finally *leads to a parliament*.”⁴ Parties are instruments of technocratic, top-down rule rather than political freedom, ways to separate the knowledge of governance from the

2 Petr Pithart, “Havlova ‘samototalita’. Ale proč tak dlouho přežívala?” [Havel’s ‘Self-totality’: But why did it Live that Long?], in *Jednoho dne se v našem zelináři cosi vzbouří: Eseje o Moci bezmocných* [*One Day, Something within our Greengrocer will Revolt: Essays on the Power of the Powerless*], ed. by Jiří Suk and Kristína Andělová, Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2016, p. 175.

3 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, New York: Penguin Books 2006, p. 263.

4 Hannah Arendt, “Thoughts on Politics and Revolution: A Commentary,” in her *Crises of the Republic: Lying in Politics, Civil Disobedience, On Violence, Thoughts on Politics and Revolution*, New York: Harcourt Brace & Company 1972, p. 231, p. 232. Our emphasis.

justification of action. Such separation is the loss of freedom.⁵ We shall see below, however, that Havel's own elitism, that of the pariah, contributed to the loss of Czechoslovakia's newly formed spaces of freedom.

For Arendt, knowledge is associated with science, technology, and technique. It is related to but still distinct from understanding. While understanding can never give us "unequivocal results,"⁶ knowledge seeks "*irrefutable truth*."⁷ There are two kinds of irrefutable truth, of reasoning and of fact. A truth of reasoning has "the force of necessity," the opposite of which "is not contingency or accident but freedom."⁸ We are not free to deny, for instance, mathematical truths. By contrast, scientific truths are factual, and so not necessary. They must be witnessed and can be amended as more expert, often technologically enhanced witnessing occurs.⁹ Nonetheless, neither this expertise nor the contingent, factual knowledge it develops gives us understanding. Rather, understanding makes "knowledge meaningful."¹⁰

Each kind of truth has its own relationship to history. For Arendt, all things appear among other appearing things, but living things "*make their appearance*" in self-display.¹¹ Humans specifically, though, neither specifically appear nor display, but present themselves through active, conscious choices of showing themselves. As a result, self-presentation "is open to hypocrisy and pretense."¹² Distinguishing between pretense and real self-presentation depends on whether it endures and is consistent, which is how humans can be considered both mortal and historical. The self-display of other living things is involved only in the cyclical temporal structure of biological appearance, growth, and decay, but individual humans present themselves as having "a recognizable life-story from birth to death."¹³ Thus, self-presentation involves a rectilinear and so historical trajectory rather than self-display's cycles. This life story assumes other humans to tell and to hear it, and so is involved in making a common world. It also assumes those others will hear and tell it as a story, with a beginning and leading to a conclusion. In that mortality is given to each

5 See Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 256.

6 Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics (The Difficulties of Understanding)," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. by Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books 1994, p. 307.

7 Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vols. 1–2, New York: Harcourt 1977–78, vol. 1, p. 59.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 61–2.

10 Arendt, "Understanding and Politics (The Difficulties of Understanding)," p. 311.

11 Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1, p. 21.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

13 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998, p. 19.

individual human, we are also associated with natality, “the new beginning inherent in birth.”¹⁴ The attempt to transform contingent truths of fact into necessary truths of reason, the attempt to separate knowledge of governance from the justification of action, thus attempts make necessary, and so eternal, what is contingent upon witnessing, speaking, and hearing. It attempts to extract humans from their mortality, natality, and self-presentation—from their individual stories. In that way, it is an attempt to remove us from our common worlds.

Further, an attempt at history that “honestly believes in causality” undermines its own content because history is composed of events, irrevocable moments in time which transcend their causes.¹⁵ The event itself tells its story. The historian makes the facts described meaningful. Insofar as events are irrevocable, they are of rectilinear movement, and so of natality and mortality. However, since political events are events of action and since events are always of an irrevocable, new moment, “natality, and not mortality” is more appropriate to politics.¹⁶

Action, which “engages in founding and preserving political bodies,” is involved in the public realm more than labor and work.¹⁷ Arendt’s use of ‘public’ here refers to a common world among humans “not identical with the earth or nature” but connected to “the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together.”¹⁸ This is the public realm of action and politics, which transcends the singular stories of individual humans born into natality.¹⁹ This transcendence is one reason why action is endless, though not eternal.²⁰ Science’s common world is the world of nature, of the cycles of birth, growth, and decay. Political action works through the world humans make for and of themselves. It is not a world of truths of fact even if it must refer to them. It is a world of the new, of rectilinear time, exceeding the particular stories of its participants, who refer to it in their acts.

14 Ibid., p. 9.

15 Arendt, “Understanding and Politics (The Difficulties of Understanding),” p. 319.

16 Ibid., p. 9.

17 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 8.

18 Ibid., p. 52. “Public” can also mean for her the presentation, as in art, of appearances which would otherwise be privately experienced. As such, this meaning refers to what “can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity.” Ibid., p. 50. This use of the word is not our focus here.

19 Ibid., p. 55.

20 Ibid., p. 233.

2 Figures of Normalization

Action then opens up questions of who is an actor, authentic or otherwise, who really participates in this world of natality. Heroes present themselves via speech and action among equals as those with rectilinear stories worth telling. However, mass society destroys both public and private space by reducing human life to labor's cycles of production and consumption. The official ideology of post-1968 Czechoslovakia—called Normalization—goes even further by disregarding the individual altogether, whether as actor or laborer, ironically opening up the space for the pariah. In this space, the call for a space of speech and action, no matter how limited or reformist, is the political call of the pariah. Those who silence themselves, as forced upon them as it may be, are parvenus. Yet the silence of the parvenu is not that of the *schnorrer*, whose outsider status is more extreme than parvenu's. The *schnorrer's* silence, however, is worse than the parvenu's because it protects the latter, is in its silence the sound of force. Nevertheless, there is one figure emerging under Normalization who does not appear in Arendt's schema, the greengrocer, who we argue is neither *schnorrer* nor parvenu.

2.1 *The Hero, Mass Society, and the Ideology of the "As If"*

Participants in action disclose themselves in both their equality, through which we understand each other across both space and time, and their distinction, through which we are individuals in our common worlds via speech and action.²¹ Speech and action, then, constitute "a second birth" indicating that "the unexpected can be expected" from actors who, in acting and speaking, "reveal actively their unique personal identities."²² This revelation is the individual's disclosure of their individuality to other individuals who also disclose or present themselves. Who an actor is, is revealed through the individual's interests, meant "in the word's most literal significance, *inter-est*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together."²³ The in-between in question here is that common world of our political public realm.²⁴ But this in-between is also temporal, especially insofar as we disclose or present ourselves as of the past, present, and future: "Man lives in this in-between, and what he calls the present is a life-long fight against the dead weight of the past, driving him forward with hope, and the fear of a future (whose only

²¹ See *ibid.*, p. 175.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 176, p. 178, p. 179.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 183.

certainty is death), driving him backward toward ‘the quiet of the past.’”²⁵ This dual temporal pressure in the present makes a non-eternal timelessness of the present as a “time-pressed, time-tossed existence.”²⁶ Here we can see the interest in distinguishing ourselves among other individuals that is the call to action, the call to make of ourselves and our lives, which follow a rectilinear path, a story worth telling in the public space that transcends individual lives.

In other words, we can see here the emergence of the hero. Action usually fails to achieve its goals because every actor’s interests conflict with others’. However, the interplay of interests is how action is real and why it “produces’ stories” distinct from the modes by which they are told in documents, monuments, objects, or artworks.²⁷ The stories of action are what reveal their heroes. History, the story of humanity, has “many actors and speakers and yet [is] without any tangible authors” because even the greatest actor is not fully an event’s outcome.²⁸ At the individual level, no one person makes their own story. As with truths of fact, the acts and words in the life of an actor is the material worked up by the storyteller to make them meaningful.

