



PUBLIC SPHERE AS ‘ULTIMUM REFUGIUM’ THE PHILOSOPHICAL, POLITICAL AND ETHICAL THEORY OF HANNAH ARENDT

Prof. Ph.D. Spiros MAKRIS,

Assistant Professor in Political Theory University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki,
GREECE, & Visiting Research Fellow, University of Oxford,
GREECE

Email: smakris@uom.gr

ABSTRACT

In this article we thoroughly explore and analyze Hannah Arendt's ontological, political and ethical theory about refugee as a conscious pariah. Hannah Arendt's philosophical thought on homeless and stateless people is by definition the locus classicus of contemporary 'Refugee Studies'. Building a typology on conscious pariahs, Hannah Arendt literally formulates a phenomenological and existential political and ethical theory of public sphere in which the figure of modern refugee dominates. Actually, Arendt founds a public sphere as an ultimum refugium for the sake of the world. Arendtian refugee is just the identification and personification of amor mundi. In this vein, Aristotle-like Arendtian republican approach of public space is a political and ethical theory of friendship and humanitas. For Arendt, the only chance we have, as unique human beings, to protect the world from the sandstorms of Totalitarianism is to protect first and foremost the refugees and the homeless people from world alienation. According to Hannah Arendt, stateless people are just the sensitive indicators of our lost thoughtfulness. Loving the refugees is like loving the world itself.

Keywords: public sphere; refugium; polis; conscious pariah; amor mundi;

POLIS AS ULTIMUM REMEDIUM OF CONSCIOUS PARIAS: THE CASE OF AMOR MUNDI

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) could be strongly regarded as the ideal political and ethical philosopher of refugees. It is needless to say that she was a refugee herself almost twenty years of her adventurous life¹. Richard H. King, in his significant book on Hannah Arendt's life in America, dedicates to her homeless and stateless human condition a special section titled 'Arendt as Refugee'². However, Hannah Arendt's viewpoint about refugees is not an ordinary ontological, political and ethical approach. Most of all, it is a quite philosophical and mainly a phenomenological and republican theory about the modern refugee as a conscious pariah³. By elaborating further Bernard Lazare's brilliant concept of conscious pariah, Hannah Arendt formulated a totally new model of vita activa, which is articulated around the figure of a Marx-like cosmopolitan intellectual. So, it is no coincidence

¹ Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World (Second Edition), Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2004, p. 115.

² Richard H. King, Arendt and America, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2015, p. 4.

³ Hannah Arendt, The Jewish Writings, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 275.



that Hannah Arendt's relevant article is titled 'The Jew as Pariah'⁴. Her doctoral student and biographer Elisabeth Young-Bruehl points out concerning this sui generis human condition of refugee as a conscious pariah in the following manner: "The distinction between politically conscious pariahs and socially ambitious parvenus came to Hannah Arendt from Kurt Blumenfeld. But it had originated with the French Jewish publicist and Dreyfusard Bernard Lazare"⁵.

Historically speaking, Hannah Arendt was introduced to the ontological view of refugee as a conscious pariah during her Paris years (1933-1940). In the French capital, at the second decade of interwar period, Arendt met, inter alia, the absolute prototype of conscious pariah in the face of literary critic Walter Benjamin⁶. As far as Arendt is concerned, Walter Benjamin represents the ideal flâneur⁷. Without doubt, Walter Benjamin could be seen as the perfect model of this sui generis Arendtian, high-sophisticated, intellectual and above of all bohemian, conscious pariah. Hannah Arendt closely experienced the conscious pariah human condition when she met Benjamin in Paris. In fact, both of them were refugees, stateless people, conscious pariahs and truly intellectuals with a very strong cosmopolitan perspective. Undoubtedly, Hannah Arendt has been taught from Walter Benjamin not only the way of thinking (*vita contemplativa*) but first and foremost the way of life (*vita activa*). This Benjaminian way of life is likened to a 'pearl diver' of the ideal polis⁸. Refugee as a conscious pariah constitutes a very specific way of life where the critical stake is the city of refuge itself⁹. In a sense, Walter Benjamin helped Hannah Arendt to politicize herself in the proper way. By seeking the city of refuge, Hannah Arendt finally found out the ancient Greek polis. Following in closely Benjamin footsteps, she highlights: "The Greek *polis* will continue to exist at the bottom of our political existence-that is, at the bottom of the sea-for as long as we use the word 'politics'"¹⁰. Here, unquestionably, it is easily traced Arendt's well-known, ontological, political and ethical, phenomenology. Refugee as a conscious pariah is by definition the ideal model of modern citizen. Or, to put it another way, ideal pariahdom is the ideal citizenship.

It is also noteworthy to remember that both of them, Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin, are two of the most representative, political, ethical and cultural, thinkers of the so-called Weimar Culture¹¹. In addition, we should always consider that the excellent

⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 275.

⁵ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World* (Second Edition), Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2004, pp. 121-122.

⁶ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World* (Second Edition), Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2004, p. 116.

⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1995, p. 164.

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1995, p. 205.

⁹ Spiros Makris, "Jacques Derrida and the Case of Cosmopolitanism: 'Cities of Refuge' in the Twenty-First Century", In: Darren O'Byrne and Sybille De La Rosa (eds), *The Cosmopolitan Ideal. Challenges and Opportunities*, Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd., London, 2015, pp. 177-194 and Spiros Makris, "Politics, Ethics and Strangers in the 21st Century. Fifteen critical reflections on Jacques Derrida's concept of hos(t)ipitality", In: *Theoria & Praxis. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Thought*, No. 1, Vol. 5 (2017), pp. 1-21.

