

Arendt and Ricœur on Ideology and Authority

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Abstract

Hannah Arendt's work is an important reference for Paul Ricœur. Her definition of *power* as the free action in concert of individuals within a community of equals, guaranteed by institutions, allows Ricœur to ground his reflection on the political dimension of recognition and justice. However, as I will show in this paper, such a definition is problematic, particularly because of the relation that Arendt establishes between power and authority, her decision to separate the social and the political, and her understanding of ideology, philosophy, and common sense in politics.

After describing Arendt's account of the relation between power and authority, I argue that, without rejecting the spirit of her political thought or her basic concepts, Ricœur's reflections on the functions of ideology in his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* offer a broader but complementary vision that allows us to understand the issues that remain obscure in Arendt's approach.

Keywords: Arendt, Ideology, Authority, Power, Social.

Résumé

L'œuvre de Hannah Arendt constitue une référence importante pour Paul Ricœur. La définition arendtienne du *pouvoir* comme agir ensemble des individus au sein d'une communauté d'égaux garantie par des institutions, fournit en effet à Ricœur les bases de sa réflexion sur la dimension politique de la reconnaissance et de la justice. Cependant, cet article s'efforce de montrer qu'une telle définition est problématique, non seulement en raison de la relation qu'Arendt établit entre le pouvoir et l'autorité, mais aussi en ce qui concerne sa distinction du social et du politique, sa compréhension de l'idéologie, ainsi que sa conception de la philosophie et du sens commun dans le domaine politique.

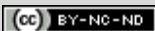
Après une analyse des thèses d'Arendt sur la relation entre le pouvoir et l'autorité, cet article soutient que, sans rejeter l'esprit de la pensée politique arendtienne et ses concepts de base, la conception ricœurienne des fonctions de l'idéologie développée dans *L'idéologie et l'utopie* offre une vision plus ample et plus complète qui permet d'éclairer les questions qui demeurent obscures dans l'approche de Hannah Arendt.

Mots-clés: Arendt, idéologie, autorité, pouvoir, social.

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Hannah Arendt's work is an important reference for Paul Ricœur. Her definition of *power* as the free action in concert of individuals within a community of equals, guaranteed by institutions, allows Ricœur to ground his reflection on the political dimension of recognition and justice. However, as I will show in this paper, such a definition is problematic, particularly because of the relations that Arendt establishes between power and authority.

For Arendt, political action depends on the legitimacy of authority, and it, in turn, depends on a relationship with a tradition whose origins lie in the founding of a political community. This tradition—constituted by the common sense of the community—must be judged by and updated through political action, a possibility that depends, as Montesquieu argued, on the effect of the principles that inspire it and not on an ideology or a theory.

In order to sustain this perspective, Arendt distinguishes the social from the political and discusses the relations established between ideology, philosophy, and common sense on the one hand and authority on the other. Of these relations, only that between authority and common sense is deemed genuinely political. The others are referred to systems of domination, to solitary reflection, or to the kind of theoretical speculation that risks becoming the ideology of a system of domination. As a result of these distinctions, the political is narrowed down to a single form of authority, which, although it has the advantage of allowing one to make a clear distinction between political authority and the totalitarian systems of domination, is also disadvantageous in that it closes off the possibility of a theoretical understanding of the relations between the social and the political and of the links between ideology, philosophy, and tradition.

This paper examines Arendt's views on the relation between power and authority and without rejecting the spirit of her political thought or her basic concepts, argues that the account of the functions of ideology presented in Ricœur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* offers a broader but complementary vision, which permits an understanding of the issues that remain obscure in Arendt's approach. Of particular interest are: the relation of philosophical criticism and common sense to ideology; the role of ideology in legitimizing political authority; and the link between the social and the political viewed in terms of a framework that is based on the motives of individuals—essentially ideological—that symbolically structures political and social action, and is capable of integrating a society, legitimizing political authority, or distorting its relation with the action of individuals and the world in general.

Arendt on Power and Authority

For Hannah Arendt, it is a feature of our time that the very notion of the world is in crisis, in the sense that we have lost a common public space. She believes that this has come about, because the world, the place where we act together, is not merely natural nor is it an artificial invention like a work of art. The fabric of the world is shaped by our relations, while they are occurring. The loss of the world implies, therefore, that such relations have ceased to exist. According to Arendt, these relations are essentially political. And so, if philosophy is to

understand the problem of a lost common public space, it must face the challenge of trying to represent the political.

One of Arendt's fundamental insights regarding the representation of the political is that it has to point to the free action of individuals in concert, an action that must occur in a public space, and must be based in turn on a form of authority. Concerning these principles, the problem of modernity is that: "Practically as well as theoretically, we are no longer in a position to know what authority really is."¹ The types of authority that in Arendt's opinion have traditionally been legitimate in the Western world are no longer valid in today's world.

One of the fundamental questions that Arendt raises in relation to power is, then, how to determine the qualities of a legitimate authority. She recognizes that authority implies disciplinary practices as well as obedience and subordination. However, she holds that if authority resorts to violence, it loses legitimacy: "where force is used, authority itself has failed."² Arendt thus identifies the function of authority in politics in the non-violent imposition of a reference to act in concert.

