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Amor Mundi and Saving the Circumstance: Loving a technoscientific world according to José Ortega y Gasset and Hannah Arendt

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Abstract. José Ortega y Gasset and Hannah Arendt were two thinkers influenced by the phenomenological tradition for whom worldly experiences within a specific circumstance were essential to what it means to be human. This article, first, examines their notions of 'amor mundi' (Arendt) and 'salvation of circumstance' (Ortega), pointing out their similarities concerning the individual's relationship to the world. It then moves on to investigate some of Ortega's and Arendt's conceptions about science, technology, and the concomitant bureaucratization and technocratization of the world. The main thesis of this article will be that both thinkers fundamentally coincide on how the individual must relate to an increasingly scientifically and technologically-mediated world that produces isolation and mass–people.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt; José Ortega y Gasset; Amor Mundi; Technology; Science; Bureaucratization; Technocracy

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1. Introduction

The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset[2] and the American Hannah Arendt share the same phenomenological approach for understanding the world as well as a critique of the modern age that started in the 17th century.[3] In her most important book of political theory, *The Human Condition,* first published in 1958, Arendt presents, phenomenologically, how life on earth was given to man through the three faculties of the vita activa: labor, work, and action. Ortega's philosophical thought, on its part, evolved from an original Neokantism during his youth, to phenomenology (de Haro 2021, p. 7); finally, he developed his own 'metaphysical innovation' known as 'vital reason' (Rodriguez Huéscar 2002).[4] It has been recognized that phenomenology is transversal to Ortega's work since when this philosophical current spread throughout Euro pe (San Martín 2012; Morón Arroyo 1968), and Ortega himself said that finding phenomenology was more than finding a philosophical outlook, but 'a strike of good luck'[5], although he overcame its idealistic component as soon as he incorporated it into his thought (Ortega y Gasset 2009, IX, p. 150)[6]. Both Arendt and Ortega were also highly influenced by Heidegger but distanced from his emphasis on Dasein's being-toward-death. On the one hand, Arendt stressed *natality* as a fundamental human trait, that is, the fact that we are born into this world with the capacity to act in it, starting something new, as the unique individual that each human being is. On the other hand, Ortega challenged Heidegger's view of Dasein as oriented toward death, proposing that each individual must rather be projected toward their unique and authentic vocation, a vocation that is only developed within one's circumstance, entailing the cultural, social, political, generational, technical elements that form it (see Cerezo 1984).

Ortega proposed that life is the radical reality and that everything in the world appears within a concrete human life, and Arendt's definition of the world includes physical elements, social norms, narratives, and meanings (Pack 2019: 2). As Kattago (2013: 170) writes, "Arendt's philosophical project is an untiring attempt to argue that the world with all failures and weaknesses does and should matter", an assertion that could also be said to encapsulate Ortega's approach. Both philosophers, indeed, paid close attention to their worlds in its social, cultural, and political dimensions. On the one hand, Arendt was fundamentally impacted by the political problems of the 20th century–chiefly the totalitarian experiences that she experienced and made her be a stateless person for 18 years–and was concerned to how individuals were able to think and judge reality meaningfully (based on her experience of Adolf Eichmann during his trial who, in her estimation, was unable

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2 I will refer to Ortega y Gasset as simply 'Ortega' throughout the article.

3 Arendt (1958, p. 6) writes: "…the modern age is not the same as the modern world. Scientifically, the modern age which began in the seventeenth century came to an end at the beginning of the twentieth century; politically, the modern world, in which we live today, was born with the first atomic explosions." For Ortega, the 'theme of our time' consists of the overcoming of modernity and its characteristic idealism toward a new form of reason not divorced from life. He will call this new reason 'vital reason' (Ortega y Gasset 2008, VIII, p. 334).

4 The different phases of Ortega's thought have been object of disagreement. Different authors have separated Ortega's work in different stages (see Ferrater Mora 1973, p. 19; Morón Arroyo 1963, p. 77; Cerezo Galán 1984, p. 16).

5 All the translations from Spanish were done by the author.

6 The quotations from Ortega's works will refer to his Complete Works (*Obras Completas*) (2004 – 2010) edited by Taurus. I will indicate the volume after the year of publication.

to think (Arendt 1978, p. 4)). Furthermore, these totalitarian experiences of the 20th century are the backdrop against Arendt's thinking, which signify a fundamental rupture for which the traditional categories of thought are not helpful heuristic tools: "Totalitarian domination as an established fact, which in its unprecedentedness cannot be comprehended through the usual categories of political thought, and whose "crimes" cannot be judged by traditional moral standards or punished within the legal framework of our civilization, has broken the continuity of Occidental history" (Arendt 1993, p. 26). She stressed how totalitarianism tried to destroy human beings' spontaneity and its intrinsic plurality, transforming the whole of social reality into a homogenous mass at the mercy of the laws of history. Later on, in *The Human Condition*, she pointed out the modern problems of world and earth alienation, driven by the scientific revolution and technological development.

On the other hand, even though Ortega looked up to Germany as the most advanced European culture and spent years studying in Leipzig and Marburg, he saw Spain as his specific challenge (see Villacañas 2004). He understood Spain as the other half of his being: "the fundamental component of my circumstance was and is Spain (…) The precipitate that the years of study in Germany left in me was the decision to fully accept my Spanish destiny without reservations" (Ortega y Gasset 2009, IX, p. 161). However, Spain was in steep decline after the loss of their oversees lands of Cuba and Puerto Rico at the end of the 19th century, and Ortega, truthful to his philosophy, took responsibility for his country being a public intellectual and acted in politics on some occasions (see de Haro 2015).

The key insight of Ortega's philosophy is that *my* circumstance makes the other half of what *I* am, and therefore, if I do not care for it–if I do not '*save it'*, according to Ortega–I live an eccentric[7] life proper to a new subject that, with preoccupation, he saw emerging and ruling in the 20th century: the mass-man. The mass-man is the direct result of the political and technical advancements of the modern age that, even though produced immense comfort and well-being, make the mass-man live an existentially inauthentic life (Ortega y Gasset 2005, IV, pp. 394-399). That is why Ortega's life mission –recognizing that Spain was his other half– was to modernize his country at the same time as to reveal its original, true perspective as the particular culture and society that it is.