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1995, p. 204.

¹¹ Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick (eds), *Weimar Thought. A Contested Legacy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2013.



phenomenon of Jewish Renaissance dominates within the Weimar Culture¹². Although Benjamin never crossed the Atlantic Ocean towards the ‘Brave New World’, since, as it is known, he committed suicide at the Franco-Spanish borders, in order not to be arrested by Gestapo¹³, he had a catalytic effect on Arendt’s, ontological, political and ethical, thought especially via his small treatise on philosophy of History¹⁴. It is no exaggeration to say that Walter Benjamin’s messianic and eschatological philosophy of history is gradually transformed into Hannah Arendt’s political phenomenology, i.e. a critical republican-like theory of citizenship, where the main protagonists (with the literal and metaphorical meaning of the word ‘actor’) are in most of the cases homeless and stateless, and so cosmopolitan, intellectuals, who live and behave as ideal conscious pariahs¹⁵. As it has been argued above, Walter Benjamin constitutes the ideal personification of the so-called cosmopolitan stranger¹⁶. In this kind of cosmopolitan and almost artistic way of life, the Socrates-like pariah becomes a ‘gadfly’ of the city in order to radically awaken the social consciousness. Inspired by Walter Benjamin’s life and thought in the arcades of Paris¹⁷, Arendt’s Socrates, as the ideal stranger within city walls (Derrida writes: “the foreigner is Socrates himself”)¹⁸, urges us to think and act in concert¹⁹. From this perspective, both pariahdom and citizenship could be seen as the ideal combination for the foundation of an inclusive public sphere. In other words, it could be supported that, according to Arendt’s ontological, political and ethical view, public sphere is regarded as a refugium or as an *ultimum remedium*²⁰.

Contrary to the famous Gramscian figure of organic intellectual²¹, who, ideologically and culturally speaking, justifies the political power elites or the establishment as a whole, conscious pariah, as a synecdoche of the ideal figure of refugee, radically and even more heretically sometimes transforms the traditional exclusive political space into a real inclusive public sphere²²; i.e. an *ultimum remedium* for the homeless and stateless people. So, Hannah Arendt via Walter Benjamin’s tragic life and death brings to the fore a totally new model of ontological, political and ethical republicanism or even political humanism²³, which without doubt seems like a Heidegger-inspired fundamental political ontology that is constructed on the strong foundations of an Augustine-like and Aristotle-inspired *amor mundi*²⁴. Thus, according to Hannah Arendt, love for the refugees, the strangers and the foreigners,

¹² Michael Löwy, *Redemption & Utopia. Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe. A study in elective affinity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1992.

¹³ Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin. A Critical Life*, Belknap Press, an Imprint of Harvard University Press, USA, 2014, p. 647.

¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, Classic Books America, New York, 2009.

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 341-384.

¹⁶ Chris Rumford, *The Globalization of Strangeness*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016, p. 101.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Belknap Press, an Imprint of Harvard University Press, USA, 2002.

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*. Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2000, p. 13.

¹⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, Schocken Books, New York, 2005, pp. 5-39.

²⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 264.

²¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ElecBook, London, 1999, pp. 134-161.

²² Jürgen Habermas, *The Lure of Technocracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2015, p. 110.

²³ Michael H. McCarthy, *The Political Humanism of Hannah Arendt*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2014, p. 1.

²⁴ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1995 and Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998.



occasionally in a Biblical sense²⁵, means first and foremost love for the world itself. Insofar as refugee, particularly in the special case of conscious pariah, signifies in late modernity the *ultimum remedium of vita activa*, Arendtian public sphere could be perceived as a human refugium in a world which, in her own phenomenological and ontological terms, is always in a state of a boundless risk due to the powerful sandstorms of Totalitarianism. “In the last analysis”, Hannah Arendt underlines with a pure Augustinian emphasis on her writing style, “the human world is always the product of man’s *amor mundi*”²⁶.

No doubt, by steadily combining in her thought European phenomenology, existential Heidegger-inspired philosophy and Jeffersonian treasure of American republicanism²⁷, Hannah Arendt both as a refugee and a conscious pariah herself has formulated a theoretical approach about the modern and contemporary public space where, from the very beginning, the heroic and tragic figure of cosmopolitan stranger dominates. Refugee as a conscious pariah and vice versa decisively contributes to the re-foundation of the destructed city from the strong sandstorms of Totalitarianism. So, refugee becomes, in a *prima facie* paradoxical way, the refugium of the polis itself against the desert winds, which constantly blow from either the side of Totalitarianism or post-Totalitarianism or conformism and the risks of mass society²⁸. This paradox of the inclusive and democratic public sphere, in the meaning of an *ultimum remedium* both for the city and the citizens, constitutes the metonymy of the modern human condition²⁹. Human being as a mortal being (Totalitarianism) is regenerated through natality (democracy). In accordance with Hannah Arendt, democratic and inclusive public sphere is a kind of political natality *per se*³⁰. Through natality, Arendt regenerates the world (*amor mundi*). In this respect, we could say that whenever a foreigner or a refugee enters the city, as an Aristotelian-like *μέτοικος* (metic), the world is reborn. Arendt refers to a political miracle that saves the world³¹. Taking advantage of the messianic experience of Jesus of Nazareth, Arendt essentially constructs a decisionist form of political theology³², where the stranger, like Socrates, is a political Jesus. The stranger is the *ultimum refugium* of the city itself. In the final analysis, the refugee is the last hope of the salvation of polis. By deconstructing the conventional meanings of words, in a Derridean sense, Arendt constructs anew the world on the strong bases of pariahdom.

