

MAKING POVERTY VISIBLE—THREE THESES¹

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Translated by Arne De Boever²*Here one cannot possibly exaggerate.*

Herman Bang, “The Life of the Poor”

Hannah Arendt’s studies and essays on totalitarianism revealed that in the concentration camps of the National Socialists, human life reached a limit that teaches us something about the human being. Giorgio Agamben took up this insight and developed it further in his ethics of bare life.³ Are there indications in Arendt’s work that the human being can approach the limit of human life in other contexts as well? This essay will show that poverty also constitutes such a limit, a wall at which we experience something about the human being, about the possibility and impossibility of a public life.⁴

In an early note from her *Denktagebuch*, which she wrote six years after the end of the Second World War, Hannah Arendt discusses poverty as a “human phenomenon.” According to Arendt, poverty only appears, it is only a phenomenon and it can only be understood in its “proper nature,” when it provokes “moral indignation”: “This has nothing to do with judging. But rather: poverty does not even become visible as poverty if there is no ‘moral indignation’ [in English in the original].”⁵ Poverty is thus characterized as a moral phenomenon, as a phenomenon that already requires a moral awareness or conduct to enter into the horizon of what can be understood. Poverty is not simply something that is given under certain historical or societal conditions, and that can first be described and then evaluated. It is not something that can be socio-politically tolerated or socio-technologically prevented. If the phenomenon of poverty does not fill us with indignation, if we do not feel outraged, resistant, or angry, if we are not carried away by an emotion that has a moral rather than a pathological quality, if we are not struck by an affect that cannot be transmitted in the form of a carefully considered judgment or a rational condemnation, then we do not even know that there is such a thing as poverty. Whoever sees poverty without being filled with moral outrage or indignation actually does not see it. We could conclude from this that the worst poverty would be to not see poverty, to be unable to perceive it or understand it as a “human phenomenon,” because we do not feel “moral indignation,” which either comes about immediately or not at all. For the absence of such indignation “denaturalizes” poverty and “strips” it from its “proper nature.”

By using the phrase “moral indignation,” Arendt implicitly brings into play a distinction between a poverty that has a proper nature, a nature that envelops it like a protective dress, and a poverty that is denaturalized, emptied out of its nature—a poverty that is poorer even than poverty itself. The “denaturalization” of poverty against which Arendt mobilizes the idea of “moral indignation” as the “essential ingredient of ‘poverty’ [in English in the original]”—the idea of a “proper nature” of poverty—generates a new poverty that is really a double poverty. While the human being who is not morally outraged by poverty is poorer than the poor, who partake in poverty’s “proper nature,” in the fact that it provokes “moral indignation,” denaturalized poverty is poorer than poverty because we are no longer provoked by it, because this poverty is constituted by the fact that it cannot be made visible. The “denaturalization” of poverty is a “dehumanization.” The poorest of the poor can therefore be found both among those who lack means of subsistence and those who are well off. As long as the “context of human solidarity” in the name of which Arendt denounces the “objectivation” of poverty and the “subjectivation” of indignation is held up and preserved in the “public life,” poverty still has a “proper nature,” because it can still provoke “moral indignation.” The poor are not simply poor. As soon as the “context of solidarity” is broken, however, as soon as the public sphere is destroyed, the difference between the poor and those who are provoked by poverty and relate to it, disappears. Shouldn’t we say, then, that poverty’s proper nature lies precisely in the possibility of such an expropriating bifurcation of its meaning, as if the way out of poverty were already there within poverty itself, through the solidarity of “moral indignation,” but in such a way that poverty would simultaneously be building a wall that proves to be impenetrable? There is poverty, and poverty beyond poverty. The question is why this is the case.

There are two transgressions that determine Arendt’s idea of poverty—an idea that cannot so much be grasped and judged through reflection, like the idea of a certain subject matter, but that is more like a holding onto an emotion or a feeling that is triggered by poverty and through which alone poverty becomes accessible.

