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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**The Difference between Political and Philosophical Freedom
in the Completed Works of Hannah Arendt**

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Philosophy

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

By

Khadeega Mohammed Ga'far

Under the supervision of **Prof. Graham Harman**

December 2015

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DEDICATION

To prisoners of conscience

who has been deprived of the World for their words and deeds

ABSTRACT

Hannah Arendt distinguishes between two different practices of freedom whose origins are rooted into two historical human experiences: political freedom/action and philosophical freedom/free will. She argues that the two experiences were different as concerns the origin, the location and the conditions of each. Freedom of the will, or philosophical freedom, is relevant only in solitude while political freedom is relevant to people living together in political communities. Arendt also claims that the freedom of the will is the origin of the ideal of sovereignty which constitutes its meaning in commanding and demanding obedience. Hence, the free will realizes its freedom at the expense of oppressing one's self and oppressing others. In addition to presenting the Arendtian accounts on the two types of freedom, I shall argue that Arendt's notion of new beginnings is an attempt to transform the faculty of will from a faculty which realizes itself in commanding, either itself or others, to a faculty that realizes itself in initiating new beginnings with others in the public realm.

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I INTRODUCTION

In *The Life of the Mind*, Hannah Arendt concludes that human beings experience two types of freedom, namely, political freedom and philosophical freedom. Through a genealogical and historical account of freedom and free will, she infers that both types are completely distinct in their origin, nature, and appearance. The most essential feature that renders them different is the multiplicity of political freedom versus singularity in philosophical freedom. In other words, political freedom is a phenomenon of a multitude acting together, while philosophical freedom is a phenomenon of individual free will.¹

It is quite paradoxical that both types of freedom, the political and the philosophical, originally came from outside the philosophical tradition. Political freedom, according to Arendt, was first experienced as human reality in the Greek *polis*; however, Greek philosophy was the reversal of the reality of the *polis*, not its representation. Philosophical freedom was born in the religious and Stoic experiences of the first century A.D. Later in the Middle Ages, the problem of freedom was discussed in theology, which transferred the problem to the discipline of philosophy. Therefore, philosophy had to deal with a double difficulty: that of theology and that stemming from the perplexing problem itself. This is why the problem of freedom “has been the last of the time-honored great metaphysical questions...to become a topic of philosophic inquiry at all,”² in comparison to eternity, time, being, and so forth.

¹ We will see later how plurality is the human condition of action. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 15. Also Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 199.

² Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 145.

In this thesis, I shall explain how Arendt came to the two conclusions regarding her unique understanding of the concept of freedom. The first conclusion argues that there are two human experiences of freedom that existed in different conditions. The second conclusion states that these two types of freedom are distinct.³ Two main aspects clarify this distinction. The first concerns their separate origin in human experience, which brought each of them into existence. The second involves the conditions that specify and qualify both experiences.

Arendt explains that while political freedom originates in the ancient Greek *polis* and finds its manifestation in *praxis*, philosophical freedom has a twofold origin in the religious experience of Christianity and (even earlier) in the philosophical experience of stoicism. Both of these experiences led to the discovery of the inner man, where the will dwells.⁴ Moreover, the conditions of political freedom, on the one hand, and the conditions of philosophical freedom on the other hand are completely different. Political freedom is only possible under the condition of plurality, where fellow men found a body-politic regulated by norms and laws and create organized public spaces, where they can act together. Philosophical freedom, by contrast, is only possible on the condition of solitude. Hence, no organized public space is required in order to experience internal or philosophical freedom, and no fellows are needed.⁵

³ I write “unique” understanding because Arendt was the first thinker to point out that there is such difference. Only, Montesquieu, as Arendt also remarked, has also noticed the difference. This remark will be explained later in the section of relation.

⁴ Arendt discusses the origin of political freedom in her book: *The Human Condition* in while she discusses the origin of philosophical freedom in her book: *The Life of the Mind/willing*.

⁵ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 199.

Arendt's inference that the two types of freedom are distinct stimulates us to ask whether the two types relate to each other, or whether they are entirely unrelated. Arendt does not address the question of their relation explicitly; however, she points out that the two kinds of freedom are opposed. In other words, the existence of one necessarily nullifies the existence of the other. To be more specific, Arendt says that we normally experience philosophical freedom through our faculty of will, or what she calls "*I-will*." In contrast, when we experience political freedom, we experience our actual abilities or what she calls "*I-can*." Because the *I-will* constitutes itself in commands, philosophical freedom ends up in domination, while political freedom constitutes itself in the *I-can*; thus, it ends up in cooperation with others because no one is capable by himself. The latter is a completely external phenomenon, which takes place between equal agents that are acting together and are not commanding each other, i.e. the phenomenon is an intersubjective one. Thus, political freedom has no internal existence. We will see later how the *I-will*, which is a completely internal phenomenon, crosses its boundaries to realize itself as a commanding faculty demanding complete obedience and submission from others.⁶ This is what Arendt claims to be the origin of the problem of sovereignty. The paradoxical result is that the mental faculty which we habitually consider to be the faculty of the very experience of human freedom, ends in the utter dominance of one will over the wills of others, who end up by being completely deprived of their freedom. From this perspective, the will, paradoxically enough, is an organ for domination when it extends itself to the public realm.

⁶ In the 4th section: relation.

In this thesis, in addition to explaining and summarizing the Arendtian theory of the two freedoms, I claim that Arendt seeks to transform the faculty of will from a faculty that realizes itself in commanding and obeying, both internally and externally, to a faculty that realizes itself in the act of *beginning*. Arendt does not state explicitly that she is seeking a transformation of the faculty of will. However, I will argue that since she sees no compromise between the domination-seeking faculty and freedom, she wants to abolish the domination of the faculty of will and to direct the will towards the outer world, where it experiences the freedom of action in inciting a beginning *with others*.

How does Arendt transform the faculty of will from an organ of domination into an organ of freedom? I shall explore the subject by following the Arendtian argument through three main phases. First, I will explain what she means by political and philosophical freedom. Second, I will address the difference between the two types and the relationship between them. Third, I will arrive at the crux of the thesis, which is arguing why Arendt transformed the faculty of will into a faculty of beginning.

II POLITICAL FREEDOM

Arendt argues that the Greeks, shaped by their life in the *polis*, experienced a reality of freedom that has no connection to the Will.⁷ This claim is strange since we, in our modern times, tend to think that freedom is an expression of the Will. For us, the Will is the mainspring of action, which bears responsibility for experiencing ourselves as free agents.⁸ Bearing in mind this modern understanding of relating action to the will, Arendt's analysis that Greeks experienced freedom in the *polis*, and at the same time, this experience is not an expression of the faculty of Will would be problematic. If the Greeks were unaware of the faculty of will, as Arendt maintains, then freedom for them is not a phenomenon of *I-will*.⁹ Hence, the question guiding the argument is: what is freedom an expression of? Moreover, if the Greeks did not discover the faculty of the Will, how can the faculty of choice, which was already discussed by Aristotle, be understood as different from the faculty of Will?¹⁰

To address this issue, I shall explain how Arendt describes and depicts the Greek's *polis*, how Greeks interpreted human activity as Arendt analyzes and why they did not discover the faculty of Will. In the following three subsections, I shall explain: first, *Vita Activa* and the Human Condition; second, the Political, Action and Freedom; and third, Time and the Faculty of Choice.

⁷ Arendt's method in understanding freedom is to look into Greek experience as an exemplary and basic human experience.

⁸ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 57.

⁹ Arendt coins the terms: *I-will* and *I-can* to refer to the relation of the subject to philosophical and political freedom consequently. *I-can* indicates the subject's ability to act in the political realm, while *I-will* indicates subject's internal willing of a thing that might be experienced inside only or might project externally as well.

¹⁰ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 55-63. In the discussion of the faculty of choice in Aristotle, Arendt refers to *De Anima*, *Nichomachean Ethics* and *Eudemien Ethics*.

II. A. *Vita Activa* and the Human Condition

II. A. 1. The Three Categories of Human Activity

Arendt argues that the Greeks experienced living through two realms only: the private realm or household, and the public realm or *polis*. This sharp distinction of life into two realms determined how Ancient Greeks interpreted and differentiated their activities, and where they assigned the location of each. Human activities could be one of three main types. First: activities subsumed under labor, which are the activities related to the necessities of the body and the sustenance of life. Second: activities subsumed under work, which are the activities related to making useful things. Third: activities subsumed under action, which are the activities related to interacting with ones' fellow men in the *polis* by words and by deeds.¹¹

Arendt asserts that the Greek life in the *polis* was characterized by assigning every activity to its proper location. Labor, which corresponds to the necessities of life, was kept inside the walls of the household (the private space) and was assigned mainly to slaves. Work, which corresponds to making and to fabrication, was done in private spaces by craftsmen, yet exhibited in public space, in the *polis*. Action, which corresponds to interaction with ones' free and equal fellows, was the political activity *par excellence* and was the prerogative of freemen or citizens.¹² These three categories were mentioned by Aristotle in the *Politics*, where he states: "Life as a whole is divided ...into occupation

¹¹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 12, 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, 7-30.

and leisure... and of matters involving action some are directed toward necessary and useful things, others toward noble things.”¹³

Taking into consideration that by the term “action” in this passage Aristotle denotes the human activity in general, it is conspicuous that he almost puts both the categories of useful and necessary things on one side and noble things on the other.¹⁴ In other words, Aristotle puts the slave, who bears the burden of maintaining life’s necessities, and the craftsman, who makes useful things and artifacts, in close proximity. However, he places the one who does “noble things” in a higher rank. He even holds that the purpose of keeping the necessary and the useful is to facilitate and to make the life of who does noble things possible. As he puts it: “...necessary and useful things [are taken care of by slaves and craftsmen] for the sake of noble things.”¹⁵

The Aristotelian hierarchy denotes that the basic principle of division and ranking is whether there is an equal choice for either doing or not-doing a particular activity. It is recognizable that for the activities dictated by life necessities, there is no other choice but to do them to ensure survival. Hence, the one who is devoted to this activity solely is unfree and the activity itself is not noble.¹⁶ Moreover, the ranking of activities implies an inescapable inequality between the individuals performing the activities. Those who are busy satisfying the needs of the necessary and the making of the useful things are unequal to those who are capable of devoting their lives to doing noble things. The ranking of the three categories of human activities in general, and the highest rank given to the “noble

¹³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1333a30.

¹⁴ This is not the position of Arendt. Arendt distinguishes sharply between the three types of activities and deals with them separately.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1333a35.

¹⁶ This is in the Aristotelian sense.

things,” in particular, is what gave rise to the Aristotle’s conception of *Bios Politikos*, which I shall discuss in the following sub-section.

II. A. 2. The Aristotelian *Bios Politikos* and *Vita Activa*

With the phrase *Bios Politikos*, Aristotle designates three main activities that could be practiced freely. The activities of the *Bios Politikos* are all concerned solely with “the beautiful.” A free man could adopt one of the three ways of life:

the life of enjoying bodily pleasures in which the beautiful, as it is given, is consumed; the life devoted to the matters of the *polis*, in which excellence produces beautiful deeds; and the life of the philosopher devoted to inquiry into, and contemplation of, things eternal, whose everlasting beauty can neither be brought about through the producing interference of man nor be changed through his consumption of them.¹⁷

In this passage, Aristotle considers the way of life of the philosopher as of the same rank as the way of life of the one who enjoys bodily pleasures and the one who is devoted to matters of the *polis* even though “contemplation,” which is the main thing the philosopher is busy with, does not seem to be an activity.

