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# THE NEOLIBERAL PARIAH

Jeremiah Howe  
*DePaul University*

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Running Head: NEOLIBERAL PARIAH

DePaul University  
College of Education

**THE NEOLIBERAL PARIAH**

A Master's Thesis in  
the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education

by  
Jeremiah Howe

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Education

April, 2019



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6
CHAPTER 1: Pariah(s) and the Jew as Pariah.....	12
The Pariah.....	13
The Pariah-types.....	16
Defining Characteristics of the Pariah-types.....	20
The Realm of Appearances – A Journal Entry.....	24
CHAPTER 2: The Rise of the Social and Totalitarian Logics.....	25
The Public, Private and Social Realms.....	26
The Preconditions for Totalitarianism.....	31
CHAPTER 3: Arendt, Marcuse and Mass Society.....	37
Marcuse’s Reworking of Freud.....	38
Arendt, <i>Labor</i> , and <i>Work</i> .....	41
A Marcuse-Arendtian Framework.....	43
What Does it Matter? – A Journal Entry.....	52
CHAPTER 4: The Double Illusion of the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....	53
Conatus, Capture and Realignment.....	54
Inverted Totalitarianism and Managed Democracy.....	60

NEOLIBERAL PARIAH	3
CHAPTER 5: Pariah(s) and the Working-Class as Pariah.....	66
The Working-Class as Neoliberal Pariah.....	68
<i>A personal interlude – Moving to Chicago, the dream.....</i>	72
The Neoliberal Parvenu.....	73
When One is Attacked as a... – A Journal Entry.....	78
CHAPTER 6: The Resistance.....	79
The Responsibility.....	80
They Get Close... – A Journal Entry.....	85
Transcending Temporal Constraints.....	86
Rebel Yell – A Journal Entry.....	91
The Resilient Howe Family – A Journal Entry.....	93
CONCLUSION.....	94
<i>Post-script.....</i>	96
REFERENCES.....	97

### Abstract

This thesis explores primarily the work of Hannah Arendt and its relationship with the milieu of 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S. capitalism, sometimes referred to as neoliberal capitalism. Beginning with her work on Jewish pariahdom, this paper explores the Arendtian pariah's journey from a useful sociological phylum in studying *The Jewish Question*, to its capitalist iteration as an apt description of the lived reality of the white working-class. As Parvikko (1996) explains, Arendt worked on three levels of abstraction in order to tie the phenomenal to the theoretical so that she could frame the individual. In so doing, Arendt was able to draw individuals together, in all of their unique particularity, and relate them to the rest of humanity (Parvikko, 1996). For that reason, this theoretical analysis draws on the work of Herbert Marcuse, Frédéric Lordon, and Sheldon Wolin among others in order to extend Arendt's second and third level theoretical abstractions. Further, this paper draws on the personal journals and conversations of the author, as a member of the white working-class, in an effort to produce contextual examples of the lived situation of the white working-class. What emerges is an image of the working-class as a neoliberal pariah class and a vision for resistance to the machinations of the domination of neoliberal capitalism.

*Keywords:* Pariah, Arendt, working-class, mass, totalitarianism

### Acknowledgements

This is an interesting space for me as it pertains to the frameworks of this paper. I'm a thankful guy, this could get long. First, I have to thank my community; some might say, my tribe. They all know who they are and some will be individually named here. From before my moment on earth until long after it, the community has served, will serve, and is serving this paper. I would like to thank Dr. Stephen Haymes for his commitment to my growth and for introducing me to pieces of myself that I'd lost. Further, I'd like to thank him for his intellectual, culinary, and human accompaniment and for chairing this thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Karen Monkman for her belief in my work, her careful dedication to detail, and for participating as a committee member for this thesis. I also wish to thank my pariah community who took the paper into their hands and minds: Brian Frye, Sam Buti, Mike Bixler, Mom, Grumpa Gary and Jessica. I want to thank those living memories whose spirit lives in this paper: Gramma Grace, Gramma Bonnie, BJ, Ashley, Charlie, and Jamie. I want to thank my thesis writing cohort: Alex Cameron and Krista Zozulia.

I also must thank my children, who have no idea what they've sacrificed. Yet, what they know now is that dad is home more often. Blane, Taireq, and Persephone – this paper is for you so that you might live in a better world than I have grown into. Above all, there is no way that I would've ever completed this paper without the love, support, and sacrifice of my thinking partner and my life partner, Kristen. I cannot wait to live this paper with you in resistance to that which would make us less human. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

*So, what is your thesis about?*

*Well, it's um... it's sort of about... I guess... I mean... it's about me.*

I'm not sure if everyone had this experience, but throughout grad school, I was regularly asked questions like, "What are your areas of interest?", "What are your research interests?" and as I got closer to writing my thesis, "What's your thesis about?". In retrospect it was a good thing, though at the time I was always caught off guard and fumbled to find the words; a state that is highly unfamiliar to me since I always have words. It wasn't until late in the process of gathering my thesis committee that the words finally came from my mouth, "It's about me." What had sat in the back of my brain as an absolute truth, came forth and this was the first time that I'd given voice to it and it felt good. From the first syllabus in this program and the first spine cracked on the first book, I was reading my experience being intellectualized in a way that I'd never encountered before. As a child who grew up in poverty with a mother who worked hard in both mainstream and alternative economies, I was acutely aware that the lived experiences of the underemployed white working-class were seldom a topic of intellectual discourse. My previous experiences with the intellectual expression of my lived experience usually lay in a festering and filthy pool of pity and resentment. Generally speaking, people who learned of my upbringing held pity for my economic situation and held resentment that my family participated in the welfare programs designed to lift us up. This master's program provided literature that, for the first time, welcomed me into the folds of humanity and examined my personhood with dignity. Hannah Arendt may say that I *appeared*, in that moment, as a unique and particular person in the context of other unique and particular people; I was no longer defined by my poverty as much as poverty was a condition of my humanity. My specific circumstances no longer precluded me from membership in the breadth of civilization, they were a precondition



for my participation in the political reality of it. The fog of the war on the poor was lifted and I found my world had been twisted in contours of economics, commodification, and conformism. The work of the last two years has been that of bringing clarity to a distorted world-view and bringing understanding to a life of purpose.

While my specific circumstances include a working-class reality, it is worth stating that this is one working-class reality among many. There are several points of interpenetration among all working-class experiences but it is a delimitation of this paper that it should focus on the white working-class experience. As Haymes (2002) asserts of the existential labor situation for black workers, “The black worker is born into and constructs a personal history out of a particular labor situation of existence that is inseparable from anti-black forms of racial oppression” (p. 156). To extend this beyond the scope of black workers in an anti-black existential condition, it is accurate to say that the conditions upon which any working-class experience is constructed will have an effect on that experience. It is my hope that by utilizing and Arendtian inspired, Weberian Ideal-Type phenomenology, that the breadth of working-class realities is not drowned out by one particular instance. Rather, that the singularly focused work here can contribute to the broader working-class reality.

This thesis explores primarily the work of Hannah Arendt and its relationship with the milieu of 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S. capitalism, sometimes referred to as neoliberal capitalism. Beginning with her work on Jewish pariahdom, I will explore the Arendtian pariah’s journey from a useful sociological phylum in studying *The Jewish Question*, to its capitalist iteration as an apt description of the lived reality of the working-class. In so doing, I will open the conversation on *The Working-Class Question* and elucidate not only the 21<sup>st</sup> century neoliberal pariah’s struggle but also her strengths. Feldman (2007) writes, introducing *The Jewish Writings*:

Arendt's solution to her own "Jewish problem" was not to repudiate her Jewishness nor blindly affirm it, but to adopt the stance of a conscious pariah - an outsider among non-Jews, and a rebel among her own people. It was because of this marginal position that she was able to gain critical insights into both the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. (Feldman, 2007, p. lxxi)

It is also for her marginal position that I draw upon the work of Arendt. As I mentioned earlier, it is the parallel between my studies and my lived experience that draws me to this work. As a child of the underemployed working-class, there is a marginal aspect of my existence which is often overlooked. It is not my intention to draw the history and future of the Jewish people into one and the same with the working-class; my argument merely draws parallels in order to understand the history and future of the working-class through those bonds held in common with the Jewish pariah. As Feldman points out of Arendt:

To the world she is saying that the Jews' condition is connected to everyone's condition, that what happened to the Jews is not an isolated instance but may happen to anybody because the crime itself is not uniquely Jewish, but was only perpetrated upon them. (Arendt, 2007, p. lxx)

In this way, *my* solution is not to repudiate my working-class upbringing nor blindly affirm it, but to adopt the stance of a conscious pariah – an outsider among capitalists, and a rebel among my own people. I hope to use my marginal position, as a child of the underemployed working-class, to gain critical insights into both the working-class and capitalist worlds.

This paper is arranged both thematically and chronologically. Beginning with Weberian thinking that pre-dates the first World War, I move chronologically through my themes in order to pull prior thinking into more contemporary contexts. In alignment with my conclusions, this is

a work of memory that aims at holding the past in the present. As such, this paper does not end at an understanding of the contemporary context, but rather, a vision for the endless effort involved in abandoning the eschatological promise of Utopia for a reality of a living Utopia.

In the first chapter, I will explore the Weberian roots of the Arendtian pariah and develop the Arendtian distinction of modern pariah into what I call pariah-types. I will trace the development of these modern pariah-types to their maturation and arrive at their defining characteristics as outlined in the work of Arendt. I will draw the Arendtian pariah, schlemihl, parvenu, and conscious pariah, from their historical roots into the world of Arendt's 20<sup>th</sup> century thinking. What emerges with this understanding is the partial responsibility of all pariahs to struggle against their assimilation and fight for their acceptance in mainstream civilization *as pariahs for pariahs*.

In chapter two, I will work through the Arendtian rise of the social realm along with her critiques of totalitarian and pre-totalitarian milieus. I will draw on her work in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and pull it alongside her later work on the collapse of the private and public realms into what she calls the social. In doing so, I will produce a full vision for pre-totalitarian conditions.

While pre-totalitarian conditions escalated to a state of actual totalitarian rule in the second World War, the conclusion of the war did not dissolve the pre-totalitarian mass. In chapter three, I work with Herbert Marcuse to develop a Marcuse-Arendtian framework for understanding how the U.S. of the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century remained in a perpetual pre-totalitarian state. By integrating Marcuse's thoughts on the *Pleasure Principle* and the *surplus-repression* required to facilitate the late industrial age's domination with the Arendtian concepts

of *Work and Labor*, I depict a totalizing mass society which manufactures consensus through conformism.

This understanding of the nascent capitalist expansion of the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century leads me to chapter four, where Frédéric Lordon and Sheldon Wolin examine mass society in its maturation and the devastating effects of capitalism's unchecked growth. In a system of managed democracy and the illusory pleasure of conspicuous consumption and meaningful labor, I find that the shift has been made away from the inculcation of mass man toward the colonization of him. No longer is massification an outside-in project, it works from the inside out.

In chapter five, I return to Arendt's pariah frameworks to argue that this pre-totalitarian milieu, in which the U.S. finds itself in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is an age where pariahdom is the reality of the working-class. In a managed society that venerates corporate values and market logics, the truly untouchable pariah-class is the working-class. Neoliberal pariahdom, as a working-class reality, is turned against the working-class in the image of the neoliberal parvenu. In this chapter, I will draw upon the first chapter in order to demonstrate this claim, explore the neoliberal iterations of the schlemihl, pariah and parvenu and, evoking my own history, draw the experience of the working-class from the margins to the center.

Lastly, I will argue in chapter six on behalf of the conscious neoliberal pariah who must persist in her responsibility to fight for mainstream legitimation of the working-class as a political body. I will draw upon Arendt, Marcuse, Lordon, and Halbwachs to illustrate the manifold ways in which resistance is still possible in such a dire and dystopian situation as presented throughout the first third of this paper. This resistance is rooted, primarily, in the human condition of human plurality and in active modes of resistance to the construction of a timebound image of human existence.

It is of note that I draw upon Arendt for the aforementioned reasons, I am drawn to the parallels between my experience and her membership in a pariah group, her marginalized experience, and her commitment to contributing to the intellectual advancement of those experiences. Still, there is an additional reason for choosing Arendt which is inextricably tied to this paper's organization. In particular, it is Arendt's purposeful work in understanding the lived situations of individuals, immersed in their context, as concrete examples which tied her theoretical analysis to concrete realities (Parvikko, 1996). In the same way, this paper will situate theoretical understandings within a very personal framework, the story of my life. As Parvikko (1996) says, Arendt worked on three levels of abstraction to tie the phenomenal to the theoretical so that she could frame the individual. In so doing, Arendt was able to draw individuals together, in all of their unique particularity, and relate them to the rest of humanity (Parvikko, 1996). Throughout this thesis, I will include excerpts from my personal journals and conversations in an effort to produce contextual examples of the lived situation of the white working-class. In following this rubric, a sort of triangulation will serve to contextualize my lived experience within the phenomenal and theoretical so as to link it to a broader life experience. That being said, it is not the purpose of this paper to hold one life as exemplary but, instead, to offer a *flickering light* to someone who needs to see themselves in this world. As Arendt (1995) states:

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

**CHAPTER 1: Pariah(s) and the Jew as Pariah**

Weber's conception of the Jew as a *pariahvolk* advances a long line of thought on what would eventually be described as The Jewish Question. Arendt (1994) was, in her youth, disinterested with politics in general and hesitant to engage in The Jewish Question specifically. For Arendt (1994) there is a defining moment for her, retold here, when she decided that she could no longer ignore her reality as a Jew:

I would say February 27, 1933, the burning of the Reichstag, and the illegal arrests that followed during the same night... . As you know, people were taken to Gestapo cellars or to concentration camps. What happened then was monstrous, but it has now been overshadowed by things that happened later. This was an immediate shock for me, and from that moment on I felt responsible. That is, I was no longer of the opinion that one can simply be a bystander. I tried to help in many ways. (p. 4-5)

Due to her connection with Weber through her teacher, Karl Jaspers, Arendt had access to the concept of the Jew as Pariah when her political self was stirred in the wake of the Reichstag Fire.

With this, there could no longer be any ambivalence toward her position as Jew or Pariah; Arendt began her foray into political theory with her being a Jew in the front of her mind. As she explains, "If one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew. Not as a German, not as a world- citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man, or whatever" (Arendt, 1994, p. 12). In this chapter, I will first give a brief background and history of the development of the Arendtian concept of pariahdom. With an understanding of its roots, I will explore the evolution of traditional pariah existence into its Arendtian variants: the schlemihl, the parvenu and the conscious pariah. Lastly, I will explore the pariah and pariah types to develop identifying characteristics of each.

### The Pariah

The term pariah, traditionally used as the name of the lowest caste of Indian society, enters the sociological lexicon with Max Weber in *Economy and Society* where he first refers to the Jewish diaspora as a pariah people (Parvikko, 1996). To understand his use of this phrase, it is important to know that Weber used a methodology that he referred to as an Ideal-Type. An Ideal-Type, as it was used by Weber (1949):

...is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct. (p.90, emphasis in original)

In other words, Weber's idea of the Jewish diaspora as a pariah people maintains only the "essential tendencies" (p. 91) of Jewish existence in order to make the concept an analytically useful tool. In this section, I will examine the Weberian roots of Arendt's concept of pariahdom to better understand the complexity of Arendt's modern pariah.

### The Pariah as Ideal-Type

Weber's Ideal-Type methodology is problematic, among other reasons, for its generalization of specific modes of existence; the idea that Jews as a people are representative of Jews in particular, can have a marginalizing effect. The value of the Ideal-Types, for Weber, is that by removing particularity, an objectivity can be achieved which will assist in understanding relationships of particular iterations of the type (Weber, 1949). Put simply, if I first understand apples in general as sweet and crunchy with fibrous flesh, it will help me make sense of the tasteless, mushy, and mealy apple in the back of my fridge. In this way, it was Weber's intention

to denote the Jewish diaspora as a pariah people so as to better understand their individual particularity in the context of their social group.

According to Swedberg and Agevall (2005), for Weber, the Jews, as a pariah people, are characteristically apolitical, socially distinct, internally prohibited from interpenetration with external groups (including the dominant group); they were politically and socially outcast, and functioned economically outside the mainstream economy. When considered in context with the original usage of the word pariah, the similarities between the Indian caste and the Weberian idea of the Jews are self-evident. While Arendt was influenced by both Weber's Ideal-Type methodology and its application to the Jews as a pariah people, she expanded and refined conceptualizations of pariahs in order to make sense of her understanding of the Jewish question. Further, as Parvikko (1996) explains, Arendt went beyond the Ideal-Type and worked on two additional levels of abstraction in order to tie the phenomenological to the theoretical so as to frame the individual.

### **The Traditional Pariah**

Arendt, inspired by Weber, examined the Jewish question through a framework that accepted the Jews as a pariah people, but she drew a significant distinction. Parvikko (1996), sees Arendt's usage of the term pariah as divided into two subdivisions, traditional and modern. In traditional pariahdom, reminiscent of Weber's Ideal-Type, the Jews were intentionally apolitical, economically sustained through alternative modes of exchange, and ritualistically (religiously) prohibited from interpenetration with external groups. As Parvikko understands Arendt, the benefit of traditional pariahdom is the fact that it was precisely Jewish resistance to political existence that held them together as a diaspora, sustained them in their statelessness, and provided an option to assimilation. Parvikko goes on to say that Arendt's traditional pariah relied



on their community of pariahs for a mixture of “eschatology, charity, appeal, negotiation, obedience, and acquiescence” (p. 160). Parvikko’s understanding of the traditional pariah aligns with Arendt’s work and is, in fact, historically *traditional* in so far as a matter of tradition. His idea of the modern pariah, while uneven and inconsistent with Arendt, still offers a path to understanding the various pariah types which emerge in her later works.

