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A STUDY OF THE PARIAH IN HANNAH ARENDT'S THEORY OF ACTION

A Thesis Presented

by

TOBI B. ELKIN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

September 1990

Political Science

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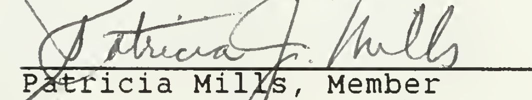

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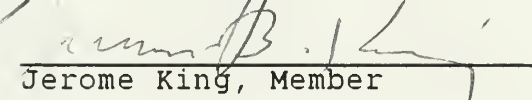

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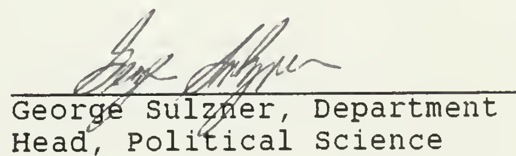

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to my family and friends for their generous support and encouragement while I was undertaking this project. I would have been unable to complete this study without the supportive environment which my family provided. Thanks also go to N. Xenos, P. Mills, and J. King for their interest, patience, and cooperation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. An Overview of the Concept of Action and the Problem of the Pariah

Hannah Arendt's political thought probes a variety of themes that originate in ancient Greece and Rome, extend into the American revolutionary period, and continue through the contemporary 20th century era. If one can make a generalization about her vast body of work, it is problematic both in its suggestiveness and elusivity, and for these reasons, provokes varied critiques. It is difficult to categorize Arendt's work because it does not fall easily into any school or system of thought. Arendt did not leave behind any disciples, although her students were influenced considerably by her thought.[1] Critics have been frustrated in their attempts to categorize Arendt's work.[2] She advocates self-thinking (selbstdenken) which she characterizes in a letter to Gershom Scholem on the Eichmann controversy:

> What confuses you is that my arguments and my approach are different from what you are used to; in other words, the trouble is that I am independent. By this I mean, on the one hand, that I do not belong to any organization and always speak only for myself, and on the other hand, that I have great confidence in Lessing's selbstdenken for which, I think, no ideology, no public opinion, and no 'convictions' can ever be a substitute.[3]

Arendt's self-thinking is what makes her thought so rigorous and challenging. Her self-thinking, unique phenomenological

method, and generally idiosyncratic view of politics cause her to defy classification even further. Her work examines a number of different themes: action, totalitarianism, "the Jewish question," revolution, violence, thinking, willing, and judging. Exploring the possibilities and potentialities of political action constitutes a pervasive and major thread in her work. In The Human Condition she seeks to provide a theoretical grounding for these possibilities. In this study, Arendt maintains that action was not given its due in the traditional hierarchy of western metaphysics in which the vita contemplativa (the life of the mind) is privileged over the vita activa (the life of action). Arendt argues that the Platonic philosopher's withdrawal from the world is fundamentally anti-political in its isolation from the space of appearances.

For many critics, commentators, and students of political theory, Hannah Arendt's most significant contribution and the one with which they seek to come to terms, is her account of action and the political.[4] Most examine the role that action plays in revolution, founding, and constitution-making in On Revolution, its noted absence in totalitarian regimes, and Arendt's rigid separation of action and politics from the social question. But the question and problem of the pariah is found nowhere in this critical corpus. The pariah, a concept and characterization Arendt develops in the essay "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition" is one that has not received much attention from

her critics. As a significant theme and a focus of legitimate inquiry, the pariah has been a conspicuous omission from scholarly treatments of Arendt's work.[5] In what follows, I will establish the pariah's importance in the context of her thought and explore the possibilities for the pariah's relationship to political action.

Arendt's exploration of the pariah, a marginal person who does not fully "belong" anywhere leads to a central problematic in her work. Her theory of action places inestimable importance on acting in the world, the public space. For Arendt, acting and speaking among others in the realm of appearances affirms our common humanity and assures the emergence of unique identity. In her terms, acting politically preserves the specifically human character of the world, its diversity and artifacts. Thus given Arendt's account of action, how do pariahs who occupy positions outside the world, estranged from it, ever become viable actors? Restated: can the pariah overcome estrangement and become a political actor/participant in the public realm, while also maintaining a unique collective identity? I will examine whether the pariah's collective identity as elaborated by Arendt, meshes with the characteristics of her citizen/actor in order to determine whether pariahs can "act" in an Arendtian sense. My question, then, is: what is the relationship between the pariah and action?

The problem of the pariah manifests itself within the context of Arendt's concern for action and worldliness.

This concern requires that human beings belong to, and become situated in the world. The problem of the pariah, or the political outsider, raises particular concerns for Arendt's theory of action which privileges caring for the world by acting in the public realm. In Arendt's thought the pariah is a political outcast who has no access to the public space, the arena that encourages the expression and affirmation of individual and group identities. For Arendt, the public space is the all-important life-affirming, preserver of humanity.

In this study, I will demonstrate how the concept of the pariah informs Arendt's theory of political action and will determine which of its elements contribute to the relationship of the two. Speech, language itself, provides the most significant conceptual link between the pariah and political action. The challenge is to elucidate what might constitute the pariah's action and how these qualities might be transferred into the public realm. Without access to the public space, the pariah, an individual without political or social status, becomes a contradiction to Arendt's theory. In a sense, Arendt offers her own antidote to the problem of the pariah in her belief that no individual can live and achieve a truly human identity without belonging to some political community. It is precisely for this reason that I will argue that we must view Arendt's theory of political action in terms of the pariah.

Arendt's work on the pariah and other Jewish themes, leads up to her consideration of action and plays an important role in formulating her theory. Her insistence on viewing issues such as the Jewish question in political, rather than social or assimilationist terms, underscores it as an essential component in her theory of action.

B. Who is the Pariah?

In "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition" Arendt distinguishes between the conscious pariahs, or the Jews who were aware of their marginal status both in Jewish society and in relation to European culture, and the parvenus who at best, are accepted only as exceptions. Ron Feldman characterizes the situation of the conscious pariah in the following way:

> By affirming both their Jewish particularity and their right to a place in general European life, the conscious pariahs became marginal not only in relation to European society -- as all Jews were -- but to the Jewish community as well.[6]

Arendt probes the lives and works of several conscious pariahs: Bernard Lazare, Heinrich Heine, Franz Kafka, Rosa Luxemburg, Rahel Varnhagen, and Isak Dinesen among several others. Arendt's pariahs are primarily literary, cultural, intellectual, and political figures whose gifts and achievements she recognizes as enduring, and whose projects are enriched by the consciousness and wisdom that is the

"gift" of a marginalized existence. The women pariahs Arendt describes illuminate not only what it means to straddle two worlds at once, but several. They inhabit the world of the pariah, confront the dominant culture, and belong to a milieu of intellectual women which because of its small size, results in an even more peripheral and marginalized status than their less intellectually oriented counterparts. The women pariahs hover on the periphery attempting to gain foothold inside the public realm, but they mostly live outside of it, circulating within the private sphere. Arendt's portrait of Rosa Luxemburg proves to be an exception to this rule however. Gaining status and legitimacy are hard enough for the male pariah, let alone the female pariah's struggle for recognition. Arendt's analysis of two women pariahs, Rahel Varnhagen and Rosa Luxemburg, reveals the complications of the pariah's dilemma. It also becomes an illumination, and in part, a reflection on her own pariah status as a German-Jewish woman intellectual and refugee living in the particularly volatile times of World War II Europe.

As stated earlier, of the several book length studies on Arendt's political thought, none confront the role of the pariah and thus, do not attempt to situate the concept in the context of her work. Current scholarship fails to give any serious attention to the concept of the pariah. But when it does address the issue, it only takes it into account as part of Arendt's Jewish writings, failing to

confront the concept's subtleties and potential significance to the theory of action. Critics fail to see Arendt's theory of political action, individuals appearing before one another as equals in the public realm with words and deeds, as inextricably linked with her elaboration on the experience of Jewishness in the modern age. The history of post-Emancipation Jews' exclusion from European society, their marginality, and inability to become full and equal participants in the public realm, significantly informs Arendt's vision of the political. Arendt is highly critical of the long history of Jewish exclusion and estrangement from the political realm and argues, moreover, that Jews must assume a share of caring for the world. The pariah must, she maintains, establish and claim political and legal identities in order to share a stake in the world. Arendt vehemently opposes social solutions to the Jewish question that at best, foster only an assimilationist, parvenu mentality -- a cosmetic change. Her analysis suggests that the pariah can have access to the public realm and find a home in the world with an awakening of consciousness.

1. Public v. Private, Political v. Social

Arendt's view of the Jewish question as inherently political stems from her strict separation of the public from the private realm, and the political from the social. This profound distinction turns on the Greek notion of freedom v. necessity: freedom sets the stage for politics, acting and speaking among one's equals in the space of

appearances. The private realm corresponds with necessity and is comprised of emotions, as well as activities of production and consumption, all of which are fundamentally anti-political.

Arendt's public sphere is comprised of freedom, action, speech, and memory; it is a privileged realm for citizen-actors to come together to talk about things that cannot be figured out with certainty. This brings into focus the crucial distinction Arendt draws between the political and the social. For Arendt, matters of distributive justice and socio-economic equality are not the stuff of politics, but belong to a social or administrative sphere. Because social welfare issues have to do with producing and consuming, or the realm of necessity, they are fundamentally anti-political, and are therefore, not within the purview of Arendt's higher order politics.

Arendt's politics includes theorizing, storytelling, narrativity, recovery, and remembrance, all of which illuminate experience, its meaning, and political identity. Leon Botstein comments that Arendt's notion of politics

> would require the very skills which had flourished among Jews in their pariah experience, namely, thinking and speaking. A political renaissance for modernity which utilized the traditions of the Jewish pariah became Arendt's normative objective for collective life in the modern world. If political action could be centered on the use of language, then the once pariah European Jew could emerge as an exemplar of political participation.[7]

Botstein argues that Arendt's views on speech as political action were formulated through her exploration of "the Jewish question" and her attempt to find a way out of traditional Jewish impotence and exclusion. He asserts that "The European history of the Jewish pariah, the legacy of a people without a home or politics, became in Arendt political action in the ideal: the Jewish experience generalized."[8] Arendt's search for the inclusion of the pariah in political life and her attempts to preserve the unique character of European secular Jewry have an affinity with current contemporary political realities in Eastern and Central Europe. The pariah as the political outsider is related to the dissident. Both are in need of access to the public space; both lack status and a sense of legitimacy and are potential contributors to the enrichment of politics. Currently in Eastern and Central Europe, the pariah as dissident is in the forefront of the political scene and has risen to the leadership ranks. As political actors who are now free to act and openly in the public space, these former political outcasts exemplify the spirit of the conscious pariah Arendt privileges.

2. The Pariah's Stance and Experience

In her essay "From The Pariah's Point Of View: Reflections On Hannah Arendt's Life And Work," Elisabeth Young-Bruehl provides further insight into Arendt's perspective on the pariah. She states:

> The pariah's task, in Arendt's understanding, was to be alert to the unexpected, to look at how things and events appear without preconceptions about history's course or pattern, to avoid sacrificing the outsider's perspective for the parvenu's comforts.[9]

Pariahs' independent stances provide them with a fresh, critical perspective enabling them to respond to situations as they arise. The pariah's response possesses a kind of distance and detachment, but it also has an ethical embeddedness that emerges from a history of social and political exclusion. This independent stance amounts to pariahs living as rebels among their own people and the rest of society. In what follows, I will explore how such a stance might compel the pariah to act politically, in an Arendtian fashion.

Arendt's own experience as a refugee during the inter-war years, a person whose legal, political, and social identities were confused for a time, taught her that the chances for freedom, no matter how slim and precarious must be pursued.[10] The elements of spontaneity and precariousness which characterize Arendtian action are such that one never knows which way things might go, but Arendt's analysis suggests that the risks inherent in action are worth it. For Arendt, the alternative to action, is a bleak, stasized mass society.

The qualities of the pariah as thinker, speaker, independent critic, and judge have something in common with those Arendt sees in action. For Arendt, action is

conditional, tentative, contingent, and spontaneous. Where the conditions for action flourish, human beings can participate in, and experience the creation of new beginnings. The opportunity to build freedom exists in a world in which the possibilities for political action are cultivated and preserved.

If the creation of freedom is an essential goal of political action, it is also one of the unique qualities of the pariah. The pariah is free from the pull of specific interests, factions, or parties, from biases, ideologies, and other keenly held passions. The pariah responds uniquely to each new situation and takes the risk of independent thought unhampered by conventions, tending to offer radical assessments of political matters. The challenge lies in whether the pariah can channel these characteristics into the public realm to help establish a political identity and a basis for public freedom.

Arendt's concept of the political seeks to allow individuals the space to appear as who they are in all their particularity. Similarly, she advances the idea that the Jew as pariah should appear as the representative of the pariah in the public realm without renouncing the collective pariah identity. The conscious pariah is her example of the way in which Jews might participate in political life. As I stated earlier, Arendt remains extremely critical of Jews' assimilationist tendencies and efforts to hide or change their identities. The pariah must assume a share of

responsibility for sustaining the world, and this can only be achieved by joining the public realm. The potentiality inherent in Arendt's characterization of action and natality, the prospect of creating something heretofore unseen, reflects her sense of hope for the future of the public realm.

a. The Pariah's Potential for Action. As previously stated, the central paradox of the pariah lies in the fact that such an individual does not fully belong anywhere and occupies a position outside of the world. This outsider status runs counter to the significance Arendt places on being situated "in" the world, of not being estranged from it, and the importance of acting in a plurality. She is concerned with amor mundi, or love of the world, and seeks to enrich the possibilities for authentic political action. Free and unburdened by care for the world, it would seem that on the surface, the pariah would not be the kind of political actor Arendt envisions. I will work through this problem to determine whether the pariah can be "in" the world in an Arendtian sense.

Chapter Two attempts to offer a critical interpretation of Arendt's theory of action and will explore her characterization of the political. Chapter Three focuses on the concept of the pariah -- how it emerges in the context of her thought and whether its characteristics fulfill the requirements of action as elaborated by Arendt. The study will conclude with some thoughts on the potential for a

relationship between action and the pariah. I will also offer some tentative reflections on the concept of the pariah's significance to the unfolding contemporary political realities in Eastern and Central Europe.

Given the momentous changes that have occurred in this part of the world and the resulting dramatic shifting of political configurations, it seems especially fitting to rediscover and reflect on Hannah Arendt's work. I think that Arendt would have reveled in these revolutionary times of founding, with the toppling of Communist parties and regimes and the growth of non-violent peoples' movements. She had great hope for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the reformist mood of the 1968 Prague Spring. If she were alive today, she would have applauded the courageousness of the people involved in the current efforts to break the Communist Party's monopoly on power. Arendt would have regarded the daily spectacle of people demonstrating for political and economic reforms as an act of liberation, a breaking with the old to usher in a revolution that would establish the framework for a founding. That members of the opposition and leading dissidents are leading new coalition governments, points to the potential significance of the pariah for invigorating and sustaining a viable public space. For Arendt, people claiming public power, a public space, and holding spontaneous demonstrations, constitutes political action and functions to preserve the revolutionary spirit in everyday life. Arendt encapsulates this spirit as

"the eagerness to liberate and to build a new house where freedom can dwell."[11]

It is my belief that a study of Arendt's concept of the pariah understood in relation to her theory of action is deepened when considered against the background of recent political events. Today the fruits of action and the unexpected are culled in places we might never have dreamed were possible. It is, then, my good fortune to have rediscovered Arendt's thought during a period of revolution and new beginnings.

Notes

1. Lewis Coser remarks:

> Arendt left no disciples, though political theorists such as Sheldon Wolin, George Kateb, and John Schaar have testified to the impact of her thought on their own. She did not wish to found a 'school' or a sect, but she intended to reopen the dialogue, inside and outside the academy.

Lewis Coser, Refugee Scholars In America - Their Impact and Their Experiences, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 196.

Elizabeth Minnich in "Hannah Arendt: Thinking As We Are" also attests to Arendt's profound influence on her work. Between Women, ed. Carol Ascher, Louise DeSalvo, and Sara Ruddick, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), pp. 171-85.

2. In response to a question about how she defines herself politically, Arendt states:

> I don't really know. I really don't know and I've never known...You know the left think that I am conservative, and the conservatives sometimes think that I am left or I am a maverick, or God knows what. And I must say I couldn't care less. I don't think that the real questions of this century will get any kind of illumination by this kind of thing.

She also states: "So you ask me where I am. I am nowhere. I am really not in the mainstream of present or any other political thought. But not because I want to be so original--it so happens that I somehow don't fit."

"Hannah Arendt: On Hannah Arendt," in Hannah Arendt: The Recovery Of The Public World, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 333-36.

3. Hannah Arendt, "'Eichmann in Jerusalem' - An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt," in The Jew As Pariah, ed. by Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1978), p. 250.

4. Among the most significant book length studies which address Arendt's concept of political action in her political theory are: Stephen J. Whitfield, Into the Dark: Hannah Arendt and Totalitarianism, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Margaret Canovan, The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974); George Kateb, Hannah Arendt - Politics, Conscience, Evil, (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983); and

Bhikhu Parekh, Hannah Arendt and the Search for a New Political Philosophy, (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981).

Also significant to the steadily increasing body of literature on her work is a special issue of Social Research 44 (Spring 1977) which was devoted entirely to Arendt shortly after her death, and several essays in Salmagundi 60 (Spring-Summer 1983).

