

# On Democratic Action Origins and Challenges<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

In this essay revolution is examined as a political concept, an ever-changing one. This analysis is based on the theory of action as Hannah Arendt defined it in *The Human Condition*. Revolution is a phenomenon of people's action and thus it is not merely theoretical, with a dependency on history and context. Revolutions of the 18th century were the origin of the contemporary political setting. They have inspired limited governments, such as democracies, as well as fundamental human rights, as well as, violent political systems, such as dictatorships and totalitarian movements. Thus, this essay explores the multifaceted features of the political phenomenon.

## **Keywords:**

revolution; freedom; republic; democracy; action; human rights.

## **Introduction**

The revolutions of the 18th century have influenced the world in many ways. Today's democratic values can be traced back to the values defended during the revolutions. However, these revolutions did not only inspire democratic values. The French revolution's consequences were multifaceted, even contradictory, more so than the American revolution. The ideas of political freedom, political participation for all, human rights (HR) and civil rights all seem, with or without its problems, to have arisen in the time of these revolutions. Nonetheless, even if some effects were those that lead us into modern democracies,

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it is clear that these revolutions also have other consequences. Their heritage inspired modern politics in many ways. Today, the world is globalized, especially economically, but politically it remains diverse, even as cultures converge together. These governments, democratic or not, might all have influences from these revolutions and how they went.

The American and French revolutions inspired the world as it is now; the values that came from them are still seen as important today in modern democracies. These HR are connected to the emergence of a state with civil rights. In both the USA and France, some form of citizen protection was included when writing the constitutions. However, mostly due to the process of secularization, the justification of these rights had to be related to politics and not religion. It was the first time HR were defended as simply inherent to human nature without the justification of the absolute. In this essay, there is no intention of defending human nature, but instead, the human condition. Paradigms have changed since the revolution and it is no longer sufficient to justify HR with human nature. This means that their value has to be connected to whether or not HR are properly enforced, for what is the point of defending basic rights as inherent to humans if they only exist if a state chooses to protect them? This takes the discussion back to civil rights: HR grew from civil rights firstly established by the revolutions. Civil rights were part of the birth of limited government, a type of government in which states allow their citizens freedom to participate. In this essay there is an exploration of this connection, as well as the idea of limited government and freedom in the public realm.

Another topic revolutions brought with is the topic of action. Action is very relevant in Hannah Arendt's definition of the human condition. Action is the human capacity that brings on change to the public realm. Without action, revolutions would not exist. Revolutions are, after all, a system that sparks change. These political phenomena cannot be simply seen as an historical necessity, for they happen to succeed when they are propelled by action rather than necessity. Necessity is a biological capacity, and cannot bring on true political change. Political change has to happen in a public realm. Hunger and poverty are things that exist in people's private lives. Even if social problems are connected to political problems, one cannot expect a revolution to solve all personal problems. That resolution has to start somewhere and it is safer to establish a political realm in which people are freer. Only afterwards establish laws to equalize what is necessary, without ever surpassing the freedom of action people have, without crossing into their private lives. This means that not only are revolution and action connected concepts, but they also relate to their concrete expressions. This means that revolution and action can only be studied related to history and philosophy @LISBON

their expressions, consequences and influences in it. The concept is not merely theoretical but has to be thought of through the action that happened in it, by studying the people of action, those who acted in the revolutions.

In this essay there is an exploration of the American and the French revolutions and their influences in the modern world and politics, including democracy and HR. The analysis of these notions is done through the concept of action as a motor to the people of the revolution to create change.

## **I. What is Revolution?**

Revolution is a complicated concept, mostly due to its practical complexities. The meaning of this concept has changed throughout the centuries, ranging from astronomical ideas to political ones. Today the meaning of revolution is connected with the revolutions of modernity, such as the American revolution (AR) and the French revolution (FR); making them an influence for all posterior revolutions, such as the Russian revolution (RR). Nevertheless, these revolutions not only inspired modern revolutions, but also the modern governments and ideas present in our democracies. The FR has a much larger influence than the American one, inspiring good and bad in the centuries after. As any concept in political philosophy, the discussion is not an abstract one, but one that includes a discussion of history and context. The situations in which revolutions arose in history were of great importance to the definition of the concept. All revolutions have a goal, which may or may not be achieved, or premeditated. However, the outcome of revolutions includes an unpredictable chain of consequences that the ideas defended often create, sometimes propelling large-scale, long-lasting changes in the political scene of their time and the time to come. In many ways, revolutions can be acknowledged as the founders of modern democracies. The first revolution to have done this, whose effects still linger today, was the AR. If the AR had an impact on establishing a long-lasting republic, perhaps FR had similar effects while also inspiring the opposite. The political experience from these situations inspired the establishment of the ideals of democracy and rights of man, as well ideals of dictatorship and political oppression. This claim is often related to the incapacity to end the FR, which ended in terror rather than in the establishment of a better order to solve the problems of people. First, one must look into what the word revolution means and how that meaning

changed over time.

Revolution is a word that originates from the latin word “*revolutio*.” *Revolutio* meant rotation or spinning, and was used in the field of astronomy, not for political matters. Nicolaus Copernicus’ *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* meant the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, using the word “revolution” in its original meaning. It was used in the 1688 Glorious revolution, but not in the sense it is used in our days. The word revolution maintained some of the meaning of “*revolutio*,” this is rotation, or restoration. In England, the revolution started with James II and VII being replaced by his daughter Mary II and William III of Orange. King James was a Catholic King, while his daughter was a Protestant. Nonetheless, King James had a second child, a son, creating the possibility of a Catholic dynasty. King James tried to make the parliaments of England and Scotland revoke the anti-Catholic laws, which they did not agree to. The King suspended both parliaments. James ended up losing political authority when he lost the support of the Church of England. This meant William of Orange was widely supported by most British people, mostly due to King James’ unpopularity. When he arrived in England he had earned the support of many powerful people, including religious leaders. He knew an alliance between England and the Dutch Republic would trample France’s expansion hopes, hence prompting victory for the Dutch against the French in the continent. Mary I and William III became joint monarchs of England, Scotland and Ireland.

After this succinct summary of the Glorious revolution it is possible to understand that its purpose was not a complete change in the political regime. The goal was a restoration of the monarchy that would maintain a Protestant dynasty and prohibit Catholic dynasties in the future. Its incentive was a religious one. This establishes a large difference from the revolutions that come after in which the religious motifs were not as important, especially due to the process of secularization.

The revolution that follows chronologically is the AR in 1776. The AR started not as a revolution in the modern sense for the foundation of freedom, independence and establishment of new body politic as it turned out to be, but as a revolution in the earlier sense of restoration. For Americans, what caused the AR was the lack of representation in the British parliament. The famous history of the Boston Tea Party in 1773 is typically considered the beginning of the revolution (where the expression “No Taxation Without Representation” was popularized), even though tensions had been building up previously due to philosophy @LISBON

the Boston Massacre in 1770 and the Gaspee Affair in Rhode Island 1772. The British applied punitive laws to the colonies which went against the rights of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to self-govern. Previous to 1776 the revolution was supposed to be a restoration. Despite that, as the Americans fought to be represented as colonist's rights of Englishmen in Parliament, it became clearer that it was not in Britain's interests to have them represented. This made the word "revolution" that still meant restoration turn into a more modern concept of "revolution," which is, as expressed above, is the establishment of a new body politic. This change is physically represented by the *Declaration of Independence (DoI)* in 1776 in which the philosophies of monarchy and aristocracy were replaced by ideals of republicanism and liberalism, influenced by ideas of the Enlightenment. In this revolution, the sense in which the word was used was in the way of a complete change of the body politic. With it came the establishment of limited power to allow all people freedom to participate in the public sphere as they desired.

When the FR began, the word "revolution" no longer meant restoration, but rather a complete change of the political system. Nevertheless, unlike the AR, in which a plan for the aim of revolution was proposed and discussed through the revolutionary war to the establishment of the Federal system in 1789, the FR failed to plan out their goal. Throughout the revolution, the word also evolved to include something more than the foundation of freedom: it included a vast social problem. While in the AR it already included a proclamation of equality between all men, the FR went further. In the late 18th century, most of France's population was in misery, unlike those in American colonies in the years prior to the revolution that could and would self-govern. This is due to America's widespread available space to build, farm and expand, (space that was at the time seen as "land of none," with a complete lack of acknowledgement of the indigenous people who lived there before European colonists), without being able to maintain a central government to oversee political action. People simply had to act on their own. In Europe there was no physical space to put off poverty, since all land already belonged to someone and all power was centralized. An average citizen would live in misery, having to pay taxes, while nobles and clergy were exempt. The Catholic Church had the role of education in modern society and the King had absolute power. In France there was a terrifying social problem prior to the revolution: most people were poor and uneducated. They were not given space to exist in the public sphere to act. They could only exist privately trying to secure their living necessities. It is perhaps possible to argue that while the AR has changed the meaning of the word from "restoration" to a complete change in the body politic and the establishment of a republican

constitution, the FR, probably due to the amount of poverty in France, not only had a political role, but also a social one. This social issue did, in many ways, overtake the political role of a revolution. While the idea of equality between all men emerged in the development of the AR, the idea of universal rights of men was a much more important part in the FR, especially in its influence on the rest of the world. One of the most important documents to come out of the FR is the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789). It is a human civil rights document that bases its articles on the idea human beings have inherent, natural rights that should be acknowledged and respected. Nevertheless, the impact the FR had in changing the concept of revolution was much more complex. The concept became more clouded, this revolution ended in terror and, finally, in a dictatorship under Napoleon. This revolution, while inspired by the AR (although also by Enlightenment ideas), was the revolution that inspired all future modern world revolutions and much of our present political systems. The ideas that stemmed from the FR have influenced democratic and dictatorial governments due to its complicated nature. It was the revolution that abolished feudalism in France and inspired the end of that old order in the western world.

