

Coping and Artifice: Theories of Anthropogenesis After Idealism

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Abstract: I provide a comparative reading of five theorists from a period of time roughly spanning from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. I argue that they were all, tacitly or explicitly, concerned with what I describe as the anthropogenic quality of the human condition. First, in reading Marx, Freud, and Heidegger, I formulate a concept of “artifice,” which denotes the tools and techniques that humans produce and employ in order to cope in their environment. I suggest that artifice is more than just a means to an end, and that it is a mode of comprehending—and thus living in—one’s world. This formulation, however, is complicated by my readings of Erich Fromm and Hannah Arendt, or more specifically by what is in their view the distinctly social or political nature of history. Ultimately, I combine contemporary readings of psychoanalysis and of Arendt—provided by Jonathan Lear and Patchen Markell, respectively—to articulate a relationship between *usage* and *appearance*.

Introduction

A great irony of humankind is that the tools and techniques that we devise, produce, and use—which I collectively call *artifice*—expand the possibilities of what we can do, and at the same time expand the possibilities as to the kind of challenges we must cope with. Insofar as the technological reality of the species at large serves as a constant backdrop of an individual’s daily life, it appears to me that the most mundane task a person can perform is, in some way or another, conditioned by artifice, and so are those struggles that are closest to their heart. It appears, furthermore, that this sort of phenomena has existed on a historical continuum for a *long time*. As the historian Rosalind Williams suggests, if the agricultural revolution was accompanied by a profound cultural transformation of the world, millennia later, it is now “probable that humanity’s decision to *unbind* itself from the soil—not to return to a nomadic existence, but to bind itself instead to a predominantly technological environment—has provoked a similarly profound spiritual crisis” (Williams 1992, 2; original emphasis).

But what I wish to point out is more than just a mere concomitance between new technologies and new challenges. In the early pages of Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing* (1994), an unidentified wolf from south of the border roams around the county. To protect the calves, Billy is out there with his father tracking the wolf by her footprints and setting up traps. McCarthy writes:

Crouched in the broken shadow with the sun at his back and holding the trap at eyelevel against the morning sky he looked to be truing some older, some subtler instrument. Astrolabe or sextant. Like a man bent at fixing himself someway in the world. Bent on trying by arc or chord the space between his being and the world that was. If there was such space. If it be knowable. (McCarthy 1995, 22)

First of all, what space is the narrator talking about? It appears that the "world that [is]" and Billy himself are separated by an epistemological gulf, dubiously traversed at this moment through the usage of artificial tools. Like the sailor who uses a sextant to quite literally navigate the sea, Billy must use iron trappings, grease, rulers, and so on in order to navigate his world, which at this moment entails studying the wolf's habits and outsmarting her. But the issue isn't only epistemological; the sextant not only endows knowledge of the sea, but enables the sail altogether, which for the sailors aboard brings upon a whole new sea of experience. Similarly, Billy's trap not only gives him an idea as to how he shall catch the wolf, but is an indispensable element of his comportment towards the wolf, or even towards the natural world at large. The passage above mentions examples of physical tools, but in this essay, I will show that the whole of human artifice is at stake. Put succinctly, the space between our being and the world, if it be at all, is *begotten* by artifice.

Two things need clarification at this point. First, how inclusive do I intend the word "artifice" to be? Are we talking about tools and techniques as in hammers and hammering, or something more like factories and mathematics? As hinted in my brief reading of McCarthy, my sense of the word "artifice" will turn out to be quite encompassing; I have in mind nothing short of all the tools and techniques involved in any human activity, material or otherwise. What gets produced by humans, I argue, does not merely become artifacts that testify to the existence of a past, but rather becomes the furnishings of the present world; in the same way that a room—say, a dining hall or an office—acquires its function, character, and boundaries through the objects that furnish it, the world does the same by the virtue of artifice. In this vein, I will go as far as to claim, by the end of this essay, that even consciousness is an artifice.

This leads us to the second issue; my understanding of artifice has been born out of an effort to holistically consider a broad collection of very specific issues. For some duration of time after the culmination of German idealism in Post-Hegelian thought, and before the period of high-modernism wherein the seemingly uncontested technological might of humankind made them feel as if they could transform the entire world to their likings, many theorists were concerned

with how human activity was conditioned by human activity itself. That is, developing in their intellectual traditions was *the idea that the human condition is itself anthropogenic*. If we are to accept their arguments, which we will explore in what follows, my concept of artifice expresses the actual—that is, historically contingent—medium through which the human condition becomes anthropogenic. In this context, we will specifically read the following authors: Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, and Erich Fromm. Much of my readings of Freud will be aided by the late Jonathan Lear’s philosophical readings of Freud and of the psychoanalytic practice.

1: Marx as an artifice theorist

Why in the first place would we want to interest ourselves in the anthropogenic quality of the human condition? The reason is most evident in Marx’s writings, for he was responding to people who, in his view, did the exact opposite. The young Marx in *The German Ideology* (1932) wants to give philosophers a reality check. Held in the iron grips of the Hegelian system, as he sees it, German intellectuals have thoroughly neglected what makes up the real world—their material surroundings. More specifically, the idealist tradition has insisted on a purely abstract conception of human essence, wherein a mind-independent and life-independent “essence” is only latently realized in each particular individual. Put in a more Marxist fashion, the tradition—including those who purport to be its critics—has only concerned themselves with an abstract *species* and *its* nature, which are manifested in each *specimen*. Thus, even the language of the young Hegelians, while seemingly grounded in material reality, belie their true foundation:

To begin with they extracted pure unfalsified Hegelian categories such as "substance" and "self-consciousness," later they desecrated these categories with more secular names such as "species," "the Unique," "Man," etc. (Marx 1932, 148)

Instead, as Marx writes elsewhere, "human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (Marx 1888, 143). His point is to avoid creating "an abstract—*isolated*—human individual" to whom we can attribute human essence, which would be "comprehended only as 'genus,' as an internal, dumb generality which merely *naturally* unites the many individuals" (143; original emphasis). Well, then, how does he think we should comprehend human essence?

