

ETHICS OF THE POLITICAL REALM  
IN HANNAH ARENDT'S THOUGHT

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## Thesis Abstract

Emre Çetin Gürer, "Ethics of the Political Realm

In Hannah Arendt's Thought"

This thesis seeks to explore the "unwritten" ethics of Hannah Arendt's political theory. It argues that even though Arendt is adamant in banishing morality from the political realm, her political theory consists of an ethical conduct that requires engaging in certain activities. This ethics differs from the morality that Arendt dismisses from politics in designating a *proper way of existing in the world*, rather than pertaining to certain normative universals. Arendt utilizes the metaphor of "home" for designating such proper way of existing or dwelling in the world, but indicates that the main characteristics of the modern age permeate homelessness. The claim of this thesis is that Arendt's ethics is revealed in her discourse on properly responding to the homelessness of the modern age and make homely dwelling in the world possible. This response consists, most prominently, of the activity of thinking, since it is the primary activity modern homelessness directly invokes. But this activity has its own "dangers" and it is inadequate in providing a proper way of existing in the world. Political action and judgment have to follow thinking and establish one's relation with the political realm. The exercise of these three activities in their distinct relations to the political realm promises to establish home from within homelessness.

## Tez Özeti

Emre Çetin Güner, “Hannah Arendt’in Düşüncesinde Siyasi Alan Etiği”

Bu tez Hannah Arendt’in siyaset teorisinin “yazılmamış” etiğini araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Tezin öncelikli savı, ahlaki politik alandan kesin çizgilerle ayıran Arendt’in siyaset teorisinin belirli eylemlerin icraasını gerektiren bir etik anlayışı içermekte oluşudur. Bu etik anlayışı, Arendt’in siyasetten dışladığı normatif ahlak anlayışından *düzgün bir şekilde dünyada varolma* anlamına gelerek ayrılır. Arendt bu dünyada düzgün varolma ya da ikamet etme halini işaret etmek için “ev” metaforuna başvurmakta, ancak modern dünyanın temel özelliklerinin evsizliği yaydığına işaret etmektedir. Tezin ana savı, Arendt’in etiğinin, modern dünyanın evsizliğine verilecek uygun yanıtta ve ev metaforuyla işaret ettiği varoluş şeklinin mümkün kılınmasına dair anlatılarında ortaya çıktığıdır. Bu yanıt öncelikle düşünce eylemini içerir, çünkü modern evsizliğin doğrudan çağırdığı eylem budur. Ancak düşüncenin kendine has tehlikeleri vardır ve düzgün bir şekilde dünyada ikamet etmeyi sağlamak için tek başına yeterli değildir. Düşünceyi, siyasi eylem ve yargı takip etmeli ve kişinin siyasi alanla bağını kurmalıdır. Siyasi alanla ilişkileri farklı farklı olan bu üç eylemin icraları, evsizlikten evin kurulmasını imkanı kılmaktadır.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BPF:	<i>Between Past and Future</i> <sup>1</sup>
EJ:	<i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>
EU:	<i>Essays in Understanding</i>
HC :	<i>The Human Condition</i>
LKPP:	<i>Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy</i>
LMT:	<i>The Life of the Mind, 1<sup>st</sup> Volume, Thinking</i>
LMW:	<i>The Life of the Mind, 2<sup>nd</sup> Volume, Willing</i>
LSA:	<i>Love and Saint Augustine</i>
OR:	<i>On Revolution</i>
OT:	<i>Origin of Totalitarianism</i>
OV:	<i>On Violence</i>
PP:	<i>The Promise of Politics</i>
SQMP:	<i>"Some Questions on Moral Philosophy" in Responsibility and Judgment</i>

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<sup>1</sup> All abbreviations are works by Hannah Arendt.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The question of the relation between morality or ethics and politics is an age old one. Hannah Arendt, as one of the most important political thinkers of twentieth century, has her stand in this discussion. She is adamant in leaving the moral out of the political. For Arendt, moral is unreliable vis-à-vis political dangers like totalitarianism; it is destructive for the public deliberative space of the political; and also categorically misplaced in politics since it is concerned with the self in its private life. Yet, we know that she does not defend a nihilist politics of 'everything is permitted' or which might makes right. What then binds the political actors for Arendt? The objective of this thesis is to explore Arendt's understanding of thinking, action and judgment in order to contribute to the literature that searches for an answer to this question.

The question gains significance not only because it points out to the primordial issue of the place of morality in politics. It has several more urgencies when we consider our contemporary, post-Nietzschean or post-metaphysical era, as it is coined. And Arendt's writing exactly appropriates this era's sensibilities and responds to the difficulties and problems emerging specifically from an era that nullifies the transcendental criteria. Hence, searching within this puzzling, and acknowledged to be one of the most difficult aspects of Arendt's thought is fruitful for us to find ways to deal with our contemporary quest for a non-transcendental, secular ethics for politics.

Considering that Arendt is one of the leading political thinkers who has trusted herself to understand, in her words, the “radically evil” political phenomena of twentieth century, her banishment of morality from politics to say the least resulted in controversy. George Kateb asks: “How could the author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* seek in her later writings ‘to purge true politics of love, goodness, conscience, compassion and pity’? How could ‘the most searching and original theorist of political horror in the twentieth century... as if in self-forgetfulness, accuse compassion and pity as the sponsors of more cruelty than cruelty itself?’”<sup>1</sup> Kateb charges Arendt’s political theory with amoralism and concludes that this would lead the way to immoral politics (Kateb 1984, 33). Parallel criticisms have stated by several other authors. Dana Villa indicates that Richard Wolin also criticized Arendt’s conception of action that it lacks any criteria for “legitimate and illegitimate modes of self-unveiling” (Villa 1996, 155).<sup>2</sup> In the same token, Peg Birmingham conveys that Cornelius Castoriadis stated as a challenge to Arendt’s action theory *qua* self-appearing: “Stalin appeared” (Birmingham 1995, 152).<sup>3</sup>

Several theorists responded to those challenges and argued that Arendt provides a moral or ethical aspect underlying her political theory. Arendt’s thought, to say the least, is multidimensional. Hence, we think that it would be wrong to suggest that there is only one single answer to the questions we have posed above. There are different approaches and answers pertaining to the establishment of the moral or ethical basis of Arendt’s political theory. We will briefly review those answers around the specific Arendtian themes they relate to. Yet, before that, it is

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<sup>1</sup> This is a passage from Canovan 1992, 156. We have taken it rather than quoting directly from Kateb’s work, since she composed his critique very concisely that stands scattered throughout Kateb’s work. It refers to Kateb 1984.

<sup>2</sup> Dana Villa refers to Wolin, R. 1990, 191n3.

<sup>3</sup> Peg Birmingham quotes it without explicit reference to where Castoriadis stated so.

important to make a distinction between two distinct approaches to this question referring to morality and ethics, since there is a difference between stating that there is a morality underlying Arendt's politics and arguing that there is an ethics.

Morality and ethics are words used mostly interchangeably. And Arendt herself utilizes them interchangeably some of the times, even though she indicates the difference in origins of the words: Latin *mores* and ancient Greek *ethos*, respectively (SQMP, 50). However, in the contemporary discussions not only on Arendt's moral or ethical thought but also on the question of moral or ethical conduct in the post-metaphysical or post-Nietzschean era, morality and ethics have been distinguished in such a way that the former pertains to normative universals and the latter designates a particular *way of life*, a "good life" or "livable life" (Nussbaum 1989, 3).<sup>4</sup>

In moving ethics away from the normative universals and characterizing it as a way of life, Aristotle's distinction between *bios* (way of life) and *zoe* (bare life) has extensively been summoned. While *zoe* designates "the simple fact of living common to all living beings," *bios* means "the form or way of living proper to an individual or group" (Agamben 1998, 1). The *proper* makes the whole difference between these two different characterizations of life. It does not pertain to any normative universals, but it designates an appropriate "a stance toward the world, our way of Being-in-the-world," or in other words, it is about "attaining the right state of composure" (McNeill, 2006, 88, emphasis added). In that sense, life as *bios* means a proper existence in the world.

The way we are in the world is among the most prominent concerns of Arendt. She uses the imaginary of "home" in order to designate a proper existence in

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<sup>4</sup> Also see, Habermas' distinction between ethics and morality in Habermas 1998, 176. For a reading of Habermas' distinction in relation to his critique of Foucault, see King 2009, 290.

the world. This imaginary appears in Arendt's works as "humanly inhabitation," "worldly dwelling" among other related phrases besides the metaphor of "home." In searching for ethics in Arendt's political theory we seeked Arendt's characterizations of this *homely* dwelling in the world, since ethics in the sense of properly existing in the world is not about which rules we conform, but rather about the way we exist in the world. Yet, when we inspect Arendt's analysis on homely dwelling in the world we have discovered that Arendt's ethics of the political does not stand out as certain criteria characterizing this dwelling, but rather as the requirement to exercise certain activities that redeems human beings from homelessness and make possible establishing a homely dwelling. We think that this is because Arendt engages in a dialogue with her age even in her most theoretical writings and hence responds constantly to the modern age, which she characterizes as an age of homelessness. Hence, in seeking to explore Arendt's ethics of the political, we will focus on the activities that comes to the fore in her discourse on properly responding to the experience of homelessness that are thinking, acting and judging.

#### Literature Review

The focus on ethics in distinction from morality gains more importance after what has lately been called "ethical turn" by prominent contemporary thinkers. With reference to the well known "cultural turn" and "linguistic turn" in the social and political theory, ethical turn designates a search for ethics without transcendental and universal grounds that would inform such conduct (Ranci re 2006; Baker 1995; Davis and Womack 2001). In our view, Hannah Arendt's dismissal of the moral

from the political realm is in line with this sensibility of purging normative and universal grounds out of the exclusively human conduct of politics.

Vikki Bell's reading of Arendt in response to the critiques of a "secular ethics" conforms this point. Bell, contrary to Badiou, who argues that ethics necessarily presupposes a transcendental God and to Derrida who states that the religious trace of any secular ethics has to be acknowledged, argues that sound grounds for non-transcendental ethics can be found in Arendt's thought (Bell 2005, 3). Bell's claim is that Arendt in her stress on the public orientation and on the affirmation of the common existence in the political realm by means of action provides remedies for the nihilistic pitfalls due to the shattering of the belief in transcendental grounds (21). In these lines Bell states that to be "open to plurality" guides ethical conduct in the absence of universals (19).

The bulk of the responses to the amorality or immorality challenges to Arendt dwell on this notion of plurality, which is one of the most important themes of Arendt's thought. Margaret Canovan states that:

Arendt's contention, adumbrated in *Totalitarianism* and developed further in her later writings, particularly *On Revolution*, was that although no absolute moral rules exist which could provide such a foundation [against totalitarianism], and although even the most authentic of personal moral experiences cannot supply it, nevertheless a foundation for sound human coexistence and a guard against totalitarianism can be found in the fundamental human condition of plurality itself, in acceptance of the fact that we share the earth with others who are both like and unlike ourselves" (Canovan 1992, 191).

Canovan in her book *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* reads Arendt's action and political realm theory as a search for a bulwark against the possible reoccurrence of totalitarianism. Plurality, as a cardinal tenet of Arendt's thought, comes forth to provide such a bulwark with the requirement of preserving

and nourishing it. This affirmation of the notion of plurality comes forth in Kimberley Curtis's work as well.

One of the central questions of Curtis' book *Our Sense of the Real: Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics* is the following: "How does Arendt's work, lodged as it is in our postmetaphysical condition, help us to conceptualize our ethical responsibility in politics?" (Curtis 1999, 125). The theme Curtis develops throughout this book, "aesthetic sensibility of tragic pleasure," is central for her answer to this question (10, 126). With this term, Curtis signifies a peculiar relation to the world, which provides an active engagement with the difficulties resulting from a tragic world. There are, on the one hand, predicaments ingrained in the modern times and, on the other hand, the existential condition of plurality bares its own difficulties. Yet, Curtis argues, there is an ethical responsibility in Arendt's thought that assigns to "stay alive to the density of the world" (125). The "tragic pleasure" provides one to bare the tragic calamities of the world and gives the power to continue engaging with it. To prevent any confusion, Curtis does not mean to have a sadistic pleasure of the catastrophes one confronts in the world. Tragic pleasure means to affirm the world, in a way Nietzsche's "yes" would do, in order to prevent turning one's face away from the overwhelming problems of the world.

For Curtis, Arendt wants to cultivate such pleasure as against the totalitarian tendency to sweep worldly reality away into the oblivion. In contrast to succumbing to the pacifying domination of the totalitarian government, to act, to begin anew and to "renew the space of the world so that others may begin" comes forth as ethical responsibilities in Arendt's thought (127). Curtis states: "Arendt's ethical concern, as I read it, lies with the conditions that make possible the strange, uncertain appearance of, as she calls it, not 'what' one is but 'who' one is, with the appearance before

others of our distinct particularity” (143). Curtis indicates one’s own self-revealing and readying the space for others to reveal their own selves as the ethical composure of plural existence. Rosalyn Diprose as well indicates this dual character of responsibility towards not only oneself or others, but towards both of them at the same time.

For Diprose, there is a mutual dependence between the “personal responsibility and political responsibility” failing in one results irresponsibility in the other (Diprose 2008, 618). To maintain the world in such a way that others can begin is the way these two responsibilities meet, in the sense that the disclosure of one’s unique self lets other’s begins as well. This, she argues, is “where morality meets politics” in Arendt’s thought and the only way to satisfy the “responsibility for maintaining the world for the disclosure of the ‘who’ and hence the futurity of others.” (625).

Plurality is the cardinal Arendtian notion that comes forth in thinking the ethics of Arendt’s political realm. We will as well dwell on this notion, while designating the twofold responsibility that constitutes the specifically political way of life. Beside the notion of plurality, several theorists base their search for an ethical or moral conduct of politics with reference to Arendt’s articulations of specifically political principles. Suzanne Duvall Jacobitti bases her argument of Arendt’s “nonwritten political morality” on those principles together with plural existence (Jacobitti 1991, 287). Jacobitti argues that there are two elements that constitute Arendt’s political morality. The first one is certain political principles that impose “moral constraints to politics.” Those principles are, on the one hand, keeping promises, forgiving the transgressions; on the other hand, acting moderately, avoiding hubris and having the courage to go out of one’s private life to participate



in the public world. The second element, Jacobbitti singles out, is friendship. Jacobbitti accounts it as having respect to others, taking their viewpoints into account, relating in such a way that acknowledges the difference of others, while at the same time regarding them as equals. That is to say respecting plurality (287-8).

Peg Birmingham is another theorist, who refers to the principles in response to the immorality challenges and in search for legitimate criteria for political judgment. She argues that Arendt dismisses ethics utterly from the political realm, in that sense Birmingham does not argue that there is a moral or ethical basis of Arendt's politics. But, she states that Arendt's conception of power distinctly defined as concerted action, and the principle of mutual covenant comes forth as a criterion to judge legitimate and illegitimate modes of political action (Birmingham 1995, 150).

Moreover, Lawrence J. Biskowski underlies two essentially political principles that traverse Arendt's action and political realm theory, which are "care for the world" and "love of freedom" (Biskowski 1993, 885). He singles them out in search for practical foundations of political judgment and argues that those principles constitute the criteria for judging. This, for Biskowski, constitutes Arendt's specific "political ethics" (867).

In addition to plurality and political principles, judgment is a cardinal theme that comes forth in the search for specifically political ethics or morality of Arendt's political theory. Seyla Benhabib argues that Arendt's characterization of judgment, whose condition of possibility is enlarged mentality, constitutes the unacknowledged normative ground for Arendt's political theory. Enlarged mentality designates "to think from the standpoint of everyone else" (Benhabib 2001, 201), to take other perspectives into account. For Arendt, our capacity to judge inherently entails such

an ability. Whenever we judge, we also engage with other's perspectives. Benhabib indicates the cardinal role of judgment for Arendt's politics and interprets this essentially other directedness of judgment as a moral foundation (185).

Maurizio Passerin D'Entrèves also indicates judging, together with other capacities, as constituent of the moral basis of Arendt's politics. He states "for Arendt the morality appropriate to politics must be grounded in public criteria and finds expression not in private sentiments, but in the exercise of our ordinary moral capacities for promising, forgiving, judging, and thinking" (D'Entrèves 1994, 95). D'Entrèves argues that writers like Kateb fail to acknowledge the roles those capacities play in Arendt's theory and the "communicative dimension" they constitute (90).

As we have seen there are several writers focused on the question of the ethical or moral in the political theory of Arendt. The research of this thesis has been highly informed by the above-mentioned authors. Yet, the works of three other writers, who do not directly published on the question of ethics of the political in Arendt, have to be mentioned as most guiding for us. They are Dana Villa, Jacques Taminiaux and Fatmagül Berktay. Villa and Taminiaux wrote the two leading works on the relation of Arendt's and Heidegger's thought and Fatmagül Berktay published two articles on the concept of freedom as the intersection point of Arendt and Heidegger. In the light of these works, we have discovered the close acquaintance of Arendt's thought with that of Heidegger, while at the same time realized that some of the most original tenets of Arendt's thought emerges at the points where Arendt retorts to Heidegger's philosophy, while radically departing from it. In that sense, it can never be argued that Arendt's thought is simply a continuation of that of Heidegger's or Arendt's itineraries are limited within the horizon of Heideggerian

philosophy. Yet, we are convinced that to focus on the intersection points of Arendt's thought with that of Heidegger is fruitful for understanding some of the cardinal tenets of Arendt's thought, including her ethics of the political realm.

Two works on the question of ethics in Heidegger's work informed the perspective we design our search for the ethics of Arendt's political theory. William McNeill and Zeynep Direk, among others<sup>5</sup>, published on the "unwritten ethics" of Heidegger. In their works, they argue that even though Heidegger has not written an ethics, his thoughts on dwelling as a way of life, temporality and care pertains to ethics. On the issue of ethics, there is, so to say a mystery, in both of the thinkers. Heidegger is, like Arendt, critical towards normative morality. And neither of the thinkers has written explicitly what the proper ethical conduct is according to them.