There is still one modern revolution worthy of mention: the RR in 1917. This revolution took many examples from the FR, although it was also influenced by the writings of Karl Marx. This is mostly due to Marx's writing on the subject of revolution with the example of the FR. Most early interpretations of the FR were based on these Marxist ideas and focused on the social question, not the political intricacies of the phenomenon. Russia had, prior to its own revolution, a feudal system of a sort. Although Tsar Alexander II had abolished serfdom in 1861, the feudal structure was maintained for much longer. This meant Russia had a very classist society. Russia was an autocratic monarchy ("emperor," according to Romanov's title) in which the differences between people were astounding. Tsar Nicholas Romanov made increasingly bad choices that only increased the rift between the rich and the poor. The problem worsened until the beginning of the Great War, in which Russia had an enormous army mostly constituted by the working class and peasants. These soldiers were not prepared or trained for war, and after only two years, approximately two million Russian soldiers had been killed. The situation of bloodshed backlashed due to opposition by the Russian people to the Tsar and the (monarchic-like) regime increased. In February 1917 workers began to strike and riot. Tsar Nicholas ordered the military to suppress the riots; nonetheless, they refused to fire over the Russian people. After a few days of riot, the army was decidedly against the Tsar and he had to abdicate, giving way for a new government. This new government was run by two parties, the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet,

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this one to represent workers and soldiers. Vladimir Lenin, part of the Soviets, was a Bolshevik and defended communism. Based on the ideas of Marx, he saw the Russian problems through the lens of the social question. The Provisional Government and the Soviets disagreed about the war from which Russia withdrew in March 1917. The Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government and created a people's rule. The outcome was established Communism with Lenin as the leader of the Soviet party, the party in power. There was a Russian Constituent Assembly in which the Soviets were voted by 25% and it was clear there was opposition to them by anarchists and socialists, which meant the end of free membership in the party for non-Bolsheviks, making the Soviet party the Bolshevik party. While in the FR the foundation of freedom was a concern, in the RR both the cause and the resolution were mostly social and not political. The RR did not establish limited government or freedom, still, it exemplifies that duplicity the FR delivered to the concept of revolution.

The question of what the word “revolution” means is clearly a changing one. Political philosophical concepts cling to history and can only be studied and analysed in complicity with it. This changing nature of the concept is heavily related to the human condition, this is, using Hannah Arendt's conception, humans identify concepts through situations, changing our interpretation over the concepts due to context. The surroundings, contexts and particularities of each human are accessible to them and what they can know through them, even if they do not think of these instances as context or particularities. Using this framework, the goal of this paper shall be to define “revolution” and its tradition, whilst paying attention to the several contexts that the concept might embody. It seems, the concept of “revolution” just cannot be defined only in theory, or abstraction, but rather in a more concrete way it often took in history. This means that not only the thinkers of revolution matter, but also the actors, for without them revolutions should not happen. Especially because in theory much can be thought that then has to take on a different approach in context, due to the development of the instances of revolution. As seen in the sections above, it was a concept influenced by philosophy, but developed in the acts of real people advocating some type of change; these are called the people of action. Revolution always has the acting within that creates the change, which means that this acting is a fulcral part of revolution which adds to its definition. Action is also a concept present in Arendt's political philosophy, as well as anthropology, which is explored in the next chapter. The everchanging contextuality of political philosophy concepts makes these harder to pinpoint as one thing only as they are also objects of action and change; they become over time different things and grow to influence what they were not to begin with. Specifi-



cally, when the Glorious revolution happened, the intent and meaning of it was completely different to the one in the RR. As seen in this chapter, it is possible to interpret revolution in different lights and ideas, depending on which revolutions one bases his concept of revolution. For all of them are affected by certain ideas prior to their times that inspire the people of action to act accordingly. In the RR it is possible to find the influences of Marx in Lenin's approaches, in the FR there are the influences of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Robespierre, and in the AR there are clear influences of Baron de Montesquieu in the founding fathers. Nonetheless, people of action tend to have ideas for political change based on previous experiences and philosophical ideas as well.

## II. Action

When I use the word "action" in this essay, it refers to Hannah Arendt's concept which I explain ahead. Action is thought of in contrast with labor and work, all of them being important human capacities. The author introduces in her philosophy an anthropological and political concept about the human condition. Arendt defines the human capacities (action, work, labor) as well as their conditions, as fundamental to understanding the life and contexts in which people live. What separates action so clearly from work and labor is freedom. Action allows freedom to act, to begin something anew, unlike the other two capacities. The main difference is that both work and labor, although especially the latter, are connected to human necessity and the maintenance of human life. Below I'll describe succinctly labor and work, in order to define action as the author did too.

Labor is what corresponds to human necessities, this is, the cyclical needs that humans have as animals, such as eating and the sustenance of their biological lives. This is in regard to people's biological needs and their natural, biological, self. The cyclical nature of this activity means that its results are never permanent, they cease as quickly as they show, so related to consumption. Labor is the element of absolute necessity. Work comes after, since Arendt's definition of this tripartite is not absolutely rigid, which means, work is not as characterized by its lack of freedom as the latter, but it is not the activity of freedom.

Work relates to the "unnatural" of the human world, or the human artifice.  
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This is the world created by humans for themselves, the cities and the cars and the machines, but also art and law. It is the realm in which the human becomes the builder. According to the author, this is the realm that separates the human from the animal world. This is different from labor because through violence in nature, work can transform the world into a more humanly sphere. This is making the world an artifice that suffices for the human necessities. It is, still, because of both labor and work that an activity such as action appears, they must precede action. Work creates the public space, which is where action takes its place by creating a space of appearances.

This takes us to the final activity, which is where freedom exists. Action fulfils a much more important role than work, mostly because it provides the freedom that labor and work cannot. Work produces instrumental necessities to human life. Work is a means to the fabricated object. The fact that means are behind work means it cannot be the space of appearances. Action is the precedent to something that, although not necessary to the development of human life, is an integral part of the human condition. The reason for action's importance is because of the meaning it provides to human life. Without action, life is all about necessity, it is through it that one can differentiate himself, as well as fit into a web of relations in which everyone is sufficiently similar for one to act in.

Action is an end in itself, for it provides meaning. The freedom that it allows is not simply contemplative, but active and public. It is free because it incorporates the faculty of beginning. To begin, it is related to natality: the act of bringing more humans into the world. These humans are the future and to begin is always to leave things for other humans to begin later. All humans have this capacity; acting and freedom are one and the same. Action is the capacity that introduces novelty into the world, the capacity of the unexpectedness and plurality. The fact of plurality is important because it relates to the space of appearances and the public character of action. The fact is that action is only of importance when it reaches the public realm, because the space of appearances is a web of human relations in which people can act for themselves. To act is also speech. Nonetheless, it must include perpetuation of the act by other humans through the web of relations. This simply means for one act to spark change, it has to be recognized. It is in this context of plurality that action creates politics which is a space for action, or a web of entangled human relations. Action takes its form in the public sphere, since otherwise the action would be meaningless. It can only be meaningful when it affects and influences the world of other humans. The identity of the actor is established in action, for each

person can assert themselves as singular in their action. The way action affects the world is unpredictable, and because of that, it is of great importance that this activity includes both the capacity of promise and forgiveness. The space of appearances is this space created for action in which communication between people is possible, it is truly a space of encounters. This is where politics happens, for it is the space that actualizes freedom, in which it is possible for individuals to participate in politics.

This idea of freedom as beginning, the starter of something new, is a very creative idea. Nonetheless, in many cases, it fails to be enforced, according to Arendt. This is due to freedom being seen as action through choice, rather than beginning. For instance, Arendt argues that the AR established many things, but not a space of appearances. Nevertheless, due to freedom being attached to action as allowing the creation of something new, of new beginnings, it is difficult to establish concrete space for action in the world. This is if there is a constant restart, there is no time to any start at all. To begin is a power all people have. Arendt seems to think of birth as the ultimate actualization of this freedom. This is due to the constant addition of humans to the world, humans who are going to become actors (possibly). While those that act and make decisions are already exercising some kind of freedom, in a way, their role is also to provide the possibility of the same actualization for the future generations. This also means that the space for action, or the space of appearances, has to allow constant new and unexpected starts.

There is a problem with such an open space. If to act is to start new ways, it might mean the end of the old ways. While sometimes this is good, republics are established to last, limited government is established to last, making it difficult to leave a space open to constant restarts. This would work if when people of action are trying to establish a long-lasting government, they do it so it lasts. Limited government also tends to establish the most possible freedom. Citizens of that country would have freedom to act. This is a democratic measure in which everything else is established afterwards. There is, nonetheless, a gap between the law that establishes political freedom and action to all citizens and the actual enforcement of action, or a space for it. Such a system must allow changes to appear, simply because by respecting people's freedom, it too respects changes in context. A constitution can be changed, if the context is beneficial, nevertheless, it has to go through a process to assure the most basic political liberties, such as life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness. The actors of the revolutions can be seen as the real beginners of something new, people who had much more power to action, to begin than anyone in the future. Nevertheless, through changes to philosophy @LISBON

what they set, future generations simply have an easier place to start. The actors of the AR were the starters to a complicated and lasting form of government, to the first modern democracy in the world. No one intends on writing a new constitution, even if they perhaps consider over time, changing the old one to apply to more modern contexts. Freedom of action does not have to be exactly the same to all people to be a possibility of action. As long as one can expose himself and act or speak in a realm where there are human listeners, he could act. Change can be brought into the system once again, even if not through a revolution, or a new constitution. However, a state with a limited government that pursues and desires to enforce political freedom, should be conscious of any transgressions of those values, for they truly are the core of democracy.

### III. The Revolutionary Spirit

The revolutionary spirit is something that Arendt speaks of through the founding fathers' written testimonies. The idea that there was something that moved the revolution but that moved it from the only place that it could possibly come from: the minds of the people. The AR did have a prior experience, the colonial experience of self-government. People could not have a centralized power in colonized America. First of all, American colonies had their political power across the Atlantic. Second, this meant that people had to rule themselves through the development of local communities and local government. This is what is named the "revolutionary spirit," the concept that not only were there ideas from the Enlightenment era that fueled revolution's ideals of republicanism and liberalism (that only the more educated Americans were aware of, but there was additionally an inherent experience of self-government and political participation of the American colonials.

