Beyond Labour: Arendt and Marcuse on Post-Totalitarian Domination and the Role of Imagination

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For Emilio, my partner in life and in philosophy.

For my parents Elvira and Roberto. For my sister Elena and brother-in-law Mario, who brought into this world two new stars, Leo and Dani.

For my extraordinary extended family.

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable.

Hannah Arendt, *The Crisis in Education*

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Abstract

This thesis presents a complementary reading of the works of Hannah Arendt and Herbert Marcuse to address the philosophical approach to labour in contemporary debates on the future of work. In particular, it studies their respective analysis of domination through labour, within the context of their reflection on totalitarianism, and their attempts to imagine an emancipated beyond. The literature jointly examining these philosophers is relatively thin (Andolfi, 2004; Sollazzo, 2004, 2011; Holman, 2013), but both provide relevant concepts for the comprehension of current dynamics of post-totalitarian domination through labour, and both also explored what Marcuse described as the "chance of the alternatives" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206). This thesis introduces the joint reading of both authors to the issue of domination through labour and emancipation from labouring lives. In relation to domination, dealt with in the first part of the research, Chapter One upholds the validity of the Arendtian notion of a society of labourers and jobholders for describing post-totalitarian domination through labour today. However, Arendt's analysis is incomplete and is shown to be in need of Marcuse's work on one-dimensionality and his psychoanalytic approach to the introjection of dominion, both examined in Chapter Two. This complementary relation between these authors arises again in the second part of this work, about the different realms beyond labour. While Chapter Three concludes that Marcuse's attempts to integrate freedom and necessity by his position on work as play cannot be described as a beyond, Arendt's notion of action, examined in Chapter Four, is a more radical effort to challenge work-centred societies. The search for this complementarity equally guides the third part, about the place of imagination in overcoming the society of labourers and jobholders. Chapter Five assesses Arendt's position on imagination, concluding that, despite its explorative dimension in which imagination is described as a "go visiting" allowing travel to other perspectives, her preoccupations related to grounding imagination in the world can limit the potential of this travel in search of alternatives. Chapter Six focuses on the extent to which Marcuse's work on imagination and utopia expand Arendt's position by depicting an ought with respect to labour, grounded on the conceptualisation of a new sensibility. By deepening the legacy of both authors, this thesis vindicates their value in relation to a necessary philosophy of labour and current post-work debates.

Introduction

The first two decades of the twenty-first century have been marked by, among other things, two critical events which have had and will have significant long-term implications in relation to the understanding of the place of labour and its organisation: the 2008 recession and the crisis which accompanies the coronavirus pandemic. As a career guidance teacher working in vocational education in a country traditionally enduring high unemployment rates, and now the prospect of their increase and an even more precarious working environment, the question of the centrality of labour in the makeup of the personal biographies of the students and in the configuration of educational itineraries came to the foreground of my reflection and practice years ago. This investigation is the result of this interrogation and has found two fundamental sources of understanding and inspiration in the works of Hannah Arendt and Herbert Marcuse. Drawing on their respective reflections on the totalitarian world and on human activity, this research puts forward three main arguments: (a) that their analysis on totalitarianism remains useful in identifying the features of contemporary dynamics of domination through labour that can be described as post-totalitarian due to the persistence of some of the traits both authors explored; (b) that Marcuse's conceptualisation of play and Arendt's notion of action both evoke alternative grounds for human activity which are useful to navigate current debates on the future of work, and (c) that the emancipatory potential of imagination, a key concept in both accounts, needs to be reasserted in order to challenge work-centred societies.

In a more biographical sense, this investigation is the result of multiple queries and encounters. As noted above, my occupation involving constant dialogue with the newcomers to the world, in the Arendtian vocabulary on education that closes this dissertation, is at the source of my concern with my own understanding of labour and of my reflection on the place of labour in the students' biographies. This interrogation has been enriched through my encounter with philosophy, which has allowed me to grasp the relation between labour and the conceptualisation of the human condition, a necessary dimension to complete the diversity of the studies on labour coming from other disciplines. Four fundamental readings inspired my first research on this issue in the context of an MA dissertation at Brighton University: Kori Schaff's (2001) anthology of philosophy and the issue of work; Julia Kristeva's (2001) biography of Arendt; Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1998), and Simona Forti's (2014b) study on totalitarianism. These readings opened up an immense

area of reflection on the issue at stake in this study, which from the very beginning benefitted from the felicitous suggestion of my PhD supervisors at Staffordshire University to bring Marcuse into the discussion, making it possible in some cases to complete and in others to contrast some of the Arendtian concepts and expand my comprehension of labour in the context of post-totalitarian domination and in relation to emancipation. Introducing Marcuse represented a challenge to the extent that both authors are rarely connected, yet it has definitely led to a richer understanding of the main questions at stake in this study. At the same time, this is one of the most significant contributions of this investigation, namely, and as will be explained next, providing a joint reading of both authors around the issue of labour in the context of current discussions on work. Indeed, a last encounter has shaped the final profile of this dissertation: the introduction of the issue of post-work, following the works by Srnicek and Williams (2016), Frayne (2015, 2019) and Stronge and Hester (2020), has progressively gained relevance in my own research and has opened up new fields of reflection and in my practice as a teacher.

These different inspirations have found a common guiding thread throughout the research process: the interrogation on the place of labour in domination and the reflection on emancipation, grounded in imagining and building a beyond labour. In arguing for the thesis that labour is still a pivotal element in post-totalitarian domination and that thinking about emancipation implies thinking and imagining beyond labour, this investigation aims to contribute to a renewed interest in the philosophy of labour (Schaff, 2001; Smith, 2016; Dejours et al., 2018) by a complementary reading of Arendt and Marcuse. Despite coming from different philosophical traditions, both authors have relevant points of connection in their reflections, thus making it possible to better think about the place of labour in the dynamics of post-totalitarian domination and the prospects of post-work.

In relation to the philosophy of labour and as already mentioned, in 2001 Schaff edited an anthology examining an issue which has received limited attention from the philosophical community: work. This despite the fact that, as he notes, there is a crucial link between "the foundational question of political philosophy – what features characterize a just and well-ordered society" and work (Schaff, 2001, p.3). Besides providing an account of the different conceptions of work from antiquity to advanced industrial societies, Schaff refers to the works of Arendt and Marcuse as relevant philosophical perspectives within the reflection on labour connected by a common concern about the relation between work, technological development and mass societies. Interestingly, the critical theorisation of the future of

labour within contemporary societies has been widely undertaken from a multidisciplinary perspective involving history, economics and sociology, yet includes philosophy much less often. As Nicholas H. Smith points out in one of the 2016 volumes of the Belgian *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* precisely about the philosophy of work, "it is an irony then that those whose work it is to do philosophy – that is, professional philosophers – nowadays, for the most part, have little to say on the topic" (2016, p.429). The philosophy of work, then, is a relatively unexplored field within current philosophical research, and this is the case despite the tradition of philosophical reflection on labour, from Plato to Marx, and the undeniable importance of labour, or the lack of it, in human existence. Happily, a "return of work" (Dejours et al., 2018) to philosophy in general and to critical theory in particular seems to be taking place. This dissertation is directed, then, to contributing to this growing interest in re-approaching labour from a philosophical perspective by exploring the possibilities of a joint reading of Arendt and Marcuse, which is the second main contribution provided by this investigation.

As will be shown throughout the research, the possibilities of this reading between Arendt and Marcuse have received limited attention. Certainly, Arendt and Marcuse have been extensively investigated on their own and they are still the object of research today. Also, an incipient line of reflection on Arendt and her connection to critical theory seems to be consolidating (Benhabib & Picker, 2018; Benhabib, 2020). However, studies that provide a joint reading of both authors are rather rare, the works of Ferruccio Andolfi (2004), Federico Sollazzo (2004, 2011) and Christopher Holman (2013) being among the few significant exceptions. Andolfi's *Lavoro e Libertà* provides a seminal proposal on the joint reading of both authors which begins with an analysis of the Marxian *oeuvre* on issues that Arendt and Marcuse equally studied. In 2013, Christopher Holman explored the possibilities of a "critical juxtaposition" (Holman, 2013, p.4) of Arendt and Marcuse in order to build a theoretical model of democracy based on human creativity. Within this perspective, the limitations of each author are overcome by resorting to major concepts of the other. Based on an understanding of Marcuse's account of essence as an endless process of self-realisation, Holman suggests that Arendt's conception of politics as an expression of new beginnings is helpful in sustaining a non-instrumental notion of politics in which human essence can display itself. Conversely, Marcuse's dialectical approach supplements Arendt's failure to grasp the social dimension and its importance in an authentic democratic project. While politics is the focus of Holman's work, Sollazzo (2011) has examined their positions on totalitarianism in his study on ethics within globalised democracies. In his view, while for Arendt totalitarianism is

a novel phenomenon in Western history, according to Marcuse it would represent one manifestation among others within the evolution of industrial capitalism. In the Marcusean analysis, Arendt's formulation of totalitarianism would therefore be limited since the link between totalitarian regimes and capitalism is not examined. These latter two studies, albeit not directly concerned with labour, have nevertheless inspired the reading of both authors in this dissertation which has been guided by the desire to show how thinking about domination, labour and emancipation from different philosophical traditions can expand the understanding of and response to contemporary challenges.

Why Arendt and why Marcuse, then? Arendt can be considered as a landmark author in terms of her philosophical reflection on totalitarianism, which goes beyond previous political theory by considering the totalitarian phenomena from her specific philosophical background, grounded in the *Existenz* philosophy. For this reason, this research takes the Arendtian *oeuvre* as its fundamental starting point so as to reflect on post-totalitarian work-based elements (at this point, commonly understood as an activity performed in exchange for a salary) in contemporary societies. Beyond the importance of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt analyses the place of work from the perspective of the human condition, pointing out how in a society of labourers and jobholders —a concept that will be explained throughout this investigation—, work leaves little room for both the life of the mind and for political action. The inclusion of Marcuse in the research has enabled the Marxist perspective on work to be brought to debate, therefore adding the question of its anthropological dimension as a possible defining element of the human being, which is an issue that will be questioned in this thesis. However, Marcuse's Marxism has specificities compared to other Frankfurt School approaches that have also theorised about human domination. In this sense, Marcuse, re-reading Marx from the exploration of Freudian concepts, goes beyond a totalising analysis of domination and focuses part of his work on an affirmative search in which he also contemplates both an alternative to work and its transformation as a way to emancipation.

More precisely, the differences between Arendt and Marcuse that are relevant to this dissertation centre on three points: firstly, their approach to the political fact; secondly, the conception of totalitarianism and thirdly, their approach towards overcoming totalitarian domination.

Marcuse, in line with the Frankfurt School, considers political action from a perspective with a social or moral origin. In other words, political action cannot be understood without looking at the social and organisational grounds that underpin it. However, Arendt, particularly if *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is taken as the main focus, does not explicitly refer to the foundational characteristics of the political space. This, as will be shown, is coherent with her conception of political action, defined as a new beginning in each action rather than in the revolutionary act. However, if Arendt's entire body of work is considered, as discussed in the second part of this research, other works show the importance of a certain environment in the emergence of political action. In contrast to Marx, Arendt deems that the consideration of the human as *homo faber* contributes to erasing or diluting the sphere of political action which finds its referent in ancient Greece, constituting the ultimate, distinctive aspect of totalitarianism, namely, the elimination of the political. According to Arendt, the horizon of politics is found in sharing individual differences through action and discourse aimed at building a common world. In the case of Marcuse and in line with the Frankfurt School, the horizon of politics explicitly entails a normative and moral ground. This difference, however, should be interpreted as a variation in terms of focus, due to the philosophical affiliation of each author, but not as a gap that makes complementary reading impossible.

The second difference is related to the conception of totalitarianism. According to Arendt, it is a question of the organisation of society that collides head on with the political, characterised by a single party that imposes an ideology through terror. Within this context, the elimination of citizenship rights, the repression of difference and the radical elimination of dissent are erased. Although in *The Origins* she tangentially addresses the place of work in the shaping of the mass-man from the perspective of atomisation, the core of her position on totalitarianism is found in the annihilation of the political phenomenon. Conversely, Marcuse states that totalitarianism must be understood from the perspective of the productive conditions imposed by capitalism. The modern individual is reduced to the dimension of producer/consumer in a context of total domination in which instrumental rationality normalises alienated work and introjects a multitude of needs and desires for the total acceptance of domination. That is why Marcuse considered Arendt's approach as insufficient, given her focus fundamentally on the political. However, the reading of *The Origins* in line with the criticism of labouring societies in *The Human Condition* broadens the Arendtian approach and enables its supplementation by Marcuse's thesis on the introjection of domination, enabling a more comprehensive conception of totalitarianism.

Finally, both authors also differ in terms of how to overcome domination. The claim of political action in contemporary societies suffers from a lack of systematic and explicit references to the social strategies that produce action, in the case of Arendt. Although in the third part of this investigation references will be made to the role of imagination as one of the options for transformation, Arendt's limitations will also be highlighted when it comes to establishing a specific route towards the emancipation of the production/consumption binomial. Instead, it is at this point where the Marcusean attempt to reconcile work and freedom displays its relevance for this research. Unlike classic Marxist approaches, Marcuse understands that class consciousness and class struggle are no longer the driving force of the revolution, instead placing the role of the intellectual at the centre in his political education function to achieve an internal transformation. He claims that a cultural revolution in thought, art and technique, oriented towards the liberation of human sensibility, can also be put in place in the world of work, as will be seen in the chapter dedicated to play. In contrast to Arendt, Marcuse foresees a possible agenda for emancipation.

Thus, it is on the basis of the differences between the two authors that a fertile ground to understand the place of work in post-totalitarian strategies of domination has been identified. As already anticipated, this research assumes a reading of Arendt that includes her intellectual production as a whole, as the result of an investigation that takes place throughout her life, and appreciates the nuances of domination in labouring societies. With this holistic vision of her work in mind, the compatibility between the positions of Arendt and Marcuse becomes more evident, and in fact, this thesis explores the totalitarian elements present in work today from this perspective of complementarity, despite the differences that have been pointed out.

An example of this complementarity, which is central to this thesis, is found in the nature of the concept of work. While this thesis uses an economic concept of work (the number of hours devoted by human beings to the production of goods and services in exchange for a salary), its goal is to show the philosophical implications of labour. In fact, Arendt sustains a notion of labour and work which goes way beyond their economic dimensions, building on philosophical foundations and centring on the political subject in modern societies. In her opinion, the issue of labouring societies is connected to the blurring of the political sphere in favour of the realm of the social in which labour and consumption prevail as fundamental human activities, as will be explained. According to Arendt, work and labour are categories with multiple implications in the shaping of the human condition in labour-intensive societies.

The multiple layers that make up the conceptualisation of work become apparent when the Arendtian glance is extended to the perspective of post-world work, the crisis of work due to automation and the links between production, consumption and the shaping of labouring identities in this context. Through a similar concern in examining the philosophical implications of labour, Marcusean criticism of capitalist and consumerist societies highlights the alienation implied in the labour forms that are developed in this context, leading to introjection of domination.

Part One of this dissertation centres on identifying the place of labour in the current dynamics of domination in the post-totalitarian world. It aims to reveal how some of the fundamental traits of totalitarianism persist beyond the fall of totalitarian regimes and how labour (both its meaning and its organisation) lies at the core of post-totalitarian domination. Building on the works of Arendt in Chapter One and Marcuse in Chapter Two, two complementary ideas are explored: the substitution of the political life of human beings by the labouring dimension and the process through which this transformation from the political subject to the labouring being develops and is introjected as the human condition. The first part of this work reveals the interest of the above-mentioned complementary reading of both authors in the sense that each of them illuminate different, but equally fundamental, aspects of contemporary domination through labour. Part Two examines the differences between the scenarios that the reading of both authors' *oeuvres* provides in order to overcome domination. While Arendt points to the centrality of action in human lives by the recovery of the political, Marcuse explores the possibilities of non-alienated forms of labour, in particular through the merge of labour and play. The fundamental differences between both authors, which have already been outlined, emerge in their approaches beyond labour, which on their own seem insufficient for the purposes of this thesis. Yes, the recovery of the political is crucial but it doesn't seem viable without profound interrogation about the satisfaction of needs and the transformation of labour. Equally, the terms of this transformation through the release of Eros, following Marcuse, seem difficult to introduce in a political agenda. Exploring the potential and limitations of both scenarios has nevertheless brought to the foreground the question of imagination, which is approached differently by both Arendt and Marcuse at different stages of their respective works. In fact, in Part Three, this research deals with how post-totalitarian domination puts the possibility of imagining at stake, irrespective of the specific traits of beyond labour that both authors depict. The limitations of what can be imagined in a context of introjection of domination, the difficulties of translating what is imagined into a political project and the role of utopia in

the process of imagining a future are explored based on different works written by Arendt and Marcuse.

In terms of grasping domination, then, this dissertation argues the validity of the Arendtian notion of society of labourers and jobholders to describe post-totalitarian domination through labour today. However, and as will be shown, its understanding has to be completed by Marcuse's work on the psychoanalytic approach to introjection of dominion and one-dimensionality. This complementary relation between the two authors has arisen again with respect to the different realms they explore beyond labour: the Marcusean play and the Arendtian action.

As will be explained, Marcuse argues freedom and necessity can be reconciled by transforming work into play. By bringing to the foreground a notion of play rooted in his reading of Schiller, Marx, Freud and Heidegger, he is pointing towards a "new basic experience of being" (Marcuse, 1974, p.148) allowing and at the same time producing the merger of two realms that have traditionally been presented and experienced in a relation of opposition. Despite Marcuse's perspective on the release of Eros in the organisation and the content of work as well, his position on work as play cannot ground, as will be shown, the beyond labour advocated by this dissertation. While his point is certainly relevant in relation to imagining an emancipatory transformation of the world of work, Arendt's notion of action emerges instead as a more radical effort to challenge work-centred societies to the extent that the acting dimension of human beings is enhanced. Of course, the Arendtian concept of world, so closely connected to action as will be explained, equally implies the performance of labour and work. What Arendt reminds in her whole *oeuvre*, however, is the indispensability of action in the constitution of this world. This research delves into the possibilities of her account in arguing not only for a transformation of work but also in asserting a post-work in which human lives are valued and enjoyed beyond their relation to labour.

The search for this complementarity equally guides the research to highlight the place of imagination in overcoming the society of labourers and jobholders. Both Arendt and Marcuse dealt with imagination at different stages of their respective theoretical reflections. For the purposes of this research, imagination remains central to the extent that the ability to imagine human lives beyond the centrality of labour is the necessary point of departure of an emancipatory project. Arendt's position focuses on the explorative dimension of

imagination, which is described as an evocative "go visiting" (Arendt, 1978, pt.Appendix/Judging). By allowing travel to other perspectives, imagination opens up the exploration of a beyond, also in relation to work. However, a central point in Arendt is, as will be examined, her preoccupation related to grounding imagination in the world. Closely related to her investigation on totalitarianism, as will be argued, the safeguards set for the imaginative exploration represent a limitation of the potential of this travel in search of alternatives. Again, Marcuse's work on imagination and utopia supplements Arendt's position. Indeed, his perspective makes it possible to push imagination to explore utopia, the realm that does not have a world but which seems indispensable to renew the current one. It equally provides a powerful perspective of an ought be, which can be read as an alternative safeguard of the grounding of imagination.

The exploration of this complementarity has led to the second main contribution of this work, which differs from the works of Holman and Sollazzo in relation to the main object of study at stake here: domination through labour and emancipation from labour. As noted, studies on the points of connection and the elements of contention between both authors specifically on the issue of labour are rare. Fortunately, separate references to their thoughts in the criticism of work-centred societies, such as David Frayne's *The Refusal of Work* (2015) or in the studies related to end-of-work theories (Granter, 2016), show the relevance of both authors in current reflection on labour. However, the most detailed comparative account of their theoretical developments on labour is still Andolfi's work, whose epilogue reads as follows: *Epilogo: il tramonto del 9 ctive 9 no laborioso* (Epilogue: the overcoming of the labouring citizen). This research further explores the question of building a beyond labour by reading Marcuse and Arendt not in their connection with Marx, although of course the issue is referred to at different stages of this research, but rather in the possibilities they both offer in overcoming what Arendt depicts in *The Human* Condition as labouring societies.

In short, the main contribution this dissertation seeks to provide is therefore the philosophical understanding of domination through labour and emancipation beyond labour today, in the context of the current reflection on the future of work, by revisiting the works of Arendt and Marcuse under the perspective of a complementary reading of both. To do so, the investigation deals with three specific issues: post-totalitarian domination through labour, the possibilities of a realm beyond labour and the place of imagination in emancipation from labour. Part One of this research focuses on the understanding of post-totalitarian domination through labour. While the features of totalitarian domination have

been extensively studied since the 1930s as the works by Forti on the issue show (Forti, 2014a, 2014b, 2016), the same cannot be said when it comes to the analysis of labour within post-totalitarian societies, which remains an underinvestigated philosophical realm in which Arendt and Marcuse constitute relevant exceptions. Indeed, both authors undertook a life-long reflection on totalitarian phenomena which, as will be shown, remains a fundamental guiding thread of their approaches towards their other works and, specifically, of their vision of the post-totalitarian world in which labour and its organisation play a pivotal role. This research explores the extent to which their reflection on totalitarianism leads them to sharply criticise the organisation of labour within current capitalist societies. It traces, then, the critical potential of the line of continuity, in the case of Arendt, between her stance in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and her account of the *vita activa* in *The Human Condition* (1958) and in *The Life of The Mind* (1977); in the case of Marcuse, between his positions in *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964). As theorists of the post-totalitarian world, this research shows that their perspectives are still significant in the study of the links between human emancipation, domination and labour.

Part One of this dissertation is devoted to identifying the place of labour in current dynamics of domination in the post-totalitarian world. It aims at showing how some of fundamental traits of totalitarianism persist beyond the fall of totalitarian regimes and how labour -both its signification and its organisation- lies at the core of post-totalitarian domination. Building on the works of Arendt in Chapter One and Marcuse in Chapter Two, two complementary ideas are explored: the substitution of the political life of human beings by the labouring dimension and the process by which this transformation from the political subject to the labouring being develops and is introjected as the human condition. The first part of this work reveals the interest of the above-mentioned complementary reading of both authors to the extent that each of them illuminate different, but equally fundamental, aspects of contemporary domination through labour. Part Two examines the differences between the scenarios that the reading of both authors' *oeuvres* provides in order to overcome domination. While Arendt points to the centrality of action in human lives by the recovery of the political, Marcuse explores the possibilities of non-alienated forms of labour, in particular through the merge of labour and play. The fundamental differences between both authors, that have already been anticipated, emerge in their approaches towards a beyond labour, which on their own seem insufficient for the purposes of this investigation. Yes, the recovery of the political is crucial but doesn't seem possible without a profound interrogation on the satisfaction of needs and on the transformation of labour. Equally, the terms of this

transformation through the release of Eros, following Marcuse, seems difficult to be introduced in a political agenda. Exploring the potential and limitations of both scenarios has nevertheless brought to the foreground the question of imagination, which is differently approached by both Arendt and Marcuse at different stages of their respective works. Indeed, and independently of the specific traits of the beyond labour that both authors depict, this investigation deals in Part Three with how post-totalitarian domination puts at stake the possibility of imagining. The limitations of what can be imagined in a context of introjection of domination, the difficulties of translating what is imagined into a political project and the role of utopia in the process of imagining a future are explored following different writings of Arendt and Marcuse.

Chapter One, entitled 'A *danger from within*: Arendt's view of totalitarian elements in a society of labourers and jobholders', unpacks the connections between the Arendtian account of totalitarianism and her subsequent depiction of the society of labourers and jobholders. It is based on the lines of continuity between Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and her later depiction of the society of labourers and jobholders in *The Human Condition*. This chapter, inspired by some of the multiple analyses on the Arendtian *oeuvre* (Canovan, 1998, 2000; Benhabib, 2003; Forti, 2014b, 2016; Kristeva, 2001; Bernstein, 2018), examines how the depiction of totalitarianism as a "desert itself set in motion" (Arendt, 1979, p.478) in *The Origins* finds a continuation in the "destructive, devouring aspect of the labouring activity" (Arendt, 1998, p.99) in *The Human Condition*. The re-examination of Arendt's works highlights the importance of the notions of worldlessness and superfluousness in grasping which totalitarian features persist, beyond totalitarian regimes, in the organisation and significance of labour in contemporary societies.

While the Arendtian analysis of the society of labourers and jobholders offers key notions to understand the dangers entailed in work-centred societies, her perspective can be completed by bringing in Marcuse, which is the focus in Chapter Two, 'A *within* insufficiently explored: Marcuse on total domination and labour'. While initially the research explored his conceptualisation of administered societies in *One-Dimensional Man*, the study of his works, supported by analysis of some of his main commentators (Abromeit & Cobb, 2004; Feenberg, 2018a, 2018b; Kellner, 1994, 1999; Kellner et al., 2011; Marcuse, 1998, 2001; Marcuse et al., 2007), extended the interest to his examination of the introjection of domination, especially in *Eros and Civilization*. Indeed, his resort to Freud in understanding domination through his conceptualisation of surplus repression provides a necessary and additional explanation to

grasp Arendt's perspective of totalitarianism as domination "from within" (Arendt, 1979, p.325). The psychic configuration of domination is the focus of this second chapter, which turns to Marcuse's Freudian-Marxist analysis to understand how the introjection of domination works and, more specifically, to his introduction of the question of needs and desires in his examination of domination. Engaging with recent analysis on the "desire of work" (Moore, 2016) and on work as an "adaptive preference" (Cholbi, 2018), this chapter shows how the Marcusean theorisation of totalitarianism allows understanding the contemporary centrality of labour as a repressive preference achieved by means of a very specific "specialisation of the body for work" (Feenberg, 2018a, 2018b).

In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse refers to the double task of the critical theorisation of contemporary societies: "to investigate the roots of these developments *and*[1] examine their historical alternatives" (Marcuse, 2002, pt.Introduction). Following his position, this dissertation is not only concerned with the understanding of current dynamics of domination through labour but also with what Marcuse referred to as the "chances of the alternatives" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206). Part Two of this research is therefore about the formulation of possible realms of human activity beyond labour. Initially designed to examine Arendt and Marcuse's respective positions on labour and their relation to Marx, the critical literature review revealed the presence of Arendt and Marcuse in some contemporary debates on work (Granter, 2016; Weeks, 2011; Chamberlain, 2018). For this reason, Part Two engages with these discussions by assessing the potentials and limitations of the alternatives they both raise in relation to the overcoming of work-centred societies.

Chapter Three, 'Marcuse on labour and play', examines Marcuse's introduction of the notion of play in order to make the transformation of work into play a part of the "new basic experience of being" (Marcuse, 1974, p.148) he advocates throughout his *oeuvre*. By introducing play, as will be explained, Marcuse attempts to reconcile freedom and necessity by means of the release of Eros. This chapter examines the philosophical grounds of the Marcusean notion of play and therefore brings in references to the influence of Schiller, Marx, Freud and Heidegger. It also deals with the variations of his conceptualisation of play, especially in two relevant texts besides his account in *Eros and Civilization*: they are *On the Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Labor in Economics* (1933) and *The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: a Reconsideration* (1969). Despite the transformative

[1] Italics mine.

potential of Marcuse's integration of creation within production as a result of his conceptualisation of work as play, for the purposes of this dissertation and following some of the contemporary criticisms that have been addressed to this merger (Bulut, 2018; O'Connor, 2014; Payne, 2018), including Arendt's own questioning as analysed by Walsh (2016), this chapter concludes that a beyond labour can only with difficulty be grounded on the Marcusean work as play.

Chapter Four, 'Arendt on action', turns to Arendt, and more specifically to the possibilities of her conceptualisation of action in relation to the notion of natality, as the beyond towards which this dissertation points. The study of the Arendtian organisation of the *vita activa* focuses on the specific terms of the *contours* of the beyond Arendt traces, which has more to do with a repositioning of labour and work rather than with its elimination. Also, the exploration of the conceptualisation of action has been informed by the reflection on pariahdom put forward in her biography of Rahel Varnhagen. What Arendt explores in relation to Jewishness has been connected here to Frayne's (2015) analysis of contemporary refusals of work in order to show how, if read as a willingness to know, act, judge and choose, they can be interpreted at least in part as actions that counter domination through labour.

In the original plans for this research, Part Three was meant to be about vindicating thought as an indispensable element in countering post-totalitarian domination. However, the research process has shown the importance of narrowing the focus down to imagination, an issue both authors studied at different stages. Likewise, and in connection to imagination, the question of their perspectives on utopia emerged and has been included in the examination of their accounts. In setting alternatives, then, the third and last part of the investigation argues that imagination plays a crucial role in the collective overcoming of labour as the major area of human activity. Chapter Five, 'The Arendtian Imagination', examines her position in the context of writing the volumes that make up *The Life of the Mind*. Understood as a gift allowing what is absent to be made present, her position, examined following Yeung (2017), seems useful to the extent that imagination implies an exploration and judgement of the possibilities on which a no-more can be determined or a not-yet can be willed and built. However, the study reveals difficulties as her cautions related to the grounding of imagination in the world become an important bound on imagining a beyond labour. This "bounded imagination" (Tyner, 2014, 2017), connected to what she criticises as the "utopian hubris" (Arendt, 1998, p.201), does not seem to provide sufficient

impulse to transform the desert, to recall Arendt's metaphorical picture of totalitarianism, into a world.

Chapter Six, 'The End of Utopia', which closes this investigation, seeks to show the extent to which Marcuse's position on both imagination and utopia allows the overcoming of Arendt's limitations in relation to the potential of imagination. Imagination is a pivotal concept in Marcuse's perspective of both domination and emancipation. Indeed, *One-Dimensional Man* contemplates the annihilation of imagination as crucial to domination against which imagination emerges as a "subversive force" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206) towards a "qualitatively different universe" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206). While the tensions between one-dimensionality and the effective display of imagination have led to the Marcusean account being referred to as an "imprisoned imagination" (Raulet, 2004), this chapter focuses on the possibilities of the "new sensibility", understood as the recovery of a Proustian *temps perdu* (Tebano, 2002) of gratification. The resort to this both Freudian and Proustian time in which the new sensibility, to be read as a "revolution in needs and values" (Kellner, 1999, p.14), can be grounded in order to provide imagination with a "cognitive value" (Reitz, 2000, p.139) makes possible imagining a beyond labour. Equally important in this respect is what Tally describes in relation to Marcuse as an "imaginative map" (Tally, 2010, 2011). Indeed, the Marcusean imagination, despite this resort to the past of gratification, is oriented towards a future of liberation in which, in contrast to Arendt, an ought has to exist, making it possible to depict a cartography on what labour should be. Chapter Six portrays the cartography of the Marcusean ought on labour in an emancipated world and brings in his distinction between utopia and the future that, only provisionally, remains unfeasible.

As was the case for Marcuse when he delivered the lecture entitled *The End of Utopia* in 1967 1970, we are facing today in terms of labour the feasibility or otherwise of beyond work-centred societies. While material forces might be in the process of overcoming the labouring society in the near future, again and following Marcuse, intellectual forces should equally accompany this possibility. The chapters that follow show the importance of setting up a dialogue between Arendt and Marcuse on this issue, authors who despite their many differences are both indispensable in grasping a better understanding of domination through labour and its alternatives.

Part One - Domination through labour in post-totalitarian regimes

As a continuation of the theorisation of totalitarianism, the term "post-totalitarian" has often been used to refer either to the historical condition of societies which have overcome totalitarian regimes or to a specific political category in the context of modern nondemocratic regimes. From this latter perspective, the work of Linz and Stepan (1996) is one of the significant attempts to characterise post-totalitarianism on the grounds of the articulation of pluralism, ideology, mobilisation and leadership. For these authors, the main features of post-totalitarianism would be limited pluralism, a still guiding ideology supported by a weakened commitment, reduced interest in organised mobilisation and a growing focus on personal security in relation to leadership. In this research, however, the term "post-totalitarian" does not relate to any of the categories that might have been identified in political theory studies. Instead, and despite Arendt's reluctance to use the term "totalitarian" beyond the context of totalitarian regimes, it will be used in this dissertation to refer to the historical phase in which societies that have experienced totalitarian domination find themselves and in which, despite the overcoming of totalitarian regimes and by means of the place of labour in human lives, some traits characterising totalitarian mechanics of domination can still be identified.

While the term "post-totalitarianism" has had a lukewarm welcome in the field of political theory, the reference to the notion of totalitarianism to describe and question current forms of domination is nonetheless controversial. On the one hand, its importance as a still relevant analytical tool has been advocated due to its potential to point out the invasive mechanisms of domination articulated to control lives. Beyond the establishment of the canonical typology by Friedrich and Brzezinski (1963), this research is in line with the analyses that refer to the lexicon of totalitarianism and still find in Arendt's *oeuvre* illuminating categories to understand what is at stake for the human condition itself in the contemporary reformulation of totalitarian domination. Several works have been particularly inspiring in pursuing the exploration of present issues based on the philosophical analysis of totalitarianism and of related issues such as superfluousness and evil. The examination of present forms of control of human bodies (Forti, 2015, 2017), of an "inverted totalitarianism" (Wollin, 2017) and the approach through the Arendtian categories to the groups excluded from economic

globalisation (Hayden, 2010) or to the issue of migrations and refugees (Bernstein, 2008) show the relevancy of the term in understanding reality today.
Certainly, totalitarianism as a political and historical category continues to be the target of sustained criticism on various grounds. Its insufficiencies in reflecting the complexity of various historical realities have been highlighted (Traverso, 1998; Traverso & Gurian, 2001; Traverso, 2005). Secondly, the ideological use of the term has been criticised, Žižek being one of the examples of this position. In his view, the notion represents a "kind of stopgap (…) [which] relieves us of the duty to think, or even actively prevents us from thinking, [since] the moment one accepts the notion of 'totalitarianism', one is firmly located within the liberal-democratic horizon" (Žižek, 2002, p.3).

This research argues that despite all its limitations, the notion of totalitarianism remains useful for it still describes the persisting attempts to achieve domination on the grounds of three fundamental aspects that the works of Arendt and Marcuse make it possible to highlight and are studied in this first part: worldlessness as the erasure of the political, the threat of making human beings superfluous and the introjection of domination. Among the accounts on totalitarianism produced since the early 1920s, this work stresses the interest of Arendt and Marcuse's respective positions for two main reasons. Firstly, their philosophical approach allows underlining the transformation of the human condition itself which is at stake in these processes of domination; secondly, their analyses make it possible to integrate the issue of labour in relation to domination, an issue that is not commonly introduced in the examination of totalitarianism from the perspective of political theory.

The first part of this research delves into the possibilities of building a critique of the place of labour in current societies by combining Arendt and Marcuse's respective accounts of totalitarian domination which, as will be shown, refer in both cases to a persistent threat of total domination beyond the existence of totalitarian regimes. In this first part, then, the role of labour in the dynamics of domination identified by each author is explored in order to show that both perspectives remain necessary in order to have an accurate picture of labour as a key element of post-totalitarian forms of domination and further explore the grounds of a philosophical critique of labour today.

In doing so, this research is along the lines of the still few studies which endorse the idea that a joint reading of Arendt and Marcuse is relevant for achieving an understanding of domination under the prism of the philosophical reflection on totalitarianism. In relation to

their perspectives on the totalitarian phenomenon, the body of Federico Sollazzo's (2004, 2011) works constitutes one of the few studies that compare both authors. As he puts it,

> Arendt uses the concept of totalitarianism to define a type of militaristic and materially oppressive regime, in which the ideological element, the use of violence and the presence of a single party represent its substantial features, with the risk of semantic extension of the term that ends up indicating all the contemporary political forms different from the western democracies. In Marcuse's interpretation, the characteristics described by Arendt represent only the first manifestation of the new forms of totalitarianism assumed by capitalism, since capitalism itself is a system that involves the "totality" of social relations by linking them to the dynamics of capital.[2] (Sollazzo, 2004)

With Sollazzo, the first part of this research deepens the exploration of the different approaches held by Arendt and Marcuse on totalitarianism and the points of connection that can be traced between them. It focuses in the first chapter on the extent to which Arendt's notion of totalitarianism, when read in relation to the rest of her works and especially to *The Human Condition*, goes beyond a specific regime and finds in labour a relevant element of continuity. Indeed, "the *animal laborans* is completely devoid of any public space, the absence of which is, for Arendt, the pre-condition of any totalitarian system"[3] (Sollazzo, 2011, p.76). As will be shown, Arendt's account of totalitarianism, due to its grounding in *Existenz* philosophy, implies a broader reflection on the human condition and of totalitarianism as a system of domination "from within" (Arendt, 1979, p.325) which also anticipates her criticism of the insertion of human beings into the production-consumption cycle. Hence, the thesis of the first chapter is that Arendt's formulation of totalitarianism, when considered in relation to her account of the society of labourers and jobholders, bears in itself a critique of the organisation of labour under capitalism as well. Therefore, it will be argued that Arendt's views on totalitarianism additionally feature specific criticism of the nature of social relations on the basis of which the totalitarian phenomena can be rooted. Nevertheless, this work advocates the need to introduce Marcuse's perspective to understand the processes of introjection of dominion and to comprehend the internal dimension of domination, evoked by Arendt as a danger "from within" (Arendt, 1976, p.325).

[2] Translation mine.
[3] Translation mine.

Chapter One. "A danger from within": Arendt's view of totalitarian elements in a society of labourers and jobholders.

This chapter deals with the features of Arendt's account of totalitarianism and the points of connection between her examination of the totalitarian phenomenon and her concept of societies of labourers and jobholders. It studies the possibilities of building a critique of work-centred societies by means of a joint reading of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Human Condition*, leading to identifying how two fundamental notions within the Arendtian vocabulary, worldlessness and superfluousness, are still operating as contemporary forms of post-totalitarian domination. To be sure, from the beginning and as Dana Villa points out:

> The last thing Arendt wants to do is to suggest (à la Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* or Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) that we are victims of a "soft" totalitarianism in the form of consumer capitalism. For Arendt, there is absolutely no analogy between the concentration camp and the shopping mall. That said, the channelling of the necessities of the life process into the public sphere obviously encourages the growth of a technocratic or bureaucratic approach to governance. And this in turn severely limits the spaces and opportunities for meaningful political participation by ordinary citizens. (Villa, 2021, p.147)

However, and as will be shown, Arendt's view on labour and on the process by which "the modern age (…) has resulted in a factual transformation of the whole society into a laboring society" (Arendt, 1998, p.4) remains closely tied to her perspective of total domination. For this reason, it will be argued that her position remains useful albeit not sufficient, and hence the interest of introducing Marcuse in the second chapter to understand how domination through labour keeps operating today and to question the configuration of the place of labour in contemporary lives. Thus both totalitarian regimes and also the societies of labourers and jobholders represent, as will be shown, a "danger from within" (Arendt, 1976, p.325).

As mentioned in the general introduction, totalitarianism has been widely studied from multiple perspectives ranging from history to political theory, social sciences and philosophy from the early 1920s onwards. Major studies of the genealogy of the term and about the controversies that accompany it include the works by Forti (2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2016, 2017) and Traverso (1998; Traverso & Gurian, 2001; Traverso, 2005). The specific purpose of this chapter is to identify the possibilities of building a contemporary critique of labour on the grounds of Arendt's theorisation of the totalitarian phenomenon by focusing on the lines of continuity between *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Human Condition*. To do so, it concentrates on the understanding of the guiding thread which connects two evocative

metaphors: the picture of totalitarianism as a "desert (…) in motion" (Arendt, 1976, p.478) which in the post-totalitarian world can be put as the "destructive, devouring aspect of the labouring activity" (Arendt, 1998, p.100). These two metaphors will be at the core of this analysis, for not only do they reflect the distinctiveness of Arendt's approach but they also point towards the main line of connection between the works studied as well as throughout her whole *oeuvre,* namely the concern for the problem of total domination and the destruction of the world – understood, as will be explained, as the space that makes politics possible – that it entails.

Arendt's conceptualisation of totalitarianism and of the *vita activa* is still the object of investigation in the numerous comprehensive studies (including Baehr & Walsh, 2017; Bowring, 2011; Hayden, 2014; Swift, 2009; Villa, 2021) examining her *oeuvre*. In approaching these notions once more, this chapter deliberately delves into a very particular, and limited, aspect of her theorisation of totalitarianism: the worldlessness of the totalitarian world, which at its last stage makes human beings superfluous. This standpoint has been chosen for two fundamental reasons. On the one hand, worldlessness and superfluousness are key in Arendt's depiction of the society of labourers and jobholders and relate to the place of labour, as will be shown. On the other, exploring both notions makes it possible to grasp what has been described as the "strangeness" (Canovan, 2000, p.26) of Arendt's account:

> Metaphorically, one might say that if the dominant picture suggests the rigidity, uniformity, transparency, and immobility of a frozen lake, Arendt's theory evokes a mountain torrent sweeping away everything in its path, or a hurricane leveling everything recognizably human. Instead of referring to a political system of a deliberately structured kind, "totalitarianism" in Arendt's sense means a chaotic, nonutilitarian, manically dynamic movement of destruction that assails all the features of human nature and the human world that make politics possible. (Canovan, 2000, p.26)

It is from this perspective that Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Human Condition* are, once again, approached in the first part of this research. The depiction of totalitarianism as a "hurricane levelling everything recognizably human" highlights the two distinctive elements of Arendt's perspective. First, totalitarianism is not represented as a rigid and fixed structure of government but instead as an endless, even shapeless, dynamic of movement characterised by its destructiveness. Second, totalitarianism displays a potential for destruction which pervades the inner core of what is for Arendt the human world as the "space for politics" (Arendt, 2005a, p.17) in which the human condition is at home. Despite the criticisms that have been addressed to Arendt's formulation of totalitarianism which will be referred to later on, this chapter contends that precisely due to

these elements of worldlessness and superfluousness, her contribution to the theorisation of totalitarianism is still indispensable to understand current dynamics of domination, in particular when it comes to the organisation of labour. For this reason, this chapter deepens Canovan's position by bringing to the foreground the metaphorical dimension of Arendt's own depiction of totalitarianism, "a way [that] had been found to set the desert itself in motion, to let loose a sand storm that could cover all parts of the inhabited earth" (Arendt, 1979, p.478).

1.1. Arendt's notion of totalitarianism

Arendt and the early theorisation of totalitarianism

As Forti explains in her studies on the genesis of the concept of totalitarianism, a well-established theoretical analysis of the "totalitarian constellation"[4] (Forti, 2014a, chap.2) existed before the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in 1951. Of particular significance are three major contributions which had launched the reflection on totalitarian regimes and had established three core ideas that will be also found in Arendt's work.

Firstly, the novelty of the phenomenon was very soon appreciated in the early 1920s in Italy. Giovanni Amendola and others, besides leading the initial opposition to fascism in the political arena, inaugurated the search for new words to explain what was already read as a new reality in which the particular dynamics of domination had to be studied. The rise of Nazism gave birth in the 1930s to a second line of research developed by the German *Émigré* thinkers and designed to identify its specific traits. The work of these authors, as Söllner has underlined, constitutes the "original context" (Söllner, 2004, p.219) of *The Origins*. Despite the scarce references to these pre-existing studies in Arendt's work, some of the ideas highlighted within the early discussion on Nazism can be identified again in *The Origins*. In particular, Sigmund Neumann's 1942 *Permanent Revolution* (1942) and Franz Neumann's *Behemoth* (1942), among others, described the dynamics of the permanent and chaotic movement characterising Nazism. This idea of endless movement, as already mentioned, is crucial in Arendt's perspective to understand the worldlessness of totalitarian regimes, or in other words the disappearance of the conditions that make politics possible and therefore endanger the human condition itself.

[4] The translation from Italian is mine.

Finally, the incipient reflection on totalitarianism, initiated in the context of this debate on fascism and Nazism, was continued by French authors such as Raymond Aron and Simone Weil (Forti, 2014b, 2014a) who started an interrogation on the link between Western culture and the roots of totalitarianism which also found its continuation in Arendt's *Origins*. From another perspective, the question of ideological domination was approached in relation to Stalinism in the works of Victor Serge and Boris Souvarine (Forti, 2014b, 2014a).