On the one hand, the mediated dimension of poverty, the fact that it must be a historically and socially produced phenomenon if it is to provoke “moral indignation,”⁶ is tied to the mediated dimension of this indignation itself, which oscillates between a feeling and a conduct or a behavior. This connection is achieved in such a way, however, that the link between the two, between poverty and indignation, should be understood as one of immediacy. When I perceive or grasp poverty, I react immediately, as if it were just as immediately given as my reaction itself. Poverty thus extends the No of indignation, since this No is not the carefully argued result of an actual trail of thought. There is therefore a relation between Arendt’s idea of poverty and Adorno, who thought that moral questions should not rationalize the impulse of the unacceptable that becomes visible in the face of suffering.⁷ If we hesitate to call “moral indignation” a feeling, it is because a feeling has an impotence about it, an inner powerlessness, as it were, and perhaps even a certain sense of self-satisfaction, which cannot be intended by the use Arendt makes of the word “indignation.” If, on the contrary, we hesitate to call “moral indignation” an awareness or consciousness, it is because in this case it would cease to be characterized by the sudden and violent immediacy of a negation and no longer appear as a kind of strike or blow. If, ultimately, we also hesitate to call “moral indignation” a conduct and follow the path laid out by the reference to morality, it is because we would then once again prioritize mediation, something that Adorno’s use of the word “impulse” is precisely meant to decry.

On the other hand – this is the second transgression – Arendt’s idea of poverty does not simply transgress disciplinary boundaries, such as the boundary between a descriptive phenomenology and an evaluative moral theory; it also transgresses the boundary between that which constitutes a discipline (history for example, the science whose “method” is the object of Arendt’s analysis) and that which is not considered scientific because it cannot be studied as something that is independently given or required, something that is or should be the case. Poverty cannot become accessible other than via the “response” it provokes. This “response” cannot be understood in a general manner, as stipulated conduct, but only with respect to a particular case.

The phenomenon of poverty marks a limit at which the possibility of making distinctions within the realm of “human phenomena,” and at the very borders of this realm, is called into question. This may be because we are dealing with a limit at which the human being itself appears and disappears. It is as if the human being appears where poverty stops, and poverty begins where the human being disappears. Or, put differently: poverty reveals how the human being appears and disappears, and is in this sense a “human phenomenon.” Poverty is the making visible of the human being, which in its turn makes poverty visible through “moral indignation.”

Poverty is the making visible of the human being because the poor are not yet or no longer human beings that could disappear or appear. But it is “moral indignation” that makes poverty visible, because poverty is not naturally given. Here, it probably still makes some sense to distinguish between nature and culture since the reality of poverty can be created through an unexpected, external influence and have its cause in a so-called natural disaster. Yet changing this reality does not depend on a coincidence or on nature, just as it does not when poverty is generated, perpetuated, and worsened even, by a mode of production. Marx explains for example that in 19th century capitalism, the free workers are propelled by the “illusion” of “general wealth,” by the deception that the money they receive as a wage is more than just “coins” that can be exchanged for the “disappearing form” of food; and by the deception that the transformation of “coins” into “money” that is the result of their saving will “[expand] the sphere of [their] pleasures”⁸ beyond the mere moment. He also explains that the free worker is a “virtual pauper” and that “in the mode of production based on capital [...] pauperism appears as the result of labor itself, of the development of the productive force of labor.”⁹

In *The Human Condition* as well as in her *Denktagebuch*, Arendt draws attention to the etymological relation between the German word for poverty, ‘Armut’, and work or labor, ‘Arbeit.’ Luis Buñuel also stages this relation in a successful montage in his film *Viridiana*. In a flowering grove, a young woman prays the Angelus with a group of poor people, beggars, and vagabonds she gathered, so that they would better their lives; at the same time, heavy work is going on on the property next door. Buñuel interrupts the focused attention of the prayer again and again by splicing short sequences of images into it that evoke the roughness with which materials are treated during the work process. Stones thunder to the ground as they are being unloaded; a tree-trunk is being sawed in two with a dry, regular rhythm; cement is smacked against a wall with a putty knife; cloudy water clutches back and forth in a receptacle; a hammer tears down a wall with dull thuds. All of this gives an impression that is compellingly obscene, as if Buñuel at this moment is already anticipating what will only become explicit later on, during the orgy of the poor, a parody of the Last Supper, namely that the poor are not better people, and that ‘egotism’ is precisely “most strongly ignited by the *vis à vis de rien*,” as Ernst Bloch puts it in *The Spirit of Utopia*.¹⁰ From this perspective, stinginess, compulsion, and baseness appear to be the defining characteristics of poverty.

