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Arendt and Lincoln on Leadership and Rule

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Introduction

At first glance, it might seem that Hannah Arendt had relatively little interest in the concept of leadership. George Kateb seems to suggest as much when he contrasts Arendt with Max Weber in the following way:

> For Max Weber . . . the authentically political activity is deciding for others, commanding them, wielding power over them, and affecting the course of events. *Indeed, Weber's conceptualization is offered in the context of his theory of leadership*. Politics [for Weber] is essentially what some do to others, rather than —as with Arendt—what all do together. She even holds that ruling is antithetical to authentic politics.[1]

Kateb here implies that Arendt placed little emphasis on—or perhaps even had disdain for—the concept of leadership insofar as she believed that politics is not about what elites "do to others" but rather about "what all do together."

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Kateb is certainly correct that Arendt believed, unlike Weber, that ruling is incompatible with genuine politics. However, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt also offers to the reader a positive conception of leadership, one that she carefully distinguishes from her understanding of rule. Surprisingly little attention has been given by political theorists to Arendt's understanding of leadership.[2] Her positive conception of leadership, though, actually plays an important role in Arendt's thought, and here I argue that it is a conception of leadership that can help us think through the problem of what it means to be a *democratic* leader (as well as what it means to be a *democratic* follower). I also compare and contrast Arendt's ideas on leadership and on rule with those of Abraham Lincoln. In certain respects, Lincoln's words and deeds resonate with Arendt's ideas on leadership and with her critique of rule; however, Lincoln can also help us see some of the shortcomings of Arendt's ideas on these matters. The key differences between Arendt's and Lincoln's ideas on leadership and on rule, as will be shown, are ultimately rooted in their very different understandings of the meaning and the significance of the Declaration of Independence.

Distinguishing the Concept of Leadership from the Concept of Rule

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt suggests that a salutary notion of leadership rooted in the ancient Greek practice of politics was gradually (and unfortunately) replaced by a deleterious concept of rule, a concept that in her view should have no place in political life. Arendt maintains that one can detect this shift within certain etymological changes in both Greek and Latin. In her discussion of the concept of action, she writes,

> Greek and Latin . . . contain two altogether different and yet interrelated words with which to designate the verb "to act." To the two Greek verbs *archein* ("to begin," "to lead," finally "to rule") and *prattein* ("to pass through," "to achieve," "to finish") correspond the two Latin verbs *agere*

> ("to set into motion," "to lead") and *gerere* (whose original meaning is "to bear"). Here it seems as though each action were divided into two parts, the beginning made by a single person and the achievement in which many join by "bearing" and "finishing" the enterprise, by seeing it through. . . . In both cases the word that originally designated only the second part of action, its achievement—*prattein* and *gerere*—became the accepted word for action in general, whereas the words designating the beginning of action became specialized in meaning, at least in political language.[3]

Originally, then, leaders were seen as those who *began* an action but who were then reliant on followers for the completion or achievement of the action. Eventually, though, the idea of a *leader*, who is always in need of the freely given support of followers, was replaced by the idea of a *ruler*, who simply demands that followers obey commands. As Arendt puts it,

> Thus the role of the beginner and leader, who was a *primus inter pares* (in the case of Homer, a king among kings), changed into that of a ruler; the original interdependence of action, the dependence of the beginner and leader upon others for help and the dependence of his followers upon him for an occasion to act themselves, split into two altogether different functions: the function of giving commands, which became the prerogative of the ruler, and the function of executing them, which became the duty of his subjects.[4]

There are a number of important points to highlight here regarding Arendt's understanding of genuine leadership (as opposed to rule). First, leaders and followers are interdependent, which means, in part, that leaders can never accomplish their goals on their own. While leaders are always dependent on followers, it is equally the case that followers are in need of leaders to provide

them with "an occasion to act themselves." While Arendt is correctly seen as a theorist who celebrates the active political participation of citizens, we see here that this active participation has as one of its prerequisites the existence of leaders who can provide the citizenry with opportunities to engage in political action. This clearly points to the idea that a participatory democracy can never be a leaderless democracy; in other words, Arendt here suggests that leadership, properly understood, does not threaten participatory democracy but on the contrary is actually necessary for it.

Arendt thus offers an important challenge to the claim of Benjamin Barber that participatory democrats must always be wary of leadership. Barber writes, "On its face, leadership is opposed to participatory self-government; it acts in place of or to some degree encroaches on the autonomy of individual actors."[5] Whereas Barber suggests that leadership tends to displace ordinary citizens insofar as the leader "acts in [their] place," Arendt suggests that genuine leaders do not render their fellow citizens passive but, on the contrary, help to empower them by supplying them with chances "to act themselves."

My argument here is consistent with John LeJeune's claim that it is a mistake to try to connect Arendt's ideas to the celebration of "leaderlessness" that emerged during the Arab Spring and the Occupy Wall Street protests.[6] I would add that while Arendt certainly rejected the dream of a "leaderless" democracy, she at the same time rejected the opposing (but equally problematic) dream of a world in which there is no need for followers to engage in political action. The longing for a world that can dispense with the active participation of followers was articulated, for example, by Donald Trump when he declared at the 2016 Republican Convention, "Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why *I alone can fix it*."[7] In stark contrast to the idea that there is one leader who "alone can fix" a nation's problems, Arendt has argued that "no man, however strong, can ever accomplish anything, good or bad, without the help of others."[8] Arendt reminds us, then, that just as leaders who can begin something new are indispensable, followers who join with leaders to work together on

the actions the leaders have commenced are equally indispensable. In other words, both the temptation to think that a democracy can do without leadership *and* the temptation to think that a strong leader can solve political problems for the people, without any effort on their part, must be resisted. In short, whereas Barber has expressed a desire for a democracy in which there are "neither leaders nor followers," Arendt suggests that a healthy political community must always contain both.[9]

It should also be noted that for Arendt, the leader "was a *primus inter pares*," which suggests that leaders and followers remain in an important sense the equals of one another, even if the leader has greater prominence.[10] This fundamental equality that exists in the relationship between leaders and followers can be contrasted with the hierarchical and unequal relationship that is alleged to exist between "the ruler" and "his subjects." Indeed, Arendt goes so far as to suggest that the concept of rule was taken by Plato from the realm of the household and, more specifically, from the master-slave relationship. That is, Plato took a concept (rule) that had traditionally been applied by the Greeks only to a realm of inequality and hierarchy (namely, the household) and applied it, or rather *mis*applied it, to a realm that should always be marked by equality (namely, the realm of politics). As Arendt puts it,

> According to Greek understanding, the relationship between ruling and being ruled, between command and obedience, was by definition identical with the relationship between master and slaves and therefore precluded all possibility of action. Plato's contention therefore, that the rules of behavior in public matters should be derived from the master-slave relationship in a well-ordered household actually meant that action should not play any part in human affairs.[11]

For Arendt, when action—which for Arendt always involves a plurality of actors—is eliminated from human affairs by modeling political life along the lines of the hierarchical household, there are

no longer any *leaders* who seek to engage in collective efforts with followers who remain their equals; instead, there are only *rulers* who seek mastery over passive subjects.