In order to try to determine the forms of genuinely political authority that have emerged in the West, Arendt reviews the relevant history, beginning with Plato. In her estimation, Plato tried to introduce a type of authority that differed from the one that prevailed in the Greek world, which basically relied on persuasion in the agora and physical force in the domestic realm. However, Arendt thinks that Plato's attempt was not successful, because in trying to replace the power of the tyrant, dependent as it was on the contingencies of the empirical world, he postulated an even more authoritarian example: the eternal laws that transcend both the world and politics. Plato downplayed politics and the world, locating the source of authority beyond them.

The concrete consequences of this absence of a worldly authority, Arendt argues, are different types of government, techniques of domination, and systems of organization lacking political certainty. In an authoritarian government, like the one proposed by Plato in the *Republic*, for example, what is decided depends on those in the upper part of the state apparatus, ultimately the *philosopher kings*, who are responsible for interpreting the divine ideas. In a tyranny, all are equally powerless in relation to the will of the tyrant. In a totalitarian regime, everything depends on the historical trend or the laws of nature, the leader himself being nothing more than an instrument of this trend or of these laws.

Where, then, can we find an example of a worldly political authority in the West? For Arendt, political authority is a Roman issue: "The word and the concept are Roman in origin."³ Only the Romans knew political certainty and how to implement it. Despite the ephemeral achievements of Athenian democracy, the Greeks were ignorant in this regard. This was because the Greek world was determined by the idea that contemplation is higher than action, something we see reflected in the political philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. In the Greek context, what matters is being able to *see* the truth, the theoretical life; and that truth displays itself publicly, sometimes in speech other times in action. The important thing is that everyone can *see* and *judge* what is shown in tragedies and comedies, or in the agora, where actors and speakers try to affect and persuade the rest. Truth, Goodness, Beauty, are all notions of authority, but there is no notion of political power.

This will "to display" is strange for the Roman world. In the Roman world the important thing is not to *see* but to *act*. Its fundamental problem is not a hermeneutical one, nor is it Marx's problem of how to transform the world. Its problem is rather how to found the world. The Romans were convinced of "the sacredness of foundation, in the sense that once something has

been founded it remains binding for all future generations. To be engaged in politics meant first and foremost to preserve the founding of the city of Rome."⁴ The source of all authority was Rome itself, as a city, as a form of political organization, which simply had to be present always: it was the Eternal City. Its authority did not lie, then, in its truth, beauty, or goodness but in the fact that it was founded and effectively existed as a world created by the political will of its citizens, something that was symbolized by the alliance between the People and the Senate: *Cum potestas in populo auctoritas in senatu sit*. For as long as the relation was effectively realized in an action in concert, Roma would exist.

The Roman notion of religion may well be the key to what it is that Arendt is trying to show.

In contrast to Greece, where piety depended upon the immediate revealed presence of the gods, here religion literally meant *religare*: to be tied back, obligated, to the enormous, almost superhuman and hence always legendary effort to lay the foundations, to build the cornerstone, to found for eternity.⁵

Politics, its authority, and therefore the survival of the world depend, from this perspective, on our link with tradition. It depends on our ability to continue the work of the founding fathers. Thus, what we have to carry out through our political action is precisely the work of foundation. "It is in this context that word and concept of authority originally appeared. The word *auctoritas* derives from the verb *augere*, 'augment,' and what authority or those in authority constantly augment is the foundation."⁶

The body responsible for representing authority in Rome was the Senate. It had no power, in the sense that it did not act, but as a representative of the past (*senectus*), of tradition, it gave meaning to action. Politics consists, according to Arendt, in precisely this kind of relation between authority and power; and this is what she believes has been missing in the West since the fall of Rome. Following the triumph of Christianity, and even more so during the period of secularization, religion and politics were going their separate ways. This threatened the existence of a common world, gradually promoting the disintegration of that world into elements that, instead of being related politically, were imposed violently.

However, Arendt asserts that even in our fragmented world there are events that reflect the Roman political spirit: "The events are the revolutions of the modern age."⁷ Arendt's idea of revolution is very special, and she detects its origin right at the transition between the Middle Ages and Modernity, more specifically in Machiavelli's work, and largely because he opposes the notion of power to both Greek and Christian notions of goodness. From this perspective, the main feature of politics, manifested at the beginning of a revolution, is what Machiavelli refers as a *virtue*:

There is no *virtù* without *fortuna* and no *fortuna* without *virtù*; the interplay between them indicates a harmony between man and world [...] which is as remote from the wisdom of the statesman as from the excellence, moral or otherwise, of the individual, and the competence of experts.⁸

What is this virtue? How can it serve to found new worlds in a political way? How is it manifested in revolutions, before a systematization of violence designed to achieve certain aims? How are we to represent it, taking into account its technical, moral, and conceptual indeterminacy as well as its dependence on fortune?

The function of such a *virtue* is to maintain the relation between authority and power. And Arendt supposes that the foundation on which it rests could well be the faculty of judgment, particularly in the area of taste, which Kant identified at an intermediate site between abstract ideas and their material application, or between empirical representations and the possible concepts that we could assign to them. "In other words, culture indicates that art and politics, their conflicts and tensions notwithstanding, are interrelated and even mutually dependent."⁹ There is an *art* to displaying and preserving great political deeds for posterity; and art requires political virtue if it is to preserve the world, the common space in which to express its works. We could say that authority is expressed artistically; that such expression gives meaning to political action as the principle that inspires it; and that action shapes the common space that allows for the existence of authority. There is, in Arendt's argument, a kind of circularity between authority and power, and the mediation is the aesthetic judgment.