A symposium called "Arendt, Politics, And The Self appears in Political Theory 16 (February 1988): 77-98. Each of the three commentators examines pertinent aspects of Arendt's later work in the Life of the Mind series. Seyla Benhabib on "Judgment And The Moral Foundations Of Politics In Arendt's Thought," Suzanne Jacobitti offers "Hannah Arendt And The Will," and B. Honig on "Arendt, Identity, And Difference." These essays confront Arendt's investigations into the activity of thinking and develop her concept of judgment as a moral faculty. They also examine the role of the will in engendering possibilities for action and consider it in relation to the potential suggested by the Arendtian self. More specifically, these works debate the constituent elements of this self and the potential for its exercising action.

5. The only treatments of Arendt's development of the pariah that I am aware of are by Ron Feldman in his introduction to The Jew As Pariah, "The Jew as Pariah: The Case of Hannah Arendt," pp. 15-52, Leon Botstein in "Liberating The Pariah: Politics, The Jews, and Hannah Arendt," Salmagundi 60 (Spring-Summer 1983), pp. 73-105, and in Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's mammoth biography of Arendt entitled, Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

6. Feldman, "The Jew as Pariah: The Case of Hannah Arendt," p. 18.

7. Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah," p. 79.

8. Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah," p. 95.

9. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, "From The Pariah's Point Of View: Reflections On Hannah Arendt's Life And Work," in Hannah Arendt: The Recovery Of The Public World, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), p. 4

10. Several of Arendt's commentators have stated that Arendt may be viewed as a conscious pariah, or the politically conscious Jew that she privileges over the parvenu. I will not establish Arendt as a conscious pariah or substantiate such claims, but rather, I intend to explore how the concept of the pariah itself, as it is elaborated by Arendt, is

significant to her theory of political action; how the qualities inherent in the pariah may create a model of action.

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Ron Feldman, Elizabeth Minnich, and Lewis Coser all characterize Arendt as a conscious pariah, examining the intersection of her life and her political theory. The authors point out that Arendt was even a pariah among her own people with regard to the Eichmann controversy and the on-going debate over the state of Israel and Zionism. Feldman argues in his introduction to The Jew As Pariah that Arendt saw herself as a conscious pariah and that this dynamic guided her approach to the Jewish question and her work on political action. He states:

> Arendt's solution to her own 'Jewish problem' was not to repudiate her Jewishness nor blindly affirm it, but to adopt the stance of a conscious pariah -- an outsider among non-Jews, and a rebel among her own people. It was because of this marginal position that she was able to gain critical insights into both the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds.

Feldman sees a dialectical tension between Arendt's understanding of modern Jewish history and her Jewish identity which she never renounces, and her sense of cultural and historical location in a German/European heritage which gives her a unique theoretical vantage point. Feldman, "The Jew as Pariah: The Case of Hannah Arendt," pp. 19 and 47.

11. Hannah Arendt, On Revolution, (New York: Pelican Books, 1977), p. 35.

CHAPTER II

ACTION ARENDTIAN STYLE

A. The Elements of Action

> Freedom...is not only one among the many problems and phenomena of the political realm properly speaking, such as justice, or power, or equality; freedom, which only seldom--in times of crisis or revolution--becomes the direct aim of political action, is actually the reason that men live together in political organization at all. Without it, political life as such would be meaningless. The *raison d'etre* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action.[1]

Most of Hannah Arendt's work hinges on the importance she attributes to political action. Her theory of action can be considered the centerpiece of her contribution to political theory. In *The Human Condition* Arendt addressess what she views as a profound need to examine the components of action, the distinctions between them, and their preversions in the modern age. In order to establish the role of the pariah in her thought, which is the focus of my study, it is first necessary to confront Arendt's account of action and politics. This account will illuminate what is considered a major focus in her thought, and will provide an idea of what the pariah's potential is for becoming a political actor.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt illuminates the key components and activities that define the human condition: labor, work, and action. Labor, says Arendt, is associated with the biological process, and mere survival, thus, with

itself."[2] In contrast, work relates to the unnaturalness of human existence and consists of artifice and contributing to the world of objects and things: "The human condition of work is worldliness."[3] Action, to which she attributes the most potential and significance, occurs directly between individuals with no intermediaries and corresponds to the human condition of plurality. While all three activities are related to politics, plurality is the defining characteristic of all political life for Arendt. Politics, speaking and acting among others, seeing and being seen, depends on the condition of plurality: "doing" politics takes more than one person. Thus action and plurality are partners -- action requires plurality as Arendt states:

> Action...corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world...this condition of plurality is specifically <u>the</u> condition...of all political life.[4]

Together, the triptych of labor, work, and action, relate to natality and mortality: the continuum of the human condition. While labor is crucial for guaranteeing individual and species survival, and work provides a permanence to human artifacts which outlast human life, action, the most celebrated of the three by Arendt, binds us to political life, "in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies [and] creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history."[5] But all three, (labor, work, and action) are rooted in the concept of

natality which is life-affirming and continuous, "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."[6] Of the three, however, Arendt says that action has the strongest connection to the human condition of natality:

> ...the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities.[7]

Thus, just as action is her quintessential political activity and category, natality becomes the fertile ground on which Arendt's political thought rests. Natality is the well-spring of action because just by virtue of being born, each individual has the capacity and the potential to initiate something new, unprecedented, and political. According to Arendt, all new action has the potential to be political. By nature, action is a political, and therefore public disclosure of identity in the presence of others. Action, perpetually inspired by natality, is the main category in Arendt's politics.

While action is rooted in natality, Arendt asserts that mortality and the preoccupation with eternity are the central features of traditional philosophical thought. Arendt claims that the vita activa, a life devoted to the public realm, has suffered from an inferior status throughout the ages since it has been seen from the

perspective of the vita contemplativa, the life devoted to contemplating beauty and eternity. The split between traditional philosophical thought and politics originates in Plato, but Arendt traces the distinction specifically to Aristotle who conceived of bioi (life) as freedom from the necessities of life. Aristotle understood freedom as independence from the work of keeping oneself alive. Therefore, the slave's labor and the craftsman's acquisitiveness did not permit them to enjoy bioi. Labor and work produced the necessary and the useful, thus they were deemed unfree activities. For Aristotle, life consisted of any of the following three things: enjoyment of the beautiful and of bodily pleasures, a life devoted to the polis and beautiful deeds, and the life of the philosopher who contemplates the eternal. Thus, in Aristotle we see the seeds sown for the emergence of the vita contemplativa's superiority. Arendt notes that with the disintegration of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity, the vita activa was set back further.

Arendt views most of political philosophy since Plato as the justification for "an escape from politics altogether."[8] The escape, she says, is based on the belief that a political community can be maintained only if some people rule and others are ruled and obey. The notion of ruling and being ruled is based on the master/slave relationship which Arendt believes precludes any possibility of action. For Arendt, such a concept of rulership fueled

the "suspicion of action...and arose from the earnest desire to find a substitute for action rather than from any irresponsible or tyrannical will to power."[9] Plato substituted rulership for action and since Platonic times, "making" and fabrication have been substituted for action, thereby degrading action as an instrumentalizing process and "politics as a means for something else."[10] In addition, Arendt is critical of Plato's abolition of the private character of the household which is class-specific, applying only to the Guardians. While the Guardian class has no traditional family life or private property, the other classes maintain the "amenities" of the private realm. Arendt believes that Plato's communalization of property results in a dangerous encroachment into the public realm, which she clearly privileges. The entry of the private, or the social into the public constitutes, for Arendt, a serious threat to the possibility of a viable politics. Arendt is equally as adamant about the Platonic elimination of private property, which she regards as an extension of the family into one so-called "household." This phenomenon leads to the creation of society, which she says, results in a nation of households. And for Arendt, the household is tied to necessity and to mere survival.

By the Middle Ages, Arendt claims that the vita contemplativa's status as the only truly free way of life was securely established; to be free from politics meant to be free from the necessities of life. Arendt contends that

the vita activa's inferiority is inferred from its Greek derivation, askholia, meaning "unquiet." In contrast, philosophy's experience of the eternal induces a kind of speechlessness and quiet. The Platonic view of contemplation's superiority stems from the belief that the realm of human affairs is uncertain and unreliable and that nothing humanly made "can equal in beauty and truth the physical kosmos, which swings in itself in changeless eternity without any interference or assistance from outside..."[11] Arendt brings this philosophical aversion to the frailty of human affairs to our attention in her criticism of the hierarchy at work in the western philosophical tradition.

The vita activa involves introducing a standard of permanence and a potential for immortality into human affairs. This standard lies in the belief that mortals' greatness is grounded in their ability to produce great deeds, words, and things which transcend and endure through history and story-telling. Arendt understands action as stories about deeds recorded for remembrance. As Arendt relates, the striving for immortality by mere mortals in ancient times "had been the spring and center of the vita activa."[12] Such events and artifacts of human history as revolution and founding occur in the sphere of action in a plurality rather than in isolation and withdrawal from others. The most important requirement of action is plurality and as Arendt asserts persistently throughout her

writing, the world consists not of one, but of many, "...the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others."[13]

B. The Requirements of Action

Arendt's characterization of action emanates from her admiration and understanding of the Greek polis. In Arendt's view, the polis provided a space where individuals could disclose their unique identities through speech and deeds, and strive for immortal fame. While the polis was a forum for the contest of words and works, it also provided a mechanism for their remembrance, thereby enabling them to become truly immortal. Arendt asserts that the poet Homer and the historian Thucydides did not achieve the task of immortalization themselves, but rather the polis itself, "seemed to assure that the most futile of human activities, action and speech, and the least tangible and most ephemeral of man-made 'products,' the deeds and stories which are their outcome, would become imperishable."[14] As abstract as it sounds the polis, an organization of human beings, ensures that the space of appearances will not only secure future possibilities for action, but the means for their remembrance as well. The polis, says Arendt, "is a kind of organized remembrance."[15] For Arendt, politics emerges directly from acting and speaking in the public realm. Action becomes a constitutive element of this realm which is rendered authentic in a plurality, which is the mutuality of seeing and being seen.

What, then are the attributes and requirements of action? Action takes place between individuals in the public realm who are characterized by their equality and distinction. Speech and action are revelatory and disclose who individuals are in all their unique specificity, while also signaling a new beginning. Arendt says, "This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are <u>with</u> others and neither for nor against them -- that is, in sheer human togetherness."[16] For Arendt, the actor is an agent, a disclosing "who" rather than a "what" (an assemblage of personality traits and characteristics), and seeks to reveal his identity in deed and word. Arendt says, "Action without a name, a 'who' attached to it, is meaningless..."[17] The actor possesses an extraordinary amount of courage because the outcome of action, by its very nature, is uncertain and unpredictable. Because of its inherent unpredictability, action could just as likely produce a bad regime as a good one. The prospects for a good regime depend on an honorable "founding" and a commitment on the part of all to secure the conditions for the future possibilities of action.

For Arendt, action involves striving for the immortality and permanence of words, deeds, and stories. Her action is agonistic and individualistic, reminiscent of the politics found in the Athenian polis. Like the kind of politics that flourished briefly, but spectacularly in the polis, Arendt's political action is constituted by words and

deeds which are immortalized through stories and remembrance. The "story" of action is preserved and "reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants."[18] Actors act in the presence of their peers and strive to distinguish themselves from each other in their excellent words and deeds. George Kateb asserts that for Arendt,

> The aim of politics is to perpetuate itself, to immortalize itself -- not only in the sense that individuals aspire to say and do imperishable things, but in the enfolding sense that all who act act for the sake of preserving future possibilities for action. The common interest is the preservation of the frame of action, a constitution.[19]

Thus for Arendt, politics is the quintessential worldly and immortalizing act. The decision to act in the world creates the potential space for freedom and the possibilities for future actions.

To act politically is to take an initiative and to begin something that might be larger than oneself. In "On Violence," an essay in Crises Of The Republic, Arendt asserts that human beings are political beings by virtue of action which also makes them more fully human. In describing action she says,

> ...to act is the human answer to the condition of natality. Since we all come into the world by virtue of birth, as newcomers and beginnings, we are able to start something new; without the fact of birth we would not even know what novelty is, all 'action' would be either mere behavior or preservation.[20]

Natality is the underlying force of the initiative or impetus in action; each newcomer and each individual possesses the capacity to begin something new, original, and unprecedented. Arendt characterizes natality as a miracle of faith and hope in its spontaneous beginnings and it is, she says, the condition in which "action is ontologically rooted."[21] Natality can be seen as the one constant and continuous element in an otherwise uncertain world of human affairs. It is the source of new life, and hence, of action. Arendt's elaboration on natality expresses her faith in the world of human appearances, in the public realm -- in its health and growth through action. The capacity to establish the world anew and the spark of novelty, closely relates to the sentiment Arendt mentions frequently to demonstrate her feeling of responsibility for the world. Amor mundi, or love of the world, refers to the feeling of being at home in the world and belonging to it. For Arendt, care for the world is of inestimable importance, and anything less becomes a repudiation of the human condition itself.

Speech and action allow the revelation of individuals' unique distinctness; they confirm the variousness of human

beings. Arendt contends that human life without speech and action, and when it is not lived among others, ceases to exist. In the public realm, individuals' words and deeds are revealed to one another, thusly they disclose their unique identities. In this context, individuals create stories of action that can be recorded for remembrance and for future actors. It is important to understand that for Arendt, language itself constitutes action because it distinguishes human beings from the rest of animal life.

In addition to speech, unexpectedness and boundlessness are also distinctive features of action. Arendt asserts that spontaneity "is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins."[22] Action is boundless in the sense that it has no limitations, impacting on all individuals who are capable of initiating their own actions. This "reaction" to action is actually the instigation of a new action; thus, action begets other newly instigated actions to establish a constant circulation. There are also elements of unpredictability and irreversibility in action; it cannot be foretold or undone. Action, then, is open-ended and "fixed" at the same time.

Arendt introduces two concepts to counter the potentially damaging effects of action's irreversibility and unpredictability. She proposes the faculties of forgiving to rescue action from the dilemma of irreversibility, and promising, as a remedy for unpredictability. Where forgiving entails "...being able to undo what one has done

though one did not, and could not, have known what he was doing...," promising, is a remedy for the "chaotic uncertainty of the future..."[23] Both faculties correspond inherently to action insofar as they require the condition of plurality because

> ...no one can forgive himself and no one can feel bound by a promise made only to himself; forgiving and promising enacted in solitude or isolation remain without reality...no more than a role played before one's self.[24]

Arendt views these faculties as safeguards against the excesses of action and believes that without them, human beings have little to rely on and little recourse. But, she says, not knowing future outcomes and being unable to control events is the price paid for freedom, plurality, and reality itself.

While Arendt acknowledges the potential dangers inherent in action and plurality, she sings its praises as the key to sustaining political life:

> The calamities of action all arise from the human condition of plurality, which is the condition sine qua non for that space of appearance which is the public realm. Hence the attempt to do away with this plurality is always tantamount to the abolition of the public realm itself.[25]

It is clear that the uncertainty of action is not Arendt's main concern, but the elimination of plurality and the public space which joins people is. The reality of the

world is underscored by the plurality of the public space. This worldly space also requires interstices between people which separate them from each other, and without which, no human life -- no political life -- is possible. For Arendt, this "in-between" space prevents the tendency toward uniformity and the creation of mass society, while also preserving the uniqueness and diversity of individuals.

1. <u>The Conundrum and Ambiguity of Action</u>

Arendt's theory of action has provoked varied responses among her readers and critics. Bernstein, Tlaba, and Parekh find her theory overly abstract and abstruse, her standards of greatness troublesome, and her sharp division between the political and the social both unreflective of, and inappropriate to contemporary political realities. These critics find her political categories rigid, but at the same time, strangely arbitrary; her concepts superficially attractive in their open-endedness, yet flat in terms of her failure to elaborate on the internal connections within them. Arendt's phenomenological approach to her political catalogue is a novel, yet idiosyncratic one, and many are quick to point out that ambiguities abound in her thought. It is plausible to advance the notion that ambiguity is embedded in her theory. Bhikhu Parekh puts it succinctly when he says, "Action is one of the most important categories in Arendt's political philosophy, yet the least clearly defined."[26]

Her concept of action is nebulous; her quest for the political is elusive. For example, George Kateb finds a certain vagueness with regard to Arendt's thoughts on the content of political action, asserting that she defies the specificity that most readers want to impose on her. To illustrate this and the extent to which ambiguity is embedded within Arendt's concept of action, Kateb draws an analogy between competitive games and political action: "...a game can be completely intelligible -- as political action can never be -- and totally free of human nature, free of motives, hidden or obvious, while political action must fight free of human nature."[27] In other words, the rules of a game are (usually) known to all who play, but action is its own end representing infinite and transcendent possibilities. But Kateb's main concern with Arendt's action is that it appears to be separated from moral motivation; it does not exist to be morally just or correct.[28] Political action, then, is not about justice: "The supreme achievement of political action is existential, and the stakes are seemingly higher than the moral ones."[29] To counter such concerns and the risks inherent in action, Arendt offers the faculties of forgiving and promising, moral precepts which emerge directly from the will to act. This does not satisfy Kateb however, who claims that her version of keeping promises overlooks the nature and content of the commitments made. Additionally, he claims that her standard of forgiveness fails to

understand that a group is not responsible for forgiving, only the person to whom wrong was done can forgive the wrongdoer. Kateb believes that Arendt's built-in remedies are inadequate and in referring to the Eichmann case states,

> Promise-keeping cannot form a barrier to atrocity. Eichmann kept faith with his leader. Who can forgive what he and his superiors did? Arendt herself cannot...she says so powerfully at the end of Eichmann in Jerusalem.[30]

As if to oppose herself and to agree with Kateb, Arendt addresses this by responding that acts of "radical evil" cannot be punished or forgiven because they occur outside the realm of human affairs and potentialities, which they tend to crush. Unfortunately, her responses to this dilemma are insufficient to the criticisms and remain undeveloped. If acts of radical evil cannot be punished or forgiven because they are so antithetical to action, how are they handled? There seems to be no satisfactory response to deal with misguided, twisted action.

