

BOUNDARIES OF THE POLITICAL
IN ARENDT'S THOUGHT:
THE EXCLUSION OF THE SOCIAL QUESTION

Devrim Kabasakal*

Abstract

Injustice and suffering had always been on the agenda probably since the beginning of the social life of humankind. It might be claimed that seeing others exposed to injustice and suffering somehow makes all of us uncomfortable and creates pity and compassion. That is why dealing with poverty and questions of distribution have been one of the basic concerns throughout human history. However, it might be also argued that in an age of globalization, different forms of injustice such as gender inequality, poverty, and malnutrition, economic and social inequality have come to the fore in an intensified manner at the global level. In this sense, political theorists who are concerned with the question of social justice have given much effort to conceptualize politics and the political in a way to deal with the problem of social and economic inequality. In this way, Arendt constitutes a striking and to a certain extent «odd» figure in excluding 'the social question' («liberation of men from suffering») from the realm of politics and the political. Under the light of these concerns, this paper aims to analyze the boundaries of what is called political in Arendt's thought. By the help of such an analysis, I will try to reflect on if an Arendtian way of grasping the political and action is relevant in our age and if so, to what extent?

It is assumed that the concept of action constitutes the basis of what she understands from the political since action is essentially connected to the political. Action is political and bound to be political. Thus, first, in very general terms, I will try to portray what action means in Arendt's eyes by focusing on *Human Condition*. What are the characteristics of action? Secondly, I will focus on the conception of 'the social question' that she excludes from the category of action, so the political and will try to see if such a picture is helpful for us to imagine politics and the political in an age where the gap between rich and poor is being sharpened and claims of justice are being raised at the global level.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, political philosophy, social question, global inequality, justice, action.

* Devrim Kabasakal – Ph. D. student Programme in Political Theory, Luiss University of Roma, Italy; dkabasakal@luiss.it.

Introduction

Hannah Arendt, who was among the leading political thinkers of the 20th century, was an interesting figure in political theory in terms of her striking ideas and her contribution to our conceptions of democracy, public sphere, political action and history. Many contemporary theorists like Seyla Benhabib, Jürgen Habermas, Ronald Beiner, and Margaret Canovan refer to her conceptions of public sphere and political participation. This paper assumes that reflecting on Arendt's theory of action will give us significant and useful tools to discuss the meaning and the boundaries of what the political is in our times; particularly because of the way she conceptualises action and the relation between action and politics in her theory.¹

One of the main and striking points one encounters in Arendt's definition of the political is the exclusion of 'the social question' and the social from the realm of politics. In this paper, I will aim to analyse the reasons of this exclusion and try to reflect on, from a much external point of view, to what extent sticking to such a strict separation between the political and the social is meaningful esp. under the conditions of deepening poverty and injustice. First, I aim to analyse her conception of action in order to have a firm grasp of what political means in Arendt's thought since, action is essentially portrayed as a political activity *per se*. Then I will try to reflect on to what extent we can consider such conceptualisation of the political as adequate under the conditions of our times.

In examining the reasons of the exclusion of the social question from the political realm, I will claim that action as the constitutive basis of the category of the political is defined by the characteristics which necessitate this exclusion itself from the very beginning. I will concentrate on «human plurality», «power» and «freedom» as three fundamental features that enable Arendt to exclude the social question from the political. We will also see that those three characteristics of action are connected to each other and they all belong to what is called the political rather than the social. However, first, I aim to give a brief idea about how and why action plays such a central and superior role in Arendt's theory by focusing particularly on the way she distinguishes among labour, work and action in *The Human Condition*.

Labor, Work and Action

In *The Human Condition* published in 1958, Hannah Arendt distinguishes three activities such as labor, work and action which constitute together the realm of *vita activa*, an active life corresponding to our relationships with the world. In this sense, *vita activa* refers to the activities related to our existence in the world, the conditioned existence of human beings. Labor, which is a form of *vita activa*, is the activity which corresponds to the human biological processes and refers to the activities of production and reproduction.² In this manner, labor is considered to be in the cycle of the necessities of life that includes production and reproduc-

tion of the necessities of human body and also human species. The human condition of labor is life itself. Life is bound to the repetitiveness of nature. Moreover, the things necessary for life process are the least durable and most quickly consummated ones.³ Unlike work, the end of which comes when the object is finished and added to the durable world of things, labouring always moves in the same circle.