There are two points that could be inferred from the Aristotelian’s *Bios Politikos*. First, the three activities are activities of free men in the *polis* or the public realm. Second, *Bios Politikos* (or the life devoted to noble things), unlike the activities devoted to the necessary and useful things, could be done or left undone without coercion. Thus, the three activities all count for free acts. *Praxis* (action) and *lexis* (speech) are means of action in the Aristotelian categories of *Bios Politikos*. And, hence, action and speech are

¹⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 13. Arendt did not refer to text-passage by Aristotle for this paraphrase by her.

of the same rank for the Greeks. Both were correlated with the free way of life that slaves, women, and craftsmen were deprived of in order to enable the free life of who has the potential to deal with the *beautiful*.

Bios Politikos was later translated in the Middle Ages as *Vita Activa*. Although it kept “its original meaning: a life devoted to public-political matters”¹⁸ in Augustine’s philosophy, it lost the Greek meaning in the late Middle Ages, at the exact moment when “the original Greek understanding of politics had been lost.”¹⁹ Even later in the Middle Ages, in the time of Thomas Aquinas, a pivotal inclusion and exclusion in the term took place. Activities related to the necessary and the useful were included under the *Vita Activa*, while contemplation (the philosopher’s peculiar way of life) was excluded from the *Vita Activa* and it was given a special term of its own: *Vita Contemplativa*. Indeed, Arendt points out that *Vita Activa* is synonymous, not with the *Bios Politikos*, but with the Greek *a-skholia* (unquiet), which denoted all the ways of “noisy” life that absolutely contradicted the quiet way of life of the philosopher (*skhole*).²⁰

In fact, Hannah Arendt builds her concept of *Vita Activa* on the logical broad division of human activities, which perfectly matches the conceptualization of the late Middle Ages, as well. Additionally, she develops and refines the concept by correlating each activity with the “basic conditions under which life on earth has been given to man.”²¹ According to Arendt, *Vita Activa* is divided into three types: labor which relates to life, work which relates to world, and action which relates to plurality.

¹⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹⁹ Ibid., 23.

²⁰ Ibid., 15.

²¹ Ibid., 7.

The Arendtian typology is quite different from the Aristotelian typology. Aristotle does not create sharp distinctions between labor and work; however, Arendt does create a very sharp distinction between these two categories. The basis of Aristotle's typology is the noble (beautiful) on the one hand versus the non-noble (useful and necessary) on the other hand. The basis of Arendt's typology is the human condition by which life on earth has been given to man. Since Arendt identifies three human conditions for the human existence on earth: life, world and plurality, there must be three human activities correlating with the three human conditions. Arendt explains that:

Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body...the human condition of labor is life itself. Work is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence ...work provides an "artificial" world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings. Within its borders each individual life is housed, while this world itself is meant to outlast and transcend them all. The human condition of work is worldliness. Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality.²²

Arendt also incorporates the Ancient Greeks' meanings into her concept of action in particular, and into her concept of *Vita Activa* more generally. For the Ancient Greeks as well as for Arendt, labor which is entangled with cyclical and never-ending bodily needs and work which is busy with fabrication and making artifacts, are not activities that realize human freedom. The only activity that does realize freedom is the human activity of Action, which is mainly conditioned by plurality. Neither labor nor work requires the company of others. They might need to be facilitated by cooperation or by organization,

²² Ibid.

but they are certainly not conditioned by continuous interaction with equal peers. Only action involves human-to-human interaction without a medium in between.

The Arendtian theory of *Vita Activa* is very well received by the contemporary political theorists; however, her trilogy: labor, work and action was criticized and debated by scholars. For instance, Shiraz Dossa considers the order of the activities as quite arbitrary:

The fundamental activities in the *vita activa*... are not related to each other in any particular order of priority intrinsic to the *vita activa* itself. The order of arrangement and the importance assigned to each activity depends wholly on the judgement of the theorist assessing the *vita activa*.²³

Although Dossa's criticism is considerable, I disagree with him on his judgment that Arendt is trying to put activities into an order or a hierarchy. In my opinion, Arendt's main concern is to *locate* activities, not to order them as the Aristotelian perspective suggests. Her method in determining these activities is mainly logical and descriptive.²⁴

We can easily agree with her that an artisan, for instance, finishes his/her craft in isolation and exhibits it in the public realm. Similarly, we can agree with her that the work of building a house has a certain beginning and a predictable end; the activity of eating to maintain our bodies has no end until the moment of our death. Selya Benhabib makes the same remark about Arendt's concern with the location of human activities.

Benhabib also argues that "each type of human activity has a proper 'place' in which it can be carried out. Labor, she [Arendt] claims, does not belong in the public realm,

²³ Dossa, *The Public Realm and the Public Self*, 51.

²⁴ Some literature studies Arendt as a phenomenologist, such as Moran, "Hannah Arendt: the phenomenology of the public sphere." and Marder, "Nativity, Event, Revolution: The Political Phenomenology of Hannah Arendt."

whereas work, although often carried out in solitude, must display its product in public.”²⁵

Benhabib, admits that the sharp distinction between the three types of activities is quite problematic. She even cites scholars who “have sought to show that her art of making distinctions often obscured rather than illuminated the phenomena at hand.”²⁶ In an attempt to solve the problem, Benhabib suggests that this criticism of Arendt does not take into account the more fundamental level that offers a basis for Arendt’s distinction, which is her philosophical methodology of “phenomenological essentialism.”²⁷ Benhabib continues to clarify that this method leads usually to conflation between conceptual distinctions and ontological analyses on one hand and social process and historical descriptions on the other hand.²⁸ According to Benhabib’s suggestion, the problematic dimension of Arendt’s theory of *Vita Activa* is not because of her conceptual sharp distinction of the three activities, but the problem arises from our confusion regarding the identification of the level on which Arendt is operating on.²⁹

Nevertheless, one could criticize Arendt easily by saying that the distinctions simplify the human activity, which might tempt the reader to reduce every particular activity into one single type: labor, work or action. Benhabib points out that this remark has been made as a standard objection by scholars, who claim that “any complex human activity, from factory work, to writing a book, to making a meal, cannot simply be seen

²⁵ Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 124.

²⁶ Ibid., 123. Benhabib mentions Hannah Pitkin, Jürgen Habermas, and Richard Bernstein.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 124.

²⁹ Ibid.

as an exemplar of a single action type.”³⁰ Benhabib continues to back up this objection by a number of examples that illustrate how complex the human activities are and how impossible it is to reduce every human particular activity into a single type of activity.

She illustrates:

Industrial factory work, for example, is not just labor...depending on the nature of the social relations of power on the shop floor, and between union and management, there are usually complex dimensions of social interaction involved. By building ten rather than fifteen chips per hour, workers may be engaging in a slowdown of production. Their activity in this case would not be merely...labor; it would also be political activity. Equally, writing a poem may appear as a case of pure work in Arendtian terms...but if you are writing a poem as your weekly addition to a comic strip that you despise, far from being satisfying work, this activity may bear all the marks of drudgery alienated, industrial wage labor. Finally, making a meal, the quintessential example of the repetitive, ephemeral labor that serves the needs of the body in Arendt’s view, may be an expressive act for a gourmet chef, just as it may be an act of love among two or more individuals.³¹

I argue that this objection, while obvious and agreeable, is based on mixing the concept of the type or the category with the concept of the particular or the real. The three types of *Vita Activa* are categories, yet they are not real particulars. In other words, the three types are analytical, not substantial. If the three types were real, there will be no need for analyzing or classifying the human activities; neither there will be a justification for Arendt’s main question of the human condition, which is to think what we are doing. Based on this remark of the difference between the type and the particular, every particular activity done in our very complex social and political context, such as writing a book or making a meal, could not be wholly subsumed under one single category or type of *Vita Activa*.

³⁰ Ibid, 131.

³¹ Ibid., 131.

In everyday life, we do not normally go straightforward in a linear way from doing one type of activity into another type; this is very obvious. However, Arendt's typology allows us to be aware that there are up to three distinct types of activity involved in every particular activity. I believe that accepting the typology of *Vita Activa* and being aware of the three types involved explains and illuminates the complexity of the phenomenon at hand; additionally, it helps us understand what we are doing, which is the main concern of Arendt in the *Human Condition*.

Moreover, the correspondence of labor, work and action to the three dimensions of human existence, which Arendt calls "conditions," might help human beings not to reduce their complex human existence into one dimension. For reducing one's existence into a single type of existence would have consequences in the form of losing the meaning of one's life, doing injustice to other people, or taking advantage of them. For example, an individual who attempts to avoid labor and try to devote his life to action entirely would turn into a parasite who lives at the expense of taking advantage of someone else who is doing for him his labor and work. Similarly, an individual who is forced to devote his/her life to labor only would turn into a means of sustenance of the life of another group of people who might be devoted to either work and/or action. On a contemporary societal level, taking *Vita Activa* as a pivotal concept in social justice policies would help making sure that every individual/class/group in the society becomes involved to some extent in the three activities, so his/her/its existence would not be

reduced into one aspect and would not be deprived from the complexity and the meaning of human existence.³²

II. A. 3. The Life and the World

Life is the human condition of labor, and plurality is the human condition of action, as Arendt states.³³ But people would not be able to live together in plurality unless they first overcome the state of living amid nature. People could not found a body-politic according to the principle of action while they are a part of nature, whose necessities deprive people of their capacity to be free. People must distinguish themselves from mere life or nature by making a world of their own; a world that is a product of their fabrication and which can hold the prints of their existence or *Dasein*: of “being-there at a certain locality in space and time,” in Heideggerian terms.³⁴ The world is the man-made home amid the wilderness of nature which is a home for the animal existence, but is not a home for human existence. The things that the human beings fabricate in order to make earth a

³² While I was writing this part, I was following up the famine of *Madaya*, a syrian city under siege amid the Syrian civil war. I contemplated the phenomenon from the perspective of *Vita Activa* and found that while people in this small city are starving to death, i.e. lacking the human condition of labor; the main reason which have lead into famine was not that they lacked food for the sustenance of their bodies. However, the main reason was that there are two groups of people who are not acting together in order to facilitate food transportation. Accordingly, the solution of the problem will be through action, not through labor or work (such as collecting money for buying food for the starving people or making projects for food production). Doing deeds such as mediating between the conflicting parties or acting by the means of speech such as publishing, writing about *Madaya* to exert pressures on the parties will be the right activity to do in this particular case.

You can find out about the case, here <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/09/middleeast/syria-madaya-starvation/>

³³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7.

³⁴ Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 52.

home for themselves are what ensures “stability and solidity without which it could not be relied upon to house the unstable and mortal creature which is man.”³⁵

Neither do the activities of labor nor work ensure the ability to make a home for human beings, because both of them do not have the thing-character that permits durability, stability and relative independence from men, who are in continuous flux into and from the world. What ensures relative stability and the making of a home is rather the activity of work.³⁶ Labor ensures the mere biological existence of human beings and it is caught in the never-ending biological cycles, which begins with birth and ends with death. In other words, labor is like the motor power that ensures our continuous living so we can perform other activities that distinguish us from nature.