Thus, a deep theoretical debate on Nazism, fascism and Stalinism established the early grounds of the theory of totalitarianism and pre-existed Arendt's contribution. However, *The Origins* can be said to have introduced an "eccentric *tour de force*" (Söllner, 2004, p.222) which can be explained by considering Arendt's personal and philosophical path. Indeed, the genesis of *The Origins*, and Arendt's whole *oeuvre*, consists of two crucial experiences.

On the one hand, the "shock of reality" (Arendt, 2005a, pt.Introduction) after the rise of Nazism and the subsequent deception within the academic philosophical world entailed an explicit need for understanding which *The Origins* and Arendt's long-life reflection on the human condition came to meet. Her well-known statement, "I want to understand" (Arendt, 2005a, pt.'What Remains? The Language Remains'), is indeed a declaration related to her idea of comprehension as a coming to terms with reality which spreads through the research undertaken in *The Origins*. As she puts it at the very beginning of her work, "comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality—whatever it may be" (Arendt, 1979, pt.Preface to the First Edition). It is this specific concern that can be said to be at the origin of the singularity of the Arendtian approach to the totalitarian phenomenon and also to her examination of the realm of human activity later on in *The Human Condition*, which implies the seeking of the philosophical and historical roots of the reality that has to be understood.

On the other hand, the "philosophic shock" (Arendt, 2005a, pt.Introduction) – Arendt's encounter with philosophy – which culminated in her years at university but had started even earlier, set the grounds of her thought anchored in three main perspectives: "the classical world (…); the early Christian (and Roman) philosophical advances made by Augustine, particularly in the area of personal responsibility; and, finally, a pantheon of modern philosophical heroes, the founders of the genuinely existential tradition – Kant, Kierkegaard, Husserl and Heidegger" (Watson, 1992, p.30). Within this philosophical pantheon, Jaspers played a crucial role from the time of the preparation of her doctoral dissertation and

throughout Arendt's whole life as not only one of the leading figures of *Existenz* philosophy but also one of her most relevant philosophical interlocutors.

Arendt's formulation of totalitarianism and her lineage with* Existenz *philosophy

It is within the context of this "philosophic shock" that Arendt's lineage to *Existenz* philosophy is built. In *Existenz* philosophy, Arendt found the tools around which her will to understand could be articulated. Indeed, it is on the basis of the relation to this particular philosophical perspective that the lines of continuity between *The Origins* and *The Human Condition* can be better traced and it is on this same philosophical ground that Arendt's potential to understand and criticise work-centred societies is maintained in this research. *Existenz* philosophy provided Arendt with the theoretical grounds on which her philosophical approach to the notion of totalitarianism was set. Indeed, despite her reluctance to claim a belonging, in a public letter to Gershom Scholem on the Eichmann controversy she stated: "If I can be said to 'have come from anywhere', it is from the tradition of German philosophy" (Arendt, 2007, p.465).

Numerous studies have analysed Arendt's insertion within the German tradition and, more in particular, the contentious issue of the extent to which Arendt remains in or goes beyond Heidegger's conceptual framework (Benhabib, 2003; Canovan, 2002; Jay, 1986; Kattago, 2013; Villa, 1999; Wolin, 2015), a question which is outside the scope of this work. For the purposes of this research, however, it is of interest to outline the place of Arendt's notion of world as the pivotal concept by means of which the Heideggerian core of her thought is transformed. As Benhabib explains, "in her transformation of the Heideggerian concept of the 'world', Arendt restored 'being-in-the-world-with', or the human condition of plurality, to the centre of our experience of worldliness" (Benhabib, 2003, p.50). Here, Arendt's conclusion in "What is Existential Philosophy?"[5] is unequivocal: "existence can develop only in the shared life of human beings inhabiting a given world common to them all" (Arendt, 2005a, p.186). Around this single sentence can be read the line of continuity that connects *The Origins* and *The Human Condition* and, equally, the grounds on which a critique of work-centred societies can be formulated from the Arendtian perspective on what human existence is. Totalitarianism, as explained in this chapter, relates to the idea of a desert to the extent that a shared life disappears by the force of isolation and solitude. These same

[5] Quotes from this text are referenced to the translation from the German in *Essays in Understanding* and not to the original version published in *Partisan Review* 13.1 in 1946.

features are part of the labouring lives characterising the societies of labourers and jobholders in which the transformation of labour into an activity mainly directed to "make a living", as Arendt herself mentions at numerous stages in *The Human Condition*, are performed in the case of many in an atomised and precarious context. To the extent that the world of work becomes less concerned with the issue of sharing as competition and competitiveness gain growing relevance in its articulation, the articulation of human lives around work, the lack of it or the search for it cannot guarantee, if indeed it does not impede, the "common world" which is both the pre-condition and the result of existence.

Arendt's whole *oeuvre* can in fact be read as a search and even as a fight for a world capable of fostering plural, singular, distinctive, and therefore irreplaceable, beings who create and inhabit this common world. While Arendt's theory of action has long been considered as one of her major contributions to political philosophy, the potential of her notion of world has been increasingly highlighted from Benhabib's aforementioned work to more recent contributions. In particular, the importance of the concept and its related themes – being at home in the world, exclusion under the form of alienation from the world and superfluousness, totalitarianism and mass society as a loss of the world – has been studied (Kattago, 2012, 2013, 2014) throughout many of Arendt's works.

Arendt's account of world, together with its *potential* to overcome some of the limitations of her conceptualisation of action (Zuckerwise, 2016), is focused on next in order to examine how the worldlessness of the totalitarian experience appears again in Arendt's depiction of the society of labourers and jobholders. As will be explained, the organisation and signification of labour as generally understood – not the Arendtian notion of labour – displays some traits that call to mind the dynamics of domination under totalitarianism. It is on two specifics grounds, worldlessness and superfluous, that a critique of labour in work-centred societies can be formulated.

As Kattago (2014) explains, Arendt's interest in the notion of world precedes her study on totalitarianism. It is already present in her doctoral thesis on Saint Augustine in relation to love and also in her biography of Rahel Varnhagen. It was also explicitly developed in "What is Existential Philosophy?" In this text, Arendt presents *Existenz* philosophy as a crucial point in philosophy to the extent that it represents an attempt to "establish the ancient tie between Being and thought that had always guaranteed man his home in the world" (Arendt, 2005a, p.164), a core concern in the whole of her work and on the basis of which the

Arendtian oeuvre can be entirely read. The text reviews the place of Kant, Schelling, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Jaspers within *Existenz* philosophy. While Arendt shares with Heidegger her concern for a "this-worldly philosophy" (Arendt, 2005a, p.179), in the text published in 1946 and her first publication after her doctoral dissertation she refers to what can be said to be her fundamental point of contention, namely the relation of man with this world, the meaning of this being-in-the-world. According to Arendt, in Heidegger's perspective:

> The crucial element of man's being is its being-in-the-world, and what is at stake for his being-in-the-world is quite simply survival in the world. That is the very thing that is denied to man, and consequently the basic mode of being-in-the-world is alienation, which is felt both as homelessness and anxiety. In anxiety, which is fundamental fear of death, is reflected the not-being-at-home in the world.(Arendt, 2005a, p.179)

Against this being-in-the-world by which an isolated *Dasein* – Heidegger uses this German word to refer to the kind of being experienced by human beings – ends up in the not-being-at-home in the world, Arendt, in bringing forward Jaspers' theory of communication, concludes:

> Existence can develop only in the shared life of human beings inhabiting a given world common to them all. In the concept of communication lies a concept of humanity new in its approach though not yet fully developed that postulates communication as the premise for the existence of man. Within "all-encompassing" Being in any case, human beings live and act with each other; and in doing so, they neither pursue the phantom of Self nor live in the arrogant illusion that they constitute Being itself. (Arendt, 2005a, p.186)

In this conclusion, the commonality of the world and the togetherness of action are already evoked as features of Arendt's re-elaboration of the concept of world. While Being-with-others is found in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, it is strangely underdeveloped compared to Jaspers and, later, Arendt. Beyond the Heideggerian perspective in *Being and Time* of a world articulated around *Dasein* acting in and upon the world, Arendt shifts the centre of focus to the idea of a shared and common world in which human beings act together. It is on the basis of this idea of world as a shared space which makes human action possible, indeed an interaction, that Arendt formulated in 1951 her account of totalitarianism and in 1958 her articulation of the *vita activa*.

"A desert itself set in motion", the worldlessness of the totalitarian world

This interest in the notion of world is a central idea in her analysis of totalitarianism. Later defined by Arendt herself as "the space for politics" (Arendt, 2005a, p.17), world is the indispensable correlated framework for human beings as *zoon politikon*, the Aristotelian-

inspired notion of the human being which is equally present at the core of Arendt's thought and can be said to preside over her specific insertion within *Existenz* philosophy. It is this notion of world as the space for politics, and of worldlessness as the situation in which this space capable of politics – and therefore allowing the display of the human condition – is annihilated, that articulates Arendt's formulation of totalitarianism first, and of the society of labourers and jobholders later on in *The Human Condition*.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter when referring to Canovan, Arendt provides in the very last lines of *The Origins* a metaphor, based on the idea of a desert, which points at the very distinctive element of totalitarian domination:

> If this practice is compared with that of tyranny, it seems as if a way had been found to set the desert itself in motion, to let loose a sand storm that could cover all parts of the inhabited earth. The conditions under which we exist today in the field of politics are indeed threatened by these devastating sand storms. Their danger is not that they might establish a permanent world. (…) Its danger is that it threatens to ravage the world as we know it—a world which everywhere seems to have come to an end—before a new beginning rising from this end has had time to assert itself. (Arendt, 1976, p.478)

This desert set in motion metaphorically evokes what totalitarianism is for Arendt: an endless movement directed towards total domination and by means of which human beings are first considered mass and finally become superfluous. The worldlessness of the totalitarian world, and its continuation beyond totalitarian regimes, can be better grasped in the final chapter of *The Origins*. While the first edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was published in 1951, a second one came out in 1958, the same year of publication as *The Human Condition*, which included a new and final chapter entitled "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government". It is mainly by analysing this last chapter, which also includes references to the *animal laborans* as a key element in the understanding of the notion of the society of labourers and jobholders, that the three elements making up the worldlessness of totalitarianism are identified next: movement, total domination and superfluousness.

The metaphor of totalitarianism as a desert set in motion has been chosen for its similarities with Arendt's account of labour as a devouring activity in *The Human Condition*. Indeed, Arendt's notion of totalitarianism emphasises the idea of movement – already highlighted by pre-existing German theorisations on the totalitarian phenomena – as a permanent, sometimes unorganised movement characterising the structure of totalitarian regimes. It is also by means of this idea that Arendt establishes a point of continuity between the second part of *The Origins*, *Imperialism*, and the third, *Totalitarianism*. In her view, both nineteenth

century imperialism and twentieth century totalitarianism are characterised by this endless movement whose unlimited eagerness for expansion sets a precedent which culminates, in both cases, in an unearthly "everything is possible" (Arendt, 1976,p.427). It is unearthly, as will be explained, because it destroys the necessary permanence that a human world requires in order to become a home. For Arendt, this continuity is based on an endless constant movement towards total domination in the name of the law of nature under Nazism or the law of history under bolshevism. This endless movement is for Arendt one of the core elements of totalitarian regimes: "in the interpretation of totalitarianism, all laws have become laws of movement" (Arendt, 1976, p.463), a movement which is constantly kept in motion by performing a dynamic of domination that requires permanent deepening. What is at stake for the human condition in this desert constantly in motion? It is precisely the possibility of a stable world in which the space of politics can be displayed. For this reason, and coming back to the aforementioned metaphor, the danger of totalitarianism approached as an endless dynamic of domination, in Arendt's words, "is not that they might establish a permanent world" (Arendt, 1976,p.478). It is quite the opposite, since it is the stability of the world, capable of fostering human action, which is endangered within totalitarian dynamics.

The worldlessness of the totalitarian world is built on a permanent movement guided by a main goal, namely total domination, which is the second fundamental feature of Arendt's conception of totalitarianism. Its articulation within totalitarian regimes is brought about from a twofold perspective. On the one hand, totalitarianism stands out for operating a domination "from within" (Arendt, 1976, p.325). Indeed, it is the goal of totalitarianism to perform a "permanent domination of each single individual in each and every sphere of life" (Arendt, 1976, p.326) and to configure this domination as a domination "from within". When the within of each human being has been attained, plurality, which is "the law of the earth" (Arendt, 1978, chap.1) as it is the precondition for a common world which is shared from the singularity of each, is endangered. Here Arendt touches upon the substantial change brought about by totalitarianism. By means of the absorption of the singular one into the mass, totalitarianism achieves the total domination of human beings. This absorption, for Arendt the paradigmatic example of how the plurality of human beings is erased, is articulated on the grounds of both ideology and terror.

Sollazzo also refers to ideology as a core element in Arendt's account and numerous analyses have stressed its importance in the articulation of total domination. The recent publication of the first draft of Arendt's response to Eric Voegelin's review of *The Origins* does indeed

show the key role of ideology. As Baehr points out in relation to Arendt's view, "terror determines what must be done but not what to think" (Baehr, 2012, p.368). By replacing the within of thinking (an issue that Arendt will largely examine in *The Life of the Mind*), ideology sets the basis of what has to be thought, to recall Baehr's explanation. By doing so, it voids both plurality and thought. Indeed, for Arendt, "an ideology is quite literally what its name indicates: it is the logic of an idea" (Arendt, 1976, p.469), an idea that replaces the unpredictable beginnings entailed by every coming into the world of a new human being by the imposition of a law which encompasses "the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future" (Arendt, 1976, p.479). Examining this Arendtian account of total domination as a domination "from within" allows the identification of one fundamental point of connection with the Marcusean perspective. While in Marcuse's eyes Arendt's notion of totalitarianism can be represented as "only the first manifestation of the new forms of totalitarianism assumed by capitalism" (Sollazzo, 2004), her perspective is already pointing towards the question of the introjection of domination, which is examined later on in Chapter 2.

Thus, what are the implications of total domination in relation to the key concept of world? Total domination implies for Arendt the elimination of the togetherness of the world. Indeed, coming back to the metaphor of the desert set in motion, Arendt refers to the main danger of this movement as the threat "to ravage the world as we know it—a world which everywhere seems to have come to an end—before a new beginning rising from this end has had time to assert itself" (Arendt, 1976, p.478). In a less metaphorical style, Arendt identifies totalitarianism as "the only form of government with which coexistence is not possible" (Arendt, 1976, p.413). Instead of the world, total domination, based on ideology and terror, "substitutes for the boundaries and channels of communication between individual men a band of iron which holds them so tightly together that it is as though their plurality had disappeared into One Man of gigantic dimensions" (Arendt, 1976, p.465). So, the worldlessness of the totalitarian world lies in the impossibility of a togetherness in which the distinctiveness of human beings, if it existed, could be displayed. Thus total domination endangers the Arendtian notion of natality in the sense that it inhibits the possibility of the new beginning each human being should entail. Because we are born, the possibility of the new is brought into the world. Natality implies a distinctive capacity to initiate, to begin, to singularly act in connection with others, and by doing so establish the space that ensures togetherness which is the world. This is precisely what totalitarian movements erase. Via ideology and terror, they expel human beings from their being together in the world

displaying the possibility of renewal each being brings. As will be shown later on and for different reasons, this world can once again be at stake, beyond totalitarian regimes, when the within is once more in danger due to the normalisation of human action.

Superfluousness is the third element characterising Arendt's notion of totalitarianism. It is also the third notion upon which the claim of continuity between *The Origins* and *The Human Condition* will be constructed in this research, which considers the idea of superfluousness as a key notion on which a critique of labour can be grounded today. Indeed, Arendt's configuration of the idea of superfluousness is one of the concepts that are central in current reviews of her account (Bernstein, 2018; Hayden, 2014). Beyond imperialism and totalitarianism, Arendt's concern with superfluity relates also to contemporary societies in which new forms of the "modern expulsion from humanity" (Arendt, 1979, p.482) take place. While Arendt did not invent the term 'totalitarian', she did not invent the notion of superfluousness either. However, her work on totalitarianism might be read as one of the accounts that better describe the process by which human beings are rendered superfluous, the fabrication of superfluous beings which finds in the concentration camp its crudest expression. Again, coming back to Arendt's metaphor which has structured the first section of the study of her account of totalitarianism, the idea of superfluousness seems to be already suggested in the picture of a desert, that is, an uninhabited space lacking human beings and human artifices, which, therefore, can hardly be called "world". If the totalitarian world renders human beings superfluous to the extent of even annihilating them, the world becomes a desert. It is indeed in terms of the world that Arendt defines what superfluousness is: "to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all" (Arendt, 1976, p.475).

By which steps is this process performed? Before the physical elimination of human beings in the concentration camp, the human condition has been endangered firstly by the enactment of total domination, and specifically by the absorption of human beings into the mass. As seen above in the context of her lineage to *Existenz* philosophy, Arendt opposes her idea of natality to Heidegger's *Dasein*, which is thrown into the world and oriented to death. The continuity of the world is ensured by every new birth, every "new beginning" which is a possibility of spontaneous action in the world. So, Arendt's world requires distinctive beings capable of performing unpredictable actions not subjected to any immutable law. The opposite version is that of the "active unfailing carrier of a law" (Arendt, 1976, p.462) which characterises the mass man. In the fabrication of superfluous beings, the mass, which is also

present in the society of labourers and jobholders, appears initially as the pre-condition for the ruling of totalitarian regimes. As Arendt puts it, "the totalitarian regimes, so long as they are in power, and the totalitarian leaders, so long as they are alive, 'command and rest upon mass support' up to the end" (Arendt, 1976, p.306). It is precisely by constituting the mass that, according to Arendt, totalitarian regimes can be built. But the mass precedes the rise of totalitarianism and it is no accident that the second part of *The Origins* is precisely about examining the genesis of imperialism and its implications in relation to the rise of totalitarian regimes.

It is indeed the case within the context of imperialism that a progressive loss of the world takes place on the basis of a growing hostility towards institutions and a process of isolation of human beings. In Arendt's perspective, the lack of interest in the public realm combined with an individualistic approach concerning human beings even erases the idea of class – the modern mob is constituted by the "déclassés of all classes" (Arendt, 1979, p.10) – and, by doing so, eliminates one of the most relevant bonds between citizens. Deprived of ties with the world, isolation and loneliness become the dominating feeling of this new mass man. As Arendt asserts, the loyalty on which totalitarian regimes can constantly be kept in motion is grounded on "the completely isolated human being who, without any other social ties to family, friends, comrades, or even mere acquaintances, derives his sense of having a place in the world only from his belonging to a movement, his membership in the party" (Arendt, 1976, p.323). And here, in the feeling of the worldlessness of the world, lies the ground in which the "within" of total domination can be accomplished.

Beyond the atomisation of beings, the distinctive feature of totalitarianism has to do with superfluousness. Indeed, and in her own words, "totalitarianism strives not toward despotic rule over men, but toward a system in which men are superfluous" (Arendt, 1976, p.457). It is also around this notion of superfluous beings that Arendt herself evoked a point of continuity with the post-totalitarian world in which "the danger of corpse factories and holes of oblivion is that *today*, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms" (Arendt, 1976, p.459). This account, as will be explained, is fully developed in *The Human Condition*.

Superfluousness is achieved in the context, as has been seen, of an isolation expressed under various ideas: homelessness, statelessness, uprootedness. It is through this process of total

atomisation that the feeling of superfluousness becomes "the mass man's typical feeling" (Arendt, 1976, p.311). Coming back to the vocabulary of *Existenz* philosophy, it can be said that, for Arendt, superfluousness constitutes a cycle by means of which *Existenz* is progressively killed. Human beings are inserted in a process that culminates with the physical elimination of their bodies in the concentration camps. Firstly, human beings as singular beings, deprived of the world, surrender to the mass. Secondly, totalitarian regimes bring about the annihilation of the juridical and moral dimensions of human beings, that is, the privation of their status as citizens and their consideration as unique individuals. Finally, the physical elimination of human beings enacted in the concentration camps comes to assert how, indeed, everything was possible. Beyond the worldlessness of the world, superfluousness transforms the world into a desert.

1.2. Domination beyond totalitarian regimes

Since the purpose of this first chapter is to identify the role of labour in post-totalitarian systems of domination, an examination of Arendt's philosophical approach to totalitarianism was an essential starting point. As noted above, this second section focuses on the lines of continuity between her account of totalitarianism and her depiction of the post-totalitarian world, which Arendt described as societies of labourers and jobholders. While Arendt's perspective on totalitarianism illuminates the possibility of the potential worldlessness of the world and brings to the foreground the notion of the superfluousness of human beings, her description of contemporary times contributes to an understanding of how both threats persist beyond the fall of totalitarian regimes, and of the place that labour can play in this persistence.

From The Origins *to the* Vita Activa*, lines of continuity*

The path that led Arendt to focus on her well-known notion of the *vita activa* very soon after the publication of *The Origins* plays an important role in the understanding of the lines of connection between the two works, and in particular when it comes to labour . Although the conceptualisation of the *vita activa* is examined in detail in the second part of this research, a preliminary explanation of the term can be identified in Arendt's own words: the *vita activa* is "human life in so far as it is actively engaged in doing something" (Arendt, 1998, p.22). As such, this active engagement in the realm of doing crystallises in three concepts, namely labour, work and action. Indeed, the very first lines of the first chapter of *The Human*

Condition define *vita activa* as the expression which refers to the "three fundamental human activities: labour, work and action" (Arendt, 1998, p.7).

As mentioned above, the first edition of *The Origins*, published in 1951, was soon followed by a second one in 1958. That same year, Arendt brought out *The Human Condition*, her major account of the *vita activa*. In her preface to *The Origins*' second edition, Arendt refers to the addition of a new chapter, *Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government*, "to replace the rather inconclusive 'Concluding Remarks' that closed the original edition" (Arendt, 1958, p.xi). This chapter, which had previously been published in 1953 in the *Review of Politics*, already includes a reference to Arendt's well-known threefold distinction of human activity which will be the focus of *The Human Condition*.

So, totalitarianism has a new articulation in this last chapter. It is not only anti-Semitism and imperialism that anticipated the totalitarian phenomenon. Now, Arendt introduces the place of labour as generally understood (and not strictly Arendtian labour) in the formation of totalitarian regimes. Concluding on the specific traits of totalitarianism as a distinctive form of government, Arendt makes the connection which is at the core of this research, namely the possibility of identifying totalitarian traits beyond the traditional elements associated with the "totalitarian constellation" (Forti, 2014, chap.2), to recall Forti's expression.

It is no coincidence that Arendt articulates this connection between a form of government and the organisation of human activity by bringing to the foreground a fundamental distinction related to the place of human beings in the world: isolation and loneliness. Driven by the imprint of *Existenz* philosophy once again, Arendt distinguishes between isolation, "a situation in which I cannot act, because there is nobody who will act with me" (Arendt, 1976, p.474), and loneliness, "a situation in which I as a person feel myself deserted by all human companionship" (Arendt, 1976, p.474).

Within the framework of this distinction, and for the first and only time in *The Origins*, Arendt refers to the *homo faber* by claiming that, in performing the "so-called productive activities (…) [he] tends to isolate himself with his work, that is to leave temporarily the realm of politics" (Arendt, 1976, p.474). This isolation, while initially acceptable for Arendt since some degree of isolation is essential for the stability that work requires – as already explained in relation to her conceptualisation of world, a stable framework is a precondition for human action – can however become the burden of the human condition. When the imprint of the

singular being that is building or working the world cannot be transferred in the project of fabrication, work becomes labour as a consequence of this loss of connection with the world. *Homo faber* becomes henceforth *animal laborans*. This situation, in Arendt's perspective, occurs in the context of what can be described as a process of labouralisation of societies, or, in Arendt's words, in "a world whose chief values are dictated by labour, that is where all human activities have been transformed into labouring" (Arendt, 1976, p.475).

Arendt concludes:

> Isolated man who lost his place in the political realm of action is deserted by the world of things as well, if he is no longer recognized as *homo faber* but treated as an *animal laborans* whose necessary "metabolism with nature" is of concern to no one. Isolation then becomes loneliness. Tyranny based on isolation generally leaves the productive capacities of man intact; a tyranny over "laborers," however, as for instance the rule over slaves in antiquity, would automatically be a rule over lonely, not only isolated, men and *tend to be totalitarian* [italics added]. (Arendt, 1976, p.475)

Hence, the end of *The Origins* can be read as an anticipation of the account fully developed in *The Human Condition* and as a warning of the possibilities of identifying totalitarian dynamics of domination in societies in which the centrality of labour has invaded and even replaced the world. The second part of this section will focus on this particular issue in order to establish how the organisation and signification of labour can be crucial in the implementation of the dynamics of post-totalitarian domination.

What led Arendt to relate the explanation of totalitarianism with the formulation, albeit not explicitly, of the *vita activa*? As Elisabeth Young-Bruehl points out, Arendt identified as the "most serious gap in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (...) the lack of an adequate historical and conceptual analysis of the ideological backgrounds of Bolshevism" (Young-Bruehl, 2004, p.276). With this in mind, Arendt plunged into the study of Karl Marx, whom she had already approached in the times of the "shock of reality". However, now, in the very year of publication of *The Origins*, and with the purpose to address what she saw as its main flaw, Arendt planned the writing of *Totalitarian Elements in Marxism*. This book was never published but it marks the origin of three of her works: *The Human Condition* (1958), *Between Past and Future* (1961) and *On Revolution* (1963). So, the research undertaken soon after the publishing of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* focused on the history of work and socialism. In this process, Arendt investigated the genesis and the terms of the conception of man as what she called "*animal laborans*" and the use of Marx by totalitarian movements. And, therefore, the last chapter of the 1958 edition of *The Origins* included a reference, albeit brief, to the

connection between totalitarian movements and the totalitarian rule of labourers as seen above.

It is against this background that *The Human Condition* was published in 1958, which for the purposes of this chapter will be examined in a line of continuity with the last chapter of *The Origins*. Again, Arendt deals with the issue of world and superfluousness in attempting to provide an answer to the question that, as already noted, constituted one of her fundamental concerns throughout her life: the world and the home that are needed for the development of *Existenz*. However, while in the study of totalitarianism the issue at stake concerned the analysis of a specific form of government, in *The Human Condition* Arendt's initial explicit aim is explained as follows: "nothing more than to think what we are doing" (Arendt, 1998, p.5).

The society of labourers and jobholders, the post-totalitarian version of a "desert itself set in motion"

While Arendt's account of totalitarianism was examined in the first section of this chapter on the grounds of her metaphor of a desert set in motion, the lines of continuity between this idea and domination through labour are examined from the standpoint of Arendt's depiction of the society of labourers and jobholders. Indeed, this society constitutes the culmination of what can be read as a process of labouralisation of human activity and of societies as a whole in which the "destructive, devouring aspect of the labouring activity" (Arendt, 1998, p.100) has ended up by covering the world.

Before looking at the connections between Arendt's perspective on totalitarianism and her position on labour, a brief reference to her conceptualisation of the *vita activa* in the context of her dialogue with Marx – an issue which is fully developed in the second part of this research – seems relevant. For Arendt, Marx represents the culmination of a line of thought, starting with John Locke and continued by Adam Smith, by which labour becomes the first and most valued human activity. In her own words, Marx accomplished the operation of transforming labour into the "source of all productivity and the expression of the very humanity of man" (Arendt, 1998, p.101), a perspective which for her represents a fundamental contestation to her account of the human being. In this respect, the critique of the society of labourers and jobholders can therefore be read as Arendt's attempt to restore the fundamental dimension of human beings, not as labourers but instead as the "who" represented by Aristotle's *zoon politikon* and *zoon logon echon*, a "living being capable of

speech" (Arendt, 1998, p.27), or also in Arendt's words, the "disclosure of who somebody is, is implicit in both his words and his deeds" (Arendt, 1998, p.178). Words and deeds that, according to Arendt, were forgotten within the Western tradition for two main reasons: first, the valorisation of the *vita contemplativa* as the life of the mind which lies beyond the realm of human affairs to the detriment of the *vita activa,* which starts after the trial of Socrates; second, by the progressive consideration of human beings as labourers.

So, Arendt's concern for the *vita activa* is connected again with the idea of world as the aforementioned space for politics. If the *vita contemplativa* cannot be a this-worldly world (although Arendt will connect it to the *vita activa* later on in her *oeuvre* as the third part of this research discusses), then how should human activity be organised to make the world possible? Following Aristotle, Arendt believes that the importance of labour and work is valuable to the extent that both activities allow human beings to create the world and interact in it. Hence, labour is concerned with the maintenance of life in its biological dimension with the order of necessity, and work with the fabrication of a stable framework in which human beings can perform the third mode of *vita activa*, that is, action. Arendt builds the distinctive feature of a truly human life around her formulation of action. Indeed, without speech and action, human life "is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men" (Arendt, 1998, p.176). Only through action can human beings overcome, within this life and excluding the dangerous attempt of a beyond of the world of the *vita contemplativa*, the realm of necessity and thus find their place in the human world. Therefore, and as seen in relation to totalitarianism, it is on the grounds of the elimination of this aspect of acting beings that the post-totalitarian word is going to be criticised again, now in the context of labouring societies.

The "destructive, devouring aspect of the labouring activity" or the worldlessness of the post-totalitarian world

The prologue of *The Human Condition* refers to the main concerns that according to Arendt threaten the "modern world (…) born with the first atomic explosions" (Arendt, 1998, p.6). On the one hand, the launch of the first satellite in 1957 which, in Arendt's view, represents another "everything is possible", now under the form of the technical possibility of the detachment of human beings from the earth, which is for her "the very quintessence of the human condition" (Arendt, 1998, p.2). And, on the other, the technical possibility of liberating

human beings from the burden of labour by means of automation, an issue that will be at the core of Marcuse's reflection. In Arendt's perspective:

> It is a society of laborers which is about to be liberated from the fetters of labor, and this society does no longer know of those higher and more meaningful activities for the sake of which this freedom would deserve to be won. (...) What we are confronted with is the prospect of a society of laborers without labor, that is, without the only activity left to them. Surely, nothing could be worse. (Arendt, 1998, p.5)

The question of automation is still a key issue in contemporary debates on work for, as was the case for Marcuse, it can imply emancipation from the realm of necessity. Indeed, the acceleration of automation is one of the main dimensions of the post-work proposal proffered by Srnicek and Williams (2016). Both positions will be examined further in this research. At present, however, it is relevant to note the different perspective Arendt underlines. While automation could be a prospect for the survival of acting human beings, Arendt warns from the very beginning of *The Human Condition* of the potential danger it might also entail. It is on the basis of her particular account of labour that she explains that "the modern age has carried with it a theoretical glorification of labour and has resulted in a factual transformation of the whole society into a labouring society" (Arendt, 1998, p.4). Then, with the perspective of human beings potentially deprived of the only activity that made sense of the world for them, Arendt's diagnosis is unequivocal: "nothing could be worse" (Arendt, 1998, p.5).

What is for Arendt this labour that is put at risk by automation once the former has become the centre of society? She initially defines labour as "the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities" (Arendt, 1998, p.7). Two features of labour are highlighted in this: its growth, an uncontrolled growth – an evocation of an endless movement, a pivotal feature of totalitarian regimes – and its limitation in the sense that it only serves, for Arendt, to cover the needs of life – the metabolisation to nature already mentioned in *Ideology and Terror*. Very much in line with these traits, as noted labour becomes a destructive and devouring activity in which lies one of the shadows of totalitarianism.

So, in the first place, labour for Arendt is closely related to her idea of totalitarianism as an endless movement – with an unknown potential for destruction of the human world – that

is necessarily stable, since no human life can be displayed in an ever-changing scenario. This movement continues within labouring societies, which actualise the endless character of the totalitarian cycle anew. To what extent does labour become a devouring activity for Arendt? Life, inserted in a new ever-recurring cycle, becomes nothing more than a process, another process, the word that for Arendt embodies "the very key term of the new age" (Arendt, 1998, p.105). Instead of lives inhabiting a world, life in labouring societies is reduced to a twofold process formed by labour and consumption, so pivotal that it even defines what the society of labourers is. As Arendt explains, "it is frequently said that we live in a consumers' society, and since, as we saw, labour and consumption are but two stages of the same process, imposed upon man by the necessity of life, this is only another way of saying that we live in a society of labourers" (Arendt, 1998, p.126). So labour becomes, for Arendt, a mere process, a notion in which the problems of the movement set in motion are identified. Indeed, the labouring process is "unending, progressing automatically in accordance with life itself and outside the range of wilful decisions or humanly meaningful purposes" (Arendt, 1998, p.106). As happened with totalitarianism, the destructiveness of labour is not grounded only on its lack of temporal end. The loss of human control by means of purposefulness is explicit in such a notion of labour, which presents again the danger of running beyond human control and even beyond the human dimension.

Labour as an endless movement articulated around vital necessities represents for Arendt an "unnatural growth of the natural" (Arendt, 1998, p.47) on the basis of which the continuation of the movement for its own sake is achieved. As a trend anticipated by imperialism and crystallised under a radically new form within totalitarian regimes, an unbearable insatiability of labour endangers the human world. Indeed, Arendt's notion of labour as a "devouring" (Arendt, 1998, p.100) activity relates to the idea of totalitarianism as an "iron band" (Arendt, 1976, p.466) upon which human beings cannot live together. Presented as the devouring element of the public space, labour seems to devour the world itself. Indeed, the notion of world becomes crucial again. As she puts it:

> The only activity which corresponds strictly to the experience of worldlessness, or rather to the loss of the world that occurs in pain, is labouring, where the human body, its activity notwithstanding, is also thrown back upon itself, concentrates upon nothing but its own being alive, and remains imprisoned in its metabolism with nature without ever transcending or freeing itself from the recurring cycle of its own functioning. (Arendt, 1998, p.115)

Then, the characteristic dynamic of movement within totalitarianism finds its correspondence in this "processification" in the context of labouring societies, both leading to worldlessness. If expansion for the sake of expansion set in motion the totalitarian desert, the disconnection of the world brought about within labouring societies is achieved by means of one of Arendt's most controversial notions, namely the social,[6] an indispensable concept to understand worldlessness in modern societies. As she states in the chapter entitled *The Rise of the Social*:

> The emergence of society—the rise of housekeeping, its activities, problems, and organizational devices—from the shadowy interior of the household into the light of the public sphere, has not only blurred the old borderline between private and political, it has also changed almost beyond recognition the meaning of the two terms and their significance for the life of the individual and the citizen. (Arendt, 1998, p.38)

In Arendt's view, citizens have become labourers precisely because of the replacement of politics by the realm of the social. This replacement is brought about by a twofold movement. First, the public space is increasingly limited to the examination of issues related to the sustainment of life; second, human activity is mainly understood in its connection to "making a living": "Whatever we do, we are supposed to do it for the sake of 'making a living'" (Arendt, 1998, p.126). By means of the rise of the social, again, a destruction of the world has been engendered, putting the human condition at risk again. Indeed, Arendt argues that the world, this space for politics, cannot arise on the grounds of the social. As she puts it, "if the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal men" (Arendt, 1998, p.55). In this respect, Arendt's perspective on the rise of the social is in line with the constant movement related to the sustainment of the strictly labouring dimension of lives, and leaves aside pivotal questions that should for her be the subject of a truly political discussion. Yet besides the problem of this movement endlessly in motion, modern societies imply a second issue that, again, is in line with totalitarianism. If the idea of *animal laborans* was anticipated in *The Origins* and is fully developed in the context of the *vita activa*, Arendt introduces a new dimension of domination in *The Human Condition*: behaviourism, which, as is examined next, entails the renewal of the threat of superfluousness.

[6] For a recent summary of the debates on Arendt's conceptualisation of the social, see Villa, 2021.

Jobholders, the new version of superfluous beings

While for Arendt labour brings about profound problems for the human condition in terms of worldlessness, considering human beings as jobholders endangers plurality in a way similar to how totalitarian regimes did. The society of jobholders brings to the foreground the dominating effects of a particular required behaviour which replaces a crucial feature of Arendt's conceptualisation of action, namely its spontaneity. What seems to be at stake, again, is the human condition to the extent that one of its main potentialities, the dimension of creating new and unpredictable beginnings, is erased by means of the predictability of a quite inhuman way of functioning. Indeed, and as Arendt explains,

> the last stage of the laboring society, the society of jobholders, demands of its members a sheer automatic functioning, as though individual life had actually been submerged in the over-all life process of the species and the only active decision still required of the individual were to let go, so to speak, to abandon his individuality, the still individually sensed pain and trouble of living, and acquiesce in a dazed, "tranquilized," functional type of behaviour. (Arendt, 1998, p.322)

Again, the first step designed to ensure that human action is substituted by a functioning, which also has to be smooth, is performed by the configuration of a mass. This notion seems to be behind her account of society, reminiscent of her description of the absorption of the human being within the "One Man" of totalitarianism. A first approach towards what society is for Arendt is provided very early in the book: "the collective of families economically organized into the facsimile of one super-human family is what we call 'society'" (Arendt, 1998, p.29). This functioning appears indeed as an erasure of plurality – the fundamental human condition according to Arendt – by the establishment of required standard behaviour. In her view, it is labour itself that opens the path to this sameness, since "the biological rhythm of labour unites the group of laborers to the point that each may feel that he is no longer an individual but actually one with all others" (Arendt, 1998, p.214). Shaped as a society of jobholders, society for Arendt exerts its domination by means of normalisation. As she puts it, "society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to 'normalize' its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement" (Arendt, 1998, p.40). In describing this process, Arendt remains close to her description of totalitarianism as an "iron band". Indeed, mass society, by normalisation, "embraces and controls all members of a given community equally and with equal strength" (Arendt, 1998, p.41).

However, it is within the society of jobholders that this sameness acquires a new dimension to the extent that any spontaneity, any action, is substituted for a "functioning". Again, a

demand for the self-abandonment of individuals seems to arise once more, now under the form of prescribed behaviour which must be functional for the movement of the production-consumption cycle. A new form of domination can be identified in this functioning. Thus if labouring societies erased plurality, the second step towards domination is accomplished through behaviour, annihilating the spontaneity the Arendtian action implies. The final consequence of the substitution of action for behaviour has equally to do once more with the phenomenon of worldlessness. In a society of jobholders, in which human beings are modelled to guarantee their functioning, even work loses its meaning since its main goal is perverted. Work, in a way, is enacted not for the making of a world but, oppositely, against it. As Arendt concludes: "in order to be what the world is always meant to be, a home for men during their life on earth, the human artifice must be a place fit for action and speech, for activities not only entirely useless for the necessities of life but of an entirely different nature from the manifold activities of fabrication by which the world itself and all things in it are produced" (Arendt, 1998, p.174).

The idea of normalised beings can also be read in relation to Arendt's overarching concern in *The Origins*, namely the threat of rendering human beings superfluous, exacerbated within the societies of labourers and jobholders by the technical possibilities of the expansion of automation, and by the appearance of a new possibility: maintaining the production-consumption cycle at the cost of an increasing number of superfluous human beings.

Although the issue of superfluousness does not explicitly appear in *The Human Condition*, its place in Arendt's critique of the post-totalitarian world has been underlined from a number of perspectives. For example, Julia Kristeva in her biography of Arendt puts the issue of superfluousness precisely at the centre of Arendt's work on totalitarianism, describing *The Origins* as "a work of political anthropology that endeavours to retrace the crystallization of an absolute evil: the notion, put into practice in the twentieth century, that humanity is superfluous" (Kristeva, 2001, p.101). Indeed, Kristeva introduces a question that focuses on the current persistence of the threat of superfluousness: "is it just some people or, under the pressure of the utilitarian and automation, are we all superfluous in the end?" (Kristeva, 2001, p.102). In this regard, Canovan outlines how "the process of economic modernization does not stand still, but (aided by millions of willing servants of necessity) continues on its apparently inexorable path, destroying traditional worlds and uprooting millions, generating 'superfluous' people as well as bringing unprecedented riches to others" (Canovan, 2000, p.39).

As already mentioned, the very last pages of the first edition of *The Origins* refer to the persistent threat of superfluousness, beyond the fall of totalitarian regimes, when a strictly utilitarian perspective dominates the understanding of the world and human intervention in it. In Arendt's own words, "masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms. Political, social, and economic events everywhere are in a silent conspiracy with totalitarian instruments devised for making men superfluous" (Arendt, 1979, p.459). Although not explicit in *The Human Condition*, the issue of superfluousness seems to appear again as an underlying concern of Arendt's analysis of the post-totalitarian world, and on this basis her account remains useful to sustain a critique of contemporary work-centred societies. Following her account of the *vita activa*, human beings in their labouring dimension are unable to transcend the production-consumption cycle. As jobholders, the requirement of standardised behaviour operates as a powerful element of domination by means of which less of human creation is incorporated into the world. Accordingly, ties with the world are increasingly severed in the society of labourers and jobholders. In this society, in our societies, in which the possibilities of human development are linked to our relation to work and the growing number of people excluded from work indeed run the risk of being excluded from a world in which the political bond has been replaced by the working bond, superfluousness becomes all the more real. Again, the threat of superfluousness is part of the current dynamics of domination.

1.3. Why still Arendt?

As seen in this chapter, a joint reading of *The Origins* and of *The Human Condition* makes it possible to draw attention to how worldlessness and superfluousness, featuring traits of totalitarian domination, appear in the context of societies of labourers and jobholders. These Arendtian categories, rooted as explained in a specific re-elaboration of the main area of *Existenz* philosophy, provides a relevant theoretical ground from which work-centred societies can be questioned. Certainly, Arendt's perspective on both totalitarianism and the *vita activa* has been heavily criticised. In relation to totalitarianism, the publication of *The* Origins in the context of the Cold War and the multifaceted reflection contained in the work entailed a divisive reception. *The Origins* was indeed "rejected by the Left because of its problematic analogies between Stalinism and National Socialism, denounced by the Right for its irreverence toward the polarizing thinking of Cold War camps, and derided by political scientists for its overly journalistic, literary and philosophical investigations" (Benhabib,

1995a, p.689). Still today, the use of the notion of totalitarianism as a perspective of analysis seems to bear the imprint of its ideological use and remains a contentious issue. Arendt's account of the *vita activa* has also been criticised from a range of perspectives. In fact, her views of the social, a certain elitism of her notion of action, a misunderstanding in her reading of Marx on labour and other questions are still being examined today.

Despite the many criticisms and the unavoidable weaknesses of any theoretical reflection, the relevance of Arendt's approach is still vindicated from various and heterogeneous fields. For the purposes of this research, of particular interest is the line of reflection that studies how Arendt's work – and in particular her notion of superfluousness as the radical political evil (Bernstein, 2008) – still proves useful in understanding current concerns such as the configuration of power relations (Forti, 2015), superfluity (Birmingham, 2018a, 2018b) and precarious global poverty (Hayden, 2007, 2009, 2010).

As noted in the general introduction, this research explores the possibilities of a combined reading of Arendt and Marcuse to understand how the organisation of human activity continues to play an important role in the dynamics of domination, which can be termed post-totalitarian to the extent that they are grounded on traits characteristic of totalitarianism after the fall of totalitarian regimes. In this respect, Arendt's account of the society of labourers and jobholders, read in relation to her examination of the totalitarian phenomenon, completes the theoretical accounts discussing work-centred societies today (Frayne, 2015, 2019; Granter, 2016; Srnicek & Williams, 2016; Stronge & Hester, 2020) and is key in building a philosophical critique of labour. As explained, Arendt's formulation allows us to understand how the organisation of human activities, to a greater or lesser extent, can display some traits that totalitarian domination features: permanent mobilisation of human beings via their insertion within the production-consumption cycle, domination through the modelling of behaviour oriented to maximise an individual's performance at work, and constant reminders of the possibility of being excluded from this "new world of work" (Beck, 2000) and, therefore, of becoming superfluous.

