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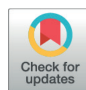

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Dwelling and Departure: Beginning Disputes between Arendt and Heidegger

Abstract

In "Letter on Humanism," Martin Heidegger juxtaposes the notion of homelessness (*Heimlosigkeit*) with home-coming (*Heimholung*), i.e. the reawakening to our original relationship to Being. This focus on dwelling in Being represents an interesting modification from his earlier study of "incipience" (*Anfang*), which emphasizes departure. We follow the critique of this shift in thinking in Hannah Arendt's work, beginning with a short allegory titled "Heidegger the Fox" (1953). We suggest that reading this allegory in the light of Arendt's decades-long debate with Heidegger illuminates the tense relationship between dwelling and incipience (or in her terms, "natality"). Though we do not attempt a complete analysis of Heidegger and Arendt's works here, we aim to draw out specific movements of their thinking. We suggest that Arendt's concept of natality, which, though partly influenced by Heidegger, ultimately challenges the authenticity of Heidegger's solitary, silent thinker who dwells in the House of Being. In the back and forth between their thinking an unresolvable tension between dwelling and departure arises as the existential fissure.

Keywords: Arendt, Heidegger, natality, dwelling, thinking, exile.

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"We live our lives, forever taking leave."

(Rilke, "Eighth Elegy")

1. SITTING WITH THE FOX'S TRAP: OR, CONFRONTING THE EXISTENTIAL FISSURE IN BEGINNINGS

In his essay "Über den Humanismus" ("Letter on Humanism") Martin Heidegger juxtaposes the notion of *homelessness* (*Heimlosigkeit*) with *home-coming* (*Heimholung*), i.e. the reawakening to our original relationship to Being. This focus on dwelling in Being represents an interesting modification from his earlier contemplations of "incipience" (*Anfang*), where he writes: "Incipience is the taking-on of departure . . . [because] the essence of Beyng is not Beyng, but the beginning incipience" (*Über den Anfang* 19).

Heidegger's student and lifelong correspondent Hannah Arendt highlights the significance of this shift in his thinking in her critique of Heidegger following his activity in the Nazi party, which we argue is reflected in an allegory she titled "Heidegger the Fox." "Nobody," Arendt says of Heidegger, "knows the nature of traps better than one who sits in a trap his whole life long" (362). We suggest that reading this allegory in the light of Arendt's decades-long dispute with Heidegger illuminates the tense relationship between dwelling and incipience (or in her terms, "natality"): Arendt sees Heidegger's dwelling as a trap, constructed by a notion of incipience imagined in the withdrawal from the public "They" (Man) and confined to the poetic house of words within Being.

By contrast, Arendt (herself an exile) reminds us that it is in being thrown into the unknown that a new incipience (*An-fang*, or catching on) might arise: it entails both un-dwelling and becoming a stranger. We also experience this when we take initiative: we exit into the unknown place (*Ferne*). Once set in motion, no action can be undone, no past can be changed. Instead, we are exiled into the arrival of an undetermined future. We therefore ponder if maybe it is exodus and not home-coming that describes one of the most fundamental moments of human existence, always hinting at the possibility to begin anew, while exiled into Otherness.

In the following, we will begin by discussing Heidegger's development of thinking as incipience, dwelling, and ad-vent(ure). In "Letter on Humanism" he writes: "The thinking is an adventure not only through the searching and questioning beyond that what remains unthought. . . . Thinking is oriented towards the Being as what is to-come (*l'avenant*)" (240–42/193–94).[1] We

[1] Page numbers refer first to the English translation and then to the original German text.

will mainly focus on his text *Über den Anfang*[2] (1941), as well as "Letter on Humanism" (1946), "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" (1951), and "What is Called Thinking?" (1951–52). We will then explore the relation between Arendt's notion of natality and her critique of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, particularly in "Heidegger the Fox" (1953), "Martin Heidegger at Eighty" (1969), and *The Life of the Mind* (1978). Though we do not attempt a complete analysis of Heidegger and Arendt's works here, we aim to draw out specific movements of their thinking. We suggest that Arendt's concept of natality, which, though partly influenced by Heidegger, ultimately challenges the authenticity of Heidegger's solitary, silent thinker who dwells in the House of Being. In the back and forth between their thinking, an unresolvable tension between dwelling and departure arises as the existential fissure.

2. ON MARTIN HEIDEGGER

2.1. DWELLING IN MOVEMENT

Martin Heidegger's profound concern about the "growing thoughtlessness" (*zunehmende Gedankenlosigkeit*) of modern times is front and centre of his 1955 *Gelassenheit* address (45/519). This "*flight from thinking*" refers to "meditative" (*das besinnliche Nachdenken*) rather than "calculative" thinking (*das rechnende Denken*); calculative thinking is goal-driven and races from one aspect to the next, fleeing the present and avoiding involvement with Being (46/520). It thus emphasizes speed and simple explanations at the expense of sustainability and complexity. The word "explanation" contains the idea of unfolding something complex into a "plain surface" to make it "pleasing" and devoid of any problems.[3] Heidegger further argues in "Letter on Humanism" that scientific and philosophical explanations and justifications bolster the common assumption that the "truth of being" can be reduced to cause and effect (199/150).