Arendt explains that “the word ‘life’... follows a strictly linear movement whose very motion ... is driven by the motor of biological life which man shares with other living things and which forever retains the cyclical movement of nature.”³⁷ She also adds that “the biological process in man... is part of the cyclical movement of nature and therefore endlessly repetitive; all human activities which arise out of the necessity to cope with them are bound to the recurring cycles of nature and have in themselves no beginning and no end.”³⁸

Arendt argues that founding a body-politic, which is mainly achieved via people acting together, is not possible until people get themselves out of the state of nature

³⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 137. Because Arendt insists that the world has a thing character, I would say, that according to this understanding, institutions (such as marriage) and laws are not subsumed under the activity of work and its human condition of worldness. It would rather be subsumed under action and its human condition of plurality because it involves human to human interaction directly.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

towards the state of culture.³⁹ Hence, human beings could not jump directly from labor/the state of nature/the mere life into action/founding a body-politic. They should first separate themselves from nature by making their home out of the artifacts of their hands, i.e. making the world. Action could not take place until there is a human habitat that functions as its scene and medium. On the other hand, the thing-character of the world and the durability of the things that human beings make by their hand is the source or the basis of the objectivity of the world against the subjectivity of the makers. Arendt illustrates the difference between the objectivity of the world and the eternal movement of nature as follows:

Against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sublime indifference of the untouched nature, whose overwhelming elementary force, on the contrary, will compel them to swing relentlessly in the circle of their own biological movement...only we who have erected the objectivity of a world of our own from what nature gives us, who have built it into the environment of nature so that we are protected from her, can look upon nature as something “objective” without a world between man and nature, there is eternal movement, but not objectivity.⁴⁰

The world, which is durable, objective, and relatively stable, serves a double function: getting human beings out of the cyclical natural life and providing a medium for actions to be laid over its relative stability: “this web [the fragile web of human relationships] overlays the tangible objects of public world with a multiplicity of interpretations emanating from different agents.”⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., 8,9. She said “action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history.”

⁴⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁴¹ Barash, “The Political Dimension of the Public World...,” 263.

II. A. 4. Natality and Mortality

The three human conditions, which render life on earth possible for human existence: life, world and plurality, are further rooted in a more existential fundamental level, which is the condition of both natality and mortality. Arendt states that “all activities and their corresponding conditions are connected with the most general condition of human existence: birth and death, natality and mortality.”⁴² Both natality and mortality are two dimensions and conditions of human existence.

Arendt, in her analysis of the relation between philosophy and politics, claims that philosophers usually emphasize the dimension of mortality over the dimension of natality. They do not even give attention to the fact that we are *natalis* as much as we are mortals; i.e. we can be defined as *natal* beings as we are defined as mortal beings as well.⁴³ Also, the fact of death is overvalued in philosophy over the fact of birth, in Arendt’s estimation. This attitude of philosophers towards life and death, which is an attitude of ignoring birth and liking death, started with Plato’s *Phaedo*, where he decides that “the one aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death.”⁴⁴ Arendt comments on the philosopher’s attitude towards dying by saying that “death, being the separation of body and soul, is welcome to him; he is somehow in love with death, because the body, with all its demands, constantly interrupts the soul’s pursuits.”⁴⁵ Because of this stance of philosophers, generally, Arendt remarks

⁴² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 8.

⁴³ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 109.

⁴⁴ Plato, *Phaedo*, 101. Moreover, Arendt devotes the fourth session of Lectures on Kant’s Philosophy for the discussion of the relation of Philosophy to Politics. See: Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 22-27.

⁴⁵ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 22.

that “the true philosopher does not accept the conditions under which life has been given to man.”⁴⁶ In other words, Arendt wants to say that the philosopher does not accept the condition of natality; and hence, he values death over life.

The tradition of valuing death over life or not accepting all human conditions of existence, which started with Plato, and never stopped in the philosophical tradition, was not challenged until Arendt came up with the notion of natality as a no less important category than the category of mortality. She theorizes it as the more important ontological category of labor, work and action. She said:

labor and work, as well as, action, are also rooted in natality in so far as they have the task to provide and preserve the world for, to foresee and reckon with, the constant influx of newcomers who are born into the world as stranger.⁴⁷

According to Arendt, the most important activity that is connected to natality is the activity of action because, as we will see later, she equates action with beginning, which is rooted in the human condition of natality. In the following passage of Arendt, she will not only clarify how the category of natality is the central category of the political action, but also she will decide on the essential difference between political and metaphysical thought. She states that:

Action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality is inherent in all human activities. Moreover, since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of the political as distinguished from metaphysical, thought.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 22.

⁴⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Natality and mortality means, in another way, that we are just visitors on the earth. We are born and become caught up in the cyclical biological processes of life that ensures our continuous existence. Then, if we do not do anything that transcend this necessary and natural cycle, we will live and die like animals.⁴⁹ We will leave the universe with no trace behind us that tells we have lived before on earth. We will disappear without a proof of our *Dasein*, of being-there at a particular space and time. This reflection upon the condition of natality and mortality, of being mere visitors on the earth, is very frightening. Even if we find salvation in religion and do good deeds as religions always prescribe to their followers, how can these good deeds be ascribed to its doers, so that they can be remembered? How can they be saved from the “natural ruin of time”⁵⁰ and be saved from its fleeting character? Is there any possibility for a mortal being to become, even relatively, an immortal being?

II. A. 5. Immortality and the Common

Human beings in ancient times seemed aware of the apparent fact that they were the only mortals in an immortal and everlasting universe. We “move along rectilinear line in a universe where everything...moves in a cyclical order.”⁵¹ The awareness of the fact that the life of an individual is a linear path between birth and death became overwhelming very early. The question of how can the existence of mortal human beings, not as species, but as distinct individuals, be transformed into immortal existence, became very

⁴⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 55.

⁵¹ Ibid., 19.

concerning. How can mortals be immortals who can endure in time and enjoy deathless life?⁵²

The Greek's solution to this human concern is the Aristotelian remark that there is a "possibility for immortalizing" for the realm of human affairs.⁵³ He argues in his *Ethics* that "...one should not follow those who advise us to think human thoughts since we are human, and mortal thoughts, since we are mortal, but as far as possible one ought to be *immortal*..."⁵⁴ Arendt adds that the insistence on immortality occurs very often in Aristotle's political writings.⁵⁵ The possibility of immortality and of creating lasting and enduring existence, which saves the human existence from its futility, would be the existential spring and the motivation for creating the common or the public realm where people can constitute reality to their existence. They can give their futile and originally mortal existence an immortal dimension by appearing as actors whose words can be heard and whose deeds can be seen. They can also exhibit the artifacts they made and they can be known as the makers of beautiful and useful things that could potentially last after they have died.

Therefore, we can conclude with Arendt that, immortality is the center and the spring of *Vita Activa*.⁵⁶ We can understand from her implications that "without this transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking, no

⁵² Ibid., 18.

⁵³ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177b32-35. Arendt quotes from a translation other than the translation I have quoted from: "Considering human affairs, one must not...consider man as he is and not consider what is mortal in mortal things, but think about them [only] to the extent that they have the possibility of immortalizing." Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 56.

⁵⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 56.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 21.

common world and no public realm, is possible.”⁵⁷ According to the private and the public domains of *Vita Activa*, Arendt clarifies that the term “public” signifies two related yet not identical phenomena. The first meaning of the public is almost identical with the meaning of appearance and reality. Arendt defines it as “everything that appears in public [that] can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us, appearance...constitutes reality.”⁵⁸ The second meaning is almost identical to the meaning of the world that is constituted from our fabrication and the human affairs altogether. She defines it as follows:

The term ‘public’ signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately own place in it. This world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life, it is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as, to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together.⁵⁹

Having explained the ontological roots of *Vita Activa* and the existential origin of the common, I shall explain how the human condition of plurality could be manifested in a public realm, in order for action to take place. In other words, how can a plurality of people exist in the public realm, so that they can act together in an organized way? I shall, as well, clarify how action and the human condition of plurality are inherent only in freedom.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 50.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 52.

II. B. The Political, Action and Freedom

It would be very difficult to discuss separately the three categories of the political, the action, and freedom, because none of them could exist without the other. Arendt argues that action and freedom are the only main constituents of the concept of the political. The reason for the very existence of the body-politic is freedom; and freedom in turn has its realization in action. Arendt maintains that “the *raison d’être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action.”⁶⁰ Therefore, Arendt, like the Ancient Greeks, has a very definite and relatively narrow meaning of the political. From the three cardinal human activities –labor, work and action– action alone is what counts as a political activity. Action in turn is the only human activity characterized by freedom. Arendt claims that “freedom...is actually the reason that men live together in political organization at all. Without it, political life as such would be meaningless.”⁶¹ Consequently, in the coming discussion, one should bear in mind that the Arendtian concept of politics takes its connotations from the Ancient Greek experience, which has almost the inverted meaning of what we take to be the political in modern times.⁶²

II. B. 1. The Human Condition of Plurality and the Public Realm

Action is determined by the human condition of plurality. No human being could act alone, as Arendt clarifies. She states that “action... is never possible in solitude or

⁶⁰ Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 146.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Arendt considers the modern state as a gigantic household that is necessary to keep life, but not by any means a body-politic for the freedom of its members. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28. She believes that what is left for the political in the modern age is the field of International Relation.

isolation; one man alone needs, at the very least, the help of others to carry through whatever his enterprise may be.”⁶³ For action to take place, agents should act in the “public realm,” which is an organized space for human interaction to take place. Arendt stresses that although the other two human conditions, life and world, have some relation to politics, the human condition of “plurality is specifically the condition –not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam*—of all political life.”⁶⁴

Not every human community secures a public realm for action and freedom. Hence, not every community counts as a body-politic, and not every human community knows that the concept of the political is associated solely with freedom. For example, tribes and dynasties are not politically organized communities; thus, although they are communities, they do not count for body-politic. The principle of the formation of tribes and dynasties is mainly labor, the need to preserve life and its necessities. Arendt explains that “where men live together but do not form a body-politic, . . . the factors ruling their actions and conduct are not freedom but the necessities of life and concern of its preservation.”⁶⁵ Interaction between its members does not count for action and thus for freedom because these communities do not organize public space in which freedom could have an appearance. In other words, if a collective of human beings needs to preserve its life and existence only, there will be no need for founding a body-politic.

The Greek *polis*, which came into existence before the Socratic school of philosophy was born, is an exemplar for a body-politic that is built upon and is organized

⁶³ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 59.

⁶⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7. *sine qua non*: an essential element or condition; prerequisite. *Conditio per quam*: the condition whereby

⁶⁵ Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 148.

according to the principles of freedom and the public realm. As the human activities of labor, work and action were differentiated and distinguished in the Greek *polis*, the location of these activities was demarcated as well. Life was divided into the household and the *polis*, or the private and the public realms.⁶⁶ All activities of labor were taken care of in the household or the private realm; and all activities of Action took place in the *polis* or the public realm. Therefore, a Greek citizen had to traverse the sharp distinction between the public and the private realms every day. Arendt asserts this division and distinction because it is decisive in understanding the Greek conception of freedom and politics. She elaborates:

At the root of Greek political consciousness we find an unequalled clarity and articulateness in drawing this distinction. No activity that served only the purpose of making a living, of sustaining only the life process, was permitted to enter the political realm, and this at the grave risk of abandoning trade and manufacture to the industriousness of slaves and foreigners.⁶⁷

Hence, freedom, solely, is the only justification for founding a *polis* and creating a public realm sterile from the activities of labor and work and devoted to human-to-human interaction. Arendt points out that this very character of the *polis*, being founded according to the principle of freedom, was reflected in the political philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, even though the description of both of these suggests that the borderline between the household and the *polis* was infrequently blurred. For instance, Plato “began to draw his examples and illustrations for the *polis* from everyday experiences in private life.”⁶⁸ On the other hand, Aristotle “tentatively assumes that at least the historical origin

⁶⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

of the *polis* must be connected with the necessities of life and that only its content or inherent aim (*telos*) transcends life in the “good life.”⁶⁹

The crucial differences between the household and the *polis*, which are noteworthy for its inherent relation to the concept of freedom, includes the type of human activities performed in each, which I have discussed, and the type of interaction between the members of each. In the household, everything is done by a command from the master and by the obedience of slaves and women to assure maintaining and sustaining necessary needs for the members of the household. In other words, the type of interaction in the private realm is rulership or governance whose main principle is command and obedience. Rulership gave rise to an inequality and a hierarchy in the household with the master/free man at the top and the slave/unfree man at the bottom. Moreover, rulership justified using coercion and violence in order to preserve necessities.⁷⁰ Arendt explains that “because all human beings are subject to necessity, they are entitled to violence toward others; violence is the pre-political act of liberating oneself from the necessity of life.”⁷¹ Because of rulership, governing by command and obedience, which entails violence, the household was by definition not a space for realizing freedom. Human interaction in the *polis* was completely opposed to the one in the household. The main principle of interaction was not command and obedience between unequals, but action by word and deed between equals. Persuasion by word and deed in the *polis* pre-empted the

⁶⁹ Ibid. Arendt deals with the political philosophies of Plato and Aristotle as opposing philosophies to *polis*, not representative to it. However, the character of *polis* is still reflected. She said “Our philosophical tradition of political thought, beginning with Parmenides and Plato, was founded explicitly in opposition to this *polis* and its citizenship. The way of life chosen by the philosopher was understood in opposition to the (*Bios Bolitkos*), the political way of life” Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 158.