Labor is bound to both the necessity of man's own body and also the necessity of the nature. Going beyond this repetitive cycle, this «calamitous destiny» is possible only by creating a common and durable world. In other words, the remedy for the circularity of labor is outside the laboring activity: the activity of *homo faber* who is the subject of fabrication and making.

Unlike labor, work corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence and it is not fixed in ever-recurring life cycle. Work provides an artificial and durable world of things which is obviously different from natural life. Hence, the human condition of work is worldliness. *Homo faber* inserts his/her works of hands into the world of things after a fabrication process the end of which comes when the product has finished. According to Arendt, *homo faber* grasps the world in terms of productivity and relations of means and ends due to the mentality of his/her activity: making.⁴ Since this instrumental way of thinking perceives everything from a means-ends relationship, every value is faced with degradation⁵ and the world of *homo faber* is indeed embedded in a deep meaninglessness.

Homo faber could be redeemed from his/her situation of meaninglessness only through action and speech, the meaningful insertion of himself/herself into the realm of human affairs as an actor. In other words, the remedy for the unhappiness of *homo faber* comes from an activity outside itself that is action.

Action is the only component of *vita activa* which is directly based on the reciprocal relationship of people. Put it precisely, it is the only activity which does not need any intermediary of a thing or matter, since it corresponds to the human condition of plurality. Action can only be realized among the plurality of human beings, that is sheer human togetherness. We will have the chance to examine the close connection between action and human togetherness in the following part of the paper in a more detailed manner.

Among the three activities which constitute *vita activa*, action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality. Although all human activities carry an element of natality in itself, the new beginning inherent in birth can reveal itself only in action because the newcomer has the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. This is because the newcomer represents a new beginning by virtue of his or her birth.

Consequently, we can argue that Arendt locates action into a superior position within the realm of *vita activa* with respect to labor and work by assigning a remarkable potentiality. Such privilege given to action is most apparent in her association of natality with action. Only with action, we have the chance to realize our human capacities in existential terms and

this kind of activity is truly political and has to be political in Arendt's thought. What is action is the political and *vice versa*.

In the following lines of the paper I aim to discuss the characteristics of action. With the help of this investigation, we will have the chance to see the link between action and the political much better. In order to establish this link, I aim to concentrate on power, freedom and human plurality as components of action, and so political in her political thought. Power, plurality and freedom come to the fore as essential characteristics of action in opposition to necessity and violence (which we will see when defining the social and social question) that characterize the realm of the social rather than the political.

Characteristics of Action

Action and Human Plurality

We have seen that human plurality is the human condition of action. Human plurality and human togetherness are features of action that make it possible because action is the revelation of the uniqueness and it can only make sense in the context of plurality and togetherness of people. Through acting, we reveal our «who», that is the quality which makes us distinct and unique in human plurality. In this context, «who» refers to a kind of authenticity and uniqueness peculiar to each individual, which makes him/her distinct from other people. Given this perspective, we may say that every human being was born to express himself/herself and he/she could do this only through action and speech among other people, that is to say; in the environment of human plurality.

In Arendt's outlook, human plurality is based on equality, and at the same time, distinctness of people. Given this presupposition with regard to human togetherness, she claims that, if people were not equal, they did not understand each other, and if people were not distinct, they did not need to express themselves to each other, they did not need speech and action in order to reveal themselves to others and they did not have any concern to be recognized and understood by other people.⁶ So, what is revealed in word and deed, in action and speech is this distinctness and uniqueness. Furthermore, through speech and action, what is revealed is not only mere distinctness in the sense that individuals appear to each other, but, an appearance in public togetherness is created and this appearance is obviously different from merely bodily existence:

«This appearance, as distinguished from merely bodily existence, rests on an initiative, but it is an initiative from which no human being can refrain and still be human».⁷

Neither labor nor work has such a constitutive and fundamental capacity with regard to the condition of being human. In other words, by acting, people enter into a process through which they actualize their humanly potentialities and create themselves as unique human beings which is, for Arendt, obviously the disclosure of the agent in speech and action.⁸

However, the revealed «who» hides himself/herself from the agent of the action, although action reveals him/her to other people.⁹ This is perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of action depicted by Arendt, because it underlines the anonymity of the meaning of a particular action. Precisely, the disclosure of the identity and personality is strictly in need of other people, the interpretations and opinions of them, since in action, it is impossible and unimaginable that a person reveals his/her identity to himself/herself. Here, we observe that sheer human togetherness which is a specific quality and condition of action gains importance.

