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Chapter 5

THE LIFE OF THE MIND OF HANNAH ARENDT

Liah Greenfeld

Hannah Arendt did not like sociology and made no exception for Weber's concept of "ideal type." She thought it prevented sociologists from focusing on what was especially important about phenomena under scrutiny, substituting for their unique qualities features arrived at through simplifying generalizations.¹ But this was a misunderstanding. The ideal type has little in common with average type, which Arendt presumed it to be. It is a method for identifying productive questions by, first, constructing a concept of the phenomenon one wishes to understand on the basis of its best-known and most obvious characteristics, as it would have been, if these characteristics and these characteristics alone were allowed to develop out of their fundamental principles, unthwarted by historical contingencies, and using this "ideal type" as a measuring rod for the importance of actual historical characteristics. The larger the deviation from the ideal type, the more important it is to focus on it (Weber 1978). Were we to construct the ideal type of the work of Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* would stick out like a sore thumb. The author of *The Human Condition*, of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, of *Rahel Varnhagen* and certainly of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, is unrecognizable in it. *The Life of the Mind* is in no way representative of Arendt's canon, however varied it may be considered, it seems to contradict the representative works in almost every line; it is completely out of character. Precisely for this reason, it is significant for the understanding of this canon and this character. More than any other, it invites one to transform Arendt's work into an *object* of sociological study.

The book was composed between 1970 and December 1975, when Arendt died (having finished two of the three planned volumes). Was it her intellectual testament? The fact that the book originated as a prestigious lecture course – the Gifford Lectures – which Arendt was unquestionably invited to give because of her contributions to political theory, and the interpretation of

totalitarianism in the first place, but chose to devote to a subject that nobody expected of her, lends credence to this idea. This makes using *The Life of the Mind* as the complement to the ideal type of Arendt's work of interest to intellectual historians and anyone seeking a key to the interpretation of her entire body of work.

What's in the Book

I am using for this chapter the compacted Harcourt edition of 1978 that includes within it the two volumes of *The Life of the Mind*: volume 1 on thinking; volume 2 on willing. The cover advertises the book as "Arendt's greatest work"; "The most intriguing ... and thought-provoking book that Hannah Arendt wrote"; "Considered by many to be Hannah Arendt's greatest work." This might have been so when the book appeared; it is no longer so, without a doubt. The eulogies go on: "The groundbreaking investigation on how we think"; "offers new insights to illuminate our own mental experience"; "a rich, challenging analysis of human mental activity, considered in terms of thinking, willing, and judging." This is plainly wrong: *The Life of the Mind* has nothing to do with how *we* think; it is not about human – our – mental activity at all. It is essentially a history of certain ideas in philosophy.

Arendt introduces her book as a philosophical discourse:

To talk about Thinking seems to me so presumptuous that I feel I should start ... with a justification. ... What disturbs me is that *I* try my hand in it, for I have neither claim nor ambition to be a "philosopher" or be numbered among what Kant, not without irony, called ... professional thinkers. The question then is, should I not have left these problems in the hands of the experts, and the answer will have to show what prompted me to venture from the relatively safe fields of political science and theory into these rather awesome matters. (1.3)

"The immediate impulse" for her "preoccupation with mental activities," she explains,

came from my attending the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. In my report of it I spoke of "the banality of evil." Behind that phrase, I held no thesis or doctrine, although I was dimly aware of the fact that it went counter to our tradition of thought – literary, theological, or philosophic – about the phenomenon of evil. Evil, we have learned, is something demonic; its incarnation is Satan, a "lightning fall from heaven" or Lucifer, the fallen angel ... whose sin is pride, namely that *superbia* of which only the best are capable: they do not want to serve God but to be like Him. ... However, what I was confronted with was utterly different

and still undeniably factual. I was struck by a manifest shallowness in the doer that made it impossible to trace the incontestable evil of his deeds to any deeper level of roots or motives. The deeds were monstrous, but the doer – at least the very effective one now on trial – was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous. There was no sign in him of firm ideological convictions or of specific evil motives, and the only notable characteristic one could detect in his past behavior as well as in his behavior during the trial and throughout the pre-trial police examination was something entirely negative: it was not stupidity but *thoughtlessness*. ... It was this absence of thinking ... that awakened my interest. Is evil-doing (the sins of omission, as well as the sins of commission) possible in default of not just “base motives” ... but of any motives whatever, of any particular prompting of interest or volition? Is wickedness, however we may define it ... *not* a necessary condition for evil-doing? Might the problem of good and evil, our faculty for telling right from wrong, be connected with our faculty of thought? (1.3)

Implicitly, this introductory passage makes what turns out to be the central argument in *The Life of the Mind*: that is, that thinking is antithetical to evil, or, at least, evildoing. The premises are as follows: a. Evil men belong among the *best*, the superior, the *extraordinary* men; they are demonic, which is divine with the opposite sign. b. Greatness, in turn, is equal to sophisticated thinking, which produces firm (clear) ideological convictions and specific motives. It is presupposed that the only alternatives that exist on both points (i.e., in regard to the relationship between greatness and evil, and greatness and thinking) are the direct contradictions of these axioms: thus, if evil men are banal, ordinary, it follows that extraordinary thinking men are not evil. Eichmann revealed himself as thoughtless and, therefore, banal. This was contrary to the original expectation, but “undeniably factual,” therefore, the matter is decided.

Logical parsing makes possible an alternative reading. It separates evil from evil deeds. If wickedness (evil) is not a necessary condition for evildoing, then evil men who are superior like Lucifer may be free from responsibility for evil done by ordinary men, thoughtless automatons that they are. Automatons are not moved by evil ideas developed by great evil men; they simply obey orders. The definition of the problem of good and evil as “our ability to tell right from wrong” complicates the matter further. Eichmann the ordinary, owing to his thoughtlessness, was not able to appreciate that inflicting suffering on and murdering millions of innocent men, women and children was wrong. It accords with the “banality of evil” that he was evil and banal at the same time. A superior man, a great thinker, such as, say, Heidegger or Schmitt, obviously would be able to tell right from wrong; ergo, such a man could not be evil. Whichever way one turns within this passage, one ends logically deprived of

the ability to pronounce moral judgment on German intellectuals complicit in the National Socialist regime, and on philosophers above all.