Of course, it was Kant who pointed out that aesthetic judgment presupposes a common ground of discussion, a common sense, which involves:

being able to "think in the place of everybody else" [...] an "enlarged mentality" [...] The power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others [...] finds itself always and primarily [...] in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement.¹⁰

Thus, the basis of political action and its representation seems to be common sense, which allows aesthetic judgment and, consequently, *thinking in the place of everybody else*.

Political representation, then, requires a specific use of language that strives to maintain the plurality of perspectives that distinguish taste and attempts to reach a consensus, as a kind of *standard of taste*. In this way, we can determine in concert how our world should look and how our relationships should unfold within it.

In this sense, the public space should be one of free discussion between equals and the role authority plays in that space should be one of an exemplary reference, as in the "relations between grown-ups and children."¹¹ What this supposes, however, is that those entitled to engage in discussion as equals have already been submitted to a process of cultural homogenization from childhood. Their education has to have taught them *how the world is*. It seems to me, then, that where we ought to frame the problem identified by Arendt, is in the discussion on the relation between tradition and modernity. Political life, as presented by Arendt, must be bound to a tradition that refers in turn to the legendary time of the foundation of a community of equals that discuss freely, while respecting the plurality of perspectives, in order to achieve a consensus that defines the sense of communal life. But the problem we have to face is modern cosmopolitanism, a notion that is radically different from the Roman world and its idea of civilization, because what is imposed here is the irreducible difference of our origins; we do not all respond to the same foundational event as the guarantor of the meaning of our existence.

Arendt often represents this modernist trend with reference to the philosophy of Marx. In her opinion, "Marx theory of ideological superstructures ultimately rests on this anti-traditional hostility to speech and the concomitant glorification of violence."¹² Arendt's anti-Marxism is based on the idea that contrary to the traditional distinction between the fields of philosophy and praxis, between contemplative life and active life, Marx would have philosophy transform the world, a position he arrives at on the basis of his Hegelian theory of history. Arendt thinks that this move destabilizes the order of language with regard a longing that "philosophy, which has always been only 'for the few,' will one day be the common-sense reality for

everybody."¹³ On Arendt's reading, common sense, which the tradition defined in political terms, is defined in Marxism in terms that open the way to establish, legitimizing violence, a totalitarian government.

For Arendt, Marxism is just a sample, perhaps the most important, of the way in which thinkers of the XIXth century attempted to generate meaning through their theories in order to deal with the crisis of tradition. She suggests that in Hegel the "thread of historical continuity was the first substitute for tradition."¹⁴ She thinks that the problem with this approach was that the real social and cultural contradictions were reduced, on the basis of a thought structure, "to a unilinear, dialectically consistent development actually designed to repudiate not tradition as such, but the authority of all traditions."¹⁵ It was as if the new authority that would have to guide political praxis were the dialectical logic of history and its processes, leaving authority rest on philosophical speculation and no longer on tradition.

In this way history ceased to be defined by action, stopped representing the great deeds—leaving aside any role model that might inspire action—, and was defined rather by theories of history. It was as if actions worth remembering ceased to exist. It was as if they lost their luster and grandeur once they were positioned in the light of universality. It was as if it had stopped being important to judge our shared relations aesthetically.

For Arendt, such a way of representing history is analogous to the production of manufactured objects. With Hegel and Marx modern history became "a man-made process; the only all-comprehending process which owed its existence exclusively to the human race,"¹⁶ opening up the possibility of matching it with technology and thus equating political action with social engineering, namely, the technical production of the conditions for human activity.

For Arendt, this is the reason that in modernity, instead of having governments that safeguard public life, we have governments that are engaged in guaranteeing freedom, productivity, and safety in the private realm. The problem with this is that freedom is no longer understood in political terms but rather in economic ones, while politics becomes a matter of protecting particular interests, encouraging exclusions and violent confrontations instead of argument; and all of this is done in the name of developing certain social forces at the expense of others. This is how Arendt understands Weber's famous definition of the state as having monopoly of the legitimate use of force.

In order to avoid legitimizing violence, Arendt thinks that political discussion ought to take place among citizens, as opposed to philosophers and intellectuals. She thinks that this would lead in turn to devolution of decision-making processes from the state.¹⁷ In short, she thinks that a cultural revolution is required, one in which we have to question our ways of thinking, particularly with regard the roles that philosophy and ideology play in the area of politics.

The idea is that we do not need to study philosophical theories or to adjust our thinking to some ideology in order to understand politics. This is because political action precedes both. Understanding politics is an existential issue, in the sense that our reconciliation with the world depends on it, and no knowledge or technique can account for it.

There is a problem, however, in that after the cultural crisis of modernity, traditional frameworks of understanding, our common sense, are no longer a reliable guide. Imagination is challenged to try to conceive what it might mean to act in concert to create a political community. And standing before such a gap, in the solitude of our decision-making, Arendt presents a scene full of temptations that could cause us to fail. On the one hand, we have the temptation of the philosopher, who in the pursuit of truth takes refuge in endless speculation, but does not act. On

the other, there is the temptation of falling into the illusory representations of ideologies that simply present a false world, not only keeping us isolated but making of us a superfluous crowd, ready to be used indiscriminately to fulfill the purposes of others.