This being said, Arendt's account needs to be rounded off. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, one of the main traits of totalitarianism as a radically new form of ruling human beings is, according to Arendt, the total dimension of the domination it exerts, since it is achieved from the within of each subject. In her own words, "totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within" (Arendt, 1976, p.325). As

previously observed, Arendt introduces labour as an element of domination towards the end of *The Origins*, anticipating a line of thought which is fully developed in *The Human Condition* by means of setting out her stance on the *vita activa* and the society of labourers and jobholders. However, if total domination is indeed a domination "from within", Arendt's position requires further explanation on how this within is reached. For this reason, understanding the within of the society of labourers and jobholders requires Marcuse's study of what he termed "introjection" of domination (Marcuse, 1974, 2002), namely the concrete mechanisms that make possible perfect obedience and self-abandonment into the mass.

Chapter Two. A "within" insufficiently explored: Marcuse on total domination and labour.

As argued in Chapter One, Arendt's account of the society of labourers and jobholders remains relevant in order to understand how worldlessness and superfluousness sustain what can be described as a post-totalitarian domination through labour. However, and as noted, her perspective does not shed sufficient light on the danger "from within" (Arendt, 1979, p.325) that she evokes. Indeed, her position does not adequately consider the process through which domination is internalised within both totalitarian regimes and also post-totalitarian societies. The dynamics by means of which domination reaches the most intimate "within" remain, therefore, insufficiently explored. Arendt attempts an explanation both in *The Origins* and in *The Human Condition* by referring to loneliness and solitude in relation to the ideas of worldlessness, uprootedness, isolation and atomisation. However, she fails to explain what the Frankfurt School theorists, in continuity with their encounter with Freud, very soon described as the internalisation of domination.

Why this failure? An increasing number of studies have shown the interest of reading Arendt in relation to psychoanalysis, from Kristeva's (2001) biography to later contributions that examine interesting points of connection between the Arendtian and the Freudian vocabularies. Peverall (2013), for example, focuses on Arendt's "political unconscious" to highlight the links of her account with an unconscious basis explaining the self-abandonment to domination and the sustainment of a public space in which the other is recognised. Alphandary (2015) stresses the connections between Freud's notion of sublimated love and Arendt's position on love in *Love and Saint Augustine*. However, Arendt was not particularly interested in the psychological or psychoanalytical study of the psyche. In *The Life of the Mind,* she asserts: "psychology, depth psychology or psychoanalysis, discovers no more than the ever-changing moods, the ups and downs of our psychic life, and its results and discoveries are neither particularly appealing nor very meaningful in themselves" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One). Even further, Arendt connects psychology with totalitarian movements in her epilogue to *The Promise of Politics*. Described as a process of adjustment in which our capability to judge by distinguishing right from wrong – for Arendt an indispensable human dimension to counter domination, as will be shown in the third part of this research – disappears:

> Both psychology, the discipline of adjusting human life to the desert, and totalitarian movements, the sandstorms in which false or pseudo-action suddenly bursts forth

> from deathlike quiet, present imminent danger to the two human faculties that patiently enable us to transform the desert rather than ourselves, the conjoined faculties of passion and action. (Arendt, 2005b, p.205)

In her biography of Arendt, Young-Bruehl refers to Arendt's lack of interest in Freud's works, probably under Jasper's own reticence (Young-Bruehl, 2004, p.26) as he argued for a philosophical rather than a psychoanalytic understanding of the self (Bormuth, 2015). What seems clear is that, again, her dismissal is equally shaped by her perspective on the relation between the loss of the capabilities to think and judge and the rise of totalitarianism, issues that will be referred to in the third part of this research. Following the metaphor of the desert focused on in Chapter One, Arendt concludes:

> When we lose the faculty to judge—to suffer and condemn—we begin to think that there is something wrong with us if we cannot live under the conditions of desert life. In so far as psychology tries to "help" us, it helps us "adjust" to those conditions, taking away our only hope, namely that we, who are not of the desert though we live in it, are able to transform it into a human world. Psychology turns everything topsy-turvy: precisely because we suffer under desert conditions we are still human and still intact; the danger lies in becoming true inhabitants of the desert and feeling at home in it. (Arendt, 2005b, p.201)

As will be shown in this chapter, Marcuse's reading of Freud is directed precisely towards the opposite point, namely understanding how the recovery of Eros is a necessary step for self-transformation and collective emancipation. This chapter focuses on Marcuse's Freudian-Marxist analysis of the very within of human beings in order to understand the place of labour, as generally understood, in the psychic dynamics of domination. If Arendt rightly describes the political implications of reducing human beings to the condition of *animal laborans*, her general dismissal of psychology, presented as an exercise of adjustment to the worldlessness of the world, misses an indispensable point: the process by means of which this condition is introjected, the last step of total domination through labour. Arendt does not address this pivotal issue, which is rightly part of current work and post-work debates: the subjective meaning of work, and in particular the desire for work. The critical examination of the desire to work emerges due to facing a "jobless future" (Moore, 2016) within societies of labourers and jobholders in which the "work dogma" (Frayne, 2015) is scarcely questioned. Interestingly, in grasping the within of domination through labour, Michael Cholbi has recently argued against the perspectives that read a still generalised desire to work as evidence of a positive source of human inner well-being. Indeed, this desire can be interpreted as an "adaptive preference (…) formed under unjust labor conditions to which individuals are compelled to submit in order to meet material and ethical needs" (Cholbi, 2018).

This chapter deepens this line of thought by introducing Marcuse's "psychoanalytic turn" (Ocay, 2009) to complete Arendt's notion of society of labourers and jobholders. It explores the possibilities of reading this desire to work not only as an adaptive preference but also as a "repressive preference" which culminates the dynamics of domination described in the first chapter. Specifically, it examines how, following Marcuse's account of introjection of dominion, the desire for work can be connected with a deep process of domination in which labour in general terms, and not strictly Arendtian labour, is key: the "specialization of the body for work" (Feenberg, 2018b). Hence Marcuse's resort to Freud supplements Arendt's perspective by examining precisely what was missed in it: the psychic configuration of domination.

By bringing in Marcuse, this research equally highlights the potential of psychoanalysis in understanding the psychic world within the reflection on domination, an issue that has received persistent attention from the early reading of Freud by Adorno and Horkheimer (Whitebook, 2006) to recent works dealing with psychoanalysis in relation to totalitarianism (Pick & Ffytche, 2016). Within this context, Marcuse plays a major role to the extent that his works build on Freudian theory as an interpretative ground of subjective domination and personal and collective liberation. Marcuse's examination of Freud remains today at the centre of the investigations that, despite the "diatribes and distortions" (Cobb, 2004, p.163) characterising its academic reception, are part of a sustained "Marcusean Renaissance" (Kellner, 1994) inaugurated with the publication of numerous manuscripts that have broadened the study of the author. In this respect, the many strands in which the works of Marcuse are being interpreted, ranging from critical theory, politics and history of philosophy to technology, aesthetics, ecology and psychoanalysis (Abromeit & Cobb, 2004), show his contemporary relevance. In relation to psychoanalysis, Marcuse's reading of Freud continues to be revisited today, within the framework of its *rapprochement* with Marx and beyond, by the examination of key issues of the Marcusean approach: Eros (Feenberg, 2018b), the debate with Fromm (McLaughlin, 2017), radical subjectivities (Kellner, 2004; Ruti, 2014), repressive desublimation (Bowring, 2012; Brown, 2018), and, more relevant to this research, post-work theories (Frayne, 2015; Granter, 2016; Lindman, 2015; Moore, 2016).

Within this line of research, this chapter explores the process by means of which the "specialization of the body for work" (Feenberg, 2018), as analysed in Marcuse's *oeuvre*, is brought about. Although *Eros and Civilization*, first published in 1955, constitutes his most complete analysis of the psychic elements intervening in domination, Marcuse's concern

with labour and alienation started much earlier within the context of his reading of Marx and his active commitment to Spartakism, the revolutionary movement which would become the German Communist Party in 1918. His doctoral dissertation, *Der deutsche Künstlerroman* (*The German Artist-Novel*, 1922), anticipates his search for a "less alienated existence" (Abromeit & Cobb, 2004, p.26) which involved from the very beginning the exploration of literature and, beyond, the whole world of aesthetics and play. In examining the tradition of the artist-novel, Marcuse is already deepening into the connections and points of rupture between subjectivity and objectivity and anticipating the reconciliation his further reflection aims at, namely the centrality of the aesthetic dimension. As he puts it, "the artist novel is only possible when the unity of art and life has been ruptured, when the artist is no longer absorbed in the form of life of the surrounding world and has awakened to his inner most consciousness" (Marcuse, 2007, p.74). This concern equally explains Marcuse's encounter with Heidegger in 1927 in search for the radical subjectivity he could not find in the works of Marx before the publication (in 1932) of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844. It is under the impact of the *Manuscripts* in the exploration of subjectivity that the issue of needs and desires in relation to domination emerges. As Kellner outlines, Marcuse "followed the early Marx's concept of human beings, conceptualizing desire as part of nature, exemplified both in erotic desire for other human beings and instinctive needs for freedom and happiness" (Kellner, 1994, p.12). It is within this perspective of human beings as both species-being and desiring beings, and of the understanding of labour in relation to the repression of desire, that three key moments of Marcuse's works are studied next.

First, his analysis of the "total-authoritarian state" (Marcuse, 2009c, p.1) is examined so as to identify the place of labour in the total mobilisation of individuals that dwell in totalitarian regimes in order to grasp how work is built in order to make it become more than just one preference among others but rather *the* preference. The inserting of human beings within a totalitarian system, as will be explained, is connected for Marcuse to capitalism itself. Second, the concept of surplus-repression in *Eros and Civilization* is analysed in the attempt to understand work as a repressive preference, resulting from a process in which domination is introjected. Finally, Marcuse's subsequent account of one-dimensionality as a beyond introjection in which labour still plays an important role is studied from the perspective of his account of "sublimated slaves" (Marcuse, 2002, p.35).

2.1. Marcuse and totalitarianism: an early question on needs and desires.

This section focuses on Marcuse's writings on the "total-authoritarian state" in order to explore how National Socialism represents a hitherto not accomplished deepening of the process of the "specialization of the body for work" (Feenberg, 2018). National Socialism, which for Marcuse represents in many dimensions a continuation of liberalism, attempts a novel form of domination in which manipulation of needs and desires plays a fundamental part. In this respect, he can be said to be close to Arendt to the extent that, despite the radical novelty she assigned to the totalitarian phenomenon in terms of the achievement of evil, she nevertheless viewed it as a pathological manifestation of mainstream Western political thought. Three issues are examined next: the continuity between liberalism, totalitarianism and capitalism, a distinctive characteristic of Marcuse's account of totalitarianism extending his focus on the place of labour beyond the persistence of totalitarian regimes; the implications of the introjection of a generalised technical rationality; and the totalitarian orientation of desire towards work through a process that involves the instinctual dimension of human beings by means of the "scientific management" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.49) of work and leisure. To do so, part of Marcuse's texts of the 1930s and 1940s are focused on, for they importantly highlight "the connections between totalitarianism, capitalism, technology and potent forms of cultural domination" (Kellner, 1998, p.xv).

The liberalism-totalitarianism continuum

As has been outlined in the few comparative works dealing with Arendt and Marcuse's approach to total domination (Tormey, 1995; Sollazzo, 2004, 2011), Marcuse's account of totalitarianism differs from Arendt's on a central point. While for Arendt the totalitarian phenomenon represents a radical novelty, which is the object of her investigation, for Marcuse there is a crucial line of continuity between liberalism and totalitarianism from the beginning based on the permanence of the capitalist mode of production. In "The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State" (1934), for example, he notes that "the new *Weltanschauung* reviles the 'merchant' and celebrates the 'gifted economic leaders', thereby only hiding that it leaves the economic functions of the bourgeois untouched" (Marcuse, 2009f, p.7). As the structure of the relations of production remains unchanged, National Socialism is the regime that frames the requirements of a new stage of capitalism, characterised by its monopolistic and imperialistic character. Eight years later, this is still Marcuse's perspective: "...this movement, we now see, has not changed the basic relationships of the productive process that is still administered by special social groups

which control the instruments of labor regardless of the needs and interest of society as a whole" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.69). Much later, in the 1968 *Foreword* to the collection of essays *Negations*, Marcuse stresses this continuity again by underlining not only the certainty of such a continuum at the time but also the confirmation of its persistence beyond totalitarian regimes. As he puts it:

> ...if there was one matter about which the author of these essays and his friends were not uncertain, it was the understanding that the fascist state was fascist society, and that totalitarian violence and totalitarian reason came from the structure of existing society, which was in the act of overcoming its liberal past and incorporating its historical negation. This presented the critical theory of society with the task of identifying the tendencies that linked the liberal past with its totalitarian abolition. This abolition was not restricted at all to the totalitarian states and since then has become reality in many democracies (and especially in the most developed ones). (Marcuse, 2009c, p.xvii)

So for Marcuse, and in contrast with Arendt, there is a more than an implicit underlying thread linking totalitarianism and previous and subsequent regimes on the basis of the continuation of the core of a particular mode of production. However, the implementation of totalitarianism implies a pivotal transformation which is focused on in this chapter: the conformation of an emotional crowd on the basis of the regimentation of every sphere of life and the manipulation of the inner within of individuals. Marcuse introduces the idea of mass, referring to the notion of "totality", in his abovementioned 1934 essay. Within the new worldview, a new kind of subjectivity arises as part of a specific understanding of universalism. Beyond and before individuality, this totality illegitimately spreads without having to "prove itself before the tribunal of individuals, to show that their potentialities and needs are realized in it" (Marcuse, 2009c, p.4). By highlighting this idea of totality, embodied in an undifferentiated *Volk* and blind to individual desire, the issue of needs and potentialities is brought to the foreground. This reflection is further added to in *On Hedonism* (1938) by addressing a controversial matter in Marcuse's thought, namely the distinction between true and false needs, which will be dealt with in the conclusion of this chapter. The dimension of repression is also introduced in this work, as some wants "already contain the stunted growth, the repression, and the untruth with which men grow up in class society" (Marcuse, 2009d, p.126). *On Hedonism* also anticipates the connection between labour and happiness, understood as the fulfilment of needs and potentialities. As Marcuse asserts, when "labor is performed not in accordance with the capacities and needs of individuals but according to the requirements of the process of profitable production, then happiness cannot be general within it" (Marcuse, 2009d, p.129). So besides underlining the continuity in terms of relations of production between liberalism and totalitarianism, Marcuse's thinking in the 1930s already

introduces a pivotal connection between labour, desire and repression which will become central in the understanding of totalitarian domination in two important texts of the early 1940s, namely *Some Social Implications of Modern Technology* (1941) and *State and Individual under National Socialism* (1942).

Technical rationality introjected

These texts explore the process of introjection of domination and, more importantly for this research, identify an initial approach towards the place of labour within it. In *State and Individual*, Marcuse departs from the limitations of understanding National Socialism from the twin perspective of the "totalitarian character of the state and the authoritarian character of society" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.70). Instead, Marcuse argues that to focus on this perspective leads "to see[ing] in National Socialism the absolute rule of the state over all private and social relationships, and the absolute repression of the individual with all his rights and abilities" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.70). Indeed, the examination of the totalitarian phenomenon has to do with the understanding of a new form of domination in which competing forces converge in a common goal, imperialistic expansion, and a common requirement, the total mobilisation of individuals for its achievement. 'Total' means of course domination from without by the exertion of force, but also implies the articulation of the process of domination from within. In Marcuse's view, the new form of domination is closely connected to the introduction of a new kind of rationality which he identifies as technical, for "it is derived from the technological process and therefrom applied to the ordering of *all*[7] human relationships" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.77). So totalitarianism exerts its full power by bringing about a change within the human condition itself through extending technical rationality to the understanding and ruling of the human realm. Marcuse examines National Socialism from the perspective of a "terroristic technocracy" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.42). This, according to Marcuse, is indeed the angle that completes the comprehension of the totalitarian phenomena, allows one to grasp how terror is not only based on "brute force" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.41) and on the blurring of the private dimension of individual. Terror is equally sustained by the culmination of a new kind of rationality, disconnected, again, "from everything that links it with the humane needs and wants of individuals [which] is entirely adapted to the requirements of an all-embracing apparatus of domination" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.77). The question of desire appears anew at the basis of domination: the centrality of

[7] Italics mine.

human desires is replaced by the centrality of the requirements of the technological apparatus.

Marcuse identifies three prevailing types of rationality respectively linked to a particular interest to be fulfilled: an individualistic rationality, which "measured all social standards and relations by the individual's rational self-interest" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.70); a rationality of competition, "in which the rational interest was superseded by the interest of the market, and individual achievement absorbed by efficiency" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.70), and technological rationality, distinguished by the "all-embracing apparatus which it had itself created" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.60). The subordination of human desires to the requirements of the apparatus is achieved by a complex system which goes beyond technics to establish a whole technology including the configuration of human thought and behaviour. As he explains in *Some Social Implications*, technical rationality implies two fundamental changes related to the articulation of domination, both of them connected to work. First, new mechanisms of recognition of human value are established. Within the framework of "individualistic rationality", achievement was at the centre of human beings' recognition: "social performance was, at least to a large extent, their own work" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.43). Instead, within the paradigm of technological rationality, efficiency replaces achievement. By this process, the dependence of the human on this pervasive technological complex grows. As Marcuse puts it, "whereas individual achievement is independent of recognition and consummated in the work itself, efficiency is a rewarded performance and consummated only in its value for the apparatus" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.45). Being efficient for a whole system becomes the defining element of recognition, value and identity. To the extent that the who of who we are, to bring in Arendtian vocabulary, is provided by efficiency, adjustment is not only required; it can even be desired, and therefore work, literally at any cost, becomes a preference. Indeed, technical rationality brings about new "standards of judgment and (...) attitudes which make men ready to accept and even to introcept the dictates of the apparatus" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.42) that are enforced. On the basis of the extension of this new rationality, Marcuse brings to the foreground the idea of introception, which will later become "introjection" in *Eros and Civilization*. As argued in this research, this concept refers to the totalitarian "danger from within" by means of which adjustment is not only demanded and sustained by external coercion but is also desired and expected from within. In Marcuse's words, "the individual could do no better than adjust himself without reservation" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.45). Adjustment, then, is not an imposition to be resisted. Being recognised implies being adjusted, and being adjusted implies a total mobilisation of wants and needs

connected to the issue of human instincts, fully developed in *Eros and Civilization*: "everything" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.47), and by everything an entire technological system including technics, behaviours and thoughts is implied, is directed to "cooperate to turn human instincts, desires and thoughts into channels that feed the apparatus" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.47). It is in this sense that totalitarian domination can be said to attempt to modify the inner core of the human condition itself. By pointing towards this profound level, Marcuse makes it possible to better grasp the Arendtian "within". Already in *Some Social Implications*, Marcuse anticipates the potential of introducing Freud to show how domination implies that the libido has to be redirected "from the all too dangerous realm in which the individual is free of society" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.47). By means of its rechannelling, the inner within of individuals is targeted and, therefore, any element ensuring adjustment, such as the meaning and organisation of labour, can even become a preference, to take up Cholbi's argument.

What is the place of work in the process of introception as described in Marcuse's analysis of National Socialism? With the goal of "imperialist expansion on an inter-continental scale" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.78), and the uniting factor of different and competing forces – industry, party, army – intervening in the articulation of the totalitarian state, the mobilisation of individuals through labour is indeed required in order to create a labouring crowd, "a vast reservoir of manpower" in which the "intellectual and physical training for the exploitation of all conquered natural and human resources" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.78) becomes key. Therefore, work becomes one of the two main frameworks of individuals' lives – service being the other – in order to create a labouring crowd by means of "the intensification of labor [and] the training of youth and workers" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.41). As was the case for Arendt, the mass is a defining element of the total-authoritarian state for Marcuse. Indeed, it is also described as the "state of the masses" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.80) in which the instinctual dimension plays an important role: "all individual interests and forces are submerged into an emotional human mass, skilfully manipulated by the regime". While Arendt and Marcuse would agree on the fundamental annihilation of distinctiveness as a defining feature of the mass, by introducing the issue of instincts Marcuse deepens the explanation of the self-abandonment of the individual into the mass which goes beyond external coercion using terror. There is for Marcuse a profound configuration of each member of this crowd by pointing at the "bare instinct of self-preservation which is identical in all of them" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.80). Self-abandonment is required to survive. However, this process is possible for Marcuse insofar as capitalism brings about a previous

configuration. This "equalization only follows the pattern on which their individuality has been previously moulded" by work as a "quantitative unit" which determined the individual's performance and, as seen above, the individual's identity in terms of efficiency for the productive system. The technological system of domination that National Socialism establishes is grounded on the configuration of new masses of individuals who are reduced to their condition of what for Arendt would be *animal laborans*, devoted to the maintenance of their own life and of the life of the apparatus.

The scientific management of work and leisure

Technological domination also implies previous training which is required to become an efficient part of the labouring mass. Vocational training is the tool to ensure this "adjustment without reservation" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.45). This training not only includes skills but also the "psychological and physiological adaptation to a 'job' which has to be done" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.54). "Scientific management" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.82) of work is put in place to this end, seeking to ensuring efficiency by means of "an elaborate system of physical, moral and intellectual education which aims to increase the efficiency of labor by means of highly refined scientific methods and techniques" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.82). The whole complex is orientated to the organisation of the labouring crowd: "the factories, schools, training camps, sport arenas, the cultural institutions and the organization of leisure are true laboratories of the 'scientific management' of work" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.82). It is on the basis of this double regimentation of lives through labour and leisure that domination from within is displayed: "the open terror, to be sure, strikes only against 'the enemies', the aliens and those who do not or cannot cooperate. But the hidden terror, the terror behind the total supervision and regimentation, war and scarcity, reaches everyone" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.84).

Shaped as the Arendtian *animal laborans* and recognised strictly in terms of efficiency, once the process of adjustment is achieved, in the Marcusean perspective of technological rationality human beings also face two fundamental dangers that, following Arendt, Chapter One has identified both in totalitarian regimes and in the societies of labourers and jobholders, namely the loss of a common world and superfluousness. In relation to the worldlessness of the labouring crowd, Marcuse identifies isolation and atomisation at the core of its articulation. In terms of the organisation of labour within National Socialism, he points out how isolation is part of both labouring and leisure time under the weight of threat and fear: "the unknown neighbour might be 'unreliable' or a henchman of the Gestapo" (Marcuse, 2004b, p.81). On the other hand, to the extent that individuals are standardised

workers for the sake of efficiency, they become potentially superfluous, "replaceable at short notice by other instrumentalities of the same brand" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.54). What is left of the uniqueness of the particular human being is nothing more than "the special form in which a man introcepts and discharges, within a general pattern, certain duties allocated to him" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.54). Anticipating his thesis on one-dimensionality, introjection deprives human beings of their fundamental dimension as desiring beings, since even "the ability to abstract from the special form in which rationalization is carried through and (...) his faith in its unfulfilled potentialities" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.47) is lost. In 1942, Marcuse seems already close to one-dimensionality, the realm beyond introjection, in which the essence of what we are as desiring beings is even forgotten.

2.2. *Eros and Civilisation*, from repression to surplus-repression

The first section of this chapter has examined the process by means of which work is a constitutive part of the dynamics of introjection of domination in Marcuse's account of the "total-authoritarian state". As we have seen, a complex technological process makes work become a preference, no matter whether it has proven, to recall Marcuse's point on the legitimacy of any totality, its ability to fulfil human needs and desires. This second section examines the repressive dimension of the desire for work in order to complete Cholbi's argument: work is not only an adaptive preference but can also be read as a repressive one in the light of Marcuse's notion of surplus-repression. This section will focus on *Eros and Civilization* so as to identify to what extent work intervenes in building the surplus character of repression, which is a central notion for the understanding of domination from within, even beyond totalitarian regimes. Despite the criticism of Marcuse's reading of Freud that will be dealt with in the conclusion of this chapter, the question of repression on the basis of Freud's theory of instincts remains useful to understand domination today. In this line, Wendy Brown, for instance, has recently drawn on Marcuse's notion of repressive desublimation developed in *One-Dimensional Man* to understand how neoliberal rationality implies the "depression of conscience" (Brown, 2018, p.71), understood as a decline of comprehension and autonomy. In relation to work, this section shows how *Eros and Civilization* remains a relevant source in challenging work-centred societies and in developing post-work theories. In order to understand how the desire to work can be viewed as a repressive preference following Marcuse's notion of surplus-repression, two key questions are dealt with. First, the Marcusean reading of Freud which introduces the distinction

between repression and surplus-repression is examined. Second, the place of labour in the implementation of domination is analysed.

Repression and surplus-repression

Marcuse's reading of Freud in *Eros and Civilization* achieves a twofold movement which is directed towards understanding the psychic structure of both domination and emancipation. By "eroticizing Marx [and] revolutionizing Freud" (Ocay, 2009), Marcuse introduces Freud's theory of instincts within the Marxian understanding of alienation and provides Freud with a historical dimension that was lacking in the analysis of the civilisation process presented in works including *Civilization and its Discontents*. By doing so, Marcuse is not only explaining how domination is introjected but he is also laying the foundations for explaining how the modification of instinctual drive can lead to personal and collective liberation – an issue he will later return to in *An Essay on Liberation* – and thus putting forward the possibility of overcoming the discontents in the process of civilisation that Freud alluded to. Marcuse's interest in introception in his analysis of the total-authoritarian state finds its continuation in *Eros and Civilization* by introducing the notion of introjection, closely connected to the issue of repression: "repression from without has been supported by repression from within: the unfree individual introjects his masters and their commands into his own mental apparatus" (Marcuse, 1974, p.6). As Simon Tormey notes in one of the few comparative works on Arendt and Marcuse's respective accounts of the specific issue of domination, the "novelty of Marcuse's analysis of domination is that he is talking about a form of domination which is exercised not against a will, not against what a person wants to do" (Tormey, 1995, p.124). Indeed, as will be explained, in the Marcusean account this 'against' disappears because true needs and desires have been repressed and rechannelled by means of surplus-repression.

How is this repression from within identified in Marcuse's dialogue with Freud? Marcuse devotes the first part of *Eros and Civilization* to examining the process of domination by referring to the rule of the Freudian notion of the reality principle. By doing so, Marcuse accepts Freud's perspective of the need for a certain level of repression of the instinctual drives – Eros and Thanatos, as life and death instincts – in order to make civilisation possible. For both authors, there is an indispensable amount of repression needed for the rule of reality. However, and in contrast to Freud, Marcuse argues that advanced industrial societies display an unnecessary level of repression which makes it necessary to distinguish between basic and surplus-repression. Basic repression, understood as "the 'modifications' of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization" (Marcuse, 1974,

p.25), is required to reverse the destructiveness of the struggle between Eros and Thanatos. However, referring to basic repression proves insufficient to understand domination through repression from within. The reality principle has to be, then, framed historically to overcome the limitations of Freud's perspective on the unfolding of the process of civilisation. Marcuse therefore brings to the foreground of the Freudian *oeuvre* how the socio-historical context shapes repression not only to ensure civilisation but crucially to sustain domination by exerting an additional repression, "surplus-repression", by means of a specific display of the reality principle, the "performance principle", the ultimate imperative of technological rationality seen in the previous section.

Advanced industrial societies, characterised by the reign of technical rationality, tame instincts through the glorification of performance and its extension to every sphere of life. Marcuse had already focused on this issue in his 1930s and 1940s texts and takes up his argument again in *Eros*. The rule of the performance principle precisely implies a "society [which] is stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members" (Marcuse, 1974, p.34). According to Marcuse, performance becomes a need, a desire, or even a drive, as a result of the capacity of the historical conditions to mould the biological structure of drives. The performance principle is sustained and perpetuated by a second element that Marcuse brings to the foreground, namely the artificial preservation of scarcity. Freud (2018, chap.IV) refers to *Ananke* in order to identify work, the necessary struggle for existence, as a foundation of civilisation together with Eros. In his view, the fight for existence explains and justifies how libidinal energies were necessarily directed to work, again, to make civilisation possible. Without work, needs cannot be met. Marcuse questions Freud's ahistorical approach by noting an "irrational scarcity" (Marcuse, 1974, p.27). Indeed, this scarcity appears to be irrational because it is artificially created within advanced industrial societies by "a particular group or individual in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged position" (Marcuse, 1974, p.26) and occurs in a context in which technical developments could cover the general satisfaction of vital needs. Surplus-repression is exerted by maintaining this premise of scarcity to justify an unequal distribution of the possibilities to cover needs and wants and by multiplying needs and desires. In short, and as Marcuse explains, "additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association (...) arising from the specific institutions of domination are what we denote as surplus-repression" (Marcuse, 1974, p.27).

Also drawing on Freud, Marcuse highlights the double dimension of any form of repression: an intertwined within and without. The Freudian scheme, in which the introjection of the reality principle is articulated through the Superego, leads Marcuse to explore how repression is operated from the very within of individuals, a process by which, as noted above, "the unfree individual introjects his masters and their commands into his own mental apparatus" (Marcuse, 1974, p.6). Here the issue of the manipulation of desires comes to the forefront of the analysis. As Marcuse explains, "the societal authority is absorbed into the 'conscience' and into the unconscious of the individual and works as his own desire, morality, and fulfilment. In the 'normal' development, the individual lives his repression 'freely' as his own life: he desires what he is supposed to desire" (Marcuse, 1974, p.36). So, repression from within implies a profound penetration of the dictates of domination linked to the rule of the performance principle. Performance is not only coercion; it becomes a desire. It is in this sense that the desire to work can be read as a repressive preference. The process of introjection leads to the conformation of desires according to the basis of the technological apparatus in which existence unfolds. The Freudian perspective allows Marcuse to show how Eros, within the process of surplus-repression, is diverted towards work, which becomes part of the additional controls that ensure domination. Whereas a post-work scenario appears to be possible, the desire to work remains at the core of identities framed by the performance principle. In this sense, surplus-repression can be read as the final completion of alienation.

Labour and the implementation of domination

What is the specific place of work in the articulation of these additional controls? Following the argument in the 1930s and 1940s texts, mobilisation through work within totalitarian regimes and beyond – as explained in the next section in relation to Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* – is intensified up to the point that it could be said that a transformation of the human condition itself is engendered. Work under the performance principle aligns human beings within tools, deprived of "the freedom of the libidinal subject-object which the human organism primarily is and desires" (Marcuse, 1974, p.36). The imperative to work, which characterises advanced industrial societies and which follows the line of the total mobilisation through work seen in Marcuse's analysis of the total-authoritarian state, brings about a change in the instinctual structure of individuals. Of course, work has to be understood at this point in its version of the Marxian-inspired alienated labour and not from the distinctively Marcusean perspective of work as play that will be further examined in the second part of this research. Instinctual drives are diverted from what would be, for Marcuse, the fulfilment of true needs in order to ensure performance through work. The "scientific

management of time" that characterises National Socialism plays a pivotal part in doing so. On the one hand, the extension of time at work intensifies alienation to the extent that work rarely fulfils not only human needs but also human potentialities. The full accomplishment of Eros cannot find its place within alienated labour, which is so precisely due to the "absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle" (Marcuse, 1974, p.35). However, the process of introjection implies that a happy consciousness follows performing lives once the performance principle has been introjected. It is indeed because of "this happiness, which takes place part-time during the few hours of leisure between the working days or working nights, but sometimes also during work" (Marcuse, 1974, p.36) that the apparatus finds its perpetuation. Linking Marcuse's point on the diversion of libidinal energy to work and coming back to the issue of the desire to work, by means of introjection of the performance principle, alienated labour becomes the point in which both erotic and societal performance, to use Marcuse's vocabulary, coincide.

Surplus-repression does not only relate to work, as control of leisure is also required to ensure individuals' performance. Leisure could indeed become a space of non-performing life from which alternatives in terms of acting and thinking might arise. Therefore, different elements converge to avoid the liberation that leisure could build; this will be specifically focused on in the third part of this research, in which *An Essay on Liberation* is examined. Marcuse notes how leisure is transformed into a mere "passive relaxation and a re-creation of energy for work" (Marcuse, 1974, p.38). Relaxation is organised to avoid the demands of life and pleasure that have been repressed. The control of leisure by means of the endless development of the entertainment industry acquires a particular importance in ensuring surplus-repression. As he puts it,

> the individual is not to be left alone. For left to itself, and supported by a free intelligence aware of the potentialities of liberation from the reality of repression, the libidinal energy generated by the id would thrust against its ever more extraneous limitations and strive to engulf an ever larger field of existential relations, thereby exploding the reality ego and its repressive performances. (Marcuse, 1974, p.38)

As the third part of this research will show, against this process Marcuse brings in Proust's "*temps perdu*" to refer to the ground of imagination and phantasy. Here the potential release of what has been repressed, amounting therefore to a challenge to the process of introjection, would be at stake. This is because the desire to work, understood as the desire to perform alienated labour, can be read within the framework of the additional control of surplus-repression and is therefore far from being within the category of true desires, that is,

desires that fulfil human potentialities. In this respect and getting back to the main argument of the first part of this research designed to show how the centrality of work in advanced industrial societies displays some of the traits that characterise totalitarian regimes, current domination can be read as post-totalitarian domination. In the Marcusean perspective, totalitarianism as such persists beyond totalitarian regimes, although this research uses the prefix "post" to highlight how some traits of totalitarian domination are reformulated and survive after the end of total-authoritarian states, as Marcuse describes such regimes. In the Arendtian perspective, any explicit reference to totalitarian domination was made in relation to the societies of labourers and jobholders which displayed, as seen in Chapter One, worldlessness and superfluousness as fundamental traits. In contrast, Marcuse refers to totalitarianism in *Eros and Civilization* in order to identify the type of domination characterising advanced industrial societies. As he explains, through the implementation of the performance principle and surplus-repression, "totalitarianism spreads over late industrial civilization wherever the interests of domination prevail upon productivity, arresting and diverting its potentialities" (Marcuse, 1974, p.83). Following Marcuse, the organisation of labour can be a decisive element of totalitarian domination. As the external dimension of domination, it ensures the endless and thoughtless activity of individuals within the framework of the dynamics of production/consumption, a line of argument that Arendt would have agreed with. Marcuse, and here lies the interest of bringing his account into the first part of this investigation, supplements Arendt by underlining the internal state of mobilisation in which most of individuals' libidinal energy is diverted to work and builds the imperative, and furthermore the desire, to work as part of surplus-repression.

2.3. Beyond introjection, sublimated slaves

While the analysis of surplus-repression is indispensable in order to understand why the desire to work can be viewed as a repressive preference, Marcuse's account of one-dimensionality as presented in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) provides the key to understanding how a further step, beyond introjection, completes the picture of totalitarian domination. This section focuses on the links between one-dimensionality and labour to examine the extent to which the desire to work can be addressed in terms of preferences. It looks at how, in a one-dimensional world which considers human beings mainly as labourers, work constitutes a destiny for "sublimated slaves" (Marcuse, 2002, p.36) notwithstanding its presentation as preference. First, Marcuse's explication of totalitarianism, which in *One-Dimensional Man* goes far beyond his previous investigation of the total-authoritarian state,

is explored. Second, the place of labour in the development of the "Happy Consciousness" (Marcuse, 2002, p.87) characterising "sublimated slaves" is analysed. Finally, a reference is made to "the chance of the alternatives" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206) in terms of work so as to highlight Marcuse's contribution as a thinker of emancipation.

Totalitarianism in One-Dimensional Man

In the preface to *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse refers straight away to the term "totalitarian" to identify a particular mode of domination that has surpassed the limits of the total-authoritarian state which he focused on in the research he carried out during the 1930s and 1940s. Referring to contemporary advanced industrial societies, he argues that "in this society, the productive apparatus tends to become totalitarian to the extent to which it determines not only the socially needed occupations, skills, and attitudes, but also individual needs and aspirations" (Marcuse, 2002, pt.Preface). In his view, totalitarian domination, after the lengthy reflection in his previous works on introjection and repression, implies a particular shaping of subjectivities which gives birth to a one and only reality. As he puts it, "there is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms" (Marcuse, 2002, p.13). Within this framework, false needs – and, as suggested by Marcuse, also false desires – represent the flashpoint of introjection by means of which the requirements of the apparatus coincide with what individuals assume their needs and desires to be. Totalitarianism therefore represents the last stage of a process of introjection of domination which culminates in the constitution of a specific reality as the one and only possible life. In this respect and when it comes to work, performance through labouring activity emerges as the fundamental task within the multiplicity of human activities both within and beyond totalitarian regimes. Indeed, the 1966 preface to *Eros and Civilization*, written just two years after the publication of *One-Dimensional Man*, highlights how introjection is no longer sufficient to describe domination, since the within that is dealt with in previous sections of this chapter no longer exists: "this private space has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality" (Marcuse, 2002, p.12). So beyond introjection, totalitarian domination adopts a particular shape of one-dimensionality in which the within and the without coincide. The "adjustment without reservation" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.45) of his early account of technological rationality becomes "mimesis" (Marcuse, 2002, p.12). Going back to the concern that was tackled at the beginning of this chapter, that is, labour as an adaptive or even repressive preference, Marcuse's notion of one-dimensionality even points towards the idea of preference, which on his grounds can be questioned when requirements from without appear to coincide with desires from within. To refer to a repressive preference

might even seem meaningless, for any preference can only arise from a completely invaded, to use Marcuse's terms, within. However, and as will be shown below in this section, Marcuse's account leaves two spaces that will give birth to the "chance of the alternatives": on the one hand, the potential of working on the unconscious through the "*recherche du temps perdu*" (Marcuse, 1974, p.9); on the other, the Great Refusal (Marcuse, 2002, p.66) as a rejection of one-dimensionality, progressively built by those who the technological apparatus considers "surplus".

Before focusing on the place of labour in the conformation of one-dimensionality, it is of interest to note how despite their different philosophical stances, Marcuse and Arendt's respective views on totalitarian domination converge at some relevant points. In this line and as the first part of this research seeks to show, Tormey underlines how both authors sustain a "strong model" of totalitarianism (Tormey, 1995, p.170) that stresses the possibility of *total* domination, in contrast to other authors who contend there is a limit to this invasive control that can be found in the deep nature of subjectivities. Marcuse argues that totalitarianism implies "not only a terroristic political coordination of society, but also a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests [which] precludes the emergence of an effective opposition against the whole" (Marcuse, 2002, p.5). In this definition and despite the differences in terms of philosophical standpoints between Arendt and Marcuse which have already been discussed, they both converge on the loss of the political realm: the worldlessness of the world for Arendt, the "closing of the political universe" (Marcuse, 2002, p.21) for Marcuse. As seen in Chapter One, the "destructive, devouring aspect of the labouring activity" (Arendt, 1998, p.100) and the "unnatural growth of the natural" (Arendt, 1998, p.47) were at the origin of the worldlessness of the post-totalitarian world in the Arendtian account. For Marcuse, totalitarian domination also has to do with unworldliness, understood as the loss of the political, a realm separated from the production/consumption process and as the bond allowing singular beings "being-together-with". Technical rationality has transformed the political realm into the reign of administration, and by doing so it has instituted "a comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom" (Marcuse, 2002, p.3) among administered beings whose discourse and actions show the "mechanics of conformity" (Marcuse, 2002, pt.Preface), the final manifestation of the deep process of surplus-repression and of scientific management of lives. In short, according to Marcuse totalitarian domination is linked to technological rationality as a system which invades every single space, erasing any possibility for human singularity and obstructing the fulfilment of human

potentialities and self-determination of true needs and desires. Instead, one-dimensionality entails the abandonment of the self into the whole within a one-dimensional world, not under the form of adjustment but rather, as Marcuse explains, of a mimesis implying "an immediate identification of the individual with his society and, through it, with the society as a whole" (Marcuse, 2002, p.12). Again, the one seems to be absorbed into the mass. Arendt's argument for singularity and distinction, as opposed to behaviourism as one of the traits of the society of labourers and jobholders, is close in this sense to Marcuse's position.

Administered societies are not only characterised by their totalitarianism but also by their irrationalism, which is linked to the intensification of mobilisation through an endless cycle of production and consumption that applies to commodities and life. Irrationality, Marcuse claims, lies in the perpetuation of something that goes far beyond alienation and which stands in contrast to the technical possibility of diverting human beings from the struggle for existence. As he puts it, "this society is irrational as a whole (...) its growth dependent on the repression of the real possibilities for pacifying the struggle for existence" (Marcuse, 2002, pt.Introduction to the First Edition). Indeed, while technology would allow human beings to overcome alienated labour, the artificial multiplication of needs, is together with one-dimensionality, at the core of "social control [that] is anchored in the new needs it has produced" (Marcuse, 2002, p.11). Here again, the focus on the issue of needs reminds us of Arendt's vision of the "unnatural growth of the natural" (Arendt, 1998, p.47) that the society of labourers and jobholders features. It also reveals, as is the case for Marcuse, the irrationality of a specific mode of production and consumption which reduces human beings to the condition of *animal laborans*, in the Arendtian vocabulary, or "sublimated slaves", as *One-Dimensional Man* explains.

Labour and the happy consciousness

How does labour intervene in the conformation of "sublimated slaves" as the subjects of one-dimensional societies in which alienation and administration converge? As suggested above, the notion of one-dimensionality for Marcuse highlights the limitations of the understanding of advanced industrial societies in terms of alienation and introjection. To the same extent that Arendt emphasised the novelty of totalitarianism, Marcuse equally indicates that, precisely because of the depth of domination from within, one further step has been achieved. As he explains, "the extent to which this civilization transforms the object world into an extension of man's mind and body makes the very notion of alienation questionable. The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in

their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment" (Marcuse, 2002, p.11). It is in this sense that the idea of "sublimated" slaves can be read. The continuity with previous stages of the development of relations of production lies in the fact that work sustains subjection to the technological apparatus, given the introjection of the performance principle and, even worse, the identification of souls and commodities, to use Marcuse's vocabulary. The step further in the process of alienation has to do with a subjective change, sublimation on the basis of the "many liberties and comforts" (Marcuse, 2002, p.35) that advanced industrial societies provide to contain the repression of Eros. While the 1930s and 1940s texts and *Eros and Civilization* insisted on the organisation of labour, either to sustain total mobilisation or to ensure introjection, with the idea of slaves Marcuse focuses on a dimension also common to Arendt's analysis: the instrumentalisation of human beings that generates the deprivation of their human condition. In an assertion that is evocative of the Marxian conceptualisation of alienation, Marcuse describes this new state of slavery, namely the reduction to the status of thing: "this is the pure form of servitude: to exist as an instrument, as a thing" (Marcuse, 2002, p.36). In describing this version of totalitarianism within advanced industrial societies in relation to the transformation of the human condition itself, Marcuse remains close to the Marx of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*: "on the basis of political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities" (Marx, 1978b, p.70).

Within this context, then, of administration of humans as things, one-dimensionality displays its fundamental feature: the assimilation to the new labouring whole and its standards applied to every productive and non-productive activity. Introjection has resulted in "assimilation in needs and aspirations, in the standard of living, in leisure activities" (Marcuse, 2002, p.32). This assimilation in terms of desires of lives implies that domination assumes a smooth and even comfortable rhythm: "things swing rather than oppress, and they swing the human instrument—not only its body but also its mind and even its soul" (Marcuse, 2002, p.32). As an echo of *Eros and Civilisation*, Marcuse notes in *One Dimensional* Man how "the technological universe breaks the innermost privacy of freedom and joins sexuality and labor in one unconscious, rhythmic automatism—a process which parallels the assimilation of jobs" (Marcuse, 2002, p.30). This notion of sublimated slaves condenses the outcome of Marcuse's investigation into the Freudian conceptual apparatus. In his "quest for radical subjectivity" (Kellner, 1999), Marcuse attempts to account for the conditions that

intervene in the process of subjection from within and the difficulties of the emancipation of the exploited. This question seems to have found an answer in *One-Dimensional Man*: "the new technological work-world thus enforces a weakening of the negative opposition of the working class: the latter no longer appears to be the living contradiction to the established society" (Marcuse, 2002, p.35).