Richard Bernstein's comments illustrate further the ambiguity that is part and parcel of Arendtian political action. He asserts that if we are seeking to use Arendt's theory as a guide to predict the future, we best look elsewhere because it is not in the nature of political action to offer guideposts for behavior. Bernstein writes:

> We are never in a position -- before the fact -- to know whether the virtues of political action or its terrible vices will be manifested. This systematic ambiguity lies at the very core of Hannah Arendt's metaphysics of action; it is rooted, so to speak, in the ontology of action ...In speaking of the systematic ambiguity of action, I am singling out what is an attribute... the most essential attribute -- of action itself. There is no way of eradicating or diminishing the ambiguity of action without eliminating action itself.[31]

This statement, I think, captures quite well a central problematic in Arendt's theory. It appears that what Arendt prizes most about action is its elusive, unknown quality which may lead to a restoration of what she regards as authentic political life.

2. Action's Antithesis: Behaviorism and Mass Society

That action is not a guide to predict the future is a central idea in Arendt's thought. Within her critique of social science is the contention that action has become behavior and that individuals have lost their ability to think independently and act freely. The consequence of action becoming behavior is that the social scientist studies human actions in terms of regularities and behavior. This distortion is decried by Arendt who sees the content of action as free and unpredictable. The growth of mass society has contributed even further to the distortion and impossibility of action. In stark contrast to behavior, action is a concept that is inherently ambiguous and open-ended. Not even the actor knows the outcome of the action

initiated, and therefore, is not bound by the determinism of history or nature. Arendt writes:

> The perplexity is that in any series of events that together form a story with a unique meaning we can at best isolate the agent who set the whole process in motion; and although this agent frequently remains the subject, the 'hero' of the story, we never can point unequivocally to him as the author of its eventual outcome.[32]

Thus while Arendt's action remains free from determinism, inevitable laws of nature, and behaviorism, it is, nevertheless, extremely elusive and questionable. On the face of it, claims about the absence of morality and moral outcomes in Arendt's political action seem justifiable. But how can Arendt be concerned with outcomes and responsibility when she maintains that action is its own end, that it is not a means, and that it remains unpredictable? Given her steadfast adherence to the spontaneity and open-endedness of action, there does not appear to be a reconciliation on the horizon.

While she paints a portrait of a world busily talking politics, in which there appears to be a lack of concern for morality it is, perhaps, in her attention to the world and its care, or amor mundi, that her sensitivity to morality and responsibility emerge. Amor mundi means literally, "love of the world" and implies the joining of self with others in a commitment to a public way of life. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl notes that while working on The Life of the Mind, Arendt felt that the mental capacities of thinking,

willing, and judging also contributed to this sense of caring for the world. Young-Bruehl asserts that, "What united her thought was the love she had come to understand as the one that unites self and others -- Amor Mundi."[33] Thus, responsibility toward the world involves not only political action in the space of appearances, but the life of the mind and the "silent dialogue between me and myself."[34] In contrast to speech, which occurs between persons in the public space, this dialogue constitutes the sheer activity of thinking within the individual. The individual thinks independently in a conversation with the self which contributes to the exercise of political action. The self-thinking in this dialogue is an important element in Arendt's schema. A certain amount of self-thinking must go on before an actor appears in the public space.

We find even further support for the inherent ambiguity in Arendt's theory of action in her critiques of behaviorism and mass society. Noting the "uniqueness and responsibility of the individual human person" as a central theme in Arendt's work, Dante Germino believes that it corresponds compellingly to her critique of behaviorism and behaviorialist social science.[35] Arendt rejects the quest for uniformities in human nature and the "rule" of society which, she says, "excludes the possibility of action by affecting a kind of enforced behavior or conformism from its members."[36] According to Arendt, the possibility for spontaneity does not exist in mass society.

For Arendt, mass society is a monolith that results in the "substitution of behavior for action."[37] Of the social sciences, which have become "behavioral sciences," Arendt says they "aim to reduce man as a whole, in all his activities, to the level of a conditioned and behaving animal."[38] Arendt finds that "society constitutes the organization of the life process" and that it is a form in which "the activities connected with sheer survival are permitted to appear in public."[39] For Arendt, the animal laborans is tied to the life process which maintains species survival and, therefore, should not be elevated to the public realm to be equated with the glories of political action. She maintains vigorously that "whether an activity is performed in private or in public is by no means a matter of indifference."[40] Arendt claims that the invasion of the social into the public realm drives individual differences and particularity into the private sphere instead of the public sphere, where they publicly reveal and validate the unique identity of the individual. Mass society precludes any possibility for action to take place and "demands that its members act as though they were members of one enormous family which has only one opinion and one interest."[41] This point is similar to her criticism of Plato's extension of the private character of the household into the public sphere.

Arendt juxtaposes the spontaneity of action and its inherent ambiguity against the regularity and repetition of

science and the scientific method. In its search for patterns of regularity, science and social science reduce living phenomena to data and behavior. Germino asserts that Adolph Eichmann is Arendt's example of the condition she finds abhorrent. Eichmann knew how to "behave" efficiently but could not act or think for himself.

Gabriel Tlaba finds Arendt's distinction between action and behavior troubling because he thinks that even repetitive and routinized activities "involve some initiative and judgment."[42] He believes that Arendt would be hard-pressed to find a society without behavior. Arendt's analysis fails to offer a plausible response to Tlaba's charge. Arendt's point is that contemporary society elicits behaviorial and conditioned types of responses from people who no longer think and act for themselves. She fails to consider that routinized tasks have the potential for action, and in so doing, limits the scope of action even as she attempts to prove how expansive it is.

a. Freedom or Necessity in the Public Space? Bernstein points out that Arendt's clear identification of freedom and action ("to be free and to act are the same") establishes an important linkage from which other issues emanate.[43] Against the background of freedom and action, emerges the crucial distinction between freedom and necessity upon which her political v. social, and public v. private distinctions rest. As stated earlier, for Arendt, action can only occur outside the realm of necessity which is tied to the

household and the chore of keeping oneself alive. Bernstein illustrates how significant this point is for her:

> From Arendt's perspective the confusion of the realm of necessity with that of freedom, or the belief that somehow freedom emerges out of -- or merges with -- necessity has been one of the most serious and disasterous confusions in modern history -- especially since the French Revolution.[44]

For the individual, freedom constitutes breaking out of the repetition of necessity. This can only be accomplished through action in the public realm and appearing to others. Of the public realm Tlaba says, "For Arendt, only participation of the self, the revelation of one's thoughts through action and speech in concert with others, is what constitutes the public realm."[45]

Arendt faults the French, and to a lesser extent perhaps, the Russian revolutionaries for attempting to alleviate poverty and other social ills, thereby tainting the public realm with household and private concerns. The "politics of compassion" is not a politics for Arendt; it is inappropriate to address social welfare concerns in the realm that is reserved for action and authentic politics. Regarding the failure of the French Revolution, Arendt states in no uncertain terms that necessity tainted the public realm, "It was necessity, the urgent needs of the people, that unleashed the terror and sent the Revolution to its doom."[46] The "politics of compassion" took over, and poverty became a political phenomenon addressed in the public realm. This is in contrast to the American

Revolution which established a real foundation for freedom, a separation of powers, and lasting institutions. Further contrasting the American Revolution to the French, Arendt claims,

> The direction of the French Revolution was deflected almost from its beginning...through the immediacy of suffering; it was determined by the exigencies of liberation not from tyranny but from necessity, and it was actuated by the limitless immensity of both the people's misery and the pity this misery inspired.[47]

Arendt argues that the French Revolution was governed by historical necessity, ideology, and terror, while the American Revolution culminated in a conscious act of founding that established public freedom and a space for spontaneous action. For Arendt, revolution is not a liberation from necessity, but rather an opportunity to found a permanent space for freedom with lasting institutions -- a constitution, a government organized by a separation of powers, laws, and rights. The fatal flaw of the French revolutionaries, according to Arendt, was the fact that poverty became a political phenomenon, motivated by a drive to liberate people from necessity. Arendt is unyielding in her belief that the satisfaction of individual or private needs, and the redress of social ills, do not automatically occasion the achievement of freedom. But nor does the act of founding necessarily yield freedom. A founding can lead to a good or a bad regime; it is up to the

founders how to proceed in establishing lasting institutions that will create freedom.

Bernstein, troubled about Arendt's division of the social and the political, is quick to point out that

> Even when we take Arendt's warnings with full seriousness, the fact remains that our problematic is one in which the social and the political are inextricably connected...We can agree with Arendt that social liberation does not automatically lead to political freedom and that the belief that it does can be disasterous in both theory and practice. But we cannot avoid the consequence that political freedom...can no longer be achieved for us without an attempt to solve the serious social issues that confront us.[48]

However, Arendt does not deny that pressing social questions exist; rather, she feels that they are best worked out in a more technical and administrative sphere through agencies equipped to find solutions to those kinds of problems. Arendt's fears about the encroachment of social problems on political life emanate from her understanding of totalitarianism, and the absolute inability of action to occur within an automatically functioning mass society. Bernstein observes that Arendt understood

> ...how fragile and limited the realm of politics really is and the dangers that result when this realm of freedom and political action is confused with the pressing needs and demands of social life.[49]

Arendt maintains that certain things are appropriate for the public realm, while others must remain within the private realm. People acting, speaking, and persuading appear

publicly, while goodness, bodily needs, and labor should be hidden. Arendt believes that each human activity, public or private, has its "proper location in the world" without which it would cease to exist.[50] The emphasis on "proper location," "space," "appearance," and "worldliness" all underscore Arendt's adherence to spatial dimensions in her political theory. Space, not time, is the key element in her vision of political life. She is concerned with the enduring issues, the timeless currents, which make for a lasting public world. She leaves questions of social and human needs to technocrats and planners, whose attempts to improve conditions, when they cross-over into the public realm, undermine it.

In a roundtable discussion in 1972 Arendt was dogged repeatedly with questions from her colleagues and critics about her radical distinction between the social and the political. In the discussion Bernstein insists that "...one can't consistently make that distinction...It's a question of whether you can dissociate or separate the social and the political consistently now."[51] Arendt's response to the comment is worth quoting in full:

> ...There are things where the right measures can be figured out. These things can really be administered and are not then subject to public debate. Public debate can only deal with things which -- if we want to put it negatively -- we cannot figure out with certainty...if we can figure it out with certainty, why do we all need to get together?...everything which can really be figured out, in the sphere Engels called the administration of things -- these are social things in general. That they should then be subject to debate seems to me phony and a plague.[52]

Arendt is adamant on this point; she does not hold out any hope that speeches, debates, hearings, and committee discussions will find solutions to the very serious social problems that confront us today. Her support for a technical and administrative approach to these problems is ironic because of her disdainful attitude toward any approach that is an inherent feature of mass society. In this rather contentious roundtable, her colleagues and critics refused to let up; C.B. Macpherson and Albrecht Wellmer pressed on questioning whether juries and town meetings were reserved exclusively for "political" matters, while the rest of supposedly public matters were social in scope, and therefore required no extended debate. Weren't social problems "unavoidably political problems...?"[53] Arendt responded that social questions have a double face; for example, there is no question that everyone should have decent housing, but whether the goal of decent housing should be achieved through integration is debatable and therefore, a political question. Essentially, she believes

in the universal human right of everyone to have safe housing, food, clothes, and rights guaranteed by law, but the means by which these goals should be achieved are not the stuff of her politics. Thus, Arendt thoroughly upholds her distinction and does not delve deeper into the real subtleties of the relationship between the issues she deems social, and the content she regards as political. Her conceptual framework does not allow her to see the difficulties of her restrictive, and seemingly arbitrary distinctions and categories.

Determining what is political for Arendt, and thus a subject worthy of public debate, seems to me the most difficult question. What is social by Arendt's standards and therefore ineligible to become a matter for public debate, is, contemporarily speaking, the standard "fare" of politics. Urban poverty, under-employment, black infant mortality, AIDS, crack; these are commonly interpreted as political issues that require political solutions. Such questions are often addressed by political action, through government assistance programs, and citizen group involvement. But according to Arendt's schema, these responses are symptoms of the problems with contemporary political life.

In his analysis, Bhikhu Parekh stresses the importance of Arendt's emphasis on distinguishing political life from the natural and animal world, and the political actor from the animal laborans. Parekh asserts that Arendt believed

that the Western tradition of philosophy was ill-equipped to confront politics because it addressed itself to nature's order and the universe, not human life.

Parekh notes that Arendt elaborates a kind of typology in which human beings are set apart from the natural world by their potential to begin something new, and by their capacity for freedom and transcendence.[54] Human life, in contrast to animal life, possesses the capacity to break the recurring monotony of the natural cycle to begin new things. Arendt's typology originates with human life being indistinguishable from natural and animal life, which is the condition of the animal laborans, or the laborer. The ability to master his animal nature and to fashion a human world through work, takes the individual one step closer to becoming an actor. Action manifests itself at the moment when the individual transcends nature and begins something new. For Arendt, the objective is to actualize what individuals are given at birth to the fullest, and to break away from the entrapment and monotony of the life process. Action is the crowning moment of an individual's life when the promise inherent in natality is realized. But in the final analysis, Parekh is highly critical of Arendt's tri-partite division of labor, work, and action because they "do not exhaust the vita activa...for many activities, such as making love, humanitarian work, and religion, fall outside them."[55] In addition, he finds it troubling that Arendt fails to address the distinctions and subtleties within each

of the three activities of the human condition and their relations to one another. For example, Parekh notes that earning a living has as much to do with sustaining life as laboring does. Similarly, there are different ways within laboring of making a living. The three categories are not mutually exclusive, i.e., an artist participates in all three.[56] And while plurality is an underlying attribute of action, the concepts of labor and work occur among others, in a plurality.

b. Where's the Action? Like Bernstein and Tlaba, Parekh argues that Arendt's theory of political action is not only unclear, but it is not apparent what actually exists in her political community besides alot of debate and discussion. He also claims that Arendt advances two different conceptions of politics, an agonistic view in her earlier thought, and a more participatory one concerned with public freedom and happiness in her later work. Of these strains Parekh says, "she capitalized on ambiguity and ascribed to participatory politics a degree of importance attributable only to agonal politics."[57] Parekh argues that Arendt's standard of greatness leads her to overinflate the glory of participatory politics because she judges it in terms of agonal politics. Not only is the Greek style uncommon in today's world, but the participatory politics of the councils hardly deserve the high praise she lavishes on them.

Parekh's analysis also faults Arendt for excluding economic and moral questions from her politics and for an apparent lack of conflict between principles. Essentially, he and other critics question where the issues, opinions, and disagreements are in Arendt's politics. What does an Arendtian politics boil down to but great words and deeds preserved for posterity by historians and storytellers? There is little conflict over the words and deeds despite Arendt's emphasis on individuals coming together in all their uniqueness, specificity, and difference. Parekh remarks ironically that the politics she envisions is unlikely to happen in the world she describes: "Political discussion here is almost like a leisurely academic seminar. Plato abolished politics; Arendt comes too close to doing so."[58] This telling insight suggests that Arendt's political community might be construed as utopian or cultural and aesthetic, but certainly not lively in the way that her descriptions would have us believe. It is as if politics were sanitized or non-existent.[59] Her concept of rulership may, in fact, contribute to this problem. Arendt envisions a relationship of equals fueled by a shared commitment to a political way of life, which involves placing the public world and good above narrowly defined self, or group interest. Essentially, she favors a government where there are no rulers and where a cooperative partnership between government and citizens exists. Most critics like Parekh, chide Arendt for her failure to account

for economic, social, and class elements that contribute to the content of contemporary politics. They quite rightly assert that Arendt's politics reflects little of the content and style of today's politics.

In short, critics charge Arendt with oversimplification and essentialism with regard to her politically defined concepts. Arendt's phenomenological descriptions, delineations, and recovery of politics result in a somewhat narrow and restrictive sense of the potential possibilities for action. As she describes the characteristics of action, she flattens them in her neglect of the relations and internal connections between phenomena.