Framed in this way, philosophy would be politically relevant only in a world that has actually been dominated by ideology in the sense of a false image of the world, one that has been diffused through practices that Arendt called “organized lying.”¹⁸ This is ideology as the manipulation of the masses and public opinion, the tendentious rewriting of history, and image making, to the extent that the liar comes to believe his own lie: “organized lying always tends to destroy whatever it has decided to negate, although only totalitarian governments have consciously adopted lying as the first step to murder.”¹⁹

For Arendt, the only thinker who introduced a philosophical reflection that promoted political action rather than neutralizing it, beyond the ideological critique of false representations, was Montesquieu in *The Spirit of Laws*.²⁰ His idea was that each political system is governed by a principle, which instead of theoretically determining that system actually inspires it; that is to say, its base is not conceptual but aesthetic.²¹ The problem, however, is that philosophy in general, especially the modern version, challenges the authority of these principles, because while constantly criticizing them, it formalizes them, and once they have been rendered abstract in this way, they tend to become ideological. In this regard Arendt notes that Hegel and Marx formalize any given political principle, transforming it into an abstract notion of *the absolute*, without substantial content, conceiving it as a historical process, infinitely reproducible and of exchangeable content, which, when applied to concrete reality, ends by replacing authority and political participation with an administrative system. And this is how Arendt interprets the famous Marxist *classless society*: “Bureaucracy is a form of government from which the personal element of rulership has disappeared, and it is also true that such a government may rule the interest of no class.”²² The problem of trying to eliminate class interests through a system that manages the resources which meet the basic needs of individuals, even when the purpose is to combat social injustice, is that it will end by nullifying political participation and the possibility of public space. In such a system not even fear makes sense. What replaces fear here is terror. Terror refers to the absence of principle. It is the reaction to a system that controls life and does not inspire action, not even a defensive one.

However, Arendt recognizes that there are interpretations of Marx’s work that could save it from ideological degeneration. In her essay on Walter Benjamin, she notes that, for this author, Marxism should be understood not so much as a theory but rather as a metaphor for the conflicts within our social, political, and economic bonds, conflicts that are expressed in all of our objects and relationships, the implication being that we should think more poetically than philosophically. That is, we should think of Marxism not as a model for acting politically but rather as something that shapes what is not shown in our relationships. This does not mean that one has to create all sorts of fantasies, quite the opposite: we have to see that objects are manifestations of language that is ideologically determined. As Brecht said, the important thing “is to learn how to think crudely”;²³ how to see mere language and not its referents; how to discern its effects rather than suffering them. In short, the important thing is to learn how to judge reality aesthetically, which, for Arendt, is the greatest of all the political virtues.

In this sense, Benjamin’s work can be understood as a kind of purification of Marxist language, which is carried out in order to show that its main contribution is poetic, thus allowing it to regain a place within the tradition and to acquire real authority. Benjamin “discovered that the transmissibility of the past had been replaced by the citability and that in place of its

authority there had arisen a strange power to settle down, piecemeal, in the present and to deprive it of 'peace of mind,' the mindless peace of complacency."²⁴ He was interested in reinvigorating philosophical tradition, taking it out of context through the use of quotes, and viewing those quotes from a perspective that might be politically useful. As in medieval treatises, quotes give consistency and authority in their dual role of "interrupting the flow of the presentation with 'transcendent force' and at the same time concentrating within themselves that which is presented."²⁵

In this way, it becomes evident that the transmission of tradition involves some form of destruction, and not any kind of blind loyalty to a message or any excessive attachment. It is about knowing how to select what is worthwhile, constructing a kind of *quotes assemblage*, as a good collector would do or, according to the metaphor used by Arendt, as a *pearl diver* might do, allowing us "to understand them in their crystallized and thus ultimately fragmentary form as intentionless and non-communicative utterances of a 'world essence'."²⁶

Arendt is opposed to any prefabricated representation of political organization. She believes that such a representation nullifies the ability of a group of people to represent how they would like to face the matters that concern them, denying them the opportunity to take responsibility for themselves and their world. She suggests that in a normal political tradition, the source of authority must be different from a particular law, because this will allow each individual to decide, along with other members of the community and in a discussion that is never guaranteed to reach a consensus, how to act and what institutions to erect. This whole process is just what is lost in totalitarianism, because its representation of political life, which equates history, nature, and law in the same legitimating ideology, replaces all forms of traditional authority. When this happens, philosophical speculation becomes the ideology of the "political movements," which, if carried to the extreme, "always result in the same 'law' of elimination of individuals for the sake of the process or progress of the species."²⁷ The actual result of its application is "a state of affairs where people live together without having anything in common, without sharing some visible tangible realm of the world."²⁸ People are forced to live in a reality that cannot be identified at all in relation to their own experiences; and to tolerate it, they appeal to the abstract logic of ideology that functions as authority, meaning, and law at the same time, in total loneliness.

Ricœur on the Functions of Ideology

In the third part of the seventh study of *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur addresses the problem of the representation of our relations with others as part of public life, which he believes requires us to consider not only the dimensions of ethics and morality but also the dimension of politics. In this way, Ricœur introduces a specific notion of otherness, that of "institution," around which he tries to delineate a sense of reciprocity, a sense of equality, and a sense of justice.

In this context, an institution is understood as the structure that enables people to live together as members of a historical community; and as a representative of the common customs and rules that define the limits of action. Referring to Arendt's definition of *power*, Ricœur asserts that what an institution makes possible is action in concert,²⁹ without repressing plurality or coercing anyone through the use of violence.