The chance of the alternatives

Tormey has referred to Marcuse's account of totalitarianism as "a hermetically sealed world whose development is determined not by the actions of individuals, groups or classes, but by 'technological rationality'"(Tormey, 1995, p.114). While this idea gives an accurate picture of the concept of one-dimensionality, it does not however fully reflect Marcuse's interest as a theorist of liberation. Indeed, this sealing, the sealing that could be implied by domination from within, finds its limitations in both *Eros and Civilization* and *One-Dimensional Man*. The work of memory and phantasy within the "*recherche du temps perdu*" and the notion of "Great Refusal" are the grounds that allow for theorisation on the possibilities of emancipation and sustain, in relation to the issue focused on in this research, the possibility of questioning the desire to work. Starting with *Eros and Civilization*, while surplus-repression channels the instinctual drives towards the purposes of the technological apparatus, as Ben Agger points out there is in Marcuse's view a surviving memory of the "truth of the unconscious" (Agger, 1992, p.107). Through this idea, Marcuse articulates a revolutionary exit to the Freudian civilising process, grounded on the necessity of repression. Indeed, for Marcuse, the unconscious "preserves the memory of past stages of individual development at which integral gratification is obtained. And the past continues to claim the future: it generates the wish that the paradise be re-created on the basis of the achievements of civilization" (Marcuse, 1974). In this sense, the *recherche du temps perdu* brings about the retrieval of memories that project the possibility of an "equation of freedom and happiness". This possibility, Marcuse claims, will come as the connection between work and play, an idea that will be taken up again in *An Essay on Liberation*, with the substitution of the performance principle as the guiding tenet of the technological apparatus by aesthetic ethics in an emancipated world.

This recovery of memory and phantasy seems to be for Marcuse the starting point of what constitutes a key concept in his perspective of emancipation, the Great Refusal. If the retrieval of the *temps perdu* opens the way to self-transformation, to the development of the "new sensibility" by means of which true needs can be identified (an issue that will be

addressed in the third part of this research), the notion of the Great Refusal is capital in the mediation between the transformation of the selves and the fight for an emancipatory proposal. As Agger says, "it is with the Great Refusal that Marcuse initiates what I have called his dialectic of individual and class" (Agger, 1992, p.149). But it only just begins the process, for Agger rightly highlights how Marcuse's account of the mediation between the regained self-determination of the individual and social transformative change remains limited. Nevertheless, and for the purposes of this research, the notion of the Great Refusal is of interest due to its twofold relation with work. On the one hand, it shows how the identification of and fight for essential needs, a contentious issue in Marcuse's thought as will be explained in the conclusion of this chapter, can at least lead to calling into question the imperative of labour. In this respect, the analysis of the incipient refusals to work (Frayne, 2015) and an already extensive post-work reflection can be read as a step towards claiming that the experience of labour can become part of a collective Great Refusal of the performance principle as the crucial element of recognition of human beings. On the other hand, it is also in relation to the world of work that Marcuse introduces the issue of the revolutionary potential of the superfluous. Whereas "the totalitarian tendencies of the one-dimensional society render the traditional ways and means of protest ineffective" (Marcuse, 2002, p.260), the superfluous in relation to work, namely the unemployed and unemployable, are part of the new historical and revolutionary subject. As he puts it, "underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and the unemployable" (Marcuse, 2002, p.260).

Conclusion

This chapter has brought in Marcuse in order to deepen the within, which Arendt insufficiently explored in her account of both the *vita activa* and also total domination. In doing so, the importance of the notions of introjection and surplus-repression, linked to a specific reading of Freudian psychoanalysis, has been highlighted in seeking to understand the place of labour in current trends in post-totalitarian domination. As shown, Marcuse's re-elaboration of the Freudian framework completes Arendt's picture to the extent that he depicts a new form of domination grounded on the "democratic introjection of the masters into their subjects" (Marcuse, 1974, pt.Political Preface, 1966). By turning to Freud and as Kellner et al. point out, he is also extending the dimensions of dehumanisation beyond alienation (Kellner et al., 2011), exploring contemporary forms of domination in which coercion is exerted from the very within. By introducing the issue of desire, Marcuse puts

forward a new dimension of domination which deepens Arendt's notion of distinctiveness as a constitutive part of the human condition that is at stake within the totalitarian phenomenon and within societies of labourers and jobholders. Indeed, Marcuse himself establishes a notion of domination connected to the possibility of fulfilling human beings' singular desires and potentialities: "domination is in effect whenever the individual's goals and purposes and the means of striving for and attaining them are prescribed to him and performed by him as something prescribed" (Marcuse, 1970a, p.1). For the purposes of this research, Marcuse's account is of special interest because it introduces the question of labour at the core of his account of the introjection of domination. In the context of the artificial multiplication of needs and a particular form of rationality, attention is diverted from what he considers as the "real issue—which is the awareness that [individuals] could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfactions" (Marcuse, 1974, p.90).

As explained in this chapter, the configuration of a particular desire to work, which becomes the imperative and the drive to work, can be read as a major attempt to reach the deeper within of individuals. Beyond totalitarian regimes, the management of needs and desires keeps providing the "adjustment without reservation" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.45) required by the technological apparatus that at the same time appears as the one and only reality. In short, a one-dimensional world in which lives are organised around the desire or the need for, or the lack of, work. For this reason, the idea of work as a preference has been questioned and Cholbi's argument on adaptive preferences has been advanced by introducing the possibility of viewing the desire to work as a repressive preference which articulates domination beyond totalitarian regimes.

While Marcuse's reading of Freud has proved illuminating for the purposes of this research, his approach has nevertheless been criticised on many grounds, a number of them outlined at the time when some of Marcuse's relevant and previously unpublished works on Freud came out (Kellner et al., 2011). Within the Freudian universe, a certain utopianism in the conception of the unconscious and of the role of phantasy and perversion, for example, has been argued. Also, his focus on a biological account of Freud's theory of instincts in contrast to the Lacanian linguistic perspective has been raised as a limitation of his account. In relation to the accuracy of Marcuse's re-elaboration of Freudian notions, his own statement in the introduction to *Eros and Civilization* expresses his philosophical interest in re-reading Freud. As he puts it, his "concern is not with a corrected or improved interpretation of Freudian concepts but with their philosophical and sociological implications" (Marcuse, 1974,

pt.Introduction). In this same line, Kellner et al. have highlighted the value of Marcuse's specific reading of Freud to the extent that he builds a "new psychoanalytic mythology" (Kellner et al., 2011, pt.Introduction) which has to be assessed in terms of its transformative dimension. Thus Marcuse's account remains useful in contemporary analysis focusing on restoring the place of desire "in search of defiant subjects" (Ruti, 2014, 2015). Indeed, Mari Ruti suggests that a joint reading of Lacan and Marcuse makes it possible to identify a possible breakage of what has been examined in this chapter as domination from within. Following her argument, Lacanian ethics of desire, grounded on the identification and enactment of own desire as different from the desire of the other, or big Other as Ruti puts it, provides a basis for the rupture of the process of introjection. However, and as Ruti notes, a difficulty arises here: how can personal desire be dissociated and traced in relation to the desire of that Other? Marcuse's account of surplus-repression provides a possible answer to this question. As she suggests, the removal of the elements that conform surplus-repression would allow individuals to face and accomplish the Lacanian "truth of desire". In this respect, Ruti's reading makes it possible to overcome two important criticisms addressed to Marcuse. On the one hand, there is the Marcusean distinction between true and false needs. On the other, the lack of mediations between self-transformation and collective transformation that, following Ruti's argument, "relies on subjects who have the ability to stick to their desire in face of the demand that they capitulate to the desire of the big Other" (Ruti, 2015, p.128). So, as we have seen, Marcuse's notion of surplus-repression that has been examined in this chapter provides an account of internal domination by the conformation of desires, as may be the case in the desire to work. Moreover, it is also a conceptual tool in grasping the mechanisms of emancipation which is still productive today. In relation to the purpose of the first part of this investigation, it makes it possible to complete the picture of post-totalitarian domination through labour. Arendt's reluctance to engage with either psychology or psychoanalysis left partially unexplored the inner within of human beings, a dimension of domination which cannot be ignored. The Marcusean approach to Freud leads to a specific exploration of subjectivity which could even find a place within the Arendtian account itself.

Part Two - Beyond Labour

The first part of this research has attempted to understand the place of labour, both in terms of its meaning and its organisation, in contemporary forms of domination which, as we have seen, can be described as post-totalitarian. Indeed, despite the overcoming of the total-authoritarian states, to use Marcuse's terminology, three fundamental traits of totalitarian domination remain. The analysis of Arendt's depiction of the society of labourers and jobholders, closely linked to her examination of totalitarianism, shows how the consideration of human beings as *animal laborans* sustains both worldlessness and superfluousness. In articulating lives mainly around an endless process of production and consumption, the political dimension of human beings, which makes it possible to collectively establish a being-together-with in which the singularity of each one can be expressed and enacted, fades. At the same time, the consideration of human beings in terms of *animal laborans* implies the persistence of the threat of superfluousness. Considered strictly in terms of their capability to acquire or maintain a labouring activity, those who cannot perform as *animal laborans* become superfluous to a world grounded on productive performance, as Marcuse highlights. If Arendt provides the thread to read the continuity between totalitarian regimes and societies of labourers and jobholders in terms of worldlessness and superfluousness, Marcuse's insights on introjection and on surplus-repression add an indispensable perspective because he illuminates the inner dimension of domination, the one which psychoanalysis grasps through its work on drives and desires. His perspective makes it possible to understand the implications in terms of domination and emancipation in the desire or refusal to work.

The second part of this research will draw on Arendt and Marcuse's respective standpoints to try to answer a fundamental question. Given that the current configuration of labour is part of a dynamic of post-totalitarian domination, should (and could) labour become a liberating labour, as Marcuse suggests with his views on play and work? Or rather, should labour be overcome by the Arendtian category of action? Here again, both authors remain relevant today for they both addressed, at different stages of their thinking, the possibilities of spaces beyond labour.

Chapter Three. Marcuse on labour and play

As noted in the general introduction to this dissertation, the purpose of this research goes beyond the investigation of the place of labour in the dynamics of domination. Indeed, in the context of a growing theorisation of post-work scenarios, it aims at identifying the philosophical stances that can sustain a conceptualisation of a realm of freedom beyond labour. To do so, Marcuse and Arendt's respective attempts to shed light on these possibilities are studied in the second part of this research by focusing on Marcuse's account of play in the present chapter and Arendt's concept of action in Chapter Four. If action, as seen in Chapter One, is one of the current Arendtian topics of investigation, Marcusean play also continues to attract academic interest today. Even further, the comparison between both authors, still scarce, has a new example of the relevancy of their joint study in the recent book by Philip Walsh. It is precisely in the categories of action and play, Walsh argues, that the common goal of both Arendt and Marcuse of reflecting on human activity is displayed. As he puts it, "despite their differences, Arendt and Marcuse have some shared goals, particularly as these appear in the latter's Heideggerian writings. Like Arendt, Marcuse is concerned to provide an ontological theory of human activity" (Walsh, 2016, p.139). Also, it is through these categories that part of their fundamental differences can be studied.

The first part of this investigation has focused on the continuities between totalitarian and post-totalitarian domination through labour on the grounds of both authors' respective analyses of domination. In the case of Arendt, her conceptualisation of the society of labourers and jobholders has been examined in order to identify the persistence of worldlessness and superfluousness. Turning to Marcuse, his account of surplus repression has been brought in so as to understand the place of labour within the process of internalisation of dominion. This third chapter begins with several main ideas previously formulated in this research. Following Arendt, it can be said that current times tend to reduce all human activity to labour – that is, to activities mainly directed at the mere sustainment of life – and to consider human beings strictly in their dimension of *animal laborans*. This process, key in ensuring a kind of domination which shares with totalitarianism the features of worldlessness and the threat of rendering human beings superfluous, is grounded on a powerful dynamic of internalisation of domination. As Marcuse shows from *Eros and Civilization* to *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), the spread of technological rationality is sustained on the re-channelling of the libido towards labouring activity, even bringing about a transformation of the individuals' instinctual basis.

Limiting the examination of Marcuse's account to the abovementioned point would mean ignoring his interest for this research as "a theorist of domination and liberation" (Kellner, 2001, p.30). Indeed, besides his account of alienation through labour in post-totalitarian times, his work provides a perspective of liberation in which the reconciliation of the realm of freedom and necessity – to put it in Marxian terms, as Marcuse himself does in a key essay that will be examined later on in this chapter – by means of the release of the Freudian Eros within productive activities plays a major role. This chapter deals precisely with one of the key elements of this proposal, namely the transformation of work into play, within the context of Marcuse's search for a "new basic experience of being" (Marcuse, 1974, p.148).

Play has been the object of philosophical investigations from Plato to Derrida (Livescu, 2003), research that has a relevant landmark in Huizinga's (1949) *Homo Ludens*. This chapter explores the place of play in Marcuse's thought, an issue that may have received less attention than notions such as one-dimensionality or introjection of domination, but nevertheless continues to generate interest today within a variety of disciplines in the context of the study of his emancipatory proposal (Bulut, 2018; Granter, 2016; O'Connor, 2014, 2018; Payne, 2018; Trullinger, 2016; Walsh, 2016). As part of his transformative project, Marcuse explores the importance of generating a "new sensibility" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.23) in which play is involved, building on a range of philosophical standpoints throughout his *oeuvre*. The theoretical roots intervening in his conceptualisation of play are dealt with in the first section by referring to the key influence of Schiller, certainly, but also to the position of Marcuse's other mentors: Freud, Marx and Heidegger in his early writings. The second section reviews the variations of Marcuse's position and vocabulary in his explanation of work as play. The Heideggerian *Dasein* in the *Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics*, the emergence of Eros from *Eros and Civilization* onwards and the Marxist terminology of *The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration* are studied. Finally, the recent critical reception of Marcuse's point on the integration of work and play is addressed so as to assess the extent to which his proposal can effectively ground a space beyond labour, understanding labour here in the Arendtian sense, i.e., the realm of human activity that reduces human beings to the condition of *animal laborans*. In doing so, this chapter also questions Marcuse's insertion within the line of end-of-work theorists (Granter, 2016) and reviews recent criticisms of Marcuse's notion of work as play (Bulut, 2018; O'Connor, 2014, 2018; Payne, 2018). This chapter will conclude by bringing the Arendtian critique to bear on labour-play theories and by highlighting the potentials and also the limitations of Marcuse's proposal to build a beyond labour.

3.1. The philosophical origins of Marcuse's notion of play

This section investigates the formation of Marcuse's perspective by approaching the position on play held by four of his philosophical referents. Schiller's influence, largely identified by Marcuse's commentators (Abromeit & Cobb, 2004; Abromeit & Wolin, 2005; Kellner, 1984), is dealt with in the first place. Also, a reference to Marcuse's readings of Marx, Freud and Heidegger on play seems equally important in order to grasp the multiple nuances of his conceptual framework, leading to the formulation of a distinctive notion of play and, further, to his attempt to reunite play and work. *An Essay on Liberation*, which for the purposes of this research can be read as a conclusive text on domination and as a final conclusion on Marcuse's position on liberation, displays the fundamental vocabularies of Marcuse's emancipatory project articulated around the conceptualisation of "new sensibility" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.23). Marcuse uses it to depict the triumph of Eros as the revolutionary Marxian praxis in a horizon depicted in Schillerian terms. As he puts it: "the new sensibility has become, by this very token, praxis (…) in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the *Form* of the society itself" (Marcuse, 1969, p.259). After a brief reference to the connection between Marcuse and Heidegger on the issue, the extent to which the Freudian, Marxian and Schillerian theoretical frameworks set the ground for Marcuse's account of play is then identified.

Heidegger

Although outside the scope of this research, the dimension of Heidegger's influence on Marcuse's thought – as is equally the case for Arendt's – has been a recurrent issue dealt with within academic debate and has even led to references to a Heideggerian Marxism (Abromeit & Wolin, 2005; Wolin, 2015). In terms of Heidegger's conceptualisation of labour, Wolin, for example, notes the pivotal place of the Heideggerian *Dasein*. In his view, "Marx's conception of labor as praxis and Heidegger's notion of Dasein's practical situatedness (along with the related notions of authenticity, resolve, and historicity) helped to provide Marcuse with a philosophically cogent ontological definition of labor" (Wolin, 2015, p.153). To the same extent that this connection has been studied through the ideas of *Dasein* or authenticity, it also seems relevant to refer to Heidegger's position on play and its related themes such as leisure or idleness. In this respect, a possible "recovery of play" (Aho, 2007) in Heidegger's thought has been investigated through various readings of the relation between authenticity and leisure. Aho shows the centrality of the category of play in the understanding of authenticity in Heidegger's later writings by referring to the works of Eugen Fink and Josef

Pieper. Aho's starting point is the use of the concept of leisure as a guiding thread of two dimensions of authenticity: the "willful commitment and resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*)" (Aho, 2007, p.218) of *Being and Time* and the "*Gelassenheit*, as a non-willful openness to the enigmatic emerging-forth of beings, an openness that 'lets beings be'" (Aho, 2007, p. 218) which is in line with Heidegger's texts on Hölderlin. In Aho's view, leisure is central to the idea of authenticity since "understood as a form of play (*Spiel*) [it] frees us from busy-ness, from the stabilizing routines and practices of the technological work-world and gives us an opening to face the abyssal nature of our own being and the mystery that '*beings are*' in the first place" (Aho, 2007, p.219). Whether Marcuse took this version of authenticity into consideration in his conceptualisation of play is hard to know. His 1977 interview with Olafson shows his criticisms of Heidegger's vision on authenticity. On the one hand, Marcuse questions the possibility of authenticity itself in the framework of a theorisation that dismisses the material conditions of historicity. While, as will be shown in section two by examining the Marcusean account, play shares with authenticity a certain "return to oneself, to one's innermost freedom, and, out of this inwardness, to decide, to determine every phase, every situation, every moment of one's existence" (Olafson, 2007, p.123), Marcuse outlines his core opposition in relation to Heidegger in his first writings by looking at "the very real obstacles to this autonomy" (Olafson, 2007, p.123), a criticism that can be addressed to both readings of authenticity.

Schiller

While the links between Marcuse and the various readings of authenticity suggested by Aho remain unclear, the relation between Schiller and Marcuse has been dealt with extensively and is still receiving attention, O'Connor's (2014, 2018) work on idleness being one of the most recent examples. For the purposes of this research, Schiller's *Aesthetic Education of Man* is considered in relation to the idea of play as the vehicle that can reconcile and reunite senses and reason within human nature, as foreshadowed in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Indeed, it is with this conciliatory precedent in mind that, as shown next, the beyond labour Marcuse attempts to build from *Eros and Civilization* to his *Reconsideration* can be better grasped.

One of Marcuse's earliest works is a bibliography of Schiller, published in 1925, which can be read, despite his own description as "just a job" (Kellner, 1984, p.33), as a relevant encounter for his long-life interest in aesthetics. Indeed, Schiller provided Marcuse with the notion of play that would later be developed in *Eros and Civilization*. In the examination of the

genealogy of his notion of play, three issues concerning Schiller's *Aesthetic Education of Man* (1796) have to be highlighted: the stress on the conception of human beings as both sensuous and rational beings, the necessity of a reunification of these two dimensions by means of the restoration of what Schiller identifies as the "playful impulse" (Schiller, 2016, Fourteenth Letter) and the connection between self-transformation through aesthetic education and collective emancipation.

Against an era in which "utility is the great idol of the age, to which all powers are in thrall and all talent must pay homage" (Schiller, 2016, Second Letter) – an assertion that calls to mind the Marcusean one-dimensional world dominated by technological rationality – Schiller's *Letters* vindicate from the very beginning the "aesthetic path [for] it is by way of beauty that one approaches liberty" (Schiller, 2016, Second Letter). This direction is based on a specific account of human beings in which the physical, the openness to the senses and to the world is at the core of the human condition, together with reason and morality. Given that "physical man actually exists, while moral man is merely a problem yet to be solved" (Schiller, 2016, Third Letter), no sacrifices should be made between nature and reason. How can one reconcile what have hitherto been considered as opposite poles in human nature? As he suggests, "a third character might be created" (Schiller, 2016, Third Letter). With it, Schiller overcomes the reigning dualisms of his time – nature/reason; feeling/thought; matter/form – in favour of a "sensuous–rational nature" (Schiller, 2016, Eleventh Letter) which harmonises human beings and also society as a whole. In a similar line, Marcuse's account of the human being can be identified from *Eros and Civilization* onwards, as section two shows. This unity is achieved by the "playful impulse" (Schiller, 2016, Fourteenth Letter) which is able to overcome "two contradictory forces" (Schiller, 2016, Twelfth Letter), the material and formal "impulses" (Schiller, 2016, Twelfth Letter). Culture assumes for Schiller this task of reconciliation of both "the capacity for feeling (…) [and] the capacity for reason (Schiller, 2016, Thirteenth Letter). The importance of Schiller in relation to Marcuse's subsequent conceptualisation of work as play lies in the fact that a field of human activity, in which a specific perspective on human nature is fully preserved, is created by resorting to play. Relevant for the understanding of Marcuse's position is how play allows a unique transformative and reconciliatory experience which gives a complete account of life itself. In opposition to the abovementioned paradigm of utility, a different humanity arises on the grounds of a simultaneous fulfilling of human impulses. As Schiller explains, "if, however, there were cases in which he were to have this dual experience simultaneously, where he was both conscious of his liberty and sensed his existence, where he felt himself to be matter

while knowing himself as mind, then he would have in these cases, and only in these cases, complete perception of his humanity" (Schiller, 2016, Fourteenth Letter). This synthetic character of Schiller's third impulse finds its Marcusean translation in the introduction of play as a vehicle which reconciles, in the sense of reuniting, both the realms of freedom and necessity, in the Marxian vocabulary, and the pleasure and reality principle in the Freudian scheme.

Why are we referring to this third impulse as "playful"? For Schiller, its object is beauty, and beauty is characterised by its freedom from constraints, a feature also displayed by the common meaning of the term play, "everything that is neither subjectively nor objectively contingent, and yet imposes no constraint, either inwardly or outwardly" (Schiller, 2016, Fifteenth Letter). Play, therefore, provides for Schiller both freedom from constraints and the possibility of full existence up to the point that "under all conditions of man it is exactly play, and only play, that makes him complete" (Schiller, 2016, Fifteenth Letter). And if play is humanity, it is through play that work can be humanised. Schiller himself evokes the translation of the playful impulse to productive activity by referring to nature as a model of work as play. As he puts it, "the animal works when want provides the spur to its activity; and it plays when the spur is sheer surplus energy, when overflowing life is itself the spur to activity. Even inanimate nature displays the same luxuriance of energy and a laxity in purpose that one could in that material sense call play" (Schiller, 2016, Twenty-Seventh Letter). Beyond the animal world, already in Schiller it is indeed through play that a beyond labour, understanding labour in terms of necessity, seems to be within human reach. Play implies, then, not only freedom from constraint but, further, the appreciation of the intrinsic value of an activity which is done for its own sake. In Schiller's words, "not content with bringing an aesthetic surplus into the necessary, the free impulse to play finally tears itself free of the bonds of bare necessity, and the beautiful becomes in itself an object for his efforts" (Schiller, 2016, Twenty-Seventh Letter).

Marx

As we have seen, then, Schiller's introduction of play anticipates some of Marcuse's developments from *Eros and Civilization* onwards. However, in his conceptualisation of play in relation to the question of freedom and necessity, his reading of Marx takes on an equally important role. Indeed, in *An Essay on Liberation* Marcuse asserts that the "new sensibility has become (…) praxis" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.25), a praxis undertaken by a particular individual, a "new type of man as the member (…) of a socialist society [that] appears in

Marx and Engels in the concept of the 'all-round' individual" (Marcuse, 1969, p.20). To what extent is play embedded in this individual all-roundness which implies, as Marcuse continues, the freedom to "engage in the most varying activities" (Marcuse, 1969, p.20)? Marcuse himself asserts that "Marx rejects the idea that work can ever become play" (Marcuse, 1969, p.21), although he refers in a footnote to the *Grundrisse* to a "far more utopian vision" (Marcuse, 1969, p.21). In the context of his reflection on the theorisation of the end of work, Granter discusses in relation to Marcuse different readings of Marx and the question of the possible integration of freedom and necessity. On the one hand, he highlights the impossibility of de-alienating labour through play for, as Marx puts it, "labour cannot become play, as Fourier would like" (Marx, 1978d, p.290), which leads to a final conclusion in *Capital III*: "the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases" (Marx, 1978a, p.441). Under this reading, an influence on Marcuse's attempt to reconcile freedom and necessity can hardly be assigned to Marx. However, another reading can be made, in the *Grundrisse* themselves, where Marx anticipates a new perspective of human activity, understood as "experimental science, materially creative and self-objectifying knowledge" (Marx, 1978c, p.290). Granter refers to authors such as Wessel and Axelos who have suggested that this emancipated human activity could be described in terms of play. However, as Granter concludes, a "matter of semantics" (Granter, 2016, p.65) comes up in these readings, in relation to the scope of Marx's rare references to an unalienated praxis that could be connected to play and, further, to the end of work. As he asks, "can this ideal conception of work now be considered not-work? How far need something be reconfigured before it ceases to correspond with the word used to define it before that reconfiguration?" (Granter, 2016, p.65). Hinman's 1978 article on unalienated praxis suggests a different approach to the issue. For him, Marx's *Manuscripts* and Mill's *Elements of Political Economy* would allow the integration of the notion of play – defined as an activity with intrinsic value which is done for its own sake (Hinman, 1978, n.5) – into Marx's position on unalienated praxis. However, he interestingly concludes that neither the word 'work' nor the term 'play' can accurately describe this praxis, precisely because unalienated praxis transcends this dichotomy. Under this reading, Marx's different evocations of an unalienated praxis anticipated, if not the transformation of work into play, certainly a radical transformation of the taxonomy of human activities potentially intertwining freedom and necessity.

Freud

A review of the immediate theoretical roots of Marcuse's conceptualisation of play would not be complete without a reference to Freud. As mentioned earlier in this section, Marcuse builds his conceptualisation of the "new sensibility" (Marcuse, 1969, p.23) also by resorting to the Freudian apparatus. This research has already referred in Chapter Two to Marcuse's operation of the eroticisation of labour, which as will be shown in the next section finds its concretisation in the introduction of play. While Marcuse draws upon key Freudian concepts such as libido and pleasure/reality principles, he certainly had to question part of Freud's vision of work. There is little joint study of the place of both work and play in Freud's thought and what there is tends to stress a strict differentiation between these two realms. In a specific examination of both issues, Riesman (1950) precisely underlines this separation. Work in the context of scarcity would apply for most human beings to the realm of necessity while play would remain the reminiscence of childhood sexuality. Interestingly, Riesman notes how this theoretical position might encounter a first refutation in Freud's own psychoanalytic practice, presenting his work as an adventurous play with words. Beyond the practice itself, a footnote in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, albeit not mentioning play, can be read as the Freudian key to Marcuse's operation of the eroticisation of labour. As Freud notes, "work is no less valuable for the opportunity it and the human relations connected with it provide for a very considerable discharge of libidinal component impulses, narcissistic, aggressive, and even erotic, than because it is indispensable for subsistence and justifies existence in a society" (Freud, 2018, chap.2,n.9). Marcuse refers to such a move in *An Essay on Liberation*. In his view, the later Freud "recognizes the erotic instincts as work instincts" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.91), which Marcuse equates to "work for the creation of a sensuous environment" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.91). Having argued in *Eros and Civilization* how surplus repression reaches the instinctual core of individuals, it is by turning to Freud that the Schillerian play can display its full potential. Releasing Eros through memory and phantasy and the banning of surplus-repression barred from social organisation implies for Marcuse, as Agger has pointed out, "a reactivation of polymorphous eroticism which would infuse work with new creative purposes" (Agger, 1979, p.193).

To conclude, Marcuse's introduction of play within Marxian theory is the result of an innovative reading of various traditions. Inspired by the early Marx's idea of free and humanising praxis, which in turn refers to Hegel and Aristotle, and inspired by the Eros at the core of the Freudian scheme, Marcuse found in Schiller's notion of play a vehicle to go

beyond the traditional dichotomy between work and play (although not beyond labour, as will be argued in the conclusion of this chapter).

3.2. Marcuse's variations on play

Marcuse accomplishes the theoretical operation just described throughout his life's work. The notion of play appears early in his analysis and is approached, as already noted, from multiple perspectives. As this chapter is concerned with the extent to which Marcuse's work as play lays the foundations for a field of human activity beyond labour, it is necessary to explain what Marcuse exactly means when he refers to play. This section focuses on the various nuances that have shaped his position and examines the different vocabularies of his perspective over time. As explained next, three main stages can be identified. His 1933 essay, *On the Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Labor in Economics*, introduces and defines play in order to provide a philosophical conceptualisation of labour expressed in Heideggerian and Marxian terms. A second work analysed in this section is *Eros and Civilization*, in which the Schillerian notion of play allows Marcuse to reconcile the Freudian reality and pleasure principles. Finally, *An Essay on Liberation* and the conclusive *The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration* are examined so as to identify the traits of the Marcusean work-play fusion.

On the Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Labor in Economics

As suggested in section one, Marcuse's early essays are inspired by the idea of tracing a connection between Marxism and fundamental ontology. On the one hand, Marxism would allow grounding Heidegger's historicity on a materialist basis in which Marcuse's view of Marx's *Manuscripts* (which he had reviewed in 1932) plays a major role. As Marcuse contends in *On Concrete Philosophy*, "concrete philosophy must become historical, it must insert itself into the concrete historical situation. The becoming historical of philosophy means, firstly, that concrete philosophy has to investigate contemporaneous *Dasein* in its historical situation" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.44). Then on the other, by bringing in the Heideggerian *Dasein*, he expected at the same time to restore subjectivity within the mechanistic turn of Marxian analysis in the context of the Second International (Wolin, 2005). Labour plays a key role in this theoretical operation. In his review of the *Manuscripts*, Marcuse, quoting Marx, states: "labor is 'man's act of self-creation', that is, the activity through and in which man really first becomes what he is, according to his essence, as man" (Marcuse, 2005a, p.94). Inspired by this Marxian premise, the *Philosophical Foundations* are about solving a pivotal

question he formulates in relation to *Dasein*: "how is economic activity related to other activities in the totality of human Dasein?" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.123). In other words, Marcuse is at this stage concerned with the understanding of labour as "an ontological concept, that is, a concept that grasps the being of human Dasein itself and as such" (Marcuse, 2005c, p.124). With Hegel and Marx, Marcuse concludes that labour is "the specific praxis of human Dasein in the world" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.127) – and this conclusion, as Chapter Four will show, is the fundamental breach between Arendt and Marcuse (and Marx) in their attempt to build a beyond labour. While for Marcuse human praxis finds its incarnation in a non-alienated form of labour connected to play, for Arendt it is action, as a realm beyond labour, which constitutes the distinctly human activity.

In this context, the notion of play appears in the reflection as another form of the Hegelian "doing" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.126), that is, as another possible mode of being-in-the-world. As Marcuse explains, "an obvious way to delimit the concept of labor is by means of another human doing that is often used as a counterconcept to labor: play" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.126). So, what are the characteristics of play? First, a suspended relation to its object, whenever there is one, which has the potential to free human beings:

> In play it is as if the "objectivity" of objects and their effects and the reality of the objective world, which one is normally forced constantly to recognize and interact with, had been temporarily suspended. For once, one does entirely as one pleases with objects; one places oneself above them and becomes "free" from them. (Marcuse, 2005b, p.128)

Freedom derives, then, from the human possibility of placing oneself "above" the relations of the objective world by fixing the rules of the game and its goals. In relation to Part One of this research, freedom seems to arise for Marcuse when human beings can place themselves, again, "above" the apparatus of technological rationality. When it comes to the specific question of labour, liberated from the necessity imposed by the thing, in playing one is not with the object but mainly with oneself. While labouring – and this term applies for Marcuse to a wide range of professional activities as the following quote shows – the thing imposes directions and rules. As he puts it,

> the laborer is always "with the thing": whether one stands by a machine, draws technical plans, is concerned with organizational measures, researches scientific problems, instructs people, etc. In this doing he allows himself to be directed by the thing, subjects and binds himself to its laws, even when he masters his object, handles it, guides it, and lets it go. In each case he is not "with himself," does not let his own Dasein happen. (Marcuse, 2005b, p.138)

Although the criticism of Marcuse's merger of work and play will be addressed later on in this chapter, a first objection can be raised at this point. Indeed, the condition of freedom at work seems to be constituted in this initial Marcusean account by the possibility of placing oneself beyond the law imposed by the activity itself. However, as he himself highlights, the labourer is "always" with the thing, no matter the wide range of activities he relates to. So, it is difficult to see what kind of labouring activity Marcuse might be pointing at as non-alienated labour.

A second feature of play is its lack of permanence. Once more, and previewing an issue that is dealt with in Chapter Four, Marcuse's subsequent incorporation of play into labour in the form of work as play cannot therefore be linked to the Arendtian consideration of work. As will be explained, work represents for Arendt the stable, permanent mark that allows the world to become a home for human beings. For Marcuse, by contrast, play in his 1933 approximation is an in-between, to be precise an in-between related to labour. In Marcuse's words, play is

> self-distraction, self-relaxation, self-recuperation for the purpose of a new concentration, tension, etc. Thus, play is in its totality necessarily related to another from which it comes and at which it is aimed, and this other is already preconceived as labor through the characteristics of regimentation, tension, toil, etc." (Marcuse, 2005b, p.128)

Drawing on Aristotle, Marcuse concludes that "to play in order to be busy (…) is the essential foundational interrelationship between play and labor" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.128). So, play finds its value in the early Marcusean investigation as a preparation for labour, and while both are connected, it is labour that lies at the centre of a classification of human activities that, secondarily, recognises play. With this framework in mind and despite the Hegelian and Marxian inspiration, Marcuse also provides a "distinctly un-Marxian denigration of labor" (Abromeit & Wolin, 2005, p.xxii) in which labour is characterised by "its essential duration, its essential permanence, and its essentially burdensome character" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.139). This burdensome character has to do, precisely, with one of the features that play overcomes, the subjection to the thing conceived as an expression of a particular organisation of the relations of production. Marcuse makes this point clear in the following quote:

> The burdensome character of labor is the most susceptible to misunderstanding. One misses the point from the beginning if one attempts to attribute it to specific conditions in the performance of labor, to the social-technical structuring of labor, to the resistance of the materials, etc. Nor is it a question of a "feeling of displeasure" that appears in certain kinds of labor and that can be eliminated or arrested with technological or psychological remedies. Rather, labor as such is already experienced as a "burden" prior to all such problems due to the modes and

> organization of labor insofar as it places human doing under an alien, imposed law: under the law of the "thing" that is to be done (and which still remains a "thing," something other than life itself, even after one has given his own labor). (Marcuse, 2005b, p.130)

So, for Marcuse, labour displays its alienating character primarily due to its connections with necessity and the subjection to the laws it unavoidably implies. As this chapter will conclude, this is the main problem in Marcuse establishing a beyond labour by integrating necessity and freedom through play. As necessity implies a certain degree of subjection, the full integration of the rules of play within this realm is difficult. Hence and as will be argued, introducing play cannot be seen as a "beyond labour" but, at best, as a humanisation of the subjection labour implies. In short, remaining in the realm of necessity implies remaining within the subjection to the thing, "this taking-on-oneself the law of the thing" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.138) that impedes the unfolding of the potential of play as Marcuse himself presents it.

Despite "its essentially burdensome character" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.139), Marcuse also points towards a true version of labour, true for it applies to human essence as a being with multiple potentialities to actualise in the world, within human reach with the transformation of the relations of production. For Marcuse,

> the sublation of the established socio-economic division of the totality of Dasein into antagonistic modes of Dasein, and the transformation of material production and reproduction, which has taken on a life of its own and been severed from the dimensions that fulfill it, into a praxis controlled, limited, and completed by these dimensions is the condition of the possibility of authentic labor being returned to Dasein and that labor, freed from estrangement and reification, once again becoming what it essentially is: the free and full realization of the whole man in his historical world. (Marcuse, 2005b, p.150)

The full realisation of *Dasein*, therefore, implies in the *Philosophical Foundations* not a real beyond labour, but instead a return to an authentic labour Marcuse strives to define. In his view, the overcoming of estrangement would imply the encounter of what labour "essentially is": the realisation of human being in this world. So, from the very beginning of his reflection, he does not seem to envisage a beyond labour, but instead a recovery of a true labour, leading to the Marxian realm of freedom, a term "we will accept (…) both because it captures well precisely what is at stake here for us, namely, the specific mode of Dasein's praxis beyond material production and reproduction" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.144). Initially accepting Marx's two-realms distinction, he concludes, also with Marx, that "only when

freed from this necessity can Dasein become free for its own possibilities" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.144).

So, Marcuse in his early works seems to follow Marx's bifurcation in relation to the realms of necessity and freedom. The issue of play is initially approached to grasp a better understanding of what labour, in his version of alienated labour, is. A realm beyond necessity in which an "authentic labour" can be performed is an "authentic praxis and that to which all other labor is directed as its 'end': the free unfolding of Dasein in its true possibilities" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.144). Albeit not explicitly, the freedom of play, a freedom from the objective thing in which oneself is mainly with oneself and sets the rule of the games and its goals, is evoked here in defining a core feature of this realm. As Marcuse puts it towards the end of his essay, "this praxis contains its goal and end in itself; it is no longer at the mercy [*Ausgeliefertsein*] of an 'alien' objective world, is no longer constantly bound to an imposed happening, to which it must submit itself in order to exist at all" (Marcuse, 2005b, p.144).

Eros and Civilization

While the *Philosophical Foundations* provides a conceptualisation of both labour and play, it is in *Eros and Civilization* that Marcuse finds in the Schillerian notion of play a way to merge Marxian vocabulary with the Freudian scheme of subjectivity, decisive at this stage of Marcuse's thought no matter the debate[8] on the persistence of Heidegger's influence in *Eros*. In 1933, Marcuse had distinguished between authentic and inauthentic (or alienated) labour. This differentiation reappears in *Eros*, formulated under the conceptual apparatus generated within his Freudian-Marxian analysis. While Arendt identifies labour, work and action as the three fundamental realms of human activity, Marcuse distinguishes between alienated work, non-alienated work and artistic work. The first of them, close to Arendtian labour, is "the work that created and enlarged the material basis of civilization [that] hardly gratifies individual needs and inclinations. It was imposed upon man by brute necessity and brute force" (Marcuse, 1974, p.75). Non-alienated work is a "a mode of work which offers a high degree of libidinal satisfaction, which is pleasurable in its execution" (Marcuse, 2015, p.74). Finally, artistic work, "where it is genuine, seems to grow out of a non-repressive instinctual constellation and to envisage non-repressive aims" (Marcuse, 1974, p.74). Again,

[8] Abromeit and Wolin refer to this content, which is outside the scope of this research, by quoting Habermas on the issue. For Habermas, "whoever fails to detect the persistence of categories from Being and Time in the concepts of Freudian drive theory out of which Marcuse [in Eros and Civilization] develops a Marxian historical construct runs the risk of serious misunderstandings" (Abromeit & Wolin, 2005, p.68).

a hierarchical order, now in terms of libidinal gratification or in relation to repression, emerges within a twofold approach to the realms of necessity and freedom which goes from freedom from work to freedom in work.

Play is explicitly introduced in relation to the explanation of necessity, a field of human activity that, as has been argued, seems to contradict what Marcuse identified as play in 1933. Necessity implies external subjection in terms of rules and goals. Indeed, "the realm of necessity, of labor, is one of unfreedom because the human existence in this realm is determined by objectives and functions that are not its own and that do not allow the free play of human faculties and desires" (Marcuse, 1974, p.185). The idea of subjection to the thing has been replaced by a more general idea of external subjection, implying a new dimension with respect to what in 1933 was the impossibility to be oneself with oneself. Now, it is the oneself itself which seems at risk: "necessary labor is a system of essentially inhuman, mechanical, and routine activities; in such a system, individuality cannot be a value and end in itself" (Marcuse, 1974, p.185). In this context, play is a guiding organisational principle of non-alienated labour, linked to the development of human potentialities through individuality. As Marcuse suggests, in the emancipatory proposal formulated in *Eros*,

> reasonably, the system of societal labor would be organized rather with a view to saving time and space for the development of individuality outside the inevitably repressive work-world. Play and display, as principles of civilization, imply not the transformation of labor but its complete subordination to the freely evolving potentialities of man and nature. (Marcuse, 1974, p.185)

Hence, Marcuse's first position in *Eros and Civilization* is that freedom cannot enter the realm of necessity. Marcuse makes clear that "no matter how justly and rationally the material production may be organized, it can never be a realm of freedom and gratification" (Marcuse, 1974, p.146). Therefore, Marcuse seems here to follow Marx in *Capital III*, for "it is the sphere outside labor which defines freedom and fulfilment, and it is the definition of the human existence in terms of this sphere which constitutes the negation of the performance principle" (Marcuse, 1974, p.146).

However, *Eros and Civilization* is also an open vindication of freedom in work. Indeed, for Marcuse, once the mechanisms of surplus-repression have been identified and removed, the Freudian opposition between the pleasure and reality principles can be overcome. In this second position, Marcuse attempts the reconciliation which will be later continued in *A Reconsideration*:

> The elimination of surplus-repression would per se tend to eliminate, not labor, but the organization of the human existence into an instrument of labor. If this is true, the emergence of a non-repressive reality principle would alter rather than destroy the social organization of labor: the liberation of Eros could create new and durable work relations. (Marcuse, 1974, p.145)

Marcuse seems to have abandoned here his perspective of freedom from work in favour of a non-repressive world of work in which authentic existence can take root. Work is still, then, at the core of human existence. By Eros entering work, Marcuse asserts the overcoming of alienated labour, yet work relations remain pivotal both in social organisation and also in personal self-actualisation in the world. We are left here with the impossibility of imagining a world beyond work, whether it is alienated or not. That is, it seems impossible to go beyond the, in a sense, one-dimensional paradigm of human existence, which is organised perhaps not for work, but certainly through the relation to work. Work still occupies a central position in both the repressive and the liberated world.

While the liberation of Eros is essential to this radical alteration of labour, the eroticisation of work relations is brought about by turning to a Schiller-inspired notion of play (Ocay, 2009). In his *Aesthetic Education*, Schiller wonders: "what is mere play?" (Schiller, 2016, Fifteenth Letter). In answering this question, he refers to the Greeks who,

> consigned to Olympus what should have happened on earth. Guided by its truth, they banished from the brow of the blessed gods all the gravity and labour that furrow the cheeks of mortals, together with the frivolous pleasures that smooth empty faces, freed those who were eternally content from the fetters of any purpose, any obligation, any cares, making idleness and indifference the envied lot of the gods: simply a more humane name for the freest, most sublime being. (Schiller, 2016, Fifteenth Letter)

Marcuse retains from Schiller not only the sensuous and rational nature of human beings but also this reference to Greek divinities "eternally content from the fetters of any purpose" (Schiller, 2016, Fifteenth Letter), that is to say, relating to the world beyond the impositions of necessity. Labour, as we have seen, is still central in Marcuse's proposal but it is now orientated by a single premise consisting of "the concerted struggle against any constraint on the free play of human faculties, against toil, disease, and death" (Marcuse, 1974, p.147). Liberating Eros implies a transformation not only of work relations but also in the human condition itself. Turning to Orpheus and Narcissus, Marcuse reintroduces play by means of which "productivity (…) is sensuousness, play, and song" (Marcuse, 2015, p.154). Drawing on Kant, he attempts to establish a contentious mediation between self-transformation – "a new basic experience of being would change the human existence in its entirety" (Marcuse,

1974, p.148) – and collective emancipation, for "sensuousness generates universally valid principles for an objective order" (Marcuse, 1974, p.167). In Kantian vocabulary, here Marcuse seems to again highlight the characterisation of play as the suspension of the subjection to the necessities of the object. It is indeed "the purpose and not the content which marks an activity as play or work" (Marcuse, 2015, p.205).

The release of Eros within the world of work, in short, displays all its potential and even creates a new category of work in the shape of "socially useful work" (Marcuse, 2015, p.145). As Marcuse explains, the "reactivation of polymorphous and narcissistic sexuality ceases to be a threat to culture and can itself lead to culture-building if the organism exists not as an instrument of alienated labor but as a subject of self-realization—in other words, if socially useful work is at the same time the transparent satisfaction of an individual need" (Marcuse, 1974, p.200). So, this new category, "socially useful work", can be identified as the point of arrival of *Eros and Civilization* in terms of labour. It is the beyond labour, in the sense of alienated labour, that Marcuse builds to ground a new being which finds his specific "doing" in the form of play.

