

Diachronies and Manifold Temporalities.

A Phenomenological Approach to Climate Change and Ecological Crisis

Letizia Konderak*

ABSTRACT: This paper employs Arendt's political phenomenology to grasp climate change. However, climate change emerges in the broader framework of the ecological crisis. Indeed, Arendt's thought offers relevant tools for this study. The first paragraph describes Arendt's three worldly activities (labor, work, action), along with their conditions (nature, world, politics), and their temporalities (circularity, linearity, processualism). The second paragraph shows how the Industrial Revolution merged these activities and temporalities, transforming work into an endless process and bringing the unpredictability and irreversibility of action into nature. The last chapter discusses the ethical and political paths with an eye to Arendt's thought.

KEYWORDS: Diachronies, climate change, intergenerational justice

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction – 2. Methodological remarks: the human condition – 3. The modern confusion among activities and conditions – 4. Ethical and Political Remarks.

1. Introduction

In 1986 Niklas Luhmann claimed that the abundance of ecological scaremongering spread by environmentalists constituted a noisy disturbance to social systems, just like the interferences from the environment.¹ Ecology distorted social communication because of its inability to speak the latter's language, thus sentencing the ecological question to remain unheard. This thesis of Luhmann's is so far from being a rushed neutralization of the ecological question that nowadays societies and politics recognize green economy and sustainable development as the only feasible paths to face the environmental crisis and, above all, climate change. These practices, however, are more the result of the translation of economic scopes and practices to ecology than effective measures against the ecological crisis.

This paper aims to structure some of the theoretical tools in order to grasp climate change and its 'invisibility' for social communication; these same tools are then used to sketch the path to follow in order to face this emergency.

It is relevant to state that these reflections on climate change locate in the broader framework of the ecological crisis: the former is certainly the most evident effect of the latter. Therefore, an analysis of

* *Research Fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies – Southeast Europe, University of Rijeka, letizia.konderak@gmail.com. The article was selected within the call "Climate change: una prova 'estrema' per l'etica e per il diritto" and was subject to a blind review process.*

¹ N. LUHMANN, *Ecological Communication*, Chicago, 1989, 1.



climate change cannot help referring to the environmental issue; also, Arendt's thought offers some relevant tools for such a research broadening.

With this aim in mind, the present study uses concepts forged by phenomenology – most clearly, in Arendt's politicized version – to describe climate change, the human experiences of nature and the world, the historical intertwining of these experiences, and their moral and political implications. It is worth noting that this paper grounds the 'invisibility' of the ecological question in the elusiveness of the experience of nature for men while at the same time showing how the rhythm of men's daily activities define their perception of space and time, and how industrialized production blended these domains. Lastly, it assumes the moral and political consequences of this depiction.

Especially in the Anglo-Saxon context, some researchers already tried such an ecological use of Arendt's thought. This paper is grounded in the discussions thus opened with its main contribution being the analysis of climate change as a deferred phenomenon in time, and as the result of the blending of manifold temporalities, through Arendt's description of the human condition, along with discussion of the moral and political implications of this inquiry.²

2. Methodological remarks: the human condition

The history of phenomenology is broad, and this paper does not aim at its complete reconstruction. However, it will explain some of its pivotal ideas, as far as required for the aims of this work.

The philosophical word 'phenomenology' has a long history as its birth dates back to Hegel's famous work *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). However, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) recognized the phenomenon to be the keystone of his theory of knowledge: in his perspective, the phenomenon is the result of the interaction among the *noumenon* – i.e., the elusive 'thing in itself' – and the human *a priori* forms organizing experience. At the same time, the phenomenon is the only way in which men experience things.

Edmund Husserl (1889-1938) grounded phenomenology as a philosophical movement, coining a new methodology to set research free from the theoretical and metaphysical structures which weighed it down for centuries. Husserl's motto, "back to the things themselves", meant that getting rid of the historical, practical, and social meanings overwhelming things, parenthesizing any intention covering them, allowed for the setting up of a rigorous science of the appearance organized around the intentionality of conscience.

² K.H. WITHESE, *Worldliness and Respect for Nature: an Ecological Application of Hannah Arendt's Conception of Culture*, in *Environmental Values*, 7, 1998, 25-40; A. CHAPMAN, *The Ways that Nature Matters: the World and the Earth in the Thought of Hannah Arendt*, in *Environmental Values*, 16, 2007, 433-445; EAD., *Technology as World Building*, in *Ethics, Politics and Environment*, 7, 2004, 59-72; P. VOICE, *Consuming the World: Hannah Arendt on Politics and the Environment*, in *Journal of International Political Theory*, 9, 2013, 178-193; P.F. CANNAVÒ, *Hannah Arendt: Place, World, and Earthly Nature*, in P.F. CANNAVÒ, L.H. LANE JR., *Engaging Nature. Environmentalism and the Political Theory Canon*, Cambridge/London, 2014, 253-269; P. OTT, *World and Earth: Hannah Arendt and the Human Relationship to Nature*, in *Ethics, Place and Environment: A Journal of Philosophy and Geography*, 12, 2009, 1-16. In the Italian context, O. MARZOCCA, "World Alienation". *Dalla scoperta dell'America alla pandemia*, in *Laboratorio di Archeologia Filosofica*, October 2022, 1-8; F.G. MENGA, *Natalità come appello di giustizia. Quello che Vita activa può insegnarci sulla responsabilità intergenerazionale*, in M. NEGRO (ed.) *Attualità di Hannah Arendt: 60 anni di The Human Condition*, 6, 2018, 130-164.





Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a disciple of Husserl's, elaborated profoundly his master's method. For the scopes of this work, it is relevant to recall his remark – which he formulates in his early masterpiece, *Being and Time* (1927) – that the structure of the human openness to the world must be analyzed before any further inquiry. For this reason, his analysis focuses on the structure of fundamental human experiences.

