



The Concept of Freedom in Hannah Arendt's Political Thought

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Abstract

Arendt argues that the concept of freedom has been misunderstood and distorted by many philosophers until the time of her writing. By examining the history of freedom in political theory Arendt problematizes the notion of freedom and strives to define 'real freedom' which goes beyond classical definitions of freedom in terms of negative and positive freedom in political theory. This paper is chiefly and simply concerned with examining how Arendt formulates the notion of freedom within the context of political theory. To this aim, the paper consists of three parts. While the first part of the study gives a short analytical introduction of the Arendtian understanding of politics, the second part lays out what freedom means for Arendt by comparing it to the classical understandings of freedom in political theory. In conclusion, the paper argues that even though Arendt's notion of freedom enables one to go beyond the classical definitions of freedom in certain respects, a number of its flaws hinder it from surpassing the state of alienation which Arendt associates with the modern times.

1. Introduction

The notion of freedom has been problematized by many political thinkers. From Ancient Greek to modern political thinkers these scholars have approached the concept of freedom from different points of view. While some thinkers such as Plato and Augustine argue that real freedom is *inner freedom* which only the people who contemplate the *truth* can reach, others such as Marx and Arendt argue that real freedom is something which can only be exercised in the world. In other words, the concept of freedom as an "essentially contested concept (ECC)²" has been assessed by thinkers in ways different from one another by underlining either individuality or collectivity. Among them it is Hannah Arendt who regards freedom as something that cannot be enjoyed individually as an inner freedom. By defining herself as a political thinker rather than a political philosopher Arendt argues that the notion of freedom has been philosophised and assessed within the

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² ECC: Essentially Contested Concepts defined by Gallie as a concept which "inevitably involve endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users". See. W. B. Gallie, 'Essentially contested concepts', Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 56, 1956, pp. 167-198.

context of metaphysics; which is why the notion of freedom has been formulated as an illusion by some philosophers. By discussing how and why people witnessed two tragic world wars during the 20th century, Arendt, as a radical critic of modern age, puts forward many hypotheses in her works. Arendt argues in her works that modern people are alienated in this world, which is why real freedom can be only enjoyed by people who are able to transcend this alienation process (Arendt in Zerilli, 2005: 162). The concept of freedom in Arendt's political thought thus plays a key role in revealing how people can rescue from alienated lives and can enjoy real freedom. This paper, in this regard, seeks an answer to the simple question "what does freedom mean in Arendt's political thought?" To this aim, the paper consists of three parts. Firstly, it lays out the methodology of and crucial key words in Arendt's political thought in order to put the concept of freedom in place. In the second place, the main aspects of Arendtian understanding of freedom are discussed by comparing them with the notions of negative and positive freedom. Lastly, it is critically argued that while Arendtian understanding of freedom has a groundbreaking impact in classic understanding of freedom in political theory, some flaws of her concept of freedom on the other hand make it problematic as real freedom to be enjoyed, which Arendt aims to reach.

2. Hannah Arendt and Politics

The relation between Arendt's political thought and her assessment of the world can be understood by means of her methodology that can be easily noticed in her books. Arendt, as a scholar who was inspired mostly from Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, uses phenomenology as the method. This kind of method that Arendt has used in her works aims at refreshing philosophy by omitting metaphysical arguments in epistemology in order to produce knowledge (Moran, 2000: 16). The main claim of phenomenology in this sense can be formulated as "if it is focused on only phenomena's essences by ignoring what we knew before about it then it can be possible to produce real knowledge" (Ibid: 21). Such a methodological stance in social science leads to analyzing concepts deeply, which enables learning about what lies behind the essence of the concept. In other words, the supporters of phenomenology claim that it is possible to sort the concepts and events out by using this methodology like a *matryoshka doll*. Arendt's methodology thus enables scholars to explain what something is rather than how it appears. In other words, Arendt's phenomenological approach to social phenomena and concepts is based on the idea that if we determine what they really are not then it becomes possible to describe what they are. That is, saying a pencil is not an eraser or a notebook gives an idea indirectly about the essence of it. By using the phenomenological method in understanding the past and present Arendt's political thought can be considered as a flashlight which enlightens the dark aspects of modern times in which Arendt believes people are incarcerated. Freedom, public sphere, political action, democracy, etc. which are directly related to politics, for Arendt, have lost their original meaning in the modern world; for modern age has not only cut its ties to tradition but also has forgotten about the Ancient Greek world where Arendt claims that an ideal society including ideal public life, ideal freedom, and ideal democracy had been established. Therefore, Ancient Greeks' understanding of politics is the best model for Arendt in order to establish an ideal

