

Hannah Arendt's Concept of 'Nativity' and the Vision of Political Solidarity as an 'On-going Process'

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The word 'solidarity' seems to be too ambiguous to be treated as a theoretical concept. Solidarity in its general usage means a form of interdependence and reciprocity between one person or group of people and another, so it can accommodate the rhetoric of any person or group in various concerns and contexts'. We can talk about 'social solidarity', 'national solidarity' or 'human solidarity', and we can say that 'we feel solidarity'; 'we display solidarity' and 'we have a sense of solidarity'; but we can never say exactly what 'it' is. What I propose in the following is not an attempt to give a strict definition to the concept of

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- 1 As a helpful attempt to theorize political solidarity, see Scholz, Sally J., *Political Solidarity*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. Scholz classifies three types of solidarity: social, civic, and political. 'Social solidarity' is connected with a social group that is based on shared interests or given identities (like a family, a club, an ethnic group, etc.). 'Civic solidarity' is connected with a political state in which people are united under shared moral obligations. The third form of solidarity which Scholz distinguishes from these two and calls 'political solidarity' is a unity that arises out of a conscious commitment to fight a perceived injustice.

solidarity but to display a perspective which urges us to see the fruitful insight of political solidarity as an on-going process in terms of Hannah Arendt's concept of 'natality'. For Arendt, "natality" is "the central category of political [thought]" because politics has to do with "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 strangers"². The kernel of her concept of natality is the vision that human beings come into the world "as strangers". What this suggests is that despite the elasticity of her usage of 'solidarity', nonetheless frame an Arendtian political solidarity within the mode of human birth. Natality discloses, as I will argue, a fruitful vision on political solidarity that is not the consequence of identification based on the existing community but an unpredictable event which comes into birth among strangers.

1.

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Richard Rorty argues that solidarity is one of the vocabularies that have been "de-theologized and de-philosophized" in the contemporary secularized societies. There is "nothing deeper than contingent historical circumstance", thus we should not "want something which stands beyond history and institutions". For Rorty, solidarity should not be regarded as a universal bond which encompasses the human race but as the feelings of similarities and the sense of identity which have developed in a particular historical community: "[M] orally as well as politically, our sense of solidarity is strongest when those with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as 'one of us', where 'us' means something smaller and more local than the human race"³. These claims may be relevant in concrete political

2 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago U. P., 1958, p.9 (emphasis added) -hereafter cited as HC.

3 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge U. P., 1989,

situations, for example, in a country where a statesman and his collaborators try to build a new national health insurance system. Other theorists such as David Miller puts an emphasis on the crucial importance of national solidarity for social policies and redistribution of wealth in the welfare state because it makes people feel the ethical duties owed to their fellow citizens⁴. Although Rorty identifies the range of 'us' with the range of a nation-state, the specific kind of national solidarity that he advocates is not, in his view, "incompatible with urging that we try to extend our sense of 'we' to people whom we have previously thought of as 'they'" because 'we' are 'liberals' who "are more afraid of being cruel than of anything else". The ethnocentrism of "we twentieth-century liberals" (or "Americans") is so decent and moderate that it can cultivate "the ability to see more and more traditional differences [...] as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation-the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of 'us'"⁵.

It sounds good. Rorty's claims are persuasive at least in the level of ordinary common sense (say, most of us, whether the westerns or not, wish to live in a liberal and democratic nation rather than a nation placed under the tyrannic rule of a cruel dictator). But the conception of political solidarity that Rorty demonstrates lacks an element indispensable to politics: that is, practice or action. As Darren Walhof points out, Rorty reduces solidarity to the result of recognition of similarities and differences. He never relates the process of mutual recognition among peoples to actual practices in concrete situations⁶. In his

p.189, 191

- 4 David Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford U. P., 1995
- 5 *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p.192. Rorty's liberal ethnocentrism might be compatible with the Habermasian move toward a "consensus utopia" (Leib, Ethan J., "Rorty's New School of American Pride: The Constellation of Contestation and Consensus", *Polity*, XXXVI-2, 2004, p.186).
- 6 Darren R. Walhof, "Friendship, Otherness, and Gadamer's Politics of Solidarity", *Political Theory*, XXXIV-5, 2006, p.573-5; see also, Stephan K.

vision, 'we liberals' need to do nothing actual to expand 'our sense of us' since it is tied with the liberal-democratic institutions which might be the consequence of historical contingency but are, for Rorty, nevertheless the best among all in the contemporary world. He never puts "the very belief in the superiority of the liberal way of life" into question and he assumes as if "through economic growth and the right kind of 'sentimental education' a universal consensus could be built around liberal institutions"⁷. According to Rorty, what 'we liberals' have to do in the public-political sphere is just to support the liberal institutions which strengthen 'our sense of us' and allow us to cultivate our decent sentiments in the private realm. If those who want to raise a radical doubt to the rightfulness of liberal principles and institutions like Nietzsche, Heidegger and Foucault, they should "privatize their projects" and "view them as irrelevant to politics" (p.197)⁸. Such an account of the distinction between the public and private, as Bonnie Honig suggests, seems to reveal Rorty's anxiety that people who are not in the range of 'us' would do damage to our liberal way of life⁹. It seems that in spite of his full confidence in his great liberal society Rorty curiously fears the disruptive intrusion of someone foreign or strange into it. He repeatedly claims that 'we liberals' should "expand our sense of 'us'" in order to "create a more expansive sense of solidarity". For him the process to expand the sense of solidarity is always the process to include 'them', as he describes in a Whitmanian fashion, the process of "inclusion among 'us' of the family in the next cave, then of the tribe across the river, then of the tribal confederation beyond the moun-