The book does not develop this argument. It runs through the *Thinking* volume, waxing and waning, but is less clearly “the immediate impulse” behind Arendt’s preoccupation with the second mental activity of Willing. Essentially, *The Life of the Mind* consists of expanded lecture notes and represents a prolonged rumination on related themes. Its structure is loose and it is not the argument regarding the antithesis of thinking and evil that provides it. Yet the book cannot be understood without it. It turns out to be a kind of special – and very personal – pleading.

Arendt brings to *The Life of the Mind* the great storage of philosophical knowledge she acquired as a brilliant student. Reading it, one learns about Arendt’s mind and about the tradition carried in it. The lesson is not *taught* because there is no intentional structuring of self-presentation or tradition, only natural signification – Arendt representing the life of her mind as a smell represents a particular living organism, and representing the German philosophical tradition as the same smell represents the form of life in general. The unintentional, *untaught* character of its lessons makes *The Life of the Mind*, in the words of Marc Bloch, that precious sort of document that testifies in spite of itself (Bloch 1953).

The philosophical tradition represented in *The Life of the Mind* is not universal. Its particularism immediately and necessarily limits its relevance for the understanding of its stated subject. This tradition, which Arendt consistently calls “our tradition” and obviously believes to be universal, the reservoir of the collected wisdom of the ages of, at the very least, Western (i.e., not Oriental) history, begins with Greek pre-Socratics and culminates with Heidegger. But what (or, rather, who) is not included in it is no less significant than what (or who) is. The index of the *Thinking* volume accords one entry each to John Locke and David Hume. In the *Willing* volume, the two philosophers generally considered among the most important in the Western philosophical tradition, specifically in the philosophy regarding faculties of the mind, do not receive even this sparse recognition. It is as if neither Locke’s “Essay Concerning Human Understanding,” nor Hume’s “Enquiry” into the subject have ever been written. Just for purposes of comparison, Kant gets 62 entries in the index of the *Thinking* volume, and 35 in that of *Willing*; Heidegger is accorded 24 in the former and 38 in the latter; and even Marx, an author not known to devote much attention to mental faculties, is recognized with six in each.

French pre-Kantian philosophers fare little better than the British. Descartes is referred to on nine pages in *Thinking* and 12 in *Willing*, but is dismissed as wrong throughout. “Descartes’ *Cogito me cogitare ergo sum* is a non

sequitur,” declares Arendt on page 20 of the first volume to repeat again and again: “The *cogito ergo sum* is a fallacy.” “It never occurred” to Descartes, she explains, “that no *cogitation* and no *cogito me cogitare*, no consciousness of an acting self that had suspended all faith in the reality of its intentional objects, would ever have been able to convince him of his own reality had he actually been born in a desert, without a body and its senses to perceive ‘material’ things and without fellow-creatures to assure him that what he perceived was perceived by them too.” (She appeals here to the commonsense interpretation of experience, the epistemic value of which the book consistently denigrates. It espouses a fundamentally idealistic position regarding the life of the mind; yet, the materialist privileging of the senses over consciousness is also consistent.) However, she is ebullient in her praise of French thinkers critical of Descartes, as in: “What Merleau-Ponty had to say against Descartes is brilliantly right” (1.48–49).

“Our tradition of thought” thus proves very limited, at least when it comes to its geographical provenance – in modern times it seems to be largely confined to Germany. At least as remarkably, when it comes to its historical extension, this tradition of ours allots almost no place to the Bible. (This body of literature, arguably foundational for our civilization, is treated as cavalierly as thinkers of the seventeenth century, the first period of modern philosophy, which emerges in France, incidentally as Biblical criticism, and its central figure, Descartes – mentioned, if mentioned at all, in order to be dismissed.) Instead, “our tradition” unambiguously starts with the Greeks. A rather curious pattern emerges. It seems that only thinkers *called* philosophers are included. The name, or, more precisely, the title, is the decisive characteristic. The word “philosophy” is Greek, Greeks applied it to themselves, ergo: they were philosophers by definition. The Hebrews who composed the Bible, in distinction and also by definition, are not philosophers, for they had their own words for “wisdom” and its “lovers.” This gets more restrictive in the modern period, in which, by the late eighteenth century, the name, previously used as a simple epithet, becomes associated with a professional, academic position and actually transformed into an official title. This happens, specifically, in Germany. French or British philosophers may or may not be professors of philosophy. Descartes was not. Locke was a physician. Hume was on several occasions denied such professorships. It is questionable that in a contemporary American university they would be placed in departments of philosophy. But no such problem exists in the cases of Kant, Hegel or Heidegger. “Our tradition of thought” in *The Life of the Mind* proves an academic tradition. The reason Arendt does not devote a single word to either Locke’s “Essay” or Hume’s “Enquiry” Concerning Human Understanding, thus, is that her book on mental activities does not concern either *human* or *understanding*. It

concerns – Kant’s irony forgotten as soon as it is mentioned – a peculiar mental process characteristic of a peculiar breed of men, *Denker von Gewerbe*, professional thinkers.

Volume One of *The Life of the Mind: Thinking* begins with Heidegger. The epigraph, taken from his writings, asserts: “Thinking does not bring knowledge as do the sciences. Thinking does not produce usable practical wisdom. Thinking does not solve the riddles of the universe. Thinking does not endow us directly with the power to act.” Now we know what thinking does not do.² It remains to us to learn what it does – and what it is, in the first place.

Arendt’s own discussion starts with the opposite of thinking – *thoughtlessness* (which, we recall, is the condition of evil). Thoughtlessness, she says, expresses itself in “clichés, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct [which] have the socially recognized function of protecting us against reality, that is, against the claim on our thinking attention that all events and facts make by virtue of their existence” (1.4). This statement, among other implications, places Arendt in direct opposition to the project of sociology, best reflected in Durkheim’s concept of “social fact.” For her, it appears, the *social* – which consists in a very large part of conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct – does not even belong to reality, while the events and facts that by virtue of their existence make the claim on our thinking attention are, by definition, not social. This does not necessarily mean that, if pressed, Arendt would insist (as logic of the statement would lead her to) that social norms, values and roles do not actually exist; what it does mean, however, is that *she places thinking outside, and in opposition, to the social*. As we proceed further, we see that she defines “the activity of thinking as such” as “the habit of examining whatever happens to pass or to attract attention, regardless of results and specific content,” that is, some sort of disinterested analysis. But it is not only that, as immediately she adds: “The very word ‘con-science’ ... means ‘to know with and by myself,’ a kind of knowledge that is actualized in every thinking process.” From this we may infer that thinking is not just analysis of events and facts that claim our attention outside of our minds, but a form of self-knowledge, or, rather, the mind turned upon itself. It is here that Arendt asks whether the activity of thinking as such could be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing, to which she responds with a rhetorical question evidently soliciting agreement but as likely to provoke astonishment: “And is not this hypothesis enforced by everything we know about conscience, namely, that a ‘good conscience’ is enjoyed as a rule only by really bad people, criminals and such, while only ‘good people’ are capable of having bad conscience?” (1.5).