By contrast, "actual" thinking constitutes our relatedness to Being. In his 1951–52 lectures "Was heißt Denken?" ("What is Called

[2] At the time of this writing, there was no published translation in English; the authors were unable to review Peter Hanly's translation (*On Inception*), which was published by Indiana University Press in September 2023 as we finalized the text. Excerpts included here were translated by Barbara Weber.

[3] Literally "pro-blem" means to throw (*gwele*) forth (per) something into the way, e.g., a fence or barrier. We owe this connection to John T. Hamilton, Harvard University, and his talk on "Life in the Middle Voices," given at the "Dialectic of Seeing" International Seminar, 1 December 2022, International Institute of Hermeneutics.

Thinking?"), Heidegger argues that the present moment is unlocked in the awareness of our mortality. In this *Er-eignis* (or event-ing), we may disclose an authentic relationship with Being: we are being pulled into this world, into the presence-ing of the moment as this authentic *Dasein*. Such *Er-eignis* relates to the older meaning of er-äugen, with äugen (meaning *eyes*). The German "*es er-eignet sich*" can thus be read as "to show itself." However, "[o]nly when we are so inclined toward what in itself is to be thought about, only then are we capable of thinking. In order to be capable of thinking, we need to learn it first. . . . We learn to think by giving our mind to what there is to think about" (*What is Called Thinking?* 4/1). Here, Heidegger takes up Saint Augustine's argument in his *Confessions* (bk. 11) that we only ever live in the present, where we experience the past as present memories and the future as present expectation. Therefore, a life in the past or in the future is impossible. However, "present" is not understood in chronological terms, as an ever-disappearing millisecond, but rather it unfolds at its fringes when we become entangled with Being—"with tiny waves on the edges of each leaf (like the smile of a wind)" (Rilke, "Ninth Elegy" 333). It is only in this relation with Being that the quality of the present can expand and deepen, like a painting or a piece of music.

For Heidegger, thinking arises from this moment when we are pulled into this abyss of existence, where we become a question to ourselves—"*Mihi quaestio factus sum*," in Augustine's words (bk. 10, sec. 33). Picking up on this Augustinian notion (as Arendt does), Heidegger writes: "We are thinking. To say it more circumspectly, we are attempting to let ourselves become involved in this relatedness to Being. We are attempting to learn thinking" (*What Is Called Thinking?* 86/5). In this *er-eignen* of the present, we are face-to-face with the abyss of Being, the groundless groundedness of existence. To this question of existence, we can only respond[4] as *Dasein*[5] in the present. And this experience of the present can be understood in three different ways: we are in this moment (the present), we are attentive (being present), and something is offered as a gift (a present). The dwelling in this moment of becoming a question is called thinking (Kohan).

However, there seems to be a tension between the dwelling in the moment and the departure *into* thinking. We will first explore the interconnection between dwelling and building, before returning to the notion of incipience, question, and departure.

[4] The term "respond" comes from the Latin "*spondere*," to pledge, to promise, and "re," in return.

[5] *Dasein*, a term Heidegger uses instead of Human, emphasizes the intensity and irreplaceability of the "being thereness."

2.2. BUILDING, DWELLING, AND THINKING WITH LANGUAGE

At the beginning of his 1951 essay "Bauen Wohnen Denken" ("Building, Dwelling, Thinking"), Heidegger explores the close relationships between the three verbs in the title. He starts with the word "to build" (*bauen*), which means "to nest" or "to settle" in an environment to which we plan to return. While the Old-German word "*baun*" means to stay, to linger, it also has a verb (time-quality) engraved in it, as "*bauen*" also means "am" (*bin*) (144–45/147–48). Heidegger writes:

> To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen*, which says that man *is* insofar as he *dwells*, this word *bauen* however *also* means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for. . . (145/149)

Moreover, the word "to dwell" (*wohnen*) is connected to "*wunian*," which is "to remain," "to stay," "to be in peace," "to be free" (*Friede*, *Frei*) (147/149). Thus, for Heidegger, building, dwelling, and thinking are interrelated, as it is through lingering that we unlock the present as event (*Er-eignis*) and become entangled with Being. And while the architect creates relationships between things in nature through structures (e.g., a bridge connects river and shore and brings out a possibility), through language we create a home in Being by letting something appear as something—phenomena (*phainetai*)—in relationship to its surroundings and to us. Heidegger writes: "Only if we are capable of dwelling, we can build" (157/162).