### **The Modern Pariah**

Parvikko’s (1996) understanding of the modern pariah, as he uses the phrase, is clearly tied to the concept of the conscious pariah. While this paper will discuss conscious pariahdom in detail below, there are two primary concerns as it pertains to Parvikko’s conflating conscious pariahdom and modern pariahdom. Firstly, in *The Jew as Pariah*, Arendt (2007) uses the word modern only once in relation to the Jewish question and that is in a passage which explores the “entire dilemma of the modern would-be assimilationist Jew” (p. 291). In this passage, Arendt outlines the options available to modern pariahs, to assimilate or to remain a pariah, and neither of these options are in agreement with the idea of the conscious pariah. Secondly, there is nothing typically modern about the concept, given that Arendt names Bernard Lazare, who died forty years prior, as the conscious pariah par exemplar. Still, the value of a modern conception of the pariah lays in Parvikko’s exploration of Arendt’s “pariah gallery” (p. 27) or, what I call, Arendt’s pariah types. Still, the concept of conscious pariahdom remains pertinent to the conversation on the modern pariah. It is, after all, in Arendt’s understanding of the conscious pariah that other possibilities emerge and the concept of a modern pariah gains salience.

In Arendt’s later work, and due to her contact with the work of Bernard Lazare, the modern pariah comes into focus as a breadth of pariah types, all of whom share the ultimate responsibility of the pariah: agency over “her own political fate” (Parvikko, 1996, p.15). It is to

the responsibility of the pariah in general that the modern pariah must respond. In modern pariahdom, Arendt begins to draw distinctions between the *schlemihl*, the *parvenu*, and the *conscious pariah* (Arendt, 2007; Parvikko, 1996). All of these characters share the essential elements of pariahdom but each varies greatly in its response to pariah existence. By distinguishing these pariah types, Arendt begins the work of relating the theoretical Ideal-Type to the personal and, in so doing, maintains a benefit of the Ideal-Type methodology that is essential to this paper: understanding the unique and particular only in the context of others, in the political.

### **The Pariah-types**

By synthesizing Arendt's writings on pariahs, parvenus, schlemihls, and conscious pariahs, her gallery of pariah-types comes into vision as iterations, and their variations, of the pariah in general. In this section, I will begin with the schlemihl as the least political of all pariah-types and move toward the conscious pariah which is the most political. By understanding the pariah-types in the context of the political, their common ground can give light to their distinct particularity and illuminate the path toward their 21<sup>st</sup> century iterations.

Before beginning with the schlemihl, it should be noted that for Parvikko (1996), Arendt's concept of the schlemihl was in no way unambiguous and he therefore, goes to great lengths to draw three specific articulations of Arendt's schlemihl. While thorough, what Parvikko ends up with is one distinct vision for the schlemihl and two versions which overlap Arendt's other pariah-types. For that reason, this section will begin with formulations of the schlemihl drawn from Arendt's 1974 work *Rahel Varnhagen: The life of a Jewess* and then use Parvikko's frameworks to extend the Arendtian concept.

### The Schlemihl

In her work on the modern pariah, Arendt's (2007) traditional pariah does not entirely disappear; the traditional pariah is, instead, subsumed in part, by the character of the schlemihl. The allegory of the schlemihl is that of a feckless fool who was accidentally killed because he was standing too close to his chieftain who was to be beheaded. For Arendt, (1974, 2007) the schlemihl, is an impoverished, apolitical, and "hapless human being" (1974, p. 4). While many of these descriptors also apply to the pariah in general, it is the distinct lot of the schlemihl that a schlemihl has no apparent desire to remove herself from the pariah existence because she has "anticipated nothing" (Arendt, 1974, p. 4). In Summary, Parvikko (1996) recaps the salient pieces of schlemihldom:

... it refers to *a situation of non-existence* in the sense that *in the eyes of those who count in the society a nobody-schlemihl does not exist at all* as she does not possess those qualities according to which an individual is evaluated... *culturally*, the schlemihl comes *from nowhere, having no roots in any cultural tradition... poverty constitutes the overall material framework* of schlemihldom... The poor schlemihl cannot but concentrate all her energy making a daily living. Poverty reduces the schlemihl's possibilities also indirectly as she cannot afford to acquire faculties... which would improve her prospects in gaining access... . [emphasis added] (pp. 95-96)

Parvikko (1996) points out that while these were the conditions of schlemihldom, they rarely converged to shape the experience of every schlemihl; moreover, when specific conditions did impact the lived experience of the schlemihl, they did not do so with an even or consistent weight. Still, as an Ideal-Type, the schlemihl, stands as one who suffers her circumstances with a smile. Poverty is both a cause of her condition and one of the conditions' very terms. The

schlemihl is a nobody who couldn't even attain personhood if she wanted to because she has no relational or political stake in the dominant cultures. Worse than any of this, because the schlemihl is culturally dislocated, her rootless existence is embedded in a worldlessness, a cultureless-ness and an apolitical-ness that rejects the possibility for collective forms of memory and leaves the schlemihl adrift.

### **The Parvenu**

The Arendtian parvenu, is a complicated and, as in the case of the schlemihl, slightly ambiguous case. The clearest expression of Arendt's parvenu emerges in the same place that the schlemihl was found, Arendt's 1974 biographical text, *Rahel Varnhagen: The life of a Jewess*. As a pariah-type, the parvenu shares elements with pariahs in general; Arendt (2007) goes as far as to say that, "The parvenu who fears lest he become a pariah, and the pariah who aspires to become a parvenu, are brothers under the skin" (p. 110). What's more, Rahel articulates her lived frustration of this fact when she says, "We are *alongside* of human society. For us no place, no office, no empty title exists! ... and thus, we are excluded from society" (as cited in Arendt, 1974, p. 205, emphasis in original). In its specificity, however, the parvenu tells the story of an outcast who strives for a specific form of assimilation into the dominant culture gained through self-deception, full denial of her past, and ultimately by attempting to live in this disjointed existence.

The parvenu, originally a concept that described a class of French nouveau riche upstarts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, emerges in Arendt's (1974) vernacular amidst her biography of Varnhagen. Arendt applies the word parvenu to the experience of Varnhagen, a Jewish woman who rose to fame as a salonière amidst two distinct bouts of anti-Semitic sentiment. For Arendt, it was Rahel's very existence as the daughter of a Jewish family that marked her as pariah; it was her

status as a socially acclaimed salonière that positioned her as a parvenu. By attaining a specific amount of acceptance, by disappearing to a certain extent into the dominant culture, Varnhagen eludes her pariahdom by becoming the parvenu. While Arendt spends the entire book exploring a parvenu existence, she slowly evokes a clearer image of the parvenu in the concluding chapters. She identifies the parvenu with “all those that must climb by fraud into a society, a rank, a class, not theirs by birthright” (p. 199). For Arendt the parvenu strives to hide their pariah origins and emerge as a member of the dominant culture with no link to the past; in order to do this, they must break ties with any semblance of their pariah history. The parvenu will abandon family, culture, location, community, and home if only to distance themselves from an existence that removes them from within society and turns them without. As Parvikko (1996) points out, “Rahel’s original mistake had been that of viewing Jewishness as an individual fate, converting it from a historical destiny, from a shared social condition, into a personal defect of character” (p. 110). The parvenu’s striving, is therefore, a simultaneously individualistic and social effort; the individual severs ties with personal history in order to emerge as an individual who is to be integrated as a member of a different, dominant society.

### **The Conscious Pariah**

Arendt’s (2007) image of the conscious pariah takes shape around Bernard Lazare who, as she saw it, “translated [the truth of pariah existence] in to terms of political significance” (p. 107). It was the conscious pariah who, now aware of their existence as a pariah, must fight for “the right to political existence as Jews” to “resist oppression without abandoning one’s Jewishness” (Parvikko, 1996, p. 28). This only takes shape, for Arendt when the pariah can no longer ignore their position in this world, they emerge in the political world and demand to be seen on their own terms. As Arendt puts it, “the emancipated Jew must awake to an awareness of

his position and, conscious of it, become a rebel against it - the champion of an oppressed people” (p. 108). This was not only the disposition of the conscious pariah, it was the responsibility of the pariah in general. To ignore this demand was to remain a schlemihl and suffer a violence that the pariah brought on themselves; to engage only halfway was to become a parvenu and trample the schlemihl beneath one’s feet.

As a response to pariah existence, the conscious pariah must, therefore actively abandon the traditional apolitical methods of schlemihldom. They must reject an eschatological worldview that delays comfort for the promise of a better tomorrow. The conscious pariah must refuse charity, appeal, and negotiation with the dominant social order precisely because these are the palliative tools of oppression. It is a dangerous and lonely existence for a pariah in the world of another’s creation; it demands sacrifice and it exists under the constant threat of annihilation (Parvikko, 1996). This responsibility sat at the heart of Arendt’s (2006) criticism of Jewish participation in the execution of the Final Solution. For Arendt, there was no alternative; anything short of complete acceptance of the Jew qua Jew was utterly unacceptable. This understanding of conscious pariahdom issues a very clear dictum, Parvikko notes that, “In the final analysis, the message of the conscious pariah is simple but demanding: even in unprecedented and extreme situations one should not humble oneself before the enemy but maintain one’s pride and dignity” (p. 216). If the conscious pariah is not simply one who rebels, they are one who *must* rebel, then, it seems possible that, in a similar way, the parvenu *must* strive to assimilate and the schlemihl *must* remain a nobody existing in a nowhere.

### **Defining Characteristics of the Pariah-types**

For the schlemihl, the parvenu, and the conscious pariah, their shared pariah existence is a tie that binds each, inextricably, to the fate of the other two. Their common bond is only the

starting point, however, since they each exemplify a response to this pariah existence. Whether they ignore it, run from it, or rebel against it, each pariah-type believes that their existential reality is life as life; their existence is the one true path and they only wish others like them knew better. In this section, I will outline specific salient characteristics of the pariah-types in order to set the stage for a maturation into their 21<sup>st</sup> century selves.

### **The Schlemihl**

The modern schlemihl still carries aspects of traditional pariahdom such as alternative modes of economic viability (charity) and an inherently apolitical existence (Parvikko, 1996). Beyond this, the schlemihl of modern pariahdom is characterized by an eschatological worldview and a socio-political exclusion enforced from both within and without. As a pariah, the schlemihl is excluded from politics on the grounds of their pariahdom; as a schlemihl, there are coping mechanisms, pulled forward from traditional pariahdom, that support the collective while shunning the political (Arendt, 2007; Parvikko, 1996). The modern schlemihl not only *is* all of these things, they *desire to be* them; they *must* remain a nobody. As a schlemihl, to leave this existence is an affront to their natural and easy way of minding their own business; their reaction to pariah existence, ignore it.

### **The Parvenu**

The parvenu, on the other hand, knew full well of their pariah existence and strove to hide all remnants of it, thus intentionally erasing as much of their personal history as possible (Arendt, 1974; Arendt, 2007). In this way, parvenus live a double existence as they strive to appear one thing, yet remain themselves inside (Arendt, 1974). This split of the mind wreaks havoc on the parvenu and, as Arendt (1974) explains, “The smallest success, so hard-won, necessarily dazzles him with an illusory: everything is possible; the smallest failure instantly

sends him hurtling back into the depths of his social nullity” (p. 202). It is a tumultuous and precarious existence exemplified by the striving, in vain, to disappear into the dominant culture (Arendt, 1974; Parvikko, 1996). Still the parvenu can’t help but strive, they *must* strive because the pariah existence is too much for them; their reaction, run from it.

### **The Conscious Pariah**

The conscious pariah, then, stands out as the only pariah with not only a desire to rebel against a pariah existence, but an understanding of the responsibility to do so as a collective act (Arendt, 2007; Parvikko, 1996). The conscious pariah fights against the pariah existence of a parvenu and a schlemihl. As opposed to the eschatological placating, she “fights for justice, dignity, and political freedom in a this-worldly frame-work” (Parvikko, 1996, p. 26). She rejects the tools of a dominant society that wishes to keep her economically impoverished and politically excluded. What’s more the conscious pariah does all of this from her position as a pariah and within her pariah community. The conscious pariah therefore, is not only an actor who is resisting, she *must* resist; her reaction to pariah existence, rebel against it.

### **The Responsibility of the Pariah**

To use the colloquial saying, “The cat is out of the bag!” and now it is a matter of the pariah’s response. Just as the human body triggers a run-fight-freeze response, the pariah can run to schlemihldom, freeze in parvenuism, or fight as a conscious pariah. From Arendt’s perspective, there is no longer a choice because once one knows the truth of pariah existence, they cannot un-know that truth; further, the modern pariah’s work is inherently political. In other words, as a pariah becomes conscious of their political reality, it is immoral to recede into schlemihldom or turn against your own in parvenuism. As such, it is the *responsibility* of all pariahs to engage in the political lest they bear culpability in their fate as a *pariahvolk*.



**Arendt's 'Modern' Context**

From the Weberian introduction of the term pariah as an Ideal-Type, through the Arendtian framework for her modern pariah-types, an understanding of marginal existence emerges and moves into Arendt's modernity. As an Ideal-Type, Arendt's modern pariah-types paint an abstract picture of the resilience of a people who choose to survive despite their stateless existence. As individual iterations of these pariah-types emerge in Arendt's writings, the abstractions become concrete, unique, and particular lives. By understanding the personal in the context of the political, the depth of pariah existence develops and what in chapter 5 will become clear as the contemporary iteration of pariahdom as the condition, preferred by a ruling class, for members of a mass society such as that of the 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S.

First, however, there is the Arendtian claim on mass society and its place in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This claim, rooted in her explication of the rise and fall of totalitarian regimes of the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, begins as a critique of the bourgeois rise to legislative and military power bringing about a capitalist imperialism. As imperial aims are turned inward, Arendt (2012) describes in detail how totalitarian regimes rise, in part, from the collapse of the private into the public realm, creating what she terms the social realm. It is in the social realm that mass man develops because the social realm rules over mass society and generates the coercive power to enforce totalitarian conformism without enlisting a central totalitarian ruler. In the next chapter, I will explore Arendt's concept of the social realm and how it creates the fertile ground necessary for the rise of totalitarian regimes.

### The Realm of Appearances – A Journal Entry

When I was a child, my mother worked very hard to be sure that my family went on a family vacation every year. When I say that she worked hard, I don't necessarily mean that she worked long and extra shifts to save up a ton of money and fly us to a hotel in an exotic location. While I have nothing against those people, that wasn't our situation growing up. She worked and she saved but what I'm really referring to is the fact that vacation was a non-negotiable drive for my mother. As a child, we'd pack up into our late-model conversion van full of the things we'd need to drive halfway across the country, camping nightly, and seeing parts of the U.S. that I wouldn't fully appreciate until far later in life.

As children are wont to do, I became a teenager and while I was never a particularly difficult teen, it was during this time that I was growing resentful of our financial situation and our place in the American Dream. I was becoming aware that there was an entire piece of me that was being asked to stay at home when I went to school. There were pieces of me that I felt as though I couldn't even share with my closest friends. And these were the unofficial dictates of social pressure. There were pieces of me that I couldn't take grocery shopping for fear that we'd be mistaken for a family fleeing the government.

I remember a particular time when, for Christmas I got a brand-name sweater, I loved this sweater. It was a mask that I could wear in public to present an image of myself; the Greek hypocrite of public life. One day, we were getting ready for a trip to the grocery store and I knew what day it was, it was food stamp day. So I quickly changed shirts and when my mom asked why, I explained, something like, *I can't wear that to get groceries with free money*. Knowing what I know now about parenting, I have to imagine my mother bit clean through her lip trying not to castigate me. The next time I was to bring our public lives into question, she didn't hold back.

On one particular vacation, after I'd grown into a resentful teenager, my mother and I found ourselves as the last two people awake around the fire; a conversation ensued. I cannot recall the breadth of the conversation, but I know that it dealt with finances, my mom's new husband, and my life at school. What I remember most clearly is the culminating bullet points. I had worked myself near tears recounting how I felt as though I had to hide who I am at school and lie about my shameful life to my friends. In response, my mother offered what I've come to understand as philosophical gold. At this point, she was shouting.

*Nobody is themselves! You think that I am the same person at work that I am when I am at home? No! I don't share everything about who I am at work and I wouldn't share everything about my work at home! Those things are separate. It's nobody's business what we do with our life. That's not how the world works- it's not about what you have or what you do, it's about in here!*

She pointed her fingers deep in her chest and then lit another cigarette; they usually calmed her down a bit and the shouts became loving understanding.

*Listen, I know that we don't have much in this world but we have family. We go on these vacations so that we can enjoy what we have and that's each other. I don't want you to think that you can't talk to me about these things, but don't expect me to just do whatever while you pout.*

She puffed on her cigarette and we sat in silence for a bit before heading to our tents for some much-needed sleep.

**CHAPTER 2: The Rise of the Social and Totalitarian Logics**

When Arendt (2006) wrote *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, the piece was widely attacked and derided by her contemporaries in the U.S. as an affront to the victims of the Shoah. These attacks seemed to be focused on Arendt's (2006) idea that the Jewish councils held partial responsibility for their participation in The Final Solution. As Parvikko (1996) states, however, those critiques either missed the point of her work, or realized somewhere inside themselves that her indictment of Eichmann was an indictment of "American conformism which most American Jewish intellectuals had internalized by heart. In American mass society there was little chance of a dissenter appearing" (p. 192). What Eichmann, one of the major logistical organizers of the Shoah, represented was the Ideal-Type of the conformism in totalitarian rule and in extrapolating the concrete, lived experience of Eichmann's evil to a theoretical abstraction, she'd uncovered the totalitarian threat already at play in the post-war U.S. This threat came in the realization that pre-totalitarian conditions were the de facto reality across the globe; the fact that it gave rise to Hitler's Nazi Germany is a specifically German reality. There was merely a functional difference between the mobilized masses of the axis and the mobilized masses of the allies; they differed only in their aims and were, therefore, merely two sides of a singular coin.

For Arendt (1973), there are very specific pre-totalitarian conditions which constitute the totalitarian movement as a preparatory phase in the rise of totalitarian rule. Among these, Arendt speaks of total loyalty which is only achieved in the totalitarian movement through the trio of atomization, individualization, and isolation. In Arendt's (2012) later work, she would come to identify, further, how even in the absence of a totalitarian movement, this trio has become the basis of society. When a civilization's existence is a perpetually pre-totalitarian state, the masses

lie dormant, waiting for the balance to tip into totalitarian rule. It is in her thoughts on what she called the private and public realms which, in pre-totalitarian life, collapse into what she called the social realm, that she begins the groundwork for understanding the pre-totalitarian condition of conformism. In this chapter, I will first discuss Arendt's (2012) thinking on the private, public, and social realms along with their effects on civilization. Next, I will explore key components of the totalitarian movement as Arendt articulates them in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Lastly, I will begin a conversation that will continue in Chapter 3 on the state of life in the U.S. as a perpetually pre-totalitarian state. As Arendt (1973) clearly explains, "The practical goal of the [pre-totalitarian] movement is to organize as many people as possible within its framework and to set and keep them in motion; *a political goal that would constitute the end of the movement simply does not exist* [emphasis added]" (p. 326).

