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Natality as Foundation for the Capacity to Initiate in the Thought of
Hannah Arendt.



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à Jocelyne Allard, M.A.



Université de Montréal
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Ce mémoire intitulé:

Nativity as Foundation for the Capacity to Initiate in the Thought
OF HANNAH ARENDT

présente par:

JEREMY RAFAËL

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Résumé

The notion of natality plays an important role in the thought of Hannah Arendt. In its most elementary sense it corresponds to the fact that man is born into the world, into a realm of human conditions, where he is confronted by both a stable existing world and people.

Confrontational from the outset, being born into the world reveals a challenge for man: how to reconcile his own unique nature with that of an already existing set of human conditions.

Hannah Arendt argues that the constellation lies in the fact of natality, a capacity in man to create new beginnings. In this sense natality has ontological relevance in the sense that for man in his original predicament, being born into a set of human conditions, he can transcend this predicament by his capacity to begin or act in the world. In the end it is in virtue of an idea of action, the concrete expression of natality, that man is able to confront his predicament and transcend existing conditions and partake in the process of creating new ones.

The philosophy of Hannah Arendt is broad, covering a spectrum of philosophical issues. What is unique, however, distinguishing herself from others, is all of the basic themes running through her thought, i.e., plurality, freedom, initiative, etc., owe their origin to the fact of natality. That is, natality precedes all of these basic themes, and their understanding, their philosophical integrity is contingent on a notion of natality to be first recognized. In the end, therefore, in order to appreciate the richness of the philosophy of Hannah Arendt, from her discussion on totalitarianism to revolution and foundation, from authority to the nature of the *polis*, it is essential to appreciate the fact of natality, since it is here where these basic themes were originally constructed.

The purpose of this thesis was to identify the notion of natality in the thought of Hannah Arendt and trace back through some of the more well known themes in her work and address their relationship with a notion of natality. In the process, I have addressed the need for this recognition to be made in order to fully appreciate the thought of Hannah Arendt. Finally, this thesis is dedicated to the fact that natality refers to an invitation for action, and that through action new beginnings can be made in the world.

Sommaire

La notion de natalité joue un rôle important dans la pensée de Hannah Arendt. Dans le sens le plus élémentaire, la natalité correspond au fait que l'homme est né dans le monde dans une ensemble de conditions humaines où il est affronté par un monde existant et par les autres dans ce monde.

Conflictuel dès le début, naître dans le monde révèle un défi pour l'homme : comment réconcilier sa nature unique avec celle d'un ensemble de conditions humaines déjà existantes ? Hannah Arendt écrit que la «constellation» est dans le fait de natalité, une capacité de l'homme de créer, de renouveler. Dans ce sens, la natalité a une pertinence ontologique, car l'homme peut toujours transcender sa condition humaine par sa capacité d'agir dans le monde. Il est en vertu de l'idée d'action - l'expression concrète de natalité- que l'homme est capable d'affronter sa condition humaine, de dépasser les conditions existantes et participer au processus de création de nouvelles conditions.

La philosophie d'Hannah Arendt s'étend sur plusieurs questions philosophiques. Ce qui distingue Arendt d'autres penseurs est que toutes les thèmes dont elle aborde, c'est-à-dire, la pluralité, la liberté, l'initiative, etc., ont leur origine dans l'idée de natalité. La natalité précède tous ces autres thèmes. Leur intégrité philosophique est basée sur la notion de natalité, qui doit être reconnue en premier lieu. Par conséquent, pour apprécier la richesse de la pensée d'Hannah Arendt, sa discussion du totalitarisme, la révolution et la fondation, l'autorité et la "nature du polis", il est essentiel d'apprécier le fait de natalité, puisque c'est d'ici que tous ces thèmes émergent.

Le but de la présente thèse est d'identifier la notion de natalité dans la pensée d'Hannah Arendt et de la tracer à travers les thèmes les plus connus dont elle a traité et adresser leur rapport à la notion de

natalité. Dans le processus, la thèse souligne le besoin de cette reconnaissance dans l'appréciation de la pensée d'Hannah Arendt. Finalement, cette thèse soutient que la natalité fait appel à l'action car c'est à travers l'action qu'il y a du renouveau.

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Introduction

The aim in this thesis is to identify the notion of natality in the thought of Hannah Arendt. The point is not simply to identify the notion of natality, but also to show that all of the other basic themes running through her thought, in the end, rely on, and are contingent on a notion of natality for their understanding to be known.

“The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs from its normal material ruin is ultimately the fact of natality in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted.”¹

This quotation captures the main interest that I'll be pursuing, namely unmasking the meaning behind what natality is and in attempt to unravel the other basic themes that are interconnected with it. At first glance, within this quotation alone, it reveals that there is an interconnected or contingent relationship between a notion of natality and action. That is,

“...to act is the human answer to the condition of natality.”²

But what does this mean, and what are the circumstances that lead this possibility to begin, to flourish, as it were, in the world. What's more, if it is true that it is in virtue of a notion of natality that 'saves the world from its normal material ruin,' what conditions are needed for this to happen in the first place?

¹Arendt, Hannah. The Human Condition. (Condition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. p. 247.

²Arendt, Hannah. Crises of the Republic (Republic). New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1972. p. 179.

The notion of natality in the thought of Hannah Arendt has in recent years become a much discussed topic. One book in particular, Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality, written by Patricia Bowen Moore clearly identifies natality as the spring board for Hannah Arendt's entire thought. I have considered this book in my own preparation and focused on areas different than Bowen-Moore. I have concentrated on the themes: totalitarianism and ideology and revolution and foundation.

The main body of the thesis consists of an examination of the three anthro-philosophical categories: labor, work, and action found in The Human Condition. In this sense, I have concentrated in the post-ontological sense of the notion of natality, and what its features are. While most scholars of Hannah Arendt always mention the notion of natality in their respective work, it still remains at the side lines to some other notions in her work, namely the notion of plurality, power, etc.. While all of these other basic themes are important, it is my intent, my own personal contribution in the study of Hannah Arendt, to suggest that her entire thought - whether it be discussing totalitarianism or the work of art or anything else - becomes more apparent only once an appreciation for the notion of natality has been made. In this sense, Hannah Arendt's own contribution to philosophy and the political and social sciences may be known in terms of her projecting a notion of beginning into the commonly accepted definition of man as an *animal rational*. No longer is he simply a being endowed with the capacity to reason and engage in dialogue but also in the capacity to begin new beginnings.

Methodologically, this thesis will unfold in the following way: firstly, the opening chapter will mark the historical and philosophical landscape preceding the thought of Hannah Arendt. Specifically I will examine the thought of Plato and Marx and show how their own thinking

has a lasting impact in Hannah Arendt's own specific endeavors. The main stress in this section will be to show that the work of Karl Marx has had a considerable impact in Hannah Arendt's own work. It is something I consider relevant insofar as a good deal of Hannah Arendt's own thinking springs from a general critique of Marx's thought proper. This chapter, therefore, not specifically concerned with natality as it will later be discussed, is more of an introductory element useful to measure Hannah Arendt's own starting point.

Secondly, I will devote some time examining the relationship between a notion of totalitarianism and ideology and its relationship with a notion of natality. This chapter will be an attempt to show what a notion of natality looks like when a political organization systematically denies the possibility of beginning, the congregating of people, through speech and deeds, from being allowed to exist. As it turns out, both the political and ontological aspects of natality shall be examined here and, in the end, the fact that natality is essentially rooted as a capacity in man will reveal that all of the discrepancies found in political organizations denying the fact of natality return to a more general denial of individuality. That is, once natality as a quality of man is denied its implications and consequences are only then seen, in this case, in the form of totalitarianism and elements of ideology and ideological thinking. Therefore, this section shall concentrate on the after-effects of what happens when natality is denied at an individual level. The implications will reveal, at the political level, an interesting result: namely the beginning of what may be called totalitarianism and ideology.

Thirdly, I will examine the book The Human Condition and discuss the three anthro-philosophical categories - labor, work, and action - and their relationship with a notion of natality. Each of these categories

sheds insight into the nature of what natality is; even though it may happen that some of the qualities in any of the categories do not meet precisely with the inherent possibilities that a notion of natality suggests. That is, through identifying at least some aspects of a notion of natality in each of these categories, and more thoroughly a direct expression of it as in the case of the category of action, we shall see that there are indeed qualities or characteristics that natality corresponds to, which, in the end, creates a fuller picture of what natality is. This chapter remains the main body of this thesis and speaks more directly about what natality is properly speaking. However, since the notion of natality is itself vague, insofar as it refers to the notion of beginning, both in the sense of a political or concrete expression, and a more general sense, its ontological sense, the capacity in all men to begin new beginnings, it will be useful to contrast these two senses, and that, I believe, will reveal itself more clearly through an examination of these three categories.

Fourthly, I will examine the book On Revolution, and discuss the relationship between an idea of revolution, according to Hannah Arendt, and a notion of natality. This chapter shall continue in the same way as the chapter on totalitarianism and focus more on actual concrete political expressions which, as history has shown, are constantly revealed in the world; in this case in the different forms and approaches of revolutions. I will begin by examining Hannah Arendt's own discussion of what revolution is and, through examining some different approaches to beginning a revolution, namely in the view of Machiavelli and others, draw some conclusions in respect to their own notion of beginning. This section shall demonstrate the historical failure in some of these approaches in virtue of failing to meet the reality of what beginning is and entails. Later in this section I will concentrate more closely on the American revolution, and suggest, while agreeing with Hannah Arendt,

that such a possibility exists in expressing something new into this world where politics are concerned. This will lead us finally to the notion of foundation or creating a constitution which, if certain circumstances remain existent, namely the generosity and the availability of a political system, a *polis*, open to be changed, contorted, may indeed reveal that something like a notion of natality is possible in the realm of politics.

Finally, I will conclude with some final comments and, once again, stress the importance of a notion of natality in the work of Hannah Arendt. The departing idea from this work therefore is that natality is the most significant element in the thought of Hannah Arendt, and that it becomes the means to understand all of the other basic themes running through her work.

Chapter One: Kafka's Parable

In the preface of Between Past and Future, Hannah Arendt explains the six essays therein are exercises in "how to think." She is cautious not to say they are in any way prescriptive. In that, the role of philosophy is not to prescribe any one particular way to think, but rather to be used as a tool, an apparatus by which we can better understand our predicament. Thus, when we seek to understand the role of philosophy in the thought of Hannah Arendt we find that its purpose lies in the fact that it is something which can improve and stimulate thought, however, not necessarily generate improved ideas in and about things. One of the characteristics one comes to see in her thought is the constant swing from discussing the nature of concepts, both in its concrete historical sense, and also, more generally, in its phenomenal sense. This aspect in the thought of Hannah Arendt has been a point of debate by some of her opponents, who claim she is often unclear in terms of her methodological tendency to sway from speaking of the nature of things in terms of their historical reference point, an event, to speaking of them more generally, or conceptually. This is something which constantly reveals itself in all criticism of Hannah Arendt, which will be addressed later on. For our purposes, what should be understood first is the debate surrounding the historical legitimacy of her claims and the philosophical one's, though crossing, are clearly separated. In this way, I have chosen to stress the notion of Hannah Arendt the philosopher, and less the sense of Hannah Arendt the historian. We will see this problem, namely the distinguishing between these two realms, as a theme in her thinking, and one we will constantly examine throughout this thesis.

The book entitled Between Past and Future begins with Hannah Arendt retelling a well-known Franz Kafka parable. It turns out that she uses this parable as a starting point, because she considers it captures the essence of the philosophical landscape leading into the twenty-first century.

Let us begin our journey, therefore, by retelling Kafka's parable and from there follow some of the observations that Hannah Arendt has drawn from it.

The parable goes as follows,

“He has two antagonists: the first presses him from behind, from the origin. The second blocks the road ahead. He gives battle to both. To be sure, the first supports him in his fight with the second, for he wants to push him forward, and in the same way the second supports him in his fight with the first, since he drives him back. But it is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two antagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? His dream, though, is that some time in an unguarded moment - and this would require a night darker than any night that has been yet - he will jump out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience in fighting, to the position of umpire over his antagonists in their fight against each other.”³

In this parable Kafka was able to capture one of the main interests in the work of Hannah Arendt, namely the confrontation between thought and action, or the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*. The qualities that distinguishes Kafka's ideas on the subject, which stand out in the mind of Hannah Arendt, is the emphasis of man in regard to that which has already been, the past, and that which is not yet, the future.

³Arendt, Hannah. Between Past and Future. (Between). New York: Penguin, 1977. p.9.

"The fact that there is a fight at all seems due exclusively to the presence of man, without whom the forces of the past and the future, one suspects, would have neutralized or destroyed each other long ago."⁴

For both Kafka and Hannah Arendt, thinking represents "the most vital and the liveliest part of reality."⁵ The thought event that Kafka was able to illustrate included not just the phenomenon of thought, an aspect of man through which his essence corresponds, but also the concrete nature of his experience, of that which has already been, the past.

Thus, man occupies a special space where events which have already been, the past, and things which have not yet happened, the future, reveal themselves as meaningful, intelligible spheres in virtue of man, and his standing in the middle of these two realms. Properly speaking, then, these two realms, the past and the future, are not a continuum, an uninterrupted succession, but rather two distinct aspects of time.

"Only because man is inserted into the realm and only to the extent that he stands his ground does the flow of indifferent time break up into the tenses."⁶

It is here where Hannah Arendt first shows the importance in the role that beginning plays in her thought, at least in her interpretation of Kafka's parable. That is, that special place where man stands exists as a gap, an empty stage where neither the past nor the future plays any role. It is Hannah Arendt who has given this gap, this dividing phenomenon, where man stands, between past and future, its spatial dimension. A spatial dimension which, metaphorically speaking, indicates that special

⁴Op.cit., p. 10.

⁵Ibid., p. 10.

⁶Ibid., p. 11.

realm where thought, pure thought, undaunted by the events of the past and of the future, can happen.

"It may well be the region of the spirit or, rather, the path paved by thinking, this small track of non-time which the activity of thought beats within the time-space of mortal men and into which the trains of thought of remembrance and anticipation, save whatever they touch from the ruin of historical and biographical time."⁷

In Augustinian terms this gap, uninterrupted by the events of the past and the future, of remembrance and anticipation, exists as a possibility in the event of a beginning for a beginning; it is further maintained, according to Hannah Arendt that, if there exists any truth at all, it is within this gap between the past and the future where it is found.

Of course, the process in making this happen, thinking outside the two antagonists, remains the most difficult task for man; in that, inherent in this gap are certain boundaries which, according to Hannah Arendt, was dominated for centuries by traditions handed down from Roman concepts.

Yet, peculiar to our time, according to Hannah Arendt is the withering away of these traditions. Consequently, there remains a certain sense of ambiguity, at least in terms of man's own predicament, in the sense of what is demanded of him in terms of orienting himself inside this gap, which, as I have already mentioned, was for so long dictated through the appealing to the particular traditions handed down. Kafka's parable is concerned with this predicament exactly, and suggests thinking as a source of beginning. In this view, inherent in the overall picture of Hannah Arendt's own thinking is that thinking exists as a consolation, as

⁷Ibid., p. 13.

a way to escape from this particular sense of disorientation. Later, this form of thinking will translate into action, a concrete expression of the thinking process, creating the possibility in man the possibility to orient himself within this gap.

This aspect of Hannah Arendt's thinking is relevant to consider at the outset, and therefore while not being initially concerned with the notion of natality properly speaking, it is important to begin the adjustment process of understanding her starting point and major influences by looking at the historical and philosophical landscape preceding her. In this way, we will be in a better position to evaluate Hannah Arendt's thinking more clearly later on.

It is important to look at the essay "Tradition and the Modern Age" because it sets the stage for gaining an appreciation of where Hannah Arendt's thought begins, and where it stands compared to the other theories that have dominated Western thought for so long. Moreover, in gaining an appreciation of Hannah Arendt's own interpretation of the evolution of Western thought we will better understand her own proclivities concerning the role philosophy and politics play in her thinking. Finally, once this has been achieved, we will focus in on how the notion of natality fits within this general interpretation of Western thought; that is, how natality may or may not have played a role in some other theories. This section will be less concerned with the idea of natality proper, but rather setting the context in which Hannah Arendt stands - whereafter natality will be discussed in **greater detail**.

The discussion begins with Hannah Arendt making the claim that the tradition of political thought has its beginning in the teachings of Plato and Aristotle and its end in the in the thought of Karl Marx. She contends the main distinction between these two thinkers, Plato and Marx, is in

how each of these thinkers view the purposefulness of the realm of human affairs, and how each provide insight in terms of political, and the special role it plays in the life of the individual. For Plato the realm of human affairs provoked confusion and ambiguity. Thus, truth was sought outside the realm of human affairs; the individual person willingly abandoned the cave and looked towards the sky, the realm of Ideas for truth. Marx, on the other hand, was convinced that truth must be sought within human affairs, and not outside of it. Truth, according to Marx, was specifically found once men lived together within a "society." The distinction between these two thinkers can be further developed in respect to their attitudes towards the role philosophy played in respect to politics. For Plato, philosophy played an integral part in the discussion of politics: philosophy preceded politics: man would exit the realm of human affairs and look towards the realm of ideas, contemplate, consider the options in front of him and then afterward return to the realm of human affairs, the realm of politics, and provide through speech and deeds whatever insights he may have made in his aloneness. Thus, in Plato there is a cyclical process in providing for the realm of politics: first, man separates himself from his fellow man, considers his options, then returns to the realm of human affairs, and so on continually from there.

Whereas Marx, on the other hand, has a less instrumental attitude towards philosophy. That is, he considered it irrelevant to the point that he created a realm of politics where philosophy played no role. Thus, the whole cyclical operation of man pendulating from contemplating to his return to the realm of human affairs plays no role in the thought of Marx since he considered the contemplative element irrelevant.

Marx's attempt to abjure philosophy is a critical point to make because it becomes a point of contention in the thought of Hannah

Arendt. The remaining part of the essay, "Tradition and the Modern Age", continues by examining the consequences of an age where philosophy no longer plays any significant role. It carries this attitude through by showcasing specific modern political institutions that are in many respects evocations of Marx's own thought.

"Only beginning and end are, so to speak, pure and unmodulated; and the fundamental chord therefore never strikes its listeners more forcefully and more beautifully than when it first sends its harmonizing sound into the world and never more irritatingly and jarringly than when it still continues to be heard in a world whose sounds and thought it can no longer bring into harmony."⁸

Marx's attempt to abjure philosophy, to promote the idea that truth comes out of the collective unit, society, is striking in its consequences because it eliminates the possibility for novelty, something new being brought into the world. To a large extent, this lack of space for novelty in the thought of Marx, where beginnings and ends can no longer be brought into harmony owes its origin to Marx's belief that the essence of man is labor. That is, the essence of man for Marx is a complete reversal of what Plato and the commonly held Ancient Greek conception was, namely as man as an *animal rational*.

