THE 'GLORIOUS LIBERTY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD': REIMAGINING FREEDOM BEYOND LIBERALISM

Susan J. Lucas

The 'Glorious Liberty of the Children of God'

Reimagining Freedom beyond Liberalism between William

Temple and Hannah Arendt

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The rallying cry of liberals over the last 50 years or so has been 'freedom!' For political and social liberals, negative freedom, understood as the absence of constraint, has been fundamental. Over the last 30 years, neoliberalism has made negative freedom concrete in economic terms as the freedom of the market. But in many contexts, this promise of freedom has failed to deliver. Ever deeper divisions, greater inequality, and more polarised politics have become the norm. Even on its own terms negative liberty has singularly failed to deliver, as we become less and less free, and increasingly inhabit a 'managed reality', in Walter Brueggemann's memorable phrase, in which life is ever more constrained. We are asked for identity documents to enter public buildings or register with a GP and space is securitised and barricaded, whether to protect or to exclude. As Wendy Brown has argued, over the last two decades or so, we have seen literal, physical barricades built and, 'the devotion of unprecedented funds, energies and technologies to border fortification' (Brown, 2010, p.8). Managed and fortified reality like this cannot, 'permit or cause freedom because there is no newness in it' (Brueggemann, 2001, p.18).

In very recent times, particularly the two years since 2016, this apparent liberal

hegemony has collapsed into regressive, nostalgic and even violent narratives globally: the election of Donald Trump in the US, Brexit in the UK and the rise of the far right in Spain, France and Germany. This includes an aggressive, even violent assertion of borders and boundaries; and strident and polarised public discourse has become the norm. As James Walters puts it:

> [B]oth economic and social liberalism are under threat. Voters are rejecting a globalisation that has taken jobs elsewhere... And the social liberalism that globalisation reinforced is being undermined with it... The Whiggish conviction held by many liberals in the inevitability of their ultimate victory has been profoundly shaken. There is no foreseeable liberal consensus. (Walters, 2017)

The effect of both the apparent global hegemony of liberal and neoliberal negative freedom and the recoil from it are felt locally, in particular contexts and communities. This is very evident in my own context as a parish priest in East Ham, in the East End of London. In some ways, London is at the sharp end of the effects of neoliberal narratives. In East Ham in particular, this is visible in the juxtaposition of high and rising property values, alongside cramped multi-occupancy houses, and a shortage of local authority and housing association accommodation. There is great diversity, which at times leads to great conflict, and constant churn, as people move in, through and on, often in pursuit of economic prosperity—sometimes successfully, sometimes very much less so. In neighbouring and less diverse boroughs the collapse of this narrative is even more evident; Barking and Dagenham, separated by just three miles and the River Roding from East Ham, voted 'leave' in the Brexit Referendum in 2016, and it is the borough which had a BNP candidate in the General Election in 2010. In this local context, there is an urgent need to rethink the public sphere, and to offer a robust account of human freedom that both avoids the tensions and omissions of the liberal account but also provides a hopeful alternative.

In this tract, therefore, I will articulate some principles for a sustainable vison of the public sphere that provide alternatives to what I will identify as the biopolitics of the neo-liberal market and the 'power' state (as opposed to the 'welfare' state). In doing so I will bring together theological and anthropological insights from two contrasting 20th century figures who engaged with the forces of totalitarianism and populism in their own contexts. From Hannah Arendt I will explore the concepts of freedom as relational, equality as an essentially political notion, and the political in turn as based on covenant and forgiveness; from William Temple, I will look at the idea of freedom *for*, freedom as respect for personality in all people, a view strikingly resonant with Arendt's relational notion of freedom, and its origin in Kantian philosophy, where there is both overlap and contrast with Arendt. I will then return to my parish in East Ham and the context of a post-Brexit public square, to see how some of these alternative principles might be earthed in practical ideas and situations.

Chapter 2

Negative Liberty

2.1 Liberty in Liberalism: Negative Liberty

The distinction between positive and negative liberty was famously developed by Isaiah Berlin in his 1958 essay *Two Concepts of Liberty*, although the priority of what Berlin terms negative liberty is also apparent much earlier in what is perhaps, the *locus classicus* of political liberalism, John Stuart Mill's 1859 *On Liberty*. Berlin construes of negative liberty as simply the absence of something: constraint, obstacle, barrier, impediment, and so on. Positive liberty, by contrast, requires the presence of something: self-determination, rational life plans, or self-realisation. For Berlin, the concept of negative liberty means that there are areas of life in which a person should be left alone to do as they please without interference; positive liberty, by contrast, is a matter of determining positively whether a person does this rather than that (Berlin 1958, 2001, pp.169-178). For Berlin, and subsequent theorists such as John Rawls (Rawls 1971; 1993) and more radically Robert Nozick (Nozick, 1974), negative liberty—freedom as simply the absence of constraint—is the more fundamental liberty, and the one that needs political protections. Indeed, for Berlin,

it is the basis of *all* constitutional liberties of liberal-democratic societies, such as freedom of movement, religion, and speech. Negative liberty is more fundamental for the kind of classical political liberalism Berlin articulates because making positive liberty the primary notion carries a danger of authoritarianism. Berlin, writing in the midst of the Cold War, and himself a refugee from Nazi Germany, saw in positive freedom an exalting of the collective over the individual, where the self's true determination is conceived within a greater whole. The danger for Berlin, and for the liberal thinkers who follow him, is that if the interests of the collective are given priority over the interest of the individual, then the individual can be coerced into fulfilling interests that are not their own, or even acting against their own interests. Berlin was keenly aware of how concepts of positive freedom, such as self-determination, had been distorted by the totalitarian dictators of the 20th century, and saw this appropriation not as accidental but as essentially related to the collectivist assumptions inherent in positive liberty.