From the mid-1940s onwards, Arendt started gradually to formulate a special theory on homeless and stateless conscious pariahs, particularly in close relation to the humiliated and persecuted Jews, which over the course of her life and thought turned to a specific typology of pariahdom as a typology of the ideal citizenship in the post-Totalitarian era: Heinrich Heine, Bernard Lazare, Charlie Chaplin and Franz Kafka are the main figures³³. In a

²⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, p. 238.

²⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, Schocken Books, New York, 2005, pp. 201-203.

²⁷ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 1985, p. 215 and Spiros Makris, “American constitutional history through St. George Tucker’s *Selected Writings: A case of Jeffersonian republicanism*”, In: *Annuaire International Des Droits De L’ Homme*, IV, 2009, Bruxelles: Bruylant, 2009, pp. 685-686.

²⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, Harcourt Brace & Company, Orlando, Florida, 1972.

²⁹ Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 9 and Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, Verso, London & New York, 2009, p. 1.

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, pp. 8-9.

³¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, p. 247.

³² John Kiess, *Hannah Arendt and Theology*, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney, 2016, p. 212.

³³ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 277-296.



sense, it could be argued that through Hannah Arendt's life (*vita activa*) and thought (*vita contemplativa*) the so-called Continental Philosophy fled to the New World having been haunted by the evilness of Nazism³⁴. Over there, in the land of Tocquevillean republicanism, Arendt's ontological and phenomenological account about refugees and conscious pariahs step by step transformed into a theoretical typology about cosmopolitan citizens in a world that had been heavily injured from the modern barbarity of Totalitarianism³⁵. Behind the tragic face of pariahdom hides the problem of evil itself³⁶. Hannah Arendt, in a Homeric [courage, free polis, *ισονομία* (*isonomia*) and *ισηγορία* (*isēgoria*)] and Aristotelian (friendship, Other) way of thinking³⁷, has shown to the entire humanity, going beyond races, genders ethnicities and religions, that the only possibility we have to efficiently deal with the enormous problem of evil is first and foremost to seriously and courageously face the critical question of homeless, stateless and deported people³⁸. In short, we could say that Arendt, in a clear Marxian manner, uses the Jewish Question as a distinguished point of departure in order to lead us to the 'Holy Grail' of human emancipation³⁹.

Arendt, by following in closely and thoughtfully the flows of refugees, stateless people and minorities footsteps throughout the 20th century, in a context that is overdetermined by inhumane state wars and social revolutions full of political criminality and terror, builds an ontological, political and ethical theory in which the notorious figure of conscious pariah dominates⁴⁰. As far as Enzo Traverso is concerned, Hannah Arendt, via Walter Benjamin or even Rahel Varnhagen⁴¹, rediscovered the 'hidden tradition' of pariah Judaism⁴², which in turn led, through the phenomenon of Shoah, to the Heideggerian *Lichtung* of public sphere⁴³. Truth, especially political truth, is no longer a cognitive result of *vita contemplativa*, but an experiential event of *vita activa* or, once more in Heideggerian terms⁴⁴, that kind of human experience which the German philosopher defines as 'Erlebnis': i.e. ontological self-experience par excellence. Both Holocaust and worldlessness constitute the ontological field within which Arendt constructs the free polis of conscious pariahs⁴⁵. By putting conscious pariah against parvenu, Arendt brings to light the ontological, political and ethical phenomenon of loneliness and worldlessness in modernity. From this point of view, Totalitarianism is seen just as the apex of mass society and human alienation. To put it in a different way, Totalitarianism could be perceived as a radical uprootedness of modern man

³⁴ Simon Critchley, *Continental Philosophy. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001.

³⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994, pp. 297-306.

³⁶ Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy. The Basics* (4th edition), Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p. 21.

³⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, Schocken Books, New York, 2005, p. 20 and pp. 122-124.

³⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 264.

³⁹ Artemy Magun, "Karl Marx and Hannah Arendt on the Jewish question: political theology as a critique", In: *Continental Philosophy Review*, Issue 4, Vol. 45 (2012), pp. 545-568.

⁴⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 344-368.

⁴¹ Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewess*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1997.

⁴² Enzo Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity*, Pluto Press, London, 2016, p. 65.

⁴³ George Steiner, *Martin Heidegger*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, p. 79.

⁴⁴ Günter Figal, "Aesthetics and Perception", In: Niall Keane and Chris Lawn (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*, Wiley Blackwell, Oxford, 2016, p. 157.

⁴⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, p. 118.



from its human origins⁴⁶. Simon Swift emphatically points out that the conscious pariah became “a representative rebel, and blaze a trail for other oppressed and excluded people”⁴⁷.