Thus, to build means to dwell, which means to think, i.e. to let become present (bring/draw out into the present) and spread time into a field, where in the creation of relationships space is timed, while time falls into space. Consequently, for Heidegger, in order to learn to think, we have to learn to dwell again:

> What is man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight? Yet as soon as man *gives thought* to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that *calls* mortals into their dwelling. But how else can mortals answer this summons than by trying on *their* part, on their own, to bring dwelling to the fullness of its nature [essence/Being/*Wesen*]? This they accomplish when they build out of dwelling, and think for the sake of dwelling. (159/164)

And while Heidegger's essay on "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" expresses a feeling of coziness, homecoming, and lingering, in "Letter on Humanism," there is also the sensation of departure through his emphasis on existence: an idea that can be found in most of his writings on thinking.

2.3. FROM DWELLING AND LANGUAGE TO EXISTENCE AND DEPARTURE

"Letter on Humanism," one of Heidegger's first publications in the post-war period, further emphasizes the connection between dwelling and thinking:

> Metaphysics closes itself to the simple essential fact that man essentially occurs only in his essence, where he is claimed by Being. Only from that claim "has" he found that wherein his essence dwells. Only from this dwelling "has" he "language" as the home that preserves the ecstatic for his essence. (204/155)

This is the essence of ex-sistence, that we create a house through language. "Such standing in[to] the [clearance] of Being I call the ek-sistence of man" (204/155). In other words, we stand into the light as the "*Da*" of Being. Standing into this clearance or clearing, we have the possibility to stand into the truth of Being. Language is the light-giving arrival of being in itself. And the Human is being thrown from Being itself into truth (210/162), as Heidegger elaborates:

> According to this essence language is the house of Being which comes to pass from Being and is pervaded by Being. And so it is proper to think the essence of language from its correspondence to Being and indeed as this correspondence, that is, as the home of man's essence. But man is not only a living creature who possesses language along with other capacities. Rather, language is the house of Being in[to] which man ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of Being, guarding it. (213/164)

This is interesting, as Arendt criticizes this "House of Being" as a trap, where Heidegger entangles himself in a monologue of his thinking that does not leave its own "*Behausung*" (house/dwelling) anymore. Arendt's criticism comes from her intuition that Heidegger's relationship to language remains idiosyncratic, trapping him in his monolithic relationship with Being.

And yet, there always seems to be this door into the *ex-* of ex-sistence. Heidegger calls the human an "*ek-statisches Wesen*" (ex-static Being) that may dwell in Being as a mortal. But how can the Human stand out, while at the same time dwell and remain? This is both a spatial and temporal question: as embodied, the Human stands out from being while being plunged into the material world. They are made of the same fabric, and yet fundamentally set apart, therefore occupying a place in the world. The question is also temporal, because the Human is able to linger while they depart with every moment into the future. All we ever

have is the present.[6] Heidegger writes that the "[Human] is the neighbor of Being," literally meaning that he *lives next* (spatial) to Being and *was born* (temporal) after Being (222/173). Thus, again the spatial and temporal coincide. Being becomes apparent through language (literally it "appears," i.e. becomes *phaenomenai*); at the same time language is what cares for Being and creates permanence in the river of time (239/191–92).

At this point in the text, Heidegger hints at the notion of adventure:

> But thinking is an *adventure* not only as a search and an inquiry into the unthought. Thinking, in its essence as thinking of Being, is claimed by Being. Thinking is related to Being as what arrives (*l'avenant*). Thinking as such is bound to the advent [arrival] of Being, to Being as advent. . . . Thinking gathers language into simple saying. In this way language is the language of Being, as clouds are the clouds of the sky. With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows in language. They are still more inconspicuous than the furrows that the farmer, slow of step, draws through the field. (240–42/193–94)

Thus, Heidegger sees existence as the being there and now, and simultaneously, the invitation to think arises through question and departure. Do we have to think "departure and beginning" differently from a chronological understanding of time? Is it the departure from the "Man" (they)? Or is it a departure from the present, thereby creating an opening in order to remain attentive and hospitable to what is to come (*advenire*)?

This tension nags at Heidegger since the 1940s. In his book *Über den Anfang*, he tries to set apart "*anfangen*" (to catch on) from "*beginnen*" (to begin). While *Beginn* is a predictable and measured point in chronological time, *An-fang* starts with the "catching" of something that continues, like the end of a rope (as opposed to catching a self-contained object). In this sense, *anfangen* stands in correspondence with Heidegger's other term "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*). We are thrown into this world, into this appearance, into this situation, into this conversation, etc., and it is now on us to "*fangen*" (to catch) the beginning of the beginning. What we find here is a sense of playfulness. Heidegger writes: "Throwing and catching / The throwing toward 'of' being / The rejection 'of' being / The thrownness of Dasein / The pro-jection of beings[7] / The throw and the more initial beginning. / The throw and the *physis* (nature). / The throw and the event" (106, translation mine).[8] The throw as

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[6] See Wolf and Weber for Weber's elaboration on the embodiment aspect of this argument in connection to Merleau-Ponty.