Poverty is linked to work or labor through its proximity to brutal nature, which is something unbending and compulsive. In her *Denktagebuch*, Arendt defines work or labor as the “occupation of poverty”;¹¹ in *The Human Condition*, she writes about the *homo laborans* that his “social life [is] worldless and herdlike” – he is incapable of “building and inhabiting a public, worldly realm.”¹² How are we to understand, against this background, Arendt’s statement about the “world’s phenomenal nature” in her late, unfinished work on the life of the mind, namely that the human being is determined by the fact that it is an appearing and disappearing being, that there always already was a world before it and that there will always be one after it?¹³ Does the poor human being approach the limit of human life, of its past and its future, because it does not actually appear and live in a world, even though the abolition of poverty does not, as such, amount to the creation of a public sphere? We could then ask ourselves whether the reason why poverty can be made visible only through the impulse of “moral indignation,” does not lie in its incommensurability with the appearing and disappearing of the human being, whom poverty cannot leave indifferent. In doing so, we should not forget that the impulse itself is difficult to grasp, since it is meant to make visible something from which the reacting and responding agent turns away at the same time. The scandal of poverty, which expresses itself as “moral indignation,” is the fact that the human being does not recognize itself in it, even though it is a “human phenomenon” that is part of a historical development and a societal relation. And this scandal is also a moral scandal, for the immediacy of the impulse denotes that morality has its origin, or at least one of its origins, in what exceeds human understanding. Is the maxim of the *Threepenny Opera*—first “food,” then morals¹⁴—a moral one? The human being who sees poverty and therefore behaves like a human being, i.e. morally, is blind, is no longer a human being. The making visible of poverty is the making visible of a wall we run into and that we want to break through, as if there had to be a way or as if we had to forge a way that leads from poverty to the human being. Can it thus come as a surprise when Arendt speaks of “indignation”? To see poverty, to make poverty visible, is conditioned by a turning away from it, by a No or an Against, by the counter-turning implied in the fact that such a thing is possible. We do not actually see poverty, not because we are not looking carefully or attentively enough, not because we are lacking dedication or because the “context of solidarity” has been broken, but because for those who are provoked by poverty, the appearance of poverty coincides with its disappearance. We do not see it because there always only remains a trace of it, a tracing that expresses itself as “moral indignation.” Poverty is always the poverty of a phenomenon; when you are poor, you are always poor in world.

If poverty indicates a limit of humanity, however, the way through it can also lead beyond humanity. Is it therefore at all surprising that Francis of Assisi, a “second Christ,” declares the “greatest poverty” to be the possession of a band of companions who wander through the world “as pilgrims and strangers”? The “boundless treasure of holiest poverty” is “that celestial virtue whereby all earthly and transitory things are trodden under foot and whereby every hindrance is removed from the soul that she may be freely conjoined in the eternal God.”¹⁵

It turns out that the doubling of poverty we found in Arendt’s note, its bifurcation into a poverty that has a “proper nature” and a poverty that is “denaturalized,” that has been stripped of its protective dress, directly follows from the attempt to understand poverty in its “proper nature” or to make it visible as a “human phenomenon.” If we set out on the road of poverty, we are inevitably stopped by a wall; we bump our heads into it, it blocks our way, there is an interruption, a lack of mediation in the immediacy that leads to “moral indignation.” This wall of poverty is there because its trace leads both towards the human being and away from it – it leads towards it,