To many of the founding fathers it was important to include the systems of the communities and townships in the *Constitution*, for they were the experience that fueled the spirit for action and independence against the British. Without the communal systems developed in the colonial period, it would be difficult to maintain that freedom and participation of the individual. This idea was enforced through sovereignty of the people, the power of the state was given and justified by the people. Freedom of speech was also a measure to assure the participation of normal individuals in politics. This way one could

be a participator and would be able to speak and act against instituted power. Freedom of speech in the *Constitution* was meant to protect freedom of religion, meaning that for this to happen people have to be free to express opinions, assemble and discuss, which allowed people to act. The revolutionary spirit was very dependent on the maintenance of normal citizens in the game of politics, acting on their own will. In a way, the action that the people of the revolution had in the AR was fueled by their capacity to act prior to it, the freedom they established in their local communities. This action, as all action, had unexpected consequences to the world. The Americans participating in the revolution were inspired by the experience that preceded it. What this means is that action lasts longer than the act itself, it propagates through the experience and action of many different individuals and lives in the actions of those that act after. The revolutionary spirit is part of action in the sense that it incentivizes action to cause change. One of the questions Arendt poses is whether or not this spirit was maintained by those laws that proposed freedom or not. Freedom is a tough question, for when political freedom makes its appearance in the political realm it relates to individuals' actions. Freedom only exists when citizens can act.

Was there also revolutionary spirit in the FR? It was not like the American one, because there simply was not a prior experience of political freedom to most people. However, it was the social conditions in which a great part of the population found themselves that inspired the movement. But normal people had no space to act whatsoever before the revolution. The struggle was about not action and the establishment of political freedom, but the cause of the people, which was the assurance of their needs. Those of the larger fraction of French society in the 18th century were in misery and poor. Although their cause was what the revolution defended at first, it quickly dissipated into a fight between groups. In the cause against misery and poverty, the cause for freedom was left behind. If there was revolutionary spirit in France, the answer could be yes and in the documents of 1789, one can see the ideals of liberalism and a defense of freedom. Nevertheless, as the revolution progressed, that spirit was lost and the cause became too large to maintain freedom as the first and most important value to establish.

#### IV. Who can Act? *The Social Question.*

“Who can act” is one of the questions the possibility of action proposes. While in a sense it seems that anyone can become an actor if one so wishes to, this is rarely the truth. The Americans in the revolution became actors due to the circumstances of colonial times. How can one become an actor? This is one of the main problems of the FR, for those that could act did not include a big proportion of the overall population. This is called the social question, it became a great part of FR and RR although not AR, mostly due to the question of slavery and natives to America being ignored. One of the great influences of the revolutions in the world is the possibility of common people to act. This is a question related to one’s political freedom in a system of limited government and the moment after the assurance of the necessities for basic life. For this reason, the ideals of HR have their beginning in these situations. Who can act becomes such a big problem, the RR seems to have been very influenced by the problems the social question holds, mostly due to the reading of the FR according only to the social question and nothing else.


People of action have one thing in common in all revolutions: they have a goal. Revolutions, whether or not they succeed, must have a goal, as in the American, French and Russian. Nonetheless, the goal might be more or less difficult to achieve, or more or less planned. This is discussed in the next chapter: goal of revolution. Yet it matters here as well. One of the questions revolution poses is the social conditions in which most people were in before the revolution began.

When one looks at the social setting of the FR one of the most noticeable features is poverty. France was bankrupt by the time the revolution started. This bankruptcy was one great predecessor of the revolution and how it expected its people to keep paying taxes without having anything for themselves. Most people were poor and living in misery, yet these were the same people who got taxed while the higher classes were exempted. The absolutist government in France was using all the existing wealth to fund themselves and the richer classes. The overspending of the absolute Kings had driven France into bankruptcy. Nevertheless, when France was bankrupt, there were no changes to correct the King’s overspending or the taxation issues, even if there was a movement in the lower class.

The revolution arose with the question of solving poverty. The poor were  
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often taxed and the higher classes were exempted. This caused the revolution to have a strong social cause. However, this social cause could coexist with the political cause at first in order to establish a just form of government. But as the trouble escalated, the ideological battles lost the ideas of political freedom to the demands of the social cause. The social cause was not only due to the lack of representation of the people, but also about the impossibility of fair trials for all and inequality before the law. For example, Robespierre stood against the death penalty and renounced his position as a judge due to his disagreement with the law, as well as the lack of fair trials. Many people did not get trials at all before they were condemned. Whoever has heard of Robespierre knows him most likely due to the reign of terror in the latter part of the FR; it is ironic that he started his career with the defense of those that were unseen by the law.

The social question revolves around the problem of poverty. Revolutions are political ways of inciting change, not social. Even if the political encompasses more than politics alone and holds social ideas for the future, a fair political system must be established in order to solve those problems justly. The revolution itself is by any means a political resolution of political problems. In this case the revolution intended on ending absolutism and establishing the values of the revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. Nonetheless, the two successes of the FR are the abolishment of feudalism and the influence of the values of inherent rights of man and democracy in Europe and in the world. The end of revolution was not planned like in the AR. In France there were many opposing voices over the type of government that should succeed absolutism, at first there were Assemblies for this. But there were especially plenty of hungry people. As seen previously this is something that belongs to the human capacity of labor, not action. These ideas of poverty and misery took over the revolution inciting not political change but something else, assurance of basic necessities for life.

According to Arendt, the problem of poverty cannot be solved by political means; it needs another resolution. This is one of the reasons the FR failed and ended up in a dictatorship. The elimination of poverty has a very private side to it, a side that is closer to labor than to action. That is, poverty affects people's private lives, even if the social problem deserves a resolution. It is difficult to continue that way without overstepping the boundaries between public and private spheres. Arendt addresses the difficult boundary between public and private spheres, consequently creating a rift between political and social. What this means for revolution is that the private sphere becomes an objective of revolution as well, ignoring its feature of privacy. This means that when one wants to decide for himself what he wants, there might be a problem with the philosophy 

general good. The mentality that everyone should think the same way to achieve a general good for all grows powerful and a group becomes the controller of the concepts of bad and good and what applies to them. Labor is not meant to affect politics. Nevertheless, the problems caused by the lack of capacity to maintain people well to live their lives is a large one for any political system. This also means that those masses are very vulnerable to strong leadership. The reason for this is that they might fall into the hands of anyone who assures their survival, not their freedom. When necessity rules over other principles in a political issue, people are not rational thinkers capable of acting but disorganized forces to support whoever becomes more convincing. Politics is the realm of action and thus the realm of freedom, not necessity, this means without freedom and the possibility for people to act, it is impossible to establish any kind of fair government. Poverty is in the realm of necessity, people did not have enough to make ends meet. This is a view in which labor is where the economy fits better, not action. It is the economy that must deal with the goods people have, not politics. Of course politics and economy are related, nevertheless politics has a much larger realm of operation, which is the one in which change can be created. This is the value of political freedom should not be forgotten at the expense of the problem of poverty. When one thinks if these people could act, those that did act were those that could, the ones that had meals and a home assured at the end of the day. People must be able to act and the fact is: when one takes a good look at the FR, he can see that the people were easy to manipulate due to their lack of social comfort.

The social question is the opposite to the ideas first defended as the rights of man. It is the complete absence of the idea of inherent rights. Arendt proposes that when the social cause became the cause of the revolution, it was lost, for it could achieve nothing more than the division of people in groups and the imposition of some groups ideals on others. The moment the revolution lost its political cause, the revolution failed, for it could no longer achieve a limited government.

The social question has its vices. If taken too far, one can claim to be defending and representing the people's will and needs but truly escalating the situation to a point of no return. This can create a situation in which the only people that can act are people of a certain group. This could mean the group that was initially oppressed, or a group of representatives. Meaning only a group would be able to exercise their political freedom through oppressing anyone else's. This seems to have influenced not the democracies of today but of the



totalitarian movements and governments of modernity. Perhaps that is one of the darkest legacies of the FR. The poverty and the lack of basic human needs brought into the revolution despotism, instead of freedom. Behind the curtain of defending the poor, a reign of terror took over, only to end in a dictatorship. The ideals defended in the beginning of the revolution left only for the future to explore, but without any successful action to begin them. This means that while the FR succeeded in terminating feudalism, they never succeeded in bringing about a new beginning.

While in the American *Constitution* ideas of rights of man are already present they did not spread from there to the world. The ideas that overtook the world in the following centuries were mainly from the FR and the attempt it had made at some kind of universal acknowledgement of the rights of all men. The FR had to let go of the ideas of rights of men in replacement with the rights of the few, which was not new, just a new group held that power. Robespierre's cause was righteous but executed poorly, achieving very little for the people of France. His cause had the support of the masses, but those that held real power were the representatives, middle class gentlemen. This seems to be rooted in the thinking of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the fight for the general will of all could not truly be achieved for all are not one mind. It was perhaps a lesson on the problem of representation. The power was supposedly rooted on the people without actually taking people into account and justifying that with the knowledge of the good for all. This does not mean that the poor should not count, it just means that for them to count they cannot simply be represented by someone who claims to defend their rights. They must be allowed participation. Participation is key to action and to politics. No one can possibly be represented if he cannot express what he thinks. I do not mean to suggest Rousseau is to blame, although in the FR there was clearly some proof that Rousseau's theory has trouble with contextualization, the people who acted are the ones to be blamed. I have mentioned how action in revolution is as important as the philosophical and political context that has possibly inspired and preceded it. The values the FR tried to press at first are still values that are defended today, they did not disappear, perhaps it just became clearer some of the possible issues a revolution might have to face. The FR could not escape the previous condition in which the great majority of French people lived. Perhaps the question it poses is whether or not a problem such as the French one can be addressed properly with participation and without taking the revolution to an end without resolution, this is a question that remains through history and reappears constantly in the 20th century.

