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**GROSSMAN AND ARENDT:
THREE PARADOXES OF «EXPERIENTIAL LIBERALISM»**

GIOVANNI MADDALENA*

Abstract: Grossman and Arendt share a peculiar kind of liberalism that I define as «experiential liberalism», according to which human experience and freedom coincide. Here for «experience» I shall understand human existence marked by birth plus human capacity of imagination of possibilities and human ability to acquire habits of action. As much as their analysis of totalitarianism as opposed to freedom is insightful, their philosophical views allow for theoretical paradoxes on political, metaphysical, and epistemic levels. As matter of fact, defending political freedom, Grossman and Arendt highlight the shadow of totalitarianism upon the nature of any power; defending uniqueness of personal freedom, they highlight its fate of death by State, History, and Nature. Finally, defending free thought, they seem to indicate that thought cannot be a source of liberation. A thorough analysis shows that in Grossman's (unaware) use of a more complete pattern of representation in thought there might be a possibility to smooth this last paradox. However, Arendt and Grossman show that if one wants to defend the complex pattern of experiential freedom has to tolerate the controversial pendulum of opposites as individual/society, finite/infinite, thought/action. The endurance of the three paradoxes marks a common line of thought that can be shared by whoever wants a political commitment based on human experience as opposed to ideology.

Keywords: freedom – totalitarianism – metaphysics – epistemology – semiotics

Grossman and Arendt share a peculiar kind of liberalism. They are not liberals according to the classical meaning of the term, but both repel totalitarianism in the name of individual experience and freedom, and in both authors living, personal experience and freedom coincide. It is what I call «experiential liberalism». However, it is not easy to understand what exactly experience and freedom mean in their work, and the task of this

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paper is to clarify it. The question about the definition of experience and freedom implies an epistemic and an ontological answer but, in order to arrive at these levels of discourse, we begin with a philosophical-political discussion.

1. The first issue is political. Experiential liberalism emerges facing the horror of totalitarianism. Similarities and differences in judging totalitarianism will guide us to a better positive understanding of liberalism in both authors.

Grossman and Arendt agree in analyzing totalitarianism from many political points of view. They describe a totalitarian state as fiction, propaganda, organization and bureaucracy, systematic treachery, dependence on leader's will, and characterization of the «objective enemy», an enemy who is such for some physical or cultural heritage he cannot choose (Jew and kulak or Jew's and kulak's descendent).

Arendt is more precise in analyzing the circumstances from which the totalitarian state stems, in particular the classless society described in the homonymous chapter of *The origins of totalitarianism*¹. Both describe the steps into hell that totalitarianism prepares to its «objective enemies». Arendt describes them as the progressive loss of judicial person, moral person, and singular identity². Grossman is no less precise in the description of these steps for both Jews in concentration camps and former communists at the Lubyanka.

Negative descriptions of totalitarian states open up the comprehension of a positive side of freedom. Here we find the first important problem. Which freedom is possible? Grossman and Arendt are liberals in their conceiving the individual as the source of right and freedom, but individual freedom is not isolation or loneliness. You are really free when you rely on your soul, consciousness, critical thinking but you cannot do that without human relationships. The source of freedom is not the individual as such but the individual rooted in meaningful relationships, as much as different they are in the two authors. McCarthy refers to this peculiar sort of freedom in Arendt as to «situated freedom»³. Classless society is the fruit of a desegregated society in which friendship, work, politics are not a common ground anymore. As Arendt puts it, totalitarianism convinced and mastered people already alone in their lives, and the real critique did not come from the intelligenza but from living relational societies (as the Italian families). You find the same view in Grossman's alter ego story. Viktor Shtrum is free when he lives true human relations that make him think of soul and God, while he loses freedom when relations are false. Relationships are what we are focused on here, but «true» and «false» will enter the scene soon.

Liberalism is not only «freedom from», negative liberty, or autonomy for our authors. On the contrary, pure «freedom from» is a pure totalitarian state, well represented by

¹ H. Arendt, 1958.

² Ivi, 305-479.