For Arendt, real revolution is not the alleviation of misery or poverty through a series of social and economic programs, but a conscious act of establishing principles that preserve and protect a space for politics. A revolution is, quite literally, the constitution of political life with citizens contributing to its ability not only to survive, but to flourish. Revolution can lead to the establishment of authentic political life where people join together to create conditions for freedom in their daily lives. Breaking with the past by means of liberation, revolution, and founding are the steps which lead toward the creation of a space for freedom, the goal of a revolution. Arendt's political community is a small one with a kind of face-to-face quality. Her vision of politics is unlikely to take root in a large society since its size, scale, and

substance are drawn from life in the Greek polis. Added to the ambiguity, is the impracticality of her politics for a large, bureaucratic, and industrialized society.

c. The Arendtian Political Self. In Hannah Arendt - Politics, Conscience, Evil, George Kateb illuminates three characteristics that belong to the Arendtian political actor. First, he claims that her political actor reveals strengths such as courage, Machiavellian virtuosity, judgment, and eloquence. Second, the actor is a masked persona, an identifiable character, who like a performer creating a role, hides himself in order to reveal more. Third, the persona allows the actor to escape the self and for Arendt, freedom from the self is one of the most important indications of worldliness.[60] She maintains that the self can only be known through appearing to others, not through introspective self-perception which does not become part of reality in the space of appearances. To live outside oneself is to live for acting and being in the world. It takes courage to leave the private realm, but appearing in the world is, for Arendt, a main guarantee of its reality and our shared humanity.

Arendt regards the unmasking of the self as dangerous because it destroys the distance and the worldly space between people which are crucial in sustaining a political community. An unmasked persona is an unprotected self, and this self disintegrates into a self-consuming passion. The emotions compassion and love undermine the masks which are

necessary conventions in the political arena Arendt envisions. These masks keep the non-authentic self from appearing in the public realm where according to Arendt, it does not belong. She maintains that we can only know ourselves through others, and that the pursuit of selfish and personal motives, goals, and ends doom us to an unworldly, anti-political, and introspective fate.

Arendt maintains that love is fundamentally anti-political and unworldly. Though it is a disclosing activity, love, like introspection, "by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others."[61] The only in-between, or mediation that exists between lovers is the child, who is a reminder of worldliness and a sign of natality and beginning anew. Arendt says further,

> Love, by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces.[62]

Arendt substitutes respect for love as the proper mode of human relations in the political community because it is without intimacy or closeness and is mindful of the need for worldly distance. Love also remains outside politics because, as Ronald Beiner remarks, "it impairs judgment," which requires mediation and distance.[63]

Arendt's categorization of love as anti-political contributes to her desire to maintain the public/private

distinction which has ramifications for the potential of women's participation in the public realm. While amor mundi is love that sustains the public sphere, Arendt believes that romantic and other kinds of love die if displayed in public. These kinds of love can only survive in the private realm of the family or the mind. Thus, Arendt distinguishes between amor mundi (worldly love), and romantic (private love), which if used politically, becomes distorted. An example of love's distortion is the French Revolution; the revolutionaries' compassion and attempt to alleviate suffering became a perversion of love. For Arendt, this manifestation of love in the public realm is unfit. As Arendt's actors are male, and express their love as amor mundi, women, who she barely mentions except for pariah women, remain in the private sphere where love is intimacy. Because this love never appears in public, the potential for women to gain access to the public realm is extremely limited in Arendt's theory. The political action Arendt envisions takes place within the public sphere, and not in the private realm which, for her, is not only apolitical, but anti-political.

While Arendt is criticized for her model of action, for elevating ordinary participatory politics to great heights, she herself notes that the reason for Athenian glory, short-lived as it was, "was precisely that from beginning to end, its foremost aim was to make the extraordinary an ordinary occurence of everyday life."[64] Critics have commented on

Arendt's fondness for endowing political activity with greatness. They believe that her standards of greatness in politics are too high, her vision of what politics "should be" too grandiose. Arendt speaks, I think, directly to this criticism, standing by her belief in the sanctity and miraculous qualities of action. She says,

> ...action can be judged only by the criterion of greatness because it is in its nature to break through the commonly accepted and reach into the extraordinary, where whatever is true in common and everyday life no longer applies because everything that exists is unique and sui generis... Thucydides, or Pericles, knew full well that he had broken with the normal standards for everyday behavior when he found the glory of Athens...[65]

Arendt believes that the political community inspires individuals to achieve extraordinary things and to perform great deeds. Even in her shift from agonal, immortalizing politics to the participatory politics of the American Founders, she clings to the mantle of greatness as a significant element of action.

Arendt saw the council system as a viable space for action, one that would fill the void left by the Athenian polis. In On Revolution, Arendt focuses primarily on how the revolutionary spirit embodied in the American revolution can be preserved and channeled into establishing permanent spaces and institutions for action. Arendt believes that a commitment to the growth of democratic institutions and principles fosters public freedom and happiness, thereby increasing the prospects for genuine political action.

d. Styles of Action: Agonal and Participatory. In order to examine and scrutinize the content of Arendt's politics, it is necessary to look at what she believes creates the conditions for action; that is, what is political action's context. Arendt's examples of specific actors are sparse, for instance she mentions Achilles, Homer, Pericles, and Jesus, the last of whom she says discovered the human capacity to act.[66] The Periclean funeral oration serves as an agonal model of a courageous act. Arendt's idea of courage suggests that happiness requires freedom, and freedom requires taking risks, being courageous. She speaks more about human actors generally, rather than of specific individuals. Arendt's conception of actors hinges on an opposition between the agonal style of the Greeks and the participatory view of the American Founders.

While Achilles and the Greeks exhibit the agonal spirit, John Jay, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson represent the participatory view for Arendt. The agonal actor is characterized by a consuming drive to excel and to attain greatness through courageous acts in which the risk of death is often an element. This is in stark contrast to the American political ethos which Arendt so highly regards. The play of different opinions, persuasion, compromise, and legislation, the last of which the Greeks considered to be pre-political, are the standard fare of the participatory politics Arendt praises in On Revolution. However, despite

the divergence in her perspectives, her concepts of freedom and worldliness remain a common element in both. Founding, speaking, acting, and constitution-making lay the groundwork for freedom. Arendt would agree emphatically with Kateb's assessment of her idea of freedom, "Freedom exists only when citizens engage in political action."[67]

On Revolution is the source of Arendt's ideas about action from a participatory political standpoint. Simply distilled, Arendt's political action is political speech. Arendt states:

> Political action is therefore direct participation in the conversation of diverse equals, or more rarely, in written composition for the occasion. The typical result is a conclusion: a decision, a choice, a judgment, a rule.[68]

The model for Arendtian, participatory style action is her understanding of the council system. Arendt perceives the councils arising spontaneously as organs of the people, although they are comprised of a self-selecting elite who "...politically...are the best..." and who choose specifically to take responsibility for public business and happiness.[69] This notion of a self-chosen elite indicates the elitist, anti-democratic strain in her participatory view of political action. Arendt states:

> To be sure, such an 'aristocratic' form of government would spell the end of general suffrage as we understand it today, for only those who as voluntary members of an 'elementary republic' have demonstrated that they care for more than their private happiness and are concerned about the state of the world would have the right to be heard in the conduct of the business of the republic.[70]

Thus, Arendt maintains that certain individuals are more capable and more interested than others of placing the public business ahead of their own private happiness. Her political elite, or class, consists of a small group of people who act in the public realm and transact the public business. These actors, or leaders do not represent anyone but themselves, which begs the question of what everyone else is doing in such a community. In Arendt's schema there are those who are excluded from the practice of politics and who possess what she regards as an important "negative" liberty originating from Christian times, namely "freedom from politics."[71] Thus, Arendt's political elite takes up the business of politics while the rest of us are "excused." Instead of her version of political leadership, what we are left with is a system of representation, which while she is skeptical of it, is consistent with her belief in "freedom from politics."

Arendt is often appropriated by the left as a radical democrat because she describes a political community with democratic institutions, processes, and direct face-to-face participation. Her depiction of the council system and

admiration for the Jeffersonian ward system looks like the practice of direct democracy. Arendt's political world of conversations among diverse equals who disclose unique identities before one another sounds, at least on the surface, like direct democracy. However, despite such democratic overtures and indications, her notion of a self-selecting elite puts her in a different camp. It is, indeed, difficult to square her respect for participatory politics and the idea of people coming together, speaking and acting, with the formation of a self-selecting elite sprung from "the people," a nebulous and misleading concept in itself. Conservatives have appropriated her thought precisely for the elitism embedded in her notion of political leadership.

Thus, the politics she describes sounds democratic on some level, but is actually quite restrictive in substance and the scope of participation and leadership. For instance, not everyone is a participant/actor in the Arendtian political community. Nor does everyone get the opportunity to become part of the politically elite, leadership cadre. It is, in fact, unclear exactly who would be acting, except the spontaneously arising, self-selecting elite who are perceived as reliable guarantors of the public realm, trustees of public freedom. Arendt's rather limited view of citizenship makes it difficult to imagine other kinds of actors and action in the public realm. She ascribes public identity and political virtues to American

Founders Jefferson and Adams, clearly part of the political elite of their time. Although she values the diversity and differentiation of peoples in her political community, her sense of political participation is not inclusive; her idea of citizenship is limited.

Despite her apparent elitism, Arendt calls civil disobedience a form of contemporary political action and finds it praiseworthy. Civil disobedience is also a form of action that is inclusive, falling within a genuinely participatory framework. Her analysis of it is striking in contrast to her overall portrayal of action arising spontaneously, carried out by a self-selecting elite. Arendt defines civil disobedience as concerted, pointed, and sustained action that emerges from the shared agreement of a group. Organized minorities who share common opinions employ civil disobedience. The elements of spontaneity and a self-selecting elite do not exist in her description of civil disobedience. This is but one of several notable divergences in her thought on action. Still, the aspects of resistance, critique of current political practices, small-scale, and inclusiveness give civil disobedience as action, a distinctly Arendtian feel. For Arendt, civil disobedience is a legitimate means of exercising action and voicing protest to policies which organized minorities find harmful to the body politic.

Her admiration for the Jeffersonian ward system of elementary republics, which failed to materialize during the

creation of the American republic, stems from her concern with the potential for people to corrupt government with an infusion of private interests. The ward system proposed by Jefferson sought to divide the republic into wards, county, and state republics, and the union of each to form a 'gradation of authorities.'[72] Jefferson was interested in giving people more of a stake in public affairs, not merely providing them with a vote by which they could exercise their private capacity for citizenship. Rather, he sought to create spaces in which all people were members of the body politic and could be heard. Of Jefferson Arendt says: "What he perceived to be the mortal danger to the republic was that the Constitution had given all power to the citizens, without giving them the opportunity of being republicans and of acting as citizens."[73] For Jefferson, the ward system of government allowed everyone to experience and partake in a share of public freedom and happiness. But Arendt's respect for this system does not seem to extend into her own idea of politics. She clearly opposes full participation. It is perhaps her fear of mass society supplanting the possibility for an authentic political life that prevents her from endowing "the people" with the potential to act. This fear of the masses is a pervasive thread running through her ideas on participation. As masses, they are not equipped to act, but Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism implies that any potentially viable politics has to come to terms with their break-up. Only

when mass society is diffused, and individuals claim their ability to think for themselves and act with others, can an Arendtian politics emerge where care for the world is primary.

While Arendt is fascinated with the ward system, she maintains her elitist bias. She infuses the ward system with her preference for a leadership "class." The elite and democratic strains within her political community make her position difficult to ascertain. While Parekh interprets Arendt's consideration of town meetings, worker's councils, juries, and constitution-making as evidence of the breadth of her politics, he also counterposes his observation with a critical and skeptical impression:

> Arendt's concept of action is so abstract that it does not connect with the world. For her, action represents man's capacity to transcend nature and necessity...for her, action is not only a supranatural but a supernatural activity. In action man performs 'miracles,' creates the 'extraordinary' and the 'unpredictable,' and 'reveals' himself. Action appears from 'nowhere' and cannot be causally explained.[74]

With a mix of different impressions such as this one, it is no wonder that Arendt's action perplexes and confuses so many students of political theory. Parekh's observation also points to an irony; he asserts that Arendt's action is so amorphous, it fails to connect with the world and reality. This is ironic since one of the linchpins of her theory of action is rootedness in the world, the space of

human appearances. Indeed, Arendt may have thwarted a very central idea to her theory unknowingly.

Notes

1. Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?," Between Past And Future, (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 146.

2. Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 7.

3. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 7.

4. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 7

A disclaimer of sorts: I find Arendt's use of "men" where she speaks of political actors and acting problematic, yet I cannot change the term to something more generic. To do so would be to impose my own sense of gender relations on Arendt's categories, and thus, to misrepresent her point of view.

Readers find that Arendt's texts charactertize political actors as being exclusively male. Although she does not explicitly state that her actors must be male, it is suggested, or implied by her use of male subjects and pronouns. She does, however, include women in her analysis of the pariah. But there is a question in my mind as to whether in contemporary times, Arendt means to keep her political actors all male, or does she mean only to depict all actors against the descriptive background of ancient Athens and Rome?

Women are "permitted" to join men in being pariahs, but I have not yet established whether the pariah is an actor in the Arendtian sense; therefore, I cannot state that women are actors in Arendt's theory. Arendt's silence on the "woman question" and feminism leads one to the conclusion that she did not consider herself a feminist and was not concerned with feminist issues as such.

5. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 9.

6. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 9.

7. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 9.

8. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 222.

9. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 222.

10. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 230.

11. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 15.

12. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 21.

13. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 199.

14. Arendt, Human Condition, pp. 197-98.

15. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 198.

16. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 180.

17. Arendt, Human Condition, pp. 180-81.

18. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 192.

19. George Kateb, Hannah Arendt - Politics, Conscience, Evil, (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), p. 119.

20. Hannah Arendt, "On Violence," Crises Of The Republic, (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), p. 179.

21. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 247.

22. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 178.

23. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 237.

24. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 237.

25. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 220.

26. Bhikhu Parekh, "Hannah Arendt," Contemporary Political Thinkers, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 10.

27. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 17.

28. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 30.

29. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 31.

30. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 35.

31. Richard Bernstein, "Hannah Arendt: The Ambiguities of Theory and Practice," in Political Theory And Praxis: New Perspectives, ed. Terence Ball (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 151.

32. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 185.

33. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt - For Love of the World, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 327.

34. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 76.

35. Dante Germino, Beyond Ideology - The Revival Of Political Theory, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 140.

36. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 40.

37. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 45.

38. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 45.

39. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 46.

40. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 46.

41. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 39.

42. Gabriel Masooane Tlaba, Politics And Freedom - Human Will and Action in the Thought of Hannah Arendt, (Lanham, MD., New York, and London: University Press of America, Inc., 1987), p. 13.

43. Arendt, "What is Freedom?," p. 153.

44. Bernstein, "Hannah Arendt: The Ambiguities," p. 146.

45. Tlaba, Politics And Freedom, p. 185.

46. Arendt, On Revolution, (New York: Pelican Books, 1977), p. 60.

47. Arendt, On Revolution, p. 92.

48. Bernstein, "Hannah Arendt: The Ambiguities," p. 157.

49. Bernstein, "Hannah Arendt: The Ambiguities," p. 149.

50. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 73.

51. Hannah Arendt, "Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt," in Hannah Arendt: The Recovery Of The Public World, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 316-17.

52. Arendt, "Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt," p. 317.

53. Arendt, "Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt," p. 318.

54. Parekh, "Hannah Arendt," pp. 7-8.

55. Parekh, "Hannah Arendt," p. 16.

56. Parekh, "Hannah Arendt," p. 16.

57. Parekh, "Hannah Arendt," p. 18.

58. Parekh, "Hannah Arendt," p. 20.

59. A footnote by Ron Feldman in his introduction to The Jew As Pariah concurs. Feldman says, "In her political theory she aestheticizes and sanitizes politics to such an extent that one often wonders what the exact content of 'political action' really is." Ron H. Feldman, "The Jew as Pariah: The Case of Hannah Arendt," in The Jew As Pariah, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1978), p. 52, note #105.

60. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 10.

61. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 242.

62. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 242.

63. Ronald Beiner, Political Judgment, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 122.

64. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 197.

65. Arendt, Human Condition, pp. 205-6.

66. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 25.

67. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 2.

68. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 16.

69. Arendt, On Revolution, p. 279.

70. Arendt, On Revolution, p. 279.

71. Arendt, On Revolution, p. 280.

72. Arendt, On Revolution, p. 254.

73. Arendt, On Revolution, p. 253.

74. Bhikhu Parekh, "Hannah Arendt's Critique Of Marx," in Hannah Arendt: The Recovery Of The Public World, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 69 and 87.

CHAPTER III

ARENDT'S CONCEPT OF THE PARIAH

A. Who is the Pariah?

Having reconstructed Arendt's theory of action, its ambiguity and the requirements for political life, I turn now to the concept of the pariah. I will examine the pariah to provide an understanding that illuminates both its limits and its possibilities. Examined against the background of action, I will pose the possibilities that exist for a relationship between the pariah and political action. During the course of this chapter, I hope to glean from Arendt's writings in what sense she might have envisioned a relationship between the pariah and action. Nowhere in her writings does she make explicit whether a direct relationship exists between the two ideas, though she often implies that they share common characteristics; I want to examine those characteristics.

Arendt's The Jew As Pariah, The Origins Of Totalitarianism, Rahel Varnhagen, Men In Dark Times, and Eichmann In Jerusalem, among other works, function as touchstones which provide access to her thought on the complex issue of Jewish identity, a pariah identity, in the modern world. Arendt's concern for political action which pervades all of her work is developed, in part, through her understanding of the Jewish experience in the modern age. Her articulation of the pariah's identity and potential contribution to political life is colored by the interplay

of the Greek, Roman, and American aspects of her thought. She takes these inheritances seriously and they influence her thought on the pariah quite profoundly. In addition, her contributions to the debate over Zionism, Israel, and the future of secular European Jewry in the Diaspora inform and influence her ideas significantly.