Against what she claims is a long-standing way of thinking about political rule that commenced with Plato and Aristotle, Arendt asserts that the "command-obedience relationship" never actually exists in political life.[12] Arendt helps to clarify what she means by this bold claim in her 1964 essay "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship." For when discussing war criminals such as Adolf Eichmann, she argues that while they may assert that they were compelled to obey their government's orders, in actuality they always had a choice, for they were adults, not children. As Arendt puts it,

> The reason . . . that we can hold these new criminals, who never committed a crime out of their own initiative, nevertheless responsible for what they did is that there is no such thing as obedience in political and moral matters. The only domain where the word could possibly apply to adults who are not slaves is the domain of religion, in which people say that they *obey* the word or the command of God because the relationship between God and man can rightly be seen in terms similar to the relation between adult and child.[13]

Arendt suggests here that while Eichmann may not have been the leader who initiated the abominable crime of genocide, he nonetheless made a decision—a voluntary choice—to help carry out a policy of genocide begun by others, and he should therefore be held accountable. In Arendt's view, "[A]n adult consents where a child obeys; if an adult is said to obey, he actually *supports* the organization or the authority or the law that claims 'obedience.'"[14] Therefore, according to Arendt, criminals such as Eichmann should be asked, not "Why did you obey?" but rather "Why did you *support*?"[15] The language of "obedience," she suggests, is appropriate when discussing the relationship between children and parents, but it is never appropriate when discussing political relationships. Arendt maintains that the shift from "Why did you obey?" to

"Why did you support?" is not simply a "semantic irrelevancy," for it serves as an important reminder that in politics we are dealing with equal adults who never relinquish—no matter how much pressure they are under—the freedom to choose whether to follow (that is, support) those who aspire to be their leaders.[16]

Arendt's ideas here call into question Barber's claim, quoted earlier, that leadership "encroaches on the autonomy" of citizens. In the same vein, Barber writes, "Under the representative system, leaders turn electors into followers; *and the correct posture for followers is deference*."[17] In contrast, Arendt suggests that it is not the case that followers are inherently deferential or that they always renounce their autonomy; in her view, it is actually incumbent on followers (in any type of regime) to make independent choices regarding whether to support what their leaders have begun.[18]

Leadership, Natality, and the Disavowal of Sovereignty

While Arendt suggests that for practical as well as moral reasons the role of the follower (and at times the role of the conscientious *non*-follower) is a dignified and honorable one, it is also clear that leaders have a very special status in Arendt thought. As we have seen, Arendt argues that "the role of the beginner and leader" unfortunately "changed into that of a ruler." Arendt here suggests that the leader should be seen as someone who *begins* something in the realm of political action. And, insofar as leaders are those who begin, leaders are those who embody and exemplify what Arendt calls "natality." Arendt explains the crucial importance of natality when she writes that

> [t]he 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. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope.[19]

The role of the follower may have great dignity and practical importance, but it is leaders—that is, those who begin something new—who miraculously save the world from ruin. In the essay "Ideology and Terror," Arendt goes so far as to suggest that "beginning is . . . the supreme capacity of man," which again indicates the crucial status that leader-beginners have in Arendt's thought.[20] Furthermore, Arendt suggests that it is the capacity of leaders to *begin* that reveals the human capacity for freedom. This can be seen when Arendt writes that once "the element of beginning disappeared altogether from the concept of rulership," the result was that "the most elementary and authentic understanding of human freedom disappeared from political philosophy."[21] Far from being of only minor importance in Arendt's thought, the concept of leadership is thus central to Arendt's thought, for insofar as leaders are those who begin, it is they who exemplify the possibility of freedom—and hope—that is inherent in natality.

Arendt also suggests that whereas the concept of rule is at odds with certain aspects of what she calls "action" that are permanent and irrevocable, the concept of leadership, properly understood, is thoroughly consistent with the omnipresent features of action. According to Arendt, Plato imported the concept of rule from the household and applied it to the political realm largely because of what Arendt calls "the threefold frustration of action—the unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of the process, and the anonymity of its authors."[22] Those who aspire to rule in a political community believe they can somehow defy or transcend "the threefold frustration of action" by achieving mastery, or what Arendt calls "sovereignty," in the realm of human affairs.[23] But for Arendt, the results of any actor's actions are always unpredictable and "boundless," and this is because every action unleashes an unforeseeable and uncontrollable chain of events once it enters into what Arendt calls the "web of human relationships."[24]

While never stated outright by Arendt, it seems that inherent in her notion of leadership is the idea that the leader (unlike the ruler) acknowledges and accepts that sovereignty can never be achieved in politics. Arendt notes, "[S]overeignty, the ideal of uncompromising self-sufficiency and mastership, is contradictory

to the very condition of plurality. No man can be sovereign because not one man, but men, inhabit the earth."[25] As noted, Arendt suggests that genuine leaders (as opposed to rulers) recognize that they can begin actions but cannot determine in advance what the outcomes of those actions will be. That is, leaders are aware that their actions will inevitably lead to unpredictable ripple effects in a "web of human relationships" constituted by the actions of many other political actors. The leader thus knows that to seek "mastership" in the political realm would be futile. Unlike those who seek to rule, those who seek to lead certainly aim to make a mark on the political world, but they do so without hubris, for they acknowledge that there are important limits—which Arendt at times calls "frailties"—inherent in action. In short, unlike the concept of rule, the concept of leadership contains, for Arendt, a sense of *humility*.

We are now in a position to see that Arendt's theory of leadership is quite useful for helping us think through the concept of democratic leadership (as well as the concept of democratic followership).[26] Important is that Arendt's critique of the concept of rule helps to reveal what democratic leadership is *not*.[27] By distinguishing the concept of leadership from the concept of rule, Arendt can help us see that democratic leadership does *not* entail ordinary citizens (or "followers") being dominated, demeaned, or displaced by the leader. Moreover, Arendt's discussion of what she sees as the original Greek understanding of leadership points us to the idea that democratic leaders must acknowledge and respect their followers as political equals and as indispensable co-participants in actions that the leader has initiated but cannot complete or ever fully control. Democratic leaders do not treat their followers as thoughtless subjects who execute their commands; instead, democratic leaders see their followers as thoughtful fellow citizens who can freely decide whether they want to join in common action with the leader. With Arendt's ideas in mind, we can see that democratic leaders seek to begin something new and thus change the political landscape, but they do so with a sense of humility, for they are aware that they can never achieve mastery over a complex web of relationships formed by the actions of countless other actors.

Lincoln, Leadership, and the "Apple of Gold"

To further elucidate—and critically assess—Arendt's ideas on leadership and rule, it is helpful to consider them in the light of Abraham Lincoln's words and deeds. At times Lincoln's ideas help to confirm the considerable value of Arendt's ideas on leadership and rule; at other times, though, Lincoln's thought constitutes a challenge—and provides some important correctives—to Arendt's ideas on these matters. Let us begin with a comparison of Lincoln's and Arendt's ideas on leadership, then turn to a comparison of their ideas on the concept of rule.