"Labor created man means first that labor and not God created man; second it means that man, insofar as he is human, creates himself, that his humanity is the result of his own activity; it means third that what distinguishes man from animal, his *differentia specifica*, is not reason, but labor, that he is not an *animal rational*, but an *animal laborans*; it means fourth that it is not reason, until then the highest attribute of man, but labor, the traditionally most despised human activity, which contains the humanity of man."⁹

⁸Ibid., p. 18.

⁹Ibid., p. 23.

Marx's definition of man has considerable implications, especially with respect to his eventual prediction that man will one day be alleviated from labor. This is a contentious point in Marx's work, according to Hannah Arendt, for the reason that if labor is the essence of man and it is Marx's prediction that labor will one day wither away, what remains for the task of man, his purpose, if his nature remains one most belonging to labor? Here we are not concerned with entertaining this debate, but rather simply to highlight which aspects of Marx's thought speak differently from that of Plato. In this respect, let us continue and examine some more of these differences. Hannah Arendt turns first to the thought of Plato and writes in praise of the capacity for beginnings in his thought.

"The beginning is like a God which as long as it dwells among men saves all things."¹⁰

This aspect of Plato's thought, namely the amplification of the notion of beginning, clearly shown in the above quotation, leads us directly to a notion of natality. Whereas, quite differently, in the thought of Marx there is no place, neither in the philosophical nor political, to accommodate the notion of possibility of beginning. This lack of "space" as it were is something which is inherent in both Plato and Augustine and yet non-existent in Marx.

Continuing on further in the relationship between the notion of beginning and the philosophy of Plato and Marx, Hannah Arendt writes,

"Marx's theory of ideological superstructures ultimately rests on his anti-traditional hostility to speech and the concomitant glorification of violence."¹¹

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

The definition of speech which Marx rejects finds its origin in the thought of Aristotle. For Aristotle, the definition of man, like Plato, is described as man as an *animal rational*. However, Aristotle goes further than Plato and explains that man is not only an *animal rational* but also endowed with the capacity for speech, which as it turns out, remains the single most important aspect of man and his individuality: it is through speech that man reveals himself in the world. Moreover, in speech man becomes a distinct being, different from other men, where his opinions with respect to things - how the political realm ought to improve itself say, and other matters pertaining to politics - is finally revealed.

“The distinction was that the Greeks, living together in a *polis*, conducted their affairs by means of speech, through persuasion, and not by means of violence, through mute coercion. Hence, when free men obeyed their government, or the laws of the *polis*, their obedience was called..., a word which indicates that obedience was obtained by persuasion and not by force.”¹²

Thus, for the Greeks speech inside the *polis* represented the way by which opinions were made. And since speech is clearly an individual act, man speaks his own thoughts and no one else's. By issuing them to the *polis* they are eventually met with other opinions, while observing communal rules, a consensus is finally reached. Thus, although speech remains a singular, individual act, in the end it becomes reified into the *polis* as something more substantial, more communal - perhaps as a law - where everybody lives accordingly.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 23

Thus, the main distinction between the thought of Plato and Marx can be read, at least in Hannah Arendt's interpretation, in terms of how each have defined the essence of man.

As I have already mentioned Plato defined man as an *animal rational*, endowed with the capacity for speech, where he could share his ideas, of whatever the subject matter, with other men inside the *polis*, resulting in a communal acceptance of a particular one opinion. Marx, on the other hand, represents a complete reversal of this definition of man, and instead consciously repudiates against the tradition and absorbs some aspects of the thought of Hegel, taken further, by his introduction of his dialectical materialism. This denial of the capacity for new beginnings, or the sense of protesting against the notion of singular, individual opinions being made in the company of one with himself and later shared with others is inconsistent with the thought of Marx, where thought is subordinated in favor of a more general elevation of law being made through the gathering of "society" and issued forth through the manifestation of this idea.

"For the young Marx man is essentially a natural being endowed with the faculty of action...; and his action remains natural because it consists of laboring - the metabolism between man and nature."¹³

In short, through surveying the thought of Plato and Marx, we can now see how two different political theories - how action is recognized in each of them - follow from their more general philosophical presuppositions regarding what the essence of man is

¹³Ibid., p. 39.

The question "what is man?" is common throughout the history of Western philosophy, and one which will be addressed more thoroughly as we proceed. However, what is important to note in this question, is the fact that there is a tendency in the work of Hannah Arendt to avoid spelling out what this question means. However, one quote in particular stands out and, perhaps, may shed some light, namely the statement that "men, not Man, inhabit the world."¹⁴ This particular quotation reappears in the work of Hannah Arendt and in many respects creates an atmosphere where the question of What is man? becomes taken for granted, or overstepped, and instead replaced with a more general, more complex open-ended formula that leads directly into her main interest - namely the area of action and plurality; the concrete expression of the fact of natality in man.

Now that we have reached some understanding of Hannah Arendt's own interpretation of the tradition, namely in respect to the main differences between Plato and Marx, it is worth going further to see if this interpretation plays any role, if at all, in terms of the relationship between natality and the overall thought of Hannah Arendt. Later this will bring us to the work found in The Human Condition, where Hannah Arendt, in a more succinct manner, works out the implications of Marx's own philosophy and in the process initiates an entire philosophy of her own, which, as we shall see, reveals the way natality finds space in her thought.

The main point that ought to be recognized up to now is that much of the originality of Hannah Arendt's thought springs out of an interpretation of Marx and a re-affirmation of the thought of Plato. This

¹⁴ Arendt, Hannah. On Revolution. (Revolution). New York: Penguin, 1990. p. 174.

will become more clear as we proceed, especially beginning in chapter five where the three anthro-philosophical categories - labor, work, and action - are discussed.

Chapter Two: The relationship between a notion of Natality and Totalitarianism and Ideology

Totalitarianism

In this chapter, we will examine the implications when a notion of natality is denied in a political philosophy. The denial of natality, as we will see, reveals itself in a number of different ways - specifically in the way plurality, freedom, and action vanish, disappear from functioning. That is, in eliminating an idea of natality it also necessarily abolishes all the other basic concepts associated with it, i.e. plurality, freedom, and action.

In this case, the form of government that reveals itself, the form of government that denies a notion of natality, may be known as totalitarianism. In later chapters we will examine more thoroughly the philosophical, conceptual aspects of natality. There we will provide a positive response to the particular negative portrayal of the aspects of natality that we are discussing here. But for now our interest will be totalitarianism: the most negative concrete political expression of what a form of government looks like when natality is denied. And as we will see throughout, the denial of a notion of natality in a form of government leads to the vanishing of a number of other basic themes, most particularly, the notion of plurality and freedom.

The first thing to discuss is what totalitarianism is. This is a particular strain in the thought of Hannah Arendt and one which has attracted a good deal of debate. Methodologically, Hannah Arendt has

loosely traced the actual event of the totalitarianism through a build up of ideology through particular events in history. Paul Ricoeur, who has written extensively on the thought of Hannah Arendt, has traced the origins of totalitarianism to a notion of authority.

"D'une part, vous avez raison, par rapport au totalitarisme, qui est à bien des égards sans précédent et, d'autre part, par rapport à la tradition autoritaire qu'il est important de ne pas confondre avec le totalitarisme car elle a eu ses lettres de noblesse: la tentative de fonder l'autorité divine, sur l'autorité présumée d'un législateur suprême, maître du cosmos, est quelque chose qu'il faut estimer à sa vraie grandeur. La démocratie s'est constituée d'abord en rupture avec cette tradition autoritaire, et elle s'est affirmée ensuite en opposition avec le totalitarisme, opposition qui nous a forcés à une redéfinition de la démocratie elle-même."¹⁵

As Paul Ricoeur rightly points out there are aspects of totalitarianism which are deeply rooted in events of history, in the particular forms of government that have preceded it, although there is also the sense of it as unprecedented, and that fact of unprecedance is what interests Hannah Arendt.

"Instead of saying that totalitarianism government is unprecedented, we could also say that it has exploded the very alternative on which all definitions of the essence of governments have been based in political philosophy, that is the alternative between lawful and lawless government, between arbitrary and legitimate power."¹⁶

She continues by saying of totalitarianism that,

¹⁵ Ricoeur, Paul. *La critique et la conviction*. Azouvi, F and de Launay, M., ed. Paris: Éditions Calmann-Lévy, 1996. p. 165.

¹⁶ Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism (Origins)*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1973. p. 461.

“...it operates neither without guidance of law nor is it arbitrary, for its claims to obey strictly and unequivocally those laws of Nature or of History from which all positive laws always have been supposed to spring.”¹⁷

Clearly from this last quotation we can see that Hannah Arendt has purposely detached herself and her formulation of what totalitarianism is by stating that it finds its origin in those laws which spring out of nature and history. But what is significant is that when she refers to nature and history, especially in the case of the latter, which can be found in the writings of Hegel and Marx, is that it is something without any particular reference, but rather found in the culmination of all historical events; and that specific or particular forms of government are unintelligible in so far as they remain culminations, which continue to build up incrementally with the constancy advance of historical events continuously giving shape and integrity to the particular form of government.

One of the obvious implications in a government that finds its meaning outside the affairs of man, and that is an implication when a government suspends any association with a particular known form of government and instead constructs itself by way of making references to things unworldly, or to the law of Nature and History, which are examples of this unworldliness, there is a tendency, a very strong tendency to suspend concern for individual citizenry. In this view, man is subordinated, and his specific concern ignored in favor of the more general concern for the laws of Nature and History.

Now in this latter point, namely the subordination of man in favor of a notion of law mirroring the absolutist model of Nature and History, we shall see reflected the anti-natal element of the idea of totalitarianism.

¹⁷Op.cit., p. 461.

However, before we go further into investigating why totalitarianism is in contradistinction to an idea of natality, what must be made clear, from what has already been said, is that totalitarianism is something, according to Hannah Arendt, which is unprecedented in the sense that it has little resemblance to anything like it before in history. Some have argued that this is not the case, and perhaps that is a fair argument. However, if we consider Hannah Arendt's own formulation in the context of looking at totalitarianism in terms of it existing as having an essence or a nature, which she admits may be the case in the first part of the chapter *Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government*, when she asks if,

"There is such a thing as the nature of totalitarianism government, whether it has its own essence and can be compared and defined like other forms of government such as Western thought has known and recognized since the times of ancient philosophy."¹⁸

What this quotation asks is what the implication of such a possibility lead to; it begs the question for at least some form of investigation. And so here that is exactly what we will do: I'll follow Hannah Arendt's own analysis that there is such a possibility of a thing as totalitarianism as having an essence, and therefore any criticism that attempts to dismantle the integrity of Hannah Arendt's position in these matters by way of arguing from the vantage point of showing how her thesis is inconsistent with other forms of totalitarianism in the past are fruitless, in the sense that it is not something which is concrete, referring to episodes of history that matter here, but rather the idea of this form of totalitarianism in particular.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 461.

I do not want to avoid the aspect of comparison between Hannah Arendt's formulation of what totalitarianism is with other forms of government completely. In fact, Hannah Arendt does entertain the position of comparison in a number of ways in her own discussion. One example of this is when she compares the differences between what a dictatorship is with totalitarianism. The main difference between the two is that the former relies on the point of view of the dictator, whereas in totalitarianism governments there is a certain amount of irrelevancy with respect to who is in charge, or who is the dictator. The reason for this is that totalitarianism embodies an idea of how things ought to be in this world in virtue of the law of Nature and History, which correspond not to any one individual but rather to an idea - particular point of view for a more general point of view, encouraged by unknown forces, provides the basis of the tension between things which are considered right or wrong. The reason for this development, namely the irrelevancy of questions regarding right and wrong, or more generally - ethics, is that these sorts of questions cannot be detached from specific concrete circumstances. Right and wrong springs from specific concrete settings. And since totalitarianism is concerned with an Idea, or the Laws of Nature and History, which themselves are not concrete, but rather the consequence of the logic of an Idea, it follows that right and wrong have nothing at all to do with totalitarianism and how it functions.

Hannah Arendt writes,

"Totalitarianism policy claims to transform the human species into active unfailing carrier of a law to which human beings otherwise would only passively and reluctantly be subjected."¹⁹

¹⁹Ibid., p. 462.

It is here where we begin to see where an idea of totalitarianism begins to reveal itself as something in contradistinction to what Hannah Arendt has already described as the essence of man, namely as being endowed with the capacity for speech, and capable of acting in this world through this capacity. Totalitarianism, on the other hand, in its attempt to fulfill the logic of an Idea of what man is, naively a carrier of the Law of Nature and History, purposely denies this active character of man and his capacity for novelty by replacing it with something literally "outside," that is the logic of the Law. What's more, this form of Law that totalitarianism supports is unlike any other forms of law, only the positive laws that are found in other forms of government. In other words, while other forms of law recognize the relationship between legality and justice, totalitarianism suggests, quite differently, that legality does not lead to justice.

In the traditional interpretation, legality works as a bridge or a mediation linking man with justice. Whereas, through instituting formal prescriptions surrounding what is permissible under the law, man, in effect, can guide his way towards justice through simply conforming to certain precepts or rules. Totalitarianism, on the other hand, works quite differently: it oversteps the bridge of legality by claiming that such is unnecessary since man is the carrier of the law itself; therefore already endowed with justice, which means further that positive laws are irrelevant, or get in the way since there is no distance separating man from justice in the first place, there is no real justification to have a notion of justice according to the totalitarian point of view.

This aspect of totalitarianism is rooted in its essential understanding of law as being something continuous or open-ended. That is, totalitarianism accepts the notion of law as movement and anything

that attempts to stifle this movement, in this case, anything that gets in the way of the natural flow of the law of nature and history, ought not simply be ignored but fiercely dismantled.

The open-endedness that totalitarianism strives towards ought not to be confused with the general open-endedness that is inherent in man, mainly in his capacity to begin new beginnings, similar to the notion of natality we have discussed so far. To the contrary, and as we shall later see, the totalitarianism sense of being open-ended simply refers to the fact that it is without positive laws. But, as we shall also see, despite this lacking in positive laws, totalitarianism is still burdened by an even greater sensibility - mainly the tension that exists between the law of Nature and History.

This is by no means a recent development initiated by the appearance of a totalitarian government witnessed in the earlier part of this century. To the contrary, the tension between natural law and positive has been of central concern for philosophers since times of antiquity. But what is unprecedented in totalitarianism is that the flow of action is no longer rooted in either of these two forms of law but rather in the attempt to follow the pseudo-science of the law of Nature and History.

“The rulers themselves do not claim to be just or wise, but only to execute historical or natural laws; they do not apply laws, but execute a movement in accordance with its inherent law. Terror is lawfulness, if law is the law of the movement as some superhuman force, Nature and History.”²⁰

²⁰ Ibid., p. 465.

What this says is that the open-endedness inherent in man, the capacity which corresponds to the ontological character of natality in man, namely the capacity to begin new beginnings, to issue in something novel into the world that has never before been seen or heard, must necessarily, in the totalitarian position, be somehow harnessed or controlled or self-contained, so that the totalitarian law, rooted in Nature and History, can successfully fulfill its supposed natural flow of direction.

The means by which totalitarianism does this is by instituting a climate of terror, where man in fear for his own particular well being, consequently, suspends his opinion in all matters.

"It has frequently been observed that terror can rule absolutely only over men who are isolated against each other and that, therefore, one of the primary concerns of all tyrannical governments is to bring this isolation about. Isolation maybe the beginning of terror; its certain it is its most fertile ground; it always is its result."²¹

And as we have already discussed earlier "opinion" is the foundation of what government is; without it, government collapses and is replaced by fictional representations. I mention the word fictional because that is exactly what totalitarianism achieves in paralyzing opinion: it creates an unworldly reality, something outside the affairs of man. Hannah Arendt uses the expression "a band of terror" to describe it as a phenomenon of unworldliness. A band of iron achieves for totalitarianism the firm grip that it needs in order to prevent people from engaging in speech between one another, preventing a climate suitable for opinion and dialogue. What the "band it iron" refers to is the idea of collectively gathering people so tightly that dialogue is nearly impossible,

²¹ Ibid., p. 474.

eliminating the public space. In this sense, terror through the "band of iron," is that instrument through which totalitarianism uses to stifle the gathering of people who, when gathered, create the possibility of engaging between one another, which is considered a threat to the totalitarian agenda. In virtue of the reason already mentioned terror is that instrument which prevents for the possibility of the notion of plurality. Instead, because of the "iron band," man is encircled by a force pushing him inward towards his fellow man in such rigor that leads the openness of communication impossible. What results is a single autonomous body of people, unable to speak, paralyzed in fear.

The obvious consequence of this, of people being paralyzed into a state of fear, incapable of freely speaking to one another, destroys the setting needed for a notion of action to be able to manifest itself. One of the conditions necessary for action to manifest itself is that there is a space, a public space and not a private one, where man can freely speak and provide his opinion on matters. What's more, when this free exchange, which depends on the notion of plurality - that is the gathering of people - is stifled, or not allowed to manifest, the possibility of beginning fades from being something real in the world. It fades because action depends on conditions prior to it being able to realize itself. The conditions that action needs in order for it to realize itself is a public space, which we have already spoken of, which corresponds to the *polis*, where the *polis* depends on the gathering of people who through speech willingly and freely engage themselves between one another. Moreover, the result of the gathering of people who engage in dialogue creates a power. And this power is the power that flows from the communicative tie that bonds one person to another. Once this bond is severed, or prevented from happening, which is the case in a totalitarian setting where terror is used to prevent the meeting of people, all of whom are in too much fear to

engage feeling, not only does the possibility for action disappear, but also all of the other notions that correspond to an idea of action.

Looking at this from a conceptual vantage point, it is not that action itself disappears, since action is always a possibility in man whenever other people are in proximity - but, the conditions for the possibility of action which it depends on: namely a public space, where one is able to freely move and openly share in novel ideas, that prevents the possibility of action from manifesting. Therefore, totalitarianism does not so much stifle action in the literal sense than it prevents the conditions from suitably arranging themselves for action to flourish.

We have already discussed the communicative element in Hannah Arendt's discussion of action: namely the fact that action is the consequence of something which is originally pluralist. That is, action, even though triggered by a single individual, and uniquely expressed through a single individual, is still the consequence of a pluralist, communicative set of conditions. And therefore when we say that action always remains a possibility in man, it is still true, that when the conditions which trigger the activity of action are prevented from being allowed to crystallize, the implication is that it is impossible for action to happen.