To be a hero is only to have the courage “to act and speak at all,” to present or disclose oneself as an individual among equals.²⁹ However, since the events set into motion by action and speech are political events, “men have never been and never will be able to undo or even to control reliably any of the processes they start through action,” nor can the consequences be foreseen.³⁰ This unpredictability and irreversibility are why action is different from the products of labor and work, which are planned and can be undone. Out of the timeless, pressure-laden present, in the space of self-presentation to distinguish oneself from others equally presenting themselves, action and speech inaugurate unpredictable and irreversible events which become the data for historians to gather and which they make meaningful by telling the hero’s story.

However, it should also be remembered that contemporary society is mass society, where “the world between [its members] has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them.”³¹ It leaves everyone isolated because even the private sphere, where “even those excluded from the [public] world could find a substitute,” has been lost.³² As James M. King lays it out, this

25 Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1, p. 205.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

27 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 184.

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 232–3.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

occurred in two stages. First, the public realm was lost. The rise of market economies in the eighteenth century meant “private concerns encroach on the public realm” since what one produces and how one labors is one’s social value.³³ Second came the bureaucratic distinction of people by biological need, destroying the traditional standards of public life and reducing social life to “an endless cycle” of labor, of production and consumption.³⁴ As a result, “while the individual might still be allowed to make a career, he is no longer strong enough to fulfill the basic demands of human life.”³⁵ Mass society, then, at least leaves questionable the possibility for a hero to emerge. There is no past or future to press on the present, only the cycles of labor. There are no equals to whom one can self-present, only other laborers.

The official public sphere of Czechoslovakia under Normalization, however, represented life “as if.” Drawn from Hans Vaihinger, this refers to the human inclination to consciously create fictions to facilitate our understanding of the world “which either contradict reality, or are even contradictory in themselves...to overcome difficulties of thought...and reach the goal of thought by roundabout ways and by-paths.”³⁶ These are not full fictions, known paradoxically in their fictiveness, but deviations from reality, shortcuts that patch up internal inconsistencies in theories and narratives. Miroslav Kusý, a signatory of Charter ’77, adapted Vaihinger to describe life under the “real socialism” of Normalization, calling it an “as if” ideology.³⁷ Vasil Bil’ak, a communist hard-liner who supported the 1968 invasion, was designated by Moscow to bring Czechoslovakia, revolutionized by the vision of socialism with human face, back to the “normalcy” of Stalinism. He coined the term “real socialism” to describe the development of what he called “that which we have here.”³⁸ The regime dropped the ideological passion of striving for a classless society and replaced it with a tolerable and mutually convenient fiction, *as if* communism was still a programmatic goal and ideological guide.

33 James M. King, “Hannah Arendt’s Mythology: The Political Nature of History and its Tales of Antiheroes,” *The European Legacy*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2011, p. 31.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

35 Hannah Arendt, “The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition,” in *The Jewish Writings*, ed. by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, New York: Schocken Books 2007, p. 297.

36 Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of As If: A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, trans. by Charles Kay Ogden, Mansfield Center, CT: Martino Publishing 2009.

37 Miroslav Kusý, “Akoby (Als Ob)” [As If (Als Ob)], in *Jednoho dne se v našem zelináři cosi vzbouří: Eseje o Moci bezmocných [One Day, Something within our Greengrocer will Revolt: Essays on the Power of the Powerless]*, ed. by Jiří Suk and Kristína Andělová, Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2016, pp. 225–30.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

As a metaphor for the pretense with which one had to live under Normalization, Havel uses the figure of the greengrocer.³⁹ The greengrocer places posters in his shop window to celebrate the International Day of Labor on May 1 or a sign saying, “unity with the Soviet Union forever,” even though he does not believe any of it. The regime knows the greengrocer does not believe in the doctrines, but demands symbolic allegiance. For Kusý, “This ideological ‘real socialism’ does not claim the whole person....It does not ask that a person believe this ideology: it is content with a person acting *as if* he believed in it.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, one cannot really become a socialist, for the regime is not interested in it. The reality of “real socialism” demands that one cheat, bribe, and steal in order to survive and take care of one’s family. The ideology of the “as if” thus demoralizes not only those in power, but also the powerless.⁴¹

On one level, the “as if” ideology of real socialism has more in common with Thomas Aquinas than with Stalinist totalitarianism. For Aquinas, divine law is necessary because humans, and so our laws, can only judge according to external acts, not inner will, so an unbeliever is no challenge to public authority.⁴² In contrast, totalitarianism is for Arendt ideology transformed into a “claim to total validity...taken literally.”⁴³ It is able to accomplish this by making a “break in our tradition” of political and moral judgment, itself made possible by the destruction of the political space by mass society and bureaucracy.⁴⁴ In the literal claim to total validity, totalitarianism must demand belief. Normalization, as an “as if” ideology, does not do that. It only demands the form or presentation of belief, simple obedience.

On another level, this ideology is perhaps beyond totalitarianism in that even the tradition of a literally total validity is disregarded. Demanding neither belief nor unbelief, all that is left is force rather than power or even strength. For Arendt, power is not a possession, which strength and force are. Strength “is checked and balanced by the presence of others” and “cannot be shared with others,” whereas power is the very potential for equals to live together.⁴⁵

39 Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” in Václav Havel et al., *The Power of the Powerless: Citizen Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, trans. by John Keane, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe 1985, pp. 23–96.

40 Kusý, “Akoby (Als Ob),” p. 227.

41 Ibid., p. 230.

42 See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Milan: Editiones Paulinae 1988, I–II, q. 91, a. 4, c, and q. 100, a. 9; II–II, q. 12, a. 2.

43 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed., New York: Harcourt Brace, & Company 1979, p. 457.

44 Hannah Arendt, “Tradition and the Modern Age,” in her *Between Past and Future*, New York: Penguin Books 1993, p. 26.

45 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 201, p. 203.

Force is the alternative to power in human life. It can be exerted by one person against others and can be possessed by “one or a few...by acquiring the means to violence.”⁴⁶ Violence, meanwhile, “can destroy power, but it can never become a substitute for it.”⁴⁷ In the ideology of the “as if,” gathering people to live as equals is unimportant and the strength of the institutions of Normalization ignores any questions of counterbalance because equals living together has been disregarded. Force and its concomitant acquisition of violence is what remains. Thus, the “as if” ideology seems to escape the third of what Siobhan Kattago describes as total domination’s three stages. The first and second stages are clearly of this ideology. Insofar as real socialism demands that individuals violate its laws, it removes both “individuals from the protection of the law” and “possibilities for moral choice due to fear and mistrust.”⁴⁸ However, the third stage, “the destruction of the uniqueness of the individual,”⁴⁹ is ironically left open by the very loss of even the ideology of mass society in Normalization’s real socialism. For this reason, Havel will call Normalization post-totalitarian.⁵⁰ When Bil’ak refers to real socialism as “that which we have here,” he implies a now. It is an eternal spatial and temporal present of force and only force, with neither past nor future, natality nor mortality. In this reduction to force, there is an ironic, private and/or parallel space left open: the space of the pariah.

2.2 *The Parvenu, the Three Types of Pariah under Normalization, and the Parallel Polis*

If heroes must present themselves and be seen by others as among equals, they are faced by another figure, the conscious pariah, against whom Arendt juxtaposes the parvenu and the *schnorrer*, the latter of whom will be dealt with in the next section.⁵¹ Her stand-in for the conscious pariah is Bernard Lazare, the Dreyfus Affair-era Jewish journalist who called for his fellow Jews to become

46 Ibid., p. 202.

47 Ibid.

48 Siobhan Kattago, “Agreeing to Disagree on the Legacies of Recent History: Memory, Pluralism and Europe after 1989,” *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2009, p. 389.