### **The Public, Private and Social Realms**

Arendt (2012) offers an examination of the human condition in her book of the same name which locates three specific activities of humanity. These activities, discussed at length in Chapter 3, are Work, Labor and Action. Salient to this conversation, these activities operate in three realms, two of which are natural and distinct divisions in the world, and a third, results from the collapse and conflation of the first two. The two natural realms, the public and the private consist of precisely what they name. The private realm consists, in part, of the actual, private space of one's home or close friends. The public realm, is the political realm of appearances. The third, and unnatural, realm is that of the social; the social realm emerges when the line between the public and the private is blurred and the realms collapse into one. In this section, I will explore Arendtian thinking on the private, public and social realms to understand their effect.

It is of note, that Arendt's (2012) explication of the origins of the private and public realms begins with the Greek rise of the city-state at a time when slaves were part of household affairs and this exclusively heterosexual household was headed exclusively by the male figure. While this anachronistic piece of the epoch she evokes does not necessarily align with the values of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the arguments and ideas are of great interest to this thesis.

### **The Private and Public Realms**

For Arendt (2012), the private life of the home is the first life; an apolitical life of non-appearances, where one is free to disappear from the realms of men. She sees the beginning of the private realm as the home and she cites for this the Greek term *oikia*, from which the term economic is derived. By doing this, she establishes the home, the private realm, as the realm of economics. She states that, "whatever was the 'economic,' related to the life of the individual and the survival of the species, was a non-political, household affair by definition" (p. 29). As a space of survival, the private realm is also, therefore, the realm of necessity. Arendt finds that the household emerges out of not only the aforementioned necessity to maintain human life through economics, but also the necessity to maintain the species through procreative practices. In its management of the necessities of life, the household was also a place, not of freedom, but of the "strictest inequality" (p. 32). The household was beholden to its ruler who was also never free in his home, since to be free meant "neither to rule nor be ruled" (p. 32). It was only in his freedom to participate in public life that the ruler of the home was free and, in turn, it was only through his ownership of a home, of the inherently *private* property of the home, that he was afforded a space among other free men.

In Arendt's (2012) estimation, it is in and amongst other free men that the public realm materializes. The public realm is the realm of appearances, of relationships between equals, and

the realm where truly political acts are possible, thus ensuring something close to immortality. Arendt defines the term public as falling within two distinctions. She says, “It means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity” (p. 50), and “Second, the term ‘public’ signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it” (p. 52). As such, the public is a timeless and human realm that spans beyond humanity’s “past and future alike” (p. 54).

In the first instance, because reality is constituted, for Arendt (2012), by the act of something being seen and heard by others, any time a person brings something into the public realm, it gains a reality that is absent in the private realm. Arendt goes on to say, “Even the greatest forces of intimate life... lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are... deprivatized and deindividualized” (p. 50). When matters are pulled out of the private and in to the public, they are confirmed and elevated to a public matter. In the second instance, Arendt likens the public to a table, it is a common space that connects those sitting around it while simultaneously separating them. It is the unification of unique and particular people who share a collective experience. It is not, however, their sameness nor equality, that binds them, they do not become one with the table, they are as unequal and distinct from the table as they are from each other, and share the common experience of the table from their unique perspective. They are only equal insofar as they are distinct.

The private realm is an inescapable realm of human existence; it is the compulsory realm of necessity where human life is reproduced and maintained. The public realm is the realm of human transcendence; it is the common world of things and ideas that permits humans to last beyond their physical expiration. Because these two realms have points of interpenetration, and

in several ways rely heavily on the existence of each other, one cannot exist without the other. Further, Arendt (2012) locates the private realm and the public realm as necessarily separate from, but wholly insufficient without each other; as she says:

To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an "objective" relationship with them that comes from being related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself. (p. 58)

In other words, the private realm, while vital to human existence, cannot be the only realm. The public realm offers the essentially human experience of being seen and heard, which cannot happen in the private realm.

### **The Social**

Arendt's writings on the concept of the social realm are seemingly disparate and often inconsistent across time. Hannah Pitkin (1998) uses the breadth of her 284-page book to examine Arendt's development of the social throughout her writing. Pitkin cites early Arendtian works such as her biography of Rahel Levin and her *Jew as Pariah* in order to trace the concept of the social through Arendt's career to its clearest, though still imprecise, iteration in *The Human Condition*. For the purposes of this section, I will rely primarily on the conclusions arrived at by Pitkin in conjunction with the Arendtian conceptualizations formulated in *The Human Condition*.

In the clearest sense, Arendt (2012) articulates the rise of the social coinciding with the collapse of the private and public realms into a single realm. She attributes this to the ascent of "economic activities to the public realm, housekeeping and all matters pertaining formerly to the private sphere of the family have become a "collective" concern" (p. 33). In the rise of the social,

even when the public realm seems to be found, the private nature of economic affairs reigns supreme so that “The dividing line is entirely blurred...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” (p. 28). What this means for the social realm is that it exists as a sort-of Alice and her looking-glass existence. Those private and intimate affairs that “cannot withstand the implacable, bright light of the constant presence of others on the public scene” (p. 51) are suffocated and killed. In the social realm, love is turned to friendship, craftsmanship is turned to a production line, and knowledge is turned to trivia. The social “not only destroys the public realm but the private as well, deprives men not only of their place in the world but of their private home, where they once felt sheltered against the world” (p. 59). In other words, in the social realm, there is no escape from the public world of appearances and the harsh and demanding light of the public exhausts the soul, constantly on display in a timeless common world.

Arendt (2012) finds that, in this perversion of a natural and necessary division of life in a civilization, there is no escape from the drudgery of necessity merged with the display of public life. Matters of no great consequence are elevated to issues of great importance and, with this, the inequality previously found in the household is countered with the equalization of the public realm. The result is an erasure of uniqueness and the great equalization of all people. Equalization, in this sense was not the act of offering everyone a seat at the proverbial table of the public realm, it was a flattening of the distinctions that make unique and particular people; the act of all becoming one with the table itself. The social realm demanded conformism and erased the distinctions that made unique and particular people available for the public realm to function.



### The Preconditions for Totalitarianism

As it pertains to the totalitarian movement, Arendt (1973) says, “their most conspicuous external characteristic is their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member” (p. 323). The movement typically comes before totalitarian rule as a preparatory force that sets the stage for the totalitarian ruler to take power. In those instances when the movement does not prepare the society, the conditions must be manufactured artificially in post. Whether generated in the movement for totalitarian rule or in an ad hoc campaign, total loyalty is the hallmark of totalitarian rule. Arendt explains of this loyalty, that:

Such loyalty can be expected only from the completely isolated human being who, without any other social ties to family, friends, comrades, or even mere acquaintances, derives his sense of having a place in the world only from his belonging to a movement, his membership in the party. (pp. 323-324)

But how is this loyalty generated? Where does the totalitarian ruler obtain the momentum necessary to, literally, move countries to action?

“Totalitarian movements are mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals.” (Arendt, 1973, p. 323). Thus, begins the Arendtian understanding of the totalitarian movement, almost impossible in its simplicity; it is a movement consisting of a *mass* of *atomized* and *isolated individuals*. But what are the conditions that atomize and isolate individuals? In order to better understand what Arendt’s terse description means and what conditions serve up this mass, it is important to explore the specific language used. For Arendt, the mass holds a complicated place which Pitkin (1994) attempts, not entirely in vain, to relate to both the parvenu and the pariah. While there are certainly parallels, the clues hidden in the quote shared above prove to be a Gordian Knot of sorts in which no piece of the puzzle can be untangled from the rest. The fact

remains that when the language is examined closely, the constellation of words will reveal the salient pieces of the mass, which for Arendt is always closely related to the social realm.

In this section, I will explore the inextricable relationship between the ideas of atomized, isolated, individual, and mass so as to better understand the roots of the totalitarian movement, found in the rise of imperialism, as a precondition for the totalitarian movement and the victory of the bourgeois class.

### **Atomization, Isolation, Individualization**

As a precondition for totalitarian rule, Arendt (1973) holds that atomization goes hand-in-hand with individualization and isolation. For Arendt, atomization is a process that begets communal isolation and replaces horizontal relationships with vertical relationships and individualism. Simply put, she sees atomization is the act of dissolving collective groups into their constituent parts and, as such, it is a process of turning cohesive relational groups into disconnected individuals. The process of atomization is one that tears at relational fabrics and destroys the public good. As it pertains to the United States, California Newsreel's 2003 documentary on the post-World War II consumer-boom demonstrates the atomization that took over an invigorated U.S. economy and its population. Not only did conspicuous consumption emerge in this era of plenty, the matters of economic prosperity existed in full view of the public. Further, the era of communal living was replaced with community living and homes were stuffed with every convenience so that you no longer had to rely on your neighbor. Instead of the communal nature of living *together*, populations now experienced the community life of living *near each other*. While one could certainly host community gatherings with a communal flair, such as potlucks and cookouts, this was another incognito manifestation of Arendt's (2012) conflating the private and public realms; it was the private on display.

Atomization and individualism fed off each other in the feedback loop of the social realm and as technology advanced, common good was converted into individual convenience; the social reigned supreme. It might seem that a social existence would, invariably, mean that individuals would come into contact with others and thus, plurality would be maintained. However, as examined in the previous section, quite the opposite was true. As the normalizing power of the social invaded the private realm and the surveillance of individualized masses produced conformism, the possibility for distinct public and private realms was obliterated. With this, isolation sets in; as Arendt (1973) tells us, “Isolation is that impasse into which men are driven when the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed” (p. 474). Thus, as a group of isolated and atomized individuals under the rule of the social realm, the mass begins to emerge and it presents itself as a disinterested, apolitical mass. This mass is malleable, mobilizable, and because of their conformist nature, without distinctiveness. They are an empty vessel, waiting to be shaped and moved for the sake of an identity.

### **Imperialism and the Social**

It is no mistake that this sounds like an echo of the previous section because, for Arendt (2012) as economic affairs were elevated to the realm of the public, the rise of the bourgeois class was also elevated through the social realm to the positions of power that were previously held for all free men. Arendt (1973) notes that, as the property-owning class, the bourgeoisie were disinterested in political action since they believed that “the state had always been only a well-organized police force” (p. 138). So long as the state could protect their private right to ownership and accumulation, the bourgeoisie had no reason to disrupt the stasis by meddling in political affairs. When the state apparatus imposed legal limits on the accumulation of private

wealth, the bourgeois class took a sudden interest in politics. Then, as the physical state imposed spatial limitations on accumulation of wealth, they used their recently acquired military might toward imperialist ends. The rise of imperialism and the rise of the social coincide in the development of a pre-totalitarian state which creates the conditions for the isolated mass of individuals to coalesce under the rule of the social and the victory of the bourgeois class over the limits of the state. It is Arendt (1973) who speaks of the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie that articulates this victory:

The bourgeoisie's empty desire to have money beget money as men beget men had remained an ugly dream so long as money had to go the long way of investment in production... The secret of the new happy fulfillment was precisely that economic laws no longer stood in the way of the greed of the owning classes. Money could finally beget money because power, with complete disregard for all laws... could appropriate wealth.  
(p. 137)

It was with this development that Arendt (1973) writes, "in the era of imperialism, businessmen became politicians and were acclaimed as statesmen, while statesmen were taken seriously only if they talked the language of successful businessmen" (p. 138). When the bourgeois class took over, the rise of the social injected the private language of ownership and business into law and shaped the development of the social. When this happened, bourgeois rationality replaced systems of thought and began to "simply add up private lives and personal behavior patterns and present the sum as laws of history, or economics, or politics" (p. 146). With the rise of the bourgeois class and the incorporation of business rationality into the social, the stage is set for the dawn of mass man. We have the historical perspective to know what happened on some of his first few outings; if Eichmann was to be the Ideal-type, then Hitler managed to wrangle the

mindless mass to commit some of the worst atrocities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But once Hitler was gone, what happened to mass man?

### **Who Then, Among You?**

I asked in the middle of this chapter how the totalitarian ruler can gain the momentum to move masses of people. What has become clear through this examination of the preconditions for totalitarian movements is that the ruler need not be any special person. Even better the leader should, in fact, be a nobody, a mass man who feels no sense of their identity. It is only the mass man who is prepared to enter the tacit agreement of all totalitarian rulers, complete submission to the will of the masses. Arendt (1973) demonstrates this as she notes:

Being a mere functionary, he can be replaced at any time, and he depends just as much on the “will” of the masses he embodies as the masses depend on him. Without him they would lack external representation and remain an amorphous horde; without the masses the leader is a nonentity. Hitler, who was fully aware of this interdependence, expressed it once in a speech addressed to the SA: “All that you are, you are through me; all that I am, I am through you alone.” (p. 325).

*All that I am, I am through you alone...*

In the next chapter, I will extend this exploration of the pre-totalitarian conditions for Arendt’s mass man and frame them within Marcuse’s (1955) work on the civilization of the late industrial age. In this civilization which, for Arendt (2012), has experienced the rise of the social realm, there is no room for political action and, as Marcuse (1955) claims, bourgeois hegemony rules through manufactured consensus. By drawing on Arendtian frameworks and focusing them through the work of Herbert Marcuse, Arendt’s vision for the future of pariahdom becomes full reality. As Parvikko (1996) states when he synthesizes Arendt’s writings on pariahdom, “in a

modern mass society, pariahdom is no longer an anomaly represented by a minority, but it has become a general political condition of the majority of people” (p. 19).

**CHAPTER 3: Arendt, Marcuse and Mass Society**

For Hannah Arendt, the United States of her time was in danger of succumbing to the very same totalitarian logic that swallowed Nazi Germany. In her effort to understand the rise of totalitarianism in Europe, she uncovered the widespread reality that the origins of totalitarianism were lying dormant across the globe. With the rise of the social, she saw the conformism that she witnessed in the rise of totalitarianism, as one of the primary conditions of life in the U.S., thus creating mass man (Pitkin, 1998). This socially atomized and isolated individual was the epitome of conformism. She writes of the conformed and conformist mass man who was to leverage his mindlessness as a bureaucrat to operate the mechanisms of the totalitarian state (Arendt, 1973; Arendt, 2006; Arendt, 2012). As a uniform member of a superfluous and apolitical group of malleable non-identity, Arendt's mass man echoes descriptions of the traditional pariah and its modern schlemihl. Mass man, like the schlemihl, is a culture-less, world-less, impoverished and hapless social nobody.

Adolf Eichmann serves as the concrete image of Arendt's mass man Ideal-type, the mindless button-pusher of Nazi Germany who was only following orders and toeing the party line while sending millions to their death during the Shoah (Arendt, 2006). Arendt (2006) describes a bumbling idiot who had no words of his own, a man with no thought of his own who, throughout his trial, just kept repeating the same catch-phrase ideologies that he was fed during Hitler's reign. What is missing from her analysis of mass man is the explicit handling of the personal forces at play in mass man's society. What are the personal contexts that make atomization and isolation in society and the Eichmann-esque mass man possible? Mass society, which Arendt handles in more abstract terms, such as in her idea of the social, is outlined on the personal and local level by Herbert Marcuse who defines in detail these concepts by reworking

Freud. With Marcuse's exploration and reworking of the Freudian drives it is demonstrated that the mass man never disappeared after World War II. Worse, he was fed, clothed, and entertained with the accoutrements of mass society and technological advance. Within this framework, the Arendtian mass man gains an added perspicuity.

With the conclusion of the first World War, and the failure of Marxism to accurately predict the revolution of the proletariat, Marcuse and his fellow Marxist thinkers of the Frankfurt School began to reexamine Marxism, Freud, humanity, and domination. This humanist approach to Marxism gave rise to deep and pointed critiques of the capitalism that could permit such atrocities as occurred in the first war. With the conclusion of the second World War, Marx's prediction, that there would be a revolution of the proletariat, failed to come to fruition. Further, there was no great return to a prior separation between the private realm and the public realm. Instead, the mass mobilization of the war machine turned into the mass mobilization of the consumer market. With the war at a close, and the bourgeoisie fully ensconced in power, the outward violence of imperialism was turned inward. However, rather than the overt violence of war in the name of freeing others, the ruling elite enacted violence in the name of freedom of consumption. In this chapter, I will merge Marcuse's mass society with Arendt's social realm so as to provide a layered understanding of the Marcuse-Arendtian mass man's context which gives rise of this new mode of capitalism that holds mass man in a perpetually pre-totalitarian state.

### **Marcuse's Reworking of Freud**

In the work of Herbert Marcuse (1955), there is a distinct effort to rework Freudian thought so as to better understand the influence of capitalism in the formation of the civilization in which Marcuse lived. For Marcuse, Freud's work was limited in two ways. First, Freud (2010) failed to acknowledge the underlying assumptions of his position in the particular epoch in which



he was writing. As an upper-middle class white male in a Germany that was deeply committed to the white German identity of its people, Freud experienced an intersection of, what we would call today, privilege. Secondly, Freud, blinded by the assumptions of his position in that epoch, advanced his argument on ill logic and, thus, failed to assert the possibility for alternate ways of seeing human potentiality.

Primarily, Marcuse (1955) noticed the capitalist creation of a new reality principle, the *performance principle*. As opposed to Freud's (2010) reality principle, the function of the Ego that checks the impulsive Id and its insatiable desire for pleasure, Marcuse noted that reality in the late industrial age was reconfigured in the name of the performance of productive power. Subject to the performance principle, man sublimates the desires of the Id in the name of production. Marcuse's performance principle was the source of a repression that was not necessary, but manufactured and so, he developed the concept of surplus-repression. In this section, I will explore Marcuse's understanding of the Freudian concept of reality principle and the repression required to achieve a civilized existence.

