

“BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY
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FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND
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SUMMARY

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Postgraduate:

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SUMMARY

Keywords: the paradigm of labour in the corpus of the human activities; the paradigm of freedom labour/human activity; the paradigm of virtue labour/human activity; master slave relationship; authority, leadership/obedience; labour means slavery or limited slavery; labour and “citizen”; the field of human businesses – the sphere of liberty; freedom as alchemy; labour, work and action; “vita activa”; “human condition”; “animal laborans”; “homo faber”; “action people”; freedom of action; labour as a cultural model in the (capitalist) Western thinking; the individual: “*rational chooser and entrepreneur*”.

The different philosophical systems tried to place *labour* in a certain hierarchy of the human activities, and the path from the most humble position till the highest position (and backwards) is related to argument, to interpretation, to prejudice, to the dominant “specie” in a society, to the desirable (political, social, economical, legal) “values”. On the other hand (from another perspective), placing labour on a certain position is the result of some extraordinary events, in whose accomplishment and development “conflict” plays an important role (between old and new, social and political, between values, “human categories”). The change of paradigm, object/subject is another way of approaching, interpretation and qualification of labour. From another perspective, almost every philosophical system tries to persuade us about which is “the most human” of the different human activities, and “labour” many times plays a dominant role or at least an important role in this paradigm, starting with the modern era. If we accept this *paradigm of the hierarchy of activities* (non-activities) and of the human capacities then the following statement should be true: “It’s time to labour, to work, to think, to action, to contemplate” or “There is a time for labour, for work, for thinking, for acting, for contemplation” (etc.) or any other succession of these (as they would exclude themselves fundamentally).

We chose for the research theme two conceptions on labour and human activity which, apparently, are each on the other side: one is represented by the thinking of the great philosopher *Aristotle* (considered by many authors as the father of the Western political philosophy) belonging to the classic Antiquity; the other is represented and structured in the political theory of *Hanna Arendt*, so criticized for its “anarchic” and devoid of substance character, built on a hierarchy of the activities from the *vita activa* (labour, work, and action) of an Aristotelian origin,

and at the same time appreciated for the originality and the magnitude of the her effort in contributing to “a communicative theory of action” (as a fundamental human activity).

Also, we tried to accomplish a transposition of the Aristotelian and of the Arendtian thinking in the actual Western thinking (including the community one) of labour and human activity.

We considered that for the purpose of our research it is necessary *a conceptual and synthetic analysis* of the Aristotelian and of the Arendtian works from the perspective of the human activity, and also of the main trends of the political, “scientific” and (community) Western normative thinking in the field of labour. In some situations we used a differential dialectics in the sphere of the human activity (regressive maybe in a certain sense) – through analysing the contradictory arguments (from the works of the two authors and of the ones expressed in the research literature) for discovering the initial, original meaning, and also some elements of novelty, after two millennia of interpretations and critics of the Aristotelian work.

What we followed in our doctoral research was to discover not what work is by itself, but which is its meaning in the whole set of human activities, the way in which it clogs or sends in “anonymity” other activities, “the sense” and “value” of freedom within the context of labour and human activity as a whole. From this point of view, “the results” of the research are limited and conditioned to the way of approaching labour (as a human activity in the whole set of human activity/activities) and to the systems of thinking submitted to analyse, one represented by Aristotle, the other by Hannah Arendt – the “political theorist”¹. But, our demarche in the actual Western thinking and, mainly, in the community one (represented by the European Union) on labour and its framing in the Aristotelian paradigm of labour human activity or in the Arendtian one, offers a sort of unexpected perspective on the meaning, position and role of labour (as a fundamental human activity) in the whole set of human activities.

The foray into the Aristotelian thinking of the human activity is based on two important works “Politics”² and “Nicomachean Ethics”³. Politics – a handbook of the virtuous

¹ Hannah Arendt repeatedly self-defined as a political theorist, refusing the collocation of “political philosopher”.