Within her tradition, Arendt's approach is conventional. She begins by distinguishing between the two "worlds" that present themselves to us: the "true world" of the suprasensory and the "apparent world" of the sensory. The mind is "the organ for the suprasensory," she says. Our senses reveal to us only appearances. (A sociologist would remember encountering this view – quite contemptuous precisely of that kind of data contemporary sociology respects above others – in Marx.³) With the scientific disrespect for the suprasensory, she goes on, "its opposite, the world of appearances as understood for so many centuries, is also annihilated":

This insight of Nietzsche's, namely, that "the elimination of the suprasensory also eliminates the merely sensory and thereby the difference between them" (Heidegger), is actually so obvious that it defies every attempt to date it historically; all thinking in terms of two worlds implies that these two are inseparably connected with each other. Thus, all the elaborate modern arguments against positivism are anticipated by the unsurpassed simplicity of Democritus' little dialogue between the mind, the organ for the suprasensory, and the senses. Sense perceptions are illusions, says the mind; they change according to the conditions of our body; sweet, bitter, color, and so on exist only *nomo*, by convention among men, and not *physei*, according to true nature behind the appearances. Whereupon the senses answer: "Wretched mind! Do you overthrow us while you take from us your evidence [*pisteis*, everything you can trust]? Our overthrow will be your downfall." In other words, once the always precarious balance between the two worlds is lost, no matter whether the "true world" abolishes the "apparent one" or vice versa, the whole framework of reference in which our thinking was accustomed to orient itself breaks down. In these terms, nothing seems to make much sense anymore. (1.11)

Of course, Nietzsche's insight (quoted, remarkably, through Heidegger, which is characteristic of the book – a backhanded compliment to Heidegger, consistently deprived of any originality in his ostensibly most important contributions) is not as obvious as that. It would be obvious, if the thinking in terms of two worlds was the only possible way of thinking about reality. But it is not. The fact that it represents the "framework of reference in which our [read German academic philosophical] thinking was accustomed to orient itself" does not at all contradict the possibility that this framework is misleading and that thinking in very different terms may better advance our understanding. (One such preferable possibility will be discussed later.) The very breakdown of the framework, which Arendt presents as proof positive of the crucial importance of the balance between the "true" and "apparent" worlds, from a

certain – Kuhnian – perspective in philosophy of science, would represent the demand for its replacement with another paradigm, that is, an urgent need for an intellectual revolution. But Kuhn, clearly, does not belong to “our tradition of thinking.” Actually, Arendt does not think he belongs to any tradition of thinking, because he pursues knowledge, and this (as we know from Heidegger already) is not what thinking is about.

We are, says Arendt, “what men always have been – thinking beings. By this I mean no more than that men have an inclination, perhaps a need, to think beyond the limitations of knowledge, to do more with this ability than use it as an instrument for knowing and doing.” This definition of thinking, which some may consider rather narrow, is based on the experience of thinkers, who increasingly reveal themselves as a much more exclusive group than the aforementioned “men.” She continues:

The only record we possess of what thinking as an activity meant to those who had chosen it as a way of life is what we would call today “metaphysical fallacies.” None of the systems, none of the doctrines transmitted to us by the great thinkers may be convincing or even plausible to modern readers; but none of them, I shall try to argue here, is arbitrary and none can be simply dismissed as sheer nonsense. On the contrary, the metaphysical fallacies contain the only clues we have to what thinking means to those who engage in it. (1.12)

In his “Autobiographical Notes,” describing his intellectual trajectory, in the context of explaining how he arrived at the theory of special relativity, Einstein explicitly raised the question “What, in effect, is thinking?” and devoted to it a separate chapter (Einstein 1979). When Arendt early in the text introduces this same question, “What is thinking?” as the problem she is “preoccupied” with, she does not mention Einstein. (Einstein merits only one passing remark from her much later in her book.) Einstein had no need to resort to “metaphysical fallacies.” His approach was empirical: he examined his own experience through careful introspection. But, unaware of this possibility, Arendt continues confidently:

At least one point has been taken for granted: that these disciplines – whether you called them metaphysics or philosophy – dealt with matters that were not given to sense-perception and that their understanding transcended common-sense reasoning, which springs from sense experience and can be validated by empirical tests and means ... all thinkers were agreed that, in order to deal with such matters, man has to detach his mind from the senses by detaching it both from the world as given by them and from the sensations – or passions – aroused by sense-objects. The philosopher, to the extent that he is a philosopher and not

(what of course he also is) “a man like you and me,” withdraws from the world of appearances, and the region he then moves in has always, since philosophy’s beginning, been described as the world of the few. (1.13)

“Thinker,” in this discussion, means “philosopher.” But even those exclusively concerned with the life of philosophers’ minds must find this characterization of their peculiar thinking questionable. To begin with, commonsense reasoning is not coextensive with the empirical, but only with the conventional. And, if we take what “all [Arendt’s] thinkers” agreed on to be true, we would have to assume that “philosophy” was born in the Christian Middle Ages and dead before the sixteenth century, because both the venerable Greeks and the few Englishmen and Frenchmen whom Arendt, however grudgingly, admits to the club, were very interested in the evidence of the senses. (Newton, for instance, belonged to an explicitly “philosophical” tradition, that of “experimental philosophy,” focused unabashedly on the world of “appearances.”)

The fact that many today question the distinction between common men and “professional thinkers” engaging in the “highest” human activity, Arendt writes, justifies considering the problem of evil in the light of “thinking”:

If, as I suggested before, the ability to tell right from wrong should turn out to have anything to do with the ability to think, then we must be able to “demand” its exercise from every sane person, no matter how erudite or ignorant, intelligent or stupid, he may happen to be. Kant – in this respect almost alone among the philosophers – was much bothered by the common opinion that philosophy is only for the few, precisely because of its moral implications, and he once observed that “stupidity is caused by a wicked heart.” This is not true: absence of thought is not stupidity; it can be found in highly intelligent people, and a wicked heart is not its cause; it is probably the other way round, that wickedness may be caused by absence of thought. (1.13)

If absence of thought is not stupidity, logically Arendt should not be able to say that Kant’s proposition about stupidity is not true. That aside, is not Kant quoted to support Arendt’s claim? Turns out, the disagreement between them is profound.