³ M.H. McCarthy, 2012, 8.

the lager-state theory dreamt of by Katzelenbogen, Krymov's cellmate⁴. In the ex-cekist world, everyone will be suspected, betrayed, traitor, and eventually guilty. Everyone is completely alone, a pure machine voluntary in the hands of an immaterial power, only occasionally represented by passing leaders. Anyone «has the right to be guilty». It seems a crazy nightmare, but it is more prophetic than it appears. Are we really free? The third epoch of democracy – after the élite democracy of the XIXth century and the mass democracy (with totalitarian degeneration) in the XXth century – is sometimes described as the «ghost hand» democracy, where you cannot enter the control room because nobody knows where and whether it is. Our freedom that strives towards a complete autonomy is easily shapeable and we find ourselves into a society in which uniformity of thought and tastes is a real danger, often ruled by moralism and justicialism. Katzelenbogen's delirium is not as absurd as it seems to be at first glance.

However, setting aside this possible actualization, the topic of political freedom generates a paradox in both Arendt and Grossman. We have seen that pure «freedom from», negative freedom, helps totalitarianism insofar as it leaves individuals alone but, on the other hand, freedom as social interaction, freedom for, positive freedom helps totalitarianism as well. Grossman and Arendt know the power of the Hegelian legacy on totalitarisms. Man alone is prey of totalitarianism as a man completely plunged into his environment where totalitarian propaganda and violence tilt awareness towards himself. Propaganda controls minds making them think, desire, will as anybody else since we are social beings all the way down. We cannot stay outside our time, society, and mentality but mentality changes any original perception, even when we are alone. Many Getmanov, the sycophant bureaucrat, and many Liss, the cold intellectual Nazi official, believed what they said and did⁵.

There is no way out from this paradox: human beings are always on the hedge of the totalitarian abyss, usually ready to be slaves. If they adhere to their society, they are going to accept the mentality it proposes; if they want to be autonomous, considering society as corruption of freedom, they will be alone, potentially enemies of anyone, and easy prey of totalitarian promises and belonging. If we accept «negative freedom» we are lost, if we refuse it we are lost as well. Apparently, totalitarianism, this new way of conceiving power – as Arendt taught us – seems to embody the real nature of any power, a nature that reveals itself when different meanings of freedom are pushed to the extreme⁶.

So much so, that Grossman's and Arendt's ways out from this situation are peculiar. Grossman somehow denies any power, included the one coming from great principles as truth or goodness, in the name of irrational good actions. On the other hand, Arendt – who notably assesses the opposition between good works and public sphere – maintains a complete separation between the social and the political, assuming that the first falls

⁴ V. Grossman, 2011, 986-90.

⁵ For Liss, *ivi*, 476-88; for Getmanov, *ivi*, 587-9.

⁶ H. Arendt, 1958, 456-8.

under the paradox just mentioned, while the second establishes a completely different sphere. This postulated political space is the only one that corresponds to our original experiential freedom but its historical realization is confined to antiquity.

For both Grossman and Arendt there is a huge gap between public and private sphere, although they define them differently. In the between totalitarianism arises and it seems unavoidable, given the premises of any society and any theory of goodness or common good. The paradox seems unavoidable: being an experiential liberal means to endure it.⁷

2. A second paradox arises when we face Grossman's and Arendt's metaphysical commitments, and this second level partly explains the outcome of the first. Both authors have a similar metaphysical view⁸. They both defend the absolute beginning that freedom is, but for both of them the horizon in which freedom lives and moves is a finite one, condemned to, and by, mortality.

Grossman exposes his thought in Ikonnykov's manuscript⁹. Here «the fool of God», so important in Russian literature and tradition, proposes his ultimate truth: Nazis are bad and Bolsheviks are bad because both destroy life without any reason except their own self-made ideology; but Nature is bad as well. Human beings are not an exception but part of a more general rule in which trees fight one another to breathe and eventually prevail. Nature destroys her children as human beings do. Radical evil is not a human prerogative; it occupies every single part of Nature. In this picture, we can understand why every good word, Jesus Christ's included, can be as valuable as you want but it becomes a source of violence. Good words start a process that aim for «goodness» and immediately goodness becomes exclusive and threatening to other beings. Christian tradition explained this unavoidable tendency as «original sin». Grossman rather thinks that there is no sin: nature is bad as such and only «fool good gestures», somehow irrationally, can give a different tone to the dark picture of this universe.

Single individuals can resist totalitarianism even in lagers and GUL-ags. Ikonnykov's refusal to build a gas chamber; Sofya refusal to escape death and to abandon the little representative of her people; Novykov's refusal to sacrifice his men for obeying to orders; the piety of the Russian offended mother toward the German soldier; Darensky's defense of the German prisoner against the Soviet Colonel; all are «fool gestures» with which human beings escape a radically cruel Fate.