² Aristotel, *Politica*, Editura Antet, Oradea, 1999 (This edition updates the paper entitled *Politica* published at Editura Națională in 1924, translation by El. Bezdechi). The passages and quotations from Aristotle’s *Politics*, including the succession and titles of the BOOKS and of the paragraphs are compliant with this edition; Aristotel, *Politica*, Ediția a II-a, revised, Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, București, 2010 (Translation, comments, notes and index by Alexander Baumgarten).

citizen in “the field of the human affairs”, of its activity as an appurtenant and a constituent of the *polis*; Nicomachean Ethics – an ethic and moral handbook for the individual in the sphere of human activity, and especially for the citizen (the real citizen, the virtuous citizen) and his activity within the *polis*.

Formulating some questions referring to labour/human activity in the Aristotelian philosophy is a necessary synthetic demarche: which is the Aristotelian conception on labour and action as a human activity? Can we also make another distinction in the sphere of human activity: labour, work and action (as suggested by H. Arendt)? Is there a “contempt” of Aristotle towards labour (and especially towards slavish labour in its different forms: slave, craftsman, worker)? If labour and the ones who work are lowdown then how can the spare time of the citizen be “virtuous” when it is obtained through the work of such “tools” or “individuals”? if slave is a “tool” (even an inanimate one) then can a tool be appreciated from the perspective of virtue? How can a virtuous citizen accept the labour of a devoid of virtue “inanimate tool”? Is the activity developed by a citizen in the private sphere “labour” or “action” or neither one or the other, is it another type of activity?

Is citizen’s spare time (which results from his work release) an end in itself, does it represent the real freedom? Or is it just a precondition of the real freedom, of the activity developed by the citizen in the *polis*?

Finally, does labour mean lack of freedom (it is generally incompatible with virtue) while citizen’s activity represents the real freedom (and other values which can be attached to the activity of the virtuous citizen: equality, righteousness/justice, common good/happiness), freedom in its pure form?

To many of these questions the answer will be a direct one, doubtfully, to others it will be undercurrent, and some will maintain their interrogative character.

The Aristotelian conception on labour and on citizen’s activity, and the transposition of freedom in this paradigm, means a cautious review through the Aristotelian political philosophy and ethics, which does not exclusively found on the master slave dialectics (a unilateral, univocally interpretation) or on the political meaning of the citizen’s activity (action), but on the contrary, it must be adopted on several levels that include among others citizenship, internal

³ Aristotel, *Etica Nicomahică*, Ediția a II-a, Edit. Iri, București, 1998, (translation by Stela Petecel). The passages and the quotations from Nicomachean Ethics are compliant with this edition.

economy (including the master slave relationship), friendship, justice/righteousness/equity, equality, education, absolute (supreme) good – happiness, virtue in general, “urban” and political organization of the City (Constitution/government).

For Aristotle labour is not and cannot be an end in itself, the purpose of labour is repose in the same measure in which the purpose of war is peace. If labour would be an end in itself how could we identify virtue, good, beauty with the “activity” of a livened tool or with the “slavish” position of a man (craftsman, worker) submitted to the needs of life, caught in the endless circle of labour.

Similarly, spare time is not an end in itself, source of idleness, laziness or chatter, but it is *a way of accomplishing a superior purpose, the activity as a citizen.*

Consequently, *spare time for the citizen does not mean inactivity*: spare time will be used by the citizen for *taking possession of the virtue* (in all its forms), for dealing with the *public affairs* and for the activities from the Public (Liberty) Square including *gymnastic exercises*⁴.

Spare time (repose) does not mean *the individual quits the scene* (inactivity), but on the contrary, it allows (obliges) his *entering* in the field (territory, we wanted to use “the spectrum”) of the *virtue* (appropriation and exertion) and *of the public affairs*, of the socio-political active life, and consequently, *the transformation of the individual from a simple (passive) citizen and/or from a nice man/honest man* (who has the virtue that is specific to a nice man/honest man/passive citizen) *into an active citizen (who acquires political virtue)*. *Entering the field of virtue and of public affairs* (of the active citizenship) is (must be) favoured by the legislator, by education and by the “private” activity of the individual (domestic activity and the vocational one – private virtue).