The word “essence” might actually do us disservice here, since today’s culture still takes essence to mean something written in stone—that is, innate—which is far from what Marx has in mind. Perhaps paradoxically, he wants to use expressions like “essence” or “human nature” in *non-essentialist* ways. In short, he claims that human nature “depends on the material conditions determining their production” (Marx 1932, 150). Let’s see how he comes to this notion. For starters, Marx explains his method in *German Ideology* as follows:

The premises from which we begin are [...] real premises from which abstractions can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way. (149)

He effectively takes the attitude of a social scientist; in that regard, he identifies the observable basis of human activity, or their “actual life process,” as what they do. And what they do is, like in the case of any other animal, subsistence; humans must keep themselves alive. The most foundational premise is therefore the “physical organization” of living individuals and their “consequent relation to the rest of nature” (149). This seems to be roughly what Marx has in mind when he speaks of the “material conditions” under which we subsist. But he also notes that humans, in subsisting, produce their own means of subsistence (and by his account this is what differentiates humans from animals). The implication is twofold. First, the act of production is still “conditioned by [the humans'] physical organization” (150). Put differently, the material conditions are not only the conditions for subsistence, but also the conditions for the production that occurs in subsisting. Secondly, the artifacts of production come to constitute the conditions for further subsistence and production. “By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life” (150). Thus, important for Marx is not only the primordial conditions—the purely biological and ecological processes of life, perhaps—but also the anthropogenic condition.

Insofar as this premise must be preserved in an analysis of any particular individual or society, Marx's explication of human nature inevitably takes a *historical* form. So far we've seen that, in subsisting under definite conditions, we produce our own means; in producing this way, we create our own conditions for further subsistence. Marx argues that, in turn, we are compelled to produce even newer means of subsistence which correspond to our new conditions for subsistence. In *German Ideology*, he goes to great lengths to describe the economic development from the household division of labor to the industrial revolution, all in order to demonstrate this continuous recursion in which a whole *enterprise* of productions must be maintained through further production, in order for humans to keep subsisting. Put succinctly, *human artifice begets further artifice*. Even non-material artifice, such as governance, results from this recursion:

The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they *really* are; i.e., as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will. (154; original emphasis)

This is a sharp contrast to, say, an argument that would explain the State as a realization of an absolute rationality—an imperfect manifestation of some ideal form.¹ Thus, when Marx speaks of humankind producing its own means of subsistence, he isn't merely speaking of crude tools or of survival. What he has in mind is that humankind creates its own *mode of life*.² The economic breadth of a particular region may grow—which is to say that it acquires new, if not more complex, conditions for subsistence—through specializing its division of labor and expanding its trades across townships, for example. The argument is that these new means now require their own means for continuation and stabilization, which might include, as Marx notes in the quoted passage, newer forms of social structure or of the State.

Should the reader be unconvinced, contemporary examples might help. During the commercialization of the internet and the widening distribution of personal computers, there existed a market that wanted to capitalize on these new technologies; data centers were built and optical cables were installed to ensure the robustness of this new mode of commerce; as this industry grew, we were introduced to new products hitherto unheard of, like mobile data plans and parallel-processing chips; this continuous unfolding of the digital economy seems to have now peaked in companies like Oracle and Nvidia. Again, we should see the broader theme here, which is that (a) human artifice begets further artifice, and (b) this recursive unfolding of artifice is precisely the way in which the conditions for life—not in any abstract sense, but as in the living conditions for actual people like you and I—is set forth.

2: Freud as an artifice theorist

In his critique of the Hegelian system, Marx unwittingly provides us an interesting light under which to read the earliest attempts in Europe to scientifically study the mind. According to him, the idealist tradition insisted that life had its basis in (abstract) consciousness (or in other similar notions such as the 'spirit,' or even in the 'soul' in the Greek sense). Marx, of course, sees it the other way around. "Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence," he writes, "and the existence of men is their actual life process" (Marx 1932, 154). And if the actual life-process is made up of subsistence and production—which again is a *mode of life*—it must be that the *mode of consciousness* for humans is also a mode in which consciousness itself is a thing that we produce *and* a way in which we produce. This has a different meaning than simply saying that we are conscious *of* what and how we produce (although this would be part of the larger picture). The point is that consciousness itself belongs to the category of the conditions for subsistence, and equally importantly, to the category of the conditions which humans produce. Simply put, *consciousness is an artifice*.

¹ This is in fact the Hegelian account, albeit in an overly simplified form.

² "This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is [...] a definite *mode of life* on their part" (Marx 1932, 150; original emphasis).

This is where we turn to Sigmund Freud. His understanding of consciousness—well, the “unconscious”—matured over the course of his career. First, he would eventually come to see the mind as a precarious balance of diverging psychological drives. What is meant by a *drive* in this context is much different than what is typically meant by an *instinct*. An instinct, roughly speaking, is a behavior response that is pretty much determined by the physiological workings of an organism, and thus could be explicated by the natural sciences alone. A drive, however, is amorphous and is developed more definitively throughout one's life. Put differently, a drive is inherently developmental. Moreover, these drives manifest themselves in one's *coping* with various circumstances and challenges of life; a person is constantly driven to do or think certain things, often in ways that are not consciously acknowledged, all because this is precisely how the mind handles difficult problems.³

This has crucial consequences for psychoanalysis, for it inclines us to see that mental development is itself an *artifact of one's coping*. Here's one way to understand what I mean—and this is a rudimentary version in comparison to what I'll suggest later. In trying to cope with the various challenges of life, we are often forced to cope with our own selves; one must consider if their prior judgements had been sound, evaluate from time to time their needs and desires, and manage difficult emotions like anger or grief. In a way, our own mind is a challenge to cope with—perhaps the biggest one there is. Conceivably, whenever we deal with something, we are also dealing with our own practical means for dealing with stuff, and therefore compelled to improve them, whether we know it or not. Jonathan Lear, who was a philosopher and a trained psychoanalyst, put it like this:

The psyche, Freud came to see, is itself a psychological achievement. The point is not merely that the psyche develops over time, but that there are distinctly psychological processes that guide and facilitate that development. (Lear 2015, 172)

By “distinctly psychological processes,” Lear intends to contrast them with the more biological, instinctual, or otherwise genetically and physiologically determined kinds of processes. For example, we could think of mental development in terms of, for example, hormonal changes or selective strengthening of the brain's synapses. But we can also consider the subjective experience of going through development, and how that experience can actually condition the development. In other words, subjective experience guides and regulates *its own future*. Thus, “[p]sychoanalysis aims to give a rigorous account of how the psyche develops on the basis of what

³ This is evident, for instance, in Freud's case history of a patient with the pseudonym “Elizabeth von R.” The patient's diagnosis was hysteria, a rather broad category of mental illness that often obscured the nuances of individual circumstances and gender-related challenges in nineteenth century Europe. Despite Freud's clinical catastrophes, however, he managed to learn something in the case of Ms. von R; psychosomatic symptoms could be selected—not by the patient's will, but by the body, so to speak—for its strategic benefit of alleviating the patient's capacity in facing an emotionally taxing situation. See Freud's “Case 5” in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895); and Jonathan Lear's *Freud* (2015), pp. 61-73.

experience is like for the subject" (172). Our takeaway is twofold. First, psychological drives are the means by which a person copes with challenges, and at the same time are constitutive of the challenges themselves. Secondly, the development of a psyche—which might include the maturing of drives or lack thereof—occurs *as part of* our coping with said challenges.