### **The Performance Principle**

Freud's (2010) reality principle runs as a through line within much of his work but finds a special place in the force that holds civilization together. For Freud, there are the insatiable impulses of the Id which are subject to the pleasure principle; the Id seeks pleasure at all cost, even self-annihilation. In order to maintain order and stay alive, the Id is kept in check by the Ego and its driving principle, the reality principle. Simply put, in order to stay alive, the Ego has to find a compromise between instant pleasure, which could lead to eradication, and the limits of reality which assure longevity. For this reason, the everlasting Id is repressed by the Ego and its connection to reality.

As Marcuse (1955) reworks Freud, a new reality principle emerges which is a byproduct of the imperialist reorganization of social orders on productive terms. For Marcuse, the Freudian reality principle relies on scarcity as a “brute fact” (p. 36). Marcuse asserts that scarcity has been part of the distributive rationalities of organized production and mobilized as a mode of domination. The intentional redistribution of scarcity takes its roots in the logic of the reality principle where Marcuse says:

... whatever satisfaction is possible necessitates work, more or less painful arrangements and undertakings for the procurement of the means for satisfying needs. For the duration of work, which occupies practically the entire existence of the mature individual, pleasure is ‘suspended’ and pain prevails. (p. 36)

As an artificial mode of living within capitalism, this is the governing mechanism Marcuse calls the performance principle. This performance principle belongs to “an acquisitive and antagonistic society in the process of constant expansion and presupposes a long development during which domination has been increasingly rationalized” (p. 45). This domination is rooted in the legitimization of scarcity and the excessive repression required to produce beyond necessity.

### **Surplus-Repression**

As Freud (2010) works to better understand the drives that make civilization possible, what he finds in the reality principle is that repression in civilization is a necessary component. Citing sex drives, destructive drives, and erotic drives that transcend the sex drives, Freud envisions a violent world full of scarcity and in need of protection from the animal instincts of its inhabitants. What Marcuse (1955) discovers in his formulation of the pleasure principle is that in the late industrial age, humanity has achieved such a productive capability that scarcity is no

longer a relevant basis for the argument. In the capitalist endeavors of the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S., Marcuse sees a level of repression that far exceeds what is necessary. When scarcity is removed as the prop for Freud's civilization, surplus-repression emerges.

Surplus-repression is, for Marcuse (1955), repression which is "added to the basic (phylogenetic) restrictions of the instincts which mark the development of man from the human animal to the *animal sapiens*" (p. 38). This redundant repression, which exists above and beyond that which is necessary to fulfill basic human needs, is expressed among other places, in the capitalist/worker relationship of the late industrial age. What Marcuse demonstrates in this reworking of Freud gives us a local abstraction for what Arendt will relate to the broader context of human existence which she frames within the activities of *Labor* and *Work*.

### **Arendt, *Labor* and *Work***

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt (2012) not only establishes the private, public, and social realms, she finds in these realms specific modes of human activity; *Labor*, *Work* and *Action*. Arendtian *Labor* is found in the redundant and endless tasks of human existence; *Labor* is tied to the private realm and the animal world of sheer maintenance. *Work*, for Arendt, is the production of material use-goods which protect the human from nature; *Work* is tied to the public realm and the means-ends rationality of creation for use and appearances. The third activity, to be discussed in Chapter 6, Arendtian *Action* is the activity of an emancipated political subject, a free man among free men; *Action* is bound to nothing, it is limitless and unpredictable. In this section, I will explore Arendtian *Work* and *Labor* and their relationship to the private and public realms.

### ***Labor and Work***

Arendt (2012) articulates the primary distinction between *Labor*, as the necessary and biological activity of existence, and *Work*, which creates a world of things which are used to mediate the human experience of nature. For Arendt, *Labor* is related to the economic management of resources to sustain life. For this reason, it is relegated to the private realm of the household. This private drudgery, sustained in the household by daily activities and “correspond[ing] to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities...” (p. 7) is *Labor*.

*Work*, for Arendt (2012), is a private act of public appearance because *Work* brings things into this world which will “remain in the world for a certain while unless they are wantonly destroyed” (p. 138). As such, use-objects produced in *Work* can serve as assemblages that delineate the private or, conversely, be exchanged in a public realm driven by private interests. Unlike the markets of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, any exchanging of the *Work* products was a subsistence exchange. This distinction between the non-appearance of the private realm of *Labor* and the appearance of the public realm of *Work*, is a distinction as old as Greek political philosophy. For Arendt, however, the rise of the social precipitates *Work* as *Labor* in the creation of *Laborious Work* and this leads to an apolitical life of non-existence.

### **The Collapse**

For Arendt (2012), the collapse of the private and the public realms begins with the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie. From this point on, Arendt (2012) sees the conflation of *Work* and *Labor* creating a Laborious Work which requires the endless creation of use-objects for immediate consumption and disposal. No longer is the artisan’s work manifesting itself in lasting assemblages which, while not as timeless as the public realm, can often sustain

themselves well past the life of the artisan. Further, the privacy of the home is invaded as public surveillance is legitimated through the dissolution of distinct private realms into public concern. Each individually rational step has been carefully considered and vetted through the lens of bourgeois rationality. Still, instrumental reason has its limits because individually rational decisions can, and often do, result in collectively irrational outcomes (Roderick, 1994). The irrational outcome of these individually rational decisions is the rise of mass man, what Arendt warns of when she says, “The phenomenon of conformism is characteristic of the last stage of this modern development” (p. 40). With this in mind, a Marcuse-Arendtian framework emerges for understanding why this mode of living is able to continue under its own inherent tensions.

### **3.3 A Marcuse-Arendtian Framework**

By focusing the abstracted work of Arendt’s social within Marcuse’s revision of Freud’s drives, both Arendt and Marcuse’s ideas on the capitalist substructures, which sustain the mass man of the late industrial age, take on a fuller veracity. While both intellectuals lived overlapping lives which shared the span of Arendt’s entire life, there is scant information on the two theorists interacting. That being said, they seem to have been aware of each other as evidenced by the similarities in their thinking. In this section, I will draw the aforementioned Arendtian frameworks of *Labor*, *Work*, and their respective realms alongside Marcuse’s understandings of the Performance Principle and surplus-repression. In so doing, a clearer image of the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century emerges and the mass man develops not as a fascist member of a nationalist society, but as a member of the hyper-consumptive capitalist society of the late industrial age.

#### **Man as Laborer and Labor as Necessary**

For Marcuse (1955), Freud’s understanding of work is limited, in its scope, to the civilized work of non-libidinal repression. Freud’s misstep is that he draws on his own notion of

work as not pleasurable and man as inherently lazy. Marcuse objects to the Freudian conceptualization of work as labor because, as Marcuse states:

In the first place... not all work is unpleasurable, is renunciation. Secondly, the inhibitions enforced by culture also affect the derivatives of the death instinct, aggressiveness and the destruction impulses... Moreover, work in civilization is itself to a great extent *social utilization* of aggressive impulses and is thus work in the service of Eros. (pp. 83-84)

In this way, Marcuse establishes a distinction between a displeasing, Freudian, work and what he sees as the potentiality for purposeful work. This interpretation runs parallel to the Arendtian (2012) conceptualization of *Labor* as distinct from *Work*. Therefore, while “there is no room for an original ‘instinct of workmanship’” in Freud’s thinking (Marcuse, 1955, p. 81), both Marcuse and Arendt define humans as essentially laboring beings. This critique of Freud is a through line in the Marxist thinking of both Arendt and Marcuse; for Marx, Arendt and Marcuse, there is a fundamental human drive to labor which defines humanity (Arendt, 2012; Marcuse, 1955; Marx & Engels, 2017).

Although Marcuse’s (1955) critique of Freud holds, Marcuse and Arendt (2012) establish, for different reasons, a contradiction in Marxist thinking. Arendt articulates that *Labor*, as the activity that satisfies primarily biological needs, is essentially human and futile; it is an unappeasable necessity. While Marcuse does not explicitly identify an Arendtian *Labor*, he offers a parallel understanding that agrees with Arendt. If Arendt’s *Labor* is an inescapable necessity, Marcuse’s idea of a baseline of necessary repression legitimates Arendtian *Labor*. In other words, because there exists a set of basic human needs, there is an amount of repression necessary to execute this inescapable labor. It is in this point, that the critique of Marx presents

itself. By extending labor beyond a drive and identifying it as an intrinsic part of humanity, Arendt and Marcuse's thinking runs counter to a revolution of the proletariat which Marx and Engels (2017) envision in the fall of capitalism. The proletariat's revolution would bring an end to man as a laborer which, for Arendt, would negate part of man's essence as a laboring being and, for Marcuse would necessarily dissolve civilization in general. For this reason, both Marcuse and Arendt hold that there is a labor which is required of humans, regardless of the degree to which that civilization is repressive.

### **Work as Production**

For Marcuse (1955), there remains an unnamed activity that is non-repressive and "which offers a high degree of libidinal satisfaction" (p. 84). The importance of this activity is that it is, in fact, libidinal in so far as it is aimed at preservation of the self and a reconciliation of Eros and Thanatos; it aims the destructiveness of man's conquest of nature at the libidinal satisfaction of self-preservation. Arendt (2012) gives a name to this activity in her description of *Work*. For Arendt, it is precisely the creation of use-objects that justifies the violence enacted on nature by the act of *Work* and the worker as a consistently destructive force of nature.

Arendtian (2012) *Work* is a means-ends activity which creates durable objects from the hands of the artisan through the destructive practice of craft. In this way, *Work* is aimed at both Eros, the creative instincts, and Thanatos, the destructive instincts and thus, aims to reconcile the instincts. For Freud (2010), "The instinct of destruction, moderated and tamed... must, when it is directed toward objects, provide the ego with the satisfaction of its vital needs and with control over nature" (p. 110). In other words, *Work* that has the aim of a technology, meaning a use-object that the creator will utilize to dominate nature, provides an egoistic satisfaction of destructive instincts and, therefore, technology is necessary for civilization. Marcuse (1955)

says, “Technics provide the very basis for progress; technological rationality sets the mental and behaviorist pattern for productive performance, and ‘power over nature’ has become practically identical with civilization” (p. 86). In this way, technological advance is an unavoidable reality of civilization as it exists. However, this inevitability presents a contradiction. Technology, as a result of repressed civilization, provides the basis for non-repressive civilization in so far as technology permits humans to produce at rates that exceed necessity.

### **Laborious Work**

Technology represents the destruction of civilization in so far as it holds the possibility for man to reach the basic productive ends of necessity quicker thus increasing free time and freedom from the rule of the Performance Principle (Marcuse, 1955). As mentioned above, Marcuse’s Performance Principle requires the sublimation of pleasure in the name of production and provides the delayed but assured gratification of pleasure from the laborer’s “useful performances” (p. 89). In his search for the productive principle’s inception, Marcuse finds it folded within itself, for “If society cannot use its growing productivity for reducing repression, productivity must be turned against the individuals; it becomes itself an instrument of universal control” (p. 93). For Arendt (2012), the contradiction is present in the victory of *Labor* over *Work*, that is, in the laborious nature of human work in the late industrial age.

So far, both Marcuse (1955) and Arendt (2012) agree that there are two modes of human activity. There is one mode of activity which is painful but necessary and corresponds to Arendtian *Labor*, and one mode of activity which is less necessary but libidinally satisfying, and this corresponds to Arendtian *Work*. Marcuse proceeds to identify a third activity which is rendered unnecessary in the late industrial age. Arendt, likewise, identifies those activities which



conflate the endlessness of *Labor* with the instrumentalization of *Work*. This Laborious Work is an activity which is subject to, what Marcuse refers to as surplus-repression.

While libidinally satisfying *Work* has no home in Freudian metapsychology, this surplus-repression finds its home as an unnecessary evil in those Arendtian activities which she identifies in a Laborious Work, and is simultaneously associated with Marcuse's understanding of the technological advancement of the late industrial age. To synthesize, the surplus-repression required to motivate a workforce who, through technological advancement, has achieved the satiation of basic human needs, manifests itself in *Work* which is endless and tied to a biological necessity through the creation of a false scarcity (Arendt, 2012; Marcuse, 1955). Alienated labor, under rule of the performance principle, emerges in the surplus-repression involved in laborious work. Therefore, Marcuse (1955) notes that the real discord of civilization is not between work and Eros; the perpetual tension lies between alienated labor and Eros.

### **Release from the Tension**

Freud (2010) is clear that humans find life difficult enough, as it is, without further imposition of repressive living. His anesthetic modes of ease include intoxication, a deadening of the instincts (through the reality principle), and running away. The damaging effects of intoxication have historically precluded drugs and alcohol from any meaningful examination of their benefits. In addition, the newly realized reality principle, formulated by Marcuse (1955) as the performance principle, excludes an examination of the deadening of the instincts from benefit. What remains is escape, which Arendt (2012) corroborates as a mode of political anesthesia made possible under the logics of domination, saying:

Escape from the frailty of human affairs into the solidity of quiet and order has in fact so much to recommend it that the greater part of political philosophy since Plato could

easily be interpreted as various attempts to find theoretical foundations and practical ways for an escape from politics altogether. The hallmark of all such escapes is the concept of rule, that is, the notion that men can lawfully and politically live together only when some are entitled to command and the others forced to obey. (p. 222)

Escape from alienated labor is relegated to leisure time which, as calculated by Marcuse, registers at a mere four hours for every twenty-four in a day. Worse, Marcuse sees the leisure time populated by the wasteful stimulation of consumer goods, sold by the prescriptive advertisements of a social order; leisure is socially engineered to ensure conformism through consumption. What Arendt (1973) finds is that “In regard to the law of the state—that is, the accumulated power of society as monopolized by the state—there is no question of right or wrong, but only absolute obedience, the blind conformism of bourgeois society” (p. 141). In other words, in bourgeois society, a society of consumption, there is no space for critique, only conformism.

### **Get Out and Get Away**

As Marcuse (1955) identifies the domination of the late industrial age with surplus-repression, escape becomes the only route for relief from the pain of an alienated existence. Even though there remains a miniscule four hours for this escape into leisure, Marcuse still issues a warning:

The free time would be potentially available for pleasure. But the pleasure principle which governs the id is ‘timeless’... it militates against the temporal dismemberment of pleasure, against its distribution in small separated doses. A society governed by the performance principle must of necessity impose such a distribution. (p. 47)

Thus, Marcuse identifies this distribution of labor, rest, and leisure time as responsible for the largest part of repressive control and because of this, leisure time is relegated to “passive relaxation and a re-creation of energy for work” (p. 48). This leisure time is solitary because it is for regenerating and it is rooted in consumptive practices. For Arendt (1973, 2012) it is in the context of others, the realm of appearances, that reality is confirmed and with this, thought and understanding can prevail. Because leisure time is an escape into an increasingly small private realm which is populated with socially useful and disposable images and objects, even escape into leisure time is an escape into the social realm.

For Marcuse (1955) even leisure time is invaded and an industry of massification creates the collective out of the individual, the bureaucracy out of the capitalist, and a totalitarian state from the alienated working class. Marcuse can be no clearer with his criticism than he is in this passage:

... the goods and services that the individuals buy control their needs and petrify their faculties... The better living is offset by the all-pervasive control over living... [people] have dozens of newspapers and magazines that espouse the same ideals. They have innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all of the same sort and keep them occupied and divert their attention from the real issue – which is the awareness that they could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfaction. (p. 100)

Arendt (1973, 2006) identifies this with the truly banal nature of evil. It is in this mindless conformism that man tends to lose himself and recommit to the totalizing force. Exemplified in Adolf Eichmann, her Ideal-Type mass man, totalitarian society needs not be committed to a human leader. Arendt was surprised to find that Eichmann, a duly appointed member of the Nazi regime, was as detached from Hitler, the man, as he was attached to Hitler, the cause. His work

was a mindless conformism to a job; his button was the one he pushed and he asked not why. Through this Marcuse-Arendtian framework, man is totalized toward his own pain.

For Marcuse “labor time, ... is painful time, for alienated labor is absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle” (p. 45). Then, in turn, the escape from alienation is populated with world-alienating frivolities which offer stimulation in place of joy and diversion instead of self-determination. Marcuse (1978) elaborates, “what took place is a large-scale integration of, perhaps, a majority of the population into the existing capitalist system” (12:45). Those people who should be revolting against the system, and Eichmann, who should be horrorstruck by the atrocities he is being asked to carry out, fail to do so because, as Marcuse (1955) says, “the overpowering machine of education and entertainment united him with all the others in a state of anaesthesia [sic] from which all detrimental ideas tend to be excluded” (p. 104). With the only mode of escape being the aforementioned sense-deadening and distracting facsimile of pleasure, life becomes a series of inescapable moments of self and world-alienation.

### **The Perpetually Pre-totalitarian State**

In this pre-totalitarian dystopia, a major question looms large. Why has this system not crumbled? There is no mass man among mass men who has stood up to lead; the U.S. continues to elect bourgeois millionaires funded by billionaires to lead the country. What’s more, the sort of domination through the performance principle that Marcuse describes, just like the domination of Freud’s reality principle, is never complete and thus, the insatiable Id maintains a connection to the pleasure principle. As humans are wont to do, is pleasure not sought out? Further, Arendt (2012) explains that pockets of resistance will always exist wherever people think and come together. So how has some revolution not happened? What Arendt and Marcuse could not foresee is what Harvey (2007) calls capitalism’s “gyrations and chaotic experiments” (p. 12)

toward neoliberalism. It is in the complete dominance of neoliberal modes that the system sustains itself as malleable and difficult to pin down (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018). Mass society is only the beginning.