Aristotle accomplished a connexion between virtue and labour/activity, activity/labour. Hence, for example friendship is an important indicator of the nature and structure of human relationships, of the interdependences correlated to it referring to righteousness, equality, freedom (or “a sort of” righteousness, equality, freedom in the less virtuous friendships), including of their way of dispensation.

In the name of the noble character of friendship there are also possible *certain deviations from the strict norms of virtue*: “It is possible, without shading, *to do for yourself, for your*

⁴ Aristotel, Politica, Despre republica ideală, chapt.XI §2 p. 140.

chappies, or with a virtuous thought, *a certain thing*, which being done in this manner *is not at all contemptible* of a free man, but which, done *for strangers*, lowers you to *the mercenary and to the slave*⁵. Hence, even a *slavish* or “liberal” *labour* (craftsman, artisan, artist, etc.), if it is delivered in *the name of friendship, is not contrary to virtue*, and the education for the “liberal” and “slavish” jobs is useful if it will not “tend to transform the ones who practice them into artisans”⁶.

This association between friendship and human activity and labour, especially shows the importance of friendship in the network of human relationships and the emphasize that this virtue brings to some tougher interpretations and arguments regarding the human condition of labour. Interesting for us there are the species (and their forms/variations) of friendship based on virtue and on utility (community, interest, mutuality) because labour under these circumstances is not submitted to any moral “absolutism”.

For Aristotle *vita active* means human activity in all its forms (“it is a great mistake to prefer inaction instead of action, because happiness lies only within activity”⁷), and within the activity of the citizen within the *polis*: participating to the activities from the Public Square, appropriating the virtue, concern for the public affairs, they all occupy the highest position in a hierarchy of the human activities.

It is true that for Aristotle labour was never an activity capable to produce *civic virtue* (the activity of the master in the administration of the slaves or slavish work or the one submitted to the need) and was not associated with the “qualities” that characterized the real citizen and did not transform labour into a cultural model of the City.

A really extraordinary, original foray in the field of human activity: labour, work and action, in what received the meaning of *vita activa*, is accomplished by H. Arendt in her work (The Human Condition) *Condiția umană*⁸.

⁵ Aristotel, Pol., Despre educație, Chapt.II §2, p.159.

⁶ Aristotel, Pol., Despre educație, Chapt.II §1, p.158.

⁷ Aristotel, Politica, Despre republica ideală, chapt.III §2 p. 121.

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Condiția umană*, Editura Idea Design&Print, Cluj-Napoca, 2007. Translation by Claudiu Vereș and Gabriel Chindea after *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958. The quotations in the text are according to the translation in the Romanian language of the paper, and the translators deserve thanks for their effort. For the originality of the text there were also considered the two English editions: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago &London, 1998, Second edition (Introduction by Margaret Canovan).

This distinction is based on a (“conceptually analytical”) foray in the political and philosophical thinking of the human activities, starting with the pre-Socratic philosophy and finishing with the modern era. Arendt is not a simple observer of the activities of *vita activa*. On the contrary, the author accomplishes her own agenda and exposes (sometimes maybe in a cryptic manner) her own “philosophy” in the field of human affairs.

In the chapter “Munca” (“Labour”) H. Arendt explores the “traditional”, philosophical and linguistic roots of *the distinction between labour and work*⁹ and criticizes the “modern” authors who have lost (eluded, ignored) in their speech this distinction (especially K. Marx and A. Smith, and also J. Locke¹⁰ in a certain measure).