It is no coincidence that throughout the two decades in which Arendt explored the phenomenon of modern alienation in the sense of Totalitarianism, i.e. 1940s and 1950s, her thought was strongly influenced by Marx’s concept of alienation. All this reflective thinking on human alienation in modernity took place within a theoretical and research manner which is titled ‘The Marx Project’⁴⁸. Therefore, refugee as a conscious pariah and vice versa signifies the personification of ontological, political and ethical resistance against total human alienation. Refugees, homeless, stateless and deported people have experienced from the very beginning the inhuman circumstances of exclusion, loneliness and abandonment. In other words, refugees and pariahs in general could be conceived as the realization of the absolute catastrophe of human relations. Paraphrasing Hannah Arendt’s terminology, I would say that refugee indicates the dissolution of free polis and furthermore the violent transformation of homo politicus into animal laborans⁴⁹. Insofar as refugee is a conscious pariah, alienation, exclusion and loneliness constitute the point of departure of a new human condition. Obviously, Arendt inspired the concept of public sphere in the meaning of refugium on the one hand by living herself as a refugee on the other hand by studying in-depth the historical phenomenon of modern pariahdom⁵⁰. So, at the same time that free polis is destructed by the sandstorms of Totalitarianism, refugee’s appearance as a conscious pariah brings forth the ontological, political and ethical possibility of a real political community. As we shall see thoroughly just below, this phenomenological and existential political ontology is centered at the Arendtian notion of the ‘right to have rights’⁵¹. To put in another way, political community is the city where everyone, without exclusions, has the right to have rights. Above all, it is the city where every human being has the right to live free with respect and dignity⁵². Summarizing thus far, we could argue, as Ayten Gündoğdu writes, that “Arendt’s proposition of a ‘right to have rights’ highlights the significance of political action for cultivating new forms of political responsibility and solidarity in response to challenging problems of rightlessness and for augmenting the fragile institutional guarantees of equality and freedom”⁵³.

1. THE ‘RIGHT TO HAVE RIGHTS’, FRIENDSHIP AND A POLITICAL ONTOLOGY OF REFUGIUM

Hannah Arendt, especially through her so-called ‘Jewish Writings’⁵⁴, formulated an Aristotle-like republican theory of public sphere⁵⁵, in which we can easily trace a strong

⁴⁶ Siobhan Kattago, “Hannah Arendt on the world”, In: Patrick Hayden (ed.), Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts, Acumen, Durham, 2014, pp. 55-56.

⁴⁷ Simon Swift, Hannah Arendt, Routledge, London and New York, 2009, p. 94.

⁴⁸ Weisman Tama, Hannah Arendt and Karl Marx. On Totalitarianism and the Tradition of Western Political Thought, Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2014, pp. 11-20.

⁴⁹ Weisman Tama, Hannah Arendt and Karl Marx. On Totalitarianism and the Tradition of Western Political Thought, Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2014, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 341-368.

⁵¹ Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, p. 376.

⁵² Jacques Maritain, Scholasticism and Politics, Liberty Fund, Inc., Indianapolis, 2011, p. 246.

⁵³ Ayten Gündoğdu, “Statelessness and the right to have rights”, in: Patrick Hayden (ed.), Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts, Acumen, Durham, 2014, p. 120.

⁵⁴ Jerome Kohn, “Preface. A Jewish Life: 1906-1975”, In: Hannah Arendt, The Jewish Writings, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. ix-xxxii.



flavour of a decisionist post-foundational political theology⁵⁶, where the figure of refugee as a conscious pariah dominates. By advancing this sui generis ontological, political and ethical figure of refugee as a conscious pariah, Arendt tries to bring to the fore the problem of evil in late modernity as it has been incorporated in the case of Totalitarianism. Basically, as Jacques Derrida very well shows⁵⁷, she seeks to demonstrate the unconditional possibilities of a truly new human condition where the-world-would-be-inhabited-as-an-ultimum-refugium. The right to have rights is first and foremost this unconditional possibility for a world without exclusions and demonization of the Others. In the last passage of her famous chapter on the ‘Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man’, actually from the ‘Origins of Totalitarianism’, Hannah Arendt describes the hypocritical way in which modernity and especially Totalitarianism itself produces the ontological category of refugees as superfluous people who are conceived from the powers of nationalism and statism as the personification of ‘barbarism’. “The danger”, Arendt stresses, “is that a global, universally interrelated civilization may produce barbarians from its own midst by forcing millions of people into conditions which, despite all appearances, are the conditions of savages”⁵⁸.

Arendt formulated for the first time this political ontology of refugium in a very significant article which published in January of 1943 at the ‘The Menorah Journal’, an English-language Jewish intellectual and literary magazine in U.S., which was dedicated to the reflective and critical promotion of humanism⁵⁹. By using Abi Doukhan’s terminology on Levinasian ontological ethics, I would dare to say that Hannah Arendt here constructs an explicitly phenomenological and existential political and/or republican philosophy of exile where the major figure of refugee constitutes the defining feature of a new human and/or political condition. “Both Arendt’s and Levinas’ political writings”, Doukhan points out and clarifies with emphasis, “are geared to address the problem of the stranger. In a society where rights are defined with connection to a given community, what of the stranger? It is this question of the stranger’s rights that constitute the locus of both Arendt’s and Levinas’ political thought”⁶⁰. No doubt, this Arendtian polis is an innovative combination of a Biblical city of refuge and an ancient Greek demos⁶¹. By definition, as Arendt analyzes in the ‘Origins of Totalitarianism’, this city is a counter-Hobbesian city to the extent that what is at stake is not the power itself but the foundation of a political community by acting in concert⁶². In Kantian terms, Arendtian demos is the identification of *sensus communis*⁶³. Human life is a life worthy of the name because every human being has the right to exist as a

⁵⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁶ Bernd Wannenwetsch, “Liturgy”, In: Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005, p. 78.

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p. 6 and Spiros Makris, “Jacques Derrida and the Case of Cosmopolitanism: ‘Cities of Refuge’ in the Twenty-First Century”, In: Darren O’Byrne and Sybille De La Rosa (eds), *The Cosmopolitan Ideal. Challenges and Opportunities*, Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd., London, 2015, pp. 177-194.

⁵⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, p. 384.

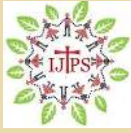
⁵⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 264-274.