The major tensions and conflicts that ripple through Arendt's thought rise to the surface within the context of her examination of the pariah. For example, there is the difficulty of reconciling Arendt's notion of masked actors with her plea for an unveiling of Jewish identity, revealing it as it is. Here, the parvenu's falsification of Jewish identity is fruitless, because it undermines a key requirement of politics Arendtian style; that is, the assertion and disclosure of a specific human identity, in this case, a Jewish identity. Acting in the public realm with what we are given by birth is Arendt's focus. She explores the facades donned by Jews eager to escape social prejudice through Rahel Varnhagen, the 18th century German-Jewess whose salon was a mainstay of both the Goethe cult and Romanticism during the time of Frederick the Great's enlightened despotism. Her meditation on Varnhagen's life, as well as her reflections on the attitudes of newly arrived Jewish emigres in America, are reminders that we cannot escape what is "given" by birth. To try to do so constitutes a renunciation of the human condition of life itself. The desperate attempt on the part of so many Jews

to assimilate constitutes, for Arendt, an escape from Jewish identity and a renunciation. Arendt denounces such an escape as a foolish ploy that fails to confront the Jewish question in political terms. The parvenu assimilationist views the issue in a social light, which is to grasp at ill-fated mechanisms to secure social acceptance that is not automatically guaranteed. Social acceptance, believes Arendt, does not necessarily provide rights or an opportunity for political participation. But she does not specifically offer the pariah a means of direct access to the public realm other than to acknowledge his dilemma as political, and in so doing, points to his potentially political characteristics.

Arendt's discussions of the pariah occur in the context of her Jewish writings which precede her work on action and are found in The Jew As Pariah, The Origins Of Totalitarianism, and Rahel Varnhagen. Arendt's concept of the pariah also enters into others of her works in relation to the public v. private and the political v. social distinctions. Arendt's characterization of the pariah, a social outcast and a Jew, depicts the plight of a marginal individual who does not fully belong anywhere. The social outcast she describes is the conscious pariah, a Jew with a critical consciousness, a rebel against his own people and the rest of society.

B. The Conscious Pariah

Although she does not explicitly state whether the pariah must in fact be a Jew, the concept, as she elaborates it, is bound specifically to Jewish experience in the Diaspora through the modern era. Her concept of the pariah is informed by the Jewish history of exclusion and worldlessness, and set squarely against the background of anti-semitism and totalitarianism. Arendt views all Jews as pariahs but distinguishes between those who she calls conscious pariahs, who are aware of their marginal status in Jewish society and in relation to European culture and who rebel against them politically, and the majority of parvenu Jews who attempt to assimilate and who, at best, are "accepted" only as exceptions. She believes that the majority of Jews sought the parvenu route as an attempt to hide their Jewish identities and to become assimilated. In Arendt's view, those Jews failed to cultivate a genuine political consciousness, to see their lives in broader political and legal terms. Arendt's biographer Elisabeth Young-Bruehl notes,

> In her terms, a Jew could be either a parvenu or a pariah, and she made it very clear in discussions and later in her writings that she thought only a pariah could develop a truly political consciousness, only a pariah could affirm his or her Jewish identity and seek, politically, to provide a place for Jews to live without compromising their Jewish identity...What astounded her about so many of the Jews she worked with was their failure to think politically, to realize the necessity for Jewish solidarity in the European--the world--crisis.[1]

Arendt's distinction between politically conscious pariahs and social climbing parvenus comes from Bernard Lazare, the French-Jewish lawyer and Dreyfusard. Lazare believed that the pariah must rebel not only against the dominant society that rejects him and mandates social uniformity, but also against the parvenu mentality. Lazare believed that the conscious pariah's opposition to the parvenu would begin to bring about a change in Jews' thinking about their status. Lazare's courageous support for Dreyfus engendered the wrath of Jews and non-Jews alike, thus he was a rebel on two levels. Arendt regards Lazare as the first person to translate the problem of the pariah into political terms:

> Lazare's idea was, therefore, that the Jews should come out openly as the representative of the pariah, 'since it is the duty of every human being to resist oppression...' he wanted him (the pariah) to feel that he was himself responsible for what society had done to him.[2]

The pariah of the pre- and post-Emancipation Diaspora lacked such a sense of responsibility and did not feel himself to be culpable, rather, he interpreted the fact of his Jewishness like an accident or a personal misfortune, and later, as an individual psychological attribute.[3]

The distinction between pariah resisters and socially malleable parvenus corresponds to Arendt's separation of the political and the social. According to Arendt, by narrowly

construing their problems as mere social adjustments to be made, parvenus could not enter the political realm as real actors/participants because they rejected their Jewish identities. Their private sense of themselves as socially inferior prevented them from entering the public realm. In contrast, Arendt says that the conscious pariah resisted the impulses of social inferiority with courage and independent thought. The conscious pariah understood his plight in political, rather than social terms. Lazare believed that a revolution needed to occur within Jewish life that would constitute a change in parvenu thinking and an awareness of the world. In this way, the pariah would become aware of his condition and fight it, rather than continuing to participate in, and thereby perpetuate a system of gross inequality.

Published in 1955, and written over a period of twelve years, Arendt's collection of biographical essays Men In Dark Times coincides with her concerns in The Jew As Pariah. Though not considered "traditional" political theory, these essays pay tribute to some great individuals, non-Jews among them, who exhibit a way of life akin to the conscious pariah's and who serve as examples of amor mundi and resistance. In this work, Arendt demonstrates her interest in broadening the concept of the conscious pariah, yet the thrust of the "tradition" is anchored firmly in Jewish Diasporic history.[4] The non-Jewish individuals she examines in Men In Dark Times: Isak Dinesen, Randall

Jarrell, and Karl Jaspers, among others, are representative "lights" in the dark times of the first half of the 20th century. While respecting the facts of the human condition, they also nurture the possibilities for its development. Arendt acknowledges the differences between them, but weaves a common thread between their love of humanity and their lack of estrangement from the world.

The conscious pariah who Arendt privileges possesses a critical consciousness, a capacity to resist oppression, and to see the Jewish question in political terms. Marginal, both with respect to Jews and to the dominant culture, the conscious pariah often takes unpopular and courageous stances publicly and wrestles privately with identity. Arendt's pariahs move in different worlds and experience tensions resulting from their European and Jewish identities, thus finding it difficult to be at home anywhere. They chafe against the predominantly Jewish parvenu mentality, and are shunned at times by their own people. As advocates for human rights and political resistance, their voices are often unheard and insights unheeded. These conscious pariahs: speakers, writers, storytellers, and rebels are accepted neither by their own people, nor by the European society Arendt refers to in her writings.

As stated earlier, Arendt's understanding of the Jewish experience in the Diaspora significantly informs and influences her view of an authentic political community.

Arendt generalizes from the Jewish experience of worldlessness and exclusion to envision a politics in which the pariah might participate. Botstein remarks,

> The Jews, once excluded from politics...could remain as they were historically (with all the characteristics of Jewishness in the secular European sense) and enter a new political realm... The redefinition of politics in her mature thought permitted Arendt to believe she could preserve the special character of the Jew while permitting him to leave behind his pariah status and participate as an equal with other free citizens in a pluralistic society.[5]

Thus, Arendt characterizes the Jews as a pariah people without a home and a place of belonging in the world, and therefore, unable to have a political stake. To join the world, so to speak, and become responsible for it, the pariah must fight for legitimately guaranteed political and legal identities which are, for Arendt, the two most important identities. Any possibility for political participation and amor mundi are not possible without these identities. Arendt relates that the Jews' Diaspora experience of wandering, worldlessness, close business ties with the state, and an overall cultural isolation all culminated in a lack political awareness and responsibility for the care of the world.

1. Worldlessness or Participation?

Arendt envisions a political space in which Jews appear as Jews without hiding their Jewish origins and changing their identities. She regarded America and Israel as two

places for genuine political participation and the proliferation of secular Jewish life. Arendt relates that even after Emancipation in Europe, there remained structural barriers which prevented Jews from claiming a stake in the political community. Social prejudices remained pervasive and limiting factors in the exercise of political, legal, and social rights which came about very gradually as a result of Emancipation. But perhaps more importantly, these liberties were ignored or suspended at will by governments. However, even the small amount of social and political relief that came as a result of Emancipation was not completely taken advantage of by the Jews, many of whom preferred to take the assimilationist route. In post-Emancipation Europe, after the decline of close court relationships, Jews maintained their distance from governments. And Arendt maintains that reforms during Emancipation did not automatically guarantee Jewish political participation. In Eastern Europe, the Jews remained just as downtrodden and discriminated against as they ever were. In the post-Emancipation Europe Arendt speaks of, there was little Jewish political participation with the exception of Zionist pariah politics and socialism.

Though she disagreed vehemently with the kind of state that was eventually established, the creation of Israel partially satisfied the political world she envisioned for the pariah. And although she was an ardent Zionist up until the founding of Israel, she eventually broke with Zionists

over the way in which Israeli nationalism manifested itself in a close tie between a people and a territory. The creation of Israel may have resolved the "physical" aspect of Jewish homelessness, but the pariah's collective identity remains profoundly marked in a historical sense by a spiritual homelessness. A collective sense of dislocation, displacement, and disconnection remain a part of the identity of the Jew as pariah. Homelessness remains a part of the mindset and frame of reference for Jews, and thus, becomes an element of their collective identities.

The pariah may now have a means of political participation and a place to call "home," Israel, but the pariah Jew has used the government and the system to create a new wave of homelessness. Arendt's thoughts in 1944-50 on the creation of Israel were incredibly prescient; she forecasted Palestinian homelessness and intense Israeli nationalism, and was opposed to Israel becoming a monolithic Jewish culture. Her support for a bi-national Arab-Israeli state made her an outcast in many influential Jewish circles and caused her to formally break with Zionists. The creation of the new state of Israel failed to satisfy Arendt's idea of a proliferation of secular European Jewish culture, of Jews living as one among many cultures. Thus, while the Jews are not literally homeless in the sense of having a homeland, and they are political actors, Arendt remained opposed to the strict identification of a particular people with a land. For Arendt, this

identification promoted a virulent nationalism and conditions in which, inevitably, her vision of politics would fail to take root. America, rather than Israel, became Arendt's prototypical political space and community for the pariah, a place where secular European emigre Jewry would flourish and prosper.

Arendt's concern with the world and political action underly the significance to her theory of being <u>in</u> and <u>of</u> the world, of acting in the space of appearances. This concern characterizes the pariah's dilemma; the importance of belonging, participating, and caring for the world suggest that the pariah needs to find a point of entry and access to politics. Arendt's analysis suggests that the pariah's exclusion and estrangment from the world need to be overcome by his claiming Jewish identity.

Arendt's concern with the parvenu embracing and asserting Jewish identity rather than evading it, stems from her deep commitment to worldliness and political action. For Arendt, in order to belong to the world, individuals must act with others in the public space to reveal and disclose their unique identities. To experience one of the aspects of action, the interplay of different opinions and beliefs, individuals must appear in all their specificity and present their particular views. An individual brings unique aspects of his identity to the public realm and these are accentuated and further differentiated through political action. In a sense, we are made more fully human in the

process of political action. Yet how does the pariah's disclosure of identity square with Kateb's interpretation of Arendt's masked actors expressing distinct personas and playing roles? While Arendt opposes the parvenu's deliberate masquerading of Jewish identity, she prefers some form of societal convention to none in the public space. For Arendt, there are authentic and inauthentic social conventions. Of the two, masks are authentic conventions that preserve distance between people and difference, which she believes counteracts tendencies toward mass uniformity. Therefore, she views conventions like masks, as safeguards of difference which also protect minorities from a potentially overbearing majority. The masks prevent private traits and interests from entering the public space where they can corrupt and interfere with the exercise of political action. If the pariah joined the public realm, it is likely that he would assume a persona or a role, thus conforming to Arendt's idea. But the pariah's initial commitment remains to acknowledge and embrace his given identity.

2. The Pariah's Characteristics

Humanity, "in the form of fraternity," is one of the characteristics of the pariah which Arendt says is commonly found "among persecuted peoples."[6] But this type of humanity is paradoxical as Arendt explains:

> This kind of humanity is the great privilege of pariah peoples; it is the advantage that the pariahs of this world always and in all circumstances can have over others. The privilege is dearly bought; it is often accompanied by so radical a loss of the world, so fearful an atrophy of all the organs with which to respond to it...that in extreme cases, in which pariahdom has persisted for centuries, we can speak of real worldlessness. And worldlessness, alas, is a form of barbarism.[7]

The warmth of the pariah's humanity evolved through the experience of persecution and oppression. However, Arendt believes that this warmth contributes to the disappearance of the world, the "interspace" between us.[8] When the space and differences between people disappear, there is little hope for the world and a diminished potential for political action. Expressed in the simple fact of being alive, warmth can bring out the best in people, but comes largely through the pariah's "privilege of being unburdened by care for the world."[9] Care for the world depends upon the maintenance of differentiation between all peoples which is expressed in the public space, and on freedom established by means of political action. Kateb maintains that,

> Freedom and worldliness can serve as the terms that stand for what Arendt prizes most. She regularly connects them; she sees them as dependent on each other. Freedom exists only when citizens engage in political action. Political action can take place only where there is worldliness--a common commitment to the reality, beauty, and sufficiency of the culture or way of life that sustains political action...[10]

Fearing the pariah's worldlessness and a loss of Jewish identity are Arendt's central preoccupations. Related to these concerns, is her strenuous criticism of the parvenu's denial of Jewish identity. This rejection amounts to nothing less than the substitution of things given (physei) for ready-made identities (nomoi). Her biography of Rahel Varnhagen illustrates this point; one is born with a destiny and certain facts of existence. To reject what is given is to reject the human condition, to alienate oneself from it and from oneself. Arendt relates this idea to her own life in a response to Gershom Scholem over the Eichmann controversy:

> I have always regarded my Jewishness as one of the indisputable factual data of my life, and I have never had the wish to change or disclaim facts of this kind. There is such a thing as a basic gratitude for everything that is as it is; for what has been given and was not, could not be, made, for things that are physei and not nomo.[11]

This basic gratitude constitutes the pariah's acceptance of the human condition, the facts of birth and unfolding destiny.

Arendt describes the characteristics that are "given" in the Jewish pariah identity in the essay "We Refugees" written in 1943, shortly after her arrival in the United States. "All vaunted Jewish qualities -- the 'Jewish heart,' humanity, humor, disinterested intelligence -- are pariah qualities."[12] The pariah is distinguished by a

capacity for speaking, thinking, and story-telling, all of which have sustained the Jewish people in their wanderings throughout the Diaspora. The pariah engages in critical observations of the world which spring directly from his exclusion from it. The pariah, a marginalized non-entity in relation to the world, speaks a discourse of the heart and mind and maintains a critical perspective and distance.[13]

The pariah brings an outsider's independent perspective to events and is free from the sway of powerful and entrenched interests and biases.[14] As an outsider, the pariah does not belong to conventional social groupings, and thus is not wedded to a particular set of interests; this, in effect, constitutes the pariah's freedom. Arendt argues that the history of Jewish exclusion has given the pariah a certain kind of freedom, though bought at a high price, as an outsider with no status. As an outsider, the pariah often risks taking an independent perspective which manifests itself in unpopular positions and stances. Unlikely to gain social acceptance in conventional society on his own terms, these risks hardly jeopardize the pariah who distinguishes himself from others through them. The pariah's unique stance contributes to the growth and respect for difference in the Arendtian political community. The pariah's speech and thought constitute a bridge between private life and a potential entry into the political realm. Arendt's view of the pariah identity renders it potentially useful to political action because it is a critical

identity. This, in effect, is the legacy of the conscious pariah, a critical stance engendered through exclusion and an acute awareness that the Jewish question must be politically construed.

The German-Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz perceives of similar pariah characteristics in the Jews. He maintains that the Diaspora gave Jews in particular, experiences of "Inquiring and wandering, thinking and enduring, studying and suffering."[15] The Jewish experience of suffering is, however, different than the kind of misery and suffering that Arendt ascribes to the French revolutionary era. The pariah's experience of suffering is a result of social persecution and prejudice, rather than a misery induced by poverty, deprivation, and squalor. The French revolution failed, claims Arendt, because of the people's pressing social needs and suffering forcing their way into the public realm. In contrast, the pariah's suffering resides within the collective identity of pariah people as a shared experience, rather than becoming a tool used to alleviate misery resulting from economic degradation. Though the pariah's moral embeddedness makes him attuned to the general suffering of humanity because he is denied access to the public realm, this empathy and his own suffering, pose no threat to the political.

In contrast, Botstein claims that thinking, a central feature of Arendt's "active politics was held to be a particularly European Jewish virtue."[16] And Arendt

maintains that Kafka's work characterized thinking as "the new weapon -- the only one with which, in Kafka's opinion, the pariah is endowed at birth in his vital struggle against society."[17] Kafka's depiction of thought as "an instrument of self-preservation," characterizes his understanding of the pariah according to Arendt.[18] This weapon is presented in contrast to the traditional pariah responses which entail a retreat from the world into the company of other pariahs, and the poetic withdrawal into the beauty and awe of nature where everyone is equal.