White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory*, Princeton U. P., 2000, p.15-7

7 Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, Verso, 2000, p.67

8 Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, p.192. See also, Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*, Harvard U. P., 1998, p.96

9 Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Princeton U. P., 2001, p.118f; see also, Raymond Geuss, "Richard Rorty at Princeton: Personal Recollections", in *Politics and the Imagination*, Princeton U. P., 2010

tains, then of the unbelievers beyond the seas". In such a process of inclusion, Rorty asserts, "we should stay on the lookout for marginalized people - people whom we still instinctively think of as 'they' rather than 'us'". In his view of the world, 'we twentieth-century liberals' always occupy the position to look 'them' out, whereas 'they' remain to be looked out. Such a unilateral perspective from 'us' to 'them' lets us keep "the ethnocentrism of a 'we' ('we liberals') which is dedicated to enlarging itself"¹⁰, but also, and perhaps more carefully, causes us to overlook the essential moment of politics, that is, the moment that they come unto us, look upon us and call out to us.

As an alternative to Rorty's conception of solidarity, I turn to Arendt's concept of natality in order to examine a different conceptualization of political solidarity. My attempt might sound curious to her critics who believe that Arendt admires ancient Greek city-states as an ideal form of political community that distinguishes the public realm from the private¹¹. According to such a view, we can find only a narrow and exclusive sense of solidarity among elite warrior-citizens in Arendt's writings. But Arendt, it should be noted, also argues that "the principle of freedom" and "the faculty of action" are "ontologically rooted" in "the fact of natality" which "Greek antiquity ignored" (HC: p.177, 247). We should not miss her critical evaluations of ancient Greek city-state¹²; rather, we should attend to the term 'principle' that is indispensable to grasping her theory of action. Arendt uses the term for the Latin word 'principium' and the Greek word 'archē' which both mean not only 'principle' but also 'beginning' (HC: p.177, 189; OR: p.212f). It is noteworthy that she describes solidarity as a principle: "Terminologically speaking, solidarity is a principle that can inspire and guide action, compassion is one of the passions, and pity is a senti-

10 Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, p.196, 198 (emphasis partly added).

11 Walhof, op.cit, p.587; Honig, op.cit, p.134f

12 See, Roy Tsao's excellent arguments in his "Arendt against Athens: Rereading The Human Condition", Political Theory, XXX-1, 2002.

ment¹³. According to Arendt, solidarity is not a matter of passion or sentiment through which we identify with one another but a principle that inspire us, each of whom is born into the world as a stranger, to act in concert.

2.

Arendt has repeatedly emphasized the kernel importance of human birth as a principle of political action by quoting the words of St. Augustine on 'initium' (beginning) in all major works that she has written since 1953¹⁴. This has, however, been disregarded by scholars who insist that Arendt uncritically praises the classical polis and distinguishes the public realm for genuine politics from all spheres of private life. Such a reading is understandable to a certain extent; Arendt definitely asserts the distinction between public and private and does argue that things that belong to the family affairs are not public but private: "the relationships between the members of a family" are "non-political and even antipolitical" (HC: sec.7, p.54). Since a child's birth is unquestionably a matter of family, her insistence on natality as a principle of political action seems to be inconsistent and insignificant. Or,

13 Arendt, *On Revolution*, Penguin, 1963, p.89 (emphases added)-hereafter cited as OR. Margaret Canovan notices the importance of Arendt's perspective that solidarity is a principle, though Canovan does not relate it to the human natality (Hannah Arendt: a Reinterpretation of her Political Thought, Cambridge U. P., 1992, p.177ff).

14 "Initium... ergo ut esset, creatus est homo, ante quem nullus fuit" (that there be a beginning, man was created before whom there was nobody), Augustine, *The City of God*, XII-21. The first appearance of this passage in Arendt's text is in her short essay "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government" (1953) which became a new epilogue of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (its first edition was published in 1951). On detailed investigations of the genesis of her concept of natality during the early 1950s, see note 17, and more Morikawa Terukazu, *Arendt and the Beginning: Birth of her Thought of Natality* [Hajimari no Arendt: Shusse no Shiso no Tanjo], Iwanami Shoten Publishers, Tokyo, 2010 (written in Japanese).

the most that can be said of it is that it remains part of her personal faith in the human capacity to renew and save the world from ruin¹⁵ or of her private belief the creation of something new ex nihilo, that is, "new beginnings out of nothing"¹⁶. I would like to contest these opinions by questioning the absolutory private nature of the event of child birth. Although the birth of a child occurs in the private realm, it nevertheless expresses the fundamental principle of action performed in the public realm. I also argue that Arendt's intention behind her distinction between the private and public is less to substantially designate two separate spaces than it is to theoretically clarify two main aspects of human life. Simply speaking, the public is something that is (should be) "seen and heard by everybody" while the private is something that is (should be) hidden from many people's eyes (HC: sec7, p.50).