This paper employs Hannah Arendt's (1906-1975) politicized phenomenology, which shares some essential features of Heidegger's approach, while elaborating several original insights. In her book *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt lays out the cornerstones of her methodology. The scope of her book is “to think what we are doing”,³ i.e., to examine the worldly activities – the *Vita activa*⁴ – in order to shed light on the differences between them and to scratch the surface of their overlap, deriving from centuries of underestimation. According to Arendt the contempt for these activities is the result of the philosophical hierarchization of life, which flattened every worldly activity to a burden obstructing pure contemplation.⁵

Before clarifying the differences among the worldly activities, some other methodological remarks are worth noting. Firstly, the notion of active life counters Heidegger's analysis of the *Dasein* – that is, of man as an existing being. According to Arendt, Heidegger cannot grasp the authentic meaning of *paxis*, i.e., political action and speech, the highest human activity according to the Greeks. Indeed, Heidegger tended to blend every activity into thought, as the condition of possibility of all other practical and theoretical deeds. Furthermore, Arendt claims that Heidegger obliterated the relevance of plurality: in her view, politics is the proper realm for encountering others, for in the public realm the relationship with them is not instrumental but free. Political action is the enacting of plurality, i.e., of “the fact that men, not Man, live on the Earth and inhabit the World”⁶ and with the “twofold character of equality and distinctions”.⁷

Secondly, again in Arendt's view, this multiplicity of activities is paramount for the shape of the everyday experience of things, time, space, and causality. Following one of the basic assumptions of phenomenology, the experience of things is the result of the interaction between them and the experiencing being. The result of this interaction is not merely ‘subjective’ since the activity mediating experience structures things and enables men to perceive them.

Lastly, it is relevant to clarify the meaning of the notion of ‘condition’. While gathering Heidegger's idea that human beings do not locate in their space as in an empty box, but rather are the openness structuring the environment (*Umwelt*) around them, Arendt clarifies that human beings are conditioned by the whole of natural and anthropic things crossing their path, thereby ‘conditioning’ their existence while at the same time structuring it. Therefore, conditions limit and define human

³ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, 1998, 5.

⁴ *Vita activa*, as Arendt claims, only partially overlaps the Greek *bios politikos* (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 12-13): while the latter denotes explicitly the life devoted to the *polis*, where «excellence produces beautiful deeds» (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit. 13), the Latin *vita activa* also includes those activities which the ancient Greek considered mediocre, such as work and labor.

⁵ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 15-21.

⁶ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit. 7; H. ARENDT, *Was ist Politik? Fragmente aus dem Nachlaß*, München/Berlin, 1993, 9.

⁷ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 175.





existence,⁸ although these conditions do not compose ‘human nature’, for their disappearance does not make existence inhuman. The activities through which men respond to these conditions define their experience, thereby revealing and at the same time defining several dispositions of time, space, and causality.

As Arendt sees it, three activities with their corresponding conditions make up the active life: labor, corresponding to nature; work, which is attached to the world; and action, whose peculiar spatiality is the public realm and corresponds to plurality. At this point, it is essential to examine these three activities and their conditions, most notably the ways they reveal and structure time, space, and causality.

The first human activity is labor, whose circular temporality mirrors the natural process and the fact that human beings inhabit the Earth: “labor is 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 produced and fed into the life process by labor”.⁹ The biological processes pervading human bodies require a steady effort in order to continue, although these efforts leave no result since consumption immediately follows production. Otherwise, the biological process unfailingly absorbs these goods and makes them disappear: “the least durable tangible things are those needed for the life process itself”.¹⁰ As labor reveals, nature is a cyclical movement that constantly produces and destroys life. The frantic rhythm of this process makes it hard to distinguish between life and death, production and consumption: “labor and consumption are but two stages of the even-recurring cycle of biological life”.¹¹

In Arendt’s perspective, this circular and recurring temporality describes organic nature. Conversely, it does not refer to Earth, whose geological structure and geography have persisted for thousands of millions of years.¹² Indeed, while Cannavò claims that Arendt neglects this inorganic durability, and consequently simplifies nature, her reference to the Earth as the “very quintessence of the human condition”¹³ reveals a deeper understanding of earthly nature: the geological and geographical formations of Earth host the only nature supporting men as biological beings. Only on Earth is human life possible without massive deployment of technological devices. Therefore, Earth symbolizes the very fact that human beings are conditioned, that life was given to them as a ‘gift’. Arendt’s remark that Earth is the home of mankind, hosting the biological process through which they reveal as a part of nature, is not a poetic celebration of devotion to Earth, but rather the result of her skepticism toward human effort to free from the Earth. The year prior to the publication of *The Human Condition*, the

⁸ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 9.

⁹ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 7.

¹⁰ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 96.

¹¹ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 99.

¹² P.F. CANNAVÒ, op.cit., 257. Natural processes are not simply always recurring, but their changes (the mutation of species, the migrations influencing ecosystems, etc.) take much more time than the lifespan of several human generations – at least before the ecological crisis.

¹³ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 2.



Soviet Union had launched *Sputnik* – its first satellite – into space, an event which some greeted with “relief about the first step toward escape from men’s imprisonment to the earth”.¹⁴

As for the time of nature, it is relevant to underline that Arendt’s notion of natural temporality explicitly refers to Friedrich Nietzsche’s idea of the eternal return of the same¹⁵: the famous insight of the German philosopher, stating that time is circular, does not describe – in Arendt’s perspective – the essence of time. For her, it reveals the experience of time of the laboring man (*animal laborans*), i.e., the temporality of the endlessly recurring biological cycle. Linear time is not a false superstructure built upon Christian contempt for worldly life, but rather the temporal experience that results from work.