In this framework, the role of an institution, as part of the ensemble of social relations, is to elevate the interaction of individuals to the level of the public sphere whilst imposing the necessary spatiotemporal limits and validity criteria. In this way an institution is able to confer

durability and certainty on action as though it were a “web of human relations within which each human life unfolds its brief history.”³⁰ Such a web of relations constitutes the public space, which, like the forms of sensibility in the transcendental aesthetic, never presents itself to perception as a phenomenon. For Ricœur, far from being an object, it is a task, something that is always to be done, and something that is imposed as a duty. It responds to the desire to live together, which must be constantly updated and is always at risk of fading away: “This is why it is perhaps reasonable to give to this common initiative, this desire to live together, the status of something forgotten.”³¹

An institution is, therefore, like the representation of the will to live together, which is often forgotten. And it fulfills its function not simply when we remember this will but when we actually promote its realization. As with all forms of memory, however, the problem is that what an institution allows us to remember is discerned in rather discontinuous irruptions. That is the fragility of power and of all forms of authority, and yet, as a representative of the form of memory that allows us to preserve the will to act in concert, an institution is the single point of application of justice.

Having reviewed the complex relations between power and authority in Arendt’s work, my question regarding Ricœur’s demonstration of the connection between Arendt’s definition of power and the role of institutions as a form of authority is really about the elements in Ricœur’s work that serve to clarify these relations. Are Arendt’s distinctions between ideology, philosophy, and common sense enough? One of the consequences of such distinctions is the separation, in Arendt’s work, of political and social issues, which has the advantage of allowing her to distance her views from those of Marxism. However, separating political and social issues is also problematic. Indeed, it has often been criticized, though not necessarily rejected, because it discourages reflection on the question of the relations that could be established between the two spheres. Is it not necessary, then, to find a more articulated conceptualization of the notion of ideology that, without rejecting Arendt’s concepts of power and public space, would allow us to better understand the relation between the social and the political? Would a notion of this type not open up a new field of reflection that allows us to rethink the relations that obtain between philosophy and common sense on the one hand power and authority on the other? Besides, would a different notion of ideology not allow us to examine the relation between the social and the political from a poetic perspective? Arendt’s essay on Walter Benjamin had of course suggested that this would be the appropriate perspective.

In my view, we can find the conceptualization of the notion of ideology that we seek in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. In them, Ricœur emphasizes the need to understand the concept in relation to three functions: legitimization of authority, distortion of reality, and social integration. Arendt thinks that only the first of these functions is political. But what Ricœur’s analysis will show us is that the notion of legitimacy not only responds to purely political reasons but also to a need for domination, and that the other two functions are not only a complement for legitimacy but also a condition for establishing the public space.

Given that Ricœur sets up an opposition between Arendt’s and Max Weber’s notions of power, in the already mentioned seventh study of *Oneself as Another*, it is appropriate to begin our review of the functions of ideology with the lecture on legitimization, where Weber is the main point of reference. There, the concept discussed is *Herrschaft*, which refers both to the notion of authority and to the notion of domination. This means that we have to face the question regarding what it is that is legitimized through ideology. Arendt showed how ideology is constantly used to legitimize domination in totalitarian systems, but is it not also necessary to

employ an ideology to legitimize a political authority? Is it simply enough to refer to tradition and its foundational events? Besides, is it not true that authority requires certain forms of domination in order to take hold? Is it not shown in the ambivalence of the word *Herrschaft* that, when dealing with power, there are always at stake, at the same time, factors of authority and domination, and that to separate them, as Arendt does, could prevent us from understanding their intimate relations?

As Ricœur notes, Weber is not like Arendt in that he proposes a motivational model which “discusses the conjunction between claims to legitimacy and beliefs in legitimacy, a nexus that supports a system of authority.”³² An analysis based on motives enables us to understand that what is at stake when we engage with an ideology is not just our ability to act but also our capacity to believe something, which is required if we are to respond to a claim of legitimization from authority. The legitimacy of authority depends largely on the successful establishment of the ideological function, and not as Arendt seems to assert solely on the political activity of individuals. What we have to ask, then, is how is an ideology able to shape the action of individuals in concert whilst supporting their beliefs and thus encouraging them to continue acting?

For Ricœur, “ideology occurs in the gap between a system of authority’s claim to legitimacy and our response in terms of belief.”³³ That is to say, it is not enough that authority inspires individuals in relation to certain principles such as those of Montesquieu; it also requires an ideological mediation to fill the gap between the system to be set up by institutions and the belief that individuals have in the claims of such institutions. What is it, then, that actually happens in that gap? “Ideology functions to add a certain surplus-value to our belief in order that our belief may meet the requirements of the authority’s claim.”³⁴ The function of ideology as a form to legitimate authority is, therefore, to create a surplus-value, in a way that recalls Marx’s account of the role of ideology with regard production processes. What Ricœur adds, however, is that surplus-value does not have to be understood simply in economic terms. It can also be understood as a function of a politics that favors the practice of power.

Marx suggested that surplus-value in economic processes affects our perception, causing a distortion that allows us to see commodities in a way different from their effective use, but Ricœur adds that it also distorts the meaning of political action. It follows that to understand the meaning of political action in varying contexts, rather than simply interpreting its principles, we ought to elucidate its motives, and this could only be afforded by rebuilding the network of meanings that constitutes the relations and patterns of authority in a given society. This approach, in turn, can introduce an orientation towards the *other*, because here, ideology gives structure to our action based on a claim coming from authority, which requires subjects to interpret how they must act. In this way, individuals can choose, in varying situations, to consent or to refuse the claim. The tension between claims and beliefs that, as we have seen, is ideological, occurs, therefore, in an interpretative process in relation to various motives that, according to Weber, can be classified as ideal types.³⁵ “It is only within a system of motives that the legitimacy of an order may be guaranteed.”³⁶ In other words, legitimacy of authority depends on the meaning, at specific moments, that action may have for political and social agents.