Birthing and, it should be added, love belong to the private realm in the sense that it is (generally speaking, should be) hidden from the public. The birth of a child is one of the private events that goes on between a few people behind closed doors. As Arendt puts it:

Love, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others. As long as its spell lasts, the only in-between which can insert itself between two lovers is the child, love's own product. The child, this in-between to which the lovers now are related and which they hold in common, is representative of the world in that it also separates them; it is an indication that

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- 15 James W. Bernauer, "The Faith of Hannah Arendt", ditto (ed.), *Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt*, Nijhoff, 1987, p.10; Luis Hinchman and Sandra Hinchman, "Existentialism Politicized: Arendt's Debt to Jaspers", ditto (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*, SUNY, 1994, 169f
- 16 Martin Jay, "Hannah Arendt: Opposing Views", *Partisan Review*, XLV-3, 1978, P.351; see also, Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, Cornell U. Pr., 1993, p.80

Article

they will insert a new world into the existing world. Through the child, it is as though the lovers return to the world from which their love had expelled them. But this new worldliness, the possible result and the only possibly happy ending of a love affair, is, in a sense, the end of love, which must either overcome the partners anew or be transformed into another mode of belonging together. Love, by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces (HC: sec.33, p.242-italics added).

Arendt reiterates her thesis of love in these passages: love is "killed, or rather extinguished, the moment it is displayed in public" because of "its inherently worldlessness" (HC: sec.7, p.51f). Moreover, she declares that sexual love between two lovers is the most powerful force to isolate them from all public-political affairs. However, what lies implicit in Arendt's description of love as the most privatized human relationship is an account of natality as a principle of action. What Arendt observes in the coming of a new child is not only the beginning of someone new that has not existed but also the transformation of the existing human relationship into a new, 'another mode of belonging together'. In other words, we should examine her concept of beginning not only from the perspective of someone who inserts herself into the world but also from the perspective of those who already exist and are forced to respond to the introduction of the new. We should note that Arendt begins the fifth chapter of *The Human Condition*, 'Action', by focusing on the child birth as a new beginning and further refers to action as a "second birth" in the opening section of fifth chapter (sec.24, p.176). She also ends the chapter with the statement: "A child has been born unto us" (HC:247, emphases added)¹⁷.

17 Although Arendt mentions that these are "the few words with which the Gospels announced their 'glad tidings'" (ibid), they are in fact the words in

the Old Testament (Isaiah 9:6). Nevertheless, what she is referring to is not a Hebrew prophecy but a stanza of Händel's Messiah. In the letter to H. Blucher on May 18th 1952 from Munich, Arendt wrote: "Handel's Messiah by the Munich Philharmonic;... The 'Hallelujah Chorus' is ringing in my ears. I realized for the first time how marvelous the 'Unto us a child is born' is. Christianity did have its good sides" (Within Four Walls: The Correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blucher:1936-1968, trans. by Constantine, P., Harcourt Inc., 1996, p.175). Clearly Arendt accepts the phrase in question in the context of "Christianity". This impression seems to make her confuse it with a passage of the Gospels in her book published six years later.

We can find her reflection on Messiah in her notebook, Danktagebuch (May, 1952): "Unto us a child is born. The profound truth in this part of the oratorio of Christ.... Every new birth is a guarantee of this luck in the world, a promise of revelation for those who are no longer beginning" (Danktagebuch: 1950 bis 1973, hrsg. Von Ursula Ludz und Ingeborg Nordmann, Piper, 2003, S.208). What we should note here is that Arendt interprets the birth of 'a child' as 'all beginning (Aller Anfang)' and 'every new birth (jede neue Geburt)', in spite of the fact that 'a child' means no one but Messiah in the original text (Messiah, no.11). I think that this unique interpretation of Messiah has a close connection with her reading of the 'initium' passage in City of God.

In the passage 'initium...', Augustine was dealing not with every birth but with the creation of "the man", Adam, from whom the human race is descended. He wrote in the next chapter (XII, chap.22): God's intention is that "the human race might derive entirely from one man [ex homine uno]" (Loeb Classical Library, book IV, p.111). For Augustine, the point is undoubtedly to defend the Christian concept of history whose origin is the creation of Adam by God: it has nothing to do with the element of 'every new birth' as an ontological condition of human plurality. Arendt, in fact, criticizes the Christian concept to regard human being as a race derived from one man, "ex uno homine" (Danktagebuch: S.70 (April, 1951)).