As noted, Arendt suggested that "beginning is . . . the supreme capacity of man," which means that for Arendt, leaders have an exalted status insofar as leaders are those who begin something new in the political realm. Similarly, one can see in the Lyceum Address that the young Lincoln believed that it was the founders—that is, the leaders who began the republican experiment—who achieved a kind of "distinction" and "glory" unattainable to those born later, for the task of the latter would merely be the "perpetuation" rather than the foundation of republican institutions.[28] In this early speech, Lincoln suggests that in his own day the desire for glory can only be dangerous; because glory requires the beginning of something new, achieving it would seem to require destroying rather than simply "supporting and maintaining" the existing "edifice of liberty and equal rights."[29] Yet, as Michael Zuckert insightfully demonstrates, Lincoln eventually "came to see that [in his Lyceum Address] he had defined the alternatives facing men of ambition too narrowly as either follow the Founders and earn less fame or achieve the great fame they sought by overturning the founders' work."[30] Starting with the Temperance Address in 1842, Zuckert suggests, Lincoln realized that a "third path" was open, for he came to believe that it would be possible for "the truly ambitious" to gain "fame on the scale of the founders," not by overthrowing their work, but by "*extending* [their] liberating deeds."[31] Lincoln came to believe, then, that after the founding of the American republic, one could still "be a great innovator" without "being a Caesar."[32] According to Zuckert, the innovative extension

of the founders' deeds that would be sought by Lincoln would be "[t]o somehow resolve the slavery problem," which "would be an achievement even the founders had not managed and could earn the individual who accomplished it the kind of recognition the supremely ambitious seek."[33]

It should be noted that Lincoln's "third path," as Zuckert puts it, arguably transcends—or at least complicates—Arendt's dichotomy between the leader who *begins*, on the one hand, and the follower who helps to *complete* what has already been begun, on the other. For by bringing about "a new birth of freedom," Lincoln certainly became a genuine beginner-leader in his own right; yet, this new beginning can also be seen as an effort to complete, or at least to extend, what the founders had already commenced.

What Zuckert refers to as Lincoln's "extending" of what the founders had started could also be called an augmentation. My use of the word *augmentation* is partly inspired by Arendt's discussion of how the ancient Roman notion of authority was tied up with the idea of "augmentation" of Rome's "foundation."[34] According to Arendt, for the Romans this augmentation at times consisted of territorial expansion through conquest. As Arendt put it, "To the Romans . . . the conquest of Italy and the building of an empire were legitimate to the extent that the conquered territories enlarged the foundation of the city and remained tied to it."[35] While Lincoln also believed in the importance of augmenting America's foundation (as Zuckert reminds us), Lincoln did not have in mind a literal expansion of America's borders through military force. Rather, he had in mind a further extension, or application, of the founding principles found in the Declaration of Independence. For when Lincoln helped the nation achieve "a new birth of freedom" by eradicating slavery, he augmented the American "foundation" by bringing about something that was new but also deeply rooted in America's "ancient faith," as he put it, that "all men are created equal."[36]

In contrast to Lincoln, when Arendt applied her understanding of authority to American political thought, she focused on the Constitution rather than on the Declaration. This can be seen in

On Revolution, when she writes that "the amendments to the Constitution augment and increase the original foundations of the American republic; needless to say, the very authority of the American Constitution resides in its inherent capacity to be amended and augmented."[37] Lincoln would agree with Arendt that it is certainly possible for a constitutional amendment to augment the founding. However, Lincoln would add that a genuine augmentation can take place only if the amendment actually further advances the principles of the founding, as expressed in the Declaration. In contrast to Lincoln, Arendt appears to suggest that *any* amendment can be seen as augmenting the "foundations of the American republic," whether or not the amendment further extends the Declaration's ideals.

With Lincoln's ideas in mind, one might accuse Arendt of failing to realize that the principles of the Declaration are, as Lincoln put it, the "'apple of gold,'" whereas "[t]he *Union*, and the *Constitution*, are the *picture* of *silver*, subsequently framed around it. The picture was made, not to conceal, or destroy the apple; but to *adorn*, and *preserve* it."[38] For Lincoln, an amendment is worthwhile only if it helps to "adorn, and preserve"—and extend to new areas—the principles of the Declaration. In short, while Arendt and Lincoln agree that leaders are those who *begin*, Lincoln departs from Arendt insofar as he insists that after the founding, new beginnings—such as "the new birth of freedom" that he helped bring about—must further the process of "spreading and deepening" the "influence" of the principle that "all men are created equal," as he put in his *Dred Scott* speech.[39]

Lincoln on Leadership as Persuasion

Notably, when Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg of "a new birth of freedom," he was using metaphorical language that fits well with Arendt's understanding of natality.[40] Indeed, Arendt herself used the phrase "new birth" when she wrote, "*Initium ut esset homo creatus est*—'that a beginning be made man was created' said Augustine. This beginning is guaranteed by each *new birth*; it is indeed every man."[41] One can argue that once Lincoln issued the

Emancipation Proclamation—which not only "officially turned the Union army into an army of liberation," as James McPherson put it, but also called for the arming of newly freed African Americans on behalf of the Union—the war became in large part an effort to achieve a "new birth of freedom" and thus a new beginning.[42] However, consistent with Arendt's thought, Lincoln knew that the "new birth of freedom" that he (the leader) had commenced could be achieved only if others helped to complete it. That is, it would take the efforts of a great many followers—Black and white, enslaved and free—to actually achieve emancipation. This is what Lincoln meant at Gettysburg when he called on his fellow Americans "to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us," which was not only to preserve the republic created by the founders but also to bring about the "new birth of freedom" that he had initiated. Moreover, in the Emancipation Proclamation he made clear his belief that these two great (and intertwined) goals could be achieved only if a significant number of African Americans were, through their own courageous efforts, able to escape enslavement in the South so that they could then "be received into the armed service of the United States."[43]

As will be discussed below, Lincoln's attachment to the principles of the Declaration of Independence led him to believe, in contrast to Arendt, that the concepts of command and obedience actually *do* have a legitimate place in a free republic. Yet, in his many speeches aimed at educating and inspiring his fellow citizens, Lincoln often assumed the role of the Arendtian leader who seeks to persuade (rather than order) followers to help to complete what the leader has begun. Notably, one of Lincoln's favored locutions during impassioned moments in some of his most famous speeches was the phrase "Let us." While this phrase may technically be in the imperative form, Lincoln's use of it sounds much more like a plea made to equals than an order issued to subordinates. In his speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, for example, Lincoln said, "Our republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. *Let us* repurify it. *Let us* turn and wash it white in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution. . . . *Let us* readopt the Declaration of

Independence, and with it, the practices, and policy, which harmonize with it. *Let* north and south—*let* all Americans—*let* all lovers of liberty everywhere—join in the great and good work."[44] And, in his Second Inaugural Address he stated, "*[L]et us* strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds . . . to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."[45] In both of these passages, Lincoln urges (rather than orders) his potential followers to help carry out "the work" that leaders such as he himself have initiated, in a way that is consistent with Arendt's understanding of the relationship between leaders and followers.[46]

When he approached his fellow citizens as equals to be persuaded rather than as subordinates to be ordered, Lincoln demonstrated a humility that fits well with Arendt's understanding of leadership. Lincoln also demonstrated humility insofar as he showed awareness of what Arendt calls the "frailties" inherent in action. Arendt argued that every action enters "a medium where every action become a chain reaction" such that action is always marked by an "inherent unpredictability" and a "boundlessness" in terms of its consequences.[47] Lincoln showed his awareness of the unpredictable and boundless quality of all action when he reflected in his Second Inaugural Address that neither Northerners nor Southerners "expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding."[48]

Of course, to say that Lincoln was aware of action's unpredictable and boundless nature is not to say that he did not attempt to shape events as much as is humanly possible. Indeed, Lincoln played a greater role than anyone else in "accept[ing] war rather than let[ting]" the Union "perish," as he put it.[49] Moreover, Zuckert has recently made a strong (and fascinating) case that in the years leading up to the Civil War, Lincoln likely predicted that his refusal to "appease" the South would lead to a (probably brief) war that would then be followed by the end of slavery.[50] If Zuckert is

correct, though, this also means that Lincoln did not predict at the war's start that it would be of such great "magnitude" and "duration" as to lead to the "fundamental and astounding" consequence of ending slavery before the war itself was over—and also to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans.[51] Thus, while there may have been an element of strategic disingenuousness in Lincoln's famous assertion that he was simply "controlled [by] events," there was simultaneously most likely a great deal of sincerity in his claim (which applied to him as much as to anyone else) that "at the end of three years struggle the nation's condition is not what . . . any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it."[52] Lincoln here revealed his agreement with Arendt that while a political leader can certainly put a "process into motion," as Arendt put it, the leader can never be the all-powerful or all-knowing "author of its eventual outcome."[53]

