

**Personal Dilemma or Intellectual Influence?
The Relationship between Hannah Arendt and Max Weber***

Peter Baehr

Tuija Parvikko contends that Weber had a significant impact on Arendt's thought. I suggest that this view is problematic on at least two counts. The first is specific and concerns Arendt's negative attitude towards the ideal type. The second is general: by focusing on a couple of vague family resemblances between the ideas of Weber and Arendt, Dr Parvikko ignores the host of antinomies that are far more conspicuous and significant. In fact, Arendt was anti-Weberian on all vital political axes of her thought. Before I briefly examine these issues, it is worth clarifying Arendt's complex relationship to her mentor Karl Jaspers.

Tangled up in blue: Arendt, Jaspers, Weber

Tuija Parvikko says that 'Arendt's debt to Weber can best be traced' from her correspondence with Jaspers. 'But alas, it does not tell us anything precise of the dimensions of Weber's thinking that inspired her the most, giving us only a general impression that Jaspers repeatedly encouraged Arendt to read Weber' (p. 236). But that assumes the very point Parvikko wishes to establish: that Arendt was indeed 'inspired' by Weber. A close reading of the Arendt-Jaspers correspondence shows something quite different. It is well known that Jaspers was awe-struck by Weber as both scholar and man of integrity (at least, that is, until he found out about Weber's sexual relationship with Else Jaffé). On numerous instances, he sought to press Weber's ideas on Arendt. How did she respond? Arendt never doubted that Weber was a forceful patriot and a brilliant 'historian'. But she faced a dilemma. On the one hand, her political project and reflexes were entirely different from Weber's. So, too, was her ontology, which was phenomenological in the strong sense and a far cry from neo-Kantianism. On the other hand, she knew that Jaspers' emotional invest-

* A Rejoinder to Tuija Parvikko's 'A Note on Max Weber's Impact on Hannah Arendt's Thought', *Max Weber Studies* 4.2 (July 2004), 235-52.