Reconsidering Marx

While *Eros and Civilization* represents Marcuse's first attempt to formulate a proposal to liberate labour from its alienating dimension, it is in *An Essay on Liberation* and in *A Reconsideration* that this theoretical operation is fully achieved, now by explicitly engaging with Marx on the idea of work as play and, in a sense, going beyond him, or at least beyond the Marx of *Capital III* that Marcuse himself quotes. As Agger says, "Marcuse's innovations in critical theory rest on this notion of the possible merging of creativity and productivity, leisure and work. All of this is still drawn from the inspiration of Marx. But Marcuse goes beyond Marx" (Agger, 1992, pp.95–97).

An Essay on Liberation starts with the consideration of the instinctual transformation Marcuse examined in *Eros and Civilization*: to counter surplus-repression and its instinctual blueprint, the liberation of Eros, in which as we have seen play is key, is the vehicle to this "new sensibility" (Marcuse, 1969, p.23) in which "men and women who have the good conscience of being human, tender, sensuous" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.21) can engage in new productive relations. Freedom and necessity are reconciled within this framework through imagination, a fundamental issue in Marcuse's thought, one which is addressed in the last chapter of this research. As he puts it, "the imagination of such men and women would

fashion their reason and tend to make the process of production a process of creation. This is the utopian concept of socialism which envisages the ingression of freedom into the realm of necessity, and the union between causality by necessity and causality by freedom" (Marcuse, 1969, p.21). Still sharing Freudian vocabulary, Marcuse refers to a "liberated work instinct (…) which, grounded in solidarity, directs the organization of the realm of necessity and the development of the realm of freedom" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.91).

Marcuse's *Reconsideration* of Marx's distinction between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity can be read as a conclusive text on the issue. In his vindication of the "chance of alternatives" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206) in *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse had already focused on the rise of social movements of refusal and on the possibilities offered by growing automation as an occasion to rethink the Marxian articulation of both realms. So, in *A Reconsideration,* rather than a beyond necessity, it is for Marcuse precisely within necessity that freedom can be accomplished. Play remains central in the transformation of the realm of what is now described as "socially necessary work" (Marcuse, 1969b, p.23). As he puts it,

> the growing productivity of labour tends to transform the work process into a technical process in which the human agent of production plays increasingly the role of a supervisor, inventor and experimentor. This trend is inherent in, and is the very expression of the rising productivity of labour. It is the extension of the realm of freedom, or rather the realm of possible freedom to the realm of necessity. The work process itself, the socially necessary work, becomes, in its rationality, subject to the free play of the mind, of imagination, the free play with the pleasurable possibilities of things and nature. (Marcuse, 1969b, p.23)

This quote can be read as Marcuse's final concretisation of the fusion of both realms by means of play. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, in the *Philosophical Foundations* Marcuse sets the distinguishing features of play which, in short, implies the liberation from the necessary subjections of the objective thing by a being that can set the goals and the rules of the game he plays. In the realm of necessity, which Marcuse never leaves, freedom is possible if the subject can play, namely if it is possible to engage with reality autonomously and sensuously. Marcuse concludes his reconsideration precisely by referring to self-determination, the setting of the rules of the game, as a decisive element of an emancipatory new society. The transformative dimension of introducing play in productive activities in terms of self-ruling can be well grasped in the concluding remarks of *A Reconsideration*:

> In conclusion, I would like to offer two remarks which refer to the discussion that has already taken place here and, which I hope, will continue. I have spoken of self-determination as the qualitative difference of a socialist society; I would like to emphasize: self-determination is not adequately described as 'Selbsverwaltung', 'autogestion'. These terms designate a different form of administration; they do not articulate the content and goals of administration. A mere change in the form of

> administration is not yet the qualitative difference. Even if the change in administration replaces one class by another, or rather by certain groups of another class, it is not yet a qualitative change, as long as the new class perpetuates the aspirations, and values of the established society, as long as capitalist progress remains the more or less hidden model of progress. Decisive, at the first stage, is not so much the form of administration as what is going to be produced, for what kind of life it is going to be produced, and what priorities are set and translated into reality. Only if production itself is guided by men and women with new goals and new values, only then can we speak of the emergence of a qualitatively different society. (Marcuse, 1969b, p.25)

So, for Marcuse, emancipation requires a fundamental transformation, a "qualitative difference" which goes beyond administration and implies, first and foremost, the possibility of self-determination. In terms of work, this difference is not only concerned with how work is organised, although self-determination is certainly promoted within specific labour structures. It has to do, as Marcuse underlines, with the capability to freely determine the goals and values that inspire the purpose of work, and also the terms of its performance, within an emancipatory project. Indeed, liberation through freedom at work entails human beings that through work can display their human potentialities for they are free to decide the goals of their activity. Here lies the connection between freedom and necessity, in the possibility of a self-determination which appears as the translation of play into the labouring activity, which is the cornerstone of Marcuse's emancipatory proposal.

3.3. Beyond labour? Contemporary critical reception of Marcuse on play.

In retrospect, Marcuse's attempt to introduce work as play as a reconciling link overcoming the distinction between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity has been both productive and controversial. On the one hand, the sustained reflection on the issue shows the necessity to continuously rethink the "radical political vocabularies" (Davis, 2004, p.50) capable of grounding emancipatory proposals, all the more relevant today in the context of the debate on work and post-work. In this respect, as Andolfi concludes in his study of Marcuse and Arendt, "the freedom to desire is a decisive component of the vital world to which one intends to give voice"[9] (Andolfi, 2004, p.223). Hence, desiring new forms of work and establishing productive activities matching human beings' desires, potentialities and needs has to be valued first of all for its emancipatory attempt. In introducing play into the realm of work, Marcuse produced this new vocabulary for liberation. Kane's *Manifesto* (Kane, 2005; Kane et al., 2007) can be read as a recent example of how the notion of play in its transformative dimension is still studied today.

[9] Translation mine.

On the other hand, several criticisms have been made of Marcuse's position. Kellner (1984) refers to some of the early points mainly addressed to the introduction of play in *Eros*: an uncritical approach to Schiller which does not provide an account of the required political transformations which should necessarily accompany self-transformation; relying on memory and phantasy as elements triggering emancipation; referring to individualities such as Narcissus and Orpheus as symbolic referents of the new society in detriment to the collective dimension of the enactment of social change; dismissing gender in the analysis of changes in production relations, etc. Today, at a time in which play – a diminished version of play, which certainly ignores its Marcusean implications – has entered the realm of work in the context of digital labour (and also the realm of education with gamification of the learning process), Marcuse's position is still questioned from a range of perspectives. Three recent examples are referred to below which also show the current relevancy of the issue together with its difficulties.

In terms of the potential of play in overcoming the dichotomy between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity, criticisms of Marcuse's point are still made in relation to an issue that has already been addressed in this chapter, namely the devaluation of play if it remains connected to necessity. In a similar line, Payne argues that integrating play within the realm of work implies in fact the subordination of its liberating potential to the requirements of production, irrespective of its socially useful character. As she puts it, "work-as-play reduces the character and scope of play; play serves as a channel—a means—for a series of socially useful functions" (Payne, 2018, p.42). This instrumentalisation of play, which indeed contradicts Marcuse's own conceptualisation of play as an activity in which one is able to set the rules of the game, has recently been assessed by Bulut from the standpoint of the labouring processes within the videogame industry. In analysing the dynamics by which creativity becomes "one-dimensional creativity" (Bulut, 2018, p.757), he introduces the idea of "degradation of fun" (Bulut, 2018, p.765) to show how the potential of work as play is undermined by an organisation of the labouring activity itself in which discipline and surveillance prevails. As he puts it, "the joy of videogame testing is diminished because play becomes instrumentalised through time discipline and specific tasks" (Bulut, 2018, p.765). Rather than a criticism of Marcuse's account, Bulut's work raises one of the main difficulties of the Marcusean transformation: without liberation from external constraint, play becomes labour. But what is external constraint? Does it refer to a particular structure of social relations and productive activity? Or is it the integration within work that in itself exerts a

fundamental limitation on play itself? In his defence of the notion of idleness, O'Connor underlines its liberating dimension as a "noninstrumental break from all that is required to make us useful" (O'Connor, 2018, p.7). Assessing Marcuse's position on play, he identifies a crucial paradox. As he explains, if "play is unproductive and useless precisely because it cancels the repressive and exploitative traits of labor and leisure" (Marcuse, 2015, p.185), how can it be connected with work, even with "socially useful work", a realm in which necessity and its imperatives unavoidably prevail? In this respect, the difficulties of Marcuse's point persist independently from social transformation. As O'Connor contends, "the 'great vital needs' remain as pressing demands on our energies. Indeed, satisfying those needs is what gives the libido its direction. These demands can be met through activity that is said to be playful, but it is no longer intelligible as play in the sense of playful idleness. It now acts on specific objectives" (O'Connor, 2018, p.166).

The introduction of this chapter discussed Walsh's latest work on Arendt, which incidentally highlights her criticism of the labour-play theories in *The Human Condition*. Within the context of her engagement with labouring societies, Arendt explains that "all serious activities, irrespective of their fruits, are called labor, and every activity which is not necessary either for the life of the individual or for the life process of society is subsumed under playfulness" (Arendt, 1998, p.127). As Marcuse could have equally claimed, she is engaging here with the privileged position of labour, leading to a general dismissal of every other activity not connected to it. However, her reference to play shows at the same time the limitations of her use of the term, which even stands opposite to Marcuse's conceptualisation, as she seems to equate play to hobbies: "from the standpoint of 'making a living,' every activity unconnected with labor becomes a 'hobby'" (Arendt, 1998, p.127). By connecting play to hobbies, Arendt is ignoring the potential of the concept that has been discussed in previous sections. As Walsh notes, this reasoning entails two problems. First, Arendt ignores the liberating possibilities of play as a human activity which can potentially question the rules of the *animal laborans* and the *homo faber* by allowing both suspension of necessity and also a self-creative determination of the goals of the game. Certainly, play can only with difficulty be equated to her notion of action, although, as Walsh points out, "play (…) bears many of the features which we associate with action and speech. Play always happens between human beings, and according to certain rules that channel the activity along certain lines, but in no way determine its course" (Walsh, 2016, p.141). From these possible connections, a certain valorisation of play could have been formulated if Arendt had not implicitly linked play and hobby. Indeed, Marcuse himself rejected this equation. As Kellner notes (Kellner,

1984, p.326), in *The Individual and the Great Society* Marcuse warns against the devaluation within advanced industrial societies of the realm of freedom Marx placed beyond necessity. And it is precisely in this context that he formulates his point on hobbies. By doing so, he is also questioning again Marx's prospects of emancipation in a realm of freedom strictly located beyond necessity. As he puts it,

> what is left to individual creativity outside the technical work process is in the way of hobbies, do-it-yourself stuff, games. There is, of course, the authentic creative expression in art, literature, music, philosophy, science—but it is hardly imaginable that this authentic creativity will, even in the best of all societies, become a general capability. The rest is sport, fun, fad. The conditions of advanced industrial society, then, seem to invalidate Marx's idea of free time. (Marcuse, 1966, p.32)

The purpose of this chapter, as stated in the introduction, is to assess the possibilities of Marcuse's conceptualisation of play for grounding a beyond labour. The examination of his pivotal works on the issue, together with the reference to their critical reception, has shown that despite the possibilities entailed by introducing play in the realm of work in terms of self-determination, his final point remains within the limits of necessity. Hence his position raises two problems for the purposes of this research. On the one hand, to the extent that necessity implies subjection to the requirements of an objective world, it is difficult to see how play can display its whole potential in terms of translating the self-established rules of the games to work relations. Following Payne, it might then be suggested that emancipation does not relate to the merging of the realm of freedom and necessity but instead to the reduction of the time spent within the realm of necessity. In her words, "it is crucial that those seeking such an emancipation of play hold on to the distinction Marx makes between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom and work in whatever fashions found practical and deemed desirable to reduce the amount of time we spend in the first so as to increase the amount of time we may finally experience in the latter" (Payne, 2018, p.42). It is within a realm beyond the imperatives of labour that what Marcuse defines as play in 1933 can emerge, despite the many difficulties that, as we have seen, advanced industrial societies pose in relation to free time that might also transform the realm of freedom into a prison under the shape of an endless cycle of consumption and consuming activities. On the other hand, and crucial for this research, in Marcuse's theoretical framework on play, labour – as non-alienated labour, work or socially useful or necessary work – remains the core mediation of human beings with the world, which is precisely the point that this investigation questions. What is then the place in the world for those who do not relate to it in terms of labour? No other mediation seems to be left for the increasing number of human beings that have been expelled from the world of work or for those that desire to self-actualise themselves beyond

labour. In short, does Marcuse's notion of play lay the philosophical foundations for the beyond labour this research seeks? No. While he certainly establishes the basis for a radical transformation of productive activity, play, due to its persistent connection to necessity, cannot display its emancipatory potential as a self-directed praxis accomplished for its own sake. In this sense, it is difficult to describe Marcuse as an end-of-work theorist as Granter suggests, arguing that merging work and play "is so radical a transformation of what we understand by the term 'work', that we can call this 'the end of work'" (Granter, 2016, p.140).

Marcuse was well aware of the problems his proposal presented in terms of the concretisation of work as play. In the last sentences of *An Essay on Liberation*, he points precisely towards the key question of play, namely the possibility to autonomously think about the rules of the game. Calling for the freedom for humans to think about what they are doing – and in connection with Arendt's concern in the opening pages of *The Human Condition* in relation to the prospect of labouring societies increasingly without labour – he states:

> and there is an answer to the question which troubles the minds of so many men of good will: what are the people in a free society going to do? The answer which, I believe, strikes at the heart of the matter was given by a young black girl. She said: for the first time in our life, we shall be free to think about what we are going to do. (Marcuse, 1969a, p.91)

Chapter Four. Beyond labour: Arendt's concept of action

This research is concerned with the need to overcome labour as the main realm of human mediation with the world. If, as argued in Part One, labour is key in the articulation of post-totalitarian domination, any emancipatory proposal has to deal with its place and, further, has to suggest alternative grounds for human lives and identities. Chapter Three looked at the limitations of Marcuse's position on work as play in building a realm beyond labour. As was noted, when introduced within work, that is to say when instrumentalised to the ends of productive activity, play as Marcuse configures it loses its liberating potential. It appears, at best, as a more humanised, even a non-alienating form of labour, which does not resolve the issue of privileging the position of labourer, in the Arendtian sense, as the fundamental insertion in the world. Instead, this chapter argues that the Arendtian notion of action illuminates a sphere of human activity which lies strictly beyond labour, and that this is the element that has to be vindicated against work-centred societies.

Arendt's focus on the space of action brings to the foreground the value of the human condition on the grounds of its acting dimension. This dimension is relevant here, as will be shown, due to its strict separation from both labour and work and because of its focus on the Arendtian category of the political as the space in-between human beings that allows a common world to be created and in which distinction can be displayed. In this space, human beings are considered not as labourers or workers but rather for their singular belonging to a world shared with others and built-in interaction through speech and deeds. This chapter seeks to explain how the Arendtian notion of action directly fights post-totalitarian domination as defined in Chapters One and Two, namely loss of the world, domination from within and superfluousness. In this respect, this research follows the lines already suggested in contemporary investigations that include Arendt as a relevant thinker through which the discussion on human activity within and beyond labour can be illuminated (Baehr & Walsh, 2017; Bowring, 2011; Chamberlain, 2018; Frayne, 2015; Schaff, 2001). With Bowring, the main claim of this chapter is indeed that it is "time for action" (Bowring, 2011, pt.Introduction) and for rethinking the core of human activity through this Arendtian category. In doing so, it highlights this concept as a relevant theoretical basis to vindicate the multidimensional character of human beings, as it allows all lives to be valued, not in their consideration as labourers but rather in themselves for their singular contribution to a common world.

Two main issues are addressed. The first section examines the contours of Arendt's notion of action as a beyond labour in relation to her study of Marx, which started soon after the publication of *The Origins* and aimed at the production of a book which in the end was never written, *Totalitarian Elements in Marxism*. The terms of this early engagement with Marx will be explained in relation to the recent publication by Barbara Hahn and James McFarland (2018) of notes and typescripts from the 1951-1955 period. Both Arendt and Marcuse had in Marx a relevant interlocutor within their reflections on labour. In the case of Marcuse, *The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity*: *A Reconsideration* can be read, as we have seen in Chapter Three, as the conclusion of a conversation leading to formulating the idea of work as play. When it comes to Arendt, and to put it briefly, her reading of Marx is an important part of her conceptualisation of labour and leads to a specific account of action that overcomes the problems of both the *animal laborans* and the *homo faber*. On the basis of the notes entitled *The Impact of Marx*, which will be read in relation to Arendt's fully developed position in *The Human Condition*, the extent to which the notion of action is built in relation to a particular reading of Marx on labour, and moves strictly beyond it, is studied.

Section Two addresses an issue already raised in this research in relation to Marcuse on play, namely its concretisation beyond its theoretical formulation. The difficulties in grasping the meaning of action remains an issue of investigation regarding what is certainly an Arendtian key notion (Bowring, 2011; Voice, 2014). This section will attempt to identify where the potential provided by Arendt's notion of action in overcoming labouring societies lies. Indeed, if, as contended here, action does not feature the limitations of work and labour but instead makes it possible to display the political dimension of the human condition, some light has to be shed on its concretisation in relation to a transition from work-centred societies to a post-work world. Although Arendt's notion of action can be defined from multiple perspectives, this section will initially focus on action as the human capability to start something new that, in terms of the political transformation this research suggests, can also put the focus – as was the case in Marcuse – on the outcasts of labouring societies as political actors. Indeed, a change of perspective in the consideration of those deemed superfluous will be suggested by referring to action in relation to the Arendtian conceptualisation of pariahdom. In turning to Arendt's texts on the Jew as pariah and to her narration of the life of the eighteenth-century *salonnière* Rahel Varnhagen, the potential of combining action and pariahdom in redefining superfluousness will be examined. By doing so, a certain *rapprochement* between Arendt and Marcuse, which is one of the purposes of this research,

will be attempted by reading the Arendtian action under the perspective of newness and pariahdom in connection to the Marcusean idea of the Great Refusal.

This chapter will conclude by assessing the Arendtian notion of action as a theoretical inspiration in challenging work-centred societies. Part of contemporary criticisms of her conceptualisation will be addressed in order to show how, despite its limitations, it can nevertheless prove useful in questioning labouring societies. Indeed, in order to illuminate this relevancy, Arendt's account will be linked to the refusals of work recently studied by Frayne (2015) .

4.1. Arendt on action and her reading of Marx

Chapter Three showed the limitations of fighting post-totalitarian domination realised through labour by means of Marcuse's attempt to transform alienated labour into work as play, and concluded with the need to deepen Marx's point concerning a realm of freedom beyond necessity by bringing in Arendt. This section explores the Arendtian configuration of action as a realm strictly beyond labour and work in order to advocate the need to overcome labour as commonly understood as the main human mediation with the world. To do this, it examines the grounds on which Arendt separates action from labour and work by focusing on the contours of this distinction. Hence this section shows the close link between Arendt's position on labour and action and her reading of Marx, precisely after the experience of and reflection on totalitarianism. In doing so, two issues are dealt with, both of them connected to Arendt's distinctive reading of Marx's works.

Firstly, her position on Marx in relation to what she reads as a boundless centrality of the *animal laborans* is analysed, based on the abovementioned notes and typescripts on the issue, which did not culminate in the planned book but instead lead to the concretisation of her position on the *vita activa* and the subsequent publication of three different books, *The Human Condition* being one of them. The terms of Arendt's engagement with Marx have been extensively studied and countless works could be cited here, from the early 1960s (Suchting, 1962) to more recent years (Barbour, 2014; Bowring, 2014; Holman, 2011; Weisman, 2014). Apart from the controversy on the accuracy of Arendt's reading of Marx and her further threefold distinction of the *vita activa*, which will be addressed in the concluding remarks at the end of this chapter, the relevancy of her reading of Marx in overcoming work-centred societies is highlighted. After dealing with the connection between Arendt's

engagement with Marx and her conceptualisation of labour, this section examines her account of action as necessarily outside both labour and work, in contrast to Marcuse's solution. Arendt's theory of action, which remains the object of investigation from multiple stances and still constitutes an indispensable element of any critical study on Arendt (Baehr & Walsh, 2017; Bowring, 2011; Swift, 2008; Voice, 2014), is vindicated therefore as a theoretical basis making it possible to question the consideration of human beings mainly as labourers.

Arendt on Marx and the animal laborans

Starting with Arendt's encounter with Marx, Chapter One noted how Arendt herself pointed towards an underlying interrogation in the writing of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. How could a totalitarian regime, Stalinism, have been grounded on Marxism? After the publication of *The Origins*, Arendt devoted herself to the study of Marx in order to build an answer. Arendt's 1951-1955 notes, drafts and typescripts provide an idea of the importance in Arendt's thought of her study of Marx, finally leading to a particular analysis of human activity which, as concluded in Chapter One, shows a continuity between her position on totalitarianism and her depiction of the society of labourers and jobholders in *The Human Condition*. As human beings remain metabolised with nature through labour and subsumed within the logic of instrumentalisation by means of work, action becomes the privileged activity through which the human condition can be displayed.

The core of Arendt's early content on Marx is condensed in the brief but illuminating notes Arendt wrote in 1952, just one year after the publication of *The Origins*, as part of the delivery of a lecture, *The Impact of Marx* (Arendt, 2018, p.883), at The Rand School in New York. Arendt anticipates the two fundamental issues of her engagement with Marx and the potential of the concept of action in countering them: his accounts of labour and politics. Although both questions can be approached from Arendt's more developed position in *The Human Condition*, this early text shows the clarity and straightforwardness of Arendt's point from the very beginning of her study. Also, these notes show how her concern with the use of Marx by totalitarian regimes is crucial to her approach. It is no accident that Arendt's first lines in these notes refer to one of the key elements of totalitarianism, the mass. *The Impact of Marx*, and her initial interest in him, is from the beginning linked to "the ideas that seized the masses" (Arendt, 2018, p.101). Arendt's notes, and her subsequent account in *The Human Condition*, reveal that her reading of Marx's *oeuvre* cannot be separated from her position on totalitarianism which, as explained in Chapter One, represents the triumph of the mass man, the self-abandonment of the one, singular and distinct, into the mass. Against this

perspective Arendt will oppose action, which as she will later state in *The Human Condition* "corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (Arendt, 1998, p.7). The cruciality of plurality, described in Arendt's final work *The Life of the Mind* as "the law of the earth" (Arendt, 1978, chap.1), is at the core of her examination of totalitarianism, reappears in her reading of Marx and is key in her depiction of labouring societies. *The Impact of Marx*, then, situates her disagreement with Marx in these two fundamental points: labour, against action; history, against politics. As she puts it at the end of the notes, "Marx discovered Labor and identified it with Work, discovered Politics and identified it with History. Marx the Traditionalist as against the usual idea" (Arendt, 2018, p.101). In these two sentences, Arendt synthesises her contention with Marx and anticipates her further move: inserting Marx within a tradition of thought that has dismissed the political dimension of the human condition by displacing action within the *vita activa*. This will be her major concern, first with Marx and very soon with most of the philosophical tradition as *The Human Condition* shows. Although the concern with totalitarian domination is crucial to her approach to Marx's thought, it is worth underlining, however, her clear rejection of an equation between Marxism and totalitarianism. As she puts in *Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought*,

> it has become fashionable during the last few years to assume an unbroken line between Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, thereby accusing Marx of being the father of totalitarian domination. Very few of those who yield to this line of argument seem to be aware that to accuse Marx of totalitarianism amounts to accusing the Western tradition itself of necessarily ending in the monstrosity of this novel form of government (...). For Marx's roots go far deeper in the tradition than even he himself knew. I think it can be shown that the line from Aristotle to Marx shows both fewer and far less decisive breaks than the line from Marx to Stalin. (Arendt, 2002, p.277)

Coming back to labour, the relevant issue for this research, Arendt starts by quoting Engels as follows: "'Labor created man' (Engels)" (Arendt, 2018, p.101). She is here probably referring to the opening sentences of Engels's uncompleted essay, *The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man*, written in 1876, in which he refers to labour as "the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labor created man himself" (Engels, 1950, p.7). This reference to Engels condenses the main criticism Arendt addresses to Marx on labour, namely conceiving human beings strictly in terms of their productive capability and establishing labour as the origin of human value. As she continues, "labor is the creator of all values" (Arendt, 2018, p.101)". It defines humanity as *animal laborans*, "against *animal rationale*" (Arendt, 2018, p.101), although she will later in *The Human Condition* prefer to oppose the *animal laborans* to Aristotle's *zoon logos echon*, the "living being capable of speech" (Arendt, 1998, p.27). Continuing with her

first objection, Marx, by propounding the "Dignification of Labor" (Arendt, 2018, p.101) – later in *The Human Condition* the word used is "glorification" (Arendt, 1998, p.4) – has reversed the tradition "since the Greeks to Plato" (Arendt, 2018, p.101). So, Arendt's reading of Marx can be framed within two coordinates; on the one hand, her perplexity about the historical experience of Stalinism as a totalitarian regime based on Marxism, and on the other, her resort to Aristotle in distinguishing *bios* from *zōē*, her starting point to assert the centrality of action. The Marxian notion of labour is read by Arendt as an activity fundamentally directed towards the reproduction of life as *zōē* which simply reduces human beings to the condition of *animal laborans* at the expense of *bios*. Against the mere sustainment of life, *bios* appears as "this specifically human life (…) that it is itself always full of events which ultimately can be told as a story, establish a biography; it is of this life, *bios* as distinguished from mere *zōē*, that Aristotle said that it 'somehow is a kind of praxis'" (Arendt, 1998, p.97). If Arendt identifies the Marxian position of labour as linked to *zōē*, then the realisation of *bios* requires emerging from it. Arendt's theory of action, then, constitutes her attempt to recover a realm beyond labour in which words and deeds replace the fulfilment of necessities as the concretisation of human potentialities. Since for Arendt labour is the human activity linked to the maintenance of life, in their dimension of labouring animals human beings remain "subject to necessities, [in] inherent contradiction to freedom" (Arendt, 2018, p.101). If the beyond labour did not exist, "no laborer could be a citizen" (Arendt, 2018, p.101) as she concludes in *The Impact of Marx*. As labour is linked to the satisfaction of necessities in Arendt's reading of Marx, freedom, in lying beyond necessity, can only be achieved beyond labour.

In Arendt's view, the Marxian notion of labour articulates an unavoidable contradiction. Accepting human beings' insertion in the world through labour, they are not freed but instead enslaved in the order of perpetual needs. The Marxian emancipation is therefore impossible: human beings cannot be emancipated from their needs since they are living beings whose needs precisely have to be fulfilled. So, for Arendt, by focusing on labour as the main coordinate of human existence Marx articulates a society based on mere necessity, and embroils himself in a contradiction that constitutes "a red thread through the whole of Marx's thought" (Arendt, 1998, p104). As she formulates in other notes from the 1951-1955 period,

> according to Marx it is foolish to think it possible to liberate and emancipate laborers, that is, those whose very activity subjects them to necessity. When all men have become laborers, the realm of freedom will indeed have vanished. The only thing that then remains is to emancipate man from labor, something that in all

> probability is just as impossible as the early hope of the philosophers to free man's soul from his body. (Arendt, 2002, p.312)

Coming back to *The Impact of Marx*, Arendt refers to the second dimension of her conceptualisation of the *vita activa*: work. Immediately after her statements on Marx and labour, she points towards the *homo faber*, as distinct from the *animal laborans*, since "to have a skill [is] different" (Arendt, 2018, p.101). However, and introducing the question of automation, key in the diagnosis of her contemporary world in *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that under the weight of machines, an "identification of Labor with work" (Arendt, 2018, p.101) has been produced. While labour is for Arendt the realm of unfreedom, work, as already noted in Chapter One, relates instead to the world for it creates its stable framework through human artifice. Arendt had already distinguished labour from work in *The Origins* in relation to the connection to the world from both activities. In her notes, she highlights very briefly what in *The Human Condition* is depicted as the "victory of the *animal laborans*" (Arendt, 1998, p.320), grounded on the identification between work and labour, another crucial distinction that for Arendt has been blurred. As she explains in *The Impact of Marx*, "the industrial revolution has replaced all workmanship with labor, and the result has been that the things of the modern world have become labor products whose natural fate is to be consumed, instead of work products which are there to be used" (Arendt, 2018, p.124). Labouring societies, in which the permanence of the products of work has been replaced by the futility of consumption, remains for Arendt linked to Marx's focus on the category of labour, read strictly in terms of satisfaction of a relentless cycle of necessities. For her, and to put it briefly, Marx has achieved the transformation of the world into a society of labourers, "a society in which men consider all their activities as primarily laboring activities, in the sense that their end is the 'preservation of individual life', and themselves primarily as owners of labor force" (Arendt, 2002, p.311).

With this move, a change is brought about in terms of the conceptualisation, or even of the existence, of the political realm, the space configured by human action. Having first dealt with labour, Arendt refers to the second dimension of Marx's impact under the heading of "Politics". Arendt attributes to Marx the dignification of history "against politics" (Arendt, 2018, p.101). And she notes: "Marx the first to see history in terms of past politics, made by men as laboring animals. Then it must be possible to make history in the process of Labor, of Productivity, to make history as we make things" (Arendt, 2018, p.101). Three intertwined criticisms are invoked here. First, a teleological vision of history through which the past

determines the present without leaving room for the Arendtian conception of the political space, characterised by its openness to the unpredictability of human action. Second, the centrality of class conflict in Marxian politics which reduces human beings to the category of labourers. Then, as a consequence, Arendt criticises Marx for inscribing history in the logic of necessity (labour) and of productive instrumentality (productivity): history becomes a making, and therefore it is placed beyond the "realm of human affairs" (Arendt, 1998, p.225) and beyond freedom. Making is not acting, as Arendt will explain in a whole chapter of *The Human Condition*, despite the substitution of acting by making appearing to be a guiding thread of the tradition. As she puts it,

> the substitution of making for acting and the concomitant degradation of politics into a means to obtain an allegedly "higher" end—in antiquity the protection of the good men from the rule of the bad in general, and the safety of the philosopher in particular, in the Middle Ages the salvation of souls, in the modern age the productivity and progress of society—is as old as the tradition of political philosophy. (Arendt, 1998, p. 229)

Arendt's reflection on Marx goes beyond Marx himself and implies a revision of a whole tradition of thought culminating in Marx (but also in Locke and Smith, as she explains in *The Human Condition*) and by means of which labour becomes the first, and most valued, human activity. Marx's specific inflexion consists of transforming labour into the "source of all productivity and the expression of the very humanity of man" (Arendt, 1998, p.101). By doing so, he is again displacing action from the central position that Arendt vindicates. It is in this sense that Arendt's abovementioned declaration on Marx in terms of "the Traditionalist as against the usual idea" (Arendt, 2018, p.101) in *The Impact on Marx* has to be understood. This reading of Marx on labour has been criticised, as the conclusion of this chapter will discuss. However, independently of Arendt's accuracy about Marx on labour, her position is relevant for this research since it is precisely from this reading and inspired by the Aristotelian distinction between *zōē* and *bios* that Arendt builds a realm of human activity strictly beyond labour that is still relevant today. By vindicating a human activity which can be performed by human beings as such, and not in their condition of labourers or workers, Arendt tackles the risk of rendering superfluous those whose relation to the world is not mediated by what is commonly described as labour.

The displacement of labour

Having explored the core of Arendt's engagement with Marx, which explains her particular conceptualisation of labour, two other issues are examined next, namely the why and the how of the grounding of this realm beyond labour. Starting with the issue of why, labouring

societies are for Arendt, and here lies the answer to her overarching question on Marxism since *The Origins*, profoundly antipolitical because labour is marked by isolation. As she explains in *The Human Condition*,

> workmanship, therefore, may be an unpolitical way of life, but it certainly is not an antipolitical one. Yet this precisely is the case of laboring, an activity in which man is neither together with the world nor with other people, but alone with his body, facing the naked necessity to keep himself alive. To be sure, he too lives in the presence of and together with others, but this togetherness has none of the distinctive marks of true plurality. (Arendt, 1998, p.212)

Featuring human beings as *animal laborans* thus implies for Arendt two fundamental problems connected to her depiction of totalitarianism: worldlessness and sameness. As labour only responds to the needs of biological life, no activity is then left to foster a political world. Again, Arendt points towards Marx's account, for whom, in her reading, "socialized men would spend their freedom from laboring in those strictly private and essentially worldless activities that we now call 'hobbies'" (Arendt, 1998, p.118). Sameness is the other issue at stake in considering human beings as labourers. For Arendt, the time of the writing of *The Human Condition* corresponds to

> the last stage of the laboring society, the society of jobholders, [which] demands of its members a sheer automatic functioning, as though individual life had actually been submerged in the over-all life process of the species and the only active decision still required of the individual were to let go, so to speak, to abandon his individuality, the still individually sensed pain and trouble of living, and acquiesce in a dazed, "tranquilized," functional type of behaviour. (Arendt, 1998, p.322)

By displacing labour understood as enclosed within the realm of necessity and underlining the behaviourist dimension of work-related activities, Arendt is forestalling the risk of loss of the world, the loss of the political, the space of plural interaction between distinct human beings, which for her can only be grounded in action. If the why of the beyond labour lies in the preservation of the world itself as Arendt understands it, the threefold distinction within the *vita activa* is the theoretical move Arendt sets out in order to reverse the tradition. What are the contours of this separation? What is Arendt's answer to the Marxian and Marcusean question of the connection between freedom and necessity?

As we have seen, for Arendt, the consideration of human beings as mainly labourers implies their insertion in the exclusive order of necessity. However, she is not at all arguing for the elimination of labour and work, which remain indispensable parts of the *vita activa*. The definition of the *vita activa*, provided in the first chapter of *The Human Condition*, is clear in defending the need to sustain all three activities. "With the term *vita activa*, I propose to

designate three fundamental human activities: labor, work, and action. They are fundamental because each corresponds to one of the basic conditions under which life on earth has been given to man" (Arendt, 1998, p.7). So, Arendt is not depicting a scenario without labour and work, and neither does she dismiss the part both activities play in building the world which is capable of fostering the human condition. In this sense and as she herself outlines, labour and work are, precisely, fundamental.

However, and against the centrality of labour within labouring societies, labour is instead a condition for action, which is itself the distinctive human activity. Arendt's argument is derived from the organisation of human activity in the ancient Greek world, within which "the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for freedom of the polis" (Arendt, 1998, p.30). Labour, devoted to the satisfaction of immediate human needs, is conceived as a precondition for action, for the possibility to display the who one is in public through words and deeds. In building the guiding thread that both connects and separates action from labour and work, Arendt turns to Aristotle's notion of the good life. As she explains,

> the 'good life' as Aristotle called the life of the citizen, therefore was not merely better, more carefree or nobler than ordinary life, but of an altogether different quality. It was 'good' to the extent that by having mastered the necessities of sheer life, by being freed from labor and work, and by overcoming the innate urge of all living creatures for their own survival, it was no longer bound to the biological life process. (Arendt, 1998, p.36)

So, as she herself continues, and always on the grounds of ancient Greek thought, the beyond labour that this chapter seeks to depict is for Arendt first and foremost a matter of distinction. "At the root of Greek political consciousness we find an unequalled clarity and articulateness in drawing this distinction" (Arendt, 1998, p.37), she says. Recovering action implies therefore a beyond which means recovering the distinction between human activities, and by doing so, implies the decentring of labour within the *vita activa*. This beyond does not mean a world in which either labour or work disappear. Indeed, for Arendt all three categories relate to and make up the human condition. As she explains, "labor assures not only individual survival, but the life of the species. Work and its product, the human artifact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of mortal life and the fleeting character of human time" (Arendt, 1998, p.5). The human condition therefore appears grounded in a world in which labour and work certainly play their part. The key in Arendt's conceptual framework is that worldliness requires a plus, a human plus, which for her can only be provided by the enhancement of action, as an activity featuring "an entirely

different nature from the manifold activities of fabrication by which the world itself and all things in it are produced" (Arendt, 1998, p.173).

While labour for Arendt is antipolitical, action is the human activity that guarantees our remaining in the political dimension: "of all the activities necessary and present in human communities, only two were deemed to be political and to constitute what Aristotle called the *bios politikos*, namely action (praxis) and speech (lexis)" (Arendt, 1998, p.24). For this reason, a beyond labour, to be won for the sake of action, is in the Arendtian framework the fundamental ground of a human world in opposition to the desert represented by totalitarian domination. Further, action even appears in the Arendtian position as the measure of the human: "we need not choose here between Plato and Protagoras, or decide whether man or a god should be the measure of all things; what is certain is that the measure can be neither the driving necessity of biological life and labor nor the utilitarian instrumentalism of fabrication and usage" (Arendt, 1998, p.173).

To conclude, the investigation on Marx's, and more specifically Arendt's, reading of the Marxian account of labour, crucially shaped by the concern of totalitarian domination, is a fundamental issue in grasping her conceptualisation of the *vita activa*. As Weisman rightly notes, "understanding and evaluating Arendt's claim that Marx reduces humans to *animal laborans* is perhaps the most important task of understanding her reading of Marx" (Weisman, 2014, chap.5). Indeed, it is by her examination of Marx on labour that Arendt strives to recover a fundamental distinction between labour and work on the one hand, and action on the other. Arendt was concerned with "a society of laborers which is about to be liberated from the fetters of labor, and (…) does no longer know of those other higher and more meaningful activities for the sake of which this freedom would deserve to be won" (Arendt, 1998, p.5). Nevertheless Arendt was reluctant to see her work as an answer and therefore the specific terms of these meaningful activities are left to unpredictable and spontaneous human actions. Indeed, as would be expected due to her account of action as a being-together-with-others, "such answers are given every day, and they are matters of practical politics, subject to the agreement of many; they can never lie in theoretical considerations or the opinion of one person, as though we dealt here with problems for which only one solution is possible" (Arendt, 1998, p.5). However, as this section has shown, with the redefinition of the frontiers separating action from labour and work, she is at least providing theoretical support for a necessary move towards emancipation, namely displacing our labouring gaze towards action.

4.2. Beyond labour, action

This chapter contends that post-totalitarian domination exerted through labour requires vindicating a realm beyond labour that can support the overcoming of the consideration of human beings as *animal laborans*. As shown in Chapter One, Arendt at different stages of her *oeuvre* uses the metaphor of the desert to refer to the loss of the world characterising both totalitarian regimes and also societies of labourers and jobholders. The issue at stake in this section is therefore how to transform the desert of the *animal laborans*' world into a human world. For Arendt, action constitutes, as we have already seen, the worldly mediation. This is first and foremost, and despite the many definitions that might describe Arendt's conceptualisation, "the capacity of human beings to condition themselves on a world that they transform" (Levi Martin, 2017). The previous section has attempted to shed light on the why and the how, following the Arendtian threefold classification of human activities, of a realm beyond labour articulated around the notion of action. This section continues the reflection by focusing on two aspects of Arendt's thought on the issue: on the one hand, the dimension of action as the capacity to start something new; and on the other, the reflection on pariahdom and its connections to action. In doing so, a reading of action will be suggested that, against the heroic model which has led Arendt to be criticised for a certain elitism, is instead in relation precisely to the outcasts represented in the figure of the pariah. With respect to the purpose of this research and bringing in Frayne's study, it will be shown that the understanding of action as the human capability to start something new, now linked to Arendt's concept of pariahdom, can transform those considered superfluous within labouring societies into political actors.

Action, starting something new

What is action? The concretisation of Arendt's account of action is sometimes difficult to grasp and, in a way, this is to be expected given her frame of thought. Indeed, the specific manifestations of action probably cannot be known in advance and cannot be predefined since it is concerned with the unpredictability of the human condition. The whole of the Arendtian *oeuvre* highlights the different dimension through which action unfolds. In short, and as Kohn highlights in his introduction to the Arendtian texts that make up *The Promise of Politics*, action has to do with "venturing forth in speech and deed in the company of one's peers, beginning something new whose end cannot be known in advance, founding a public realm (*res publica* or republic), promising and forgiving others" (Kohn & Arendt, 2005, pt.Introduction). While this definition refers to multiple aspects of Arendt's notion, for the

purposes of this research one of them specifically is focused on next, namely that in starting something new, human beings are acting.

The conformation of action in *The Human Condition* is tightly linked to another relevant category within Arendtian thought, namely natality, which in itself entails the appearance of the new in the world. While action as a beyond labour can be read within Arendt's dialogue with Marx, in focusing on the new and natality Arendt's engagement with Heidegger can again be grasped, and specifically her overcoming of his being-towards-death. Every newborn implies for Arendt the possibility of a new path which is actualised by action. Through action, our human condition leaves its mark on a world that both precedes and succeeds each of us, since it is by means of action that the singularity of the who one is can be displayed, a singularity derived from every new birth. As Arendt puts it, acting "means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, 'to begin,' 'to lead,' and eventually 'to rule,' indicates), to set something into motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin *agere*). Because they are *initium*, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action" (Arendt, 1998, p.177). So, although at some points *The Human Condition* may display a grim scenario of the degradation of the Arendtian world into labouring societies, the possibility of transformation remains since action implies "that the unexpected can be expected from [man], that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world" (Arendt, 1998, p.178). So, it is birth, our coming and being in the world, which first and foremost justifies the dignity of human beings in themselves and not in their condition of labourers. Because they were born, human beings are all potentially actors. However, birth in itself is not sufficient. While it certainly guarantees the inclination to act, the possibility of action and thereby the possibility of the emergence of the new, its actualisation requires traversing a path towards a second birth. It is indeed the transition from potentiality to its reality that constitutes a specific insertion in the world: acting through word and deeds, a particular mediation with the world that Arendt explicitly opposes to labour and work. As she explains, "with word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labour, and it is not prompted by utility, like work" (Arendt, 1998, p.176).

For Arendt, then, the specific mediation with the world natality entails, that is to say the mediation that is particular to our human condition, is necessarily beyond labour and work.

Action is not framed either by necessity or utility, as she makes clear. So what is the origin of human action? Arendt suggests that "it may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we may wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative" (Arendt, 1998, p.176). Thus it is the presence of others, the being-together-with, so crucial in Arendt's thought and one of its distinctive elements in contrast to Heidegger as explained in Chapter One, that moves the newborn to act as a form of taking upon himself or herself the singularity he or she is born with and to make it present in the world shared with others. Indeed, "the primordial and specifically human act must at the same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: 'Who are you?'" (Arendt, 1998, p.178). This is a who that cannot be sustained in its wholeness when human beings are considered as mainly labourers or jobholders. With action, it is precisely "this disclosure of 'who' in contradistinction to 'what' somebody is" (Arendt, 1998, p.179) which is at stake.

