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EUROPE'S DOUBLE ORIGIN: "THE GREEK" AND "THE ROMAN" IN HANNAH ARENDT'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL GENEALOGY OF EUROPE

abstract

In our paper we treat the Arendtian genealogy of Europe against its Heideggerian backdrop and also with regard to several key phenomenological commentaries, especially these of Reiner Schürmann, Jacques Taminiaux and Eliane Escoubas. Arendt often plays Greek against Roman politics insisting that the political is founded upon a unique type of experience, which is not that of truth, but of freedom perceived not as a means for political ends, but as being intrinsically political, which is for her a unique Roman achievement. What would such a discourse on Europe's founding narratives, which are no doubt not only Greek and Roman, but also Christian and Enlightenment-based, have to contribute to the on-going European crisis? The phenomenological discourse on the origins of Europe shouldn't be perceived as the reductive endeavor to identify a unique, unchanged, and ultimately exclusive principle determining the common European identity in terms of identity and difference or authenticity and inauthenticity, but in the terms of what Marc Crépon claims about Europe being the product of a dream, that is, the product of an infinitely renewable self-differentiation.

(I)   In his book *Europe. La voix romaine* (Brague 1992) the eminent French historian of Arabic and medieval philosophy Rémi Brague defended that today's Europe should recognize the diversity of its heritages: it is not only Athens and Jerusalem – Hellenism and Judaism-Christianity which have constituted its identity, but first and foremost Rome.[1] For Brague, a historian of philosophy with a sound knowledge of phenomenology,[2] *latinitas* more than *romanitas* is typical of what modern Europe has identified as its heritage (Brague 1992, pp. 35-36). The phenomenological echoes of Brague's questioning is more than evident in his explicit reference to Husserl's crisis of the European sciences and to Heidegger's critique of Western (European) metaphysics, when he introduces the dichotomy between Europe as a space (*lieu*) and Europe as a content (*contenu*), but also when he transcribes the initial question "*qui sommes-nous?*" into the question "*que possédons-nous en propre?*" (Brague 1992, pp. 32-33). Brague points out the Hellenocentrism of phenomenology, its depreciation of what strikes as derivative or inauthentic, last but not least, its silence as to what constitutes for him the third term between the two "creative" origins of Europe, that is the Greek and the Jewish-Christian (Brauge 1992, p. 4; see also Brauge 1993). Brague does justice, nevertheless, to a phenomenologist who is the only to differentiate herself from the phenomenological orthodoxy by recognizing the independence of Rome vis-à-vis Athens: Hannah Arendt (Brague 1992, p. 45).

Brague's critique of Hellenocentrism in phenomenology does not, of course, strike us as paradoxical: along with the revival of a discourse on Europe – from E. Husserl and M. Heidegger to H. Arendt, J. Patočka, J. Derrida, J.-L. Nancy, M. Crepon, B. Waldenfelds among others – it is Europe's "eccentric" identity which lies at the heart of this questioning.[3] In what follows I will raise the question of Europe's double, Greek and Roman, origin within Arendt's European phenomenological genealogy. Arendt's treatment of the "Roman answer" structured around the triangle of *traditio-auctoritas-religio* has emphasized the autonomy of the Roman origin with regard to its Greek predecessor in opposition to other leading European

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1   "Nous sommes des Romains, dirais-je. Et, en un sens, nous le sommes restés, après et malgré la révolution qui s'est produite dans le rapport avec le passé" (Brague 1991, p. 31). Brague alludes to Michel Serres' raising of the question of the Roman foundation in his *Rome. Le livre des foundations* (1983). He criticizes, nevertheless, the absence of clarity in Serres' argumentation with regard to the Roman foundation of Europe.

2   See for instance Brague 1984.

3   For a comprehensive account of Europe in phenomenology: Valdinoci, 1996.

phenomenological discourses, such as those of Martin Heidegger and, to a certain extent, of Jan Patočka.

Hannah Arendt has reflected intensively on the difficult relation between the Greek and the Roman origin of Europe, especially with regard to the political heritage of modern Europe. The key issue here is philosophy's relation to politics and it is in this light that she treats comparatively the Greek and the Roman experience of *theoria* and political *praxis*. It is, thus, worthwhile to elucidate the juxtaposition as well as the mutual penetration of the two experiences in light of Arendt's key writings, such as *The Human Condition*, *Between Past and Future* and *The Life of the Mind*, but also in light of less known writings, such as her 1950s draft essay of an *Introduction to Politics*.

(II)