Without human togetherness, action loses its unique and specific meaning, because then it may be considered as merely a simple means to achieve a higher goal or a means to pursue an objective under the conditions that lacks human plurality. In this sense, in Arendt's perspective, action needs sheer human togetherness which means the togetherness of people that occurs when they are neither for, nor against others, but when they are just with others. Only in this sense, action can preserve its meaning and it can be away from an instrumental logic in politics and public life. We will see that human plurality as a characteristic of action is closely connected to power which emerges out of action itself. Power, in order to emerge needs sheer human togetherness and plurality.

Action and Power

In *The Human Condition*, it is stated that with the emergence of the public space, together with the realm of appearances, a power generating mechanism also developed. In this way, Arendt considers the public realm as a potentiality which cannot be reduced to physical locations, but, rather, as a potentiality that arises when people come together. In line with this argument, she conceives power as a potentiality which keeps the public realm alive, and maintains the potential space of appearances between actors and speakers. This means power preserves the public realm and keeps it active. From this angle, we can find affinities between power and action, in the sense that power always exists in the togetherness of people, since the generation of power depends on human togetherness. As mentioned before, power is also in need of sheer human togetherness and plurality in order to emerge.

Moreover, power cannot be kept in reserve for later times, but exists only in its actualization unlike the instruments of violence.¹⁰ However, power is not actualized in any kind of human togetherness, since in order to be actualized it needs words and deeds, action and speech in their specific and unique senses. As she defends:

«Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds are not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities».¹¹

For instance, in cases of both work and labor, there is human togetherness, but we cannot see this togetherness as the condition of the emer-

gence of power. Because in work, *homo faber* comes to the market only for selling his/her products, so he/she has an instrumental logic which is very different from the logic of action. In addition to this, in the case of labor, people live together but, it is an activity in which man is neither together with the world nor with other people. This is because in the activity of laboring, *animal laborans* is alone with his/her body in order to provide his/her survival. Then, we can argue that power is actualized when actors gather together just for political and public concerns. Looking from this angle, like action, power too has a vital significance for the preservation of public realm, i.e., realm of appearances. Therefore, we can talk about the actualization of power only under the conditions of political action and public deliberation. In this sense, we can claim that power is connected to the concept of the political since it is essential to action which is realized in public realm as opposed to the private and social affairs which are outside that particular realm. Human plurality and togetherness as a condition to power make action possible and action is only realized within the political realm which excludes the concerns of all sorts that are not related to public affairs. In the following sections of the essay, we will see that this enables Arendt to argue that social and poverty concerns cannot be solved within the realm of the political because they are not and cannot be connected to power and action in the way she depicts (without instrumentalization and even violence).

Action and Freedom

In order to focus on Arendt's conception of action with regard to freedom, it is essential to look into its closest connections with her conception of politics and plurality. As I have outlined above, action should always be considered together with the phenomenon of plurality. Within this framework, I will argue that there is a direct correlation between the arguments in *The Human Condition* and *What is Freedom?* Then, it becomes essential to focus upon both texts together for catching the links between action and freedom. In this context, *What is Freedom?* might be seen as a text supporting Arendt's arguments in *The Human Condition* with regard to the concept of freedom and its relation with action.