2.2 The Economisation of Negative Liberty: Neoliberalism and Biopolitics

Daniel Stedman-Jones suggests that economic neoliberalism has been the 'dominant ideology' of our own time; by the end of the 1970s, the neoliberals had persuaded, 'a grocer's daughter, a former film star and Europe's greatest chicken farmer to unravel 40 years of state expansion' (Stedman-Jones, 2012). Neoliberalism is, at once, both the economic radicalisation, and the logical outworking, of negative liberty in the classical political liberal sense—certainly as it is defined by the so-called 'Chicago School', most notably Friedrich Hayek (1960, 1982) and Milton Friedman (1951). The term 'neoliberalism' was first used by Friedman, who coined the word in his

1951 essay *Neoliberalism and its Prospects* (Freidman, 1951). Alongside economising negative liberty, neoliberalism radicalises and appropriates the laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith; for Hayek in particular, the precepts of economic, social and political liberalism are synthesised to the extent that the freedom of the market becomes concrete in ways that had previously only been abstract in Berlin's thinking. It is the market that becomes the safeguard of all freedoms. Other writers, for example the Marxist human geographer and critical theorist David Harvey (Harvey 2005; 2010; 2013), see neoliberalism as more properly an outworking of capitalism rather than liberalism—and, in particular, capitalism in its circulation phase. Harvey suggests that Marx is prescient in volume two of *Das Kapital* in anticipating the way in which the rise of highly liquid forms of capital-as-money would accelerate the circulation phase of capital, including its accumulation, and give birth to ever more complex forms of transaction, financial products, and the monetisation of great swathes of everyday life (Harvey, 2013, pp.205-206). Michel Foucault, who similarly perceived in the late 1970s that the neoliberals, then regarded as outsiders, were on the rise, also identifies neoliberalism's genealogy in classical liberalism and its acceleration of the circulation phase of capital as two aspects of a single reality:

> I would like to say that if it is true that a feature of the contemporary world, or of the modem world since the eighteenth century, really has been the constant presence of phenomena of what may be called crises of capitalism, couldn't we also say that there have been crises of liberalism, which are not, of course, independent of these crises of capitalism? The problem of the thirties I have just been referring to is indeed the proof of this... You can find crises of liberalism linked to crises of the capitalist economy. It is the crisis of the general apparatus (*dispositif*) of governmentality, and it seems to me that you could study the history of these crises of the general apparatus of governmentality which was installed in

the eighteenth century. (Foucault, 1979, pp.69-70)

If freedom is fundamentally negative freedom, and if all freedoms are guaranteed by the markets, then it inevitably comes to pass that humanity is defined in relation to capital: for example, how someone can participate in the markets as a self-interested agent or inserted into them as a speck of human capital. As Wendy Brown, drawing on Foucault, puts it:

> All conduct is economic conduct: all spheres of existence are measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized... we are only and everywhere *homo oeconomicus*, which itself has a historically specific form... today's *homo oeconomicus* is an intensely constructed and governed bit of human capital... (Brown, 2015, p.10)
>
> Thirty years ago, at the dawn of the neo-liberal era, *homo oeconomicus* was still oriented by interest and profit seeking, but now entrepreneurialized itself at every turn and formulated as human capital. As Foucault puts it, the subject was now submitted to diffusion and multiplication of the enterprise form within the social body. Today, *homo oeconomicus* maintains aspects of that entrepreneurialism, but has been significantly reshaped as financialized human capital: its project is to self-invest in ways that enhance its value or to attract investors through constant attention to its actual or figurative credit rating and to do this across every sphere of its existence. (Brown, 2015, pp.32-33)

So, under such a stark and economised negative liberty, someone unable to participate in neoliberal capitalism as an interest- and profit-seeking entrepreneur or to self-invest so as to enhance their value and marketability as a speck of human capital quite literally does not exist, is a non-person. If neoliberalism, then, is a rad-

icalised and economised form of liberalism, it also shapes and distorts the human, economising every kind of social relation, from healthcare to the soul of the citizen.