Lincoln on the Concept of Rule

As shown, Lincoln often spoke and acted in ways that are consistent with Arendt's understanding of leadership; however, Lincoln insisted, unlike Arendt, that leaders (and also the constitutional amendments they support) must further advance the principles of the Declaration of Independence. Turning now to the ways in which Arendt's critique of rule at times overlaps with Lincoln's ideas, it is first worth noting that at key moments in his speeches, when one might have expected Lincoln to use the word *rule*, he actually uses the word *govern*. According to Kateb, Lincoln believed "that no one should be ruled without his consent," and to back this up Kateb quotes Lincoln as stating in his Peoria Address that "no man was good enough to *rule* another without his consent."[54] Kateb, though, here misquotes Lincoln. At Peoria, what Lincoln actually said was not "no man was good enough to rule another without his consent," but "no man is good enough to *govern* another man, *without that other's consent.*"[55] Similarly, in his Lyceum Address, Lincoln used the word *govern* rather than *rule* when he stated that the American founders sought to achieve "a practical demonstration of the truth of a proposition, which had

hitherto been considered, at best no better, than problematical; namely, *the capability of a people to govern themselves*."[56] Lincoln here deploys the language of self-*government* rather than self-*rule* when discussing his vison of democracy. And, at Peoria, what Lincoln actually suggested was not that rule can be legitimate when it rests on consent but that government can be legitimate when it rests on consent. Some might argue that these are semantic distinctions without a difference, but when approaching a writer as skilled as Lincoln, I think it is best to assume that his choice of words is rarely, if ever, arbitrary. In short, that Lincoln often chose to use the word *govern* rather than *rule* may very well indicate that he believed the latter word had certain connotations he wanted to avoid, and this resonates with Arendt's thought.

Recall that Arendt criticized the concept of rule when applied to the political realm largely because she believed the concept was borrowed from the ancient Greek household, where relationships were hierarchical and unequal. In short, Arendt associates the concept of rule with the idea of mastery, or "mastership," as she sometimes put it. It is quite possible that in some key moments Lincoln chose the word *govern* instead of *rule* because he tended to associate the latter word, as Arendt did, with a notion of mastery that has no place in politics. Lincoln's rejection of the concept of mastery as applied to the political realm is most clearly stated in the brief yet profound fragment in which he declared, "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy."[57]

Important to note is that when Lincoln did use the word *ruler*, he typically was referring, not to any sort of political relationship between human beings, but to the relationship between God and humanity. In his First Inaugural Address, for example, he referred to the "Almighty Ruler of Nations."[58] And, in his Thanksgiving Proclamation he refers to the "Creator and Ruler of the Universe."[59] Lincoln's language here suggests that God has a kind of sovereignty and mastery over people that no human being can or should ever possess.

While it is significant that in key moments Lincoln chose to use the word *govern* when he could have chosen *rule*, it must be

conceded that Lincoln did occasionally use the language of self-*rule* rather than self-*government* when discussing his view of democracy. Most notably, in his First Inaugural Address he stated that

> the candid citizen must confess that if the policy of the government, upon vital questions, affecting the whole people, is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made, in ordinary litigation between parties, in personal actions, the people will have ceased to be *their own rulers*, having, to that extent practically resigned their Government into the hands of that eminent tribunal.[60]

While Lincoln does in this instance suggest that it can be appropriate to use the word *rulers* when discussing democratic self-government, it must be noted that in this passage the crux of Lincoln's argument is still very much consistent with a key aspect of Arendt's critique of the concept of rule. As shown, Arendt argued that the concept of rule implies a "command-obedience" relationship that is incompatible with political life conceived of as a relationship between equals. As further discussed in the next section, Lincoln believed, unlike Arendt, that the "command-obedience" relationship does actually have a certain place in a democratic polity. Yet, Lincoln's response to the *Dred Scott* case reveals that he also believed that certain aspects of political life should not be understood in terms of command and obedience, and his argument here bears a definite similarity to Arendt's ideas. Specifically, Lincoln argued that while he would "offer no resistance" to the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision as it pertained to the parties involved in the case, he would not simply accept the Court's opinion on "vital questions, affecting the whole people" as if it were a *command* that must be thoughtlessly *obeyed*.[61] In other words, while Lincoln would accept the decision as it pertained specifically to the question of Dred Scott's freedom, he would continue to believe (and would vote in accordance with this belief) that Congress *can* outlaw slavery in the Territories, and he would continue to believe and to

proclaim that African Americans *can* be citizens under the Constitution. In short, Lincoln was "refusing to *obey*" the decision "as a political rule," as he put it in a speech at Chicago, and he would "peaceably" work toward its reversal.[62]

Relatedly, Lincoln pointedly mocked Stephen Douglas for accepting in its entirety the majority opinion in the *Dred Scott* case as a set of commands that must be obeyed. During their first debate, Lincoln stated that Douglas

> sticks to a decision which forbids the people of a Territory from excluding slavery, and he does so not because he says it is right in itself—he does not give any opinion on that—but because it has been *decided by the court*, and being decided by the court, he is, and you are bound to take it in your political action as *law*—not that he judges at all of its merits, but because a decision of the court is to him a "*Thus saith the Lord*."[63]

According to Lincoln, then, Douglas was suggesting that on a crucial political controversy, citizens should simply accept the Supreme Court's ruling without critically examining "its merits" (or lack thereof). As Lincoln put it in a draft of a speech, Douglas's position was essentially that Americans should automatically "indorse all court decisions, without caring to know whether they are right or wrong."[64]

Lincoln's use of the phrase "Thus saith the Lord" to ridicule Douglas's response to the *Dred Scott* case is quite striking in the light of Arendt's thought. For as shown, Arendt argued that "there is no such thing as obedience in political and moral matters. The only domain where the word could possibly apply to adults who are not slaves is the domain of religion, in which people say that they *obey* the word or the command of God because the relationship between God and man can rightly be seen in terms similar to the relation between adult and child." With Arendt's point in mind, we can see that when Lincoln asserted that Douglas was treating the Supreme Court's ruling as if it were issued by God, Lincoln was

essentially suggesting that Douglas was promoting a form of obedience that infantilized citizens by asking them to renounce any independent judgment on crucial moral and political matters. In other words, when Douglas accepted without any challenge all aspects of the *Dred Scott* opinion as if it were a "Thus saith the Lord," he renounced his status as an equal citizen and instead became a childlike subject who thoughtlessly obeys commands.