In *The Human Condition* Arendt echoes Heidegger's devaluation of the Latin transcription of Greek terms such as the "politikon" and man as a "zōon politikon": these transcriptions have, in fact, led to a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of "the political" for the Greeks and its hasty identification with "the social" (Arendt 1983, p. 64). The radical misappropriation by the Romans was accompagned by a new equilibrium between the public (*res publica*) and the private (the family, the household), which witnessed, among others, the new function of the economy – the wealth as a driving social force – and of the gradual depreciation of the *bios theoretikos*. This evolution, which led to the "rise of the social", shook the very foundations of the dichotomy between the public and the private and was further exacerbated by Christianity; it is in this form that it reached the modern world (Arendt 1983, p. 66). Arendt thematizes in detail what she designates as "the solution of the Greeks" in the central part of her book, where she deals with the theme of action as the highest form of activity lying beyond labour and work (Arendt 1983, p. 251). Here Arendt explicates the revelatory function of action and speech, which in the Greek world, served the exercise of an "agonistic" spirit; due to this conception of the political as intrinsically "agonistic" and situated in the in-between of people, the Greeks, contrary to the Romans, neither included the law in the originary space of the political nor considered it as an autonomous region of human action. Arendt's account of the Greek pre-philosophical experience of speech and action exemplifies the *polis* as an essentially fragile community of action, as a "space of appearance", which as such incorporated the activity of the legislator as a content of action only to the extent that he continued to act, thus not fixing the law in an immutable finished product.[4] At the same time, the Greeks, once more contrary to the Romans, had no particular attachment to the *polis* as a territory or as a fatherland, they were not patriots, so to speak (Arendt 1983, pp. 253-254). Arendt's questioning in *The Human Condition* is further deepened in *The Life of the Mind* and also in *Between Past and Future*, a collection of essays which stands as an intermediary between the two. In "What is authority?" Arendt explicates "the one political experience which brought authority as word, concept and reality into our history – the Roman experience of foundation", that is the "conviction of the sacredness of foundation", on the occasion of her treatment of today's crisis of authority (Arendt 1967, p.p. 121, 136).[5] Authority was clearly

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4   In this sense, Aristotle seems to be more adequate than Plato in his investigation into the nature of action in terms of *energeia* (Arendt 1983, p. 267). Secondary literature on *The Human Condition* illustrates is Arendt's back and forth between two models of politics – the one being, the "agonistic", that is, the Greek – and the other, the "associationist", the Roman. In this respect, "agonistic" politics for Arendt would be the outcome of plurality, the models being Homeric heroes and Pericles in Athens's golden age; on the other hand, "associationist" politics for her would be those related to publicity, to the opening up of a space constituted by the in-between of human agents (Disch 1994, pp. 73-90).

5   It is noteworthy to note that for Arendt the concept of foundation is of critical importance for the European

not a constituent of the Greek public realm: a structural analogy for it would be the structure of the household, but also the political diagnoses and insights of Plato and Aristotle into the crisis of the Greek *polis*: "…[for them] the element of rule, as reflected in our present concept of authority so tremendously influenced by Platonic thinking, can be traced to a conflict between philosophy and politics, but not to specifically political experiences, that is, experiences immediately derived from the realm of human affairs…" (Arendt 1967, p. 113; also p. 116). The latter became possible only in Roman times, when the concept of authority in terms of rulers and ruled received a firm political foundation in terms of preserving the founding of the city of Rome: "The foundation of a new body politic [Rome] – to the Greeks an almost commonplace experience – became to the Romans the central, decisive, unrepeatable beginning of their whole history, a unique event" (Arendt 1967, p. 121).[6] To this originary event are linked two more instances, those of *religio* – rendered as the quality of being tied to the past – and of *traditio*: "The notion of a spiritual tradition and of authority in matters of thought and ideas is here derived from the political realm and therefore essentially derivative – just as Plato's conception of the role of reason and ideas in politics was derived from the philosophical realm and became derivative in the realm of human affairs" (Arendt 1967, p. 124). Arendt's powerful analysis of the "Roman trinity" of *auctoritas-religio-traditio*, as it has perpetuated its existence into the Christian Middle Ages, witnesses the twofold "continuity of the Roman spirit in the history of the West", but also the impasses from the vain efforts to disrupt the continuity between these three factors which constitute an "unbroken tradition of Western civilization" (Arendt 1967, pp. 127-128). Enlightenment Europe has clearly threatened the undisrupted continuity of this triad. While referring to Montesquieu's diagnosis of the loss of political authority Arendt observes: "In its broadest terms, one can describe this process as the breakdown of the old Roman trinity of religion, tradition, authority, whose innermost principle had survived the change of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire, as it was to survive the change of the Roman Empire into the Holy Roman Empire; it was the Roman principle that now was falling to pieces before the onslaught of the modern age." (Arendt 1963, p. 117).

Let us now move to the third instance in Arendt's Athens/Rome dichotomy. In the second part of *The Life of the Mind* Arendt elaborates on what she designates as the "Greek answer". What Arendt designates as the pre-philosophical assumptions of Greek philosophy corresponds to archaic thought but even more to archaic poetry, which contains an intact political core rendered explicit in the Greek term *athanatizein*: "What was involved, prior to the rise of philosophy, in the notion of a position outside the realm of human affairs, can best be clarified if we briefly examine the Greek notion of the function of poetry and the position of the bard. [...] To state this in conceptual language: The meaning of what actually happens and appears while it is happening is revealed when it has disappeared; remembrance, by which you make present to your mind what actually is absent and past, reveals the meaning in the form of a story" (Arendt 1981, pp. 131-132). Therefore, in the last presocratic philosophers, such as Parmenides, Being became another term for immortality, an event which gave rise to classical

political tradition: "In politics, the capacity to begin something new is exhibited most clearly, she asserts, in the foundation of bodies politic. Foundation, like spontaneous action, is a kind of creation *ex nihilo* – a circumstance that poses thorny issues for the founders" (Schnell 2002, p. 465).