[7] See in Latin: *iacere* = throw.

[8] In the original: "Der Zuwürfe »des« Seins / Die Verwerfung »des« Seins / Die Geworfenheit des Da-seins / Der Entwurf des Seienden. / Der Wurf und der anfänglichere

thrownness into Dasein is derived from the throw of Being itself as an event (108). Of course, we can always re-ject: such a rejection introduces a difference and allows us to project this difference into the future of a new beginning. Therefore, *Anfang* is the unique historical presencing of the beginning in its irreplaceability. The beginning that Heidegger is pondering is neither a rule nor a law; it is neither a predictable nor an identifiable point in time. Instead, "*Anfängnis*" (incipience) is the event as its fissuring as well as a singularity of fundamental difference.

In Exodus 13:4 it is written: "Today you are going out, in the month of the New Grain." There is an intense urgency in these words, which are both a command and an invitation to the Hebrews departing Egypt. How are we able to leave every moment, departing into what is to come and yet dwell and remain attentive to the present? It seems that a different time quality arises from this awareness, which sees being present as movement and in opposition to a quantitative understanding of time, where the moment disappears in the squeeze of measurability of chronological time.

We have shown the tension between thinking as dwelling and building (i.e. not to leave this moment in order to derive an answer or a goal), as well as the call to think as the departure from the moment into what is to come as adventure (*advenire*). We have shown that, for Heidegger, in order to build, we have to dwell. And yet, dwelling is not a synonym for remaining forever. By contrast, thinking is the adventure to being attentive to what is present-ing itself to us. Or in other words: we create the present by *being* present, which means to be attentive to what is coming towards us from the "ad-vent" (future): allowing for it to dwell with us in this present, enriching and expanding it. In this attentiveness, we draw out what is within and thereby build a house in language that "times," i.e. is not static. In the following we will show that while Heidegger errs on the side of dwelling, Arendt attends to the dangers of staying at home, which, without the leap into departure, can become a trap.

3. ON HANNAH ARENDT

3.1. NATALITY AND BEGINNINGS

Natality is, in Arendt's view, inherent to the human condition; every newcomer born into the world "possesses the capacity of beginning something new, that is, acting" (*Human Condition* 9). Intimately

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Anfang. / Der Wurf und die [*physis*]. / Der Wurf und das Ereignis" (106). See also Rainer Maria Rilke's poem called "Der Ball."

connected to action, natality describes the capacity to "set something in motion," without knowing what will come from it (177). In terms of Arendt's political theory, however, the natality of the newcomer is far from the late Heidegger's lonely home-coming; indeed, beginnings (including action) can only be initiated in the public space of appearances, where we are not alone but among a plurality of others. "Since action is the political activity par excellence, Arendt writes, "natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought" (8–9).

While Arendt's encounter with Heidegger on the topic of natality often appears in the text obliquely (as in the juxtaposition between natality and mortality, above), we argue that a close reading of her analysis of Heidegger's conception of thinking as an essentially solitary experience draws attention to the spatial-temporal tension in Heidegger's works that finds, as Arendt shows us, a troubled resolution in "dwelling." The next sections will discuss three texts spanning more than two decades in which Arendt addresses these topics before returning to the notion of natality as it emerged in the 1950s.

3.2. THE FOX'S TRAP AND THE THRACIAN GIRL'S LAUGHTER

In 1953, just a few years after she resumed correspondence with her former teacher Heidegger, Arendt wrote a short parable in her *Denktagebuch* ("thought journal") titled "Die wahre Geschichte von dem Fuchs Heidegger" ("Heidegger the Fox"). It describes "the true story of Heidegger the fox . . . who was so lacking in slyness that he not only kept getting caught in traps but couldn't even tell the difference between a trap and a non-trap" (361/403). Furthermore, due to a problem with his fur, "he was completely without natural protection against the hardship of a fox's life" (ibid.). After years of exposure, the fox withdraws into a burrow, which is really a trap. The fox knows that the burrow is a trap, but in his ignorance believes that everyone else's burrows are traps too. When other foxes avoided his trap (seeing the fox caught inside), he "decorate[d] his trap beautifully" and drew many visitors, who stepped into the trap "to visit him where he was at home" (362/403–04) but, of course, could step out again. Proud of his perceived success, he declares himself "the best of all foxes," and Arendt concedes at the end that "there is some truth in that, too: Nobody knows the nature of traps better than the one who sits in a trap his whole life long" (362/404).