⁷⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28-37.

⁷¹ Ibid., 31.

coercion of command. The *polis* was the location where equal citizens realize their freedom in action, i.e. in speech and deed, "...to be free meant both not to be subject to the necessity of life or to the command of another and not to be in command oneself. It meant neither to rule nor to be ruled."⁷²

The household and the *polis* share the similarity of being conditions and requirements of freedom for equal fellows. The household/ private realm liberates the free man from the necessities of life; and the *polis*/the public realm provides him with an organized space for the communication and interaction with equal fellow men by words and deeds. Arendt argues that:

... in order to be free, man must have liberated himself from the necessities of life. But the status of freedom did not follow automatically upon the act of liberation. Freedom, needed, in addition to liberation, the company of other men who were in the same state, and it needed a common public space to meet them—a politically organized world, in other words, into which each of the free men could insert himself by word and deed.⁷³

The way the Greeks organized their space of existence, their body-politic, helps us to understand that in the Greek case, freedom is related to how they understood their relation to the space they inhabited. Freedom was a state of a body whose ability to move should be guaranteed and facilitated, i.e. by protecting it from being enforced by command and from being coerced by its own needs of preservation. Arendt states that "freedom was understood to be the free man's status, which enabled him to move, to get away from home, to go out into the world and meet other people in deed and word."⁷⁴ It

⁷² Ibid., 32. Arendt cited Herodotus for this quote "neither to rule nor to be ruled" which was said by Otanes who was a defender of Greek equality.

⁷³ Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 148.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

is also obvious that freedom is not possible for everyone in the *polis*. The freedom of some, the slaves and women, is sacrificed for the freedom of others, the freemen or the citizens in the Greek conception.

II. B. 2. Action and Freedom

Action is the field of the experience of freedom, as Arendt proves. For a freeman to realize his freedom, he should be an agent among other equal and distinct agents. Action has two modes or two forms in the Greek *polis*: deeds (acts) or words (speech). Action has no end. Nevertheless, it has a result in the form of a story that could be narrated and remembered. Ultimately, the story is weaved in history, the storybook of the human mankind. Although action has no thing-character for action does not end in an ultimate end product as work does, it certainly has an inter-subjective or “subjective in-between”⁷⁵ reality that has an appearance insofar as the words are heard and the deeds are seen. Consequently, freedom, because it is no more than the ability to act, would have both an appearance and a reality.⁷⁶ Arendt clarifies that “the subjective in-between is not tangible ... but ... this in-between is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common.”⁷⁷

Arendt argues that no form of communication needs speech more than action. Every other human interaction could be mediated with a minimum of language; even sign

⁷⁵ Arendt used the term “subjective in-between” for what we call “inter-subjective”

⁷⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 183.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

language could suffice to get labor or work done.⁷⁸ On the other hand, speech is indispensable for action, not to mention that speech itself is already an action. Most conspicuously, “finding [and uttering] the right word at the right moment, quite apart from the information or communication they may convey, is action.”⁷⁹ Therefore, in the Greek *polis*, speech and action were conceived as “coeval and equal, of the same rank and the same kind.”⁸⁰ Beside the inherent character of action in speech, acting together would not be possible without self-disclosure. Speech lets us know who we are and lets other fellows know who we are. Without disclosing ourselves and answering the question “who we are,” we would not be able to act together because action happens in-between distinct disclosed agents who have appearances.⁸¹ Even though agents in the public realm are equal, they are distinct and different and “...speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals.”⁸²

If speech is correlated with the human condition of distinct plurality, action is correlated with the human condition of natality.⁸³ Arendt considers natality, not mortality, as “the central category of the political.”⁸⁴ As *natalis*, newcomers born into the world, they need to disclose who they are and insert themselves in the world by word and deed. Arendt calls the agent’s insertion into the world a second birth.⁸⁵ What is common

⁷⁸ Ibid., 179.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Whatever is occult and has no appearance, is unpolitical by definition for Arendt.

⁸² Ibid., 178.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 176, 178.

between biological and political birth is the fact of beginning. Birth, by definition, is a beginning, whether it's a beginning in nature (the biological) or a beginning in the world (the political). This is what Arendt concludes from the etymological analysis of the Greek language, which she takes as self-interpreting for the practical political experiences of the Greeks.

According to Arendt, there were two different, but inter-related, words for “to act” in the Greek language: *archein* and *prattein*. *Archein* means “to begin,” “to lead,” and eventually “to rule,” while *prattein* means “to pass through,” “to achieve,” “to finish.” In Latin, these words were rendered respectively as “*agere*,” which means to set something in motion, and “*gerere*,” which means the enduring and supporting continuation of past acts.⁸⁶ The twofold meaning of “to act” as related to politics was interpreted by Arendt in the following passage:

In both instances, action occurs in two different stages; the first stage is a beginning by which something new comes into the world. The Greek word... which covers beginning, leading, ruling, that is, the outstanding qualities of the free man, bears witness to an experience in which being free and the capacity to begin something new coincided. Freedom, as we would say today, was experienced in spontaneity. The manifold meaning ... indicates the following: only those could begin something new who were already rulers (i.e. household heads who ruled over slaves and family) and had thus liberated themselves from the necessities of life for enterprises in distant lands or citizenship in the *polis*; in either case, they no longer ruled, but were rulers among rulers, moving among their peers, whose help they enlisted as leaders in order to begin something new, to start a new enterprise; for only with the help of others could the... ruler, beginner and leader, really act,... carry through whatever he had started to do.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ibid., 177,189. and Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 165-166.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 166.

The achievement or the finishing, indicated by the second meaning of the word, is by no means an end product or a thing. The action has no end, but it is an end in itself.⁸⁸ Having no end, action, by definition, is fleeting in character.⁸⁹ Speech and deeds could fly away with no proof that they had existed sometime in the past. The fleeting character of action requires the constant presence of others, the witnesses, who would testify, recognize and then narrate the story of the great deeds and words.⁹⁰ Story preserves actions from losing their reality, and bears witness that, one day, they happened and were heard in words and seen in deeds.

Unprecedented actions would give rise to unprecedented happenings, to events which challenge all expectations based on causality and present themselves in the guise of miracle.⁹¹ Being able to act, to begin, to cause something new to happen that was unprecedented before, to challenge the laws of causality and to begin a causality of ones' own is Freedom. Thus, freedom in its political origin was mainly constituted in the *I-can*.⁹² In the ability to utter words and to perform deeds, this might give rise to an event and would deserve to be told in a story. Freedom is constituted in the ability of the Agent. If I can, I am free; if I cannot, I am not free. Arendt asserts that:

...this is the realm [public realm] where freedom is a worldly reality, tangible in words which can be heard, in deeds which can be seen, and in events which are talked about, remembered and turned into stories before they are finally incorporated into the great story book of human history.⁹³

⁸⁸ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 60. Arendt refers to Aristotle who says "for good action is an end" Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139 b1-4.

⁸⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 189.

⁹⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 184-7.

⁹¹ Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 168.

⁹² *I-can* is an Arendtian expression which denotes the ability/movement of the Agent to act with others.

⁹³ Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 154-5.

In addition, Arendt believes that unpredictability is an inherent character in action; hence, the actor should free himself from intentions and motivations as well as from aims and consequences; otherwise, he would be implementing a plan, which has an end (his aim) and he will not be acting with others, but he will be using them as means for his end.

Kohn comments on this insight by saying that “if we knew what we were doing when we act we would not be free but enacting or unfolding a plan.”⁹⁴

II. C. Time and the Faculty of Choice

Arendt has a strong argument that “freedom as related to politics is not a phenomenon of the will.”⁹⁵ Greeks did not discover the faculty of the Will that we usually conceive, in the modern age, as a spring of action.⁹⁶ Action was not subjective in the Greek experience, but inter-subjective, represented in words and acts that networked the agents together. The point that might be perplexing here, as pointed out by Arendt, is that the Greeks experienced voluntary and involuntary acts as well as intended and unintended acts. She asks the question in this form: “How Greek philosophy dealt with phenomena and data of human experience that our post-classical ‘conventions’ have been accustomed to ascribe to the will as the mainspring of action?”⁹⁷ Arendt, then, turned to Aristotle

⁹⁴ Kohn, “Freedom: The Priority of the Political,” 123.

⁹⁵ Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 151.

⁹⁶ Arendt wrote the history of the faculty of Will in *The Life of the Mind/Willing* in which she asserted that Greeks did not know the faculty of Will, however, she considered the faculty of choice as a forerunner for the faculty of Will. She also refers to Hobbes and Gilson that both of them were aware that Greeks did not know the faculty of Will. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 16.

⁹⁷ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 57.

because he recognized “the lacuna in Greek language and thought regarding the faculty of will” as no word existed for the faculty of Will.⁹⁸

Arendt explains that volition is different from willing. Willing is directed towards the future, and thus towards projects that have not yet existed. However, volition occurs between two or more existing objects at hand.⁹⁹ The faculty that makes volition possible is a faculty of choice, not a faculty of willing. It is practical reason or *proairesis*, as Aristotle conceptualized.¹⁰⁰

The faculty of Choice is mainly concerned with means, not with ends, since the end is already designated. For the Greeks, the end of the Agent was *eudaimonia* or happiness, which no one directly chooses, but rather pursues through chosen means. Arendt interprets the question of ends and choice by the Greeks as follows: “Nobody deliberates and chooses health or happiness as his aim, though we may think about them; ends are inherent in human nature and the same for all.”¹⁰¹ The faculty of choice “decides between things equally possible and given to us, as it were, in *statu nascendi* as mere potentialities.”¹⁰² Choice has no capacity to create a new possibility; it is a mere arbiter between several possibilities.¹⁰³

The reason Arendt refers to for which the Greeks did not discover the faculty of Will is their concept of time. Will is an organ of the future; and future is plausible only if the time is conceived as a rectilinear line that has a definite beginning and a definite end.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 15, 57.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 13,14.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 55

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 62.

¹⁰² Ibid., 29.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 62.

The Greeks did not have such a concept of time because they conceived the universe as immortal having neither a beginning nor an end. The mathematical form which has no beginning and no end is the circle. Therefore, their time concept was cyclical. Moreover, Arendt argues that the emergence of the cyclical time concept was inevitable on the background of discovering an everlasting being, birthless and deathless.¹⁰⁴ Everything for the Greeks was revolving, happening again and again in a circular manner. Even “Events and *doxai ás*, they occur among men, revolve not only once or a few times but infinitely often.”¹⁰⁵

In fact, the Aristotelian categories of potentiality and actuality are good representatives of the cyclical time concept. The potential exists in a dormant form, which needs a cause to bring it into being. Potentiality is one of the causes of everything real and the future is always a consequence of the past, as Arendt notes.¹⁰⁶ In the frame of the cyclical time concept, nothing completely new would be introduced into the world.