The second component of the active life is work – which defines the human being as *homo faber* – whose products compose the world. The latter is in sharp contrast to nature since work extracts violently raw materials to shape lasting objects. The world is indeed the sum of these objects.¹⁶

While natural cycles consistently recur, the world’s feature is durability: “the durability of the human artifice is not absolute; the use we make of it, even though we do not consume it, uses it up”.¹⁷ Indeed, the scope of human artifacts is to partake in a stable world, and their use guarantees their durability, with their destruction unlikely to be caused by consumption. The adequacy of use for these kinds of things reveals another feature of the world: human beings can orient themselves in it through a hierarchy of tools, for each object is a tool with an end; the latter is by its side a tool. Furthermore, instrumentality is the main feature of the productive process, through which the craftsman violently organizes and manipulates raw materials to shape the object he has in mind. Nevertheless, world does not include only tools, institutions, and cultural products: works of art are also the world, despite their complete uselessness. Paradoxically, in the world, maximal durability matches minimal usability. Thus, stability and durability essentially define the world.¹⁸

At this point, elucidating two further insights of Arendt’s is crucial. Firstly, her accurate distinction between labor and work addresses Marx’ accounts on work:¹⁹ in her opinion, his theory reflects his

¹⁴ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 1. The alienation from Earth and World is one of the central topics of the book (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., pp. 248-325; O. MARZOCCA, “World Alienation”, cit., 1-3). See H. ARENDT, *Man’s Conquest of Space*, in *The American Scholar*, 4, 1963, 527-540; P. VOICE, *op. cit.*, 179. The uncontrollable *hybris* fueling the exploration of the universe also pervades the claim of an English politician and businessman, Cecil Rhodes, “I would annex the planets if I could”, H. ARENDT, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, San Diego/New York/London, 1976, 121.

¹⁵ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 97, EAD., *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewish Woman*, New York/London, 1974, 89; F. NIETZSCHE, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Cambridge, 2006, 125. Walter Benjamin also opposes natural to historical temporality, W. BENJAMIN, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, London, 1998, 92.

¹⁶ «Work provides an “artificial” world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings. Within its borders each individual life is housed, while this world itself is meant to outlast and transcend them all» (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 7).

¹⁷ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 136; H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future. Six exercises in political thought*, New York, 1961, 216.

¹⁸ H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, cit., 208.

¹⁹ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 79. Arendt claims the distinction between labor and work was not even clear to the ancient Greeks. These people disdained not only labor, but also trade and manufacturing because of their servility towards wealth and necessity (ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, Oxford, 1998, 1257a -1258b).



subjugation to the modern confusion between labor and work²⁰ – which this paper will analyze in the third chapter.

Secondly, the relationship between world and nature is entangled: nature grounds the world, and the latter cannot help extracting materials from the former. Also, the durability of the world ‘imitates’ the eternity of natural cycles, by translating it as worldly linear durability. However, the human abode is world, and the stability of its objectivity allows men to locate themselves in its reality. Without a world standing before men (as the German word for object, *Gegenstand*, “standing against”, indicates), men would drown in the endlessly recurring natural cycles, unable to raise their heads from capturing biological needs. In Arendt’s words:

“viewed as part of the world, the products of work – and not the products of labor – guarantee the permanence and durability without which a world would not be possible at all. It is within this world of durable things that we find the consumer goods through which life assures the means of its own survival. Needed by our bodies and produced by its laboring, but without stability of their own, these things for incessant consumption appear and disappear in an environment of things that are not consumed but used, and to which, as we use them, we become used and accustomed. As such, they give rise to the familiarity of the world, its customs and habits of intercourse between men and things as well as between man and man”.²¹

Nature glimpses only on the background of the world, to the point that “probably [...] we would not even know what a thing is without having before us the work of our hands”.²² As Chapman states, using Kant’s lexicon, nature is the noumenon, and world is the phenomenon: world appears against the givenness of nature.²³

²⁰ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 85-90.

²¹ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 94.

²² H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 94. “It is this durability which gives the things of the world their relative independence from men who produced and use them, their ‘objectivity’ which makes them withstand, ‘stand against’ and endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users. From this viewpoint, the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that [...] men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table. In other words, against the subjectivity of man stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sublime indifference of an untouched nature, whose overwhelming elementary force [...] will compel them to swing relentlessly in [...] the circle of their own biological movement, which fits so closely into the over-all cyclical movement of nature’s household. Only we who have erected the objectivity of a world of our own from what nature gives us, who have built it into the environment of nature so that we are protected from her, can look upon nature as something ‘objective’. Without a world between men and nature, there is eternal movement, but no objectivity” (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 137; 2, 118; see H. ARENDT, *Work, Labor, Action*, in J.W. BERNAUER (ed.), *Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt*, Boston, 1987, 29-42).

²³ A. CHAPMAN, *The Ways that Nature Matters*, cit., 436. Thus, world is transcendental, i.e., it is the condition of possibility for the appearance of nature and the only way in which it appears. On the contrary, Tassin states that the earth is the transcendental of world, since world is built from what is given on the Earth (É. TASSIN, *La question de l'apparence*, in M. ABENSOUR (ed.), *Ontologie et politique. Actes du colloque Hannah Arendt*, Paris, 1989, 63-84, 68).



This last remark is particularly relevant to our current analysis since it phenomenologically grounds the ‘invisibility’ of natural circular temporality for the prevailing linear experience of time.²⁴ This might explain the deafness of societies toward the ecological question, which Luhmann has so clearly described.

Furthermore, as Paul Ott underlines, this very objectification of nature allows men to valorize it, since only in the human world can something like a value exist, the contempt for the destruction for nature can emerge, and the possibility of an engagement for preserving the ecosystems arises.²⁵

The final human activity is action, which corresponds to the public realm and plurality: Arendt sees politics as participative action and discussion on public matters. Political action consists of the great deeds and speeches men enact before others, thereby revealing the uniqueness of every human being.²⁶ While modern political philosophy has always flattened action to work and politics to a bare means to realize an idea,²⁷ the specific feature of political action is natality, i.e., the ability of each man to bring into the world a new beginning.²⁸ Furthermore, these miraculous beginnings merge with other commencements, thereby generating a network of uncontrollable springs. Action is the result of the entangling of this unforeseeable spontaneity, whose final meaning only emerges at the end of the process, after the waving of actions occurs. This spontaneous interweaving is the specific meaning of the beginning, in opposition to the principle: while the latter detaches from its creation, the former interweaves with what it starts, thus disappearing in the process. The interlacing of spontaneities implies a tremendous uncertainty of results of political action.²⁹

Consequently, the experience of temporality and causality corresponding to action is processualism, i.e., the dangerous and uncontrollable merging of multiple beginnings: action opens a discontinuous diachrony, whose long-term effects are totally uncontrollable. As the results of these processes are irreversible and unpredictable, Arendt recognizes in promise and forgiveness the political remedies against the deafness of action: against its irremediable consequences – for acting human beings “know

²⁴ Chapman employs this insight of Arendt’s to analyze the positions of several ecological movements. She examines – when dealing with the debate on the wind farms in the UK – whether the notion of nature assumed by the ecological movements approximates to world or nature (A. CHAPMAN, *The Ways that Nature Matters*, cit.).