Neither Leadership nor Rule: Lincoln on Governing

As shown, like Arendt, Lincoln usually avoids the term *rule*, most likely because he found it to have connotations of mastery. Moreover, Lincoln's refusal to obey the constitutional doctrines of the *Dred Scott* case as "a political rule" jibes with Arendt's insistence that equal citizens must retain their ability to make their own judgments about political and moral questions. In contrast to Arendt, however, Lincoln does not totally reject the command-obedience relationship. In addition, Lincoln can help us see that *governing* (with the consent of the governed) is an indispensable form of political action that actually transcends the dichotomy that Arendt sets up between leading (which entails persuasion) and ruling (which entails domination).[65]

While Lincoln's refusal to "obey" the *Dred Scott* decision "as a political rule" can be fruitfully connected to Arendt's ideas, Lincoln would not go nearly so far as Arendt did when she made the blanket statement that "there is no such thing as obedience in political and moral matters." Indeed, Lincoln's belief that political life in a democratic republic must at times include obedience can be seen in multiple moments of his political thought. First, recall that Lincoln suggested that all Americans do in fact need to obey the *Dred Scott* decision insofar as it affects the particular parties in the case. Moreover, in the following passage, Lincoln suggested that obedience to the Supreme Court's broader judgments regarding the Constitution may also sometimes be warranted: "We believe, as much as Judge Douglas, (perhaps more) in *obedience* to, and respect for the judicial department of government. We think its decisions on Constitutional questions, *when fully settled*, should

control, not only the particular cases decided, but the general policy of the country, subject to be disturbed only by amendments of the Constitution."[66] Lincoln, then, refused to obey the *Dred Scott* decision as a political rule because he did not believe that the erroneous doctrines in the case were fully settled, and he was confident they never would be. But this also means, according to Lincoln, that any decisions pertaining to constitutional law that *are* fully settled must be accepted and obeyed—even as a political rule and not merely for the particular parties in the case.[67]

Further evidence that Lincoln at times finds obedience in political matters to often be entirely appropriate can be found in the Lyceum Address, where he insists that "every American" should "swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least particular, the laws of the country."[68] Anticipating—and rejecting—the kind of argument for civil disobedience that would be made by Thoreau a decade later, Lincoln argues that while "bad laws . . . should be repealed as soon as possible," they must "be religiously observed" while "they continue in force."[69]

Moreover, once he assumed the presidency, Lincoln made clear his belief that the language of "command" was sometimes legitimate, especially during wartime. After all, Lincoln fully embraced his role as *commander* in chief. Thus, when Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, or when he issued a draft order, he was certainly wielding the language of command and obedience that Arendt claims has no place in political matters.[70] While one might perhaps here attempt to object that Lincoln found obedience to be appropriate only during wartime and not during "normal" times, we have seen that this rejoinder must fail insofar as Lincoln also spoke of the need for obedience to the Supreme Court in the case of "fully settled" constitutional questions; and, almost two decades before this, in the Lyceum Address he spoke of the need for "religious observ[ation]" of the laws in a way that seems synonymous with obedience. In neither of these pre–Civil War cases was Lincoln confining the need for obedience to wartime.[71]

It is clear that for Lincoln, the command-obedience relationship actually *does* at times have a place in a free republic and its

presence does not automatically entail a descent into mastery. Moreover, while Lincoln refused to accept the *Dred Scott* decision's "unsettled" doctrines as a political rule, Lincoln's general view is that obedience to the laws of a republic is necessary and perfectly legitimate. Why, though, is this the case? The answer lies in Lincoln's adherence to the principles of the Declaration of Independence. For Lincoln (as for the authors of the Declaration), when a government has the "consent" of the people, the "just powers" of that government then do entail the power to issue commands and laws that must be obeyed.[72] In contrast, in the case of a tyrannical government—and, as Lincoln emphasized, in the case of chattel slavery—there is an effort to issue commands in the absence of any consent to be governed; these commands are thus wholly illegitimate and unjust. As Lincoln put it at Peoria (in a quotation cited earlier), "[N]o man is good enough to *govern* another man, *without that other's consent.*" If and when the consent to be governed exists, though, such as in a democratic republic, then for Lincoln the command-obedience relationship becomes legitimate.[73]

It should be recalled that Arendt sets up a dichotomy between *leading* (which involves persuasion) and *ruling* (which in her view always involves domination). Lincoln, though, introduces a crucial third term—namely, *governing*. According to Lincoln, governing does indeed at times entail command rather than persuasion; however, it does so in way that is not tantamount to mastery or to domination as long as there is a prior consent to be governed. Arendt argued that for the ancient Greeks, "[t]o be free meant both not to be . . . [in] command of another *and* not to be in command oneself. It meant neither to rule nor to be ruled."[74] Lincoln certainly agrees with Arendt that the maintenance of freedom demands both the renunciation of slavery and the renunciation of mastery, for he wrote that "he who would *be* no slave, must consent to *have* no slave."[75] Yet, in contrast to Arendt, Lincoln believed there is a certain form of ruling—which Lincoln usually preferred to call governing—that does not threaten freedom because it rests on the consent of those who are governed.[76]

In arguing that there is a version of governing that is entirely distinct from mastery, Lincoln followed in the footsteps of both Aristotle and Locke. For at the outset of the *Politics*, Aristotle argues (in contrast to Plato) that the activity of the "statesman" is quite different from that of "the monarch of a kingdom, or the manager of a household, or the master of a number of slaves."[77] Adriel Trott notes that for Aristotle, "political rule is between those who are free and equal," and it involves a form of ruling and being ruled in turn that is not simply "an exchange of opportunities to rule as a despot."[78] As J. S. Maloy has noted, the opening of Locke's *Second Treatise* is very similar to that of the *Politics*, for Locke similarly insists that "[t]he power of a *Magistrate*" must be distinguished from "that of a *Father* over his Children, a *Master* over his Servant, a *Husband* over his Wife, and a *Lord* over his Slave." Without denying the important ways in which Locke departs from Aristotle, Maloy argues that "both thinkers understood politics properly speaking as the rule of a community of equals for their common good."[79] As noted, Arendt claimed that the Western philosophical tradition is haunted by a concept of rule that is borrowed from the hierarchical and unequal realm of the household; however, with the examples of Aristotle and Locke in mind, one can see that, *pace* Arendt, it is actually the case that much of the Western tradition after Plato centers precisely on an effort to articulate and uphold a form of governance that is appropriate for equal citizens and is thus entirely distinct from nonpolitical forms of rule.[80] By insisting that government by the consent of the governed is categorically different from mastery, Lincoln shares in this project.

Arendt is, of course, aware of the efforts of Aristotle and Locke to develop a theory of political rule that is consistent with equality and freedom; however, she believes that these efforts were ultimately doomed from the start insofar as they sought to rehabilitate a concept—rule—that in her view is hopelessly tied up with domination. As Michael McCarthy notes, "Arendt explicitly rejects the concept of political rule as a contradiction in terms," whereas "Aristotle deliberately retains it, carefully distinguishing

the constitutional rule of free citizens from both royal and despotic governance."[81] Aristotle's specific ideas on rule certainly differed a great deal from those of Plato; nevertheless, Arendt believes, as McCarthy puts it, that Aristotle's "reliance on rule as the central category of political analysis and appraisal" indicated that Aristotle still "followed Plato's theoretical guidance rather than the patterns of Greek civic culture."[82]