Even though these two authors share the phenomenological element in their philosophies and a critique of an increasing technological modernity that coincides in some respects, there is no precedent in elaborating a connection between both. Arendt was born in 1906, and Ortega in 1883 and died in 1955. Ortega acquired world-renowned fame as an intellectual and critic of modernity with the publication of *The Revolt of the Masses* in 1933, which was later translated into many languages, including German and English (and Ortega's work was generally well received in Germany). However, Arendt does not cite Ortega's work considering that, for example, her *Origins of Totalitarianism* overlap with Ortega's analysis in *The Revolt*

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[7] I mean eccentric in the sense of being determined by the circumstances of the social world rather than by the decisions that we make through our intrinsic human capacity of inwardness and self-absorption. For Ortega, what differentiates humans from animals is precisely this capacity that allows us to think, judge, and return to the world to act on it (Ortega 2006, V, p. 525-550**)**. This can also also can be found in Arendt's phenomenological analysis of the *vita contemplativa* (1978). Ortega claims in *The Revolt of the Masses* (2004, IV) that the modern subject has lost this capacity, something that Arendt described as a feature of totalitarian regimes that provide an ideology, in other words, a coherent fiction that eliminates facts and truth (Arendt 1951).

of the Masses where he offered a critique of mass society and the political expressions of that time: fascism and bolshevism.[8]

This article will focus specifically on two aspects of Arendt's and Ortega's work that are essential in their respective philosophies. It will describe what the former meant by *amor mundi* –that is, love of the world– and what the latter meant by *saving one's circumstances*. The main thesis of this article will be that both are fundamentally pointing at the same direction in relation to how the individual must relate to the world–a relationship that entails commitment, authenticity, and responsibility. After presenting their two perspectives, this article will make another move and describe the challenges of loving the world within a circumstance that is increasingly scientifically and technologically mediated, in which, as Arendt describes in *The Human Condition*, human beings are isolated and retreat toward the self. From an Orteguian perspective, this article will also point out the problems that such technologization creates for people to be authentic saviors of their circumstances counteracting the force of the mass-man within mass society.

2. Arendt's *Amor Mundi*

Arendt claims that the Western tradition has focused on finding truth behind appearances, in other words, on finding what is stable beyond the fluidity of reality. As Ponce de León (2011, p. 24) writes: "Philosophers have belittled human affairs and have locked themselves in the labyrinth of understanding about human being in the singular rather than in plurality, which is the condition for action and therefore for politics, understood as an activity that looks for agreements. Thinking of 'man', philosophers forgot men". This disdain for plurality was a move started by a disheartened Plato after Socrates' trial and execution. For Plato, the world of opinions is a surface that hides true reality, and thus, the task of the philosopher is to look for and contemplate eternal truths, which is exemplified in his allegory of the cavern (see Arendt 1993, pp. 107-115). This position presents a radical aversion toward the world as a space of appearances, which for Arendt is essentially the world of politics, where plural men appear, discuss public matters, and act: "The hostility between philosophy and politics (…) has been the curse of Western statecraft as well as of the Western tradition of philosophy ever since the men of action and the men of thought parted company–that is, ever since Socrates' death". (Arendt 2006, p. 306 n1; see also 1993, p. 107).

For Arendt, the world is the human artifice or the human creations that stand in contrast to the natural world. Whereas the natural world entails cyclical processes repeated *ad infinitum*, the world of human artifice is durable; it is what separates humans from nature. In *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt describes the three human faculties that make their life on planet earth: labor, work and action. 'Labor' refers to the cyclical activities of production and consumption that that sustain life. 'Work' entails the construction of a durable world of tangible objects that last and compose the human artifice. 'Action' relates to human beings' appearance in the world through speech, thus mattering, being meaningful, and revealing their

[8] Here I am not saying by no means that this is a shortcoming of Arendt's brilliant analysis. I am just mentioning that Ortega had already published a very-well received book such as *The Revolt of the Masses*.

identities, which is the meaning of politics. For Arendt, the problem with the tradition that extends until today, is that philosophical contemplation looks to eliminate the unpredictability of the public world where plural men act, and where through their spontaneity have the capacity of starting new beginnings.[9] That is why she wanted to redirect "wonder from philosophical reflection on eternal truths outside the everyday world to gratitude for appearances and opinions in the world" (Kattago 2014, p. 53). Plato and Aristotle wanted to eradicate action–that is, politics–insofar as action by its very nature is boundless, unpredictable, and disruptive (Arendt 1958, pp. 188-192). In other words, when we act, we start new movements in the world that we cannot control. Therefore, action is dangerous, and it takes courage. Courage is the most important political virtue for Arendt insofar as in acting we step outside of the comforts of the private realm and we care for the common world, which for Arendt is the realm of politics: "Courage is indispensable because in politics not life but the world is at stake" (Arendt 1993, p. 156).

In this sense, there was a fundamental difference between her teachers Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger (also her lover). The former was "an intellectual who never retreated into himself" whereas the latter retreated "from the world into contemplative solitude and pour scorn upon the public realm, which he judged obfuscating, corrupting" (Young-Bruhel 2006: 7-8). At the same time, Arendt was critical both with Romantics and psychoanalysis, insofar as the former tried to make themselves into works of art and the latter is focused on self-crafting. Arendt rejects the atomistic existential perspective based on individual anguish as well as psychoanalysis because they reject the public world of action and emphasize only the self (Arendt 2005, p. 201-202). Rather, she sees the world as a place of wonder with which one needs to engage and be responsible for. The world and the individual are complementary rather than in opposition–something that we will see is a cornerstone of Ortega's thought–, and therefore, philosophers must not escape the world but pay attention to it (Kattago 2013, pp. 170-171).