Animal laborans is the man of the labour, fettered in “the activity of labour”, it is the “animal” and not the “homo”, so is (*homo faber*) because: “it is true that the use of the word “animal” in the collocation *animal laborans*, unlike the very debatable use of the same word in the collocation *animal rationale*, is fully entitled”; “Animal laborans is truly one, in the best case the highest form the animal species that populate earth”¹¹. Animal laborans is lead only by the biological process of life and it is totally submitted to it¹².

Labour is free and not the individual submitted to the need. Freedom of movement, freedom to develop economical activities and the inviolability of the person does not mean anything else but the individual’s capacity (possibility) to “organize” his need.

If labour and *animal laborans* would occupy a primordial role in *vita activa* then we would face a multitude of dangers:

- The loss of the individuality and of the identity;

⁹ Arendt states that: “The distinction that I propose between labour [labor] and work is out of the ordinary. Its phenomenal obviousness is too striking for it to be ignored, but, for all that, historically speaking, if we put aside a few scattered remarks which, by token, were never developed not even in the theories of their authors, there is almost nothing to support it, not in the premodern tradition of the political thinking, nor in the great mass of the modern theories about labour. H. Arendt, op. cit., p. 69.

¹⁰ Still, in the introductory section of the chapter “Munca” (“Labour”) Locke’s distinction is used “THE LABOUR OF OUR BODY AND THE WORK OF OUR HANDS”, Second Treatise of Civil Government, section 26; starting from the Greek distinction between craftsman (*cheirotechnês*) and slaves and animals (*tô sômati ergazesthai*) op.cit., pp. 69-70.

¹¹ H. Arendt, op. cit., p. 73.

¹² „*Animal laborans*, lead by the needs of its body, does not use freely its body, such as *homo faber* uses his hands, his primordial tools, and this is why Plato suggested that workers and slaves are not only submitted to the need and incapable of freedom, but they are also inapt to be in control of their “animal” side “inside of them”. H. Arendt, op. cit., p. 100.

- Desirable social values are uniformity and social conformism and not equality (which are no different than eating and drinking in common);
- *The levelling of all human activities* “at the common denominator of ensuring the needs of life and of using abundance”;
- The universal “devouring” character “of the biological life”, specific to a “society of workers” disguised as “a consumer society”, “free to consume the entire world”¹³;
- The anti political basic character of “unification of the many into a single” (a situation which is no different from the one of the despot: singularity and need)¹⁴;
- The claim of *animal laborans* (with his inaptitude for differentiation and hence, for acting and speaking) to occupy the public space and to receive a certain visual identity in this space (*sans-culotte, a badge, a banner, a black suit and a white shirt*) for gaining “*his own distinction*, and the distinction was directed against all others”¹⁵;
- Overriding of the public field by the social one (of the space of freedom by the space of need);
- “The inexplicable” victory of *animal laborans in vita activa*;
- “The universal claim” of *animal laborans* “for happiness and the widely distributed unhappiness in our society” and possible only “in a society of labour which has not enough work to keep it satisfied”¹⁶.

Work is the activity which makes man feel at home in this world, an artificial world, built/manufactured by him, but durable.

Through “the work of our hands” *homo faber* “manufactures the real endless variety of objects of whose entirety is represented by the human artificial”. For Locke, these “*user objects*” mean *permanence* necessary for “founding property”, for Adam Smith they are the “value” necessary on the “exchange market”, for Marx they mean “the proof of productivity” – “the touchstone of human nature”¹⁷. The hands are the primordial instruments of *homo faber*¹⁸.

Labour, the activity of *homo faber*, is different in the whole set of human activities only if “the human artificial” “becomes the house of the human mortals” and “it overpasses both the

¹³ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 183.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 141.

pure functioning” (...) “and the pure utility of the objects produced for use”. Thus and so, this house – the human artificial acquires “stability” and “permanence” which “will hold and survive the movement always changing of life and of human activities”¹⁹, and in the permanence of the artistic work we will find its highest form of manifestation.