⁷ See: A. Graybosch, 2011, 215-30.

⁸ Certainly Arendt refused any metaphysics and she maintained a "radical refusal of ontology" (L. Boella, 1993, 171-2). As R. Bernstein said: "Metaphysics and epistemology are not terms that frequently occur in Arendt's writings, but I am using them in a perfectly straightforward sense. If metaphysics is taken as the study of what there is and epistemology as the study of what we can and cannot know, it is essential to realize that at the heart of Hannah Arendt's thought is a metaphysics and epistemology of action" (R. Bernstein, 1977, 144).

⁹ See: V. Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 489-95.

In these gestures, freedom obtains its bitter victory over the world and history. Moreover, freedom, as it is depicted in Shtrum's story, stems from dialogue and life and somehow represents the absolute gift that life is. Freedom is a beginning, «like a white water-lily appearing out of the calm darkness of a lake. He gasped, reveling in its beauty...»¹⁰. However, also freedom, individual redemption and resistance to evil are doomed.

When a person dies, they cross over from the realm of freedom to the realm of slavery. Life is freedom, and dying is a gradual denial of freedom. [...] The universe inside a person has ceased to exist¹¹.

The deed is that nothing can escape Fate, even though human victory is the human eternity of our fool good gestures in which the «humanity of humanity» lives.

Arendt shares with Grossman the general pattern of the picture we described, even if it does not seem so at first. In Arendt, we find the possibility of radical evil embodied by the cold killing machine orchestrated by Hitler and Stalin. The evil they represent is «radical» because it escapes any law of interest: Eichmann helps killing millions of people without any emotion, just accomplishing his task for trivial reasons as a career move to gain superiors' benevolence, as if he were accomplishing any other job and he were interested in making it work¹². Totalitarianism is a new form of government, the one in which nature and common sense are eluded completely. Ideology claims to bring people to a new form of nature, the right one or the final one¹³. This image of the future allows people to overlook actual nature as it were a temporary accident you can delete from the face of the earth. Ideologies are perfectly consistent as far as logic is concerned: they share with common sense reality only a first premise that they develop independently from any real fact and any circumstance¹⁴. They use a particular device in which propaganda, treachery, lie, and violence are intertwined so that when you are caught in you cannot help thinking that what you think is what is out there. The only aim is to accomplish the final duty your ideology sets up for you. This explains why Nazis were accelerating «final solution» while they were knowingly rushing to the end of the Reich. They were trying to get the job done for the good of humanity. Frighteningly, once released from the self-imposed hand of the totalitarian state, nobody of them tried to defend ideology as something that is good for anybody, as Nazi's authorities showed at Nuremberg trial.

Arendt's conclusion is quite negative. Human freedom is easily subjugated and not easy to defend. There are exceptions but the Jewish philosopher sadly observed that few people resisted. Certainly, Nazis eventually lost but the mechanism of power and

⁸ Ivi, 391.

⁹ Ivi, 661.

¹² H. Arendt, 1964.

¹³ H. Arendt, 1958, 10, 352, 456-8, 463.

¹⁴ Ivi, 468-71.

ideology seems to revive itself repeatedly, as the Pentagon Papers showed¹⁵. Time proposes a few moments of freedom in the continuous history of power. The philosophical problem is that freedom was never understood correctly as tied up with action and politics, but often seen as a power related to interior and exterior sovereignty¹⁶.

This does not mean that freedom does not exist. Ontologically speaking, freedom is a strange absolute, a sort of «miracle» that interrupts the continuum of time determined by power and ideology, as Arendt explains in *The life of the Mind*¹⁷. So that, as in Grossman, freedom is a beginning, the true representative of a possible political experience and, somehow, of human originality¹⁸. Freedom and thought are two interruptions of mechanical continuity and, each in its own realm, the possibility of human immortality¹⁹.

However, Arendt's freedom is doomed, too. The novelty opens up a horizon destined to a distinct end. There is no escape from mortal condition: it is evident to the one who thinks.²⁰ Using Grossman's words, we could say that freedom and thought are for Arendt the bitter victory over the continuity of time that destroys its values repeatedly.

