

The Public, The Private and The Social

Work and the Human Condition: Fall 2008

I. Arendt's Project

II. Contrasting Terms

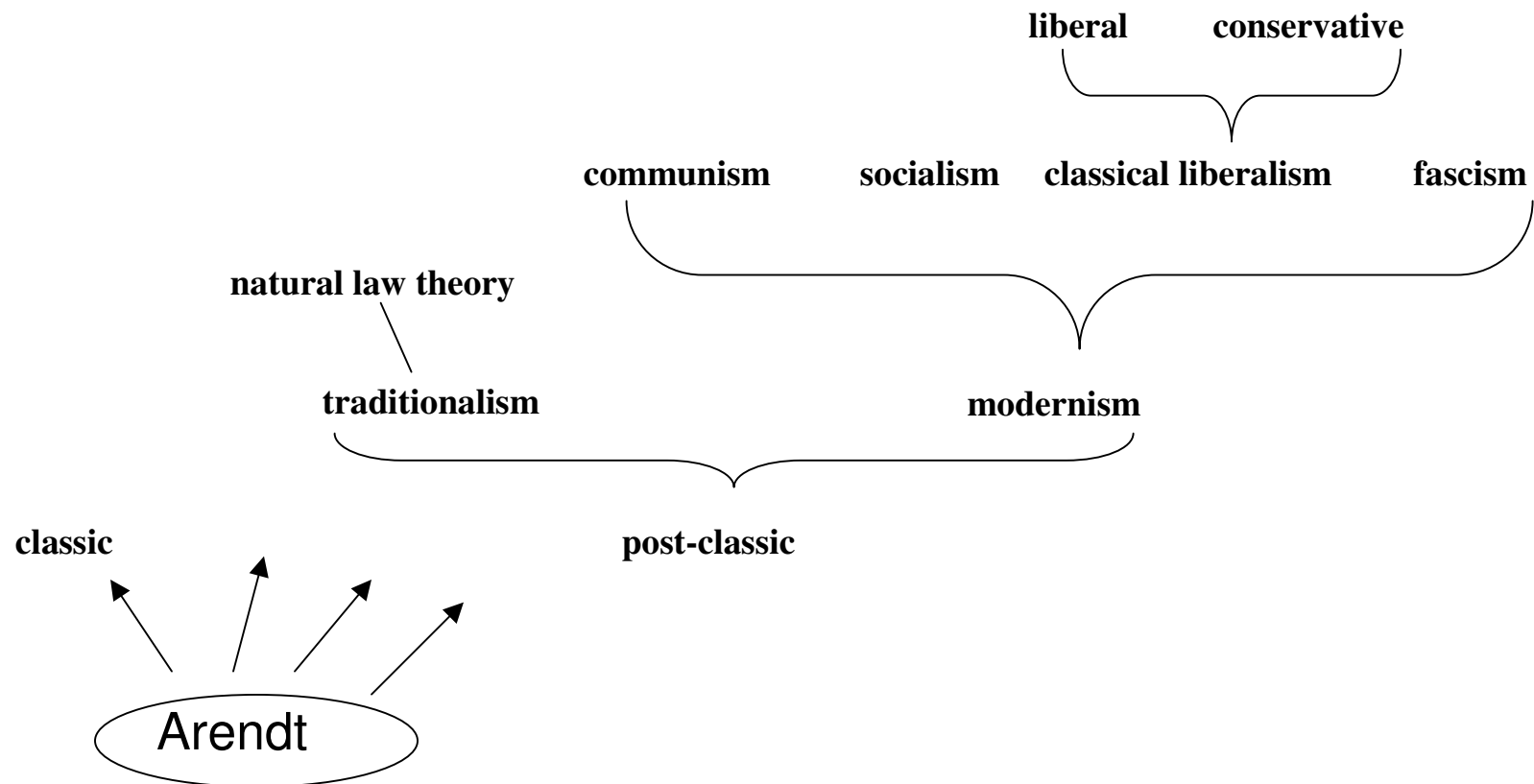
III. Public and Private: The Classical Divide

IV. The Rise of the Social

Arendt's Project:

“nothing more than to think what we are doing” (5)

A matter of perspective — Arendt wants a wide view



Problem:

The language we use to discuss social and political matters usually presupposes classical liberalism, or at best, modernism.

Arendt's Challenge:

- to find and use a ***vocabulary*** that can express the concepts she needs
- to find and use a ***mode of argument*** that can support her position
- to convey this to a contemporary audience

Result:

- Arendt's use of common terms is idiosyncratic
- Arendt's arguments are frequently complex and convoluted
- Arendt frequently needs to draw upon a vast literature

Terminology — Some Contrasts

Public

Private

Property

Wealth

Action

Behavior

Freedom

Necessity

**What should be
displayed**

**What should be
hidden**

Glory

Goodness

The Public and Private Realms in the Classical World

The Private Realm

the household (*oikia*)

focused on maintaining
biological life

location of labor

realm of necessity

strict inequality

the economic
foundation for political
equals

private property = ***place***
from which you enter
the public realm (cf.
real property)

The Public Realm

the *polis*

focused on political
activity

location of action

realm of freedom

community of equals

not a realm for
discussing economic
matters

set against futility

immortality

The Rise of the Social