Direk argues that despite the lack of explicit theory of ethics in Heidegger's works, *the way of life of the thinker* comes forth as his theory of ethical conduct. Direk states that this ethics is ingrained in Heidegger's ontology and the tenet of Heidegger's ontology that constitutes an ethics is his characterization of the way of life of the thinker with care and openness to the *Other* (Direk 2005, 60). Direk's characterization of the way of life of the thinker as the ethical conduct in Heidegger's thought is informative for our search for the ethics of Arendt's thought.

Together with the focal point of way of life, the focus on temporality emerges in McNeill's research for ethics in Heidegger's thought. McNeill scrutinizes Heidegger's conception of *ethos* as the kernel of Heidegger's ethics. The way he sets his task is significant for our purposes, which follows: "The present study seeks to explore Heidegger's understanding of *ethos* -- of the originary dimension of the ethical and of human action- conceived in terms of time of life and the temporality of

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<sup>5</sup> See also, Volpi 2007.

human existence. *Ethos* for Heidegger means our dwelling, understood temporally as a way of Being” (McNeill 2006, xi). McNeill underlines temporality for designating the *ethos* of the human being as a way of Being. He explicates that Heidegger’s temporal considerations of being resolutely towards the future is the cardinal attunement of the way of life of the thinker (McNeill 2006, 87,88). The directedness, or using McNeill’s own words, *attunement* towards future singles out as the ethical comportment for Heidegger and this pertains to the way of life of the thinker. McNeill characterizes this temporality of attuning to the future as the “temporality of *Angst*” (anxiety) that opens up the experience of the existential homelessness [unheimlichkeit], within which one has the possibility to authentically decide to be one’s Self (1-2).

McNeill’s focus on attunement to a specific temporal experience in designating the ethics of Heidegger partly guides our itinerary in Arendt’s thought. Arendt extensively analyzes the temporal sensation of the thinking being and characterizes it as the sensation of a “gap between past and future.” When we focus on those considerations we observed certain resemblances of this gap with Heidegger’s temporality of anxiety, but also we realized that Arendt departs from Heidegger by characterizing the proper way of life of thinking in relation to political participation.

### Design of the Thesis

Concerning ethics in Arendt’s thought, the activity of thinking is cardinal, since the bulk of her discussion on ethics/morality is around the exercise or the lack of exercise of this activity. Hence, in the second chapter, we will focus on Arendt’s

considerations of thinking. In the first part of this chapter, we will dwell on Arendt's peculiar linking of the thinking activity to morality. It is a striking fact that Arendt, while dismissing morality from the political realm, develops a moral theory at all. Here, we will explicate firstly, that this moral theory of Arendt does not have the same character of morality she dismisses *qua* religion or moral philosophy; secondly, that Arendt places the relevance of this morality at the margins of politics and hence prevents us to indicate it as the ethical conduct of the political realm.

In the second part, we will first open up Arendt's conception of the modern and existential homelessness with comparison to that of Heidegger. Secondly we will open up Arendt's conception of home and her notions of reality and durability of the world as the essential qualities for homely existence. Then, we will argue that Arendt's temporal explication of the activity of thinking provides a key for settling down into a homely existence from within homelessness. Thinking for Arendt is the initial activity that is invoked by the experience of homelessness. In her temporal considerations of this activity, it become apparent that Arendt does not conceive thinking in isolation from the political realm. She characterizes the proper way of exercising this activity with relation to two other activities that are political action and judgment, both of which are cardinal for the world.

In the third chapter, we will open up the activities of political action and judgment. While the first part of the third chapter will be on political action, the second part will be on judgment. In dealing with political action we will focus on Arendt's temporal characterizations of its experience, which, we will argue, resembles to that of thinking. Tracing Arendt's description of the temporal experiences of actors leads us to the notions of freedom, beginning and plurality. Finally in this first part, we will open up Arendt's specific conception of the political

realm. In the second part of the third chapter, we will underline the faculty of judgment's importance for the reality and durability of the world. Here, we will explain the prominent characteristics of judgments in their political and worldly significance for Arendt.

We think that focusing the question of ethics of the political realm in Arendt's thought is fruitful for the greater search of a secular ethics for politics in our postmetaphysical or post-Nietzschean era. Arendt is one of the most resourceful thinkers to explore for a meaningful conduct in the political realm that does not succumb to the nihilistic pitfalls or power politics at the absence of transcendental criteria.

## CHAPTER 2

### THINKING, MORALITY AND ETHICS

Even though we have lost yardsticks by which to measure, and rules under which to subsume the particular, a being whose essence is beginning may have enough of origin within himself to understand without preconceived categories and to judge without the set of customary rules which is morality (EU, 321)

The activity of thinking is central in both the moral or ethical considerations of Arendt. In this chapter, we will focus on those discussions in two parts. The first part will aim at situating morality in Arendt's thought. In those considerations we will see that Arendt, while dismissing traditional morality *qua* religion or moral philosophy, develops a moral theory distinctly connected to the activity of thinking. However, Arendt's moral theory has only a marginal significance for politics. Hence, as we will indicate, it cannot be regarded as the moral foundation of Arendt's political theory. In order to argue this, we will first make preliminary explications of Arendt's conception of thinking by underlining her conception of thinking as an activity and reflecting upon her problematization of the state of thoughtlessness/"banality of evil." Then we will explicate Arendt's understanding of morality.

In the second part, we will demonstrate how the activity of thinking comes to the fore in the experience of *homelessness qua* existential strangeness and modern world-loss, for Arendt. We will claim that, contrary to Heidegger, Arendt credits the possibility of settling down into the world for homely dwelling from within homelessness, and such move from homelessness to home pertains to the proper response one gives to the experience of homelessness. This response for Arendt is political participation. In arguing so, we will first read Arendt's usage of the

metaphors home and homelessness in their convergence and divergence to that of Heidegger, and explicate what is a *homely* existence in the world for Arendt. Then we will deal with Arendt's analysis of the modern loss of home with reference to her notions of "world alienation" and "loss of tradition." While searching for the proper response to the experience of homelessness, we will focus on Arendt's temporal characterization of the activity of thinking. We will first explicate them in relation to some of her philosopher companions and Kafka's parable. Then we will go into Arendt's discussion on settling down into the temporal experience of thinking and read it as political speech and judgment.

The difference between morality and ethics in the two parts of this chapter, is not the same with that which we have designated in the introduction. We have stated that while morality designates normative universals, ethics means a way of life, a good life. Arendt dismisses the first kind of morality but develops a peculiar morality that pertains to the activity of thinking. The morality Arendt develops, as we will see, is not related to normative universals, but connected to the choice of company, which depends on one's personal preference. In that sense, this understanding of morality comes close to ethics, which we have stated as a way of life. But it still is not the same with ethics. The difference emerges due to their distinct relation with the political.



## Part I: Thinking and Morality

### Thinking as an Activity

Thinking, as Arendt insists, is an activity itself. It is a state of mind in which a human being is divided into two within him/herself and engages in an active relationship with himself/herself through speech. In contrast to the contemplative speechlessness and suspension of activity, thinking is an unending dialogue within oneself and hence an action acted upon oneself. Arendt takes Socrates as her historical model in order to explicate the activity of thinking. Even though our knowledge of Socrates is limited to the accounts that are given of him,<sup>6</sup> she treats Socrates separately and regards him as a categorically different philosopher than his major narrator, Plato. In contrast to Plato, Socrates did not solidify his questionings and answers into philosophical doctrines. According to Arendt, it's rather so that late Plato used Socrates in order to convey his own thoughts, while earlier dialogues give a better account on the Socratic way of thinking (LMT, 168). What characterizes the early dialogues of Plato is their *aporetic* structure. The continuous questionings of the taken-for-granted presuppositions and everyday concepts eventually did not lead to conclusive answers, but rather left both sides of the dialogue with shattered creeds and more questions. Arendt describes this as such: "the argument either leads nowhere or goes around in circles" (169). It is exactly what thinking leads into: more thinking. It does not prescribe certain conclusions for prominent questions, but rather

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<sup>6</sup> From Plato, Xenophon and Aristophanes, we learn about Socrates. Arendt points out this controversy, but states that she chooses to ignore it and takes Plato's accounts of Socrates as Socrates himself. See LMT, 168. For further discussion on the issue, see Tarrant 2003, 73-74. And also, Kahn 1981, 305-320.

emancipates people from the “unexamined pre-judgments that would prevent them from thinking” (173). In that sense, thinking is *purposeless* and without *practical* consequence. However, the preservation of the conditions of thinking is not inconsequential.

Thinking is a solitary activity. When “a man indulges in sheer thinking, and no matter on what subject, he lives completely in the singular, that is, in complete solitude, as though not men but Man inhabited the earth” (47). The experience of thinking leads to such illusions of inhabiting the world in solitude, but the truth is even in solitude one is not alone. Arendt’s distinction between solitude and loneliness is significant here. One is in complete solitude while thinking, but not lonely, since:

Loneliness, that nightmare which, as we all know, can very well overcome us in the midst of a crowd, is precisely this being deserted by oneself, the temporary inability to become two-in-one, as it were, while in a situation where there is no one else to keep us company (SQMP, p.96).

Hence, loneliness is the state of complete deprivation of company, while solitude “is that human situation in which I keep myself company” (LMT, 185). The term Arendt uses for such duality in the self is “two-in-one” which constitutes the parties for the dialogue within the self that paves the way for thinking (Ibid). Very much like a dialogue that occurs between two people, thinking is talking back and forth among the divisions of the self. This duality, Arendt argues, is what gives thinking its character of activity. Arendt explicitly states this in the following passage:

Nothing perhaps indicates more strongly that man exists essentially in the plural than that this solitude actualizes his merely being conscious of himself, which probably share with the higher animals, into a duality during the thinking activity. It is this duality of myself with myself that makes thinking a

true activity, in which I am both the one who asks and the one who answers (LMT, 185).

Hence, despite creating the illusion of inhabiting the world as one single “Man,” thinking is structurally a capacity of the mind that is exercised in plurality. In so characterizing thinking, Arendt acknowledges the traditional understanding of thinkers withdrawing from the world, but she opposes its singular understanding of solitude, and indicates its plural condition of possibility. She points this out again as follows:

[T]he specifically human actualization of consciousness in the thinking dialogue between me and myself suggests that difference and otherness, which are such outstanding characteristics of the world of appearances as it is given to man for his habitat among a plurality of things, are the very conditions for the existence of man’s mental ego as well, for this ego actually exists only in duality (LMT, 187).

This dual character of thinking, which makes it an activity, leads Arendt to distinguish thinking from contemplation. Arendt indicates two sources for contemplation, both of which contradict the principles of thinking. The first one is “the shocked wonder at the miracle of Being” which is signified by the term *thaumazein* in Plato and Aristotle (LMT, 302). Arendt regards this shock as a peculiar experience that is rightly conceived by Plato as “the beginning of all philosophy.” However, what is most peculiar to this shock is its speechlessness, that this wonder is not translatable to words (Ibid). The other source is again an experience, and it is that of a craftsman. A craftsman’s experience is, as Arendt describes, to see the model of what he fabricates before his inner eye (Ibid). So that he can make what he conceived beforehand. Contemplation does not spring from the experience of craftsman, while he is making his craftwork, but rather it does so from

the experience of such pre-seeing, in which the overall work is preconceived (303). All in all, passivity of the mind characterizes both of these sources of contemplation. Both in its being shocked with wonder and its pre-seeing the model that is to be realized, the mind is not acting upon anything, but rather receiving, as in seeing and being affected. In Arendt's words, "contemplation is not an activity but a passivity; it is the point where mental activity comes to rest" (6).

To understand the significance of Arendt's characterization of thinking as an activity, we have to think that an activity is something that we can choose not to do, as well. It severs the traditional predicate of thinking from any definition of human being.<sup>7</sup> That is to say, the human as the "thinking animal" is not a statement to rely upon, since it defines thinking as an indispensable feature of human. For Arendt, thinking is not something to be taken for granted. It lies as a possibility as one of the main human capacities, but it is not necessarily exercised.

Thinking doesn't stand as a moral norm or basis that distinguishes human beings, but it stands as an activity. This means that thinking is not an attribute which makes itself appear as an act of contemplation; but urges its very engagement in a dialogue between *me* and *myself*—a dialogue that is neither a mere abstract metaphysics nor a non-conceptual speculation but a serious reflection. Hence rather than to claim that human beings are "thinking animals", the assertion may be that human beings are those who *become* "thinking animal." The question would be the "how" of this becoming, that is its very exercise whose result lead us to an understanding of what evil is.

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<sup>7</sup> Which always is entailed in a metaphysical tradition that Arendt says she undertakes to dismantle in LMT, 212.

## The Case of Eichmann: Banality of Evil

Arendt's report on the Eichmann trial indicates this possibility of not exercising the activity of thinking. It is possible to sum up the riddle of Eichmann for Arendt in these words: how is it possible that the doer of such evil deeds can just be a clown, rather than a monster?<sup>8</sup> How can a high rank officer of the S.S. army, who was in charge of the deportation of the Jews from their homelands to the concentration camps, just be a normal family guy with good intentions and warm social relations? Arendt's answer lies in her term: "banality of evil." Arendt states: "The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think" (EJ, 49). Contrary to the traditional figures of evildoers in the Western tradition like Melville's Claggart, Shakespeare's Macbeth, Cain or Lucifer himself, the evil we are confronted with here is not "demonic": a violent transgressor, who "do[es]n't want to serve God but to be like Him" (LMT, 3). Quite on the contrary, he is banal with no specialty or character except being obedient and thoughtless.

Berel Lang points out that Arendt's usage of the term "banality" was misinterpreted by some readers as designating "common or commonplace" (Lang 1994, 47). And hence, "banality of evil" was confused to be the evil acts that could as well be done by whoever would be in Eichmann's place, resulting from being "after all, only human" (Ibid). Lang makes clear that Arendt does not mean "to err", which is all too human. Rather, banality designates Eichmann's lack of what makes a

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<sup>8</sup> See EJ, 54, for Arendt's characterization of Eichmann as a clown, rather than a monster. Also see, LMT, 4.

human being: to think about what one is doing and to be able to relate to other human beings. This two basic capacity was lacking in Eichmann and this allowed him to take part in the cruelest machinery and exercised his function obediently.

Eichmann admits in his biography that he has always been an obedient person. He was basically an ambitious man who discovered S.S. to be a convenient place to climb up the ladder. As Arendt makes clear, he could have been doing the same in *Schlaraffia* (a Masonic group with commercial purposes) if he were not dismissed from the organization. With the sole purpose of rising to a higher status, the actual content of what he was in charge of did not really concern him. For Eichmann, deportations of the Jews were a technical problem, to which he found the most efficient answers.<sup>9</sup> Another peculiar thing about Eichmann was that he did not remember the events and the people, unless it was related to his tasks and career. Arendt points this out by saying that he was ignorant of “everything that was not directly, technically and bureaucratically connected with his job” (EJ, 54). Such ignorance of the world except the parts that were essential to his career objectives, and his inability to remember together denote his deficiency in thinking. Arendt states: “The greatest evildoers are those who don’t remember because they have never given thought to the matter, and, without remembrance, nothing can hold them back” (SQMP, 95).

Arendt witnesses that, apart from the events related to his career, Eichmann was good at remembering and stating in every occasion, the sentences which, in her own words “had served to give him a ‘sense of elation.’” She wrote that he was “genuinely incapable of uttering a single sentence that was not a cliché” (48). Judges

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<sup>9</sup> See EJ, 45, for the assembly line solution of Eichmann for the cumbersome paper works during the moving out of the Jewish people.

were right when they commented that all he said was “empty talk” (49). But they were mistaken to suppose that there was some hidden agenda, deep criminal thoughts under those empty ones. For Arendt, it was the opposite case. Eichmann was quite honest in the trial. Such empty talk was not a façade; rather it manifested Eichmann’s lack of personality and inability to think what he is doing, that is to say, to relate to reality. His talk was informed not from his experience but by, what Arendt calls in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, “ideological thinking.” In Arendt’s words:

[I]deological thinking becomes emancipated from the reality that we perceive with our five senses, and insists on a ‘truer’ reality concealed behind all perceptible things, dominating them from this place of concealment and requiring a sixth sense that enables us to become aware of it... The propaganda of the totalitarian movement also serves to emancipate thought from experience and reality; it always strives to inject a secret meaning into every public, tangible event and to suspect a secret intent behind every public political act (OT, 470-1).

Eichmann was sincerely confessing everything he knew and thought, but his words were giving no more content to reality than those caught up in the filter of ideology. Due to the very way he was relating to reality, he was only able to speak about the “bigger picture”, but nothing about what he had actually done to other people.

Arendt argues that in the dialogue between me and myself, one constitutes oneself as a person. In her words, “thought ... is indeed an activity, and moreover, an activity that has certain moral results, namely that he who thinks constitutes himself into somebody, a person or a personality” (SQMP, 106). This personality is constituted through the dialogue within oneself; however, there are acts, which would result in the severance of this dialogue. Those acts, which no one can reconcile with and forgive, result in the absolute elimination of the talk within oneself. Eichmann’s deeds were of the kind not possible to be forgiven or punished

(55). Once such crimes occur, the second party of the dialogue abandons his company as well. This is the gist of what Arendt calls “Socratic morality” (106).

### Socratic Morality

The Socratic precept Arendt refers frequently is “I would rather suffer wrong, than do wrong” (SQMP, 100). And this is, as we have pointed out, because one wouldn’t like to live with a wrong doer in the closest sense. And furthermore, in certain deeds that Arendt calls the “radical evil” acts, one breaks up with the party within oneself, terminates the dialogue and basically stops thinking. This neither means a lack of intellectual capacities, nor the inability to have social relations or success. On the contrary, all of them can still exist, but thinking would be inexistent.<sup>10</sup>

Arendt connects the activity of thinking with morality along these lines.<sup>11</sup> This activity, as if wanting to preserve itself, prevents one to act in such ways. A thinking self talks from within like Socrates’ *daimon*<sup>12</sup> and says “This I can’t do” (SQMP, 109). Arendt distinguishes this from conscience. She argues: “Conscience... is a way of feeling beyond reason and argument and of knowing through sentiment what is right and wrong.” But she adds:

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<sup>10</sup> See Bernstein 2006, 205-224 for a comprehensive discussion on this issue.