The basis of a formal system of authority and its power relations, then, is not only the action of individuals but the meaning of that action, which depends on their beliefs and interpretations, in the sense that they shape the ideology upon which an authority is legitimized. Ideology is thus not only a condition of political action but also the ability to imagine different forms of power.³⁷

Legitimacy does not depend here solely on unanimity or consensus; that is why, as Weber shows, it is likely to be imposed by the state, hence his suggestion regarding the state's monopoly of the use of force. Consensual legitimacy, however, could well be a utopia, which could be considered as a tool of criticism, even more so than as a condition of political life.

What we have to note for our discussion is that the opposition between consensus and imposition is possible because:

the coercion of the state is finally sustained not by its physical power but by our response of belief to its claims of legitimacy. To put it in the language of Plato, we might say that what enables the state's dominations is more its sophistic or rhetorical structure than its sheer force. Nevertheless, we must still insist on the fact that the state is defined by the recourse to force. The state has the last word in terms of force [...] It is legal for the state finally to use violence. Only with the introduction of the role of force is the concept of domination complete. Only then is the concept of claim, the claim to legitimacy, also complete.³⁸

The difference between the two forms of power is not only the use of violence as opposed to free action but the use of ideology in a context of motives, even if it can be reinforced through the use of violence in the form of disciplinary actions. What Ricœur shows through Weber, in fact, is that ideology and violence are necessary to consolidate a form of authority, like that of the state, and that this should not necessarily be condemned because the risk of an unsuccessful establishment of the ideological function would be precisely totalitarianism: "Where this response to the state is lacking, where people want instead a leader, a *Führer*, then a democracy is dead no matter what the extent of its own structural problems. Evident is a kind of disease in belief supporting the claim."³⁹

In order to understand the notion of ideology implicit in Weber's work, as well as its ambivalence with regard legitimization of authority and domination by force, Ricœur notes that the word used to refer to the belief that arises in response to a claim made by authority is *Vorstellung*: "A *Vorstellung* is each individual's representation of the order. The order exists more as an intellectual representation than as an emotional belief."⁴⁰ Such a representation "implies a differentiation between rulers and ruled. Here, as we observed, we are on the way to the definition of the state."⁴¹ In this sense, present in ideological representations is "not only an order but an implemented or imposed order [...] The notion of claim must then incorporate not only recognition of who we are but obedience to the one who rules."⁴² Ideology includes a factor of rulership that in Arendt's notion of political action is not completely clear. Can power be exercised without this element? What ideology makes evident is that on one side of its representation we find the ruler and his claim, and on the other side we find the governed and what they believe. A fundamental asymmetry is thus established, which facilitates the implementation of different forms of domination: "we have three stages in the concept of claim: the claim of an order in general, the claim of a ruling group within an organization, and the claim of those in power to have the capacity to implement order by the use of force."⁴³

A system of domination, however, cannot be automatically implemented through ideology. "The belief in legitimacy is not the result of the factors mentioned but something more. This something more is what intrigues me."⁴⁴ What Ricœur supposes about the belief that allows individuals' political participation through institutions is that it is "a supplement which must be treated as a mere fact, since it is derived from experience."⁴⁵ The belief is contingent; it may or

may not occur. That is why it empowers individuals, because in relation to it they can give or refuse the recognition on which the legitimacy of authority and its ability to exercise power relies.

We can say that what allows individuals to enter and leave the public space as well as being an active part of it, is their belief, which is like a valuable possession that must be understood in terms of interests or motives, and for which it would be necessary “to elaborate a concept of surplus-value, now linked not so much to work as to power.”⁴⁶ In Marx, surplus-value occurs because of the difference between the price of production and the price in the market, and it is subject to an economics of work and labor: “Marx calls this transfer of productivity from work to capital the fetishism of commodities.”⁴⁷ For Ricœur, however, instead of condemning it, as Marxism does, fetishism can be formulated as that which “is always more in the claim of a given system of authority than the normal course of motivation can satisfy,”⁴⁸ which in turn requires and leads to the belief that allows the political participation of individuals. That *something more* is supplied by ideology, as “the supplement to the coercive function of the state and more generally the supplement to the functioning of institutions in civil society as a whole.”⁴⁹

The effect of the adoption of the ideological belief is not only the establishment of authority but also the transfer of power to what it represents. Properly speaking, what is respected is not the power of the individuals in public posts but what ideology represents through them:

Persons in authority are themselves subject to the impersonal order and govern according to its rules, not their own inclinations; people do not owe obedience to authorities as individuals but as representatives of the impersonal order. All relationships are depersonalized. What we must recognize for our purposes is that the system is formalized, but the system also requires our belief in this formalization.⁵⁰

The question of ideology cannot be reduced, then, as Arendt would have it, to the implementation of systems of technical domination. The “political body has more memory and more expectations or hope than a technological system. The kind of rationality implied by politics is thus more integrative in terms of the temporal dimension.”⁵¹ In reference to Eric Weil’s *Philosophie politique*, we ought to consider the difference between the *rational* (rationnel) and the *reasonable* (raisonnable); the first relates to the technical, to the connection between means and ends; the second relates to the ability to integrate the social and the political. Arendt seems to reduce the ideological function to the former, while Ricœur shows that it also has a political dimension, linked to the social, even if the link is opaque: “A strategy of means can be technological, but a political decision always implies something else, and this is more opaque.”⁵² This *something else* that is *opaque* and that is provided by ideology is precisely the *sign* of the power of authority, on which the possibility of the belief and the motives for action, political and social, rely.