Scholars like Facundo Vega and Kimberly Maslin have referred to this sardonic allegory in order to elucidate Arendt's critical engagement with Heidegger's ontological project, which extends across her life's work and

emerges from precise philosophical concerns. We aim to add to that set of interpretations here.[9] What does the trap signify? What kind of "natural protection" did Heidegger lack? Why can he not tell the difference between a burrow and a trap? Who are the visitors, and what about his trap is so beautiful as to draw them into it with him? Lastly, what does it mean for him to stay in the trap, or to make it into a burrow, or, for that matter, for others to leave it?

The 1969 reflective essay "Martin Heidegger ist achtzig Jahre alt" ("Martin Heidegger at Eighty") provides some context for the setting of the parable. Arendt begins by clarifying that her essay in fact commemorates not Heidegger's eightieth birthday but the fiftieth anniversary of his entry into public life, "as a university teacher." Based in part on her own experience as a student, she vividly describes the allure of the young Heidegger's popular lectures and describes him as the "hidden king" in the "realm of thinking." "I have said that people followed the rumor about Heidegger in order to learn thinking," Arendt writes, "[w]hat was experienced was that thinking as pure activity." While Arendt has been criticized for her flattering portrayal of Heidegger-the-teacher in this text, to focus on the sensationalist story of their personal relationship is to fall into another kind of trap, one which misses the specificity of Arendt's concern. Indeed, rather than continue to praise Heidegger's exceptional capacity for thinking, the purpose of the essay centres on the critique that what is actually "extraordinarily rare" about Heidegger is his disturbing belief that, in thinking, he goes beyond the "faculty of wondering" (which is common to all)[10] to the "faculty of 'taking up this wondering as one's permanent abode.'"

Here, the tension between dwelling and departure (or as Jacques Taminiaux puts it, "belonging and withdrawal") emerges again: Arendt

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[9] Maslin's recent book, *The Experiential Ontology of Hannah Arendt*, presents several readings of multiple "traps" in the first chapter, including "the trap of worldlessness" (withdrawing from the world, especially the common world); "the trap of stillness" (isolated from others); and "the trap of universal guilt" (his early allegiance to Nazism and aspects of Nazi ideology thereafter). Maslin also notes that the fox in the parable refers to the Ancient Greek proverb "a fox knows many things, but a hedgehog knows one big thing," which Isaiah Berlin had discussed in an essay published the same year (1953) as "The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History" (Maslin 5–6).

[10] Thinking is one of the faculties of the mind shared by all; the significance of this point in Arendt's critique of Heidegger is elaborated upon by Taminiaux (see esp. 21–22) and Vega, who points out the central importance of natality for political pluralism ("Bad Weather"; "Fox Traps"). Vega writes: "In the face of current theoretical perspectives that advocate a return to ontology in order to account for the 'exceptional' origin of life-in-common, I propose that Arendt invites us to recognize the 'principle of anarchy' innate to 'political beginnings'" ("Bad Weather" 230).

points out that for the post-*Kehre* Heidegger, "where" we go when we think—away from what is immediately near and towards what is distant in thought—becomes a part of the everyday world (a permanent abode), withdrawing from the very activity of withdrawing into thought; and further, entailing a "withdrawal from the world of human affairs" altogether.

Indeed, Arendt notes that this position of radical isolation is found "documented with some degree of certainty only in Plato, who expressed more than once and most drastically in the *Theaetetus* (173d–76) on the dangers of such a residence" ("Eighty"). Her analysis compares Heidegger to the figure of Thales in Plato's dialogue, of whom Socrates says:

> [T]hey say Thales was studying the stars, Theodorus, and gazing aloft, when he fell into a well; and a witty and amusing Thracian servant-girl made fun of him because, she said, he was wild to know about what was up in the sky but failed to see what was in front of him and under his feet. The same joke applies to all who spend their lives in philosophy. (174a)

Socrates then mocks Thales the philosopher for his "constant ignorance and lack of resource in dealing with the obvious," listing examples ranging from the painfully awkward to the outright contemptuous (174b–75b). That is, while laughable, Heidegger's "absent-mindedness"[11] is not a joke.[12] His lack of "common" sense is a sign that, like many deep thinkers, he has lost touch with or sense for the common world; but like the fox caught in the trap, Heidegger's withdrawal has frightening implications; as a professor of thinking, he takes pride in his trap and invites hosts of visitors to dwell with him in its dangerous confines. But what makes the trap so dangerous, and for whom? In order to elaborate on this critique, we turn to Arendt's later writings.

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[11] As Arendt writes in *The Life of the Mind*, "[t]o put it quite simply, in the proverbial absentmindedness of the philosopher, everything present is absent because something absent is present to his mind, and among the things absent is the philosopher's own body. Both the philosopher's hostility toward politics, 'the petty affairs of men,' and his hostility toward the body have little to do with individual convictions and beliefs; they are inherent in the experience itself" (1: 84–85).