The pariah is a speaker and a thinker who has the potential to develop a critical and political consciousness of his marginal condition. Arendt's conscious pariah does not experience self-alienation; his awareness constitutes the exact opposite: an affirmation of unique identity and an acceptance of the facts of his birth. However, the conscious pariah is estranged from the world such as it is. Ironically, this estrangement and distance from the existing society foster a thorough-going critique of prevailing conditions. Distance from the prevalent norms of society engenders a critical perspective concerned with humanity and the world at large. Stories, satires, conversations, and dialogues that attempt to reconcile, and understand the world from the outsider's point of view emerge from the pariah's critical distance. But does this critical distance allow the pariah, ever the outsider, to fully enter into and participate in the public space as envisioned by Arendt?

The central issue here is whether the pariah can assume a public voice as an actor in order to create a "home" in the world and a place of belonging. Given Arendt's stress on being situated in the world and her insistence on Jews assuming a share of responsibility for its maintenance, it is clear that she envisions the pariah becoming a full and equal participant in political life. I think that she sees the pariah's participation as a significant contribution to a more vital and enlivened politics overall.

One place where the pariah finds acceptance and belonging is among diverse individuals in the environment Rahel Varnhagen sought to create in her 18th century salon. The salons of the late 18th century spawned a pariah culture of sorts outside conventional societal boundaries. These alternative public spaces encouraged dialogues among diverse equals and offered a measure of worldliness. Here rebels, storytellers, poets, writers, critics, and bizarre representatives of the intelligentsia and cultural literati, "exiles" from both the Jewish and non-Jewish sectors of society, found a rich sanctuary of cultural and intellectual ferment. The pariahs characterized by Arendt reject the route of assimilation and conformity and refuse exceptionalism, choosing instead to affirm their particular identities in and through their work and the salon gatherings. The salon corresponds to the public space that Arendt envisions for dialogue, debate, and thinking about politics. It is also notable that these alternative public

spaces were initiated mostly by women who had no other realm in which to experience discourse. In what follows, I will explore the lives of two women who represent different aspects of the pariah experience. As conscious pariahs, these women contributed to the growth and cultivation of worldliness among those traditionally regarded as outsiders.

We are now in a position to explore the pariah status described in the preceding section through the lives of two pariahs with whom Arendt was fascinated. How does the conscious pariah identity constitute itself in these two women? What can their lives tell us, if anything, about the pariah's potential for political action? Using these women as illustrations of the conscious pariah, I will examine the plausibility of an affinity between the pariah and political action.

I chose Rahel Varnhagen and Rosa Luxemburg as two representatives of the pariah "tradition" because they exhibit contrasting elements of the pariah identity, are from two different eras, and lived their lives quite differently from each other. Rahel exemplifies the private, introspective strain of the pariah's intense, personal struggle to reconcile the desire for social acceptance with a refusal to deny Jewish identity. Varnhagen had few contacts with whom she could experience the world and share her suffering over her uncertain identity and lack of status.

Rosa is a pariah of a different kind and temperment. While Rahel struggled to gain experience and status in the world, Rosa, with the exception of the time she spent in prison, was an extremely public person with access to the public realm. When she was not writing or in prison, she spent her time in the company of her peers and party members, speaking publicly, and generally "doing" politics. Rosa represents an exception in that most pariahs, and most women during the era in which she lived, remained in the private sphere of the family without access to the public realm. In what follows, I sketch briefly the lives of these two pariahs.

a. Rahel Varnhagen. Arendt's portrait of Rahel Varnhagen, the late 18th and early 19th century salon hostess, and Goethe cult organizer who was a major influence on the Romantic Movement, was written over a nine-year period. Arendt's first published book-length work not only illuminates the characteristics of a conscious pariah, but probes the complex inner struggle through which she comes to terms with her Jewish identity. It is a work of self-definition and exploration, a painfully rendered portrait of a woman laden with an unfolding identity drama, tortured by introspection and enlightened by the salon culture she helped stimulate.

As a young woman, Varnhagen kept her Jewishness at a distance through introspective, self-searching which filled a void in her life caused by society's rejection. But over

a period of years, Varnhagen overcame her tendency toward self-destructive introspection as she matured through the experience of the salon and other events in her life. As she experienced the world through the salon, her struggle with her Jewish identity assumed a less interior form.

Rahel had neither beauty nor wealth, and for women of this era in Berlin, these factors constituted a measure of power and status. With nothing to her credit but her tendency for passionate thinking and her sensitivity toward people, she drew a group of the most diverse and well-known figures of Romanticism into her salon for a brief period. Initiated during the late 18th century, a time of increased and intense attempts at assimilation among German Jews, Varnhagen's salon defied Prussian social conventions of the time. Her salon was considered unconventional both by Jews who were attempting to assimilate and by the rest of society, which viewed Varnhagen's gathering of major Romantic figures with a mixture of surprise and curiosity.

The typical pariah traits of "...humanity, kindness, freedom from prejudice, sensitiveness to injustice," all belonged to Varnhagen, whose intense struggle over her Jewish identity enabled her to better understand both the pariah and parvenu aspects of her personality.[19] While Varnhagen's parvenu mentality led her to the conclusion that she needed to escape her Jewishness in order to gain social entry and acceptance into Prussian society, she could not bring herself to entirely blot out her Jewish identity by

playing the necessary games. While she attempted to enter society by undertaking the role of the parvenu, Rahel clung stubbornly to the hope that luck, which Arendt says is "the natural miracle of pariahdom," would improve her lot in life.[20] Varnhagen struggled for years with her desire to join the ranks of fashionable society and her need to maintain her Jewish identity.

Arendt concludes that what made Varnhagen a conscious pariah was her increasing awareness of the importance of accepting the fact of her Jewish identity. Acceptance meant understanding that her destiny was inextricably linked to the human condition and the world. Rahel explored her pariah status by means of the salon and her various interactions with people. Varnhagen's struggles to be accepted by the society at large, as well as her gradual coming to terms with the fact of her Jewish identity without qualification make her a conscious pariah. Though her struggles assumed an interior form residing mostly in the realm of thought, they were also expressed through a rich and abundant correspondence and in the dialogues of the salon culture which constituted her world.

Varnhagen is a rebel because she could not reconcile herself to discarding her true identity through the construction of a new one. To do so would be to sacrifice and to deny her Jewish identity and her essential nature. Of this sacrifice, Arendt says, "One had to pay for becoming a parvenu by abandoning truth, and this Rahel was not

prepared to do."[21] Varnhagen's rebellious spirit, her establishment of a salon "counter-culture," and the activity of her thinking and speaking establish her as the conscious pariah Arendt privileges. Her independence and courage became a way of refusing to be an exception, shunning the relative comforts of the parvenu and the uncertain path of assimilation.

Established in opposition to conventional society, it was a place of acceptance for those who made a conscious decision, albeit one fraught with ambiguity, neither to assimilate, nor to deny their Jewish identities. Thus, Varnhagen's pariah world of the salon becomes a political space and constitutes "world" in Arendt's terms. The congregation of diverse equals in conversation, storytelling, acts of speech, recovery and remembrance with others becomes compatible with the practice and requirements of Arendtian action. These elements of the salon culture are political for Arendt and offer a means by which the pariah can participate in the world. Though it is an alternative public space, the salon offers all of the worldly elements that Arendt admires. Principles of mutuality and plurality manifest themselves in the atmosphere of the salon, in which recognition of emergent and diverse identities occurs through the give and take of speech. Spontaneity, unexpectedness, and the other attributes of action are also present in the salon. Language and dialogue constitute the link through which a

relationship between the pariah and political action can be consummated.

b. Rosa Luxemburg. In Men In Dark Times, Arendt extrapolates from J.P. Nettl's biographical account of Rosa Luxemburg. Arendt's essay illuminates Luxemburg's pariah status both within the socialist movement and the German Social Democratic Party. She notes with favor the critical role of Luxemburg's Polish-Jewish peer-group in maintaining a source of the revolutionary spirit in the 20th century.

Of Luxemburg, Arendt writes that "even in her own world of the European socialist movement she was a rather marginal figure, with relatively brief moments of splendor and great brilliance..."[22] Like other conscious pariahs Arendt reflects upon, she remarks that Rosa's role in the movement and the party was little recognized, and thus after her death, she remained a misunderstood figure in the history of Polish socialism. Arendt discounts most of the popularized accounts of Rosa's life, preferring to understand it through the context of the pariah.

Luxemburg, Arendt notes, was an unorthodox Marxist who sought above all else to improve existing world conditions which "offended her sense of justice and freedom."[23] Her support for revolution stemmed from her moral commitment to improve conditions for working people. This commitment compelled Luxemburg to lead a life in the public realm, wedded to the destiny of the world and to socialist political possibilities. Her interest was not only in the

working class, but in the larger world context of a European politics, and how the working class might fit into the world scene. Arendt praises Luxemburg for attempting to transcend narrow, nationalistic boundaries and for going beyond an exclusive concern with the working class to advance a "republican program" for the German and Russian socialist parties, which Arendt notes, was an idea that only strengthened her pariah position.[24]

The Polish-Jewish peer-group which nurtured Luxemburg captures most of Arendt's attention. The peer-group, says Arendt, embodies the revolutionary spirit which she believes has been a long neglected facet of Luxemburg's life. Much like Arendt's own peer group described by Young-Bruehl, Luxemburg's circle consisted of secular, middle-class Jews with German cultural and intellectual backgrounds. Arendt writes that Luxemburg's peer group shared similar political affinities, common moral standards, and

> stood outside all social ranks, Jewish or non-Jewish, hence had no conventional prejudices whatsoever, and had developed, in this truly splendid isolation, their own code of honor -- which then attracted a number of non-Jews.[25]

Arendt suggests that this moral code gave the group a kind of legitimacy and credibility. In the same vein, she asserts that Rosa's family, which did not have strong socialist leanings, risked everything to support her. This unique Jewish family background was a formative influence on the moral code of the peer group. Such a demonstration of

moral allegiance represents an unconditional trust and what Arendt refers to as "moral taste," or the kind of ethical code that formed the core of Rosa's beliefs. The code possessed principles of equality, "mutual respect and unconditional trust, a universal humanity and a genuine, almost naive contempt for social and ethnic distinctions were taken for granted."[26] The world of the peer group was "home" to Rosa; it supported her and provided her with a sense of solidity.

This background, often unnoticed by critics, is the framework against which the peer group spurned societally mandated distinctions and prejudices to create an opposition to conventional society and politics. Rosa built her socialist vision from the richness of her peer group and milieu. But despite her humanism, she maintained an aversion to the women's emancipation movement. Her distaste is striking during an era in which many progressive women were drawn into the movement. Like Arendt's own views on women's equality, Luxemburg believed that maintaining social differences between men and women was a good thing, making her a pariah among progressive women. But Arendt concedes that Luxemburg's outsider status was "not only because she was and remained a Polish Jew in a country she disliked and a party she came soon to despise, but also because she was a woman."[27] Thus, Arendt's women pariahs bear a further pariah strain because they are women.

A pariah status is felt more intensely by women because as women, they have extremely limited access to anything even remotely resembling a public space. For Varnhagen and Luxemburg, the salon and party respectively, provided alternative public spaces in which they could create and participate in the discourse of their particular eras. In Varnhagen's case, it is very significant that she initiated the idea of a salon in her home. Unable to participate in and experience the world, Varnhagen brought the world to her, and with her limited experience she fashioned a world out of individuals, who like her, were shunned by conventional society. In creating a pariah society Varnhagen and her associates established a place of belonging. The salon enlarged her experience and provided a space in which to act. In her private capacity, lacking in status as both a pariah and a woman, Varnhagen chose to act and to affirm the critical traits of the pariah consciousness, extending them to create an alternative space. The salon transcended the narrow boundaries of the conventional society that shunned the pariah, and encouraged independent and free thinking. Ideas were circulated, discussed, and debated. Political action's vigorous interplay of differences and opinions emerges within this context.

Similarly, Luxemburg's pariah politics in the SPD provided a forum for her entry into socialism and an opportunity to press demands on behalf of the downtrodden.

Luxemburg emerged as a leader of her party, something that might never have been possible in a conventional political party. Her moral fervor and commitment to promoting the cause of world socialism, constitute her decision to act in the world. Her decision was a choice made against isolation, passivity, and estrangement from the world. The choice she made to act and to resist, has something in common with Arendt's theory of political action. Although Luxemburg sought to alleviate human suffering and degradation, which for Arendt is clearly an anti-political impulse, she remains an example of a conscious pariah. Despite this tendency, Arendt suggests that Luxemburg's life was committed both to action and to preserving the revolutionary spirit, and morally praiseworthy because of her grounding in the Polish peer-group.

While Arendt credits Luxemburg's and the Polish peer-group's continuous opposition to existing political and social arrangements, she criticizes Luxemburg's late acknowledgment that the "secret of this defiance was willful noninvolvement with the world at large and singleminded preoccupation with the growth of the Party organization."[28] Arendt interprets this willful non-involvement with the world as a distinct loss of the world. Despite her criticism, Arendt links Luxemburg's maintenance of constant friction with society to the preservation of the revolutionary spirit, which she also associates with the pariah. Luxemburg's support for continuous opposition to

society provides us with the idea of the pariah consciously _choosing_ to act defiantly by spurning society, rather than being spurned. In this way, the pariah "steals" the prerogative of society by snubbing _it_, and by providing a critique of existing conditions. Luxemburg's belief in maintaining constant friction with society is grounded in the concept of the conscious pariah itself, and in her moral commitment, which is both an inherent part of her pariah identity and a "gift" from the peer-group. The pariah's heightened sensitivity and awareness of societally mandated discrimination and prejudice engenders a defiant reaction against it. The pariah's perspective on the idea of resistance to society stems directly from a moral commitment to opposing any kind of oppression.

Arendt's essays on Rahel Varnhagen and Rosa Luxemburg are attempts to come to terms with two complicated women. Her characterizations constitute a project of reclaiming and recognizing the pariah in various manifestations. Arendt views Varnhagen's and Luxemburg's experiences and life stories as artifacts that contribute to the world. Their lives provided what sense of immortality mere mortals can hope for in the way they experienced the world, in their deeds and words. Arendt herself becomes a chronicler of immortalizing action in her narratives on Varnhagen and Luxemburg. She contributes to the story of action by re-creating Varnhagen's life story as she might have told it and lays bare unacknowledged facts about Luxemburg in an

effort to make both live on in memory. This effort is Arendt's understanding of action, storytelling and remembrance. Thus, Varnhagen's and Luxemburg's lives constitute stories about the importance of identity. For Arendt, both Varnhagen and Luxemburg were conscious pariahs because they lived what they were given, affirmed their identities, and attempted to build a "home" in which they could act freely.

That Varnhagen and Luxemburg were women does not escape Arendt, but she does not hold them up as examples for the cause of feminism. Illustrating women as specifically political beings was not Arendt's central concern, though she considered the facts of their lives, such as Varnhagen's lack of sophistication, beauty, and wealth as political givens, not irrelevant personal data.[29] Arendt thought of women's issues in terms of her distinction between the political and the social; she felt that they should be part of a larger political struggle and opposed efforts to establish the demands of women as an interest group. In a similar vein, Rosa Luxemburg felt that the oppression of women, like that of Jews, would cease with the advent of genuine socialism.

c. Arendt's Political Identity. Having established Varnhagen and Luxemburg as representatives of the pariah tradition, I believe that it is appropriate from now on to refer to the pariah as a "she." It is also necessary to become briefly acquainted with Arendt's understanding of

identity. Arendt's emphasis on care for the world expressed through action is essentially an identity forming activity. Also crucial to her concept of political action is a public disclosure of unique identity. While the pariah's identity is a collective one, it is not, according to Arendt's schema, automatically public, and therefore not political unless there is access to the public space. In such a space, the actor has the opportunity to disclose a specific and individual identity through words and deeds which are recorded as stories and historical narratives. Through their preservation, the actor attains what little sense of immortality a human being can possess. As stated in Chapter Two, the actor becomes a distinct "who" as opposed to a "what," an assemblage of qualities that are reducible and quantifiable, and therefore reproducible, only by means of political action. Of the "who", Arendt says,

> This disclosure of "who" in contradistinction to "what" somebody is -- his qualities, gifts, talents, and short-comings, which he may display or hide -- is implicit in everything somebody says and does. It can be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity, but its disclosure can almost never be achieved as a willful purpose, as though one possessed and could dispose of this "who" in the same manner he has and can dispose of his qualities.[30]

The "who" is one of a kind, while the "what" consists of various personality traits that are mass defined and produced such as emotions, passions, and interests which

belong exclusively to an individual's inner life. The "what" has nothing whatsoever to do with the public realm. Arendt maintains,

> The moment we want to say who somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying what he is; we get entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a "character" in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us.[31]

The "who" is key for Arendt because she believes that the route to political action is through an assertion and disclosure of unique identity, and not in laying bare private aspects of a self that can never be known. To become a "who" through politics is for Arendt the highest existential opportunity.

If we can know the "who" publicly, Arendt is not as hopeful for the properties of the "what." She disdains modern subjectivity and is disparaging of psychoanalytic claims that we can know ourselves.[32] She argues that we can never know the self and that a search for self-knowledge yields self-hate and self-alienation. Yet this view presents the following difficulty: the pariah undoubtedly undergoes an intense, inner deliberation process in confronting the issue of identity. The pariah's soul-searching seems unavoidable. But what kind of identity will the pariah embrace: the socially ambitious parvenu or the pariah resister? Will the pariah become an ardent Zionist

nationalist, or the rebellious critic of society?