To recapitulate, Arendt argues that the political freedom was experienced in the Greek *polis* as an objective quality of the body and an inter-subjective reality in the *polis* of which the recognized chief units are the equal citizens.¹⁰⁷ Freedom has both an appearance and a reality in the body-politic or the *polis*; however, it was not a manifestation of the faculty of Will, for the Greeks did not discover such a faculty. Freedom, in the *polis*, was an experience associated with the ability to act with other equal fellows. In other words, freedom was a phenomenon of the *I-can*, not the *I-will*.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Arendt refers to Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, 339 b 27

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 19.

III PHILOSOPHICAL FREEDOM

III. A. The Concept of Time and the Concept of Inner Life

Arendt insists that the human mind could acquire and develop new faculties throughout the course of history.¹⁰⁸ She dates the discovery of the faculty of the Will to the human experience of religious conversion, specifically the conversion of Paul in the first century A.D. as well as the rise of “popular philosophy” by which she refers to Stoicism and the related doctrines. Both Christianity and Stoicism led eventually to the discovery of an inner life of man, where he could experience an internal freedom in solitude. That is, an experience of freedom whose existence is testified only by the one who experiences it.

Christianity, on the other hand, reversed the relation between man and the world. The world is no longer everlasting and immortal. Man, as well, is no longer a mortal being whose life is transient in the world as the Ancient Greek world-view suggested.¹⁰⁹ In Christianity, the relation is reversed and an authentic future could be hoped for or feared from “you who have believed that men die but that the world is everlasting need only turnabout, to a faith that the world comes to an end but that you yourself will have an everlasting life.”¹¹⁰ Because of this inversion, an inner life for man was possible and the question of faith, rightness and struggle to master the inner life became relevant.

A new concept of time, entailed in the new Christian world-view is a second decisive factor that contributes to the discovery of the faculty of will. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl agrees also on the decisiveness of the concept of time for the discovery of the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 56. She contends that “the mind of man, its concerns and its faculties, is affected both by changes in the world, whose meaningfulness it examines, and , perhaps even more decisively, by its own activities”

¹⁰⁹ The Greek world view where mortality and immortality were central categories was discussed in the subsections of natality and mortality and immortality and the common.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 66.

Will. She explains that “the lack of a notion of will among the Greeks and the achievement of such a notion among the Christians were tied to time concepts.”¹¹¹

According to the Christian world-view, the universe is created; hence, it has an absolute beginning. The universe will come to an absolute definite end as well. Since the mathematical form that has a beginning and an end is *the line*, the new concept of time that corresponds to a view of the World, with a beginning and an end, is the rectilinear time concept. Therefore, the ancient cyclical concept of time that was congruous with the circular movement of life and nature could be preempted with the rectilinear time concept. Not only the creed or the faith of creation determines a beginning and end for the world, but also “the story that begins with Adam’s expulsion from Paradise and ends with Christ’s death and resurrection is a story of a unique, unrepeatable event.”¹¹²

Arendt notices that the story’s events could not be repeated again and again in a circular manner: “the story’s sequence presupposes a rectilinear time concept; it has a definite beginning, a turning point -the year one of our calendar- and a definite end.”¹¹³ The concept of future and the possible events that might come with it changes accordingly from an inauthentic event that already existed in the past in the status of potentiality (using the circular time concept) to an authentic tense, which brings about events that have never existed in the past (using the rectilinear time concept). Such new concept of time hardly touched the secular events in the medieval period, as Arendt observes.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, it was indispensable for the discovery of the faculty of will for

¹¹¹ Young-Bruehl, “Reflections on Hannah Arendt’s *The Life of the Mind*,” 157.

¹¹² Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/Willing*, 18.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

the Will is “our mental organ for the future.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, without the possibility of authentic future that could carry noble events, there would be no need for a faculty of Will. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl also observes this relation by stating that:

...when thinkers emphasize the past within the context of a cyclical time theory - that is, when future is seen as an actualization or consequence of the past- no mental “organ” for the future, no Will, is posited; but, on the other hand, when they emphasize the future within the context of a rectilinear time theory-that is, when unique events are brought to be possible- an “organ” for the future is considered essential.¹¹⁶

Given the new possibility of an internal life and the new possibility of a genuine future that could be a harbinger of novel events, a new experience of freedom ascribed to the Will was possible: the freedom of the Will, or philosophical freedom.¹¹⁷ Neither philosophical nor political freedom were born in the philosophical tradition; however, the fact that a mental faculty had been discovered and with which freedom could be ascribed to, in addition to its being experienced in solitude, made the freedom of the Will eligible to be subjected to philosophical speculation.

Political freedom, on the other hand, was not eligible for philosophical investigation, for it is conditioned by plurality. Arendt upholds that the main feature of philosophy, in its historical tradition, is its concern with man in his singularity, and not his plurality. She argues that:

It lies in the nature of philosophy to deal with man in the singular, whereas politics could not even be conceived of if men did not exist in the plural. Or to put it another way: the experiences of the philosopher- insofar as he is a philosopher-

¹¹⁵ Ibid.,13, 18, 32.

¹¹⁶ Young-Bruehl, “Reflections on Hannah Arendt’s *The Life of the Mind*,” 157.

¹¹⁷ The rectilinear time concept was an essential precedent and condition to the modern idea of progress; an idea which is not conceivable without the concept of rectilinear time

are with solitude, while for man- insofar as he is political-solitude is an essential but nevertheless marginal experience.¹¹⁸

Hence, philosophical freedom as an attempt to exercise freedom in singularity was a hope of redemption for people, who were exempted from the elite class of citizens. Freedom in plurality was not guaranteed for everyone, and is, as well, conditioned by the consent of the multitude to grant and secure the freedom of the movement of the body.

III. B. The Discovery of the Will

Since the discovery of the Will is datable, Arendt's method in tackling the faculty of Will is historical.¹¹⁹ Arendt dates the discovery of the Will to the Apostle Paul. She states that "the Will and its necessary Freedom in all their complexity were first discovered by Paul."¹²⁰ Concomitant with Paul's conversion and preaching on behalf of Christianity, Epictetus, who was a freed slave, was also able to discover the Will and its capacities through a rather different experience with Stoicism.

After Paul and Epictetus raised the complexities of the Will, Augustine, the first philosopher of the Will, as Arendt labels him, attempted to solve the problems of the Will by transforming it into love. Eight centuries later, in the Middle Ages, Aquinas and Duns Scotus were interested in contending over the problems of the Will, not in isolation, but in its relation to the intellect. These contentions were the exact problem of free will,

¹¹⁸ The quote from a speech presented to the American Society of Political Scientists in 1954 entitled "Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought," quoted from Barash, "The Political Dimension of the Public World," 251.

¹¹⁹ Young-Bruehl, "Reflections on Hannah Arendt's *The Life of the Mind*," 157.

¹²⁰ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 18.

which Arendt affirms. She elaborates that we should not be mistaken by the synonymous discussions in relation to the problem of freedom, in the political sense.

Arendt abstracts two general historical human experiences that brought about the Will and its alleged freedom. The first, is the human experience in demand of voluntary submission to the Divine law; i.e. obedience vs. disobedience to the Divine law in theological terms. Arendt extrapolates this fundamental statement as follows:

...it was the experience of an imperative demanding *voluntary* submission that led to the discovery of the Will, and inherent in this experience was the wondrous fact of a freedom that none of the ancient peoples-Greek, Roman, or Hebrew- had been aware of, namely, that there is a faculty in man by virtue of which, regardless of necessity and compulsion, he can say “Yes” or “No,” agree or disagree with what is factually given, including his own self and his existences, and that this faculty may determine what he is going to do.¹²¹

And the second experience is the experience whereby freedom becomes a problem; i.e. “when men begin to doubt the coincidence of the Thou-shalt and the *I-can*...the question arises: *Are things that concern only me within my power.*”¹²² Both of these experiences are manifested in the experience of Apostle Paul.

III. B. 1. Paul and Epictetus

Paul noticed that law is hard to fulfill. Thus, while there is a will to fulfill the law, the real ability of the agent for fulfilment is diminished.¹²³ In other words, there is an “*I cannot*”

¹²¹ Ibid., 68

¹²² Ibid., 63.

¹²³ Ibid., 55-73. Arendt relies on Bible in addressing Paul’s view, especially: Galatians, Corinthians, Luke, Matthew, Romans. This observation of Paul, that the law could not be fulfilled might be related to his time when he was a Jew. The law of Judaism was very hard to fulfil and to live according to its orders and preventions. Quran preserved many of the legislations of Jews that is easy to recognize how hard they were.

regarding the commands of law even if the agent has the “*I will*.” In addition, the voluntary submission required by the law from its followers implies that there is a possibility of refusal to voluntary submission to the law, i.e. the will might will (submit voluntarily to the law) or might *nill* (refuse to submit to the law). Arendt explains that Paul discovered the two-in-one that Socrates had discovered previously.¹²⁴ However, while the Socratic two-in-one is in friendship and is indispensable for a solitary dialogue or thinking, the two-in-one of Paul is problematic, because the split between the mental willing and the real ability would incite a conflict between the *I-will* and the *I-can*, or the *I-will* and the *I-nill*.

Paul does not see any possible solution to the conflict within the range of human capacity, “so that even if the law is obeyed and fulfilled, there remains this inner resistance.”¹²⁵ Only divine grace can resolve the conflict and give peace to the Will. Hence, for Paul, the Will is utterly impotent “because it hinders itself”¹²⁶ and it requires divine salvation.

Concomitantly, Epictetus’s philosophy was interested in making the freedom of the slave possible. How could one be a slave in the world and still *feel* free? It seems also

So it is plausible that Paul’s insistence on “I cannot” was a solution to the problem faced by a Jew that he is not able to submit completely to the Divine Law.

¹²⁴ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 64. Arendt considers that thinking is not possible unless you think with yourself, that is, thinking is an internal dialogue between me and myself. She thinks that Socrates discovered that two-in-one that is indispensable for thinking. She also considers that the two-in-one is the forerunner of consciousness.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

that Epictetus was not troubled with the conflict of the demand of the submission to law, but he was more concerned with the problem of inability in the outer world.¹²⁷

Epictetus discovered that the mind could retain outward “impressions”; and, thus, it could deal with the outside things as mere data of consciousness.¹²⁸ For him, man has no power over the outward world; yet, he is gifted with mental capacities that enable him to represent the outward world in his own inwardness. This implies that man is able to rule over himself and over what concerns him only.¹²⁹ Epictetus continues to argue, as Arendt explains, that reason teaches the will what is within the limit of will’s power and what is outside of its power. Accordingly, the Will has the sovereign decision to command itself to do only that which is within the scope of its power. It restricts itself to exercise its sovereignty in inwardness only. When the will is entirely capable of mastering and ruling the inwardness state, man will be indifferent and invulnerable to the outside circumstances and miseries.

The status of limiting oneself to live in inwardness and to withdraw from the outside world demands continuous training. This is for two reasons: first, “man lives his ordinary life in the world as it is,” and second, “his inside itself is located within some outside, a body that is not in his power but belongs to outside things.”¹³⁰ Nonetheless, despite the hardness of keeping this training in the face of the miseries of the outside reality and the vulnerability of the human body, the man, who succeeds in training his will to “will what happens anyhow” and to “will what *is*” and “thus never be at odds with

¹²⁷ Sources of Arendt for extracting Epictetus’s Doctrine: *Discourses*, the *Manual*, and *Fragments*.

¹²⁸ Arendt, *The Life of the mind/Willing*, 76.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

outward things,”¹³¹ would achieve the status of invulnerability or *atarxia*. While Paul concludes from his experience that the will is impotent, Epictetus concludes that the will is omnipotent for its sovereignty over itself, because nothing could hinder the Will other than itself and its capability to bracket reality.