[12] Arendt defends the "laughing Thracian child" from the philosophers and men who, when belittling her understanding of "higher things," "have obviously not discovered what laughter is good for. . ." ("Eighty"). It is interesting to read Arendt's comment in light of Heidegger's commentary on the story from "What is a Thing?", which Taminiaux quotes: "The question 'What Is a Thing?' must always be rated as one which causes housemaids to laugh. And genuine housemaids must have something to laugh about" (1). Arendt elaborates on the story of Thales again in *The Life of the Mind* (1: 82–85).

3.3. TURNING POINTS: TWO READINGS OF HEIDEGGER'S *KEHRE*

Unlike Thales, Heidegger did not merely fall into a well and appear foolish, nor is the danger of the trap theoretical. A section of Arendt's posthumously published work *The Life of the Mind*, titled "Heidegger's Will-not-to-Will," addresses his Nazism in historical and philosophical terms. Her extended analysis centres on the *Kehre*, a term used to describe his "turning against" Nietzsche's will to power in the 1940s; "[i]n Heidegger's understanding," Arendt reflects, "the will to rule and to dominate is a kind of original sin, of which he found himself guilty when he tried to come to terms with his brief past in the Nazi movement" (2: 173).[13] What concerns Arendt about the *Kehre*, as attentive readers like Taminiaux and Dana R. Villa have shown, is that in his repudiation of the faculty of the will, which in her own political theory is "the spring of action" and the "faculty of being able to bring about something new and hence to 'change the world'" (2: 6), Heidegger radically alienates thinking beings from the common world and into a metaphysical fallacy where the thinking activity constitutes the most authentic form of action. In doing so, Villa writes, Heidegger commits an "'error' both more grotesque and more tragic than Plato's misguided attempt to transform a run of the mill tyrant into a philosopher-king" (237), trapping himself inside the realm of thought and away from the possibility of taking action or facing the judgement of the others who inhabit the common world with us.[14]

It is this part of Arendt's multifaceted argument that we attempt to trace through the text, which can be summarized as follows: whereas the question of Being is asked by a being thrown back upon itself by the question, in the later configuration, "when, thrown back upon himself, he raises the question Who is Man?, it is Being, on the contrary, that moves into the foreground; it is Being, as now emerges, that bids man to think" (*Life of the Mind* 2: 173). The task is then for the thinker to listen obediently to "the silent claim of Being" that, in thinking with language,

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[13] Since Arendt's death in 1975, decades of scholarship, including the publication of the Black Notebooks that only began in 2014, have shed more light on Heidegger's private thoughts about Nazism, antisemitism, racial doctrines. Though it is impossible to know how that body of work might have changed Arendt's criticisms, it is important to note that her description of "his brief past in the Nazi movement" refers not to his personal beliefs (however reprehensible and enduring) but to the ten-month period of his political involvement at the University of Freiburg and subsequent withdrawal from public life. It is his (re)interpretation of that time that is the subject of Arendt's theoretical study (and ours).

[14] As Taminiaux tells it, Arendt's "reversal" of Heidegger's "reappropriation" of *praxis* as a completely private phenomenon "is the very fundament of her political thought" (17). He presents a detailed analysis of Heidegger's reading of *praxis*, *poesis*, and *theoria* in relation to Plato, Aristotle, and Husserl (ch. 2).

becomes speech (2: 174). Furthermore, it is only through a passive thinking (expressed through language and *Gelassenheit*, "letting be") in response to the claim of Being that the History of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*) is actualized: not through the actions of people in the world, but through the thinking of the Thinker, which in "Letter on Humanism," Arendt specifies, "is the only authentic 'doing' (*Tun*) of man" (2: 175, 2: 180–81); not in response to the call of conscience (as in the early Heidegger) but in response to the ghostly call of Being (2: 186–87). In short, Heidegger's *Kehre* includes a reconceptualization of the will in which (in Arendt's words) "man is willed by the Will to will without experiencing what this Will is about" (2: 49), and this Thinker, rather than Hegel's *Zeitgeist*, is now the incarnation of Being, who "remains the '*solus ipse*' in 'existential solipsism,' except that now the fate of the world, the History of Being, has come to depend on him" (2: 187).[15]

As she follows the shifts in his thinking that culminate in the solitary thinker who acts/appears by withdrawing into thought, Arendt draws attention to what she calls a "variation" of Heidegger's teachings. Like "Letter on Humanism," *Der Spruch des Anaximander* (*The Anaximander Fragment*) was published in 1946 (though written in 1942); by reading these two texts together, Arendt is able to interpret the *Kehre* as a genuine "turning point" that presented more than one path forward. In contrast to the rest of Heidegger's body of work (and "Letter on Humanism" in particular), *Anaximander*—perhaps in a manner similar to *Über den Anfang* (written in 1941 but unpublished in Arendt's lifetime)—provides "haunting hints at another possibility of ontological speculation" through a "strictly phenomenological description" of the subject in which the subject "'lingers' in the present 'between twofold absence,' its arrival and departure" (*Life of the Mind* 2: 189). The lingering in the present that Heidegger describes, and the spatial-temporal tension of thinking, which both initiates in a withdrawal from what is close at hand, and a drawing near towards what is distant, is an essential characteristic of the thinking activity and a "key to which everything [in his whole work] is attuned" (Arendt, "Eighty").