Is it not this opacity of ideology in relation to power and its ambivalence with regard legitimate authority and the implementation of a system of domination that leads thinkers such as Arendt and Marx to hastily qualify its political and social relations as a distortion? I believe that Ricœur’s reinterpretation of the *German Ideology* allows us to see how ideology may indeed distort our relations with the world without rejecting the legitimizing function of authority which, as we have seen, is necessary for political action.

The first Marxist principle that Ricœur questions here is the relation between changing and interpreting the world: “Can we change without interpreting, this is the problem.”⁵³ The root of this problem, he notes, is in the Marxist notion of ideology, presented as a set of concepts or

ideas that justify social order and its modes of production, concealing in turn the real relations of production. Ricœur explains that, like Weber, Marx uses the German word *Vorstellungen*: “The *Vorstellungen* are the way in which we look at ourselves and not the way in which we do, we act, we are.”⁵⁴ The ideology criticized by Marx is the one that “claims that in order to change people’s lives, it is enough to change their thoughts.”⁵⁵ But does all ideology function as a way of concealing the material processes through mental processes?

Ricœur thinks that the problem goes beyond having to reject the notion of ideology, reducing it to the justification of systems of domination; it requires us to criticize its legitimization function so that we may determine the extent to which it favors the establishment of authority and the extent to which it favors a system of domination. It is not the case, then, that ideology merely conceals reality rather it justifies certain types of relations, introducing motives regardless of their actual consequences.

In this regard, Ricœur proposes an unconventional reading of the *German Ideology*: What Marx identifies there is that ideology introduces a break “between consciousness and real individual, not between human being and structures.”⁵⁶ Thus, what Marx shows is that “the division of labor is troublesome because it is a division within the individual”;⁵⁷ that the conflict is not between material and mental processes, nor between the social and the political, it is rather one of motives, which occurs in every individual and not only between classes or between authority and society. Beyond this, Ricœur points out that “free association is Marx’s answer to the challenge of compulsory association in the class,”⁵⁸ effectively matching up Marx’s and Arendt’s positions. Viewed from this perspective, the question raised both by Marx and by Arendt concerns the possibility of acting freely and in concert beyond ideological compulsion: “Attention is drawn to the power of united individuals; their issue is not one of collective entities.”⁵⁹

Ricœur places an emphasis on the action of individuals, at the heart of Marx’s critique, allowing him to assert that “self-activity is a fundamental concept, for me the fundamental concept at this point in the text.”⁶⁰ Such activity (*Selbstbetätigung*) consists in the following: “the appropriation of a totality of productive forces and in the thus postulated development of a totality of capacities.”⁶¹ What we are talking about here is the activity of individuals under certain material conditions as opposed to collective entities, such as classes. Based on this, Ricœur presents his hypothesis: “My hypothesis in fact is that the great discovery of Marx here is the complex notion of the individual under definite conditions”;⁶² and that individual activity responds to a materialistic dialectic, which, according to an observation of Michel Henry, implies effort and resistance. When Marx discusses the relation between praxis and ideology in the *German Ideology* he places an emphasis on action, not on doctrinal coherence. The latter emphasis is found in the Marxism developed by Althusser, which shifts the discussion to the opposition between science and technology.

On this account, Arendt would be closer to Marx than is usually recognized; her critique of ideology as distortion and her plea for action would coincide with Marx’s motives in the *German Ideology*. Now, according to Ricœur, as we have already seen Arendt does not consider the ideological legitimization of authority in the same way as Weber. She locates its foundation in common sense, which is configured and transmitted by tradition. One wonders to what extent this version of common sense is itself founded on political action, as Arendt’s discussion on the Romans suggests. Is it not the case that common sense is a social presupposition, which is determined by the material and cultural conditions of specific contexts?

In my view, the lecture on the integrative function of ideology could serve to clarify these issues on common sense. Here, Ricœur explains that Clifford Geertz's anthropological point of view allowed him to conceive ideology as a shared structure that helps in the building of social identities. Ricœur shows that, from this anthropological point of view, ideology can be seen to encompass the other two functions, distortion and legitimacy, and to be capable, by virtue of its scope, of introducing a dimension that transcends and determines politics: "Here the main attitude is not at all suspicion nor even the value-free but conversation";⁶³ it is concerned about communication with people who not only have different opinions but also differ in terms of their culture.

Ideology here occupies the same place as common sense in Arendt's argument, which was considered as the foundation of the public space. Under the integrative function, ideology would shape not only beliefs, whilst running the risk of distorting our relations with the world, but also the conceptual framework that facilitates the search for meaning by way of signs that express the motives of the actors. What ideology shapes at this level is *symbolic action* or, as Ricœur prefers to say, the "action as symbolically mediated [...] in the sense that it is construed on the basis of fundamental symbols."⁶⁴ Ideology, then, would not only be the basis of political authority but also the ground of any kind of action, whether political or social, because it offers the symbolic mediation that allows us to establish all kinds of communication, the plurality of our origins notwithstanding.