because it leads away from it, and away from it, because it leads towards it. “Moral indignation” wants poverty, which leads away from the human being, to lead towards it; it wants to understand poverty as a “human phenomenon” that resists “denaturalization” and “dehumanization.” The liberation of the soul wants to free poverty from the transcendental illusion of wealth, which leads to the human by way of restraints and worries, in order to unify the poor with God and to lead them away from finitude and mortality. The wall of poverty sparks a revolution of both immanence and transcendence. A revolutionary subject constitutes itself there and recognizes the limit. In the case of the revolution of immanence, the subject recognizes the limit formed by poverty only to return to a humanity whose future might remain unknown (“if there is poverty, wealth should measure itself by it – this requires solidarity, which expresses itself in the resistance against poverty”). In the case of the revolution of transcendence, on the contrary, the subject recognizes the limit formed by poverty only to hurl itself forward, into exaggeration (“if there is poverty, wealth should measure itself by it—this requires a kind of wealth that is no longer opposed to poverty”). The fact that both cases share the essential component of recognition can be explained by the fact that poverty cannot be objectivized, as Arendt emphasizes, and that we cannot tear down the wall and work our way around poverty.

Why is this the case? Why does poverty double itself, why does it raise a wall when it also indicates a way out? These questions, which we raised at the beginning, can now be answered. If indeed the doubling of poverty takes place within poverty’s “proper nature” itself, if it turns out that poverty’s “denaturalization” and “dehumanization” is not due to external factors, the reason for this can be found in what we have already drawn out, namely that poverty as such is produced and suffered by human beings who in this very activity approach a limit of human life that they do not simply draw themselves, or open or close themselves. Wherever this approach of a limit is looked at from a distance, poverty risks to be sentimentally transformed into something it is not.

If we approach poverty in this manner, if we assume that the moral and religious practices that refer to it must engender a discourse consisting of paradoxical expressions, if poverty is the making visible of something that cannot appear, or if it is a possession that belongs only to those who are entirely without possessions, then it is possible to formulate two theses:

First Thesis – Although poverty is not naturally given, it is still irreducible, regardless of whether it is continued in one form, or ended in another. We can recognize this irreducibility, this impossibility of distinguishing a limit, from the fact that—as in Artur Aristakisjan’s film *Ladoni*—it can lead to a mystic-apocalyptic vision that cannot simply be denounced as ideology. For to do so we would have to show that the limit which both connects and separates poverty and “moral indignation,” to refer once again to Arendt, can be crossed in one direction only, namely in the direction of the world. But this would hollow out “moral indignation” itself and undermine its credibility, and it would also imply a highly questionable understanding of the notion of the limit. We can recognize the irreducibility of poverty from the fact that, as in Knut Hamsun’s novel *Hunger*, it puts the increasingly impoverished in an impossible situation. It is as if the subjectivation, the experience of poverty as intoxication and hallucination, were a sign of the fact that the narrator is increasingly abandoning himself to poverty, running into a wall again and again, and that he is doing so the more stupidly he behaves, the more desperately he denies the dead end at which he arrives, the more stubbornly he wears himself out to build a

wall against the impenetrable wall of poverty. He has to endure poverty, because every attempt to set himself free from it through recognition would amount to a betrayal—of himself, and perhaps of poverty even, which has become his occupation. We can only endure poverty, however, when we try to give ourselves to it with the same inflexibility that characterizes poverty. The end of the novel—the departure on a ship that travels abroad across the sea—is more like a giving up on poverty than a liberation from it or a triumph over it. Whatever it may be, it tells us everything and nothing about poverty: that in the end, we do not arrive there. Hence the two most extreme forms of poverty’s irreducibility become recognizable there where poverty is accepted and pushed into exaggeration, and where it produces immediate resistance. On the one hand, poverty provokes a kind of resistance that raises itself against it over and over again, and that perhaps cannot be broken, precisely because poverty is not naturally given. Such resistance thus proves to be as stubborn as poverty itself. On the other hand, poverty is accepted in order for it to lead outside of human life and the world, outside of hardship, deceit and illusion, perhaps also into a life and a world that are no longer simply those of the human being. Where the human being runs up against poverty, its acceptance of poverty wants to transgress the limits of humanity; where the human being resists poverty, it wants to redraw these limits, and to do so for the very same reason. For those who accept poverty, there are alternatives to the “human phenomenon,” to the “world’s phenomenal nature,” namely a future that lies outside; for those who resist poverty, the “human phenomenon” is the alternative, and the future has to be looked for in the “phenomenal nature of the world.”