Kant drew a distinction, Arendt continues, between *reason* and *understanding* (or “intellect”):

He was also quite aware that “the urgent need” of reason is both different from and “more than mere quest and desire for knowledge.” Hence the distinguishing of the two faculties, reason and intellect, coincides with a distinction

between two altogether different mental activities, thinking and knowing, and two altogether different concerns, meaning, in the first category, and cognition, in the second. (1.14)

Yet, the great philosopher

remained less than fully aware of the extent to which he had liberated reason, the ability to think, by justifying it in terms of the ultimate questions ... The great obstacle that reason (*Vernunft*) puts in its own way arises from the side of the intellect (*Verstand*) and the entirely justified criteria it has established for its own purposes, that is, for quenching our thirst, and meeting our need, for knowledge and cognition. The reason neither Kant nor his successors ever paid much attention to thinking as an activity and even less to the experiences of thinking ego is that, all distinctions notwithstanding, they were demanding the kind of results and applying the kind of criteria for certainty and evidence that are the results and criteria of cognition. But ... the assumption must be that thinking and reason are not concerned with what the intellect is concerned with. To ... put it in a nutshell: *The need of reason is not inspired by the quest for truth but by the quest for meaning. And truth and meaning are not the same.* (1.14–15)

In other words, German philosophers, on whose interpretation of thinking Arendt relies, misinterpreted themselves and, diverted from the path of pure reason, that is, the unadulterated ability to think, ended up among scientists and the rest of us, representatives of intellect, questing for truth and focused not on the “true world,” but on the world of “appearances.” Even the neo-Kantian Heidegger was known, in an unguarded moment, to make the mistake of equating meaning and truth, and Heidegger, as we already know, knew better. (1.15)

The introduction into the discussion of the concept of meaning may hearten a sociologist. On the face of it there seems to be an exact parallel between Arendt's idea of philosophy and Weber's idea of sociology: both insist that meaning and not truth should be the focus of the enterprise. There are good reasons for the affinity between German philosophical tradition and Weber's view of sociology, since it is clearly in conversation with the former that the latter crystallized. Weber's very choice of words for the subject matter of the new discipline he advocated – “social action,” which he carefully and immediately defined as action, committed or omitted, meaningful for the actor⁴ – is only understandable in the context of philosophical discussions that identified action with “the real” and meaning with “the ideal.” Weber wished to stress the *reality* of meaning, to make it a legitimate subject for science, dealing with the empirical, and by appropriating the term that was in

his immediate intellectual environment associated with objective reality (and applying it to a subjective phenomenon) he achieved it. (This is just one example of how important the historical context is for the evolution of scientific concepts, and language is for thinking. Durkheim, incidentally, also in a position of an innovator, faced a very similar situation: he too had, in the first place, to appease the predictable naysayers. But in France at the time, positive science, and not idealistic philosophy, ruled the intellectual roost. This explains Durkheim's choice of the phrase "social fact" to refer to *mental* phenomena and his insistence that "social facts" be *approached* as things [Durkheim 1982]. The choice of different words, carrying different conceptual baggage, derived from different traditions, and chosen because of the exigencies of different situations, to refer to precisely the same class of phenomena, has obscured the close affinity between the two greatest sociological theorists for a century, even to themselves.) However, if we are to judge by Arendt's reaction, this "cunning of (Weber's) reason" did not impress philosophers, no *rapprochement* occurred and, while uttering the same words, they continued to mean very different, if not opposite, things.

Arendt's idea of "meaning," ironically, means precisely what Weber calls "truth": it is empirically inaccessible, unknowable, unfathomable; it cannot be learned from experience, because it is beyond the world of so-called appearances and belongs to the "true world" of the really real. Even more confusing is that, despite the constant use of the phrase "true world," she thinks that "truth" is the correspondence to perceived facts and that this is what science wants. Here is a representative passage (1.57–65):

Cognition, whose highest criterion is truth, derives that criterion from the world of appearances in which we take our bearings through sense perceptions, whose testimony is self-evident, that is, unshakeable by argument and replaceable only by other evidence. As the German translation of the Latin *perceptio* ... clearly indicates, truth is located in the evidence of the senses. But that is by no means the case with meaning and with the faculty of thought, which searches for it, the latter does not ask what something is or whether it exists at all – its existence is always taken for granted – *but what it means for it to be*. This distinction between truth and meaning seems to me to be not only decisive for any inquiry into the nature of human thinking but also to be the necessary consequence of Kant's crucial distinction between reason and intellect. Admittedly, Kant himself never pursued that particular implication of his own thought; in fact, a clear-cut line of demarcation between these two altogether different modes cannot be found in the history of philosophy. ... The questions raised by our thirst for knowledge arise from our curiosity about the world, our desire to investigate whatever is given to our sensory apparatus. ... But the questions raised by thinking and

which it is in reason's very nature to raise – questions of meaning – are all unanswerable by common sense and the refinement of it we call science. The quest for meaning is “meaningless” to common sense and common-sense reasoning, because it is the sixth sense's function to fit us into the world of appearances and make us at home in the world given by our five senses; there we are and no questions asked.