²⁵ P. OTT, op. cit., 11 and 14-15. Ott clarifies that the theories of intrinsic value (claiming that nature carries value in itself) and of monism (reducing culture to nature) precisely lack a grasp of this point: only against the background of the human world can nature appear and reveal itself as something in danger (P. OTT, op. cit., 6, note 2). Monism, in its most radical forms, reaches the point of stating that technology is natural, thus opening the path for accepting every anthropic pollution and destruction of the environment, even if its intent may be the opposite.

²⁶ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 176.

²⁷ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 220-230, and EAD., *Karl Marx and the Tradition of Political Thought*, in *The Modern Challenge to Tradition: Fragmente eines Buchs. Kritische Gesamtausgabe Band 6*, Göttingen, 2018, 245-255 and 246.

²⁸ «*Initium [ergo] ut esset, creatus est homo, ante quem nullus fuit* (That there be a beginning, man was created before whom nobody was)» (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 177; EAD., *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, San Diego/ New York/ London, 1979, 479).

²⁹ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 230; on the difference between Principle and Beginning, EAD., *On Revolution*, London, 1990, 162-164; also R. ESPOSITO, *The Origin of the Political: Hannah Arendt or Simon Weil?*, New York, 2017, 21-23, where Esposito refers to W. BENJAMIN, cit., 40 and 45.



not what they do”³⁰ – stands the political power of forgiveness, which allows men to start anew even when the entwining of actions causes a disaster.³¹ Against the unpredictability of action stands the power of political promise, i.e., the decision of men to bind their future to each other and to respect their pacts.³²

Analyzing the relationship between the public realm and the world in Arendt’s thought is at this point of prime importance. The world ‘stands against’ men, thereby structuring the background against which nature appears. At the same time, World and its durability stabilize political action by offering a public sphere where men can witness great deeds and speeches; the others also preserve the memory of these actions, thus making worldly immortality possible. Public discourses also signify the world and guarantee its commonality. Lastly, the promises – as the laws of a political community – limit the more destructive consequences of the unraveled course of action. In Arendt’s words, world is the essential stake of politics,³³ and world’s political organization guarantees to its citizens a space of appearance, a theatre for the epiphany of freedom.³⁴

In conclusion, the coupling of activities and the corresponding conditions, space-times, and causalities (labor and nature, work and world, action and plurality) embodies the phenomenological notion of identity of actualization (*Vollzugsidentität*) whereby each activity enacts at its best when it adheres to the respective condition so that the condition is the form of the activity, and the activity the actuality of the condition.³⁵ The various components of the active life structure and reveal the manifold temporality of human existence. Further, the political domain manifests a fundamental diachrony, a projection into the future without which the public realm would lose its *raison d’être*.

This study focuses on the way in which the modern age merged the activities and their conditions, thus intertwining different spaces, times, and causalities.

3. The modern confusion of activities and conditions

According to Arendt, the modern age started with the largescale slippage of worldly activities and their conditions. Firstly, the decline of the Greek *polis* and Roman *Res publica* emptied the political space. Indeed, following on from Arendt’s notion of participatory politics, the political space ceases to exist as soon as citizens flee from it to take refuge in the private space, or when the violence of a despotic

³⁰ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 239. Arendt’s use of the term ‘process’ is equivocal, since she employs it for describing the unpredictability of the interweaving of actions, but also for the deterministic notion of history, as a necessary and teleologic development (H. ARENDT, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, cit., VII-IX). Naming ‘process’ the result of actions, she addresses the uncontrollable effects of the network of beginnings, and their discontinuous and non-determinist interlace.

³¹ “Only through this constant mutual release from what they do can men remain free agents” (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 240).

³² H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 243-246; these insights assume the form of the contract theory in H. ARENDT, *On Revolution*, cit., 173-182.

³³ H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, cit., 156.

³⁴ H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, cit., 154; S. KATTAGO, *Hannah Arendt on the World*, in P. HAYDEN (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: Key Concept*, London, 52-65; EAD., *Why the World Matters: Hannah Arendt’s Philosophy of New Beginnings*, in *The European Legacy*, 18, 2013, 170-184.

³⁵ S. LOIDOLT, *Phenomenology of Plurality. Hannah Arendt on Human Intersubjectivity*, New York, 2018, 113 and 129-130.





government conquers it.³⁶ In Arendt's narrative, in the early modern age work replaced politics: the former reached the most extraordinary dignity from the 15th through to the 19th centuries with the myth of the craftsmen and traders as *fabri ipsius fortunae*. Thus, the exaltation of the *homo faber* invaded the political realm as well, where the idea spread that acting meant violently founding a new State.³⁷ In the meantime, the public realm turned into the exchange market.³⁸ This substitution also offered the benefit of releasing politics from the dangers and unpredictability of action,³⁹ with this violent idea of politics serving to enliven the European Revolutions, where politics was envisioned as a means of solving the problem of misery.⁴⁰

For Arendt, since the 19th century, life – i.e., the biological process of the human species – has conquered the space of politics. Indeed, after the affirmation of nations as the legitimating ground of States, the reproduction of life left the private realm, where it had been mired for centuries, and became the primary concern of politics. Therefore, managing the home (*oikonomia*) invested the public sphere to the point that political economy is nowadays directing politics itself: “in our understanding, the dividing line [between the *polis* and the household] is entirely blurred, because we see the body of peoples and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping”⁴¹. The ‘social’ is the sphere where men attend together to the needs of life, the result of bare subsistence occupying the public realm. This overabundant attention to life corresponded to the magnification of labor and consumption in industrialized countries.