First, I will examine the relationship between freedom, action and natality. As I have said above, the potentiality of action has come to the scene when we were born, since a single birth on its own refers to a new beginning and the principle of beginning has caused further new beginnings, processes, actions. But, at the same time, with birth, the principle of freedom has also come to the scene, since every individual is born with the potentiality of freedom to start new beginnings, more exactly, processes.¹² In this manner, freedom and action are like the sides of a single coin (since their existence necessitates each other) because we cannot talk about action without freedom and *vice versa*.¹³ Also, in order to act, one should liberate himself/ herself from the necessities of life which locate an obstacle in front of action. In this sense, for Arendt, necessity and freedom are opposite poles, since only under the conditions of freedom to act, we

become fully liberated from the necessity. Consequently, Arendt conceives every kind of necessity as in the opposite pole of action and freedom (This opposition between freedom and necessity becomes significant esp. in the distinction between the social and the political.) For instance, both labor and work depend on different kinds of necessities of fabrication and market, but on the contrary, action is the only activity which has gone beyond these necessities, so that we can talk only about freedom in the context of action. It may be argued that she juxtaposed these activities in a very strict manner: those of necessity (labor and work) and freedom (action). That is why she associates the social realm with necessity rather than the political because the social realm (concerns about poverty) deals with the biological necessities and basic needs so that they cannot be included in the political realm which is the realm of freedom.

On the other hand, emancipation from the necessities of life does not lead automatically to a state of freedom.¹⁴ Because, such emancipation needs the existence of a public-political space where free people gather together in order to insert themselves to the realm of appearances with words and deeds. In this way, freedom can be realized merely in plurality, human togetherness of free people, since we can practice and understand freedom only and only in relationship with other people. Furthermore, freedom which is practiced in human plurality is strictly related with politics, because they necessitate each other. We may say that, for Arendt, just like action, freedom is also related to politics inherently, since freedom is one of the significant essentials of politics.¹⁵ So, here again, we can observe the inherent connection between the features of action: human plurality, freedom and power as components of public political life. Freedom, like power, can only be realized under the conditions of sheer human togetherness and that is the realm of the political, the realm of appearances in Arendtian terminology.

According to Arendt, it is evident that the principle maintaining the political life is freedom which can be practiced only through action.¹⁶ However, the tradition of Western philosophy has rendered this close connection between action and freedom obsolete, through conceiving action as a phenomenon which is fundamentally practiced in solitude: through one's dialogue with him-/herself. This emphasis on solitude caused the development of a conviction which grasps freedom as sovereignty. As a result, freedom was identified with the concept of sovereignty. But, for Arendt, such a perception was in contradiction with the human condition of plurality, because no one could be sovereign under the conditions of human plurality.¹⁷ Put precisely, since sovereignty refers to an uncompromising self-sufficiency, it is impossible to realize such an identity in the web of human relationships because we, as human beings, are not able to dominate all the processes we have started and are not able to even foretell the consequences of our actions. We may argue that, indeed for Arendt, action and freedom can be associated with the term non-sovereignty rather than sovereignty. Such interpretation locates her political thought into a very interesting place in the tradition of modern political thought which

still conceives the notion of sovereignty as central for grasping the state, rights and public authority.

Consequently, we can argue that for Arendt, the individual who has lost his/her capacity to act, to begin new processes cannot be called a free person, since action and freedom are always conceived side by side. In addition to this, both action and freedom are conceived in human plurality, since both of them are realized in relationship with other people. For this reason, freedom in its relation with action is a phenomenon which has the capacity to open new gates to new unpredictabilities. In other words, both freedom and action have productive and constitutive capacities and essences to begin something new.

Action as the fundamental component of what is called political and public contains the characteristics that are in the opposite pole of the realm of the social and necessity. In this sense, as we have seen, action is associated with power, freedom and plurality. In Arendt's thought, those categories exclude the realm of the social and necessity. We will have the chance to see this conceptual opposition much better in the following part of the paper regarding the discussion on the social question. Therefore, what we will see is where there is action, power and freedom (which are the realm of the political); we cannot talk about concerns such as poverty that can be associated with the concept of the social.

Arendt on the Social Question

We find the discussion about the social question mainly in her text *On Revolution*. In the text, she examines the social question as part of her criticism of the French Revolution. However, I will argue that her treatment of the social question is not only peculiar to her interpretation and criticism of modern revolutions but is part of her understanding of the political in general. That is to say; her criticism of the French Revolutionaries in terms of their concern about solving the social question might be considered as a reflection of her political theory which portrays the public political activity in opposition to what the social is.