6   The Roman experience of foundation is, therefore, an experience of repetition, retrieval, and also of imitation: "Inherent in the Roman concept of foundation we find, strangely enough, the notion that not only all decisive political changes in the course of Roman history were reconstitutions, namely, reforms of the old institutions and the retrievance of the original act of foundation, but that even this first act had been already a re-establishment, as it were, a regeneration and restoration" (Arendt 1963, pp. 207-208).

philosophy as such and philosophical conceptuality structured around the terms *logos, nous, alētheuein*.[7] If pre-philosophical Greece was structured around *athanatizein*, thus, laying a political claim on the public realm, classical Greece (Athens), essentially in Plato, condensed its intellectual endeavour in the attitude of admiration (*thaumazein*) (Taminiaux 1992, pp. 211-246). But this pursuit of contemplative philosophy jeopardized the pre-philosophical quest for immortality and made it succumb to the ideal of eternity, of eternal truth: "For this wonder is in no way connected with the quest for immortality; even in Aristotle's famous interpretation of wonder as *aporein* [...] there is no mention of *athanatizein*, the immortalizing activity we know from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and which indeed is entirely Platonic" (Arendt 1981, pp. 141).[8] Arendt comprehends *thaumazein* not in terms of confusion and perplexity, but as the affective disposition of admiration, as "admiring wonder"; it also links it to *physis* as the "invisible in the midst of the appearances".[9] In the transition from the classical Greek to the Roman conceptuality the philosophical language was impoverished – here Arendt echoes Heidegger's thesis – as key philosophical terms, such as the term θεωρία, were deprived of their conceptual strengh; thus, in Lucretius: "the philosophical relevance of spectatorship is entirely lost – a loss that befell so many Greek notions when they fell into Roman hands" (Arendt 1981, pp. 140). Arendt qualifies the relationship between the "Greek" and the "Roman answer" as oppositional: "On the one hand, admiring wonder at the spectacle into which man is born and for whose appreciation he is so well equipped in mind and body; on the other, the awful extremity of having been thrown into a world whose hostility is overwhelming, where fear is predominant and from which man tries his utmost to escape" (Arendt 1981, p. 162). In fact, if the "Greek answer" is to be understood as "thought [...] concerned with invisible things that are pointed to, nevertheless, by appearances", the Roman answer has an entirely different starting point, which is intrinsically non-philosophical or at least indifferent to philosophy, condensed in the phrase "*nihil admirari*": "thinking then arises out of the disintegration of reality and the resulting disunity of man and world, from which springs the need for another world, more harmonious and more meaningful" (Arendt 1981, p. 153). The shift in the understanding of *theoria* came out of the radical transposition of Greek conceptuality into something different, a shift which had a tremendous impact upon the fragile equilibrium between reason and will, thus favoring the will and at the same time turning philosophy into a *techne*, more precisely, into the highest possible form of *technē*, while the realm of politics became the only realm ascribed to authentic *praxis*: "Philosophy is called upon to compensate for the frustrations of politics, and, more generally, of life itself" (Arendt 1981, p. 160). Arendt's treatment of Christian philosophy in Saint Augustine conceives of him as a Roman philosopher, an identity which she acknowledges as decisive for the whole Roman Catholic Church through medieval times, thus, drawing a straight line from Paul and Saint Augustine to Duns Scotus passing through Aquinas.[10]

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7 Here Arendt proposed an etymology of the term which resembles Heidegger's in his *Parmenides* course (Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 54).

8 Cf. "The Concept of History" in: Arendt 1967, pp. 71-72. See Jeffrey A. Barash's comment on the immortality/eternity dichotomy in Arendt, where immortality in the early Greeks is essential political, pre-philosophical, whereas eternity fits the deal of theoretical truth (Barash 1996, pp. 262-263).

9 Plato's answer, that is the answer of the classical Greek philosophy, is identical to what Heidegger designates under the term of metaphysics (Arendt 1981, p. 145).

10 "That the Roman Catholic Church, despite the decisive influx of Greek philosophy, remained so profoundly Roman was due in no small mesure to the strange coincidence that her first and most influential philosopher should also have been the first man of thought to draw his deepest inspiration from Latin sources and experiences. In Augustine, the striving for eternal life as the summum bonum and the interpretation of eternal death as the summum malum reached the highest level of articulation because he combined them with the new era's discovery of an *inward* life" (Arendt

(III)   Arendt's questioning on Europe's double origin with regard to philosophy and politics have been the topic of several commentaries by phenomenologists such as Jacques Taminiaux, Eliane Escoubas, Reiner Schürmann and others, such as Barbara Cassin, most of the times in light of a comparison with Heidegger's discourse on Europe.[11] Barbara Cassin's treatment of the Greek/Roman dichotomy in Arendt retrieves a common hermeneutic "topos" to the extent that it insists on opposing the two major hermeneutic paradigms – Heidegger's and Arendt's (Cassin 1990). Cassin opens up the space of her questioning by pointing out several critical points of convergence between Arendt's and Heidegger's approach to Europe's tradition and modernity; first, their common concern for the dismantling of Western metaphysics, which for both of them is not a speculative issue, but an issue closely related to European and world-history, and, as far as Arendt is concerned, to political history; second, their indisputable debt to Greek thought, in particular to Aristotle. However, Cassin goes on to emphasize Arendt's harsh critique of the false political claims of the philosophical orthodoxy in major twentieth century philosophers as well as her explicit denunciation of political philosophy as such; this interpretive stance constitutes the leading thread of her questioning contrary to Eliane Escoubas' effort to reveal a political core in Heidegger – e.g. in his *Parmenides* course – by relating it to the European and world history contemporary to it (Escoubas 1987). While claiming to be a political theorist Arendt brings to light a phenomenological reception of classical tradition on the grounds of political praxis. In this light, contrary to Heidegger's standard argument on the inauthenticity of the Roman experience Cassin takes as a starting point Arendt's leading interpretation in *The Life of the Mind* and in other writings, where she adopts a positive hermeneutic standpoint on the "Roman experience" as an intrinsically political experience in terms different from those of the Greek world.