The dangers that *labour* and *homo faber* rise on a dominant position in *vita activa*:

- the introopathy of “reification” (the “exacerbated” transposition of the self in the external objects): this vision is one of a modern inspiration from the theories of the psychology of labour;
- the consequential utilitarianism of *homo faber* can establish the lack of sense (“utility established as a sense comes to generate the lack of sense”)²⁰;
- “the devaluation of all values” through *homo faber*’s demand that utility and use, the criteria of manufacture and production become the criteria of (producing) this world;
- *homo faber* as a “measure of all things”: “it is certain that the measure cannot be ... the utilitarian instrumentalism of manufacture and of use”²¹;
- the danger for the inherent violence of manufacture and production by *homo faber* to transform into the violence of this world;
- the (violent) creator of the human artificial, of this world, can transform into its “destroyer”. “Alone with the image of his future product, *homo faber* is free to produce and so, being alone in front of the work of his hands, he is free to destroy it”; “and this not only because he is – or he pretends to be – the master of the entire nature, but because he is his own master and the master of his acts”²².

The action is mainly analysed as a fundamental human activity (one of the three which compose *vita activa*) and of the human condition associated to it – plurality and, in subsidiary, from the perspective of the political implications of the action, only as far as to this activity there can be “attached” certain “values” or “qualities” (freedom, equality, and eventually righteousness).

Action is the highest for of the human activity, and its distinctness, its plurality (the condition of human action – “action is the only one that cannot be not even imagined outside

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 144-145.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 129.

²¹ Ibid., p. 145.

²² Ibid., p. 121.

human society”) confers it the status of the “exclusive prerogative of man” because “not even the animal, nor the god are capable of action, and only the action depends entirely on the constant presence of the others”²³.

For Arendt action, as a fundamental human activity, receives its originary sense of activity specific to the political existence of the individual and it possesses certain characteristics which individualize it within the *vita activa*: the only activity which truly takes place between people; plurality is the condition of the human action and a *conditio per quam* of any political life; it represents a new beginning and it corresponds to the human condition of the birth rate.

If we were to paraphrase the fundamental idea of Marx, “Labour created man” it could be expressed from an Arendtian perspective this way: “*Action creates people*” because plurality – the human condition of action (which corresponds “to the fact that people, and not the Man, live on earth and populate the world”) has the (unlimited, infinite) ability to update and recreate the individual (not only besides the others but also along with them) and has its source in each new beginning (in the human condition of the birth rate), in each generation.

Of course, Arendt insists on explaining the meaning of the action from the perspective of its political implications, in terms of “rare political activity”, but its meaning of “fundamental human activity” cannot be neglected.

First, in comparison to labour and up to a point with work, *action is the “human” activity by excellence*, it is the one which confers to the individual, at the highest degree, the status of “human”, the one which distinguishes him from other species that populate Earth (as for Adam Smith the barter is the human activity by excellence, the one that distinguishes us from other animal species).

It is the only activity that can be imagined only in the presence of the others, together and along with the others, “without trusting the action and the speaking *as a way of being together*, neither reality of the individual self, of the individual’s identity, nor the reality of the surrounding world cannot be established with absolute certainty”²⁴. It is not possible in “isolation” as labour and work are, even though several are working together “they all work as one”.

Action (fundamental human activity) creates (without being an end in itself) a network of human relationships (in the proper sense of the word interest which lies between them) and its

²³ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 173.

own space, which have nothing in common with the “need”, “vulgarity”, “values” and “virtues” of the social relationships and of the social field or with the “productivity” and “utilitarianism” of the exchange market. *In this network and in this space none is the master or the sovereign*, they are all free and equal in their unique difference.

It is the activity through which “people update the pure passive given of their being”. Human sense of the reality imposes this update through the activity (activities) that exist in the pure reality, and the “*common sense*” is the unit of measure of the reality, a reason why it “occupies such a high position in the hierarchy of the political qualities”²⁵. On the other hand, “the update” is just one of the reasons why action as a human activity occupies (or it should occupy) the highest position in the hierarchy of the human activities (without necessarily taking into account the pure political connotations of action as a human activity).