Second Thesis – It is a consequence of the irreducibility of poverty that it demands distinctions. It is as if we had to keep asking what poverty is, what it really is, and what it really means to measure ourselves against it and to make it visible. To approach poverty, the artist can represent it; the believer can welcome it through his religious practice; the philosopher can consider it the origin of morality and of the always uncertain “context of solidarity” because of the immediacy of “moral indignation.” Thus, the artist, the believer, and the philosopher explicitly or implicitly distinguish between an experience, a practice, a conduct, that measure themselves to poverty and an experience, a practice, and a conduct that do not. Hamsun wanted to show what it can mean to really suffer from hunger, and not just occasionally or with a consoling outlook onto an ultimately successful overcoming of necessity. The irritated reader quickly notices that for the narrator, every perspective onto such an overcoming only turns into an opportunity to entangle himself more deeply into poverty. Francis of Assisi wanted to be liberated from “bodily needs” by living without possessions, and thus in true poverty; Arendt wanted a true relation to poverty; with the “response” of “moral indignation,” she wanted to mark the beginning of a world, of an appearing and a disappearing, that would leave poverty behind or rise above it.

Marx distinguishes between the poverty of a reactionary, counter-revolutionary Lumpenproletariat and that of a progressive and revolutionary proletariat. In his text “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” he writes that the French bourgeoisie turned against the “domination of the working proletariat” in order to bring the Lumpenproletariat to power.¹⁶ The “financial science” of the Lumpenproletariat, “whether [the Lumpenproletariat is] of high degree or low,” is restricted to “loans and donations.”¹⁷ In his essay from 1933 entitled “Experience and Poverty,” Walter Benjamin makes a distinction between a “new misery” that came into being after the First World War because of the “tremendous development of technology,” and a “great poverty,” “[whose] face [is] of the same sharpness and precision as that of a beggar in the Middle Ages.”¹⁸ According to Benjamin, there is a revealing “underside” to the new misery he detects: the “oppressive wealth

of ideas” that doesn’t require a “genuine revival” but instead brings about a “galvanization,” a fixation of the mind. We therefore need to turn against this new misery and to give ourselves completely to the “poverty of experience” that partakes in the “great poverty.” “This should not be understood to mean that people are longing for new experience. No, they long to free themselves from experience, they long for a world in which they can make such pure and decided use of their poverty—their outer poverty and ultimately also their inner poverty—that it will lead to something respectable.”¹⁹ Benjamin advocates a wealth that we can only take in if we “give ourselves without reserve” to poverty, if we transform poverty’s wall into a way (out) as opposed to trying to escape poverty through fake abundance, something that would only serve to render the new misery eternal. The figure of “Mickey Mouse” supposedly embodies this wealth. It is the figure of poverty, the figure of an infinite plasticity *in concreto*, as if the infinite wealth of sensuous certainty—the truth of which, as is well known, dialectics wants to uncover in poverty—is not just a wealth of fullness, but a wealth of unlimited reorganizations and transformations; and as if with that, poverty were no longer a matter of truth or knowledge: “Nature and technology, primitiveness and comfort, have merged here. And to people who have grown weary of the endless complications of everyday living and to whom the purpose of existence seems to have been reduced to the most distant vanishing point in an endless horizon, it must come as a tremendous relief to find a way of life in which everything is solved in the simplest and most comfortable way—in which a car is no heavier than a straw hat and the fruit on the tree becomes round as quickly as a hot-air balloon.”²⁰