This is also without any doubt the most critical point of divergence from Heidegger's approach to this issue. In fact, the absolute independence of "the political" in the Latin world from "the political" in Greek thought is, nevertheless, far remote from Heidegger: "The political, which as πολιτικόν arise formerly out of the essence of the Greek πόλις, has come to be understood in the Roman way. Since the time of the Imperium, the Greek word "political" has meant something Roman. What is Greek about it now is only its sound" (Heidegger 1998, p. 45).

For Arendt, the "Roman trinity" of *religio-traditio-auctoritas* to which she dedicates several remarkable analyses cannot be perceived as an (inauthentic) transposition or translation of the "Greek experience" as such and cannot be reduced to it, therefore the Roman *imperium* is the result of the experience of foundation than of an exercice of power (*potestas*).[12] But the Roman experience, which is essentially an experience of foundation, is an irreversible reality and a landmark for modern Europe: "We can at least listen to the Romans; we can hear them, with Arendt, alongside the Greeks – two fundamental experiences which do not form a sequence, two irreductible events. We need no longer think of the Romans, with Heidegger, as following the Greeks, a mere running out" (Cassin 1990, p. 38). Contrary to Heidegger, what is genuine in the Presocratic inception of philosophy is not theoretical αλήθεια, originary truth, but political freedom. Parmenides, understood in this sense, would not be a part of the Presocratic or Preplatonic philosophical "moment", as he too belongs to the philosophical tradition which separated philosophical from political life, βίος θεωρητικός from βίος πρακτικός. In this sense, Arendt is closer to Patočka than to Heidegger in the way she perceives "the Greek moment", as

1981, p. 85; Arendt's emphasis).

11   Cf. indicatively: Dastur 1993, pp. 185-219; Chiereghin 1993, 197-224; Gasché 2009, pp. 124-143.

12   "To the Romans, at least, the conquest of Italy and the building of an empire were legitimate to the extent that the conquered territories enlarged the foundation of the city and remained tied to it" (Arendt 1963, p. 201). On the opposition between *potestas* and *auctoritas* see: "What Is Authority?" in Arendt, 1967.

for her too the breach between the Greek inception and the beginning of philosophy is set not by θεωρία but by political πράξις for which Socrates, not Plato, would serve as the ideal type. Cassin goes on to thematize the Greek conception of "the political" along with Socrates, but also the Sophists and tragic poets and concludes stressing Arendt's emphasis on the political versus the philosophical and on freedom and judgment against theoretical knowledge and truth criticizing Heidegger's apoliticism as responsible for his depreciation of a whole European tradition which emerges in ancient Roman, a tradition endowed with an eminently political character. For Cassin, who follows Arendt on this issue, it is Heidegger's transposition of the Greek πόλις/Roman res publica couple into the original/derivative or authentic/inauthentic binary oppositions of αλήθεια/rectitudo which testifies mostly his apoliticism (Cassin 1990, p. 48).[13] On the whole, Cassin identifies the common themes shared by the two thinkers: their idea of a philosophical tradition which should be liberated from pure scholasticism and examined anew in a phenomenological light; the need for phenomenological attention as to the way the past summons us; the importance of *logos* for politics with regard to its Greek beginning. She also, nevertheless, recognizes their profound disagreement as to many critical issues in light of the relation of philosophy to politics, of truth to freedom. In this respect, a questionable conclusion in Cassin's analysis is her conviction that "the reaction against Latinity and the concern for the Greek origin hidden beneath the translation is certainly one of the elements in Arendt's attitude to the past" (Cassin 1990, p. 35).[14] For us, this is clearly a Heideggerian twist of Arendt's analysis, which in all her texts, and especially in those we will see closer in a while, speaks in favor of the autonomy of the "Roman answer" vis-as-vis the "Greek answer". But also within Arendt's dichotomy between the pre-philosophic, that is the proto-political, and the philosophic "Greek answer" Cassin sees the in-between that Socrates represent for the Greek *polis*, which is intrinsically non philosophical, that is, idealistic and Platonic, but political, that is, pluralist, "doxic" and sophistic. In opposition to the middle Heidegger's ontologizing reading of the Greek *polis* – rendered explicit also in his interpretation of Greek tragedy – Cassin discovers in Arendt a fundamental claim: "Hence politics is essentially a politics of appearance; and Greek politics speaks the language of the sophists and deploys all its possibilities: plurality, the space of appearances, persuasion, judgement" (Cassin 1990, p. 47).