Thus, in a way, the psyche is simultaneously a means for coping *and* an artifact of coping. Put more strongly, an individual must cope with artifacts of their own prior coping. What might this look like in real life? Garrick Duckler, a psychoanalytic clinician, suggests:

What if a problem isn't seen as something that had gone wrong and was in need of a repair, but was itself a desperate attempt to survive something, something that couldn't be seen for what it was at the time it was happening? From this perspective, a problem is just a failed solution to a prior problem—someone else's problem that you had to live in. The new problem becomes that the protection, whatever form it takes, is something that can't be taken off, or at least not by a conscious act or by willpower alone. (Duckler 2025, 0:35)

A problem—say, having an overly defensive personality—can be acquired as a means to cope with a challenge—say, living in a dysfunctional family. In that regard, a problem can be understood as an artifact of prior coping. A particular "solution" which was selected in the past, regardless of how effective or ineffective it may be, is among the person's practical skillset for coping with other challenges in life. Therefore, the artifact of prior coping comes to constitute a new challenge that the person must cope with.

There's a recurrent theme here. The Marxist conception of history begins with fairly naturalistic conditions for subsistence that are determined by the physical qualities of humans and their consequent relation to the rest of nature—a condition that appears largely *external* to the humans' control. But in coping with this condition, we produce our own means for subsistence, and thereby produce our own conditions for subsistence. The Marxist argument effectively boils down to: we cope by producing our own conditions for coping. It therefore appears that both the Marxist history of the species and the Freudian history of a psyche can both be understood as *a recursive unfolding from and out of itself*.

We have thus acquired an outlook of the "anthropogenic quality of the human condition" that I spoke of earlier. Marx and Freud are, of course, concerned with different types of human activities, but they have much in common. To both thinkers, the world wherein any sort of activities take place is not a space independent of what happens in it, as if the world provided an *a priori* stage on which humans could act. Instead, Marx wrote that the world is precisely the "total living sensuous activity" (Marx 1932, 171) of the individuals inhabiting that world, while Freud understood the psyche to be composed of the active processes—including its concomitant subjective experience—by which an individual navigates their world. In this light, the significance of describing the economy or the subjective psyche as a "recursive unfolding from and out of itself" is that humans are *driven to alter their own drives*. As Marx argued, what drives in-

dividuals to act a certain way is “the necessity, and at the same time the condition” (171) for transforming the the necessity and conditions that they might face in the future. Put differently, the necessity for a certain activity, and the conditions that allow the activity, are two expressions for the same thing; and the two expressions find their unified meaning in the idea that the conditions and necessities which drive one’s activities are themselves human artifice that are created in coping with prior conditions and necessities.

A possible exception to this idea is the very beginning, so to speak, of history: the prehistoric human life in the case of Marx, and the newborn infant in the case of Freud. Besides these exceptions, however, I shall refer to this idea as the *disposition principle*. In the next section, we will see how this principle has been articulated in Heidegger’s writings.

3: Heidegger as an artifice theorist

Before actually getting into Heidegger’s writings, a digression is needed about the historical context of this philosopher. The three writers that I’ve brought into the picture so far—Marx, Freud, and Heidegger—aren’t often seen together in secondary literature. But we have a good reason for reading them together; we are ultimately trying to identify a peculiar *mode of thought* that emerged during a time when the human capacity to transform its world had become a real force to be reckoned with. By the time Marx began writing, the first industrial revolution was already wrapping up. Freud began to see his patients in Vienna in the late 1800s, in the midst of the second industrial revolution *and* the rapid scientific development in Europe; he also witnessed the first World War and the sheer capacity of human societies in inflicting suffering. Meanwhile, Heidegger lived through the unprecedented mechanization of the world which preceded the period of high-modernism that I spoke of earlier. But also, he participated in the Nazification of German universities during the 1930s, and remained a member of the Nazi party until the end of the war. Some authors, such as Richard Wolin, have thus argued that Heidegger’s philosophy, even including the pre-1930s writings, should be read in the context of his resentment towards the alleged consequences of modernity. Wolin writes:

the self-conscious radicalism of Heidegger’s philosophical project—its indictment of 2500 previous years of Western philosophy, which has been [according to Heidegger] tainted by a deficient understanding of Being—is incomprehensible apart from the deflation of European cultural confidence following World War I. (Wolin 1990, 22).

Put simply, what was purportedly a universal category of “Being” which took up the central theme in Heidegger work was, in fact, a reaction to historical circumstances. What we should notice is that, while these three authors had *vastly* different responses to the breakdown of traditional values and to the increasing incoherence in humankind’s own actions, they were noticing fairly similar things at a foundational level. Marx, Freud, and Heidegger all noticed, albeit tacit-

ly, that even the most basic aspects of life that humans had to cope with resulted from human deeds. In this section, we will cover a brief passage from Heidegger's "The Questions Concerning Technology" (1954; *QCT* for short henceforth) and his critique of Cartesianism in *Being and Time* (1927).

Heidegger in *QCT* first asks what would be the most basic account of technology. His answer is twofold: technology is a means to an end, and it is also a human activity. To him, these two definitions are two sides of the same coin. He writes:

[...] to posit ends and procure and utilize means to them is a human activity. The manufacture and utilization of equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves, and the needs and ends that they serve, all belong to what technology is. (Heidegger 1954, 4-5)

In the first sentence, he equates technology with a type of human activity. In this activity, not only do we procure means, but we also *posit* ends. In this view, ends are not to be taken as propositions existing independently from our instrumental activity; rather, together with means, ends are created precisely *by* and *within* our activity. To understand this, we must look to Heidegger's broader ontology in *Being and Time*.

Earlier in my introduction, we read a passage from McCarthy's *The Crossing*. In the passage, I pointed out how Billy's predicament is not merely epistemological. The sextant not only endows knowledge, but enables distant sails otherwise difficult, if not impossible; the tool is not just a means to an end, but something that brings forth new possibilities of experience. Similarly, Billy's situation is not only that, by studying the trap's workings, he'll figure out how to catch the wolf, but that the tool conditions his comportment towards the wolf, and potentially towards the natural world at large. In other words, the tool mediates his encounter with the wolf; in a literal sense in that Billy will see the wolf caught in the trap; and in an attitudinal sense in that the wolf is to Billy something to be outsmarted and caught, a creature alien and threatening to his ranch lifestyle, or even a mystery that eludes comprehension.