Finally, to bring in a last example, Martin Heidegger makes a distinction between two meanings of poverty or between two ways in which the concept can be used. In his lecture from the winter term 1929/30, he juxtaposes the “proper being deprived” that would have to do with “the being poor of the human being” to the misunderstanding that is expressed in the “weaker sense” of poverty, and that does not so much arise from a confusion of quantity and quality as from a confusion of having and being: “What is poor here by no means represents merely what is ‘less’ or ‘lesser’ with respect to ‘more’ or ‘greater’. Being poor does not simply mean possessing nothing, or little, or less than another. Rather, being poor means being deprived.”²¹ In a short text that Heidegger adds to a manuscript on the “The Essence of the Question,” and that dates from the years 1943/44, he also discusses the meaning of being deprived, the confusion of having and being, the difference between poverty “properly understood,” or a “being poor” that is “in itself a being rich,”²² and that other kind of poverty that is life’s empty turning-around-itself, a pure self-preservation that bars the “way” through which the human being can learn about the “essence of poverty.” This text is explicitly directed against the idea of the relation between poverty and wealth that can be found in “communism.” “What does the word ‘poor’ mean?” Heidegger asks. And “What constitutes the essence of poverty? What does the word ‘rich’ mean, if we only become rich by being poor and through being poor?” Here is the answer: “‘Poor’ and ‘rich’ usually have to do with a possession, with having. Poverty is a not-having, more precisely, a being deprived of what is necessary. Wealth is a not being deprived of what is necessary, a having that exceeds the necessary. The essence of poverty, however, has to do with a being. To be truly poor means: to be such that we are not deprived anything, except for those things we do not need. To be truly deprived of means: not to be able to be without the unnecessary and thus to entirely belong to the unnecessary.”²³ If we tried to summarize Heidegger’s argumentation, it would perhaps sound as follows: those who are truly poor, the poor who do not confuse being and having, lack nothing except for what they cannot but lack because they can’t have it or possess it or because its possession is not the possession of *something*; those who are truly poor are therefore those who conduct themselves towards the other

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or whose existence consists in a conduct, a behavior, a relation. Now, if poverty itself turns out to be what the human being does not have, does not possess, what it does not dispose of because it indicates a limit of human life, we could conclude this trail of thought by saying that there is a poverty that is in a relation to poverty, that there is a self-relation of poverty, as it were, one that needs to be drawn out again and again. Such a conclusion takes into account both the thesis of the irreducibility of poverty as well as the thesis that derives the demand for a distinction from poverty itself, from its essence.

It follows that we can supplement the formulation of our two theses with a third that takes into account the previous two.

Third Thesis – The making visible of poverty lies within poverty’s complicated relation to itself. The “moral indignation” that Arendt discusses has to be considered in its turn in light of this self-relation and its complexity. The “context of solidarity”²⁴ does not come into being on the other side of poverty but within poverty itself, through a constant renewal, as a context that does not presuppose the human being.