In Arendt's analysis, the being who lingers in the present stands in contrast to the obedient thinker who responds to the call of Being by taking up residence in its house (language). Arendt writes that "[i]n the exegesis of the Anaximander fragment, unconcealment is not truth; it

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[15] Taminiaux draws a comparison between Heidegger's escape into "thought" and Adolf Eichmann's thoughtlessness (136). For a reading of Heidegger's "error" of loneliness (trapped alone in thought) against Arendt's critique of Eichmann's thoughtlessness, see Burton (167–72).

belongs to the beings that arrive from and depart into a hidden being" (*Life of the Mind* 2: 190). She summarizes Heidegger's argument:

> [T]he coming and going, appearing and disappearing, of beings always begins with a disclosure that is an *ent-bergen*, the loss of the original shelter (*bergen*) that had been granted by Being; the being then "lingers for a while" in the "brightness" of disclosure, and ends by returning to the sheltering shield of Being in its concealment. . . . everything we know has become, has emerged from some previous darkness into the light of day; and this becoming remains its law while it lasts: its lasting is at the same time its passing-away. (2: 190–91)

In other words, in *Anaximander* the subject is not only coming home, but also departing or venturing out from its "original shelter"—which in this case is death itself, pitted against the everyday world of becoming. Although Arendt identifies several other problems in *Anaximander,* she concludes that in it, Heidegger provides "a kind of history with a beginning and an end" for the ontological separation of Being and beings, in which Being begins by disclosing itself in beings and thereby initiates both the withdrawal of Being back into itself and the venturing out, briefly, into the "realm of error," or, in Arendt's re-interpretation, "the sphere of common human history" (2: 191–92).

3.4. FROM THE POLITICAL CONDITION OF LONELINESS TO FREEDOM

In the final analysis, the question Arendt posed at the beginning of her discussion of the Will—"whether men of action were not perhaps in a better position to come to terms with the problems of the Will than the men of thought" (2: 6)—seems affirmed, and she turns to other sources to ponder the "problem of beginnings," i.e. that the founding of a new beginning always carries "in itself an element of complete arbitrariness," and further has to contend with the contradictions of becoming in a world that already existed (2: 6, 2: 207). "Professional thinkers, whether philosophers or scientists," Arendt writes in reference to Heidegger and others, "have not been 'pleased with freedom' and its ineluctable randomness; they have been unwilling to pay the price of contingency for the questionable gift of spontaneity. . ." (2: 198).

On the other hand, "men of action," who initiate something that could have been otherwise and who understand that what they do cannot be undone, face the "abyss of freedom" that is liberated from the bonds of necessity and causality. "In the normal time continuum every effect immediately turns into a cause of future developments," Arendt explains, "but when the causal chain is broken . . . there is nothing left for the

'beginner' to hold on to" (2: 207–08). And she knows of only one thinker who accounted for these problems of freedom and beginnings, namely Augustine:

> According to him, as we know, God created man as a temporal creature, *homo temporalis*; time and man were created together, and this temporality was affirmed by the fact that each man owed his life not just to the multiplication of the species, but to birth, the entry of a novel creature who *as* something entirely new appears in the midst of the time continuum of the world. The purpose of the creation of man was to make possible a *beginning* . . . The very capacity for beginning is rooted in *natality*, and by no means in creativity, not in a gift but in the fact that human beings, new men, again and again appear in the world by virtue of birth. (2: 216–17)

Arendt's invocation of Augustine in establishing the ontological position of natality speaks to the close links between her central concept and her critique of Heidegger.[16] But rather than juxtapose natality against Heidegger's mortality, or life with death, the inverse concept of natality—that which destroys new beginnings—is loneliness.

Like natality, Arendt treats loneliness as a political condition, and it is this condition that may best describe the fox's trap. As Miguel Vatter traces through Arendt's writings, Arendt's notion of natality reaches full maturity around 1958 with the publication of *The Human Condition* and the second edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Vatter 141). In the final paragraphs of the newly-written concluding chapter of the latter ("Ideology and Terror"), Arendt invokes Augustine once again in response to the terrifying peril posed by "organized loneliness" under totalitarianism, which "threatens to ravage the world as we know it—a world which everywhere seems to have come to an end—before a new beginning rising from this end has had time to assert itself" (*Origins* 478).[17]

Here, Arendt returns to the figure of the philosopher, for whom solitude (the experience which allows one to "be with oneself" in thought) is a familiar terrain; loneliness, on the other hand, is an "uprootedness," the "experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man" (475).[18] Without both one's own

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[16] Others have noted that the word "natality" can be read as a deliberate choice to avoid Heideggerian language; indeed, Arendt translated the term into German as "Natalität," a term that does not appear in Heidegger's work (Vatter 139; see also İlhan DemiṘyol 128).