49 Ibid.

50 Havel, “The Power of the Powerless.”

51 Here we will focus on the conscious pariah over and above Arendt’s other types of pariah: the schlemiel (Heinrich Heine), the suspect (Charlie Chaplin), and the man of good will (Joseph K.). While this focus is because of the conscious pariah’s explicit and exclusively political character, the political aspects of the other three should not be denied. Nor should that of the upstart (Mr. Cohn) in Hannah Arendt, “We Refugees,” in *The Jewish Writings*, ed. by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, New York: Schocken Books 2007, p. 271, p. 274.

conscious of their position of dependence on both “the hostile elements of his environment and...his own ‘highly placed brethren’ who are somehow in league with them.”⁵² In becoming conscious of this double dependence, such people should become rebels against the historical position of Jews in Europe as a people who “did not enjoy political freedom nor full admission to the life of nations,” despite exceptional examples suggesting otherwise.⁵³ These exceptions are parvenus, Jews who chose to “live in the ordered ranks of society” at the cost of abandoning their heritage.⁵⁴ French politics taught Lazare that

whenever the enemy seeks control, he makes a point of using some oppressed element of the population as his lackeys and henchmen, rewarding them with special privileges....It was thus that he construed the mechanism which made rich Jews seek protection behind the notorious general Jewish poverty, to which they referred whenever their own position was jeopardized.⁵⁵

As Jennifer Ring points out, heroes speak, act, and present themselves to equals, but the pariah expects no recognition because the status of pariah is of one who does not belong, who is not equal. The pariah’s equals are fellow outsiders and the action called for is “*against* the prevailing community.”⁵⁶ This call is made within the context of the private realm because, for outsiders, “even their private lives are defined by politics.”⁵⁷ The pariah is the hero of those excluded from the public realm. By contrast, parvenus accept both the unpolitical world and their exclusion from the public realm. In the name of inclusion in the social, not the political, they both “deny their historical identity” as excluded and “take the blame for their exclusion on themselves.”⁵⁸

The *polis* of Czechoslovak anti-regime activities during communism was concentrated around Charter ’77. While its proponents advocated “apolitical politics” and the system tried to keep them restricted to the private sphere by barring their access to the public domain, this platform served to create a free space as a substitute for the official *polis*. Under Normalization, with the loss of even a mass ideology, the arena of private self-understanding became

52 Arendt, “The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition,” p. 284.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 276.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 279.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 284.

56 Jennifer Ring, “The Pariah as Hero: Hannah Arendt’s Political Actor,” *Political Theory*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1991, p. 441.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

a political arena of self-presentation among equals. The founding fathers of Charter '77 defined this space and shaped the nature of political action within it. Those who disturbed the “as if” ideology were pariahs, privately presenting themselves as what was thought to have been left behind. They were thus dangerous for the regime and needed to be eliminated, marginalized, and shunned from the official public sphere. In the parlance of the regime, they were traitors, subversives, or bourgeois elements.

Former communist leaders, intellectuals, writers, artists, and so on had to face the choice of freedom in the immediate aftermath of the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion or during the campaign to sign Charter '77. It was possible for dissidents to sign a cooperation agreement with State Security and inform on the activities of others from time to time, which a handful did; to agree to move out of the country provided they never return; or to apologize publicly for being mistaken and join the ranks of conformist intellectuals in the party, ministries, or academia. Initially, there was much conversation among political and intellectual leaders who opted for a life of comfort and power, i.e., for the life of the parvenu, and those who dissented. In Slovakia, for example, Miroslav Válek, poet turned post-invasion Minister of Culture, was known to offer a “helping hand” to former colleagues, offering them a safe spot in the administration in return for declaring their mistake.⁵⁹ Some took the help, others did not. Gradually, their paths parted.

Thanks to this history and dynamic, we can discern three types of pariah under Normalization. The most internationally known representative of one type was Havel, an author of Charter '77 influenced by Jan Patočka, himself among the platform's first leaders.⁶⁰ In line with his mentor's direction, Havel rejected ideological thinking, where one is subjected to social aims and interpretations, opting instead for discovery through experience, a life in truth and freedom.⁶¹ Life in the “parallel *polis*” of dissident communities was a personal choice for freedom. It was the space, Patočka maintained, for care of the soul. Havel was inspired by Patočka's quest for authenticity through an inquisitive

59 Jan Karásek, “Válek v HN magazíne: Komunistický politik, ktorého ženy spáchali samovraždu” [Válek in the HN Magazine: A Communist Politician, whose Women Committed Suicide], *Hospodárske noviny*, February 27, 2016, <https://style.hnonline.sk/vikend/592900-valek-v-hn-magazine-komunisticky-politik-ktoreho-zeny-spachali-samovrazdu>

60 When Havel was imprisoned in 1977 for composing and distributing the text of the charter, Patočka became its spokesman. Patočka was interrogated and harassed frequently by the police, whose harsh treatment impacted his health and hastened his demise.

61 See Robert Pirro, “Václav Havel and the Political Uses of Tragedy,” *Political Theory*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2002, pp. 228–58.

stance, a self-concern, and a drive to understand oneself with clarity, that is, the quest for the truth.⁶²

A second type of anti-communist pariah was not on board with Havel's vision of an anti-political, partyless society of enlightened individuals and communities.⁶³ People with a political past like Pithart, who later became the Minister of Foreign Affairs, opted for pragmatic opposition, seeking to pluralize the party system and to introduce a free and fair competition among political parties as the foundation for a democratic society. Those like Pithart cannot be considered parvenus, of course. The ideology of the "as if," as a reduction of the knowledge of governance to force, makes even this degree of attempted collaboration and reform dangerous, not simply precarious. When even mass society has been left behind, any attempt to do anything beyond getting through the day is a form of action, but it remains the action of an outsider.

The third type of regime opponent sought to gain power either through revolution, which was not really pursued after the bloody suppression of Hungary's 1956 uprising, or through opposition from within the official domain.⁶⁴ This type at times coopted young reformist members of the Communist Party, who attempted genuine, rather than "as if" reform inside the Party. Their ranks swelled after the ascent of Mikhail Gorbachev, leading to exploratory dialogue and collaboration. Alexander Dubček, the former First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party who was pushed out of politics after the suppression of the Prague Spring, offered critique via open letters to his former party and interviews in the foreign press. He also collaborated, albeit gingerly, with the newly established association Club for a Socialist Renaissance (Obroda).⁶⁵ Its program included democratic self-government, an effective and pluralistic economy, civic equality and justice, the rule of law, and so on.⁶⁶ They drafted a new version of the Constitution and prepared materials for the agenda of the national assembly of the Communist Party, neither of which ultimately came to fruition. Some dissidents of the first two types came to appreciate the window of opportunity and sought contact with reformist communists in the last few years of Normalization. In 1988, a vast majority of Czech and many Slovak

62 Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. by Erazim Kohák, ed. by James Dodd, Chicago and LaSalle, IL: Open Court 1998.

63 Alan Renwick, "Anti-Political or Just Anti-Communist? Varieties of Dissidence in East-Central Europe and Their Implications for the Development of Political Society," *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2006, pp. 286–318.

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 298–300.

65 Milan Otáhal, *Opozice, moc, společnost* [*Opposition, Power, Society*], Prague: Maxdorf 1994, p. 67.

66 *Ibid.*

dissidents signed the petition, Movement for Civic Freedoms, which was also an attempt by Charter '77 intellectuals to reach out to the broader public. It called for involvement in political life and the rehabilitation of politics. Even Havel signed.⁶⁷ While such moments may have transformed the reformists into something other than pariahs, few were motivated by direct participation in power. Although Havel was the most visible figure and became the icon of the movement, it was the reformists and outsiders who represented the majority of opposition leaders.