III. B. 2. Unifying the Will

Augustine, the first philosopher of the Will, went beyond Apostle Paul and Epictetus. In Arendt’s analysis of Augustine’s philosophy, she explains his claim in which he states that the Will might will and might find no obstacle to realize its willing. Nevertheless, it still might not be able to perform. “It is possible to will and, in the absence of any outside hindrance still be unable to perform!”¹³² Thus, Augustine is critical of Stoicism. He noticed that saying no to reality was not enough for tranquility.¹³³ He also remarked that the willed submissiveness regarding the Divine law presupposes a severe limitation on the willing capacity itself. Even the creed of belief in “creation” exerts more limitation on the willing capacity. In fact, “no created being can will against creation, for this would be a will directed not only against a counter-will, but also against the very existence of the willing or *nilling* subject.”¹³⁴ For this extreme inability of the Will, Augustine is against the Will’s omnipotence; and he claims that the Will needs redemption.

¹³¹ Ibid., 81.

¹³² Ibid., 87. Augustine’s writings that Arendt depended on in her account are the following: *On the Trinity*, *Confessions*, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, *Epistolae*, *On Grace and Free Will* and *the City of Go*.

¹³³ Ibid., 91.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Augustine demands that “a good man ought to conform his will to the divine will, so that he wills what God wills.”¹³⁵ In addition; he believes, like Paul and Epictetus, that the Will is spilt and thus is in conflict with itself. This is attested by the very fact that the Will always speaks in imperatives: “Thou shalt will.”¹³⁶ It is in the nature of the Will to command and to demand obedience. It is as well in its nature to be resisted.¹³⁷ Augustine, and Paul, seeks resolution to the conflict of the Will, but, Augustine seeks to resolve the division by reuniting the divided will and by transforming it into Love.¹³⁸ Although the transformation remained mysterious, as Arendt states, she concludes “...he diagnoses the ultimate unifying will that eventually decides a man’s conduct as *Love*.”¹³⁹

III. B. 3. Who was willing to pay the price?

Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, who came eight centuries after Augustine, were not interested in the Will *per se* and its own structure as an isolated faculty, but they were interested in its relation to the intellect and whether it is of higher rank with respect to the intellect.¹⁴⁰

Thomas assembled all faculties: Will, Choice, Intellect and Reason in one system. Arendt explains that he assembled the four faculties in the following manner: the two apprehensive faculties (the Intellect and the Will) and the two appetitive faculties (the

¹³⁵ Ibid., 92. This extreme fatalism is still playing an influential rule in the everyday life of many believers who are fanatic in ascribing every human action to God directly!

¹³⁶ Ibid., 94.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 96.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 104.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 95.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 117. Arendt’s main source of Aquinas is *Summa Theologica*; for Duns Scotus, she depends on two books by Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* and *The History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*.

Reason and the Choice) work together in harmony in one system and for an ultimate universal end. In the pursuit of the universal end “as the intellect has reasoning as its subordinate power for dealing with the particulars, the Will has free choice as its subservient helper in sorting out appropriate particular means to a universal end.”¹⁴¹

Despite the fact that both faculties, the Intellect and the Will, pursue the same universal end, which is Being (truth and good), the faculty of Intellect, according to Aquinas has primacy over the Will, because the intellect’s end is truth and truth compels; yet, it does not coerce. On the other hand, the end of the Will is good; and the good does not compel; yet, the Will commands and coerces towards doing the good.¹⁴²

III. B. 3. a. Autonomy and Limitation

Contrary to Aquinas, Duns Scotus decides that the Will is nobler and higher in rank than the Intellect for the Will is able to resist “the needs of desire on the one hand, and the dictates¹⁴³ of intellect and reason, on the other.”¹⁴⁴ Scotus recognizes the Will as an independent faculty from the things as they are; and he acknowledges that the only limitation of the Will is that “it cannot deny Being all together.”¹⁴⁵ Therefore, the Will can set limits to reason; however, it cannot limit the power of nature, whether the nature of the inner man, his inclinations, or the nature of the exterior circumstances.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 120.

¹⁴² Ibid., 116,120.

¹⁴³ By dictates, Arendt does not mean orders as the Will is the organ of commands not reason. By dictates, she means the compelling character of intellect being the organ of truth and truth is compelling.

¹⁴⁴ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/Willing*, 130.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Despite this limitation, Scotus insists that even in this case, the Will can still exercise its omnipotence, by refusing to submit to the coercion of nature or necessity. The exercise would be a mental exercise only. Arendt explains this mental freedom in the following passage:

The Will's autonomy... decisively limits the power of reason...but it does not limit the power of nature, be it the nature of the inner man, called 'inclination,' or that of exterior circumstances. The will is by no means omnipotent in its actual effectiveness: its force consists solely in that it cannot be coerced to will. To illustrate this mental freedom, Scotus gives the example of a man 'who hurls himself from a high place'...while man is necessarily falling, compelled by the law of gravity, he remains free to continue 'to will to fall,' and can also of course change his mind, in which case he would be unable to undo what he started voluntarily and would find himself in the hands of necessity."¹⁴⁶

III. B. 3. b. The Characteristic of the Will

Arendt cherishes Duns Scotus among all philosophers. She believes that he is the only philosopher who is willing to pay the price of contingency for the gift of freedom.¹⁴⁷ She writes "...his quintessential thought-contingency, the price gladly paid for freedom- he had neither predecessors nor successors."¹⁴⁸

Duns Scotus believes that the Will's main characteristic regarding freedom is that its openness to contraries, namely, the Will can will the thing and its opposite at the same time. Arendt quotes Scotus: "it is in the power of our will to will and to *nill*, which are contraries, with respect to the same object."¹⁴⁹ Scotus asserts the idea that, as quoted by Arendt, "the essential characteristic of our volitional act is ... the power to choose

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 131-132.

¹⁴⁷ Arendt praises Scotus very much and sees him, may be, as more important than Aquinas. She states "if there is such a thing as Christian philosophy, then Duns Scotus would have to be recognized not only as "the most important thinker of the Christian Middle Ages" but perhaps also as the unique one who did not seek a compromise between the Christian faith and Greek philosophy"

¹⁴⁸ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/Willing*, 133.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 130.

between opposite things and to revoke the choice once it has been made.”¹⁵⁰ The attribute of openness to contraries at the same time is peculiar to the Will. Neither desire nor intellect can side with the Will regarding this criterion. Arendt interprets Duns Scotus as follows: “An object presented to desire can only attract or repel, and an issue presented to the intellect can only be affirmed or negated. But it is the basic quality of our will that we may will or *nill* the object presented by reason or desire.”¹⁵¹

As a consequence to the ability of the Will to will and *nill* a particular object at the same time, the Will is able to suspend a second volition. The ability of the mind to suspend the second volition is the very test of freedom. Arendt affirms that: “[suspension] is an important testimony to human freedom, to the mind’s ability to avoid all coercive determination from outside.”¹⁵² Simply, the Will knows that it could have willed the object that it actually *nilled* with no coercion. Scotus also confirms that “[the willing ego knows that] a decision actually taken need not have been taken and a choice other than the one actually made might have been made.”¹⁵³

III. B. 3. c. The Unconditional Bias to Freedom

Arendt depicts Scotus as a rescuer of human freedom. In every argument freedom is endangered because it confronts either the Divine providence or the law of causality.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 131.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 130.

Scotus makes choices and builds arguments to protect freedom. Indeed, his position on contingency and the primacy of the Will is for the sake of saving freedom.¹⁵⁴

We discussed earlier how Arendt interprets the letters of Paul and the philosophy of Augustine as doubting the human competency, and hence, seeking the Divine redemption to the split will. Scotus, unlike Paul and Augustine, finds no need for the Divine interference to redeem the split will. Scotus admits that all of man's natural capabilities "follow the laws laid down by divine Fiat."¹⁵⁵ Therefore, he neither sees contradiction between free will and nature, because man is part and parcel of nature; nor does he see contradiction between free will and the Divine providence, because man was created in God's image.¹⁵⁶

For Scotus, Will cannot *nil* the Being altogether as stated before. Thus, freedom of the Will is limited. Nevertheless, the Will still has the capacity to freely affirm, negate, love or hate whatever confronts it without being coerced by any cause of coercion,¹⁵⁷ whether it was an outside coercion or it was the coercion of another inside mental faculty, namely: desire or reasoning.¹⁵⁸

Freedom in Scotus has a limitation and a capacity: a limitation of a man who is created and subjected to God's Will, and a capacity to have unconditional position from being. In other words, to love a being is a position, to hate a being is a position, and to deny or to accept a being is a position. All these positions are taken freely. According to

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 135.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 136.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 135.

Scotus, as Arendt interprets him, nothing could coerce the Will to take a particular position; even if there is an external coercion, the Will still could not be coerced!

III. B. 3. d. Causality and Contingency

Free will was problematic, not only because of its apparent contradiction with the Divine providence, but also because of the law of causality. Arendt explains that “theoretically, the trouble has always been that Free Will... seems utterly incompatible, not just with divine providence, but with the law of causality.”¹⁵⁹ She adds that Scotus knew the law of causality in its Aristotelian version as “a chain of causation that would make movement intelligible and ultimately lead to an unmoved source of all motions, the unmoved mover, a cause that itself is not caused.”¹⁶⁰

Scotus accepts Aristotle’s law of causality; nevertheless, he accepts it not uncritically because if he accepted the law of causality as it is, freedom would be at stake. Scotus, on the other hand, did not reject the law of causality, neither did he refute it. However, he developed the theory of causality and modified it into a theory that can accommodate or rather explain freedom.

Arendt claims that Scotus began his discussion by asking the question “whether the act of the will is caused in the will by the object moving it or by the will moving itself.”¹⁶¹ In fact, he rejects both answers. To explain, he rejects the first one, will is moved by object because it is entirely contradicting to his principle on the Will’s

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 32.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 137.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

autonomy and hence of freedom (or his unconditional commitment to freedom). Scotus, as well, rejects the second answer that the Will is moving itself because it contradicts his principle of the Will's limitation. Arendt also adds that if the second answer is accepted, there would be consequences to volition, which could not be explained. She did not clarify what these consequences are.

The rejection of both answers led Scotus to adopt a median position and to develop a theory called "theory of concurrent-partial causes," which can save both necessity and freedom, as Arendt argues. To explain his theory of concurrent causes, another factor should be explained. It is Scotus's critique of Aristotle's account of causality.

Scotus noticed that "the strength of the argument, or, rather, its explicatory force, lies in the assumption that no more than one cause is sufficient to explain why something should be rather than not-be, that is to explain motion and change."¹⁶² Arendt argues that Scotus challenges the chain-oriented theory of causality and proposes a theory of causality that includes many concurrent causes for a thing to-be. The prime example for Scotus is the simple daily fact of reproduction: "two independent substances, male and female, must come together to bring forth a child." As a result, "he reaches the theory that all change occurs because a plurality of causes happens to coincide, and the coincidence engenders the texture of reality in human affairs."¹⁶³

As a matter of fact, the theory of partial-concurrent causes proved that the very phenomenon, change and motion, that led Aristotle to the law of causality, also led

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Scotus to the notion that change and motion are ruled by contingency.¹⁶⁴ His theory led him even to a different concept of contingency than that of Aristotle. Scotus prefers to say that something is caused contingently rather than saying that something is contingent.

Arendt quotes Scotus:

by contingent, said Scotus, “I do not mean something that is not necessary or which was not always in existence, but something whose opposite could have occurred at the time that this actually did. That is why I do not say that something is contingent, but that something is *caused contingently*.”¹⁶⁵ (Italics added)

Arendt explains Scotus in her own words by saying that “it is precisely the causative element in human affairs that condemns them to contingency and unpredictability.” She praises Scotus for his quite challenging position on the notion of contingency itself.