It would seem that the pariah, by virtue of her outsider status and unceasing battle over identity, would travel the treacherous route in search of self-knowledge everyday. Or perhaps, more accurately, the conscious pariah actually struggles with self-definition while the parvenu/assimilationist pariah runs away from such struggles by escaping from Jewish identity. But perhaps the consciousness of the conscious pariah is different from the self-knowledge that Arendt disdains because its critical content focuses outwardly on society, rather than concentrating in an inward and self-destructive manner. The conscious pariah's awareness and sensitivity are directed toward how she might fit into the world and contribute to it. In contrast, the <u>self</u>-conscious pariah concentrates energy inwardly on how she can change herself in order to conform to existing societal norms. The conscious pariah somehow achieves the delicate balance required to be conscious, without being destructively <u>self</u>-conscious in the way Arendt disdains.

d. <u>Unity or Disunity between the Pariah and Action</u>? In some ways the pariah's sensibilities are similar to the properties of action. Like the actor, the pariah takes courageous and independent positions, responds with a new and often alternative perspective to the unexpected, and is unfettered by biases, preconceived notions and interests. Also like the actor, the pariah attempts to make a break

with the old and encourage something new and unprecedented, and ultimately larger than herself. Both individuals envision a "whole," in which a new set of arrangements and thinking further a respect and esteem for the world. Both the actor and the pariah become caretakers of the world.

However, while both the pariah and the actor are bold and visionary, the pariah's role is more prophetic and defiant. The pariah is morally bound to resist oppression by rebelling against it wherever it exists, while the actor's moral obligation manifests itself in a basic love and respect for the world, amor mundi. And this may be the most important factor that separates the pariah from the actor. The pariah is especially bound to a moral framework because of a direct experience of oppression and injustice. By contrast, the Arendtian actor is not inherently obligated to follow a code of political and moral resistance. Ideally, her actor acts in accordance with amor mundi which is morally suggestive, but not strictly compelling.

The strongest argument against the pariah becoming an actor emerges within Arendt's own theory, by virtue of her continual emphasis on preventing private traits from entering the public realm where they may become fodder for politics. In Arendt's view, these private traits which include introspection and its corrollary, self-absorption, are dangerously corrupting if they infiltrate the public realm. For the pariah, the distinction between the political and the social manifests itself in the strict non-

admission of self-conscious practices into the public space which, according to Arendt, do not encourage the growth of a political identity.

Arendt's critique of introspection, which is reflected in her portrait of Rahel Varnhagen, weakens the likelihood of a relationship between the pariah and action. Her critiques of compassion and self-absorption also provide ample evidence of pariah characteristics and private traits which prevent political participation. Arendt believes that compassion destroys the worldly distance between people that sustains the world and political action; it is politically "irrelevant and without consequence."[33] Arendt argues that the content of political action, "talkative and argumentative interest in the world is entirely alien to compassion, which is directed solely, and with passionate intensity, towards suffering man himself."[34]

Kateb argues that Rahel Varnhagen is Arendt's "most extended meditation on the existential inadequacy of the inner life."[35] Arendt's narrative on Rahel Varnhagen's life illustrates how introspection and the interiorized world of self-consciousness ensure obfuscation of an authentic self, thereby tending to obstruct the process of accessing and affirming the self through participation in the world. Kateb underscores Arendt's concern with introspection and self-knowledge: "There is another kind of self-absorption equally fatal to the political realm...That is the concern of the self with the self, with its own

inwardness."[36] Since Arendt believes that we can never know the self she naturally thinks that "trying to be fulfilled in one's inner process is to misspend one's life."[37] This, essentially, describes Rahel Varnhagen and the Platonic philosopher.

Arendt's concern with introspection stems from its promoting the appearance of unlimited power in isolation from the world and reality. Indifference to the world is the consequence of introspection, in which the inner self becomes a shrine. She states:

> If thinking rebounds back upon itself and finds its solitary object within the soul -- if, that is, it becomes introspection -- it distinctly produces ...a semblance of unlimited power by the very act of isolation from the world...it also sets up a bastion in front of the one 'interesting' object: the inner self. In the isolation achieved by introspection thinking becomes limitless because it is no longer molested by anything exterior; because there is no longer any demand for action... Even the blows of fate can be escaped by flight into the self...[38]

In this state of mind everything has already been anticipated, thus foreclosing any possibility of spontaneous action; political action cannot occur where everything has been foretold. For Arendt, introspection spawns protective generalities without foundation, instead of truth and understanding of experience. These generalities do not reveal the person, or the "who," but signal a descent into personality and the "what." According to Arendt, meaningful political activity cannot occur in a public realm tainted

with emotions and feelings and a self-conscious, uncertain identity. Arendt maintains that the protective "comfort" of introspection poses a threat to political action in its preoccupation with the inauthentic self.

In contrast to the introspective pariah, the Arendtian actor finds a complete identity and becomes individuated through a commitment to a political way of life through action. This occurs only through a distinct loss of self or the "what," rather than in obsession with it. Rosa Luxemburg is the most obvious manifestation of the conscious pariah's commitment to a political way of life. Luxemburg represents a selfless public figure, a political person whose identity as a "who," an authentic self, emerged in her political practices.

But Arendt remains concerned about the pariah's inwardness and acute sensitivity to humanity which raises her fears about the human heart, the seat of suffering and compassion. Of the French Revolution she says, "Where passion, the capacity for suffering, and compassion, the capacity for suffering with others, ended, vice began."[39] Arendt defines the heart as

> a place of darkness which...no human eye can penetrate; the qualities of the heart need darkness and protection against the light of the public to grow and remain what they are meant to be, innermost motives which are not for public display.[40]

To the adage "Know Thyself" Arendt would say, "Thyself cannot be known, motives and goals cannot be foretold or anticipated." The idea of the heart as a guide to action is preposterous to Arendt; action is its own guide and its own end.

e. The Relationship between the Pariah and Action. Kateb's analysis suggests that a potential actor must live outside the self where an authentic identity and self will emerge. This identity is forged by participating in the world, therefore, a commitment to a political way of life must be made. If the pariah can live life in this way, there is a chance for participation. Arendt's analysis suggests that the pariah is capable of making a commitment to living outside the narrow confines of the self, but not always willing. Her analysis in the "The Jew As Pariah: A Hidden Tradition" of Bernard Lazare's attempt to instill the pariah with a consciousness of her condition notes, "The decisive factor was not the parvenu...Immeasurably more serious and decisive was the fact that the pariah refused to become a rebel."[41]

Also in this vein, Kateb speaks of Arendt's pairing of freedom and worldliness as key to the emergence of genuine political action, and thus, a route to participation. The commitment to worldliness, however, must first be established; that is, a life outside introspection. Underscoring Arendt's emphasis on worldliness, Kateb maintains,

> To live outside oneself and for the sake
> of acting from a principle is to live freely,
> free of the necessities of body, heart, and mind.
> To live with others loyal to the same or to a
> different principle is to live in a free world.[42]

In relation to the pariah, Kateb's interpretation of Arendt implies that the pariah can participate if she takes an interest in the world and the risk of a life outside introspection. The question then, becomes whether or not the pariah is capable and willing to make a commitment to worldliness, and whether she can be free enough of "body, heart, and mind" in order to cast her lot with the world.

The pariah's commitment to worldliness emerges in the form of a resistence to oppression and injustice. By choosing to act on the awareness of oppression and discrimination, the pariah's worldliness comes to light. In choosing to emerge from the darkness of the self by acting on a moral principle, the pariah joins others in caring for the world. Thus, in addition to this moral commitment, the pariah's speech and storytelling abilities, as well as the founding of alternative spaces all constitute a connection between the pariah and action.

The challenge where the pariah is concerned is to participate in the public realm and to contribute something to sustaining the world. But does the pariah cease to be a pariah if the commitment to worldliness is made? This question hinges on the assumption that the elements which exclude the pariah are the same ones that make the pariah a

pariah. According to Botstein this challenge is overcome, or at least negotiated, by infusing the pariah's capacity for speech, storytelling, creation of alternative spaces, and resistance to oppression, into the public realm. These pariah contributions, gifts to the world, in their own way, constitute political action and correspond to Arendt's idea of a political community. Affirming the positive aspects of the pariah identity by admitting them into the public space, leaving behind the lack of status and sense of social inferiority, do not necessarily mean that the pariah ceases to be a pariah. On the contrary, the pariah's sense of collective identity is enriched by an affirmation that materializes and is validated publicly. With this affirmation, the problem of the pariah's lack of status -- political, legal, and social, would be left behind.

Leon Botstein's essay "Liberating The Pariah: Politics, The Jews, and Hannah Arendt" provides support for a relationship between the pariah and action. Botstein argues that a shift takes place in Arendt's thought from a sharply critical view of the private, to a more sympathetic one that lends support to the contribution of pariah characteristics in the practice of political action. Botstein argues that Arendt "...saw, in America, the authentic prospect of a political life (as she conceived politics) for Jews."[43] She understood America as a place where Jews could appear as Jews, shedding the pariah's lack of status without

discarding positive, secular European pariah qualities. Of the shift in Arendt's thought he states,

> The redefinition of politics in her mature thought permitted Arendt to believe she could preserve the special character of the Jew while permitting him to leave behind his pariah status and participate as an equal with other free citizens in a pluralistic society.[44]

Arendt's later thought frees the private traits of the pariah from the formerly pejorative sense with which she associated them, launching them formally into the public realm. Botstein maintains that her emphasis on individual speech and action "could allow a particular Jewish character, originally developed in pariah conditions to continue."[45] He argues that Arendt envisions a secular Jewish culture in America, much like the European one that she left behind. Botstein asserts that her interpretation of post-Emancipation era anti-semitism, the European Jewish secular tradition, Jewish nationalism, and American politics, culminate to establish the "origins" of her theory of action.

Speech and thought constitute the bridge between the private sphere and the public realm for the pariah. For Arendt speech _is_ political action and also a pariah skill which can contribute to the restoration of politics. Arendt, Botstein advances, believes that Jewish political

participation in a confederation of peoples could eradicate pariah status without destroying the uniqueness of secular European culture. Botstein underscores the significance of language to participation in the Arendtian political community,

> A political renaissance for modernity which utilized the traditions of the Jewish pariah became Arendt's normative objective for collective life in the modern world. If political action could be centered on the use of language, the once pariah European Jew could emerge as an exemplar of political participation.[46]

According to Botstein, the pariah's contribution to political action is language; through language the pariah is individuated, and connected at the same time to the public realm and action. Through speech, the pariah contributes to the restoration and reinvigoration of politics and the revolutionary spirit. In effect, Arendt transfers the exceptional elements of Jewish history and pariah culture and places them into a political context where they are generalized. Botstein says, "The European history of the Jewish pariah, the legacy of a nation without a home or politics, became in Arendt political action in the ideal; the Jewish experience generalized."[47] If this is accurate, the pariah establishes a solid relationship with action, in which pariah characteristics are infused into the public realm, and the lack of status which marked her earlier, is left behind.

Notes

1. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt - For Love of the World, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 121.

2. Hannah Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," in The Jew As Pariah, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1978), p. 77.

3. Hannah Arendt, The Origins Of Totalitarianism, (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 66.

4. Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah," p. 68.

5. Leon Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah: Politics, The Jews, and Hannah Arendt," Salmagundi 60 (Spring-Summer 1983): 96.

6. Hannah Arendt, "On Humanity in Dark Times," Men In Dark Times, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), p. 13.

7. Arendt, "Dark Times," p. 13.

8. Arendt, "Dark Times," p. 13.

9. Arendt, "Dark Times," p. 14.

10. George Kateb, Hannah Arendt - Politics, Conscience, Evil, (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), p. 2.

11. Hannah Arendt, "'Eichmann in Jerusalem' - An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt," in The Jew As Pariah, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1978), p. 246.

12. Arendt, "We Refugees," in The Jew As Pariah, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1978), p. 66.

13. In Refugee Scholars In America - Their Impact and Their Experiences, Lewis Coser notes the importance of refugee scholars' marginality in their new environments. He says,

> The refugees could deprovincialize the American mind and upgrade American culture largely because they remained marginal. This made it possible for them to throw a novel and more searching light on American society and scholarship than was usually the case with those born and bred in the pieties of their tradition.

Lewis Coser, Refugee Scholars in America - Their Impact and Their Experiences, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 10.

Arendt's writing on the subject of Jewish identity, the history of anti-semitism, and the pariah are very strongly influenced by her upbringing in a secular, middle-class German-Jewish family and her gravitation toward German-Jewish intellectual circles as a young woman.

14. It is interesting to note that in a dialogue on the 1960's U.S. student movement Arendt considers universities, like pariahs, to be outside the sway of powerful interests. She says, "Let us ask what in fact is student freedom. The universities make it possible for young people over a number of years to stand outside all social groups and obligations, to be truly free." She fears the escalation of violence within the movement claiming that if the students destroy the universities, no such position of "independence" will exist for them, and hence, no rebellion against society. But her statement is troubling in its suggestion that students do not face powerful, vested interests within the university.

Hannah Arendt, "Thoughts on Politics and Revolution," Crises Of The Republic, (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), p. 208.

Voicing her concern over the destruction of the universities, Arendt claims in a footnote to her essay "On Violence," that universities' "main social and political function lies precisely in their impartiality and independence from social pressure and political power." In this way she points to the university as a pariah and a political gadfly. But her assertion that universities, like pariahs are free from entrenched and powerful interests is quite preposterous! Her analysis lacks substantiation and depth on this point, failing to take into account the existing tensions and conflicts between the universities and political interests, elected officials, government agencies, private industry, etc.

Anyone who is involved with the university today is aware of its powerful ties with government defense contracts, private firms, biotechnology, CIA and ROTC recruitment, etc. The list is endless. State institutions in particular are increasingly reliant on such sources for funding programs that might not otherwise receive support. Arendt goes astray on this point. Her pariah ideal for the university does, however, manifest itself in critique and rebellion led from within the institution by students and members of the university community. But that is also to say that both the sway of powerful interests and critique can be found in the university. Students are subject to both, if the university is nurturing and honing its members' critical thinking skills. But to assert as Arendt does that

universities are somehow free from interests is completely inaccurate and very far afield.

Hannah Arendt, "On Violence," Crises Of The Republic, p. 189, note #25.

15. Heinrich Graetz, "The Diaspora: Suffering and Spirit," Ideas of Jewish History, ed. Michael A. Meyer (New York, 1974), pp. 229-231, note #51, cited by Leon Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah," p. 95.

16. Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah," p. 95.

17. Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah," p. 83.

18. Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah," p. 83.

19. Arendt, Totalitarianism, p. 66.

20. Arendt, Totalitarianism, p. 68.

21. Hannah Arendt, Rahel Varnhagen, (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), p. 205.

22. Hannah Arendt, "Rosa Luxemburg 1871-1919," Men In Dark Times, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), p. 34.

23. Arendt, "Rosa Luxemburg," p. 38.

24. Arendt, "Rosa Luxemburg," pp. 51-52.

25. Arendt, "Rosa Luxemburg," p. 41.

26. Arendt, "Rosa Luxemburg," p. 41.

27. Arendt, "Rosa Luxemburg," pp. 44-45.

28. Arendt, "Rosa Luxemburg," p. 51.

29. Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich, "Hannah Arendt: Thinking As We Are," in Between Women, ed. Carol Ascher, Louise DeSalvo, and Sara Ruddick (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p. 181.

30. Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 179.

31. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 181.

32. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, pp. 175-76.

33. Hannah Arendt, On Revolution, (New York: Pelican Books, 1977), p. 86.

34. Arendt, On Revolution, p. 86.

35. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 6.

36. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 5.

37. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 5.

38. Arendt, Rahel Varnhagen, p. 10.

39. Arendt, On Revolution, p. 81.

40. Arendt, On Revolution, p. 96.

41. Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah," p. 78.

42. Kateb, Hannah Arendt, p. 13.

43. Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah," p. 76.

44. Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah," p. 96.

45. Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah," p. 82.

46. Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah," p. 79.

47. Botstein, "Liberating The Pariah," p. 95.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A. A Relationship between the Pariah and Action

The comments of Arendt and others on the pariah suggest that neither an "escape" through assimilation, nor a total reconciliation of Jewish identity are likely. For Arendt, escape through assimilation, and exclusion in the form of Zionist nationalism represent two extremes, both fraught with difficulties. The pariah identity is worked through precariously, at best. Arendt's views suggest that living with the contradictions and the inherent ambiguities may provide some direction in the pariah's search for a home and status. Embracing the contradictions may foster the critical inquiry and engagement that promotes an interest in the world and political action. This critical engagement emerges in the conscious pariah's resistance to the oppression of conventional society.

Though it would appear that Arendt's political community is quite restrictive, I believe it is plausible to claim that a relationship exists between the pariah and action. Although Arendt does not posit the existence of such a relationship, there is evidence to suggest that her concept of the pariah informs her theory of action. The pariah can be seen as a participant, and a leader in Arendt's political community even though it is both elusive and restrictive. The pariah's compatibility with action as

defined and characterized by Arendt, hinges largely on the faculty of speech which, in her terms, constitutes political action.