When one thinks of the social imposing on action and political freedom, it  
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seems that the only way to establish social safety is truly to go through political freedom first. This is, whilst freedom for all means the possibility of participation. This enhances the importance of each person as they are in the political realm, only a diverse space of appearances can enhance the web of relations to start new things. This means, when one proposes that private interests are bad for the good of all, it does not have to be that way. One might choose to participate or not due to their personal ideas and values; these can greatly improve the web of human relation action establishes. Political and social development need variety in the political realm. Political freedom establishes a space of equality for everyone to act. Only freedom in the public realm to do and choose what one wants personally can establish real equality between humans. Otherwise the action to establish social equality might necessarily mean that some groups, perhaps the disadvantaged deserve to be more heard than the others. The same can happen if freedom of participation becomes wealth-induced, this is, if political freedom becomes seen as simply economical freedom and gain. That could end up destroying the idea of political participation. Meaning that the social and the economic have to exist in society and they relate to freedom. Nevertheless, both are balanced by the possibility of participation by everyone freely.

This is not a defense of capitalism as the system of freedom. It is not truly economical either. This is a problem that belongs to political philosophy, not simply economy. The idea that when a revolution gets too taken away either by the differences in economic and social standings in society, it fails to establish political freedom or limited government. Political freedom is so much more important than economic freedom. It is what each human can do in the human realm of relations, apart from their economical standing in life. One could argue they are related. Those that do not have to be concerned with whether or not they might be able to provide for themselves are much less likely to be conscious participators in issues of politics. Political participation should be more important for those that have less, so they could change their lives. However, because their cause is generally social, it can easily be used against by people who claim to defend their rights and protect their cause. This might mean keeping some people from action by claiming representations. If action is not available to everyone then those who are more privileged might use it for their advantage. Action should allow participators more freedom. Nonetheless, the confusion between the social and political realms or the private and public spheres creates the possibility for those in need to be weaponized. This is, those that would benefit with public participation, end up being controlled by groups that claim to defend their interests.


The question of who can act is a question on social conditions. This is not a small question, for it inspires many movements. However, it seems that it might create problems to an idea of limited government, due to the lack of possibility one might have once government is established. Conversely, due to it hindering the process of creation of limited government in the first place. It is a question of great importance if one considers action the top capacity of the human condition.

## **V. The Goal of Revolution.** *Establishment of limited government.*

When one states all revolutions have a goal, it means that one of the questions often proposed considering revolution is whether or not they fulfilled their goal. If the goal of revolution is not achieved, then how can revolution be a method for establishing anything? And have revolutions ever achieved their goals? How can one know exactly whether or not the goal of revolution has been achieved?

What was the goal of the AR? The AR was a revolution that started as a fight for freedom through the severing of ties to the previous arrangement as colonies of the British Empire. This depended on the establishment of a limited government in America. If this was the end of the revolution then it seems to have been achieved.

How about the FR? Most famous interpretations are of Marxist influence. Thus taking the idea of “social question”, this is the class struggle interpretation in which the privileged classes monopolized wealth creating misery, exclusion and poverty for those of the lower classes. The social question is the idea that the goal of the French in their revolution was to end these social differences in society. In which case, if so, they failed.

It seems important to mention, before moving on ahead, that the FR had a much more lasting influence on the world after it ended, than the AR. The reason why this is depends on the interpretation one chooses to follow of FR. While the AR happened with success, America was but a provincial state across the ocean. There was despise in European societies towards America for being philosophy 

uncultured and provincial. Hence the FR inspired more authors following both events, it was more publicized, it spread through more works of history and philosophy. When the French invasions started, the ideas of liberalism were spread further too, even if republicanism failed in France.

Arendt disagrees with the above ideas about the goal of revolution, she thinks that both revolutions aimed at more. For both revolutions were concerned with the establishment of political freedom, of a space of appearances in which people could begin to act. This means a way for people, everyone in a country, to have political participation. This is the mark of revolutionary moments, the establishment of a political realm for action of all. In which case, both revolutions seem to have failed to achieve, according to the author.

The RR was heavily influenced by Marxist ideas, in which case the social question appears as the sole purpose of revolution. There was no intention of establishing political freedom, but rather to promote a change in the class system. When the RR established a new government, the power was in the hands of the Bolsheviks only, the power belonged to one party. The social question trumped itself, for a group representing the oppressed took power in their name and exercised in the sense of solving the problems of the poorest people.

Of all the revolutions mentioned, the AR had a much clearer goal, in the sense it became a planned goal with the *DoI*. The goal was the foundation of freedom and the establishment of limited government. The FR also had a goal to establish fair representation and just government under the same values as the AR of freedom and equality, however their plan was less clear and had more problems due to the social situation in France. Yet, with a much larger social problem, the goal was lost from the establishment of fairness to the social cause as the revolution advanced. When Marx wrote the *Communist Manifesto* the revolution that inspired his views was the French one. It was also the interpretation read and subscribed by the leaders of the RR. The problem of class struggle in the midst of the FR inspired many to think revolution through the lenses of the “social question” only. Perhaps because the problems the FR became involved in solving, caused the FR to fail to even establish a long-lasting body politic under a fair constitution with the values of liberalism. Nevertheless, the ideas that were part of the revolution did not disappear, they were maintained by the theorists of the time. Of the two revolutions, AR was the only to actually establish a long-lasting political system based on Republicanism and Liberalism. Nonetheless, they also failed, paraphrasing Arendt, to establish a space of ap-

pearances for politics to happen, for people to act perpetually.

This is a problem that concerned Thomas Jefferson. He expressed it in his correspondence with James Madison. While the founding fathers were actors in a space of freedom created to act, to begin a new body politic, this space could not be achieved for a perpetual amount of time. It was not possible to maintain the capacity to begin again as a possibility, in the event of establishing a form of government that expects durability. Due to this, Jefferson proposed timed revisions of the *Constitution*, for otherwise citizens in the future might live under the *Constitution* considered as absolute and basic truth, even if it became obsolete. Citizens did not truly have a space to participate in government with the same authority the founding fathers had, or with the same political freedom of the colonial townships. The *Constitution* protected its citizens from the arbitrary exercise of authority, by having a system of balances and checks between political powers. Nevertheless, it was difficult to create a space for action. The experience of common rule in the colonies was difficult to maintain and integrate in the new body politic. The activities called political could only be exercised by the representatives of the people instead of the people themselves. This is a total failure to integrate the township system developed in the colonial years that was the political experience that inspired the foundation of a republic. This is the problem of representation, it was thought of as a way to retain that direct political action, the people would be electors and the representatives would have to respect and act accordingly to the people's ideas, being a mere substitute. Nevertheless, this was not possible for representation to have implications dependent on the representative. The representative could not speak to those who elected him everytime he had to make a decision. The centralized power had some impact over people's direct participation. Nonetheless, it is not because the *Constitution* failed to integrate the township system into the federal one that meant people could not act. The assurance of individual freedom and pursuit for happiness in the *Constitution* included a protection of individual rights that allowed people to be both privately and publicly as they chose to be.

The AR did, theoretically, succeed in giving freedom to the people. To the founding fathers the action on part of the common folk was rather important to keep government in its axis. Nevertheless, as soon as John Adams was president there was a strong attack on the First Amendment through the Alien and Sedition Acts. The system of checks and balances inspired in Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Law* and its division of powers (judicial, legislative and executive), but also in some way the freedom of the people to oppose and criticize government. Freedom of speech, expressed in the First Amendment, had a great deal philosophy @LISBON

to do with the concern of ensuring religious freedom. When the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed by John Adams. This process, although unconstitutional, was not taken to the judicial power, as it should have been, according to Article III of the *Constitution*. John Adams' actions were explained by the Quasi-War with France among the lines of strengthening national security by making it more difficult for immigrants to have American citizenship and criminalization of speech against the government. It is now thought that the Sedition Act of 1798 was to suppress voters that disagreed with the Federalist party. There were four acts total: the Naturalization Act (making it more difficult for one to become a citizen), the Sedition Act (breaking the First Amendment of the United States *Constitution*), the Alien Enemies Act (giving the president the power to imprison and deport non-citizens who were deemed hostile) and the Alien Friends Act (same as prior but with non-citizens deemed dangerous). Thomas Jefferson, when president, reversed the Sedition Act and the Alien Friends Act without ever going to the Courts. The Alien Enemies Act still exists today, although slightly altered, it remains with the same principle. This is a problem on freedom of speech and its role in action.

Freedom of speech is a feature of democracies and it is one often discussed for its loose definition. Speech can offend others, or it can manipulate others, this poses the question of whether or not freedom of speech is a healthy measure within a democracy. Democracies are fragile and speech can turn them into other types of government by the manipulation of the masses to believe in some ideal a leader proposes to respect. Nonetheless, if speech is censored, who censors has an enormous amount of power, since it is important to give citizens diverse accounts of events. Freedom of speech is part of political freedom and it relates directly to action and who can or cannot act. While one can say that manipulators that use speech to make people do what they want are conditioning people's freedom. If on other hand, decides to control speech and what is shared with people or not, he becomes equally conditioning people's capacity to act.

This is why freedom of speech is complex: it relates to action and political participation. If true political freedom is the possibility to participate in the creation of the political realm, then freedom of speech is directly connected to freedom of information. Which is how people learn the facts and formulate conclusions based on the information they have access to, biased or unbiased. The bias issue can only be solved as anything else is in a democracy, this is, it is important people are represented along with their opinions. In a large group

of people, it is likely that opinions vary and create a general diversity. If people get their information from many biased sources, then at least, they know diverse biases. If people only consume one biased media source then their opinions are solely based on that biased information. This problem goes into the realm of human objectivity, in which questions of whether or not information can be unbiased pop up easily. Here it is better to assume it is, since people generally receive information through a type of media, so through mediums, they were not there when it happened, they heard from someone.

Historical situations are objects of interpretation, they are not exact science. Thus it is better to expect some bias in everyone. Nevertheless, diversity is a way to fight bias, especially if political decisions have to be made by people with different ideas and opinions. Democracy is not only the sole system that allows diversity but a system that requires dialogue and understanding from people who think differently. This is one of the great changes compared to past systems, in which a group held the opinion of the state as the righteous opinion and no others would be allowed. This means that political freedom, action to start anew and to act, requires freedom of speech.