⁶⁰ Abi Doukhan, *Emmanuel Levinas. The Philosophy of Exile*, Bloomsbury, London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney, 2014, p. 134.

⁶¹ Spiros Makris, “European Demos, Citizenship and Migrants in a Globalized World. Some Critical Reflections from a Habermasian Perspective”, In: Marco Caselli and Guia Gilardoni (eds), *Globalization, Supranational Dynamics and Local Experiences*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2018, pp. 87-107.

⁶² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 181-196.

⁶³ Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p. 27.



unique individual amongst others. As far as Arendt is concerned, political collectivity is rooted in ontological alterity of human beings. Everybody matters without exclusions and demonization. Nobody is superfluous. Refugee is just but the symbol of this new human and/or political condition⁶⁴.

It is worth noting that Hannah Arendt elaborated further this kind of political humanism through the Hegel-inspired concept of reconciliation with the world (*amor mundi*). Daniel Maier-Katkin writes that “the principal benefit of reconciliation, as Arendt understood, is that it brings peace, understanding, and human warmth into a world too often hostile, confused, and cold. The promise of reconciliation, which is neither forgetfulness nor an averted glance, but a full-bodied recognition of the human condition, is that it preserves the possibility of love-in the case of Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, an easy commerce between friends-and friendship, as Hannah understood, is the foundation of all humanity”⁶⁵. Thus, philosophically speaking, in Hannah Arendt’s phenomenological, ontological and existential perspective, homeless and stateless people and especially refugee as a conscious pariah are transformed into a crucial human ferment for the sake of friendship and humanity in dark times. In 1959, when Arendt was honored with the notorious ‘Lessing Prize of the Free City of Hamburg’, she analyzed in-depth the core meaning of *humanitas* as friendship. By adopting the Aristotelian concept of *philia*, she tried to highlight the clear ontological, political and ethical relevance of friendship. Actually, friendship does not mean only peace but, in a great degree, it consists in discourse. Friends who are talking to each other are the quintessence of *polis*. Friendship via speech and dialogue prepares the common world. According to ancient Greeks, *philanthropia* means first and foremost to share the world with other people. *Philanthropia* means *amor mundi*. In fact, refugee brings to light this human condition of friendship even when he or she is treated like a Schmittian enemy⁶⁶.

Arendt identifies refugee with the conscious pariah in order to give to this new human condition the character of a Socrates-inspired constantly human self-reflection. At the epicenter of this Socratic self-reflection, Arendt puts the Aristotelian notion of friendship. Citizenship is a special kind of friendship. Citizens are free and equal friends. Undoubtedly, conscious pariah is the Aristotelian *metic* (refugee, homeless) *par excellence*. “The equalization in friendship”, Hannah Arendt clarifies, “does not of course mean that the friends become the same or equal to each other [alterity is the basis of Arendtian political ontology], but rather that they become equal partners in a common world-that they together constitute a community. Community is what friendship achieves (...) Aristotle concludes that it is friendship and not justice (as Plato maintained in the *Republic* (...)) that appears to be the bond of communities. For Aristotle, friendship is higher than justice, because justice is no longer necessary between friends. The political element in friendship is that in the truthful dialogue each of the friends can understand the truth inherent in other’s opinion. More than his friend as a person, one friend understands how and in what specific articulateness the common world appears to the other, who as a person is forever unequal or different [see ontological alterity or natality]. This kind of understanding-seeing the world (...) from the other fellow’s point of view-is the political kind of insight *par excellence* (...) Socrates seems

⁶⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 610-616.

⁶⁵ Daniel Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad. Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 2010, p. 348.

⁶⁶ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1983, pp. 23-25 and Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2007, pp. 19-79.



to have believed that the political function of the philosopher was to help establish this kind of common world, built on the understanding of friendship, in which no rulership is needed''⁶⁷. City of refuge is a city of friends. So, public sphere is perceived first and foremost as the locus classicus of friendship. Arendt builds through political equalization an *ultimum remedium* for alterity, i.e. a common world for the refugees; for the alterities; for the foreigners; for the strangers. Public space is by definition a *pariahdom*. Socrates is the outstanding tragic and conscious pariah and therefore on his death Hannah Arendt founds the ideal free city of refugium⁶⁸.

If Socrates is the ideal figure of refugee within free city walls, then Arendtian philosophy and political ontology of exile is a Socratic model of thinking, acting and judging *per se*⁶⁹. In other words, it could be argued that if Socrates is the ideal conscious pariah then philosophy of exile is the rival awe of thoughtlessness⁷⁰. Therefore, refugee as a conscious pariah is by definition, in Arendt's viewpoint, the 'holy grail' of thoughtfulness. Paraphrasing Richard Kearney, it would be said that refugees as conscious pariahs are the prophets of alterity who bring to the fore a new kind of citizenship, i.e. the Derrida-like citizen 'to come'⁷¹. This new kind of citizen promotes a collectivity through total difference or ontological otherness via pure collective acting. In Giorgio Agamben's terms, this new citizenship of refugees in the land of refugium is bare life *par excellence* beyond nationalities, religions and sexes. Otherness is just the human flesh in the condition of natality⁷². Hence, the condition of refugee is a life that deserves to be lived⁷³. In Hannah Arendt's ontological, political and ethical philosophy of exile, refugee as a conscious pariah is no longer the realization of superfluity. On the contrary, refugee steadily symbolizes the representative newcomer (natality) of friendship, citizenship and public sphere. So, plurality presupposes natality. In this vein, it could be argued that common world presupposes refugee as a Socratic 'gadfly' which is coming at midnight to awaken our alienated consciousness. From this standpoint, it is no coincidence that during the last years an important academic and research project is taking place within which the bridging between plurality and alterity is attempted, especially under the aegis of a long overdue dialogue between Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas. Hospitality, reconciliation, friendship, responsibility, solidarity and the figures of exile and refugee constitute the common place of this ongoing reflexive and critical discussion⁷⁴.