As Foucault realises, neoliberalism is what he terms a 'biopolitics'; namely a mutual intersection between human (biological) life and politics such that regimes of authority and power develop strategies and mechanisms for managing human life processes through knowledge, subjectification and 'soft power'. This is particularly true of economic power, with its inherent capacity for the immediate satisfaction of biological desires. We are 'nudged' in the direction of healthier lifestyles, encouraged to be more 'resilient', and prompted to buy the latest products and services 'because we're worth it'. In short, biopolitics integrates human bodily life into a marketised economy: from the provision of care homes to the running of hospitals, from the care of infants to the finding a life partner. As Foucault writes:

> *[H]omo oeconomicus*, that is to say, the person who accepts reality or who responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment, appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment. *Homo oeconomicus* is someone who is eminently governable. (Foucault, 1979, p.270)

As Graham Ward has recognised, there is a natural affinity between economic and social liberalism, and its capitalist faces, and postmodernity, or perhaps, better, late modernity, which gives rise to a form of humanity constructed by, 'desire [which] is conformed to commodifiable options.' (Ward, 2000, p.274). Under late modernity, the liberal subject, has morphed first into what Foucault calls an entrepreneur of the self (Foucault, 1979, p.226), to a speck of human capital who is eminently useable, dispensable and disposable, whether as a worker in an Amazon Warehouse, an Uber driver, or, for that matter, as a trader in a merchant bank. Given these features

of neoliberal biopolitics, which purports to offer and protect human liberty, but in fact controls, nudges and constrains humans through desire, and actually excludes those unwilling or unable to participate as consumers, it is no wonder that there is a backlash couched, perhaps unfortunately, in terms of populism and regression. This backlash nevertheless represents an inchoate sense of exclusion, and recognises that the negative liberty on which the liberal hegemony is premised fails to deliver the freedom and flourishing it promises.

Can there be an account of human freedom that gives a richer story about humanity than this, without falling into the collectivist assumptions of positive liberty, at least as Berlin conceives of it? I argue that there is just such an account, and that it emerges in different ways and with different emphases from the writings of William Temple and Hannah Arendt, with some suggestive resonances between them.

Chapter 3

Liberty beyond Liberalism

3.1 Temple on Freedom For

Freedom, or liberty (and I shall use these interchangeably), for Temple, was one of four principles that formed the basis for his social philosophy, which in turn allowed him to build a bridge to more practical recommendations that addressed real world issues. The metaphor of the bridge was Temple's own; as Stephen Spencer puts it, 'his social principles were of the type that would expect the bridge to be safe for all users and environmentally appropriate, without prescribing technical engineering solutions' (Spencer, 2017, p.93, quoting Temple, 1942, pp.47, 98).

Liberty is in fact the core of Temple's four social principles. His definition of liberty cuts across the distinction between positive and negative liberty as Berlin defines them. According to Temple, liberty is the respect for personality or worth in all people:

> If each man and woman is a child of God, whom God loves and for whom Christ died, then there is in each a worth independent of all usefulness to society. The person is primary, not the society. (Temple, 1942, p.59)

So much, then, for negative liberty being the only alternative to collectivist positive liberty: Temple makes it clear that liberty is not derived from society, from the collective, but nor is it merely from the individual either. Rather, it is human persons whose personhood is derived from being a child of God that are central to liberty as he defines it. Furthermore, 'good for persons' is not annexed by the state, nor by society, but rather:

> ...the State exists for the citizen, not the citizen for the State... It is the responsible exercise of deliberate choice which most freely expresses personality and best deserves the great name of freedom. (Temple, 1942, p.59)

For Temple, then, liberty might be characterised as, 'freedom of the glory of the children of God' (Romans 8:21, NRSV), not corresponding to what Berlin defines as positive freedom, with its collectivist assumptions, but rather, as Spencer puts it, 'freedom *for*' (Spencer, 2017, p.95). Freedom for is the purposeful freedom of living a full, and fully human life—what another writer on Christianity and society, this time an intelligent Christian conservative, T S Eliot, called, 'the natural end of man, virtue and well-being within society' (Eliot, 1949, p.33).

It is surely no accident that Temple derives this perspective on freedom in part from, as Spencer puts it, 'a kind of Kantian universalizable approach to ethics, integrated within a theological framework' (Spencer, 2017, p.93). Sabina Lovibond (2002) and Christine Korsgaard (1996) have argued that, 'in a... Kantian vein... adopting a moral end is a "volitional act" albeit "one that you can only do gradually and perhaps incompletely"' (Lovibond, 2002, pp.70-71, quoting Korsgaard, 1996, p.180). The idea of a 'volitional act' here relates to Kant's postulates of pure practical reason in the *Critique of Practical Reason*: God, freedom and immortality (Kant, 1788, 2012, pp.170-172). Practical, moral and political reasoning requires these postulates

about human nature and cannot operate within the realm of reason alone. For our purposes here, the second postulate, namely that of freedom, is crucial. Kant conceives of freedom, 'positively, as the causality of a being to the extent it belongs to the intelligible world' (Kant, 1788, 2012, p.170). Kant's ethical principles, both the 'Categorical Imperative' and the 'Postulates' are sometimes represented as formal principles, only in the sense that they give form to ethical behavior without themselves having any content. On the Lovibond/Korsgaard interpretation, it is misleading to construe this formality as just abstraction; rather, they are formal principles in the sense of giving a scaffolding to purposeful ethical action, without being over-prescriptive about what that action is. Lovibond identifies this 'scaffolding' as having a teleological dimension, in being shaped by the norms of a particular community. However, they also make space for what is counter-teleological, or recalcitrant with respect to particular norms, a recalcitrance that may be necessary to be fully serious in one's ethical actions. If we are to be fully serious in our actions there may be a need for:

> ...the possibility of a change of attitude to some of the phenomena highlighted in our account of formation... motivated by a practical interest in becoming something other than our socialization has made of us up to now. And this is an interest that is liable to set us at variance with the agencies of upbringing... and a rapprochement with the "recalcitrant"... So, for example, socialists may be prepared to take the side of the ethically recalcitrant insofar as it seems to express refusal to acquiesce in class position that places one on the receiving end of economic exploitation... likewise, feminists will be disposed to side with the recalcitrant insofar as it seems to express refusal of a subordinate gender position. (Lovibond, 2002, pp.134, 139-140)

That is, Kant's ethical principles enable human beings as subjects to find themselves

as directed, 'towards a use of those forms in which they would become, at the limit
fully "serious", or fully permeated by the conscious intention of the user. . . one's
own ethical expression coexists with the condition of responsibility for one's actions'
(Lovibond, 2002, p.125). This richly suggestive Kantian notion of freedom linked
with form, is neither on the one hand, over-dependent on the norms of a particu-
lar community, and so subject to the communitarian assumptions of what Berlin
characterises as positive freedom—it does have elements of the universal; but nor,
on the other hand, is it wholly abstract. And, in recognising the role both of being
shaped by the norms of a particular community and sometimes needing to, 'become
something other than what our upbringing has made us,' it exists in a dialectical
space between the teleological and the counter-teleological. Temple's conception of
freedom as, 'freedom *for* living a purposeful life. . . people. . . empowered to make
deliberate choices,' is very much at one with the Lovibond/Korsgaard reading of
Kant, and perhaps, derives from a similar reading of him. It is this, rather nuanced
conception of liberty as 'freedom for', or perhaps, as the potential for formation in
becoming a being to be taken seriously, rather than state collectivism, that is at the
root of Temple's understanding of the welfare state. For Temple, that phrase implies
no particular empirical form, but rather a construal of the relationships between
persons and the state such that:

> If the state recognises in every citizen something superior to itself, we get
>
> the conception of the welfare state, according to which the state exists
>
> for the sake of its citizens, both collectively and individually. (Temple,
>
> in a 1941 unpublished manuscript, quoted in Spencer, 2017, p.95)

For Temple, this conception of freedom is essential to understanding human persons
in all their individuality and creativity, persons not just with unique needs, but who
are unique in their freedom. In turn, the principle of freedom leads to Temple's
second principle, which he calls brotherhood or fellowship, but which, in a more

contemporary and inclusive way we might term solidarity. Temple rightly recognises
that:

> No man is fitted for an isolated life; every one has needs which he cannot
> supply for himself; but he needs not only what his neighbours contribute
> to the equipment of his life, but their actual selves as the complement of
> his own. Man is naturally and incurably social. (Temple, 1942, p.69)

It is, then, not as individual, isolated selves, nor yet as a monolithic collective, that
we find our freedom, but interpersonally and relationally.

3.2   Arendt on Politics as Relationality

In an echo of Temple's view, Arendt, writing a decade and a half later, says:

> . . . the given world depends, in the last analysis, upon the fact that men,
> not one man, but men in the plural inhabit the earth (Arendt, 1998, p.9)

In fact, Arendt goes further than Temple. It is not only freedom that depends on
our being for one another; there is an epistemic and metaphysical dimension as well.
Being-in-the-world, the experience of reality rather than simply of an environment,
depends, *ab initio*, on human plurality and relationality. She distinguishes our bio-
logical birth into the natural environment, or what she calls the world of necessity,
and our birth into the world of politics:

> With word and deed, we insert ourselves into the human world, and this
> assertion is like a second birth. . . not forced on us by necessity. . . and. . .
> not prompted by utility, like work. (Arendt, 1958, 1998, p.58)

Thus, for Arendt, the political is (co)created by free human beings in relationship
through 'word and deed', in essence through action. The space that is so (co)created

is, for Arendt, a space for human flourishing. This space is constructed out of a nuanced account of the relationship between freedom and equality. Arendt boldly, and in the interests of plurality, opposes the idea of human equality as natural; but she is no anti-egalitarian; rather, equality for her is related to her distinction between being in an environment and being in the world, and so is political rather than natural:

> The equality attending the public realm is necessarily an equality of un-
> equals that stand in need of being "equalized" in certain respects and for
> certain purposes (Arendt, 1958, 1998, p.215)

For Arendt, it is a requirement of engaging with others in freedom in the public sphere that one treats all others, and not just those with whom one happens to agree, as equals (Topolski, 2015, p.58). The result of engaging with others in freedom and (political) equality is that we recognise one another, co-create our shared world, and answer for ourselves the question, 'who am I?'. That is, the political intersubjective relational space is one in which each person appears as a 'who' and not as a 'what':

> The disclosure of "who" in contradistinction to "what" somebody is—his
> qualities, gifts, talents and shortcomings, which he may display or hide,
> is complicit in everything he says and does. (Arendt, 1958, 1998, p.179)

Also, and intriguingly:

> [T]he "who" which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others remains
> hidden from the person himself. (Arendt, 1958, 1998. p.179)

The disclosure of the 'who' we are in the political and public space of freedom and equality is beyond our full control. For Arendt, the political and public is a contested space, full of antagonism and strife: but it is a healthy antagonism and strife, counteracting the dangers of superfluousness, anonymity and loneliness, which

Arendt identified as the markers and origins of totalitarianism. The political and public is interpersonal, relational, contested space, but for Arendt, it is bounded and supported by law—which she regards as outside the political, and a condition of it, and which she sometimes represents by the metaphor of the city walls, a space held by 'boundaries in pleasant places' (Psalm 16, NIV), common to all who are prepared to participate. What is common, however, is the space and not its contents, which may well be characterised by dissensus. Within such a public space, reality, as an ever more accurate and truthful perception of what is the case, is, and can only be, affirmed through manifold distinct and diverse perspectives in contestation.