Eliane Escoubas, on the other hand, starts with recognizing the intrinsically phenomenological tenure of both Heidegger's and Arendt's reflection on the question "*Who are we?*" in contrast to the question "*What are we?*".[15] Arendt structures her idea of public space in terms of explosition which is of the order of an appearing (Erscheinen). Escoubas questions further what Arendt means as the "Greek answer" focusing on *The Human Condition.* The key concept of Arendt's analysis is the Greek term "*athanatizein*", which she places at the heart of her reflection on Greek politics.[16] But classical Greek philosophy does not belong to the eventful character of

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13   Here Cassin takes as a point of criticism Heidegger's consecutive interpretations of Sophocles' *Antigone*, also in the *Parmenides* course.

14   Cassin elaborates further the Greek/Roman dichotomy with regard to Arendt's differentiation between Greek "agonistic" politics and Roman "imitative" politics (Cassin 1990, p. 37). See also on this issue: Euben 2000, pp. 151-164.

15   "Question du qui – question du Dasein : une même question chez Arendt et chez Heidegger ? Une question, en tout cas, enracinée dans le "phénoménologique" en tant que le mode de l'*apparaître*. Exposition (disclosure – *Enthüllung*) chez Arendt, apparaître (*Erscheinen*) chez Heidegger sont ainsi le fondement de la *Wer-Frage* : ce fondement est phénoménologique. Dans l'*exposition* et l'*apparaître* s'élabore la 'solution des Grecs'..." (Escoubas 1991, p. 56; Escoubas' emphasis).

16   "Lieu de la liberté, la polis est le lieu de l' 'évènement' ; de ce qui surgit sous la triple forme du 'nouveau', de l' 'imprevisible' et de l' 'insaisissable' [...] inscrivant les évènements dans la mémoire comme lieu d'exposition, il [l'évènement] les dote d'une permanence. La *polis*, lieu de tous les 'commencements', instauration d'une histoire

the *polis* anymore.[17] The hesitation vis-à-vis the political of classical Greek thought is on the one side of a discontinuous evolution, whereas the Roman city-state stands on the other: if for the "pre-philosophical" (pre-Platonic), essentially political, world the political was of the order of the eventful, the event *par excellence* so to speak, the substitution of the originary triad of plurality-speech-action by the Roman triad authority-religion-tradition makes of politics a homogeneous and predictable process; at the same time, Greek citizenship is substituted by the *urbanitas*, that is, by a place – the patria – to which everything must go back to and therefore *patria* is not *polis*.[18] Escoubas links here Arendt's interpretation of the gap between Athens and Rome as to the nature of the political to Heidegger's equation of the *imperium romanum* to a kind of commandment (*Befehl*) so that they both accept, even though in different terms, the "Roman answer" as a prefiguration of modernity.[19]

Another critical issue to raise with regard to Arendt's relation to Heidegger with regard to philosophy and politics is the presence in them of the Aristotelian *praxis/poiesis* dichotomy. Phenomenologists such as Jacques Taminiaux have tempted a comparative reading of Arendt and Heidegger on this basis. For Taminiaux, Arendt's political thought reads Aristotelian *praxis* in light of Kant's theory of judgment, leaving thus Plato alone to confront the accusation of apoliticism. Taminiaux interprets Heidegger's phenomenological reading of Aristotelian ethics in light of Arendt's labor-work-action triad, thus, introducing a series of critical questions and aporias in the ongoing discussion on the relation of philosophy and politics in them.[20] Contrary to Taminiaux's argument, others, such as Dana Vila, refute the importance of this dichotomy for the formation of her political thought and doubts the significance of its phenomenological background.[21] Last but not least, phenomenologists, such as Peg Birmingham, deny the unconditional chasm of natality in Arendt and being-towards-death in Heidegger, thus, proposing a new reading of several phenomenological themes in *Being and Time* which suggest an insight into natality and being-toward-birth in Heidegger too.[22]

(V) Let us now move beyond these standard references to Arendt's major works in order to seek for answers to the question of Europe's double origin from the viewpoint of less known early

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(*history*), est aussi le lieu ou les actions et les paroles constitutives de l'exposition du qui se reinscrivent dans des paroles, dans d'*autres* paroles: dans des histoires racontées (*stories*)..." (Arendt 1983, p. 59).

17   "...avec Platon, selon Arendt, le theme *lexico-pratique* en lieu dans la *polis* cède la place à un thème *psycho-théorique* qui est, en quelque sorte, apolitique; en quelque sorte, car on peut dire que Platon congédie le politique et cela ressemble beaucoup à la façon dont Platon congédie la poésie), ou bien qu'avec Platon le politique prend une autre tournure" (Arendt 1983, p. 58; Escoubas' emphasis). On the notion of event and its importance for Arendt's thought:Taminiaux 1984.

18   "L'imitation est le mode d'*augmentation* de la fondation et le caractère politique du romain devient l'*urbanitas*. L'*urbanitas* prend la place du *bios politikos* et, en même temps, l'imitation induit une visée d'universalité, de sorte que le politique romain se décline *urbi* et *orbi*" (Escoubas 1991, p. 67 ; Escoubas' emphasis).

19   "Les Romains n'ouvrent-ils pas alors la porte à la modernité, avec, comme Arendt l'analyse, la substitution du *comportement* à l'*action* et la substitution du *processus* à l'*évènement* – en fin de compte, avec la substitution du social au *politique*?..." (ibid, p. 95 ; Escoubas' emphasis).