It is important to keep in mind that for Arendt, love of the world is a different kind of love from those that we are used to.[10] It is not an emotion, but about "understanding and reconciling oneself with the world as it is" (Hill 2017, para. 12). The fact, however, is that Arendt never directly addresses the notion of amor mundi.[11] For example, as Justin Pack writes, in *The Human Condition*, "…love is not a prominent topic in it. Love is mentioned in five different places in the text and the most extensive discussion, which is still rather short, concerns love as an anti-political force… amor mundi is omnipresent in The Human Condition–present in its absence" (Pack 2021, p. 279). Lucy Tatman also points out that amor mundi is implicit, "a kind of substratum underlying her work" (Tatman 2013, p. 625), and Karin Fry reminds us of the fact that Arendt's political theory is inspired by 'love for the world' rather than alienation from it: "what Arendt calls amor mundi, or love of

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9 The problem, for Arendt, is that politics within a context of immense technoscientific power carries the capacity to eliminate life from the planet; therefore, the messiness and unpredictability of politics is distrusted (see Arendt 2005, p. 153-154).

10 See Campillo (2019, p. 61-74) for an overview of the different phenomenological types of love described by Arendt.

11 Antonio Campillo (2019, p. 61-62) points out that love in its different kinds transpires throughout all of Arendt's thought, and that her "reflections on love are the connection between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, and therefore the invisible center of gravity of her entire political and philosophical thought" (ibid., p. 97).

the world, is the theme that unites all of Arendt's thought. In fact, Arendt's original title for The Human Condition was 'Amor Mundi', because her theory of political action stresses attachment to place and to others" (Fry 2009, p. 51).

It is important to also note that Arendt was concerned with love since her doctoral thesis from 1929, *Love and Saint Agustine*, but here we cannot find explicitly what amor mundi is either. She distinguishes between *cupiditas*, that is, love of the world, and *caritas*, love of God and neighbour (Campillo 2019, p. 18; Tatman 2013, p. 626). She points out the difficulty in reconciling these two loves, already indicating a concern with worldliness. As Kattago (2013, p. 172-173) writes: "Already in her dissertation, one can sense an early preoccupation with certain themes: gratitude for the existence of world and life in general; a richer understanding of responsibility toward others; and the problem of evil and freedom of the will (…) It is not simply that one is in the world, but that one is impelled to make the world one's home". This way, Arendt was stressing the world, *civitate mundi*, rather than the *civitate Dei* of Saint Agustine, thus emphasizing not men in isolation but in their plurality (Fernández López 2016, p. 103).

Arendt described the common world in terms of *inter homines esse*, that is, the space between men (Arendt 1958, p. 8). In this public space, men act, and their actions are unpredictable and boundless. That is why promising and forgiving are important elements within action, because the actor's promises are 'islands of predictability' and 'guideposts of reliability' (Arendt 1958, p. 244) within boundlessness, and the action must be susceptible to be forgiven.

In this messy world of action, "What saves acting men and women from this wreckage is love and responsibility (…) 'Amor mundi', the love of the world which informs Arendt's philosophy throughout, implies a willingness to respond to the world on its own terms" (Williams 1998, p. 950). This response to the world in its own terms is part of the fact that in politics we cannot distinguish between being and appearance; they coincide (Arendt 2006, p. 98). Arendt repeatedly discards the existence of a "true world", and this continuous emphasis on appearances and plurality *is* amor mundi. Loving the world thorough action implies taking care of the world, with all the risks that it carries. Retreating exclusively to private relationships or hobbies is a rejection of the world, a refusal of our responsibility: "People who have given up on the world, thinking that they can set themselves outside it, without revealing themselves in the world or in the public realm, but only in private friendships or solitary pursuits, do not understand that "vital interests and personal liberty" pursued without heed for the rest of humankind become meaningless" (Young-Bruehl 2006, p. 6-7).

One essential concept in Arendt's work key to amor mundi is that of *natality*, namely, the human capacity to act and start something new. As Villa (2019, p. 110) reminds us:

> "Beginning," she writes, "is the supreme capacity of man; politically, it is identical with man's freedom." She cites a phase from Augustine's *City of God: Initium ut esst homo creates est*–"that a beginning be made man was created"–before offering a gloss that, initially at least, looks more like an expression of faith than the result of historical or philosophical analysis: "This beginning is guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man".

Totalitarian regimes such as Nazism and Bolshevism tried to obliterate natality and human's intrinsic spontaneity because they saw themselves as bringing into fruition laws of history or of nature. Yet, for Arendt, it is natality, as a key component of amor mundi, that interrupts what are seemingly automatic chains of events (Villa 2019, p. 218).

Natality is the spontaneous capacity of each human beings to begin the unexpected: "The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, "natural" ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born" (Arendt 1958, p. 247). For Arendt, action and natality go hand in hand, and action is a kind of 'second birth'. When individuals act, "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a 'second birth', in which we confirm and take on ourselves the naked fact of our original appearance" (Arendt 1958, p. 176). This is to say that man has an intrinsic capacity to introduce new processes into the world by virtue of the irreplaceable individual that each one of us is. Natality is thus part and parcel of amor mundi insofar as a connection to the world is implicit. As Bowen-Moore explains, for Arendt,

> [the] identification of her own natality to the world into which she was born was eventually consummated in an attitude she called amor mundi (…) From the standpoint of amor mundi, the expression of love for one's own natality is neither individualistic nor isolated from others; it is, rather, a love for the world, even if, or sometimes especially if, the world is hostile to you. If amor mundi is anything it is a critical attitude toward the world and toward oneself in relation to the world (…) Arendt's concern for natality and its ultimate expression as amor mundi resembles her earlier concern for the existential meaning of the evangelical command: Love your neighbour as you love yourself. (Bowen-Moore 1989, p. 16)

Arendt was categorical in her essay *The Crisis in Education* (1993) that amor mundi plays an important role in natality and the way younger generations are prepared to enter the political realm. She states that education needs to be both revolutionary and conservative, at the same time preserving the world but also being open for the new that is brought through human natality. The child "is a new human being and is becoming human being" (Arendt 1993, p.185). A degree of conservation is then essential insofar as education's task is to protect "the child against the world, the world against the child, the new against the old, the old against the new" (Arendt 1993, p. 192). In this sense, education involves the tension between change and stability; it needs to teach to love the world as well as to cultivate natality: "education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing into an old world" (Arendt 1993, p. 193). Let us stress that amor mundi is "that attitude which always takes a favourable position on the side of the common world" (Bowen-Moore 1998, p. 36), thus Arendt's theory of education juxtaposes human natality with love for the world:

> Education the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from the ruin, which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too,

> is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing the common world (Arendt 1993, p. 196).