If Arendt is opposed to freedom simply as negative freedom, she is also opposed to a certain kind of internalising, over-spiritualising of freedom, in Augustinian fashion, as freedom of the will:

> The theological journey of freedom from Plato to Augustine via Paul, is the locus of freedom's transformation from an external, worldly, plural action to an internal and personal struggle, the singularizing principle of the Will, the *principium inividuatuinonis*. (Arendt, 1981, p.62)

She makes unlikely common cause with Machiavelli, applauding him for reinvigorating a more public, performative and action-driven conception of freedom. For Arendt, then, freedom is world-directed, reliant on action and intersubjective interaction, and equality is political, only made possible by entering the public realm in free action and interaction; there is only politics and public life if people turn up and act. She is explicitly critical of the liberal shibboleth that, 'the less politics, the more freedom' (Arendt, 1963, p.149); and she refuses to reduce the political to either law or governance—both of these might be necessary for creating the space of the political but the political is not reducible to them.

Chapter 4

Freedom and Equality Beyond Liberalism

4.1 Biopolitics and Sovereign Power with Arendt and Temple

Thus, in both Arendt and Temple, there is an account of human freedom which rejects the bare idea of negative liberty in the classical liberal tradition, and its contemporary economic work out in neoliberalism. Arendt also explicitly opposes the over-spiritualising of freedom in some parts of the Christian tradition as freedom of the will. The account of freedom that emerges is richly suggestive of new ways of reimagining politics in our present and contested context.

The possibility is always already present in liberalism, as Foucault outlined, of the economic turn of liberalism into neoliberalism, in which politics morphs into biopolitics. Foucault sees biopolitics as emerging, in modern liberal democracies, from the collapse of sovereign power. Sovereign power, as the controversial legal theorist Carl

Schmitt defines it (Schmitt, 2005, pp.6ff), consists of:

- Absolutism (no higher power)

- Perpetuity (no time or term limits)

- Decisionism (not bounded by submission to law, since the sovereign power is always able to decide on the exception to the law)

- Territory (city walls or national boundaries)

It is always possible to contest Schmitt's account as ahistorical. For example, in England the Magna Carta enshrined the principle that the sovereign is subject to the law. Nevertheless, it is possible to see in the idea of sovereign power something akin to what Temple identifies as the 'power state' of pre-First World War Prussia, in which the state controlled the lives of its citizens to serve its own ends (see Spencer, 2017, p.95; discussing Temple, 1929, pp.160-77). As Hannah Arendt rightly realised, exiled from Germany in 1933 with the rise of Hitler, sovereign power and its totalising tendencies, is one of the origins of totalitarianism. As Foucault reminds us, however, modern liberal democracies, under the influence of the conception of negative freedom as lack of constraint as the only legitimate account of freedom, have tended to recoil from those totalising tendencies in the opposite direction—that of a nostalgic and fantasised restoration of sovereignty. It is perhaps not accidental that the rhetoric of much of the Brexit debate has been couched in precisely those terms, albeit without much understanding of its origins or implications. As Wendy Brown suggests, if liberal and neoliberal narratives of biopolitics are being contested, then we live in an age of, 'walled states and waning sovereignty,' in which the idea of pulling up the drawbridge and quite literally rebuilding the city walls is recoil and fantasy, not response or reimagining (Brown, 2010).

What Arendt and Temple converge on is an account of freedom that not only contests

the distinction between positive and negative liberty—we are not stuck with these alternatives—but contests the level at which the distinction is made. And if, for them and for us, freedom can be construed as free action of intersubjective human beings already belonging to the public and political, then our options for politics and public life need not be exhausted by either sovereignty or biopolitics.

Second, Temple and Arendt give us new ways of configuring equality. According to the liberal model, equality and liberty are in tension: equality is polarised between equality of opportunity, bare equality under the law, and equality of outcome. For Arendt in particular, equality is political ab initio. It is not that there is some natural and necessary equality between people; rather, the deeper point is that the very existence of public space is one which requires that we treat one another as equals in certain defined ways. Far from being incompatible with freedom, it is free action that creates the space in which such equal treatment is possible. This is echoed in Temple's conception of brotherhood, or solidarity, following for him, as it does for Arendt, from a principle of freedom for human persons:

> [Man] needs not only what his neighbours contribute to the equipment of his life but their actual selves as the complement of his own... Liberty is actual in the various cultural and local associations that men form. In each of these a man can feel he counts for something and that others depend on him as he on them. (Temple, 1942, pp.62, 64)

Finally, Arendt and Temple offer us a richer political anthropology than that which lies behind either neoliberal biopolitics or sovereignty. It is significant, though perhaps unsurprising given that she was steeped in the Hebrew scriptures, that for Arendt promise and forgiveness are key to both her anthropology and her account of freedom (Arendt, 1958, 1998, p.237). She is hesitant even to call them moral principles, seeing that terminology as redolent of the Platonism of which she was

consistently critical—abstract principles imposed from above, possibly by force and therefore potentially violent. For Arendt, promise and forgiveness emerge 'from below', as horizontal categories that create and sustain both humanity and the public:

> Binding and promising, combining and covenanting... are... the grammar of action... which applies solely to the worldly in-between space by which men are mutually related... by virtue of the making and the keeping of promises, which in the realm of politics may well be the highest human faculty. (Arendt, 1990, p.175)

It is promise, or covenant, that for Arendt introduces the possibility of stability in the public realm in that it sustains a space for continued action, supporting the inherent instability of a public realm by strengthening the web of relationships that constitute it. In On Revolution, she suggests that the idea of covenant allows the change inherent in revolutionary moments to becomes constitutive and embedded. Thus, covenant forms the link to the legal realm that also stabilises the public sphere (Arendt, 1990). Arendt also contrasts covenant with the liberal political tradition of the social contract. In particular, she is critical of Hobbes's development of the concept, suggesting that the social contract is an inherently controlling mode of the political, obliterating the very plurality it seeks to protect and based on a dehumanising anthropology. For Hobbes, a human being is a solitary, isolated frightened being without real capacity for thought or action:

> A being without reason, without the capacity for truth, and without free will, that is, without the capacity for responsibility... man is essentially a function of his price. (Arendt, 1973, p.139)

The link with biopolitics is clear: if selves can only be construed as biological beings, indoctrinated with the idea that freedom is merely the absence of constraint, the self that emerges is isolated, capable of being linked to other selves only through

a contract. Such a self can exercise power only through acting on its environment with desire, with its obvious economic corollary of participating only insofar as s/he can be *homo oeconomicus*,[1] as producer, consumer or speck of human capital—a function, that is, of her/his price. Biopolitics as a concept emerged from Foucault's writing in the 1970s and 1980s, so Arendt does not address it directly. She is clear, however, that it is a category mistake to see politics and biological life at the same level. Nor is it just a theoretical mistake, but one that fails in practical terms to recognise substantial human freedom and equality as embedded in those forms of interpersonal association that for her, as for Temple, constitute the public. What we can also take from Arendt is that what biopolitics and sovereignty share is a conception of a bare and isolated self. Without the potential for solidarity, such a being is vulnerable to the imposition from above of something like what Temple called the power state, a state which:

> . . . asks for absolute obedience, depriving all subjects of political or (for Arendt) participation rights. This leads to Arendt's understanding of sovereignty as domination. . . Leviathan. . . gives rise to power politics.'
> (Topolski, 2015, p.83)

Instead, for Arendt, we are beings who can act significantly, and we are beings who can make promises. Promising involves a bias towards the greatest possible participation in public life; it is horizontal and rooted directly in our human nature which is neither uniformly communitarian nor wholly isolated and individual, nor yet simply personal, but always interpersonal.

If covenant and promise frame the future, our human nature is also, for Arendt, shaped by the ability and need to give and receive forgiveness, which allows us to reinterpret the past. Our actions cannot be undone, but forgiveness holds out the

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[1] The question of the gender of *homo oeconomicus* is a particularly vexed one. See Brown, 2015, pp.99-107.

possibility of a future we can share, even if we have done harm or harm has been done to us. This is not cheap and easy forgiveness—Arendt, above all, wrote in the shadow of the *shoah*—but rather requires a response from the wrongdoer, that they take responsibility for their actions (Arendt, 1958, 1998, p.240; Topolski, 2015, p.84). Arendt's concept of forgiveness is explicitly shaped by the Jewish theological concept of *teshuvah*. Significantly, given Arendt spent much of her life in exile, *teshuvah* can be translated as 'return', returning to the fold or the community or the path of righteousness, but it can also imply response, an action which demands a response, or one for which one accepts responsibility. It can be expressed liturgically, in the prayers of repentance at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, enacting a process of confession and regret, and there is a direct link to promising within the concept, in that it includes the promise not to repeat the action even if one has the opportunity (Abramson, 2012, pp.9-16).

For our purposes, alongside our capacity for promising, the concept of forgiveness allows Arendt to build a much richer anthropology of human beings as plural (both in terms of our inner and outer life), diverse beings, constituted interpersonally and in the plurality of public life together. We are not isolated bundles of desire, but beings capable of promising and forgiving, of doing harm to one another that requires forgiveness, and able to reinterpret the past and imagine the future together.

Temple, of course, does not specifically mention promising and forgiving. As we have seen, however, his concept of freedom derives directly from one of Kant's postulates; and I have suggested above that this places his principle of human freedom in a dialectical space between teleology and counter-teleology. This space is concerned with the formation of human beings as subjects, to find themselves directed towards a use of ethical forms, which might well include promising and forgiving, to a space in which they become, in the words of Lovibond, 'serious' and 'permeated by conscious intention of the user' (Lovibond, 2002, p.125). That is, no less for Temple than for

Arendt, we are human beings who can act, in such a way that our actions are not indifferent.