Among all the disparate, sometimes contradictory uses of the idea of neoliberalism, two core concepts aid in the conversation here; these are neoliberalism's malleability and its preference for the permeation of corporate logics and ethics into all areas of life (Cahill, Cooper, Konings, & Primrose, 2018; Peck, Brenner & Theodore, 2018). Neoliberalism, as an ideology that gives primacy to corporate and business logics, is a remnant of that bourgeois emancipation that gave rise to imperialism turned inward. Because the laborious work of the late industrial period is non-libidinal and time away from this non-libidinal work is indoctrination into a mass society there seems to be no escape and no pleasure to be found. Neoliberalism's trick is that in their search for pleasure, humans are pointed back at the source of their pain; their Laborious Work is made to appear libidinal. This predicament gives rise to a new mode domination which supplants human need with the needs of a productive society, capturing what should be joy and realigning it with the capitalist mode of production. In the next chapter, I will first draw upon the work of Frédéric Lordon, to better understand how this is possible. This is, however, only one half of the illusion of neoliberal capitalism. It is through neoliberalism's malleability that the imperial tendencies, now turned inward, hide in plain sight. In the next chapter, I will also draw on Sheldon Wolin's work in *Inverted Totalitarianism* to better understand what all of this means for democracy as mass man matures into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### What Does it Matter? – A Journal Entry

My earliest recollection of any sort of presidential politics was the 1985 election between Reagan and Mondale. Since I was five, there are only vague recollections that my family liked Reagan and as such, the clearest memory that arises is the almost ritualistic falsehood of mirroring the larger elections in schools so as to teach civics of some sort. (I'm far more cynical about the practice than I was at five.) The memory I have is a very strong memory associated with pride; the pride that I had cast my vote for Reagan. I told so many people and everyone kept reminding me, "we don't talk about who we voted for" and "that's my civic right". After that, I don't have much of a memory as it pertains to the president or most elections. As I grew, my family would loosely talk about politics and some lessons were taught to me from the glib conversations I'd overhear from my extended family and parents. They are as follows:

- 1) Nobody ever likes the president or what he does. Yes, it was assumed that the president would always be a 'he'.
- 2) The only thing you can do to make a difference is vote and if you don't vote, you don't have the right to complain.
- 3) Never throw away your vote on a third party candidate. While it may be the right thing to do in your heart, any vote not thrown behind your party's guy is a vote for the other guy.

When I was finally of age, I was semi-excited to vote for a president – and I even cast my absentee vote since I was in college. I didn't have strong feelings about either candidate but I did some cursory reading so that I could make "an informed decision" – after all, if I didn't vote then I didn't have a right to complain... . Once my vote was cast, I went on with my day, not thinking much about the election. Which is why I was so perplexed when I returned from my evening rehearsal to see my friend Harry biting his knuckles, glued to the television.

With a mild curiosity, I asked what he was up to. When it comes to Harry, I tend to vacillate between honestly concerned friend and antagonistically naïve concerned friend; he tends to be easily riled when I play dumb. Tonight, it was closer to the latter. He spoke at great length about things that I didn't really understand; my cursory reading on the candidates wasn't of much substance. He was steamed- "This is bullshit!" He would pace. "We cannot lose to this piece of shit." That's the extent to which I am comfortable sharing his expletives, but suffice it to say, he was increasingly enraged.

Harry stayed up all night following coverage and into the next day. I, on the other hand, did what every other American does: I asked Google, "Who won the election?"

George W. Bush defeated Al Gore.

We have the benefit of historical perspective to tell us what would unfold in the coming weeks, months, and years. While Harry knew from the beginning, I wouldn't come to understand the depth and breadth of the American error until much later. Despite everything that came out of the Bush presidency, one thing didn't change. When I went home for Thanksgiving break in 2000, I followed rule number 4) We don't talk about politics, sex, or religion. But with so much tumult and the aftereffects still roiling, it was common small talk among my uncles.

The talk remained the same. While I don't remember details, I *do* recall the general mood. Nobody likes the president; besides, what does a president really do? That's what checks and balances are for. Did you vote? Because if you didn't, then I don't want to hear it! Well, I didn't want Bush, but I wasn't going to vote for a damn hippy. Rigged? Well, duh! That's why it's nice to have a brother in Florida. If I was running for president, you bet your ass I better win your state. Otherwise, what's the point? Besides – What does it matter? They'll do what they want anyhow.

#### CHAPTER 4: The Double Illusion of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

As Marcuse (1955) advanced, capitalist production of the late industrial age has outpaced consumption and has, thus, led to surplus-repression in the form of a hyper-consumption that has perpetuated a manufactured conformism. Lordon (2014) notes that capitalism's great feat of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century was to fixate human desire on monetary gain in the pursuit of consumption; the neoliberal extension of this is monetary gain in the pursuit of solvency. I gotta pay my debts! The neoliberal answer to consumptive practices that outpaced the wages paid for production was found in the late 80s with, among many other things, the increased availability of credit and, therefore, the ability to go into debt (Harvey, 2007). What was once 'will work for food', became 'will work to pay off food debt'.

With dwindling opportunities for human fulfillment and happiness, Lordon (2014) turns to the neoliberal invention of the 'fulfilling' job. One seeks "happy labour, or, to borrow directly from its own vocabulary... 'fulfilment' and 'self-realisation' [sic] in and through work" (p. 52). This self-realizing work turns to self-fashioning work as workers are asked to perform prescriptive roles. This corporatization of daily life works hand-in-hand with Wolin's (2010) machinations of inverted totalitarianism to introduce a managed society in which consensus is manufactured and "corporate power and its culture are no longer external forces that occasionally influence policies and legislation" (p. 131). Before any of this can be handled, however, there is an important transition that needs to take place.

In chapter 3, I examined Marcuse's (1955) critiques of Freud in order to bring Freud's work into the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this chapter, I begin with the work of Debra Nails (1979), who reworks Freud's dual forces of Eros and Thanatos and subsumes them into the singular Spinozist drive called *conatus*. I will then, explore Lordon's (2014) Spinozist

framework for the realignment of human desire toward capitalist production. Lastly, I will explore Wolin's (2010) Inverted Totalitarianism so as to lay the foundation that makes it possible for the working class to rise to prominence as the preeminent neoliberal pariahs with the neoliberal parvenu sovereign among them. With this understanding, the 21<sup>st</sup> century moment is realized as a perversion of the conatus. Humans are driven not by Freud's essential human drive for destruction, but by a Spinozist drive of self-preservation in the context of other selves who are striving to persevere. Unfortunately, this self-preservation takes the shape of the upside-down world in which it was forged. This is the world of the double illusion; the illusion of the fulfilling job and the managed democracy of inverted totalitarianism.

### **Conatus, Capture and Realignment**

To better understand just how the malleable, neoliberal capitalist system has morphed and maintained itself through its own fundamental contradictions and flaws, Lordon (2014) offers a Spinozist interpretation of the capitalist endeavor of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the Spinozist concept of conatus, as the desire to exist that is held by all material substance, Lordon establishes the neoliberal capitalist mode of domination. It is in the employment relation, for Lordon, that the capitalist skews the employee's conatus away from natural aims and realigns them with the aims and desires of the capitalist. This skewing of the conatus, is an act of capture that occurs when money is exchanged for labor. It is this perversion of the very human drives that sustains the anti-human system of neoliberal capitalism. In this section, I will first discuss Nails' (1979) work that reexamines the Freudian concepts of Eros and Thanatos in order to reframe Thanatos in terms of self-preservation. Next, I will explore the conatus capturing and desire aligning effect of capitalism as Lordon sees it in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.



### **Only Conatus**

As Nails (1979) quotes Spinoza's *Ethics*, conatus refers to the fact that "each thing, in so far as it is in itself, endeavors (*conatur*) to persevere in its being" (p. vi). This drive is, for Spinoza, the very essence of everything as it relates to mind and the mind-body and this creates what Spinoza calls, *desire* (Lordon, 2014; Nails, 1979). Nails proceeds to demonstrate the distinctions which lay her groundwork. For Nails, because the conatus applies to all material things, the conatus holds differing degrees of influence which correlate to the material complexity. While this seems like a miniscule detail of little importance, what she establishes here, is an understanding of conatus as an energy separate from its outcome. Regardless of the outcome, for better or for worse, the striving is what sits at the core of Nails' interpretation of the conatus. With this in mind, to rethink Freud, we must divest the drive from the action taken to accomplish the aim of the conatus.

Spinoza articulates that man's conatus is also tied to the desire for an increase in joy and a decrease in sorrow (Lordon, 2014; Nails, 1979). So, while the result of a given action is beyond comprehension, the effects of that result can be seen, in Eros, as a move toward joy and, in Thanatos as a move toward sorrow (Nails, 1979). In this way, Eros, as a pleasure-seeking drive, is essentially a framework for understanding the conatus. As it pertains to Thanatos, however, Nails discusses that Freud's Thanatos is represented in his work by "transference, play-impulse in children, certain dreams, sadism and masochism" (p. 36). For Nails, all of these can be explained as manifestations of the drive of the conatus. They are realized, on one hand, as repetitions of success, as is the case in transference, play, and dreams. On the other hand, they are realized as neurotic states of confusion, as in sadism and masochism. Thus, a singular drive remains and the barely tenable concept of Thanatos is dissolved. What was previously a

fulfillment of an aggressive drive, becomes the product of the human perception of another's attempt to weaken their conatus. That is, aggression is an activity aimed at preserving a thing's being, even if it means destruction of that which would inhibit the conatus. With this understanding, there is no room for a fundamentally human drive of destructive forces.

### **Conatus, Capture, Rapture**

With Spinoza's conatus placed at the heart of human existence, Lordon (2014) explicates what he calls the employment relationship of capitalism. Lordon begins his explanation in the Fordist era and, in so doing, overlaps Marcuse's work. Marcuse (1955) is primarily concerned with the libidinal pleasure (similar to the conatus' joy) of free-time, time spent away from alienated labor. Lordon, on the other hand, offers an explication of the labor relationship of the same era which he then draws into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He identifies the ways in which, from its inception, the employment relation was an act of the capitalist capturing a laborer's conatus and realigning it with his own master-desire.

For Lordon (2014), capitalists are those with the necessary capital to economically fulfill a productive desire that transcends the capabilities of a single human. Further, as discussed in chapter 3, Marcuse (1955) understood that capitalism of the late industrial age maintained the falsehood of scarcity as a general condition which required the laboring masses to work. For Lordon, this false scarcity presents employment as a necessary evil for procuring the requisite goods and services for survival. For Lordon, it is in this system that the capitalist offers subordinate laborers the opportunity to acquire the reproductive necessities of life through "the division of labour, and the monetary market exchange" (p. 7). What is of particular interest at this point, is the common-sense acceptance of money exchanged in wage labor.

As Lordon (2009) points out, for Spinoza, “Instead of desire adjusting to values which preexist to it, it is desire which institutes value” (2:33). This is to say that there is no thing with inherent value because those things which are valued are only those things for which one desires. This becomes especially problematic since the conatus is a “desire without an object” (Lordon, 2014, p. 14). This desire, central to all existing matter, seeks out objects of joy and deems them as having value. In the human instance of this pursuit for joy, the conatus will, as such, assign value to those things which the human perceives as creating joy. Since Marcuse (1955) sees consumptive massification being thrust upon the little free-time one gets from labor, joy is found, in part, in the consumer culture of material goods. Lordon’s argument extends joy to the acquisitive relationship of wage labor. With this understanding of the human pursuit of joy during free-time, satisfied through the exchange of wages for labor, Lordon would agree that, at this point, there is nothing to inhibit the pleasure to be found in the consumptive practices of mass man. It is in the neoliberal vision for money that Lordon extends beyond Marcuse in order to bring him into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Rapture, Rupture and the Neoliberal Answers**

Prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, work had one primary purpose; the acquisition of money in order to increase purchasing power and as such, to increase joy (Lordon, 2014). In this way, Marcuse and Arendt’s examination of the 20<sup>th</sup> century illuminated an outside-in process. They described a process of indoctrination in a social order that prescribed purchases and scripted responses. For Lordon, the 21<sup>st</sup> century and neoliberal capitalism turned this into an inside-out project. It is clear that the outside-in forces of the social realm, laborious work, and surplus repression were still in play, but Lordon introduces the neoliberal twist on capture and alignment in what he calls “the girlfriend experience” (p. 81) of neoliberal labor. For him, it is the double

attack that begins with first, compelling employees to understand their job as a human endeavor. Then once the employee enters the employment relation and develops material dependence, the one-sided relationship is leveraged toward the coercive violence of a constant threat. This threat rules the employment relationship, the threat of unemployment and material destitution.

As Lordon (2014) states, the neoliberal employment relation dictates that, “The desire to find employment should no longer be merely a mediated desire for the goods that wages *circuitously* permit buying, but an intrinsic desire for the activity for its own sake” (p. 52, emphasis in original). The exchange of money for labor keeps the employment relationship permanently one-sided. Because it is one-sided, there is no choice but to accept the complete infiltration of corporate logics and ethics which puts the interests of the capitalist at the center of activity. A remnant of the political emancipation of the bourgeois class, early 21<sup>st</sup> century neoliberalism is marked by a blind and common-sense acceptance of corporate logics in all facets of life. One of the outcomes of this, is the façade of customer service that marks an employer’s attempts to make work seem meaningful; the promise of fulfilling, and satisfying, libidinal employment relations. It’s no wonder that whenever I hear of someone’s very difficult job and I express condolence, their response is to immediately defend the job in terms of the manifold pain-mitigating “benefits” of the job.

This double attack is revealed as a sort-of bait-and-switch once the employee is enlisted. What the laborer learns is that, “all the incentives that the capitalist employment relation successively put on stage in order to enrich its scenery... can collapse at any moment, leaving only the indestructible foundation of material dependence” (Lordon, 2014, p. 7). At this stage of the employment relation, affect is prescribed, modeled after the needs of the job market, and is thrust upon the employee. Lordon tells of an Indian call center where employees were compelled

to adopt American personalities and study American culture in order to better serve clients. He reminds us that in this call center, as sad as it may seem, the employees can put on this mask-like persona while working, and retreat from it when they head home for the day. Unfortunately, for Lordon, there is something far more upsetting, far worse:

There is worse indeed every time an enterprise in the service sector not only commands employees to show the required emotions (empathy, attention, solicitude, smiling), but aims at the ultimate behavioural performance in which the prescribed emotions are no longer merely outwardly enacted, but ‘authentically’ felt. (pp. 82-83)

In other words, the 21<sup>st</sup> century employment relation aims not only to provide the image of the model employee, the employee is compelled to embody the model as their personal essence.

### **The First Illusion**

The illusory power of neoliberal capitalism and the employment relation is that at first, it presents itself to the conatus as the exclusive route for pleasure. After enlisting employees in the employment relation, the balance shifts and the employment relation continues under “the constant threats of relocation, redundancies, and, ultimately, loss of employment [which serve to] merely exploit the primal effect of the employment relation, monetary dependence and the fear of losing the conditions necessary for the reproduction of material life” (Lordon, 2014, p. 41). In other words, under threat of material destitution, employment is suffered by everyone.

This is the first illusion; the illusory *labeur nécessaire mais joyeux*. The employment relation begins as an outside-in project of mask-like appearances brought to joyful work. Once material dependence reemerges as the conatus capturing mode, a Pavlovian spontaneity is required of all employees in order to reproduce the dispositions of a model employee. Because of this, the employment relation is never interrogated only suffered. Lordon (2014) says that, “The

goal is reached when employees, ‘moving entirely of their own accord’ and without needing to be further co-linearised, strive in the organization’s direction and bring to it their power of acting unreservedly as a perfectly voluntary commitment” (p. 123). In other words, the ideal employment relation is when normalizing power cripples the laborer’s ability to operate outside the norm without fear of castigation or worse, unemployment. Lordon’s employment relation compliments Marcuse’s consumer culture, and both serve to support Sheldon Wolin’s (2010) inverted totalitarianism to complete the double illusion.

### **Inverted Totalitarianism and Managed Democracy**

It is in Wolin’s (2010) inverted totalitarianism that the work of Marcuse, Arendt, and Lordon come together in a vision for his understanding of the managed democracy. As Wolin explains:

It [inverted totalitarianism] is resolutely capitalist, no friend of the working class, and, of course, viscerally antisocialist... the ever-changing economy... despite its affluence, makes fear the constant companion of most workers. Downsizing, reorganization, bubbles bursting, unions busted, quickly outdated skills, and transfer of jobs abroad create not just fear but an economy of fear, a system of control whose power feeds on uncertainty. (p. 67)

Surplus-repression, paired with the illusion of self-realizing employment suspends the pre-totalitarian mass until that time when the system aims their fears and the mass is moved.

For Wolin (2010), however, the fearful mass is always moved in ways that preserve the façade of democracy in the name of freedom while maintaining the strictest control over actual modes of power so as to render the masses ineffectual. What arises from this configuration is a figurehead leader who, through the gridlock of a bifurcated political system, rules by

appointment. When these figurehead leaders fill their administration with mostly corporate magnates and special interest agents, the interests of democracy are subordinated to corporate interests and market rationalities. As mentioned in chapter 2, the introduction of the bourgeois class into political power is nothing new; for Wolin, the neoliberal expansion of powers turned over to corporate interests lays at the root of the managed democracy and inverted totalitarianism.

In this section, I will first explore how Wolin (2010) understands the control mechanisms that provide for inverted totalitarianism and a managed democracy. Next, I will discuss how the leaders of inverted totalitarianism rely on nostalgia to churn out an idealized past which distorts and erases the collective memories of atomized and isolated masses. Lastly, I will draw Wolin and Lordon's work together for a clearer understanding of the double illusion of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Democracy's Façade**

Wolin (2010) defines managed democracy as "the application of managerial skills to the basic democratic political institution of popular elections" (p. 140). Based solely on what we have learned from Lordon in the previous section, we already know a few things about the word manager. Beginning with Lordon's (2014) employment relation, we know that even the manager is engaged in a one-sided relationship with the capitalist that entails capture of the manager's conatus and realignment with the master-desire of the capitalist. In other words, it is a relationship of doing what your boss tells you to do in order to get paid. Second, because of the illusory power of the employment relation, we know that the skills of the manager, as an apparatchik of the capitalist's master-desire, include coercive fear-based attacks on the employment relation itself. If we are to take these ideas and apply them to the process of popular elections, then we see that elections are a one-sided relationship where the employee (the

electorate) will be coerced by the manager (governmental apparatchik) to align with the master-desire of the capitalist (who, in this stage of development needs no governmental correlate). In other words, voting is the act of choosing which corporate-sponsored candidate we want to lead the country.

However, this is not where it stops, Wolin (2010) goes on to say that it's not just popular elections, "the operation of governmental departments and agencies now are routinely considered a managerial rather than a political skill" (p. 135). When we think of the government at large as the manager who has, to a commensurate pecuniary degree, aligned with the desires of the capitalist/statesman, then the primary function of the government becomes sustaining permanent stasis. When employees muster the collective power to disrupt the one-sided employment relation, as happens with unions, then the power shifts. In effect, the capitalist leverages his management to keep the employee too busy to do more than work. As it relates to a democracy, this relationship is democracy's ruin. Wolin explains, "Managed democracy thrives not on active suppression but on an electorate so evenly divided as to prevent the formation of a strong majority will" (p. 240). In this way, the democracy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S. is managed not only through the election process, but through the bifurcation of oppositional politics. Any tool that renders the masses ineffectual through infighting removes power from the demos. Unlike the totalitarian mass which is moved to action by its leader, the inverted totalitarian mass spends most of its time suspended in a state of idleness, consuming mass goods.