Action itself has the ability to fight against its own incapacibilities and inconveniences and it is based on its own “moral code”: the remedy against the irreversible is the faculty of forgiveness, and against the unforeseen of the process triggered by action comes from the ability of doing and of keeping the promises²⁶.

Certainly, for H. Arendt action as a fundamental human activity as essentially a political meaning because *action and speaking* (“Doing great deeds and saying great words”) are measuring by the ability to represent a “new beginning”, to present the individual in the unique space of freedom and equality (public space), to force any types of limits and constraints, by the possibility to escape the conformity, uniformity and necessity of life (associated to labour and to *animal laborans*), from the utilitarian instrumentalism and “the condition of the lack of sense” “in a world determined by the categories of means and of purpose” (associated to work and to *homo faber*), in order to produce “stories full of meaning” (for the individual, but especially for the “world” in which he acts).

In “*Condiția umană*” (“The Human Condition”) Arendt presents what can be called a contrasting theory of freedom and teaches us about the importance of the positive political

²⁵ Id.

²⁶ “The two possibilities are forming a whole, as far as one of them, forgiveness, serves to erasing the deeds of the past, whose “sins” hang as the sword of Damocles over each new generation, and the other, *connecting through promise*, serves for the establishment, in the ocean of uncertainty which is by definition the future of some islands of rare certainty without which not even continuity, nor the permanence of any kind would not be possible in the relationships between people”. H. Arendt, op.cit., p. 195.

freedom²⁷: “Consecrated to debate, to deliberation and to decision on the common affairs of the citizens, the public realm was a space of the positive freedom created by man (man-made/artificially created)”²⁸.

If we were to define the political theory of Hanna Arendt, in the terms used by the author, then it is *a political theory of the human plurality*, of the ones who express, manifest and update individuality together through action and speaking, within a space of freedom (of the freedom by “excellence”) and of equality (of the unequals, or more precisely of the ones who are not identical), where the individuals endowed with “the faculty of forgiveness” and with “the capacity of making and of keeping promises” generate a new beginning and stories full of significance.

But let us not forget that “political action” (as a fundamental human activity; even though we qualify it as “the highest...”, “the only...”, “the unique...” and we associate it with attributes as for example: human/freedom/equality) it is framed into a wider network of human activities: *vita activa* (labour, work and action).

When we cover the critical arguments addressed to the Arendtian theory we get the impression of a defocusing (if we may allow a technical term and maybe easily inadequate) of the ideatic speech. We should see three problems at the same time, only one of them seems brighter, taking our eyes and impelling to grant it with the greatest attention. But, Arendt also grants an ample space to labour and work, as fundamental human activities in *vita activa*, because: *without labour we would be “GODS”* on this earth (not simple “beings” or a “specie” among others, that populate Earth and fight for “the individual survival” and “for the life of the specie”; *labour was sent by the gods as a punishment for humans and like all other harms it got out of the Pandora’s box* as a means of salvation for the sins of this world and/or done in thus world); *without work we would be strangers* in this world (we would be lacking the membership to the world and we would be no different than other species). ***It is true that only action makes us be what we are or***

²⁷ „As she writes in her essay “What is Freedom?” Men are free as long as they act, neither before nor after; for to be free and to act are the same.” Dana Villa, PUBLIC FREEDOM, p. 339.

²⁸ Dana Villa, op.cit., p. 339; In the same context, „ According to Arendt, freedom — considered as a tangible, worldly reality — was experienced by the ancients whenever they entered the assembly or conversed in the agora. These were public spaces predicated upon the equality of citizens. Such civic equality was an equality of peers, and — as such — stood in the sharpest possible contrast to the (seemingly natural) hierarchy that pervaded the private or household realm”.

what we should be, meaning “human” beings (as for Adam Smith trade off/exchange is an activity specifically human).