For Arendt, the problem of solving the «social question» that is, the liberation of men from suffering is one of the chief motivations of the French revolutionaries. It was a guiding principle which determined the course of the revolution. By the «social question», she means the aim of total liberation of men from suffering. Yet, she maintains that the «social question» must not be understood in terms of the lack of equality of opportunity, or the problem of social status.¹⁸ Due to the attempts for solving the problem of poverty with political means, the French Revolution has been sent to its doom. In other words, the duality between the social and political is so strict in Arendt's theory that any revolution which aims to solve the "social question" with political means has to fail because the problem of finding and implementing remedies to the social demands of the people is the task of administration and it must be put into the hands of the experts.¹⁹ For this reason, in Arendt's perception, the problem of

poverty is not a political problem that is to be solved by the processes of decision making and persuasion.

According to Arendt, the attempt to solve the «social question» with political means caused at the same time the public realm to become social in the process of the French Revolution. In this sense, public realm was overwhelmed by the needs which belonged to the sphere of household. Closely related to this, the distinction between the social and the political problems has been blurred, and the public realm has gained a new character; it has lost its “public” character in the strict sense. Namely, it has lost its peculiarity where freedom is realized. Accordingly, the entrance of social demands into the realm of politics brought forth the dominance of necessity over the public realm rather than freedom. Indeed this is in line with her insistence in *The Human Condition* concerning the distinction between public and private (household) realms: public realm was considered with the concept of freedom while the private realm was seen as the realm of necessity. Arendt conceives poverty as a category which locates men under the dictate of their bodies which means that it causes people to be directed by the call of necessity. In this way, in the French Revolution, it was under the rule of necessity that the multitude rushed the assistance of the revolution and sent it to its doom.²⁰

Dealing with the social question with political means caused the invasion of the political realm by necessity. Thus, freedom disappeared in the course of the French Revolution. However, this was not the only reason that is criticized by Arendt. What was missing in the scene of the French Revolution was also power because instead of power, violence dominated the course of events. Here, what might be of our interest is the connection that is implied between the attempt of solving the social question and violence. From this angle, Arendt relates violence to the problem of social necessity: the aim of solving social problems led the French revolutionaries to a state of terror.²¹ Specifically, trying to solve the “social question” with political means not only led to terror in the French Revolution, but also rendered the subsequent modern revolutions to their doom. Such association of violence with social necessity was inevitable, because as she argues, it was almost impossible to separate them when a revolution breaks out under the conditions of mass poverty.²² About this matter, one might question Arendt’s estimation that the attempt to solve the «social question» will inevitably lead to violence and terror. There is a certain ambiguity in assuming that the association between violence and the «social question» will always emerge, no matter under what conditions a revolution breaks. Here, one can infer that in Arendt’s view, power as the component of action cannot be compatible with solving the social question and dealing with poverty. They are mutually exclusive in Arendt’s outlook since violence (as a category that is truly incompatible with power) is associated with the social question.

Here, as one can easily observe Arendt works with rather sharp distinctions and juxtapositions when speaking about the social question. For her, the political and the public are associated with freedom, power and action whereas the social, and the social question of course, is associated

with necessity. That is to say: the political and the social question belong to distinct realms by their essence. In this sense, we can explicitly come to the conclusion that the social question is excluded from the realm of the political and this is not only peculiar to her treatment of the modern revolutions but also constitutes the very basis of her understanding of the public and what is political. This means that poverty is not a concern for Arendt in the realm of the political because we cannot solve the problem of poverty with political means, namely deliberation and discussion.

Concluding Remarks

So far we have seen that action constitutes the very basis of what we should understand from the political in Arendt's thought. The way she defines action enables her exclude any concern related to the social such as poverty from this very realm of the political. In this manner, action is the realm of freedom, power and plurality whereas what we see in the realm of the social is necessity.

We have also seen that Arendt explicitly argues for the solution of the problems of the social sort outside the realm of public deliberation and decision making. For her, these are the tasks of administration that some professionals should deal with. Politics is the activity that free citizens should perform and the content of this political activity is already confined to what is not related to necessity.