Scotus was the only thinker, according to Arendt, for “whom the word contingent has no derogatory association.” For him, “contingency is a positive mode of Being, just as necessary is another mode.”¹⁶⁶ He was also quite shocking for his opponents, who were in doubt about contingency. He confronts them with this example: “let all those who deny contingency be tortured until they admit that it would be possible *not* to be tortured.”¹⁶⁷

For Scotus’ quite unique position on contingency, Arendt states that “nothing indeed could be in greater contradiction to every philosophical tradition than this insistence on the contingent character of processes.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 138.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 134.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Arendt said that this example is borrowed by Scotus from Avicenna. Scotus was influenced by the Avicenna philosophy on contingency.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 138. Scotus was a Franciscan monk who was committed to his Christian faith; for hence, Arendt finds his position on Freedom is quite unique and challenging.

III. C. The Modern Age

With the rise of modernity, there was more need for an organ for future, since modernity obviously emphasized the future and the concept of progress. While medieval speculations regarding the Will were still dominant in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, the discussions following Kant were dramatically different.¹⁶⁹ However, Arendt skipped Kant because, for him, “the Will is not a special mental capability distinct from thinking, but practical reason, a *Vernunftwille* not unlike Aristotle’s *nous praktikos*.”¹⁷⁰ She also continues to justify the absence of the Will as a mental faculty from Kant’s philosophy: “Kant’s Will is neither freedom of choice (*liberum arbitrium*) nor its own cause; for Kant, sheer spontaneity, which he often called “absolute spontaneity,” exists only in thinking, Kant’s will is delegated by reason to be its executive organ in all matters of conduct.”¹⁷¹

Arendt observes that with the last stage of the modern age: “Will begins to be substituted for reason as man’s highest mental faculty.”¹⁷² At the turn of the Nineteenth Century, “it became fashionable to equate Willing and Being.” For this reason, Arendt proposes that for the philosophers of German Idealism, the Will was not a mental faculty, but is transformed into an ontological entity.¹⁷³ She states that for Schiller “no power of man but his will,” for Schopenhauer “the Kantian thing in itself is the Will,” for Schelling, “in the final and highest instance there is no other Being than Will.” This view

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 149.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 20.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 158.

on Will finally culminated in Hegel.¹⁷⁴ Due to this transformation of the Will and its eventual equation with Being, Arendt exempts the philosophers of the Will from her historical exposition for she considers the Will a faculty of mind, not an ontological entity. She clarified “ [I have] omitted from our considerations that body of thought, German Idealism, in which sheer speculation in the realm of metaphysics perhaps reached its climax together with its end.”¹⁷⁵

Two modern philosophers were still relevant to her objectives: Nietzsche and Heidegger. Nietzsche, who refuted the theory of the freedom of the Will for the last time, was depicted by Arendt as a convert to ancient philosophy whose main inquiry was into Being and his thought of eternal return was a conversion to the ancient cyclical concept of time which means restricting the Will to willing that whatever happens shall happen again and again.¹⁷⁶ While Nietzsche repudiated the Will, Heidegger broke later with the modern philosophy and its belief in progress, and he concluded that the Will should will not-to-will.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 20.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 157-8.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 22.

IV THE RELATION

Having explained Arendt's exposition of political and philosophical freedom, I shall turn now to the question of: What is the relation between political and philosophical freedom, if any? As a matter of fact, Arendt sees no relation between the two types of freedom other than the utter opposition of one to the other. I, however, infer three main aspects of opposition between the two types: first, the *origin* or the human experiences that gave rise to each one of them; second, the *location* of both of each; third, the conditions that determine the existence or the experience of each one of them. The best description of the relation between the two types is that they are completely distinct and differentiated from each other.

IV. A. The Three Aspects of Differentiation

IV. A. 1. The Origin

The basic human experience that gave rise to each one of the two types of freedom is completely different in nature. Political freedom originated in the human experience of inserting ones' self in the world by words and deeds. Philosophical freedom, on the contrary, originated in the human experience of withdrawing ones' self from the world into the inwardness of one's self, which no other selves has access to. Hence, political freedom would have an appearance in the world, while philosophical freedom would not have an appearance. Arendt considers anything that has no appearance in the world as unpolitical by definition, such as experiencing one's own will.

According to Arendt, the original freedom is the political freedom. Men, originally, lived together in a political community and experienced freedom in their mutual interactions. She elaborates that “we first become aware of freedom or its opposite in our intercourse with others, not in the intercourse with ourselves.”¹⁷⁸ She affirms that the experience of inner freedom would not be possible if it were not preceded by the experience of political freedom. She states that “man would know nothing of inner freedom if he had not first experienced a condition of being free as a worldly tangible reality.”¹⁷⁹

The World, which exists because of the human existence, is a decisive factor in the human experiences of freedom since the world functions as the scene of human action. To be more specific, action does not take place in nature. If man existed in nature, he would be reduced to *animal laborans*. That is, he will be occupied only with satisfying his bodily needs and protecting his body from dangers of nature. On the other hand, the World, which is conditioned by the human activity of work, is the scene of human action since it gives the possibility for human beings to liberate themselves from mere bodily needs and to fabricate a world of their own that would be a scene for action; “work... corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence.”¹⁸⁰

Political freedom in the Greek experience was conditioned by having a home (or private space) in the world. Obviously, this is not guaranteed for everyone. Having one’s private space in the world as a condition to be free in the public realm is automatically

¹⁷⁸ Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 148.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7.

excluding the one who does not have his own space. This misfortune applies to many groups in the *polis*, such as slaves, women and foreigners. Consequently, how could one who is a slave in the world, for instance, experience freedom? This was the burden and concern of Epictetus, who was a freed slave. Epictetus, as Arendt depicts, was looking for a home in the world, but he did not find one. Thus, he turned inside his own self to find a home that is not conditioned by any external conditions. As a consequence, the experience of freedom in the outer world was transposed to the inner world. And hence, the experience of inner freedom is a derivative in character. “The experiences of inner freedom are derivative in that they always presuppose a retreat from the world, where freedom was denied, into an inwardness to which no other has access.”¹⁸¹ Not only Epictetus transposed the experience itself from outside to inside, he also transformed the worldly relations that conditioned freedom into relations within one’s own self.¹⁸² In other words, as the outer experience of freedom was conditioned by owning a home and liberating ones’ self from necessities by ruling and dominating over others, who are not free, the experience of inner freedom must be the same. Arendt clarifies this transposing experience by stating that:

Epictetus transposed these worldly relations [having a place in the world and having power over others] into relations within man’s own self, whereby he discovered that no power is so absolute as that which man yields over himself, and that the inward space where man struggles and subdues himself is more entirely his own, namely, more securely shielded from outside interference, than any worldly home could ever be.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 148.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 148.

The Experience of Epictetus could be interpreted as an early attempt to break up the notion of freedom from the notion of politics for the sake of granting freedom to slaves and reach a formulation “through which one may be a slave in the world and still be free.”¹⁸⁴

IV. A. 2. The Location

Understanding the experiences that gave rise to each one of the two freedoms, it is possible to say that a main difference between both of them is the location of each one. In other words, one could ask the question “what is the location of freedom?” Experiencing freedom in the external world, where freedom would have an appearance and worldly relations, is the political freedom; while experiencing freedom in the internal life, where freedom hides from the world and lacks an appearance is philosophical freedom. Ilya Winham agrees that “to attribute freedom to the (*I-will*) even if you could not do what you will to do, is to separate freedom from movement in the world and thus from action (*I-can*), and to locate it in intercourse with yourself.”¹⁸⁵

Arendt, however, does not ask the question “where is the location of freedom?” She rather asks the question “where is the *proper* location of freedom?”¹⁸⁶ As a matter of fact, Arendt does not see philosophical freedom as a genuine or a correct form of

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 147. Arendt does not clarify why the freed slaves of the first century A.D. did not struggle in the outer world to have a “space” and to have “freedom” instead of formulating the doctrine of Stoicism, which Arendt regards as having no relation with philosophy other than its name.

¹⁸⁵ Winham, “Rereading Hannah Arendt’s What is Freedom?,” 93.

¹⁸⁶ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 19.

practicing freedom. Her reason is that the quality of freedom should be the *I-can*, where it manifests in the outer world with other fellows; while philosophical freedom is a quality of the *I-will*, where it is limited only to the inner realm. Arendt's real concern in posing the question in the form of "what is the proper location of freedom?" is to re-marry politics and freedom again after they had been divorced for long centuries of philosophical speculations centered on the theme of inner freedom or free will.

Arendt points out that it is only when the location of human freedom is transposed from outside into inside, it is possible to incorporate the problem of freedom or the question of freedom into the discipline of philosophy. Philosophy did not deal with the subject of freedom in the political realm before theology accomplished the job of transposing locations. This is for the reason that philosophy deals with human beings in singularity only, not in plurality. When freedom was transposed into the inner domain of man, it was ready to go under philosophical speculations. Thus, freedom became a synonym to free will. As Arendt puts it:

Only when the early Christians, and especially Paul, discovered a kind of freedom which had no relation to politics, could the concept of freedom enter the history of philosophy when it was experienced as something occurring in the intercourse between men. Free will and freedom became synonymous notions, and the presence of freedom was experienced in complete solitude, "where no man might hinder the hot contention wherein I had engaged with myself," the deadly conflict which took place in the "inner dwelling" of the soul and the dark "chamber of the heart."¹⁸⁷

And she also reiterates the same idea in the following passage:

...philosophers first began to show an interest in the problem of freedom when freedom was no longer experienced in acting and in associating with others but in

¹⁸⁷ Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 158. The quote of Arendt is for Augustine.

willing and in the intercourse with one's self, when, briefly, freedom had become free will. Since then, freedom has been a philosophical problem of the first order...¹⁸⁸

IV. A. 3. The Conditions

Having explained the differences between the origin and location of both philosophical and political freedom, it is likely to recapitulate the conditions of each. Neither occurs naturally or automatically, but there are conditions for each one to exist or to be experienced.

Political freedom could not exist in a place other than where men live together in a body-politic that is regulated by laws, norms and traditions. Not every body-politic secures action-based interactions between its members. Only the body-politic founded upon the principle of making action possible in a public realm (where agents can relate to each other by words and deeds). This is in addition to the condition of equality between its agents (i.e. not allowing the form of ruler-ship among the agents, neither to rule, nor to be ruled). Moreover, the intersubjective space and the bodies of agents should be in a secure and safe state for interactions, and must not be threatened by fear and insecurity.

Arendt recapitulates political freedom by stating:

Political freedom is distinct from philosophical freedom in being clearly a quality of the *I-can* and not of the *I-will*. Since it is possessed by the citizen rather than by man in general, it can manifest itself only in communities, where the many who live together have their intercourse both in word and in deed regulated by a great number of rapport-laws, customs, habits, and the like.¹⁸⁹

On the other hand, philosophical freedom is conditioned by isolation and solitude. No action in philosophical freedom, but only training is required to exercise ones' will and

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 163.

¹⁸⁹ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 200.

master the self-inwardness. Moreover, philosophical freedom (or exercising free will) does not need a public space to be experienced nor does it need other fellows and hence it needs no recognition. Indeed, nothing could verify or testify free will because it has no appearance; it is completely solipsistic. Arendt writes: “Nothing indeed can be more frightening than the notion of solipsistic freedom- the “feeling” that me standing apart, isolated from everyone else, is due to free will, that nothing and nobody can be held responsible for it but me myself.”¹⁹⁰

As a matter of fact, political and philosophical freedoms are limited. The political type is limited because of the law or the constitution that includes normative principles even if they are human-made; in other words, there is what “ought” to be done. Arendt refers to Montesquieu on this matter. As the French thinker says:

It is true that in democracies the people seem to act as they please; but political liberty does not consist in an unlimited freedom. In...societies directed by laws, liberty can consist only in the power of doing what we ought to will, and in not being constrained to do what we ought not to will.¹⁹¹

Similarly, free will is, as well, limited. The Will could not deny Being altogether, as Duns Scotus pointed out. Philosophical freedom is also limited by the body’s vulnerabilities. And this is how suicide was justified in Stoicism (i.e. when outside circumstances were no longer bearable). According to the Stoics, life after death is another form of being, exactly as life on earth is a form of being.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 195-6.