Now turning to the notion of natality and how totalitarianism weakens this notion from revealing itself to what it is, namely the possibility in man from gaining something new, we can say that totalitarianism prevents the possibility of natality from manifesting, from expressing itself in the character of action precisely because - through terror and the band of iron -totalitarianism stifles the meeting of people and allowing for people to freely and willingly engage with each other. As we have already mentioned nothing but the expression is actually denied;

that conditions that totalitarianism creates, namely a climate of fear, and what's more a climate of paranoia, where each individual distrusts his fellow man, atomization happens. That is, people atomize into their own being, neglecting the world and the other people that surround them, fostering the impossibility of people meeting and cultivating ideas to improve the situation. In this sense, at first glance as a contradiction in terms which appears contradictory initially, namely that totalitarianism even though ultimately lately wholly concerned with a truth it considers objective, that is the law of History and Nature, in its first stages must cause an inwardness in the world citizenry that is so extreme in its inwardness, in each person's own subjectivity, that the existence of other subjects, for each individual, becomes something unfamiliar or irrelevant. The sense of irrelevancy of each person towards another is, as I have mentioned, the consequence of each person looking inward so deeply, that to consider the world outside himself, looking towards the world of another person say, becomes almost impossible. Totalitarianism sees this as an advantage when it attempts to cultivate a sense of the law of History and Nature into the minds of men, because now that opinion between one another has been paralyzed all that remains is to have each person, at least, conform to the one thing that they do have in common - and that is as the vehicle by way the law of History and Nature moves.

The aspect of totalitarianism in fostering the sense of alienation to an acceptance of the law of Nature and History represents the crucial first step in the totalitarian process. The transition from the first sense to the next is a crucial stage since it is here where the possibility of novelty, still in the mind of man, can finally be obliterated according to the totalitarian agenda. And so when we say that totalitarianism is against an idea of natality, it is because totalitarianism recognizes the fact of natality in man, as the possibility in issuing forth novel ideas into the world; it is in the

unleashing of novelty that threatens the flow of law of totalitarianism. Therefore, according to this view, there is, in some respect the fact of totalitarianism recognizing the fact of natality, even though it works deliberately in denying its existence.

Ideology

According to Hannah Arendt, ideology reflects identically the same presuppositions that are built into a conception of totalitarianism.

“Ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historic process-- the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future--because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas.”²²

The above quotation clearly shows that an ideology is something which claims to know the truth of things, and that truth is found inside the ideology itself, and not in human affairs. That is, ideology, like totalitarianism, claims that there is a logicity to its claim, and this logicity has nothing to do with the affairs of men, but rather in respect to its own logic or reality.

On the subject of ideology, turning to Margaret Canovan, she writes,

“For one may take an ideology seriously not as something that is already true but as something to be *made* true in place of what actually exists. In other words, one may reject reality in favor of an alternative structure - a fiction to be realized.”²³

In this case, the aspect of ideology that refers to the thing to be made is founded in the notion of what something should be like, and instituting certain prescriptions in realizing this end. The aspect which Margaret Canovan clearly recognizes in ideology, and in which Hannah Arendt does also, is the fact of trying to create something without actually

²²Ibid., p. 469.

²³ Canovan, Margaret. Hannah Arendt on Ideology in Totalitarianism (Ideology), in Noel O'Sullivan, ed., The Structure of Modern Ideology. Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1989, p. 154.

recognizing the fact of the things existence, its essential qualities. Accordingly, in ideology, it simply creates the thing in the end - which it is pursuing - ignoring the essential qualities, or building a state of government in accordance of the law of nature and history while not considering the essential qualities of the government to begin with.

And so when Hannah Arendt writes, that ideologies are:

“never interested in the miracle of being,”²⁴

it is simply an implication of the fact that ideology is not interested in the question of being. In virtue of this definition, the consequences are revealed in the same way in ideology, where the notion of process is stressed; where process corresponds to the natural flow of the ideological direction. And since the definition of man is seen only in terms of his physical utility, like in the category of labor, in the case of ideology and how it manifests itself, the answer is through the application of man and working as the vehicle for achieving the already anticipated ends that are inherent in the ideology. What's more, while ideology accepts that man acts as its vehicle to realize the logic of its original idea, the consequence may prove to be initially against the interest in man. This, however, is considered irrelevant, and once the interest of individual man is subordinated, just like the inventiveness of man and his threat as a carrier of novelty in the category of labor was irrelevant, man's individuality is ignored and replaced by his purpose to fulfill the inherent law found in the ideology. Of this logic that exists in ideology which is concerned only with manifesting itself, regardless of the cost of anything else, a peculiar contradiction emerges.

²⁴ Arendt, Hannah. Origins, p. 469.

“Dialectical logic, with its process from thesis through antithesis to synthesize which in turn becomes the thesis of the next dialectical movement, is not different in principle once an ideology gets hold of it; the first thesis becomes the premise and its advantage for ideological explanation is that this dialectical device can explain away factual contradictions as stages of one identical, consistent movement.”²⁵

It is this part of the quotation, namely the fact that the kind of dialectical logic, which totalitarianism appeals to, allows in its explication the ignoring away any factual contradictions that may spring out of the dialectical logic. The brutality of this fact of totalitarianism justifies away any inhumane consequences. Thus, the idea generating the law of History and Nature can justify the torture of man, justify the suffering of man, based on the illusion that in the realization of the law of History and Nature there may be occasional shortcomings.

In comparing ideology and totalitarianism one of the most obvious similarities is that both are less concerned with the question of what a thing is, or what man is, what his essence is, but rather with the notion of process, of the way in which things are born and pass away into the world. Ideology is concerned with justifying certain actions based on the logic of its starting point. Therefore, whatever the original idea is, which is in-itself a first presupposition, and therefore arbitrary in essence, that is one has the choice in deciding what the starting point is, what is most important here, is that what the starting point is reflects what the specific idea means relative to a definition of man. Insofar as the question of man is ignored, is considered irrelevant, and the idea only concerned with its own justifying path, it is most clear then that man will at some point end up facing the ideology, and its inherent logical path, and miserably

²⁵Ibid., p. 469.

discover that he has no voice, no active position in the direction in which the ideology moves - in virtue of the fact that man was irrelevant from the very beginning, he has been subordinated in favor of the Idea. Therefore, the first aspect of ideology is that it ignores the question of what is man, and in consequence can justify inhuman acts, since it is the Idea which is considered most relevant, as opposed to the welfare of man. Totalitarianism is almost identical to ideology in the fact that it too subordinates a concern for the welfare of man in favor of realizing the law of History and Nature.

And so when Hannah Arendt writes that ideological thinking becomes emancipated from reality, it simply means that ideological thinking subordinates a concern of worldly things in favor of a conceptual, or un-worldly concern. I say conceptual in the sense that something conceptual is concerned with things unrelated to the concrete, specific settings. This fact of ideology, the fact of its un-worldly character, may be more clearly discussed in terms of the well known philosophic problem concerned with the particular and the general, or subjectivity and objectivity. Quite simply ideology and totalitarianism are concerned with the general, and justify its generality, its un-worldly law, by using the particular, concrete, specific things, to act as vehicles for realization, without any concern at all what suffering may be caused to men.

Going back to the idea of fiction we can say that ideology and totalitarianism are interested in creating a fiction of what the world should be, for example, according to Margaret Canovan,

“Once in power, the totalitarian leaders alter the real world to suit their fiction, for example by reducing Jews to

manifest inferiority and making racial descent all-important in social life."²⁶

Therefore, ideology and totalitarianism are concerned with fabricating a fictitious world, where their own flow of law, corresponding to the law of Nature and History, can be manifested.

In the sense of fiction which ideology and totalitarianism correspond to there is an aspect of un-worldliness. That is, un-worldliness in the sense that there is an actual departure from recognizing things as they really are and instead seeing them in terms of the way they should be; a departure from things in this world to something outside the realm of human affairs.

"The tyranny of logicity begins with the minds submission to logic as a never ending process, on which man relies in order to engender his thoughts. By this submission, he surrenders his inner freedom as he surrenders his freedom of the movement when he bows down to an outward tyranny."²⁷

The line "tyranny of logicity" neatly sums up the nature of both totalitarianism and ideology. What this tyranny of logicity refers to is the similar sense of necessity that is inherent in the category of labor, where man as an animal labors, being used as a vehicle towards which the end, the finished product is mad. Nothing of the individual qualities that distinguishes each man is considered, rather what is most important is the building of the finished product, and that the maximum amount of labor power is being used. As we have already mentioned, this aspect of the category of labor is what makes it correspond to the idea of necessity. And the same is true in the case of ideology and totalitarianism: both are

²⁶ Canovan, Margaret. Ideology. p. 154.

moved, pushed forward through a web of necessity, through a web of inherently logical steps, which are inherent in the original Idea, of the law of History and Nature.

What's more, necessity is closely associated with an idea of science. That is, science is rooted in a sensibility which relies on rules, on principles; where truths are reached through demonstrative proofs, eventually leading towards hypothesis, finally either being accepted as true or false: This whole process of "science" can be called deductive-truths when reached deductively. What makes ideology "scientific" then, based on what I have just said of science and its basic essence, is that ideology also works deductively; the idea sparks a general direction, a general flow, leading towards where the logicity will lead. But afterward the logicity itself self-generates, leading into sometimes unpredictable directions, albeit still logical, but still in unpredictable directions that are not intelligible in terms of man's own observations, but only in terms of the Ideas path and function. This is obviously the most disturbing fact regarding ideology and totalitarianism, namely that the logicity, the direction in which the law of History and Nature, or the Idea, more is out of reach for man. The law and Idea exist independently, flowing in their own way, with the intentions of man and his own sense of initiative ignored.

Clearly all of this stems from the fact that ideology and totalitarianism are utopian; both attempt to create a realm of reality which has nothing what to do with particular concrete things. What's more, through this utopian dialectical approach, not only is man's basic essence denied - the fact he is endowed with the capacity for speech and deeds, and

²⁷ Arendt, Hannah. Origins. p. 473.

that he is capable of generating new beginnings into the world in virtue of the ontological fact of natality, but also even the relevance of his existence as a living being.

And to say that ideology and totalitarianism represents two forms of thinking, which can be projected into society by means of its representing a body politic or form of government, which we have already seen attempted numerous times through history, that are in contradistinction to an idea of natality is in virtue of the fact that both ideology and totalitarianism both systematically have created a conception of man where the fact of his potential for invention and novelty is denied. And it in virtue of this denial, of the fact of man's capacity for beginnings, that further prevents any notion of action, or the potential for action, novel action, from spontaneously happening too.

Thus, the main aspect of ideology and totalitarianism is the fact that both deny the possibility of the notion of natality, which is in virtue of both overstepping the question of being, namely what is man?, they replace it with an projection of what man should be, which is projected then through a general idea, by the law of History and Nature, where its worldliness is un-worldly, ignoring the fact of concrete specific beings, man, and instead creating an utopian fiction, which has no earthly relevance to begin with.

What's more, in denying this aspect of natality in man, the possibility of man for generating and bringing into new existence new beginnings, there follows that the notion of action is also, more importantly, denied in both ideology and totalitarianism too.

And therefore, when Hannah Arendt writes that,

"To act, in its most general sense, means to take initiative, to begin, to set something in motion."²⁸

This kind of movement that action corresponds to is unavailable, incapable of being realized under the conditions of ideology and totalitarianism. The reasons for this have already been mentioned clearly enough. But what ought to be stressed is the fact that action, the form of action that Hannah Arendt speaks of, remains the only expression endowed in man that triggers new beginnings, novel ways of approaching or seizing a situation. And what is striking is that the kind of "movement" that is characterized in this form of action is one that literally spills itself into the world, can still be harnessed or collected back, thus not in-itself self-generating, but still under the restraint of the direction in which each individual directs the particular idea. That is to say, in totalitarianism and ideology, where the idea and law of History and Nature essentially takes on a life of its own, the logicity swelling in the world without any association with an individual, but rather only the logicity of the idea or law, therefore cannot be effectively "controlled". And it is in this sense that ideology and totalitarianism are uniquely harmful in themselves, since there is nothing in way of human participation that can deter, or influence, the way in which the logicity will develop. I have already mentioned it is in virtue of an idea of natality that allows the prevention of an idea from existing in the world on its own. Natality, in the possession of man, gives forth the capacity, here in the form of action of the possibility of resisting against the "natural" flow of things. And it is exactly this sense of disruption, of altering an idea of laws natural flow of direction that appeals to the concern embedded in an idea of natality to begin with. That is, in its first and original sense, natality

²⁸ Arendt, Hannah. Condition. p. 177.

corresponds to a capacity in man towards the possibility of beginning something new into the world, to trigger the beginning of new beginnings, but what's more, is that it is also capable of arresting the flow of existing situations, existing developments, processes, by imposing, revealing a new direction, or novel way of the thing existing in the first place. And it is exactly in this sense why totalitarianism attempted to stifle all public meeting and opinion, or a sense of plurality in a society, because it is through these means that when allowed to flourish the flow of the law of History and Nature can be arrested. And so, obviously, the totalitarianist, who is concerned only with the natural flow of law and History and Nature as being alone, allowed to run its course, is concerned primarily with discouraging anything, that would prevent this "natural" flow from moving forward. And it is precisely in this sense why natality, the capacity in man to begin new beginnings, is considered the most legitimate threat in the mind of totalitarian and ideological thinkers, because natality is that capacity in man, springing from all of the conditions which allow it to flourish - plurality, freedom, and a public space - which represents the antithesis of "natural" narrow thinking, because it is able to turn ideas into new ideas, by bringing new ones into existence, in virtue of action, the concrete expression of natality in man.

Chapter Three: Natality and its Pre-Political context

In the following three chapters, especially in the chapter on action, we will begin to uncover the meaning behind the above quotation. But first let us examine the pre-political aspects of a notion of natality.

To begin - to state one of the most elementary aspects of the notion of natality - is that it corresponds to the most basic element of human existence, namely that every person is captured, so to speak, in the cycle of birth and death, or natality and mortality. Thus, before natality takes on any ontological significance, which shall later be the focus of this thesis, there is also another sense: that when we are all born into the world we are caught in the biological web of life and then life ending in death. What's more, this birth into the world, into the realm of human affairs, spares little in terms of what man can expect once this birth happens. That is, the world exists and has within it an already existing set of conditions, where men have already lived, building a world around them, and where men have died; there is creating a world already in existence, in the design of the men who have lived throughout history. Thus, one of the first predicaments that man finds himself in is to reconcile his birth, being born at this particular time, and recognize that he must exist in a world already in existence, and which will continue long after his own life ends. In this respect man is to some extent caught in a world whose conditions have an affect on his own thoughts, in the sense that the world that surrounds him, the concrete reality, are that which his senses see, therefore necessarily having an affect on the thought in his mind.

“...because human existence is conditioned existence, it would be impossible without things, and things would be a

heap of unrelated articles, a non-world, if they were not the conditioners of human existence."²⁹

To avoid any misunderstandings it is essential to grasp the idea of the human condition and how it relates to man in his pre-political existence in the world. One way of understanding this important point is to contrast the idea of human existence as conditioned existence and the idea of human nature, in that both are distinct, not at all considered to be the same thing, according to Hannah Arendt.

"The human condition is not the same as human nature, and the sum total of human activities and capabilities which correspond to the human condition does not constitute anything like human nature. For neither those we discuss here nor those we leave out, like thought and reason, and not even the most meticulous enumeration of them all, constitute essential characteristics of human existence in the sense that without them their existence would no longer be human."³⁰

According to Hannah Arendt, human nature is something each person is endowed with. That is, human nature is the essence of what individuality is, what distinguishes one person from another. To suggest or explain what human nature is an impossibility, and is only a question known or understood by God. Thus, although each person is endowed with a nature, distinct from being endowed with the qualities that the conditions of the world have on each person, our nature remains a mystery, as opposed to the observable understanding of some qualities in each person that spring from the conditions surrounding each individual person.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

³⁰Ibid., p. 11.

“the conditions of human existence - life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, plurality, and the earth can never explain what we are or answer the question of who we are for the simple reason that they never condition us absolutely.”³¹

Going back to what we already discussed in respect to Kafka's parable, one may see here the relationship between the idea that man is not fully a conditioned agent, but still able to disengage himself from the conditions of his existence, like the two antagonists in Kafka's parable, that which has already been, the past, and that which is not yet, the future. Thus, we see from what Hannah Arendt says here and with her interest in Kafka's parable that there always remains a gap, a space both in the sense of being spatial, in that man is able to maneuver in this space, and also in the sense of intellectual space, where he is free to think, without the restrictions of the two antagonists.

The notion of this gap plays an important role in the thought of Hannah Arendt, especially in the way it relates to an idea of natality; this gap corresponds to the Augustinian pronouncement of the notion of the beginning of the beginning of things. The task now is to isolate this gap, and pin-point its special features, specifically in the way it corresponds to the three anthro-philosophical categories that are discussed in The Human Condition.

³¹Ibid., p. 9.

Chapter Four: Natality and the Category of Labor

"Labor and work, as well as action, are also rooted in natality in so far as they have the task to provide and preserve the world for, to foresee and reckon with, the constant influx of newcomers who are born into the world as strangers."³²

Hannah Arendt further writes,

"However, of the three, action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomers possess the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities."³³

To begin let us examine the category of labor and see in which respects it is in opposition to an idea of natality, and the experience of bringing new beginnings into the world.

In the process of understanding the category of labor, it is important to note a great deal of Hannah Arendt's discussion here springs from an critique against the thought of Karl Marx. In this respect, the category of labor may be interpreted as reflecting a Marxist sensibility. This point will become more clear as we proceed.

"To labor meant to be enslaved by necessity."³⁴

Obviously, based on this quotation, it is clear that the category of labor is most closely associated with an idea of necessity. That is, necessity

³²Ibid., p. 9.

³³Ibid., p. 9.

is the foundation of the category of labor, or the single first presupposition to which everything included in an idea of the category of labor corresponds. In this respect, the category of labor - founded on an idea of necessity, which is the inverse of an idea of possibility, free from the chains, the flow of necessitating forces - is unequivocally against an idea of possibility. This is further accepted to be the case when one recognizes that possibility refers to countless variations of an event or thought exercise expresses itself or is executed. Labor, on the other hand, suppresses the variety of choices, of possibilities, and instead corresponds to a single passage or thought event without considering the variations that may or may not exist. This aspect of the category of labor being contrary to the range of possibilities of choice of ways in which to execute an idea into the concrete will become more obvious once we examine the notion of totalitarianism. For now it is important to recognize that in the category of labor the general presupposition is of elevating an idea of labor, or laboring, and suppressing an idea of thought, or mental exercise, or contemplation.

This elevation of the category of labor ahead of the category of thought, or thinking and contemplation, is one of the main themes in The Human Condition, and remains, by implication, according to Hannah Arendt, a direct implication of the thought and teaching of Karl Marx. What follows in the elevation of labor over thinking is of central concern in the thought of Hannah Arendt, and will be of increasing importance in respect to her own discussion of the nature of an idea of natality. One way to penetrate this novel arrangement, this new arrangement of the hierarchy, which was previously the opposite in time of Greek antiquity, is

³⁴Ibid., p. 84.

to look into some of the relationships inherent in the category of labor - namely the relationship between an idea of productive and unproductive labor, skilled and unskilled labor, and manual and intellectual labor.