20   See in particular J. Taminiaux's analysis in *La fille de Thrace et le penseur professionnel. Arendt et Heidegger*, *op.cit.* Taminiaux reads Arendt's analyses in *The Human Condition* and elsewhere as replies to Heidegger's appropriation of the Greeks in the period where his fundamental ontology was shaped, a key example being his course on the *Sophist* (Taminiaux 1992, p. 25). See also a series of shorter studies such as Taminiaux 1985.

21   "Arendt, then, describes freedom, rather than the good life, as the *raison d'être* of politics; she identifies the initiatory dimension of action as the chief locus of freedom; and she sees virtuosity of performance as its primary manifestation. When combined, these aspects suggest that Arendt's view of action is more than a little different from Aristotle's" (Vila 1996, p. 45).

22   "Although largely ignored by readers of both Heidegger and Arendt, Heidegger's notion of being-toward-birth, particularly when thought through his discussion of *Fürsorge*, offers a corrective to Arendt's discussion of natality" (Birmingham 2002, p. 262).

but equally important texts of hers, such as her 1950s preparatory notes for a never written *Introduction to Politics* (Arendt 1995). Jacques Taminiaux is to our knowledge one of the few who have thematized the Athens/Rome dichotomy in Arendt from the viewpoint of the drafts of her 1950s draft writing (Taminiaux 2000).

Here Arendt sets out posing a dramatic event of European, also of world, history, that is the threat of a nuclear war or of what she calls "total war" (guerre totale), that is a war which leads to a disequilibrium between the force of production and the force of destruction: "Les instruments de violence necessaries a la destruction sont crees pour ainsi dire a l'image des instruments de production et l'arsenal technique de chaque époque les englobe tous deux de la meme maniere [...] Mais le pouvoir de detruire et le pouvoir de produire ne s'equilibrent pas toujours de facon parfaite" (Arendt 1995, p. 126). On another occasion she admits rather superficially that this war is not the offspring of Europe, but that of America, which is in a certain sense non-European, still serious doubts could be raised against this claim (Arendt 1958, pp. 578-580).[23] Through a remarkable analysis of what she designates as a process of annihilation Arendt comes to differentiate Europe's previous World Wars – but also totalitarian regimes though it is their offspring, from the rise of a new reality introduced on a world scale by nuclear power (Arendt 1995, p. 131). In nuclear war Arendt sees the accomplishment of a process prefigured in WWII, that is, the complete annihilation of the defeated, a process that is intrinsically non-political, as it bursts open the limits of the political in an unprecedented way, even in totalitarian regimes. What makes of this new reality – European or planetary (in Heidegger's terms)/post-European (in Patočka's terms) – a non-political reality? It is the absence or superflousness of negotiations and the return to "brute" existence. Violent annihilation is aimed at the murder of one or many individual existences, but of something that is potentially immortal, also at the destitution not of particulars productive means, but at the extermination of a whole historico-political reality. It is in the context of a harsh critique of today's European – or driven by the European mode of knowledge and production – reality that Arendt poses the origin of the political in the Romans so as to circumscribe its destitution by a "surpassing of the limits inherent in violent action" proper to politics in the Atomic age.[24] If contemporary Europe ends up in the destitution of the political – inaugurated by totalitarianism and exacerbated by the reality of the "total war" – its beginning is a political one. It is here that Arendt turns to another glorified war, the Trojean War. Contrary to other systematic analyses of classical political thought, Arendt builds a bridge between Home and Cicero, archaic Greek and Roman *res publica* in order to ask the vital question: "Was the Trojean War a war of annihilation just like contemporary, actual or potential, total wars?" (Arendt 1995, p. 137). I would like to delve into Arendt's brilliant analysis of the way in which the Greek polis instaures politics through an exclusion of the possibility of annihilation, such as the Trojean war, and also of the cultivation of a special discerning ability, which makes Arendt approach Aristotle's φρόνιμος to Kant's critique of judgment. Nevertheless, it is not the Greek but the Roman instauration of the political – as a re-instauration of Troy by the Romans, the descendants of the Trojans (*Ennead*) – that determines fully what belongs to the realm of the political and what lies outside it. The determining factor, which marks also the difference between the Greek and the Roman-modern experience of the political is the negation of violence through alliance

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23   See on this issue: Sylvie Courtine-Denamy, "Préface", in Arendt (1995), pp. 16-17.
24   "Ce qui en principe depuis les Romains, et de fait depuis les trois ou quatre derniers siècles que nous appelons l'époque moderne, paraissait impossible, parce que cela ne s'était plus produit au coeur du monde civilisé, à savoir l'extermination de peuples entiers et le fait de rayer de la surface de la terre des civilisations tout entières, était réapparu d'un seul coup comme une menace dans la sphère du possible-trop possible" (Arendt 1995, p. 133).