<sup>11</sup> For a critical reading of Arendt’s connection of thinking and morality, see Beatty 1994, 57-77.

<sup>12</sup> See, Apology, in Plato 2003, 58. The term *daimon* is translated in this edition as “a sort of voice” and designated in the defense of Socrates as the inner voice that prompts Socrates to continue his philosophical search and dialogues. In short it is the voice individualizes person, following of which leads him/her to be what only he/she can be. Kafka’s short story “Before the Law” is fruitful to think this together with. Also for Arendt’s account on the term *daimon*, see LMT, 190. Also see Bernstein, 2000, 285.



[A]las, these feelings are no reliable indications, are in fact no indications at all, of right and wrong. Guilt-feelings can, for instance, be aroused through a conflict between old habits and new commands- the old habit not to kill and the new command to kill- but they can just as well be aroused by the opposite: once killing or whatever the 'new morality' demands has become a habit and is accepted by everyone, the same man will feel guilty if he does not conform. In other words, these feelings indicate conformity and nonconformity, they don't indicate morality (SQMP, 107).

The stress on discursiveness and argumentation is crucial here. Those features come only with thinking, not with a feeling. And it is thinking that provides the only reliable morality at times when the change of *mores* is proven to be easy. But it is important to distinguish such discursiveness from moral doctrines. This morality based on the thinking activity itself has no pre-given, normative content. It doesn't even say "thou shall not kill," since this would be a content prescribing certain moral conduct. Arendt indicates the similarity of such morality with that of Kant's (108). Kant's categorical imperative is a formal law. It does not assign this or that obligation but only the obligation to act in such a way that one's maxim can as well be a universal law. The maxim in this formal formula is subjected to change. By the same token, the morality coming out of the activity of thinking, or in Arendt's words "Socratic morality," is as well empty in content. Socratic morality has such similarity with that of Kant's, but the inner dialogue it engages does not prescribe moral law as in that of Kant's practical reason. It just urges one to continue a dialogue, to stay two-in-one. The matter here is dependent on the personality. With whom I would like to keep company? With whom I would rather not? In both cases, the answer depends on the person and hence no general rule can be imposed.

Here we can see that Arendt has a moral theory. For her the activity of thinking constitutes a formal structure for morality. And the case of Eichmann shows not only the swift change of the traditional rules of morality and their easy

replacement by a cruel sense of duty, but also that the lack of thinking is the reason behind failing to do the right thing. In the case of Nazi Germany, the right thing to do was simply to refuse participating and this would be assigned by thinking, since the acts one could partake are those that would sever the inner dialogue.

In her report, Arendt contrasts Eichmann with another Nazi soldier, Anton Schmidt, *Feldwebel* (sergeant) in charge of a patrol in Poland. He was helping the Jewish partisans, giving them forged papers and military trucks as accounted by Arendt (EJ, 230). She stresses that his motivation was not money. She doesn't know what it was exactly, but the fact was that he did it until he was caught by Nazis and executed in March 1942. Arendt almost laments in her language that this was the only story of a German soldier helping the victims instead of obeying the orders. Let me quote at length her description of that moment Schmidt's name was uttered in the court:

During the few minutes it took Kovner [a prominent member of the Jewish partisans in Poland] to tell of the help that had come from a German sergeant, a hush settled over the courtroom; it was as though the crowd had spontaneously decided to observe the usual two minutes of silence in honor of the man named Anton Schmidt. And in those two minutes, which were like a sudden burst of light in the midst of impenetrable, unfathomable darkness, a single thought stood out clearly, irrefutably, beyond question- how utterly different everything would be today in this courtroom, in Israel, in Germany, in all of Europe, and perhaps in all countries of the world, if only more such stories could have been told (EJ, 231).

Arendt does not make any explicit connections between Schmidt's disobedience and her theory of morality. One reason for that is that there is no account of his personality to speculate upon, another one is that Arendt has directed her attention to

the activity of thinking and its moral consequences after the trial of Eichmann.<sup>13</sup> We don't know if Schmidt disobeyed out of a traditional Christian morality or a morality Arendt assigns to thinking, but according to Arendt, there would be more stories of this kind, had the totalitarian conditions of terror in Germany not impeded the activity of thinking. In that case, we would have witnessed the political effects of the activity of thinking, which occurs only in those cases of emergencies for Arendt:

For the lesson of such stories is simple and within everybody's grasp. Politically speaking, it is that under conditions of terror most people will comply but *some people will not*, just as the lesson of the countries to which the Final Solution was proposed is that 'it could happen' in most places but *it did not happen everywhere*. Humanly speaking, no more is required, and no more can reasonably be asked, for this planet to remain a place fit for human habitation (EJ, 233).

From these considerations morality pertaining to thinking may seem to play a larger role than does in politics. Yet, as we have stated in the introductory chapter, Arendt deprives morality from political realm. Does Arendt takes morality back into politics by means of those above mentioned considerations? The answer for Arendt would be negative, since she makes clear that the morality tied up with the activity of thinking, Socratic morality has only a marginal significance for politics.

Socratic morality is effective in times when not acting is politically significant. But normally action is the activity *par excellence* of the political realm. In those times, if there are more people thinking and hence disobeying, things will be different. But thinking, Arendt makes clear, and hence morality, is actually the last resort to provoke changes in the world. Such changes are due to singular and concerted actions and the new beginnings occur in the world by means of them. In

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<sup>13</sup> See, for Arendt's own account of turning her attention to the activity of thinking after the case of Eichmann LMT, 4.

contrast, thinking never prompts one to action. The most it does is to say: "This I can't do." Hence, categorically, thinking and the Socratic morality Arendt develops remain out of the scene of politics. Only in rare cases, when refusing to act in such a way that one is prompted to, thinking becomes politically significant. Such cases happen only in "boundary situations" (Arendt borrows the term from Jaspers here) and there "thinking ceases to be a politically marginal activity" (LMT, 192). In those lines, Arendt condones conscientious objection and civil disobedience,<sup>14</sup> but she still keeps them at the margin of her theory of the political.

We have explicated in the introductory chapter that Arendt dismisses traditional morality from the political realm. She characterizes it either as an exclusive occupation for one's own self rather than for the world, or charges it as being destructive due to channeling the anti-political features of the absolute into the political realm. Here, in this first part of our second chapter, it becomes clear that the Socratic morality Arendt develops pertaining to the activity of thinking does not resemble to the morality that Arendt dismisses from the political realm, since it does not have a normative content. However, it is not fitting for politics either. Its political significance is limited to situations in which the proper political realm is already destroyed. The way of life of the thinker is apolitical, but it does not mean that thinking is insignificant for the *bios politikos*. On the contrary, the specific ethical responsibilities of the *bios politikos* comes to the fore in Arendt's considerations of the temporality of thinking. In the following part, we will demonstrate that tracing Arendt's considerations of worldly habitation and temporality of thinking is helpful in determining what binds the actors in the political realm.

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<sup>14</sup> For detailed accounts, see Arendt's articles: "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship" in *Responsibility and Judgment*, and "Civil Disobedience" in *Crisis in Republic*.

## Part II: Thinking and Ethics

In the first part, we have seen that Arendt develops a conception of morality exclusively pertaining to thinking. This morality is clearly distinguished from the normative morality Arendt dismisses from the political realm. Yet, Arendt does not welcome this non-normative morality in the political realm either. On the contrary, she locates it at the margins of politics, gaining significance only at rare times. Hence, this conception of morality does not answer to our initial question of what binds the political actors in the political realm. In this part, we will argue that the prominent ethics that binds the participators of the political realm comes to the fore when we consider Arendt's analysis of the loss of home in the world and the possibility to humanly dwell in it by means of the political realm. The key, we will claim, for building a home from within homelessness lies in Arendt's temporal considerations of thinking, since there, she establishes the structure of the proper response to this homelessness *qua* thinking and political participation.

### Homelessness of the Modern Age

Arendt's analysis of the modern age is multifaceted and impossible to exhaust within the limits of this thesis. Yet, there are two main phenomena, which come to the fore concerning the deprivation of homely existence in Arendt's analysis. They are world alienation and the shattering down of the tradition. In this section we will explicate these two phenomena that deprives human beings from homely existence. But in

doing so, we will argue that even though they both are the reasons of the modern homelessness, the shattering of the tradition also opens up a different kind of experience of homelessness, properly responding of which constitutes an essential characteristic of Arendt's ethics.

The first kind of homelessness is conjunctural and pertains to the modern age. It results in the destruction of worldly existence. Yet, the second kind of homelessness is existential and got revealed when the tradition that covers it over is gone. Strikingly, while the first one deprives human beings from settling back into the world since it exhausts the active capacities of the modern individuals, the second one makes it possible to redeem them both from the homelessness of existence and from the modern one. Our claim will be that the proper response to the existential homelessness we are exposed to by virtue of the historical gap that opens up at the breach of tradition in modernity provides us with the opportunity to settle down back into the world and be redeemed from alienation.

Home as a metaphor appears in Arendt's works in several guises, e.g. "human habitation in this world" (EJ, 233), "homely dwelling", and at various crucial points. Yet, she never explicitly accounts for it. The reason that Arendt utilizes this metaphor without much explanation and explicit definition is we believe due to an inner dialogue she has with the thought of Heidegger. The notions of home, dwelling, homelessness (*unheimlichkeit*) are fundamental concepts of Heidegger's thought. Arendt utilizes those concepts, usually without explicit discussion of what Heidegger means by them. Hence, a comparison of these two thinkers around those themes is fruitful to understand Arendt's conception of those notions.

Jacques Taminiaux argues in his book *The Thracian Maid and Professional Thinker* that there are "common denominators" between Arendt and Heidegger's

thought. Yet, “this does not mean that they are similar” (Taminiaux 1997, 3). The importance of Taminiaux’ trace of the divergences together with the convergences between Arendt’s and Heidegger’s thought all throughout his book becomes even more manifest in Fatmagül Berktaş’s indication of a common fallacy, contained in several works that read Arendt together with Heidegger. Berktaş states that in those readings there is a tendency to overlook the originality of Arendt’s thought by overlapping it with that of Heidegger due not only to the sexist tendencies inherent in the history of philosophy but also to degrading Arendt’s thought by regarding it simply as that of a pupil’s of Heidegger (Berktaş 2002a, 89, 89n2). In contrast to such readings, both Berktaş and Taminiaux argue that some of the most original tenets of Arendt’s thought become apparent at the intersection points of her thought with that of Heidegger’s. We argue here that the metaphorical notions of home and homelessness are among those crucial intersection points, and Arendt’s ethics of the political realm appears when we consider her conception of redemption from homelessness and settling down into the world as a home.

The concept of homelessness [*unheimlichkeit*] is crucial for Heidegger’s philosophy in two distinct senses. The first one is that homelessness in the sense of being detached from the world is the dominant experience of human beings in the modern age. The rise of the modern subject, modern science and technology resulted in a peculiar relation with the world that he characterized as homeless. Dana Villa conveys that for Heidegger: “homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the age” (Villa 1996, 172). Villa explains two crucial tenets of Heidegger’s critique of modernity. On the one hand, in modernity the real began to be comprehended through representation for the first time (180). Hence, Heidegger labels modernity, as it is in the title of his article, “The Age of the World-Picture.” This phenomenon,

Villa makes clear, results in the emergence of the modern subject as against the world. By that means, human beings acquired a position outside the world that he/she can relate to the world as his/her object. This rise of the subject, accompanied by the "subjectification of the real" makes the world dependent on the gaze of the subject, rather than acknowledging the human being's inherent dependence to the world. On the other hand, such a determination of the real and the emergence of the subject makes science and technology the only dominant modes of relating to the world, which deprives human beings from an original truth-revealing relation to the world.<sup>15</sup>

The second meaning of homelessness for Heidegger is the original experience of the singular human beings' Dasein<sup>16</sup> in times of anxiety vis-à-vis his/her own death. Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, argues that the authentic experience of Dasein is when one withdraws from his/her everyday comportment. In everydayness we live in a referential structure that gives significance to things and our activities. Once Dasein withdraws from the engagements within the world, the "worldhood of the world" appears and reveals the originary *unheimlichkeit* (uncanniness/homelessness) of human existence. Such withdrawal and the opening up of the originary homelessness happen in the experience of anxiety (*Being and Time*, §40)<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> For an extensive analysis, see Villa 1996, 170-188. Also see Villa 2001, 291.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger's neologism for human being designating the radical potentiality of being human that is being there (Da-sein).

<sup>17</sup> This experience accompanies a seeing for Heidegger [Augenblick] and it is crucial for Dasein to decide to be itself or not itself. In such moments of sight Dasein is brought before itself in such a way that it can claim its authentic potentiality for being. This decision to choose oneself happens in one's resoluteness towards one's ownmost potentiality, which is death. And even though Heidegger does not state it as an obligation, his characterizing it as the way to authenticity poses it as a responsibility, not towards some higher being or rule, but towards one's very Self.



These two senses of homelessness in Heidegger's thought find an echo in Arendt's analysis of modernity and her indication of the temporal experience of groundlessness in the activity of thinking. As for the first sense, Arendt, in line with Heidegger, characterizes the modern age as the era in which human beings have lost the world as their home. Yet, the prominent elements of her analysis of modernity that pertains to the fall of the public realm, rise of the social, the loss of the fundamental activities of *vita activa*, and totalitarianism significantly differ from that of Heidegger. However, her analysis of the modern subjectivity, loss of meaning of the world and detachment from it, as well as the role science and technology plays in the world alienation echoes Heidegger's critique of modernity.

For the second sense, Arendt's characterization of the state of mind in thinking as homeless, when it is provoked by the novel events and when understanding ceases to accomplish its function, echoes Heidegger's originary homelessness. Taminiaux makes clear that Arendt never emphasizes the *Unheimlichkeit* of Dasein, and she has good personal reasons for it considering her pariah life for years (Taminiaux 1997, 15). However, the groundless experience opened up between past and future in thinking echoes the homelessness of Heidegger's anxiety, albeit with very significant differences.

The most important continuation between Arendt and Heidegger is due to their common bond with Nietzsche. For both of the thinkers, existence is tragic and inherently meaningless as Nietzsche established. Hence, homelessness is an existential fact of the human existence in the world. Yet, Arendt and Heidegger diverge around that theme in two senses. First one is that for Arendt the condition that opens up this singular experience of homelessness is never one's own death as it is for Heidegger, but rather the novelties in the world. And the second one is that, for

Arendt, the proper response to this homelessness is not resolute being in solitude towards one's *ownmost* potentiality that is death, but rather participation in the political realm.

For Heidegger, homelessness has become an irrevocable destiny of the modern age. He states in his famous interview in *Der Spiegel* that "only a God can save us" from the scientifically and technologically determined worldview, which detached us from the world as our home. Villa points this out by saying that "for Nietzsche art, and for Arendt political action, could redeem human existence [which is "deeply tragic"]". For Heidegger in the Anaximander essay, no such redemptive power exists: there is only 'erring,' estrangement, homelessness" (Villa 1996, 239). Heidegger dismisses acquiring a *homely* life in his analysis of the experience of homelessness of Dasein as well. Home for Heidegger designates inauthentic everydayness, fallenness of the *Das Man* (the They). The authentic response to that originary experience of homelessness is to stand in that homelessness, to bare it and stay resolutely directed to the possibility of impossibility, which is death. Such engagement with one's own death is possible only in absolute solitude, a continuous withdrawal from the public and political life into the life of thinking.

In contrast to Heidegger, for Arendt, the stake is to be redeemed from the homelessness and create the home to settle down into. Arendt's emphasis on home becomes apparent both in her critique of modern homelessness and her argument of settling down into the temporal gap of thinking between past and future. In both of these two cases, as Villa said, it is politics that makes such settlement possible for Arendt. What is so peculiar in Arendt's thought is that modern homelessness bares the possibilities for building a home in it. While one aspect, that is world alienation and world alienating events that shatter the tradition take away the capabilities of

human beings to build a home in the world, the other aspect of the modern homelessness, that is the temporal gap opened up with the loss of tradition, opens up the existential homelessness that calls for, even necessitates a response in such a way that one must settle down into the world. We will explain in the following part how modernity has this peculiarity for Arendt. Here, it is important to dwell on what is homely for Arendt and under what conditions.

In Dana Villa's words, " 'at-homeness' is one of the qualities Arendt attributes to a 'worldly'... existence" (Villa 2001, 294). Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, indicates two main features of a worldly existence. On the one hand, it needs a variety of durable objects in the public realm that "gathers men together and relates them to each other" (HC, 55). That "world of things" is the medium "in which men move, which physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective, worldly interests. These interests constitute, in the word's most literal significance, something which *inter-est*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together" (182). On the other hand, there is what Arendt calls "subjective in-between" which is not tangible. Yet, Arendt makes clear: "for all its intangibility, this in-between is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common. We call this reality the 'web' of human relationships, indicating by the metaphor its somewhat intangible quality" (Ibid). While the durability of the world require "world of things" to be long-lasting in contrast to the finite human lives, the reality of the world necessities plurality and common sense. In Arendt's words:

The only character of the world by which to gauge its reality is its being common to us all, and common sense occupies such a high rank in the hierarchy of political qualities because it is the one sense that fits into reality as a whole... It is by virtue of common sense that the other sense perceptions are known to disclose reality... A noticeable decrease in common sense in any given community and a noticeable increase in superstition and gullibility are therefore almost infallible signs of alienation from the world (HC, 208-9).

In the modern age, world is neither durable nor real. It has lost its objective and subjective qualities for it to provide a homely existence for the human beings. And yet, even if it had those features, the experience of homelessness wouldn't wither away, due to Arendt's existential understanding of homelessness. Interestingly, even if these two conditions of the worldly existence were satisfied in any age, homelessness would still exist according to Arendt by virtue of the strangeness of the human being when he/she comes to the world. This usage of homelessness resembles to that of Heidegger's originary homelessness of Dasein. Yet, as we have pointed out, for Arendt it is possible and required to reconcile with that existence and build a home from within it. Our capacity to understand provides this possibility according to Arendt. However, understanding ceases to function vis-à-vis novel events and especially the ones impossible to be reconciled with like totalitarianism.

Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, explicates the phenomenon of world alienation on the basis of three historical events. She makes clear that we should not be surprised by the fact that this phenomenon of modernity was made possible by certain historical turning points long before the modern age. They were events that happened in the continuity of the tradition but opened up an era that gradually lead to the most abrupt changes in the world history. Those events that Arendt singles out are the discovery of America, the Reformation and the invention of the telescope (248).

The importance of the discovery of America was not only due to the novelties brought in the Western world by this new continent, but it was crucial because it was a benchmark in the completion for the exploration of the whole world and acquisition of the knowledge of its totality. In the age of explorers and before, world

had always been a “mortal dwelling place” that “gathered the infinite horizons, which were temptingly and forbiddingly open” (250). The distances were vast and unconquerable. Yet, after the fulfillment of the discoveries, world has become “globe in our living rooms to be touched by our hands and swirled before our eyes” (251). Previously unsurpassable distances have “yielded before the onslaught of speed” (250). The gist of Arendt’s analysis here resembles to that of Heidegger in “The Age of World-Picture” that both concerns the making possible of the human mind’s mastery over the world. Such mastery has cardinal importance in the detachment of human beings as modern subjects from the world to which they are inherently bonded.

Arendt links the contribution of the second event, the Reformation, to the phenomenon of world alienation in relation to the expropriation of the church, the collapse of the feudal system, and the precipitated emergence of capitalism. Arendt indicates that Church’s loss of property resulted in the expropriation of peasants, and the emigration of certain groups. Because of the loss of a place and property in the world, large amounts of people have become subjected to the “naked exposure to the exigencies of life”<sup>18</sup> (254). Those people were turned into the labor force and it made possible to acquire wealth, through the accumulation of capital. This followed prosperity in production and consumption but the things produced lost the character of durable objects. They were made in order to produce and accumulate more besides consumption. This is how Arendt briefly accounts for the rise of capitalism. Her stress is on the loss of the durable place in the world and the collapse of the stability of the world. In her words: “all property was destroyed in the process of its

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<sup>18</sup> This passage and the passages in the “Total Domination” at end of the *Origins of Totalitarianism* must have influenced Giorgio Agamben in his work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.

appropriation, all things devoured in the process of their production, and the stability of the world undermined in a constant process of change” (252). It is important to indicate that by property Arendt means “the privately owned share of a common world” which she distinguishes from wealth and appropriation (253).

This discussion of Arendt’s conception of property is another matter that will be left aside in this thesis, but it is important to underline that Arendt attributes it the capacity to provide a durable and stable life for human beings by virtue of protecting the private life. And the loss of durability of the things as well as of the private lives of human beings is one of the pivotal characteristics of world alienation.

Arendt dwells more on the issue of the loss of durable objects in her discussion of the rise of the *animal laborans*. It is a neologism by Arendt that designates the life of the laborer, which is one of the three fundamental activities of the *vita activa* (active life). The activity of labor indicates the human struggle to stay alive by means of toil and moil. Its characteristic is being always cyclical, that is to say, a never-ending process that results in objects for consumption.

Arendt starts her narration of the historical sequence of the rise of the *animal laborans* from the modern scientific turn owing to which the proper way of acquiring knowledge and truth became an active engagement with nature, rather than the philosophical contemplation (HC, 290). This led to the first reversal and place *vita activa* over against *vita contemplativa*. The second reversal arrived when productivity and creativity became the highest ideals and placed *homo faber*, the way of life of the worker/craftsman, at the top of the activities within *vita activa* (296). Finally, *animal laborans* replaced the crown of *homo faber* due to another

process<sup>19</sup> through which “the priority of life over everything else had acquired... the status of a ‘self-evident truth’” (319).

There are two main reasons according to which the rise of the *animal laborans* permeates world alienation. The first one is that the world has lost its durable character, which as we have mentioned above is *sine qua non* of worldly existence. Arendt indicates the second problem with those words: “The last stage of the laboring society, the society of jobholders” demands the transformation of this last activity to automation and eventually led to the result “that the modern age- which began with such an unprecedented and promising outburst of human activity- may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known” (HC, 322). World alienation deprives man not only of the world, but gradually of all of the fundamental activities. The concern of Arendt in narrating the rise and fall of certain activities is not only about those activities themselves. The underlying theme in all of the above considerations, and it can be said all throughout *The Human Condition*, is the interrelated phenomena of the withdrawal of the political, elimination of the public realm and the drying out of the conditions of the third fundamental activity: political action.

Finally, the third event that paves the way for world alienation is Galileo’s discovery of the telescope. The point Arendt stresses that this discovery resulted in the confirmation of the ancient doubt that our senses may deceive us. It was proven

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<sup>19</sup> World, Arendt states, was conceived as immortal in the ancient Greeks. Yet, with the rise of Christianity, the world lost such meaning, and life, as the soul of the individual, began to be regarded immortal. Then with secularization and loss of faith by means of the Cartesian doubt, this status of immortality of the human life has been discarded as well (HC, 320). The problem for Arendt is that the turn of the modern age that deprive the human life from immortality didn’t result in world gaining back its immortal status. Rather, in Arendt’s words: “that modern men were not thrown back upon this world but upon themselves” (HC, 254; BPF, 52-3).

by the telescope that our senses are not fitted to the universe, that is to say, they do not give us its proper knowledge. Arendt makes clear that the deception of the senses was proven by Copernicus and it was laid down that contrary to our sense perception that the sun revolves around the earth, it actually is the opposite. But, Arendt states, this happened only in the realm of ideas, that is to say, it was proven theoretically and hence did not constitute an event. What Galileo accomplished was that the “secrets of the universe were delivered to human cognition ‘with the certainty of sense-perception’; that is, he put within the grasp of an earth-bound creature and its body-bound senses what had seemed forever beyond his reach, at best open to the uncertainties of speculation and imagination” (HC, 259-60) and this made his accomplishment an event. This event grants human beings with a capacity that was never as soundly at his/her disposal. Arendt indicates it as the capacity to relate to the world from a point outside the world, the Archimedean point.

This point is as old as ancient speculations on the world and universe, but after Galileo’s invention, modern science has arisen on this universal point of view outside the world (262). Despite the enormous creative power and capabilities it provided, this “higher standpoint” outside the world had its price and it was the loss of our sense of reality, since our sense of reality is dependent on our sensory perceptions and on the assumption that we can rely on them (Ibid).

Reality, as we have explained, is a key word for Arendt in a worldly dwelling. Arendt connects reality to two criteria that are relying on our senses and the plurality of perspectives. The first one was seriously damaged by the discovery of the higher standpoint outside the world. The second one was about to be utterly destroyed by the totalitarian form of government. Together with the loss of durability of the worldly things, these happenings have resulted in a total deprivation of people



from homely existence in the world. And yet, the second characteristic of the modern age, the loss of tradition brings with it a specific possibility and as well as a twofold responsibility that would provide us to be redeemed from homelessness and to make the world our home again.

#### Shattering of Tradition: Opening up of the Epochal Interval in Historical Time

The objective of this section is to show two peculiar consequences of the shattering of the tradition. The first one is the failure of our faculty of understanding to make sense what we are experiencing. Arendt characterizes this faculty as the one that helps us to reconcile with the world and be at home in it. Confronting with novel events, especially those that are impossible to be reconciled like totalitarianism, understanding ceases to operate. The second consequence, Arendt indicates, is a peculiar temporal experience. The developments that shatter the tradition also opens up a breach in the time continuum and hence rather than the smooth continuum of the chronological time, actor's time sensation consists of recognizing a gap between past and future. This gap is very important since it opens up a distinct possibility and as well a responsibility to be saved from the alienation and the predicaments emerging from the novel modern events.

We will indicate three events that are exemplary of the abrupt changes of the modern age and break in the continuity of the tradition. They are First World War, totalitarianism and space race. Arendt likens the First World War to an explosion that severs the ties between European history and politics before and after it. The two most important consequence of it was the shattering of the Rights of Man that, in Arendt's words, constituted the façade of the European state system, and the

emergence of the minorities in Eastern and Southern Europe and huge amounts of migration and statelessness (OT, 267-9, 277). Arendt stresses that the Rights of Man proved to be inconsequential at the absence of political bodies that secure and apply them. The stateless persons, once deprived of their citizenship status were also devoid of this supposed to be the inalienable rights of man. These happenings were not only destructive for enormous numbers of people losing their places in the world, and in this indication Arendt's analysis resembles to that of the consequences of Reformation, but also it shattered the core of the European state system, that paved the way for the elements that would come to the surface in totalitarianism.

Arendt defines totalitarianism as a new form of government. Hence, she argues that Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Russia cannot be understood with the terms "authoritarian", "despotic" or "tyrannical." Their political organization has unprecedented elements that should be signified with another term. Arendt characterizes several elements peculiar to totalitarianism. Two of them are very significant for our purposes. They are, on the one hand, the total collapse of the common sense, and on the other hand, the elimination of plurality. Both of these themes, as we have seen, are related to the reality of the world. Hence, Arendt characterizes totalitarianism as a complete severance of individual's lives from reality. As for the total collapse of common sense, Arendt writes:

All this clearly points to totalitarian methods of domination; all these are elements they utilize, develop and crystallize on the basis of the nihilistic principle that "everything is permitted," which they inherited and already take for granted. But wherever these new forms of domination assume their authentically totalitarian structure they transcend this principle, which is still tied to the utilitarian motives and self-interest of the rulers, and try their hand in a realm that up to now has been completely unknown to us: the realm where "everything is possible" (OT, 440).

She indicates that “total domination” exercised in the concentration camps were the “laboratories” of the totalitarian form of domination. In those camps,

Totalitarian domination as an established fact, which in its unprecedentedness cannot be comprehended through the usual categories of political thought, and whose “crimes” cannot be judged by traditional moral standards or punished within the legal framework of our civilization, has broken the continuity of Occidental history. The break in our tradition is now an accomplished fact. It is neither the result of anyone’s deliberate choice nor subject to further decision (BPF, 26).

Finally the third event that contributed to the conjunctural homelessness is the beginning of space race by the first space lunch in 1957. Arendt begins *The Human Condition* pointing out to that event and states that its joyful receptions with the hope of it begin the “first ‘step toward escape from men’s imprisonment to the earth”” (HC, 1) shows a turning point in actualizing the desires of escaping from world. This event confirmed the modern scientific and technological triumph and the desires to go beyond the world, which has always been the limit and home of human beings. The securing of the Archimedean point outside the world by the invention of telescope has reached to a point that modern individuals not only relate to the world from this point outside, but struggle literally to settle down outside the world.

The triumph of science and technology paved the way for such desires and struggle to escape from the world according to Arendt. In Arendt’s words:

Only we, and only we for hardly more than a few decades, have come to live in a world thoroughly determined by a science and a technology whose objective truth and practical know-how are derived from cosmic and universal, as distinguished from terrestrial and ‘natural’ laws, and in which a knowledge acquired by selecting a point of reference outside the earth is applied to earthly nature and the human artifice (HC, 268).

With an insight resembling that of Weber's, Arendt correlates the effects of the triumph of the science and technology to our relation with the world.<sup>20</sup> When science and technology become that determinant in our age, we are faced with a danger Arendt summarizes in those words: "it could be that we... will forever be unable to understand, that is, to think and speak about the things which nevertheless we are able to do" (HC, 3). Hence, she sets the overall task of *The Human Condition* as a response to this risk that we might be forever unable to understand our own lives and the happenings around us. In Arendt's words:

What I propose in the following is a reconsideration of the human condition from the vantage point of *our newest experiences and our most recent fears*. This, obviously, is a matter of thought, and thoughtlessness- the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of 'truths', which have become trivial and empty- seems to me among the outstanding characteristics of our time. What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing [emphasis added] (HC, 5).

Those novel events create fear and restlessness, but they also defy our understanding. Thinking comes to the fore at times when understanding is unable to make sense of the world. This we will deal with after focusing on Arendt's analysis of the temporal consequences of the shattering of the tradition.

The earliest formulation Arendt gives for a temporal gap opens up in historical time is in 1946 in a review article on Hermann Broch's *The Death of Virgil*, entitled: "No Longer and Not Yet". Let us quote the beautiful and explanatory beginning of the article at length:

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<sup>20</sup> Interestingly though Arendt points out the very opposite of what Weber was indicating that our lives are becoming more and more unintelligible to us. In Weber's analysis, the "scientific process" is a part of the more general "process of intellectualization" that makes world more intelligible and deprives it from its enchantment, which as a result lead to the "disenchantment" of the world (Weber 1998, 138-9).

Hume once remarked that the whole of human civilization depends upon the fact that "one generation does not go off the stage once and another succeed, as is the case with silkworms and butterflies." At some turning points of history, however, at some heights of crisis, a fate similar to that of silkworms and butterflies may befall a generation of men. For the decline of the old, and the birth of the new, is not necessarily an affair of continuity; between the generation, between those who for some reason or other still belong to the old and those who either feel the catastrophe in their very bones or have already grown up with it, the chain is broken and an "empty space," a kind of historical no man's land, comes to the surface which can be described only in terms of "no longer and not yet." In Europe such an absolute interruption of continuity occurred during and after the First World War" (EU, 158).

Arendt indicates this phenomenon of temporal breach in these terms as well:

[T]he appeal to thought arose in the odd in-between period which sometimes inserts itself into historical time when not only the later historians but the actors and witnesses, the living themselves, become aware of an interval in time which is altogether determined by things that are no longer and by things that are not yet. In history, these intervals have shown more than once that they may contain the moment of truth (BPF, 9).

The peculiarity of Arendt's characterization of this historically odd in-between period is that it makes manifest the temporal sensation of a gap in time, which has always been known by the thinkers but was limited to the experience of the few. This, we will see, is the very experience of existential homelessness, which has been covered over by the tradition. The loss of tradition in the modern age, thus, did not only result in the opening of the conjectural homelessness, but also made this existential homelessness binding for all. Arendt states this claim in these words:

For very long times in our history... this gap was bridged over by what, since the Romans, we have called tradition. That this tradition has worn thinner and thinner as the modern age progressed is a secret to nobody. When the thread of tradition finally broke, the gap between past and future ceased to be a condition peculiar only to the activity of thought and restricted as an experience to those few who made thinking their primary business. It became a tangible reality and perplexity for all; that is, it became a fact of political relevance (BPF, 13).

As we have indicated, Arendt accounts for the opening of the gap for all in reference to the failure of understanding. Tradition has been providing the concepts for understanding to make sense out of the happenings around us. It has not only been providing continuity in practices but also in ways we conceive what we are doing. But the loss of tradition takes away those concepts. Hence, Arendt states “[t]he paradox of modern situation seems to be that... we have lost our tools of understanding” (EU, 313). Arendt characterizes this faculty in those words:

Understanding... is an unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality, that is, *try to be at home in the world* [my emphasis] ... Understanding is unending and therefore cannot produce final results. It is the specifically human way of being alive; for every single person needs to be reconciled to a world into which he was born a stranger and in which, to the extent of his distinct uniqueness, he always remains a stranger (EU, 308).

Human beings are not at home in the world naturally. They have to reconcile with it, because they were born as strangers. If we would translate this point of Arendt's in a more familiar language we could say that as we grow up, we socialize in a culture, we get into the symbolic structure of a language and start making sense out of things around us. This capability of making sense of the things around us, according to Arendt, comes thanks to our faculty of understanding. We make sense of the things in the world and being in the world becomes disturbing only in exceptional situations.

With reference to Hegel, Arendt indicates this function of understanding: “The task of the mind is to understand what happened, and this understanding, according to Hegel, is man's way of reconciling himself with reality; its actual end is to be at peace with the world. The trouble is that if the mind is unable to bring peace and to introduce reconciliation, it finds itself immediately engaged in its own kind of

warfare” (BPF, 7). The “warfare” designates the activity of thinking. Arendt tackles with thinking in those passages not with reference to Socrates but to Kafka and characterizes it not as a dialogue but as a battle to keep one’s stance in between past and future.

### Temporality of Thinking

Arendt argues that when understanding ceases to do its job and fails us in reconciling with the world vis-à-vis events, the “mind ... finds itself immediately engaged in its kind of warfare” (BPF, 7). This warfare is the activity of thinking itself. It is invoked as mind’s reaction to the modern homelessness but at the same time it opens up the existential homelessness that is inherent in this activity itself. Arendt, in her characterization of the temporality of this activity, reveals the proper way to respond to these experiences of homelessness, which is political participation.

Arendt characterizes the temporal sensation of someone who is engaged with the activity of thinking as the experience of a gap between past and future. In order to open up this characterization, it is fruitful to trace Arendt’s dialogue with her philosopher companions.

Arendt’s concern with temporality goes as early as her doctoral dissertation entitled *Love and Saint Augustine*. In analyzing the notion of love in the works of Saint Augustine, Arendt goes into the temporal discussions of this medieval philosopher. It is highly acknowledged that Augustine’s thoughts on time have been very influential in the tradition of Western philosophy. And the striking similarity between Arendt’s conception of the time of thinking as a gap between past and future is one illustration of it.

In the passages in which Augustine speculates about time in *Confessions*, his main concern is to prove that the only real time is the present. Past and future are illusionary suppositions by virtue of the existence of the present. This present has the character of an eternal moment, *nunc stans*, as Arendt refers in several occasions, and human being occupies that stance by virtue of his mind. Here is one of the most important passages of Augustine's temporal considerations:

What now is clear and plain is, that neither things to come nor past are. Nor is it properly said 'there be three times, past, present, and to come:' yet perchance it might be properly said 'there be three times; a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future.' For these three do exist in some sort, in the soul, but elsewhere do I not see them; present of things past, memory; present of things present, sight; present of things future, expectation<sup>21</sup>.

All the tenses of the time continuum are dependent on the present for Augustine since it is the only real time upon which we have a supposition towards past and future. In the following passage from Arendt's dissertation, we witness her appropriative reading of Augustine's above given considerations and the rise of a question that will be crucial for her later temporal considerations:

But even if things should last, human life does not. We lose it daily. As we live the years pass through us and they wear us out into nothingness. It seems that only the present is real, for "things past and things to come are not"; but how can the present (which I cannot measure) be real since it has no "space"? Life is always either no more or not yet. Like time, life "comes from what is not yet, passes through what is without space, and disappears into what is no longer." (LSA, 14).