This appears to be what Heidegger had in mind when he wrote *Being and Time*. He argues that philosophers have systematically neglected the nature of this sort of immediate encounter with the entities that we *actually use* in every-day life. According to him, western philosophy has hitherto concerned itself with the task of matching a mind-dependent *cognition* to a mind-independent *reality*. The philosophical tradition, in other words, first posits a person, the capacities of their mind existing independently from the outside world, and asks: when this person is brought into the world, how is it that they can comprehend what is before them? In Heidegger's terminology, the main mode of encountering the world according to philosophers had been *presence-at-hand*; the relationship between a person and the world—the kind of *in-ness* by which a person is *in* the world—was primarily spatio-temporal, and therefore "the phenomenon of

Being-in [had] for the most part been represented exclusively by a single exemplar—*knowing* the world” (Heidegger 1927, 86; emphasis added).

Heidegger, likely unbeknownst to him, therefore had something in common with Marx; the intellectual tradition that Heidegger protested was precisely the kind of idealism that Marx was responding against. We should read *Being and Time* in this context. Heidegger argues that, in contrast to *knowing*, the primordial mode of encountering the world is *equipment*. The point is not simply that an entity, like Billy’s trap, has utility for us, although that has to be a part of the picture. The larger argument is that the *world* is equipped with entities, such that we are already presented with activities that we can partake in merely by inhabiting the world. In contrast to the epistemologies of Cartesians and Kantians, Heidegger wants to describe a pre-cognitive relationship between the world and the human wherein the world is *already significant* for any human being that actually lives. He calls this relationship *readiness-to-hand*: we understand an entity not through explication when it’s presented before us, but through usage when we partake in some definite activity that involves the entity. He writes:

Equipment can genuinely show itself only in dealings cut to its own measure (hammering with a hammer, for example); but in such dealings an entity of this kind is not *grasped* thematically as an occurring Thing, nor is the equipment structure known as such even in the using. (Heidegger 1927, 98)

In plainer terms, Heidegger wants to avoid thinking about the relationship between a thing and a person in isolation from the rest of the world that both parties inhabit. (Notice the similarity in language to Marx, who wanted to avoid thinking of an abstract, isolated individual.) Once we accept this attitude, it is revealed that things are made available to our perception and made comprehensible through our *dealings* in life. Hammer is understood by hammering; a bicycle is understood by biking. (Of course, there has to be *some* thinking involved in these activities, but his point is about which mode of interaction—between knowing and doing—should be considered ontologically prior.) Entities are therefore understood not through a “bare perceptual cognition,” but through our “dealings” in the world wherein a person goes about taking care of one’s daily business (95). Thus, entities are not objects of theoretical knowledge, but are simply “what gets used, what gets produced, and so forth” (95). His further comments on nature is revealing. He writes:

In equipment that is used, ‘Nature’ is discovered along with it by that use—the ‘Nature’ we find in natural products. [...] The wood is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock; the river is water-power, the wind is wind ‘in the sails.’ As the ‘environment’ is discovered, the ‘Nature’ thus discovered is encountered, too. (100)

He is arguing that the significance of the natural elements are attained through our dealings with them. Instead of considering nature as an unchanging basis of human activities, he sees

that nature gains its function and meaning precisely through its involvement in human activities. In fact, he wants to argue that the whole world—and with it, ourselves—come into existence in this manner. “Our concerned absorption in whatever work-world lies closest to us, has a function of discovering” (101); that is to say, discovering the world.

It is worth mentioning that, despite the enormous difference in the works of Marx and Heidegger, we see a common thread; Marx, in his critique of Hegel and his followers, sought to bring philosophy back to earth; Heidegger, in his critique of Descartes and beyond, appears to do something similar. We can understand Heidegger’s ontology as an effort to understand the basic pre-cognitive conditions for the kind of cognitive activities previously explored by philosophers. In doing so, he quite interestingly finds that such conditions are largely generated by non-deliberate human activity.

In this light, let us return to the earlier passage from QCT. Heidegger had written that “to posit ends and procure and utilize means to them is a human activity.” This seems to be a compressed form of what he says about activities in *Being and Time*; the means and ends which concern us are discovered, along with the whole world and nature, through our dealings. He had furthermore argued: “The manufacture and utilization of equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves, and the needs and ends that they serve, all belong to what technology is.” In other words, the production of artifice, the usage of artifice, and the seemingly non-technological factors that dictate this production (such as needs), should all be considered within one whole picture—namely human activity.

4: The “Human” as an artifice

Freud’s framework was “fundamentally antisocial” (Fromm 1941, 8) according to Erich Fromm, who saw the need of a social psychology that recognized the parallels between the individual and society, and, more importantly, was able to explain one through the other. In *Escape from Freedom* (1941), Fromm explores the mutual interactions between economic, psychological, and ideological factors that characterized the course of modernity from the period of Reformation to Nazi Germany. In doing so, he would repeat much of the ideas that we’ve seen so far, and bring some of them into a unified expression.⁴

Let’s begin with the concept of “individuation,” which has a central role in his thesis. On the surface, a child is born when it emerges out of the mother’s womb and when the umbilical cord is cut, for this is the moment when the child is physically severed from the mother. However, Fromm argues, the infant is not only dependent on the mother in a functional sense—since it needs to be fed and carried—but the infant also lacks a sense of individuality. This wasn’t a new

⁴ The reader might notice, after reading this section and the subsequent one, why I didn’t choose to engage in more detail Fromm’s discussion of Nazism and its relation to Arendt. After all, *Escape from Freedom* was elicited by the political catastrophe of the 1930s, and has a shocking amount of similar themes in comparison to Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). The reason for this omission is actually fairly simple: not enough time and space for anything that’s more than a surface-level reading.

idea by the time Fromm was writing. The idea that an ego—or, in a more accurate translation, the “I”—is something developed and identified over time, as opposed to existing *a priori* in a mind, was central to Freud’s later works. His most explicit formulation perhaps came from his work on narcissism. He postulated that the ego could function as an object of libido, much like in the way that another person or an external entity could be an object of libido. Yet, his argument wasn’t that a cathexis could undergo a perverted distribution onto the ego; by such an account, narcissism would be a case of a breakdown of the boundary between the subject who holds libido and an object who receives it. Instead, Freud argued that “an original libidinal cathexis of the ego” existed first, “from which some is later given off to objects” (Freud 1914, 547). Thus, one’s erotic concernment with other people or with the external world had to be understood as a *latent* capacity—not because a child is inherently selfish, but because the child’s sense of self includes the whole universe. Put simply, it doesn’t make sense to attribute an ego to an infant because there is no separation of subjectivity from the infant’s perspective. Commenting on Freud’s account, Lear wrote that “from the baby’s point of view there is a sea of experience” instead of two people in a room, and that “we are trying to capture the subjectivity *from which* two subjects will emerge” (Lear 2015, 173; original emphasis).