A federalist system is one that includes a very strong system of representation. This means that power is existent in many different places and at different levels. In the American system, States have state law and can legislate, however there is also federal law. This system is divided in the same way, there are the states' legislative, executive and judicial power as separated, as well as at the federal level. This means that a system of proportions had to be adopted so the population could be well represented. This means a large system of representation, which can create problems due to misrepresentation and thus an impossibility for citizens to act as citizens. Which is why freedom of speech is important. It stands in the way of action and participation getting lost in the hierarchy. This is, it protects the citizens by informing them and allowing them to take action against misrepresentation. This is clearly not an ideal system for individual action, in fact it needed plenty of work to allow people action and Arendt sees this problem clearly.

This problem was related to what the *Constitution* established. In a sense because, in the first ten years of the *Constitution*, points that were related to the free participation of common people in the political realm were broken. Despite that those rights were in the *Constitution* with the goal of protecting people from their government and allowing freedom of expression to criticize if that is what philosophy @LISBON



one wished for. Jefferson had always been concerned with the validity of the *Constitution* in the sense that people should not be able to act like they had. For Jefferson the meaning of this was clear, there needed to be an expiration date in which the *Constitution* would be revised. He then proceeded to propose a nineteen year period in which the constitutional law would have to be decided upon again and again. However, this was clearly a problem, recognized by Madison, and it could not happen, for the *Constitution* was the foundation for all further law. In the foundation of limited government there were principles necessary for its construction to maintain political freedom as participation of the common folk. These elements, especially those present in the colonial experience, were forgotten and left behind. This was not the objective, in fact, this was a problem of representation. In the British colonies of North America, there was the self-government system that developed in a way naturally, or through habit. In the colonies there was no way to make decisions by consulting a centralized government. This meant that people had to make decisions on what to do and hence were in a system of self-government. The foundation of a republic and especially a federal one, involved the centralization of government, even if divided in many parts. One of the concerns of the revolution was to maintain in a way the systems developed in colonial times, but it failed to be included. This colonial system was truly a system of action, in which individuals could act freely. However, republican government needs some kind of centralization, even if it maintains its local governments, but the power still shifts. Especially when one of the goals of revolution is to create a world, different from the previous that truly ruptures with its past, but that lasts and prospers while allowing freedom and participation of every citizen in the public realm. This was the sole principle of creating a republican, a political system that was less oppressive with the promise of durability.

The problem with the township's loss of political power is that it represents a loss of direct power of the people in the community. The problem of representation is that when one is a representative of a group of people, they are representing people in a higher level, in hierarchy of power, in which the higher one finds himself, the more powerful. Nonetheless, this power is also derived from the people, the sole purpose is that their vote is represented in the chain of representation and this is why, combined with freedom of expression, the holders of sovereignty are the people and their vote is the foundation of the whole system. There was then an impossibility to keep the exercise of freedom at such a local level. Mostly due to the need of creating a union of states, in which they were all under the same government. A system in which power was divided.

The AR provided the US with a lasting body politic and a lasting system with a separation of powers, however it did not do much for a lasting institution for people to act perpetually. There is no room for an institution like the one that existed to build the republic in the first place. No one else, apart from the founding fathers, would again have the power of beginning like they did. Exactly since the system is supposed to last. Jefferson was aware of this problem, but all of his resolutions to it were failures. Perhaps the problem with this is that it is very difficult to create a political system in which everyone is represented perfectly, but especially a system in which everyone has a potentiality of action and the privilege of using it to begin new things. The spirit that evolved with the revolution, one of beginning something new and just to all included was in contrast to what was established a long-lasting republic with a constitution that served as the text to found anything else on. This text is the basic law of that state. That does not mean that it is absolute, in fact, the constitution is basic law for it intends at establishing the most basic of all rights, including political freedom for all. Nevertheless, the AR did not fail to instate individual freedom, in the sense that everyone is not only allowed but should have the possibility to seek their own happiness privately. This is part of the *Constitution*, the pursuit of happiness, the idea that anyone should be able to pursue their wants and needs, this being recognized publicly but being a given to the individual. This personal freedom is not minimal, it is important and is what is included in the freedom of speech, freedom to participate and oppose the established power. As well, as the power to change the *Constitution* should it become necessary, as it was in the abolishment of slavery.

In contrast with the AR, there is the FR. While in the case of the AR Arendt argues it fails due to the need to last by, accidentally, impossibilizing people's action similar to the one of the founding fathers in the future. One of the problems of the FR contrasts with this, for there was a loss of revolutionary spirit and ideals that caused the revolution to fail. The FR went from a fight for freedom and a republic to the infamous reign of terror. This happened in the adoption of the social question as the goal of revolution, instead of the establishment of a fairer political order. In France, there was a much larger social issue. The classes, or the estates had extremely different rights and duties. In the General Estate, a legislative and consultative assembly of the different classes of the French subjects in the *Ancien Regime*, every vote counted as one, no representation dependent on population's numbers. Each representative had exactly one vote. In the General Estate of 1789, the voting system revealed just how clearly flawed it was when most of the population of France would still be out-voted by the votes of the clerics and the nobles (the privileged minority). The privi-

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leged classes' votes counted as one each, as well as the vote of the Third Estate (the people). The Third Estate declared separation with the other Estates and became the Commons, later the National Assembly. The National Assembly declared all previous taxation illegal. The representatives of the people of France, the commoners, were represented by people of the middle class. The common people only stayed around to get food, whenever it was distributed. This meant the people were not part of the action, they were simply represented without choosing their representatives. The social problem meant the program for the revolution had to change, there were deeper problems than the rights of people, there was also hunger and misery. The background of the FR destroyed the goal of revolution, it was the reason it failed. Instead of wishing for freedom, the people desired to be fed, even if the ideas remained to influence France and the rest of the world in the following century. It was no longer a political goal, it was a social one, one that related to necessity and the maintenance of biological life, rather than the establishment of political freedom and rights. Without this there was nothing for the revolution to accomplish, a revolution is a political resolution to bring on political change. Only after can it deal with internal social issues. That is why the FR failed.

## VI. Pursuit of Happiness

One of the interesting problems posed in the *DoI* of the USA is that of the "pursuit of happiness." This pursuit was one of the inalienable rights of humans. According to the correspondence between the founding fathers, it is possible to find evidence that this idea was Jefferson's, since he replaced "property" in the political classical trilogy (life, liberty and property), with "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The idea is tied with the idea of freedom, but freedom completely as a right of the individual. This is connected to action.

In previous times, especially in Europe, those that should be concerned with public matters were chosen and privileged, as well as allowed to as long as they agreed to the general ideas of the ruler. Europe was a continent of powerful monarchies and absolutism, only a small sum of people were allowed to publicly act, or to publicly appear. The philosophy that inspired many of the ideas of the AR is essentially European. The idea of freedom appeared in many philosophy texts of different European philosophers prior to the revolutions,

freedom as a political value, something for society to achieve. This idea of freedom is connected to an idea of equality that was not true to European society in the 18th century. However revolutions claimed and pursued that freedom that would establish political equality in people's participation.

Equality is necessary to freedom, for one to be free, he has to have the same chance at liberty as anyone else in his society. These ideas have a correlation and the pursuit of happiness is part of it. The fact that in the *DoI* this idea was present demonstrates a concern for inalienable rights of all men, an idea with its root in the Enlightenment. This "happiness" corresponds to the idea of individual and personal freedom. This pursuit is both public and private and this was why it was so novel and important. There is a concern not only for the necessities of one's life, labor, or what one has to do in order to live in a human world, it is a concern with the pursuits people take in their lives, the right for everyone to self-determine themselves, to privately become who one wants to be, to choose and to act. A political system that encourages pursuit of one's goals is one in which people stand in a level of freedom to will for things. This is, people are free to make their own choices to express and defend their own ideas. Nonetheless, the idea of "pursuit of happiness" is very often presented as ambiguous. On one hand, one is able to pursue what they desire in their own criteria as long as the same right is withheld to others. People are allowed to exist privately and publicly as they wish, as well as act when or if they wish to. Nevertheless, one's pursuits may correspond to each individual as his own. It is, in a way, the allowance for self-discovery and growth in a world of humans, in a world of togetherness. A world in which everyone is allowed to do the same pursuit, hence the equality inherent to this pursuit. The private and the public spheres are not exclusive, they are connected and flux in between each other, people can travel among them as they wish to. This is for and in the pursuit of happiness, people oscillate between the two spheres and this is necessary for their freedom to be maintained. There is freedom for everyone to pursue their individual and private happiness, the State has nothing to say about what happiness is or how one should pursue it, for it is limited. After all it is an inalienable right that assures people's independence from the State. This pursuit is as much one's right as one's life or one's liberty is.

What of the question that could be posed here is: did the AR achieve this? As exposed above, the AR did achieve the establishment of a limited government in which this principle was of great importance. The USA never had as much of a miserable social situation as the French one did. But when the docu-  
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ments of the federal government established duties and rights to all men under the federal government and with the Bill of Rights, they excluded some parts of the population: Native Americans, women and slaves. The problem is not whether or not a limited government was established, but whether or not that government succeeded in offering some kind of political rights to its people. The idea of pursuit of happiness was a political concern, in the sense that it was supposed to be an assurance of people's political rights and right of participation, right of individual freedom. Nevertheless, this idea seems to have been inverted after the *DoI* was drafted in the centuries that followed. The ideas that were once political, in the sense of negative rights acknowledgement, became something identified with wealth and economical gain instead.

The idea here is also expressed by Arendt *On Revolution*. These ideas of negative rights in the *DoI* have been inverted over centuries to mean not political rights, but the right to acquire wealth and use it as one intends to. Happiness has an ambiguous meaning since Jefferson never made absolutely clear, yet, it does not seem to mean only wealth. Although wealth might be an asset desired by many, the original meaning had to be about political and negative rights. To explain this one can give a look to Jefferson's work with the founding fathers for the *DoI* and the *Constitution*. They were not establishing simply a capitalistic and economical system, but a new type of government, the first modern democracy.