Here, in this paper, my goal was not to criticize the way she disconnects what is called the political from the social but rather, trying to see the inner structure of her way of reasoning when doing this. What I mean is I aimed to see in what manner she opposes to the questions of social concerns brought into the realm of the political. In this way, it is obvious that she works with sharp distinctions that allow her to reason that the realm of the political and the social are essentially distinct because they have different natures. However, I still do think that one can oppose, from an external point of view, to the fact that the social is detached from the political. This kind of criticism does not necessarily and particularly directed only to Arendt but to the thinkers who grounds their theories on the sharp distinction between the social and the political and exclude the social from the political in terms of treating the realm of the political as a place that should stay pure and uncontaminated.

Many contemporary political thinkers consider a connection between what is social and political in the sense that they bring the issues related to distribution and justice into the political deliberation process. Also, from my perspective, if political decisions have to affect all the people in a setting, there is always a question of distribution of goods and resources. Indeed it is not so easy to exclude the concerns of social sort from the political in the sense that where the borderline starts and ends is not so clear all the time. In this manner, one might also claim that (like feminists do), what is social and private (belong to the realm of necessity for Arendt) is political.

Given the diversity of the political and social problems of our times, an Arendtian way of seeing things - a strict separation of the social and the political - might not be so adequate. Nevertheless, the potentiality of her way of portraying action in terms of grasping political activity is still significant. She still reminds us the importance of political participation and action as a distinct and particular way of existence in the world. Politics is not an administrative activity that can be left to the hands of professionals but it is a way of realizing ourselves as citizens.

References

- ¹ Here, I do not aim to define what the political is but rather, try to see what the characteristics and nature of such a conception in Arendt's theory are. In this sense, we can at least claim that the political is an essentially distinct realm with a specific nature.
- ² *The Human Condition*, p. 7.
- ³ *The Human Condition*, p. 96.
- ⁴ *The Human Condition*, p. 154–155.
- ⁵ In this sense, we can say that such a mentality causes the substitution of making for action and creates an instrumentalist perception of politics. It will not be too assertive if we argue that this instrumental logic operates in the following manner: person, as a toolmaker, does violence to nature, or destroys it in order to finish his/her product, in politics person can do everything in order to achieve a political goal and every means can be legitimized in the light of a particular end.
- ⁶ *The Human Condition*, p. 176.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ For Stewart Justman, the conception of «disclosure» has a specific meaning for Arendt since she does not use the term «expression» or «unmasking», but she definitely uses the term «disclosure». For him, people do not tend to unmask themselves. In other words, only I can disclose myself because I am the subject of the disclosure. But, in the act of unmasking I am the object inevitably. Furthermore, both unmasking and expression can be thought in terms of violence, since we can talk about violent «expression» and forcible «unmasking», but violent «disclosure» is uncertain. Moreover, Justman indicates that Arendt must have believed that the concept of «expression» threatens to reduce all action (in her view the supreme capacity of beings who are beginners by birth) to behaviour or acting out» (Justman, S. (1998) Hannah Arendt and the Idea of Disclosure, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. Vol. 8, Iss. 4, p. 415). In other words, Justman claims that; for Arendt, the concept of «expression» is far from referring to the uniqueness and specificity of action itself.
- ⁹ In this context, Arendt points out an analogy between the revealed «who» and the figure of «daimon» in Greek religion. «Daimon» is always with the person, looking from his/her shoulder but he/she could not see the «daimon», since «daimon» reveals himself/herself to other people that the person has got in contact. That is to say; the personal identity revealed through action is always related with the interpretation of other people, their opinions and reactions (*The Human Condition*, p. 179).
- ¹⁰ See Arendt's *On Violence* for the distinctions of «power», «violence» and «authority».
- ¹¹ *The Human Condition*, p. 200.
- ¹² M.P. Dentreves emphasizes the significance and peculiarity of Arendt's perception of freedom as to begin something new. For him, by freedom, Arendt does not mean simply the ability to choose among a set of possible alternatives

but, rather she means the capacity to start something unexpected with which all human beings are endowed with by virtue of birth (Dentreves, M.P. (1989) Freedom, Plurality and Solidarity: Hannah Arendt's Theory of Action, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. № 15(4), p. 318).