What the first, anti-political type of pariah under Normalization brought as inspiration for all dissidents was the quest for a life in truth and dignity, even if the others differed on the definition of the political end-goal and the means to achieve it. The language of "living in truth" gave symbolic unity to the various oppositions and made central an Arendtian action within these movements, focusing on private action and organization, the politicized private realm as parallel to the unpolitical official space or as within the structuring system of that official space. The private realm was the political space under Normalization. Without even mass society, almost everyone is either an outsider or a parvenu.

2.3 *The Schnorrer, the Greengrocer, and the Rise of the Parvenus*

But not absolutely everyone. In Arendt's schema, it is not the parvenu who most betrays the conscious pariah, but the *schnorrer*, the non-privileged Jew who, knowing their double dependence, "refused to become a rebel" and instead "mortgaged himself to the parvenu, protecting the latter's position in society and in turn protected by him."⁶⁸ To peoples historically excluded from the sociopolitical scene, pariahs and not parvenus ought to serve as heroes. However, as long as Jews remained only social pariahs in Western Europe, becoming a parvenu could save them.⁶⁹ For this reason, "Modern Jewish history...is apt to forget about" pariahs.⁷⁰ The Shoah made the precariousness of the parvenu's status clear. Thus, for Arendt, "only within the framework of a people can a man live as a man among men," to which the pariah calls fellow pariahs to become conscious.⁷¹ Becoming conscious of their status as a pariah people, precarious no matter how assimilated into the dominant social order, is part of the story of the conscious pariah's life, and thus a story in that people's history

67 Renwick, "Anti-Political or Just Anti-Communist?," p. 303.

68 Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," p. 285.

69 See *ibid.*, p. 296.

70 Arendt, "We Refugees," p. 274.

71 Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," p. 297.

as it seeks a space where speech and action is possible, where heroes can straightforwardly emerge.

For this reason, the betrayal of the *schnorrer* is deeper than that of the parvenu. While both may be conscious of their double dependence on the dominant society, the parvenu at least gains a semi-membership in it. The *schnorrer*, equally aware but without the parvenu's precarious benefits, still protects their own place of exclusion and refuses to make a place of their own. Indeed, the *schnorrer* even protects the parvenu along with the dominant society. In this way, they turn their back on themselves, betraying the pariah in the process. The space for heroes created by pariahs needs to be made, as do all political spaces. Without it, especially when living with sheer force as under Normalization, there is little those without any access to that force can do. What makes the *schnorrer's* betrayal deep is not the turn from the pariah, but the protection of the parvenu. The *schnorrer*, then, is not the greengrocer.

The greengrocer may lead a relatively comfortable life within the bounds of the official and grey economies. However, non-elites under the ideology of the "as if" did not have the luxury of open dissent. They opted for "as if" conformity and retreat from political action into the privacy of their homes, gardens, and cottages. As Ivo Možný explained shortly after the regime breakdown, the common family, well adapted to this ideology, colonized the state because it was the backbone of both the grey economy and career growth. It had become the most important unit for social mobility. Dissidents, then,

were just other families, and from the perspective of the traditional bearers of common sense, they were not particularly trustworthy. The common person's innate instinct for class divisions compelled them to see society as divided into those at the top and those at the bottom. When they tried to place the dissidents into this division, they were at least uncertain into which clan to place them.⁷²

They could recognize among the dissidents some of the leading personalities from before the 1968 invasion. Even if these families could appreciate dissident principles and stances, they would not see them as relevant for their day-to-day problems and were at times suspicious of their motives.⁷³

With their visibility and international support, people in Havel's position were not as vulnerable as greengrocers. For David Ost, Havel's critique of the greengrocer and his appeal to living in truth is a simplistic view of a complex

⁷² Ivo Možný, *Proč tak snadno?* [*Why so Easy?*], Prague: Slon 1991, p. 20.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–3.

reality, a black and white vision of heroes and collaborators: "not everyone was equally powerless. When Havel was punished for his political activities, international petitions poured in on his behalf...Who did the greengrocer have?"⁷⁴ Havel's life in truth is an intellectual's way to oppose the regime, but the resource-poor's avenues of non-cooperation are more self-destructive than those of internationally recognized intellectuals.⁷⁵ Power is not distributed equally, not even among the powerless. It would be a mistake, therefore, to label as either parvenu or *schnorrer* all those who did not join the ranks of the dissidents and preferred to lay low.

Greengrocers can only join an opposition once the space for a movement has been made. During the Velvet Revolution, intellectuals, artists, sociologists, and priests first voiced calls for change. Upon reaching a critical mass of such calls, with the help of international events and perhaps happenstance, the masses joined in with enthusiasm. After Gorbachev's introduction of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, at the quarterly meetings of the Chartists, Ludvík Vaculík would call on those present to seek such openings. Havel issued a manifesto titled *A Few Sentences*, addressed to the government but also the general population, in the hope of bridging the divide between it and the Chartists.⁷⁶

Nonetheless, the space pariahs might make will not be a space for freedom, for speech and action wherein equals distinguish themselves, if it is not a public realm. Ost partly blames the Havelian "living in truth" paradigm for the rise of the illiberal anti-intellectual backlash in contemporary Central European societies.⁷⁷ He maintains that the paradigm is elitist, that it places guilt on those who were most vulnerable under the communist regime. This may be true in part. It is also, however, not the whole story, not even the whole story of elitism.

When the Slovak Constitution was drafted in the summer of 1992, it was not a creation of former pariahs. Although it was a collective work, a few main authors took part in it over a hasty couple of weeks. Lubomír Fogaš, one of its co-authors, was a member of a committee for drafting a constitution at the end of the communist era when there was a push for a more federal union. After 1989, Fogaš and others from the Normalization era joined the new committee to draft the constitution amidst Czech-Slovak tensions regarding the nature of

74 David Ost, "The Sham, and the Damage, of 'Living in Truth,'" *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2018, p. 303.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 305.

76 See Otáhal, *Opozice, moc, společnost*, p. 72.

77 Ost, "The Sham, and the Damage, of 'Living in Truth,'" p. 301.

the federation.⁷⁸ Besides Fogaš, who became a member of SDE (the Party of the Democratic Left, the reformed Communist Party), among the members who were present during the whole time of the drafting process were Milan Čič, the first Slovak prime minister during the era of power-sharing on behalf of the Communist Party and later a member of Vladimír Mečiar's HZDS (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia), and Milan Sečánsky, also of HZDS.⁷⁹ Only Sečánsky was expelled from the Communist Party in 1968, making a living as a high school teacher of law, which required at least a quiet conformity with the regime. Other members who took part in the drafting came from the circles of HZDS and the SNS (Slovak National Party). Jozef Klapáč, who took part in drafting one constitutional article, was a legal scholar at the Slovak Academy of Sciences and professor of law during the communist era.⁸⁰ The committee also collaborated with Ivan Gašparovič, who pursued a legal career before 1989, was a close ally of Mečiar during the peak of his rule, and later became the President of the Slovak Republic. A majority of the drafters thus represented those who benefited from or were a part of the previous regime. They were parvenus.

3 Interpretations of the Past in the Parallel *Polis*: Pariah Elitism, the Inauthentic Hero, and the Strong Man

For Arendt, isolation reduces activities to fabrication, to labor and work, which only needs nature around it rather than a public realm. Thus, “to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act.”⁸¹ However, since the events and consequences of action are both unpredictable and irreversible, its processes are less under control of the actor's strength than those of fabrication, labor, and work. The gathering together of the public realm, of the political space, is always at risk of collapse by the loss of power.