### **The Good Ole' Days**

Wolin (2010) describes the potent use of nostalgia during the Reagan campaign and subsequent presidency to evoke an idealized past which was not only purportedly better but, to which America could return. Reagan, the original MAGA president, represented for Wolin the



logical progression from a president who was at odds with corporate power and served to stifle that power in the name of public interests, to the president as performer. A president who “internalizes the inauthentic but expresses it as authenticity” (p. 271). Nostalgia, only useful insofar as the masses are unable to access their own history, serves to reframe the past in a positive light thus projecting into the future, aspirations of this fictionalized history.

In order to craft history, one must first control the narratives of the contemporary conversation. As Hedges (2018) cites Arendt, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century political context, we are immersed in a culture of what she called the permanent lie. Wolin (2010) cites, from cover to cover, the breadth of lies that presidential administrations have engaged in from Kennedy to Obama. For Wolin, “Lying is more than deception; the liar wants the unreal to be accepted as actuality” (p. 263). Wolin goes on to discuss how the marriage of corporate power and governmental power no longer has its lies legitimated through formal ministries of propaganda. In an allusion to Plato’s allegory of the cave, the powerful have seized control of the tools for projecting shadows and thus fabricate reality as they see fit. Corporations have taken control of the government and, through ownership of news and entertainment outlets alike, have gained comprehensive control over mass forms of communication. In this way, the corporate power of government not only controls contemporary narratives, they can also reframe history. Wolin discusses how, “elites *temporarily* assemble or rally diverse interests without integrating them” (p. 285). By feeding reifying narratives to a pre-totalitarian mass, corporate power can then mobilize these masses, when necessary, in directions that serve the corporate interests of the ruling elite.

The politics of inclusion serve as an example of this sort of mobilization toward causes that create the illusion of choice while hiding the assumptive foundations that disfigure the idea

of freedom. By uncritically accepting the basis of the argument, an infighting emerges that accomplishes the ultimate bourgeois political goal, gridlock. Malcom Gladwell's *Revisionist History* podcast makes several strides toward understanding how history has been reframed by the powerful in order to disguise such political implications. In a near-perfect example, Gladwell (2017) tells a true story of the effects of *Brown v. Board* and how its aims were refocused away from eliminating the exclusionary practices of segregation and turned, then, toward a constructed idea of ineffectiveness of black schools. By forming an argument against exclusion, the lawyers in this case demonstrated, in the courts' estimation, that because black schools were inferior, black children *needed* white schools to succeed. What Gladwell demonstrates through his interviews is that this just wasn't true and, in fact, racial integration of schools *as it was executed* was detrimental to both the success of black students and the employment of black teachers. What the politics of inclusion said to the high court was, *let us into your better schools*. Which is an entirely different statement from the intent, *you can't stop us from entering any school*. By reframing their ruling in the shadow of the former argument, the high court reconstructed the narrative in a way that stigmatizes black schools and lionizes white schools.

### **The Illusion is Complete**

Lordon (2014) discusses how the employment relation works "by reconfiguring their [employees] imaginary and inducing joyful affects, towards narrowly defined objects that trace for it a new, well-determined perimeter of the desirable" (p. 107). In other words, the employment relation is a perversion of the very drive that constitutes human joy. This perversion aims the conatus away from self-realization and toward prescribed objects of desire. This one-sided relationship is the condition of all wage laborers in the context of a U.S. that Wolin (2010) describes as being in the grip of the managed democracy and inverted totalitarianism.

Hedges (2018) describes Wolin's inverted totalitarianism as "the primacy of economic profit over everything else, which... maintain[s] the façade [of democracy] ... the structures are there, still- you still pay fealty to the constitution... yet inside, the mechanisms of power, corporations still control everything" (18:15). It is the inversion of totalitarian rule, the hallmark of which is a mobilized mass and its mass man leader who submits to the will of the people. In this inversion, the masses are immobilized and the leader is a figurehead, a Manchurian representative of the masses controlled by the corporate-run government.

With this understanding, the double illusion is fully realized, the allegory of the cave loses its fictionalized quality, and the cave becomes reality. The masses, chained to the walls of the employment relation, are fixated on the shadows of corporate, bourgeois design. Unlike Plato's cave, there is no need for the masses to be mute. While atomization and isolation serve this function in part, any possibility for the transformative nature of communication is mitigated by the perpetual lie of mass communication and consumer culture which indoctrinates through an outside-in process of conformism. This is coupled by the inside-out process that encourages an outrage that finds its usefulness in acts of infighting amongst the cave-dwellers. This deeply impotent way of life is antithetical to the drive of *conatus* and, as such, is anti-human. It is no wonder that, in describing the situation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Hedges (2018) evokes Durkheim's work on suicide and, in particular, the helpless feeling, *anomie*, that leads to acts of self-destruction. In the next chapter, I will return to the Arendtian framework for pariahdom and explore the existential reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With wage laborers reorganized into the bourgeois construct of the middle-class, a class defined, in part, by its consumptive practices, pariahdom becomes the lived reality of a majority of the civilization. Among these pariahs, the hierarchical structures of corporate logics encourage the sustained competition of parvenu

existence as a mode of self-preservation and the entire civilization succumbs to social Darwinism.

### **CHAPTER 5: Pariah(s) and the Working-Class as Pariah**

From Weber to Arendt and into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century where the social realm has commodified and made public nearly every private space, neoliberal capitalism and the corporate logics of the ruling bourgeoisie has given rise to inverted totalitarianism. A suspended state of pre-totalitarian masses carries out the pageantry of a managed democracy for the insanely wealthy to hide their fleecing of the federal government. Mass society and mass man sit in a perpetually pre-totalitarian state of atomization, isolation, loneliness, and *anomie*; he searches for escape or stimulation, sometimes both. The illusion is not limited to the managed democracy and its democratic institutions; a deeply layered so-called middle-class is continuously selling off progressively large pieces of their souls for increasingly small wages as the threat looms, among other threats, that their jobs will be shipped overseas.

As a *pariahvolk*, the working-class mirrors so many of the traditional pariah traits and the underemployed working-class is under attack as corporate logics continue to engrain themselves in the minds, hearts, and rationality of all of humanity. Just as Arendt was stirred by what she saw in the Reichstag Fire, I am stirred by what I see all around me. Wolin, (2010) citing a 2006 New York Times article, explains that as working-class wages stagnate, corporate profits have hit record highs. As Chris Hedges (2018) explains, there are two rules of law in the contemporary U.S., “the legal mechanisms that criminalize the poor and the mechanisms that essentially allow the elites, Goldman Sachs, Citibank, to carry out massive acts of financial fraud and orchestrate tax boycotts, which they’ve done” (10:55). I see what Wolin (2010) speaks of when he says of inverted totalitarianism that it “exploits the poor, reducing or weakening health

programs and social services” (p. 239). Even Obamacare, which was supposed to be the great social program of Obama’s term in office was a mere shell game. Rather than critiquing the systemic issue of insane healthcare costs in the U.S., tax dollars were funneled to the poor so that they could participate in the market. Even the liberal heroes of this era cannot interrogate the system. The *anomie* of a political life which has been gutted of its essence presents itself in the self-destructive tendencies of people I know personally. This is global, local, and personal.

As Marcuse (1955) predicted, “It [accumulated aggression] turns against those who do not belong to the whole, whose existence is its denial” (p. 101). As a pariah class, suffering the pains of economic inequity in a nation of unprecedented wealth, all facets of the working-class stand as a testament to neoliberal capitalism’s failure. As punishment, the working-class faces, among other things, austerity measures that target poor communities, and constant attacks on human decency such as the legislation of food stamps use (Hedges, 2018; Holley, 2016). As it pertains to the latter, as a member of a former food stamp family, all I can say is that anyone who thinks that the poor is trying to buy steak and lobster with their meager food stamps has never been on food stamps.

With all of this, I echo Arendt’s sentiments, if one is attacked as a member of the working-class, one must defend oneself as a member of the working-class. Not as an American, not as a world-citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man, or whatever. In this chapter, I will synthesize the work carried out in chapters 1- 4 within the Arendtian framework for pariahdom, thus establishing the working-class pariah. With this framework, I will draw the Arendtian pariah-types into their 21<sup>st</sup> century, neoliberal iterations; iterations marked by the temporal marker of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the conditional marker of neoliberal indulgence of market rationalities and corporate logics.

### **The Working-Class as Neoliberal Pariah**

As an Ideal-Type, the unemployed and underemployed working-class represents the untouchable class in the Arendtian sense of traditional pariahdom. In a civilization that has experienced the collapse of the private and public realms, conspicuous economic performance becomes the proverbial measure of the man. With this paradigm in place, there cannot be a more despised caste. From the economically poorest members of the working-class, those laborers who are unemployed in the mainstream economy, to their better compensated counterparts, who remain gainfully employed by their wage labor, the working-class includes all of those people who exchange their labor for wages. It is a broad, striated class who are all subject to the same oppressive, one-sided employment relation. When taken into consideration within the Arendtian frameworks of pariahdom, the working-class experience of neoliberal capitalism and inverted totalitarianism crystallizes as an apolitical and anti-human existence.

As before, by using the Weberian concept of Ideal-Type, I am not hoping to create a universal image of the working-class as a whole. Working-class, in this sense is meant to be like the Arendtian table of the public realm, a common space that acknowledges the unique particularities of each human while providing that necessary common realm of appearances in which we can emerge as unique and particular. In this section, I will reexamine the pariah and its modern schlemihl in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S. so as to establish the working-class and its members as neoliberal iterations of the pariah and the schlemihl.

### **The Working-Class as Neoliberal Pariah**

To borrow, again, from Swedberg & Agevall (2005), Weberian pariahs are apolitical, socially distinct, internally prohibited from interpenetration with external groups (including the dominant group); they are politically and socially outcast, and function economically outside the

mainstream economy. When pulled into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the rise of the social, the working-class fulfills these requirements. As a class that has been disconnected from political power by the machinations of Wolin's (2010) inverted totalitarianism, the working-class is not only apolitical but also politically and socially outcast. While they may be less internally prohibited from interpenetration with external groups, constructs such as gender, race, and the middle class, produce divisive *-isms*, which prohibit or limit interpenetration to a great degree. Lastly, the manifold ways in which the working-class tend to operate outside the mainstream economy include, but are not limited to, illegalized alternative economies such as the sexual service industry and drug economy (Davis, 2017). As an isolated, apolitical mass who has been dislocated from power and forced to sustain themselves economically, the working-class begins to take shape as the neoliberal pariah class.

However, as Parvikko (1996) points out, "The most important problem of traditional pariah existence lies in the fact that it may develop into a self-prolonged condition of worldless irresponsibility." In this way, the worldless irresponsibility of the neoliberal pariah of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is realized in the knowledge that you will most likely die in the same socio-economic class that you are born into (Alexander, 2014). Worse than the pariahdom of the Jewish Diaspora, the condition of the working-class as a pariah people is nearly inescapable. The working-class, as an Ideal-Type of the neoliberal pariah, sets a foundation upon which other aspects of the working-class existence can come into vision. Further, as a product of the maneuvers of the bourgeoisie in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the atomized and individualized isolation of the working-class gives rise to what Durkheim called *anomie*, which is at the heart of self-destructive tendencies such as suicide (Hedges, 2018).

### The Neoliberal Schlemihl

Like the modern schlemihl that Arendt evokes, the neoliberal schlemihl carries on where the neoliberal pariah leaves off. In addition to all of the characteristics of the neoliberal pariah, in the neoliberal schlemihl we also find an eschatological worldview and because of the particularly atomized and individualized isolation of the working-class, there is a rising sense of *anomie*. In their eschatological worldview, the modern schlemihl suffered the pains of today for the promise of a better tomorrow. While eschatological religions certainly still play a part in the worldview of the working-class, there is no longer a need for religion to fulfill this role. In the neoliberal extension of the employment relationship outlined by Lordon (2014), the eschatological nature of capitalism can replace or even augment what was, previously, the exclusive realm of religion. The capitalist promised land consists, in part, of images of retirement, thoughts of a vacation, and *if we save up, we can get a... fill in the blank*. Worse, even the religious iterations of end times include images of mansions in the sky. This perpetual promise of a world in the great beyond does more than pull the laborer begrudgingly to their happy death. Because this promise exists beyond the temporal existence of humanity, it also points back to the elimination of the timeless public realm. Timelessness, in the double illusion of neoliberal capitalism, is something that humans can only achieve after the capitalist is finished with your corporeal body.

In this atomized group, where social bonds have been rent and individualism is the hallmark of economic success, self-destruction permeates the group. In a 2018 speech, Hedges refers to Durkheim's work on suicide and the helpless feeling of *anomie* which provokes acts of self-destruction. According to Hedges (2018), Durkheim discovered that it is in communities where social bonds had been destroyed and where humans could no longer feel self-realized that the greatest risk of *anomie* and acts of self-destruction manifest themselves. As such, unlike his



modern schlemihl counterpart, who has no interest in transcending his schlemihldom, the neoliberal schlemihl usually feels the either/or imperative to escape or die.

If we return for a second to Freud's (2010) palliative measures for civilization's discontents, we know now that Marcuse's (1955) performance principle directs escape toward hollow acts of excitation through consumer goods and Arendt (2012) explains that escape into the private realm is no longer possible. Further, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not only is alcohol a perfectly legal depressant, it is also a measurable problem among low-income populations (Hasin, Stinson, Ogburn, & Grant, 2007). Worse, the prevalence of drugs in low-income communities has been a wide-spread problem for decades and finds its most recent occurrence in the opioid crisis ravaging my home state of Ohio (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2018). The neoliberal schlemihl, seeking escape, full of *anomie*, engages in self-destruction that sometimes results in death; whether quick or slow, always suicide.

### **The Anti-human System**

What has culminated here, from the previous chapters into the despair of self-destruction is possibly the most disastrous expression of what has come before it. While, as merely an Ideal-Type, the neoliberal versions of pariah and schlemihl remain indicative of the misanthropic system which deprives humans of what Arendt (2012) considers the most human essence, entry into the realm of appearances. For Marcuse (1955) it is the system of a repressive civilization of the first order that goes as far as to dictate not only the expectations for behavior but also prescribes the acceptable modes of rebellion. Lordon (2014) decries the capture and realignment of the conatus that occurs in neoliberal capitalism as an act that denies humans of their very essence. However, if this is where it all came to a stop, the suicidal masses would dwindle and the system would collapse under the weight of its own drive for more. Arendt saw the solution

for this coming not from a benevolent ruler who cared so deeply; her explication of traditional pariahdom condemned the acts of even the well-to-do and well-meaning leaders of Jewish Councils in the fate of the Jews. Arendt had seen the horror of collaboration and named the partial responsibility of the pariah on several occasions. According to Pitkin (2001), “Arendt had seen and had herself experienced how desperate is the plight of this 20th century pariah and how it’s necessities constantly impel him toward the dangerous line where prudent resourcefulness turns into parvenu collaboration with the persecutors” (p. 53). Because of this, we turn now to the parvenu; the life that is strung to the end of a stick so as to compel the pariah forward, to prevent the pariah masses from self-destruction.

\* \* \*

***A personal interlude – Moving to Chicago, the dream.***

When I finished my 7-year stint in undergrad with a B.A. in vocal performance and immersed in well over \$100,000 in debt...

I’ll let that sink in...

Something that my voice teacher had mentioned to me stuck in my head. “I’ll fill out your recommendation for graduate school if you promise to check out The Second City.” At this point in my life, I hadn’t heard of the Second City and as I really wanted to move on to graduate school to bury myself deeper in debt, I had no real interest in looking it up. When I eventually looked in to it, there was some intrigue – I took a week-long class.

After the first half of the first class, I was hooked.

As I was preparing for the move to Chicago and people in my life heard that I was moving to take classes at The Second City, three things started happening almost simultaneously. First, everyone and their cousin knew a guy (it was almost always a guy) that had ‘done second city’ and then moved back to do theater in Ohio. Second, everyone started talking about their favorite SNL characters and hinting that those actors got their start at Second City. Third, I was constantly told “don’t forget us little people when you make it big”. At the time, there was nothing odd about these occurrences – I actually liked them. They were comments that connected me to a potential – they were ideas that made me think, “Oh, wow, I could be rich.”

As a pariah nobody, I would read about the other famous nobodies who rose to fame through their Chicago detour. I gobbled up stories of parvenus, freed from their provincial pariah existence. This thinking warped my brain as I began applying the instrumental reason of ladder-climbing logics to my projected ascent toward fame.

*If I can just get on those boats, then I could get on a touring company and then I could get on E.T.C. and then mainstage and then... and then... and then...*

When I left for Chicago, I told myself that I was saying goodbye to my friends forever. I told my mother that I wouldn’t be home for Christmas Eve (the *only* holiday that *everyone* in my family

makes it home for). I made a deal with myself that I wouldn't return home until I had something to show for it and every trip home without something to show for it, was another death.

In Judy Carter's book, *The Comedy Bible*, there is a "commitment contract" where she asks the reader to fill out, in ink, a commitment and email or fax it to her personally so that she can, "track your progress and give you assistance along the way with encouragement, practical tips, and new exercises" (p. 55). While I filled it out, I broke my promise and I never sent it in. I'm positive that this is the precise reason why I'm not rich and famous now (hahahaha). Nevertheless, I still have it in my possession and it reads, "I commit to doing comedy until I win an Oscar." You know – just like all those other Oscar winning comedians...

I digress – all of this is to say that the path was so crystal clear for me: it was through Chicago that I would take classes at Second City, through Second City that I would get on SNL, through SNL that I would get into film and through all of this, achieve fame and money so that I could rise above my station in life and never be poor again.

Bootstraps exceptionalism never seemed so easy!