However, Ricœur recognizes that the political use of this anthropological and communicational concept of ideology is limited: "I would claim that the primitive concept of ideology as integration cannot be used in political practice except for the purpose of preserving even in the situation of struggle the problematic of recognition."⁶⁵ As he notes: "Realization of the integrative character of ideology helps to preserve the appropriate level of class struggle, which is not to destroy the adversary but to achieve recognition. To put it in Hegelian terms, the struggle is for recognition and not for power."⁶⁶

In a power struggle "what prevents us from making a plea for civil war is that we have to preserve the life of our adversary; an element of belonging together persists. Even the class enemy is not a radical enemy."⁶⁷ Is it not precisely this function of ideology that prevents its degradation into systems of domination, which reach the most extreme forms in totalitarianism? Besides, is it not the link between the social and the political that seems to be missing in Arendt's argument? In my view, Arendt does not fully recognize the integrative function of ideology, which would have allowed her to recognize the intimate link between the social and the political that forms the basis of the legitimacy of political authority. She does not fully recognize this function because she places too much importance on political action regardless of the symbolic mediations that shape it and give it meaning. That is why political order is continually reduced in Arendt's argument to events like the founding of Rome. Might there not have been favorable social conditions for political discussion, prior to the founding of a political community like Rome, or the writing of a constitution like the American one?⁶⁸ Is action in concert leading to the establishment of political institutions, which guarantee freedom and political rights, not already present in the symbols of societies that constitute its ideology? And, if so, would political action not be the realization of what was in those symbols but only as a possibility, often utopian, and running the risk of distorting our relation with the world?

Ultimately, as Arendt points out in her essay on Benjamin, it is likely that ideology is simply a set of metaphors, the use of which can shape a sense of tradition and action in concert, or make us forget our mutual links and cause us to disperse. Thus, Benjamin's attempt to

reinterpret the sense of Marxism can be equated with Ricœur's effort to find and show, through his readings, what it is in ideology that may serve to promote political and social interactions. Arendt seems to be too focused on one type of authority and political action, perhaps in an attempt to determine precisely what is missing in the phenomenon of totalitarianism; but it seems that she has lost sight of the relations that could be established between ideology and other political and social phenomena. Without rejecting the spirit of Arendt's thought and its fundamental concepts, Ricœur's philosophy, especially his conceptualization of ideology, looks like an ideal complement capable of filling such gaps.

- ¹ Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 92.
- ² Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority," 92.
- ³ Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority," 104.
- ⁴ Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority," 120.
- ⁵ Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority," 121.
- ⁶ Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority," 121.
- ⁷ Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority," 136.
- ⁸ Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority," 137.
- ⁹ Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 215.
- ¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," 217.
- ¹¹ Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis of Education," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 188.
- ¹² Hannah Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 23.
- ¹³ Hannah Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," 23.
- ¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," 27.
- ¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," 27.
- ¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, "The Concept of History, Ancient and Modern," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 58.
- ¹⁷ In this regard, an important reference is her essay "On violence," in *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972).
- ¹⁸ Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 247.
- ¹⁹ Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 248.
- ²⁰ Hannah Arendt, "Montesquieu's Revision of the Tradition," in *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 63-69.
- ²¹ *Equality* in a republic, *Honor* in a monarchy, *Fear* in a tyranny.
- ²² Hannah Arendt, "From Hegel to Marx," in *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 77.
- ²³ Hannah Arendt, "Introduction. Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 15.

- ²⁴ Hannah Arendt, "Introduction. Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940," 38.
- ²⁵ Hannah Arendt, "Introduction. Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940," 39.
- ²⁶ Hannah Arendt, "Introduction. Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940," 50.
- ²⁷ Hannah Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding," in *Essays in Understanding* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1994), 341.
- ²⁸ Hannah Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding," 356-357.
- ²⁹ This notion of institution is related to Arendt's definition of political power, understood as the ability of the members of a group to act in concert, and distinct from the activities of labor, which are destined to fulfill immediate needs, and work, which is destined for the production of objects. Such a notion is present in all of Arendt's work, but the distinction among activities can be found in *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1989).
- ³⁰ Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1992), 196.
- ³¹ Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 197.
- ³² Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 183.
- ³³ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 183.
- ³⁴ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 183.
- ³⁵ Instrumentally rational, value-rational, affectual, traditional.
- ³⁶ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 188.
- ³⁷ In this regard, Ricœur's notion of *utopia* becomes relevant, because it implies the ability to reconfigure our ideological representations.
- ³⁸ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 195.
- ³⁹ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 197.
- ⁴⁰ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 199.
- ⁴¹ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 199.
- ⁴² Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 199.
- ⁴³ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 199.
- ⁴⁴ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 200.
- ⁴⁵ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 201.
- ⁴⁶ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 201.
- ⁴⁷ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 201.
- ⁴⁸ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 202.

⁴⁹ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 202.

⁵⁰ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 204.

⁵¹ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 210.

⁵² Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 210.

⁵³ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 70.

⁵⁴ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 71.

⁵⁵ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 71.

⁵⁶ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 97.

⁵⁷ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 97.

⁵⁸ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 98.

⁵⁹ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 99.

⁶⁰ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 99.

⁶¹ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 100.

⁶² Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 101.

⁶³ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 255.

⁶⁴ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 256.

⁶⁵ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 263.

⁶⁶ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 263.

⁶⁷ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 263.

⁶⁸ In her essay *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), Arendt draws a parallel between the founding of Rome and the writing of the American Constitution. Both events, in her opinion, reflect the spirit of creating a new political order that guarantees the free action in concert of its members.