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<sup>21</sup> From Augustine's *Confessions*, 1999, Book XI, part XX, 266-7. Arendt reads and cites the original Latin texts, hence we had to rely on an English translation that was not cited by Arendt. Arendt reads this passage in LSA, 13-4.



Arendt does not only write like Augustine in this exemplary passage of her dissertation, she also thinks with him, and this appropriation of Augustine's temporal considerations comes to the fore in Arendt's characterizations of the temporality between past and future. In this passage, she asks "how can the present... be real since it has no 'space'?" This question will reoccur in Arendt's *The Life of the Mind*, albeit in a very different form and without taking in the spatial determination of time back in as the question suggests.

Arendt asks the question "Where are we when we think?" in the last part of the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*, to which we will come, but she at the same time criticizes the conception of time in terms of space. Arendt is in a dialogue with Bergson in those passages in which she dismisses the spatial determination of time. In Arendt's words:

As Bergson first discovered, they [metaphors we traditionally use in terminology dealing with the phenomenon of time] are all terms "borrowed from spatial language. If we want to reflect on time, it is space that responds." Thus "duration is always expressed as extension," and the past is understood as something lying behind us, the future as lying somewhere ahead of us. The reason for preferring the spatial metaphor is obvious: for our everyday business in the world, on which the thinking ego may reflect but in which it is not involved, we need time measurements, and we can measure time only by measuring spatial distances (LMW, 13).

The spatial determination of our thinking on time is inevitable due to our everyday comportment, but such a conception fails to give the temporal sensation of the thinking self its due. This temporality opens up in the activity of thinking and Arendt characterizes it as a gap between past and future. In doing so, Arendt as well takes the help of a spatial metaphor but this metaphor contrary to the traditional metaphors designating the activity of thinking, does not fail to indicate the gap, but rather

directly points out to it. She develops this metaphor upon Kafka's parable entitled "He," which goes as follows:

He has two antagonists: the first presses him from behind, from the origin. The second blocks the road ahead. He gives battle to both. To be sure, the first supports him in his fight with the second, for he wants to push him forward, and in the same way the second supports him in his fight with the first, since he drives him back. But it is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two antagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? His dream, though, is that some time in an unguarded moment- and this would require a night darker than any night has ever been yet- he will jump out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience in fighting, to the position of umpire over his antagonists in their fight with each other (BPF, 7; LMT, 202).

Arendt reads the antagonists as the metaphors of the forces of past and future. From the point of view of the person who is exercising the activity of thinking, time breaches into two tenses and the ground that lies between them is the present, within which "he" struggles to keep his stand. But this present is not "the present as we usually understand it" Arendt indicates. It is rather a "gap in time" (BPF, 10). Once this everyday understanding of time comes to a breach, even the temporality of what lies in between past and future turns into something other than the "now" we normally would conceive. This is because time itself is not "passing" in its usual flow. Another experience of temporality comes to the fore that prevents any conception of it as the sequences of fleeting "nows."<sup>22</sup>

This gap in time opens up in the absence of a tradition covering it, as we have stated before. Only when understanding fails to reconcile us with our homeless

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<sup>22</sup> Its important to note that the usual conception of linear time is not a given / natural for Arendt. Hence, in thinking we don't go out of the normal time into some extraordinary temporality. Rather, she explains: "That we can shape the everlasting stream of sheer change into a time continuum we owe not to time itself but to the continuity of our business and our activities in the world, in which *we continue* what we started yesterday and hope to finish tomorrow. In other words, the time continuum depends on the continuity of our everyday life, and the business of everyday life..." (LMT, 205).

existence in the world, thinking is provoked. Hence, Arendt characterizes her temporal considerations as “the contemporary conditions of thought” referring to the loss of tradition in our present era (BPF, 12). However, then she adds: “The gap, I suspect, is not a modern phenomenon, it is perhaps not even a historical datum but is coeval with the existence of man on earth” (12-13). She still have a caveat in saying that she only “suspects” that it is coeval with the existence of man, but there are several indications that Arendt is convinced with this supposition.

We have already said that Arendt appropriates Saint Augustine’s perspective on time that present is the only real time. Yet, even though Arendt refers this present as *nunc stans*, which is the moment of eternity for Augustine, she never attributes such an eternal feature to it (LMT, 210-1). She rather characterizes it as a gap, that is to say, as a breach and groundless moment of existence. Nevertheless, Arendt applies *nunc stans*’ relation to past and future. That is to say, past and future opens up due to the gap and the insertion of human being as beginning in between them. This point we will explicate in the following chapter, and also we will deal more with gap being an original temporal sensation there.

Besides Saint Augustine, Arendt’s characterization of the temporal gap summons for another thinker whose close acquaintance with Arendt is well known. Walter Benjamin’s infamous reading of Klee’s painting in his “Thesis on the Philosophy of History” was published at the end of his book, *Illuminations* was edited by Hannah Arendt herself. The similarity of the thesis with the parable of Kafka is remarkable. Benjamin states:

A Klee painting named “Angelus Novus” shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a

chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress (Benjamin 2007, 257-8).

The angel of history stands in between the past, looking at it, and the future, to which she is trusted by the storm of progress. This characterization of the angel of history apparently resembles Kafka's "He" in terms of standing in between past and future. Strikingly though, Arendt never summons Benjamin's angel in her considerations of the temporal gap. This took the attention of Oliver Marchart, who argues that such neglect is due to a general disdain of Arendt to characterize the temporal gap as politically significant (Marchart 2006, 137).<sup>23</sup> Marchart is right, in our mind, to point out that there is a lack of an explicit political account of the temporal gap in Arendt, however, we will demonstrate in the following chapter that even though Arendt does not discuss it explicitly, the gap in time is cardinal for political action as well. Hence, we don't think Arendt's lack of attention to this ninth thesis of Benjamin stems from failing to read the gap politically, but we think that it was due to Arendt's purposes in reading the gap pertaining not to a meta-entity like history, but to the singular individual's experience that is conceived only from the first person perspective.

The first person perspective is crucial for Arendt, since it is this perspective that let us reach any reliable truth from a phenomenological approach. And it is well acknowledged that Arendt did not abandon this method after leaving Germany.

Richard Bernstein characterizes Arendt's objective in treating the activity of thinking as "developing a phenomenology of thinking" (Bernstein 2000, 286). And discusses

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<sup>23</sup> See also for a reading of Benjamin's thesis as presenting an anti-dialectical understanding of history, Kohn 2004, 288.

the paradoxical situation of phenomenologically analyzing something that does not appear. It is paradoxical since phenomenology is the method of analyzing the phenomena as they appear to the sight of the first person perspective.<sup>24</sup> Thinking is not a phenomenon, but Bernstein argues it can become a subject of phenomenological analysis by means of metaphors.

Arendt's phenomenology of thinking acts upon the metaphor developed on Kafka's parable. The temporal experience of thinking as the gap between past and future appears to the person engaged with that activity as it is pictured in that characterization. However, Arendt emphasizes that Kafka's standpoint is still a "battlefield and not a home" (BPF, 12). For the thinking ego to settle down into the gap characterized in that metaphor, there is a need for "a step further". The trouble arises, since Kafka is still haunted by the traditional conception of "rectilinear temporal movement"(11). The conflictual positioning of past and future rejects the co-presence of the linear time. This is why "he" is caught in a dream of leaving the antagonistic arena and wants to ascend to a place where he can grasp an overview as an "umpire". For Arendt, Kafka shares the same desires with the Western metaphysical tradition stretching from Parmenides to Hegel as the "timeless, spaceless, suprasensuous realm as the proper region of thought" (Ibid). And this region beyond the world is exactly what Arendt wants to avoid. Hence, she suggests her own metaphor for the activity of thinking building upon Kafka's "parallelogram of forces".

Arendt suggests that the "perfect metaphor for the activity of thought" would include another force originating from the meeting points of the two conflicting

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<sup>24</sup> For a detailed discussion on the methodology of phenomenology, see Heidegger 1962, 58.

forces of past and future and leads to infinity (BPF, 11-12).<sup>25</sup> This third force is missing in Kafka's parable and exempts him from the "spatial dimension where thinking could exert itself without being forced to jump out of human time altogether" (11). Arendt's diagram provides a direction to the mind standing in between the clash of past and future in the form of "train of thoughts" so that the one who thinks does not "die of exhaustion" as it had led Kafka as Arendt states.

In his failure to find the third force that would direct the tensions resulting from the clash into "slow and ordered movements" back and forth, he is "worn out under the pressure of constant fighting" (Ibid). Yet, had he been saved from the traditional time conception, "[h]e would [have] recognize[d] that 'his' fighting has not been in vain, since the battleground itself supplies the region where 'he' can rest when 'he' is exhausted" (LMT, 208). Providing this resting place is exactly what Arendt aims at while describing the activity of thinking. This, I would suggest, leads her into the question she would inquire in the fourth part of the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*: "Where are we when we think?"

This question on the location of the thinking activity has first arisen in Arendt's engagement with Augustine, but we have also stated that Arendt rejects any spatial determination of time together with Bergson. Hence, Arendt makes it clear that this question, naturally directed towards a *topos*, does not summon a spatial answer. Had it been so, she states, the answer would be "nowhere", since thinking is concerned with "generals/universals" applicable to everywhere, which exempt the thinking ego from any specific location (199-201). Hence, Arendt's proposed answer to the question is temporal in character, rather than a spatial place. The location is again the gap that opens up in between past and future in the form of

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<sup>25</sup> See the diagram visualizing three forces in LMT, 208.

“remembering, collecting and recollecting what no longer is..., and anticipating and planning in the mode of willing what is not yet” (201). And past and future are still antagonistic forces, which calls one to struggle with. However, at the presence of the third force, those clashes do not impose one the desire to escape from it once and for all.

The significance of this third force for Arendt’s considerations of thinking is apparent, but we still have to open up what it really consists of. When we consider Arendt’s characterization of this deflection, we realize that it indicates two distinct activities. Let’s hear Arendt in her characterization of this third force:

If Kafka’s “he” were able to exert his forces along this diagonal, in perfect equidistance from past and future, walking along this diagonal line, as it were, forward and backward, with the slow, ordered movements which are the proper motion for trains of thought, he would not have jumped out of the fighting-line and be above the melee as the parable demands, for this diagonal, though pointing toward the infinite, remains bound to and is rooted in the present; but he would have discovered – pressed as he was by his antagonists into the only direction from which he could properly see and survey what was most his own, what had come into being only with his own, self-inserting appearance- the enormous, ever-changing time-space which is created and limited by the forces of past and future; he would have found the place in time which is sufficiently removed from the past and future to offer “the umpire” a position from which to judge the forces fighting with each other with an impartial eye (BPF, 12).

This is a very dense passage by Arendt but it clarifies two important points for our purposes. On the one hand, here Arendt states the function of the third diagonal force that would have made Kafka’s “He” to discover the time-space, which would nullify the desire to go beyond the melee. On the other hand, Arendt gives clues for what exactly this diagonal force consists of. It contains thought trains and lets one to judge with an impartial eye, but also it opens us a possibility for insertion and appearance of what is one’s own, of what exists thanks to that unique human being: “self-inserting appearance.”

According to Arendt, for one's self to appear, one needs to step into the public realm and the proper milieu of such appearance is the political realm. Peg Birmingham points out that all the themes of slow and ordered trains of thought, the umpire position, impartiality and the explicit indication of judging refers to the activity of judging (Birmingham 1995, 142), and hence she regards Arendt's deflection as judging. Yet, we would suggest that deflection designates political action as well as judgment, since political action as speech has the same characteristics of thought trains resulting in the appearance and self-insertion of the unique selves. In fact, Arendt's focus is on political action in analyzing the appearing of the agent. Nevertheless, we can conclude that deflection that results from the activity of thinking is consisted by both of the activities of political action and judgment. They are crucial as a response to the experience of homelessness opened up in the activity of thinking, which is invoked by the conjuctural loss of home in the world due to world alienation and shattering of the tradition.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, we have argued that even though Arendt has a specific understanding of morality, it is at the margins of politics for her and hence it does not respond to our question what binds the political actors. Yet, when we considered her argument about being redeemed from homelessness and establish a homely existence in the world, there appears a structure for appropriately responding to the predicaments of the modern age. In a nutshell, it consists bearing the tensions of thinking in the first place vis-à-vis contemporary novelties and participating in the political realm via action and judgment as a response to the existential homelessness that opens up in this activity of thinking.



### CHAPTER 3

#### POLITICAL ACTION, THE POLITICAL REALM AND JUDGMENT

To be at home in the world in Arendt's sense means to be at home with the estrangement that permeates both her performative conception of action and her notion of 'disinterested' judgment (Villa 2001, 295).

[P]olitics is not so much about human beings as it is about the world that comes into being between them and endures beyond them (PP, 175).

In the previous chapter, we have singled out political action and judgment as the deflections opening up the possibility for the thinking ego to settle down into world, that is to say, establish a home from within the experience of homelessness. To remind that structure, we have indicated that for Arendt the loss of tradition resulted in the collapse of understanding, which is the faculty that reconciles us with the world. Through such reconciliation, one can, so to say, feel at home in the world, make sense of the happenings around oneself. Yet, especially due to the experience of totalitarianism and abrupt novelties brought by the triumph of science and technology, understanding ceases to make sense of the happenings in the world. Arendt states that this inability to reconcile with the world invokes the activity of thinking, which opens up the experience of the temporal gap that reveals existential homelessness. Such experience of existential homelessness resembles to what Heidegger posed as Dasein's experience of *unheimlichkeit* in anxiety, but the proper response to this homelessness is not resolute being towards death, but as Fatmagül Berktaş states, a "Being towards life" for Arendt (Berktaş 2002b, 268). That is to

say, rather than withdrawing into the solitude of thinking, engaging in the political realm.

We have characterized this engagement as political action and judgment in the previous chapter. And in this chapter, we will explore these two activities in the two parts of this chapter. Our objective will be to demonstrate that they are activities that provide a *homely* dwelling in the world. In dealing with political action we will not trace the conventional explication of Arendt's political action theory. Rather, we will trace Arendt's rather hidden description of the temporal experience of actors going through political action. In doing so, we aim at revealing one very important concern of Arendt, which is relying on the experience of freedom. This, we will argue, is a cardinal feature of homely dwelling in the world, not due to the freedom those individuals acquire, but due to what they add up to the world; which are, on the one hand, *novelty* and *difference* by virtue of beginning, and on the other hand, *variety* and *vitality* by virtue of nourishing plurality.

## Part I: Political Action

### The Experience of Political Action: Temporal Gap Revisited

The prominent themes around which Arendt analyzes with reference to political action all pertain to time in different guises. Arendt's characterization of action as beginning something new in one of its senses means starting a temporal sequence in the time continuum, which needs to be carried out in time. Additionally, the reification of the action by means of stories and its immortalizing is a process that occurs in time. All of them are issues to tackle thoroughly, but here in this section we

will focus exclusively on the temporal sensation of the political actors, which we will try to demonstrate that pertains to a temporal sensation of a gap between past and future very much like the experience of thinking. Before dealing with the passages in which she emphasizes this temporal sensation of action, it is important to reveal within which discussions and for what purposes she approaches this temporal consideration.

Throughout the second volume of her book *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt analyses the ways in which the Western philosophical tradition has thought of the faculty of willing. At the end of that volume, in the chapter entitled “The abyss of freedom and the *novus ordo seclorum*,” Arendt turns her attention away from the thinkers and focuses on the actors. She states in the beginning of this chapter the flaw of the philosophical examinations of this faculty of willing:

[S]imply that every philosophy of the Will is conceived and articulated not by men of action but by *philosophers*, Kant’s ‘professional thinkers,’ who in one way or another are committed to the *bios theoretikos* and therefore by nature more inclined to ‘interpret the world’ than to change it’ (LMW, 195).<sup>26</sup>

She narrates her turn of attention to the men of action as following:

Let us put them [professional thinkers] aside... and fasten our attention on men of action, who *ought to be* [my emphasis] committed to freedom because of the very nature of their activity, which consists in ‘changing the world,’ and not in interpreting or knowing it (LMW, 198).

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<sup>26</sup> This statement on the inability of the professional thinkers’ gaze to penetrate the realm of human affairs is a central critique Arendt directs to the tradition of Western philosophy. And her attempt to grasp the dynamics of this realm in ways that is authentic to that realm is not a new theoretical move of her readers either. On the contrary, Arendt herself states in her interview with Günter Gaus, which can be read as a summary of her lifetime itinerary, “I want to look at politics, so to speak, with eyes unclouded by philosophy” (EU, 2).

Arendt explicitly quotes, needless to say, Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach in both of these passages. As such, she directs our attention to the philosopher-political actor dichotomy and the inadequacy, or as Marx would have said, to the "poverty of philosophy."<sup>27</sup> Arendt here focuses on the perspective of actors hoping to find proper accounts of the experience of action, which is always ingrained in freedom and genuine to that experience. However, she gets disappointed with the lack of sources that account for this experience. This, she expresses in these words:

When we direct our attention to men of action, hoping to find in them a notion of freedom purged of the perplexities caused for men's minds by the reflexivity of mental activities- the inevitable recoil on itself of the willing ego- we hoped for more than we finally achieved (LMW, 216).

The reason Arendt gives for this lack of account and notion of their direct experiences is the role of the tradition.<sup>28</sup> Traditional concepts for Arendt fail to apply to the novel event and try to make sense out of the new with regard to the old. We have dealt with this briefly in the previous chapter, hence now we have to ask: What exactly is this experience that has been misconceived and covered over? The answer is apparently the experience of acting. But, what is this experience of action then?

Arendt states that in times of revolution men of action get involved with a certain problem. In her words:

When men of action, men who wanted to change the world, became aware that such a change might actually postulate a new order of ages, the start of something unprecedented, they began to look to history for help [in order to find an answer to] *the problem of beginning* - a problem because beginning's very nature is to carry in itself an element of complete arbitrariness. It was only

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<sup>27</sup> See, Karl Marx's "Thesis on Feuerbach" and *Poverty of Philosophy*.