Because strength and force are insufficient to hold together the public realm or political space, this realm often frustrates the strong. This frustration is part of “The popular belief in a ‘strong man’...based on the delusion that we can ‘make’ something in the realm of human affairs...or it is conscious despair of

78 Vladimír Jancura, “Tvorcovia ústavy zvädzali súboj s časom” [The Creators of the Constitution Struggled with Time], *Pravda*, September 1, 2019, <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/247861-tvorcovia-ustavy-zvadzali-suboj-s-casom>.

79 Ibid.

80 “Jozef Klapáč,” in *Encyclopaedia Beliana*, Slovak Academy of Sciences, last modified March 2017. <https://beliana.sav.sk/heslo/klapac-jozef>.

81 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 188.

all action, political and non-political, coupled with the Utopian hope that it may be possible to treat men as one treats other 'material.'⁸² The frustrations of the strong—the realization that no strength is by itself powerful enough to make a public realm since humans are not the same as material objects—mistake making and fabrication (the purview of labor and work) for power (that of action).

But this error is also the result of strong men's successes. Still, these successes are never fully the result of the strong man as such. At best, he initiates action, commands others to perform it. While at one point the mutual dependence of commander and performer may have been clear, their separation leads to a ruler who, "isolated against others by his force," begins to "claim for himself what actually is the achievement of many."⁸³ Yet what the many achieve remains an achievement by strength since the many is isolated from the isolated ruler and the public realm or political space fails to appear, that is, since power has dissipated and no one appears to any other as an equal to distinguish themselves through speech and action. Thus, "the ruler monopolizes...the strength of those without whose help he would never be able to achieve anything," giving rise to a seeming strength that makes and fabricates of humans what he deems necessary or useful, whether to all or to himself alone.⁸⁴ For this reason, even life under a tyrant "is not necessarily characterized by weakness and sterility; on the contrary, the crafts and arts may flourish under these conditions if the ruler is 'benevolent' enough to leave his subjects alone in their isolation."⁸⁵ Thus, there arises what Arendt calls "the fallacy of the strong man who is powerful because he is alone."⁸⁶

One part of the quest for authentic Dasein in Heidegger is interpretation of the past as the "future which has been," though authenticity here requires awareness of self as well as of the context of one's existence.⁸⁷ Having grown up with interpretations of the past, Dasein is determined by them.⁸⁸ It can thus be deformed as much as formed by interpretations in and of the public sphere as part of the social nature of Dasein's thrownness and the relations, habits, traditions, rules, and obligations that nature imposes on it. Thus, Heidegger sees the need for a hero to aid public interpretation. Like Arendt's hero

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid., p. 189, p. 190.

84 Ibid., p. 190.

85 Ibid., p. 203.

86 Ibid., p. 190.

87 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 1996, p. 5.

88 Ibid., p. 17.

pressed in the timeless present by both past and future, Heidegger's hero appears as an authentic figure. However, even these figures may struggle with authenticity. It is thus possible to envisage the same process for inauthentic Dasein, giving rise to an inauthentic hero whose purpose is not forward-looking, but to offer easy solutions motivated by the present and the gains to be made from it.

Heidegger's inauthentic hero is distinct from Arendt's pretentious hero because the latter is inconsistent in self-presentation while the former offers consistent interpretations, though interpretations of the past that limit what the future could offer. While inauthentic heroes may present interpretations that take the form of nationalism, they can also be consistent in other modes of self-presentation, such as elitism. This mode is Havel's, who presents elitism from his status as pariah, in his condemnation of the greengrocer, through to his rise to power.

In the face of the ideology of the "as if," there is a risk of the pariah's call being for something inauthentic, as there is with all calls for a space for speech and action. After all, if mass society had done away with traditions and Normalization had left behind even that society's unpolitical collection of individuals, then the call of a pariah may be the call of one who seeks to remake the people according to a strong-man vision. The past looked to in order to shape the future may be one that, intentionally or otherwise, equally forecloses that future as anything other than what can be forged by the strong man.

The Charter '77 intellectuals often turned to the past to unravel the complexities of existence under Normalization and the prospects for the future. Many hours were spent addressing the controversies stemming from challenges to established narratives. Driven by the ethos of human rights, they pondered difficult questions of future Czech and Slovak life. For example, Jan Mlynárik's exposé, in his samizdat book *Causa Danubius*,⁸⁹ of the expulsion of three million Sudeten Germans after the Second World War led to volatile debates in the chartist circles. These dialogues were among the sources that inspired Havel, as president of the Czech Republic, to offer an apology to the Germans for the way postwar Czechoslovakia resolved the question of ethnic diversity.

Yet, even in the parallel *polis*, narratives about the past, despite occasionally heated debates, were not completely dissimilar in their framing from the official discourse. Shortly before the break, Eva Hahn observed a proximity

89 Jan Mlynárik, *Causa Danubius*, Prague: Danubius 2000.

between the majority of dissident approaches to the past and the mainstream discourse. They were all nation-centric, offering polarized interpretations of the past, and monistic.⁹⁰ Dissent at least occasionally disturbed that framing and engaged in dialogue and soul-searching when historiographical works by pariah historians were presented within their circle. However, Charter '77 was neither ever fully able to address that past nor present a full vision for the future concerning the fate of and relations to Czechoslovakia's German, Hungarian, and Roma minorities.

As noted above, Ost believed part of the disillusionment with the former dissident intellectuals, at least in Czechoslovakia, was the paradigm of "living in truth."⁹¹ Havel, like many other liberal reformists who gained power after 1989, failed, knowingly or not, to recognize their own privilege. Ost maintains that this failure led them to pursue reforms that benefited themselves and left the greengrocer in the dust, frustrated, disappointed, and angry, thus opening the path for right-wing populists.⁹² If Ost is correct, the parvenu and the *schnorrer* will, in such a situation, emerge along with the elitism of the former pariah, but not to drop their parvenu or *schnorrer* status. They will see in this elitism another or a new opportunity to adhere to a society that excludes or only nominally includes them.

What is more, in that contemporary society is mass society, unless the call from the pariah is for the creation of a space for self-presentation among equals, it will reinscribe the unpolitical structure of mass society. The parvenu and the *schnorrer*, and perhaps the greengrocer, detect this even if the pariah does not. For this reason, the dynamic between the elitism of the pariah and the emergence of at least the *schnorrer* and greengrocer, if not of the parvenu, is crucial. In this interaction, there may be glimpsed the transition of the pariah into a strong man, perhaps aided by the parvenu. That is, what may emerge in such moments is the combination of conscious despair and utopian hope Arendt cites as part of the frustration with the unpredictability and irreversibility of the public realm, especially if the tradition or past of mass society is one of just this despair and hope.

90 Michal Kopeček, "In Search of 'National Memory': The Politics of History, Nostalgia and the Historiography of Communism in the Czech Republic and East Central Europe," in *Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, ed. by Michal Kopeček, Budapest: Central European University Press 2008, pp. 75–92.

91 Ost, "The Sham, and the Damage, of 'Living in Truth,'" p. 301.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 308.

4 1989 as Free Political Action and Subsequent Isolations

Recent academic accounts of late Normalization tend to emphasize the continuation of its structures and processes into the new regime,⁹³ as well as their embeddedness in the global political and economic processes of the era.⁹⁴ However, over the last few months of 1989 and into the following year, there was mobilization for and broad public participation in political life. Encouraged by the changes in Poland and Hungary, by thousands of East Germans successfully fleeing to West Germany in the summer and autumn of 1989, and by the fall of the Berlin Wall, hundreds of thousands of Czechs and Slovaks poured into the streets following the suppression of a student demonstration on November 17, 1989. In that moment, real socialism's ideology of the "as if" was revealed in its irony. Pariahs emerged from their politicized privacy into the official *polis'* unpolitical space, and at least the greengrocers joined them. To whatever extent the parvenu and *schnorrer* were there was irrelevant because the official, unpolitical space of "as if" ideology became something new and was opened onto the rectilinear trajectory of natality that overtook the cycles of labor and of (tolerated) demonstration and suppression.