As for the Lockean claim that rule—or governing, as Lincoln prefers to call it—is legitimate and consistent with liberty when it rests on the consent of the governed, Arendt believes that this argument is also highly flawed. According to Arendt, a social contract that is based on consent actually disempowers the people by rendering them mere subjects to be ruled. As she puts it in *On Revolution*, "[T]he government which . . . is the result of consent acquires a monopoly of power so that the governed are politically impotent so long as they do not decide to recover their original power in order to change the government and entrust another ruler with their power."[83] Arendt notes that this argument about the consent of the governed can, of course, be found near the beginning of the Declaration of Independence. She claims that at the end of the Declaration, though, one sees a very different (and in her view superior) kind of social contract in which the signatories "mutually pledge to each other [their] lives, [their] Fortunes and their sacred Honour." Through this kind of "mutual promise," Arendt argues, people do not relinquish their power to the government; instead they gain "new power" by leaving "their isolation" and joining together as equal citizens.[84] In Arendt's view, then, Thomas Jefferson articulated two distinct understandings of the social contract in the Declaration of Independence, but he failed to notice the distinction himself. As Arendt puts it, "Jefferson could speak of the consent by the people from which governments 'derive their just powers' in the same Declaration which he closes on the principle of mutual pledges," but "neither he nor anybody else became aware of the simple and elementary difference between 'consent' and mutual promise, or between the two types of social-contract theory."[85] For Arendt, it is only the latter type of

contract, "the mutual contract where power is constituted by means of promise," that "contains *in nuce* . . . the republican principle, according to which power resides in the people."[86]

Lincoln contra Arendt on the Declaration of Independence and the "Consent of the Governed"

How might Lincoln respond to Arendt's criticisms of the consent theory of the social contract? First, Lincoln would, I think, deny that his understanding of the "consent of the governed" involves the creation of a government that leaves the citizenry disempowered. For in his First Inaugural Address, Lincoln made clear that he did not believe in a social contract in which people consent to a government that then makes all political decisions *for* the people; on the contrary, Lincoln insisted that "[a] majority, held in restraint by constitutional checks, and limitations, and always changing easily, with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people."[87] Thus, for Lincoln, the American people have *not* consented to a government that rules over them as if it were a kind of alien entity with a will of its own; instead, the government will be "of" and "by" (and not simply "for") the people, as he famously put it at Gettysburg.[88] Lincoln similarly denied that his understanding of consent entails the disempowerment and displacement of the citizenry when he declared at Peoria, "Allow ALL the governed an equal voice in the government, and that, and that only is self government."[89]

Lincoln would likely also highlight a fundamental problem with Arendt's argument that republican government should be understood to be rooted in a "mutual promise" rather than in the "consent of the governed." Lincoln would find this to be a disastrous theoretical move, for it means that one may lose sight of the principle of natural equality that undergirds the Declaration's argument about the consent of the governed. After all, why is it that government must rest on the consent of the governed? Arendt does not dwell on this question, but the implicit answer according to the Declaration of Independence is that a legitimate government can have no other basis than consent, given our natural equality.[90]

If some were by nature superior, then they would be entitled to govern others even in the absence of consent. Because "all men are created equal," though, not only is despotism illegitimate but so too is slavery. Thus, if one abandons—or outright denies—the principle of natural equality that is intrinsic to the consent theory of government, then one endangers, Lincoln argues, both "the principles of free government" and antislavery principles.[91]

Relatedly, if a republic is based not on the "consent of the governed" but on the principle of a "mutual promise," as advocated by Arendt, there is a risk that those who are included in that mutual promise might claim that those who are not included within it can be subjugated or even enslaved. In contrast, if one adheres to the "consent of the governed" contract theory, which is based on the idea that "all men are created equal," then slavery can *never* be justified, as Lincoln so eloquently noted. Indeed, the inadequacy of Arendt's "mutual promises" version of the social contract when it comes to the battle against racial subordination and slavery can be seen when Arendt claims that "the reason [Alexis de Tocqueville] could predict the future of Negroes and Indians for more than a century ahead lies in the simple and frightening fact that these people had never been included in the original *consensus universalis* of the American republic. There was nothing in the Constitution or in the intent of the framers that could be so construed as to include the slave people in the original compact."[92] In *On Revolution*, Arendt refers to a social contract based on "promises" as a "mutual contract by which people bind themselves together in order to form a community."[93] For Arendt, though, it is apparently a "fact" that African Americans were not originally part of the people who bound themselves together into the American political community through a mutual promise.

Lincoln, of course, had to contend precisely with these kinds of arguments before the Civil War, for Arendt's arguments echo those that were made by both Chief Justice Taney (who claimed that African Americans "were not regarded as a portion of the people or citizens of the Government" created by the Constitution) and by Senator Stephen Douglas (who argued that "the signers of the

Declaration of Independence . . . referred to the white race alone, and not to the African, when they declared all men to have been created equal").[94] Against Taney's claim in the *Dred Scott* case that African Americans were not included in the founding (a claim that finds an echo in Arendt's claim that African Americans were not part of "the original compact"), Lincoln invoked Justice Curtis's dissent, which demonstrated that free African Americans actually did fully take part in the process that ratified the US Constitution.[95] Moreover (and perhaps even more importantly), Lincoln suggested that even if one sets aside the question of whether African Americans were included in the making of the Constitution, it certainly remains the case (contra both Taney and Douglas) that the Declaration's principles—including, of course, the idea that "all men are created equal"—applied to African Americans and, indeed, "to all people of all colors everywhere."[96]

By focusing on the end of the Declaration, though, rather than on the principles found in its second paragraph, which Lincoln so brilliantly invoked, Arendt arguably defangs the Declaration in a way that would have rendered it of little use to Lincoln in his anti-slavery efforts. In short, by privileging a social contract based on a mutual promise over a social contract based on the consent of the governed, Arendt leaves behind what Lincoln called the "father of all moral principle"—namely, the principle that "all men are created equal."[97] Without this principle, the Declaration would no longer be a document that "contemplated the progressive improvement in the condition of all men everywhere," as Lincoln put it.[98]

It is here worth noting that in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt writes, "We are not born equal; we become equal as members of a group on the strength of our decision to guarantee ourselves mutually equal rights."[99] While Arendt is here criticizing the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen rather than the American Declaration of Independence, it is clear that Arendt rejects the notion of natural equality that serves as the foundation of Lincoln's political thought. Relatedly, in *On Revolution*, Arendt asserts that the "greatness" of the Declaration of Independence actually "owes nothing to its natural-law

philosophy—in which case it would indeed be 'lacking in depth and subtlety.'" Of far greater significance, Arendt writes, is the way in which "the list of very specific grievances against a very particular king gradually develops into a rejection on principle of monarchy and kingship in general."[100] She appears to find this "rejection on principle of monarchy" in "the 'mutual pledge' of life, fortune, and sacred honour," for she notes that "in a monarchy, the subjects would not 'mutually pledge to each other' but to the crown, representing the realm as a whole."[101]

Lincoln would agree with Arendt that the Declaration rejects kingship, for as shown, Lincoln thinks that the Declaration's theory of consent demands a government in which "all have an equal voice."[102] For Lincoln, though, the Declaration's "natural law philosophy," to use Arendt's term, also entails a rejection of slavery, for as Lincoln put it, "the relation of masters and slaves is, PRO TANTO, a total violation of [the Declaration's] principle" that "the just powers of governments are derived from the consent of the governed."[103] In contrast, Arendt denies the "greatness" of the part of the Declaration that most inspired Lincoln, and it is not at all clear, as suggested here, that a republic built on a mutual pledge would necessarily rule out the enslavement or subjugation of those who are perceived to stand outside the pledge, even if it establishes a community of equal citizens for those who are included within it.