In this sense, even though Arendt is highly influenced by Heidegger and incorporated his emphasis on the disclosure of meaning as a defining feature of human being (Villa 2019, p. 192), she distances from him insofar as she orients human beings toward natality and the start of new beginnings in a common world. Heidegger, on the contrary, described the forgetfulness of Being and of Dasein's being-toward-death as a source of existential inauthenticity. Arendt writes: "The life span of man running toward death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born to die but in order to live" (Arendt 1958, p. 246). In other words, it is natality that reveals meaning rather than death.

In conclusion, we could say that amor mundi means facing up the world that we must live in and try to comprehend it through "the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality–whatever it may be" (Arendt 1951, p. viii). It means inhabiting in the "gap between past and future" and thinking within "human time" (Arendt 1993, p. 11), where, as the poet René Char said, "our inheritance was left to us by no testament" (Arendt 1993, p. 3). Amor mundi entails a reconciliation with the world, in other words, the acceptance of the world as it has been given to us. In reconciling with the world, we make a political judgment (Hill 2017). Each human being has the miraculous capacity to act, to promise and to forgive. However, there are some things that we cannot forgive and reconcile with in the world, as Berkowitz explains:

> The challenge of reconciliation is to love the world as it is, that is, as potentially irreconcilable and inclusive of evil. It is well known that Arendt considered calling the book that would become The Human Condition by the title Amor Mundi–For the Love of the World. In 1955, there are at least three entries in the Denktagebuch[12] dedicated to Amor Mundi. The first asks simply: "Amor Mundi–Why is it so difficult to love the world?" (...) The answer is clear enough: anti- Semitism, racism, totalitarianism, poverty, corruption, and a feeling of utter powerlessness to make change. What reconciliation and understanding require is a commitment to politics and plurality that can come about only through a dedication to the world as it is. (Berkowitz 2017, p. 31)

This non-reconciliation comes from the happening of radical evil, in Kantian terms, those offenses that cannot be forgiven nor punished (Arendt 1958, p. 241). That is why Arendt deemed adequate that Eichmann was executed given that he did not want to share the world with a group of people, thus eliminating plurality from the world and showing contempt for it (Arendt 1963). Therefore, amor mundi is a care for a common world, thinking about it and judging it. Amor mundi is "above all, marveling at the spectacle of the mundane" (Sorrentino 2009: 21); it is the task of "connect[ing] the individual up to others and the world" (Pack 2019, p. 4), of "fight[ing] nihilism and lov[ing] the immanence of the real" (Campillo 2019, p. 82).

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[12] Arendt's intellectual diary.

3. Ortega y Gasset‘s and the salvation of one‘s circumstance

Ortega’s most well-known sentence, which early on summarizes his philosophical project in his *Meditaciones del Quijote* from 1914, is: “I am I and my circumstance, and if I don’t save it, I do not save myself” (Ortega y Gasset 2004, I, pp. 756-757). However, what precedes it is not less important: “My natural path toward the universe opens through the ports of the Guadarrama, or the fields of Ontígola. This sector of surrounding reality forms the other half of my person: only through it can I integrate and be fully myself”. With the former, highly repeated, sentence, Ortega attempted to encapsulate a rejection of both realism and idealism, planting the seed for vital and historical reason, namely, his own philosophical system, because: “reason is incomplete if it is reduced to mathematical or logical reason. What we need to add today to the old reason is historical reason, a historical sense” (Ortega y Gasset 2005, III, p. 698). Through vital reason, then, Ortega was proposing an alternative to the abstract rationality of modernity, understanding each individual’s life as a radical reality based on a continuous and inescapable dialogue between *I* and circumstance. The lines that precede the famous “I am I and my circumstance, and if I don’t save it, I do not save myself” are also essential to understand Ortega’s project as amor mundi, insofar as both *I* and circumstance are inextricable, and we cannot understand them independently. For Ortega, the ports of Guadarrama and the fields of Ontígola, that is, the concrete world he lives in, makes the other half of his being. Insofar as our circumstance is an inextricable part of our being, it gives us the burden of a fundamental responsibility that we reject under own peril. The cost of ignoring this other half, of refusing to save our circumstance, is the inauthenticity of rejecting that what is; it would be a sort of self-mutilation.

In making these claims, Ortega is indebted to the ‘good luck’ of phenomenology. As Alejandro de Haro (2021) explains, Ortega moved away from Neokantism in his younger years toward phenomenology around 1912. Phenomenology gave him the philosophical tools to analyze the relationship of the individual with their circumstance and thus be able to discover its meaning or *logos*. In this sense, saving one’s circumstance is tantamount to extracting the meaning of what surrounds us, of our world. That is why Ortega, in distinction to Heidegger’s being-toward-death, describes life as an individual shipwreck where we must try and stay afloat with joy, not angst. This is because, for Ortega, salvation of oneself inherently carries the salvation of one’s circumstance (Cerezo 1984, p. 31), but this salvation is fundamentally anti-utopian. Paying attention to what things are in their appearance as well as capturing what they can realistically, potentially be, is essential for extracting the logos out of reality, that is, for revealing its meaning. For Ortega,

> only must be what could be, and only could be whatever moves within the conditions of what is (…) The ideal of a thing, or, in other words, what a thing should be, cannot consist in the supplantation of its real texture, but, on the contrary, in the perfecting of it. Every right judgment about how things should be presupposes the devout observation of their reality. (Ortega y Gasset 2005, III, p. 485)

Ortega is adamant in establishing that things must only be what they can be, therefore rejecting all idealism:

> Idealism is precisely the name of that terrible disease that the West has suffered (...). I am not an idealist. Idealists take the ideals out of their own heads. Such a vice has been the greatest misery of the West during the last two centuries, the disease that has exhausted us. I believe, on the contrary, that ideals, perfection, must be extracted from reality itself (Ortega y Gasset 2009, IX, p. 243)

In this anti-idealist spirit, Ortega's concern with his Spanish circumstance is transversal to all his work. Thus, similar to Arendt, Ortega stressed the notion of facing up to reality:

> Realism (...) invites us to transform reality according to our ideas; but at the same time, that we think our ideas in view of reality, that we extract the ideal, not subjectively from our heads, but objectively from things. Every concrete thing (...) contains, together with what it is today, the idyllic profile of its possible perfection (Ortega y Gasset 2004, III, p. 800).