Through an investigation of these three distinctions, or conditions inherent in the category of labor, we will discover what distinguishes or marks the category of labor as being essentially against an idea of natality in the sense that it is described as triggering or allowing the beginning of new beginnings from flourishing in the world.

Since the category of labor corresponds to an idea of necessity, it is no accident then that what distinguishes it as being inherently against an idea of natality, is the fact of its own inner logic. Thus, what makes the three relationships inherent in the category of labor distinctive, is the fact that each are reflections, or constructions of the fact of necessity. The fact of necessity as corresponding to an idea of the category of labor is an important point to consider in respect to how it differentiates itself from the other two categories: work and action.

"The common characteristic of both, the biological process in man and the process of growth and decay in the world, is that they are part of the cyclical movement of nature and therefore endlessly repetitive; all human activities which arise out of the necessity to cope with them are bound to the recurring cycles of nature and have inside themselves no beginning and no end, properly speaking; unlike working, whose end has come when the object is finished, ready to be added to the common world of things, laboring always moves in the same cycle, which is prescribed by the biological process of the living organism and the end of its "toil and trouble" comes only with the death of the organism."³⁵

³⁵Ibid., p. 98.

It is clear from this quotation that to Hannah Arendt the fact of necessity corresponding to the category of labor is in virtue or finds its origin in the very predicament in which man finds himself in. Thus, the notion of necessity is much a consequence of the very basic fact of human existence, namely the biological circumstances that each person finds himself in. That is, each individual person is embedded in a natural biological process which, corresponding to the natural cyclical pattern of a life beginning and a life ending, is necessarily initially limited in certain respects - namely ones which configure in this biological cycle. Thus, to borrow an Heideggarian expression, man in his being-in-the-world, is immediately thrust into a process, the cyclical process of life and death, which, in the end, leads immediately to his not being-in-the-world.

This aspect of biological process, and process in general, plays an important role in the thought of Hannah Arendt. That is because the notion of process, whether it be in the biological cyclical sense, or even in the sense of an ideology turning in its own inner logic, what remains true for all of them, besides being all processes, is that they are based on the assumption of not being able to be interrupted.

Later we will see in the political sphere that there are means to disrupt the political process through means of forgiveness. However, if it is initially accepted to be the case of something not being able to be interrupted, which the notion of processes is based on, the consequence is that the notion of necessity plays a considerable role, in so far as necessity implies the lack of breadth from changing the course of a particular starting point. What's more, this lack of freedom from the altering of the original starting point, in virtue of the arbitrary nature of that point, the first presupposition, is secure and that it represents a predicament which cannot be escaped from, in the sense that it is a predicament that man is

caught in the predicament of man being caught in a biological cycle, despite revealing limitations, and possibilities, remains still a predicament none the less which cannot be ignored.

But let us turn our attention back to the three distinctions mentioned earlier. The reason why these distinctions interest us here is because each of them corresponds to the basic idea of necessity inherent in the category of labor. Moreover, it is in this recognition that we will not only find the implications of Marx's own thought in the concrete, but also the implications of what an idea of necessity means and how it closely resembles an idea of ideology. And which we shall see later where it is more fully elaborated in The Origins of Totalitarianism. Finally, as I mentioned before, this recognition of necessity and its correspondence relation with the category of labor is also related to an idea of natality - the central notion we are here concerned with. That is, necessity represents the opposite of something new being brought in the world, even though man in his own predicament is himself partially a being closely linked, or embedded in an idea of necessity, in the sense that he is caught in his own biological cycle - which he cannot escape; it follows that man is himself a being with necessary forces pulling at him, which cannot be altered despite the efforts he makes. That said, man is not just a being linked to this biological cycle, he can also free himself from this limitation, metaphorically speaking, through his capacity to speak and through his ability to generate new ideas into the world, which is the final constellation of the link he himself has with the necessary forces surrounding his predicament.

Turning to the three distinctions spoken of earlier, it is important to note that in the category of labor, Marx has replaced the traditionally understood concept of *Homo Faber* with *animal laborans*.

"The modern age in general and Karl Marx in particular, overwhelmed, as it were, by the unprecedented actual productivity of Western mankind, had an almost irresistible tendency to look upon all labor as work and to speak of the *animal laborans* in terms much more fitting for *Homo Faber*, hoping all the time that only one more step was needed to eliminate labor and necessity altogether."³⁶

The consequence of this bringing out the *animal laborans*, traditionally an aspect of the private household, where the essence of the private household was reserved for things relating to necessity, that is providing suitable sustenance and shelter, and everything else that was considered necessary for the proper running of the household, was that these aspects of necessity were now part and parcel of a public realm, and not the previous private. This had considerable implications - especially given the tendency of society and government to divide aspects of labor. Labor for the first time became a commodity that belonged to society, the public realm, and could thereafter be treated like any other commodity, for example: be divided, exploited, and manipulated to maximize its worth for the overall well being of the society, and the public realm as a whole. One of implications of this dividing the category of labor into sub-categories was to name its worth in terms of productivity, whether or not the labor was considered skilled or unskilled, or manual and intellectual labor as it remained embedded in necessity, even though these sub-categories gave the illusion that it was something else entirely. The sub-categories gave the illusion that labor was essentially a free condition of human existence where the production of his labor represented an extension of man's productivity.

³⁶Ibid., p. 87.

"This productivity does not lie in any of labor's products but in the human 'power,' whose strength is not exhausted when it has produced the means of its own subsistence and survival but is capable of producing 'surplus' that is more than is necessary for its own 'reproduction.'"³⁷

The idea that productivity, a condition of labor, that does not lie in any of labor's products immediately suggests that productivity of labor is itself unrelated to any notion of reification, or the idea of bringing something new into the world. To the contrary, the way in which productivity is being used here, a consequence of Marx's own thought, is in the sense of how productivity is itself a thing, unrelated to anything but the power of productivity itself. Thus the creation, the object being built, the new thing in the world, is not a concern in the category of labor, but rather the process itself, the laboring, and not the creation. In this sense, we can now begin to see in which way the category of labor is against an idea of natality; the category of labor is fixed by the incessant flow of laboring, the process of laboring, which is itself unrelated and distinct from anything else, say the object. It is simply concerned with productivity, productivity only, and nothing else.

"Its result is that which is brought and sold in the labor market is not individual skill but 'labor power' of which each human being should possess approximately the same amount."³⁸

The implications that follow swell into absurd situations. First, since the category of labor is only concerned with labor power and nothing else, say the object, the thing, questions pertaining to skill, the differences between peoples perspective towards how a thing should be made, in the

³⁷Ibid., p. 88.

end it becomes irrelevant. Moreover, in respect to things that are made either intellectually or manually also becomes irrelevant since labor is only concerned with manual labor, and the power that is generated through each individual in the process of some thing.

Regarding the activity of intellectual labor, or thinking, Hannah Arendt says,

"Thinking, however, which is presumably the activity of the head, though it is in some way like laboring - also a process which probably comes to an end only with life itself - is even less productive than labor."³⁹

The point that is being made here is that the category of labor is wholly concerned with the process of laboring, physical laboring and nothing else.

"...labor's productivity is measured and gauged against the requirements of the life process for its own re-production; it resides in the potential surplus inherent in human labor power, not in the quality of character of the things it produces."⁴⁰

The denial of character, of each subjects own unique strengths and weakness, is a characteristic of the category of labor. And it is in this denial of and the exultation of labor where natality reveals itself most tellingly. That is, the notion of beginning something new depends on the fundamental right to remove the shackles of necessity from man and his predicament. And since the activity of labor corresponds to an idea of necessity, the possibility of beginning something novel remains inconsistent with this particular category, since it is strictly concerned with

³⁸Ibid., p. 90.

³⁹Ibid., p. 90.

collecting labor power for the laboring process, which is the result of physical laboring, and not individual interests that might disrupt the chain of necessity already in progress. Therefore, in the category of labor, there is a fear towards the notion of freedom, since it is the opposite of a notion of necessity,

"Man cannot be free if he does not know that he is subject to necessity because his freedom is always won in his never wholly successful attempts to liberate himself from necessity."⁴¹

Therefore, in the category of labor, the denial of natality also implies a sort of deception on the part of man and the activity, that is the labor he is engaged in: the activity of labor gives man the illusion that he is actively involved in the process of creating something new, when the reality is that he is not, but rather simply involved in the activity of labor - something which is quite removed from the original conception, the original design of how the thing should be made.

It is this condition of illusion which makes the category of labor so persuasively disturbing, insofar as it embodies an aspect of denial, self deception as it were on the part of man thinking that he is engaging in something novel when in fact he is not at all. The category of labor depends on this aspect of illusion and deception, insofar as that is inherent in an idea of necessity, which at its root is something which is lacking in specificity, ignoring the specifics of individual persons, and elevating a more general idea of the process of labor instead. In this sense, the category of labor is unique in its unequivocal denial of an idea of freedom, understood here in the sense that each individual has within himself the

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 93.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 121.

capacity to freely choose and engage in affairs, activities, in whatever manner he chooses. The category of labor denies this possibility and instead, found and encouraged in the thought of Karl Marx, and even earlier found in the thought of Hegel, the idea of labor becomes the catalyst for invention and not the inventor - properly speaking. Thus, in the end, under this view, man's individual uniqueness is subordinated in favor of a process: the process of generating labor power, and consequently ushers in all of the implications and consequences that would follow in virtue of it.

To close this section, the category of labor, it is essential that we leave with the appreciation of the basic condition of labor, namely that the category of labor corresponds to an idea of necessity, where the process of generating labor power is the essence of the purpose of the laboring activity, rather than concern for the invention of something wholly new being born into the world. To take it a step further, the implications show that there is a complete denial of novelty and an idea of natality, in the sense of allowing for the possibility of new beginnings being ushered into the world. That is in virtue of the very fact that the category of labor corresponds to an idea and elevation of an idea of necessity, which, as I have already stated, is inherently against an idea of freedom, the first precondition for the allowance of something new being born into the world. Moreover, since freedom is not accepted in the category of labor, since it would naturally disrupt the harmony of the logical process that labor is embedded in, it follows, according to Hannah Arendt, that the category of labor is inherently against an idea of natality since it denies all of the conditions which an idea of natality depends on. What's more, in virtue of this denial of the conditions necessary for an idea of natality to exist, the category of labor also, in the end, denies the basic qualities unique to each individual, namely the possibility to express himself,

through his capacity to speak, to usher novelty, invention, new beginnings into the world.

Chapter Five: Natality and the Category of Work

The next anthro-philosophical category we will examine will be the category of work. Here, for the first time, we will see the glow of natality and how it is revealed in the thought of Hannah Arendt, and not in its negative portrayal, which was how natality was portrayed in the category of labor. The category of work does not yet embrace an idea of natality or how it will eventually be seen in the category of action. However what we do find are glimpses of its fullness, of its sheer possibility, which will be later seen in its true appreciative realm - the category of action.

“Against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sublime indifference of an untouched nature, whose overwhelming elementary force, on the contrary, will compel them to swing relentlessly in the circle of their own biological movement, which fits so closely into the overall cyclical movement of nature's household.”⁴²

In other words, the world is composed of things, which like man and his biological predicament, are condemned to the cyclical movement of birth and death will eventually fade out of this world. That is, objects also cease to exist like men, and therefore, despite often outlasting the life time duration of ordinary men, they too, will fade out of existence. Thus, physical things which exist in the world, in their own way, driven by different forces, are also caught in a cycle of birth and death; their existence, in the end, lacks permanence, eventually fading into non-existence. The only difference between man and the objects that surround him, is that the objects in the world often out live the duration of man in

⁴²Ibid., p. 137.

the world and cross over into different time frames, where different generations of men will be confronted with the same objects and things that men before them witnessed and lived with. And it is this crossing over of objects from different times that sustains a certain sense of continuity between man and the things that surround him. Man, associating himself with the things that surround him, is able to generate ideas about the world, and make links about men in other contexts, at different times in history. Thus, things, objects which have been fabricated, play more than simply a utilitarian function; rather they collectively represent a time frame in which people lived, and therefore reveal a certain aspect of time, and how things have changed and remained throughout different time frames.

In this context, the function of things appears obvious: namely it is through an appreciation, a witnessing of things in relation to their time of origin and the present particular time, that man is able to make judgments about the world that surrounds him, the conditions of which, in the end, create his own particular human condition. From this point of view, in terms of the utility of the things that occupy space in the world, the objects take on two forms of purpose. In the first sense, the objects that are made correspondingly to a particular utilitarian purpose - namely a cups designed and fabricated for the purpose of being used to hold liquids to drink; and in the second sense, the objects, later, will remain as artifacts, beyond their basic utility, and take on the role of historical things which will inform people in later times of the particular time the object was made.

This sense of double purpose is an interesting aspect of the category of work, and one which distinguishes it from the other two categories. In the simplest form, the category of work can be characterized as

corresponding to an idea of reification. Reification is the idea of taking something from nature, and through the means of manipulation and altering the original natural state, creating something meaningful, which contains in it a particular purpose and utility. At the very beginning of this process of reification, inherent in the actual activity of reifying, or creating something, is an idea of violence, of breaking away from the original state of nature, and turning it into something new, i.e, replacing of one form of government with another.

"This element of violation and violence is present in all fabrication, and *Homo Faber*, the creator of the human artifice, has always been a destroyer of nature. Since his productivity was seen in the image of a creator-God, so that where God creates *ex nihilo*, man creates out of given substance, human productivity was by definition bound to result in a Promethean revolt because it could erect a man-made world only after destroying part of God-created nature."⁴³

In other words, in respect to how the category of work relates to an idea of natality, (the capacity to begin something new) it is clear that something new is revealed into the world with every act of fabrication, or reification. However, what is unique to the category of work is the notion of the ever present aspect of destruction, the natural consequence when something from nature is taken, manipulated, exploited, and the fact that this aspect of destruction does lead to something new being born into the world. What is interesting for us to note here though, is the idea of something new being born into the world, say, the object, containing within it its own sense of meaning, which corresponds to its basic fundamental utility, but that there is also the other fact which corresponds to man - the relationship between man and the object - where the object's

⁴³Ibid., p. 139.

becomes irrelevant, and its sheer existence becomes something more important insofar as it acts as an artifact where man can orient himself to other times, and understand a little more about his own predicament through the objects that surround him.

We could say, each object that is made, metaphorically speaking, corresponds to a new birth, to a new thing being ushered into the world. And even though this particular thing, only has relative permanence, eventually fading out of existence like all other things, we could also say in a similar way man is conditioned by the biological cycle he is caught in, so too are all things he is surrounded by.

"To have a definite beginning and definite, predictable end is the mark of fabrication, which through this characteristic alone distinguishes itself from all other human activities."⁴⁴

That is, fabrication, the essence of the category of work, is distinct from the category of labor precisely because there is a concrete sense of beginning - the actual building and design of the thing; whereas, in the category of labor there is no such definite starting point. That is, labor corresponds as an activity of laboring, where the laboring itself has no association with the thing being made, properly speaking. The process of laboring, in the end, becomes through itself the thing, which is, obviously, unlike an actual fabricated thing, a process, an activity, never reaching a point where it can be represented as an actual concrete thing. Thus, one of the main distinctions between the category of work and the category of labor is in relation to an idea of natality or in relation to the idea of being able to distinguish between how one thing, (in the category of work,

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 144.

through fabrication,) has a definite starting point, and how that is different from the category of labor where it has none.

Thus, natality, in the sense that it is defined here, in terms of the differences between a notion of beginning, demonstrates that the main differences between the category of work and labor are that where one, the category of work, can accommodate a notion of beginning, the category of labor cannot, because it is caught up in a chain of necessity. The logic of the process is in-itself the thing. Finally then it is natality which differentiates these two categories, based on their differences in terms of a notion of beginning.

In the category of work, the making or the activity of fabricating a thing, there remains only one aspect of a notion of beginning in the category of work. In this initial discussion I have forwarded the notion that in the process of fabrication there is also an aspect of inventiveness, or design, which in its original sense refers to a uniquely individual act. What's more, this individual act corresponds to a new beginning. It is this aspect of fabrication, which has a component of inventiveness, something never before witnessed, that shares with natality the aspect of bringing something novel into the world which is uniquely its own thing - perhaps similar to other things, but still never before seen in its exact state. Despite this sense of novelty, a certain loss of novelty occurs when the appropriation of instruments occurs. That is, the relationship between *Homo Faber* and instrumentality, turns complex, against an idea of natality, if it turns out that the instruments themselves are the main component behind the design, inventiveness. To put it simply, with the addition of the instruments, there is an aspect of denying the novelty of the designer's intent, insofar as to some extent he must yield his interests in terms of the capacities of the instruments. In this sense, the idea, or the

original intent of the thing being made, is subordinated in favor of the means and its capacities. Thus the ends are denied through the achievement of the means.

"Man, in so far as he is *Homo Faber*, instrumentalizes, and his instrumentalization implies a degradation of all things into means, their loss of intrinsic and independent value, so that eventually not only the objects of fabrication but also 'the earth in general and all forces of nature,' which clearly came into being without the help of man and have an existence independent of the human world, lose their value because they do not present the reification which comes from work."⁴⁵

Therefore there is a crucial aspect in the category of work that has a good deal to do with how a thing is made. And it is in the answer to the question 'of how?' whether fabrication is considered, in the end, something novel, new and original, or is simply a degradation of the original idea in virtue of the instruments which in the process of fabricating something, in turn, devalue it into something less than novel, something which rather than being new, instead becomes an amplification of the instruments themselves and not the original idea that triggered the fabrication to begin in the first place.

The exception to this perplexity inherent in the category of work, is saved only in the sense of the fabricated thing corresponding to the realm of art.

"Because of their outstanding permanence, works of art are the most intensely worldly of all tangible things; their durability is almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes, since they are not subject to the use of living creatures, a use which, indeed, far from actualizing their own inherent purpose - as the purpose of a chair is

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 156.

actualized when it is sat upon - can only destroy them. Thus, their durability is of a higher order than which all things need in order to exist at all; it can attain permanence throughout the ages."⁴⁶

The main differences between the work of art and other fabricated things, is that art transcends the means, end dichotomy that is continually present in any other form of fabrication. Things other than works of art are to a large degree designed and fabricated with the general concern of its their eventual utility and durability. And it is in his consideration of factors that to some extent, along with the inherent corruption of what instruments may have, there still remains a concern in terms of the things purposefulness; its utility and durability, as a thing lasting in the world, also corrupts, impedes the process of building, creating something novel, to be born freely into the world.