Conclusion

This essay has sought to reveal that Arendt has an important contribution to make to the study of democratic leadership. Also argued here is that Arendt's ideas on leadership—and her critique of the concept of rule—at times resonate with the words and deeds of Abraham Lincoln. Yet, also shown is that Lincoln offers a number of important correctives to Arendt's ideas on these matters, and he does so as a result of what I take to be his superior understanding of—and his greater respect and appreciation for—the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

In a critical assessment of Arendt's ideas on law and command, Keith Breen wisely notes, "Certainly, neither politics nor law can

be reduced to relations of command and obedience. . . . However, neither can they be divorced from these."[104] We have seen that while Lincoln's practice of leadership typically centered on persuasion, he also believed that command and obedience sometimes have their proper place in a democratic polity. Furthermore, we have seen that Lincoln believed, again unlike Arendt, that a particular form of rule, which Lincoln preferred to call governing, also has a legitimate role in a democracy. Lincoln's belief that governing is legitimate when it rests on "the consent of the governed" is an idea that clearly strikes against despotic government; moreover, the concept of equality that underlies this idea also invalidates slavery and points to a "promise," as Lincoln so powerfully put it, "that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that *all* should have an equal chance."[105]

Notes

1. George Kateb, "Political Action: Its Nature and Advantages," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana Villa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 132 (emphasis added).
2. One indicator of the lack of attention paid by political theorists to Arendt's ideas on leadership is that in his recent book-length overview of Arendt's political thought, Dana Villa discusses Arendt's critique of the concept of rule, and he discusses Arendt's understanding of "the Leader" in totalitarian regimes, but he does little in the way of discussing what I call Arendt's positive conception of leadership. See Dana Villa, *Arendt* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 123–24, 86. Villa does mention Arendt's understanding of what Villa describes as "the actor who initiates," but unlike Arendt, Villa chooses not to use the term *leader* here, and he does not dwell on the implications of Arendt's ideas for thinking about the concept of leadership. See Villa, *Arendt*, 199. Moreover, none of the contributors in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (2000), ed. Villa, give any sustained attention to Arendt's understanding of leadership. Also, no essay in the following volume focuses on Arendt's ideas on leadership: *The Bloomsbury Companion to Arendt*, ed. Peter Gratton and Yasemin Sari (New York: Bloomsbury, 2020).
3. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 189.

4. Ibid. Arendt reiterated this distinction between leadership and rule in her 1964 essay "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," in *Responsibility and Judgement*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 46–47.
5. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 238.
6. LeJeune writes that "[h]ardly glorifying leaderlessness, Arendt exposes it as politically irresponsible. The suggestion that Arendtian-style democratic power is inconsistent with leadership . . . is a debilitating misreading of her thought." See John LeJeune, "Hannah Arendt's Revolutionary Leadership," *Journal for Political Thinking*, HannahArendt.net, November 2013, https://www.hannaharendt.net/index.php/han/article/view/286/413. While LeJeune and I both argue that leadership plays an important (and often-overlooked) role in Arendt's thought, LeJeune's focus is specifically on Arendt's understanding of "revolutionary leadership" and so he does little in the way of examining Arendt's broader ideas regarding leadership (including how leadership differs from rule) in *The Human Condition* (and elsewhere), as I seek to do.
7. See "Full Text: Donald Trump 2016 RNC draft speech transcript," *Politico*, July 21, 2016, https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/full-transcript-donald-trump-nomination-acceptance-speech-at-rnc-225974 (emphasis added).
8. Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," 47. See also Arendt, *Human Condition*, 190.
9. See Benjamin *Barber*, "Neither Leaders nor Followers," in *Essays in Honor of James MacGregor Burns*, ed. Thomas E. Cronin and Michael R. Beschloss (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 117–32.
10. See also Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," 47.
11. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 223–24.
12. The general notion of a "command-obedience relationship" is discussed by Arendt in *The Human Condition* as well as in "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship." This specific phrase, though, is found in a later work—namely, the essay "On Violence." See Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1972), 139.
13. Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," 48 (emphasis in original).
14. Ibid., 46 (emphasis in original).
15. Ibid., 48 (emphasis in original).

16. Ibid. Arendt's discussion in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* of Anton Schmid—a sergeant in the Germany army who courageously chose to rescue Jews and to aid the Jewish Resistance—helps to flesh out her idea that people who found themselves in positions such as Schmid's or Eichmann's were not children who were compelled to obey but were, rather, adults able to choose whether to consent to the Nazi regime. See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 230–33. (Arendt mistakenly uses the spelling "Schmidt" rather than the correct "Schmid.")
17. *Barber*, "*Neither Leaders nor Followers,*" 121 (emphasis added).
18. Richard Ruderman also offers a helpful critique of Barber's claim that followership is inherently deferential. According to Ruderman, "A liberal statesman does not ask citizens to submit or defer to him but, rather, to be persuaded by him to approve of the prudence of his judgment." See Richard Ruderman, "Democracy and the Problem of Statesmanship," *Review of Politics* 59 (1997): 760. Ruderman's argument that the liberal statesman does not demand submission but instead seeks to *persuade* citizens overlaps with Arendt's claim that followers always freely determine whether to support their leaders.
19. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 247 (emphasis added).
20. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), 479. "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government" originally appeared in the *Review of Politics* in 1953 and was added to the end of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* starting with the 1958 edition.
21. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 225.
22. Ibid., 220.
23. Ibid., 234.
24. Ibid., 190–91, 230.
25. Ibid., 234.
26. According to Patchen Markell, "Hannah Arendt was not a democratic theorist in the usual sense of the term," but "her critique of rule and her unorthodox interpretation of beginning have much to offer democratic theory." I agree with Markell that Arendt's critique of rule has considerable value for democratic theory; unlike Markell, though, I seek to elucidate Arendt's positive conception of leadership (a conception that she distinguishes from rule) and I argue that this conception provides us with rich resources for thinking about what it means to be a democratic leader. See Patchen Markell, "The Rule of the People: Arendt, Archê, and Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 100 (February 2006): 11.

27. My idea that Arendt helps us see "what democratic leadership is *not*" is inspired in part by the title (and format) of Sebastian de Grazia's article "What Authority Is *Not*," *American Political Science Review* 53 (June 1959): 321–31.
28. Abraham Lincoln, "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois," January 27, 1838, in *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, 34.
29. Ibid., 34, 28.
30. Michael P. Zuckert, *A Nation So Conceived: Abraham Lincoln and the Paradox of Democratic Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2023), 362–63.
31. Ibid., 363 (emphasis added).
32. Ibid., 29.
33. Ibid.
34. When discussing the ancient Roman view of authority, Arendt writes, "The word *auctoritas* derives from the verb *augere*, 'augment,' and what authority or those in authority constantly augment is the foundation." See "What Is Authority?" in Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 121–22.
35. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 201.
36. Abraham Lincoln, "Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, Illinois," October 16, 1854, in *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, *ed. Don Fehrenbacher* (New York: Library of America, 1989), 328.
37. Arendt, *On Revolution*, 202.
38. Abraham Lincoln, "Fragment on the Constitution and the Union" [ca. January 1861], in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 169.
39. Abraham Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision at Springfield, Illinois," June 26, 1857, in *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, 398.
40. Abraham Lincoln, "Address at Gettysburg," November 19, 1863, in *Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865*, ed. Don Fehrenbacher (New York: Library of America, 1989), 536.
41. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 479 (emphasis added).
42. James M. McPherson, "'A Bombshell on the American Public,'" *New York Review of Books*, November 22, 2012, 59, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2012/11/22/bombshell-american-public.
43. Abraham Lincoln, "Final Emancipation Proclamation," January 1, 1863, in *Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865,* 425.
44. Lincoln, "Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act," 339–40 (emphasis added).
45. Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address," March 4, 1865, in *Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865*, 687 (emphasis added).