Grossman and Arendt share a pessimist view of reality that includes freedom. There is a sort of temporal immortality (as opposed to eternity, in Arendt's words), which is really a no-time zone, that makes immortal human beings free in gesture and thought. Such human characteristic that shines in the uniqueness of the single person and grounds the impossible political sphere is again a paradox: a person is born free, just as free actions and ideas she can bring into the world are so unexpected to be describable as human, strange miracles. This human miracle fights against the cruel totalitarian State (Arendt), Time (Arendt) or Universe (Grossman) but it will lose and perish. This is the second paradox that experiential liberalism has to endure.

3. Paradox is a conceptual relation in which two apparently opposed concepts stay together. We saw two paradoxes. The political one: defending political freedom, Grossman and Arendt highlight the impossibility of escaping the threat of totalitarianism as the hidden nature of power. The ontological one: defending uniqueness of personal freedom, they highlight its fate of death by State, History, and Nature. A third paradox emerges and it is at an epistemic level²¹.

¹⁵ H. Arendt, 1972.

¹⁶ H. Arendt, 1961, 146-56.

¹⁷ H. Arendt, 1977-78.

¹⁸ For the ontological foundation of human rights upon humanity understood as natality, see P. Birmingham, 2006, 3.

¹⁹ See also H. Arendt, 1961, 225.

²⁰ H. Arendt, 1977-78, 200-1.

²¹ For the term «epistemology» see footnote 8.

How does knowledge work in Arendt and Grossman? Here again we find a similarity but less close than before. We will see that this slight difference will produce the only real difference in outcome between the two great authors.

Arendt proposes a strong division between meaning and truth, maintaining that reason looks for meaning while intellect looks for, and works with, truth²². Relying heavily upon the old Kantian distinction²³, Arendt puts the intellect to work on a contemporary hermeneutic horizon. Reason and thinking have no role in practical life, where we need truths ready to be used. However, real thought is only the one opposed to practice, the one that lives only of its own activity and which finds life itself in this activity²⁴. Thought is an abstraction that starts with the double de-sensibilization from both object and intellectual representation, as Augustine held²⁵. Thought has no space, no time, and no practical utility. It is concerned with the problem of meaning even though it is aware that these kinds of issues have no solutions; thought enjoys life as such, without concerning about realizations. Epistemic abstraction becomes ontological segregation, and that is how we can explain – according to Arendt – the continuous re-proposal of different forms of the same two-world doctrine²⁶. We thought there is heaven or substance or being or eternity because in these concepts we reflect our experience of reason, as something that separates itself from reality when intellect and ‘truths’ rule. There is nothing more necessary than this separation because we cannot help using its results as we do with truths derived from intellect and knowledge. Eichmann did not think; the meaning of his actions did not bother him, even if he was perfectly acquainted with truths about trains and transportation of Jews living corps.

What is the epistemic problem beneath ideologies? They are logical, namely they work in the realm of thought but instead of remaining there as dialogical thought, they try to know and manipulate reality. They become ‘truth’. They stem from a singular experience, as every thought does since we are not absolute creator, but then they follow a logical process without confronting it with reality anymore. Reason becomes intellect. It becomes a subject for an object. The thought, that should not have any application but itself, becomes a principle and then a positive knowledge, and eventually a technique. In ideologies, the Greek attitude towards speculative thought mixes up with the Roman attitude to translate everything into politics and action. The cocktail is fatal: Greek dialectic and Roman will power produce the concretization of an anti-realistic monster that violates both reason and intellect in their own tasks. Similar to many readings of Heidegger, Arendt thinks that this fate is typical of the destiny of Western metaphysics and that it has its ultimate result in the inhuman use of technique that Nazis showed in all

²² H. Arendt, 1977-78, 3-16.

²³ «Many of the problems with Arendt’s theory of judgment can be traced to an over reliance on the Kantian model. In Kant’s epistemology, both theoretical and practical reason are credited with universal and exceptionless judgments» (M.H. McCarthy, 1994, 137).

²⁴ H. Arendt, 1977-78, 121-25.

²⁵ Ivi, 77-80.

²⁶ Ivi, 162-3.

its scary possibilities. The unity between thinking and acting is for Arendt a stigma of totalitarian violence that Western metaphysics somehow provoked.

