



Comparing the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions



Hannah Arendt

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“The Social Question”

The French Revolution “was overwhelmed by the cares and worries which actually belonged in the sphere of the household and which, even if they were permitted to enter the public realm, could not be solved by political means, since they were matters of administration, to be put into the hands of experts, rather than issues which could be settled by the twofold process of decision and persuasion.” (81)

Prosperity or freedom?

“The outcome of the American Revolution, as distinct from the purposes which started it, has always been ambiguous, and the question of whether the end of government was to be prosperity or freedom has never been settled.”

(127)

Haiti and the “Social Question”

“[T]o avoid this fatal mistake [of trying to solve the social question with political means, thereby leading to terror] is almost impossible when a revolution breaks out under conditions of mass poverty.” (102)

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