society. In other words, Arendt argues that modern people who live in a place where public sphere has collapsed, can learn much from the Ancient Greeks, which is why she describes Ancient Greek World as a treasure needing being re-opened (Arendt, 2016: 17). Arendt's understanding of politics in this sense is based on the idea that the aim of politics is to establish a public sphere where people can act politically freely. With this in mind, Arendt questions the modern understanding of politics by developing critical concepts which have been undermined during modern times in re-defining what politics is.

2.1. Labor, Work, Action and the Meaning of Public Realm

In criticising the meaning of politics in modern times, Arendt argues that the categorization of Labor-Work-and Action as human activities is the best way to understand what politics meant for the Ancient Greeks and how it is misunderstood by moderns today. As dichotomies such as freedom/necessity, mortality/eternity, private/public, etc. play key roles in Arendt's political thought, Arendt clarifies human activities within the context of Vita Activa and Vita Contemplativa dichotomy. While the faculty of Vita Activa consists of three activities, namely, labor-work-action, Vita Contemplativa on the other hand includes three human activities which are thinking, willing and judging (Ibid: 42). While the hierarchical order ends in favour of action in Vita Activa which is directly related to the political realm, Vita Contemplativa, on the other hand is mostly started by the inner order among willing, thinking, Judging. Hierarchically, Arendt claims that action should be placed on top of the all human faculties. In this sense, according to Arendt, the negative aspect of Vita Contemplativa is its potential to eliminate or to trivialize the action process in Vita Activa (Ibid: 420). In other words, Arendt argues that worldly human activities in Vita Activa can be hindered by the faculties of Vita Contemplativa if the categories of thinking, willing, and judging work against carrying out action (Ibid: 433). The faculties of human activities, in this respect, are elaborated by Arendt. Basically, Arendt describes labour as something which is directly related to biological necessities of the human being (Ibid: 458). In this respect, she argues that labour creates nothing permanent or durable that is why its efforts are quickly consumed as biological necessities which require re-producing again in order to enable human beings to survive. From this point of view, labour, for Arendt, is vital for *Animal Labourans*³ for surviving. Apart from this natural and biological necessities the term work, on the other hand, refers to the fabrication of an artificial world where people as *Homo Fabers* built walls, architecture, and cultural structures including arts etc. While labour and work are important aspects of human beings, it is action, for Arendt, that distinguishes human beings from animals (Ibid: 415). Action is neither possible in labour process nor is it in work world. The meaning of action can only

³ The term animal labourans is used by Arendt to refer to one aspect (satisfying biological needs) of human beings. See Arendt, Hannah. 2016. *İnsanlık Durumu*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları: 453-460.

be established by means of *speech* within the context of human plurality,⁴ in public realm. In this sense, what makes it possible for individuals to come to disclose their distinctive identity is action as speech. As Arendt writes: “Action is the public disclosure of the agent in the speech deed” (Ibid: 258). Therefore, participating in the public sphere in the course of action and speech is the only way to become human, since only the activity of action is the privilege of the men that “neither a beast nor a god is capable of” (Ibid, 262). As far as the faculties of *Vita Contemplativa* are concerned, Arendt argues that there should be checks and balances among thinking, willing, and judgement, since thinking alone may not enable one to reach political action, and willing alone can lead to a position where an agent cannot stop himself or herself to obtain *will to endless power*, etc. By categorizing the faculty of human activities, Arendt makes a room for an ideal public realm in which people are able to act or reach a position where the faculties of human activities work in the sense of Arendt’s goal (Arendt, 2006: 152).