<sup>28</sup> We can here add the role of the philosophical determination of politics, but this would open up another discussion that requires a larger delineation.

now that they confronted the abyss of freedom, knowing that whatever would be done now could just as well have been left undone and believing, too, with clarity and precision, that once something is done it can not be undone (LMW, 207, emphasis added).

Arendt here stresses that in times of revolution, actors realize the radically contingent character of their actions. They can just as well not do what they are doing. This contingency or abyss of freedom is inherent in political action for Arendt. What happens in the moment of foundation is that this character becomes extremely apparent. And this experience brings with it a problem, the problem of beginning. At times in which something completely new is coming into being, this problem emerges for justification purposes (LMW, 210). Yet, for Arendt it is a problem that cannot be legitimately answered. However, it has to be asked properly (202-3).

In order to indicate the problem with loyalty to the phenomenon of beginning itself, Arendt strikingly turns to two foundation legends one from Judeo-Christian tradition and the other Roman in origin. First one is the biblical story of the exodus of the Israeli tribes and the other is Virgil's story of Aeneas's wanderings, which terminates with the founding of Rome (204). Despite their differences, they both are stories indicating the specific date of their community's genesis and "both arose among a people that thought of its past as a story whose beginning was known and could be dated" says Arendt (203). Arendt does not share this belief indeed but still thinks that an element of those stories points out the core of the problem. Let's hear Arendt's account of those mythical stories in the following three quotations:

Both legends begin with an act of liberation, the flight from oppression and slavery in Egypt and the flight from burning Troy (that is, from annihilation); and in both instances this act is told about from the perspective of a new freedom, the conquest of a new "promised land" that offers more than Egypt's fleshpots and the foundation of a new City that is prepared for by a war destined to undo the Trojan war (LMW, 204).

Arendt argues that the gist of those stories lay in between those moments of “flight” and establishment of a new order. They reveal, according to Arendt, a principle and this principle is freedom. Arendt accounts it with terms echoing Isaiah Berlin’s “Two Theories of Freedom” (Berlin 2002) that there is on the one hand “a negative sense of liberation from oppression” and on the other hand “the positive sense of the establishment of freedom as a stable, tangible reality” (LMW, 203). In other words:

The foundation legends, with their hiatus between liberation and the constitution of freedom, indicated the problem without solving it. They point to the abyss of nothingness that opens up before *any deed* that cannot be accounted for by a reliable chain of cause and effect (LMW, 207, emphasis added).

Acknowledging this abyss as a problem and not covering it over is cardinal for Arendt. She directs her criticism upon the mindset that merges liberation and freedom. Her aim is to indicate the distinctness of freedom. Hence, she states:

The legendary hiatus between a no-more and a not-yet clearly indicated that freedom would not be the automatic result of liberation, that the end of the old is not necessarily the beginning of the new, that the notion of an all-powerful time continuum is an illusion (LMW, 204).

Arendt, while criticizing the conceptions of liberation that assume freedom to succeed naturally, mentions the illusion of time continuum in such a way that addresses those with such assumption. Such linear, continuous time is the time of cause and effect. And this conception informs deterministic theories in politics, arguing that such and such will succeed by virtue of History or Nature, necessarily due to those elements in the society.

In her article "The Concept of History," Arendt indicates that "modern concept of process" is the most peculiar feature of modern theories that, so to say, invades political thought with History and Nature (BPF, 63). She states that accounting for every phenomenon on the basis of an underlying process assumes a time continuum that stretches from an infinite past to the infinite future, which results in the "elimination of all notions of beginning and end" (68). In contrast, for Arendt such causal continuum in regard to human action is an illusion. In times of spontaneous revolutions, even those who are coming from traditions that assumed such continuum have faced with this rupture. Arendt writes:

All those who... were not satisfied to change the world by the gradual reform of an old order ... were almost logically forced to accept the possibility of a hiatus in the continuous flow of temporal sequence (LMW, 205).

The experience of revolution itself brings with it such awareness of the ruptures in the time. Hence, men of revolution were confronted with the problem of beginning. It is important to underline again that Arendt is concerned with the direct experiences of the actors. How things have appeared to them interests her. Her wording in *On Revolution* at the passages accounting this experience makes this first-person perspective more obvious:

The revolution- at least it must have appeared to these men- was precisely the legendary hiatus between end and beginning, between a no-longer and a not-yet. And these times of transition from bondage to freedom must have appealed to their imagination very strongly, because the legends unanimously tell us of great leaders who appear on the stage of history precisely in these gaps of historical time. Moreover, this hiatus obviously creeps into all time speculations which deviate from the currently accepted notion of time as a continuous flow; it was, therefore, an almost natural object of human imagination and speculation, in so far as these touched the problem of beginning at all; but what had been known to speculative thought and in legendary tales, it seemed, appeared for the first time as an actual reality. If one

dated the revolution, it was as though one had done the impossible, namely, one had dated the hiatus in time in terms of chronology, that is, of historical time (OR, 197-8).

Arendt is adamant that actors in revolution had experienced a gap in time. A gap that opens up between the liberation and foundation, between the old order that is no longer and the new one that is not yet. This characterization of the temporal gap indeed echoes that of thinking and historical epoch after loss of tradition. Despite the continuity in watches and calendars, gaps in time occur in the experience of those who have engaged in revolutions. In tackling with the founding acts in revolution, Arendt does not limit her temporal attributions to the experience of actors to only founding acts. In contrast, she states them in such a way that it entails action in general. The peculiarity of revolutions and founding acts are that this temporal sensation of action becomes almost impossible not to notice. I have already emphasized within one of the quotations that Arendt clearly states that in “any deed that cannot be accounted for by a reliable chain of cause and effect” opens up the “abyss of nothingness.” For the temporal gap to be exclusively pertinent to founding, it must only be produced by those acts that cannot be accounted for by cause and effect. Yet, this is definitely not so. The following passage makes it even more explicit:

They [founding fathers] were quite aware of course of the bewildering spontaneity of a free act. As they knew, *an act can only be called free if it is not affected or caused by anything preceding it* and yet, insofar as it immediately turns into a cause of whatever follows, it demands a justification which, if it is to be successful, will have to show the act as the continuation of a preceding series, that is, renege on the very experience of freedom and novelty (LMW 210, emphasis added).



Very much like the temporality of thinking, temporal sensation of the actors experiencing free actions is at the character of a gap between past and future, between no longer and not yet. Hence, it is tied up with the present, but it is not the present that takes its part in the flowing time continuum. In contrast, it is a breach in the continuum. It must be this fact Arendt is referring when she states in *Between Past and Future*:

Seen from the viewpoint of man, who always lives in the interval between past and future, time is not a continuum, a flow of uninterrupted succession; it is broken in the middle, at the point where 'he' stands; and 'his' standpoint is not the present as we usually understand it but rather a gap in time which 'his' constant fighting, 'his' making a stand against past and future, keeps in existence. Only because man is inserted into time and only to the extent that he stands his ground does the flow of indifferent time break up into tenses; it is this insertion –the beginning of beginning, to put it into Augustinian terms– which splits up the time continuum into forces which then, because they are focused on the particle or body that gives them direction, begin fighting with each other and acting upon man in the way Kafka describes (BPF, 10).

It is what Dana Villa indicates when he says that action as well as judgment are groundless (Villa 1996, 157). It is the human being as a beginning that constitutes the ground but this ground is in the character of a gap rather than a solid base. This gap, very much like the gap Kafka's "He" was trying to keep his stance, "supplies the region where 'he' can rest when 'he' is exhausted" (LMT, 208) and this region is freedom. Yet, one needs to pay the price of freedom that is contingency, and does not flee from it. That is to say, one has to rely on the experience of freedom. The merit of relying on the experience of freedom is not much about one's own self as it is about the world. By not succumbing to points beyond the meleée of freedom, one brings new beginnings in the world and nourishes plurality. In the following sections, we will dwell on these aspects of Arendt's thought.

## Five Different Usages of The Term “Beginning”

Beginning is a term that appears almost in all of Arendt’s works and used mostly without thorough explication. Here, we will suggest we can group those usages into five, which will help us to make clear sense out of the different meanings of Arendt’s beginning, even though they are not mutually exclusive. The first one, which we have already mentioned, is what she calls with reference to Saint Augustine: “beginning of beginning.” Human being by virtue of the existential condition of *natality*, which is by coming into the world as something totally new due to birth, is a beginning himself/herself. In Arendt’s words:

[M]an owed his life not just to the multiplication of the species, but to birth, the entry of a novel creature who *as* something entirely new appears in the midst of the time continuum of the world... The very capacity for beginning is rooted in *natality*... not in a gift but in the fact that human beings, new men, again and again appear in the world by virtue of birth (LMW, 217).

Arendt’s usage of the term *natality* is remarkable here. *Natality* and *mortality* are the two main conditions of human life in general (HC, 8). Human being is a beginning himself/herself due to the fact that existentially he/she is conditioned by this primordial feature of his/her existence. This being a beginning himself/herself gives human beings the existential capacity to begin. Hence, the following four usages of beginning are possible due to this fundamental condition.

The second usage is also one that we have already discussed, while we were dealing with the “problem of beginning.” In those passages Arendt uses the term as the origination of a new order. One aspect we haven’t touched upon is that she

discusses the origin of a “We” that is a community in those passages. Let us quote that passages that makes clear of this usage of her:

Human plurality, the faceless ‘They’ from which the individual Self splits to be itself alone<sup>29</sup>, is divided into a great many units, and it is only as a member of such a unit, that is, of a community, that men are ready for action. The manifoldness of these communities is evinced in a great many different forms and shapes, each obeying different laws, having different habits and customs, and cherishing different memories of its past, i.e., a manifoldness of traditions... The only trait that all those various forms and shapes of human plurality have in common is the simple fact of their genesis, that is, that at some moment in time and for some reason a group of people must have come to think of themselves as a ‘We.’ No matter how this ‘We’ is first experienced and articulated, it seems that it always needs a beginning, and nothing seems so shrouded in darkness and mystery as that ‘In the beginning,’ not only of the human species as distinguished from other living organisms, but also of the enormous variety of indubitably human societies (LMW, 201-2).

One of the reasons that the problem of beginning has arisen in the minds of the actors was this curious fact that community itself had to emerge at a certain point. Arendt indicates such beginning of the ‘We’ with the purpose of touching upon the community-creating capacity of concerted action. American foundation is an example of such beginning.

The third sense of the term beginning designates the occurrence of something that interrupts the continuity of the cause and effect, or in Arendt’s words that “breaks into the world as ‘infinite improbability’” (BPF, 168). While opening up this interruptive character of action, Arendt mostly involves in a dialogue with Kant. She summons Kant’s problem of human freedom in the nature that is ruled by laws of nature. Human is a part of that nature and he/she is subjected to those laws. This leads to a complete determination of human beings by the natural causation and

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<sup>29</sup> Arendt is clearly referring to Heidegger’s ‘Das Man’ /The They as the public that authentic Dasein withdraw from and be himself/herself.

processes, which make impossible to account human volition and responsibility. Kant, responding this problem, “makes room for freedom” and attributes a capacity to human begins to start spontaneous chain of causations in the nature. The account Kant gives in order to make this “room” is too complex to be explicated here, but what is important for our purposes is that Arendt appropriates this capacity to start a new chain of causation as spontaneity and beginning in the sense of interruption. In Arendt’s words: “Action is unique in that it sets in motion processes that in their automatism look very much like natural processes, and action also marks the start of something, begins something new, seizes the initiative, or, in Kantian terms, forges its own chain” (PP, 113). In the same token, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt states: “The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable” (HC, 178).

Arendt strikingly uses the religious world “miracle” to designate such process breaking and new process beginning character of action. In order to justify this usage of the term and twist it free from the religious connotations, Arendt states, “our physical existence- the existence of the earth, of organic life on earth, of the human species itself- rests upon a sort of miracle. For, from the standpoint of universal occurrences and the statistically calculable probabilities controlling them, the formation of the earth is an ‘infinite improbability.’” This conception of infinite improbability holds for every action as beginning something new for Arendt. In her words:

[W]henver something new occurs, it bursts into the context of predictable processes as something unexpected, unpredictable, and ultimately causally

inexplicable- just like a miracle. In other words every new beginning is by nature a miracle when seen and experienced from the standpoint of the processes it necessarily interrupts (PP, 111-2).

Patchen Markell argues that this reading of Arendt's conception of beginning is the most common one in the literature. Yet, he argues, it has problems in the sense that it mostly regards those beginnings limited to rare occurrences and to the unexpected events. For him, beginning does not need to be unexpected. Markell acknowledges Arendt's discussion of miracles and infinite improbabilities as supporting this reading, but he states that what Arendt indicates as beginning does not have such interruptive character (Markell 2006, 5-6). Markell then suggests a reading, that we will cite below, of Arendt's beginning in contrast to that of interruption, which we take here as the fourth sense of beginning. However, we still think that rather than suggesting one definite reading of beginning, it is important to keep the different usages of this term of Arendt's. Nevertheless, Arendt does emphasize the interruptive character of the beginning, which transcends not only the existing expectations but also that of cognition and imagination. In her words, political freedom is:

[T]he freedom to call something into being which did not exist before, which was not given not even as an object of cognition or imagination, and which therefore, strictly speaking, could not be known. Action, to be free, must be free of motive on one side, from its intended goal as a predictable effect on the other (BPF, 150).

This unexpectedness occurs due to what Arendt calls in *The Human Condition*, "boundedlessness of action" that is once it has started, those who are affected from it start acting upon it and hence the results of the actions have never fit into the initial expectations (HC, 191).

The fourth usage is a responsiveness to events happening around oneself.

Markell opens it up in these words:

[W]hen an event passes from possibility to actuality- regardless of how probable or improbable we may have taken it to be while it was still only a possibility- something changes in a different register; namely the register in which happenings are not only caused states of affairs but also meaningful events, features of a world, and, in particular, occasions for response... [N]o degree of certainty about whether something will or will not happen, and what it will turn out to be, can smooth over the difference between 'not yet' and 'already.' Beginning is tied to the perspective or stance in which that difference matters: the novelty of a new beginning, its eruptiveness, arises not out of the degree of qualitative difference it manifests with respect to what has come before, as though the features of this act were being compared with the features of its predecessors by a neutral observer of history, standing outside of time, but precisely out of an agent's attunement to its character as an irrevocable event, and therefore also as a new point of departure (Markell 2006, 6-7).

Markell indicates that beginning depends on the responses of the spectators to the event. "One deed or one word changes the over all constellation" not by virtue of that deed or word alone but due to the chain of responses it received. Considering that Arendt defines action as inherently requiring a plural space and different appropriations, the precision in Markell's stress on responsiveness could be better appreciated. Action without reception does not mean anything and for action to gain reality it has to be seen and responded to by the other actors. In designating this aspect of action Arendt summons the ancient Greek word of *prattein*, that means acting with connotations to "pass through", "to achieve", "to finish" (HC, 189). And she states it as the other side of initiation that every action needs another's appropriation and their carrying it through in order to be effective.

Something new begins thanks to the others receptions. This aspect of beginning is slightly different from the third one we have designated. Here, the stake is the change that occurs in the world, not only the action's difference and its

interruption of the existing processes. Arendt accounts the interrelated character of the beginning and action to receptions by means of the spectators that judge and respond to the events. Hence, judgment is crucial for beginning to be. We will designate Arendt's reading of judgment in the following section, yet it is important to state here that judgment, for Arendt, is the mind's way to engage in the particular happenings in the political realm.

The reason we have indicated Markell's reading of beginning as the fourth distinct usage of Arendt's conception of this term is his explication of it as a daily occurrence of the normal politics. The events do not need to be spectacular, but the normal political happenings are also beginnings when they are received with responsiveness. He reads actor's sense of the "the no longer and not yet" in such a way that it pertains not only to revolutions, but to all happenings that change the overall constellation even if they are not interruptive of the political regime. But, we think contrary to Markell that this is not the only meaning that emerges from Arendt's account on beginning. Especially, the following meaning, Markell left totally aside.

Last but not least, the fifth usage of the term beginning designates the beginning of the unique self of someone. Arendt frequently appeals to the Ancient Greek terms *archein* ("to begin", "to lead", finally "to rule")<sup>30</sup> in her discussions on beginning (BPF, 164; HC, 177; HC, 189; OR, 205; PP, 126). The gist of those discussions of her is to remind that at the origin of the term action, contrary to the modern meaning it acquires of ruling, there as well is beginning. Yet, additionally, at the first moment in *The Human Condition* when Arendt makes this distinction, she

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<sup>30</sup> Translation is Arendt's. It is important to note that Arendt refers to another Ancient Greek term in that context: *prattein* ("to pass through," "to achieve," "to finish") as well as their Latin correspondents: *agere* ("to set into motion," "to lead") and *gerere* (original meaning or which, Arendt states, is 'to bear') (HC, 189).

adds referring to Augustine's conception of beginning: "This beginning is not the same as the beginning of the world; it is not the beginning of something but *of somebody* [my emphasis], who is a beginner himself" (HC, 177). This indeed echoes the first usage of the beginning we have delimited here. However, it is important to mark the difference of this beginning of the unique self from the beginning as the existential condition of human beings. As it is clear in the passage, "somebody" is beginning himself. And we have explicated as the first usage of beginning that this being a beginning makes possible all the beginnings we have discussed above. Yet, it is important to underline that he/she also begins *qua* somebody by means of action. A human being can be a beginning existentially, but he/she begins only in political action. Let us open up this crucial point below.

### Beginning of the Unique Self of Someone

Throughout the Action chapter of *The Human Condition*, the focal point of Arendt's discussions is what she calls "disclosure of the agent." This disclosure is made possible through public speech, but this speech cannot be considered distinct from public/political action. She ties action with speech to the extent to argue: "Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and an actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words" (HC, 178-9). Hence, political action begins the actor or the agent as well.

This argument seems very controversial considering the modern conception of action stemming from the actor, not vice versa. Arendt turns our conventional action-actor relation upside down. This is one of the main tenets of what Frederick M. Dolan calls Arendt's decentering "the sovereign subject of intention and will"



(Dolan 1995, 332). Action and speech are neither the expressions of the intentions nor of thoughts, as we have explained in the previous chapter, formulated within the subject and then externalized. The very existence of the actor and speaker is tied up with the activities themselves. This shouldn't be confused with not having an individual moving his/her body and mouth and acting or speaking. Indeed there is a physical body and an individual before hand. Arendt does not indicate the absence or presence of such an individual, she does so of the uniqueness of this human.