However, Arendt wrote in Danktagebuch, July 1953, that "Augustine's 'initium' is the last and highest expression of the ancient concept of freedom" (S.405). In the following month, she wrote that "Augustine's word is thought of as Greek one, not as Hebrew. Human being comes into the world as beginning" (p.423, cf. BPF: p.167). Moreover, Arendt, as we know, begins to refer to the passage of 'initium' as the expression of the principle of human freedom from the mid-50s on. In my opinion, her discovery of 'the profound truth' of the phrase 'Unto us a child is born' on May 1952 inspired her to interpret Augustine's 'initium' in her own way: just as 'a child' means not Christ as a particular man but every child, 'initium' corresponds not to the creation of Adam as 'uno homo' but to every new birth. Only by taking

Article

A baby is born unto us. It brings the element of a radical change into the existing relationship of us. Let me consider a simple case of two lovers in order to grasp the point. The coming of a baby is an ambivalent event to them; its cause is very clear, their sexual intercourse. They are the makers of their baby even if they in fact did not want to have a child. This means that they can control the childbirth to a certain extent but they can never control 'who' would be born unto us. Every newborn comes into existence as a unique person who is never "the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live" (HC: p.8). For a couple of lovers, the 'who' of their child is contingent and unpredictable in spite of the fact that it is no doubt their "love's own product". The baby comes unto them as a stranger in this sense. And the baby demands them to transform their relationship "into another mode of belonging together", that is, from two lovers into parents who have the responsibility to take care of the baby. Through their acceptance of its coming, the newborn is transformed from a strange and nameless being into the child whose existence and uniqueness are affirmed by those who existed in the world. For two lovers to accept a newborn as their child means to receive the end of their love affair and to affirm the beginning of a new relationship between three persons. In other words, their relationship does not end but still continues through its radical change that a newcomer brought. Here we realize the real significance of an Arendtian concept of natality for her theory of action: what she discovers in the event of birth is not just the beginning of someone new but, more crucially, the beginning of a new relationship. For Arendt the fact of natality discloses the most basic mode of continuity and change in the realm of human affairs and thus the principle of political action.

into account this particular interpretation can we understand Arendt's emphasis of 'beginning': "Because they are initium, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action" (HC: p.177).

Although the child birth is definitely a private event that goes on within the closed space hidden from the public at large, it shares the basic mode of continuity and change with the human activity that Arendt calls action-the interactions among the plural men in the public realm. She compares the happening of a course of action to "second birth": "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth" (sec.24, p.176). Action as well as birth is the insertion of someone into the world through which something new is brought unto the people. Every action appears in "the web of human relationships which exists wherever men live together" and thus "[t]he disclosure of 'who' through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall [s] into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt" (HC: p.183-4, emphases added). Every human community whose continuity depends basically upon the existing orders and relationships is always exposed to 'the constant influx of newcomers' who, whether they are strangers who come into it from without or those who want to transform the given circumstances from within, bring the moment of change. Every beginning, whether the birth of a child or action as 'a second birth', needs to be recognized and responded to by others who belong to the preexisting web of human relationships.

In sum, Arendt describes the basic structure of human relationships as a steadily changing process which consists of the coming of strangers and the response to them by the existing people. Hence, solidarity is tied to a notion of natality. But we should note a crucial distinction between the childbirth that happens in the private realm and action as "a second birth" that is performed in the public-political realm. Simply put, newborns lack 'word and deed' that are indispensable to the actors in politics. By examining this difference, we will figure out Arendt's vision of political solidarity as an on-going process.

3.

The theoretical distinction of politics and education that Arendt argues in her essay, "The Crisis in Education" (1958), is particularly instructive in examining this difference. The realm of politics consists of the people who "act among and with adults and equals", while the realm of childcare and education depends on "the relations between grown-ups and children"¹⁸. In the latter, human relationships are necessarily unequal and asymmetric. A newborn comes into existence by its birth but it cannot insert itself 'with word and deed'. It is powerless and even incapable of taking care of itself. Parents (and/or other adults) have to look after it, give it its own name like Hannah, and bring it up not as a just living creature but as a newcomer who will disclose its unique existence in the public relationships. In sum, parents "have not only summoned their children into life through conception and birth, they have simultaneously introduced them into a world" (BPF: p.185-emphasis added). Education is a process in which adults "gradually introduce" children into the world by protecting, training and teaching them. This gradual process begins in the family home whose "four walls...constitute a shield against the world and specifically against the public aspect of the world" (p.186). Then, children are introduced into the school as "the institution" that adults "interpose between the private domain of home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world possible at all" (p.188f). What Arendt emphasizes is the "responsibility" of adults to take care of children and the "authority" of educators to teach students. A teacher trains his students "as though he were a representative of all adults inhabitants, pointing out the details and saying to the child: This is our world" (p.194-emphasis added). By 'our world', Arendt is here referring to the

18 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, Penguin, 1968, p.192-hereafter cited as BPF.

community which its preexisting inhabitants have constructed and continued. In other words, educational activities are essentially "conservative" in the sense that the elder members of a community bring up the younger to be good participates in the traditional knowledge and moral customs which they have conserved and cultivated. The authority of educators depends on the superiority of the old generations which is "firmly grounded in the encompassing authority of the past" (ibid).