Fromm in *Escape* is thinking on a continuum from this idea. After noticing that there must be a process by which “the child comes to regard the mother and other objects as entities apart from itself” (Fromm 1941, 25), he goes further by expanding his context beyond the individual’s idiosyncratic world. That is to say, when we speak of an ego which forms by separating itself from the rest of the world, we should consider the larger context of humankind’s history. He writes:

The social history of man started with his emerging from a state of oneness with the natural world to an awareness of himself as an entity separate from surrounding nature and men. Yet this awareness remained very dim over long periods of history. The individual continued to be closely tied to the natural and social world from which he emerged; while being partly aware of himself as a separate entity, he felt also part of the world around him. (24-25)

But as modernity took its course, Fromm argues, the emergence of the individual in this manner climaxed. He points to the period of Reformation as a prime factor; people no longer felt part of a large Church in their encounters with God; instead, they began to face God in solitude, and therefore felt themselves confronted by an immense being as a lone individual in the utmost privacy of their faith. It’s important to Fromm that this transformation largely coincided with an economic one, namely the breakdown of the feudal system and the rise of capitalistic commerce.

Some details of his argument are as follows. In medieval society, an individual’s economic and spiritual potential was largely determined by the feudal society they were part of. Yet, the individual did not see this as a threat or an obstacle to overcome, because their sense of indi-

viduality didn't yield such a view (recall our infant from earlier). Beginning in the sixteenth century, however, "[t]here ceased to be a fixed place [for an individual] in the economic order which could be considered a natural, an unquestionable one. The individual was left alone; everything depended on his own effort, not on the security of his traditional status" (59; last sentence italicized by Fromm). The consequences were twofold. On the one hand, there was a new sense of freedom. The limits of one's life, once set forth by the feudal system, was now in the hands of one's own abilities and choices (or at least purportedly so). On the other hand, society was atomized and the individual was uprooted. "Man was deprived of the security he had once enjoyed"—that is, the security provided by his status in traditional society—and the individual was "torn lose from the world which had satisfied his quest for security both economically and spiritually" (99). The religious doctrines of Protestantism appealed to the middle class who were, due to the conditions described above, was in need a new belief which could make reality bearable:

[Protestantism] destroyed the confidence of man in God's unconditional love; it taught man to despise and distrust himself and others; it made him a tool instead of an end; it capitulated before secular power [...] Its doctrines presented a picture of the individual, God, and the world, in which these feelings were justified by the belief that the insignificance and powerlessness which an individual felt came from the *qualities of man as such* and that he *ought* to feel as he felt. (101; first emphasis is mine, second one is original)

The solution to the problem, namely the problem of a discrepancy between psychological reality and the material one, was to produce a new psychological reality. The power of the doctrines in assuaging the individual's anxiety in the modern world was rooted in its re-portrayal of the individual in a particular light; the new sense of self was a tool that could help an individual better cope in the new world. If Freud came to see that the psyche is itself a psychological achievement, Fromm similarly came to see that "man himself is the most important creation and achievement of the continuous human effort, the record of which we call history" (11). Thus, while we can attribute a vague category of "ego" or "subjectivity" to any human being, the definite form into which the ego or subjectivity enters, it turns out, must be *made*.

Another side of the issue is that this new sense of self did not remain a mere tool. In addition to giving expression to the feelings of anxiety and uprootedness, the religious doctrines, "by rationalizing and systemizing this attitude, [...] also increased and strengthened [the feelings]" (109). Fromm thus echoes Weber in writing: "The individualistic relationship to God was the psychological preparation for the individualistic character of man's secular activities" (109; entire sentence italicized by Fromm). He continues:

[the doctrines] also showed the individual a way to cope with his anxiety. [...] Protestantism was the answer to the human needs of the frightened, uprooted, and isolated individual [...] The new character structure, resulting from economic and social changes

and intensified by religious doctrines, became in its turn an important factor in shaping the further social and economic development. (101)

So, the artifice through which one coped with a reality became a catalyst for substantializing that very reality. This is at the heart of the disposition principle; it is *with artifice* that human activity enters definite forms—the forms by which the world is made sensible to the individual, and at the same time the forms by which a distinct set of conditions for coping is selected out of an otherwise ambiguous background. In this regard, From would bring into maturation the concept of “drives” in the Freudian sense; he argued that, basic biological features like sex and hunger notwithstanding, the drives which make the nuanced differences between individuals were all products of social processes. He thus bridged the efforts of Marx and Freud, writing:

[...] the individual has to accept the mode of life rooted in the system of production and distribution particular for any given society. In the process of dynamic adaptation to culture, a number of powerful drives develop which motivate the actions and feelings of the individual. The individual may or may not be conscious of these drives, but in any case they are forceful and demand satisfaction once they have developed. They become powerful forces which in their turn become effective in modeling the social process. (20)

The disposition principle has appeared again. Recall how Freud understood drives to be practical aptitudes for coping with challenges; to repeat what I said, drives are the often unnoticed means by which a person copes, and at the same time are constitutive of the challenges themselves. Also recall, in the same light, Heidegger’s idea that means and ends are discovered together as part of a single, coherent activity. Such an activity, furthermore, was taken to be our “concernful absorption” in normal life circumstances and dealings. Meanwhile, Marx described how the conditions for subsistence determines our production; in producing, we transform the conditions for, and therefore the definite forms of, subsistence; and so on. And finally, Fromm’s “powerful drives” are developed *as part of* an individual’s coping with the societal conditions presented to them. It is not that an individual, with their psychological makeup already determined, is conjoined with a society which also has its character already determined. Rather, the definite forms into which psychological drives enter are simultaneously the *articulation* of the present situation, as well as the *means* for coping in that situation.