The rise of labor to the dignity of the highest human activity and the prominence of life in the public realm result from another merging of activities and conditions. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution – through its division of labor and mechanization – multiplied exponentially the production speed of every commodity. Starting from the 17th century, the dizzying growth of wealth and goods led philosophers and economists to see the economic process as a never-ending development, an ineluctable growth. Thus, the metaphor of life and the temporality of labor and consumption converged to describe this overwhelming abundance:

“historically, political theorists from the seventeenth century onward were confronted with a hitherto unheard-of process of growing wealth, growing property, growing acquisition. In the attempt to account for this steady growth, their attention was naturally drawn to the phenomenon of a progressing process itself, so that [...] the concept of process became the very key term of the new age as well as the sciences,

³⁶ On the mutual exclusion of politics and violence, and reclusion of violence in the Greek household, H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 22-38. Indeed, while political power results from men acting together, violence destroys power and the political realm itself (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 200-204; EAD., *On Violence*, San Diego / New York / London, 1970, 79).

³⁷ According to Arendt this shift influenced the political philosophy from Machiavelli till Marx (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 207-212 and 220-230). However, in Arendt's view, Plato introduced the idea that politics has to realize the philosopher's prescriptions, like the craftsman shapes his artifact.

³⁸ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 159-167.

³⁹ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 222.

⁴⁰ H. ARENDT, *On Revolution*, cit., 59-114.

⁴¹ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 28, where Arendt shows that the syntagm ‘political economy’ would have been a contradiction in terms for the ancient Greeks; also EAD., *Was ist Politik?*, cit., 10.





historical and natural, developed it. From its beginning, this process, because of its apparent endlessness, was understood as a natural process and more specifically in the image of the life process itself".⁴²

From a phenomenological perspective, the Industrial Revolution sanctioned the merging of labor and work, of nature and world: the production of artifacts acquired the frantic rhythm of the natural process, the craftsman became the alienated laborer, and consumption took the place of use.⁴³ Therefore, the cyclic temporality of nature enters the world, thus threatening its stability and exposing it to voracious consumption. At the same time, the teleological temporality of work joins with the biological process, thus turning it into progress. With the notion of progress, teleology directs the cyclical temporality towards an end, and in so doing intertwines instrumentality and the devouring logic of labor and consumption.⁴⁴

It is of paramount importance to examine the several implications of this intuition of Arendt's since it offers relevant tools to grasp the ecological crisis and climate change.

Firstly, the abnormal expansion of labor, while transforming human beings into *animales laborantes*,⁴⁵ requires that what once they respectfully used must be voraciously consumed. Indeed, while the rhythm of production increases steadily, only devouring lasting goods allows new hordes of objects to take their place. According to Arendt, after the "multiplication of lives and the increasing abundance of goods needed by them",⁴⁶ the consumer society itself nourishes economic growth:

"since mankind as a whole is still very far from having reached the limit of abundance, the mode in which society may overcome this natural limitation of its own fertility can be perceived only tentatively and on a national scale. There, the solution seems to be simple enough. It consists in treating all use objects as though they were consumer goods, so that a chair or a table is now consumed as rapidly as a dress and a dress used almost as quickly as food. This mode of intercourse with the things of the world, moreover, is perfectly adequate to the way they are produced. 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 to be used".⁴⁷

⁴² H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 105.

⁴³ Arendt uses Marx's language of alienation, even if she employs it for the alienation from the world (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 248, 254). Marx's notion of alienated labor designates what Arendt simply names labor: for her, labor cannot help enslaving men to the violent force of necessity. In Arendt's terms, what Marx lauds as free labor is work (H. ARENDT, *The Modern Challenge to Tradition*, cit., 247, 272; C. HOLMAN, *Dialectics and Distinction: Reconsidering Hannah Arendt's Critique of Marx*, in *Contemporary Political Theory*, 10, 332-353, 337; J.L. VIEIRA, *A questão da técnica e a condição humana em Hannah Arendt e Karl Marx*, in *Doispontos*, 12, 2015, 151-169, 154-161).

⁴⁴ For an account of the inability of the notion of progress to authentically take into account the future, G.F. MENGA, *Cura*, Milano, 2023, 126-127.

⁴⁵ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 117; this is the reason why Arendt would consider a return to nature a disaster (P. OTT, *op. cit.*, 2).

⁴⁶ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 116.

⁴⁷ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 124; Arendt also quotes the case of the reconstruction of Germany after the Second World War: the exponentially increasing wealth of the post-war phase showed that in Germany, "outright destruction took the place of the relentless process of depreciation of all worldly things" (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 252; see K.H. WITHESE, *op. cit.*, 31; A. CHAPMAN, *Technology as World Building*, cit., 68-69; P. VOICE, *op. cit.*, 181; O. MARZOCCA, "World Alienation", cit., 2).





Thus, the Industrial Revolution brought the cyclic temporality of nature into the stable world.⁴⁸ This thesis implies that the combination of work and labor produces a considerable amount of waste which – unlike the scraps of the biological process – nature cannot metabolize.⁴⁹ In addition, beyond Arendt's analysis, labor takes on the shape of work: industrial agriculture does not simply earn livelihoods after cultivating the soil according to its rhythms. Contrarily, it almost 'extracts' these goods from nature through induced productivity, polluting soils and permanently ruining their fertility.⁵⁰ Furthermore, this mode of production of livelihoods forces them to last longer through additives, preservatives, and a massive use of plastic, thus polluting the environment and the human body.⁵¹ The modern turmoil of human conditions and activities implies further displacement. In Arendt's narrative, the locking of the public realm pushed action towards another domain: political activities addressed nature itself. Remarkably, she claims that scientific action focused on the technological effort to conquer nature, i.e., to grasp the laws of its functioning and bow it to human scopes. As Arendt puts

⁴⁸ Arendt's application of Nietzsche's eternal return of the same to the age of the technique and to its experience of time undoubtedly differs from Heidegger's. Heidegger states that the Nietzschean notion of the eternal return describes the notion of being as an always disposable presence, which corresponds to the needs of the age of technique (M. HEIDEGGER, *Nietzsche*, I and II, New York, 1991, 198-208; F.G. MENGA, *Cura*, cit., 125). On the contrary, Arendt claims that the cyclic temporality of nature – which, according to her, Nietzsche grasped with his notion of the eternal return of the same – penetrates the manufactured world with the Industrial Revolution.