In the realm of politics, on the other hand, are framed utterly differently since politics consists of reciprocal intercourse among equal actors. In order to illustrate the matter in question, let me consider the most basic and elemental structure of human action that Arendt demonstrates by a set of two terms, *archein* (*agere*) and *prattein* (*gerere*):

In order to illustrate what is at stake here we may remember that Greek and Latin, unlike the modern languages, contain two altogether different and yet interrelated words with which to designate the verb "to act". To the two Greek verbs *archein* ("to begin", "to lead", finally "to rule") and *prattein* ("to pass through", "to achieve", "to finish") correspond the two Latin verbs *agere* ("to set into motion", "to lead") and *gerere* (whose original meaning is "to bear"). Here it seems as though each action were divided into two parts, the beginning made by a single person and the achievement in which many join by "bearing" and "finishing" the enterprise, by seeing it through (HC: sec.26, p.189).

In short, action is a kind of human conduct that consists of *archein* (to begin) and *prattein* (to follow). What Arendt means by the word 'action' is not just 'to begin something new', let alone, as assumed by critics, 'to create something new ex nihilo'. Rather, Arendt takes action to be course of an event that someone begins and other (s) follow (s). What Arendt illuminates by 'two altogether different and yet interrelated words', *archein* and *prattein*, is "the original interdependence of

action, the dependence of the beginner and leader upon others for help and the dependence of his followers upon him for an occasion to act themselves" (HC: p.189-emphases added). In other words, the sequence of action starts not at the moment that someone begins something but at the moment that the other (s) respond (s) and follow (s)-'with word and deed' -to something that someone began, just as a event of child-birth becomes the beginning of a unique person when two lovers accept her/his coming unto them and affirm that their relationship is transformed into new one. My point is to highlight the crucial importance of 'prattein' (to follow) without which archein cannot be the beginning (archē) of a new sequence of action. "Action", Arendt argues, "is never possible in isolation" so that every actor needs other actors who follow what she begins. In this sense, the element of prattein is essential to action as praxis¹⁹. Moreover, since every beginning of action as 'a second birth', unlike the birth of a child, happens among those "who are capable of their own actions", every prattein is another possible archein. Thus Arendt argues that "reaction...is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others" and thus "action and reaction among men never move in a closed circle and can never be reliably confined to two partners" (p.190). The "space of appearance" emerges and continues through the changeable sequence of innumerable (re) actions (archrin--prattein/archein -prattein/archein- ...) through which the existing relationships are always exposed to the possibility of radical transformations. It is the realm of dynamic power relations "where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes" (ibid).

While such a view of mutual action is, to a certain extent, consonant with an 'agonistic' image of democratic politics, my point is not to examine whether an Arendtian kind of politics is 'agonistic' or 'deliberative' but to focus on the most basic condition of mutual action that

19 Markell, Patchen, "The Rule of the People: Arendt, Archē, and Democracy", *American Political Science Review*, vol.100, no.1, 2006

Arendt assumes; that is, the spontaneous agreement to "act in concert" among actors who insert themselves into the course of mutual action. A brief conversation of two individuals, for example, begins only if I speak something to you (*archein*) and then you respond to me (*prattein*); and it goes on only if we both try to continue our conversation. In other words, our conversation is premised on affirming one another as equal partners and "trusting in action and speech as a mode of being together" (p.208). In short, the beginning and continuity of '*archein-prattein*' sequence depends on the spontaneous agreement to act in concert. It necessarily follows in every action, whether our conversation is agonistic or deliberative, whether we are members of a certain community or not. In other words, an event of action can happen and continue whenever men agree to act in concert regardless of the favored conditions of consensus: "The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates all formal constitution of the public realm and the various forms of government" (sec. 28, p.199).

Arendt never claims to create a new political space *ex nihilo*. A conversation between you and me emerges not in the middle of nowhere but in the concrete place where we operate under the existing moral customs, social manners, legal institutions, and are surrounded by many other people. Almost every attempt to act in concert happens in the midst among the given things and continues by following these terms and conditions. This, however, does not mean that our practices simply follow the preexisting codes. Every act of *prattein* is potentially *archein*; to follow something that already exists in a unique way implies the possibility to transform it into something new. This is the basic mode of action, and the basic mode of political solidarity as an on-going process. Political solidarity is born when a number of people spontaneously follow a certain act that someone set into motion, gradually expanding its influence, speed and inherent diversity as more people follow it. Political solidarity, therefore, is cultivated and sustained through spontaneous participation. This insight coincides with

Article

Arendt's concept of power (dynamis): power is always "a power potential and not an unchangeable, measurable, and reliable entity like force or strength....power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse" (p.200). Thus political solidarity is a fugitive and contingent process. It is an open-ended process that inspires newcomers to follow. As Arendt notes in *On Revolution*, "solidarity is a principle that can inspire and guide action" (OR: p.89).