Ortega defined philosophy as the 'general science of love', which "represents the greatest impetus toward an all-embracing connection" (Ortega y Gasset 2004, I, p. 752), and writes: "each day I am less interested in judging: rather than being a judge of things, I prefer to be their lover" (Ortega y Gasset 2004, I, p. 759). Therefore, Ortega develops, following Spinoza, *amor intellectualis*, understanding *amor* as the attempt of taking the loved thing toward its perfection, in other words, taking one's circumstance to its fullness (Ortega y Gasset 2004, I, p. 747). This exercise of love also entails establishing connections within reality:

> …love is linking things to each other, and everything to us, in firm essential structure. Love is a divine architect who came down to the world (...) so that everything in the universe lives in connection. Disconnection is annihilation. The hatred that creates disconnection, that isolates and disconnects, atomizes the orb, and pulverizes individuality (...). I would like to propose in these essays to readers younger than me (...) that they expel from their spirits every habit of hate and strongly aspire to love once again managing the universe. (Ortega y Gasset 2004, I, p. 749)

In the task toward the perfection of one's circumstance, Ortega describes the heroic figure as whom, showing a self-demanding, creative attitude, projects a 'sportive and festive' sense to life, accepting and facing up to reality and his "tragic fate" while trying to develop his life-program (Ortega y Gasset 2004, IV, p. 308). Consubstantial to the hero is a desire to be himself within a circumstance that provides means as well as obstacles. The hero does not simply accept the traditions and the social and cultural reality that he is immersed in but looks to change it according to the project that he is, a project that emerges from the profundity of his being (Cerezo 1984, p. 342). This type of existential attitude Ortega defines as the 'playful hero', which he contrasts with the 'tragic hero' personified in Don Quijote. While Don Quijote wanted to subjugate reality to his own ramblings, subsuming what is to what it should be–in other words, disregarding his circumstance–the playful hero recognizes that there is a reality that limits him, and thus accommodates his life project or vital program to his circumstance. Ortega writes: "the reabsorption of the circumstance is the concrete destiny of man. The meaning of life, then, is nothing other than accepting

each one's inexorable circumstance and, by accepting it, making it our creation. Man is being condemned to translate need into freedom" (Ortega y Gasset 2009, IX, pp. 151-152). The playful-realist hero follows Aristotle's motto of being archers aiming at a target within a specific social, cultural, and historical circumstances, rejecting pure abstraction, as José Lasaga writes (2005, p. 106): "the desire to be whoever one has to be, the desire of one's fate (…) the true "ethical subject" in a time that started to dissolve in the social (…); an imperative of creation of targets to which direct life (…)".

A good life, for Ortega, then, is that one which sees effort as a value and pursues realistic, authentic goals. Here, he is following Pindar and his imperative of 'becoming who you are' (Ortega y Gasset 2006, V p. 541), trying to achieve personal perfection. Through this quest, the playful-realistic hero extracts reality's logos, establishing a connection of all things that appear in the radical reality that is his life.

The hero must act in this world through love. As de Haro (2018: 178) suggests, love, for Ortega, must return to be "the central element govern the universe and by extension the hearts or intimate dwelling of the Spanish, because love is connection (…) in the face of hatred that is disconnection and annihilation". Within vital reason, phenomenologically, Ortega emphasizes the hero's necessary connection with the world. de Haro (2018: 180) further highlights the loving connection that must be established with things and the world, building upon Ortega's expression:

> "Things be sanctified! Love them, love them! Each thing is a fairy clothed with misery and vulgarity hiding her inner treasures, and she is a virgin who has to be in love to become fertile". This fecundity consists in leading them to their maximum splendor or significance, where things reveal their meaning that is nothing less than their maximum value and connection with the rest of elements or things that make up the universe whose order responds to the benefactive action of love.

This is to say that, for Ortega, love entails finding a meaning to the things that compose the circumstance rejecting idealism insofar as love does not conceive the world as it should be but as it is. To save one's circumstances, then, is to 'reabsorb it' in the attempt to bring it to its perfection, "saving the appearances" (Ortega y Gasset 2004, I, p. 757). Above all things, (and Arendt would certainly agree) it is a fundamental "desire for understanding" (Ortega y Gasset 2004, I, p. 749). This impetus is what led Ortega to be fully committed to Spain. It would not be mistaken to affirm that Ortega loved Spain, and deeply cared for it:

> Life as acceptance of one's circumstance implies (…) that man cannot save himself if, at the same time, he does not save his surroundings. My first book began a series of Spanish studies to which I gave the title of Salvations. My individual destiny appeared to me and continues to appear to me as inseparable from the destiny of my people. But the fate of my people was, in turn, an enigma, perhaps the greatest in European tradition. That is why my production for many years suffers from the obsession of Spain as a problem (...). (Ortega y Gasset 2009, IX, p. 164)

At this point we can establish similarities between Ortega's salvation of circumstance and Arendt's amor mundi. For Arendt, to love the world means caring for a shared world. It means accepting it and judging it with its horrors; it entails

teaching new generations to love it as well as to foster the natality for acting when they become political beings. For Ortega, we can only be proper human beings when we save the inalienable historical, social, geographical, technical circumstance that we are thrown into, which is our destiny and makes the other half of our being. Our existential authenticity resides on heroically and realistically accepting it as our vocation, a vocation that is not abstract but rather emerges from our own being-in-circumstance.

Now that it has been established how these two thinkers propose the loving relationship to the world, the next step will be to investigate how we could love our increasingly scientific, technological, and bureaucratic circumstance.