While action implies taking it upon oneself to display the who one is and by doing so being part of the human world, the question arises of knowing this who, the ground on which and by means of which this second birth, this insertion, occurs. If the category of birth entails the capacity to act for all of us, the realisation of action seems to require the consciousness of the singularity of each of us, enabling its display in the world. Arendt's account of pariahdom can be useful at this point in order to understand how Arendtian action calls for a consciousness of one's position in the world. In referring to the figure of the pariah, the usual heroic perspective of her account can be shifted and allows a reading of action whose availability is not limited to the extraordinary, but instead to the awareness of one's position in the world. In relation to the actor as hero, one of the criticisms that have been raised against Arendt is, as mentioned above, the issue of elitism, precisely due to the dimension underscored here, the fact that action lies beyond necessity and, further, should not be concerned with necessity as she highlights in her controversial perspective on the social, an issue that is examined in the concluding remarks closing Chapter Five. However, reading *The Human Condition* in relation to Arendt's texts about the pariah makes it possible to understand how action does not exclusively belong to the realm of the heroic, as Ring (1991) rightly notes in her examination of the Arendtian pariah as hero. Arendt herself provides an explanation of the heroic compatible with human beings shared capability to act. As she states,

> the hero the story discloses needs no heroic qualities; the word "hero" originally, that is, in Homer, was no more than a name given each free man who participated in the Trojan enterprise and about whom a story could be told. The connotation of courage, which we now feel to be an indispensable quality of the hero, is in fact already present in a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own. (Arendt, 1998, p.186)

Pariahdom and Rahel Varnhagen

So, action seems to be less related to a specific content – another element of criticism of Arendt's account – or to a singular circumstance than to the courage implied in the desire to act, to speak and, further, to think and judge, as Arendt suggested in *The Life of the Mind*. In short, acting means wanting to engage with the world based on one's singularity. This willingness is indeed crucial in Arendt's representation of the pariah. As Ring points out, "what Arendt admires about the pariahs (…) is their acknowledgment of the role politics plays in their lives and their willingness to accept those unsought terms of existence, all the while refusing to conduct themselves in a less than fully human fashion" (Ring, 1991, p.442). In this respect, the pariah becomes a heroic actor when he or she faces the world and fights to vindicate his or her humanity. "As soon as the pariah enters the arena of politics, and translates his status into political terms, he becomes perforce a rebel" (Arendt, 1944, p.109) Arendt asserts in *The Jew as Pariah*, in which she explains her conceptualisation of the pariah borrowed from Bernard Lazare. Yet becoming a pariah as rebel or as hero as argued here requires the willingness to know, which in itself implies a first engagement with the world. In *We Refugees*, Arendt refers to the unwillingness to know, which is what at first has to be overcome: "the less we are free to decide who we are or to live as we like, the more we try to put up a front, to hide the facts, and to play roles" (Arendt, 2008, p.270).

This idea of hiding the facts and playing roles, and the subsequent coming to terms with the condition of pariah, can be better grasped by bringing in Arendt's biographical work on Rahel Varnhagen, begun in 1929, finished in 1938 and published in 1958 (Benhabib, 2003). In this early work, Arendt turns her gaze towards singular acting lives, for as she will put it years later in *Men in Dark Times*,

> even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination, and that such illumination might well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given to them on earth (Arendt, 1983, p.ix)

It is in this sense that Frayne's *The Refusal of Work* is referred to later on in this chapter in order to find some illumination in current attempts to live beyond labour, not necessarily in

the condition of pariah assigned to the superfluous but rather as actors, willing to know and engaging with the world by refusing labour and finding alternative mediations. Coming back to pariahdom, this hiding of facts featuring the pariah can be found in Arendt's narration of Rahel Varnhagen, which in her case has to do with hiding her Jewishness. It is precisely this unwillingness to know and to act which constitute "the 'worldless' sensibility that Arendt finds most objectionable about Rahel" (Benhabib, 2003, p.11) and that Arendt refers to in describing Rahel's efforts to hide a world which, within the context of growing anti-Semitism, excludes her. In the Preface, Arendt explains how for Varnhagen

> her whole effort was to expose herself to life so that it could strike her "like a storm without an umbrella." ("What am I doing"? Nothing. I am letting life rain upon me.") She preferred not to use characteristics or opinions on persons she encountered, on the circumstances and conditions of the world, on life itself, for purposes of shelter. Following this principle, she could neither choose or act, because choice and action in themselves would anticipate life and falsify the purity of life's happenstance. All that remained for her to do was to become a "mouthpiece" for experience, to verbalize whatever happened (Arendt, 1997, p.81).

In refusing to engage with the world by displaying her who and making herself visible, by hiding her singular standpoint, from her Jewishness to her personal views, Rahel is in Arendt's view building her own disgrace: her "lack of position in the world" (Arendt, 1997, p.155). The fundamental problem Arendt highlights in Rahel is precisely not having a place in the world and even avoiding it. Progressively, however, Rahel evolves towards what has been read, in resorting to the Marcusean terminology, as a "'Great Refusal' [which] allowed Hannah Arendt to prize her 'pariah' attributes" (Goodman, 1982, p.124). From her early worldlessness (Arendt, 1997, p.155), Rahel progressively finds what could be described using the Arendtian vocabulary as a home in the world through the consciousness of her own life as a story developed in her letters, told to others and even being an example for others. As Arendt puts it, "her ability to speak provided her with an asylum in the world" (Arendt, 1997, p.171). Refusing the place that the circumstances of her time had assigned to her, the place of rejection for being an intellectual Jew woman, Rahel, despite all disappointments, assumes her position in the world and the life she has built from this position. While Arendt's work on Rahel starts with the accusation on the grounds of a Romantic inwardness, she concludes by claiming the rebel dimension of the conscious pariah she represents. Indeed, the end of Rahel's life is marked by the final acceptance of her Jewishness, by the recognition of her own position in the world. As Arendt quotes, "'the thing which all my life seemed to me the greatest shame, which was the misery and misfortune of my life—having been born a Jewess—this I should on no account now wish to have missed'" (Arendt, 1997, p.285). In

Arendt's reading, Rahel has evolved from the worldless introspection, "the great error Rahel shared with her contemporaries" (Arendt, 1997, p.81), to the position of conscious pariah which transforms her into a rebel. And Arendt concludes,

> in a society on the whole hostile to the Jews—and that situation obtained in all countries in which Jews lived, down to the twentieth century—it is possible to assimilate only by assimilating to anti-Semitism also. If one wishes to be a normal person, precisely like everybody else, there is scarcely any alternative to exchanging old prejudices for new ones. If that is not done, one involuntarily becomes a rebel—"But I am a rebel after all!"—and remains a Jew. (Arendt, 1997, p.256)

Rebellion, and heroism, seems therefore to be represented in the courage of wanting to know and engaging with the world from this knowledge. As Benhabib notes in her study on Arendt's narration of Varnhagen, "the authentic existential attitude cannot emerge for a self who is still submerged in given categories of cultural and social existence; it is the confrontation with life itself, without reliance upon the social and cultural givens of one's background, which would guide one here" (Benhabib, 2003, p.9). New categories have to be and can be created in order to perform the existential transformation of the pariah into the rebel.

Arendt's position on pariahdom is not only relevant for this research in terms of changing the perspective of those considered superfluous within labouring societies, as it is also on the grounds of this concept that another point of *rapprochement* between Arendt and Marcuse can be found. As noted in Chapter Two, Marcuse points towards "the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and the unemployable" (Marcuse, 2002, p.260) as political actors that can engage with the world through a transformative refusal. In a similar way to Arendt's conscious pariah – in this quote in relation to the emancipated Jew – who "in contrast to his unemancipated brethren who accept their pariah status automatically and unconsciously, (…) must awake to an awareness of his position and, conscious of it, become a rebel against it—the champion of an oppressed people" (Arendt, 1944, p.108), for Marcuse "the fact that [the outcasts] start refusing to play the game may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period" (Marcuse, 2002, p.261). Both authors are thus, in their own terms, vindicating a refusal which is again necessary to be considered in countering post-totalitarian domination through work. The Arendtian action, if read under the dimensions of newness and pariahdom, constitutes, as Goodman suggests in the abovementioned quote, a possible expression of the Marcusean refusal to the extent that a dignified place, a home, is vindicated.

The previous two sections have sought to demonstrate that the Arendtian notion of action, articulated in contrast with and beyond the laws of labour and work, is useful for this research to the extent that it makes it possible to distinguish a realm of human activity available for human beings as such and not in their condition of labourers. For this reason, vindicating human beings first and foremost as actors can fight both the loss of the political world and also the threat of superfluousness which post-totalitarian domination through labour entails. The final and concluding section of this chapter has a twofold purpose. On the one hand, Arendt's conceptualisation of action will be assessed by bringing in some of the criticisms that have been addressed to it. On the other and to conclude, a possible insertion of the notion of action within post-work debates will be suggested by referring to the work of Frayne.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has combined Arendt's reading of Marx on labour and her account of action as distinct from labour and work in order to support the recovery of acting, instead of making, as the core of the human condition. Although her analysis from her early works on Rahel Varnhagen and Marx are relevant theoretical starting points in building a beyond labour, this chapter cannot conclude without noting that Arendt's position is questioned on several grounds, the accuracy of her reading of Marx being one of the more significant. Was Arendt right in her reading of Marx on labour?

This issue has been the object of controversy almost from the moment of publication of *The Human Condition*. Suchting is an example of this early criticism. In his view, Arendt's "interpretation of Marx is completely erroneous and (…) there is no foundation whatsoever for the 'contradiction' in Marx's thought which she presents" (Suchting, 1962, p.47). As he sees it, Arendt extends her notion of labour to the different meanings labour has for Marx. Drawing on *Capital I*, he argues that Arendt did not take into account Marx's concern with labour implying imagination, the specific human activity which actualises in the world a projected idea and which, according to Suchting, would be close to Arendt's notion of work. As he puts it, "the question is, then, whether Marx meant by this 'labor' in Miss Arendt's sense and whether he confused it with what she calls 'work'" (Suchting, 1962, p.49). In a similar line, and more recently, Holman has noted that "what Arendt is unable to grasp, or, more precisely, what Arendt refuses to grasp, is that the Marxian concept of labor at once cuts across all three of the dimensions of the *vita activa*" (Holman, 2011, p.336). The

interesting point in Holman's criticism is the question regarding Arendt's effort to maintain the distinctions between labour, work and action, which is precisely the dimension praised in this research. Even if it were the case that for Marx the concept of labour went far beyond the dimension of the *animal laborans*, Arendt's effort to distinguish the different realms of human activity is valuable. In relation to her reading of Marx and as has been pointed out above, it is her lifelong concern with totalitarianism that seems to push Arendt to insist on clarifying the different realms of human activity. She focuses on Marx's notion of labour as the instrument by means of which human beings become one with nature, that is to say with the mere sustainment of life, which erases human plurality. In this way, Arendt attempts to explain why Marx's thought was used by totalitarianism. Coming back to Holman, therefore, the critique of Arendt's distinction has to focus on understanding how, for her, "the dialectic is implicated in the triumph of totalitarianism to the extent that it provides the theoretical tools for that practical overcoming that marks the totalitarian experience" (Holman, 2011, p.341). This is precisely the path Weisman has recently explored in her examination of Arendt and Marx in relation to totalitarianism. As she suggests, Arendt "is not simply wrong or willfully misleading in her reading of Marx on labor. Rather, she reads Marx as she believes Lenin and Stalin read him" (Weisman, 2014, chap.5). In this sense, Weisman's analysis confirms Arendt's overarching concern with totalitarianism, which conditioned not only her reading of Marx but also, as noted in Chapter One, the whole depiction of the society of labourers and jobholders.

Despite its limitations, Arendt's portrayal of labouring societies, in which her reading of Marx plays a pivotal role, is still a relevant reference in current investigations on labour and its future. This chapter has sought to use Arendt on action in order to argue the possibility of a realm in which human beings can fully display the who each of us is independently of the connection with labour or work. In vindicating mediation with the world beyond labour, much of the Arendtian conceptual framework has been used. In relation to her reading of Marx on labour, her account of the society of labourers and jobholders has been the starting condition to be overcome by means of the recovery of action as central within the *vita activa*. Indeed, this chapter asserts the need to recognise with Arendt the centrality of the capability to start something new embedded in each of us, and to highlight the acting dimension of those considered as the outcasts of labouring societies. The restoration of action to its central position should, in short, entail the possibility of an articulation of human societies beyond labour.

It is no coincidence that many of the works making up the current reflection on labour and its future consider Arendt at certain points. The last part of these concluding remarks seeks to insert the Arendtian perspective on action in one of the works within post-work literature that focuses on the "chance of the alternatives" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206). Specifically, it would be useful to conclude by reading Frayne's *Refusal of Work* in connection to Arendt on action.

In his study, Frayne analyses various forms of refusal of work undertaken at an individual level. After referring to many of the authors who have historically developed a theoretical analysis on work and to those who have introduced concepts that can challenge the "work dogma" (Frayne, 2015, p.1), he examines the ways in which the refusal he maintains is being articulated today. In some cases, it consists of working fewer hours or a career change towards a less work-centred life; in others, it implies stopping work. As he says, "the question of whether or not these people were successful in their attempts to resist work is a complex one" (Frayne, 2015, p.121). Frayne alludes to Arendt in reviewing the theoretical attempts to engage with work-centred societies by referring to her position on the transformation of human beings into *animal laborans* and her warnings on "labourers without labour" (Frayne, 2015, p.39). Following what has been discussed in previous sections, introducing Arendt's notion of action and pariahdom in Frayne's analysis may extend the potential of the refusals of work he examines. Beyond the possibility to sustain life without work or not mainly on the grounds of work, it is the dimension of action that can also be emphasised. Indeed, within the Arendtian perspective, it is the refusal of a dominant mediation with the world that marks the transition from "play[ing] the roles" (Arendt, 2008, p.270) to starting something new, from the position of pariahdom as the superfluous of labouring societies to the position of hero willing to know and willing to engage with the world under different terms. Indeed, independently of the issue of success in breaking the link with work, Frayne underlines how "the decision to resist work was always motivated by a powerful set of alternative moral principles" (Frayne, 2015, p.133). In other words, the refusals of work Frayne examines do not seem to respond to a reactive escapism, which Arendt would reject because "in attempting to escape, we carry the sand of the desert into the oases" (Arendt, 2005b, p.203), but instead reflect the willingness to know, to act, to judge and to choose that feature in Arendt's action.

Nevertheless, a crucial issue remains. As Frayne himself asks, "to what extent is a substantial rebellion against work achievable, given the forces that are ranged against this possibility?" (Frayne, 2015, p.117). In trying to shed some light on this question, Arendt's being-together-with, which in terms of action has to do with its public character, might prove helpful. Arendt

herself refers in *The Human Condition* to the indispensable human interrelation that action requires, in contrast to the isolation and loneliness featuring in labour and work:

> Action and speech need the surrounding presence of others no less than fabrication needs the surrounding presence of nature for its material, and of a world in which to place the finished product. Fabrication is surrounded by and in constant contact with the world: action and speech are surrounded by and in constant contact with the web of the acts and words of other men. (Arendt, 1998, p. 188)

In this respect and coming back to the thesis of this research, the beyond labour that Arendt's notion of action makes it possible to at least glimpse, requires more than just the willingness to know, the refusal to play roles at an individual level. It equally entails the display of the world we are capable of creating anew with others and in front of others. In other words, the refusal towards labouring societies cannot remain strictly within the individual existential transformation. It requires, for the Arendtian notion of action calls for publicness, leaving its mark on the space of appearances. In which "public" can this refusal find a home? The refusal of work can still only with difficulty be inserted in the organisation of statist public policies, as labour is one of the disciplining instruments of post-totalitarian societies. In order to grasp what kind of publicness can foster the refusal of work, Benhabib's analysis is illuminating. As she explains,

> the kind of revitalization of public life that Arendt envisaged in her later work had at least two salient characteristics: on the one hand, Arendt was a political universalist, upholding egalitarian civil and political rights for all citizens while supporting nonconformism and the expression of pariahdom in social and cultural life; on the other hand, Arendt's call for a recovery of the public world is antistatist—indeed, we can complain that Arendt's philosophy as a whole suffers from a certain "state blindness." However, if such revitalization of public life does not mean the strengthening of the state but the growth of a political sphere independent of the state, where must this sphere be located, if not in civic and associational society? (Benhabib, 2003, p.30)

Following this interpretation of Arendtian thought, the extension of the beyond labour within the core of society, albeit not sufficient, is indispensable. For this reason, and following Arendt, the refusals to work that are already taking shape should be fully considered as actions to be connected within a public realm, not necessarily mediated by state structures which remain far from the questioning of work-centred societies. Thus, current challenges to labouring societies need to embed the publicness of Arendtian action, that is to say, to be heard and seen by others in order to display their full potential for collective emancipation. The strengthening of civic and associational articulations, which can question work at a collective level and imagine and set articulation beyond labour, remains a challenge in which imagination, as the following chapters explain, is key.

Part Three - The Role of Imagination

Previous chapters have dealt with the destruction of the world and its transformation into a desert, following Arendt's metaphor on totalitarianism that has been analysed in Chapter One in the context of the explanation of post-totalitarian domination through labour. While the first and second part of this research have examined Arendt and Marcuse's respective accounts on domination and labour, the third and last part of this investigation seeks to assess the relevance of both authors in imagining emancipation. In other words, these last two chapters look at how both Arendt and Marcuse examine the possibility of recovering a human world by introducing imagination and, as will be shown, also utopia in their reflections. Certainly, the issue of imagination has received less academic interest within research on both authors, at least in relation to other key concepts that have already been studied such as the Arendtian account of action, for example, or Marcuse's notion of one-dimensionality. However, the question of imagination is relevant for this research since it is concerned not only with understanding the dynamics of post-totalitarian domination through labour but also with the possibility of imagining and building an alternative to the society of labourers and jobholders, the Arendtian depiction of current times whose relevance has been argued previously in this investigation.

It is no accident that Frayne's study of the refusals of work, examined above in Chapter Four, should conclude with a vindication of the role of imagination in challenging work-centred societies. As he puts it, "these ideas of a multi-active or culture-based society may seem lofty and remote from the perspective of the here and now, but their primary function in the present is to stimulate the imagination. What is demanded is not an instant, top-down change in policy, but a more gradual process of collective exploration and open debate" (Frayne, 2015, p.222). Similarly, and bringing in authors such as Ruth Levitas who will also be referred to in the following chapter, he equally champions the need to recover utopian thinking because "positive changes cannot occur unless we as a society remain open to the idea that an alternative might actually be possible" (Frayne, 2015, p.235). Following this proposal, the last two chapters of this research are devoted to investigating the extent to which Arendt and Marcuse's respective accounts on imagination and their positions on utopia make it possible to explore "the chance of the alternatives" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206) in challenging work-centred societies.

Chapter Five. The Arendtian imagination

What can be learned from the Arendtian account of imagination when it comes to projecting possible scenarios beyond labour? This chapter continues with the analysis of Arendt's *oeuvre* but switches the focus from action to imagination, an issue approached in her later investigations within the context of her study of thinking, willing and judging that make up the posthumous *The Life of the Mind*, the pivotal work that will be mainly examined. Although as noted above there has only been limited investigation of Arendt's conceptualisation of imagination, its centrality in the understanding of her perspective on mental activities seems to be gaining importance in current works (Biser, 2014; Tyner, 2014, 2017; Yeung, 2017). For the purposes of this research, exploring Arendt's position on imagination is at this stage a crucial question for two main reasons that are the core of this chapter. On the one hand, and as will be shown, Arendt presents imagination as a "gift" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One Chap. II), a gift by means of which, in line with Kant, what is absent can be made present. Hence it is imagination the gift that allows an alternative to labouring societies to emerge within the thinking process as a first step to becoming an achievable reality. As will be explained, Arendt metaphorically represents imagination as a visit which allows the exploration of multiple perspectives, this being a precondition leading to the also key theme of judging. In this respect, her account seems relevant for the purposes of this research as it is by means of exploring alternatives to work-centred societies that a judgment can be made and different actions can be undertaken. However, and as will be underlined, Arendt's perspective is limited because it moves between the recognition of the explorative dimension of imagination towards the search for alternatives and what she presents as necessary safeguards that have to be followed in maintaining imagination close to the realm of human affairs and then constitute the limits of this exploration. So, this chapter examines the extent to which imagination as a gift provides, or not, the necessary impulse to transform the desert of societies of labourers and jobholders into a world in which action reappears at the core of human activity.

In order to answer this question, the first section of this chapter focuses on the potentialities of Arendt's account of imagination. To do so, the path leading from the *vita activa* in *The Human Condition* to the reconsideration of the *vita contemplativa* in *The Life of the Mind* is analysed first. Secondly, the contours of the depiction of thinking, in terms of process and location, are examined in order to grasp the terms of Arendt's thinking about the world. The insertion of imagination within thinking activities is explained so as to identify the extent to

which imagination emerges as a gift making it possible to judge and to will. This section concludes by dealing with the interest of Arendt's concept of imagination as a necessary step in overcoming post-totalitarian domination through labour. As will be shown, without imagination, a new beginning can hardly be expected.

Section Two looks at the limitations of Arendt's analysis of imagination in its dimension of "bounded imagination" (Tyner, 2017, p.523). By focusing on recent studies that examine Arendt's perspective, it will be shown how her preoccupation for grounding imagination in the world conditions limits the display of the full potential of the visit imagination represents. Following Biser and Tyner, the limitations of Arendt's account for the purposes of this dissertation will be explored before referring to her insertion within current utopian debates. Specifically, the positions that locate Arendt's thought within anti-utopianism (Jacoby, 2011; Levitas, 2005) against others in which she is championed as a thinker of utopia (Hiruta, 2016) are examined. Finally, the chapter will conclude by dealing with Arendt's account of the social as a further limitation in imagining a post-work world.

5.1. From the *vita activa* to imagination

This section firstly focuses on the path leading Arendt to move from the *vita activa* in *The Human Condition* to the *vita contemplativa* in *The Life of the Mind*, and secondly explores the place of imagination within her account of thinking. As examined in previous chapters, Arendt devoted *The Human Condition* to vindicating the value of the *vita activa*, and by doing so to reversing the hierarchy established by Western philosophical tradition according to which the *vita contemplativa* is configured and praised as a beyond the realm of human affairs. In her view, this distinction initially emerges in relation to the trial of Socrates, which inaugurates "the conflict between the philosopher and the polis" (Arendt, 1998, p.12). In the opening words of a lecture given at the University of Notre Dame in 1954, she indeed claims that "the gulf between philosophy and politics opened historically with the trial and condemnation of Socrates" (Arendt, 1990b, p.73). Connecting this issue with her study of human activity, it is at this moment when in Arendt's view the relevance of the *vita activa*, and more specifically the complexities of action, start to be questioned and philosophy initiates its subsequent turn towards the safer truths of contemplation. Arendt's explanation of the notion of the *vita activa* describes a process from Plato to the modern age by which "contemplation (…) was left as the only truly free way of life" (Arendt, 1998, p.14). This

separation between the realm of contemplation and the realm of active life in the world entails for Arendt a crucial problem whose importance can only be grasped if the role played by indifference towards public life in the rise of totalitarianism, examined in Chapter One, is borne in mind. Against the idea of contemplation as a beyond earthly affairs, Arendt, as already seen in this research, vindicates a *vita activa* concerned with the human world. As she puts it, a human life requires being "engaged in doing something, (...) always rooted in a world of men and of man-made things which it never leaves or altogether transcends" (Arendt, 1998, p.22).

Towards The Life of the Mind

What room is then left for the *vita contemplativa*, the life of the mind, which will be the final focus of interest in Arendt's *oeuvre*? Although *The Human Condition* already starts from an interrogation linked to thinking, "to think what we are doing" (Arendt, 1998, p.5), the issue of thinking, and the hierarchical relation between action and contemplation, is resolved early on as follows: "my use of the term *vita activa* presupposes that the concern underlying all its activities is not the same as and is neither superior nor inferior to the central concern of the *vita contemplativa*" (Arendt, 1998, p.17). Mainly devoted to the examination of the tripartite classification of the *vita activa*, *The Human Condition* interestingly anticipates what will progressively become a central issue within it for Arendt. Indeed, its very last paragraph introduces the question of thought by quoting Cato on, precisely, contemplation:

> For if no other test but the experience of being active, no other measure but the extent of sheer activity were to be applied to the various activities within the vita activa, it might well be that thinking as such would surpass them all. Whoever has any experience in this matter will know how right Cato was when he said: *Numquam se plus agere quam nihil cum ageret, numquam minus solum esse quam cum solus esset*—"Never is he more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself. (Arendt, 1998, p.326)

So, against the "sheer automatic functioning" (Arendt, 1998, p. 323) of the society of jobholders, Arendt vindicates both action *and* thought. But it is not only the overcoming of the behaviourism featuring in labouring societies that is at stake. Thinking is presented as crucial for the continuity of the human condition itself. Indeed, as Arendt goes on, "thought has always been assumed, perhaps wrongly, to be known only to the few. It may not be presumptuous to believe that these few have not become fewer in our time. This may be irrelevant, or of restricted relevance, for the future of the world; it is not irrelevant for the future of man" (Arendt, 1998, p.324). It is from this perspective that Arendt's interest in the phenomenon of thinking has to be read; always in its connection to action, as Cato's quote

highlights, thinking is a guarantee of the world and of the human condition itself. The thinking activity Arendt upholds is far from contemplation. Instead, it is an active, worldly thinking that, as will be shown, is put at the core of the future of men. Thinking, then, cannot be either a beyond the world or an isolated activity: it is instead "a living experience" (Arendt, 1998, p.324).

The Life of the Mind can be read as an attempt to reverse the philosophical tradition which split thinking and acting apart. By studying mental activities, Arendt configures a thinking which can be reconciled with, or even integrated in, her core concept of action. Cato's remark is cited again as one of the opening quotes in *Thinking*, which starts with Arendt's justification, as she herself puts it, of her interest in reflecting on the phenomenon of thought. Her explanation is twofold. Firstly, there is her investigation on Eichmann leading to a major question which anticipates the connection between thinking and judging. As Arendt asks, "might the problem of good and evil, our faculty for telling right from wrong, be connected with our faculty of thought?" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Introduction). And further: can thinking be said to be an antidote against evil? In Arendt's words, "could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention, regardless of results and specific content, could this activity be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually 'condition' them against it?" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Introduction).

So Arendt's interest in thinking appears, on the one hand, connected to her reflections on Eichmann's trial. Yet on the other hand, Arendt also refers to the perplexities already involved in her 1958 study of the *vita activa*, which soon entailed some interrogations related to the traditional conceptualisation of the *vita contemplativa*. Referring to the writing of *The Human Condition*, Arendt notes:

> I was, however, aware that one could look at this matter from an altogether different viewpoint, and to indicate my doubts I ended this study of active life with a curious sentence that Cicero ascribed to Cato, who used to say that 'never is a man more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself' (*Numquam se plus agere quam nihil cum ageret, numquam minus solum esse quam cum solus esset*). Assuming Cato was right, the questions are obvious: What are we 'doing' when we do nothing but think? Where are we when we, normally always surrounded by our fellow-men, are together with no one but ourselves?" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Introduction)

This quote shows some of the concerns that, as explained next, condition Arendt's analysis of thinking and, even more, of imagination. These concerns are linked to Arendt's need to

connect thinking to a form of human doing and thus a doing that has to be located within the world and whose solitary dimension has to be resolved for, indeed, it would appear to be in breach of the Arendtian vindication of the being-together-*with*. Here again, to the same extent that a guiding thread existed between Arendt's conceptualisation of totalitarianism and labouring societies, an echo of the issues dealt with in *The Origins* can be traced. Thinking cannot be a solitary beyond: it has to be framed within an earthly world and, therefore, cannot mean isolation. Thus, if thinking has to be grounded within a doing of the human world which, as Arendt warns, is never transcended, her task in the first part of *The Life of the Mind* is to define the contours of this worldly activity both in terms of process – what we are doing and with whom – and location – where we are. At this point in her work, the focus has shifted. Indeed, these new questions entail a reorganisation of the issues at stake in the whole of Arendt's *oeuvre*. While *The Human Condition* examined the categories of labour, work and action with little reference to thought, her theorisation on thinking can now be read as an integrative link between the *vita activa* and thinking as, precisely, a "living experience" (Arendt, 1998, pp.324). After establishing the once more triadic characterisation of the life of the mind in which "thinking, willing, and judging are the three basic mental activities" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Chap. II), an explanation is given of the missing link in the traditional separation between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*. Indeed, in a chapter which is precisely concerned with, and entitled, "mental activities in a world of appearances" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch. II), Arendt states,

> men, though they are totally conditioned existentially—limited by the time span between birth and death, subject to labor in order to live, motivated to work in order to make themselves at home in the world, and roused to action in order to find their place in the society of their fellow-men—can mentally transcend all these conditions, but only mentally, never in reality or in cognition and knowledge, by virtue of which they are able to explore the world's realness and their own. They can judge affirmatively or negatively the realities they are born into and by which they are also conditioned; they can will the impossible, for instance, eternal life; and they can think, that is, speculate meaningfully, about the unknown and the unknowable. And although this can never directly change reality—indeed in our world there is no clearer or more radical opposition than that between thinking and doing—the principles by which we act and the criteria by which we judge and conduct our lives depend ultimately on the life of the mind. (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.II)

This quote condenses many of the Arendtian themes: natality, *vita activa*, the configuration once more of the life of the mind. It also reveals how the abovementioned reorganisation is accomplished by establishing a guiding link between all human doings. *Vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* are a continuum in which what has traditionally been presented as contemplation is inserted within the realm of human affairs. Labour, work and action, which

are incidental issues in *The Life of the Mind*, are nevertheless crucially linked to the realm of the life of the mind, not under the form of a hierarchy but rather in relation to the possibility of a strictly mental transcendence. Like birth and death, the labour, work and action triad is part of the conditions of existence. Thinking allows a mental beyond to the extent that it provides the possibility of an exploration, as Arendt explains. However, and this is the crucial point in Arendt's account of thinking and, as will be seen, of imagination, thinking has to be grounded in the realm of human affairs. To do so, Arendt introduces what will become the second and third part of *The Life of the Mind*: judging and willing. By judging, the life of the mind is cast towards the quest for the meaning of the past; by willing, it is the future and the possibility to undertake projects which is at stake. So, if thinking is defined by Arendt as the examination of what happens, to recall her question in relation to evildoing, it is the specific mental capabilities of judging and willing that intervene to an important extent to ground the life of the mind in the world.

The life of the mind cannot therefore be separated from its worldly character and remains linked to the *vita activa* since it allows a moral reflection on the past through judgement and a speculation on the future, for human beings can even "will the impossible". It is precisely this insertion of mental activity within a temporary span that, by grounding human activity in the world, embeds a political dimension which avoids entering the desert of contemplation, a metaphor again brought into *The Life of the Mind* by quoting Hugh of St. Victor, a twelfth century medieval author: "the active one goes on in public, the contemplative one in the 'desert'" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Introduction). By drawing on Jaspers' notion of boundary situations, Arendt explains how "whenever I transcend the limits of my own life span and begin to reflect on this past, judging it, and this future, forming projects of the will, thinking ceases to be a politically marginal activity" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.III). Lying in between the past and the future, thinking acquires its political dimension by means of which the past can be reflected on and judged and a specific future can be willed. It is through this temporal insertion, then, that thinking finds its connection to worldly action. In relation to maintaining the togetherness of the world, Arendt brings in her distinction between solitude and loneliness. As she puts it,

> I call this existential state in which I keep myself company "solitude" to distinguish it from "loneliness," where I am also alone but now deserted not only by human company but also by the possible company of myself. It is only in loneliness that I feel deprived of human company, and it is only in the acute awareness of such deprivation that men ever exist really in the singular, as it is perhaps only in dreams or in madness that they fully realize the unbearable and "unutterable horror"

> [quoting Kant in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*] of this state. (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.II)

The place of imagination

What is the place of imagination within the triad of mental activities? In *The Human Condition*, as explained in Chapter Four, action emerged as the quintessential characteristic of the human condition itself. Indeed, and to put it briefly now, acting actualises our worldly being-together-with-others. *The Life of the Mind* accords a similar position to the active and grounded thinking seen above. Thinking is "the de-materialized quintessence of being alive" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch. III), even to the extent that although "a life without thinking is quite possible; it then fails to develop its own essence—it is not merely meaningless; it is not fully alive" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch. III). Similarly, imagination, despite not being at the core of Arendt's explanation, is presented as pivotal in relation to critical thinking and is even a central part of what it means to be human. As Yeung notes in his work on the "priority of imagination" (Yeung, 2017, p.346), for Arendt, "lack of imagination prevents people from existing" (Arendt, 1983, p.97).

What are the contours of the Arendtian notion of imagination? While Aristotle was key in relation to building Arendt's conceptualisation of the *vita activa*, Kant's heritage is pivotal in her depiction of the life of the mind and, more specifically, it is the starting point of her reflection on imagination. While for Kant imagination is the "power of presenting an object in intuition even without the object's being present" (Kant, 1996, p.191), Arendt turns to a similar definition which also transforms imagination into a gift. It is indeed an indispensable gift which makes possible mental activity as a whole. As Arendt explains,

> every mental act rests on the mind's faculty of having present to itself what is absent from the senses. Re-presentation, making present what is actually absent, is the mind's unique gift, and since our whole mental terminology is based on metaphors drawn from vision's experience, this gift is called imagination, defined by Kant as "the faculty of intuition even without the presence of the object." (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.II)

This gift is not only the vehicle which drives mental activity; it is also the condition by means of which thinking can be inserted within the temporal axis referred to above: "only because of the mind's capacity for making present what is absent can we say 'no more' and constitute a past for ourselves, or say 'not yet' and get ready for a future" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.II). This is the dimension of gift, specifically connected for Arendt to the role played by imagination in relation to our capability to judge. Thus, imagination seems key to providing

an answer to the opening interrogations of *The Life of* the Mind, the gift that makes it possible to act morally. As is shown next, enacting imagination in thinking implies an exploration in which I am with myself and then I am able to displace my position to others' perspectives. By doing so, I can make a judgment and, on its grounds, I am able to act morally.

Only the first page of *Judging* had been written when Arendt died in 1975, yet she had already examined the issue in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* and in a specific seminar on imagination, both delivered at the New School for Social Research in 1970. Reading *The Life of the Mind* in relation to these works makes it possible to identify the place of imagination in Arendt's framework and how she connects thinking and judging by turning to Kant. How is thinking connected to judgement through imagination? Arendt makes clear in the first place the centrality of imagination. As she puts it, "the role of imagination for our cognitive faculties is perhaps the greatest discovery Kant made in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For our purposes it is best to turn to the 'Schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding'. To anticipate: the same faculty, imagination, which provides schemata for cognition, provides examples for judgment" (Arendt, 1992, p.80). Imagination appears as the key allowing the synthesis between intuition and concepts, as Arendt explains by quoting Kant: "the way imagination produces the synthesis is by 'providing an image for a concept'. Such an image is called a 'schema'" (Arendt, 1992, p.81). So, imagination plays a role in connecting the multiple experiences of labour with the schema that enables the identification of such activities as labour and also its evaluation. In other words, because we have a specific schema of labour, it can be recognised and assessed. As Arendt puts it: "the point of the matter is that without a 'schema' one can never recognize anything" (Arendt, 1992, p.81). Imagination, then, implies making what is absent, this "schema", present in order to allow the thinking process itself.

In his study on Arendt's perspective on imagination, Yeung identifies three pivotal issues in her explanation of judgement that show, as noted, the central place of imagination. Based on this work, the relevance of Arendt on imagination for the purposes of this dissertation can be underscored. Having synthesised Arendt's views throughout a number of texts, Yeung shows how judgement draws on a specific appropriation of three different concepts: critical thinking, enlarged mentality and distant evaluation (Yeung, 2017). The three of them can indeed be traced in the following quote from Arendt, in which the Kantian notion of "enlarged mentality" is brought in. As she explains,

> the 'enlargement of the mind' plays a crucial role in the *Critique of Judgment*. It is accomplished by 'comparing our judgment with the possible rather than the actual judgment of others, and by putting ourselves in the place of any other man.' The faculty which makes this possible is called imagination . . . Critical thinking is possible only where the standpoints of all others are open to inspection. Hence, critical thinking while still a solitary business has not cut itself off from 'all others.' . . . [By] force of imagination it makes the others present and thus moves potentially in a space which is public, open to all sides; in other words, it adopts the position of Kant's world citizen. To think with the enlarged mentality—that means you train your imagination to go visiting. . . . (Arendt, 1978, pt.Appendix / Judging)

Yeung argues that for Arendt, thinking critically is concerned with "the question whether the thinking subject can deliberate freely, independently and impartially or not" (Yeung, 2017, p.350). As Arendt's quote shows, this freedom entails a move, which can even be read in spatial terms as it implies one's distancing from one's own position, one's personal standpoint. If imagination embeds a temporal dimension in thought, as explained above, it equally casts thinking towards a spatial displacement. By means of it, one can distance oneself from one's perspective and "go visiting" others, meaning others' perspectives. Arendt contends that "to think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting" (Arendt, 1992, p.43). Thanks to imagination, thinking intervenes in the being-together-with-others and takes part, as Arendt underlines, in the public realm, understood as the space built and shared with others. Thus by enacting an enlarged mentality, critical thinking makes it possible to achieve the third move in Yeung's account, namely evaluating with distance. As he explains by quoting Arendt in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, "the judging subject as a spectator, who by nature reflects upon the events with distance, employs not only 'a position of the onlooker'" (Yeung, 2017, p.352) but also "the idea of progress, the hope for future, where one judges the event according to the promise it holds for the generations to come" (Arendt, 1992, p.54). Imagination, then, allows a displacement oriented to making a judgement on the grounds of the visit to others' perspectives with implications in terms of the future and hope for the others that succeed the thinking-judging-willing subject on earth.

A fourth dimension implied in Arendt's study of judgement can be added to Yeung's analysis: exemplary validity, again introduced in connection with Kant. If imagination implies a visit to different standpoints, discerning right from wrong and, on these grounds, making a decision that can hold out a project of hope for future generations requires the criterion of exemplarity. As Beiner notes in his Preface to Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, "the notion of exemplary validity that emerges in the third *Critique* and the doctrine of the

Schematism in the first *Critique* are linked by the role of imagination, which is fundamental to both, providing schemata for cognition as well as examples for judgment" (Beiner & Arendt, 1992, p.viii). Indeed, it is by introducing Kant's conceptualisation of exemplary validity that Arendt resolves what she presents as "the chief difficulty in judgment [which] is that it is 'the faculty of thinking the particular': but to think means to generalize, hence it is the faculty of mysteriously combining the particular and the general" (Arendt, 1992, p.76). So at some point, the visit of imagination reaches its end and finds its final destination in the best example. As Arendt puts it,

> how, for instance, is one able to judge, to evaluate, an act as courageous? When judging, one says spontaneously, without any derivations from general rules, 'This man has courage.' If one were a Greek, one would have in 'the depths of one's mind' the example of Achilles. Imagination is again necessary: one must have Achilles present even though he certainly is absent. (Arendt, 1992, p.84)

This same exercise of identifying examples finds its translation at different stages in the Arendtian *oeuvre*; the reflections of *Men in Dark Times* and also the narration of Rahel Varnhagen's life, both works mentioned in Chapter Four, are an expression of the exemplarity of "some men and women, in their lives and their works" (Arendt, 1983, p.ix) from whom illumination can be expected.

For the purposes of this research, Arendt's reflection on thinking and imagination seems relevant from a number of perspectives. First, it brings to the foreground the necessity to recover thinking. While the society of labourers and jobholders exerts its domination through the repetition of behaviour in the context of an endless movement of production/consumption which endangers the stability to sustain the construction of a human world, thinking is a necessary and urgent "out of order". As Arendt explains, "thinking is always out of order, interrupts all ordinary activities and is interrupted by them" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.IV). This interruption can be, in itself, a disruption of the order of motion, a common feature of Arendt's depiction of totalitarian domination and labouring societies. It is within the framework of the temporary suspension of the flow of events that the visit which imagination implies can be fostered. This visit might allow a spatial and temporal displacement in search of examples of construction of a world articulated more around acting rather than labouring and working. Both the past and the present are available to visit to make present what is absent and project the future. In relation to the past, Arendt's work shows how a different reading of the philosophical tradition might inaugurate new beginnings. Yet we can also add to the Arendtian account that the present may already be visited. As seen in Chapter Four in relation to Frayne's study, incipient exemplary examples

of refusals of work can be found in the here and now. While that chapter referred to the path leading from being a pariah to becoming a hero in Arendtian terminology, now the question of exemplar validity can be added. Arendt's account of imagination suggests, then, that within this visit a mental move has to be made. Critically thinking about the society of labourers and jobholders implies a distancing of one's own labouring dimension, which has become an order that thought can momentarily suspend. By recovering an enlarged mentality, those perspectives that historically or currently have distanced themselves from labour can be explored. In finding examples of exemplar validity, finally, a judgement can be made and a future willed.

Of course, the conclusion of this first section, devoted to examining the possibilities of Arendt's notion of imagination in building an emancipatory project, is not that the society of labourers and jobholders can be overcome only by thinking and imagining. What should instead be the conclusion is that as already noted, a new beginning can hardly be expected without the enactment of imagination. As Arendt puts it, "imagination, therefore, which transforms a visible object into an invisible image, fit to be stored in the mind, is the condition *sine qua non* for providing the mind with suitable thought-objects" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Chap.II).

5.2. Bounded imagination

While Arendt's perspective of imagination provides relevant insights in order to think about post-work scenarios, this chapter also has to deal with the analysis of its limitations for the purposes of this research which, as will be shown, derive from an overarching concern throughout the whole of her *oeuvre*: the disappearance of the world. This preoccupation relates to the emergence of the mass within totalitarian regimes and on the reduction of human beings to their condition of labourers and jobholders in the context of labouring societies. When it comes to the examination of mental activities, Arendt again identifies what is at stake in terms of worldliness. To put it briefly in Arendt's own words, "the trouble is that the thinking ego, as we have seen—in distinction from the self that, of course, exists in every thinker, too—has no urge to appear in the world of appearances" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One Ch.III). Indeed, thinking, despite Arendt's efforts to set a worldly temporal and spatial grounding, implies a dangerous withdrawal which is at the heart of her concerns linked to the experience of totalitarianism. Disappearing from the world of appearances, the space of

human affairs that is shared with others, endangers Arendt's perspective of the world, grounded, as we have already seen, in the display of the who of each in the common space.

As noted above, the cruciality of this concern can be followed throughout many of Arendt's works, no matter the issue that is addressed. At its origins lies the experience of the withdrawal of philosophy in 1933, leading Arendt to a rupture she explained in her 1964 interview with Gaus: "I have said good-bye to philosophy once and for all" (Arendt, 2005a, p.2). A major cornerstone of this disappointment with what she refers to, quoting Kant, as "professional thinkers" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.III) is her rupture with the pre-war intellectual milieu and in particular in her contention with Heidegger. As Arendt says in *Heidegger at Eighty*, he once represented "the idea of a passionate thinking, in which thinking and aliveness become one" (Arendt, 1971) but succumbed to the dangers of "taking up this wondering as one's permanent abode" (Arendt, 1971). Putting it very briefly in this quote, Arendt illuminates the twofold dimension of thinking. Firstly, thinking goes hand in hand with life itself; secondly, isolation is at stake if thinking loses the grounding in the realm of human affairs.

Arendt's perspective on mental activities cannot be fully grasped without this background, which leads her to strive

> to get hold of the question [by] look(ing) for a model, an example of a thinker who was not a professional, who in his person unified two apparently contradictory passions, for thinking and acting—not in the sense of being eager to apply his thoughts or to establish theoretical standards for action but in the much more relevant sense of being equally at home in both spheres and able to move from one sphere to the other with the greatest apparent ease, very much as we ourselves constantly move back and forth between experiences in the world of appearances and the need for reflecting on them. (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.III)

This exemplary validity was found in Socrates. However, when it comes to imagination and as this section shows, "getting hold of the question", to use Arendt's expression, encounters difficulties that undermine the potentials of imagination itself. Indeed, imagination, despite its conceptualisation as a go visiting, implies a withdrawal Arendt is well aware of. In relation to her characterisation as a gift, she continues:

> … but this is possible for the mind only after it has withdrawn from the present and the urgencies of everyday life. (…) The will transforms the desire into an intention. And judgment, finally, be it aesthetic or legal or moral, presupposes a definitely "unnatural" and deliberate withdrawal from involvement and the partiality of immediate interests as they are given by my position in the world and the part I play in it. (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.II)

Arendt's account of imagination, then, moves on in two directions. On the one hand, it is no doubt a matter of open exploration; on the other, this visit is nevertheless limited, for "thought itself arises out of incidents of living experience and must remain bound to them as the only guideposts by which to take its bearings" (Arendt, 1968a, p.14). Bearing this in mind, this section is devoted to explaining how Arendt attempts to solve the unavoidable withdrawal which imagination implies with the equally indispensable grounding in the world. To do so, three issues are dealt with. Firstly, the theoretical move by means of which Arendt addresses "thinking and the dangers of disorientation" (Biser, 2014, p.519) is examined. Secondly, Tyner's analysis of the Arendtian "bounded imagination" (Tyner, 2017, p.253) is explored. Lastly, Arendt's insertion within current utopian debates is discussed.