Before I elaborate further on Arendt's vision of political solidarity as a principle of action, I return to Rorty's conception of political solidarity. From his point of view, an Arendtian kind of action should be performed within the private realms because it is irrelevant and even dangerous to the existing sense of political solidarity which, in his view, consists of the sense of identity among "we liberals". For Rorty, "our sense of us" is bound up with the belief in the superiority of liberal way of life and liberal institutions; these things might merely be the consequence of contingent historical circumstances but are, by great fortune, much better than all others. So "we liberals" should, Rorty says, expand 'our sense of us' through the process of 'inclusion among us' of 'them'. From the perspective of Arendt, such a process is not the sequence of political activities among equal partners but the course of educational activities in which mature adults teach immature children and introduce them into their community: "This is our world" (BPF: p.194), newcomers, you must learn the greatness of our liberal society that we have constructed and conserved. Rorty assumes the superiority of 'we twentieth-century liberals' over 'them' in his self-centered nationalist formulation of political solidarity, just as an elementary school teacher assumes that he has the authority over his pupils in the classroom. This vision is not new but rather common in the history of political thought; many great philosophers have thought of an ideal form of political community in terms of the educational activities since Plato who claimed to transform the solidarity of free citizens in the polis into an authoritarian relationship between a wise philosopher-king and the commons. In spite of his powerful declaration on the lapse of the

traditional philosophy which has been captured by the metaphysical presuppositions and thus reluctant to affirm the fact that there is nothing "beyond history and institutions", Rorty tamely adheres to the tradition of political philosophy by endorsing the identification of politics to education.

4.

Arendt provides two historical examples of political solidarity both of which can be found in *Crisis of the Republic*: the first is "the organized solidarity of the masters" found in the ancient Greek city-state and the second is the "act of solidarity" characteristic of the student movements in the 1960's America²⁰. Although both are examples of political solidarity, there are nonetheless great differences to be discerned between them. The former refers to the organization of worrier-citizens who participated in political decisions as equal citizens, on the one hand, and who dominated the "slaves" as their "masters", on the other. The master-citizens united themselves against slaves according to the division between them which was firmly prescribed by the laws and institutions of city-state. Arendt never advocates such an image of solidarity but simply describes it as a historical example. It is only the latter case that she voices her approval, describing it as a "definitely positive" example of solidarity, because it arose out of "a spontaneous political movement" and because the students "acted almost exclusively from moral motives" and discovered that "acting is fun" (COR: p.203). It is safe to say that the example of an Arendtian version of political solidarity is not the former image of master-citizens but the latter vision of student activism. It is interesting here that Arendt suggests that the students discovered what had been called "public happiness" in the American Revolution era (ibid).

20 Arendt, *Crisis of the Republic*, Harcourt Brace, 1972, p.149, 202f-hereafter cited as COR.

Article

In *On Revolution*, Arendt ends with a citation from Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*:

Sophocles in *Oedipus at Colonus*, the play of his old age, wrote the famous and frightening lines [l.1224ff]:

Mē phunai ton hapanta ni-
ka logou. to d'epei pahnē,
bānai keis' hopothen per hē-
kei polu deuteron hōs takista.

'Not to be born prevails over all meaning uttered in words; by far the second-best for life, once it has appeared, is to go as swiftly as possible whence it came.' There he also let us know, through the mouth of Theseus, the legendary founder of Athens and hence her spokesman, what it was that enabled ordinary men, young and old, to bear life's burden: it was the polis, the space of men's free deeds and living words, which could endow life with splendor-ton bion lampron poieisthai [l.1143-4] (OR: p.281).

This is a strange and cryptic paragraph because Arendt unexpectedly refers to the ancient Greek's tragic view of human world and life in the very final paragraph of the text in which she examines the principle of the American Revolution in the late 18th century (a text which, moreover, rarely mentions the ancient Greeks). Taking two sets of lines from Sophocles' last work which deals with the end of Oedipus' life, she compares a pessimistic view of human mortality with Theseus' words which, according to Arendt, tells that the polis can "endow life with splendor". Then, what is the polis?-on the face of it, Arendt appears to be referring to the Greek polis, which in another text she describes, with reference to Pericles' Funeral Oration, as founded "to multiply the occasions to win immortal fame" and it was "a kind of organized remembrance" to keep "the everlasting remembrance of their good and bad deeds" (HC: p.197f). If, as argued by George Kateb, Arendt's

account of the polis stands in opposition to the the Silenus' wisdom cited in the last paragraph of *On Revolution*, her introduction of it would be "the most shocking and foreign moment in her writings"²¹. If the warrior-citizen of Athens is to perform his passionate "agonal spirit" in the political agora and the battle field in order to overcome his mortal fate by winning immortal fame beyond good and evil, then is he nothing but 'being-toward-death' that 'must shatter against' his mortal fate? Given that Arendt is the preeminent thinker of nativity, it remains for us to examine carefully what she is suggesting with this strange citation. Is Arendt "one of the great modern appreciators of the Periclean ideal"?²²

Arendt makes a clear distinction between the Greek city-state and the polis as the space of appearance. The former is the Athenian city-state in which a small number of citizens competed for the glory and praise within the walls around the city (HC: 194f). The freedom of action and speech could exist only in the public space enclosed by the walls, whereas the world outside the walls of city was not the space of peaceful interaction but the field of violent strife. The Athenian citizens whose greatness Pericles praised in his famous Funeral Oration were the brutal worriers who wished to gain their immortal fame by defeating the other Greeks and barbarians. Arendt distinguishes the polis from the historical city-state as such: "The polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no mat-

21 George Kateb, *Politics, Conscience, Evil*, Rowman & Allanheld, 1984, p.1; See also, Margaret Canovan, "Hannah Arendt as a Conseravtive Thinker", *Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later*, edited by Larry May and Jerome Kohn, p.28f