4. Loving our technoscientific world?

To answer this question, firstly we need to review how Arendt and Ortega analyzed science, technology, and the human technological condition. Secondly, we need to investigate what are the risks of a world that is increasingly techno-scientifically, bureaucratically, and technocratically mediated for these authors. The fact is that, as Javier Echeverría (2015, p. 27 n. 12) writes, we increasingly live in 'techno-circumstances'; and through the affordances brought by digital technology, we inhabit a 'third environment' (composed of internet, smartphones, apps, ATMs, etc.) that overlaps the 'first environment' (natural entities) and the 'second environment' (that which humans manufacture, such as urban spaces) (Echeverría 1999, p. 18). We need to come to terms with this third environment.

Let us recall that for Arendt the world is the human artifice, made of objects and institutions that last: "This earthly home becomes a world in the proper sense of the word only when the totality of fabricated things is so organized that it can resist the consuming life process of the people dwelling in it, and thus outlast them" (Arendt 1993, p. 210). Furthermore, one of the characteristics of the human artifice is that it conditions human life: "Men are conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition for their own existence. The world in which the *vita activa* spends itself consists of things produced by human activities" (Arendt 1958, p. 9). The problem of modern man, for Arendt, is not one of alienation from himself as Marx saw it, but a problem of alienation from a common world (Arendt 1958, p. 254). This world-alienation was produced by three events that provoked man to move toward the self: the discovery of America and the exploration of the earth, the land expropriations of peasants during the Reformation that provoked a shift from property to wealth, and the invention of the telescope that made nature to be seen from the point of view of the universe (Arendt 1958, p. 248). From these, I want to emphasize the last one.

Through the telescope, Galileo delivered the secrets of the universe to human cognition with the certainty of sense perception, showing, consequently, that human senses were unreliable (Arendt 1958, p. 260). This led to Cartesian doubt, the mathematization of the world, and experimentation, which fundamentally challenge authority and traditions: "Since the rise of modern science, whose spirit is expressed in the Cartesian philosophy of doubt and mistrust, the conceptual framework of the tradition has not been secure" (Arendt 1993, p. 39). Simply put, science does not emerge from what we perceive through our senses. Rather, what we can be certain of

is our experiments, which are man-made conditions. For Arendt, science provokes the "dissolution of objective reality into the subjective states of mind or, rather, into subjective mental processes" (Arendt 1958, p. 282). Galileo's astrophysical view from nowhere established a universe "of whose qualities we know no more than the way they affect our measuring instruments (…) Instead of objective qualities (…) we find instruments, and instead of nature or the universe–in the words of Heisenberg–man encounters only himself" (Arendt 1958, p. 261). Given that contemplation did not grant access to truth, the result of this was a reversal from *vita contemplativa* to *vita activa*, where *homo faber* in his activities of making guided by utility became prominent. However, the principle of happiness quickly took hold, and *animal laborans* and its concern with mere life became the modern subject.

Furthermore, the launch of Sputnik, as a scientific and technological achievement, fundamentally changed the human condition (Arendt 1993). Through such a technoscientific event, Arendt saw the transcendence of our animal foundation. Humans challenge their biological portion, have the capacity to make themselves, and escape their earthliness. However, the danger is that it made *everything possible*–which is indeed the totalitarian motto as she described in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (see Berkowitz 2018, p. 341-342). Science subsumes every aspect of reality to rationalization, transforming everything into processes, so that *what things are* does not matter anymore, but rather *how things work*. This version of progress, for Arendt, presents a serious threat: "Not only has the progress of science ceased to coincide with the progress of mankind (…) but it could even spell mankind's end (…) Progress, in other words, can no longer serve as the standard by which to evaluate the disastrously rapid change-processes we have let loose" (Arendt 1972, p. 132).

The consequence of progress and of seeing all of reality through nowhere, renders things to stand for their usefulness, and the world as something to be manipulated, quantified, predicted, and controlled:

> If we look down from this point upon what is going on on earth and upon the various activities of men, that is, if we apply the Archimedean point to ourselves, then these activities will indeed appear to ourselves as no more than "overt behavior," which we can study with the same methods we use to study the behavior of rats. Seen from a sufficient distance, the cars in which we travel and which we know we built ourselves will look as though they were, as Heisenberg once put it, "as inescapable a part of ourselves as the snail's shell is to its occupant." All our pride in what we can do will disappear into some kind of mutation of the human race; the whole of technology, seen from this point, in fact no longer appears "as the result of a conscious human effort to extend man's material powers, but rather as a large-scale biological process. (Arendt 1993, p. 279)

What Arendt suggests, as Berkowitz (2018, p. 352) points out, is that "we humans begin to look at ourselves the way that scientists look at rats". This can be seen when, for example, the social sciences reduce human freedom to mere behavior that can be explained through statistical models (Arendt 1958, p. 42-43), which presents the risk of abolishing human plurality, natality, and spontaneity.

Daily we can find examples of this, for instance, when news articles describe some artificial intelligence or smart technology being developed to take the place or make easier some activity carried out by humans. An example of these are the

'Amazon Go' stores, based on what they call 'Just Walk Out Technology'. Using computer vision, sensor fusion, and deep learning, these stores offer a "checkout-free shopping experience. Just Walk Out Technology automatically detects when products are taken from or returned to the shelves and keeps track of them in a virtual cart. When you're done shopping, you can just leave the store. Later, we'll send you a receipt and charge your Amazon account".[13]

Arendt mentions the modern threatening event of automation as decisive for the human condition, insofar as "all human productivity would be sucked into an enormously intensified life process" (Arendt 1958, p. 132), and the question that rises is "whether machines will serve the world and its things, or if, in the contrary, they (…) have begun to rule and even destroy world and things" (Arendt 1958, p. 151). In such desire to replace humans with more reliable and efficient technology, we risk losing what makes us human: "we confront a future in which "human" is a derogatory adjective signifying inefficiency, incompetence and backwardness" (Berkowitz 2014, p. 163). Insofar as through science and technology the whole of reality is statistically measurable and human freedom is transformed into behavior, we also risk our freedom (Arendt 1958, pp. 42-43).