More than that, people spontaneously organized on the ground, establishing local chapters of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence in towns, villages, and workplaces. James Krapfl traces the extent of this mobilization in *Revolution with a Human Face*.⁹⁵ As Otáhal maps it out, some mobilization of civil society in Czechoslovakia had already occurred in previous years, as the number of dissident movements tracked by the Federal Bureau for Press and Information recorded four groupings being created in 1987, fourteen in 1988, and 39 in 1989.⁹⁶ People joined protests and religious pilgrimages, signed petitions, and joined discussions at local levels. Immediately following November 17, protests sprang up in bigger and smaller towns and local chapters of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence were formed. As a testament to their spontaneous creation, in some cases these chapters had to be renamed in order to fall

93 See, for example, Michal Kopeček, *Architekti dlouhé změny: Expertní kořeny postsocialismu v Československu* [Architects of a Long Change: Expert Roots of Postsocialism in Czechoslovakia], Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR and Argo 2019 and Muriel Blaive (ed.), *Perceptions of Society in Communist Europe: Regime Archives and Popular Opinion*, London, New York, New Delhi, and Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic 2018.

94 See, for example, Kristina Spohr, *Post Wall Post Square: Rebuilding the World After 1989*, London: William Collins 2019.

95 James Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2013.

96 Otáhal, *Opozice, moc, společnost*, p. 70.

in line with the later push for a unification of CF and PAV structures in the two republics. For example, Košice established Civic Forum, then later renamed it Civic Forum-Public Against Violence.⁹⁷ These are Arendt's councils, small-scale spaces of freedom equally open to hero, pariah, *schnorrer*, and greengrocer leading toward larger systems of governance. They were spaces of self-presentation which can be real or pretentious, authentic or inauthentic, and which remain fragile in the face of the global, national, and local elitism that seeks to separate knowledge of governance from the justification of action. They, however, remain spaces of an understanding which would make the knowledge of governance meaningful and fashion the data of history and of heroes' lives into stories worth telling, if only by telling a story of both the destruction of the public and private spheres by mass society and the further destruction of that society by Normalization's ideology of "as if," a story to justify something new.

However, CF and PAV gradually became more centralized and input from the local branches was cut off. This phenomenon was perceived as a lost opportunity to craft a new type of politics, opting instead for more of the same. Civic Forum felt pressure to make the most crucial decisions quickly, "via *facti* starting to fulfill the role of a political hegemon."⁹⁸ In Slovakia, the former opposition represented a less coherent group of people, with only a handful of Slovak dissidents having been part of Charter '77. It was comprised of a sizeable number of Catholic dissenters and ecological activists who came to the fore in the last few years before the regime change. Many intellectuals at the helm of PAV did not feel equipped to enter positions of political power and instead envisioned their role more as mediators with the task of navigating Slovakia from the communist era to the next, then retreating into academia or back to writing. The resulting vacancies in positions of power were quickly filled by ranking communists.⁹⁹ The local initiatives and activists of CF and PAV gradually grew disenchanted by the too-appeasing nature of political compromise, calling for a thorough decommunization of the public sphere, which was falling short on all levels of society. With the alienation of CF and PAV from the regional levels and the withdrawal of many former dissidents, public frustration turned against these movements, paving the way for the populists. One such populist was Václav Klaus, former economist at the Prognostic

97 Dionýz Hochel, public discussion with the leaders of November 89 events at the Human Rights Olympics (Omšené, April 11, 2019).

98 Jiří Suk, *Politika jako absurdní drama: Václav Havel v letech 1975–1989* [*Politics as an Absurd Drama: Václav Havel in the Years 1975–1989*], Prague: Paseka 2013, p. 352.

99 Jiří Suk, *Labyrintem revoluce* [*Through the Labyrinth of the Revolution*], Prague: Prostor 2003, p. 173.

Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, who spearheaded the neoliberal “bitter pill” policy of economic reforms. Another was Mečiar, former boxer and member of the *nomenklatura*, who made a skyrocketing climb within the ranks of PAV before he broke from it and joined the newly established Movement for a Democratic Slovakia. Nationalism became the main tool of political mobilization, culminating in neoconservative, inward-looking orientations to the question of political identities and seeking vindication of exclusivist policies in a mythologized past.

In addition, Havel found himself in the role of explicitly political leader. Although moderated by his moral compass, he realized the need for negotiation and compromise. Unlike, say, Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, who cut his teeth as a youth political leader,¹⁰⁰ Havel was not used to the art of political negotiation. He was often impatient with the way processes took place, with waiting for legislation to pass for instance. Often, he decided issues single-handedly without broader discussion even within CF, isolating his office from an organization that was isolating itself from the broader society.¹⁰¹ Even though Havel took the office of President of Czechoslovakia as a temporary solution, portraying himself as the guarantor of a peaceful path to the country’s first free elections, bold plans in domestic and foreign policy quickly followed, far exceeding a temporary role.¹⁰²

5 The Constitution of the New *Polis* and the Loss of Authenticity

The November events resulted in the removal of articles four and six from the Czechoslovak Constitution, ending one-party rule. However, doing so also *de facto* removed the structure that held the federation together. As a result, questions of power asymmetry between the Czech and Slovak representative structures became acute. Suk cites Šútovec, speaker of the Assembly of the Nations from 1990 to 1992: “the Czechoslovak state could have survived only under the condition of an immediate—and if need be forcible, revolutionary—structural and institutional reconstruction.”¹⁰³ The name of the country, and hence of the constitution, was amended twice in the years following November 1989, and

100 Suk, *Politika jako absurdní drama*, p. 351.

101 Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, p. 29; Suk, *Politika jako absurdní drama*, p. 358; Suk, *Labyrintem revoluce*, p. 241.

102 Suk, *Labyrintem revoluce*, p. 278.

103 *Ibid.*, p. 258.

the system of national councils was abolished and replaced by local administration. Regional administration was only created several years later.

The drafting of a new constitution for the new political order was met with a series of failures. Attempts had been made by reformist communists and dissident circles before 1989, but neither materialized into a viable document. The negotiated power-sharing arrangement following the roundtable discussions also prevented any radical redrafting. Even though the removal of the Communist Party's leading position meant a power vacuum, all the more so in that the federal constitution was hierarchically structured, the members of the federal assembly did not feel compelled to consider full constitutional reform.

The federal assembly consisted of the People's Council and the upper chamber, the Assembly of the Nations.¹⁰⁴ The lower chamber was an outcome of general elections, but the upper chamber consisted of an equal number of representatives from the Czech and Slovak Republics, despite the much smaller size of Slovakia. It also included several veto possibilities, leading to frequent crises and conflicts. Josef Vavroušek pointed out that the complicated structure, as well as a lack of differentiation of functions between the two chambers, disrupted communication channels and fostered duplicity between the federal and state levels.¹⁰⁵ These deficiencies, Vavroušek argued, were further accentuated by the void left by the Communist Party.

Despite these factors, the only attempt at a redesign of federal structures, by Vavroušek, did not meet with support at the Civic Forum headquarters. It was not perceived as a priority at the time.¹⁰⁶ Vavroušek also appealed to the leadership of People Against Violence, stating that, "if these legislative structures will not change before the elections, they will be petrified for the entire period after the election, and most likely until the next revolution."¹⁰⁷ But PAV also turned a deaf ear, some arguing they were too centralizing, others not considering them to be backed by sufficient expertise, and still others possibly suspicious that it was a trick against Slovaks.¹⁰⁸ Both CF and PAV dismissed Vavroušek's proposal as destabilizing.¹⁰⁹ Besides Pithart, Havel, and a handful of others, not enough willpower was mustered to adapt such changes at the time. Pithart, agreeing with Vavroušek, warned that this failure could lead to

104 Ibid., p. 256.

105 Ibid., p. 261.

106 Ibid., p. 260.

107 Ibid., p. 261.

108 Ibid., p. 263.

109 Ibid., p. 260.

the unraveling of the Czechoslovak state itself.¹¹⁰ But, after the meetings with CF and PAV and one meeting of experts, the topic fizzled out.