22 Dana Villa, *Socratic Citizenship*, Princeton U. P., 2001, p.21

23 My arguments do not deny the importance of the Greek city-state in Arendt's reflection on the genealogy of the Western political experiences. As she notes, "[t]he Greek polis will continue to exist at the bottom of our

ter where they happen to be" (HC: 198, emphases added)²³. It is clear that "the polis" that Arendt refers to in the last paragraph of *On Revolution* is not the city-state but the polis as the space of appearance in this sense, since the whole drama in *Oedipus at Colonus* goes on not inside the city of Athens but Colonus, a rural place outside the walls of Athens. Moreover, it is not the story of interaction among elite-citizens but the story of the encounters between the Athenian people and powerless exiles ("apopolis", I.207)²⁴ and the creation of a new relationship forged through promises²⁵.

In the opening of the play, Oedipus comes to Colonus accompanied by his daughter²⁶. The inhabitants of Colonus fear this strange visitor: "The old man is a wanderer, a wanderer, not a native!" (I.123-4); "He is terrible [deinos] to see and terrible to hear!" (I.141). When it is revealed that Oedipus is the notorious ex-king of Thebes who was kicked out of that city on charge of patricide and incest, he is expelled yet again²⁷. The crucial word is 'deinon'²⁸; The people of Colonus hesitate to

political experience [...] as long as we use the word 'politics'" (Men in Dark Times, Harcourt Brace, 1972, p.204). The Greek polis is, for Arendt, the oldest example of authentic political experiences. However this does not mean that Arendt idealizes the Greek city-state. For Arendt, every "example" is not the mere object to be praised but something that we should examine from various perspectives and judge critically.

- 24 Most of the English citations of *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone* are derived from H. Lloyd-Jones's translation (*Sophocles: II*, edited and translated by, The Loeb Classical library, 1994) with a few modifications of my own.
- 25 Peter Euben indicates this point, though his interpretation is different from mine (Euben, *Platonic Noise*, Princeton U. P., 2003, p.44f).
- 26 Oedipus: "Child of a blind old man, Antigone, to what regions, or to what men's city have we come? Who on this day shall receive Oedipus the wanderer [planēs] with scanty gift?" (...) / Antigone: "Unhappy father, Oedipus, the walls that surround the city look to be far off." (*Oedipus at Colonus*: I.1-5, 14-5)
- 27 The people of Colonus are afraid that the curse of Oedipus would be harmful to the security of their land (Oedipus is forced to confess: "Terrible was my birth [deina physis]", I.207): "leave this seat and hasten away from my country, for fear you may fasten some heavier burden on my city!" (I. 233f).
- 28 "These poetic words express the intimate relation of being-there [Dasein] to

accept the refuge who wants to be accepted because he seems to them an uncanny pariah. In other words, they judge 'who Oedipus is' not by 'what he does' but by 'what he was'. Theseus response to Oedipus is, however, different: "Oedipus, I wish to ask you what request of the city and of me you have come to make, you and your unfortunate companion. Tell me! No matter how terrible [deinān] a fortune you might speak of, I would not turn away from it... I would never turn aside from helping to rescue any exile such as you." (I.560-1, 565-6) Oedipus answers with his requests-that is, through the conversation between Oedipus and Theseus-Theseus grants Oedipus and his daughters amnesty. This suggests that through words and deeds on the part of both Theseus and Oedipus, the relationship between the community of Colonus and Oedipus is transformed; no longer perceived as a pariah, Oedipus is welcomed into the community and regarded as a friend. Hence we find an example in which strangers found an Arendtian polis as "the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me" (HC: p.198). The

being and its disclosure; they do so by naming what is remotest from Being, namely not-being-there. Here the strangest and most terrible possibility of being-there is revealed. [...] being-there must, in every act of violence, shatter against Being" (An Introduction of Metaphysics, translated by R. Manheim, Yale University Press, 1959, p.177). Human being whose essence is 'being-toward-death' (Sein zum Tode) is so terrible that he must violate the order of Being. Heidegger draws this from the Greek word 'deinon' in the first ode of Sophocles' Antigone: "There is much that is strange, but nothing that surpasses man in strangeness (polla ta deina kouden anthrō pou deinoteron pelei) " (I.332f). The word 'deinon' means 'terrible', 'strange', 'violent', 'clever' and 'uncanny' (un-heimlich). Human being is the most violent and most uncanny creature of all (to deinotaton) (An Introduction of Metaphysics: pp.146ff). Arendt criticizes Heidegger's insight of deinon as an essence of being-there with her insight of a human faculty of action. Although human beings are surely deinon in the sense that they easily use violence, it does not mean that they are fated to be at war among themselves or to "shatter against Being" (BPF: p.42). They can constitute the space of appearance, the realm of political freedom, in which they disclose their unique personalities: "men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin" (HC: p.246).

space of appearance emerges among strangers whenever they accept each other as friends [philoi], regardless of origin or identity. One suspects that for Arendt, the story of Oedipus at Colonus resonates with her writings on the American Revolution because it illuminates the generative and transformative potential of political solidarity: a potential that Arendt discovers in the American Revolution, that is to say, the birth of a country that accepted her as a new member when she was a disempowered exile.