⁴⁹ A. CHAPMAN, *Technology as World Building*, cit., 68, where the author quotes the nuclear wastes and the chemicals released in the atmosphere – like the chlorofluorocarbons responsible for thinning the ozone layer. Regarding climate change, frantic consumption describes the massive release in the atmosphere of amounts of carbon dioxide which plants and soils have been storing for millions of years (A. CHAPMAN, *The Ways that Nature Matters*, cit., 438). Plastic materials, deriving from fossil fuels, are another example of the fixation in the earthly ecosystems of non-metabolizable wastes of a voracious labor-consumption process.

⁵⁰ According to Arendt, the Greeks considered agriculture as a violent extraction of livelihoods from the womb of nature (H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, cit., 213). Leonardi analyses very penetratingly the inclusion of the processes of reproduction – i.e., nature and the social invisible activities whose scope is bare reproduction of life – in capitalistic exploitation, against its traditional reliance on industrial production. Also, Leonardi shows how the aim of the green economy and sustainable growth is to make financial assets out of natural ecosystems: it is the case of carbon trading (E. LEONARDI, *Bringing Class Analysis Back in: Assessing the Transformation of the Value-Nature Nexus to Strengthen the Connection between Degrowth and Environmental Justice*, in *Ecological Economies*, 156, 2016, 83-90 and 88; O. MARZOCCA, *Biopolitics for Beginners. Knowledge of Life and Government of People*, Milan /Udine, 2020, 346-347, shows how the 'solution' of climate change through green economy and sustainable growth derives from a theoretical bias of ecological thought. Indeed, the latter acquires some of its core axioms from the economy and biopolitical strategies – O. MARZOCCA, *Biopolitics for Beginners*, cit., 323-369). According to Leonardi, the traditional nexus value-nature recognized nature as a limitation to valorization. On the contrary, the 'new' nexus value-nature valorizes nature too, together with the 'reproductive' activities, by building assets on the ability of the ecosystems of 'cleaning' the planet from pollution and greenhouse gases, on their pivot function in sustaining life, on pollution itself. Arendt's insights reveal another perspective on the question. Indeed, capitalistic value extraction derives from reducing all the worldly activity to the abstract forms of labor and consumption: the latter guarantees that labor generates a continuity of profits. Therefore, the valorization of livelihoods and natural resources – reproduction-centered valorization – is not in contrast with production-centered valorization: the former has been shaping the latter from the very start. Thus, while climate change promises the increasing scarcity of some livelihoods and creates a 'demand' for a clean environment, valorization targets goods whose consumption is required by the ineluctable needs of human life. See also E. LEONARDI, *Lavoro natura valore. André Groz tra marxismo e decrescita*, Napoli, 2017 and the Symposium on this book of *Etica & Politica/ Ethics & Politics*, 2019, 21, 1.

⁵¹ P. OTT, *op. cit.*, 15.





it: “the capacity for action, at least in the sense of releasing processes, is still with us, although it has become the exclusive prerogative of the scientists, who have enlarged the realm of human affairs to the point of extinguishing the time-honored protective dividing line between nature and the human world”.⁵² Therefore, the scientists’ solitary and quiet research has the most significant political impact. Although Arendt here is thinking of the research on nuclear technologies,⁵³ the confusion among temporalities also describes climate change very well. Indeed, the analysis of political temporality showed the diachrony resulting from plural action, where human spontaneity initiates irreversible and unforeseeable processes. The slipping of action towards nature interpolates this temporality into the circular biological process: the juxtaposition of cyclic temporality and human beginnings leads the unpredictability and irreversibility of action into nature so that “nature can no longer be relied upon to behave in the same way as it did in the past”.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the political remedies against the unpredictability and irreversibility of action – i.e., promises and forgiveness – are no longer helpful in the natural realm. In conclusion, climate change – the more visible effect of the environmental crisis, along with pollution, desertification, extreme weather events, deforestation, and reduction of biodiversity – results from the accumulation in nature of linear and processual temporalities which entered it when labor merged with work⁵⁵ and when the scientific and technological action penetrated the natural cycles. The manifold temporality of human existence converges into nature, while the deferred political temporality, i.e., its diachrony, leaves a legacy of unpredictable consequences. The awareness of the risks for future generations forces our current generation to wonder what planet we are leaving to those who are yet to come.

⁵² H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 323-324, EAD., *The Man’s Conquest of Space*, cit., 537-538.

⁵³ A. CHAPMAN, *Technology as World Building*, cit., 66; H. ARENDT, *Was ist Politik?*, cit., 85, where she describes the employ of nuclear power as the capture of forces coming from the Universe on the Earth.

⁵⁴ A. CHAPMAN, *Technology as World Building*, cit., 68. Not only does the biological process not follow the same circular path it did, but the new processes generate unpredictable chain reactions. It is the case with the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which increases the earth’s temperature in various ways: it generates the greenhouse effect, thus triggering the melting of glaciers. The reduction of the glaciers decreases their capacity to cool down the atmosphere – also through the albedo effect –, combined with the increased temperature of the oceans. The latter modifies the balance of temperatures among the different areas of the planet, to which the increase of the sea level contributes as well (also due to the thermal expansion of water). Meanwhile, the higher level of carbon dioxide in the oceans decreases the ability of seaweeds to store greenhouse gases. In addition, the evermore visible effects of these changes result from decades of greenhouse gas emission linked to anthropic activities (A. PIRNI, R. BUIZZA, *op. cit.*, 328-334).

However, the direct proportionality between carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere and the earth’s surface temperature was prematurely discovered in 1896 by Svante Arrhenius (E. LEONARDI, *Bringing Class Analysis Back in*, cit., 88): it was therefore neither unpredicted nor unpredictable.