Thinking and the dangers of disorientation

In his examination of the relation between thinking and disorientation in Arendt's *oeuvre*, Biser refers to two different versions of thinking. As opposed to Eichmann's thoughtlessness, Socrates is, as we have seen above, the exemplary figure of an active thinking. Yet as Biser points out, Arendt finds in Heidegger the representation of a thinking which, transformed into a "permanent abode" as already quoted, implies a disorientation opening the path to political catastrophes. It is by introducing Heidegger within the more usual contraposition between Socrates and Eichmann that Biser maintains his argument: for Arendt, thinking requires guideposts, to the same extent that an aeroplane, to use his metaphor, requires navigation. As he underlines, the issue of disorientation appears in various works as a consequence of a permanent state of motion. It is indeed on the grounds of this endless movement that Chapter One identified one of the lines of continuity between totalitarian domination and the society of labourers and jobholders and argued the relation between movement and loss of the world. In this context, Biser notes that "whereas Heidegger wants to connect the activities of holding steady and sheltering to thinking itself, for Arendt, thinking can never offer the 'guide-posts of reliability' so vital for taking our bearings" (Biser, 2014, p.528), which he says include reality and promises as "islands of certainty in an ocean of uncertainty" (Arendt, 1998, p.244), as Arendt herself puts it in *The Human Condition*.

For the purposes of this research, concerned at this point with the possibilities of imagining an overcoming of the society of labourers and jobholders, Arendt's focus on stability against disorientation is relevant. Indeed, if imagining – in the Arendtian sense of making present what is absent – implies a temporal withdrawal from the here and now of the world, certainly some safeguards might be required in order to preserve a thinking grounded in the world.

However, the issue at stake is the extent to which these safeguards enable thinking and imagining to display their impulse to build an emancipatory proposal and, more precisely, an emancipation from the core of the world which is being thought: human beings' labouring dimension. Here Biser suggests an interpretation of Arendt's view of stabilisation that might be of interest: rather than fixedness, it has to do with the "activity of maintaining ourselves within [change]" (Biser, 2014, p.523). As he asserts, "to discuss Arendt and stability in the first sense—as if stability inhibits change—would clearly be misleading" (Biser, 2014, p.523). Indeed, not only Arendt's account of action, as he explains, but also her views on natality as unpredictable new beginnings are certainly incompatible with fixedness. The question would be, then, how change can be navigated in order to avoid the "experience of being surrounded by a world that refuses to stand still long enough for us to make sense of it" (Biser, 2014, p.521). If, as Biser suggests, reality is our "primary bearing" (Biser, 2014, p.528), the process of changing reality, via action or via active thinking, implies a certain state of instability which has to be reconciled with the openness to change that actions and new beginnings entail.

While the issue of reality as a guidepost raises problems, Biser's explanation of Arendt's effort to set safeguards for thinking remains equally useful to the extent that it maintains the view of a form of thinking which is far from a withdrawal. Indeed, he identifies three fundamental elements which ground thinking in reality. The first is the temporal limitation of the process of thinking itself. Secondly, the "critical capacity" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.I) thinking bears in itself. And lastly, the connection between language and thought which, rather than a safeguard, appears to be a dissolution of the problem of withdrawal. As Arendt puts it, "analogies, metaphors, and emblems are the threads by which the mind holds on to the world even when, absent-mindedly, it has lost direct contact with it, and they guarantee the unity of human experience" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.II).

Seen from this perspective, the linguistic dimension of thinking and its communicability constitute a single reality in which the world of thought and the world of appearances are reunited. Instead of two worlds, the realm of thought is separated from the realm of appearances only in terms of visibility. To the extent that I communicate what I think, both worlds are merged into one another. Then, language and communicability become the most reliable safeguards of thinking as the permanent abode Arendt rejects. The communication of thought guarantees its grounding in the world, its being displayed to others to the same extent that it appears, through words, to the thinking self. Thus, when introducing language

and communicability, the question of withdrawal is in a way dissolved. As Arendt concludes, "there are not two worlds because metaphor unites them" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.II).

Bounded imagination

While Biser's analysis has proved useful in understanding Arendt's concerns with disorientation in relation to the thinking activity and her preoccupation in setting safeguards and guideposts, Tyner's works on the notion of "bounded imagination" (Tyner, 2014, 2017) are equally relevant. As was the case for thinking, Arendt strives in different ways to ground imagination in reality. Before looking at Tyner's conceptualisation, it will be useful to bring in Arendt's distinction between productive and reproductive imagination. As she puts it,

> the ability to create fictive entities in your mind, such as the unicorn and the centaur, or the fictitious characters of a story, an ability usually called productive imagination, is actually entirely dependent upon the so-called reproductive imagination; in "productive" imagination, elements from the visible world are rearranged, and this is possible because the elements, now so freely handled, have already gone through the de-sensing process of thinking. (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.II)

Now, following Tyner, imagination is further bounded by reality from a number of perspectives. First, due to its relation to judgement; as explained in Section One, imagination allows the visit which provides us with exemplary figures. This visit, then, is framed in Arendt's perspective within a goal: the identification of exemplary figures that make it possible to form a judgement. The visit is not boundless, but instead limited by the search for "meaningful exemplars—whose validity derives from their manifestation in reality" (Tyner, 2017, p.527). So, the examples that can be used are bounded by the experience of reality. Examples can be identified to the extent that they have existed in reality and therefore allow a solid ground for judgement. What are the implications of this bounding by reality in terms of imagining a different world? Or in other words, and recalling the question posed in relation to thinking, what is the extent of the change that at the same time preserves a link with reality? As Tyner puts it,

> actors, on Arendt's account, also need the capacity to imagine a new world in place of the one that they presently inhabit. This new world, though, cannot be so distinct from the world that exists as to require excessively destructive practices to bring it about. Rather, Arendt promotes the exercise of bounded imagination that brings into focus a world that can be realized through limited action. (Tyner, 2017, p.528)

Again, this account of imagination seems to raise problems in its conciliation with Arendt's position on action and new beginnings. While Arendt recognises the value of imagination in

establishing the new, how much new that imagination can afford remains unclear. For this reason, it is of interest at this stage to deal with Arendt's position on utopia and her insertion within current utopian debates. If imagination allows making present what is absent, but at the same time reality is an unavoidable horizon in thinking, imagining and judging, what then is the value of Arendt's perspective for building substantial change? In other words, and in relation to the issue examined in this research: does the link to reality constitute a definite limitation in overcoming the society of labourers and jobholders?

Utopia

As explained above, Arendt's account of imagination is of interest for this research as it makes it possible to focus on the idea of bringing to the present what is absent, that is to say, to think about a world that could be organised otherwise. Also, its exploring dimension, by means of which one is displaced from one's own position in search of exemplary figures that allow making judgements and wills, seems relevant. Indeed, work-centred societies, rather than being accepted as the only possible reality as currently seems to be the case, should be judged and challenged on the grounds of exemplary figures that can be identified in the past and present and willed for the future. However, Arendt's position raises issues that might limit the potential of her perspective on imagination. Her cautions against a form of thinking disconnected from the realm of human affairs posit limitations in the sense that "everything is [not] possible" (Arendt, 1979, p.304). In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, there are many statements related to the need to limit what can be done. For example, in the Preface to the First Edition, Arendt says that "it is as though mankind had divided itself between those who believe in human omnipotence (who think that everything is possible if one knows how to organize masses for it) and those for whom powerlessness has become the major experience of their lives" (Arendt, 1979, pt.Preface to the First Edition). While limiting the horizon of human action is indeed indispensable to counter the dynamics of processes of domination, this final part seeks to assess the extent to which Arendt's claim might entail problems in imagining and projecting emancipatory proposals. To do so, Arendt's points of connection and disconnection with the issue of utopia are examined next.

Given that this chapter explores the potential and limitations of Arendt's account of imagination, it is also useful to deal with her position on utopia, a question she referred to in passing throughout her *oeuvre*. A simple reference to the traditional account of utopia, which appears "simultaneously [as] a non-place (utopia) and a good place (eutopia)" (Vieira, 2010,

p.5) anticipates what may be another core problem in integrating utopian language in Arendt's theorisation. It is not only the "utopian hubris" (Arendt, 1998, p.201) that is questioned within Arendt's frame of work. Also, and for the reasons set out earlier in this chapter, utopia as a non-place calls into question another pivotal point in Arendt's perspective, namely her striving to firmly anchor mental activities in this world. Thus, thinking a non-place seems incompatible with her account.

What is Arendt's reflection on utopia? In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt refers to the issue of omnipotence as "the totalitarian Utopia of world rule" (Arendt, 1979, p.421). It is, however, in *The Human Condition* where, out of the works examined in this research, Arendt reveals more about her vision of utopia and, specifically, of the kind of utopia transforming the place of labour and work. It is indeed in the context of her examination of Marx that Arendt states:

> the danger that the modern age's emancipation of labor will not only fail to usher in an age of freedom for all but will result, on the contrary, in forcing all mankind for the first time under the yoke of necessity, was already clearly perceived by Marx when he insisted that the aim of a revolution could not possibly be the already-accomplished emancipation of the laboring classes, but must consist in the emancipation of man from labor. At first glance, this aim seems utopian, and the only strictly utopian element in Marx's teachings. Emancipation from labor, in Marx's own terms, is emancipation from necessity, and this would ultimately mean emancipation from consumption as well, that is, from the metabolism with nature which is the very condition of human life. Yet the developments of the last decade, and especially the possibilities opened up through the further development of automation, give us reason to wonder whether the utopia of yesterday will not turn into the reality of tomorrow, so that eventually only the effort of consumption will be left of "the toil and trouble" inherent in the biological cycle to whose motor human life is bound. (Arendt, 1998, p.130)

Here, Arendt refers to the emancipation of labour as Marx's utopia. Although in other parts of this work he is criticised for considering human beings in terms of *animal laborans*, an issue that has already been examined in previous chapters, Arendt seems in this case to share the Marxian perspective on emancipation from labour. So emancipation from labour in the sense of necessity, of the endless cycle of production/consumption, could then be interpreted as an Arendtian utopia and possibly one of the points of connection with Marx. In a footnote in relation to *La Condition ouvrière,* she seems to agree when Weil "concludes that the hope for an eventual liberation from labor and necessity is the only utopian element of Marxism and at the same time the actual motor of all Marx-inspired revolutionary labor movements" (Arendt, 1998, p.328) . However, Arendt adds, in relation to this utopian perspective: "it is the 'opium of the people' which Marx had believed religion to be" (Arendt, 1998, p.328). As

seen in previous chapters, Arendt is indeed reading Marx's project as a liberation from labour but not as a possible restoration of the acting dimension of human beings, since for her Marx "foresaw that 'socialized men' would spend their freedom from laboring in those strictly private and essentially worldless activities that we now call 'hobbies'" (Arendt, 1998, p.118). In this respect, Marx's utopia is for Arendt rather a dystopia, similar to the prospect of an automated world which eliminates labour to multiply consumption.

Beyond Arendt's view on Marx's proposal, her perspective on utopia is hampered by two other issues. On the one hand, utopia is referred to as a "utopian hubris" (Arendt, 1998, p.201) linked for Arendt to a dangerous attempt to go beyond the limitations of the human condition itself which cannot aspire to omnipotence, again in connection to the "everything is possible" featuring in totalitarianism. On the other hand, Arendt criticises utopia for displaying a normative dimension based on what ought to be. In *The Life of the Mind*, she asks: "yet isn't it clear to everyone that the world is not, and has never been, what it ought to be? And who knows, or has ever known, what this 'ought' should be? The 'ought' is Utopian; it has no proper topos or place in the world" (Arendt, 1998, pt.One, Conclusion). Reading this quote in relation to what has already been set out in this research makes it possible to identify the extent to which utopia for Arendt puts the pivotal concepts of her thought at risk. First, utopia is the manifestation of an omnipotence which makes human beings exceed the limitations of the human condition itself, the safeguards that ground human lives in the world. Second, utopia, in its prescriptive dimension, implies an "ought" incompatible with the unpredictability of human action and its external incompleteness in terms of content. Finally, an external prescription of what the world should be collides with the decisions that potentially can be made in the in-between of the public realm. As seen in previous chapters, in fact the Arendtian notion of action cannot be explained in terms of content and, therefore, leaves out of its scope a possible "ought".

These reasons explain in part the fact that Arendt has been repeatedly characterised as an anti-utopian thinker. Jacoby Russell (2011), for example, includes Arendt within the positions held by a group of thinkers who, disenchanted with communism and having gone through the experience of totalitarianism, ended up equating utopia, Marxism and totalitarianism. In a similar line, Ruth Levitas situates Arendt within an anti-utopianism tradition starting with Friedrich von Hayek and continued by Karl Popper, Jacob Talmon, Isaiah Berlin and Arendt herself. In the case of Arendt, Levitas notes that Arendt "argued that totalitarianism implied

terror for its own sake, together with the intention to transform human nature" (Levitas, 2013, p.7).

Against these views, Key Hiruta advocates a more nuanced analysis of Arendt's relation to utopia by focusing on her depiction of an ideal polity in her analysis of the American Revolution. Although he concedes the difficulties of sustaining an abstract utopia within her frame of thought, he argues that Arendt's America is a "half-realised" utopia. As he puts it,

> her America was a somewhat schizophrenic entity, a half-realised utopia in recurring crisis; it was constantly pulled by various deleterious 'social' forces (in Arendt's sense of the term) unleashed by modernity such as individualism, materialism and consumerism, while continually correcting itself by re-enacting what she called the 'revolutionary spirit'. America, for her, was a quintessential modern free republic, with all the contradictions characterising modernity itself. Yet it was, in her words, 'the only country where a republic at least still has a chance'. (Hiruta, 2016, p.12)

As he continues, Arendt explicitly showed a certain openness towards the council system as a form of government that she herself depicts as the "people's utopia" (Arendt, 1972, p.231), against "pure utopia" or "the utopia of theoreticians and ideologies" (Arendt, 1972, p.231). It is, then, in search of political organisation from below that Arendt seems to have conducted her own exercise of imagination, visiting different forms of spontaneous kinds of political articulation of the will of diverse groups in the past and in her own times and projecting them into the future. In doing so, and following Hiruta, it can be concluded that a certain form of utopia, grounded in worldly action, has a place in Arendt's thought. It is indeed a relevant issue in Arendt's *oeuvre*, as Shmuel Lederman's (2019) investigation shows, although, as he points out, there seems to be a "common tendency among commentators to regard Arendt's support to the council system as a romantic utopia Arendt herself did not take seriously"(Lederman, 2019, p.3).

This chapter has explored the place of imagination in Arendt's thought and has underlined some of its potentials and weaknesses for this research. Amongst its potentials lie the possibilities of overcoming labouring societies by visiting individual lives or collective forms of social organisation that challenge work-centred societies. Amongst its weaknesses, the safeguards of this visit may also be limitations when it comes to imagining a post-work scenario. Indeed, in her perspective, reality seems to be, as Arendt said of truth, "what we cannot change; metaphorically, it is the ground on which we stand and the sky that stretches above us" (Arendt, 1968c, p.264).

Coming back to Hiruta, it is true that Arendt's *oeuvre* allows reading the actualisation of a revolutionary spirit as a certain utopia. However, this spirit does not deal with the future of labour under the form of a transformation, as Marcuse proposed by introducing play, or under the form of its end. As Hiruta outlines, Arendt is instead referring to

> political freedom conceptualized as the exercise of the distinctly human capacity to act in the public realm and begin something new; the habit of forming voluntary associations to address matters of public concerns in a pragmatic and non-partisan fashion; the awareness of, and a propensity for, public happiness (as distinct from private welfare) arising out of the enjoyable experience of 'discussions, […] deliberations, and the making of decisions' over public business; the ambition to excel accompanied by the desire to see the excellence of others working towards a shared political goal; and trust in the value of the plurality of opinions and the resulting opposition to the rule of unanimous public opinion. (Hiruta, 2016, p.13)

No mention, then, of an emancipation of labour which, despite Arendt's praise of action as the main characteristic of human beings as bearers of the ability to start something new, is seen at best with caution. As referred to in previous chapters, *The Human Condition* starts with the warning about a "a society of laborers which is about to be liberated from the fetters of labor, and this society does no longer know of those other higher and more meaningful activities for the sake of which this freedom would deserve to be won" (Arendt, 1998, p.5). As worst, and as already mentioned in this chapter, it is the "opium of the people" (Arendt, 1998, p.328) which, according to Arendt, Marx failed to see.

While one of the issues focused on in *The Human Condition* has to do precisely with the perspective of a society that might be dramatically transformed by automation, this silence on the prospects of labour is difficult to understand. Certainly, as Margaret Canovan points out, Arendt, following her account of the unpredictability of action, "emphatically denied that her role as a political thinker was to propose a blueprint for the future or to tell anyone what to do" (Canovan, 1998, pt.Introduction). However, and this chapter ends by addressing this final issue, it might be that Arendt's dismissal of the question of the satisfaction of needs, linked to her position on the "rise of the social" (Arendt, 1998, p.38), lies at the origin of the difficulties in visiting a post-work world. Indeed, a single sentence by Arendt in *On Revolution* makes it possible to understand the reason why issues concerning necessity are not part of the revolutionary spirit Hiruta refers to. As she puts it in relation to the French Revolution, "it was necessity, the urgent needs of the people, that unleashed the terror and sent the Revolution to its doom" (Arendt, 1990a, p.60).

Indeed, the insertion of the discourse of necessity within political discourse is connected to Arendt's conceptualisation of society and the social. It has already been mentioned that for Arendt, a crucial step in the rupture of the Greek philosophical tradition lies in a distortion in the translation of Aristotle's notion of *bios politikos* as social animal, taken first, as she explains in *The Human Condition*, by Aquinas. In her view, "more than any elaborate theory, this unconscious substitution of the social for the political betrays the extent to which the original Greek understanding of politics had been lost" (Arendt, 1998, p.22). For Arendt, the realm of the social, linked to the realm of necessity and needs, "neither private nor public" (Arendt, 1998, p.28), has in the modern age blurred the distinction between the private issues of the *oikos* and the public concerns of the *polis*. As a consequence, citizenship has been transformed into "the collective of families economically organized into the facsimile of one super-human family [which is] what we call 'society'" (Arendt, 1998, p.28). In the vocabulary of the *vita activa*, the social marks the crucial point by which labour attempts to replace action, freedom is blurred by necessity and, at the very end, human life is substituted by animal life. By excluding the social from political discourse, is Arendt implicitly accepting, as Christopher Homan asks, "the administrative logic that her political theory ostensibly attempts to overcome, the logic that maintains there are spheres of human existence that can be completely left to social engineers who instrumentally solve problems through the practical application of principles of technical authority" (Holman, 2011, p.340)?

To sum up, Arendt provides a potentially useful account of imagination as a mental activity inviting us to think of an otherwise that, maybe against her own approach, can also be applied to thinking about post-work scenarios. However, Arendt's perspective on the unpredictability of action and on the amplification of the social are obstacles for a necessarily extended theorisation of the "ought" of an action-centred society.

Chapter Six. The end of utopia?

As argued in the previous chapter, Arendt's conceptualisation of imagination as a visit making it possible to trace figures of exemplary validity has both potentials and limitations for the purposes of this research. While the idea of visiting is inspiring in imagining a beyond labouring society, the safeguards Arendt herself imposes on this visit seem to limit its potential. Therefore, her account leaves unsolved the question posed in the third part of this investigation, namely whether and in what way imagination is a crucial impulse in articulating this beyond. The sixth and last chapter of this research takes up Marcuse's *oeuvre* again in order to investigate whether his account of imagination can ground the "out of order" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.IV) at stake in challenging work-centred societies. It is no accident that the issue of imagination is relevant in much of his work as increasing research shows (Feenberg, 2018a; Raulet, 1992, 2004; Reitz, 2000; Tally, 2010, 2011).

The place of imagination within the dynamics of both domination and emancipation is key in the Marcusean perspective. In examining one-dimensionality, Marcuse culminated the study on the extent of introjection of domination by referring to the annulment of imagination. The "within" dealt with in Chapter Two is at the core of one-dimensionality (and remains equally relevant, as will be shown, for enacting imagination). In this particular reading, alternatives cannot even be imagined, for domination implies the deprivation of the revolutionary potential of imagination. As he puts it,

> …it is precisely this new consciousness, this "space within," the space for the transcending historical practice, which is being barred by a society in which subjects as well as objects constitute instrumentalities in a whole that has its raison d'être in the accomplishments of its overpowering productivity. Its supreme promise is an ever-more-comfortable life for an ever-growing number of people who, in a strict sense, cannot imagine a qualitatively different universe of discourse and action, for the capacity to contain and manipulate subversive imagination and effort is an integral part of the given society. (Marcuse, 2002, p.26)

This chapter addresses some of the issues raised in this quote. The first section deals with the "subversive" (Marcuse, 2002, p.26), in Marcuse's words, potential of imagination in order to understand the extent to which the Marcusean imagination makes it possible, or not, to expand Arendt's visit. The centrality of imagination in Marcuse's thought is analysed by bringing in the problem of the "negative dialectics of imagination" (Raulet, 2004, p.114). In contrast to Raulet, for whom the emancipatory potential of his position on imagination is imprisoned within the limits of one-dimensionality, it will be shown how Marcuse's specific

recherche du temps perdu sustains his claim for a "new sensibility" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.19) and provides a space beyond one-dimensionality.

The second section looks at what is described as "the map of an ought". As will be argued, Marcuse's account completes the problems identified in Arendt's position on imagination by, precisely, suggesting an "ought". As we have seen in the previous chapter, Arendt was cautious in formulating a specific ought capable of depicting the overcoming of labouring societies. Instead, Marcuse describes in many of his works a "qualitatively different universe of discourse and action" (Marcuse, 2002, p.26), which indeed appears as the "what" that is the object of imagination. In contrast to Arendt, for whom the unpredictability and spontaneity of human action implies difficulties for a prescriptive utopia, part of Marcuse's works focus on the depiction of an ought of emancipation in which a beyond alienated labour is evoked, expanding on the work as play position examined in Chapter Three. Among the perspectives which might guide the general approach to this chapter and in order to follow Arendt's metaphor of the visit, this section is inspired by Tally's spatial approach to Marcuse. By connecting Jameson's notion of "cognitive mapping" (Jameson, 1988) to the Marcusean prospects of a "life without anxiety" (Marcuse, 1974, p.150), Tally highlights the idea of an "imaginative map" (Tally, 2010, p.6) in the Marcusean analysis. By navigating the visit with a Marcusean map, then, it is suggested that the Arendtian imagination expands its possibilities while remaining grounded in the realm of the possible of this world, this being one of Arendt's fundamental concerns.

As was done for Arendt, the third section of this chapter refers to Marcuse's perspective on utopia by examining his position articulated in *The End of Utopia*. Following Levitas (2010), the various perspectives on utopia displayed in the whole of Marcuse's thought are dealt with alongside the difficulties of his claim for a transformation of needs and desires as an indispensable condition for emancipation. This chapter concludes by taking our account of Marcuse to the post-work debates, and addressing some of the criticisms raised against the core of end-of-work imaginaries.

6.1. Imagination and new sensibility

The first section of this chapter examines the place of imagination in Marcuse's thought by engaging with the problem Raulet refers to as "negative dialectics of imagination" (Raulet,

2004, p.114) in order to show how his account of the new sensibility, as developed in *An Essay on Liberation*, asserts an affirmation of Eros which can provide a way out of one-dimensionality. As Raulet explains in relation to *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse's position has to tackle the problem of an "imprisoned imagination" (Raulet, 2004, p.120) since one-dimensionality merges reality and fiction up to the point of making one indistinguishable from the other. In his words,

> if the sphere of the fictional, of the imaginary, is the realm in which the possibility of a different world finds its expression, then this sphere is nonetheless always dependent upon the "system", particularly since imagination has been integrated into it and the system as a whole is itself only a fiction: that false totality that results from the indistinguishability of the real and the fictive. (Raulet, 2004, p.119)

While the issue of the fusion between the fictive and the real is for Raulet a pivotal point Marcuse raises in relation to one-dimensionality, in his view Marcuse further fails in attempting to ground the critical dimension of imagination, either by focusing on a primal memory of gratification in *Eros and Civilization* or by his resort to art in an *Essay on Liberation* and *The Aesthetic Dimension*. As he states,

> the constitutive function of imagination for historical cognition and practice is abandoned in favor of a dualism of art and sensuousness, which Marcuse is only able to transcend to the extent that an autonomous art detached from concrete historical references safeguards the archetypal memories of an originary human nature prior to ontogenic or phylogenic deformation. Marcuse struggled to break free from this dualism in *An Essay on Liberation*. But despite the link suggested by the work's subtitle – *Beyond One-Dimensional Man* – the essay is in fact more of a continuation of *Eros and Civilization*, as becomes clear when Marcuse asserts that 'the new sensibility has become a political factor'. (Raulet, 2004, p.121)

The goal of this section is to assess the extent to which Marcuse's account might nevertheless provide completion to Arendt's perspective by precisely resorting to what for Raulet remains controversial: the "new sensibility" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.23), which appears to be, together with technology, the transformative element leading to emancipation. Following the metaphor of the visit and navigation, can Marcuse's new sensibility be considered as a sort of compass facilitating the search? In answering this question, the place of imagination in Marcuse's perspective and the conceptualisation of the new sensibility as a political factor are addressed.

The centrality of imagination

As has already been suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the place of imagination in Marcuse's thought is crucial in the understanding of domination and emancipation. Even further: critical theory itself cannot do without imagination. As early as 1937, *Philosophy and*

Critical Theory propounds not only its importance but also the issues linked to its potential which Marcuse will examine in subsequent works. Marcuse is clear in affirming how imagination, sometimes referred to as "phantasy", remains linked to philosophy to the extent that following Kant – as was the case for Arendt – it allows the presence of the absent. As he puts it,

> the abyss between rational and present reality cannot be bridged by conceptual thought. In order to retain what is not yet present as a goal in the present, phantasy is required. The essential connection of phantasy with philosophy is evident from the function attributed to it by philosophers, especially Aristotle and Kant, under the title of 'imagination'. Owing to its unique capacity to 'intuit' an object though the latter be not present and to create something new out of given material of cognition, imagination denotes a considerable degree of independence from the given, of freedom amid a world of unfreedom. In surpassing what is present, it can anticipate the future. (Marcuse, 2009e, p.113)

It is thus by means of imagination that the new, a pivotal issue also for Arendt as already seen in this dissertation, can be intuited. So, critical theory, in advancing an emancipatory project, cannot operate without integrating imagination. This is even the case for philosophy itself, if philosophy wants to stay in the realm of human affairs: "without phantasy, all philosophical knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future, which is the only link between philosophy and the real history of mankind" (Marcuse, 2009e, p.114). In this respect, Marcuse's approach to imagination seems to imply from its very beginning a less cautionary perspective in relation to Arendt's position. It is not imagination and its excesses that can lead to a dangerous beyond of the realm of the human affairs. Instead, it is precisely because imagination makes it possible to intuit a future for mankind that the connection with human affairs is ensured.

Philosophy and Critical Theory is equally relevant for it sets out the scope of imagination. In the same way that for Arendt not everything has to be made possible despite being imagined, as Chapter Five explained, imagination finds limits in Marcuse's perspective. In 1937, it is mainly the issue of technology that is alluded to. Although "in phantasy one can imagine anything" (Marcuse, 2009b, p.114), it is the task of critical theory to identify the realm provided by conditions of possibility, which the early Marcuse identifies in technological developments. As he puts it,

> the freedom of imagination disappears to the extent that real freedom becomes a real possibility. The limits of phantasy are thus no longer universal laws of essence (as the last bourgeois theory of knowledge that took seriously the meaning of phantasy so defined them), but technical limits in the strictest sense. They are prescribed by the level of technological development. (Marcuse, 2009b, p.114)

But while technological development was envisaged in 1937 as the fundamental horizon of imagination in quest of emancipatory landscapes, the subsequent perspective in *One-Dimensional Man*, as quoted in the introduction, posits the limits implied by introjection of domination, the imprisoned within Raulet refers to. How to deal, then, with the "chance of the alternatives" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206) if such alternatives can hardly be imagined? The same question is relevant for the purposes of this research, which in Chapter Two referred to the generalised and rarely unquestioned desire for work (Cholbi, 2018) as a repressive preference: what is the space in which to imagine post-work? Does the "new sensibility", the main axis for the later Marcuse to sustain his emancipatory project, become a "landmark experience" (Tally, 2010, p.7) capable of sustaining a challenge to work-centred societies?

While *One-Dimensional Man* notes the difficulties of imagining a beyond, *An Essay on Liberation* takes up the Proustian-inspired "*recherche du temps perdu*" (Marcuse, 1974, p.9) of *Eros and Civilization* to argue the power of imagination as a gateway to the new sensibility. As Tally notes, Marcuse himself points in *An Essay on Liberation* towards a space beyond: "beyond these limits, there is also the space, both physical and mental, for building a realm of freedom which is not that of the present" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.viii). So, if imagination is part of an emancipatory project to the extent that it is part of the beyond domination, how can *le temps perdu* guide it towards the new sensibility? And, first, what is *le temps perdu* Marcuse is referring to?

Le temps perdu

Before examining Marcuse's resort to the key Proustian theme of *le temps perdu* in the context of his analysis of repression and surplus-repression in *Eros and Civilizatio*n, a preliminary remark is of interest. Against the criticisms raised by the Freudian approach held in *Eros*, related to an alleged regression to an infantile stage (referred to in the second chapter of this research), Marcuse is clear in the final pages of *An Essay on Liberation* on the dynamic dimension of the gaze towards the repressed. What is suggested is "not regression to a previous stage of civilization, but return to an imaginary *temps perdu* in the real life of mankind [implying] progress to a stage of civilization where man has learned to ask for the sake of whom or of what he organizes his society" (Marcuse, 1969, p.90). So, Marcuse turns to this *temps perdu* made up of both remembrance and imagination as a quest for meaning. In getting back to *le temps perdu*, the question of the sake of social organisation might be recovered, as he points out in the only reference to the Proustian *oeuvre* in *An Essay on Liberation*.

As Elena Tebano (2002) argues (Tebano, 2002), Marcuse seems to have been reading *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* when dealing with his wife Sophie's death and while working on *Eros*. The manuscript known as the *Proust Notizen* is in fact about the work of Proust, so it is no coincidence that it is part of the vocabulary of *Eros and Civilization* which, as seen in Chapter Two, constitutes a turning point in relation to previous writings. As Tebano says, "through Proust, Marcuse identifies a new element, which marks all the difference of these pages compared to the writings of the thirties and forties: the subjective basis of social criticism is traced in a sensitive impulse and no longer in a revolutionary (practical or theoretical) consciousness" (Tebano, 2002, p.695). Further, it could be said that it is precisely this "sensitive impulse" that in Marcuse acquires a revolutionary dimension by means of the conceptualisation of the "new sensibility" in *An Essay on Liberation*. Indeed, the Proustian memory of this sensibility grounds Marcuse's call for the recovery of the Freudian Eros, *un temps retrouvé* which makes it possible to anticipate the direction of liberation. As this chapter is about the quest for an orientation completing Arendt's imaginative visit, it is relevant to note how both *temps perdu* and *temps retrouvé* are landmarks of the Marcusean emancipatory project. As Marcuse explains in the first pages of *Eros*,

> the weight of these discoveries must eventually shatter the framework in which they were made and confined. The liberation of the past does not end in its reconciliation with the present. Against the self-imposed restraint of the discoverer, the orientation on the past tends toward an orientation on the future. The *recherche du temps* perdu becomes the vehicle of future liberation. (Marcuse, 1974, p.9)

So, it is because there is a *temps perdu* that a beyond one-dimensionality can be located. Through phantasy and imagination, this *temps perdu* becomes a *temps retrouvé* by means of which another future can be imagined. What are these discoveries of the past? As Reitz rightly points out, "the repressed content of the pleasure principle is thought to persist as a subconscious memory of past states of fulfillment and joy" (Reitz, 2000, p.134). In a similar way that *À la Recherche* recreates under multiple forms Proust's anguish while waiting for the joy of his mother's "*baiser du soir*" (Grimaldi, 2015), Marcuse champions the search for past gratification: "remembrance retrieves the *temps perdu*, which was the time of gratification and fulfillment" (Marcuse, 2015, p.223). It is on the grounds of the satisfaction of the past that "Eros, penetrating into consciousness" (Marcuse, 2015, p.223) brings about the subjective change in terms of sensibility without which, for Marcuse, no emancipatory project, as will be shown, can be projected. Then, the affirmation of Eros and the pleasure principle through the impulse of imagination allows the display of a new sensibility, which

seems for Marcuse to be the way out of one-dimensionality. The new sensibility is understood as a "a revolution in needs and values [that] would help overcome a central dilemma in Marcuse's theory – sharply formulated in *One-Dimensional Man* – that continued to haunt him: 'How can the administered individuals—who have made their mutilation into their own liberties and satisfactions ... liberate themselves from themselves as well as from their masters? How is it even thinkable that the vicious circle be broken?'" (Kellner, 1999, p.14).

As noted, the potential of this past in the Marcusean perspective precisely lies in a projection towards the future, for which the Freudian scheme of the dynamics of the unconscious is key. What was introduced in Chapter Two as the truth of the unconscious is relevant again at this stage of the research because it appears as a fundamental orientation in the imagination of the future. As Marcuse explains:

> According to Freud's conception the equation of freedom and happiness tabooed by the conscious is upheld by the unconscious. Its truth, although repelled by consciousness, continues to haunt the mind; it preserves the memory of past stages of individual development at which integral gratification is obtained. And the past continues to claim the future: it generates the wish that the paradise be re-created on the basis of the achievements of civilization. (Marcuse, 2015, p.8)

So, boosted by an unconscious which bears the memories of gratification, imagination displays all its affirmative potential. The

> phantasy (imagination) retains the structure and the tendencies of the psyche prior to its organization by the reality, prior to its becoming an "individual" set off against other individuals. And by the same token, like the id to which it remains committed, imagination preserves the "memory" of the subhistorical past when the life of the individual was the life of the genus, the image of the immediate unity between the universal and the particular under the rule of the pleasure principle. (Marcuse, 2015, p.132)

So, in resorting to Freud, Marcuse conceptualises a crucial *temps perdu/retrouvé* which might be read as an exit point from Raulet's issue of an imprisoned imagination within the walls of one-dimensionality. In relation to the resort to art within Marcuse's "dualism of art and sensuousness" (Raulet, 2004, p.121) problem, Marcuse is indeed aware of how the potential of imagination might be at risk in particular if its autonomy is secured "at the price of becoming powerless, inconsequential, unrealistic" (Marcuse, 2015, p.131). However, he equally provides the key to approaching the "cognitive value of imagination" (Reitz, 2000, p.139) and underlines how art is the quintessential manifestation of a process by means of which imagination can become truth. As he puts it, "the truths of imagination are first

realized when phantasy itself takes form, when it creates a universe of perception and comprehension—a subjective and at the same time objective universe. This occurs in art" (Marcuse, 2015, p.133). Imagination, when grounded in the unconscious, seems, then, to be able to go beyond the prison of one-dimensionality.

Imagination appears, therefore, in the Marcusean perspective as a crucial dimension that "sustains the claim of the whole individual, in union with the genus and with the 'archaic' past" (Marcuse, 2015, p.133). Closely linked to art, especially in the later Marcuse, imagination, as Reitz explains, becomes an "aesthetic agency" (Reitz, 2000, p.138) which is of interest for this research for it represents an emancipatory orientation to complete the Arendtian imaginative visit. While this aesthetic agency makes it possible to imagine some of the clear landmarks Tally refers to within a beyond labour landscape, Arendt's concern on indispensable safeguards then becomes a possible expansion for the visit of imagination. In other words, and in relation to post-work, the imaginative visit of the alternatives to labouring societies might be guided by the worldly attempts that in the past and today have been made in organising communities and lives beyond labour. In this respect, current attempts to build lives beyond labour as studied by Frayne (2015) and examined in Chapter Four as incipient forms of Arendtian actions might be read from this perspective on aesthetic agency. Expanding the potential of imagination beyond the artistic domain or reading the articulation of non-labouring lives as attempts to approach lives as works of art are just some of the many directions that Marcuse's perspective allows.

The new sensibility

So far, it has been shown how for Marcuse there is a preserved memory of gratification on which a liberating, and liberated, imagination can be grounded. However, as already noted, transformation requires the translation of this remembrance towards a different agency characterised by a "new sensibility". This concept becomes crucial in *An Essay on Liberation* and remains relevant in Marcuse's last formulation of his emancipatory project in *The Aesthetic Dimension*. It is, indeed, one of the fundamental features of the subjective transformation which he brings to the foreground within his proposal. As he clearly states, "political struggle (…) must be accompanied by a change of consciousness. But it must be recalled that this change is more than development of political consciousness—that it aims at a new 'system of needs' [which] would include a sensibility, imagination, and reason emancipated from the rule of exploitation" (Marcuse, 1978, p.36). In the Marcusean perspective, then, an emancipatory continuum connecting sensibility, imagination and

reason has to be enacted in the transformation of society. In which terms? As he puts it, "imagination becomes productive if it becomes the mediator between sensibility on the one hand, and theoretical as well as practical reason on the other, and in this harmony of faculties (in which Kant saw the token of freedom) guides the reconstruction of society" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.37).

In explaining what the new sensibility is, Marcuse turns to the vocabulary of *Eros and Civilization*. Indeed, it is characterised by the fact that it "expresses the ascent of the life instincts over aggressiveness and guilt" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.33). It is thus, again, the recovery of Eros that allows the display of a liberated imagination as the first step towards building an emancipated society. The new sensibility implies a transformation of imagination, and by doing so makes it possible to expand the limits of the technologically possible which is the first horizon of transformation as seen above. In Marcuse's explanation:

> in order to become vehicles of freedom, science and technology would have to change their present direction and goals; they would have to be reconstructed in accord with a new sensibility—the demands of the life instincts. Then one could speak of a technology of liberation, product of a scientific imagination free to project and design the forms of a human universe without exploitation and toil. But this *gaya scienza* is conceivable only after the historical break in the continuum of domination—as expressive of the needs of a new type of man. (Marcuse, 1969, p.19)

The new sensibility thus represents the affirmation of life against "exploitation and toil". In this recovery of *Eros*, new "directions and goals" are established: these are therefore the guides, the safeguards, within the limits of which imagination flows. Against the picture of technological rationality of the early texts, examined in Chapter Two, a "technology of liberation" emerges as the alternative towards liberation within a process of reorientation of the "human universe" in which imagination is key. Imagination is, therefore, both the compass making for present emancipation and the bridge allowing the new sensibility to go beyond the subjective dimension by setting projects of transformation.

This section started by bringing in the problem raised by Raulet in relation to Marcuse's "imprisoned imagination" (Raulet, 2004, p.120). So far, it has been shown that in the Marcusean theoretical apparatus, the resort to a Freudian *temps perdu* makes it possible to overcome the problems of the limits of imagination implied by the false totality of one-dimensionality. In concluding on this issue, Marcuse's reference to this same problem in relation to art seems, once more, illuminating. In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, he precisely refers to how art operates from, following the vocabulary of Chapter Two, the within of one-

dimensionality. As he explains, "art is inevitably part of that which is and only as part of that which is does it speak against that which is" (Marcuse, 1978, p.41). In this sense, Marcuse is well aware of the pervasive imprint of one-dimensionality. However, he identifies in art the mechanism that allows this contradiction to both exist and be resolved. As he puts it, "this contradiction is preserved and resolved (*aufgehoben*) in the aesthetic form which gives the familiar content and the familiar experience the power of estrangement—and which leads to the emergence of a new consciousness and a new perception" (Marcuse, 1978, p.41). It is, then, by enforcing the artistic play which estranges the familiar that art can boost new consciousness. By directing estrangement to what is familiar, art, according to the later Marcuse, plays a crucial part in the emergence of the new sensibility, described as a new consciousness and a new perception. It is "the possible 'other' which appears in art" (Marcuse, 1978, p.56). Following this line of thought and connecting it to one of the questions at the origin of this research, the possibility of imagining a beyond labour, it is of interest to turn our gaze back to the narration of the refusals of work. These questionings of labouring activities, read within the Marcusean frame of thought, are experiences of estrangement in relation to the familiarity of work-centred lives and societies. They can indeed support the emergence of a new consciousness which seems today as necessary as Marcuse identified it to be.

6.2. The map of an ought

As explained in Chapter Five, Arendt was reluctant to refer to an ought: "yet isn't it clear to everyone that the world is not, and has never been, what it ought to be? And who knows, or has ever known, what this 'ought' should be? The 'ought' is Utopian; it has no proper *topos* or place in the world" (Arendt, 1978, pt.Willing; chap. Conclusions). However, and taking into consideration her cautions related to the limits of imagination, this section asks whether a certain idea of an "ought to be" might be necessary in order to guide the imaginative visit. Thus, this section suggests that reading Marcuse's emancipatory proposal as an "imaginative map" (Tally, 2010, p.6) completes Arendt's position. Indeed, it is because there is an ought that a map guiding imagination can be traced. It is this map and the place of work within the Marcusean perspective that this section attempts to identify.

An "ought" guiding the map of emancipation

Before approaching the core of this section, a preliminary explanation of the construction of this imaginative map will be useful. As mentioned, Tally turns to this notion by drawing on both Jameson and Marcuse. In relation to the former, he explains how

> Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping is famously a blend of Kevin Lynch's analysis of urban space in *The Image of the City* and Louis Althusser's theory of ideology as "the representation of the subject's *Imaginary* relationship to his or her *Real* conditions of existence" (qtd. in Jameson, Postmodernism 51; emphasis in the original). For Lynch, the anxiety one feels in being unable to navigate one's urban terrain easily becomes an apt figure for the existential angst. Contrasting Boston (with its Charles River and distinctive skyscrapers) and Jersey City (which lacks monuments that may serve as clear points of reference), Lynch argues that the inhabitants of cities without clear landmarks experience a pervasive sense of alienation, as they cannot form a clear, usable, mental picture of the landscape. The city-dweller must try to map the city in order to alleviate this anxiety and successfully move about the urban space (Tally, 2010, p.7).

For the purposes of this research, a fundamental point of interest lies in the connection between alienation and the lack of the aforementioned "clear landmarks" making it possible to form the map that could tackle the dangers of disorientation which Arendt highlights in her perspective of imagination. In other words, can Marcuse's depiction of a beyond (alienated) labour be read as one of the exemplars Arendt identifies as a key guide of the visit that imagination represents? While imagination requires safeguards in the Arendtian perspective, can Marcuse's attempts to identify the contours of a beyond labour be read as an orientation landmark? In this line of argumentation, Tally's introduction of Marcuse on imagination brings in the idea argued in this chapter: an imaginative map, grounded in an "ought", might solve the problems of the Arendtian imagination. In relation to Marcuse, Tally explains how

> Marcuse's version offers a revision—or better, a dialectical reversal—of the traditional priority of truth and fiction. Whereas the non-imaginative representation of reality (scientific realism) may produce an accurate portrait of a very limited field, the imagination makes possible a more comprehensive, and therefore more "realistic", representation (i.e., from the perspective of one wishing to understand the "big picture," perhaps). An imaginative map may prove more reliable than one that limits itself to mere factual detail, as I discuss below. From this rejection of the factual detail in favor of the more comprehensive overview, the imagination exerts its critical or negative force, inasmuch as it can analyze the drawbacks or limits of the present situation in the process of projecting some alternative. (Tally, 2010, p.6)

While Tally contends that a wider and deeper map of emancipation can be traced on the grounds of the Marcusean perspective on imagination, what is the role of the "ought" within it? In his exploration of the relations between reason, imagination and utopia, Feenberg (2018a) refers to the issue of the ought and points out what an ought has to be like for

Marcuse, based on the following quote from his 1967 lecture "Liberation from the Affluent Society":

> For without an objectively justifiable goal of a better, a free human existence, all liberation must remain meaningless—at best, progress in servitude. I believe that in Marx too socialism ought to be. This 'ought' belongs to the very essence of scientific socialism. It ought to be; it is, we may almost say, a biological, sociological and political necessity. It is a biological necessity in as much as a socialist society, according to Marx, would conform with the very logos of life, with the essential possibilities of a human existence, not only mentally, not only intellectually, but also organically. (Marcuse, 1968, p.175)

In a similar vein, Reitz refers to the value of Marcuse's ought. Years before *An Essay on Liberation* and *The Aesthetic Dimension*, he identifies in One-Dimensional Man "a significant source of human autonomy in the '… experience of a divided world…' (OD, 131) philosophically captured in the two-dimensional, is/ought content of the 'critical' (OD,133) Platonic dialectic" (Reitz, 2000, p.139). So, it is on this idea of an ought to be that critique is grounded, and it is precisely on experiencing this break between what is and what ought to be that a rupture within one-dimensionality seems available to imagine and project. Thus, combining Marcuse on the ought to be and Tally on the idea of an imaginative map, a map can be traced precisely because there is an ought, an ought lacking within Arendt's perspective which leaves her account of imagination incomplete.