5: History and artifice

The issue of freedom, or of agency, has been lurking around this whole time. It appears, according to our disposition principle, that the individual is largely at the mercy of the environment into which they are thrown. Marx in *The German Ideology*, for instance, thinks of all human activity and artifice as resulting from a set of conditions that determine our mode of subsistence and production. The Freudian drive, despite its central role in conditioning a person’s behaviors and affect, remains unconscious for the most part. The Heideggerian world is specifically posit-

ed in contrast to the kind of deliberate cognition which interested prior philosophers; he therefore seeks to disclose the workings of the world, as it were, that are already there and functioning before we grasp it thematically. In short, while the disposition principle suggests that human activity is given definite forms through human artifice, the production of artifice and therefore the activity itself cannot be adequately described as matters of judgement or choice. But this is, in some ways, a naive way of characterizing the issue. In what follows, we will see that the notions of *sight* and *recognition* take priority over the ostensibly pertinent issues of freedom, judgement, choice, and the likes.

Much like Marx, Hannah Arendt recognized that the conditions for human activity were largely anthropogenic. However, unlike Marx who spoke of a human essence or the nature of individuals, Arendt spoke of the human *condition* (and I have tacitly adopted this language in my essay since the beginning). While the Marxist account of history posited all human history on a continuum from the fundamental premise of life—wherein the “physical organization” of humans and their “consequent relation to the rest of nature” (Marx 1932, 140) composed the material conditions for subsistence—Arendt thought productive human activity to be entirely different from coping with such “original” conditions. She writes:

The human artifice of the world separates humane existence from all mere animal environment, but life itself is outside of this artificial world, and through life man remains related to all other living organisms. For some time now, a great many scientific endeavors have been directed toward making life also “artificial,” toward cutting the last tie through which even man belongs among the children of nature. (Arendt 1958, 2)

This is, on the one hand, in sharp contrast to Fromm’s thesis. The process of individuation was understood by Fromm (and Freud) to be a natural occurrence for a developing subject; the fact that humankind separated itself from the rest of nature and against each other was, in Fromm’s view, a growth that many people were unprepared for, but a growth nonetheless. On the other hand, the passage also critiques Marx, for different reasons. Despite the human world consisting of artifice, “life itself” is outside of this artificial world, she argues. Marx included production in his concept of human activities, but to him “production” meant the kind that occurred *in subsisting*. The simple fact of needing to keep the body alive—along with the whole enterprise of prior productions—was the primordial premise that was preserved in each and every subsequent acts in history. For Arendt, however, this kind of subsistence and production—what Marx described as the metabolism between humans and nature—was precisely what characterized the animal life.

While we will eventually be interested in *The Human Condition* (1958), wherein Arendt explicitly lays out this critique, the best way to prepare ourselves is to start with her account of temporality in *Between Past and Future* (1954). She writes that history—not material history as Marx describes, nor a social history as Fromm describes, but history itself—differentiates hu-

mans from the rest of nature (Arendt 1954, 41-45). Of course, nature is subject to passage of time in a crude sense; but what she means by “history” is specific. She writes that nature is cyclical, and therefore ever-present and eternal. Examples might help. A flower might come and go, but what really exists for nature is a species that endures indefinitely, a species to which the particular flower belongs merely as a replaceable specimen. An ant exists in a colony, yet the birth and death of a single ant does not have the kind of significance for the colony that a person might have for their community. In fact, all of nature as a whole, regardless of how a certain organism or species might be identified according to the taxonomy used by humans, exists in this kind of indefinite homeostasis in Arendt’s view. There is no beginning or end—and therefore no distinct *thing* or *entity* to begin or end—because all occurrences emerge out of this homeostasis and is absorbed right back into it. *Nature is timeless.*

Humans, insofar as they are part of nature, share some of this eternal existence. But individual humans are *mortal* while their world is *immortal*, she argues. The fact of human mortality is not a reference to a biological fact of birth and death; again, such things don’t happen in nature the way we typically understand them. Similarly, the immortality of the human world is not to be confused with the eternity of nature. Instead, cutting through the natural timelessness are *recognizable stories* with beginnings and ends. She writes:

This is mortality; to move along a rectilinear line in a universe where everything, if it moves at all, moves in a cyclical order. Whenever men pursue their purposes, tilling the effortless earth, forcing the free-flowing wind into their sails, crossing the ever-rolling waves, they cut across a movement which is purposeless and turning within itself. (Arendt 1954, 42)

The subject matter of history is these interruptions—“the extraordinary, in other words” (42). Meanwhile, the task of history is to make these mortal deeds more durable through remembrance. This is where immortality begins: where deviations from the natural timelessness of animal life are made durable; or in other words, where humans *become* mortal beings and yet *beget* something relatively permanent. By acting outside of the cyclical order of nature, the artifice of humankind invites an element of mortality that is alien to nature; but through further elaboration of the act of production, the artifice manages to become relatively permanent. The realm wherein human artifice accumulates in this sense is what Arendt means by the *world*.

What Marx had identified as the essential driving force of humanity—subsistence and production necessitated by the life processes—was therefore the quintessence of the animal condition, not the human. Activity in this naturalistic realm is what Arendt categorizes as *labor*. The products of labor are consumed and gone as soon as they come into existence, without meaningful repercussions. Meanwhile, she designates the word *work* for the kind of activities that build the relatively permanent and artificial world. The conceptual error that Marx made, in her view, was conflating labor with work. This error was in fact the hallmark of a mass consumer

society; Marx's work "rests on the equation of productivity with fertility, so that the famous development of mankind's 'productive forces' into a society of an abundance of 'good things' actually obeys no other law and is subject to no other necessity than the aboriginal command, 'Be ye fruitful and multiply'" (Arendt 1958, 106). Marx had, much like everyone else living in his time, subsumed artifice under natural occurrences.

But why should it matter that there's a difference between animal life and the human world? What purpose does this distinction serve, other than some semantic neatness? The Arendtian world, by providing a durable and distinctly human realm, elicits from humanity a third kind of activity besides labor and work. Arendt repeats her concept of history in *The Human Condition* when she writes: "Birth and death presuppose a world which is not in a constant movement, but whose durability and the relative permanence makes appearance and disappearance possible [...] It is only within the human world that nature's cyclical movement manifests itself as growth and decay" (97). On one level, the "appearance and disappearance" should be taken to mean the mortality of things, organisms, and people in the world of artifice. But on another level, Arendt is hinting towards a uniquely *political* quality of the human condition. Our discussion of mortality has largely remained abstract, insofar as we've been concerned with the idea of a distinct event as a conceptual antithesis to the cycle of nature. But for such an event to occur in the first place—that is, for something to be distinctly made out against the amorphous background of nature's homeostasis—there must be an entity *for whom* particular occurrences may be meaningful enough to be identified as such.⁵ Nature is timeless precisely because it is *indifferent* to what happens; I might identify a particular tree *as that specific tree* because, for example, it belongs to my grandmother's garden. But if the subject matter of history is the deeds and works of human individuals, who else is there to be this arbiter? For Arendt, this role is fulfilled by people in their *plural* sense—or more precisely, the public realm.