⁵⁵ It is curious that Gregory Bateson (1904-1980) – from a very different perspective – describes the ecological crisis as the result of tension between the teleology of purposive consciousness of human action and the ‘cybernetic’ and reticular structure of the ecosystems-mind. Remarkably, the former produces an imbalance in the ecosystems, and the multiplication of these variances might approach the point of disintegrating the ecosystem (G. BATESTON, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind. Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*, Northvale /London, 1987, 313-317 and 343-346; O. MARZOCCA, *Biopolitics for Beginners*, cit., 364-390).



4. Ethical and political remarks

The diachrony of climate change and ecological crisis implies an ethical diachrony: the risk that future generations might not have a planet for a life worth living has shown that the present generations should consider future ones in the decision-making process. Remarkably, a sense of responsibility toward future human beings – thus, an ethical diachrony – emerges from the diachrony between intervention in nature and its long-term effects, thus posing the question of intergenerational justice.

Nevertheless, the quest for an intervention remains generally ignored. The compelling emergencies of the political agenda often led to neglect the ecological issue,⁵⁶ thus confirming Luhmann's claim that the environmental disturbances are little more than noise to the social systems. As this work has demonstrated in the second paragraph, the heterogeneity between natural cyclical temporality and the teleological organization of the world – in the transfigured shape of progress, the mixture of cycle and teleology – makes nature 'invisible'. Indeed, the ecological solutions which are generally accepted are those which reproduce the social and economic discourse, i.e., those which successfully extract value from natural resources, ecosystems, and environmental risk itself – as this paper has briefly shown for the carbon trade market and the creation of financial assets on ecosystems.

Against the numbness in facing the ecological question rises the quest for a compelling ecological argument.⁵⁷ Individual inaction surely derives from a sense of ineffectiveness, the exceptional costs of the transition to a cleaner lifestyle, and anti-scientific divulgation negating the anthropic responsibility of climate change.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the expectation for a resolute technology that might counter the global quest for energy with no environmental repercussions plays a key role in silencing the sense of responsibility to face climate change and ecological crisis, and the responsibility toward future generations. This idea hides in the 'ecological transition', which assumes that the advanced societies' lifestyle might remain unchanged through a shift in energy sources and technologies.⁵⁹

This paragraph discusses a number of moral and political arguments deriving from Arendt's reflection to direct the moral and political path required by climate change. Indeed, it is not certain whether any rational argument is able to leap from the domain of rational argumentation to motivating action, as Aristotle himself states;⁶⁰ however, a discussion on moral obligation surpasses the scope of this work. Therefore, the arguments here proposed are not motivations, but rather lay out the path that facing

⁵⁶ O. MARZOCCA, *Biopolitics for Beginners*, cit., 343-345; In Europe, this occurred with the war between Russia and the Ukraine and earlier with the pandemic, whose ecological roots remain unthought (O. MARZOCCA, *Biopolitics for Beginners*, cit., 391-437); elsewhere, the imperative of economic development is still the paramount priority.

⁵⁷ See A. PIRNI, *Overcoming the Motivational Gap: a Preliminary Path to Rethinking Intergenerational Justice*, in *Human Affairs*, 29, 2019, 286-296 and A. PIRNI, R. BUIZZA, *Il ruolo degli individui e delle istituzioni nell'affrontare il cambiamento climatico*, in *Etica & Politica / Ethics & Politics*, 24, 2022, 323-348, where the two authors underline the great effect which the combination of individual and state efforts to decrease the emissions of greenhouse gases could achieve.

⁵⁸ A. PIRNI, R. BUIZZA, *op. cit.*, 332-334; the paper also clarifies the undeniable evidence of the anthropic origin of climate change.

⁵⁹ For example, this path prescribes that electric cars replace internal combustion engines, a solution which already brought huge investments and public incentives to this market. Nevertheless, the production of electricity still relies on fossil fuels, and building electric cars requires an extensive use of rare earth metals.

⁶⁰ ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Cambridge, 2004, 1139a 31-1139b 6, 1140a 24-1140b 30.



the ecological crisis and enacting the responsibility toward future generations could take. With this aim in mind, the present study discusses some of the insights which researchers found in Arendt's thought and which could lead to the rethinking of the human position on Earth and in the world: indeed, if technological and scientific solutions might begin new unpredictable processes, and if the green economy and sustainable growth make climate change profitable, there is an urgent need for a global change in the way men dwell in the world.⁶¹

There are four main pathways sketched in Arendt's thought toward a redefinition of the human position in the world: the democratization of science and technology, the notion of natality, the semantics of culture and care, which relates directly to the last point, i.e., the locating of each human activity in its proper condition.

Firstly, Whiteside, Chapman, and Voice claim that Arendt's notion of participatory politics offers a relevant grounding for a renewed path toward environmental responsibility. Indeed, *The Human Condition* opens with the claim that from the 20th century onwards, any public discussion on science is impossible, for scientific language is no longer meaningful to common sense. Scientists "move in a world where speech has lost its power".⁶² The impossibility to speak publicly about scientific innovations implies the risk that men "indeed become the helpless slaves, not so much of our machines as of our know-how, thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible, no matter how murderous it is".⁶³ Whiteside states that political deliberation and judgment might generate a qualitative valorization of the world, thus subtracting it from a merely utilitarian and consumeristic attitude. Chapman employs the notion of technology: as technology is a way of building the world,⁶⁴ she claims that men should judge technology by pondering whether the world it creates "is a place fit for action and speech",⁶⁵ and not because of the power it generates on nature. While Voice also recognizes the relevance of unconstrained public deliberation, he nevertheless emphasizes that public discussion on ecological issues implies the transformation of scientific truths into mere opinions, exposed to doubts and discussion.⁶⁶ However, this is the ineluctable destiny of everything appearing in the public realm. It is not even sure that the democratization of the discussion on ecological crisis and climate change is not resulting in the same exploitation deriving from the capitalistic economy and society. Although these risks are unavoidable in order to make the politicization of science possible, their counterpart might be a collective assumption of responsibility for climate change.⁶⁷

⁶¹ *Ethos*, the ancient Greek word from which ethics derives, meant not only way of behaving but also mode of dwelling (M. HEIDEGGER, *Über den Humanismus*, Frankfurt am Main, 2000, 46-48; O. MARZOCCA, *Biopolitics for Beginners*, cit., 380).