\* \* \*

### **The neoliberal parvenu**

It is precisely in the image of the working-class parvenu that we see a neoliberal tool of domination. As Arendt (2007) notes of Bernard Lazare:

His experience of French politics had taught him that whenever the enemy seeks control, he makes a point of using some oppressed element of the population as his lackeys and henchmen, rewarding them with special privileges, as a kind of sop. (p. 284)

In the neoliberal capitalist construction of domination through employment, Lordon (2014) sees the rise of the managerial class as just those sops. As a member of a class whose primary distinction is their connection to labor, managers, as neoliberal parvenus, are already receiving the special privileges to which Lordon refers. Still, those favors and privileges are merely partial.

As Lordon speaks of the distribution of goods in the neoliberal mode of domination:

... in order to be fully successful, the distributive operation of domination must meet an additional requirement; it must reserve certain objects of desire to the dominators, and

make the dominated recognize them as desirable, *but with a decisive provision*: desirable in general, but not for them. (p. 110)

This idea echoes Arendt's (1974) passage on Herr Varnhagen, Rahel's husband, also a parvenu, about whom she says:

... he was gnawed by a multitude of things which he did not even really want, but which he could not bear to be refused; that he had to adapt his tastes, his life, his desires to these things; that in nothing and not for a single minute did he dare to be himself any longer. (p. 205)

The parvenu, as an in-between, lives in two worlds; while they strive to appear as a non-pariah, they cannot shake the inner knowledge of their pariahdom (Arendt, 1974). This split is to the detriment of the parvenu and is, in part, why Rahel, despite the danger of being exposed, maintained a few pariah friendships throughout her life. Moreover, after a lifetime of hiding her pariah status, Rahel was compelled to reject her parvenu life, albeit on her deathbed. In this section, I will discuss the rise of the neoliberal parvenu in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where a previously inconsequential aspect to the parvenu emerges as one of its key points.

### **The neoliberal parvenu**

Arendt (1973) saw the rise of what she called the administrative class which was paired with widespread bureaucratization that rose when imperialism was turned inward. When this happened, the whole political machine was turned into a chain of command where even the laboring 'link' in this chain is further divided by seniority or regular raises. Every aspect of the civilization has been turned into a bureaucratized hierarchy. This hierarchy is leveraged politically, as Wolin (2010) explains, in the smoke and mirror trickery of inverted totalitarianism so as to incapacitate change leaders. As it pertains to the working-class, the hierarchy manifests

itself in wage disparity; it can be difficult for an hourly fast-food worker to see their oppression as one-in-the-same with a partner in a law firm. This layering of a deeply divided the working-class, this inner hierarchy, is divisive and prevents the very social solidarity that the working-class as pariah relies on for cohesion.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Lordon (2014) has it right when he speaks of the rise of the management class, as something that Marx could not foresee; he says:

The growing number of employees who partially crossed over symbolically to the ‘side of capital’... is not an all-or-nothing affair, but a matter of degrees that can be laid out in a continuum going from the lowers – the sullen employee who does the least, and reluctantly – to the highest – those who, albeit instrumentally, devote the totality of their working life, at times their whole life to the success of the enterprise. (p. 147)

It is in this continuum that the bourgeois idea of the middle class emerges as that which frames humans within their economics, or buying power, and is therefore a private and apolitical term elevated to the public realm. In the end, it is by growing the economically rooted middle class, that an increasingly layered and divided working-class loses its clear defining characteristics and the only identifying characteristics that remain to articulate this class are those of the parvenu.

The distinction between the parvenu and mass man is now untenable and mass man reveals himself as a neoliberal parvenu. With the poor and working-class of the U.S. representing the neoliberal pariah, the neoliberal parvenus are necessarily those unemployed, underemployed, and working-class individuals who strive to improve their position as an individual in a world that will never fully accept them. Pitkin (2001), defines the parvenu as the pariah who is “striving for acceptance as an individual exception at the expense of fellow pariahs” (p. 58).

What is clear in this distinction is that no person should ever have shame or guilt over the desire

to improve their situation; but as we will learn in chapter 6 with the conscious neoliberal pariah, the fight for political relevance must be for pariahs as pariahs. This is what is forgotten by the neoliberal parvenu, as the atomized and individualized mass man *par excellence*, emancipation is a collective act as opposed to an individual one.

### **A Society of Parvenus**

In this chapter, the neoliberal pariah has been brought into the harsh light of the public realm for all to see. As demonstrated here, the neoliberal pariah can no longer enjoy the innocence of schlemihldom lest she finds herself walking the razors edge between self-destruction and complete annihilation. The neoliberal pariah, therefore, finds herself as an individual amongst individuals, each one standing on the other's head, trying to achieve some semblance of the life represented by the parvenu above them on the hierarchy. The ones at the top of the hierarchy, employ charity as their contribution to pariah existence and encourage others to strive, as they did, and rid themselves of the chains of poverty. The ones at the bottom, Barbara Ehrenrich, says are suspended in "one long emergency" (as cited in Hedges, 2017, 11:30); they are a mishmash of criminalized, fearful, non-people whose primary concern is scraping together a meager existence.

As Rahel Varnhagen learned, the precarious existence of the parvenu is the empty pursuit of something the pariah neither is, nor can it ever be. As neoliberal parvenuism rises to prominence as the condition of a majority of the population, resistance becomes difficult if not impossible. As Parvikko (1996) notes, Rahel learned this after it was too late:

However, she had ended up in a kind of impasse from which she could not jump out. On the one hand, open rebellion and admission of her pariahdom would have been suicide, a catastrophe that would have destroyed everything she had achieved in her life. On the

other hand, suddenly it dawned on her that she had not achieved very much. (pp. 108-109)

After another journal entry, I will examine, in the next chapter, Arendt and Marcuse as they offer possibilities for emancipatory action. It is possible, as Rahel feared, that such emancipation will destroy everything. If by *everything*, Rahel was alluding to the aspirational existence of parvenuism, then perhaps it is only by destroying *everything* that emancipation will be possible.

### When One is Attacked as a... – A Journal Entry

My journey to the SCFE program and my interest in the program stems, in part, from my relationship with my friend who, for the sake of anonymity, we will call Bea. From the time we met, she maintained the patience necessary to, as a black woman with a Master's degree from a great school and a PhD from life, engage a well-meaning white person in the conversations necessary to bring that well-meaning white person along and elevate them into a sphere of understanding that could forge an important allyship. When I look back at my behavior, I scarcely know why she called me friend as long as she did and when she finally sent me that email that explained why she could no longer let me be a drain on her, as hurt as I was, I understood. Still, despite all of my missteps, there was a moment of clarity for me that wasn't fully realized until halfway through my first class with Dr. Haymes.

Bea and I would engage in conversations around equity and inclusion, around identity and the experience of black folks in America. For the most part, I was a good student; I said all of the right things and I would listen a lot. I never listened as much as I should have, I never listened as close as I should have, but I did listen. Once in a while, I would hear something or have an idea of my own that I wanted to test; something that sounded wrong but felt right and I knew, that I could take it to Bea. 9 times out of 10, it was as wrong as it sounded and even though the conversations always ended the same way, I'd argue points and raise counters – she was always right.

In addition to this, there was an ethnic ambiguity to my appearance that would get me asked questions such as, "What are you?" When I'd respond, "Um, what?" The inevitable response was, "Like, where are you from? Where is your family from?" This was the same look that got me asked, point blank, "What you mixed with?" This mostly annoyed Bea since she would have to regularly remind me that even if there was an ethnic bloodline that contributed to this ambiguity, it had nothing to do with my lived experience. As much as I knew this, there was something about my life that never perfectly aligned with the white narrative and each mistaken ethnicity was an edifying confirmation that something wasn't *white* about my life.

When I was working on the cruise ships, Bea maintained loose contact with me. One afternoon, we were chatting and she asked if I'd made any friends with crew. I responded, without much thought, that I enjoyed it because in the belly of the ship, I was amongst "my people". Almost instantly annoyed at the thought that I'd refer to the largely black and brown, multi-lingual, non-U.S. crew as "my people", Bea shot back with an incredulous but subdued outrage, "What does that even mean!?" I laughed at my own error, but found myself unable to articulate what it meant. Still, after the conversation, the feeling lingered. They *were* "my people" – but how can I say that? We have almost nothing in common; how could I feel this way about people who are *so different*?

The first time that I sat in Dr. Haymes class to discuss Emile Durkheim, I was nervous, excited, eager and a little afraid – intimidated? Intimidated. Still, as I sat there, being engaged by the soft-spoken man in an intellectual discourse about social solidarity, I stumbled over my own words, trying to find the right phrase. He said – "Working-class... you're talking about the working class. You can say it." I said it –

Working-class – my people are the working-class. The people pulling 16 hour shifts for minimum wage in the dark belly of a cruise ship in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico so they can make ends meet. While my job on the cruise ships put me in a position far removed from them, my heart and my gut felt their presence – the social solidarity of the working class.



## Chapter 6: The Resistance

It is quite possible that, to the reader, this thesis has conjured a dystopian image of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Evoking images of cave-dwellers chained to walls and anti-human systems of domination offers the possibility of an all-pervasive big-brother-esque existence where there is no way to discern humanity from the imaginary of humanity implanted in the minds of unsuspecting plebeians. The idea of freedom has been intercepted and, through a process where Leonardo DiCaprio exercises inception, *true freedom* is replaced with *the freedom to choose* between pre-ordained options. If I may be indulged to draw further on dystopian film, there seems to be no human agency in this matrix where humanity is relieved of any culpability in its own destruction.

On the contrary, this is specifically why the Arendtian pariah framework is of the utmost importance in this conversation. It remains true that the neoliberal schlemihl is the sort of victim that has little to no accountability. They cannot be held responsible because, as Parvikko (1996) points out, like the traditional pariah, the schlemihl as “an outcast who does not belong to any polity, cannot, of course, be responsible for the deeds carried out in the polity” (p. 21). As it pertains to neoliberal pariahdom however, there is no such guiltlessness. Because neoliberal pariahdom, as a construct of capitalism, is a pervasive and constant part of life in the U.S., there is almost no way to remain a neoliberal schlemihl. Further, the shared aspirational natures of capitalism and parvenus, reveal a majority of the neoliberal *pariahvolk* as parvenus.

It is the creation of humans as temporal beings that sits at the heart of the eschatological worldview characteristic of the neoliberal pariah. Further, the construction of humans as finite, disconnects them from history and subjects them to the scars of time. Scars that serve as a reminder that, for the working-class, the past cannot exist in the present and life becomes a

“tribute to death” (Marcuse, 1955, p. 120). Marcuse (1955) goes on to say, “Nietzsche’s attempt to uncover the historical roots of these transformations elucidates their twofold function; to pacify, compensate, and justify the underprivileged of the earth, and to protect those who made and left them underprivileged” (p. 121). In other words, humans, now constructed as temporal beings, are pacified by the eschatological mechanisms of that which is yet to come, an otherworld which will compensate the pain and suffering of the temporal existence of the world. This is the justification for the oppression of pain and suffering which, in its neoliberal form, aims working-class frustrations back on themselves instead of the oppressors.

In this chapter, I will discuss how neoliberal pariahs and parvenus, constructed as timebound beings, must strive for the political timelessness of Arendtian *Action*. I will examine the work of Marcuse, Arendt, and Halbwachs as they each pose ways in which timelessness can serve emancipatory ends. By pulling these thinkers together, I envision what I call the utopian effort of mass resistance. Utopianism, which can be future-oriented when framed within the instrumentality of a means-end relationship, does not serve the here-and-now necessity of resistance. Utopian effort, on the other hand, is modeled after the life drive itself; like the *conatus*, it is a desire (for emancipation) without an object (or end-point). First, however, there is the matter of Arendt’s conscious pariah. In the first section, I will draw parallels between the conscious neoliberal pariah and the modern conscious pariah in order to elucidate their common responsibility, resistance through political action.

### **The Responsibility**

Unlike Arendt’s conceptualization of the traditional pariah, and later the *schlemihl*, the neoliberal pariah is constantly made aware of their pariahdom. Because the neoliberal pariah is characterized in part by their participation in the market ideologies that drive the employment

relation and their participation in the overtly ineffective government, complicity is the condition of their existence. It is specifically, that pervasive sense of their pariahdom that is leveraged against them when it is time to mobilize them. When the neoliberal pariah masses are mobilized, through outrage, to see the other neoliberal mass as an oppositional force, that outrage is framed in terms of an inhibition of the conatus. The contemporary political rhetoric, delivered through binary and pre-approved news sources, can always be traced back to ways in which *they* are trying to stop *us* from living a full life. While, in a functioning democracy, this may lead to true Arendtian political *Action*, in the defunct apparatuses of the U.S., the citizenry is constantly reminded that nothing will really change. This constant awareness of their pariah status leaves the neoliberal pariah with two choices. They can choose to remain the neoliberal parvenu outlined in the previous chapter or they can accept the responsibility of their role as conscious neoliberal pariahs. In this section, I will first discuss the responsibility of the conscious neoliberal pariah to not only emancipate her pariah brethren, but to do so on the condition of her pariahdom as legitimate. Next, I examine the pariah community, when legitimated as a political reality, in its relational and communal strength, as a mode of living which can be free from the dominating forces of the 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S.

### **The Conscious Neoliberal Pariah**

Arendt (2006) solved Sophie's choice when she rebuked the Jewish councils' participation in the Shoah as an instance of pariah negligence. It was in her understanding of conscious pariahdom, that the responsibility of the pariah became clear (Parvikko, 1996). The inherent responsibility of the pariah is to resist even unto death. Parvikko goes on to say, "Although taking the initiative does not guarantee the result of an action, it is characteristic of the conscious pariah that she does not hesitate in the face of oppression and discrimination but

rebels openly against it” (p. 149). The conscious neoliberal pariah must always resist, which is particularly difficult in the 21<sup>st</sup> century milieu. Because the employment relation entails material dependence for the neoliberal pariah’s basic needs, resistance could result in destitution.

Resistance takes the shape, in one sense, of awakening other pariahs to their situation but it is also a fight against the parvenu. Arendt (2007) quotes Lazare, who says he is tired of fighting, “not only the wealthy of my people, who exploit me and sell me, but also the rich and poor of other peoples who oppress and torture me in the name of my rich” (p. 284). In other words, the fight is a double fight; on one hand, the conscious pariah is fighting her own parvenu brethren who make great gains on the backs of other pariahs. On the other hand, she fights others who shame her for not adopting the posture of the parvenu, thus procuring her own gains. This is especially true in the case of the neoliberal parvenu who has taken their compensation package and aligned with the master-desire of neoliberal capitalism. With his favored position, the neoliberal parvenu offers the image of success, modeled after the capitalist’s desire; thus, calling to other neoliberal pariahs to follow suit. While the neoliberal parvenu offers charity and advice, he never offers a critique of the system that benefits him at the expense of others.

Another way in which resistance takes shape is in the political fight itself. It is the responsibility of the conscious pariah to fight for the political place of pariahs qua pariahs. The fight is no longer a case of the individual legitimation, through assimilation, of each parvenu who erases their pariah history so as to remake themselves in the image of the dominant society. The conscious pariah sees legitimation as a collective effort. It is the legitimization of pariah life as inherently political, and therefore, a part of political life. In this way, we turn next to the pariah community as a way of life that represents resistance to the norm and the potential for political emancipation.

### **Pariahs qua Pariahs**

To distinguish the pariah community in Arendtian terms seems to give rise to manifold contradictions. As a community of pariahs, the concept already appears oxymoronic since pariahs, typically apolitical, should not be able to exist as part of a community, which is a product of the public and, therefore, political realm. However, it is precisely this contradiction in terms that draws Arendtian thinking toward pariah communities as a possible solution to the collapse of the private and public realms and the rise of the social. By working through the apparent contradictions in Arendt's construction of the pariah and its community, I will establish pariah existence as a mode of active resistance.

The pariah community is apolitical insofar as its members, primarily schlemihls, have no interest in being admitted into the dominant culture. On the other hand, as a community of schlemihls, the pariah community maintains cohesion on the basis of what Durkheim (1985) called, an organic social solidarity. In Durkheimian organic solidarity, it is the primacy of difference that provides social cohesion of a group. As a self-sustaining group, it is the unique and particular individuals whose skills contribute to the success of the group. In this way, the unique and particular members of the pariah community sit at the table of pariahdom together and share that public realm. The pariah community, in this sense, harkens back to the original bifurcation of the private and public realms into distinct realms. Because the community avoids interpenetration with a broader public realm, their community delimits the extent of their public realm.

Further, as evidenced by traditional pariahdom, the cohesion of the pariah community was the very essence of its durability over generations of difficult and dark times (Arendt, 1973). As mentioned in chapter 1, for Parvikko (1996) it was the apolitical tradition of charity, in the

form of the literal sharing of money, physical assistance, and communal property, that allowed the pariah community to survive and even thrive outside the dominant culture. Further, we are driven to the communal life of pariah community by the Spinozist conatus. Nails (1979) describes the conatus as that drive that compels us toward survival and, as such, a drive that sees the collective power of the many exceeding the power of the one. Since humans are averse to any diminishment of the conatus, sharing must be an act of the conatus gaining power.

By thriving outside of the dominant culture and, therefore, outside the broader public realm, the pariah community is a model community of shared living. Because it is built on a public realm whose limits are the walls of the family home, the pariah community is a microcosm of human political *Activity* in the Arendtian (2012) sense. Within the walls of their home, the pariah is hidden in the private realm. Beyond the walls of their home, the pariah community shares amongst the individuals from whom it is constituted and is governed by community concerns. As Arendt (1974) explains, “As soon as the pariah enters the arena of politics, and translates his status into political terms, he becomes perforce a rebel” (p. 284). As such, the conscious pariah must act politically and in her political action, she must remain, specifically, a pariah identifying as a member of the pariah community.

### **They Get Close... – A Journal Entry**

*We should take disagreement to mean... speech... in which one of the interlocutors at once understands and does not understand what the other is saying. – Jacques Rancière, Disagreements*

There's nothing quite like my brother Lorenzo. Even though he's not my biological brother, we are cut from the same cloth. We have worked our way through similar, though distinct, lives... and he will hate a quarter of what I've presented in this paper and he will disagree with three quarters of it. The final quarter, he probably won't understand, but once I explain it, he'll just say, "Sounds like bullshit to me". Oh, and we will talk about it. It will come up on a random text at 3am or it will come up halfway through day two of our next multi-day visit with each other. From the time I met Loro, I had that sense that we knew one another – that kind of familiarity that you have when you first meet someone, like they feel like a relative you are just now meeting. I had a similar feeling with my wife's mom and dad. I was like, "Oh, those are my people."