46. A third notable instance in which Lincoln repeatedly uses the word *Let* is the famous passage in the Lyceum Address that begins, "Let reverence for the laws." See Lincoln, "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum," 32 (emphasis in the original).
47. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 190, 191.
48. Lincoln, "Second Inaugural," 686 (emphasis in original).
49. Ibid.
50. Zuckert, *A Nation So Conceived*, 358–61.
51. As Zuckert notes, "[T]he war that was fought" was quite "different from the war [Lincoln] expected." See Zuckert, *A Nation So Conceived*, 361.
52. Abraham Lincoln, "Letter to Albert G. Hodges," April 4, 1864, in *Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865*, 586.
53. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 185.
54. George Kateb, *Lincoln's Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 76 (emphasis added).
55. Lincoln, "Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act," 328 (emphases added to the word govern; other emphases are in the original).
56. Lincoln, "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum," 34 (emphasis in the original). Lincoln later used similar language when he said that in America, "the world has found a solution of that long mooted problem, as to the capability of man to govern himself." See Lincoln, "Address to the Washington Temperance Society of Springfield, Illinois," February 22, 1842, in *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, 89.
57. See Abraham Lincoln, "On Slavery and Democracy," 1858?, in *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, 484.
58. Abraham Lincoln, "First Inaugural," March 4, 1861, in *Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865*, 223.
59. Abraham Lincoln, "Proclamation of Thanksgiving," in *Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865*, 637.
60. Lincoln, "First Inaugural," 221 (emphasis added).
61. Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," 393 (emphasis in the original); Lincoln, "First Inaugural Address," 221.
62. Abraham Lincoln, "Speech at Chicago, Illinois," July 10, 1858, in *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, 450, 451 (emphasis added).
63. Abraham Lincoln, "First Lincoln-Douglas Debate," Ottawa, Illinois, August 21, 1858, in *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, 525 (emphases in original).
64. Abraham Lincoln, "Draft of a Speech," ca. August 1858, in *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, 493.

65. The idea that Lincoln's notion of governing actually transcends Arendt's dichotomy between leading and ruling was first suggested to me by an anonymous reviewer of an earlier version of this essay. I am very grateful for this suggestion.
66. Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," 392–93 (emphasis added).
67. Lincoln explained when he would consider a Supreme Court decision to be a matter of "settled law" in the following passage: "If [the *Dred Scott*] decision had been made by the unanimous concurrence of the judges, and without any apparent partisan bias, and in accordance with legal public expectation, and with the steady practice of the departments throughout our history, and had been in no part, based on assumed historical facts which are not really true; or, if wanting in some of these, it had been before the court more than once, and had there been affirmed and re-affirmed through a course of years, it then might be, perhaps would be, factious, nay, even revolutionary, to not acquiesce in it as a precedent." See Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," 393.
68. Lincoln, "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum."
69. Ibid., 33. For Thoreau's argument that sometimes an unjust law should simply be "transgress[ed] …
at once," see Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," in *Civil Disobedience in Focus*, ed. Hugo Adam Bedau (London: Routledge: 2002), 35–36.
70. In the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln declares that "as *Commander*-in-Chief . . . I do *order* and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free" (emphases added). See Lincoln, "Final Emancipation Proclamation," 425. Lincoln's military draft orders are, of course, also formulated as commands rather than requests. See, e.g., "Form Draft Order" [June 1863], in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 6:239–40.
71. My argument in this paragraph was inspired in large part by the helpful comments of one of the anonymous reviewers of an earlier version of this essay.
72. Lincoln quoted these words from the Declaration of Independence at Peoria. See Lincoln, "Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act," 328.
73. According to Keith Breen, Arendt attempted to develop a notion of law (inspired by the Romans and Montesquieu) that is rooted not in "rule and obedience but rather" in "reciprocal persuasion and speech." Breen argues that Arendt failed, though, to "recognize . . . that for the law to

endure there must be some effective sanction . . . that counters violations and transgressions." See Keith Breen, "Law beyond Command? An Evaluation of Arendt's Understanding of Law," in *Hannah Arendt and the Law*, ed. Marco Goldoni and Christopher McCorkindale (Oxford: Hart, 2012), 23, 27. In contrast, Lincoln seems to adhere to a more conventional view of law as a command that is backed up by the possibility of punishment.

74. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 32 (emphasis in original).
75. Abraham Lincoln, "Letter to Henry L. Pierce and Others," in *Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865*, 18 (emphases in the original).
76. Another example where Lincoln chooses to use the word *govern* rather than *rule* is when he argued that the true definition of *popular sovereignty* is "the right of the people of every nation and community to govern themselves." See Abraham Lincoln, "Portion of Speech at Edwardsville, Illinois," in *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, 583. Lincoln argues that Douglas's so-called popular sovereignty actually violates popular sovereignty rightly understood, insofar as Douglas's version allows the people to govern not only themselves but also others—without their consent. Lincoln's critique of Douglas's ersatz version of popular sovereignty has something in common with Arendt's critique of sovereignty. Specifically, whereas Arendt rejects the idea of sovereignty in part because she thinks it entails the hubristic aspiration to achieve a kind of limitless mastery over the political landscape, Lincoln condemns Douglas's so-called popular sovereignty because it suggests that the majority is entitled to do anything and everything, without any moral limits. Of course, whereas Arendt rejects the idea of sovereignty *in toto*, Lincoln believes there is in fact a legitimate version of popular sovereignty, which he finds described in the Declaration of Independence.
77. Aristotle, *The Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 1.
78. Adriel M. Trott, "Ruling in Turn: Political Rule against Mastery in Aristotle's *Politics*," Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy 17 (Spring 2013): 307, 301.
79. J. S. Maloy, "The Aristotelianism of Locke's Politics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70 (April 2009): 235, 253.
80. As Michael McCarthy notes, Arendt was mistaken in claiming that Aristotle was guilty of "inserting the ruling patterns of the household into the free exercise of public affairs." See Michael H. McCarthy, *The Political Humanism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 157. Locke similarly sought to distinguish political power from the kind of power exercised in the family.

81. McCarthy, *Political Humanism of Hannah Arendt*, 138.
82. Ibid., 139.
83. Arendt, *On Revolution*, 171.
84. Ibid., 176, 171, 170.
85. Ibid., 176–77.
86. Ibid., 171.
87. Lincoln, "First Inaugural," 220.
88. Lincoln, "Address at Gettysburg," 536.
89. Lincoln, "Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act," 328.
90. See Harry Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 211.
91. Lincoln, "Letter to Henry L. Pierce," 19.
92. Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1972), 90.
93. Arendt, *On Revolution*, 170.
94. *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1857), https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/60/393/#tab-opinion-1964281; Stephen Douglas, "Remarks on Kansas, Utah, and the Dred Scott Decision," June 12, 1857, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, https://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc00358. Unlike Douglas, Arendt bemoans rather than extolls what they both see as the exclusion of African Americans from the "original compact." Arendt suggests that in addition to the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, it could have been best to have "[a]n explicit constitutional amendment, addressed specifically to the Negro people of America" in order to definitively include them in the political community. See Arendt, *Crises*, 91.
95. Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," 395.
96. Ibid., 398.
97. Abraham Lincoln, "Speech at Chicago," 456.
98. Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," 400.
99. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 301.
100. Arendt, *On Revolution*, 129.
101. Ibid., 130.
102. For an argument that Lincoln's "rejection of every form of government other than democracy" is actually a departure from the original meaning of the Declaration of Independence, see Glen Thurow, *Abraham Lincoln and American Political Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976), 55.

103. Lincoln, "Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act," 328.
104. Keith Breen, "Law beyond Command," 32.
105. Abraham Lincoln, "Speech at Independence Hall," February 22, 1861, in *Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865*, 213.