6: Coping

To see the function of the public realm as that of sight and recognition, we'll make a detour into psychoanalysis again. A common misunderstanding of psychoanalysis is that it attempts to dig out the hidden thought-contents of a mind. This was true earlier in Freud's career, but we've already seen how the psychoanalytic effort as a whole is more encompassing. We've understood the psyche as a divergent collection of practical aptitudes; instead of identifying the beliefs and thoughts inside a mind, we've chosen to recognize the mind itself as consisting of the active

⁵ This is another place in *The Human Condition* where Heidegger's thought finds its way into Arendt's political theory, in ways that Heidegger himself neither intended nor expected. To Heidegger, entities in the world take on their meaning in virtue of their employment in dealings. Such dealings, ultimately, are dealings that human beings concern themselves with. In other words, the 'essence' of things, so to speak, is determined not before the human is brought into the picture, but precisely as the human is thrown into it. See my further explanation in: "Where is My Mind? A century of context for anticipating machine subjectivity" (Oct 2025), available at: <https://jjung02.substack.com/p/where-is-my-mind>

processes by which a person copes with challenges. This conceptual orientation has an important consequence; in trying to describe the mind's tools and techniques for coping, if we turn to aptitudes instead of beliefs and thoughts,⁶ we are inclined to see that "fairly sophisticated thought-activity can at the same time be expressing a primitive struggle. [...] there is no limit to the sophistication and complexity of living situations that can simultaneously embed struggles that go back to earliest childhood" (Lear 2015, 48).

In an ideal therapeutic moment, the patient goes from (a) experiencing an enduring, primitive struggle in the above sense, to (b) beginning to "*grasp* the world of meanings that [they have] hitherto *used* to interpret experience and orient [themselves]" (Lear 2015, 143; emphasis added). The theoretical language we developed earlier in response to Heidegger is quite useful here. We can roughly understand the difference between "grasping" and "using" to be that between "present-at-hand" and "ready-to-hand"; in usage, the "world of meanings" is encountered immediately through one's immersion in one's dealings, whereas in grasping, the world of meanings confronts the person as an object to behold. The latter can occur in what Lear calls an "interpretive breakdown": the person is faced with a situation wherein their usual means for comprehending their challenges—that is, their world of meanings, or their mode of encountering the world as Heidegger might say—become no longer viable. This is a crisis; the kind of total breakdown that a person might experience under extreme emotional pressure is exactly what Lear has in mind.⁷ But this crisis also presents an opportunity to *recognize* what one is doing and *deliberately disrupt* that process in the here and now. In Lear's words:

In normal social circumstances one is *too busy coping*; and the breakdown in one's ability to cope hardly seems like a luxury. The psychoanalytic situation is structured to offer an existential Sabbath: a benign environment that does not provoke too much anxiety, in which one takes an hour's rest from normal life in order that one has *the liberty to experience an interpretive breakdown*. (143; emphasis added)

The therapeutic moment is thus synonymous with an *interpretive* moment—a moment of sight, of recognition, and of being confronted by oneself. Here's what I mean. One of Freud's patients, the "Rat Man," had what Freud called an obsessional neurosis; today's diagnosis would be an

⁶ This is the kind of language that a Heideggerian might adopt, specifically in contrast to rationalist philosophers. See: Robert Pippin. 2024. "The Culmination: Reply to my Critics." *European Journal of Philosophy*, 32 (3): pp. 959-970. Also see: Hubert L. Dreyfus. 2007. "Why Heideggerian AI failed and how fixing it would require making it more Heideggerian." *Artificial Intelligence*, 171: pp. 1137-1160.

⁷ In fact, this sort of breakdown, in Lear's view, is what happened in Freud's infamous attempt to treat a young woman named Dora (a pseudonym); Freud did not recognize the interpretive breakdown when it was happening, and failed to see that it was *his* duty as a clinician to allow a safe space for the breakdown to occur (Lear 2015, 142-144). Moreover, this is an issue that can—and does—occur even in contemporary clinical settings. See: Robin T. Lackoff and James C. Coyne (1993). *Father Knows Best: The Use and Abuse of Power in Freud's Case of Dora*. Teachers College Press: New York. Pp. 2, 65-67, and 106-107.

obsessional-compulsive disorder (OCD). A telling symptom of Mr. R was that he feared the death of his father who had already passed nine years prior (Freud 1909, 311). For a while after his father's death, Mr. R had went about his life as if his father was still alive; he would think of telling his father a good joke he heard during the day, or expect to see him when he heard a knock. After eighteen months of doing this, "the recollection of his neglect [of his father's death] had recurred to him and begun to torment him terribly, so that he had come to treat himself as a criminal" (311). In combination with other stories of Mr. R, it's clear that his irrational fear is an anxiety response to feelings of guilt and shame. What's important for us is that his anxiety response is not a *judgement* or *action* in response to his situation; it is simply *repeated*. Put differently, his reaction occurs not because the reaction makes sense in the present circumstance; it occurs because it is simply the means by which Mr. R is capable of handling guilt and shame. Again, we aren't speaking of unconscious beliefs or thoughts, but rather the very processes of coping which haven't been recognized as such.

In this light, Lear writes that "from the perspective of the unconscious—if we may speak loosely—it is less like 'the same thing happens again' and more like 'the same primordial struggle *endures*'" (50; original emphasis). That is, the unconscious is *timeless* (Lear 2015, 48; Freud 1915, 582) much like the Arendtian view on natural life; in the same way that nature is indifferent to particular occurrences, the unconscious structure of the psyche is indifferent to the particular challenges that a person faces; what matters for the unconscious is that the same process (or mechanism) endures. A neurotic patient's predicament is therefore nothing short of "a repetition of an entire orientation to the world" (Lear 2015, 139). But more specifically, this repetition is of a kind that is much similar to the Marxist history. The patient is "too busy coping" (Lear 2015, 143), while the laboring animal is "caught in the fulfillment of needs in which nobody can share and which nobody can fully communicate" (Arendt 1958, 118-119); and both are utterly consumed in an old struggle that repeats indefinitely, no matter how complex the specific manifestations of that struggle may evolve to become.

