

## **Philosophy, Politics and Platonism. An Investigation into the Arendtian Interpretation of Kant**

Paula Hunziker, *Filosofía, Política Y Platonismo. Una investigación sobre la lectura arendtiana de Kant*, Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2017

Clear, serious and generous is this book that we are reviewing here. It combines, as mentioned in its prologue, rigour and subtlety in a way that is very representative of the way in which the author has thought, for years, the work of Hannah Arendt.

It is really rigorous in its work with the texts and with the thought of the authors: in the analysis of the reading that Arendt makes of the authors she questions on the horizon of her interest in the relationship between philosophy and politics; in the way she reconstructs and replaces the dialogues within Arendt's work, and by the operation of situating the texts in their writing context and in the series of preoccupations that animate them.

She is subtle in her hypotheses and in the way she answers questions. There are no categorical oppositions: Arendt is not Kantian or anti-Kantian, she does not completely embrace or reject philosophy. And by this rigorous subtlety, Hunziker allows us to understand the complex relationship between philosophy and totalitarianism, the way in which Arendt reads the authors and her critique of the philosophical tradition. Subtlety, however, which is not ambiguity. The hypotheses of this book are clearly heard in her generous writing with a wide readership.

The book we review here is a great contribution both to the field of contemporary political philosophy and specifically to the studies of Arendt's work. It combines a great erudition with a great clarity, two qualities that are not usually found together and that makes it an interesting book also for non-philosophical readers who are interested in the topics addressed here: politics and philosophy (mainly) in their relationship of responsibility and care for the world.

The book deals in a very original way with a recurrent theme among Arendt's interpreters: the complex relationship that the author establishes with philosophy through criticism of the tradition, her positioning in the face of political events (in particular the most important and disturbing event of the 20th century, Totalitarianism), and the question about the exercise of thought that the author herself develops, that is, what does Arendt do when she thinks: Philosophy? Political theory? History?

The originality of Hunziker's work lies in its hypothesis and in the path it proposes to its readers. Indeed, the general objective of this book is to approach the Arendtian recovery of the Kantian cosmopolitan spectator at the end of the 1960s as the point of arrival of a questioning that begins to be traced from the 1940s under the impact of totalitarianism and motivated by the insufficiency of the categories of tradition to assume responsibility for the world we share with others and for its destiny, that is, motivated by the insufficiency of tradition for the care of the world. In this way, Arendt undertakes a dialogue with those authors that she questions when she raises the question of the

relationship between thought and politics: Heidegger, Kant, Jaspers and Socrates. The book maintains that only through this dialogue the critique of tradition gets its definitive form and, at the same time, the answer to Arendt's essential question: under what modalities can thought approach action, politics and the world?

In this way, the originality of the text also lies in the choice of the authors with whom Arendt enters into dialogue. Although the relationship with Heidegger and Kant has been more frequent in the texts on Arendt, the dialogue with Jaspers and the importance of the figure of Socrates has been much less so. The book highlights the place these two thinkers occupy in Arendt's work: the way in which Jaspers mediates in Arendt's reading of Kant and the fundamental way in which the figure of Socrates illuminates his reading of the classical world.

In this way, Hunziker offers a vision of Arendt as a reader of philosophy, as we said, more subtle. Refining the consideration that is usually made (be it of Arendt as a philosopher or of Arendt against philosophy - in the words of Miguel Abensour), suggesting that the relationship she maintains is one of discomfort and criticism but also of respect. Thus, she clarifies, clearing up certain misunderstandings, that Arendt does not blame philosophy or certain philosophers for Totalitarianism without either exonerating the academics and intellectuals who communed with Nazism. She argues that the author's work does not support a filiation between the tradition of political philosophy and Nazi ideology, but, on the contrary, the rupture of all tradition that Nazism means. What is revealed with totalitarianism is the blindness of philosophy and the lack of responsibility it has with the world. That is why, according to the author of this book, to think of Arendt as a reader of philosophy means at the same time exploring the relationship of her readings within the framework of the question of the dynamic between thought and politics; and to think of these readings as a dialogue in time and over time.

This book also shows its originality by the route it proposes through Arendt's texts that are not usually approached, establishing connections between them that illuminate aspects of great importance. Thus, great centrality is given to texts from the 1940s that are usually considered marginal and this allows us to see the continuity and trace the origin of Arendt's interrogation at a very early stage of her thought. It also allows us to respond, among many other questions, to visions that raise the existence of two theories of Arendt's judgment, as well as to more schematic visions that separate her "political" texts from his "philosophical" ones. On the contrary, what the book proposes and its journey makes possible, is to understand the problematic continuity in meditations on thought and action.

This can be seen throughout the book and even without dwelling on the details we would like to mention the new reading horizons that open up for Arendt's main works, such as, for example, the importance of considering how the background of *The Human Condition* becomes more complex by taking into account the centrality of the Socratic model of the "citizen philosopher". This opens up a perspective of comprehension for the text that invites us to stop reading it as a book purely dedicated to action and to ponder the place occupied there by the relationship between action and thought. For the general objective of the text, that is to say, to revise the Arendtian reading of Kant, it is essential since it poses the book on *vita activa* as a bridge between the early reading of the Kantian

moral philosophy and the reception of the *Critique of Judgment*, pointing out that the turn towards the latter is given because there you will find the affirmation of a responsibility of philosophy for the common world. Reading this and other texts from the 1950s and 1960s allows her to reconstruct an appropriation of Kant to go “with Kant beyond Kant”, that is, in short, to recover the importance of the ethical dimension of thinking together with the political importance of the aesthetic spectator for the praxis of human beings. Thus, the “love of the world” that Kant attributes exclusively to the inactive spectator may be a “principle” for the ethical perspective of sensitive and worldly actors committed to the destiny of the common world. In this way, Hunziker manages to find an answer to the pressing question that accompanied her during the years of preparation of this book about the “separation” between “actor” and “spectator”. In this context, according to the author, the spectator's reflection does not imply his absolute separation from thought, but rather his redefinition.

In short, the reader will find here that the particular journey proposed by the book recovering the readings of Kant in her early work of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s opens new perspectives of understanding for his main works from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, through *The Human Condition*, to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Also, this book promises for a future work new perspectives of reading of her later work, particularly of *The Life of the Mind*.

As we said at the beginning, it is with rigour and subtlety that this book traces a journey through Arendt's work, which allows the author to distinguish philosophy from *Platonism of the tradition* and to understand, from there, the meaning and the way in which Arendt read Kant. But it also allows the author to deal more fully with the question of the relationship between philosophy, politics and the world in Arendt's work and to shed light on Arendt's thought operation.

For all these reasons, this book is essential for those of us who devote ourselves to Arendt's work from different perspectives and disciplines, but also for those readers interested in such broad and urgent issues as philosophy, politics and care for the world we share.

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