"Happiness" appears in the *DoI* as fundamental and a just government must respect it as such. Nonetheless, wealth is more than enough economic well-being, it is above that. Today, wealth stands for abundance and fortune, it is something that does not reach all, if people's participation is dependent on it, it might possibly cause inequality in political matters. Can anyone argue that it is more important for wealthy people to have more power in the pursuit of happiness and freedom? No. Political fundamental rights are greater than the relativity present in wealth and those who are wealthy.

The "pursuit of happiness" was a replacement of the historical "property" in the formation of John Locke for man's natural rights. Property is a possession and when thought of as an inalienable right, it means a right of everyone and anyone to possess property. Never in history has property been seen as something of the poor, those that owned land could tax people working and living in their land, which was how the feudal system worked. Thus the system in the USA could not be one that impoverished people, but rather that allowed them to freely explore their options in the personal pursuit of happiness. Even if this

would have a good economical outcome for people, acquisition of wealth was a secondary concern. It was a concern after the much needed establishment of political freedom for all (except women, slaves and Native Americans).

This view was influenced by the work-related culture established in the USA in the years after the revolution. The economical growth of independent citizens was done through their work and their participation in the community. Unlike the Old World, in America work gained an important role in the emancipation of the citizen as a participant in society. Work was not seen as something that only the poor did, but as something that could dignify the individual. This new dimension of work is truly important for it allows people to be economically independent through their own work. Through work one could acquire enough money to buy things he desires, without needing to belong to a privileged class.

Was it an idea of economic gain that Jefferson had in mind when he wrote “pursuit of happiness” into the *DoI*? There is not a correct answer, for Jefferson did not write a treatise explaining the meaning of the expression. Due to that it cannot be seen by all in the same eyes and creates this ambiguity. Nonetheless, one can think of Jefferson as a man worried about politics and concerned with the establishment of limited government that respected fundamental rights of humans (theoretically, he was a slave owner). Happiness must have had a much more private meaning, in the sense that each should be able to decide for themselves what their happiness is. Nevertheless, this view is a political one, not economic. Hence, happiness is a right but work is simply a necessity. The process of obtaining wealth is not fundamental in the sense that being free and able to make choices and act for oneself is. This stands only by virtue of the meaning of “inalienable:” the idea that no one, not even the possessor, can take these rights away from a person. If the “pursuit of happiness” was meant to be inalienable, it had to be in the sense that it was meant to be some kind of negative right. This would have to be political rights for anyone to reach their private goals, through the private sphere or the public one. It is everyone’s universal right to pursue their happiness, hence, the pursuit of happiness is not simply pursuing wealth.

Nevertheless, these ideas have been inverted and people were led to believe wealth is the only valuable happiness. Only in the sense that the ideas of political freedom and negative rights present in the *DoI* are seen, many times, as simply economic freedoms. This way of looking at these concepts completely philosophy 

inverts the values of the revolution. The idea that no one should lose or gain more or less political participation due to how much fortune they withhold. In a democracy there is no requirement to participate in public life except for one's own freedom and will to do so. As nowadays one can see in countries such as the USA, economic power often overcomes political participation with influence of the media and other interested sources. The true pursuit of happiness has to offer the possibility for all to equally achieve it. Today the idea that, especially in the USA, anyone can be wealthy as long as they are not lazy, as long as they get themselves to it comes from this overturn of such concepts. The idea that being wealthy is the only liberating happiness. As well as the constant spreading of success stories in a universe of millions of people, through work an individual achieved by themselves as the exemplification of the American Dream. These are ideas supporting that anyone can be wealthy and successful as long as they get themselves to it. Ideas that explore the poor by passing the message they simply have not worked hard enough. Also spreading the idea that one is powerless until he becomes wealthy, like the billionaires did. This inverted idea clouds the role of the citizen in a republic as a free participant. It tells people they are pieces in a game of chess they cannot possibly play until they become wealthy too. This is truly bad for the idea of free participation of the citizens. It teaches only that they can only agree or disagree with powerful people's interests and perhaps benefit from the goodwill and kind actions of some of those powerful enough to give.

## **VII. State-mandated Happiness**

This problem brings to light another part of the FR legacy. Which is the power of the masses and the strength of a leader impersonating a guide for the people. The FR left behind a legacy that had severe consequences. The FR ended in a dictatorship, it failed to establish limited government or fundamental rights. The FR escalated into the infamous reign of terror in which a group of people, led by Robespierre, achieved enough power to execute anyone that opposed them. This issue was connected to the problem of misery in France prior to the revolution. Nevertheless, it is one of characteristics of the 20th century totalitarian movements. Seen in the FR as well, however much more sophisticated in the 20th century and with long-lasting political consequences. The reign of terror was thought of as a necessary evil in order to establish something fair and better in the end, according to Robespierre. This is a situation in which a

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group is clearly established as the enemy to be destroyed. This movement had to be popular with the people. That way a mass is used to gain power and destroy the dialogue by jumping into violence. This mass formation tendency is absolutely necessary for any group to take power and establish another group as the enemy. It was by allying himself to the largest and most discriminated group that Robespierre achieved the reign of terror. Those that opposed the group's ideas that claimed to protect the people became the enemies. The ones that had to be executed in order to establish a fairer political and social order. When happiness is state-mandated, it is not freedom and it is not happiness.

The RR took a great lesson from the FR. While Marx's writings were indeed inspired by the FR, as well as known and defended by Lenin, they had a view of revolution only by the social question. Suffering in the past was seen as necessary for the progress of history towards its end. In the RR there was an inversion of the view on happiness, this is a certain kind of socially accepted happiness, hidden as the socially acceptable opinion. The RR had the ability to purge whole parts of society, not only during the revolution, but as the communist regime was established as well. Stalin was a gruesome totalitarian dictator that purged its citizens, considering common people too as enemies of the state.

What it takes to become an enemy of the state ruled by a group is to have a stance or opinion that might make the leader feel fragile. To survive one must be willing to commit to the group's ideas, or at least to the leader's. Fear, not anything else, pulls people away from the political scene, fundamental rights and limited government must be forgotten. The amount of terror the Russian totalitarian government achieved was, compared to France, enormous, an appalling difference. The enemies of the state were not only those that had different ideas that could be dangerous, but due to the amount of population Russia had, Stalin could easily purge large parts of society and did so during the Great Purge 1936-1938. The purges of the Russian regime under Stalin were so large and monstrous, the country took years to technologically and scientifically catch up. There was an enormous loss of human resources. This is an example of the legacy of FR. Perhaps, this is the most gruesome example, yet, one that illustrates how violence within one's own state was birthed and did not leave again the realm of politics. Throughout the 20th century there were more and more examples, such as the extermination camps in Nazi Germany or the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in China. Nevertheless these are good examples of what happens when the goal of revolution is lost and there is an escalation towards violence. Nonetheless, it was a movement that instrumentalized people to be used either to feed a violent movement, or to be the enemy of it. All pos-  
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sibly justified in the future, for the achievement of the acclaimed greater goal.

Happiness becomes no longer a private enterprise, but becomes a publicly one and socially sanctioned. In the sense that people are going to be concerned enough to report others in order not to appear complicit. Happiness becomes mandatory, for anything other than that is defiance to the regime and a danger to one's safety. This happens when a certain group becomes the regime and depends on only a few to stay in government. Only a few powerful friends must remain happy and anyone else must fear for their safety. When the Soviet party in Russia became exclusive to Bolsheviks, two groups were assembled, those that belonged to a powerful inner circle that claimed to defend the people and the enemies. Socially acceptable standards become one of compliance with the established power, in a manner of survival, not in a manner of pursuing happiness or acting freely. The idea of freedom became completely surrendered to a major cause defended by the party (for when whenever someone speaks of the party, it already means an exclusive group with power). Happiness becomes a completely public feature, in the sense it is not even happiness, it is compliance, fear and survival. Everyone has to stand up to the public idea of a type of socially accepted happiness at all times. The risk of crossing the line could end up in executions of individuals and their families and/or purges of entire parts of society (although the latter must happen in a state with many human resources). Instead of happiness, freedom and fundamental rights, one has to worry for his most basic necessities: labor. Those that want to live have to give up freedom and action, to protect life, to assure basic necessities. The public sphere is owned by a few, who make choices for everyone else.

This is the problem of a strong public sphere. It happened in France during the revolution and it was used afterwards, especially in the 20th century, as a way to obtain power. This influence is one of historical importance, for the reign of terror was also for the greater good. Its influence in the RR is tremendous. Nevertheless, it is good to remember the FR also influenced the world by passing its ideals of fundamental rights on. Today, democracies and defenses of HR are still based on the FR's *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* 1789. The FR had very contradictory influences on the world. It inspired both democracies, so praised today, as well as terrifying dictatorships, or even inspiring totalitarianism to a certain degree.

### VIII. Human rights & Civil rights


During the AR there was the problem of the absolute. This is the problem of where to derive power to legislate and create a new state from. This is also directly connected to secularization. Before the State and the Church separated, the political decisions were founded in the divine will. God was the figure that offered legitimacy to political ideas, especially those concerning human nature. In the process of secularization, this guidance of the divine was lost, meaning the justification for things had to be different than it had been previously. In the 18th century all legislators were related to religion, especially in America. The argument for why those were the rights they were arriving at as the foundation of the state were that those were evident and clear. This could remind anyone of Descartes, and it is related to the idea of reason. These men of the revolution were men that believed in reason as the guide of the human. The laws that they achieved upon consideration were the ones that seemed clear to appeal and respect all humans. However, the founding fathers did not fool themselves as to whether or not they were absolute. They were basic and fundamental to the establishment of the American republics, but they were not absolute. Legitimacy for power was founded in the people that through participation in government could legitimate the authority of the government. People live under certain circumstances and the founding fathers were aware of the changing nature of the secular realm. This meant that it had to be possible for the people to change the constitution would the circumstances demand it. For reason could give evident truths and they could try their best to write them as basic law for the country but how could the founding fathers predict change? This was the chance for next generations to act too as they would be the ones to change what might necessarily need change. Nonetheless, these rights of people were considered natural, evident and most importantly inalienable. Today there is an inversion of this thought, and even if that is true the people of the revolutions did not see civil rights in the condition of man but as a part of their nature. The human is studied by the edifice of human relations, the constructions made among each other. Even if during the time of revolution this was not seen as some kind of human condition, it is clear how times change and how easy it is today to admit that humans simply do not know their nature. Change is seen as the evidence to this disconnection to our own nature. Following the modern view of condition and not nature, HR are not truly more than civil rights, until one can acknowledge and respect them on a global scale. This means that the first HR to make their appearance in the DoI were mostly civil rights necessary to the construction of a limited government.