¹⁹¹ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 150.

¹⁹² Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 82.

The difference between the political and the philosophical freedom has not been outlined clearly before Arendt outlined it in “What is Freedom?” and in the *Life of the Mind/Willing*. In our understanding, we tend to think that free will (Philosophical freedom) and freedom (political freedom) are synonyms. In fact, Arendt points out that only Montesquieu noticed the difference: not because he was interested in the question itself, but because he realized that free will, as articulated in his time, did not suffice for political and the legal purposes. In the chapter entitled “Of the Liberty of the Subject,” Montesquieu explains that “philosophical liberty consists in the free exercise of the will; or at least, if we must speak agreeably of our will. Political liberty consists in security, or at least in the opinion that we enjoy security.”¹⁹³

IV. B. The Reversal and the Problem of Sovereignty

Another aspect that might shed light on the significance of understanding the two types of freedom as separate phenomena is to ask the question: what if both types have been exercised inter-changeably? What if we attempted to exercise the *I-can* in the internal realm and the *I-will* in the external realm? Arendt suggests that it is irrelevant to exercise the *I-can* in the inner self because the *I-can* always expresses itself in the outside and always has an appearance. Political freedom consists mainly in action, and since I could not act with myself, I could not experience the political freedom in solitude: “action... is never possible in solitude or isolation.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 183.

¹⁹⁴ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 59.

Similarly, philosophical freedom as an attempt to master the inwardness has no appearance; therefore, it is politically irrelevant. Arendt argues that “this inner feeling remains without outer manifestations and hence is by definition politically irrelevant.”¹⁹⁵

However, the *I-will* might have the ambition to cross the boundaries of the self and to extend itself in the public realm. In this case, if the philosophical freedom is applied as such on the political realm, it will lead to endangering and cancelling political freedom. To explain, the *I-will* constitutes itself in giving commands and demanding obedience.¹⁹⁶ The mastering of the internal realm means that one should be sovereign on his own self, that is to say, having the supreme authority to command one’s self and coerce it to obey.

Most conspicuously, if the *I-will* extends itself to the political realm, where others also exist, it will exercise the same capacities: the capacity to command and to coerce for demanding obedience; ultimately, to be sovereign over others. Exercising philosophical freedom as such in the public realm implies hierarchy and presupposes inequality; hence, to preclude the possibility of action, action should be between equals. Not to mention that the mode of interaction in the command-obedience model is incompatible with the mode of interaction in action-based models. The problem of sovereignty is a manifestation of the exercise of free will in the public realm. Arendt asserts that: “...as such it was applied to the political realm and thus has become a political problem as well. Because of the philosophical shift from action to will-power...the ideal of freedom ceased to be

¹⁹⁵ Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 146.

¹⁹⁶ As Aquinas pointed out Will commands and coerce while truth compels. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/Willing*, 120.

virtuosity...and became sovereignty, the ideal of free will, independent from others and eventually prevailing against them.”¹⁹⁷

The faculty that identifies itself in commanding and obeying could not be a faculty for freedom, but could only be a faculty for oppression, and therefore something anti-political. Arendt explains that “the faculty of will and will-power in and by itself...is and essentially nonpolitical and even ant-political.”¹⁹⁸ The conflict that is inherent in the formulation of *I-will* and *I-nill* or the *I-will* and *I-cannot* shall be transformed in the public realm between numerous wills which, needless to say, would be in continuous struggles and conflicts. In this case, the most powerful individual will, will end up taking over the public realm and oppressing other wills. The other possibility that Arendt explains is when an organized group succeed to reach a consensus in the “general will.”

Arendt argues that any political theory, which implies equating between free will and freedom, leads to either one of two fatal consequences: either to cancel political freedom entirely or to grant freedom of the will to one individual or one group at the expense of canceling the freedom of others. Arendt elaborates as follows:

Politically, this identification of freedom with sovereignty is perhaps the most pernicious and dangerous consequence of the philosophical equation of freedom and free will. For it leads either to a denial of human freedom... or to the insight that the freedom of one man, or a group, or a body politic can be purchased only at the prices of the freedom, i.e., the sovereignty, of all others.¹⁹⁹

As philosophical freedom or the free will requires sovereignty, which is obviously fatal to political freedom, Arendt adds an additional protective guarantee to political

¹⁹⁷ Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 163.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 164.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

freedom. It is the condition of non-sovereignty. Freedom and sovereignty cannot be identical and cannot exist simultaneously. Freedom consists in action while sovereignty constitutes in command. While Arendt did not solve the problem of how the condition of non-sovereignty could be realized, we can understand how a body-politic based on sovereignty turns out to be inimical to freedom. Arendt explains that:

Where men wish to be sovereign, as individuals or as organized groups, they must submit to the oppression of the will, be this, the individual will with which I force myself, or the “general will” of an organized group. If men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 164-5.

V THE TRANSFORMATION

Having explained Arendt's unique exposition and differentiation between political and philosophical freedom, it still seems that the problem of freedom has not been settled. In modern times we claim that we are *for* freedom; simultaneously, we assert that the notion of sovereignty is indispensable for keeping the body-politic functioning. The contradiction seems left unsettled.

Not surprisingly, Hannah Arendt did not aim at reconciliation between opposing rivals, though she is unconditionally biased towards political freedom. Arendt went back to the pre-Socratic Greeks to find refuge in a world where freedom was constituted in action, not in willing.²⁰¹ However, she admits that human experiences that led to the discovery of the *I-will* and the human experiences of the philosophical freedom are impossible to undo. Philosophical freedom is rooted and integrated in the body of the philosophical, the religious and even the political traditions. Arendt explains how the philosophical notion of freedom insinuated itself into the principles of the men of action. She asserts that: "the philosophical ancestry of our current political notion of freedom is still quite manifest in the eighteenth-century political writers, when, for instance, Thomas Paine insisted that "to be free it is sufficient [for man] that he wills it," a word which Lafayette applied to the nation-state."²⁰²

²⁰¹ I do not know why Hannah just ignored the very fact that she is a woman and thus, if she had existed in the ancient Greek times, she would not have granted freedom! Her denial of the gender question is obvious and remarked by scholars like Seyla Benhabib. Look at Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*. For this reason, I consider Arendt's study of the Greek experience as a methodology not as a normative reference.

²⁰² Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 163.

How could freedom be protected from such an assault of the commanding and oppressing faculty? Since it is apparently impossible to undo the experiences of the past, I argue that Arendt's insistence on the notion of beginning as a way of action and a way to express one's freedom is actually an attempt for the transformation of the faculty of the Will into a faculty of Beginning. To argue for the thesis of transformation, I shall explain how Arendt has been inspired by Augustine and Kant to articulate her notion of beginning, which starts off from the mind but ends up in the external world.

Arendt calls the philosophy of Augustine "a philosophy of natality." His speculations on the *creation of Man* might have led him to define human beings as *natales*, not as mortals like the Greeks. Augustine's addresses of the question of "why it was necessary to create Man, apart from and above all other living beings," and he gave a rather surprising reply. He argues that "in order that there may be novelty, a beginning never before existed, that is, not before Man's creation."²⁰³ Moreover, he gives much more significance to the creation of Man than to the creation of the world. He designates two different words for the creation of each: he used the word *initium* for the creation of Man and *principium* for the creation of heaven and earth. Augustine assumes that other creatures were created in numbers, while Man "was created in the singular and continued to be 'propagated from individuals.'"²⁰⁴ The individuality of man, which accompanied him from his very beginning, expresses itself in the Will. Thus, Arendt infers from Augustine that "every man, being created in the singular, is a new beginning by virtue of

²⁰³ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 108.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

his birth.”²⁰⁵ Hence, the beginning, which implies novelty, is the very manifestation of the Will. As the creation of man has never been preceded by any similar creature and as he himself is a beginning, he is able to initiate beginnings.

The beginning as a beginning that has not been preceded is one determining element of Arendt’s concept of freedom. The other element is spontaneity, which Arendt draws obviously from Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he proved that the faculty of beginning a series is an act of freedom. Kant explains that:

...the faculty of beginning a series in time entirely on its own is thereby proved, now we are permitted also to allow that in the course of the world different series may begin on their own as far as their causality is concerned and to ascribe to the substances in those series the faculty of *acting from freedom*.²⁰⁶ [Italics added]

Kant differentiates between the absolute and the relative beginning, which Arendt takes to be very similar to Augustine’s differentiation between *principium* and *initium*.²⁰⁷ The relative beginning is preceded by another state of affairs, but only in time not in causality.

Kant claims that:

One should not, however, be stopped here by a misunderstanding, namely, that since a successive series in the world can have only a comparatively first beginning, because a state of the world must always precede it, perhaps no absolutely first beginning of the series is possible during the course of the world. For here we are talking of *an absolute beginning not as far as time is concerned but as far as causality is concerned*.²⁰⁸ [Italics added]

Nevertheless, Arendt points out that there is something remarkable regarding what Kant calls “absolute spontaneity.” That is to say, spontaneity, as Kant argues in the

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A450/B478.

²⁰⁷ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 110.

²⁰⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A450/B478.

above passage exists only in thinking and not in willing. Therefore, Arendt infers that Kant's Will is not a separate mental faculty, but "a practical reason." In other words, "Kant's Will is delegated by reason to be its executive organ in all matters of conduct."²⁰⁹

Arendt criticizes Kant in the example of the chair, whereby he attempts to illustrate what he means by *absolute beginning regarding causality*, which he considers to be the human act of freedom. Kant states that:

If (for example) I am now entirely free, and get up from my chair without the necessarily determining influence of natural causes, then in this occurrence, along with its natural consequences to infinity, there begins an absolutely new series, even though as far as time is concerned this occurrence is only the continuation of a previous series. For this decision and deed do not lie within the succession of merely natural effects and are not a mere continuation of them; rather, the determining natural causes of that series entirely cease in regard to this event... therefore it must be called, not as far as time is concerned but in regard to causality, *an absolutely first beginning of a series of appearances*.²¹⁰ [Italics added]

Arendt's main critique is that this example does not count for a free act because it lacks an important element, which is the element of the role of mind in the act. Only when there is "something in mind he wishes to do" does this series of events count for freedom in Arendt's account. She objects to Kant by saying:

...there is something fundamentally wrong with Kant's example. Only if he, arising from his chair, has something in mind he wishes to do, does this 'event' start a 'new series'; if this is not the case, if he habitually gets up at this time or if he gets up in order to fetch something he needs for his present occupation, this event is itself 'the continuation of a preceding series.'²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 149.

²¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A450/B478.

²¹¹ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind/ Willing*, 30.

Therefore, in Arendt's view, this example would be significant in relation to her concept of freedom as spontaneity, as long as it is reinterpreted as an attempt to reconcile "new series of acts and states" with the time continuum that this 'new series' interrupts." In her critique, Arendt tries to make the interruption of the genuine unprecedented act to the time continuum a comprehensible act of freedom.

VI CONCLUSION

In conclusion, freedom for Arendt constitutes in bringing something new into existence, (i.e. something which has not been existed before). Thus, freedom causes events to happen, which appears in the guise of a miracle. And this miracle could not be predicted beforehand by any given state of affairs. The choice between two given things is not an act of freedom at all, for the two possibilities of choice already exist. Arendt asserts that to create something new, we should begin or initiate, and we should act together, not for or against others. Using the Kantian concept of spontaneity and the Augustinian concept of beginning, the faculty of Will would be no longer a faculty of command and coercion, but a faculty of future, of action, and of beginning.

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