Arendt while defining, what she calls the "basic condition of both action and speech," *human plurality*, delineates the concepts of otherness, distinctness and uniqueness. While the first one designates the simple fact of things being different than each other, distinctness applies for the difference of only the living beings. But among the living beings, only human beings "can express this distinction and distinguish himself" (HC, 176). By means of speech, human distinctness becomes uniqueness, Arendt argues. But what is this uniqueness, why does Arendt argue that it only appears in political speech and action, which by definition happens in the public space? Isn't someone who does not speak and act in the political realm unique as well?

Arendt's answer would acknowledge the difference of each and every human being without having the chance to speak and act in the political realm. However, such distinction wouldn't be due to what deeply constitutes one's uniqueness. Everybody has different physical features, personal histories and social positions that distinguish them from others. And yet, the unique difference Arendt argues to appear only in action and speech is more than the difference of those predicates to one's name. In the previous chapter, we have mentioned what Arendt wrote about what Kafka would have achieved, had he managed to find the time-space of thinking in his

struggling. It was in her words: “what was most his own, what had come into being only with his own- self inserting appearance” (BPF, 12). Whatever is most one’s own is not among the predicates one can possess. None of the questions of “what” can be addressed to have a glimpse of it. It is only the question of “who” that can give us a clue about it. Yet still, why do we need public speech and action to reveal such unique self? This passage from *The Human Condition* might be of help to find an answer:

[T]he ‘who,’ which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself, like the *daimon* in Greek religion which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters. This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are *with* others and neither for nor against them (HC, 179,80).

The unique self appears only to others and not every kind of togetherness provides the conditions for such appearing. To be “with others” designates not only being side by side with others, it pertains to relate to others *qua* equals. Even though we might be able to indicate cases, which would be against Arendt’s definitions, she argues that, categorically speaking, family, work place or spheres of social interaction are not places that people can relate to each other equally. There are always certain types of hierarchies that would result from the activities and concerns inherent in those spheres. It is the political sphere that takes relations among the equal citizens at its center by definition. Hence, it is the realm *par excellence* for speech and action to reveal the uniqueness of one’s self. And it is not only revealing to the eyes of the spectators, but also insertion of one’s self into the world. Arendt states : “With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world” (HC,176). The following passage reveals this aspect of Arendt’s thought more clearly:

The disclosure of the “who” through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action<sup>31</sup>, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt. Together they start a new process which eventually emerges as the unique life story of the newcomer, affecting uniquely the life stories of all those with whom he comes into contact. It is because of this already existing web of human relationships, which its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions that action almost never achieves its purpose; but it is also because of this medium, in which action alone is real, that it “produces” stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things. These stories may then be recorded in documents and monuments, they may be visible in use objects or art works, they may be told and retold and worked into all kinds of material (HC, p. 184).

Through the means of stories told and reified about the actors in the political realm, their unique selves that appeared to others get inserted into the world. They become parts and parcels of this world. Considering that the uniqueness of the actors designates what exists solely by virtue of one single individual’s existence, the insertion of such *difference* to the world is what brings into the world that which is unprecedented and also unrepeatable. Hence, the simple fact of one inserting one’s unique self into the world through public/political speech and action is a beginning not only of one’s unique self but also of something unprecedented into the world. Hence, two senses of beginning, that of somebody and that of an unprecedented and un-caused miraculous happening comes close in the insertion of the “who” in the world.

We have stated that the experience of temporal gap is inherently an experience of homelessness and groundlessness. Nothing causes or justifies the successive happenings, but they originate solely from the moment in between past and future. This is indeed a source of anxiety and an extraordinary moment. In short, using Peg Birmingham’s reading, it is a moment of “crisis” (Birmingham 1995, 142).

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<sup>31</sup> Here, “new beginning” designates the second usage of beginning we have opened up.

A kind of crisis that opens up the original temporality and reveals the existential homelessness, but very much like Kafka's "battlefield" it bears the dangers of "dying in exhaustion." In that sense, this experience itself requires certain remedies for it to continue. In the same token, for Arendt, the very consequences of action are crisis-laden as well. In Arendt's words:

These consequences [of action] are boundless, because action, though it may proceed from nowhere, so to speak, acts into a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes. Since action act upon beings who are capable of their own actions, reaction, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others. Thus action and reaction among men never move in a closed circle and can never be reliably confined to two partners... the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation (HC, 190).

Considering this boundless character of action, it seems that Arendt's conception of politics is constantly a realm of extraordinary occurrences, changing the constellation each time and staying constantly in sort of a state of emergency. Arendt's stress on ruptures, new beginnings, boundlessness calls for such a reading and commentators like Margaret Canovan, Bonni Honnig, George Kateb criticized Arendt for only theorizing the extraordinary and neglecting the normal politics (Kalyvas 2009, 254). However, Andreas Kalyvas, we believe, rightly argues that: "[w]hile the extraordinary and the pathos for new beginnings are at the center of her [Arendt's] political thought, her project was actually much broader... it also included the quest for normalcy, permanence, and order" (Kalyvas 2009, 256). In another passage, Kalyvas opens up this interpretation by arguing:

Arendt held onto the possibility of reconciling extraordinary politics with a lasting constitutional government by broadening the second movement in order

to salvage the experience of political freedom within a firm juridical framework. Her project was informed by a constant preoccupation with the thorny problem of how freedom could survive the institutionalization of spontaneity during normal politics (Kalyvas 2009, 192).

Kalyvas mentions here the importance of constitutional government for Arendt. In *On Revolution*, Arendt definitely reads constitutions sympathetically, but it is crucial to point out that constitutional government itself does not provide the necessary political realms for Arendt. Those realms are founded only in the form of councils of direct democracy. Constitutions are significant for setting the limits of the political realm with an enduring product of human initiative, but what makes freedom survive after institutionalization is not a constitution, but rather councils. Kalyvas also appreciates this point stating: “[t]he councils are the institutionalized embodiment of a stabilized, pacified, and thus derevolutionized constituent power” (Kalyvas 2009, 276).

We will soon open up the characteristics of Arendt’s conception of the political realm, yet here it is important to underline the character of normal politics that Kalyvas is attributing to Arendt. Politics does not consist of new foundations, spectacular ruptures most of the time. And Arendt does not overlook this fact, but her normal politics still consists of an element of extraordinary since political action by definition is going out of the ordinary.

Councils as forms of government are the institutionalizations of the “spirit of revolution” that Arendt argued to be lost in the foundation of representative governments (OR, 214). After the moments of liberation in revolutions, councils spontaneously emerged and carried with them the power stemming from the concerted action of initial foundations. They didn’t last for various reasons, but formally they had the potential to keep the revolutionary spirit and make it an

ordinary occurrence of everyday life. But how did they solve the “thorny” problem of keeping freedom and continuity together? By definition every foundation of a new body politic binds the succeeding generations. It aims at continuity. Hence, to defend the revolutionary spirit and attempt to found new body politics each time seems contradictory. To keep continuity and rupture at the same time seems like squaring a circle. How, then, does Arendt defend them both at the same time?

Arendt challenges the question itself. She states: “Perhaps the very fact that these two elements, the concern with stability and the spirit of the new, have become opposites in political thought and terminology- the one being identified as conservatism and the other being claimed as the monopoly of progressive liberalism- must be recognized to be among the symptoms of our loss” (OR, 215). Patchen Markell reads this characterization of the togetherness of the new beginning and continuity as an indication of the beginning as a daily occurrence, which we have characterized as the fourth sense of beginning in Arendt’s thought. In this sense of beginning, political action does not need to bring abrupt changes like revolution to the world. The new does not appear as a spectacular happening all the time. Even the smaller events in the political realm, on the condition that others attune to that beginning and carry it through (*prattein*) change the constellation of the world (Markell 2006, 7).

This novelty as beginning does not exclude the continuity of a political realm, but not only in the sense Markell indicates. Except in times of revolutions, beginning requires the existence of the political realm, rather than destroy it. This becomes more clear when we elaborate on the last three usages of the term beginning as Arendt designates them. They were as we have indicated: 1) Beginning of something without any determined causation, 2) Beginning as responsiveness to events and 3)

Beginning of the unique self of somebody. In the first type of beginning we have seen that Arendt contests the process character of life in general. Thanks to political action, human beings can transcend that process and bring “miracles,” that is to say, novelty into the world. In the second type of beginning, we have seen the responsiveness and hence appropriation of the novel happenings in the world. This is the condition for an event to gain the character of a beginning, since without appropriation by the spectators the event could not gain reality. And the third type of beginning as the beginning of the unique self involves the novelty that is inscribed into the world thanks to the very existence of that singular individual. When we consider them together, political action, carries with it different aspects of beginning, brings *difference* and *novelty* into human life that is inherently meaningless and tragic for Arendt.

### Plurality as the Multiple Beginning of Unique Selves

The bulk of the literature that concerns Arendt’s ethics tackles with this, probably the most important, notion of plurality. We have stated in the previous chapter that plurality is crucial for the reality of the world. And yet, we have not explicated this term thoroughly. Here, after considering beginning of the unique self and his/her insertion to the world tied up with the temporality of action, it is important to open up what Arendt means with plurality in order to indicate its essential significance for *homely* dwelling in the world.

Very much like her other leading notions, Arendt uses plurality to designate different but interrelated meanings. At the core of all different meanings there is the signification of diversity and variety. Zeynep Gambetti indicates in her article “The

Agent is the Void! From the Subjected Subject to the Subject of Action” that “[p]lurality literally means that no two persons are exactly identical, that singularity is the ontological human condition” (Gambetti 2005, 431). Having this basic signification at the basis, Arendt uses the term in different senses. Applying the same method we had in dealing with the notion of beginning for clarification purposes, we will suggest that there are three usages of the term plurality in Arendt’s works. The first usage underlines and makes possible the other significations of the term that is plurality as one of the fundamental human conditions. In that sense, this usage resembles to that of natality.

When Arendt states that “plurality is the law of the earth,” she is indicating this fundamental and at the same time very simple fact of “men rather than Man inhabit the world.” Arendt reveals this condition character of plurality in her discussion around action. Plurality, for Arendt, is the pivotal human condition for the human activity of action. In Arendt’s words:

Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world. While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically *the* condition –not only the *conditio sine quo non*, but the *conditio per quam*- of all political life (HC, 7).

This passage is crucial not only for indicating the first usage of Arendt’s plurality, but also for Arendt’s peculiar understanding of the political. The latter we will deal in the following part of this chapter. What is important to note here is that plurality as the condition makes politics possible and also the following two usages of plurality is based on this basic condition.



The second signification of the notion of plurality appears as the variety of perspectives. Due to the fact that there are men, there are different perspectives perceiving the world. Such variety in perspective is the condition for the existence of a world's reality for Arendt. Young-Bruehl notes in her biography that Arendt, in a very early period of her life, wrote in her diary that reality is essentially tied up with the existence of other people. There is reality so far as there are other perspectives.

Arendt develops this contention of her in those words:

If it is true that a thing is real within both the historical-political and the sensate world only if it can show itself and be perceived from all its sides, then there must always be a plurality of individuals or peoples and a plurality of standpoints to make reality even possible and to guarantee its continuation. In other words, the world comes into being only if there are perspectives; it exists as the order of worldly things only if it is viewed, now this way, not that, at any given time. If a people or nation, or even just some specific human group, which offers a unique view of the world arising from its particular position in the world- a position that, however it came about, cannot readily be duplicated- is annihilated, it is not merely that a people or a nation or a given number of individuals perishes, but rather that a portion of our common world is destroyed, an aspect of the world that has revealed itself to us until now but can never reveal itself again. Annihilation is therefore not just tantamount to the end of a world; it also takes its annihilator with it. Strictly speaking, politics is not so much about human beings as it is about the world that comes into being between them and endures beyond them (PP, 175).

This is a passage that reveals so many significant aspects of Arendt's thought and hence we thought it would be appropriate to let it indicate even the areas that we are not concerned directly here. What interests us here in this quotation is that for the existence of reality and the *being* of the world, which politics is inherently concerned, a plurality of perspectives has to exist. Preservation of plurality in this sense is vital for the homely existence in the world, since the reality of the world depends on it.

The third meaning of the notion of plurality is the plurality of unique selves. We have already stated that Arendt gives the definition of “human plurality” as the “paradoxical plurality of unique beings” (HC, 176). And we have pointed out that uniqueness is not simply a given feature of human beings, it is, so to say, gained in participation in the political realm. By acting and speaking in the political realm, one reveals one’s unique self to the gaze of spectators. It is very interesting for us how this uniqueness pertains to plurality. On the one hand, we know already that for the unique self to begin there is the existential requirement of plurality. Only through the reception of others, one can make appear one’s “daimon” from the back of his/her shoulders. The “who” of someone is never at one’s disposal, but only in the reach of others. But, this usage of plurality corresponds to the first and the second categories we have suggested. Here, when Arendt states the plurality of unique selves, it does not designate the plurality that makes the beginning of the unique selves possible. Arendt indicates the co-existence of those unique selves. Considering that unique self exists by virtue of its beginning in political action, plurality of unique selves designates their multiple beginnings via action and speech.

Arendt accounts for acting in the political realm not in terms of compassion or self or group interest, but in terms of making the unique self appear. To indicate that the beginning of the unique self pertains to the constitution of plurality, helps us appreciate that such self appearing is not *for* the person himself/herself, but for the world; on the one hand, for its vitality by means of beginning and on the other hand for its variety by means of plurality.

As we have indicated in the introductory chapter, Rosalyn Diprose and Kimberly Curtis argue that to keep the space for others to begin is an ethical responsibility for Arendt. Such a space corresponds to the political realm for Arendt

in which participators can reveal their unique selves by means of acting and judging. In the following section, we will dwell on Arendt's conception of the political realm.

### Political Realm

Politics is an exclusive realm of human activity for Arendt. Basically, it is the realm that comes into being when individuals come together and bind themselves to each other through promises and covenants<sup>32</sup> that would grant them equal right to speak and participate in decisions. Ancient Greek polis is the archetypical example of her politics as well as the revolutionary councils, e.g. Paris Commune, Räte or Soviets. In order to clarify Arendt's delimitation of the political, it is fruitful to compare it with approaches that comes forth with their peculiar understanding of the political. Regarding the exclusiveness of the political in Arendt's thought, it can be considered to stand at the opposite of post-structuralist theories of politics<sup>33</sup>. Foucault's conception of politics being everywhere due to the ubiquity of power is one obvious example. Regardless of it subscribing to post-structuralist paradigm or not, the feminist approach in general considering family and daily relations of domination among men and women political can be cited as another.

The obvious polarization between these approaches and that of Arendt can be argued to be due to the difference in their understanding of the political. The theoretical novelty of feminist and Foucaultian conceptions of the political is that

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<sup>32</sup> Not hypothetical contracts like that of contract theorists, e.g. Rousseau's, Locke's or Hobbes'; but concrete ones like constitutions.

<sup>33</sup> This does not mean that Arendt's thought in general stands at such opposition. On the contrary, it is well acknowledged in the literature by the works on the resemblances of especially Foucault and Arendt that there are significant connections between the thoughts of these two thinkers.

theirs is not defined in relation to the state exclusively. Arendt joins in their ranks by indicating revolutionary council and defining politics pertinent to the concerted action of the human beings rather than to the state. However, this novel theoretical gesture of feminists and Foucaultians bares with it a conception of the political that defines political activity as related to domination. Relations in the family between men and women are political, due to former's domination upon the latter. Everywhere is political since micro relations of power i.e. one dominating the other in various ways, are ingrained in every aspect of life. In contrast, Arendt's conception of the political excludes domination from its definition. For her the political realm is where the distinction between rulers and ruled is abolished. Her avoidance of the term "politics" and insistence in using "the political" attests to Arendt's intention of referring to an area that is radically different then what it was referred by the tradition.<sup>34</sup>

Struggling to leave aside the domination and violence centered conception of politics, we find Arendt accounting for her understanding of politics mostly through its negative. Violence is one among the many elements Arendt insistently expels from the political realm. Referring to the historical inception of the political in ancient Greek polis, Arendt asserts: "To be political, to live in a polis, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence" (HC, 26)<sup>35</sup>. "Violence is mute" by definition and it is always caught up

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<sup>34</sup> Hauptmann's article (2004) is very helpful in tracing the usage of the term "the political" in American political discourse. Her central argument is remarkable that argues the usage of the term "the political" in 50s. and 60s. have replaced with that of "democracy" after 70s. Out of the American context, Nicole Loraux' usage of "le politique" rather than the common French usage of "la politique" designates this neologism's aim to signify the essence of whatever is political in distinction from the traditional state centered usage. See, Loraux 2002, 10.

<sup>35</sup> This emphasis on persuasion in dealing with the conflict within the polity is cardinal for most of the works deal with the origin of the political. The widely acknowledged contention

with the means-ends dichotomy (HC, 26; OV, 4). It is always a means towards achieving certain objectives. In contrast, speech is indispensable for political activity and in line with Aristotle's attribution of being an end by itself, words in the political realm are uttered not to achieve some other higher end, but for its own sake.<sup>36</sup>

As Arendt theorizes it, the political realm is devoid of economical activity and related concerns as well. The latter aims at the sustenance and reproduction of human biological existence and belongs to the private realm by definition.<sup>37</sup> The proper activity of this realm is labor and it concerns with what is necessary to do in order to stay alive. Yet, for Arendt, necessity is not the determining criteria for politics. On the contrary, politics is the realm that is formed not out of any necessary or natural inclination, but due to what supersedes them all in human beings. It is important to point out here that for Arendt what constitutes the peculiar characteristic of human beings is this "unnatural" potential.

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is that the peculiarity of ancient Greek polis was to find ways to resolve conflicts solely in persuasion. J. Taminiaux states: "The City proper is born exactly when the medium for shared sovereignty and for rivalry within one's peers becomes speech" (Taminiaux 1997, 101). See also Meier 1990.

<sup>36</sup> See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, lines: 1097a,b.