To Aristotle labour is, first of all, a matter of authority/command and obedience, supra-ordering and sub-ordering and the exercise of authority and obedience (as long as the individual or his labour is “a tool in the hand of other/others”), but the real citizen cannot be “conditioned” in any way by labour. The ethic and moral aspects play an important role in the Aristotelian philosophy of labour/human activity and they are a remedy for the breaches of the individual and of the individuality.

To Arendt labour is a vital necessity (that it is produced by labour itself and it is introduced in the process of life) solution: a hierarchy in which labour not to occupy the highest degree of the human possibilities (because otherwise we would not be different from other animal species, possibly we would occupy the highest position among them).

For both of them labour “conditions” human activity by excellence, the possibility that the “individual or people” to manifest themselves and to action in full freedom and equality. *The result is similar, the way is different.*

Starting with the modern era under the excuse of some presumed benefits: “socialization”, “self esteem”, “updating, development”, it was considered that labour should be accepted as it is (subordination and necessity, authority and control, uniformity and conformity) and placed at the top of the tree of the human activities.

We saw, in philosophy, generally, and especially in the political philosophy, the theme of labour, in its different expression forms (labour law/freedom, labour force, value of exchange, the source of all values, the basis of property, the social relationship, a source of power – authority and control, the cause of the modern social conflict), occupy a different place, depending on the role and meaning of labour. If in the Greek Antiquity labour – as a human activity – occupied a secondary place in the life of the City, of the *polis* (because it related to the internal, private sphere of the citizen’s activity), starting with the modern era labour began to have an essential role. If in many aspects Aristotle can be considered the father of the Western political philosophy, and if political science has an important role (maybe the most important one) in “accomplishing” the life of the citizens within the state, the government, the Constitution, then we must analyse what was the conception on human activity (and of labour) that was overtaken from the Aristotelian political thinking.

The demarche of identifying the philosophy “embedded” in the community social politics and the values “attached” to labour can (apparently) be an extremely simple and precise one if the subject is approached from the perspective of the political “philosophy” and of the scientific research literature: on the one hand, labour is governed by the liberal (neoliberal) values, of the social democracy and of the Western Christian democracy (or by a compromissory mixture of other values, the dominant role being played by the neoliberal values); on the other hand, labour was circumscribed in certain patterns, forms, models which mean (or not) an integrated, systemic approach of it.

Habermas²⁹, in the context of a more ample discussion about the need for an European Constitution (2006), analysing the *political culture*, the public sphere, the European social model (between globalization and social solidarity) and the normative aspects related to these issues, he states that “the economical regime predominant at a global level” (and consequently, at the European level) imposed “a model that presents itself as an anthropological image of man “*rational chooser and entrepreneur*” who exploits his own labour force; a moral vision of the society which accepts the rise of the cleavages and exclusions; and a political doctrine that betrays the narrow purpose of democracy for (oriented towards) the freedom of the market”. “These are the cornerstones of the neoliberal vision which do not stand comfortable on a sort of normative self understanding, up until now predominant in the entire Europe”. On the other hand, he highlights the uniqueness of the European cultural landscape which “in the terms of a comparative cultural analysis” can be qualified as “a combination between the public collectivism and the private individualism”³⁰.

If we try *a conclusion in an Arendtian style* we can state that, probably the individual or the humanity (the term is interpretable), will not free themselves (and they cannot if they should not “free” themselves) of labour, with the meaning of fundamental human activity, but the way in which the individual or the humanity will relate to labour and the place that labour occupies within the whole set of “human activities” (possibly for raising “human activity by excellence” on the highest plane) it does not have to be the fatidic result of a Revolution, of a discovery,

²⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *Why Europe Needs a Constitution*, in Ralf Rogowski, Charles Turner (eds.), *The Shape of the New Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

“spectacular turnover” or utopia (in the – philosophical, political, economical, social - “universal thinking”), but a matter (much more down to earth) *of option*, of the people, of the individuals.