Edward Said, in his attempt to identify refugium's specific ontological content in the meaning of this new public sphere of refugees, mainly against the state violence and Totalitarianism, which atavistic nationalism produced from the late 19th century onwards, writes in his famous essay 'Reflections on Exile' as follows: "And just beyond the frontier

⁶⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, Schocken Books, New York, 2005, pp. 17-18.

⁶⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2006, p. 114.

⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1978, p. 173.

⁷⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2006, p. 280.

⁷¹ Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters. Interpreting otherness*, Routledge, London and New York, 2003, pp. 63-82.

⁷² Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 270.

⁷³ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1998, p. 136.

⁷⁴ Anya Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality*, Rowman & Littlefield International, London and New York, 2015, pp. 156-161.



between ‘us’ and the ‘outsiders’ is the perilous territory of not-belonging: this is to where in a primitive time peoples were banished, and where in the modern era immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons”⁷⁵. This concrete space of not-belonging; beyond the state borders; between past and the future; this dangerous political space par excellence; the public sphere as contingency, irreversibility and unpredictability⁷⁶; is exactly what Hannah Arendt thoroughly investigates in her article ‘We Refugees’, just the historical time when the eugenic and racist experiments of the so-called ‘Nazi Medicine’ had begun to reveal the awful face of ‘Final Solution’ (Shoah). In Levinasian terms, the destruction of the space of not-belonging, i.e. the sui generis public space of refugium, obviously signifies the tragic end of humanity itself. In his prophetic minor treatise on Hitlerism, Emmanuel Levinas concludes in the following way: “racism is not just opposed to such and such a particular point in Christian and liberal culture. It is not a particular dogma concerning democracy, parliamentary government, dictatorial regime, or religious politics that is in question. It is the very humanity of man”⁷⁷. As we have seen above, Arendt defines this humanity of man as *humanitas*, by meaning with this the inherent capability of man to establish political communities on the strong bases of speech, action and judging. “This political background”, she points out emphatically, “distinguishes Roman *humanitas* from what moderns call humanity by which they commonly mean a mere effect of education”⁷⁸.

From this specific view, refugee either as a conscious pariah or as a Socratic ‘gadfly’ signifies the crisis of modernity per se⁷⁹. By exploring in-depth the condition of modern refugee, Hannah Arendt actually explores the shortcomings and failures of the modern human condition. Against this crisis of modernity, Hannah Arendt puts the figure of refugee as a conscious pariah. At the end of her article, by summarizing, in a sense, the portrait of this sui generis (Jewish a fortiori) persona of modern times, she writes as follows: “All vaunted Jewish qualities-the ‘Jewish heart’, humanity, humor, disinterested intelligence-are pariah qualities (...) It is the tradition of a minority of Jews who have not wanted to become upstarts, who preferred the status of ‘conscious pariah’ (...) the tradition of Heine, Rahel Varnhagen, Sholom Aleichem, of Bernard Lazare, Franz Kafka, or even Charlie Chaplin”⁸⁰. Just next year, in 1944, Hannah Arendt published in ‘Jewish Social Studies’ her famous article on the hidden tradition of Jew as pariah where literally she outlines a specific typology of conscious pariahs. In all the cases she thoroughly explores, undoubtedly the conscious pariah is a Socratic stranger within the city walls who portends the catastrophic consequences of human evilness in modernity. For Arendt, refugee as a conscious pariah and vice versa constitutes a last chance to seriously reflect on the Aristotelian sociality of human beings. “For only within the framework of a people”, Arendt underlines, “can man live as a man among men, without exhausting himself. And only when a people lives and functions in concert with other peoples can it contribute to the establishment upon earth of a commonly conditioned and commonly controlled humanity”⁸¹.

⁷⁵ Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 140.

⁷⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, pp. 175-247.

⁷⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism”, In: *Critical Inquiry*, No. 1, Vol. 17 (1990), pp. 62-71, p. 71.

⁷⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1983, p. 25.

⁷⁹ Liisi Keedus, *The Crisis of German Historicism. The Early Political Thought of Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, pp. 1-11.

⁸⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 274.

⁸¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 297.



2. SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS OR THE QUESTION OF REFUGEES IN THE 21st CENTURY

It is noteworthy to point out here that Jacques Derrida in ‘On Cosmopolitanism’ refers especially to Arendt’s ontological, political and ethical theory concerning the thorny question of refugees in the 21st century⁸². Arendt’s high-quality thought on homeless, stateless and deported people is conceived today as the main point of reference at the relevant academic and research field of inquiry. Her magnum opus on the historical and cultural origins of Totalitarianism could be perceived as the ‘Bible’ both of ‘Refugee Studies’ and/or asylum seekers approaches⁸³. Actually, Arendt in ‘The Origins of Totalitarianism’ investigates in-depth the problem of *Heimatlosen*, i.e. human beings without a home, a state or a place to live with peace and dignity. Especially, in ‘The Decline of the Nation-State and the end of the Rights of Man’, which is the fifth chapter of the second part of the book, Arendt explores the historical phenomenon of modern chauvinistic and aggressive nationalism at the epicenter of which she puts the critical concept of the ‘right to have rights’⁸⁴. Arendt’s political and ethical theory about refugees is a pure philosophical and mostly ontological approach in the meaning of world as an earthly hospitable home. “The story of our struggle”, she points out, by interpreting *inter alia* the Jewish Question, “has finally become known. We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life. We lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in this world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings. We left our relatives in the (...) ghettos and our best friends have been killed in concentration camps, and that means the rupture of our private lives”⁸⁵. She is talking about the everyday life of human beings from a phenomenological and existential point of view. This is an amazing fact which is rooted in her Aristotelian *Weltanschauung*. According to Arendt, to be a man at home in the world means first and foremost to be amongst people without exclusions. It is necessary to take seriously into consideration the phenomenon of world alienation. Over the course of her life, Hannah Arendt strongly supported the restoration of the world (*tikkun*) by heralding the human power of *amor mundi*. Therefore, the critical question of belonging to the world had “important consequences for her subsequent reflections on metaphysics, ethics and politics”⁸⁶.

Insofar as modernity is characterized by world alienation, i.e. the “desire to escape from the limited, human world into the limitless sphere of the non-human”⁸⁷, Arendt’s philosophical account concerning refugee’s question entails a new science of politics where human rights constitute the hard core of the new human condition⁸⁸. Throughout the 1940’s, writing simultaneously the ‘Origins of Totalitarianism’, Hannah Arendt published a range of important articles about homeless and stateless people. In doing so, she shed more light to the negative role of nationalism and imperialism in world alienation over the course of modernity. Most of them are included in the volumes which were published by Jerome Kohn

⁸² Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p. 25.

⁸³ Garrett Brown Wallace and David Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, Polity Press Cambridge, 2012, pp. 414-415.

⁸⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, p. 376.

⁸⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 264-265.

⁸⁶ Siobhan Kattago, “Hannah Arendt on the world”, In: Patrick Hayden (ed.), *Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts*, Acumen, Durham, 2014, p. 52.

⁸⁷ Simon Swift, *Hannah Arendt*, Routledge, London and New York, 2009, p. 28.

⁸⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994, p. 430.



from 1990's onwards⁸⁹. In an article she published at the 'Review of Politics' in 1946, she explored further the phenomena of nationalism and imperialism, particularly the specific way in which nation dominated the state. "Nationalism", she writes, "signifies essentially the conquest of the state through the nation. This is the sense of the national state. The result of the nineteenth-century identification of nation and state is twofold: while the state as a legal institution has declared that it must protect the rights of men, its identification with the nation implied the identification of the citizen as national and thereby resulted in the confusion of the rights of men with the rights of nationals or with national rights. Furthermore, insofar as the state is an 'enterprise of power', aggressive and inclining to expansion, the nation through its identification with the state acquires all these qualities and claims expansion now as a national right, as a necessity for the sake of the nation. 'The fact that the modern nationalism has frequently and almost automatically led to imperialism or to conquest, is due to the identification of state and nation'. The conquest of the state through the nation started with the declaration of the sovereignty of the nation. This was the first step transforming the state into the instrument of the nation, which finally has ended in those totalitarian forms of nationalism in which all laws and the legal institutions of the state as such are interpreted as a means for the welfare of the nation. It is therefore quite erroneous to see the evil of our times in a deification of the state. It is the nation which has usurped the traditional place of God and religion"⁹⁰.

Refugees are the main product of modern nationalism. However, it is needless to say that chauvinistic nationalism led to the rise of Totalitarianism and as a main result to the creation of the so-called superfluous people. Especially, the phenomenon of pan-national movements in the 20th century led the whole world to the paradoxical situation of mob rule, where some peoples faced other peoples as pariahs or mortal enemies à la Schmitt⁹¹. Arendt mightily argues that collective responsibility, as a legal, political and ethical mask of aggressive nationalism, was the perfect cover for the crimes against humanity during the first half of the 20th century. To the extent that everyone is guilty, actually nobody is guilty in the final analysis⁹². As she clearly shows in the case of Adolf Eichmann⁹³, human superfluity is the metonymy of human thoughtlessness. In fact, the deification of the nation in the 20th century transformed the state from a legal protector of human and citizen rights to a violent and aggressive guarantor of the rights of nationals⁹⁴. In accordance with Hannah Arendt, this is the realization of the banality of evil. This means, that thoughtlessness does not concern the human stupidity but the reluctance of men to imagine what the other persons are experiencing⁹⁵. For Young-Bruehl, Eichmann is just the personification of "the imperialist techniques of ghettoization and massacre"⁹⁶. Patrick Hayden points out with emphasis that "superfluity, or what Arendt regards as the process of endangering human plurality itself" is

⁸⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994 and Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007.

⁹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994, pp. 208-209.

⁹¹ Karin A. Fry, *Arendt. A Guide for the Perplexed*, Continuum, London, 2009, pp. 14-16.

⁹² Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, Schocken Books, New York, 2003, pp. 149-151.

⁹³ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2006.

⁹⁴ Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994, p. 210.

⁹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Last Interview and Other Conversations*, Melville House, London, 2013, p. 48.

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2006, p. 76.



the quintessence of nationalism-inspired Totalitarianism. “What Arendt calls ‘superfluosity’”, he summarizes, “is the major problem of dehumanization” (...) Superfluous people are not only oppressed or treated unjustly; they are made expendable from a properly human world, which proves fatal to their human status. Making ‘human beings as human beings superfluous’” constitutes “a central element of the totalitarian project (...) In their systematic attempt to eliminate human spontaneity, individuality and plurality, totalitarian regimes were not simply liquidating individuals but rather annihilating the very idea of humanity itself”⁹⁷.