<sup>37</sup> Private and public distinction is one of the most criticized tenets of Arendt's political realm theory. She leaves all social and economical questions of distribution aside, and deals only with political equality among citizens. Furthermore, she criticizes ways of political engagement that takes the social question at its center e.i. "Social Question" in *On Revolution*. In our view, this theoretical stand of Arendt does not indicate a total rejection of the relevance of the questions of distribution. Even though it is known that she would oppose the idea of a proletarian revolution that would aim at founding a socially equal society, there is strong evidence in her text that what we call "social politics" today is not inherently controversial to her theory. This leaving aside of the social question from politics pertains to a bracketing of the question of social justice and equality in order to achieve its prominent aim that is the political equality. In her discussion on social question becoming central in politics of Robespierre, Arendt states that such "happiness" of the end of misery "is indeed a prerequisite of freedom but which, unfortunately, no political action can deliver" (OR, 234). It is a question of administration in a nation wide scale, but administrative acts are the ones that Arendt insistently refuses to consider political. On this problem, see Pitkin 1998.

One of the main features of her famous criticism of totalitarianism involves this understanding. In *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt states: “man’s ‘nature’ is only ‘human’ insofar as it opens up to man the possibility of becoming something highly unnatural” (OT, 455). In regarding men and his relations as the necessary extensions of natural laws (as in the case of Nazi Germany) or the laws of history (in that of Stalin’s Soviet Union), this “unnatural” character of human beings and the political realm are effaced. Arendt argues that the political realm emerges not as a natural body, but like an artifact formed by the pacts among human beings. In other words, the political realm is found not as a part of a natural process, but out of the concerted acts of men.

Besides violent activities and those concern economic and social relations, Arendt excludes the activity of *work* from the political realm as well. Work is, together with labor and action, is one of the fundamental activities of *vita activa* (active life). In distinction from labor’s temporary and repetitive operations, work is the activity to make objects that will endure in time<sup>38</sup>. Work’s difference from action appears in the mentality it pertains. Work is an activity that operates instrumentally. An end product has to be imagined before the activity commences and the appropriate means has to be followed to reach that end (HC, 153-4). For Arendt, such a mentality is utterly destructive for the political realm. It reduces men to mere material to be regarded as means for certain ends, and hence betrays the core of the political realm, which consists nothing more than human interaction (188).

Arendt’s criticism of philosophy’s concern with politics involves this criticism of the mentality of the *worker/craftsman* (or in Arendt’s term “*homo faber*”) becoming determinant in human affairs. As we have mentioned before, for Arendt,

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<sup>38</sup> On the importance of making a distinction between labor and work, see Gambetti 2007.

political philosophy from its inceptions in Plato's dialogues, had "escaped from politics altogether" in order to settle into a sound ground that would be impervious to the "unboundedness of action" and "frailty of human affairs" (222, 191). However, as Arendt argues, this very frailty and unboundedness are the price we have to pay for engaging in human affairs, which is tantamount to be free.

In giving these delimitations to the political realm, Arendt twists the conception of politics free from its conventional understanding. She characterizes it as a "space of appearance" (HC, 199) that actors and spectators meet and appear to each other. Through such appearance, as we have explicated, unique selves of the individuals comes to the world, which renews the world and grants it its worldliness. In contrast to the world-loss through world alienation and break in the traditional continuity, political realm provides the space for the "care of the world" (Berkday 2002b, 266), and hence it is essential for *homely* dwelling in the world for Arendt.

Political realm is cardinal for the ethical conduct not only in the sense that it makes possible the exercise of the activities that are essential for homely dwelling in the world, but also it cultivates the habit of those activities. In that sense Arendt's ethics-politics relation resembles that of Aristotle. Aristotle after searching for the highest good and its actualization in human life as good life in his *Nicomachean Ethics* concluded that *praxis* and *theoria* are the leading activities for a good/virtuous or happy life [eudaimonia]. The way human beings have *eudaimonia* is tied up with certain habits. Hence, those habits have to be cultivated in the new generations (1179b20). Aristotle's discussions of the best constitutions in his *Politics* involve finding the right political regime to cultivate appropriate habits in its citizens. Polity is the best constitution since it secures and nourishes the virtue of its citizens.

Very much like Aristotle's, Arendt's conception of the political realm as a plural space that brings together different but equal individuals cultivates responsiveness to the events and makes action and judging a habit in the lives of its participators. In that sense, the ethical conduct in the political realm and the direct democratic formation of this realm nourishes each other and opens up the possibility to homely dwell in the world from within the homeless times of the modern age.

## Part II: Judgment

Judging is one, if not the most, important activity in which this sharing-the-world-with-others comes to pass (BPF, 218).

To ascribe... [judging] its own *modus operandi*... is of some relevance to a whole set of problems by which modern thought is haunted, especially to the problem of theory and practice and to all attempts to arrive at a halfway plausible theory of ethics (LMT, 216).

In the previous chapter we have stated that judgment, together with political action, is the deflection that enables one to establish home in the world. In this chapter, we have started by characterizing the first deflection of political action and argued that its specific temporality resembles to that of thinking. In this section, we will explicate judgment and argue that this faculty is cardinal for one's worldly attunement to the novel events. To attune to novel events has pivotal significance for homely dwelling in the world, which we will designate in three sections. First of all, Arendt characterizes this faculty as the human capacity to engage mentally with novel events when they defy understanding. In the first chapter we have indicated that novel events defy understanding due to the lack of concepts/tools that would enable understanding to function. Judgment, in contrast to understanding, does not



need pre-given concepts to relate to the phenomena. It makes possible to find one's way after experiencing the bewilderment of the activity of thinking, which, we have stated, is provoked when understanding fails to operate.

The second focal point in Arendt's considerations of judgment in relation to attuning to novel events concerns the standpoint in relating to them. Contrary to the higher standpoint of the world alienation, judgment provides an alternative standpoint through which one can relate to the phenomena and which is provided by the withdrawal from the world in imagination.

Both of these features of Arendt's judgment theory relate to the assuring of the reality of the world, which we have stated is quintessential for a homely dwelling in the world. The third significance of judgment is related to the second essential characteristic of the homely dwelling in the world, which is its durability. Arendt characterizes story-telling as an aspect of judgment. By means of storytelling, actions and the unique selves that appear inscribe in the world as durable occurrences. This is the specific way in which Arendt characterizes the durable, but lively existence of the world.

### Reflective Judgment as the Political Faculty *Par Excellence*

Arendt's sudden death prevented her from accomplishing the third volume of *The Life of the Mind*, which was planned to be on judgment. Hence, we could never access a thorough analysis on this faculty, as we had on thinking and willing. Yet, two of Arendt's previous articles, namely "Crises of Culture" and "Truth and Politics," together with the posthumously edited lecture notes on Kant's political

philosophy, provide us with the main tenets of her approach and interest on the faculty of judgment.

In all of those texts, the main figure Arendt engages with in dealing with judgment is Kant. She states that Kant was the first thinker who recognized this faculty in its distinctness and regarded it worthy to be subjected to transcendental critique. For Arendt, what Kant failed to do, even though he was going to compensate for this failure had he not been too old at that time, was to acknowledge the political significance of this faculty (LKPP, 9). Arendt regards two focal points in Kant's characterization of judgment politically significant: its directedness to the particular and its condition of functioning as "sociability of men" (14). In this section, we concern with the first one, in order to explain judgment's capacity to relate political events.

In the Critique of Judgment, Kant makes a distinction between two different kinds of judgment. The first one he calls "determinative judgments" and the second one are "reflective judgments." He distinguishes them as follows:

Judgment in general is the ability to think the particular as contained under the universal. If the universal (the rule, principle, law) is given, then judgment, which subsumes the particular under it, is *determinative* ... But if only the particular is given and judgment has to find the universal for it, then this power is merely *reflective* (Kant 1987, 18).

The third critique, *Critique of Judgment*, concerns itself with the reflective judgment. This reflective character of judgment and its relatedness to particulars without the guidance of universals makes this faculty politically significant for Arendt, since politics is always the realm of the particular happenings *qua* new beginnings that categorically defy any universal guidance. Judgment in this sense is cardinal for

attuning to the events in the world, since it is the faculty *par excellence* for relating to the happenings around oneself.

Her dismissal of morality is definitely in line with this prominence of the particular in politics. Judgment, in the absence of universals like moral precepts, lets one to find his way amid the particulars. Maurizio Passerin D'Entrèves points out this aspect of judgment in these words:

Once these [universal] rules have lost their validity we are no longer able to understand and to judge the particulars, that is, we are no longer able to subsume them under our accepted categories of moral and political thought. Arendt, however, does not believe that the loss of these categories has brought to an end to our capacity to judge; on the contrary, since human beings are distinguished by their capacity to begin anew, they are able to fashion new categories and to formulate new standards of judgment for the events that have come to pass and for those that may emerge in the future (D'Entrèves 2000, 247)

This characteristic of judgment constitutes one of the two models of Arendt's judgment theory according to D'Entrèves. This model encompasses the actors, that it guides one in one's actions (D'Entrèves 2000, 246). To find one's way amid the particulars without the help of universals, one needs a specific distance from those particulars and this distance is provided by imagination.

Imagination is one of the two operations judgment involves as Arendt characterizes them (LKPP, 68). On the one hand, the things that are not immediately present have to be made present in the mind and this is possible by virtue of the imagination. On the other hand, the mind reflects on those representations and accomplishes its judgment. This making present what is not immediately present provides one to engage with the phenomena in such a way that he/she is not completely absorbed by them. It is the way human beings can engage with the

particulars and at the same time be disinterested, which takes us to the second characterization of judgment.

### Judgment's Impartiality as against the World Alienating

#### Higher Standpoint

For a worldly engagement with the events, the mind has to have a place to withdraw but not go beyond the world. Arendt's criticism of science is, as we have seen, is due to the engagement with the world from the Archimedean point, which is beyond this world. Arendt in her discussions on thinking and judgment describes such a point that is withdrawn from the world, but is still a part of it. This point is provided by the imagination's representative capacity, but this imagination is not solely about one's own mind, rather it is about the representation of other's points of views. This Arendt indicates as the "other directedness of judgment" (LKPP, 678). By virtue of this other directedness, one is able to takes other's standpoints into account every time when one judges a particular. This is the way one can be impartial in one's judgments and this impartiality is one of the most important features of judgment in its political significance for Arendt. In the following quotation, she states this character of impartiality explicitly:

[I]mpartiality is obtained by taking the viewpoints of others into account; impartiality is not the result of some higher standpoint that would then actually settle the dispute by being altogether above the *melée* (LKPP, 42).

The echo of Arendt's criticism of the dream of Kafka's "He" can be detected immediately. "He" was caught in a dream of going beyond the *melée*, in his struggles with past and future, as we have mentioned in the previous chapter. Arendt was

suggesting the deflection for turning this “battlefield” between past and future into a home and nullifying the desire to go beyond it. Judging transforms this battlefield into a home by virtue of its specific *modus operandi*, which involves taking other’s standpoints into account through imagination and acquiring, not objective, but impartial standpoint. Again with reference to Kant’s characterization of reflective judgment, Arendt indicates this feature of judgment’s taking other’s standpoints into account as “enlarged mentality” (BPF, 217) This, on the one hand, is a capacity that is improved by judging, but it is also an essential characteristic of judgment itself. That is to say, such a mentality must exist for judgment to operate at all.

This is the second reason Arendt regards Kant’s considerations on judgment as politically significant since it assumes the sociability of men. The faculty of judgment, to operate at all, requires the plurality of selves. Each time when one judges, one takes the standpoints of others into account, even though one can be thoroughly alone in the actual operation of judging. In this sense Linda Zerilli argues that judgment is constitutive of the political space, since it always delimits a realm that includes others in its singular exercise (Zerilli 2005, 178). The limit of those standpoints that one takes into account is that of the people one is sharing a common world with, in its narrow definition. Common world never designates the globe that billions of people live on for Arendt. World is the shared space that lies in between people, that ties and separates them. In that sense, it always is limited to a certain communality, that is to say a group of people sharing the same world. Hence, Arendt translates Kant’s “Allgemeinheit” not as universal but as general.<sup>39</sup> Judgments are valid not universally but generally. Arendt states this aspect of her theory of judgment

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<sup>39</sup> For Beiner and Nedelsky’s discussion on the issue, see Beiner and Nedelsky 2001, Xxiii, n32.

in her article entitled "The Crisis in Culture," while discussing the validity of judgments:

[T]his enlarged way of thinking, which as judgment knows how to transcend its own individual limitations, on the other hand, can not function in strict isolation or solitude; it needs the presence of others 'in whose place' it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all. As logic, to be sound, depends on the presence of the self, so judgment, to be valid, depends on the presence of others. Hence judgment is endowed with a certain specific validity but is never universally valid. Its claims to validity can never extend further than the others in whose place the judging person has put himself for his considerations (BPF, 217).

Hence, the validity of judgment is always dependent on a particular group of others.

In her lectures on Kant's political philosophy, Arendt makes clear that its "criterion... is communicability, and the standard of deciding about it is common sense" (LKPP, 69). Judgments are never individual decisions about certain issues, they are public articulations that are made possible by means of the representations of other's standpoints, but they also require the reception of others to be valid.

Hence, they need to be communicated. But they are distinct from rational deliberation or logical operations that are also communicated. They are based on common sense, which Arendt make resemble to taste that is an inner sense about the common world of a specific group (67-8).

Arendt's discussions on common sense are multifaceted and difficult to exhaust in these pages. What is crucial for our purposes pertaining to common sense is that it is a sense that is inherently connected to reality, which is formed among a plurality of human beings. Thus, its existence is cardinal for a homely dwelling in the world and its absence indicates world alienation. In contrast to the higher standpoint of the sciences, which shatters the trust in the truth revealing capacity of the senses

and against the totalitarian tendencies that destroys the plurality of the world, homely existence depends on the sensual and plural existence of common sense that is the standard of judging. In those lines, the very exercise of judging comes to the fore like a resistance to those modern phenomena that deprives us from homely dwelling, and hence appears as an ethical faculty as it is indicated by Biskowski and Benhabib.

### Judgment as the Narration of the Durable Stories of the Unique Selves

The third significance of judgment in its contribution to a homely existence via providing a worldly engagement with the events is through storytelling. D'Entrèves characterizes the position of the spectator as “judging in order to cull meaning from the past” as the second model of Arendt’s theory of judgment (D'Entrèves 2000, 246). Turning the actions and the disclosed unique selves of the actors into stories is one of the most prominent functions of spectators. We have already indicated while tackling the beginning of the unique selves that the way they are inscribed in the world is through turning them into stories, which are worldly durable phenomena. In those passages from *The Human Condition*, Arendt’s concern is to indicate that actors do not have their own stories at their disposal; it is the storytellers who write them. And by this medium, the futile actions and mortal selves become real and consequential (HC, 184). Arendt states that action and speech mostly does not bring the intended results, but their reification to the durable objects of art change the world in a way that those art works become part of this world.

Judgment in this third significance contributes to the homely existence by virtue of turning the unique selves and actions of persons into stories that are inscribed in the world by artists as durable artistic objects. Due to this function of

judgment, it contributes to the durability of the world as well as the vitality and reality of it, all of which are cardinal for homely existence in the world.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explicated the two deflections resulting from Arendt's temporal considerations on thinking: action and judgment. In the first part, while designating the first deflection, we have focused on the temporality of this activity and argued that very much like the temporality of the activity of thinking, temporal sensation of action has the character of being a gap between past and future. This temporal characterization let us indicate the groundless character of political action and the requirement of relying on the experience of freedom. Action is one of the cardinal activities for homely existing in the world due to the beginnings it initiates and plurality it nourishes.

In the second part, we have dealt with the second deflection that is judgment and indicated its importance for establishing a relation to the world that may terminate world alienation. Arendt emphasizes this faculty as politically significant due to its inherent connection with the particulars and its condition of operation as commonality. Both of these features, we have indicated are cardinal for the *reality* of the world, which needs sensuous relation with the particulars and plurality. The third significance of this faculty is due to its contribution to the *durability* of the world, which is the other criterion for worldly existence.



## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

Sophocles in *Oedipus at Colonus*, the play of his old age, wrote the famous and frightening lines: ... 'Not to be born prevails over all meaning uttered in words; by far the second-best for life, once it has appeared, is to go as swiftly as possible whence it came.' There he also let us know, through the mouth of Theseus, the legendary founder of Athens and hence her spokesman, what it was that enabled ordinary men, young and old, to bear life's burden: it was the *polis*, the space of men's free deeds and living words, which could endow life with splendour - τὸν βίον λαμπρὸν ποιεῖσθαι (OR, 273).

In this thesis, we have argued that the exercise of the activities that compose the proper response to the modern and existential homelessness constitutes Arendt's ethics of the political. By means of such response, it is possible to establish home in the world from within homelessness that is permeated by the world-loss of our modern times.

Thinking is the initial activity that is invoked vis-a-vis modern world-loss. It stands out at the inability to understand and make sense of the happenings around one's world. Once one takes the trouble of engaging with it and bear the existential groundlessness it reveals, the possibility to reconcile with the world opens up. But such redemption from homelessness is never possible in one's solitude thinking. In that sense, Arendt is against the philosophical gesture of withdrawing into one's own thoughts. On the contrary, world may become human being's home only if thinking precedes political participation.

Political action and judgment are the second constituents of the response to the homelessness. We have characterized them as the deflections emerging from the temporal gap opened up in thinking. They are cardinal activities for establishing a

homely dwelling in the world. While in acting one brings novelty and difference to the world and reestablishes the "law of the earth," plurality; in judging one engenders the reality and durability of the world and opens up the possibility to secure a non-alienated relation with the world.

Arendt's distinct conception of political realm stands out as the condition for achieving such redemption from homelessness. Arendt defines the two cardinal activities of this realm, action and judgment, inherently connected to the space of appearance that is provided by the political realm. For Arendt, human beings have the chance to redeem each other from the intrinsically tragic and homeless existence in the world by means of gathering together and forming a political realm. Such response to the groundless human existence bears also the possibility of emancipating us from the modern world-loss. Arendt's ethics of the political realm consists of this dual response that promises a homely dwelling in the world.

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