

Rodowick. D. N., *An Education in Judgment: Hannah Arendt and the Humanities*. Chicago University Press 2021, 182 p., 34.39 EUR.

In this short and elegantly written book, the philosopher D. N. Rodowick lays out reasons why Hannah Arendt's writings can revitalize ideas about the importance of philosophical thinking and reasoning to the humanities. The book consists of a preface and six interconnected essays. The essay form was one that Arendt was also fond of, as her favourite collection of her own writings, *Between Past and Future*, illustrates. So it was good to see someone adopting this style of writing in a full-length monograph.

What I liked most about this finely-argued book was the author's concentration on some of Arendt's lesser-studied works. There is a close reading of her essay "The Crisis of Culture," a particular favourite of mine. Rodowick maintains that this essay sums up some of Arendt's main arguments in *The Human Condition*. As well, as discussing her lectures on Kant, we have a thoughtful reading of her lecture on "Philosophy and Politics", which shows her engagement with Platonic and Socratic thought. This concentration on some of Arendt's lesser-known works is a strength of this collection.

One thread that runs through this book is that of the importance of artful conversations in humanities classes. The notion of "artful conversations" is one Rodowick wrote a book on in 2015. With this book on Arendt, they develops a strong argument regarding why artful conversation is critical. This is not only in the humanities classroom, but also to the education of future citizens. Rodowick asks the reader to consider how "judgment as artful conversation might be considered as both a critical and ethical practice" (29). This is an important topic, and one in keeping with Arendt's own reflections. I started to wonder whether Arendt enjoyed taking part in artful conversations. She certainly liked antagonist ones, as colleagues and friends have noted. Upon reflection, I wonder whether an artful conversation is more of an antagonist one or a well-reasoned dialogue. Or perhaps it is more of a rhetorical technique, which Arendt might not have been so keen on, given her negative assessment of rhetoricians.

I really enjoyed the short discussion toward the end of the book where Rodowick shares their experience involved in teaching in the Department of Visual Art at The University of Chicago. In reading this chapter, I was reminded of the robust discussions amongst a group of scholars and artists who took part in an online series, sponsored by the Richard Saulton gallery in conjunction with Bard College. In these discussions, we read different essays from *Between Past and Future* with scholars familiar with Arendt's work as well as artists new to Arendt's oeuvre. Each essay was introduced by a different scholar, such as Roger Berkowitz and Judith Butler. Not every artist who took part in the discussion was enamoured with Arendt's writing, and this made for good dialogue and dissent. I now think these robust discussions might represent the kind of artful conversations that Rodowick discusses. If so, I would agree we need more of these conversations in diverse fora.

This is not a book for those looking for an in-depth discussion of Arendt's connections with phenomenology. It is, therefore, a different Arendt who appears before us than say in the work of Dana Villa or Seyla Benhabib. As an example, Rodowick argues that Benhabib's approach to Arendtian judgement is not one they appreciate, much preferring Linda Zerilli's approach to the same topic. While I, too, enjoy Zerilli's work I see Arendt working within a tradition of phenomenological and existential thought, albeit in her own unique way. Conversely, those readers who appreciate a close reading of Kant's influence on Arendt may find much of interest here.

Additionally, Rodowick thinks with and against Arendtian ideas in a thoughtful manner. For example, they are not keen on Arendt's idea of beauty as timeless, seeing this as more of a Platonic ideal than a tangible fact. This conservative streak in Arendt's assessment of culture is problematic, Rodowick maintains, because it leaves little space for the new. Rodowick finds her timeless approach to beauty at odds with her concept of natality. We need more space for the new, Rodowick maintains, asking the reader to re-imagine ways of conceiving not only aesthetic experience but history and forms of community.

In the preface, Rodowick informs the reader that they have deliberately left out historical or political examples in preference for thinking carefully with Arendt. I think Rodowick misses an opportunity to connect Arendt's work with current political events. In my view, this would strengthen the argument about the importance of her ideas on judgment to a society where ideas of truth have lost purchase. That said, Rodowick does touch on politics in that they are critical of the professional turn in universities, and the lack of support for the humanities. In concert with Arendt, Rodowick states that "there is no democracy without impartial and independent criticism, testimony, and the exercise of good judgment" (165). This is what philosophy can bring to the humanities. What I wanted to know more about is what value are the humanities to philosophy.

At one point, the author makes the argument that the centrality of philosophy is obvious, given that successful doctoral candidates in the humanities receive a PhD. This struck me as a poor argument for why other humanities' disciplines should see philosophy as central to their way of thinking. But then again I am in the interdisciplinary camp of the humanities. While I may engage in philosophizing, to me, Arendt's foremost strength is as a political thinker who offers us insight into past and present existential crises.

At the beginning of the book, Rodowick asks readers to think and judge for themselves. My opinion is that this book will appeal to readers interested in the philosophical underpinnings of Arendtian thought as they relate to the humanities. I was not always convinced by the arguments put forward, but they did offer me pause for thought, which is one important criteria for a well-argued monograph.

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