Thought is an intermediate realm that allows us to compare the ineffable experience of our souls and the visible world²⁷. Visible reality and invisible soul would remain severed from one another if there were not links granted by thought and expressed by words and metaphors. Imagination is the world-sense active capacity that presides over these forms of expression²⁸. Metaphors are part of a story telling pattern of saying that allow human beings to talk about experience and to bridge the gap between thinking and judging, or «the abyss between the inner and invisible activity in the mind and the world of appearance»²⁹. Metaphors «guarantee the unity of human experience»³⁰.

However, as much as it is interesting the reference to experience which is the denoting mark of this form of liberalism, the link provided by metaphors between thinking and judging is weak and, as we have explained, potentially dangerous. Words and metaphors are the tools of thought but they can be used to enter common sense reality of knowledge and action losing their original relationship with thought³¹. On the other hand, words and metaphors are not images according to Arendt, so they do not represent the experience from which they stem as it is, according to the way in which she uses Augustine's concept of sign. They are loose media of communication and ambiguous in both directions. Summing up, intuition, intellect, and knowledge objectify while reason, wisdom and thought abstract and dialogue with words and metaphors. However, as soon as we start defining anything, reason becomes intellect, thought becomes intuition, and wisdom becomes knowledge. There is no third alternative: either we leave thought in abstraction and not-definition or we will use it for destructive ends. The third paradox emerges. Thought is our glory and our curse.

Grossman's account of knowledge parallels Arendt's one. Even when we think of goodness, our thought becomes violent. Grossman is no philosopher and he does not argue upon distinctions. He simply states that knowledge produces ideologies because knowledge follows logic and logic tends to unification while life aims to differences. He relies somehow on the same pattern: reason is indispensable to account for reality and thus to resisting power. Shtrum's fierce resistance to political pressure is due to his loyalty to truth. Even his discovery stems from a free glance to truth during Kazan nights. At the same time reason imprisons Liss, Mostovskoy and Abarchuk in their ideologies. They stick to ideas they always followed with the strength of logic. They are monsters created by the logic of their ideas. Wisdom becomes knowledge, Arendt would say.

However, as far as knowledge is concerned, thinks differently from the German-American political theorist. Certainly, he agrees on the mechanism of ideology and his

²⁷ Ivi, 108, 110.

²⁸ For a comprehensive sketch of imagination see W. Heuer, 2007.

²⁹ H. Arendt, 2002, 110.

³⁰ H. Arendt, 1977-78, 109.

³¹ Ivi, 110-125.

account ends up with the same paradox: ideology tends to win through, and by, our thought. However, for Grossman meaning and truth are not severed from one another, and the link between thought and reality is not entrusted to ambiguous words.

Let us begin with the second proposition. While Arendt considers words and thought as parts of the same realm, and entrust words for making contact with visible reality, Grossman's work presents a more continuous and sophisticated pattern based on what we can call basic kinds of signs as icons and indices.

Many times we find his characters finding out the truth through sentiments and through the physical contact with objects. Let us think about Shtrum's description of his nuclear discovery, which is the result of a very complicated assembling of mathematical formulas. «...Rustling of leaves, the light of the moon, millet porridge with milk, the sound of flames in the stove, snatches of tunes, the barking of dogs, the Roman Senate, Soviet Information Bureau bulletins, a hatred of slavery, and a love of melon seeds»³². Darenky looks at the old Cossack spurring his horse and riding through the steppe: his feelings transform his blood into the concept of freedom that pounds at his temples³³. Feelings are icons. They represent reality by a subtle kind of similarity; they bring us the reality we face in its more overt aspect and form. They really save appearances treating them as signs. Sofya Osipovna clarifies Grossman's conception in a remarkable passage: «As she listened to people's cries and mutterings, she realized that their heads were filled with painfully vivid images that no words could ever convey. How could these images be preserved, how could they be fixed – in case men remained alive on earth and wanted to find out what had happened?»³⁴

Besides icons, Grossman uses tons of indices. In a wonderful paper, Anna Bonola showed that the words of freedom in Grossman are often very indexical³⁵. Indexes show reality by brute connection. If they are words, they are proper nouns or pronouns, or common nouns used as proper nouns, or put in long lists. They indicate reality as rigid designators, making deception by ideology a little more difficult.