“What science and the quest for knowledge are after is *irrefutable* truth,” she offers, and there are two kinds of this: truths of reasoning and truths of fact. “Truths of fact,” in Arendt's view, “are as compelling for anybody witnessing them with his own eyes as the proposition that two and two make four is for anybody in his right mind,” while “rational or mathematical truth presents itself as self-evident to everyone endowed with the same brain power.” With the authority of a neuroscientist, she declares: “The source of mathematical truth is the human brain,” commenting:

Brain power is no less natural, no less equipped to guide us through an appearing world, than our senses plus common sense and the extension of it that Kant called intellect. The best proof of this may lie in the otherwise quite mysterious fact that mathematical reasoning, the purest activity of our brain, and at first glance, because of its abstraction from all qualities given to our senses, the farthest removed from sheer common-sense reasoning, could play such an enormously liberating role in science's exploration of the universe. (1.60)

The agreement with the evidence of the senses and dictates of the brain, Arendt argues, is *necessary* in the sense that no one can withhold it: “Truth is what we are compelled to admit by the nature either of our senses or the brain,” while “The opposite of necessity is ... freedom.” She does not wish to deny, she concedes, that thinking's quest for meaning and knowledge's quest for truth are connected. In fact, it is “by posing the unanswerable questions of meaning, [that] men establish themselves as question-asking beings.” (The rhetoric here – the postulation of empirically unverifiable and logically arbitrary causal relations as facts and building on them – once more reminds us of Marx's “German Ideology.”) “It is more than likely that men,” Arendt continues, “if they were ever to lose the appetite for meaning we call thinking and cease to ask unanswerable questions, would lose not only the ability to produce those thought-things we call works of art but also the capacity to ask all the answerable questions.” Yet the differences between cognition and thinking trump their affinity; among other things, cognition “leaves behind a growing treasure of knowledge.” Thinking, in distinction, does not “and the need to think can therefore never be stilled by the insights of ‘wise men’” (1.62).

Kant, on whose pronouncements Arendt relies most often to substantiate her own claims, continues to disappoint her and she is clearly troubled by this. She writes: "What undermined Kant's greatest discovery, the distinction between knowledge, which uses thinking as a means to an end, and thinking itself as it arises out of 'the very nature of our reason' and is done for its own sake, was that he constantly compared the two with each other." Kant, she says, "is afraid that his ideas might ... turn out to be 'empty thought-things.'" For this reason, "he equates what we have here called meaning with Purpose and even Intention. ... it turns out, reason pursues specific purposes, has specific intentions in resorting to its ideas; it is the need of human reason and its interest in God, Freedom, and Immortality that make men think." But, she concludes, "we do not have to go hunting for small contradictions in the work of this very great thinker. Right in the midst of the passages quoted above occurs the sentence that stands in the greatest possible contrast to his own equation of reason with Purpose: 'Pure reason is in fact occupied with nothing but itself. It can have no other vocation'" (1.65). Arendt chooses to consider this Kant's final position.

It is difficult to say what is more frustrating: Arendt's awareness of the many contradictions in the thought of philosophers on whose ideas about thinking she bases her own to the arguments she attributes to them, or her lack of awareness of the incongruity of her own view of science. We must believe that the life of the mind she describes is the life of, at least, some – granted, very few – people's minds. But how can we believe this, if even Kant, the one who discovers the difference between thinking and knowing (his predecessors, though also included among thinkers, pondering the meaning of "the true world" beyond mere appearances accessible through perception, must have been unaware of this distinction), does not think that he thinks that way? Are we to rely on Arendt's erudition and numerous quotations it brings us, which contradict her, or on her assertions that some of these quotations, which do not, represent the actual (can one use the word "true" here?) state of the minds of those quoted?

As to science, Arendt's idea of it is based exclusively on Newtonian physics – physics before Einstein – and, more important, science before biology. It is a naive idea, presuming a perfectly logical universe, lying "out there," ready to be discovered through the natural medium (a product of brain power) of mathematics – indeed, reflection of the creative intelligence behind everything there is, including the knower of precisely the kind to know everything there is. Only, as we knew already in the 1970s, the physical universe is not perfectly logical, and mathematics, to quote Einstein, "as far as they are certain ... do not refer to reality" (Einstein 1922: 28). Neither is the physical universe everything there is. There are also the undeniable empirical phenomena of Life, in general, and

of human life, in particular, which presumes History and Culture. History does get a passing mention in the book, in connection to Hegel's philosophy of history. Culture does not. But even in the former case, Arendt gives no thought to the inescapably historical nature of our scientific concepts, of mathematics, of the mind itself and, most important in the present context, of the discipline of philosophy she is expounding and its idea of science. In a textbook manner, philosophy is treated as timeless, wholly independent of the lives of the people who produce it, passively reflecting (rather than preoccupied with) not the truth, of course, in the sense of correspondence between propositions and sense perceptions, but "the true world" and thus, though sometimes confused as anything passing through the medium of mortal men is bound to be, by definition supremely valuable and worth mortal men's attention.

Speaking practically, philosophy is worth our attention because of the discipline it imposes on thinking of the sort mortal "men, like you and me" do, when we attempt to generate objective knowledge. Not coincidentally, Durkheim, the great sociologist, was educated as a philosopher. This discipline expresses itself, first of all, in the careful definition of one's terms, foremost those referring to the object or focus of one's discussion. Without such careful definition, as was discovered already by Thales, arguments are not arguable. Only their exposure to contradiction, and its avoidance having been so exposed, makes them arguable, that is, compelling in the absence of any other force but logic. This is logically impossible, if the terms are not defined. It is sad that sociologists often must be reminded of the importance of definitions. Even colossal reservoirs of data (the *big data* of much fame recently) are rendered trite by the lack of logical discipline. Much sadder, however, is when a philosopher forgets about this essential requirement of the profession: central terms left undefined make contradicting one's propositions impossible, and discussions consisting of uncontradictable propositions are not simply trite, but meaningless – they are, logically, nonsense.

It is ironic when such a thing happens to a discussion of meaning, yet this is what happens in *The Life of the Mind*. Arendt would not make up her mind as to what she means by "meaning." Besides telling us repeatedly that meaning is what the faculty of thought searches for (1.57), that is, defining meaning in terms of thought or thinking that is in turn defined as "the appetite for meaning," she offers her reader no guidance. Nevertheless, it seems that most of the time the meaning she believes philosophers are after is precisely what Kant in the offending passages calls "Purpose" or "Intention" (in the sense of the intention of creative intelligence behind the universe, or God): the ultimate "Meaning of Life," in other words. It is metaphysical, the questions behind it being not "what does it mean to live, to be?" or, more specifically, "what does it mean to be human? to live a human life?" – these are empirical questions,

answerable through biological or sociological description – but “why are we here? what is the justification for being and living?” They boil down to a theodicy, the justification for suffering, and thus bring us back to the problem of evil. These questions are not unanswerable; they are complex, debatable, but perfectly answerable within the framework of our fundamental beliefs. Does a believing Jew, Christian, or Muslim find them unanswerable? No.