Back in the time of the revolutions, the evidence for these rights to be natural were seen as crystal clear. The idea of rights for all, even if thought as for the nationals of a certain country, was based in a very anti-absolutist approach. Although, this idea can be traced back to the Enlightenment, as the rights of men are derived from nature. This means that the rights of people are much more intrinsic than their form in a charter, or their appearance as a law. HR are inalienable, they cannot be revoked, they simply exist and should be respected, especially by any fair type of government. This argument means to propose that rulers have interest in governing well, due to the interest of the ruler is the interest of the people. In the sense, the further law shall not interfere with these, but work around them. What a charter of rights or a bill of rights intends to do is to acknowledge these rights but they cannot be given since they are already in each human. These rights have a clear problem, they can be broken, although a fair government should respect them, in order to limit itself. If they are inherent to humans, then this causes the problem of having to trust this inalienable law for others to respect. The law can only enforce positive rights. This means that the law must acknowledge negative rights without ever surpassing their domain. But one question remains.: Can anyone truly enforce inherent rights that cannot be taken away (even by himself at his own will and volition)?

This problem is more of a contemporary one than a problem of the Enlightenment, or of the 18th century revolutions. Human nature was much more accepted as a way to justify these rights. Nevertheless, the question remains. If the law of one country acknowledges HR in it with something similar to a bill of rights it still stands that how can it be enforced? And to whom? This problem gets even more interesting in a globalized world. The idea that all humans have some kind of inherent value at birth has been widely accepted. Still this means no guarantee universally. One's national government might or not protect those rights.

There is a strong connection between HR and civil rights. It is possible to note in the development of the revolutions of the 18th century evidence for the reasoning of human civil rights. Together with the *Magna Carta* (1215), the English *Bill of Rights* (1689), the US *DoI* (1776), the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789) and the US *Bill of Rights* (1789) were the inspiration for the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). There we can find a very modern theme in the midst of the revolution's innovations. While these rights were declared as "rights of man" with certain universality, they still remain the rights of the citizens, or the rights of nationals. Nevertheless, in both the AR and the FR there were ideas of universal rights of humans, not just na-  
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tional rights, but inalienable in human nature. Even to our days these rights are thought of as inherent to humans independent of who they are and where they were born, even if many go unenforced around the world. HR are wide in context, which makes it even more difficult to enforce them without the existence of citizenship. Hence their relation to civil rights, it is through those that a state assures their citizens these rights. While countries, these days, take on refugees seeking asylum, the asylum is not an assurance of all their HR, simply one of them, the right to life. The rights that one is supposedly born with do not apply if an authority does not protect and enforce them. All of this is evidence that HR are closely related not only to a state that enforces them, but to civil rights. Civil rights are in the foundation and building of limited governments. These rights were thought of in the AR and the FR and in America they helped build the republic. The countries that see people as subjects of freedom are countries that have taken something from this tradition.

It seems that the problem of HR is their width, especially in modern days. They simply contain too much, being larger than civil rights. Freedom and happiness are goals in the revolutions but in modern days, they are normality in democratic countries. Civil rights are an integral part of democracies, no democracy can be called that without respecting and enforcing what is called HR. That a state assures their citizens rights is not very difficult to comprehend, however, to think of a state claiming such a statement as universal HR, it is much different. States do not do much more than claim to believe in HR, for they have no other way of showing it other than the enforcement of civil rights within their realm of action. They cannot do much to enforce them in the world or in other countries. Life is a basic human right, but life is labor, not action. Labor is not enough for the human experience to stretch to all its possibilities, this is to show itself publicly, or to create, to act. This is an attempt to defend HR without recurring to a higher force, or human nature. Nonetheless, one can say that at least humans have capacities that do not relate to their biological selves. Humans can do more than labor. Thus, if they can act, how can one defend that only those who were lucky get to exercise their freedom? This is, in a way, a defense of universal rights. Not based on the nature of humans but on the social conditions humans face. In any situation one could end up not being rightfully represented, their will and interests completely overlooked in favor of someone else's. One can always argue that apart from the situation both individuals find themselves, there is nothing different between them, only their circumstances. HR try to assure these circumstances are not too great to stop all from having equal chances in life. Obviously the list of HR is wide and their enforcement does not depend on the individuals themselves but those that intend to condition them. The idea philosophy 

of inherency of rights to humans has always failed in enforcement. For when one argues inalienability, one has to forget that those rights are stripped away from people and their inherency is only in the name when that happens. In the past century there were two world wars and several refugee crises, this problem was clearer than ever. Nonetheless, they did not create an enforcement gateway to solve refugee crises in the future through the enforcement of HR, today there still is not a resolution. The human condition can justify the idea of HR by affirming that they need to exist in order to assure people's condition is respected enough for them to act. Yet, if the enforcement fails, then HR fail as inherent. HR are negative rights, which means no body politic anywhere can properly enforce them, it can only respect them by considering them existent in everyone.

HR and civil rights are not just connected, they are the same, except one defends the universal rights of all humans and the other only the citizen. To argue this we can use the revolutions, both AR and FR. When their respective declarations were written, the rights were used as the edifice for their states and the rights of their citizens, even if they were written as inalienable to all men. These were recognized by the Americans and the Frenchmen that wrote them and that sought to verify the rights, but France did not intend to defend the inalienable rights of the Prussian men. Hence, at the time of their birth, HR were civil rights.

The FR was very important to spread the ideas of HR, yet it did not create a long-lasting constitution where those rights would be acknowledged and respected as a negative right. Even if it did plenty in the spreading of these ideals. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* inspired other countries to abolish feudalism and fight for a form of government that allowed more individual freedom. Nonetheless, through the reign of terror the goal of the revolution changed. This is one of the situations that inspired the RR. This revolution does not have a good record of respect towards humans and their inherent rights. The FR had very contradictory influences and it both inspired in the sense of HR, but also inspired in the sense of totalitarian governments that take terror as a measure to control their population and rivals.


No matter how, these documents inspired centuries of political change throughout Europe and America. It can be seen as a very gradual change, from no political participation of a great part of society to an increase in the people that could participate in political affairs. Only after the most complicated part of the 20th century was it established that HR had to be established as a universal

protection of all people. During and after World War II, there were refugees from many European countries, people that simply did not have a home to return to. Many had become stateless, it became obvious how related those HR were to the civil rights and the protection offered by the state over them. The revolutions of the 18th century, successful or unsuccessful, were the start of HR in the political realm, especially when seen from the possibility of participation in politics. They were the beginning of Enlightenment ideas applied to real situations, in the case of the US. Democracies must have assurance of civil rights.

## **IX. Democracy & Action**

This brings us to a question: Can people living in democratic states today truly act? The answer is divisive.

While it is true that democracies today abide to the idea of HR through protection of civil rights, as well as they tend to be a limited government, it is also true that they have a much more difficult time defending HR abroad. HR has become part of the realm of individual action, in which certain people choose to try to make a difference for people elsewhere. This as well as climate change is very related to the phenomenon of globalization. Globalization has an impact on everyone's lives in the world in some way or another. The world became inter-dependent, whatever system one country has does not stop that country from having close economic and political relations with another. However, this does not mean an equalization of political systems, in fact economic necessities often surpass concerns for people's conditions in other countries. The world today, with its democracies, its autocracies and its global economy is a world inspired by the values that came out of the revolutions. Today, democracies are more diverse, the system can be different from the American, for instance the parliamentary democratic system adopted in most of Europe instead of the presidentialist system. Nonetheless, democracies established limited government and basic HR. These are respected and acknowledged within the government's limited space of action, there is definitely action for political groups. Can normal people participate actively in the political and public realm? This question is more and more complicated as the world becomes more connected.


Through the internet people have access to a great deal of content from philosophy 



everywhere. Through social media people can have contact with people wherever they are. This means that media outlets such as journalism had to find a way of existing in this different world from the one in which those were created. Journalism is a great protector of people's rights through freedom of press to deliver unbiased or at least diverse information. Supposedly journalism is part of a good system of checks and balances. Nonetheless, journalism is no longer a wealthy business and it does not stimulate private interest to invest in it. The fact that the existence of such a reassurance of people's rights could be threatened by private interest and economic benefit, takes the problem slightly back to Rousseau. The internet has a great influence on spreading "fake news" and false information, most of it connected to private or political issues. The influence that the media has over people is of an entirely greater proportion than ever before. There is one other issue here, the political freedom and right to action is being replaced with the idea of freedom for the wealthy.

Exploring the private interest approach, it seems that it is true that private interests do have a greater chance to influence, especially if they are wealthy. If a wealthy person can influence millions of voters by paying services to do so, then not only freedom of press, but freedom as a political value is destroyed. The best example for this is the Cambridge Analytica (CAAnalytica) scandal during the American presidential elections of 2016. Someone paid CAAnalytica to determine who was influenceable and who was not, based on their Facebook data. After this first analysis was conducted, they could begin to influence those in the group of the undecided. Whoever paid CAAnalytica had an interest in mind. However, their action changed the outcome of the election, changing democracy forever. This means that democracy does not only face a problem of private interests but the amount of influence they could truly have. How can one tell if the election was fair or not when people might have been influenced by enemies of the state? In the case of the 2016 elections, it is believed that Russian companies paid to establish that influence over the American public. As the world became more connected, a real danger to individuals' action has made an appearance. Questioning whether or not, even with free elections and freedom of press, people of a country can have real freedom to make decisions. This is of course a question on influence itself. Any unbiased information could have influenced people to make certain choices. Nonetheless, the case here escalates much more. It is a much stronger influence that relates to the decay of free news companies reporting on issues without a bias. In the USA today most daily newspapers are owned by private companies and when one searches for the daily publication numbers, he can find that they all belong to the same companies (such as Gannett Company). This means that since the introduction of the

internet, news people have access to are more detailed to their interests, exploiting people's own bias. And even the newspapers that still exist in print might be owned by large and wealthy companies with certain interests. This is in fact a problem of private interests invading the public realm to the point it might be a danger to people's freedom and thus their action.