Such constitutional reform might have alleviated part of the tensions brought by the wave of nationalism that swept across Slovakia. As federal-state relations failed to be resolved within the structures of CF and PAV, nationalist elements in Slovakia set to resolve the question of representation by forming a separate state. In addition to being parvenus, many of the Slovak Constitution's drafters represented a political wing driven by nationalism. According to Fogaš, they drew inspiration from the constitution of the wartime Slovak state and the French and Spanish constitutions.¹¹¹ While the new constitution included a full catalogue of political, civic, social, economic, and cultural rights in its Bill of Rights, it also includes important remnants of the previous era, in particular robust and hierarchical prosecution.

Richard H. King observes that Arendt “drew relatively little on the discourse of liberal rights and freedom associated with American constitutional culture” and instead “emphasized the ‘concern for public freedom’ and, more generally, the idea of ‘public happiness’ as the core ideas of the American experiment that were manifest in free speech.”¹¹² The word of law is only part of a constitution. Its integration into public life is another. Slovaks have not historically fought *en masse* for their civil and political rights. This struggle took place in Vienna and Budapest with only a modest presence of Slovaks. The extension of social and economic rights came in spurts throughout the twentieth century, introduced by legislation from Prague or by totalitarian governments, seldom as an outcome of popular mass action. As a result, a sizeable chunk of the population perceives pressures for non-discrimination or integration of various minorities old and new as an ideology, a ‘human rights ideology,’ pushed by the West and endangering traditional domestic values and identities. The language of human rights was and is perceived as a foreign import. For Arendt, the threat to human rights, whether explicit or implicit through lack of interest in defending them, is not so much the result of a loss of rights as it is “the loss of a community willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever,” which is “the loss of a polity itself.”¹¹³ On this ground, if American constitutional culture is not found so much in its rights discourse but in its concern for public freedom and happiness, the Slovak public’s lack of interest in defending human rights or the regard of them as a suspicious import marks a failure to integrate

110 Ibid., p. 263.

111 Jancura, “Tvorcovia ústavy zvädzali súboj s časom.”

112 Richard H. King, *Arendt and America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2015, p. 98.

113 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 297.

a constitutional culture. This failure was perhaps foreshadowed by the failure of Normalization's pariahs to take full account of the country's past so as to present a vision for the future of its minorities.

History may make its data meaningful, but, it is composed of unpredictable and irreversible human events, and so events of rectilinearity, natality, and mortality. Its material is not like that of labor or scientific work. Its causal claims are always contingent, and contingent on accurate, pretentious, authentic, and inauthentic self-presentations. Thus, the causal relationships are difficult to tease out between insufficient historical accountings: the power vacuum left by the Communist Party, the complicated and self-defeating structure of the constitution that emerged, the disinterest in a fully new constitution, the distancing of the councils like Civic Forum and People against Violence from the public at large and Havel's isolation of himself from even these organizations, the public distrust in at least these organizations if not Havel himself or Czech interest more broadly, the parvenu status and/or nationalist interests in those who did participate in drafting the Slovak Constitution, the decisions as to what were the most pressing issues of the moment, and the concern over the infiltration of non-local traditions. Nonetheless, they add up to a culture that lost sight of the concern for what Arendt considers public freedom and happiness.

The Czech Constitution passed a constitutional law similar to the Slovak at the end of the existence of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. Later, in January 1993, legal continuity with the existing laws in the new state was proclaimed to be amended by a series of new laws.¹¹⁴ It was a political compromise, inspired by the constitution of 1920, that incorporated a Bill of Rights and acknowledged continuity with the previous regime's laws. Continuity of statehood is expressed in the Preamble and text of the Constitution, but also in state symbols and the state holiday marking the date of the creation of the first Czechoslovak Republic.¹¹⁵

Legislative design in both places was marked by the somewhat schizophrenic criminalization of the past of Normalization and an exalted claim to the legacies of a strongly mythologized ancient past, be it the lands of the Czech crown or the Great Moravian Empire for Slovakia. The Slovak Constitution particularly manipulates historical memory, marked by the nationalist discourses that emerged immediately after the events of 1989. This manipulation was the

114 Václav Pavlíček, "Ústava České republiky" [The Constitution of the Czech Republic], in *Demokracie a ústavnost [Democracy and Constitution]*, ed. by Jiří Kunc, Prague: Karolinum 1999, p. 162.

115 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

intent of the drafting team that was composed mostly of the members of the new nationalist and populist parties. The schizophrenia stemmed from the continuity in both the bulk of legislation and the legal profession. As to the latter, most Czech and all Slovak judges, lawyers, and prosecutors remained in their positions and continued to practice in the new regime.

Many argue that one of the greatest mistakes of the early transition period was the narrow focus on neoliberal market reforms as the sure recipe for democratic success. Ralf Dahrendorf captured already in 1997 the global neoliberal *Zeitgeist* of the early 1990s, when Nelson Mandela bet on the economy to solve South Africa's racial problems, Shimon Peres the problems of terrorism in Israel, and Northern Ireland of armed violence. Since politicians had largely failed before 1989, many believed it was time for businessmen to save the day. The first few rocky years of transition only underscored this belief in Central Europe: "A new economism has come to dominate public discourse which makes one wonder whether Marxism, which seemed well and truly dead, is celebrating an unexpected revival in capitalist circles where the prevailing creed seems to be: trust economic forces, and politics will come right by itself!"¹¹⁶ A class of economists with some know-how and connections, recruited from academic institutes or dissident ranks, rose to the forefront to pursue a neoliberal agenda of economic reforms. Milan Znoj argues that this focus also helps to explain the marginalization of alternative traditions of democratic thought.

Between the parvenu role of the majority of the new constitutions' drafters, the continuity of the legislation and constitutions themselves with the previous system, the appeals to presumed prior eras of regional strength, and the pressures of global capital, the stage was set for the new systems to emerge as a return to mass society, to the bureaucratic destruction of public and private space alike and the separation of the knowledge of governance from the justification of action. As Arendt says, "just as socialism is no remedy for capitalism, capitalism cannot be a remedy or an alternative for socialism."¹¹⁷ For her, the question of freedom, of the time-pressed space of speech and action, is not an economic question since both communism and capitalism are systems of mass society. The ideology of the "as if" perhaps made Czechoslovakia particularly susceptible to the appeals of a capitalist mass society in that its pariahs

116 Ralf Dahrendorf, *After 1989: Morals, Revolution and Civil Society*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 1997, p. 92.

117 Arendt, "Thoughts on Politics and Revolution: A Commentary," p. 220.

had a political system tied to an economic one to which to appeal in their attempts to bring the *schnorrer* and the greengrocer into the public realm: "Bourgeois freedom' is frequently and quite wrongly equated with the freedom to make more money than one actually needs. For this is the only 'freedom' which the East, where in fact one can become extremely rich, respects, too."¹¹⁸ Thus, in the way the Czech and Slovak constitutions were written, and who wrote them under which pressures and contexts, everything was prepared for inauthentic heroes to foreclose the future such that the elites of the knowledge of governance remained in their roles, without equals to whom they can or must justify themselves.