The problem for Arendt, and for anyone in our unbelieving age, is not that such questions are unanswerable, but that we do not want to accept the obvious answer (i.e., the answer obvious to a committed nonbeliever): life has no meaning besides that with which we (in our different times and societies) endow it. For the simple reason that no creative intelligence is behind the universe – which is the core of the nonbeliever’s belief – there can be no intention or purpose behind it. None. Given this, there is no justification for suffering. The fact that God’s nonexistence cannot be proven, empirically or logically, interferes with this our faith as little as the impossibility of proving His existence does with that of the believers. The suspension of critical judgment insofar as our fundamental beliefs are concerned is a necessary condition of sanity. The most one can do is to be aware of one’s beliefs and not to confuse them with conclusions arrived at by critical thinking. Both the awareness of this limitation on reason and its acceptance are essential for a scholar who wishes to understand the life of the mind. But neither appears to have crossed the mind of Hannah Arendt.

Insofar as the search for meaning is concerned, the dispute between philosophy and sociology ultimately boils down to the question of methodology. Some of us believe that meaning is to be discovered through speculation (Arendt’s “thinking”), some – through the examination of empirical reality. But it is always empirical reality – our experience – that we want to come to grips with. We are all interested in understanding, making sense of, the human condition *as it is* – we all would like to have the assurance that our suffering is not senseless, meaningful for none but each sufferer in his or her loneliness. We would all like to find meaning in this sense. But what we find is that, without creative intelligence behind the universe, phenomena, such as life and humanity, which are not in-built into the timeless material world, but have a definite beginning in it, resulting from an accident utterly improbable from the point of view of its immanent laws, are temporary and purposeless, and that we – meaning-seeking beings – give meanings to our lives as we go along. There is no meaning of life to be discovered besides the many ones we endow life with, which means that the only way to access these meanings, to learn about them, *and to talk about them without talking nonsense*, is the Weberian, sociological way.

By constructing these makeshift meanings “men like you and me” make suffering sufferable – not all kinds of suffering, it is true. Some cases, such as the Holocaust, remain beyond the reach of meaning, for which reason we tend

to identify it with absolute evil. Remarkably, suffering does not figure at all in *The Life of the Mind*. Evil, brought into the discussion by way of Eichmann's trial, is never associated with inflicting it, but is presented as the opposite of the equally undefined good and beautiful, as *kakia*, "bad," though the reader is treated to detailed discourses on the Greek idea that death was the greatest evil and the Roman one that it was, rather, fear. This detached approach to evil may explain why Arendt is not interested in empirically accessible meanings.

Arendt's idea of the mind emerges fully in the ninth chapter of the first volume, which Arendt opens writing:

Thinking, willing, and judging are the three basic mental activities; they cannot be derived from each other and ... reduced to a common denominator. To the question What makes us think? there is ultimately no answer other than what Kant called "reason's need," the inner impulse of that faculty to actualize itself in speculation. And something very similar is true for the will, which neither reason nor desire can move. (1.69)

These activities are basic, she continues, because they are "autonomous," which "implies their being unconditioned; none of the conditions of either life or the world corresponds to them directly." The "main characteristic" of these mental activities, she adds, "is their *invisibility* ... they never appear" (1.69–71).

The mind, therefore, is not only "the organ for the suprasensory," as we learned earlier, it belongs to the "suprasensory"; empirically inaccessible, it cannot be *known*. Arendt postulates that it consists of three essentially unconnected faculties, each self-caused, because independent both of each other and of anything in life or in the world ("autonomous" here means much more than the term usually denotes). How does she know that?

The independence of the three basic faculties renders problematic the idea of the mind. In which sense is it a meaningful unit? It is certainly not an organ composed of systematically related (interdependent) elements. But, if there is nothing to the mind beyond the independent faculties or activities, one cannot talk of "the life of the mind." Each of the faculties stands on its own and each can be discussed on its own. These discussions may be assembled as in a specialized encyclopedia, as is usual for discussions about things of a kind, but there is no logical necessity for this and they in no way affect each other. This would explain the absence of an overarching argument and a very loose structure of *The Life of the Mind*, but begs the question: why did Arendt write it? Could she want her likely last book to be a compilation of what some philosophers said about some mental faculties?

The *Willing* volume, which represents precisely such a compilation, creates a strong impression that it was not originally planned, but written as an answer

to requirements of Gifford Lectureship. Unlike *Thinking*, it has no epigraph (while the two epigraphs to the book as a whole are discussed in *Thinking*); its introduction is very short and gives no explanation for Arendt's interest in the subject; and, as mentioned earlier, it has no argument. Its structure is roughly chronological and, instead of beginning with Heidegger, it ends with him. In other respects, it is similar to *Thinking*: quoting from the same roster of authorities, exhibiting the same level of erudition, lack of originality and logical problems.

The few words in *Thinking* regarding the will's independence from reason and desire gives the reader a foretaste of the discussion in *Willing*. The main concept alongside which it is considered by philosophers, Arendt says in the introduction, is Freedom, commenting: "The touchstone of a free act is always our awareness that we could also have left undone what we actually did. ... Willing, it appears, has an infinitely greater freedom than thinking, which even in its freest, most speculative form cannot escape the law of non-contradiction" (2.5). (Thinking here, again, means Western philosophical thinking.) Several pages later, she, without any argument, substitutes "willed act" for "free act": "willed acts, which – on the assumption of free will – could all be defined as acts about which I know that I could as well have left them undone" (2.14). The will *becomes* freedom. The claim that the will is free is taken by Arendt to mean that one is free to do whatever one wants and the subsequent discussion revolves around the question whether indeed this is possible, arguments to the contrary offered as negations of free will. The fact that ancient philosophers did not equate free will with freedom allows Arendt to say, all the while relying on modern interpretations, that they did not have the concept of will at all, and that it was "discovered" only in the Christian era, though, apparently, discovered mostly to be denied.

Dubious about will as "the location of human freedom" (2.19), Arendt brings up the possibility to consider it as "the organ of the future." She clearly prefers it, writing: "The Will, if it exists at all ... is as obviously our mental organ for the future as memory is our mental organ for the past" (2.13). This has been the position of modern philosophy, "because the modern age's main and entirely new concept, the notion of *Progress* as the ruling force in human history, placed an unprecedented emphasis on the future." At "the last stage of the modern age," which was also "the last era of authentic metaphysical thought," "the Will began to be substituted for Reason as man's highest mental faculty": "suddenly, right after Kant, it became fashionable to equate Willing and Being" (2.20).