The second issue relates to this one in the sense that the idea of pursuit of happiness, discussed in a previous chapter. The interpretation of this idea has been inverted from the idea of freedom to one of acquisition of wealth. The wealthiest are the freest and this freedom is the freedom of modern times, the one that allows the wealthiest to help the world by applying their wealth to the common good. While this is a typical thought of capitalism and mostly seen in the US, it is also a very dangerous thought. This topic has been discussed in this essay before. However, here I am allowing myself some freedom to discuss the current issues freedom and action are facing in the present. This idea is dangerous to freedom for it is another way of thinking freedom for a group. The group is not large either, as groups often are not. Like the claims of defense for a people's rights like Robespierre or Lenin declared, this is the claim that the privileged can do great things for the non-privileged. This is a problem Rousseau warned about. The problem of the few that hold great power and privilege. These people do not have to respect anyone's rights or freedom, for their privilege allows them to not need that kind of affection. They can do most of what they want and whether or not they help the common good is a matter of their own freedom. These are people who are capable of choosing for others without having to justify, they are private, the government can limit their action but nothing stops them from giving people the least they possibly can. Jeff Bezos, owner of the Amazon and estimated trillionaire by 2026, is one of those few privileged that does not do much for the common good. Does he have enough wealth to influence politics? Yes. Can he buy a similar service to CAntalytica if he decides so? Yes. Bezos is known for the lack of condition he provides to their workers, during a pandemic very little was done for his employees protection and before the benefits of working a low paying job at Amazon barely covered a good health insurance. This man is one of the richest men in the whole planet, his net worth is larger than the GDP of 96 countries. It is estimated that on March 9 2020, Jeff Bezos made \$230.000 each minute. This man made his fortune in many countries, many in which people are struggling to pay rent, university tuition, some even struggle to get food at all. While his fortune could have been used to help billions of people, it has not. No one blames Bezos for not becoming the world's most giving man, it is his fortune, whatever he started with, he made his way to gain it. However, it seems clear by this example that his wealth philosophy  LISBON

does not benefit the world in a much better way than any other wealth. It also does not add to anyone's freedom but his own. Bezos has, in fact, money to do most things. He might even donate money to certain institutions and charities. This is not enough to change most things in the world. Families without money might be helped by a fund that feeds them. But it does not change the fact that if one person is born in poverty in the US their chances for social mobility are very low. Opportunity structures are close to non-existent to the poorer, offering very small chances of change. These are people that are in a situation in which they might not be able to have enough to feed their families. How could they even start to act? In a world where freedom is a concept connected to wealth and not personal will to act, is a world in which everything has a cost. A poor person might be as lost in this world as a poor Frenchman of the 18th century was with his lack of representation in the General estates. He could not begin to act without starting a revolution to change the order completely.

This is why freedom is more important as a measure for political participation by the individuals and not a wealth mechanism. Action is possible when people have a certain standard they can all equally participate on. This is the great change democracies brought, a democracy should allow an equalization of freedom, so all people can participate by acting equally. Globalization and private interests in this panorama have created great challenges to democracy. It does not seem like these challenges are going to have a quick and simple resolution any time soon, which is why democracies have to create new mechanisms for dealing with new circumstances. Democracies must adapt while maintaining a system of limited government. These challenges do possess problems to freedom and to action and while the above are examples of situations in which normal people might become unable to act. It is also true that in the realm of HR, climate change and even technological abuse of personal information there are more activists than ever. These issues have not passed unseen to the youngest generations, there is a claim for more action on a global level. For instance, Greta Thunberg, who is a teenage climate activist, fighting for global changes in order to save the environment, a person that was able to create a movement. Action is perhaps possible in a globalized world for the same reasons politics became more complex. This is the extreme connectedness that exists in the globe is one that allows for more criticism that reaches more people (when the internet has free access in one's country, not China for example). There is a space today that if one has access to people's words and speech can reach places much further away than before.

The world is more connected than ever. Even if this is possibly a problem, it is also part of the solution. A globalized world has many issues, such as the connections democratic countries establish in order to profit economically with non-democratic, and disrespecting of HR, poorer countries. On the world this is seen by all, a globalized world makes people feel closer to each other, makes the claim of universal rights louder if they are not being applied halfway across the globe. Nonetheless, the internet, which allows this connectedness, can be hazardous to freedom. The reason for this is through the internet groups defending dangerous ideals (e.g.: groups incentivizing discrimination against Rohingya in Myanmar's Facebook accounts) that would generally not have a voice. Now they can easily earn themselves a voice and spread dangerous messages through echo chambers. For instance, Facebook was very important in Myanmar on the spreading of hate towards the Rohingya community. Due to events such as that one, Youtube is one platform making changes to their algorithm to stop messages of hate from spreading. However, algorithms are not perfect and signal much content that could be considered polemic, but not exactly dangerous. This could be the start of a certain censorship to the discussion of polemic issues, for example Taiwan's issues with China. If people stop having access to discussions due to newspapers slowly disappearing and the internet slowly becoming more and more prevalent and echo chambered, as well as it tracks the users and their information, how can people get access to good information? It is important that those who live in a democracy can think, thinking is a step for action. If people cannot gain access to information due to being polemic, it influences people to believe and watch from afar, not act. People that do not know how to act at all, they are not incentivized to participate. Democracy is at the ends of action, it simply cannot exist without people to perpetuate it. The internet seems to be both a blessing and a burden. Perhaps the trick is to learn how to use it and filter its information individually, for as seen previously, democracy must have space for opposing ideas to be heard and followed, it is why it is such a diverse system.

Throughout this essay I have mostly used the word "republic" instead of "democracy", even though in this chapter I am using them interchangeably. The American *Constitution* established the first modern democracy in the world. Nonetheless, even today most democratic countries are known as republics, e.g: Republic of Portugal or Republic of Ireland. The reason for such is due to the prejudice the word "democracy" had throughout a great part of history due to Aristotle's opinions on democracy. A republic is a system in which power is held by the people who elect their representatives, while a democracy is supposed to be the same, it's definition is a political system in which people choose their philosophy @LISBON

representatives through elections. The word “democracy” only gained popularity and colloquial usage during the 20th century, the change was very gradual. Only halfway through did it become a normal word to use to describe republics. Today, the word has a positive meaning, it is seen as the defense of a righteous political system that allows their citizens more freedom and equality.

## **Conclusion**

In this essay the concept of revolution was analysed whilst exploring the history and context of the American and French revolutions. It is clear that all the concepts, such as democracy, freedom, republic, that came out of these revolutions are concepts that have not only been defined by theories but also by action of people in the world. Revolution is one way of inciting action and thus change. It established limited government which is the core of the values of modern democracies. Through innovation there was newly found respect for the rights of humans as fundamental. Democracy, the system that revolutions inspired, has become the first system to allow more freedom of action to their citizens than any prior.

Action is the concept that takes priority. It is through action that change happens in the world. This is why it is necessary to create a space for action and freedom in order to have real limited governments. The revolutions brought great change into the world, having inspired the start of the realm of modern politics.

This is why revolutions left behind contradictory influences. Both democracies and dictatorships seem to have been inspired by these previous experiences, exposing even the fragility of the most praised system of today: democracy. The goal of revolution was to establish a fair body politic. This ended up meaning limited government. Nonetheless due to limited government being a system that allows freedom and plurality, it is also a system that permits intolerance. This towards diversity can cause democracy to crumble, especially if one group paints others as enemies. Meaning action would lose its space again.

For this reason revolutions had great importance in the establishment of

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civil rights. It was the beginning of the ideas behind HR. People had fundamental negative rights to which no one could cease. This step was important in the building of democracies as limited government, since it was the acknowledgment of people's privacy and rights to have their freedom. Offering a space for individual action. One might say this is not enough to establish fair participation as there still remain problems of representation. Nonetheless, it is such mechanisms as representation that assured in the first place the possibility of participation. Freedom of speech, religion and press were just other achievements of this system along with the system of checks and balances.

Democracies face dangers and challenges. They have at the time of the American and French revolutions, especially in questions of their establishment and they do now too. These dangers are multifaceted, they are the dangers of those that intend to seize power for the general good and those that defend their own, private, interests. Today there are more dangers to be added, as internet misinformation spread by equally misinformed people or misinformation intentionally spread in order to satisfy a private interest.

Action happens in a world of connectedness. It happens with biased influences. Each action has its own influence and influences many others. Action exists by inspiring more action. In the biased world of media, it is possible to act but it is conditioned freedom. It is impossible to imagine freedom and/or action without conditions. It has always been so. Humans are conditioned by their situation and circumstances. Today that will continue to happen. Being influenced is not being manipulated. Nonetheless some information intends to manipulate people and does it. This means there needs to be extra care for one to act consciously and thoughtfully, knowing actions have unpredictable consequences. Conversely, when one thinks about the question of happiness, action remains of importance due to its connections with one's freedom. To pursue happiness is to be able to act, to have the freedom to propel oneself into different situations. Wealth might be part of the pursue for happiness. However, in the part in which happiness relates to individual freedom, it is that all people have the same right of pursuit. This means that wealth is not happiness in the sense freedom is. Action is only possible in a web of relations, thus to defend freedom of the wealthiest is freedom of most inferes in a mistake. Political freedom can only be widespread, otherwise it does not exist more than it did before the revolutions. For in a limited government it must be possible for all to act equally. Action in a highly connected world is of extreme importance for it

can still cause change. Instead of simply accepting that things are a certain way. Today with all the challenges democracy faces, it is difficult to see action as a solution. It seems one is powerless to such a large world. Nonetheless, action is the only possible response, for it has been the motor of political change since the times of revolution.

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