The cartography of Marcuse's ought on labour

The second part of this section seeks to describe the map of Marcuse's emancipatory project and the terms of the organisation of labour within it. That is to say, the cartography of Marcuse's ought, or taking up Tally's vocabulary, the wider picture imagination makes it possible to depict. Before entering into the specific issue of labour, it is relevant to note, with Tally, the guiding idea inspiring the whole of the Marcusean map: a life without anxiety, whose more specific description leads him to question both capitalist and state-socialism organisation of work. Two issues are at stake here: one concerning life, the other concerning anxiety. As Tally points out, Marcuse is concerned with a philosophy of life in which "the question was not how best to organize a government or an economic system per se, but how to live a good life, a 'life without anxiety,' as Marcuse would put it" (Tally, 2011, p.2). Anxiety, here, has to be understood in the context of the German *Angst* and Lukács's "transcendental homelessness" (Tally, 2010) which, as seen in the first part of this research, is key in Marcuse's doctoral dissertation on the German novel artist. In his specific search for a way of "being at home in the world", to take up the Arendtian vocabulary, Marcuse supplements Arendt's imaginative visit by introducing a map tackling homelessness. As Tally explains in his article

on Sartre, Marcuse and utopia, it is on the grounds of overcoming homelessness that an imaginary map has to be traced:

> One has no choice, since this freedom to project or to create a project is very much part of the fallen state of mankind. The project then becomes a kind of figurative cartography as I discuss below in which one engages with the condition of disorientation by making sense of, or giving form to, the world. By projecting a sort of imaginary map—a metaphor for constellating the various forces that directly and indirectly affect one's life—one may overcome one's anxious homelessness, and if one does not exactly feel "at home," then at least one develops strategies for navigating the uncanny spaces. (Tally, 2010, p.4)

While life without anxiety can be the guiding feature of the imaginary map Marcuse provides, the articulation of labour, as explained next, is key. Chapter Three has already described the beyond labour Marcuse attempts through the merger of labour and play. But Marcuse's emancipatory proposal goes far further than this conceptualisation. Play is indeed pivotal, since "the play impulse is the vehicle of this liberation" (Marcuse, 1974, p.177). But beyond the work as play dimension, it is life itself which is the object of the Marcusean play: "it is the play of life itself, beyond want and external compulsion—the manifestation of an existence without fear and anxiety, and thus the manifestation of freedom itself" (Marcuse, 2015, p.77).

With this goal, the new sensibility, that is to say and to put it briefly after the analysis in Section One, the affirmation of Eros, is the starting point of a transformation in which labour is crucial. *The Aesthetic Dimension* provides, through art, a general answer concerning the place of labour. The new sensibility, described as "this qualitative difference" (Marcuse, 1978, p.28), is translated when it comes to labour into two fundamental aspects: firstly, the negation of labouring lives; secondly, the overcoming of the technological rationality applied to the organisation of work:

> Even now in the established society, the indictment and the promise preserved in art lose their unreal and utopian character to the degree to which they inform the strategy of oppositional movements (as they did in the sixties). While they do so in damaged and broken forms, they nevertheless indicate the qualitative difference from previous periods. This qualitative difference appears today in the protest against the definition of life as labor, in the struggle against the entire capitalist and state-socialist organization of work (the assembly line, Taylor system, hierarchy), in the struggle to end patriarchy, to reconstruct the destroyed life environment, and to develop and nurture a new morality and a new sensibility. (Marcuse, 1978, p.28)

The new sensibility, in the Marcusean framework, therefore implies a beyond labour which finds its expression in lives that are not defined by labour. Here a "clear landmark" (Tally, 2010, p.7), to take up again Tally's reference to spatial vocabulary, can be identified completing Arendt's imaginative visit. Exploration has to be guided, firstly, by the landmark

represented by lives not defined by labour, and secondly by a different organisation of labour which questions, as Marcuse puts it, "the assembly line, Taylor system [and] hierarchy" (Marcuse, 1978, p.28). Other Marcusean works provide a more specific perspective, a detailed map it may now be said, that is relevant for this research in order to trace the contours of Marcuse's beyond labour which, as already suggested, expands the crucial notion of work as play dealt with in Chapter Three.

Under the affirmation of Eros, therefore, "the life instincts would find rational expression (sublimation) in planning the distribution of the socially necessary labor time within and among the various branches of production, thus setting priorities of goals and choices: not only what to produce but also the 'form' of the product" (Marcuse, 1969a, pp.23–24). The beyond (alienated) labour Marcuse points towards is precisely a beyond in which labour seems to reach the aesthetic realm and by doing so is transformed into "socially necessary labor", as the following quote explains:

> Production would be redirected in defiance of all the rationality of the Performance Principle; socially necessary labor would be diverted to the construction of an aesthetic rather than repressive environment, to parks and gardens rather than highways and parking lots, to the creation of areas of withdrawal rather than massive fun and relaxation. Such redistribution of socially necessary labor (time), incompatible with any society governed by the Profit and Performance Principle, would gradually alter society in all its dimensions—it would mean the ascent of the Aesthetic Principle as Form of the Reality Principle: a culture of receptivity based on the achievements of industrial civilization and initiating the end of its self-propelling productivity. (Marcuse, 1969a, p.89)

In short, production becomes creation. In doing so, in labour being impregnated by the new sensibility, the whole of society is transformed under the impetus of the last version of the Marcusean Eros, the "Aesthetic Principle". How does this collective transformation come about? Organised around the aesthetic principle, false needs and wants, grounded on introjection of domination and one-dimensionality, disappear. Indeed, "existence would no longer be determined by the need for life-long alienated labor and leisure, human beings would no longer be subjected to the instruments of their labor, no longer dominated by the performances imposed upon them" (Marcuse, 1978, p.29).

Beyond labour, what Marcuse is finally suggesting is a transformation that seems to involve the human condition itself. As a consequence of the transformation of labour under the impetus of the aesthetic principle, human beings would be transformed within their

biological core. The inner within is altered, as Marcuse explains, in accordance with Freud's last thoughts on labour:

> Their sensibility would register, as biological reactions, the difference between the ugly and the beautiful, between calm and noise, tenderness and brutality, intelligence and stupidity, joy and fun, and it would correlate this distinction with that between freedom and servitude. Freud's last theoretical conception recognizes the erotic instincts as work instincts—work for the creation of a sensuous environment. (Marcuse, 1969a, p.91)

So, Marcuse's new sensibility operates on two levels. Subjectively, the instinctual individual structure is diverted towards the controversial question of "true needs", which is examined next. On a collective scale, the guidance of the aesthetic principle transforms production into creation when it comes to "socially necessary labour", which represents the affirmation of Eros in the organisation of work. Post-totalitarian domination, as domination from within as argued in Chapter Two, is therefore crucially fought by a transformation from within leading to the dissolution of domination. As stated in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, if needs and wants are transformed, "the entire system of material and ideological repression and renunciation would be senseless" (Marcuse, 1978, p.29).

6.3. Utopia

As was the case in relation to Arendt, a reference to Marcuse's position on utopia has to be made in order to complete the analysis of the place of imagination in his thought. This chapter is indeed entitled "The end of utopia" in reference to the title of Marcuse's well-known 1967 lecture. A question mark has been added, however, in order to express the complexities of utopian thought in the Marcusean *oeuvre*. As is explained, the interrogation shows that for Marcuse, even though utopia has come to an end because it has become historically feasible, its enactment requires a transformation in terms of needs which, as will be noted, is less clear. Therefore, the end of utopia remains an interrogation today.

Marcuse's variations on utopia

The Marcusean *oeuvre* makes it possible to identify different uses of the term utopia which show the extent to which "Marcuse shifts between using utopia to signal impossibility and both denying the impossibility and pointing to the ideological uses of the accusation" (Levitas, 2010, p.174). Indeed and following her analysis, if "utopias are susceptible to unrealistic blueprints" (Marcuse, 1974, p.215), "the unrealistic sound of these propositions is indicative, not of their utopian character, but of the strength of the forces which prevent

their realization" (Marcuse, 2002, p.6). In defining utopia in *The End of Utopia*, this "ambiguity" (Levitas, 2010, p.75) appears again. Indeed, utopia is conceptualised as a "historical concept [that] refers to projects for social change that are considered impossible" (Marcuse, 1970b, p.67). However, and most importantly, Marcuse seems to find in the historicity of this impossibility the distinctive element making it possible to refer to utopia. A specific project of transformation can be described as utopia, as the later Marcuse states, when "a project for social change contradicts real laws of nature [for] only such a project is utopian in the strict sense, that is, beyond history—but even this 'ahistoricity' has a historical limit" (Marcuse, 1970b, p.67). As an example, Marcuse refers to eternal youth, which would be utopian due to positing a reversal of a natural law. Instead, "the other group of projects, where the impossibility is due to the absence of subjective and objective factors, can at best be designated only as 'provisionally' unfeasible" (Marcuse, 1970, p.63). This second kind of projects cannot be described as utopian because they become possible when subjective and objective elements converge. It is in this sense that the end of utopia has to be understood. In 1967, utopia is for Marcuse at the point of being enacted; therefore, utopia has come to an end. In his opinion,

> there is one valid criterion for possible realization, namely, when the material and intellectual forces for the transformation are technically at hand although their rational application is prevented by the existing organization of the forces of production. And in this sense, I believe, we can today actually speak of an end of utopia. All the material and intellectual forces which could be put to work for the realization of a free society are at hand. That they are not used for that purpose is to be attributed to the total mobilization of existing society against its own potential for liberation. But this situation in no way makes the idea of radical transformation itself a utopia. (Marcuse, 1970, p.64)

Following his position on utopia, "material and intellectual forces" are ready to drive the break leading towards a free society. Material or objective factors have to do with the availability of technology capable of eliminating scarcity and alienated labour which, as seen in Chapter Two, sustain surplus-repression. Indeed, Marcuse posits that "even in bourgeois economics there is scarcely a serious scientist or investigator who would deny that the abolition of hunger and of misery is possible with the productive forces that already exist technically" (Marcuse, 1970, p.64). However, and while technology is available, Marcuse is cautious in relation to what appears as a more subjective dimension. As he puts it,

> we are still not sufficiently clear about the implication of this technical possibility for the abolition of poverty, of misery, and of labor. The implication is that these historical possibilities must be conceived in forms that signify a break rather than a continuity with previous history, its negation rather than its positive continuation, difference rather than progress. They signify the liberation of a dimension of human

> existence this side of the material basis, the transformation of needs. (Marcuse, 1970, p.64)

The depiction of the end of utopia by means of automation as the objective element is clear for Marcuse:

> This tendency, if freed from the fetters of capitalist production, would lead to a creative experimentation with the productive forces. With the abolition of poverty this tendency would mean that play with the potentialities of human and nonhuman nature would become the content of social labor. The productive imagination would become the concretely structured productive force that freely sketches out the possibilities for a free human existence on the basis of the corresponding development of material productive forces. In order for these technical possibilities not to become possibilities for repression, however, in order for them to be able to fulfill their liberating function, they must be sustained and directed by liberating and gratifying needs. (Marcuse, 1970, p.70)

So, the end of utopia requires not only the technical possibility of tackling scarcity. Marcuse's free society has to do with a rupture that implies the transformation of the human condition itself through the modification of needs. In Marcuse's words, "what is at stake is the idea of a new theory of man, not only as theory but also as a way of existence: the genesis and development of a vital need for freedom and of the vital needs of freedom—of a freedom no longer based on and limited by scarcity and the necessity of alienated labor" (Marcuse, 1970, p.65). While Marcuse is clear in positing the technological possibility of enacting utopia, his views in relation to subjective change are nuanced and, therefore, the end of utopia remains, despite the title of the lecture, an interrogation. Indeed and as it has been noted, Marcuse argues that "in order for these technical possibilities not to become possibilities for repression, (…) in order for them to be able to fulfill their liberating function, they must be sustained and directed by liberating and gratifying needs" (Marcuse, 1970, p.66).

True and false needs

Introducing needs implies bringing to the discussion one of the controversial issues in Marcuse's thought which has already been examined in Chapter Two, namely the distinction between true and false needs. In relation to utopia, this distinction raises issues that are referred to next, again following Levitas's work on Marcuse. A first problem has to do with the question of the concretisation of what the true needs that would sustain the reorientation of technology towards liberation are. As Levitas points out, "if the underlying values of Marcuse's good society are clear enough, its details are absent" (Levitas, 2010, p.181). Nevertheless, Marcuse provides in *The End of Utopia* an indication of how true needs can be identified via negation:

> The new needs, which are really the determinate negation of existing needs, first make their appearance as the negation of the needs that sustain the present system of domination and the negation of the values on which they are based: for example, the negation of the need for the struggle for existence (…); the negation of the need to earn one's living; the negation of the performance principle, of competition; the negation of the need for wasteful, ruinous productivity, which is inseparably bound up with destruction; and the negation of the vital need for deceitful repression of the instincts. These needs would be negated in the vital biological need for peace, which today is not a vital need of the majority, the need for calm, the need to be alone, with oneself or with others whom one has chosen oneself, the need for the beautiful, the need for "undeserved" happiness—all this not simply in the form of individual needs but as a social productive force, as social needs that can be activated through the direction and disposition of productive forces. (Marcuse, 1970, p.71)

The lack of a more detailed concretisation on needs extends also to the specific institutional organisation of the free society, for "if the needs of the future cannot be predicted from within the objective and subjective limits imposed by domination, nor can its institutional form be worked out in advance" (Levitas, 2010, p.163). At different stages, Marcuse is reluctant to push forward the depiction of the free society. In relation to the institutional dimension for example, and as Levitas points out, Marcuse contends in *An Essay on Liberation* that "the demand is meaningless if it asks for a blueprint of the specific institutions and relationships which would be those of the new society: they cannot be determined a priori; they will develop, in trial and error, as the new society develops" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.86). The last sentences of *An Essay*, already quoted in Chapter Two in relation to this issue, are illuminating in understanding how an *a priori* complete depiction of utopia is neither possible nor desirable. As Marcuse posits, "there is an answer to the question which troubles the minds of so many men of good will: what are the people in a free society going to do? The answer which, I believe, strikes at the heart of the matter was given by a young black girl. She said: for the first time in our life, we shall be free to think about what we are going to do" (Marcuse, 1969a, p.91).

Another point of contention relates to the difference between true and false needs itself. As Levitas notes, "Marcuse is aware that the distinction between true and false needs is problematic. People may experience real satisfaction in the gratification of false needs" (Levitas, 2010, p.164). Indeed, if the organisation of needs and desires is a dimension of post-totalitarian domination as argued in Chapter Two, gratification tends to be obtained when false needs are fulfilled. The desire for work, analysed in the second chapter as a repressive preference, might be read as an example of this process of internalisation of domination. What is the space remaining for distinguishing true and false needs? Levitas highlights two

different answers Marcuse himself seems to provide. On the one hand, the recovery of Eros, as explained in the first section of this chapter, relates to an "inbuilt tendency for liberatory needs to make themselves felt even in the face of considerable repression" (Levitas, 2010, p.169). On the other and considering again the later Marcuse, it is through art, as we have already seen, that the contradictions of capitalism can still be illuminated. However, and as was the case in relation to concretisation, imagining the future, also in terms of desires, implies an openness towards what still cannot be known. As Marcuse states in *On Hedonism*, "when all present subjective and objective potentialities of development have been unbound, the needs and wants themselves will change" (Marcuse, 2009d, p.144). At this point, a connection between Marcuse and Arendt might be reached in relation to the depiction of a beyond. For both, and despite their contrasting positions on the issue of utopia, there is a future that cannot even be said for it is the unpredictability and spontaneity of human action that is implied. In this sense, Marcuse's "ought" seems to find an additional limit, namely human transformation itself.

So, to conclude this section on Marcuse and utopia, it can be said, with Tally and bringing in again the spatial metaphor, that the Marcusean *oeuvre* makes it possible to think that "other spaces are still possible" (Tally, 2011), also in terms of a beyond labour. Moreover, and for the purposes of this research in relation to imagination, his account remains valuable to the extent that he shows the need to push imagination towards the projection of an emancipatory future in which human lives find mediations not articulated around what we commonly describe as "jobs". Additionally, and despite the complexities that have been outlined, this chapter has shown the extent to which Marcuse's account is relevant in continuing the construction of a beyond labour. Firstly, the crucial place of imagination has been described. Even within the walls of one-dimensionality, there is a space that makes it possible to imagine both lives which are not defined by labour and also a more gratifying organisation of labour. Secondly, Marcuse makes it possible to identify some of the features of such a beyond by introducing the idea of lives without anxiety and also, in relation to labour, by introducing creation and cooperation within the productive activities that remain socially necessary. Finally, although 50 years later it can be said that utopia has not ended because technology has not been mobilised towards human emancipation and the transformation in terms of needs and desires is still insufficient in order to challenge work-centred societies, Marcuse shows how the imagination of a beyond, despite seeming sometimes utopian, has to be subjectively and collectively cultivated if utopia is one day to come to an end.

Part Three of this research has been devoted to vindicating the place of imagination and utopia in building a beyond labour. As argued in Part One, work as destiny is a pivotal part of the current dynamics of post-totalitarian domination within labouring societies. In challenging work-centred societies, the enhancement of imagination is key in setting an emancipatory project including increasing spaces beyond labour. As this final part has sought to show, turning to Arendt makes it possible to recover a perspective of imagination as an exploratory visit in search of examples allowing a judgment on what we are doing and on what we would like to do. Turning to Marcuse has shown the value of depicting an imaginative map, utopian or not, for guidance in this visit. The joint reading of both authors on imagination might contribute to enriching the reflection on "radical imagination in dark times" (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014, pt.Introduction). The imaginative and emancipatory visit that has been described, grounded on Arendt and Marcuse, is relevant for a conceptualisation of radical imagination which explores both the future and the past for

> it is not just about dreaming of different futures. It's about bringing those possible futures 'back' to work on the present, to inspire action and new forms of solidarity today. (…) Likewise, the radical imagination is about drawing on the past, telling different stories about how the world came to be the way it is, and remembering the power and importance of past struggles and the way their spirits live on in the present. (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014, pt.Introduction)

When it comes to the future, radical imagination has to do with creation, "with those around us, multiple, overlapping, contradictory and coexistent imaginary landscapes, horizons of common possibility and shared understanding" (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014, pt.Introduction). The landscape which has been examined in this chapter is concerned with a beyond labouring societies, an issue that is currently being explored in post-work and end-of-work debates. Several specific issues are part of the configuration of these landscapes. As Srnicek and Williams note, post-work landscapes relate to "building a post-work society on the basis of fully automating the economy, reducing the working week, implementing a universal basic income, and achieving a cultural shift in the understanding of work" (Srnicek & Williams, 2016, chap.6). Of course, the possibilities and limitations of these dimensions in the context of an emancipatory and transformative project continue to be studied within post-work debates, as recent collective works (Cholbi & Weber, 2020) show.

However, as the thesis of this dissertation is that a beyond labour has to be built by countering post-totalitarian domination through labour, this chapter would not be complete without referring to one of the most fundamental criticisms raised against post-work

imaginaries. Claiming that "a post-work economy of robots and machines is a bad Utopia for the left," Dinerstein, Pitts and Taylor (2016) question the emancipatory potential of automation and basic income, two key elements in building post-work political scenarios. Their main point is that "post-work is not post-capitalism". Two elements that are part of post-work landscapes are challenged as follows. Universal basic income is called into question because it might entail dependence on the state and also generate a consumerist offshoot. In their view, while "it may make us free from (un)employment, it makes us more dependent on money and the state. Ultimately, it provides a state-sponsored foundation for unsustainable hyper-consumption" (Dinerstein et al., 2016). When it comes to automation and the extent to which technology is arranged following the dictates of capitalist modes of production, "robots are celebrated while humans are denigrated and consigned like zombies to the total domination of money and the state" (Dinerstein et al., 2016). Furthermore, given that "the distribution of money by the state will only mean a different form of distribution of wealth for social reproduction but in no way can move us to a post-capitalist era" (Dinerstein et al., 2016), they conclude that "the post-work Utopia is a bad Utopia" (Dinerstein et al., 2016) and champion a "concrete [and good] Utopia", which is the one where:

> By intervening in and "commoning" our access to the things we need, cooperative projects seemingly unrelated to the world of work may pose the most radical challenge to it. These projects develop not outside or 'post' capitalism but within it. Concrete Utopias create alternative practices, ideas and horizons that exist in the here and now. They are crisscrossed by tensions and contradictions, disappointments and setbacks. But it is here where we can find the promise of a properly post-capitalist future. (Dinerstein et al., 2016)

In a subsequent work, Dinerstein and Pitts pursue this line of argument which puts cooperativism and municipalism at the core of emancipation though work. As they explain,

> the crucial question for interventions into the futures of work is how to maintain an autonomous space of society standing between workers and the capitalist state that governs them, navigating the terrain of social and political contestation, without succumbing to the easy answers offered by the transitional programme of post-work and post-capitalist thought, which runs the risk of reinforcing social domination at the hands of the abstract forms power assumes in capitalist society rather than providing grounds for emancipation from them. We discuss an alternative approach that involves the *prefigurative* translation of grassroots innovations into new mediations beyond the state, rendering 'policy' not a privilege of the state, but a result of struggles around the form of policy. We suggest that any alternative to the present state of things would need to move through real abstractions and capitalist mediations in order to establish new ones, rather than seek an immediacy whose impossibility makes its fruitless pursuit politically dangerous. (Dinerstein & Pitts, 2021)

For the purposes of this dissertation, this approach is insufficient. Although putting the distribution of wealth at the centre of the debate is of course indispensable, the labouring dimension of human beings seems to remain unchallenged. Yes, "concrete utopias" might develop cooperative forms of organisation of labour and provide satisfaction to certain needs without the mediation of money; they might even provide new significations for labour. However, this landscape leaves untouched the problem raised in this dissertation, namely labour's centrality as the fundamental mediation with the world. In this respect and as this research has attempted to show, "achieving a cultural shift in the understanding of work" (Srnicek & Williams, 2016, chap.6) has to be part of any good utopia. To this end, Arendt's and Marcuse's reflections on domination, emancipation and labour are still relevant references today and should be taken into account in thinking about work and post-work. Both authors question the features of labouring societies and advocate an overcoming of the *animal laborans*, and they do so from different standpoints. Indeed, and as has been explained, the examination of their differences has made it possible to identify the complementarity of their perspectives in order to criticise the present and project an emancipatory future in which a common world can be built and shared beyond labour.

Conclusion: educating beyond labour

This research has sought to show the relevance of Arendt and Marcuse's respective reflections on domination, labour and liberation in relation to the philosophy of labour as a whole and also, and more specifically, in current debates on the immediate future of labour. As stated in the introduction, an important critical discussion is being held on what the place of labour should be in the near future. Srnicek and Williams' accelerationism, addressed at many stages in this investigation, and degrowth theories (Demaria et al., 2018) are the two fundamental areas of the critical proposals focusing on the end of, or the transformation of, labour. However, these discussions do not that often bring to the foreground the philosophical reflection on the human condition that is involved in the interrogation on the future of labour. In bringing in Arendt and Marcuse and their relevance in understanding domination through labour and in imagining a beyond labour, this study highlights the importance of a joint reading of both authors to philosophically approach these scenarios. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the wider field of the philosophy of labour which, as noted in the introduction, is pivotal in critically thinking about what we are doing, as Arendt urged in *The Human Condition*, and needs to vindicate its importance by joining the debate on the future of labour that is being held in a wide range of non-philosophical disciplines. Also, this dissertation is equally an attempt to connect two authors who, while they are from different and at some points even opposite philosophical traditions, can nevertheless shed the light needed to grasp and to question the complexities of labouring lives.

Three fundamental points have been maintained. Firstly, the centrality of labour in contemporary societies, described following Arendt as societies of labourers and jobholders, exerts a specific dynamic of domination through labour that can be better illuminated when examined from the perspective of both authors' theorisations on totalitarianism. Secondly, and focusing on a beyond labouring societies, two key ideas for imagining alternative mediations to labour have been studied: the Marcusean approach to work as play and the Arendtian conceptualisation of action. Finally, the crucial place of imagination as an indispensable dimension in building an emancipatory project has been highlighted, turning again to a complementary reading of Arendt and Marcuse. In doing so, it has been suggested that this joint reading of both authors is useful in expanding contemporary reflection on work to the extent that it allows highlighting the post-totalitarian traits of domination through labour, together with the need to recover a particular account of imagination in articulating spaces beyond labour.

Part One has argued the existence of post-totalitarian elements within domination through labour today by combining key notions of Arendt and Marcuse's reflections on totalitarianism. Chapter One has focused on the Arendtian notion of society of labourers and jobholders in order to underscore the continuities between this conceptualisation, the core of *The Human Condition* and her previous theorisation in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The worldlessness of the totalitarian world, presented as explained as a "desert in motion" (Arendt, 1976, p.478), is the result of a process of endless movement aimed at total domination which culminates in the concentration camp, that is to say, in the attempt to make human beings superfluous. Analysed in relation to her account of totalitarianism, Arendt's depiction of labouring societies can be read as the post-totalitarian version of this desert, which continues to reduce human beings to potentially superfluous *animal laborans* or jobholders guided by "a sheer automatic functioning" (Arendt, 1998, p.322) in the context of a renewed worldlessness.

Although Arendt's perspective of the society of labourers and jobholders brings to the fore the elements of worldlessness and superfluousness in post-totalitarian domination through labour, the internal dimension of domination is hardly dealt with in her account. It is precisely this point that is completed by introducing Marcuse's position on introjection of domination. Indeed, while Arendt refers to totalitarianism as a form of domination "from within" (Arendt, 1976, p.325), her theorisation leaves this within insufficiently explored. Marcuse's Freudian-Marxist analysis provides an explanation of the psychic configuration of domination which affords a better understanding of post-totalitarian domination through labour. Chapter Two explores how the internalisation of domination is approached throughout the Marcusean *oeuvre* and the place of labour in it. As has been shown, the introduction of the question of needs and desires in the analysis of totalitarianism leads Marcuse to identify the "scientific management" (Marcuse, 2004a, p.49) of work and leisure as part of the total mobilisation characterising National Socialism. The manipulation of the instinctual within is further examined in two of Marcuse's fundamental works; they are brought into this second chapter to complete Arendt's account. On the one hand, *Eros and Civilization* allows an understanding of the place of labour within surplus repression. By re-elaborating the Freudian notion of repression, Marcuse describes this necessary element in the internalisation of domination. Indeed, repression, operating under the reign of the performance principle has replaced the libidinal core represented by the pleasure principle in the instinctual apparatus of human beings. Beyond introjection, Chapter Two examines the Marcusean idea of one-

dimensionality in order to highlight the totalitarian character of administered societies, following Marcuse's vocabulary, which accomplishes a further step in domination. The culmination of introjection and surplus repression transforms human beings into the "sublimated slaves" of *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse, 2002, p.36), for whom emancipation can only be expected from the configuration of a Great Refusal (Marcuse, 2002, p.66) in which for Marcuse those excluded from work play a major role, allowing the return of the repressed.

While Part One focuses on the contours of post-totalitarian domination through labour, the aim of this dissertation is equally to identify the key issue of "the chance of the alternatives" (Marcuse, 2002, p.206) as conceptualised by both authors. Part Two is therefore devoted to exploring the beyond labour that Arendt and Marcuse's respective works depict. In the case of Marcuse, Chapter Three examines his attempt to overcome alienating labour through the fusion of work and play. As explained, many of the Marcusean theoretical referents such as Schiller, Marx, Freud and Heidegger can be traced in the specific conceptualisation of play provided by Marcuse, which is not univocal throughout his *oeuvre*. Indeed, *On the Philosophical Investigations of the Concept of Labor in Economics* introduces play as a form of doing which is situated as an in-between labour. In *Eros and Civilization* and unlike alienated work, non-alienated work together with artistic play makes it possible to envisage a form of work aimed at the "free play of human faculties and desires" (Marcuse, 1974, p.185) beyond the realm of necessity which remains a space of unfreedom. Already, however, freedom in work is posited if Eros enters work. Such a path theoretically culminates in the later *Reconsideration* of the connections between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity, which argues for the merger of work and leisure, creativity and productivity on the grounds of a liberated work instinct framed within the human doing. The controversial reception of the Marcusean conceptualisation of work as play, from the Arendtian critique to contemporary criticism, is outlined at the end of the chapter in order to understand the limitations of Marcuse's attempt to overcome labouring by the introduction of play in the realm of labour.

A beyond labour as the fundamental mediation in the world can instead be traced around the Arendtian notion of action and its restoration within the *vita activa*. As has been suggested in Chapter Four, *The Human Condition* provides the grounds for proposing a reorganisation of human activity making it possible to put the focus on human beings as political beings, whose lives are valued not in terms of labour but for their unique

contribution to a common world. By vindicating action as the fundamental mediation with the world, superfluousness and loss of the world, identified as the lines of continuity connecting totalitarian domination and labouring societies, can both be overcome. By understanding the potential of Arendt's position on action, the analysis of pariahdom, especially in relation to her work on Rahel Varnhagen, has been brought to the fore. Indeed, it has been argued that the understanding of action as the human capability to start something new in relation to the examination of the pariah can transform the superfluous of labouring societies into political actors that display new relations with labour. Frayne's study of refusals of work is, in this line, read as part of an incipient contemporary "Great Refusal" challenging work-centred societies.

The third part of this research has been concerned with the possibilities of new beginnings, following the Arendtian vocabulary. It has examined how a complementary reading of both authors illuminates the important role of imagination in setting an emancipatory post-work project. Chapter Five has recovered the perspective on imagination Arendt provides in *The Life of the Mind*, conceptualised as a "gift" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.II) so as to make present what is absent. The insertion of Arendt's account of imagination within her general reflection on thinking and judging provides a specific vision of imagination as an exploratory visit which finds an indispensable compass in the combination of reflection and judgement. Inserted within the process of thinking, imagination implies a moment of suspension leading towards an "out of order" (Arendt, 1978, pt.One, Ch.IV) that makes it possible to establish a no-more in relation to the past and to prospect a not-yet in relation to the future. Equally, imagination conceptualised as a visit enables the exploration of the past and the present in search of alternatives directed to identifying the situations of exemplary validity, following Arendt's vocabulary, on which decisions for the future can be based. While these elements have been considered as relevant in imagining post-work scenarios, Chapter Five has also dealt with the limitations of Arendt's account, in particular when it comes to utopia. Her concerns with avoiding the "everything is possible" (Arendt, 1979, pt.Preface to the First Edition) of totalitarianism may limit the potential of imagination; moreover, her ideal polity is insufficient for the purposes of this dissertation to the extent that it does not provide a specific position on either the future of labour or the organisation of the satisfaction of needs.

Chapter Six has found in Marcuse's work an emancipatory safeguard capable of expanding Arendt's conceptualisation of imagination. Indeed, the Marcusean *oeuvre* traces the map of an ought which at the same time vindicates the potential of imagination as a subversive force

despite one-dimensionality and attempts to configure the place of labour within the context of a "life without anxiety" (Marcuse, 1974, p.150). Although this dissertation has argued the need to displace labour from the core of human mediations, Marcuse's claim for a new sensibility, which would equally transform the remaining socially necessary work, seems likewise of interest for a post-work emancipatory project. Overcoming labouring societies requires not only less labour and work but also their transformation in accordance with human beings' desires and potentialities. Finally, the chapter has examined Marcuse's variations on utopia, which remain useful today in dealing with post-work or end-of-work theories when they are disqualified as utopian.

Although the core line of the argumentation of this thesis has been fully developed, some limitations of the reflection presented here have to be considered. Part of them refer to the philosophical readings underpinning the study, while others have to do with the problematisation of thematic areas directly related to domination, labour and imagination. Starting with the philosophical grounds of both authors, some questions have not received specific attention. Amongst others, the place of Hegel and Nietzsche in the Marcusean *oeuvre* has not been examined, the study having focused on the immediate influence of Marx and Freud in Marcuse's emancipatory project. In relation to Hegel, introducing Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution* might have shed light on the issue of the connection between Hegelian dialectics and totalitarian movements. As is well known, Marcuse rejects this interpretation and argues for an interpretation leading to emancipation in line with his position in *One-Dimensional Man*. In relation to Nietzsche, the connections between the liberation of Eros and the aesthetic of existence in Nietzsche's *Übermensch* could equally have been explored. In Arendt's case, a deeper reflection on the points of connection and rupture with Heidegger has not been provided, for example in fully understanding the temporality of Arendt's account of imagination as visit. Although introducing Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger would have undoubtedly enriched the argumentation, it would not have substantially modified any of the conclusions of this research.

In terms of the thematic limitations, while most of the interrogations at the origin of this research have been covered, many others have arisen in the course of the investigation but have not been analysed in order to keep the study focused on the line of argumentation. Given that this study has entailed the examination of multiple and diverse thematic issues which are rarely related to each other, each of them could certainly have been expanded. Indeed, relevant topics for this research such as post-totalitarian domination, labour-play

theories, Arendtian action and the reflection on imagination, among many others that the study has introduced, are still being investigated to attempt to answer new questions that come up around them. For the specific purposes of the argument put forward in this thesis, three questions seem of particular interest at the end of this study. First, the connections between Foucault's biopolitics and post-totalitarian domination through labour; second, the possible insertion of Arendt and Marcuse's conceptual apparatuses, considered more systematically than has been possible here, within post-work reflection; third, their potential contributions to current debates on utopias around work, focused on displaying alternatives to labouring societies.

In relation to domination, a possible insertion of Foucault within the joint reading of Arendt and Marcuse remains to be examined since the research on the control of the body in the dynamics of domination described by both authors has not been specifically addressed. Introducing Foucault's work on the government of the body would probably reach a third dimension of post-totalitarian dimension related to the construction of the subject through the control of the body, an issue which has not been dealt with here. Equally, introducing the disciplining dimension of work as approached in the Foucauldian perspective would probably complete Arendt's depiction of totalitarianism as an endless movement and Marcuse's conceptualisation of introjection of domination. In short, introducing Foucault in the analysis would round off the idea of total mobilisation linking totalitarianism and labouring societies and would provide relevant nuances to both authors' conceptualisation of superfluousness.

A second issue which has been shown to be crucial for this research has to do with current debates on the end or future of work. How Arendt and Marcuse's respective proposals might or might not find a place in Srnicek and Williams' works on accelerationism, for example, or in the multiple strands within degrowth theory have yet to be assessed. Examining these lines of thought under the Arendtian and Marcusean categories in order to identify whether they provide an answer to the fundamental problems raised by the two authors might be the object of further investigation in at least two directions. On the one hand, introducing the philosophical perspective leads to the interrogation on the consideration of the human condition within post-work discussion. The extent to which worldlessness, superfluousness and introjection of domination are modified in a post-work scenario should be studied under the light of both emancipatory proposals. On the other hand, the analysis of Arendt and Marcuse's respective works could provide criteria in order to assess accelerationism and degrowth alternatives. In particular, the possibilities of the unfolding of action and of the

free play of human potentialities within both approaches should be the object of further study.

Thirdly, and connected to the question of imagination, an expanded reflection on the place of the transformation of labour in utopian thinking today should also be held in the light of Arendt and Marcuse's respective contributions. In this reflection, Arendt's work provides a necessary grounding for utopian thought against the "everything is possible" of totalitarian movements. Marcuse's analysis highlights the value of and need for a frame of reference in which utopia should operate, namely the full expression of human creativity through praxis. The relevance of this framework in relation to contemporary debates such as transhumanism can support a critical interrogation on the limits and possibilities of the transformation of the human condition. In particular, Arendt and Marcuse's respective conceptualisations can provide pointers in order to explore what is at stake in the overcoming of the *animal laborans* by a blended human-machine being. Although all these issues would have rounded off the analysis put forward in this research more widely, their consideration within this study would have excessively extended its scope, which on the one hand consists of understanding domination through labour by means of Arendt and Marcuse's respective theorisation of totalitarianism and, on the other and again following both authors, attempting to imagine specific post-work scenarios.

Among the topics that remain to be researched, and beyond the three questions that have been set out, the interrogation on the place of education in building a beyond labour is of special interest both for the research itself and for the researcher. So, this dissertation cannot conclude, or better, has to conclude with a final comment on this particular point: the place of education in overcoming labouring societies. As educators who are part of work-centred educational systems, what can be learned from Arendt and Marcuse, who both dealt with education in few yet illuminating texts? In thinking about emancipation from labour and imagining political and social mediations beyond labour, what is the place of education? Again, and following the line of thought established in this dissertation, a joint reading of Arendt and Marcuse on education can provide relevant answers. In relation to Arendt, her approach to education as the mediation between the old and the new is briefly dealt with here. And again, Marcuse is brought in order to navigate this mediation towards emancipation.

In her well-known 1954 essay *The Crisis in Education*, Arendt connects the question of education to three fundamental issues that have already been examined in this research: natality, action and worldliness. As she puts it, "the essence of education is natality, the fact that human beings are born into the world" (Arendt, 1968b, p.174), and, since they are born into this world, which precedes and will succeed each of them, education has a fundamental task: preparing the insertion of the newcomers into a world which has to be known to be transformed. It is in this sense that Arendt's perspective on education has to be understood, namely in the fact that there is a long-standing pre-existing world that has to be known, taught and learned and transmitted as an act of responsibility of educators which enables the newcomers to take action. That is to say, education is directed towards enabling change. Although of course Arendt does not provide any specific prescription on the content of this change which has to be expected from the uniqueness of each newborn, she nevertheless does present two key ideas. Firstly, transformation is crucial in the conservation of the world itself and therefore "conservatism in politics, this conservative attitude—which accepts the world as it is, striving only to preserve the status quo—can only lead to destruction, because the world, in gross and in detail, is irrevocably delivered up to the ruin of time unless human beings are determined to intervene, to alter, to create what is new" (Arendt, 1968, p.192). Education is thus a transformative praxis in which a grounded natality is precisely the key to transformation.

Secondly, in supporting the process of becoming of the child, education takes responsibility for "the free development of characteristic qualities and talents (…) the uniqueness that distinguishes every human being from every other, the quality by virtue of which he is not only a stranger in the world but something that has never been here before" (Arendt, 1968, p.189). So, educating implies enabling change by making it easier for the newcomers to enact their unique contribution to the transformation of the world. Educators take responsibility for the world when they support the specific and singular insertion of newcomers within this world by providing them with the keys to understanding and transforming it. It is on the grounds of this acceptance of responsibility towards this common world that the authority of educators is built. As Arendt puts it,

> the teacher's qualification consists in knowing the world and being able to instruct others about it, but his authority rests on his assumption of responsibility for that world. Vis-a-vis the child it is as though he were a representative of all adult inhabitants, pointing out the details and saying to the child: This is our world. (Arendt, 1968, 189)

Teaching and facilitating the learning of this world is therefore for Arendt the condition for the enactment of natality by action. A second birth occurs, as seen in previous chapters of this research, when the who of each one is displayed by words and deeds in the public, political space of appearances. In this respect, an alternative to work-centred education can be sustained by means of the Arendtian conceptualisation of education as long as the teaching process leads towards an insertion in the world that is not exclusively grounded on the dimension of work. For the purposes of this research, then, Arendt's conceptualisation of education as a fundamental mediation which enables both insertion in this world and its transformation is important to the extent that it is a reminder of the responsibility towards the world implied in the act of education. Importantly, it is equally a reminder that the full connection between natality, action and worldliness requires supporting the display of a who. This who, as argued in the fourth chapter, is much more than the what of the *animal laborans* or the jobholder. So, taking full responsibility for the world by educating should imply for teachers challenging educational systems guided by a unique and one-dimensional, following Marcuse, insertion in the world: insertion through work, which is at the core of current education plans.

And here again, Marcuse is indispensable for expanding the mediating dimension of education highlighted by Arendt when it comes to answering a crucial question: what is this old world educators teach and how can the newness of the world, articulated by the newcomers generation after generation, be built? Marcuse's reflections on negative thinking and education need to be briefly mentioned in order to highlight how a critical approach to teaching activity can better support the singular who of each newcomer, dissolving the one-dimensionality of work as the fundamental end of education.

Among the texts that deal with the issue, two of Marcuse's lectures are of interest. In 1968, in a talk delivered at Brooklyn College, Marcuse says right at the beginning of his account of education that "education is the teaching and learning of knowledge considered necessary for the protection and enhancement of human life" (Marcuse, 2009a, p.33). It is this idea of enhancement, formulated as seen in other texts as the development of the full potentialities of human beings, which runs across his whole vision of education and connects it with his perspective on critical theory. His conceptualisation of the dialectic of education is equally crucial and is explained as the process which both

> involved an increasing dependence on education, unrestricted knowledge in the competitive economic process, and in the steering of the political process; and, at

> the same time, an increasing need to 'contain' knowledge and reason within the conceptual and value universe of the established society and its improvement and growth in order to protect this society against radical change. The result: an emphasis on professional, vocational training, and a decline of the 'humanities', of transcendent, critical thought. (Marcuse, 2009, p.34)

As educators in vocational education, how can we challenge this exclusive focus on work? How can we educate in vocational education, beyond labour, where the early insertion of the learner through work is its main specific goal? Marcuse provides a direction, again as the research showed in Chapter Six, and a necessary compass that can be useful to orientate an education beyond labour. On the one hand and in relation to insertion within this world, which is the world that has to be taught and learned, "we want to learn the facts and how to interpret them. But we want to learn all the facts, especially those usually suppressed or obscured. In short, we want to learn more, not less" (Marcuse, 2009b, p.43). On the other,

> to create the subjective conditions for a free society, it is no longer sufficient to educate individuals to perform more or less happily the functions they are supposed to perform in this society, or, to extend this "vocational" education to the "masses." Rather, a new type of man is necessary, to educate men and women who are incapable of tolerating what is going on, who have really learned what is going on, has always been going on, and why, and who are educated to resist and to fight for a new way of life. (Marcuse, 2009, p.35)

In short, Marcuse completes Arendt's view inasmuch as he clarifies the how of this insertion in the world in positing an education which "leads beyond the classroom (…) into the political" (Marcuse, 2009, p.35), guided by the will of "the application of knowledge to the improvement of the human condition, and, the liberation of the mind, and of the body, from aggressive and repressive needs" (Marcuse, 2009, p.35).

To conclude, challenging work-centred educational systems implies, with Arendt and Marcuse, recovering an educative praxis struggling against the post-totalitarian traits of labouring societies which also occurs within the walls of the classroom. To do so, the grounding of the learners in this world is indispensable. With Arendt, the world has to be taught and learned; with Marcuse, it has to be fully grasped, focusing on its hidden negative dimension. With this grounding assured, education has the crucial duty to support the newcomers towards the task of the transformation of the world which is being transmitted. The classroom is therefore a space for reflection and creativity closely linked to the political, understood as the space in which the present and the future are discussed and prospected in common. The terms of the transformation that has to be supported in the education process call for a new subject aware of Eros and the multidimensional sense of his or her unique existence.

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