Words are symbols and, since they require interpretation, they are always an ambiguous medium. Grossman knows that and underscores the truth of words only when they are free, namely when they belong to a vision of the world, when they are really fruit of our thought. In this case, they illuminate part of reality as icons and indexes do. Words can help freedom when they are within true friendships, namely within friendships dedicated to discover the truth that human beings can know: the connection between signs and our experience. The symbolic level of words is the one of which Arendt talks as well, but Grossman shows that the link with reality is more complex and more faithful to experience than Arendt's account shows. Moreover, if we read Grossman in this semiotic way, we will see another peculiarity of his masterpieces. Icons, indexes

³² V. Grossman, 2011, 429.

³³ Ivi, 362-5.

³⁴ Ivi, 254.

³⁵ A. Bonola, 2011, 301-31.

and symbols are signs, namely they connect experience (object) and meaning. That is why meaning is not severed from visible reality and from invisible truth. Meaning is strongly connected to experience, whether visible or invisible. It stems from signs and the more they are basic (icons and indices), the surest they are. Signs that stem from objects carry on meanings. Truth is a meaning that reaches peace, which becomes fully visible. Therefore, there are not many truths in the world, but those that we reach are reliable. Contrary with Arendt, Grossman relies on scientific truth and, sometimes even on historical truth: the fierce enemy of any party truth recognizes the moment of truth that follows the meaningful battle of Stalingrad.

The Germans weren't shooting. It was quite. The silence made their heads whirl. They felt as though they had grown empty, as though their hearts had gone numb, as though their arms and legs moved in a different way from usual. It felt very odd, even inconceivable, to eat *kasha* in silence, to write a letter in silence, to wake up at night and hear silence. This silence then gave birth to many different sounds that seemed new and strange. [...] These minutes of silence were the finest of their lives. During these minutes they felt only human feelings; none of them could understand afterwards why it was they had known such happiness and such sorrow, such love and such humility. [...] There is only one truth. There cannot be two truths. It's hard to live with no truth, with scraps of truth, with a half-truth. A partial truth is no truth at all. Let the wonderful silence of this night be the truth, the whole truth... Let us remember the good in these men; let us remember their great achievements³⁶.

Finally, if truth is accomplished meaning, there are many questions we cannot settle down because there are many questionable meanings. So much so that *Life and Fate* is full of questions about future, meaning, hopes. Meaning is a provisional sign that we have to question and to dialogue about if we want to get to a truth. Nevertheless, meaning is itself a sign that there is the truth, no matter how long it will take to get to it. The epistemic paradox of the entanglement among thought, meaning, and truth is here less absolute. Here comes the difference between Arendt and Grossman: neither at a political nor at a metaphysical level, but at an epistemic one. Grossman, even sharing a pessimist ontological commitment, seems to imply that a positive answer to the questions of our life has to exist because of the meaningful beauty of our gestures and questions. Even more paradoxically, and contradictory to the ontological claim, this possibility of a positive horizon is the final vertiginous limit of human reason, and the only way out of a totalitarian Fate.

Conclusion

The experiential liberalism is thus described by three paradoxes one has to endure in order to keep freedom and experience of reality inseparably together. In fact, to

³⁶ V. Grossman, 2011, 784-6.

experience reality means to act practically in the world. That is why it is so important to keep the word «experience» instead of «existence» in order to define this kind of liberalism. Grossman and Arendt have a broad view of existence that has to include the entire ontological/logical realms of possibilities, of facts, of mental and practical habits of action, and the transition among those realms. Their liberalism keeps together the political, the metaphysical, and the epistemic dimensions. They stress the importance of existence, and in particular of natality, as the source of this experience, but they both open it up existence to a temporal immortality, to a non a priori foundationalist essence of humanity, to a new and nuanced articulation of thought and action. In particular, both strive for a different and more concrete way of understanding and saying human experience. «Existentialist liberalism» would be too a narrow word to describe this rich pattern.

When one wants to defend the freedom of action grounding it on «experience» as Grossman and Arendt did, he/she has to tolerate the pendulum of opposites as individual/society, finite/infinite, thought/action. Our authors tried to find different and sophisticated solutions to keep together these opposites. Arendt's public space theory and Grossman's fool gestures are notably some of those technical, experiential tools. However, the tools are very different and signal the originality of the authors whereas the endurance of the three paradoxes marks a common line of thought that can be shared by whoever wants a political commitment based on human individual experience as opposed to ideology. It is a powerful original way to conceive liberalism, which amounts also to different values not easily defensible in the traditional views of liberalism. However, it highlights also the extreme difficulty of any liberalism in the entanglement between the positive and the negative sides of freedom.

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