"It is as though worldly stability has become transparent in the permanence of art, so that a premonition of immortality not the immortality of the soul or of life but of something immortal achieved by mortal hands, has become tangibly present, to shine and be seen, to sound and be heard, to speak and to be read."⁴⁷

Thus, the work of art, given life by the hands of mortal men, distinguishes itself - not just in the sense that it transcends the ordinary concerns that occupy much of the things that are fabricated - but rather because it transcends to a space where it achieves its own form of immortality, escaping the constraints of ordinary time, and nearing a new out-of-this-world form of time. Here, art is no longer measured in terms of its utility insofar as art is not concerned with the question of utility in the traditional sense, but specifically about capturing the essence, the idea

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 167.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 68.

of the artists intent. And it is in this transcendence of time, which makes the work of art closer in proximity to an idea of natality, where the object of art is born into the world, composed of its own essence, the intention of the artist, neither conforming to instrumentalization nor caught in the means/end dichotomy, but rather alone, keeping to its own design, unconcerned with the constraints of things outside of itself. In this unconcern, this fleeing from the notions related to its utility, that forces art to accept a noble stance in the sense that it is like anything that is born into the world, like any person, where it is just he who is born, just the work of art that is born, where it is given to the world, where its life begins, uncorrupted by the world outside of itself. And it is for this reason, that the work of art remains closest to a notion of natality because it is neither caught in a web of necessity like the category of labor, nor does it simply exist as a fabricated thing, as we saw in the category of work; it remains a representation of the artists intent to capture an idea.

“Unique et non fongible, privée de valeur d’usage, l’oeuvre d’art est par excellence l’objet inutile qui s’épuise dans son éclat, son unique fonction étant d’apparaître afin de donner à voir le beau, c’est-à-dire dans l’interprétation grecque d’Arendt, le “suprêmement éclatant”⁴⁸

In its most illuminating form, the work of art, now becomes one with the idea; consequently, it takes on the same qualities inherent in an idea, namely its immateriality, and a sense that it is in constant flux. And that is why the category of work, while some fabricated things are still only one step above the category of labor and one below a category of action, simply rest as fabricated things and nothing more, others, in the case of the work of art, reflect the qualities of an idea, therefore taking on the qualities

⁴⁸ Enegrén, André. La pensée politique de Hannah Arendt. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984. p. 38.

therein, namely the fact of immateriality; it is in the sense of immateriality that gives a work of art its active place; creating new beginnings, new ideas, and creating a stir in the person looking at it.

Chapter Six: Natality and the category of Action

"Life in its non-biological sense, the span of time man has between birth and death, manifests itself in action and speech, both of which share with life its essential futility. The 'doing of great deeds and the speaking of great words' will leave no trace, no product that might endure after the moment of action and the spoken words has passed."⁴⁹

When discussing the category of action within the first few pages Hannah Arendt quickly points out the importance the role of natality plays and its relation with a notion of action plays in her thought:

"It is the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins"⁵⁰

She continues...,

"The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle."⁵¹

The term miracle is something which surfaces many times over in the thought of Hannah Arendt. Anne-Roviello in her book Sens Commun et Modernité chez Hannah Arendt describes in a very clear way the meaning of this term.

"Ce terme de "miracle" ne désigne pas l'intervention d'une force mystérieuse, "supra-human," dans la réalité historique, mais il renvoie précisément au pouvoir de

⁴⁹ Arendt, Hannah. Condition. p. 173.

⁵⁰ Op.cit., p. 178.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 178.

l'homme d'interrompre l'automatisme de l'enchaînement causal."⁵²

Anne-Marie Roviello, was able to capture the essence of what the term miracle refers to in the thought of Hannah Arendt. Miracle does not correspond to anything mysterious, outside the realm of human affairs, but rather, to the contrary, it corresponds to the capacity in man to interrupt the cycle of necessity that surrounds him, including the fact that his own person is caught in its own cyclical motion; the fact that man is born into the world and will someday cease to exist. It is in this sense of miracle that corresponds to a notion of natality, in that miracle allows a thing's natural flow to be intersected, crossed, where a new beginning, man's initiating a new action, causes a new flow of direction. In the sense of interruption, or miracle being that power, associated with the fact of natality, revealed in the world through the initiative of action, man is therefore able to detach himself from necessity and become a carrier of novelty when he chooses to act. It is in this sense of miracle that, in contradistinction from the modern notion of science, where cause and effect are presupposed to exist, unable to account for anything outside this formulation, separates man from this common view of science, providing another constellation in the life of man, where through his action, and its expression as a miracle by intersecting the chain of causality, man is able to usher in new beginnings, and finally transcend his mortality and join with the realm of immortality that characterizes the notion of action when it is unleashed into the world, without the possibility of being framed within a time frame of beginning and end, since it exists freely on its.

⁵² Roviello, Anne-Marie Roviello. Sens commun et modernité chez Hannah Arendt. Grèce: Éditions Ousia, 1987. p. 109.

"With respect to this somebody who is unique it can be truly said that nobody was there before. If action as beginning corresponds to the fact of birth, if it is the actualization of the human condition of natality, then speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals."⁵³

Before going into the latter part of this quotation, the relationship between speech and plurality, let us first examine the relationship between an idea of action and how it is similar, metaphorically speaking, to an idea of beginning, birth, or natality.

This section shall comprise the final section of identifying the notion of natality in the thought of Hannah Arendt. Once this has been accomplished we shall shift our attention to some other aspects of her thought, namely the role that an idea of freedom and plurality play in the category of action.

"Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must at the same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: 'who are you?'"⁵⁴

Therefore, that which corresponds to the category of action is speech. Speech, according to Hannah Arendt, is the essence of action.

"Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of the deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of the words."⁵⁵

⁵³Arendt, Hannah. Condition. p. 178.

⁵⁴Op.cit., p. 178.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 179.

Thus, the answer to the question, 'who are you?' which is the most essential question directed to each man, is answered, in terms of how each man acts in the world, how each man, through his speech and deeds, responds to specific circumstances which he finds himself. This particular conception which Hannah Arendt has proposed, finds its origin in the existentialist thinking of her former teacher Martin Heidegger. It is based on the belief that essence does not precede existence, but rather the inverse is true. That is, man's essence is constantly renewing itself; through deeds and spoken word, man responds to his world, and through this responsiveness his essence builds onto itself, in the end, creating in man the very essence of who he is.

"In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in their unique shape of the body and sound of the voice."⁵⁶

Going back to the idea of essence preceding existence, to borrow an existentialist expression coined by Jean-Paul Sartre, Margaret Canovan writes:

"Her (Hannah Arendt) books are haunted by a thoroughly existentialist view of the human predicament. Her assumption is that we find ourselves in the present age flung into a situation in which inherited structures have broken down. Traditional beliefs no longer make sense, no authorities are left to guide us, and we must act into an open future as best we can."⁵⁷

And the way this "act into an open future" happens is by man revealing himself through speech and deeds, through dialogue. According

⁵⁶bid., p. 179.

⁵⁷Canovan, Margaret. Ideology. p. 164.

to this view, turning directly to the notion of natality, action, the concrete expression of natality, in the end, discloses the essence of who each individual is; action is the equivalent of the disclosure of "who." Furthermore, the answer to this question of who man is, can in fact be overlooked, ignored, whenever man neither acts, speaks, nor engages himself consequently and lives a sort of irrelevant existence, according to this view.

Accordingly, the notion of disclosure and the notion of natality, of beginning something new for the first time, corresponds exactly to the notion of man and the responsibility, the purpose of his existence, namely to disclose who he is.

Speech therefore is action and action corresponds to natality. In short natality is speech, and the inverse remains true as well.

To make this point even clearer let us go over once more the essence of what speech entails. First, to speak is to give life to words; as words are spoken something new is being born into the world, regardless if the words have been spoken before. Moreover, once this word is spoken, once something meaningful is put into the world, it then occupies a space, a space of its own. What's more, this series of words in the world, outside of its vehicle, man, now belongs to the world, forced now to exist in the unpredictable way things do exist, confronted by the possibility of crossing other contexts and circumstances. That is, once a word is uttered it will cross the paths of other lives, each instance upon its sight interpreted in its own way depending on the circumstances. And therefore when it is said that speech is action it means that language - when uttered into the world - takes on its own existence, when it crosses the path of other lives, affecting the way people see things, contributing to the world's artifice, in

effect, acting in the world full of other aspects, entities with similar qualities of its own.

"This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are with others and neither for nor against them - that is, in sheer human togetherness."⁵⁸

Hannah Arendt here is commenting on the fact that speech alone, for example a speaker talking to himself, has no value, neither political nor social efficacy insofar as speech is that which bonds people into a area of togetherness; speech is that bond which unites strangers, creating the possibility for dialogue, the generating of opinion, which has already been mentioned is the foundation of government. What's more, where the notion of togetherness and its relation to the notion of natality comes to bear is that togetherness between people entails a quality of novelty between people before the engagement can take on any meaningfulness. That is, if everyone is in constant agreement, unconcerned with the obligation of ushering new ideas into the space of discussion, nothing new is being made, and the consequence is an empty space between people; the bond of togetherness entails unique, novel ideas being ushered forward. Otherwise dialogue loses its purpose, namely as the basic capacity in man to reveal his uniqueness, distinct from all other things outside of himself.

As we have already discussed, human nature remains the same; it is a constant in each persons life - distinct from one person to the next, however, what is similar is that each person does share the same human condition, or the seeing of the world in a particular state at a particular time. The difference that happens is in the bridging of the human condition, of the condition of the human artifice, with the meeting of the

⁵⁸Arendt, Hannah. Condition. p. 180.

human nature. It is in meeting, where the newness, the richness of seeing the world differently from each finds its origin. And it is exactly here where the notion of natality and the idea of togetherness intersect. That is, natality corresponds to something new being brought into the world, either in the form of a word being spoken or in the form of deeds being enacted, and togetherness, the symbol of hope of the potential for new things from potentially happening, through the meeting of people, each with a different perspective can still paradoxically intersect, and creatively meet and generate an opinion of interest for society, bringing a new event into the world.

In the end, the difficulty of togetherness, (as the case may be,) may be understood as the problem of the representation of an idea of disclosure.

“This frustration has the closest affinity with the well-known philosophic impossibility to arrive at a definition of man, all definitions being determinations or interpretations of what man is, of qualities, and therefore, which he could possibly share with other living beings, whereas his specific difference would be found in determination of what kind of a ‘who’ he is.”⁵⁹

It is striking that Hannah Arendt should point to this as being the most perplexing problem of disclosure, although it is not at all inconsistent with anything she has already mentioned. If we look back at what we have already discussed one of the things that Hannah Arendt is concerned with is the way in which Karl Marx redefined the definition of man as an *animal laborans*. In this view, the essence of man, according to Hannah Arendt's interpretation, is that man's essence corresponds to an idea of

⁵⁹ Op.cit., p. 181.

labor. She will object to this definition of man on the grounds that such a position is in contradistinction to Marx's overall political thought. That is, once labor withers away, (which is a prediction in Marx's own thought,) what would then remain for man if his essence corresponds to an idea of labor, and nothing else? Hannah Arendt points to this point alone to discard Marx's entire thought, and what is striking is that Hannah Arendt herself does not aim to replace this aspect of Marx's thought with something else, but merely suggests that the question alone, namely "who is man?" is one that mortals ought not to be concerned with insofar as it is a question that could only be answered by God alone.

In this way, one of the distinguishing aspects of the thought of Hannah Arendt, versus other Western thinkers, beginning with Plato and ending with Marx, is the manner in which she does not attempt to answer this perplexing riddle. Instead, (which I submit is the essence of the richness of Hannah Arendt's thinking,) she supplements the question of man by replacing it with a basic theme, which I consider the basic quality in each man, namely the capacity of natality, the possibility of beginning new beginnings, endowed in each existing person.

To make this point more clearly, let us compare the Ancient Greek conception of man with Hannah Arendt's. In the Ancient Greek formulation, man is an *animal rational*; he is engaged in the world through his capacity to think of matters in an intellectual way. What's more, more fully developed in the thought of Aristotle is that man is endowed with the capacity for speech, enabling him to engage in political matters, giving the possibility of togetherness, meeting with other people and generating new ideas. Hannah Arendt's point of view is not at all inconsistent with either of these views, however, she takes the definition of man a step further by appealing to the fact of man's basic predicament,

namely that he is born into the world, caught in a biological cycle, where he is endowed with the capacity to generate, invent, and create new things into the world. Thus, when it is suggested that the essence of man - in Hannah Arendt's view - does not correspond to some of the other views found in the history of ideas, and by implication lacks the arguments against some of these views, it is because Hannah Arendt has leapt beyond the traditional conceptual definition by proposing that man is an open-ended definition, whose very essence corresponds to open-endedness insofar as he is endowed with the never ending capacity to begin new beginnings. What's more, this notion of togetherness, or the ushering of new things into the world, is quite different from former conceptions of man in so far as since man has within himself the capacity to generate new ideas through his capacity for speech, he brings these utterances into the world where they take on a life of their own, crossing the path of innumerable other circumstances, and individuals, in the end, shifting the intent of the speaker, to simply the supremacy of the utterance, itself where it coexists in a world full of other things; the utterance being born into the world, living a life of its own, is also capable of generating new beginnings through its own meeting of other utterances, other beings. Thus, man is a causal agent of ideas, which he has contained within himself, similar to the same way Plato discusses the fact of man being born with a sense of the Forms in virtue of his soul first seeing the Forms prior to mortal life. However, Hannah Arendt goes further and gives the ideas themselves an existence independent of man once they have been ushered into the world through acts of speech and deeds. The consequence of such a theory of meaning, of epistemology, suggests that meaning is something that cannot be contained, captured in the name of a concept or something else, but instead simply stated as an open-ended dialogue between the causal agent, man, the capacity in him to generate new

beginnings, and the fact that these new beginnings, once in the form of utterances or speech and deeds live their own existences, outside the realm of its causal agent, able to meet other minds and therefore, capable of creating new beginnings of their own, ad infinitum.

Taken this way, it is no surprise that Hannah Arendt refers to the idea of a narrative or story as metaphor when she speaks of the life of beginnings; in that the story of life, of each individual never does end, but rather continues, narratively moving forward, with the allowance of being interpreted, however, never fully captured in so far as the story never ends entirely.

In the end the notion of togetherness is at the foundation of the thought of Hannah Arendt, and as we will see, plays an important role when speaking of some of the other basic themes running through her thought, namely the notion of plurality and freedom.

“Action and speech go on between men, as they are directed them, and they retain their agent revealing capacity even if their content is exclusively “objective,” concerned with the matters of the world of things in which men move, which physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective, worldly interests. These interests constitute, in the words more literal significance, something which inter-est, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together.”⁶⁰

This “thing” which binds people together, namely the words and deeds which people speak and hear, are intangible, immaterial. Yet even though they assume an intangible quality, in that there is nothing concrete in the words which bind people together. That said, even though we are engaged in a form of dialogue, and dialogue is something

⁶⁰Ibid., p.182.

immaterial, it does not follow that this immaterial quality suggests that it is any way less real than anything else. To the contrary, it is through dialogue that we are able to bridge the gap between one person and another. What's more, it is in virtue of dialogue that one person is able to agree or disagree with respect to hinges which exist in the world. And therefore when Hannah Arendt mentions the phrase "the web of human relationships" she purposely uses this kind of metaphor, suggesting its immaterial quality since, in the end, it is something immaterial which fuses, which allows for "the web of human relationships" to fuse in the first place.

The point that ought to be stressed here is the importance of a notion of togetherness, of man being able to affirm his own existence, the different opinions he may have towards the world, and the relationship between those ideas, and the necessity of finding the constellation through someone else. That is, it is through togetherness, through the meeting of one opinion with another, that affirms one man's existence against other men. And that possibility of someone else, as an agent of recognizing others existence is what makes this notion correspond to a notion of natality since, in the end, the birth of something new is contingent on the meeting of another to affirm the other's existence.

Let us now examine the conditions which are necessary in order for this meeting between people to happen in the first place; we will see that natality depends of certain actual physical conditions in order for it to prosper in the world of men.

Before that let us go over what we have already discussed about the category of action and make note of the difference between it and the other two categories we have already examined: labor and work. First, action is rooted in something which is unpredictable. In this way, like all things

which are born into the world, their happens a detachment from its causal agent, in this case man, where words are uttered and deeds acted they assume their own existence, beyond where they were originally formed. In this detachment of sorts a new thing is born into the world, and that is what makes the category of action the same as a notion of natality, because it corresponds to the basic idea of new things being born into the world assuming an existence of their own outside of the realm of their origin. In contrast, for example, the activity of labor, is neither free nor independent since it is permanently rooted in a chain, a process of necessity. Under this view, the category of labor cannot escape from the principles which it is founded on, therefore unable to account for permutations, which may result in the category of action, but impossible in the category of labor. That is, as I have already mentioned, the category of labor is rooted in the belief in science where the activity of labor, with an already established set of laws and principles and design must necessarily maintain its particular course to ensure the integrity of the entire thing, of the creation of the thing.

Another difference between the category of action and the category of labor is where the former is unpredictable, the latter is predictable: action, expressed in the representation of speech and deeds coexists with all things, thus in the way of being disrupted constantly, whilst coming into contact with other things; labor, on the other hand, is linked to a chain of necessity where its intent, its means and ends, are always known before the actual building of the thing. In action intent disappears and the utterance is vulnerable to the potential of meeting other voices.

Now looking at the category of work, which is slightly different from what we have already discussed - albeit still falling short in its attempts in being something novel, or giving novelty to the world - is

burdened by the fact that to some extent dependent on the instruments of the causal agents who make the design. In this way, the category of work runs short in reaching its own potential insofar as the fact of instrumentalization. That is to say the process of reification, or translating the idea of something into something concrete, is spoiled because of instrumentalization.

Reification is a constant theme in the history of Western thought and one thing that is important to note here is that the category of work, in the least, amplifies this recurring problem - namely the problem of the transition between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*. Hannah Arendt does not attempt to reconcile this problem, nor does she think a thing is even possible, rather it exists as a problem, and remains one. In the end though, the problem does at least shed some light on the inherent difficulties found in the category of work, namely the attempt to reconcile the gap between the mental subject and extra-mental reality, or the thing, in that the fabricated thing depends of resources which are fabricated by things which are themselves limited and carved out of a finite surplus of natural things, which both suggest a paradox insofar as the intent of the original idea springs from an infinite perspective of options and not a finite one.

That is, the world is composed of things which are in their very essence concrete things. And since the idea of the artist say is not thinking in terms of concrete things but rather in terms of ideas, which are immaterial, thoughts in the mind, it follows that any attempt in reification would be a crude approximation, since nothing could compare to the original immaterial intent of design that started the whole thing. Hannah Arendt does admit that approximations do indeed trigger an interest towards what the immaterial idea is, however, it remains simply

an approximation and nothing more. And that is why, in the end, Hannah Arendt agrees with Aristotle in the idea that the stage play is the finest of all the arts since it does not attempt to capture the idea of the artist into something concrete, or fabricated, but rather, it remains in an open area where the art itself, the play, remains in constant flux, like all other things in the world. Thus the stage play is the most approaching of an idea of art insofar as it most closely reflects the original intent of the immaterial idea. However, where the category of work is in contrast to the category of action is in the way the former uses instruments in the process of building a thing, causing an eventual distortion from the original intent of the artist.