and contract (*pacte*) conceived as a transformative practice, a "*consensus omnium*" which ends up in the creation of the new, that is, of new relations between individuals and peoples. The central importance of contract at the Roman beginning of Europe is intrinsically linked to another phenomenon, that of the law (*lex*). Here, in complete disagreement with Heidegger's conjunction of *lex* and *imperium*, Arendt envisages the Roman law as a factor of novelty, of creating bonds between people under conditions of plurality and exchange of λόγοι.[25] Thus, contrary to Heidegger, Arendt opts for the superiority of the "Roman" over the Greek to the extent that the former satisfies the two conditions of possibility for the emergence of the political, that is, human plurality and noverty. In this respect, Arendt interprets the oppositional couple νόμος (*nomos*)-*lex* on the background of her poiesis/praxis opposition, where the Greek νόμος succumbs to the model of production, whereas Roman *lex* to the pluralistic model of *praxis*. The Roman law, on the contrary, is "praxical" in its very essence, as it opens up a new political space through the contract between people: if for Heidegger the Roman *imperium* is metaphysical through and through – the essential prefiguration of all modern "epochal" principles ending up to Nietzsche's will to power – for Arendt the *imperium* is the actual realization of Roman law as the enduring creation of new bonds of alliance and association. In this sense, what for Heidegger lies at the heart of the Roman beginning, that is expansionism and will to domination, is for Arendt nothing but a late derivative of its initial impetus to a *pax romana*, as she challenges Heidegger's claim about the Roman imperium as a manifestation of a will to domination.

(VI) Arendt often plays Greek against Roman politics insisting that the political is founded upon a unique type of experience, which is not that of truth, but of freedom not as a means for political ends but as being intrinsically political, which is for her a unique Roman achievement. Considered in a different light, if Greek νόμος is ontological in its essence – in Reiner Schürmann's beautiful terms of law's tragic "double bind" – as it is always relevant to a limit and to its (non)transgression, Roman l*ex* is intrinsically political, always inscribed within a networks of relations and aims at creating or recreating new ones. This is particularly important because Europe is born out of this process of alliances in terms of foreign policy, the field in which the Romans prevailed in what Arendt designates as the "Roman politicization of space" (Arendt 1995, p. 171). Arendt plays here also on the opposition couple "world/desert" in order to illustrate the properly political essence of the Roman *imperium* and its modern European descendants: the Roman *lex* should not be conceived in terms of domination and power, but in terms of a possibility to open up a world, that is a space of plurality suitable for human action. In twentieth century Europe, totalitarianism and its outcomes – the most dangerous being the threat of a total war – transgresses the law in the sense that it reintroduces violence into the public space in a "deworlding" manner. Thus, the power of History as a supra-individual which fabricates facts as a solitary artisan in the name of a unique metaphysical truth threats to put human plurality, freedom and politics aside thus instauring the "law of the desert"(*ibid.*).[26]

It is at this point where the transition from the Roman to the modern becomes possible that Arendt situates Augustine. Her late treatment of his philosophy and theology comes, quite naturally, as a supplement to her 1929 dissertation on Augustine's concept of love, where the

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25 "...la *lex* romaine, à la différence et même au contraire de ce que les Grecs entendaient par *nomos*, signifie proprement "un lien durable" et tout de suite après le pacte, aussi bien dans le droit public que dans le droit privé" (Arendt 1995, p. 157).

26 Arendt affirms this deworlding effect in her diagnosis of totalitarianism. In *The Human Condition* it is linked to the triad labor-work-action as totalitarian regimes' insistance upon labor and their degradation of work and action leads to the establishment of loneliness and deworlding. See on this point: Taminiaux 2002, pp. 442-443.

whole conceptual framework for this treatment, but in more general terms, for her treatment of the political as such is set.[27] Let us for the moment confine ourselves to her 1950s treatment of the Christian-Augustinian moment in relation to the rise of modernity. Strictly speaking, this "moment" is situated in the strict continuity of the Roman experience of the political. In terms similar to those of the Romans Augustine formulates the "world" as a public space, therefore the Christian experience of freedom is not that of detachment, as in the case of the Greek philosophers and it is on this occasion that plays Plato against Augustine.[28] Christian politics from Saint Augustine and to medieval Europe always secured a religiously predetermined public space, where the role of the political was endowed with much ambiguity. What has changed between the roman-medieval and the modern era as to the status of the political is the equilibrium between the public and the private, that is the privatization of religious experience, and the rise of new spheres of human activity, such as economy.

Last but not least, a critical approach to Arendt's understanding of the "Greek" and the "Roman answer" and of their role in the formation of modern Europe is once more Reiner Schürmann's account of it in his *Broken Hegemonies*. His analysis is impregnated with both Arendt's – and Heidegger's – views of Athens and Rome. Schürmann borrows the "double bind" structure of his epochal principles from Arendt's theme of natality and Heidegger's "being-towards-death", thus affirming their necessary belong together. Arendt's questioning of the "principle of beginnings" is present here along with her double principle of natality and mortality: "It had seemed to me that the most obvious and the least thetic beginnings are marked when one natural language yields to another in our history. Everything begins differently when we change language. The *topoi* of which the topology takes inventory are then the Greek, the Latin, and the modern vernacular sites from out of which philosophy has spoken" (Schürmann 2003, p. 348).[29] Though Schürmann acknowledges the middle Heidegger's elaboration of the institution-destitution of metaphysical epochs, which he designates as a topology which is both recapulative and critical (Schürmann 2003, pp. 554-558), and as a "phenomenological ultimate", he nevertheless incorporates a great deal of Arendt's account of the labour-work-action triad in Western politics and history: "At its Greek apogee, philosophy was astonished by what the hands could accomplish. Since Aristotle, fabrication had remained the key phenomenon, the observation of which furnished the schemes for all branches of knowledge. Beginning with Latin philosophy, the great beginners were astonished by another making – by the cosmopolitan republic, unique in history and so obviously crowned with success" (Schürmann 2003, p. 261). In this context, Augustine is shown along with Cicero to illustrate the Latin "hegemonic fantasm" so as to set the continuity between the Roman and the Christian epochal regimes. But what is proper to Augustine's Christian "Latinity"? Here Schürmann admits his reliance upon Arendt's reading of Augustine while criticizing at the same time her lack of awareness of the epochal "double bind" inherent in it:

(VII)

> As Hannah Arendt analyzed it so well, the heavenly city in gestation on earth *does not meet up with* existing societies that are gathered together under a body of consensual laws so at to temper and make up for a plurality of interests [...] Arendt, however, does

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27 Ronald Beiner argues that, against the commonly held opinion that Arendt's preoccupation with the notion of world comes from her personal experiences of the war and totalitarianism, the roots of this problematic goes back to her 1929 doctoral thesis on Augustine (Beiner 1996, pp. 269-284).

28 On Augustine as a philosopher of natality and, in this sense, a strictly non-Greek philosopher: Arendt 1981, pp. 109-110.

29 Cf. also Schürmann 2003, pp. 624-625.

not allow herself to the institutive gesture through which Augustine endows nature-as-law with normative attributes; it is a focusing that fixes, in large scale, the parallel city, the only city that conforms to this law (Schürmann 2003, p. 256).[30]

An obvious question to ask is what would be the philosophical importance of raising the question of Europe's origins in today's situation of crisis. A first answer would point out Europe's need to re-activate its myths, cultural and political, in order to survive the current crisis.[31] In this respect, Arendt's phenomenology of political poses a serious challenge to today's tendencies of reducing history to labour, which seriously harm the perspectives of Europe's political future. Europe has always identified itself to a process of self-awareness which is mainly defined in terms of an internal critique. It is in this sense that a positive and constructive questioning on Europe's present and future needs to raise the question of Europe's origins, that is the question of what is proper to it (Crépon 2006, pp. 79-95). What makes Arendt's analysis powerful for today's European crisis is the centrality of "the political" as what constitutes the very essence of the European identity. In this sense, the intertwining of "the Greek" and "the Roman" has to be constantly reactivated in order for European politics not to be deprived of its foundations.

(VIII) What would a discourse on Europe's founding narratives, which are no doubt not only Greek and Roman, but also Christian and Enlightenment-based, have to contribute to the on-going European crisis? The latter is most often perceived as a financial crisis shaking the very existence of Europe, in the figure of the EU, as an economic entity (Shore 2000). Accounts of European identity, mainly those produced by contemporary phenomenology (Husserl, Heidegger, Arendt, among others) or hermeneutics (Gadamer) – are often accused to indulge in the promotion of a "thick" cultural identity, which eventually succumbs to two major fallacies: the "historicist" and the "culturalist" fallacy. The former type of fallacy would consist in arguing that "we should always find in the past the correct recipe to face current problems and challenges", whereas the "culturalist" fallacy would consist in reducing "the legitimacy of a political body to its presumed homogeneous, cultural identity" (Bottici 2013, p. 29). However, there are more than one ways to envisage cultural identity in terms of a challenge to construct a new common identity suitable for the multinational entity that Europe is at present. In order to do this, it would be imperative to detach Europe's Greek and Roman founding narratives from their boundaries within sovereign nation-states and resituate within a broader and inclusive cultural space. In this sense, the phenomenological discourse on the origins of Europe wouldn't be perceived as the reductive endeavor to identify a unique, unchanged, and ultimately exclusive principle determining the common European identity in terms of identity/difference or authenticity/inauthenticity, but in the terms of what Marc Crepon claims about Europe being the "product of a dream", that is the product of an infinitely "renewable self-differentiation" (*autodifférenciation renouvelée*).[32] Hannah Arendt is one of the few thinkers who have dared a profound reflection on the properly political identity of Europe, therefore her reflections on the political could serve the purpose of constructing a republican model of Europe based on the formation of a common European political culture without reducing the political definition of Europe as a supranational entity to a set of cultural

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30 Here Schürmann refers to Arendt's doctoral thesis on *Love and Saint Augustine*.
31 See in this respect: Bottici & Challand 2013.
32 "L'Europe est le produit d'un rêve qui n'a jamais été celui d'une identité à soi ou d'un repli sur soi, mais d'une autodifférenciation, renouvelée, à chaque étape de son histoire, par la critique de chacune de ses compositions" (Crépon 2006, p. 15).

discourse of its culturally significant core-nations (Passerini 2003). A discourse on the origins is not necessarily a reductive discourse of sameness and difference, as origins can also be differentiating, as in the case of "the Greek" and "the Roman" in their co-belonging and mutual exclusion: "...the singular and seemingly proper name of *Europe* is a name that comes to *Europe* from somewhere other than itself; as such it designates a still indeterminate and obscure part of the world where the sun sets. It is the name for a region or a thing that still remains, and will perhaps forever remain, indeterminate" (Gasché 2009, pp. 13-14). Europe's indeterminate or differentiating identity could prove an important contribution to the current debates on the rescuing of the European project. Questions of authority and legitimacy should be envisaged in light of their roots within Europe's own genealogy and not solely within an instrumental or procedural perspective. Consequently, "political Europe" is as much as needed as its origins should be activated as a part of a comprehensive "European social imaginary" as a space of common cultural and historical significance independent from existing national cultural and historical narratives.

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