Loro and I met while working at a wage-labor job for teenagers and we quit together one day when we were tired of working. I was a shift manager and I told him that if he did something fire-able, that I would fire him and then quit. He threw store food in his mouth, I shouted 'you're fired' and then I wrote my resignation on a napkin and left a voicemail with my store manager. We went to a friend's house, drank, and retold the story close to a thousand times. Over time, our politics shifted but our friendship never waned. Even through tough times – especially through tough times? – we remained tight. We continued to talk politics too; neither one of us ever really aligning with generally accepted politics. We were never fully left or right, never democrat or republican, never in agreement with each other; it was a space of appearances. We shared a common table and held our unique place at that table; we emerge in our plurality as part of a common world. We had, and I should say at this point, still have, heated disagreements over what it means to be human, what it means to be a civilization, what it means to have dignity – and soon... we'll get into heated disagreements over what it means for the working-class, as a pariah class, to fight the system that strips them of their dignity.

Dr. Haymes said recently something like – "This may mean that you're going to have to make friendships with people who you disagree with in order to affect real cultures of resistance." I'm already ahead of him. There are so many things to love about my brother Lorenzo – not the least of which are our deep and meaningful conversations. He is my brother in thought, in history, in arms, and in bond. One of the best parts of our bond? We will never fully see eye to eye. He respects me too much to do that and, while I feel likewise, I'd also find him incredibly boring if he just agreed with me. And the secret to our bond? Our shared sense of history, rooted in our experiences together and apart... and back together again. Shared life.

*They just don't get us – they get close, but they don't quite get it.*

### **Transcending Temporal Constraints**

According to Hedges (2018), Plato's *Republic* was an attempt to freeze time in a culture that saw time as cyclical and, as such, the past and the future were inextricably tied to the present. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it seems that the construction of humanity as timebound exists as the fullest realization of that project. Neoliberal parvenus, beholden to the surplus-repression of Marcuse's (1955) performance principle and severed from their personal history are suspended in a pre-totalitarian state where nostalgia is employed by the ruling elite as one of the many tools used to reframe a fictionalized past. There is no escape from this timebound material dependence but the eschatological promise of an otherworldly tomorrow. With no history and no future, humanity is adrift and their very existential reality is subject to the master-desires of the ruling class. While the pariah community offers alternative modes of living which are communal and, thus, serve as an act of resistance, Arendt and Marcuse offer insights on broader notions of resistance.

Because I am reentering Marcuse's (1955) Freudian analysis of civilization, we must first recall the points of interpenetration between Eros/Thanatos and conatus. In Marcuse's reworking of Freud, it is through the formulation of the performance principle that Marcuse discovers a solution for the domination of surplus-repression. While his theory of a non-repressive civilization is rooted, in part, in a reconciliation of Eros and Thanatos, the work of Debra Nails has dissolved the destructive drive into the Erotic drive and associated that with the conatus. Still, to consider the performance principle as that which molds the Id's drive for pleasure remains salient to the conversation. Further, because Marcuse associates an unfettered Eros with the pleasure principle and the Id, it is reminiscent of the conatus, that drive with no aim. As such, in this section I will replace Marcuse's references to Eros with the concept conatus; in addition,



any reconciliation of Eros and Thanatos would, likewise, take the shape of the conatus which has subsumed both drives.

Beginning with the Spinozist understanding of the conatus' role in civilized society, the roots of a non-repressive civilization start to take shape through Marcuse's (1955) explication of a Freudian regression. In order to work through the collective regression necessary to envision emancipation, Marcuse and Arendt point us to the aesthetic. With Marcuse's insights on the aesthetic dimension, Arendt's (2012) *Action* strengthen the potential of a political and social reclamation of the conatus. Throughout this section, I will explore Marcuse's perspective on the aesthetic as pointing the way toward a non-repressive civilization and frame it in the context of Arendt's *Action* in order to envision the potential for resistance. However, before examining these relationships, we return to Nails (1979) as she cites those reconciliations between Eros and Thanatos, now subsumed in the singular drive Conatus, which align with the Marcuse-Arendtian framework for liberation.

### **The Origins of the Instincts**

As mentioned before, in her understanding of Freud, Nails (1979) identifies three activities which correspond to the Thanatic drive. These are children's 'play-impulse', dream regression, and sadism/masochism. Taken in reverse order, Nails finds, in accordance with Marcuse (1955), that a masochistic state is one of confusion or perversion which is the result of avoidable trauma; masochism is not a natural state of being. While Marcuse finds a similar rationale for sadism, Nails subsumes the sadist's aggression borne out as a consequence of the conatus' desire for perseverance. Secondly, dream regression and the images conjured therein do not move Marcuse as he is no student of Jung, but for Nails the images of dreams take on symbolic form in as much as they are the mental images that make salient the unconscious desire

of the conatus to increase. The last case, that of the play-impulse, illuminates the most striking realization of Marcuse's exploration into the conatus.

Drawing on Schiller's concept of play-drive, Marcuse (1955) identifies the conflict between a timeless Id and a reality bound Ego being resolved in the children's drive for play. Play, for Marcuse was a regression that brought the child back to a non-repressive state. In play, the repressed connection between the child and a timeless boundlessness reemerges and expresses itself. Marcuse further identified works of Art as aesthetic representations of this same play-drive and, in this way, to experience the truly aesthetic was to experience a captured moment of non-repression. This is Art, with a capital 'A', as set in contradistinction to art which is the instrumentalized art of contemporary society, often found in places such as advertising.

It seems, then, no mistake that Marcuse (1955) should find in Art, an expression of the unrepressed libido, made consciously manifest as, "...the perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom" (p. 141). In other words, Art as an aesthetic reality, allows for the reconciliation of repressed memories, those of freedom from the reality principle, with the repressed reality of the lived experience. As Marcuse articulates further, "What sensuousness recognizes, or can recognize, as true, aesthetics can represent as true, even if reason rejects it as true" (p. 183). That is, to say, Art is the lens through which we can see the possibility of non-repressive civilization and political action. In a similar way, Arendt (2012) identifies works of Art as the clearest representation of *Work* in its transition toward truly political *Action*.

### **The Aesthetic and Action**

For Arendt (2012), in order to obtain its rightful place in the world, the aesthetic must serve an additional function. It serves as a path from the unalienated, human, and stable *Work* of

contributing to the artifice of temporal human existence and the timeless transcendence of *Action*. This is an instance of timelessness that is simultaneously a timely critique to the repression present in the cultural milieu. For both Marcuse and Arendt, the aesthetic must, in order to be an effective mode of resistance, be presented and seen. This presentation, or as Marcuse (1955) calls it, display, must happen in the context of others. Because of this, Arendt explains that works of Art “must be removed carefully from the whole context of ordinary use objects to attain its proper place in the world” (p. 167). Art cannot be fully realized in the home, on a wall, where nobody can see it; likewise, it cannot be bought and sold as a common commodity. Art must remain in the public realm and in this way, the second function of Art, is that it is the thin veil that mediates humans in their plurality. Art is an object of *Action*.

For Arendt (2012), *Action* is the truly political behavior that is freed from the necessities of *Labor* and the utility of *Work*. It is the uniqueness of plurality bound by the sameness of humanity put in motion. Arendt reminds us that this motion is as unpredictable, literally, as humanly possible; she calls this unpredictability natality. Similar to its biological correlate, Arendt’s natality, is the *tabula rasa* of commencing something that is primarily a potential for other things to happen. But in the public realm, *Action* takes on the plurality of other humans. As Arendt ties speech to human plurality and distinctness, it is the public intercourse of all humans, through speech that allows for the creation of something new. Just as each new human born into the world brings someone who has never been before, those humans in the plurality of the public bring something that has never been before. It is this quality of Art, as a timeless presentation of a non-repressed human reality presented for public discourse, that ties it back to the potential for resistance.

**Timelessness and Effort**

Marcuse (1955) says, of Art, that “If the ‘aesthetic state’ is really to be the state of freedom, then it must ultimately defeat the destructive course of time” (p. 191). According to Arendt (2012), it is one of the very functions of Art to transcend time. This occurs, “in the permanence of Art, so that a premonition of immortality... has become tangibly present, to shine and to be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak and to be read” (p. 168). It is the enduring persistence of priceless Art that contests, in addition to the contemporary commodification of life, the temporal isolation and individualization of the neoliberal pariah. As a mode for resistance, it points toward larger acts of collective resistance.

Marcuse (2008) sums up his broad scope approach to resistance in the umbrella term, the Great Refusal; for him, this is “the protest against what is” (p. 66). I mention Marcuse’s Great Refusal primarily because it is indicative of the necessarily proleptic nature of resistance that he suggests. Marcuse goes on to say that once acts of resistance emerge, they “circulate as part and parcel of the equipment which adorns and psychoanalyzes the prevailing state of affairs. Thus, they become commercials—they sell, comfort, or excite” (p. 67). In other words, resistance is an endless endeavor because once an act of resistance is committed, it is incorporated from the edges into the dominant society. Because of this, resistance is a continual effort which must transcend the temporal construction of the neoliberal parvenu.

### Rebel Yell – A Journal Entry

My family knows me as the liberal guy. They enjoy that I not only fight for equal rights, they enjoy *how* I do so. I try to be dogged, specific, brash, and funny. So, when I took my wife and kids to visit my hometown (which really includes an area near my town – since my hometown is just the 60 people who live there and a grain elevator) I knew exactly why my youngest brother pointed out his friend to me.

The proliferation of confederate flags around my Northwestern Ohio hometown area has been very disturbing for me. When my brother pointed out his friend's hat, a camouflage hat with a rebel flag on it with the word 'REBEL' superimposed, I was, at first, confused. I know this kid and I happen to know, for a fact, that his family fought on the side of the Union in the Civil War. Here's what followed after I sarcastically told him, "Nice hat." He rolled his eyes and tried to deflect my attention –

(Him and Me)

What?

*Your hat – It's nice – that's a nice, rebel flag hat. You got a nice rebel flag on your hat.*

Ugh. I wanted a camo hat and this is all they had.

*That's not true. Wherever you went, if you went there for a camo hat. They had just camo hats – you picked that one.*

Whatever.

*Do you know that your family fought on the side of the Union?*

That's not what this is –

*That's exactly what that is. That's the flag of the confederacy, it was flown by General Lee himself and it was flown for a confederacy that wanted the right to keep slavery going.*

No... this is like, rebel.

*Rebel... Rebel, like... Yee-haw, let's have more slaves?*

No, it's like... you know, like rebel, like the south will rise again.

*And what do you think that the south will do when it rises? Can you hear yourself?*

It's like a rebel thing. Like nobody can keep me down.

*Read a book, man. Read a book and give me that hat, or turn it inside out. Something.*

He reluctantly turned the hat inside out and I offered to buy him a camo hat with no rebel flag on it if he gave me the one that he had so I could burn it. He refused. Then I turned to my brother and smacked him on the back of the head. He was laughing at his friend being put on the spot, with his feet held to the fire.

*You dummy! I didn't say anything you couldn't have said. How long has he been wearing this around?*

### **The Timelessness of Collective Memory**

If I have built any argument for mass man, then the resistance includes a struggle that stands against forces which atomize and individualize isolated masses who are therefore worldless and without an identity. If there is a solution, then it is for collaborative collectives of unique and particular humans with a strong sense of identity. It is for this reason, that I turn to Maurice Halbwachs (1992) who establishes identity as a socio-historically constructed concept. In other words, identities are co-constructed by a relational groups' connection to their shared history. The opposite end of Arendt's (2012) idea of *Action*, which include acts of sending forward remembrances, Halbwachs is on the receiving end of the remembrances, where one can construct a collective identity.

Marcuse (1955) agrees, saying that, "Like the ability to forget, the ability to remember is a product of civilization" (p. 232). The collective memory of humanity is one that can remember but it is also one which can forget. Wolin (2010) reflects this thinking in his critique of nostalgia, but he also sees it in official days of remembrance conjured by the ruling class of inverted totalitarianism (9/11, never forget). Further, Marcuse explicitly states that, "unless the power of time over the life is broken, there can be no freedom" (p. 20). As the aesthetic realm suggests, it is only by deconstructing humans as temporally bound beings that liberation can be achieved. He goes on to say, "the force which accomplishes the conquest of time is remembrance" (pp. 116-117). In other words, it is through remembering that humans see themselves as not only temporally connected to a shared history, they can see that history projected forward.

### **The Resilient Howe Family – A Journal Entry**

Insofar as my family has never had to withstand the intentional destruction of our familial identity at the hands of a systematic erasure of our personhood, one might think that holding on to a collective memory may not be so hard. As a point of fact, my family enjoys a tradition that dates as far back as the 60s on paper, that is rooted in our celebration of Christmas Eve. Less of a religious celebration, my family comes together over the sense memories of food, tastes, and smells. During this evening, we exchange gifts – even when, as happened one year, my uncle bought a 6-pack of socks and the first six people who asked for a pair got one. In a fit of merriment, two of my other uncles each took one sock and then, after inspecting the identical socks, decided they wanted to trade with each other. Then, after the gift exchange, we read the Howe Christmas story. This tradition, started on paper in 1960, was started by my Grandfather Virgil and when he passed, it was carried on by my Grandma Bonnie. Christmas is *her holiday*.

When I was ten, she passed too and nobody wrote stories. Over the years, the tradition has morphed and changed and what used to be an extended family gathering has now really centralized on my immediate family and one of my uncles. (The one with the socks). Last year, he gave out gifts of linesman gloves that he got for free from his Labor Union; he decided to wrap them, so he put each pair in a plastic bag before tossing them across the room. In 2014, I sat down to write the first Howe Christmas story in almost 15 years and since then, I've written one every year and plan to continue writing them until it's time for one of my children to take over. They tell of our escapades from the year and they make timeless our collective joys and our sorrows. The year in which each is written shapes the experiences and tell a story of a family that has sat in the working-class, loving one another, just trying to get by supporting one another all the way. From my great, great, great Grandpa Chalmer's remodeled house in 1961, to my grandpa Gary's big remodeling job in 2014 – don't ask – we've been able to hold together a narrative that allows the past to exist in the present. We hold dear to our timeless existence and we hold on to a memory that allows our deeds to extend beyond a future.

### Conclusion

Marcuse (1955) is critical of anyone who rejects the possibility for Utopia. He says that, constructed as timebound beings, humans “forget what was and what can be: it makes them oblivious to the better past and the better future” (p. 231). In other words, temporal humans are unable to envision the possibility of Utopia because they cannot connect to their history nor can they imagine a future that defies expectation. In this sense, Utopia is the potential for Utopia. This can also be expressed as connected to the *conatus*, which Lordon (2014) articulates as “pure momentum, and has no definite direction” (p. 14). It seems that, like the *conatus*, in order to achieve Utopia, it is not the specifics of Utopia as an end point which are important as much as it is, from whence Utopia draws its aims. When considered in the context of Arendt’s (2012) natality, Utopia gains elements of *Action*; that is, to say, it arises from the unpredictable political intercourse of plurality. Much of the work cited in this paper has been accused of being Utopian, I would agree. I would agree in the context of Utopia, not as a timebound place in the future which is an eschatological end toward which we must draw our means, but as an aim, toward which we must move as an act of political dead-reckoning. As an act of dead-reckoning, we must know our history, we must know our aim and we must move together, adjusting along the way.

With the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the wage-laboring, working-class, emerge as a neoliberal pariahvolk. Their apolitical existence has served them as they survive and now, a managed democracy and inverted totalitarianism suspends them in a pre-totalitarian state. They are turned in whatever direction serves the interests of power while remaining powerless themselves. The atomized and isolated masses are aimed, in awe, at the neoliberal parvenu, the neoliberal pariah who disguises their pariah existence by wrapping themselves in the only thing that can disguise them, money. But like the historical parvenu, it is precisely their disguises that



give them away and the assimilation that they so desire is in image only. Like the exception-Jews of history, kept around as examples of what Jews could be if they only relinquished their Jewish roots, the exception-Poor are kept around so long as they serve as a tool of legitimation for economic domination. If they only took advantage of the opportunities they are given; I mean, look at everything *you* 've accomplished! Arendt found ways to make sense of her Jewish experience through the experience of other Jewish lives, abstracted and made concrete again (Parvikko, 1996). It is only in the lived experiences of the rural working class and the impoverished that I have found the voices that call, specifically, my name. Future research can and should revolve around the lives of neoliberal parvenus of every walk of life until that time when a network of interconnected neoliberal conscious pariahs can arise and the economically oppressed emerge, in their unique particularity, as a cohesive and inherently political body. As pariahs qua pariahs.

*Post-script – You must be so relieved, what are you going to do with all of your free time?*

I'm going to...

- read a book to my children who have seen their dad an average of 1.5 hours a day for the last six months
- look in my wife's eyes and *not* talk about my thesis or my classwork, honestly I may not say anything, we talk a lot
- disagree more often
- cook for my family and involve them in the memory-making process of our family's food culture
- tell more stories to more people
- kiss my wife
- make more friends that I disagree with
- print more pictures and show them to my kids
- grow more vegetables, eat them and share them
- learn mandarin in preparation for the dollar being dropped as the reserve currency
- finish my daughter's first year birthday book
- converse with my extended family about their pariahdom
- read more books
- re-read some books
- cook and eat more meals with my wife
- take summers off of work
- break with the aspirational life of the neoliberal parvenu within me
- call Lorenzo and get him wound up
- write more about my ideas and share them
- work toward Utopia in the here and now
- buy fewer things and make more of them with my own hands
- play with my kids
- spend more time in Ohio with people I love so dearly
- support the campaigns of candidates who I believe in
- 'throw away' my vote on those candidates
- renew my own passport and get them for my wife and kids (you never know)
- write more hand-written letters to people I care about
- chip away at my friend, Clark
- honor my past in the present and pass that past forward with my children
- send my wife away for a retreat weekend
- be bored more often
- listen to my father-in-law and my Grandpa more, they have so many stories
- cultivate the spiritual health of my children
- continue writing all the Howe stories
- resist

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