In Arendt, one can also get a good idea about what constitutes the political by understanding what it excludes. The excluded elements manifest themselves in the introspective side of the pariah which, if admitted to the public space, thwart the kind of authentic politics Arendt envisions. The pariah as pariah, that is, the pariah who fails to become a conscious pariah, is excluded from Arendt's public realm. Her politics does not give the pariah who fails to become conscious of her position, and to nurture this consciousness in the form of resistance and critique, an opportunity to join the public space. Arendt's hope for the pariah's affirmative and critical qualities outweighs her concern over the potential encroachment of introspection and the other self-oriented traits into the public realm. The conscious pariah's moral grounding, a capacity for critique through the preservation of distance, expression through language, and a willingness to confront and resist oppression, all contribute to the enlivening of Arendt's political action. Arendt's concerns with aspects of personality, and introspective self-searching invading the space of action, can be held at bay to consider the pariah's positive characteristics. That is, those which are compatible with action, are world-enhancing, and which make

a positive contribution to the sustenance and enrichment of the public space.

In Chapter Three, I have outlined in some detail the elements of the pariah's identity which are compatible with the properties of action. I have discussed the pariah's unique moral grounding and commitment which are instrumental factors in acts of resistance to oppression. These acts, are in fact, forms of action. But do the responses offered thus far resolve the problem that this study sets out to explore? Namely, can the problem of the pariah, a lack of public space and feeling of caring for the world, two elements which Arendt values highly, be resolved by providing the pariah an opportunity to participate in the public space? My response to this question is yes, the pariah will find a home in the world if she first becomes attuned and conscious to her lack of status. Once this consciousness is secured, the affirmative and critical pariah traits can be understood while the negative ones can be left behind. If the pariah acknowledges her plight as political, there is a chance for participation in Arendt's vision of the public space. Participation may also come in the form of small alternative, non-mainstream, public spaces, something altogether different from what Arendt envisions. But it is clear that only with the cultivation of a critical consciousness does the pariah have any hope of acting in the Arendtian sense. The pariah's continuous opposition to, and critique of injustice and oppression

emerge even more powerfully once she claims a legitimate and authentic stake in the public space.

Within Arendt's work, the connection between the pariah's speech and action culminates in the conversation and storytelling of the salon. In the political space of the salon, these acts of narrativity and discourse, recovery and remembrance, allow the story of the authentic self to be told. This story, told in the presence of others, becomes the story of action, an example of a life projected into the world rather than an experience of estrangement and withdrawal. Through the action of storytelling, an individual's unique identity is illuminated. It is Arendt's belief that we glean meaning and understanding from these stories of identity. The disclosure of unique identities in the public space also ensures and protects the notion of difference, an important concept for Arendt. The pariah's distinctive character traits, those which affirm a critical identity, are preserved and projected into the public space. While the pariah's collective, and public identities emerge in spaces like the salon, the pariah's individual identity also appears, thus working further toward ensuring the preservation of difference in the political community. The relationship between the pariah and action manifests itself when the pariah's introspection gives way to a new understanding of self and world. For Arendt this new understanding emerges through storytelling and language

which are the relation of experience and understanding, and essentially, public acts of disclosure.

With the extension of pariah traits into Arendt's public space and speech as political action, the pariah's identity is affirmed and accepted as one among others. As I stated earlier, this does not necessarily imply that the pariah is no longer a pariah upon entry into political life. The pariah's collective identity remains intact. Formed through a common history and experience, it is an identity shared with others of similar backgrounds and inheritances. The positive characteristics of the pariah identity adhere and are accentuated in the public space, but the negative status changes. This negative status is shed for an enlargement and a generalization of the positive features of the pariah identity. The pariah finds a home either in the construction of alternative public spaces or in the conventional political arena where she continues to function as a gadfly and a critical resister. Botstein comments that Arendt generalizes the pariah experience, extending its significance until it comes to play a critical role in political life. It is possible to see Arendt transposing affirmative pariah qualities to the public realm where they contribute to its growth and enrichment. Arendt seeks to bring the pariah into the world without fundamentally changing the positive traits in her character. Botstein's remarks suggest that the pariah's essential character is not

compromised by participation in the public realm, and that on the contrary, it flourishes in a diverse community.

Arendt's Rahel Varnhagen, her Jewish essays in The Jew As Pariah, and The Origins of Totalitarianism, precede her work on political action. These formative writings on the pariah and related themes contribute significantly to her later formulation of the theory of action. Botstein argues that Arendt's depiction of speech as political action was made by way of her study and understanding of the Jewish question. The Jews' quest throughout the modern era for freedom from prejudice and a cessation of their experience of powerlessness are significant to her theory of action. Her concern with the statelessness, worldlessness, and homelessness of the Jewish people stems from her interest in securing them legitimate political and legal identities during the pre- and post-WW II eras in Europe. For Arendt, a truly human individual cares for the world and contributes to its artifacts by participating in political, hence, worldly acts. Only by acknowledging the legitimacy and worth of these identities did Arendt think that the pariah would be able to assume a stake in maintaining a commitment to public life. A legitimate status is gained by entering into, and participating in the affairs of the world, which for Arendt, are first steps toward the exercise of political action.

B. The Pariah: Political Outsider or Political Insider?

If it is plausible to claim as I have throughout this study, that the concept of the pariah informs Arendt's theory of action it is, then, reasonable to advance that this concern can be extended to the problem of political outsiders more generally. Her overriding concern with the sustenance of amor mundi and the preservation of worldliness suggests that finding points of access and entry into the world for the pariah and the political outsider is a desirable and appropriate activity. The pariah's capacity for speech, storytelling, critique, moral sense, and resistance to injustice contribute to a more enlivened political community, if put into practice in the public space. In order to gain legitimacy and status, the pariah must employ these capacities, or remain a political and social outsider. Though Arendt's idea of citizenship and leadership are limited, her work suggests that the pariah need not remain a political outsider. Arendt's political vision, her reading of the American founding, and interpretation of what Israel could be, all point to her interest in creating access to the public realm for the pariah. The possibility of the pariah's contribution to, and enrichment of the public space are every bit as important to her theory as action itself. Her concept of political action is meaningless without actors, the agents who bear a responsibility for carrying out the public business.

The pariah's moral responsibility would be a welcome complement to, and enhancement of the Arendtian actor, who as agent, acts without regard to outcome. Without a moral commitment, this actor bears no responsibility for the action. The only way out of this dilemma, as I discussed earlier, is to acknowledge Arendt's commitment to the world (amor mundi), as an inherently moral one that her actors are predisposed and wedded to. But for those who still find morality lacking in her sense of action, I would argue that the pariah's moral underpinnings can be considered a real contribution to the practice of political action.

In the public space, the pariah gains status and legitimate standing in the political community while managing to retain the positive traits which characterize her unique collective identity. While the pariah's lack of status outside the public space and unique, collective identity combine to make the pariah a pariah, Arendt clearly favors discarding this negative status and affirming positive pariah traits through the practice of political action. These characteristics which make up the collective identity of the pariah, contribute to the diversity and quality of political discourse. Except for acquiring a legitimate status, the pariah's essential nature and identity remains unchanged. As a new member of the public space, the pariah retains the memory of her previous lack of status which helps to ensure a continued critique from a point <u>inside</u> the public space.

Botstein's comments point to Arendt's concern with the preservation of a collective pariah identity by admitting the pariah into public life. The extension of pariah traits into the public realm would encourage the specifically Jewish European, secular character that Arendt speaks of to continue, its existence guaranteed through the pariah's participation in political action. Arendt wants the particular collective identity and character of the pariah to take root in a public life that ensures a diversity of collective <u>and</u> individual identities. According to Botstein, Arendt's theory of action constitutes an extension of the Jewish pariah experience into a universal norm. While the pariah experience of speech, thought, and critical inquiry is nurtured in conditions unique to the political outsider, these conditions can also be created inside the public space. Arendt's political community seems not to take the pariah out of the pariah, so to speak, but to generate and enlarge the possibilities for the emergence of unique identities through action.

Like the dissidents and former political outsiders who currently lead the newly emerging democracies and multi-party systems in Eastern and Central Europe, Arendt's conscious pariahs participate in and become leaders in public life. Once outsiders, banned, persecuted, and interrogated, these pariahs have become leading figures in their countries' new governments. Given the current dynamics and political openings in these countries, which

have no longstanding democratic and pluralistic traditions, Arendt's concept of the pariah and its contemporary relevance are considerable.

In her essay "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," Arendt characterizes four individuals whose lives and works exemplify the plight of the conscious pariah: they are Bernard Lazare, Heinrich Heine, Charlie Chaplin, and Franz Kafka. Of the four, the plight of Kafka's character "K.," in The Castle, most resembles the current situations of pariahs, former opposition members who now find themselves cast in the role of political leaders. Arendt notes that The Castle is the only Kafka novel in which the hero is clearly Jewish, and though he is not marked by any specifically Jewish attribute, his struggle dramatizes the typical plight of the assimilationist. K's dilemma is that he is neither a member of the village, nor does he belong to the Castle: put simply, he "fits" nowhere. Arendt characterizes K. as Kafka's man of goodwill who struggles to attain basic human rights and to determine his own destiny in a difficult situation. He wishes for no special dispensations from the Castle, and he refuses to accept the villagers' superstitions. K. thinks for himself and makes his own way along the ambiguous path toward assimilation on his own terms. One man's life and struggle for basic human rights becomes a symbol for the villagers. After he dies, they realize that they, too, can insist on their human rights and dignity.

The plight of K. shares something in common with the pariah as dissident in the contemporary political configurations in Eastern and Central Europe. The new government leaders in these countries are attempting to build a respect for human rights into their societies. They are attempting to show people who are used to accepting their fates blindly, who had little or no recourse against the things that happened to them, that they have the right to expect more and that they are ultimately, responsible for the health of their societies. Most importantly, the pariah leaders maintain that the corruption and lies with which people have lived for years, must be cleansed from political life in order for them to believe that they do have a real stake in the decision-making processes of government. The vast majority of people in these countries have little experience in establishing a democratic system of government and are learning that building a democracy takes work; it takes time to establish legitimacy.

1. The Pariah's Changing Critique

Perhaps it is true that the nature of the pariah's critique changes in countries where dissidents, members of the opposition and underground are now holding power in their new, or soon to be elected governments. How could their critique not be affected when at one time, as outspoken dissidents and opposition members, they were imprisoned for their views? Vaclav Havel's example illustrates the dramatic revolution of a pariah who has

risen to the ranks of the new political leadership in his country in just a few months after being released from prison. Havel is a pariah, who in Arendt's terms, helped create the new public space and also very much retains his pariah features. The consequence is a change in status for everyone who was oppressed by the Communist system and a growing understanding of democratic tools and principles. It is difficult to say how his critique has changed as a result of his change in position, but there is little doubt that the memory of one's pariah experience cannot easily be erased or forgotten. Havel and other leading dissidents, once political outsiders, now legitimate insiders, maintain a consciousness of their former pariah statuses as new leaders. They also publicly affirm positive pariah characteristics, legitimating them politically for everyone.

As a leader of a newly formed government, the dissident's ideas and opinions are now legitimated through the initiation of democratic processes and principles such as human rights, respect for law, and free, periodic elections in which representatives are popularly elected. These pariah leaders: dissident intellectuals, trade unionists, artists, and former members of the underground, cannot help but retain in memory what most people's lives were like as indistinguishable drones in a one-party communist system. The consequence of a country of pariahs is self-alienation, and an estrangement from the capacity to establish and participate in some kind of nourishing public

life. Such a possibility does not exist for the pariah as pariah. The consequence of this same group of people resisting their oppression and forming new parties and governments, and pressing for democratic reforms, is that all the various pariah peoples will gain a legitimate political status. The memory of what their lives used to be, as well as the processes by which they rebelled against old ways, constitute the maintenance of the pariah consciousness. The pariah's moral embeddedness and ethical resistance are the key features that live on in this consciousness. The pariah as dissident's experience of living without basic human rights and freedoms, being under surveillance, being banned, labeled subversive, interrogated, and generally, being oppressed in life and work, is a virtual guarantee that her basic character will remain intact.

It is the preservation of the memory of this experience that infuses morality into the new system and prevents its possible corruption. The nature of the dissident's critique of the political system and the structure of society may change as a result of an elevation in status, participation, and leadership in the government, but the fact of its existence and perpetuation are maintained. Vigilance through critique and opposition continue in the new government, and coincide with Arendt's concept of amor mundi, which requires the preservation of a certain kind of distance of which both are a part. Distance is embedded in

Arendt's notion of care for the world. And the pariah, whether she assumes political leadership or not, may never feel completely comfortable in the world. Critic James Bernauer associates this sense of discomfort with Arendt's concept of amor mundi, whose demands he claims involve "the preservation of a certain distance, the willingness not to conform, the permanent status of what Arendt called the conscious pariah."[1] Thus, as much as responsibility and care for the world, distance and resistance are integral elements of amor mundi. The pariah's distance and resistance foster critique and correspond to Arendt's notion of caring for the world.

This is, perhaps, how the problem of the pariah is resolved. Arendt's concern for being situated in the world and unestranged from it, is resolved by deploying the affirmative characteristics of the pariah, and also by understanding the notion of distance embedded in the concept of amor mundi.

2. The Contemporary Significance of the Relationship between the Pariah and Action

Arendt's elusive political community has an otherworldly feel to it. Her politics seems transcendent in nature, its content, cultural and aesthetic and of a higher order. Her politics is distinctive in its bias against the masses, who as masses, are incapable of participating in the kind of political life she envisions. But Arendt paints a portrait of a politics that in some way resembles the collective face of today's dissident pariah leaders. The

leaders of the revolutionary people's movements of 1989 turned out to be mostly members of the intelligentsia: students, professors, artists, poets, writers, and generally, members of the cultural literati. These people of letters and arts are very much in keeping with Arendt's concept of the conscious pariah. As caretakers, instigators, and leaders, they have pursued the vigorous conversation of politics, debated over structure, laws, and constitutions. They have engaged in political action which, for Arendt, as we have seen, is political speech or talk about political things. These leaders have come out openly as representatives of the pariah, who never before had a legitimate status or a rightful place in affairs of state. Arendt's concept of the pariah as actor, viewed against the background of the emerging politics of Eastern and Central Europe (led by the dissident as pariah), presents an interesting broadening of her original idea. Viewed in this way, the concept illustrates a further development and could be creating an important precedent.

Botstein's comments suggest that the pariah's character is not compromised by a move into the public realm, and in fact to the contrary, is enhanced by it. And since Arendt believes that freedom can only be experienced in politics, it would seem implicit in her concern for the future viability of the world, that the pariah must join the public realm to help build, and experience authentic freedom. Freedom only emerges where worldliness, a commitment to

preserving the possibilities for action, has taken root. This argument provides further support for the pariah's relationship to action.

In Arendt's work, various elements of the pariah identity manifest themselves differently within different pariahs. While it is clear that she favors the conscious pariah, who possesses a commitment to sustaining the possibilities of political action through rebellion and critique, both of her people and existing society, how does Arendt treat the different kinds of pariahs? For example, the conscious pariahs Bernard Lazare and Rosa Luxemburg clearly, were very public and political figures, while Rahel Varnhagen and poet Heinrich Heine were not. There seem to be different shades of the pariah identity which includes both a collective sense, in terms of the Jewish people being a specifically pariah people, and a public sense, which manifests itself in explicitly political acts such as Luxemburg's socialism or Herzl's Zionism. In the sense in which Arendt speaks of it, the pariah's collective identity is comprised of cultural, artistic, moral, intellectual, and critical elements. Given access to the public realm, the pariah can channel these elements of collective identity into a public and political identity. The pariah as pariah, even though part of a collective identity, lacks political status which she can only obtain through access to, and cultivation of some type of public realm. If the pariah fails to muster the resolve and the awareness to critically

resist her situation, she possesses little more than a private identity.

For Arendt, the pariah must become a conscious pariah in order to achieve a public, hence, a political identity. And herein lies the key: the public identity, shored up by a sense of collective experience, is the most significant identity for Arendt. Individuals' unique identities are asserted in the public space where they become political. Arendt's sense of the political and of legitimate actors is, as we have seen throughout this study, quite restricted and at certain points appears inconsistent. The shift that takes place in her thought from an agonal to a more participatory view of politics, and the blending of both of these approaches, constitutes what appears to be an inconsistency. But despite these difficulties, Arendt endows the conscious pariah with what she regards as inherently political traits; those of speech, critique, resistance, morality, justice, and impartiality. Arendt searches for a public identity for the pariah that extends <u>beyond</u> an understanding of Jewish identity as simply a collective identity. Arendt's thought on the pariah considers this collective identity in terms of, and in relation to a political identity. Her depiction of the way in which Luxemburg's Polish peer-group was enriched by the pariah's collective identity also illustrates how this background encouraged and nurtured the formation of Rosa's powerful political, i.e., public identity. There is,

therefore, a relationship between the pariah's collective identity and the emergence of an authentic political identity. In Arendt's portrait of Luxemburg, the pariah's public identity manifests itself clearly. And therein, Arendt's concern for the pariah's making a commitment to preserving future possibilities for political action comes to fruition.

Notes

1. James Bernauer, "The Faith Of Hannah Arendt: Amor Mundi and its Critique - Assimilation of Religious Experience," in Amor Mundi - Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt, ed. James Bernauer (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), p. 21.

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