The emphasis on future naturally focuses attention on Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which is discussed throughout. The penultimate chapter of *Willing* (2.172–94), however, is devoted to his reinterpretation in volume II of *Nietzsche*

(after World War II) of his intellectual “reversal” of the 1930s, reflected in volume I, and leading to “his passionate insistence on willing ‘*not* to will.’” The place of this historically confusing story, which adds just another curlicue to the convolutions of the concept of will in German philosophical tradition, is significant for the understanding of Arendt’s book. She writes:

The first volume explicates Nietzsche by going along with him, while the second is written in a subdued but unmistakable polemical tone ... what the reversal originally turns against is primarily the will-to-power. In Heidegger’s understanding, 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.

When he later announced publicly – for the first time [in 1949] – that there had been a “reversal,” for years in fact, in a larger sense, he had been recasting his views on the whole of history from the Greeks to the present and focusing primarily not on the Will but on the relation between Being and Man. Originally during those years, the “reversal” had been a turning against the self-assertion of man (as proclaimed in the famous speech delivered when he became rector of Freiburg University in 1933) ... Now it turned against the alleged subjectivism of *Being and Time* and the book’s primary concern with man’s existence, his mode of being. (2.173)

Insofar as will is concerned, apparently, these multiple reversals led Heidegger to see death as “the ultimate savior of man’s essence” and to define will as the destroyer of this essence. He equated will with “the ‘craving to persist,’ ‘to hang on,’ the inordinate appetite men have ‘to cling to themselves’” (2.193).

Some More on the Life of the Mind

Whatever interest Arendt’s fragmentary history of philosophers’ notions of mental activities may hold for others, for a sociologist the main question about *The Life of the Mind* remains: What moved Arendt to write this uncharacteristic work (unoriginal, logically flawed and so entirely outside the political sphere on which her readers expected her to comment)? Fundamentally a question in the sociology of knowledge, this one, as all sociological questions, is empirical. Its answer must be sought in the life of Arendt’s mind.

Arendt to the contrary, the mind is an empirical reality: it is unquestionably experienced and, as such, it can be studied. Though not an organ, it is a complex, dynamic system and in this sense can be said to have a life. It is by focusing on makeshift, changing (Weberian) meanings that we come to understand and appreciate the life of the mind. For this life (like any life,

a process) consists entirely in handling and construction of meanings. To equate the preoccupation with the *empirical* with animal cognitive processes, determined by sensory perceptions, is to submit slavishly and unreflectively to the ancient authority of “thinking in terms of two worlds” and to deny the mind (one’s own, in the first place) its magnificent creative ability, and therefore freedom. Even cursory self-examination makes obvious that most of our knowledge of the world is produced by our minds and not our bodies (brains, whatever is their power), and what we perceive through our bodily senses itself, in the overwhelming majority of instances, is dependent on the cues from our minds, rather than the other way around. It is the mind that focuses our attention on certain stimuli from the environment, forcing our brains to reject most of what the environment actually offers us at any given moment as so much random noise: we tend to perceive only what we *believe* to be there. Our beliefs reflect the meanings we assign to different components of the world we seek to know. The quest for knowledge and the quest for meaning, which Arendt separates so sharply, cannot be distinguished even as stages of the same process.

Meaning is what makes the mind – it is the intentions behind any specifically human (i.e., not animal) act or utterance, which make the connection between any sign and its referent arbitrary and radically separate humanity from the rest of the animal kingdom. In other words, meaning is the changeable significance conveyed by *symbols*. Any other meaning of “meaning” is metaphorical and obscures this meaning. Being essentially symbolic, meaning is also essentially historical, because the significance of every symbol changes with the context. The human mental process, the mind, is the process of such symbolic changes, supported by the individual brain. This makes every mind an autonomous and creative process. At the same time, minds coexisting in the shared symbolic space are interdependent, because the overwhelming majority of symbols (and their meanings) processed even by the most creative mind is given to it ready-made from the outside. This shared symbolic space, which is also a process, also essentially historical, and which goes on by means of individual minds, is culture. The life of the mind is cultural life, historical life, symbolic life, which is supported at every step by the organic life.

Within this life one can distinguish particular symbolic operations. One of such operations is thinking. Thinking is distinguished from other human mental operations (all of which are symbolic) by its *explicitly* symbolic character: because of its explicit or declarative character it allows the mind to be conscious of its own consciousness, that is, conscious of itself. “I think, therefore I am”: thinking is constitutive of the thinking mind. Both logically and empirically, Descartes’ postulate is *obviously true*. This is the only thing of

which we can be certain. A bit of introspection and skepticism in regard to established authority is all that is needed to reach these conclusions.

The will performs the function of arbitrage in the mind, deciding which of the always multiple possible meanings to assign to symbols the mind is processing. Willed action is arbitrary; intentional action, by definition: it is in this sense that will is (by definition) free. But this freedom has very little in common with the freedom to do as one wants. Incidentally, ancient philosophers had the notion of will in the sense of arbitrage (which Arendt claims was no notion of will at all). It would be very puzzling, indeed, if someone so introspective and sensitive to everything empirical (every experience) like Aristotle lacked such a notion, because, even if most acts of will are unconscious in the sense of not being explicitly thought about, we feel (thus experience) their being willed. In fact, not feeling this is a symptom of schizophrenia. The meanings that we process while thinking are, therefore, necessarily mediated by the will; these activities are not independent of each other and not even autonomous. The symbolic reality of the mind and culture is indeed autonomous, but all the human mental operations obey the laws of this reality.

Thinking and willing are conditioned by *identity* – a core element in the life of the mind that Arendt does not mention. Identity refers to the individual's position on the symbolic terrain, indicating the choice of and ranking meanings between which the will may arbitrate. An important facet of the self, it is constituted in relation with the specific surrounding culture and channels the influence of this culture on one's thought, shaping attitudes, encouraging doubt and creativity in regard to certain established notions and conformity to others, affecting both the questions one asks and the answers one gives to them. Arendt's identity – and through it, German culture – played a crucial role in her life of the mind.

Before the emergence of modern science, which happened in seventeenth-century England, all philosophers who were not exclusively religious thinkers (and such would not define themselves as “lovers of wisdom”) considered themselves involved in a scientific conversation; they all wanted to understand empirical reality. This changed only with the formation of the academic system (and with it the profession of professors of philosophy) in Germany of the eighteenth century. The rest of us imported the academic discipline of philosophy from Germany. Philosophers before the discipline had to and did keep pace with the development of science. Academic philosophers do not have to and do not. This naturally makes and keeps the philosophical problematic outdated.