⁶² H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 4.

⁶³ H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 3.

⁶⁴ "Technology is how we add things to the world; technology is the things that we have added to the world that we use" (A. CHAPMAN, *Technology as World Building*, op. cit., 62).

⁶⁵ A. CHAPMAN, *Technology as World Building*, op. cit., 66.

⁶⁶ P. VOICE, op. cit., 188-191; H. ARENDT, *Truth and Politics*, in *The New Yorker*, 1967, 49-88.

⁶⁷ In Arendt's perspective, however, frantic consumption fulfills the senselessness of human existence constrained by its biological dimension: only consumption remains to the *animal laborans*, when he does not labor. Optimistically, she seems to think that the reappearance of politics might counter the unnatural expansion of labor and consumption (H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., 191).





Secondly, Menga detects in Arendt's idea of natality a chance for grounding intergenerational responsibility. Natality – i.e., the human attitude to bring the new into the world – intertwines every community with those of the past and with those still to come. Indeed, the political existence of the present generations requires its projection toward the future, just as it gathered what the past generations left behind them. Through sharing a lasting world, future generations make sense of the past, continuing or changing it, and in any case guaranteeing it some kind of immortality. As Menga clarifies, his political perspective on intergenerational justice counters Thompson's idea that the human duty towards future generations should rely upon 'lifetime-transcending interests', i.e., on the 'interest' of the present community to transcend itself toward the future. While Thompson grasps the relevance of continuity in the future of political communities, the limit of her reasoning, according to Menga, consists in her adhering to the notion of interest, which she recognizes as the only possible motivation for human action.⁶⁸ Beyond the liberal founding of political communities on pacts of interested individuals, natality grounds the political and moral diachrony of intergenerational continuity.

Furthermore, Voice, Whiteside, and Cannavò underline the ecological implications of Arendt's analysis of culture. In her essay *The Crisis in Culture*, Arendt examines the Roman meaning of the word 'culture', which derives from "colere – to cultivate, to dwell, to take care, to tend and preserve".⁶⁹ Culture initially defined the human relationship with nature, and described the activity of agriculture, as "the intercourse of man with nature in the sense of cultivating and tending nature until it becomes fit for human habitation. As such, it indicates an attitude of loving care and stands in sharp contrast to all efforts to subject nature to the domination of man".⁷⁰

Initially, culture-cultivation denoted building a world through the respectful allocation in nature so that human beings preserve the latter while making it last through the edification of a world. Remarkably this caring activity bestows upon the world a "fitness for human habitation".⁷¹ According to Voice, this idea of Arendt's assumes the ineluctably anthropocentric perspective on nature, while presenting the imperative of 'respect for nature'⁷² reasonably. As Voice and Whiteside show, the notion of loving care for nature, so that it may host a human world, counters the "utilitarian attitude of using nature for human consumption",⁷³ as well as the ecological perspective which condemns any human activity on nature. Building a world and caring for its location in nature is the human way to respect nature.⁷⁴

This study claims that Arendt's notion of loving care for nature and world and her appeal to the cultivation of nature through the building of the world require a redefinition of the human position in

⁶⁸ F.G. MENGA, *Natalità come appello di giustizia*, cit., 150-164, Id., *When the Generational Overlap is the Challenge rather than Solution. On some Problematic Versions of Transgenerational Justice*, in *The Monist*, 106, 2023, 194-208

⁶⁹ H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, cit., 211; P.F. CANNAVÒ, *op. cit.*, 262; K.H. WITHESSIDE, *op. cit.*, 31-32; P. VOICE, *op. cit.*, 186.

⁷⁰ H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, cit., 211-212.

⁷¹ P. VOICE, *op. cit.*, 186.

⁷² Whiteside underlines the perplexities of the 'respect for nature': this respect should not exclude that "at a minimum point it must allow for human beings routinely to kill the object of their respect" (K.H. WITHESSIDE, *op. cit.*, 29). Marzocca underlines that Arendt sticks to an anthropocentric idea of nature (O. MARZOCCA, "World Alienation", cit., 5-6).

⁷³ P. VOICE, *op. cit.*, 186.

⁷⁴ H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, cit., 204-208.





nature. Remarkably – as the third paragraph of this work has shown – starting from the modern age, work and labor, consumerism and instrumentalism merged in the gargantuan shape of a frantic productive process, destroying the stability of the world and the cycles of nature. Accordingly, loving care for world and nature supposes the locating of each human activity within its specific condition: labor should stick to nature and indulge in its cyclic temporality, its self-restoring and yet limited fertility,⁷⁵ while work should build a world, and its artifacts should last through caring use against consumption. While human existence cannot help building a world and dwelling in it – and that always means destroying nature⁷⁶ – the objectification of nature puts human beings in the position of valorizing it and fighting for its preservation. Ott calls this “ecological” argument world mediation, i.e., the caring construction of a lasting world from that which men find in nature.⁷⁷

Lastly, loving care supposes the identity of actualization, i.e., the coupling of worldly activities and their relative conditions. This return of every activity to its condition is also an appeal for a reopening of the political space, in which public discussion of science, mastery of technological inventions, and democratic decisions on climate change should take place. It means expropriating science and technology of their monopoly over action. While forgiveness is powerless against the irreversible effects of the environmental crisis, a public promise of commitment – also in the perspective of political continuity toward future generations – could open the space for political deliberation on climate change and ecological crisis. That would mean, if not an immediate action, at least the public taking on of responsibility for the environmental crisis and climate change.

The most optimistic scenario is one in which individuals and communities recognize the threatening risks of climate change, assume responsibility for intergenerational justice, and push states and governments to action. Undoubtedly, this could lead to a democratic discussion in the ecological language beyond its reduction to economic aims.

⁷⁵ A. CHAPMAN, *The Ways that Nature Matters*, cit., 442 and P. OTT, *op. cit.*, 1 and 14-15.

⁷⁶ *Ivi*, 7 and 14.

⁷⁷ *Ivi*, 16.