Again, another aspect of the category of work, is the sense of permanence, whereas in the category of action there is a greater sense of impermanence in that when something is acted departs on its own, living its own life, without a point of origin, without roots. This is slightly less the case in terms of the category of work, where the object made is seen through its association with its causal agent, and remains still in its foundation.

One final comment about the difference between the category of work and the category of action has very much do with the notion of immortality surrounding the notion of action.

“Action, on the contrary, as the Greeks were the first to discover, is in and by itself utterly futile; it never leaves an end product itself.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Arendt, Hannah. Between. p. 59.

The sense of futility inherent in the category of action does not correspond to the negative sense of the term but rather to the sense that there is nothing physical that remains, no one particular reference point to the existence of the action. Indeed there are elements of its existence in things, in terms of the things which it crosses - the influence it may have when crossing things - but quite differently from the category of work, where beginnings and ends are clear and distinct in the form of the fabricated object. In this sense, there is a literal aspect of immortality built in the expression of action in the world, since its existence cannot be measured in terms of beginnings and ends but only in the sense that it exists, and continues, like natural processes, to flow through the things, concrete or conceptual, that exist in the world.

“...immortality is no longer the medium in which mortals move, but has taken its homeless refuge in the very heart of mortality; immortal things, works and deeds, events and even words, though men might still be able to externalize, reify as it were, the remembrance of their hearts, have lost their home in the world, since nature is perishable and since man-made things, once they have come into being, share the fate of all being - they begin to perish the moment they have come into existence.”⁶²

The most revealing aspect of this last quotation is the general attitude that Hannah Arendt evokes; namely the idea that the modern age has appropriated the qualities that are unique to the category of labor and work, and by implication cut short the proximity to an idea of immortality; the same form of immortality that was so ardently striven towards in the times of Ancient Greece. And so with this current disappearance of the sense towards driving towards immortality, (and the elevation of the fabrication process, where, like the predicament of all

⁶² Op.cit., p. 44.

things, their existence is wholly finite, without the possibility of living through the natural cycle that they are embedded in,) there remains a lingering lack of possibility since it has been limited in its application. Clearly Hannah Arendt is addressing the notion of immortality and the category of action since it is her opinion that this is something which ought to be sought again; it is the very essence of man to begin new things, and through this beginning, moving beyond the realm of fabrication, exists the realm of action where man is again able to realize his own immortality and escape from the restrictions that limit only one aspect of his being, his finitude. But also there is his capacity to act, which supersedes these barriers, allowing for immortality and its correspondence features to be unleashed into the world.

Let us continue on and examine the notion of freedom - another basic theme associated with the category of action

In the book Between Past and Future, under the chapter "What is Freedom?," Hannah Arendt states,

"Men are free--as distinguished from possessing the gift for freedom--as long as they act, neither before nor after; for to be free and to act are the same."⁶³

It is obvious from this quotation that there is something quite unique about the notion of action and freedom, namely that they are one and the same thing. The implication, of course, is that if one is not free one cannot act; whereas the inverse - if one cannot act one is not free - is also true.

⁶³Ibid., p. 153.

In order to grasp this idea of freedom and action as being one and the same thing, it means that we go back and consider what the original description of action was: namely the fact that every person is endowed with the capacity to speak and do deeds. This formulation goes back to Aristotle's original description of what is man?, that is, with the capacity to speak, man is immediately thrust into the position of being able to communicate with others, extend his own novel perspective through other people, and other people through him, continually generating the possibility of new opinions, which, as we have already mentioned, is the essence of government, thus giving life to the *polis*, giving life to the government and people to coexist in a function egalitarian way.

"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 where they may happen to be. "Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*: these famous words became not merely the watch word of Greek colonization, they expressed the conviction that action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost at any time and anywhere."⁶⁴

Clearly there is an intangible quality when Hannah Arendt describes the *polis*. The *polis* is not a concrete thing, like an actual meeting place where politics happen, or a government building in capitals where politicians meet. On the contrary, in this view "where" governments meet is accidental; it is not necessary nor sufficient for a *polis* to exist. A *polis* has nothing to do with an existing location, according to this view, rather it is an intangible thing, a web which when people meet and come together, freely speak and act with one another, without any censorship,

⁶⁴Arendt, Hannah. Condition. p. 198.

the *polis* then simply becomes. Moreover, the *polis*' existence is contingent, relying on the basic belief of particular circumstances, where the freedom for freedom is allowed to happen. Without freedom the *polis* simply fades out of existence. Therefore, even though a people may meet and congregate it does not follow that they find themselves in a *polis*, since a *polis* is something that emerges out of the meeting of people who willfully and engagingly discuss matters of the concern for society in general. And it is in this sense which makes the *polis* not something that exists independently, but rather something contingent, where it emerges out of a particular context. The implication of course is that without man there is no *polis*, however, since the *polis* depends on the condition of freedom and men to congregate.

In his way of looking at the *polis*, namely in the sense that it emerges out of something which already exists before it, namely the condition of freedom, where people can congregate and relate it to an idea of natality, we can say that the *polis* is something that is born into the world, existing unpredictably, like the category of action, where it can fade as swiftly as it appears with the collapse of the condition of freedom. In this sense, causal agents who meet and congregate are those who guarantee the existence of the *polis* from appearing. Moreover, the sense of lacking in predictability is similar in both natality and the *polis*, in that there is no guarantee that the *polis* will flourish, since it may potentially collapse at any time with the vanishing of men. .

Now that we have made the assertion that the *polis* is similar to an idea of natality, we can say that as we move away from the notion of action, and looking at a particular context, like the *polis*, we can accurately say that, still, the notion of natality is playing a critical role in the thought of Hannah Arendt, specifically in the sense of its association to the idea of

polis. That is, natality is not simply a loose conceptual device springing out of a capacity in man, but rather the framework for Hannah Arendt's entire political philosophy, including the notion of *polis*.

Let us examine some of these other basic themes, namely the conditions for the springing up of the *polis*, (which in this case is an idea of plurality, the inverse of aloneness and freedom,) and see how it is related to an idea of natality.

In its original sense, (which was mentioned in an earlier chapter,) plurality represents the opposite of aloneness. Not to be mistaken with the notion of solitude, which Hannah Arendt discusses in the book The Origins of Totalitarianism,

"Isolation and loneliness are not the same. I can be isolated - that is, in a situation in which I cannot act, because there is nobody that can act with me - without being lonely; and I can be lonely - that is in a situation which I as a person feel myself deserted by all human companionship - without being isolated."⁶⁵

There are conditions when solitude is essential, especially in the case of *homo Faber*, when in the fabrication process he must remove himself from the company of people and be alone with his creative energies. However, it is suitable only for a short period of time. In being alone, like in the philosophy of Plato, a flight from the *polis* is essential at the beginning stage, but after this time away from human affairs there is a return to the *polis*, when man engages in matters of interest for society with other men. The same rings true in the philosophy of Hannah Arendt, and in this sense the notion of plurality corresponds to this

⁶⁵Arendt, Hannah. Origins. p. 474.

notion of gathering, and through dialogue, a consensus is met on matters of government. Accordingly, the positive reason then for advocating a notion of plurality within a standard of government policy is recognized in terms of the negative implications which are observed in forms of government when this form of plurality is denied. And as we have seen in the discussion of totalitarianism. The one way in dealing with the issue of denying plurality is through systematically denying all spaces, physical and mental, where dialogue may take place. This, of course, in totalitarianism, is achieved through devices of terror: imposing a fear within a society where man no longer feels free to express his opinion, and consequently narrows the sense of common, shared public space, until eventually none exists and each man is caught in the privacy of his own aloneness. Clearly, based on incidents of history, the justification for a notion of plurality within a form of government is essential, indeed the most important factor to preserve unique, individual points of view. In the end, the notion of plurality is not simply a concept, but something very real, whose existence is recognized most brilliantly, unfortunately, in expression when it is denied. And it is within this denial of plurality that moved Hannah Arendt to elevate its importance within her philosophy to its greatest heights, arguing for its essential existence, the preservation of which if denied could lead to a terrible loss: the inventiveness of human novelty.

The notion of plurality has its closest relation to an idea of freedom in the thought of Hannah Arendt, which, as it turns out, plays a significant role in the overall aspect of Hannah Arendt's thinking. What's more, the notion of plurality, as discussed earlier, is deeply rooted in the notion of natality.

“Human action like all strictly political phenomena, is bound up with human plurality, which is one of the

fundamental conditions of human life insofar as it rests on the fact of natality.”⁶⁶

One way to penetrate the idea of plurality is to examine some other authors who have concentrated on this notion and who suggest that this is the most important element in Hannah Arendt’s political philosophy. One author in particular, who stresses the relevancy of the notion of plurality in the work of Hannah Arendt, is Margaret Canovan. In the essay Arendt, Rousseau, and Human Plurality in Politics, she writes,

“The essentially political aspect of this originality is that men do not act or start things in a vacuum. They act in relation to one another, inserting their initiatives into an already tangled web of human affairs, each affecting and altering what others have started.”⁶⁷

Here, Margaret Canovan rightly shows the importance of the role of plurality in Hannah Arendt’s thinking. She continues to describe a “double unpredictability” aspect of the notion of plurality. What the notion “double unpredictability” refers to is the fact that each man, through acting, not knowing where the action is going towards, since there is no end in action, that is:

“Nobody who engages in public affairs can know where the repercussions of his actions and the interweaving deeds of others will carry them away.”⁶⁸

and therefore there always lingers a sense of unpredictability. This quality of unpredictability in the category of action is not singular, in the case of one person acting, but becomes doubly unpredictable when there is

⁶⁶ Arendt, Hannah. Between. p. 61.

⁶⁷ Canovan, Margaret. Arendt, Rousseau, and Human Plurality in Politics (Politics). *Journal of Politics*, vol. 45, no. 2 (1983). p. 293

a meeting of another person, and it is through the collision of this other person - the meeting of two opinions - where the doubleness of the notion of plurality happens.

This aspect of unpredictability, corresponding to a notion of plurality, finds a good portion of its own inner integrity through Hannah Arendt's discussion on power.

Much has already been discussed by Hannah Arendt's opponents in terms of her definition of power, especially when comparing her own formulation to that of Max Weber's. It is not my intention to recall this entire discussion, except to mention that Hannah Arendt's formulation is communicative in essence, whereas Weber's is not, which reveals an interesting aspect, since the communicative theory which Hannah Arendt proposes is consistent with her overall thinking, especially in the sense of how communicativeness is comparable to an idea of togetherness. This will later be more fully expressed in the importance of plurality, all of which combined come together and remain consistent with an idea of natality.

Jurgen Habermas, in his revealing essay, Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power, writes,

"Hannah Arendt disconnects the concept of power from the teleological model: power is built up in communicative action; it is a collective effect of speech in which reaching agreement is an end in itself."⁶⁹

Habermas is correct in showing that power for Hannah Arendt is indeed something communicative, and what's more its communicative

⁶⁸ Op.cit., p. 293.

⁶⁹ Habermas, Jurgen. Hannah Arendt Critical Essays (Essays). ed. Hinchmann L & Hinchmann S. New York: State University of New York Press, 1994. p. 213.

character corresponds to an idea of freedom being something embedded in an idea of plurality - which, as already stated, is the contrary of individuality or thinking alone. In this way, with dropping the teleological association with an idea of power, Hannah Arendt is able to properly ground her theory to something that has its correspondence in human affairs - something concrete - rather than referring to something outside the realm of human affairs. The consequences of this view are broad. However, the most salient point is that power is something which comes from rather than something which is used upon. Therefore, in Hannah Arendt's interpretation, power remains something corresponding to the fact that man is capable of engaging, through speech, other people, and the consequence of this meeting creates a certain power. Also, when man forcefully imposes his will onto another man, it is not a form of power, according to Hannah Arendt, but an act of domination.

"All political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them."⁷⁰

Here Hannah Arendt is referring to the fact that power, through consent, and people engaging between one and other through speech, in effect, create the institutions which we call political institutions. Moreover, once the people cease in engaging with one another, as the political institutions themselves begin to "petrify" and "decay." Thus, Hannah Arendt's theory of power is consistent with her other basic themes, (plurality and freedom), in the sense that it conforms to the fact of an idea of communicative involvement between people.

⁷⁰ Arendt, Hannah. Republic. p. 140.

This is the basic essence of man, according to Hannah Arendt, but even before that there remains the fact of natality, which Habermas himself refers to thus.

“Communicative action is the medium in which the inter-subjectivity shared life world is formed. It is the “space of appearance” in which actors enter, encounter one another, are seen and heard. The spatial dimension of the life-world is determined by “the fact of plurality,” every interaction unifies the multiple perspectives of perception and action of those present, whose as individuals occupy an inconvertible standpoint. The temporal dimension of the life world is determined by “the fact of human natality:” the birth of every individual means the possibility for a new beginning; to act means to be able to seize the initiative and to do the unanticipated.”⁷¹

To go over what we have discussed so far, the category of action and an idea of natality are similar in the way each corresponds to the view that beginning new beginnings in the world is possible, indeed the very essence or capacity is in each person. And it is this capacity for beginning that things, as they exist in the world, can, in the end, be improved, or in the very least, converted into something different.

“The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal material ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted.”⁷²

We can now say, that what saves the world from its potential material ruin is the fact of natality, the fact that men are born into the world, and through their concern, can potentially save things, and through their inventiveness by means of speech and deeds, have the

⁷¹Habermas, Jurgen. Essays. p. 215.

⁷²Arendt, Hannah. Condition. p. 247.

capacity to continually create novel things, potentially dampening the current faults that exist.

Chapter Seven: Natality and the notion of Revolution and Foundation

Revolution

Now that we have looked at how natality does not exist in the form of totalitarianism and ideology, let us turn and see how, perhaps, it exist in a notion of revolution.

At the outset Hannah Arendt, consistent in her thinking of beginning or natality as the spring board for any form of expressed action, writes,

“...revolutions are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning.”⁷³

What makes revolution, especially modern revolutions, so striking, is they embody in concrete terms some of the same qualities - contingent upon accepting the Nature argument that are in possession of man in terms of his own attempts to trigger new beginnings. The differences are obvious and clear enough, since revolution is not an expression of one man's tendency to begin new beginnings, but is, in more general terms, a concerted expression of beginning. We will find that even in natality's concerted expression, in the form of revolution, there still remain the inherent problem that characterizes natality - that is, the conditions and aftermath which are inherent in it, conditions for which it depends on, is contingent on, prior to its existence being made to the world.

⁷³Arendt, Hannah. Revolution. p. 21.

The emphasis of revolution and the problem of beginning is even more clearly defined in the following statement by Hannah Arendt,

"For revolutions, however we may be tempted to define them, are not mere changes."⁷⁴

The operative word here is "changes", and what it refers to in its etymological sense. Firstly, there is a tendency when seeing the word "changes" to associate it with other terms, like reform, adjust, rotate, twist, etc., in essence, contortionist, where the main body on the idea remains the same, but is made to appear different through various ways of manipulation. This is quite unlike the kind of revolution that Hannah Arendt is speaking of, perhaps there is resembling either expressions of revolution pre nineteenth century. No sense of government being shaped, or reformed into something different, but more radically, the modern revolution attempts to abjure itself from a former kind of government and begin a new one. Hannah Arendt suggests that modern revolutions are quite different from other forms of revolution prior to the eighteenth century; they owe their distinctiveness, by and large, to the general populist attitude towards the social question.

"The social question began to play a revolutionary role only when, in the modern age and not before, men began to doubt that poverty is inherent in the human condition."⁷⁵

This suggests that for the first time modern revolutions considered the question of man, and through this, opened the possibility of man living beyond the shackles of tradition; by doing this they opened up questions on common notions of tradition, which at the time were still a strong aspect of daily living.

⁷⁴Op.cit., p. 154.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 22.

With the settlement of the American colonial experience, came thinkers such as John Adam's:

"I always consider the settlement of America as the opening of a grand scheme and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."⁷⁶

With this new form of awareness, of consciousness, a significant pocket of society was stirred for the first time to re-think, re-consider their particular social, human condition. No longer was poverty, and living in a particular social class such an obvious, necessary factor in one's life. What the modern revolutions provoked, more than anything, was a tendency to re-examine the question of what is man?, and in this new and novel way, the question of "man" broke itself away from the chain of necessity and tradition, which had dominated consciousness for so long, and instead was replaced by a definition of man that more closely resembled Aristotle's definition: where each man regardless of his social background is firstly, defined, like all other men, in terms of his capacity for speech, and therefore the ability to share in the process of government, through submitting his opinion on matters in the agora or polis or public space that is provided.

And therefore when Hannah Arendt attributes the social question to the rise of secularization, she writes,

"Secularization, the separation of religion from politics and the rise of a secular realm with a dignity of its own, is certainly a crucial factor in the phenomenon of revolution. Indeed, it may ultimately turn out that what we call

⁷⁶Arendt, Hannah. Revolution. p. 452.

revolution is precisely the transitory phase which brings about the birth of a new secular realm."⁷⁷

It is clear then that for the first time revolution, more specifically the modern revolutions of the twentieth century reveal an aspect of consciousness that was previously tied to a mostly Christian, religious point of view.

But, when Hannah Arendt continues on and says that what characterizes all revolution is a notion of novelty, she is not completely abandoning the idea that novelty is in contradistinction to Christian philosophy, as she writes,

"Christian philosophy, it is true, broke with the time concept of antiquity because the birth of Christ, occurring in human secular time, constituted a new beginning as well as a unique, unrepeatable event. Let the Christian concept of history, as it was formulated by Augustine, could conceive of a new beginning only in terms of a transmudane event breaking into and interrupting the normal course of secular history."⁷⁸

In the Christian view, clearly defined in the work of Augustine, there was indeed a notion of novelty, in fact this form of novelty, something being born into the world, namely the birth of Christ, represents one of the most fundamental notions of Christian thought. But as Hannah Arendt rightly points out, this form of novelty, an event like the birth of Christ, reveals that the commonly held rectilinear track of time could be broken; it could be shattered from conventional ways of looking at time; it suggests the possibility a new beginnings could indeed happen. The implication of course is that events, could indeed trigger new

⁷⁷Arendt, Hannah. Revolution. p. 26.

⁷⁸Op.cit., p. 27.

beginnings, new infinite tracks of time, which in essence are borne out of finite, specific events.