We can find that Ortega pointed in the same direction than Arendt, sounding a similar alarm, although he was more explicitly ambivalent about technology. In his writing *Meditación de la Técnica* (2004, V, p. 559), Ortega argues that "A man without technique, that is, without reaction against the environment, is not a man". By 'reaction against the environment' Ortega is saying that technique is what humans do to modify their circumstance according to their desires and ideas about a good life. In this sense, he defines man as an 'ontological centaur':

> …the being of man has the strange condition that it is at the same time related to nature, and it is not; it is both natural and extra-natural, a kind of ontological centaur, with half a portion immersed in nature, but the other half transcending it (...) What is natural is realized by itself (…). But, for the same reason, he does not feel this natural part as his true self. On the other hand, his extra-natural portion, is not realized, but consists of a mere pretense of being, in a life-project. This is what we feel as our true self, what we call our personality, our self. (Ortega y Gasset 2004, V, p. 338)

In other words, for Ortega, technique is the human reaction against nature, through which man creates a new, artificial, 'supernature' according to their projects. It is "the energetic reaction against nature or circumstance that leads to create between it and man a new nature placed on it, a supernature" (Ortega y Gasset 2004, V, p. 558). This is also to say that, rather than humans adapting to their environment, they adapt their environment to them, trying to create an identity with it. Here, the similarity with Arendt's is quite clear, insofar as she defined work as the human interference over the inexorable cycles of nature for the sake of creating a human shared world. And this shared world, this artifice, in turn, conditions humans.

Ortega's ambivalence toward technology lies in the fact that, even though technical modifications are consubstantial with human beings, technique reaches a point in which it occludes human capacity of deciding how to live authentic lives. Modernity, for Ortega, is characterized by the different pacing of science,

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[13] This description is available at https://www.amazon.com/b?ie=UTF8&node=16008589011

technology, and moral development (de Haro 2003), and the risk is that we can be swept by totalizing ideologies. In a similar fashion to Arendt's argument that that the motto of totalitarianism is that 'everything is possible' (Arendt 1993, pp. 87-88), Ortega warns that in the 20th century, technique reaches a point that it grants every imaginable possibility, a fact that fosters the new modern subject of the 'mass-man', who has innumerable means at his disposal but lacks clear ends (Ortega y Gasset 2004, *La Rebelión de las Masas*, IV).

Technique makes man hubristically believe that reality consists of pure means to satisfy his desires, thus life is not a struggle where one faces constant circumstantial limitations and resistances. As de Haro (2004) pointed out, this is the crisis of our contemporary world that Ortega warned about: in societies increasingly technological and automatic (as the shopping experiences of Amazon Go), given that technique makes everything possible, our lives lose substance. We end up being, as Ortega write, "incapable of determining the content of life", and in spite of our current times being "the most intensely technical that there have been in human history, [they] are the emptiest" (Ortega y Gasset 2004, V, p. 596). The problem of modern, technological societies is that they submerge people in a 'crisis of desiring' (ibid.) that provokes a lack of imagination about how to live one's life, and therefore, people find meaning by following ways of life that are socially predefined. This mass-man lives in constant 'alteration' (ibid.), that is, incapable of thinking by himself; he finds predefined solutions to the problems of life in mass movements and ideologies.

This fact is crucial when we consider that loneliness is currently a social problem in the developed world (Beilock 2020; Renken 2020; European Comission, n.d.), even though as Ortega already pointed out in *The Revolt of the Masses*, there are increasingly masses of people everywhere. For Arendt, loneliness is a key element conducive to totalitarianism insofar as it is sharply experienced when one is "deserted by all others" (Arendt 1951, p. 476).[14] Totalitarianism is "organized loneliness" (Arendt 1951, p. 478), and the mass man that both Ortega and Arendt describe is susceptible to suffer this social disease insofar as loneliness is an everyday experience for him, as Arendt points out: "The chief characteristic of the mass man is not brutality and backwardness, but his isolation and lack of normal social relationships" (Arendt 1951, p. 317).

Isolation and 'being deserted by all others' are the problems that Arendt saw when politics is substituted by bureaucracies, experts, and technical systems, or for Ortega when he described the 'barbarian-specialist' as one expression of the mass-man. For Arendt (2005), the elevation of the expert started early on with Plato, who rejected the *doxai* of politics for eternal truths that the philosopher must contemplate. This led to a distrust of lived experience and to seeing politics as a threat rather than the realm of action, insofar as politics turned out to be about experts making scientific policy-decisions. Given that now governments have weapons that can extinguish life on earth, the prejudice against politics, for Arendt, lies in "the fear that humanity could destroy itself through politics and through the means of force now at its disposal" (Arendt 2005, p. 97), which is followed by "the hope that humanity will come to its senses and rid the world, not of humankind, but of politics. It could do so through a world government that transforms the state into an administrative machine, resolves political conflicts bureaucratically, and replaces armies with police forces" (ibid).

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[14] A conspicuous expression of this is, for instance, the fact that Americans have less and less friends (Cox 2021).

Consequently, politics is seen as something to be delegated to technocrats who administer mere life: "the fact that contemporary politics is concerned with the naked existence of us all is itself the clearest sign of the disastrous state in which the world finds itself–a disaster that, along with all the rest, threatens to rid the world of politics" (Arendt 2005, p. 145).

By describing the 'barbarian-specialist' as an exemplar of the modern mass-man, Ortega shares with Arendt this concern about technocrats and bureaucrats imposing the limited outlook that their expertise grants them onto the world to other areas of reality that are not properly subsumed under their reduced field of knowledge. The barbarian-specialist is characterized by Ortega as the one who knows about his reduced aspect of reality but ignores the rest, and not conscious of his ignorance, tries to impose their partial vision to the whole of reality. This reason makes him an exemplar of the modern mass-man: "…it turns out that the current man of science is the prototype of the mass man. And not by chance, not by the unipersonal defect of each scientist, but because science itself –the root of civilization– automatically converts him into a mass-man; that is, it makes him a primitive, a modern barbarian" (Ortega y Gasset 2004, IV, p. 442). This echoes what Arendt (1972) described in her essay *Lying in Politics* about the 'problem-solvers' during the Vietnam war, namely, experts who knew a great deal about abstract politics but ignored the reality of Indochina, who ended up imposing their theories onto reality with a complete disregard of the facts. From an Orteguian perspective, the technocrats that Arendt describes paradigmatically behaved like mass-men.