Milan Šimečka's 1979 *Restoration of Order* begins with the statement, "There are no greater defenders of order than victorious revolutionaries."¹¹⁹ This statement withstood the test of the years following 1989 in Czechoslovakia, where the question of who the victorious revolutionaries were quickly appears. The 'men of the Velvet Revolution,' the former dissidents or pariahs who spoke at squares filled with the parvenu, the *schnorrer*, and the greengrocer, and who sat at roundtables with the communist leadership, were marginalized in several ways. The very negotiating process was part of the legitimation that passed to the representatives of the old order. Many aspects of the process came at the expense of the former dissidents. Its subsequent victory then legitimated the neoliberal economic agenda over any alternative paths of democratization.

How do we know the stage was set for a re-destruction of a newly reborn political space, along with any parallel private space it may have had? Because of its legislative continuity and because of the history on which grounds it tried to justify itself. As James M. King points out, Arendt's answer to mass society's destruction of the public and private and to totalitarianism's further destruction of tradition is to develop another tradition through new types of stories. The first type is stories of "power, violence, freedom, authority" and the second "about particular persons, specifically those persons she saw as political actors who should serve as models for future generations," especially how they "stand against the destruction of political space."¹²⁰ The appeals to Czech crown lands and the Great Moravian Empire were intended as stories of strength to give the sheen of freedom, but a freedom to make money—a

118 Ibid., p. 221.

119 Milan Šimečka, *Obnovení pořádku: Příspěvek k typologii reálného socialismu* [*Restoration of Order: Contribution towards the Typology of Real Socialism*], Cologne: Index 1979, p. 3.

120 King, "Hannah Arendt's Mythology: The Political Nature of History and its Tales of Anti-heroes," p. 32, p. 33.

confusion of strength for power that allows a seeming power to adhere to the elites and parvenus guiding the country toward strength. They are not stories of pariahs standing against the destruction of the political space. Such standing against, by pariah-heroes or by councils, must be minimized and marginalized. No alternatives, no natality, nothing new can be allowed. However, the elitism Ost points out should also not be forgotten. If Havel forgets, ignores, or is unaware that his status as a pariah with global reach leads him to condemn the greengrocer who is without influence and to steadily isolate himself while in power, this elitism only further allows the parvenu and inauthentic pariah-hero to speak for the *schnorrer* and greengrocer with stories of strength and mass society and which confuse money for freedom.

Former dissidents variously anchored their legitimacy to the events of 1989. Sometimes they understand themselves as protectors of the freedom embedded in the revolutionary events despite all the hurdles the transition brought. Sometimes they understand the events as a benchmark to which to return in order to “finish the revolution.”¹²¹ Both options bring difficulties in relation to the authenticity of their leadership. Both narratives, those of the “Gentle Revolution” as well as the “Unfinished Revolution,” are selective and mythologizing at best. Indeed, the latter is also outright manipulative. Narration from a position of power, even with commendable intentions, can seldom prove authentic. It must be a justification to equals. In neither narrative does this happen, as both are deployed as techniques to stay in positions of power, on the premise that knowledge of governance has been separated from justification of action. In both cases, something is revealed about their self-presentation. Since self-presentation can be real or pretentious, depending on its consistency over time, the inconsistency of self-presentation, from “I want freedom” to “I prevented violence” or “I know what to do and how to do it,” shows these former dissidents in their pretentiousness. This movement is different from Havel’s in that his elitism is a thread of consistency throughout his story. The appeals to strong pasts by pretentious pariah-heroes only serves to show their masks of consistency as masks.

Further, since appeals to an unfinished revolution often come with claims to remain in the position of pariah, of being excluded, there is an occlusion of the very positions of power these strong men hold. “I know what to do and how to do it” becomes “I need your help, your force, to do it,” which is what Arendt identifies as the early stages of tyranny, when the mutual dependence of commander and performer is still recognized. Pariahs only make sense as political figures before the space for heroes is established. Once it does, if it is space for freedom, the former pariah can transform into a hero. If it is not

¹²¹ James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution: Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2011, p. xiv.

space for freedom, if the public and private realms have been destroyed once again, however, then the space that the pariahs worked to establish is a space of strong men figuring themselves as pariahs, presenting themselves as if excluded from the space of self-presentation. In a sense, they are correct, but only because the space for freedom was constructed, made as a space for pretentious self-presentation. In the Czechoslovak case, this occurred through the elitism of inauthentic pariahs, through the parvenu's design of that space, perhaps through the destruction of even mass society by the ideology of "as if," through global pressures toward a capitalist mass society that confuses money for freedom, and through appeals to a history of strength that foreclosed the future as a hopeful arena of unpredictable and irreversible consequences of action justified to equals.

6 Conclusion

For Arendt, political action proper concerns natality, the rectilinear self-presentation of oneself to equals in a common world of contingent facts. Heroes are those who present themselves as having a life story worth telling in its trajectory, though that story exceeds the individual whose life is revealed in it. Mass society, though, leaves questionable the possibility that heroes can emerge, since it destroys both the public space of self-presentation and the private space by reducing human life to the cycles of production and consumption. However, Czechoslovakia's post-Prague Spring real socialism goes beyond the destructions of mass society through the ideology of "as if" as a reduction of the social and political alike to force, abandoning even the bureaucratic gathering of mass society. Ironically, this abandonment created a private space that allowed dissident pariahs to emerge and create a parallel *polis* via Charter '77. These pariahs were of three types: anti-political outsiders, pragmatic outsiders, and those within the official space. Meanwhile, parvenus emerged with the offers of benefits from Normalization's state apparatuses. None of this, however, makes the greengrocer a *schnorrer* since Normalization's reduction to force means the greengrocer's lack of connections or resources in a world of pariahs and parvenus gives him nothing to gain from protecting or joining either. The greengrocer must wait for the political space to emerge in its fragility.

Prior to that emergence the Chartists often, like all political actors, turned to the past to make sense of Czechoslovakia's future. Yet the very privacy of the parallel *polis* led to a kind of pariah elitism which, coupled with the ever-presence of mass society, opened up the opportunity for the pariah and the greengrocer to become frustrated with the unpredictability and irreversibility of the newly reborn public realm. Despite this risk, the events of 1989 were moments of

political action, with pariah and greengrocer transforming Normalization's official yet unpolitical *polis* of force into a public realm and with Civic Forum and Public Against Violence emerging as the councils that Arendt says always appear in the course of revolutions. However, both these organizations and Havel himself steadily isolated themselves from the broader public and from each other, leaving the door open to nationalist populism, at least in Slovakia.

The rest of the story, though, is one of parvenus establishing continuity with Normalization's "as if" ideology and telling histories of strength to maintain control over the future, both of which fed into the appeal to a capitalist form of mass society and allowed those who claimed knowledge of governance both to maintain control without needing to justify themselves to equals and to marginalize the councils and authentic pariahs. These pariahs also contributed to this possibility through a disregard for their own privileged status. Combined, the pretentious pariah-become-hero, inconsistent and deceptive in self-presentation, stepped into the light to tell a story of seeming consistency as a pariah but disregarding the changed political circumstances, where the public realm had, briefly, reappeared. This realm is occluded in a self-presentation as a (permanent) pariah, itself a transformation into a strong-man self-presentation, even if one who recognizes his need of the many's force.

Like all histories, this one is contingent, subject to further and later re-examination by others, open to future interpretations. Perhaps those future histories will make of this data a series of moments that set into motion later births of political, public spaces without appeal to either mass society or strong pasts. Perhaps this history—the story of events that exceeded and overtook its actors such that they came to foreclose the future, in some cases by virtue of the very qualities that made them pariah-heroes under the conditions of Normalization, in others by dint of a pretentiousness to their self-presentation as pariahs, in still others because they were parvenus from the start—will come to be understood as the prelude for the emergence of new, authentic, and real heroes. As it stands in the present, however, it is a history, far from special or unique, of the loss of the public space once again, a history of pariahs coming to at least resemble strong men.

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