This provides a new context for reading Heidegger when he claims that our world is revealed through "our concernful absorption in whatever work-world lies closest to us" (Heidegger 1927, 101). To Heidegger, the world is not so much a realm of artifice than a realm wherein a person finds themselves already amidst things to use and things to do—their *dealings*, in other words. Accordingly, the immediate mode of discovering the world does not have at its forefront the actual processes by which such dealings may come to be—processes like socialization, other people's work, and natural occurrences—which is to say that the nature of one's most proximal dealings remains hidden from oneself. In plainer terms, we don't often comprehend our own every-day activities; we just do them.

Thus, the concept of artifice as articulated in the first half of my essay (i.e., in reading Marx, Freud, and Heidegger) appears to be mostly *non-intentional* products of *non-deliberate* activities; the only thing on which we deliberate, if anything, is the simple goal of coping, whether it be

coping with the necessities of life, with psychological distress, or with daily businesses we must take care of. So, are we no different from every other animal? Or even worse, are we no different from machines?

7: The Worldliness of Artifice

Let's slowly make our way back to Arendt. I suggested earlier that Arendt's notions of sight and recognition are, on the one hand, comparable to the act of identifying an individual thing and thus imbuing it with mortality. She writes: "only if we consider nature's products, this tree or that dog, as individual things, thereby already removing them from their 'natural' surroundings and putting them into our world, do they begin to grow and decay" (Arendt 1958, 98). On the other hand, for human beings to undergo a similar transformation, it appears that one must rely on other people to fulfill this role. The world of artifice, therefore, serves to provide a second birth, as it were, of human beings; much like the process of the ego's development in the classic psychoanalytic view, or like the creation of the "human" which Fromm describes, it is through artifice that we come to *be ourselves* in a way that is both conceptual and pragmatic. But more important for Arendt's thesis is that this process occurs politically; the function of the world of artifice is, in other words, to provide a realm wherein people can see and recognize each other. Arendt writes:

[...] men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table. In other words, against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sublime indifference of an untouched nature [...] Without a world between men and nature, there is eternal movement, but no objectivity. (Arendt 1958, 137)

We should be cautious in noticing that "work," in this case, means not so much the particular work of some particular individual, than the work of humankind as a whole. Consider how in Heidegger's thinking, while one's dealings have a function of discovery, the ways in which those dealings come to concern the individual is not at the forefront of the world. Put formally, the readiness-to-hand of daily objects are not grasped thematically. While Arendt inherits the Heideggerian idea of the world as a realm of sight and discovery, she thinks that we ought to give serious consideration to what Heidegger brushed off as an inherently inconspicuous aspect of the world; much like how Fromm took Freud's framework to be fundamentally antisocial, Arendt might think of Heidegger's ontology as fundamentally anti-political. In that regard, her argument in the above passage is that the world of artifice reflects the mortality of humans in sharp contrast to the futility of natural cycles, yet at the same time, because the world itself is relatively permanent in comparison to an individual, the individual can retrieve *their* sense of belonging in that humanity. To speak loosely, the "ego" of humankind is recognized in the artificial world—which would entail a separation from the rest of nature as well as an act of mold-

ing (or re-molding) the human condition into some definite form by giving expression to the “mute and inarticulate despondency” (Arendt 1958, 168) of feelings, needs, and desires. This species-ego, in its turn, allows an active and deliberate process of making the world truly one’s own.

The kind of deliberate quality that is enabled by the artificial world, but a quality that is different from the activity of producing the world through work, belongs to a third type of human activity which Arendt names “action” in *The Human Condition*. While there are “territorial readings” of Arendt that posit a strict separation between labor, work, and action, Patchen Markell writes that action has to work a relation of *articulation* that is not present between work and labor (Markell 2011, 18). What he argues, in my view, is to the effect of making the same argument that Lear does, but in a collective context. We’ve seen multiple times, beginning with my discussion of Freud in section 2, how a person makes their own orientation to the world—that is, their own means of coping. Yet, this creation appears to be non-deliberate. In this context, let’s read how Markell interprets Arendt:

The substitution of making for acting [...] is problematic in part because it reduces work itself to the production of mere use objects, disarticulating use from appearance—and thus also disarticulating work from action. (35)

The world of artifice—both in the Arendtian sense and also in the sense of “a whole orientation to the world” (Lear 2015, 139) that is crafted through coping—goes beyond means to ends; it provides an opportunity to behold each other (in the political world) and to behold oneself (in the idiosyncratic world). Furthermore, we must remember that Lear’s “interpretive breakdown” doesn’t merely entail finding truth; it is insufficient for a clinician to simply *tell* a patient what they might be unconsciously doing. Lear thinks that Freud matured as a clinician when he “re-nounce[d] his role as the detective of the unconscious” (137). An interpretive breakdown is significant because it presents a situation wherein a patient’s usual means of coping—the kind of mindless mechanisms which the patient, perhaps paradoxically, has built themselves—become untenable, and therefore *elicits* a deliberation from the patient. Similarly, Markell argues that between work and action is “a relation of provocation and response between things in their meaningful appearances [...] and what we say about and do to them and the world they constitute” (35-36).

Thus, the significance of artifice is threefold. First: **Artifice is produced as a means to an end.** This is the most rudimentary understanding, but it is worth reviewing. I’ve demonstrated that the act of producing a means for an end can occur non-deliberately. In that regard, it might be more apt to say that a means is *selected*—much like in the sense of “natural selection”—for its strategic advantage in coping. Secondly, we saw that: **Artifice puts into definite forms the conditions for coping; it thereby makes the world comprehensible for the individual in some particular way.** Alternatively, as Markell writes in reference to the Arendtian flavor of this issue,

“the instrumental purpose of a course of activity—its use, you might say—is, when properly understood, never *merely* instrumental, but implicates larger questions” (35) about what kind of things get to confront us in the world. This is in line with what we saw throughout the first half of this essay, and even in some of my reading of Erich Fromm. But now, we finally see that: **By recognizing artifice as such, we are presented with an opportunity to recognize ourselves, and therefore an opportunity to deliberate.** In other words, the act of production—in every sense of the expression that we’ve discussed, such as the Marxist, the psychoanalytic, and the Arendtian conceptions of *making*—is ultimately to (re)produce our own being, and therefore to (re)produce ourselves as something that can be beheld; it is to create a realm wherein we appear to ourselves. Thus, as I claimed earlier during my reading of Marx and Freud, even consciousness turns out to be an artifice.

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