Let us now go back to the question that titles this section: can we love a world increasingly explained in technoscientific terms and ruled by experts, technocrats, and bureaucrats? The problem is not only that every aspect of human life is increasingly mediated through some type of technology of the 'smart' kind, and that human freedom is reduced to behavior and manipulated through algorithms, but also that, as Nolen Gertz (2019, pp. 172-173) writes, technology defines how we value the world. One of the main problems with technology is that we see them as mere instruments for our own autonomous ends, but in reality "not only do technologies shape how we see the world and how we act in the world but they also shape how we evaluate the world, how we determine what is "best" and what is worst" (...) What is best for the device becomes what is best for us" (2019, pp. 172-173). Gertz (2019) further explains that, for example, technological companies such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tinder, etc. redefine what we understand by privacy as they present themselves as the best way to be social, and we see them simply as tools toward that end. Thus, those of us who reject to use those apps or sites, or who for example refuse to share photos through WhatsApp, are ridiculed and "ostracized for not being sufficiently technological" (Gertz 2019, p. 177). Indeed, resisting technological mediation is a challenge in the 21st century that the Covid 19 pandemic only exacerbated.

For Arendt, science and technology have emancipated themselves from humanistic concerns, and they carry a sort of deterministic force. Scientist have renounced common sense and normal language through working with algebraic mathematical abstractions that make no sense in the world of regular people (Arendt 1993, pp. 265-266; 1958, pp. 164-165). Arendt appears to be doubtful that we can love a world that is increasingly artificial or man-made, because technoscientific developments such as smart technologies or deep learning present an essential challenge to natality,

spontaneity, and plurality. Societies, with the use of big data, are creating a new sort of "no man rule" (Arendt 1958, p. 40; 1972, p. 137 and 178) that is literally void of humans through the rule of new bureaucrats not of flesh and blood but electronic, such as algorithms (Gertz 2019, p. 184). The fundamental risk that she warns us about, is that in processes such as automation, human beings become superfluous (Arendt 1958, p. 132), and there is a small step from superfluousness to extermination, as she explains throughout *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951).

However, Arendt is not fully a pessimist about the technoscientific constitution of the world, nor sees it as entirely deterministic. In *The Human Condition*, she clearly says is just proposing that "we think what we are doing" (1958, p. 5), assessing whether world and earth alienation, artificiality and automation, are truly how we want to be conditioned, or whether we ought to change directions. Indeed, contingency is important to Arendt, and things could always be otherwise (Campillo 2019, p. 92). Let us remember that one of her main critiques to totalitarian regimes is their vision of them carrying out the inexorable laws of history. One of the main problems that we must face in modernity is the dissolving of the bannisters of tradition for thought, thus we must think in the 'gap between past and future' (Arendt 1993).

Ortega also pointed out this modern need to think what we are doing in novel circumstances without the authority of tradition:

> Our civilization knows that its principles are bankrupt–dematerialized–, and therefore that it doubts itself (...) This means that the form cultivated up to here by our civilization–or more accurately the Westerners–is exhausted, but that, for this very reason, our civilization feels impelled and obliged to invent radically new forms. We are at a time (…) when we have no other choice but to invent in all respects. No other task could be more delightful. We must invent! (Ortega y Gasset 2004, VI, p. 794).

As Llano-Alonso (2015) indicates, this is Ortega's claim for us to come to terms with our technological world from a ratiovitalist perspective, that is, not through abstract reason but attending to the requirements of life as radical reality. In this sense, this world is not directly a threat unless we allow it to dominate ourselves. On the one hand, the role of technique is "to give freedom to man to be able to become himself" (Ortega y Gasset 2004, V, p. 575), but the peril is that "to be technical and only technical, is to be able to be everything and consequently not being anything determined" (Ortega y Gasset 2004, IV, p. 596). Therefore, Ortega emphasizes the individual responsibility to retreat from the world and look inwardly within a technological world, thus criticizing and judging it (Llano Alonso 2015, p. 20). Here we can find an important similarity to Arendt in her division between the public and the private spheres, and the risks of the rise of the social as the technocratic and bureaucratic realm that obfuscates both curtailing human freedom. Indeed, both for Arendt and Ortega the self-absorption that we can achieve in privacy, that is, a temporary retreat from the world is fundamental to come back to it and act on it. The challenge is, precisely, to be able to be self-absorbed freely–something that ubiquitous technology that is designed to be addictive, that gathers data from us, and tries to predict and manipulate our behavior, makes increasingly difficult. This technoscientific circumstance is the one we need to try to love and save, but it is not an easy task. It is our responsibility to retreat from the world to our inwardness–following Ortega–and then –according to Arendt–face up to this technical reality we inhabit and think what we are doing.

5. Conclusion

We are living in a social world increasingly mediated by technology of the 'smart' kind. Algorithms guide our behavior, and soon, developments on artificial intelligence and the internet of things will make decisions for us. Genetic engineering will liberate us from the randomness and fate of nature, rendering it under our control (Berkowitz 2021). José Ortega y Gasset noted very early on how technological change has perilous consequences both socially and individually. On the one hand, there is the emergence of the mass-man as the nihilistic, alienated modern techno-subject (cf. Echeverría 2018); on the other hand, individuals lose their capacity to look inward and decide who they are beyond the forces of their technological circumstance. Hannah Arendt also warned us that we must think about such technological changes that completely change how we live in a common world and how we are conditioned as humans. Ortega proposed that we must 'save' our circumstance, in other words, be responsible subjects rather than passive objects who go with the social flow of the mass and its blind technoscientific infatuation. Arendt, on her part, looked at the world through the prism of *amor mundi*, that is, love for the world. She proposed facing the hard reality of the world, caring for what appears in it, and making judgments. It means not escaping from our shared, human world toward any abstract ideal, but rather, to take on the burden of thinking about what we are doing.

The world is receding as science and technology grant us full control of nature so that it loses its unpredictable awesomeness. Reality is transformed into subjective mental processes so that what is left are atomized individuals reduced to consumers (Berkowitz 2020). Both Ortega and Arendt anticipated these social processes, and demanded that we take responsibility for them, so that we can make the world our home.

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