It is a new beginning of political solidarity whose principle Arendt discovers in the American Revolution, that is, the beginning of a country that accepted her as a new member when she was a powerless exile²⁹. But we should note that a beginning (arche) of solidarity could not become an on-going process unless actors follow it by another practice (prattein).

It is with this in mind that we should consider what Arendt endorses to say with the citation of Theseus' words: what does she mean by saying that the polis "could endow life with splendor" (ton bion lampron poeisthai)? In Sophocles, the phrase appears at the moment in which Theseus, responding to Oedipus' gratitude for rescuing his daughters, Antigone and Ismene, from Creon, the new king of Thebes, asserts, "I strive to endow life with splendor not through words but through actions (ou gar logoisi ton bion spoudazomen lampron poeisthai mallon ē tois drāmenois)". In answers to Oedipus' plea to rescue his daughters, Theseus promises Oedipus that he will have his daughters back-"Oedipus, remain here in peace, in the assurance that, if I do not die, I shall not rest till I have placed your children in your hands!" (I.1139f) -and proceeds to fulfill his promise. Oedipus expresses his gratitude to

29 "[The men of the American Revolution] knew that whatever men might be in their singularity, they could bind themselves into a community which, even though it was composed of 'sinners', need not necessarily reflect this 'sinful' side of human nature. [...] The hope for man in his singularity lay in the fact that not man but men inhabit the earth and form a world between them" (OR: 174f).

Theseus: "[M]ay the gods grant you what I desire, for yourself and for this country, since I have found in you alone among mankind piety and fairness and the absence of lying speech!" (1.1124-7). Theseus replies with the words in question: "I strive to endow life with splendor not through words but through actions. And I can prove it, for I have failed to keep none of the oaths I swore to you, aged man; I am here bringing these girls alive" (1.1143-7).

The reason that Arendt connects the polis as the space of appearance with Theseus's words 'ton bion lampron poeisthai' is clear. The space of appearance can happen wherever and whenever people create their new relationship by act of promising, the legitimacy of which is dependent on the persistent effort to keep one's promise³⁰. It is only as a result of Theseus' fulfillment-achieved through action-Oedipus places his confidence in Theseus and a friendship is sustained³¹. What "endows their

30 "Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities" (HC: p.200).

31 The opposite occurs in the case of Creon who uses words to veil his intentions. He is condemned by Oedipus: your words are "sounding goods, but in essence bad" (1.782); "You are clever [deinos] with your tongue" (1.804). When his attempt of persuasion by falsehood is unsuccessful Creon does not hesitate to use violence. The people of Colonus protest his kidnapping Antigone ("Let go the girl [Antigone] at once!", 1.838), but Creon tells arrogantly: "Do not give orders where you have no force [mē krateis]!" (1.839) The Colonus' inhabitants are frightened of this tyrannical man who boasts his arrogance ("hubris", 1.882-3) - it should be noted that in ancient Greece hubris is considered to be one of the most dangerous temptation to destroy the bond of their community (HC: p.191; See also, Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and ethics in Greek tragedy and philosophy*, Cambridge, 1986). And the people of Colonus say: "What you say is horrible [deinon]" (1.862). Here again 'deinon' is a crucial word that hits the cleverness and violence of human beings, as Heidegger says that "man is to deinotaton, the most powerful and violent in the midst of the overpowering" (*An Introduction of Metaphysics*, p.150). Creon's words without their faithful performance and his violent acts without words bring nothing but distrust and discord, whereas the relationship between Theseus and Oedipus goes on by their endeavor to perform their promising.

life with splendor" and gives their life delight is their continuous actions to transform and maintain their relationship that they founded. Even just before his death Oedipus wants to display his friendship to Theseus: "The scale of my life is turning, and I do not wish to die leaving my promises to you and to the city unfulfilled" (I.1508-9); "Come, dearest of friends [philtate ksenōn], may you have good fortune, yourself and this land and your attendants, and in prosperity remember me when I am dead for your success for ever!" (I.1552-5). It is impressive that, even at the moment of death, the eyes of this blind aged man turn toward the future of Athenian king and people who accepted him as a new friend in spite of his horrible past (*deina physis*). In a similar way, for Arendt the political is concerned with the future of the polis as a space of appearance into which "newcomers who are born into the world as strangers" will come (HC: 9)³².

Theseus and Oedipus, a noble king and a poor exile, were not friends but just strangers before their chance encounter outside the wall of the city-state. Their sense of solidarity depends neither on shared identities nor on existing institutions but on their own words and deeds. The tale shows the most elemental form of political solidarity as an ongoing process 'to act in concert'; it illustrates the *archē* of solidarity as "a principle that can inspire and guide action" (OR: p.89).

32 As for the men of American Revolution, Arendt writes: "It was matter of course [...] that they had to found and build a new political space within which the 'passion for public freedom' or the 'pursuit of public happiness' would receive free play for generations to come, so that their own 'revolutionary' spirit could survive the actual end of the revolution" (OR: p.126, emphases added).