Insofar as the central fields of metaphysics and epistemology are concerned (that is, the fields within which Arendt places her *Life of the Mind*), their problems – in the sense of the questions they ask, as well as their inability to

offer any answers to these questions – begin with their ignorance of biology. Biology is important for two reasons: One, man is an animal. While much of what we know (or think) about man cannot be reduced to this fundamental fact, everything we know (or think) must be consistent with it. Lacking updated knowledge about animal nature is a significant obstacle in understanding that part of human nature that cannot be explained by it. Knowledge, if it is reliable (and thinking, if it is more than “empty thought-things”), about man above human biology can only begin where biology stops. To establish this all-important point we must start from comparing men with other animal species. This comparison allows us to explain the mind and focuses our attention on its core processes and the nature of their interdependence.

Two, as important as such empirical knowledge is the dramatic transformation in our fundamental ontology introduced by Darwin’s *Origins of the Species* and consistently justified by the prodigious development of biology since. For what the theory of evolution by means of natural selection makes clear is that thinking in terms of two worlds, on which the philosophical tradition Arendt identifies as “ours” – and her own thought – is based, is neither necessary nor useful. An historical phenomenon, as all our traditions are, dating back 2,500 years, it has long outlived its usefulness. So long as thinking about life continued within this framework, its understanding could not develop and biology remained purely descriptive: biological phenomena had to be either reduced to physical, material phenomena, which proved logically impossible, or attributed to some metaphysical *élan vital* beyond the empirically accessible. Darwin proved that life was *autonomous*, evolving according to its own, organic, laws, irreducible to the laws of material reality but perfectly consistent with them. This simply made the “two worlds” beside the point insofar as phenomena of life were concerned, making possible to conceive a completely different ontology.

The first to discern the implications of the Darwinian revolution in thinking for mental phenomena was Durkheim. His precocious argument that social facts (i.e., ways of thinking and acting) were *analogous* to biological facts was misinterpreted and dismissed as biological reductionism. What he suggested, however, was that the phenomena of the mind, like those of life, belonged, in terms that were to appear later, to an *emergent* layer of reality, irreducible to, but consistent with and dependent on the layers underneath it. It is impossible to say whether Weber was also aware that the evolutionary theory transcended the 2,500-year-old thinking in terms of two worlds, making it irrelevant for the understanding of empirical reality. But he too treated the realm of the mental as autonomous, obviously related but irreducible to the biological or physical worlds and eminently deserving of its own science.

A brilliant student of philosophy, Arendt was taught to consider science irrelevant. But what, in the end, kept her resistant to the most profound

transformations in thinking under way in her youth and moored in the nationally biased tradition which by her university days had separated itself from all experience was something far more personal. She was very much a product of German culture, that is, unlike Weber, for instance, she was not sensitive to its contradictions and offered its dominant trends no resistance. The culture through which she saw herself was profoundly anti-Semitic. But she happened to be Jewish. She did not like the Jewish element of her identity, seeking continuously to downplay it and emphasize – in her own mind, in the ongoing process of identity constitution – its German elements. Philosophy was a very German thing to study (already Engels insisted that “the Germans” held the names of their great philosophers “as the glory of their nation” which was “philosophical” to start with⁵), far more than psychology or psychiatry. Psychiatric insights of Karl Jaspers, Arendt’s teacher and loyal friend, are striking in their absence in *The Life of the Mind*. Arendt’s love life reflected a similar bias: evidently, she found it difficult to be attracted to Jewish men, and was drawn to Germans. (Human sexual attraction, in distinction from that of animals, is an act of will and as such directly tied to one’s identity. This is why we generally find attractive people defined as attractive in our culture.) To be sexually desired by the leading German philosopher – what could be more affirmative of her Germanity? In response to Heidegger’s dalliance, Arendt fell in love. Arguably, he remained the central figure in her life. The rest is history, and the major part of it is the Holocaust. Her love for a man who joined – and cooperated with – what could only be defined as the forces of evil must have appeared as a tremendous error of judgment. She understood that it was related to her rejection of her Jewishness: clearly, she saw herself in Rahel Varnhagen, the subject of her first book, subtitled “The Life of a Jewess.” The 20-year-long delay in its publication might have been due to her realization that blaming this error on the impossible situation of German Jews, which made them hate themselves, still recognized it as an error of judgment. It would be much better to prove to the world and to herself that it was not. What was needed for that was to justify Heidegger.

It is quite possible that Arendt began doing this as early as *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: the unprecedented nature of the phenomenon, which offered at least two simultaneous examples in Russia (of which Arendt knew extremely little) and in Germany, already exculpated German culture and its intellectuals. It is certain that this was behind the argument of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Perhaps, Arendt hoped that Eichmann’s vapidness was proof enough that someone so strikingly different from him as Heidegger could in no way be associated with the evil of his deeds. But the concept of the “banality of evil” seemed to trivialize the deeds more than the doer. Moreover, putting some of the blame on the victims backfired: this overshadowed the argument of the

“banality of evil” and rendered it unpersuasive. So, in *The Life of the Mind*, at the age of 65, Arendt met the problem head-on. She decided to spell out why a philosopher who dedicates himself to the search for meaning cannot be evil and deserves to be loved. It did not work.

There is much more to the life of the mind than *The Life of the Mind* would have us believe. Of this the work of Hannah Arendt, starting with *Rahel Varnhagen* and ending with *The Life of the Mind*, offers a convincing proof.

Notes

- 1 TLOTM, 1.169. On Arendt’s attitude to the social sciences, see Baehr (2010c).
- 2 We also know that even works that explicitly mention “thinking” sometime have very little to teach us about it and might not be particularly useful for a sociology of thinking, were such special area of study to emerge; see Swedberg (2010). Of course, thinking is central to the discipline of sociology as a whole, because, on the one hand – so at least one dearly hopes – sociologists, too, think when they ply their trade, and, on the other, engaging in thinking is one of the main distinguishing features of humanity, which constitutes the subject matter of all social sciences.
- 3 “The German Ideology.”
- 4 Weber, op. cit., p. 4.
- 5 An 1843 paper written in English for an Owenite publication, *Marx-Engels Collected Works* (International Publishers, New York/Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, vol. 3, 406).

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