- ¹³ According to Richard King, political action was precisely freedom in its highest form, so action cannot be seen merely instrumental in achieving freedom. Nor was freedom a capacity to achieve some higher good (King, R. (1984) Endings and Beginnings: Politics in Arendt's Early Thought, *Political Theory*. Vol. 12, Iss. 3, p. 245).
- ¹⁴ Arendt, H. (1996) *Özgürlük Nedir? (What is Freedom?)*. Geçmiş ve Gelecek Arasında; trans. by B.S. Şener. İstanbul: İletişim, 1996, pp. 201–202.
- ¹⁵ For Arendt, in our age, it has become impossible to talk about a natural connection between freedom and politics due to the experiences of totalitarianism and the tradition of political thought. For instance, totalitarianism has brought practices which altogether annihilated freedom and politics. Whereas the tradition of political thought has grasped freedom as being free from politics, since for political thinkers, freedom and politics cannot be conceived together. For instance, in the intellectual tradition of the 17th and the 18th centuries, freedom referred to the activities outside the realm of politics (*Özgürlük Nedir?*, p. 202–205).
- ¹⁶ *Özgürlük Nedir?*, p. 205.
- ¹⁷ *The Human Condition*, p. 234.
- ¹⁸ *On Revolution*, p. 66. In this context, one may ask whether there is a problem in her understanding of the «social question» because if the «social question» refers to the liberation of men from suffering during the French Revolution, is it possible to consider this ideal by ignoring the problem of social status or lack of equality of opportunity? In other words, we can argue that all these categories are the parts of the problem of the «social question», and for this reason, Arendt's understanding of the «social question» seems to be problematic and ambiguous.
- ¹⁹ *On Revolution*, p. 86. One should here be attentive to the critical remarks made on this view of Arendt. For instance, Joel Olson, criticizes Arendt's strict separation of social and political and asserts that it is a major weakness in her theory that she refuses to recognize that social concerns, when brought into the public realm, are amenable to political action. For Olson, her distinction between the social and the political essentializes the social concerns, leaving them for technology and administration to be solved. In distinction to Arendt's outlook, for him, the key to the «social versus political» dilemma lies in politicizing the social realm. That is to say, the solution can be found by providing a public sphere where the social concerns are addressed, without eliminating the distinction between the social and the political. See: Olson, J. (1997) The Revolutionary Spirit: Hannah Arendt and the Anarchists of the Spanish Civil War, *Polity*. Vol. 29, № 4, p. 463–474. In criticizing Arendt's perspective about the «social question», Ferenc Feher also points out a remark in Kant's philosophy for providing a public place within the republic to address the issue of happiness, the «social question». Feher touches on the two material principles Kant integrated into his «doctrine of virtue»: one's obligation to one's own perfection and one's obligation to the (morally approved) goals of others. For Feher, the second principle provided as much space for «happiness» (or the «social question») as possible within Kant's theory although he was not an ideologue of unlimited wealth. In other words, the introduction of the second principle, which was the principle of association, provided a public space within the republic to address the issue of happiness, the «social question» (Feher, F. (1989) Practical Reason in the Revolution: Kant's Dialogue With the French Revolution, *Social Research*. Vol. 56, № 1, p. 184). Feher, in another article, criticizes Arendt's perception about the domination of the social during the process of

the French Revolution. For him, the main weakness of her innovative view of the French Revolution is that she failed to understand the negative character of the social strategies during the revolution. This means that for Feher, the revolutionaries chose political terror as an answer to the social problems, as a negative strategy. In line with this, he argues that «If the Jacobins stand accused before a revolutionary posterity, it is not because of their merging the political with the social but because, as captives to the “power of circumstances”, they chose political terror as the only answer to social problems. They rejected the idea of a rapid industrialization because the British urban scene of the industrial revolution was abhorrent to them. They also rejected what they called, in the wake of Rousseau, an ‘artificial civilization’» (Feher, F. (1987) Freedom and the ‘Social Question’ (Hannah Arendt’s Theory of the French Revolution), *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, № 12, p. 19).

²⁰ *On Revolution*, p. 54.

²¹ In this context, the following statement by a Parisian carpenter in 1795 which Albert Soboul tells us advocates that terror is related to the social demands in the French Revolution: «There were blood in the era of Robespierre, but, we had bread to eat» (Soboul, A. (1989) *Fransız Devriminin Kısa Tarihi*; trans.by İ. Yarkın. İstanbul: İnter, p. 88).

²² *On Revolution*, p. 108.