Here, there is an apparent point of contrast between Arendt and Temple. For most of her life, Arendt was critical of the Kantian taxonomy on which Temple bases his account of freedom, as she consistently resisted the tendency to formulate abstract principles 'from above'. She contrasts her claims about promising and forgiving with such abstraction:

> Since these faculties correspond so closely to the human condition of plurality... [they establish]... a diametrically different set of guiding principles from the "moral" standards inherent in the Platonic notion of rule. (Arendt, 1958, 1998, p.237)

She sees a similar abstraction and dehumanising tendency in Kant, writing in *Men in Dark Times* that, 'the inhumanity of Kant's moral philosophy is undeniable' (Arendt, 1970, p.27). However, late in her life, Arendt began to reassess Kant, and to reframe the political in terms of judging and acting. In this, she drew on Kant's *Third Critique*, identifying in it the significance of reflective aesthetic judgements which move from the particular to the general rather than the other way around (Arendt, 1989, p.83). In doing so, she brings to the fore that dimension of Kantian aesthetics which sees it as mistaken to regard the formality of the 'Categorical Imperative' and the 'Postulates of Freedom' as pure abstraction, but as formal in a rather different sense, concerned with the formation of the human person in action and judgement.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: East Ham in London—The Exceptional Case?

I am writing this as a 'recovering' philosophy PhD who is now a vicar in East London, in East Ham, to the south east of Newham—one of the most diverse boroughs in the UK. I am especially conscious of a global need for thinking and imagining together a new and more creative way of configuring the political, one that is not exhausted by neoliberalism or regressive fantasies of sovereignty, and that the accounts of freedom offered by Temple and Arendt have something to offer us. I cannot but be struck by the impact of the global on the local context in which I serve; and I am inspired by both Temple's 'middle axioms'—provisional, practical objectives and policy recommendations—and Arendt's exhortation to participation and action. I would therefore like to conclude by drawing out some implications of the foregoing analysis for my own context.

First, the London borough of Newham where I live and serve is one of the five London boroughs that are historically part of the county of Essex, and now in the Diocese of Chelmsford. London today is changing rapidly, perhaps so rapidly that it is fair to

represent it as an exceptional case in comparison to the rest of the UK. The effects of both neoliberal biopolitics and its apparent collapse over the last couple of years have been felt everywhere in the UK, but in London, they are magnified, multiplied and speeded up in an overheated property market, and in forms of regeneration that, in the space of a few short years, have completely changed the demography of some localities. This has left many behind in huge infrastructure projects and a vibrant if precarious 'gig' economy, all reinforced by and in turn reinforcing immigration on a large scale, with a huge churn of people moving in, through and on, as well as settling. East Ham Parish, where I work, bounded on the South by the A13, to the North by the Romford Road, to the East by the River Roding and to the West by the Sari shops of Green Street, is the largest in the Church of England by population (53,000). It is a lived example of Arendtian plurality: there are 212 languages and dialects spoken in Newham schools. Newham is also one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in the country. 46.5% of Newham's residents identify as Asian/British Asian, 26.5% white, 18.1% Black/Black British, 4.9% mixed/multiple ethnic group and 4% as other ethnic groups. In 2015, Newham was the 25th most deprived local authority, having been 2nd in 2010. However, the benefits of this greater affluence have been uneven, and there are still huge areas of great need. Whilst the increase in affluence has given the borough a certain vibrancy, the contrasts between those who have and have not benefited from it are stark, and the deprivation, where it exists, is even more marked.

All of these trends are part of the daily lived experience of the parish. Houses in the middle of the parish, around the green space of Central Park, are becoming desirable, and terraced 'two up, two down' houses in that part of the parish sell for around £450,000. There are at least 42 mosques in the parish which are influential both within their own ethnic and faith-based communities and in local politics. The religious life of the parish is shaped by the sometimes fractious debates between

mosques. Just a street away from the houses on Central Park Road, which are being bought by young, white professional people as they start families—the parish is about a 20 minute cycle ride to the banking district of Canary Wharf—there are a number of multi-occupancy houses, often with 4, 5 or 6 people sharing rooms. These are predominantly Eastern European men, working as day labourers on London's many construction sites for Crossrail and other big infrastructure projects. Some of these citizens may not appear in any of the official statistics of the borough, but they are a visible part of the life of East Ham, for example groups of young men drinking in parks and on street corners. Meanwhile, a vibrant Romanian and Bulgarian coffee shop culture has sprung up in and around the high street. Newham has the highest rate of street homelessness in London, and this is visible in the 'regulars' who use the churches in the parish as shelter. Economic activity at all levels is obvious, often vibrant and colourful, from the sari and Indian sweet shops of Green Street, to the market traders, to the fast food outlets and restaurants constantly springing up and then disappearing, many of them homespun and family run, to the car washes. But if it is vibrant, it is often fragile, shown in the high turnover of businesses and in some cases the anti-social behavior that goes with chicken shops, kebab houses and off-licences. Diverse, vibrant, contested, contradictory: East Ham embodies many of the conflicting narratives that make London. It is both a paradigm of the effects of neoliberalism, and an extreme example of it; a microcosm of the forces shaping our own times. How, then, do the reflections on freedom, equality and humanity drawn from Arendt and Temple speak into the contested spaces of our times?