It is worth noting here that the ontological, political and ethical problem of superfluity does not concern only the refugees or the homeless and stateless people in the era of nationalism and Totalitarianism, but, as Arendt has plainly shown in her late works, it entirely connects with the post-Totalitarian phenomenon of mass society and especially with the relevant questions of conformism, mass culture and kitsch which all of them could be considered as the contemporary form of thoughtlessness⁹⁸. It is no exaggeration to argue that the ontological, political and ethical crisis of modernity, in the face of refugees, especially in the case of the Arendtian conscious pariahs, indicates in parallel a deep crisis in modern and also in contemporary culture⁹⁹. The case of Franz Kafka is too characteristic. The story of Stefan Zweig is interesting as well. Both of them are critical indicators of the distinguished cultural aspects of crisis of modernity¹⁰⁰. Cecilia Sjöholm speaks about Arendtian aesthetics as an integral part of Arendt’s political ontology to the extent that the question of art, as a matter of appearance and visibility, is by definition a question of public sphere. “She speaks of art”, Sjöholm points out, “as a means towards solidarity, collectivity, and remembrance. For that reason, it must be appreciated as an essential aspect of her work”¹⁰¹. Paraphrasing Sjöholm, it could be supported that the art as a synecdoche of public sphere could be perceived as a remedy of laughter¹⁰². From this point of view, Charlie Chaplin is the ideal contemporary refugee as a conscious pariah in the public field of art. In other words, Charlie Chaplin could be seen as a Socrates of our days, who uses his laughter in order to awaken our consciousness¹⁰³. Marie Luise Knott argues that Arendt invented the act of laughing¹⁰⁴, particularly via the conscious pariahs, as the metonymy of reflective thinking, imagination, enlarged mentality and judging¹⁰⁵. These are the main mental and spiritual characteristics of refugees as conscious pariahs.

To sum up, we can say that Hannah Arendt’s philosophical and ontological view on human rights could be seen as an excellent manner in order to efficiently deal with the thorny question of refugees in the 21st century. Arendtian theses on refugee as a conscious pariah

⁹⁷ Patrick Hayden, “Illuminating Hannah Arendt”, In: Patrick Hayden (ed.), *Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts*, Acumen, Durham, 2014, pp. 14-15.

⁹⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2007, p. 149 and pp. 179-202.

⁹⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2006, pp. 194-222.

¹⁰⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2007, pp. 94-109 and pp. 58-68.

¹⁰¹ Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt. How to see things*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015, p. 153.

¹⁰² Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt. How to see things*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015, p. 137.

¹⁰³ Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt. How to see things*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015, pp. 133-153 and Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 286-288.

¹⁰⁴ Marie Luise Knott, *Unlearning with Hannah Arendt*, Granta, Great Britain, 2014, pp. 3-29.

¹⁰⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 7-85.



could be perceived furthermore as an entire political and ethical theory on power with the meaning of ‘acting in concert’. ‘Power’, Arendt clarifies in her famous treatise on violence, “corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together”¹⁰⁶. Refugee, as a man without property, guides us to the free polis, where power firstly means that people act in concert under the aegis of friendship. So, public sphere as an ultimum refugium is a common place or, in other words, a common world which does not belong to anybody. The world belongs to everybody, especially to refugees and homeless people¹⁰⁷. Each time where people are violently excluded from the world either for religious or national reasons human rights are transformed from a political, ethical and legal structure of the contemporary liberal democratic state into a pseudo-humanistic ideology which opens up the ontological possibility of the nationalism-inspired Totalitarianism. As Hannah Arendt shows, the identification of human rights with national rights, or, in other words, the identification of citizens with nationals or the identification of the citizenship with nationality, challenged the great tradition of Enlightenment and particularly the culture of inalienable rights of human beings and citizens, i.e. the ‘right to have rights’. From this point of view, the “stateless people lost not only citizenship rights but also human rights. Arendt”, Gündoğdu highlights, “captures this double loss with the term ‘rightlessness’, but the meaning of this term is far from obvious. To clarify this loss, she identifies the one truly human right that is not reducible to the rights that we are entitled to as citizens: ‘a right to have rights’ or ‘a right to belong to some kind of organized community’”¹⁰⁸. Adopting Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft specific analysis on Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas, we can say that thinking and acting for the sake of refugees in a state of world alienation is as if thinking and acting for the sake of public sphere or as if thinking and acting for the sake of amor mundi¹⁰⁹. This new human condition, in Giorgio Agamben’s own terms, “would no longer be the *ius* (right) of the citizen but rather the *refugium* (refuge) of the singular”¹¹⁰. This is why Hannah Arendt matters today more than ever.

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¹⁰⁶ Hannah Arendt, On Violence, A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Inc., Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, London, 1970, p. 44.

¹⁰⁷ Spiros Makris, “Emmanuel Levinas on Hospitality. Ethical and Political Aspects”, In: International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science, No. 2, Vol. 2 (2018), pp. 79-96.

¹⁰⁸ Ayten Gündoğdu, “Statelessness and the right to have rights”, In: Patrick Hayden (ed.), Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts, Acumen, Durham, 2014, p. 110.

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, Thinking in Public. Strauss, Levinas, Arendt, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2016, pp. 1-22 and Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, Why Arendt Matters, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2006, pp. 1-29.

¹¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, Means without End. Notes on Politics, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London, 2000, p. 95.



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