[17] Her description, including the invocation of Augustine, echoes her articulation of action in *The Human Condition* (177–78).

[18] See Maslin (ch. 2) on the role of "rootedness" in both Arendt and Heidegger; see also Vatter (141–42).

company and the world of experience, what is left is the kind of logical reasoning that manages to hang on to self-evident truths in a deserted plane. To trust in nothing but truisms like "two and two equals four" is to diminish thinking to a "strict self-evident logicality, from which apparently there is no escape," and further, a "deducing process which always arrives at the worst possible conclusions" (477).[19] What is more, under conditions of totalitarianism, the lonely person is especially vulnerable to what

> looks like a suicidal escape from this reality . . . the strict avoidance of contradictions that seems to confirm a man's identity outside all relationships with others. It fits him into the iron band of terror even when he is alone, and totalitarian domination tries never to leave him alone except in the extreme situation of solitary confinement.[20] (478)

Natality constitutes the antithesis of the terror which fits a person like an iron band; "Beginning, before it becomes a historical event, is the supreme capacity of man; politically, it is identical with man's freedom" (479).

4. DEPARTURE

In this paper, we have tried to show how the story of the fox's trap, though just a short journal entry at a crucial moment of Arendt life, can draw together Arendt's complex critiques of Heidegger's existential solipsism, in which "taking up wonder as one's permanent abode" sets one apart from the very world that constitutes the place in which we linger between birth and death. While texts like *Anaximander* and *Über den Anfang* gesture towards a phenomenological description of Being as involving both "coming and going," arrival and departure, Heidegger ultimately shies away from the exilic aspects of Being—and of the faculties of the mind: thinking, willing, and judging—as beings who sojourn in a world of appearances, embodied and visible to others, not just in silent speech but aloud in words and deeds.

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[19] In such a light, the fox making himself at home in his trap appears as a pathetic character. This is only highlighted further in other passages, as in *The Human Condition* where Arendt notes that "lonely figures . . . remain outside the pale of human intercourse and are, politically, marginal figures who usually only enter the historical scene in times of corruption, disintegrations, and political bankruptcy" (180).

[20] Vega highlights the significance of Arendt's critique of Heidegger in elucidating this point, explaining that "for Arendt the post-totalitarian political crisis could not be understood if the crisis of philosophy was not tackled, and Heidegger blatantly manifested that theoretical and political quandary" ("Bad Weather" 231).

In contrast, Arendt shows that we are authentic in being "called out" from the private and into the public world, to respond through our actions that go beyond our control and are thus in *ex*-ile. As Taminiaux writes,

> Arendt's denunciation of what she calls the "metaphysical fallacies" does not consist at all in denouncing the paradox of belonging to and withdrawing from appearances, but quite on the contrary in putting value upon it and assuming it. There is a fallacy when the paradox, far from being recognizes as such, is covered over. This paradox is that of the human condition. . .[21] (132)

It is the vocation of the human to depart from what was and thereby open up for what is to come: giving rise to a future that is undetermined, and continues to arrive (*l'avenir*) rather than be predicted and controlled.[22] Or in yet other words: a predictable and controlled future is not an actual future, but rather a continuation of the past, denying for future to arrive.

Being "provoked" to think, thus, means nothing else than being "called upon" to live. Not any life, and certainly not the life of "das Man" or the "they" (man). Rather, we are called upon in our own groundlessness from which we stick out in this awkward way. Standing face-to-face with the question of our own existence, no one can give this response for us—we are this incipience. The danger, however, is that this house of Being becomes solipsistic, because we remain inside or carry it on our back to strange lands, like a snail. Thinking alone is never enough; so easily we can become trapped in our desire to create permanence and eschew change. For as long as we linger in this world, thrown into time, we live in a state of someone "forever taking leave" (Rilke, "Eighth Elegy" 331), and therefore capable of new beginnings.

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[21] Villa takes a similar view, writing that "[f]or some, this state of affairs may be a source of untempered regret; for Hannah Arendt, however, it signifies both loss and hope" (270). See also Vega on the "paradox" posed by beginnings/*Anfang* ("Bad Weather" 240–41).

[22] Through our relationship with and rootedness in Being, the poet (dis)closes its (re)veiling character as we respond to what comes toward us in our advent(ure) into the future. Starting with the exodus from the womb into the world, the departure from each moment into the next, and finally our last departure as we leave our mortal body behind, farewell and beginning are the two faces of human existence.

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