Despite their very different backgrounds, from one another and from our time, both Arendt and Temple speak against a background of war and the threat of totalitarianism; both were deeply concerned for humanity, freedom and for a public space with a bias towards the participation of all, and in which all could, in a memorable phrase of Arendt's, feel 'at home in the world'. I am often struck by the question of what being

'at home' in the world in East Ham is like: few in the parish were born there, and the white East Enders have overwhelmingly moved on to Essex. Indigenous Asian families too are beginning to move on, recognising the possibility of 'more house for your money' in Essex. Here, it seems, the overwhelming drivers are economic, even beyond the religious and cultural ties that bind particular communities; yet the particularity of East Ham's diverse communities makes common ground difficult and contested. Within this context, what it means to be at home in the world is one for the parish to reflect on. It is, in a way, encouraging for a parish—always both 'at home in the world' and perpetually in exile—to be reminded (re-minded) by Arendt, that an interpersonal space, a space of freedom, is nevertheless contested and shaped by dissensus as much as common ground—and that this is not necessarily unhealthy.

For both Arendt and Temple, their conception of freedom gives rise to an understanding of equality that is not exhausted by opportunity or outcome, and is not configured in narrow, economic, distributionist terms either, but which is at once both the cause and consequence of freedom. Equality is the recognition that is necessary for a public life that, whilst it is plural, contested and multifaceted, is nevertheless lived together, with the possibility of redeeming the past and sharing the future. In a diverse parish therefore, it is important to recognise equality as a public and political concept, deriving from, and in turn supporting, our attempts to configure a shared future. We insist on treating others with equality and grace whether we are naturally drawn to them or challenged by them, in the interests of beginning to imagine a shared future together.

And the anthropology on which those accounts of freedom and equality are based converges in being not only political and philosophical, but also theological. Humanity is not configured purely in terms of biological life and power but is constituted by the thought and reflective action of beings who are capable of promising, forgiving, needing forgiveness, and seriousness—whose actions are truly 'actions, rather than

just indifferent shopping choices' (Spufford, 2013, p.42).

How might this work out in practice? It is, as one might expect, always a challenge to earth a very different paradigm from the dominant one. So, we start with where we are, and the resources that God has given us, always hopeful that even small initiatives can be significant, and with the recognition that, in a parish, this place and this people are what we have been given.[1] So, at one level, the different paradigm is one in which diversity is welcomed and given space. In one church in my parish, a community café is a welcoming space where people can gather, socialise, dream, and sometimes argue! It is open to all: from the knitting group which includes a Muslim woman who, as a labour of love, found a source of sackcloth and repaired, by hand, every one of the church's hassocks; to the parents and toddlers of all backgrounds using the day nursery in another part of the building; to the fellowship group from a local Pentecostal church; to some very vulnerable people, often with mental health issues, who simply seek a safe space. We also offer space to a charity that provides genuinely low-cost psychodynamic counselling. The service is fully booked, although the charity continues to do assessments and 'triage' potential counsellees onto a waiting list. Finally, the clearest outworking of public, interpersonal human freedom, in which we insert ourselves into a contested public realm with words and deeds, is an example from the history of the parish which provides a model for a hopeful initiative for the future. A predecessor in the parish in the 1980s was part of a group of local Christians who, with support from the Tavistock Institute, pioneered a vernacular, grass roots conciliation service based in the parish. Although there was some professional support, the model was one of using local volunteers, and indeed the reflective paper written by one of the original consultants to the project (Miller, 1986) describes how, over the initial two years of the project, the volunteers

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[1]The Parable of the Mustard Seed springs to mind of course. See Matthew 13:26-36, NRSV. See also Sam Wells (2006, p.1): 'God always gives... enough to sit and eat with him and be his friends,' and for direct comment in relation to engagement in diverse community contexts, see Wells (2016).

increasingly took hold of their role with a much lighter touch of support. Its original values insisted that it was genuinely based in conciliation and not the more familiar pattern of mediation; that is, on finding ways for people to 'be at home in the world' and with one another, and to live creatively with conflict, in a contested space, rather than seeking closed solutions. Although to focus on mediation, 'would increase the likelihood of success. . . it would mean taking on only such cases in which both parties were prepared at least to meet' (Miller, 1986, p.25). The project was firmly rooted in the Arendtian idea that the public space of Newham is diverse and contested, and therefore that there is the ever-present possibility of conflict which need not be unhealthy, but can lead, with support, to constructive change and a reimagined future. The project initially ran for two years and was sustainable for some years beyond that. However, as Miller's paper recognises, it was always fragile, and in the end was not sustainable:

> The volunteers, having underestimated . . . what they were taking on may. . . [have undervalued] what they have achieved. . . funding is insecure; the morale and commitment of volunteers are at times fragile and need consolidation. . . However, the evidence of this experiment indicates. . . the potential to go further. (Miller, 1986, p.26)

The Newham of 2018 is more diverse, more crowded, and more conflicted than the Newham of 1986. However, the model, which resonates strongly with the ideas of freedom, equality and the human person developed here from Arendt and Temple, holds out the possibility of a renewed initiative in the present context.

In our own contested, dark, and difficult times, then, between the polarities of neoliberalism and sovereignty, Arendt and Temple, one shaped by the Jewish theological notion of *teshuvah*, one by the conception of the Trinitarian God that is diverse and relational, offer us in our particular contexts and shared world now, an image of

public life that is plural, diverse and relational, and so a political imaginary founded on the diverse and relational God in whose image we are made.

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