But what is characteristic of modern revolution, as distinct from the commonly held Christian view of things, is that even though there is a tendency in Christian thought to accept an idea of novelty - of a breaking away from the common track of rectilinear time - it wasn't until much later, until the eighteenth century, when man, after the outbreak of the French Revolution, that he realized the strength of an idea of novelty, is contingent on an idea of freedom: the same sense of freedom that demands man to look inside himself and ask what is man? And not accept any of the traditional responses, especially those which explained any social inherent categories, which suggested anything inherent in respect to action.

And therefore, when Hannah Arendt stresses the notion of freedom and the social question as pre-Revolutionary conditions, which then allow for modern revolutions to flourish, it is precisely for the reason that, in order for man to first consider the social question as being legitimate, he was first needed to be free - free from the shackles of tradition, of custom, which for centuries dominated daily life, *polis* life, and which did not let the social questions be examined.

This association between freedom and revolution is expressed most clearly when Hannah Arendt writes,

“What the revolutions brought to the fore was this experience of being free, and this was a new experience, not, to be sure, in the history of Western mankind--it was common enough in both Greek and Roman Antiquity--but with regard to the centuries which separate the downfall of the Roman Empire from the rise of the modern age. And this relatively new experience, new to those at any rate who made

it, was at the same time the experience of man's faculty to begin something new."⁷⁹

To begin something new was always the aspect of natality inherent in each man. What is important to note in respect to revolution is the radicality in the sense of beginning something new means. And this is why surveying the history of revolution, looking at the way in which the different fathers of revolutions interpreted what beginning meant, may actually provide some insight towards what beginning represented then, in the past, and what beginning means now, or the way in which beginning or revolution have revealed themselves in the modern age. Through making this distinction, through surveying the interpretation of beginning, we find an interesting concept emerging: namely from where the genesis of conceptual thinking in the modern age originated. One of the main culprits of the revolutionary spirit, according to Hannah Arendt, is Machiavelli.

"He [Machiavelli] certainly was not the father of political science or political theory, but it is difficult to deny that one may well see him in the spiritual father of the revolution."⁸⁰

Hannah Arendt attributes the revolutionary spirit common in the modern age mostly due to Machiavelli's own insistence of the efficacy of violence in the realm of politics. For Machiavelli this affectation towards an idea of in praise of violence had to do with his view of it with respect to a notion of foundation. According to Hannah Arendt, needed to be installed, in a violent way, in an un-worldly way, since any foundation would necessarily have to reflect something greater than common man. That is, in foundation, the imposing a new standard of law, or a new

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 34.

starting point where politics, the affairs of man would spring from, in Machiavelli's view.

She writes :

"This resource of God, to be sure, was necessary only in the case of extraordinary laws, namely of laws by which a new community is founded."

And continues,

"Machiavelli's insistence on the role of violence in politics was due not so much to his so called realistic insight into human nature as to his futile hope that he could find some quality in certain men to match the qualities we associate with the divine."⁸¹

This is an interesting observation especially in respect to the association of interpretation Machiavelli made between the purpose of violence and its relationship with foundation. The point here is, as Hannah Arendt states, violence was not something essentially inherent or common in man, but rather a symbol of the absolute, the un-worldly - in a word - the most foreign of all inherent qualities in man. But through creating a foundation, through initiating a foundation of law, Machiavelli insisted that it be instituted through a means of violence, where the consequence would lead to a general honor of this un-worldly foundation, creating in the people a certain affection, something which they could hardly accommodate, or understand, and therefore, would accept as something greater, more real than themselves, appealing to its word, whatever the word may be that springs from the realm of politics.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 37.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 39.

Above all else, this notion of violence in Machiavelli, beyond referring to an attempt to capture an aspect of the absolute, or something unlike any particular quality in man, is also reflected in the antagonism inherent in it in regards to change. That is, Machiavelli, although suggested as the father of the revolutionary spirit insofar as he ushered in a new point of view to how society ought to build itself up, namely by violently instituting a foundation, was also attempting to create a state, which he is most well known for popularizing, but not so much in a novel, new way, but rather by aiming to reflect the same virtues of the former glory of Rome. And this is why Hannah Arendt suggests that the lack of permanence or durability of Machiavelli's thought is due to the fact that there is no novelty occurring at all, but rather a mimic, or nostalgia for a former form of government that once prospered centuries before. Therefore, it is right to say that Machiavelli was the father of the revolutionary spirit, only insofar as he stressed the notion of a violent beginning. This would later, as we shall see, metaphorically speaking, remain as a constant theme in all revolutions, including ones of the modern age. But in respect to his suggesting that his foundation, in the manner in which he tried to reflect the institution of law, in his attempt to mimic the former glory of Rome, Machiavelli fails to mimic the notion of beginning and novelty in any authentic way; rather it remains simply a design of something else, and not the new beginning that is necessary for something to be considered novel and new.

At its root, Machiavelli's discussion of revolution remains consistent in the way in which the etymological sense of revolution originates. As Hannah Arendt says, in its original meaning, "revolution" was:

"An astronomical term which gained increasing importance in the natural sciences through Copernicus *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*."⁸²

That is, in its astronomical sense, revolution referred to the scientific explanation of stars lawfully moving through a cyclical, predictable path. In this way consistent with the definition of science in general, the stars rotated in a way, that was predictable and unchanging; things followed in a logical, deductively understood manner.

And in a particular way, now looking at Machiavelli's discussion of revolution, and all revolutions prior to the eighteenth century - prior to the ascendance of the plausibility of the question of freedom - revolutions remained consistent to this logical and obviously old way of thinking. The revolution to which Machiavelli and others conformed to was one that was shaped largely by this astronomical point of view - it was still heavily contingent on the notion of something cyclical and therefore still caught in a web of necessity; whereas everything which is cyclical is therefore an expression of an event chained to a form of necessity.

"Where we find the word for [revolution] for the first time as a political term, the metaphoric content was even closer to the original meaning of the word, for it was used for a movement of revolving back to some pre-established point and, by implication, of swinging back into a preordained order."⁸³

This is exactly the sense in which the revolution of Machiavelli may be interpreted. That is, to suggest that there is nothing novel in his form of revolution is because there is a tendency to go back and consider the events of another time and attempt to capture that spirit and translate

⁸²Ibid., p. 42.

⁸³Ibid., p. 43.

that into a present sense. But by implication, by swinging back to the past, according to Hannah Arendt, all that is achieved is boarding another preordained order, or a form of law. And in this sense, as was discussed in the section of totalitarianism and ideology, this form of revolution, unique prior to the rise of the question of freedom in the eighteenth century, is neither novel nor original in any sense of the word, but simply repeating something which already existed, simply gives a worldly event the appearance of something new, but is still caught in the web of necessity - still plagued by the spirit of history and the idea of things repeating themselves in a cyclical way.

Therefore, bringing back the notion of natality, the idea of new beginnings being generated in the world - revolution - in its pre-eighteenth century form is quite different from Hannah Arendt's notion of natality, precisely for the reason that this form of revolution, albeit suggesting a new beginning being born, because of its violent expression and the abjuration of one form of government in favor of another is still in check with a former form of government of centuries past: that is, it has been built in the imagery of the former glory of Rome. And in this reference, in this attempt to capture a former form of government in the present sense, destroys the very essence of what natality refers to, namely, of the relationship between the idea of things lost - the past - and things not yet - the future - there remains a single in-between point, the present, which, in moments of when the origin of things begin, there is a temporary lapse out of this time equilibrium, a realm of timelessness, where neither the past nor the future time the present context with a design, or a motivating clue in terms of the nature of its beginning.

In this sense, to begin, in Kafka's parable of, or the event of the expression of beginning, in this case the revolution must, in order for it to

capture the novelty of beginning, be borne without any influence from neither things which have already happened, and things not yet. And since we have already seen the tendency to return back to the glory of Rome in Machiavelli's discussion, we also saw that this form of revolution was neither novel, since it attempts to capture the essence of something long past, nor interested in beginning something novel all of its own, something unique, never before seen - it follows from everything we have said thus far, that there is nothing in respect to this form of revolution, the one prior to the eighteenth century which characterized it as anything related to the notions corresponding to a notion of natality. Rather it is in complete contradistinction to it, insofar as it still leans towards an idea, an event of the past; and therefore its present, regardless of its original violent expression, and that illusion of breaking off from something already in existence, namely one particular form of government, remains not a present in the Kafkian and Arendtian sense, but something different: an attempt to pull an idea or event or context of something from the past into the present. But such attempts are fruitless, or in the very least inconsistent with an idea of natality. Therefore, in this respect, arguing in the context of what revolution is in the context of Hannah Arendt's notion of natality, Machiavelli as father of the revolutionary spirit is inconsistent in respect to the way in which "his" revolution suspends the novelty of the present in favor of something of the past; an attempt to capture an event of the past, and therefore his proposal appears nothing more than nostalgic in essence and not progressive, or forward.

Moving forward, to the French and American revolutions and their relationship with the idea of natality, we find a completely different approach to what revolution is, and in what revolution refers to.

"Theoretically, the most far-reaching consequence of the French Revolution was the birth of the modern concept of history in Hegel's philosophy. Hegel's truly revolutionary idea was that the old absolute of the philosophers revealed itself in the realm of human affairs, that is, in precisely that domain of human experience which the philosophers unanimously had ruled out as the source of birthplace of absolute standards."⁸⁴

This statement clearly resembles the other aspect of Hegel's thought which would later appear in the writings of Marx: it contains in the spirit or the idea of an attempt to bridge the gap between the notion of human affairs and thought, or between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*. In a word, through Hegel's writings, and later, in Marx's dialectical materialism, one of the most notable characteristics, is the fact that every attempt is made to abolish the notion of the *vita contemplativa*, where in the thought of Plato man goes and contemplates before returning to the *polis*. In Hegel's philosophy the *spirit* develops through *time*, assembling itself, creating itself through the deeds of man. That is, through human affairs, in the gathering of men engaging in worldly and political affairs, Hegel would argue, the *spirit* develops itself - accumulating its potential - becoming more and more potent until such a time that it reaches its final culmination; however, since human affairs is the generator of this spirit, and man constantly renews himself through the birth of a new person into the world, the continual building up of the spirit continues parallel to this same re-generation of man. In this view, only with the end of man comes the end of the spirit developing itself through time.

In this view's relation to revolution something interesting happens. That is, in applying Hegel's philosophy to an idea of revolution, which we have already suggested represents the starting point of the

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 52.

French Revolution we must also take into account the implications that follow. It is important to mention this, at least parenthetically at the outset before examining more closely the French Revolution, because, as Hannah Arendt writes: the fathers of the French Revolution...

"...looked upon revolution through Hegelian categories."⁸⁵

...which is to say, the French Revolution consequently must suffer the same implications that are inherent in Hegel's thought. Obviously it is clear by now what these implications are, and perhaps it is not in our interest to provide a general criticism of Hegel here. However, referring back to our earlier discussion, namely of the critique of Marxism, where I stated at the very outset of this thesis is an important aspect to consider, in the sense that much of Hannah Arendt's thought springs from this general critique. And therefore in looking at the idea of revolution and its relationship to an idea of revolution, it is by no accident that much of the discussion will approach what revolution means in the context of Marxism, or more precisely - in the sense of how Hegel's thinking provided the general philosophical foundation for a modern idea of revolution to appear in the first place.

Accordingly, when looking at the idea of revolution of the modern age, it is impossible to consider such a phenomenon without first examining the implications of Hegel's thought revolution of the modern age is as much a reflection of Hegel's thought in its concrete expression, as much as, in the same way, Marx's dialectical materialism is a reflection of Hegel's thought in its materialist expression.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 55.

Hannah Arendt, in respect to the influence of Hegel's categories on the foundation of modern revolution, writes:

"This aspect concerns the character of historical motion, which according to Hegel as well as all of his followers, is at once dialectical and driven by necessity: out of revolution and counter-revolution, from the fourteenth of July to the eighteenth of Brumaire and the restoration of the monarchy, was born the dialectical movement and counter-movement of history which bears men on its irresistible flow, like a powerful undercurrent, to which they must surrender the very moment they establish freedom on earth."⁸⁶

The implications of this view, namely the influence of Hegel's thought on the nature of the modern revolutions, consist mainly in terms of the subordination of the man as an acting agent in favor of a more general view of history proper; that is, a speculative quietism sets in motion, where the actions of man are replaced by the logical flow of history. Of the influence of the thought of Hegel in the question of revolution, Luc Ferry writes:

"...si le cours de l'histoire est à la fois orienté et déterminé, il est en effet normal que l'attitude *contemplative* l'emporte sur l'attitude activiste ou volontariste."⁸⁷

What Luc Ferry is addressing here is that with the influence of Hegel in the modern revolutions came the elevation of a notion of action, while at the same time subordinating the notion of contemplation.

Hannah Arendt writes,

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁸⁷ L. Ferry et E. Pisier-Kouchner, "Théorie du Totalitarisme" in M. Grawitz et J. Leca, Les régimes politiques contemporains, PUF, 1985, p. 143.

"Politically, the fallacy of this new and typically modern philosophy is relatively simple. It consists in describing and understanding the whole realms of human action, not in terms of the actor or agent, but from the standpoint of the spectator who watches the spectacle."⁸⁸

This inherent denial of the actor or agent is at the core of revolution, and especially in respect to the French Revolution as opposed to the revolutions prior to the nineteenth century. And what the main distinctions between these two periods, although still both succumbing to the fact of denying the actor or agent from acting, but at closer inspection we find that rather than the inherent nostalgia that is built into the Machiavellian point of view, the latter revolutions instead of being nostalgic, tracing back through history attempting to capture the spirit of another time, the French Revolution attempted to capture its spirit through looking forward so to speak, towards an idea of history, in the Hegelian sense. In this way, the main difference is that the modern revolution, embodied in the spirit of the French Revolution, the founding fathers did not appeal to a time, or a previous event in history, as a distinct entity, a being, running, or passing through time, an intelligibility develops on its way, more closely approaching, towards the true spirit of history, which is as I have already mentioned the Hegelian influence in the modern revolution. In this way, the modern revolutions look not at something specific, namely an event in history, or another time, but rather at an idea of history and the inherent implication of history striving towards something more real and truthful. Thus, modern revolutions, like the Machiavellian conception, are distinct in respect in the way both revolutions direct their motivation: one looks towards an event, towards something in the past and the other looks towards something un-worldly,

⁸⁸ Arendt, Hannah. Revolution, p. 52.

without any concrete or specific reference whatsoever. The implications cross the same path; they both are unconcerned, or actively omit considering the specifics of the present, of the here and now in favor of something totally foreign from it.

And therefore when Hannah Arendt writes of the modern revolutions that,

“It was the course of events, not the men of the revolution, which they imitated.”⁸⁹

It is clear that there was nothing specific of the time which the men of the revolution followed, but rather they acted in behalf of the idea of the revolution itself. This same sort of indictment, namely the suppressing of the human agent from acting, is revealed too, as we have already seen, in the form of government known as totalitarianism. Moreover, given the previous quote, it is also significant to note that, like totalitarianism, of its irrelevance when it comes to the leader of the respective form of government in power. The irrelevancy is due to the sublimation of power from one or many individuals in favor of a more general idea. The implications are that the people, also, too adopt a quality of irrelevance, where each individual is no longer perceived as an agent offering the possibility of novelty, ushering in some new into the world, but simply is an agent carrying out the logic, or the demands of the manifesto of the revolution. Therefore, in closing this section on revolution, it is clear to point out that the inherent failure of all revolutionary attempts is its failure to accommodate the specifics in man. This failure results in a fleeing away from man towards something unworldly, either in the way of a historical nostalgia, yearning for something

⁸⁹Op.cit., p. 57.

from the past, something far removed from the present which we spoke of earlier, in the Kafkian and Augustinian sense, or in the sense of fleeing towards an idea of history in the Hegelian sense, giving up the sense of intelligibility found in specific things and replacing it with an overall expectancy of finding the truth in the process of history itself, regardless of what absurdities may transpire. That is, even in the absurdities, the logic of the Hegelian system, and the general knowledge projected by the fathers of the French Revolution was that perhaps they would eventually lead into a more fortunate set of circumstances. Suffice to say, this acceptance of the revolutionary logic has had a considerable impact of past two hundred years, especially in surveying the events of the early to middle part of this century in Europe. Through appealing to something outside the realm of human plurality, and supporting a general idea, an immeasurable, incalculable amount of harm was ushered into the world. And what is striking about these events, according to the view of Hannah Arendt, is that at the core of all revolutionary, ideological, and totalitarian thinking and also active governments and citizenry is that there lies at the core a silence from the individual man: a silence which allowed for the brutality and logic of something un-worldly, having specific results, to happen in the first place.

That said, in this approach, there is something common between all of these three different phenomena which we have looked at and that is, that all of them deny the notion of present in the way we discussed earlier. And in this denial of the present - either in the form of yearning for some specific event in the past, being historical nostalgic, or even looking towards something in the future - blindly anticipating events to unravel in a favorable way, appealing to some theoretical explanation provided by Hegel that history will through time reveal truth eventually, despite any harmful of concrete expressions of violence that may happen

in the meantime, or in the way of ideology and totalitarianism, both inherently historically nostalgic in a fictional sense and looking forward towards something unraveling in a favorable way, in this case towards an idea revealed in the laws of Nature and History, all in their own way deny the specifics of the present, and the concrete foundation that the present is rooted in. Moreover, in this denial of the present, in the idea of the foundation of the present, the implications remain the same, namely the subordination of the acting present agent, man, in favor of something unworldly. In this way, in the three categories we have examined in this section, including the notion of revolution, both in the sense of the Machiavellian interpretation and that of the influence of the French Revolution, remain unworldly, repeatedly denying the very essence of man as an acting agent, a being endowed with the capacity of generating new beginnings in favor of an event rooted in the past or an Idea or Law rooted in something other than the present, either still in front of man, in the future, or even more radically, not even eligible to be understood in the sense of historical linear time, but something outside the space of time, rooted in a sphere concerned not with the realm of concrete but rather the realm of fiction. In all of this, the main point to carry over, as we approach the part of the thesis that reveals where the notion of natality has political efficacy, is the fact that, in some way, all philosophical pronouncements which deny the character of the *vita contemplativa* also, in the end, deny the fact of natality in man.