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NOTES

1. This essay first appeared as “Die Sichtbarmachung der Armut: Drei Thesen” in: Geulen, E., K. Kaufmann and G. Mein, eds. *Giorgio Agamben und Hannah Arendt: Parallelen, Perspektiven, Kontroversen*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2008.
2. TN: The translator would like to thank Alexander García Düttmann for his corrections as well as helpful comments and suggestions.
3. Cf. Alexander García Düttmann. *Philosophie der Übertreibung*. Frankfurt am Main: 2004, 165. (*Philosophy of Exaggeration*. Trans. James Phillips. London and New York: Continuum, 2007, 85.)
4. Agamben calls our attention to poverty’s path or way: as a Franciscan form of life, it should found a “messianic community”; it should lead outside of power’s reach and away from its laws: Giorgio Agamben. *Il tempo che resta: Un commento alla lettera ai romani*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000, 32. (*The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Trans. Patricia Dailey. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005, 31.)
5. Hannah Arendt. *Denktagebuch: 1950 bis 1973*. Ed. Ursula Ludz and Ingeborg Nordmann. Piper: München, 2002, 89.
6. “Hence Jean Ziegler, charged by the United Nations with reporting on the human right to feeding, repeatedly states that the ‘fatality’ of poverty disappeared a long time ago; what we are dealing with is more like a ‘silent massacre’ that takes place every day.” (Christoph Menke and Arnd Pollmann. *Philosophie der Menschenrechte*. Hamburg: Junius, 2007, 108.) The idea of a ‘fatality’ only seems to apply to a situation that resembles a “state of nature”; in such a state, however, the difference between poverty and wealth seems to become less pertinent since it can be described as a situation of neediness or abundance.
7. Theodor W. Adorno. *Negative Dialektik*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1975, 281. (*Negative Dialectics*. Trans. E.B. Ashton. New York: Seabury Press, 1973, 287.)
8. Karl Marx. *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*. In: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA)*. Vol. 42. Dietz: Berlin, 1983, 214. (*Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. Trans. Martin Nicolaus. New York: Vintage, 1973, 289.)
9. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 505/ 604.
10. Ernst Bloch, *Geist der Utopie*. 2nd ed. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1985, 300.
11. Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 389. (*The Spirit of Utopia*. Trans. Anthony A. Nassar. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, 240.)
12. Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 160.
13. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*. San Diego-New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978, 20.
14. Bertolt Brecht. *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1968, 69. (*Threepenny Opera. Baal. The Mother*. Trans. Ralph Manheim and others. New York: Arcade, 1993, 117.)
15. Francis of Assisi, *Fioretti*. Diogenes: Zürich, 1979, 104. (*The Little Flowers of St Francis. The Mirror of Perfection. The Life of St Francis by St Bonaventure*. Trans. T. Okey and others. New York: Dutton, 1951, 29-30.)
16. Marx, “Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte.” In: Marx and Engels, *MEGA*. Vol. 8. Dietz: Berlin, 1982, 194. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Trans. Progress Publishers. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, 101.)
17. Marx, “Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte,” 154/ 56.
18. Walter Benjamin, “Erfahrung und Armut.” In: Benjamin. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 2.2. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1980, 214f. (‘Experience and Poverty’ In: Benjamin. *Selected Writings*. Vol. 2. 1927-1934. Cambridge: Belknap, 1999, 732.) Translation slightly modified by Alexander García Düttmann.
19. Benjamin, “Erfahrung und Armut,” 218f/ 734.
20. Benjamin, “Erfahrung und Armut,” 218f/ 735.
21. Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 2004, 287f. (*The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995, 195.)
22. Heidegger’s idea of a wealth that would be poverty’s alone can not just be found in Francis of Assisi and Hölderlin, whose saying “we have become poor in order to become rich” he recalls, but also in authors such as Adorno and Bloch—even though this idea is conceived of differently in each case and the context is a different one, too. In his ‘Conception of a Viennese Opera House,’ Adorno refers to a conversation he had with Brecht during the ‘American emigration’, in which he distinguished between two forms of wealth and their corresponding forms of poverty: “The defeat of the National Socialists was imminent. I proposed to Brecht that after we return to Germany—nobody was thinking at that point that it would be split up—a theatre of poverty should be created. Such a theatre would steer clear from all fake glimmer and glitter and represent things purely. In this way, something like the liberation of culture from ornamentation that is announced in the program of Adolf Loos would be realized in the theatre as well.” (Theodor W. Adorno. ‘Konzeption eines Wiener Operntheaters’ In: Adorno. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 19. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1984, 514.) In his ambitious and long essay on “Paradoxes and Pastorale in Wagner’s Music,” to be found in his *Literary Essays*, Bloch in his turn recommends “modesty” to those who want to discover “an anti-Wagnerian tendency within the genuine Wagner” and thereby avoid the fake ostentation in which the composer’s operas are often lost. Cf. Ernst Bloch, “Paradoxe und Pastorale in Wagners Musik.” In: Bloch,

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Literarische Aufsätze. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1965, 296-300. (“Paradoxes and Pastoral in Wagner’s Music.” In: Bloch, *Literary Essays*. Trans. Andrew Joron and others. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, 257-262.)

23. Heidegger, *La pauvreté/ Die Armut*. Introd. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. Straßbourg: Presses Universitaires de Straßbourg, 2004, 78f.

24. During the nineteen sixties, Arendt is highly critical of the “passion of compassion” in the revolution, of the compassion with the poor and the “solidarity” with the enslaved and the oppressed (Arendt, *On Revolution*. London: Penguin, 1990, 70f).