And if labour in itself (and our conception on labour: subordination and/or necessity, command and obedience, uniformity and conformism) will be always dissociated (contrary to some rules, models and mechanisms which have the purpose to indicate another reality) or will contain an act of *fundamental dissociation of freedom, equality, righteousness/justice* (or it will not be a space of freedom, equality) then the alternative that we see in a revealing way will be represented by the *human activity in which the individual along with other people* creates, updates and potentialises a space and itself, a space in which the *real freedom* is not conditioned in any way by the sovereignty of the other or of others or by their “condition”.

The concern from the Western (and community) thinking and practice for the entrepreneurship, for different (other) forms of dependent and independent activities, sustaining the voluntary service and other forms of social and economical activism, can represent a change of the paradigm *in the complex issue of the labour*. But the recurrent question whether labour as a fundamental human activity (one among others) is (the only one) in measure to be a source and a content of individual freedoms and equalities (and even of security, justice, and social welfare, or of other values), remains a meaningful one. The interest for labour is a documented one, but the unilaterality of this interest in the community norms and policies is a debatable one.

Human activity as a whole (an in all its forms) cannot be limited and oriented exclusively towards the activity of labour, as a source of all values, of all possibilities and human capabilities. Any programmatic demarche through which the activity of labour is exclusively *placed on a dominant position and this cultural model is imposed* (the other activities being conditioned in one way or another by labour, “spare time” being at the disposal of the individual, some forms of labour are declared incompatible with other forms of labour or with other types of activity – a sort of moral remedy for the “excessivity” and “universality” of labour) *can have unpredictable negative consequences within the societal, political, economical and jurisdictional mechanisms and structures*. And if the purpose of this demarche is to persuade the individual that, ultimately labour (and the *formal* “action” related to labour – entrepreneurship, corporatism, voluntary services interpreted as labour or substitute for labour and other similar forms) is its fundamental activity, then *others* (statesmen, “professionals”, functionaries and “independent” experts, “the epistemic community” and the enumeration can go on) or else (an autopoietic “system” reflexive

or not) will establish (or they will claim to establish) which is the real “value” of freedom and equality (or of other values), of any activity, and all the more of labour.

Still it seems interesting (curiously, maybe disappointing) that after two millennia of knowledge and of exploration of the limits of knowledge, in the Western political, economical and social practice and thinking, *labour self-imposed* (was imposed: a conspiracy of the “leading elite”, within the conspiracy theories) as *a cultural model to the detriment of other activities*. We say “practice” because in the “theory” of thinking there are enough voices that seized the risk represented by the imposing of labour as a “model” of the actual communities. Here we do not talk about a stigmatization of labour and of the ones who work, but a revolt against the incapacibilities and inaptitudes of the individual who kids by the brightness of this model which places labour on the top of the hierarchy of the human activities (an Arendtian perspective), but which is immediately thrown into oblivion and marginalization once his working ability is diminished, out of date or he concluded his natural cycle (education – labour – retirement).

Finally, we must ask ourselves if in the contemporary communities it is not necessary to promote that type of freedom (considered by some “obsolete” and “archaic”), possibly with certain remedies offered by the modern and contemporary thinking, which similarly to the *Aristotelian freedom* is an extremely refined product of a complex process, which is fundamentally founded on the activity of the individual as a whole (and not mainly on labour) and means an exceptional alchemy from whose ingredients do not miss: equality, justice/righteousness/equity, friendship, moderation/prudence, proportion/proportionality, goodwill and other alike. The proportion in which these elements exist establishes “the quality” of freedom and of the individual life and (in an Aristotelian expression the quality of the life of the “City” (community), state, “the purity” of the Constitution and of the government, and *the active life of the citizen has as a final end common good, happiness alongside and along with the others*.

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