Since the origin of government, there have been episodes in history, that have, in the pursuit of something considered the proper way of government, at times, deteriorated the notion of human agent, in respect to his singular role in the running of government. I have provided three examples of this form of manifestation where the human agent is subordinated in favor of something else - either in the form of a prior

event in history or simply in the expression of an idea or a series of laws of History and Nature. Moreover, I have discussed why each of these three forms are worth examining in the sense that each have embedded in their conceptual and practical expressions, a univocal denial of agent, or man, as an acting agent, or a being capable of expressing novelty into the world. Furthermore, what we have already mentioned and its relation to an idea of natality, it can be said that revolution specifically does indeed carry in it a resemblance of a natality in the way Hannah Arendt speaks of it. However - and this is significant - since it is here where the resemblance fades, reveals itself, in that even though revolution comes into the world, is manifest in a violent manner, which is in agreement with the first sense of natality, that is that man is born into the world, violently detached from something and brought towards something else, the world, and in this entrance leaves behind the continuity of something unworldly and thereafter thrust into a particular human condition, containing within it an already established set of conditions. And it is also true that the revolution, regardless of the nature of violence, in that in respect to violence there are degrees - it does necessarily mean to have something physical to happen to be considered violent - and therefore, even though that there exists this singular comparable quality between revolution and natality, it does not follow they are in any respects the same. In that, in the revolutionary sense, violence is rooted in power, collective power, where the individual agent is denied. Therefore, despite the fact that natality in its pre-political sense and revolution have the option of violence in common, there are still great differences between the two in respect to the fact that the revolution denies the individual agent, and his role as a being possessed with the capacity to create new things.

Foundation

In the next phase of this thesis, leading towards the end of our journey, we will examine the notion of foundation and the American Revolution, where quite different from the prior revolutionary tactics already examined, we will finally see that in the American attempt to construct a foundation, based on the founding fathers of America, (specifically the efforts of Jefferson,) there are indeed, arguably, methods in which the presentation, and the continual use of the idea of natality in man can be instituted into a governmental institution. Looking at this of foundation, according to Hannah Arendt, there is indeed a proper space to make proper use of the quality of natality in man, and this quality is revealed through the individual agent acting - through expressing his opinion. However, for the essential conditions for this to happen there needs to be a suitable place where the notion of natality, and all of its corresponding basic themes, i.e. plurality, freedom, etc., may be allowed to not simply exist, but also to flourish in the world.

As was mentioned before, in order for an idea of natality to prosper there are certain contingencies which have to be met: there must be a public space available, or an agora in the Ancient Greek sense of the term, where people are allowed to freely meet and engage themselves between one another, expressing their opinion, the main quality of government. And, of course, the condition of freedom where people can people meet and speak freely.

Quite different in terms of revolutionary spirit of the other revolutions prior to the eighteenth century, the American Revolution, still relying on the notion of the Roman revolutionary spirit, was different

in the sense that the American revolutionaries, the founding fathers, were committed to an idea of foundation.

"The very fact that the men of the American Revolution thought of themselves as founders indicates the extent to which they must have known that it would be the act of foundation itself, rather than an Immortal Legislator or self-evident truth or any other transcendent, transmundane source, which eventually would become the foundation of authority in the new body politic."⁹⁰

The difficulty surrounding the notion of foundation, or creating something new in the world goes back to the same old philosophical riddle of the difficulty in bridging the gap between something new, which is in-itself arbitrary, chosen as a thing amid the infinite choices available, and its implication in the world of human affairs, or how this new beginning corresponds to the conditions which are already in progress.

Hannah Arendt rightly captures this problem when, regarding the difficulty in imposing a foundation onto an already set of conditions, she writes,

"...in how the human mind attempted to solve the problem of the beginning, of an unconnected, new event breaking into the continuous sequence of historical time."⁹¹

In other words, to restate the problem, which we have discussed throughout this thesis: the main problem facing the expression of natality, or the idea of a beginning being born into the world, has very much to do with not so much the actual phenomenon of beginning it-itself, but rather how this expression of beginning manifests itself in an already set of existing conditions. In that way, the problem of beginning, or something

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 204.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 205.

being born into the world, is not so much the actualization of a new thing out of nothing, but rather the notion of something, a unique novel thing, with its own set of inherent conditions, and the collision it makes with the set of conditions already in process. Of course this convergence of the two set of conditions, two stories passing one another, is not in itself impossible - however, in the process of intersection, a new story is born, with its own set of conditions, that like all things that are born into the world has contained in its existence the potential of meeting other stories along the way.

The arbitrary nature of this new beginning, of the notion of building a foundation, is best described by Hannah Arendt when she writes,

"It is the very nature of a beginning to carry with itself a measure of complete arbitrariness. Not only is it not bound into a reliable chain of cause and effect, a chain in which each effect immediately turns into the cause of future development, the beginning has, as it were, nothing whatsoever to hold on to; it is as though it came out of nowhere in either time or space."⁹²

One of the first problems of a notion of beginning is in its pre-political context, when someone is born into the world yet still without the capacities to engage intellectually, or providing an opinion on matters concerning politics.

In relation to this idea of man as being endowed with the capacity of beginning and the idea of creating a foundation, Hannah Arendt writes,

"...men are equipped for the logically paradoxical task of making a new beginning because they themselves are new

⁹²Ibid., p. 206.

beginnings and hence beginners, that the very capacity for beginning is rooted in its natality, in the fact that human beings appear in the world by virtue of birth."⁹³

Thus at this point one thing must be stressed and that is the beginning is in-itself an essential quality of man, in fact it is the essence of man, it is the quality which distinguishes him from other beings, that is man is not simply an *animal rational* in the Aristotelian sense, a being endowed with the capacity to speak and engage in dialogue, but more importantly a being capable of beginning new things as being able to invent novel things not yet seen before. In a manner of speaking, this quality goes further than simply saying that man is *rational*; it says, in natality the essential quality in man is to exhibit this quality in the form of bringing new things into the world which have not been seen before. And therefore the notion of foundation, unlike the other notions of revolution we have spoken of, is quite different in that its main quality surrounding the building of a foundation is that it is an extension, an expression of the basic, essential quality that is inherent in man.

Thus when Hannah Arendt writes,

“...when the Americans decided to vary Virgil's line from the *magnus ordo saeculorum* to *novus ordo saeculorum*, they had admitted that it was no longer a matter of founding a "Rome anew" but of founding a new Rome"⁹⁴

Therefore, unlike the Machiavellian intent in attempting to bring back a Rome which once existed, the American Fathers of the revolution aimed simply at building a new Rome, without so much as attempting to mimic the same sort of foundation, but rather to appeal to those same

⁹³Ibid., p. 211.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 212.

qualities that once made Rome successful, and consider their own set of new conditions and attempts to build something entirely new.

“The American Revolution, unique in its respect until the breakdown of the European colonial system and the emergence of new nations in our own country, was to a large extent not only the foundation of a new body politic but the beginning of a specific national history.”⁹⁵

Thus, the main aspects of the American Revolution, and the spirit which it attempted to bring into its constitution, are aspects unique to the notion of natality, where the antagonists of the past and the future are suppressed, and instead replaced by a novel approach, which, in the end, is rooted in a notion of political action, the idea of man as a carrier of novelty, creating government through dialogue, continually renewing the *polis* with new inventive points of view.

André Enegrén writes,

“La fondation correspond au plan politique à l’idée de commencement qui est le propre de l’agir authentique, mais plus originellement elle répond au phénomène de la naissance dont elle est le moment collectif, l’écho amplifié et solennel.”⁹⁶

From the above quotation it is clear that the notion of foundation corresponds to an idea of political action, and, as we have already discussed, action is natality in its concrete expression.

One of the goals of the American Revolution was to capture the Revolutionary spirit in foundation through its constitution, which in effect means, capturing the idea of natality into something formal.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 212.

⁹⁶ Enegrén, André. Révolution et fondation. Esprit, juin 1980, p. 60.

“If foundation was the aim and the end of revolution, then the revolutionary spirit was not merely the spirit of beginning something new but of starting something permanent and enduring; a lasting institution...”⁹⁷

This, to many of Hannah Arendt’s opponents, is the most tenuous point in her work, namely the transition of political action into a constitution. The attempt to embed the essence of political action, or the revolutionary spirit into a stable constitution, was of general concern for the Fathers of the American Revolution. It was a paradox which Jefferson was conscious of.

“In other words, what he (Jefferson) wished to provide for was an exact repetition of the whole process of action which had accompanied the course of the Revolution, and while in his earlier writings he saw this action primarily in terms of liberation, ..., he later was much more concerned with the constitution-making and the establishment of a new government.”⁹⁸

The confrontation between political action and the idea of foundation and constitution was for Jefferson difficult in terms of the notion of keeping intact the notion of the revolutionary spirit and the fact of representation. That is, how the public space would be represented to accommodate the plural views of different people. Hannah Arendt states, on the predicament of the revolutionary spirit, states:

“...while it had given freedom to the people, had failed to provide a space where this freedom could be exercised.”⁹⁹

Clearly then, as we approach the end of our journey, we are faced with a rather troubling feature of the notion of natality: namely in terms

⁹⁷ Arendt, Hannah. Revolution. p. 232.

⁹⁸ Op.cit., pp. 234-235.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

of its representation. In the frame of representation, the active person, endowed with the capacity for dialogue, is finally faced, ultimately, with unleashing an opinion that will inevitably be framed with a constant, stable formula. In this case, as seen in the Fathers of the American Revolution - opinion - a notion of vote and representation was reached. But with this arrived much discontent from critics who thought representation in the form of vote was self-defeating, contrary to the notion of what political action really is.

“Representation means that the voters surrender their own power, albeit voluntarily and that the old adage, ‘All power resides in the people,’ is true only for the day of election.”¹⁰⁰

In the end, it is not untrue to say that there is much to be troubled about with the theme of representation and the notion of natality. Disciples of Rousseau, recognized the failure of representation, and suggested in representation there still persists an injustice for Rousseau. According to Margaret Canovan,

“His solution is that the sovereign, composed of all citizens united together, should govern itself by its own general will. Freedom, after all, plausibly can be held to lie in ruling oneself: “l’obéissance à la loi qu’on s’est prescrite est liberté (Rousseau, 1962, II, pp. 32, 37.)¹⁰¹

Opponents of Rousseau, including Margaret Canovan, have argued that the difficulty with this position is that citizenry is reduced to a single will. That means, in the thought of Rousseau, all men share in a General Will. The consequence of this view of General Will leaves no room for the possibility of varying positions on a particular point of view.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁰¹ Canovan, Margaret. Politics. p. 290.

“not only may he be forced into obedience, but his coercion may, notoriously, be described as “forcing him to be free.” (Rousseau, 1962, ll, pp. 36)¹⁰²

Rousseau himself admits that the integrity of the General Will depends on the condition that the General Will be “not threatened by any serious source of diversity.”¹⁰³ That is to say the General Will, in the end, holds all of the social and political power, whereas citizenry are forced to abandon their own private interests and support whatever vote is necessary to keep the General Will integral. In the process of elevating the notion of General Will in favor of the states integrity comes at great cost, which, within the thought of Hannah Arendt, entails abandoning the notion of plurality, the idea of distinct human points of view in constant dialogue with other points of view. That is to say, in the context of Hannah Arendt’s own thinking, according to the thought of Rousseau, the “Men, not man, live on the earth and inhabit the world”¹⁰⁴ no longer makes sense; it is logically implausible, since Rousseau cannot accommodate any notion of political diversity. In Rousseau political philosophy the equivalent expression would appear as “man live on the earth and inhabit the world, not men.”

Therefore, in the end, the criticisms that are directed towards Hannah Arendt by supporters of Rousseau, who support the claim of the unfairness in terms of the notion of representation is a self-defeating attack in virtue of the lack of attention addressed to a notion of plurality, where in the thought of Rousseau human diversity is denied, meanwhile celebrated in the thought of Hannah Arendt, as the second most

¹⁰² Op.cit., p. 290.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 290.

¹⁰⁴ Arendt, Hannah. Revolution. p. 174.

important aspect of her entire political philosophy, after the notion of natality.

Finally, at the end of our journey, with respect to the notion of representation, there still lingers certain questions: namely how do we preserve the notion of human action, rooted in the notion of natality, the capacity in man to create new beginnings in the world, and all of its inherent qualities, namely its impermanence, and constant pendulating nature, into a constitution?

Perhaps there is no one answer to this question. Jefferson, bitter in the form of government that would eventually develop in his time and continue to its present form, recommended that a ward system of government be instituted:

"One of the advantages of the ward divisions I (Jefferson) have proposed that they would offer a better way to collect the voice of the people than the mechanics of representative government."¹⁰⁵

The nature of government, therefore, in terms of its policy of representation is very much rooted in an idea of natality, in terms of the notion of political action and plurality, where a more accommodating government, while not becoming central, polarizing political power into a single office, alienating the voice of plurality, diverse points of view, would, while being consistent with the thought of Hannah Arendt, necessarily be a much more participatory form of government, perhaps in the form of a ward system that Jefferson recommended, where the public

¹⁰⁵Op.cit. pp.254-255.

space would be readily available for everyone to participate dialogically in from all regions of a nation.

Conclusion: Natality and the Promise of Hope

At the end of our journey, tracing through what has been discussed, the most important aspect to be recognized is that it is the notion of natality that gives life and meaning to all the other basic themes running through the thought of Hannah Arendt.

In the first part of this thesis we examined the notion of totalitarianism and ideology. The stress was on what a form of government, indeed a form of thinking, resembles when a notion of natality is denied. The events of history, now immortalized in the minds of man and preserved in the work of art and poetry, constantly remind us of the incalculable destruction and evil man is capable of. In many respects, regrettably, it was because of an act of unprecedented evil that caused Hannah Arendt, that caused her to begin her journey into the origins of evil. In her study she discovered that it originates, in its political expression, when a notion of human diversity or plurality is denied. Totalitarianism and ideology are both expressions of this formula towards evil - where neither can accommodate human diversity in the world - since diversity is in conflict with the flow of law of History and Nature that it narrowly, blindly follows. It is only within a celebration of the notion of natality, the capacity of beginning new beginnings, where man is endowed with the capacity for dialogue, which in turn implies the notion of human plurality. It is here, where man coexists through dialogue with one another, that totalitarian and ideology are finally confronted and their flow interrupted. Then, natality in its ontological sense, referring to the miracle of being that is capable of creating new beginnings finally becomes a concrete expression in the world once man acts in the world. In the end, looking at the notion of totalitarianism and ideology, Hannah Arendt has

provided a portrait of what a form of government looks like when natality is denied; however, in the process, she was able to revitalize the importance of political action, since the only force greater than the flow of processes of the law of History and Nature are the forces which are capable of interrupting it - and that proves to be the fact of political action: the concrete expression of natality in man.

Next, we examined the three anthro-philosophical categories: labor, work and action. Beginning with the category of labor, we discussed how a notion of necessity, the inverse of the notion a possibility, most closely reflects the essence of this category. That is, the unique strengths and weaknesses of each individual is denied, and instead interpreted in terms of how much labor power each person is capable of generating through physical labor. Hannah Arendt discusses the category of labor in terms of Marx's own thought, where she suggests the category of labor most closely resembles the thought of Marx in the concrete. An overriding quality unique to this category is the notion of process, where individuals are not each recognizably different, but instead appear as different parts of a whole, towards which all of their labor power is combined. In this sense, individuality, and the possibility of beginning new beginnings, cannot be tolerated; it is in complete contradistinction to the overall aim towards the process is moving.

Next, in the category of work, we looked at the first instance of where man's own capacities of a being possessed with the tools to begin new things is generally accepted. In the category of work, man, as *Homo Faber*, is a being who is capable of fabricating things out of nature around him. One of the drawbacks in this category is that man is still dependent on the instruments he uses, consequently, the desired intent of his idea, to some extent, is ruined through the application of these instruments.

Therefore, although the category of work suggests man as a being capable of building something new, there are also natural constraints to letting the new thing truly reflect the aspirations of his ideas.

Finally, in the category of action, we saw firsthand how the notion of beginning plays a crucial role in the development of man and his role in the world. Through his capacity for speech, to engage in conversation, to give an opinion vitality, man is able to usher his ideas into the world. Often, through its collision with others, ideas meeting one another through dialogue, man reaches greater insights into things, often leading to further ideas, discussions, and concrete alterations. That is to say, insofar as man is incapable of telling his story, of speaking, he is therefore incapable of beginning new things; it is only through meeting with others - in a context free from outside pressures, either authoritarian or ideological or anything else - that man is able to finally reveal this unique quality corresponding to his being. Also, this quality to beginning new beginnings, in virtue of the fact of language, must therefore be fully able to flourish only under certain climatical circumstances. In other words, the fact of natality in man becomes an essential fact of his being only when the proper conditions for its release into the world are met: a public space, freedom, and plurality. Therefore, when speaking of natality in man, it becomes intelligible, as a concrete expression in the world, only when the conditions for its release are finally realized. In this way - action - the concrete expression of the ontological fact of beginning, or natality in man is real and becomes a part of the world only when the circumstances for its release are first realized.

Next we looked at the notion of revolution and foundation and discussed the development of the notion of beginning in the context of specific historical events that attempted to appropriate a notion of beginning into its political philosophy. We saw that revolution in general has tended historically to look either into the past or into the future - both

ways deny the present and elevate another frame of time for its own purposes. In this sense, revolution, historically, indeed inherently, is utopian in its failure to accommodate the present and instead prescribes towards something else. The failure of revolution, therefore, is very much rooted in a sense of equivocating the notion of beginning, or rather denying the essential facts of beginning that Hannah Arendt has discussed, in terms of the context needed for beginning to occur, namely in respect to a public space, a notion of freedom, and finally encouraging a notion of plurality.

In the end, the notion of foundation or constitution is essentially in contradistinction to an idea of natality, which has been addressed by some of the opponents mentioned. That said, however, there is still some form of government that can have embedded in it the virtues of a notion of natality, and that would be the ward system of government that Hannah Arendt has mentioned that was originally the aspiration of Jefferson's own political philosophy. Even though a paradox reveals itself here, namely in respect of finally being able to capture a notion of natality into something specifically concrete, like a constitution, it does not follow that the paradox is essentially false: that is, even in a paradox something meaningful can be issued forward. And finally, in the sense of natality and the relationship between it and a constitution, the paradox is real only in the sense that inevitably natality is something that means beginning, always in constant flux, and never able to be fastened down. Yet the inevitability of this fact of natality is only an announcement towards constantly increasing attention towards the world and the political institutions that surround us. That is, opinion is the nature of government, and not law, and opinion is founded on dialogue, which is something vital, alive, constantly contorting, constantly renewing itself,

constantly beginning - just like the fact of natality: the capacity in man to begin new beginnings.

Finally, I'd like to restate the original quotation from the beginning of this thesis, namely:

"The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, "natural" ruin is ultimately the fact of natality in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted."¹⁰⁶

We can read that what is at root of the saving of the world from its ever increasing material ruin, which is a consequence of all life, of being born into a cycle of birth and death, is that there is a capacity in man to transcend this banal predicament and interrupt the process through action. And finally, it is because of this interruption that gives meaning behind the fact of life; in that life is essentially a composition of hope, where - through the range of possibilities man is faced with - he can ensure his own fate by interrupting the cessation of it by imposing an action into the world, where it will flourish into eternity. Thus, the fact of natality in man, in the end, becomes an amplification of a notion of hope; and it is through hope, the sense of possibility in the world, the celebration of human diversity, that ultimately springs from the notion of natality.

¹⁰⁶Arendt, Hannah. Condition. p. 247.

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