While laying out the main theoretical bases of Arendtian political theory, it is noteworthy that the dichotomy between private realm and public realm in Arendt’s thought underlines the basic features of Arendtian understanding of politics. By criticizing the modern public sphere, Arendt argues that the modern public sphere is dead, since economic and administrative households dominates public sphere (Arendt, 2012: 76). In such a dead public sphere, Arendt argues that the hierarchical order in *Vita Activa* has changed in favour of labour and work, since action has lost its original meaning as the political aspect of the public sphere in the modern world. As Arendt says; “the modern age, by elevating labour, the most natural of human activities, to the highest position within the *vita activa* has brought off the action of politics” (Ibid). In other words, according to Arendt “we moderns have lost the clarity of the distinction between private realm and public realm, thanks mainly to the rise of the social and the penetration of household” (Ibid: 9). In order to diagnose how public sphere in the modern world has lost its function, she turns back to Ancient Greece where she claims an ideal public sphere was alive compared to modern dead public sphere. What makes the Ancient Greek public sphere attractive for Arendt is its clear distinction between public realm and private realm. Arendt argues, in this respect, that while biological and economic necessities were catered in private realm (*Oikos* in Greek terms), public sphere (*Koine* in Greek terms) was a place in which all equal free citizens attend to public matters (Rosenmüller, 2007: 22). Arendt claims that the distinction between public and private spheres which enabled Greek citizens to take part in public life stems from possessing private property (Nemesio, 1997: 28). In other words,

⁴ Even though the concept of plurality evokes modern understanding of pluralism in democratic societies, Arendt uses the term quite different from that of moderns. She uses the term plurality as a condition of action in public realm where those who have their own different moral, philosophical, and ideological doctrines are regarded as equals to participate and act in public realm. See Arendt, Hannah. 2016. *İnsanlık Durumu*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları: 453-46. Moreover, Plurality in Arendt’s political thought has a twofold character consisting of equality and distinction as it was in Ancient Greek *polis* states. “If men were not equal on being human, they could not understand each other and make plans for the future, and if they were not distinct (distinguished from each other by who they are), they would not need action and speech to understand each other” See. Ibid: 175

private property was the pre-condition of the dichotomy between private and public spheres, since private realm enables citizens to participate in public matters as equal citizens who have solved their biological and economic necessities in private realm.

By elucidating the faculties of human activities in terms of *Vita Activa* and *Vita Contemplativa* and re-constructing the Ancient Greek understanding of public sphere, Arendt underlines how the political aspect of the modern public sphere has been eliminated. Therefore, it is not difficult to say that Arendtian understanding of politics is based on the idea that the faculties of human activities in terms of *Vita Activa* and positive aspects of *Vita Contemplativa* can be realised in a context in which the dichotomy between public and private realms makes it possible for people, who have solved their biological and economic necessities in private realm, to freely and equally take part in public matters. More importantly, in such an ideal public sphere, Arendt argues that those who participate in public matters should isolate themselves from their selfish interests for the sake of the common interest. Arendt, in this sense, argues that people who take part in public matters have to use *masks* in a metaphorical sense in order to participate in this area in which they are entitled with new public identities (Arendt, 2016: 92). In other words, Arendt's understanding of politics is based on the idea that individuals appear in the public realm through acting and speaking and showing their uniqueness among their peers "by word and deed" by means of "acquiring and sustaining personal identity makes them something entirely new person in public realm" (Ibid: 95). In short, it can be said that the Arendtian formulation of public sphere and politics strictly overlaps with the Thukydidesian motto which is; *while some people describe those who do not take part in public life as selfish, we do describe them as useless.*

2.2. Arendtian Understanding of Freedom

As mentioned above Arendt uses the phenomenological approach to analyze politics. The analysis of the concept of freedom⁵ should also start by taking this into consideration. Before anything else Arendt tries to identify *what freedom is not* by taking issue with both pre-modern and modern times. In this sense, she analyzes the history of the term freedom in three periods, namely in Ancient Greek philosophy, in Christianity, and in Modern times (Arendt, 2006: 147).

Arendt discusses that even though public realm was a place where the connection between politics and freedom could easily be realised, Plato's idealist philosophy has tried to cut this connection by taking the notion of freedom from the real world to a sanctum, or inner world. She criticizes Plato, in this respect, in the sense that he idealizes the notion of freedom and relegates it to a place where human beings

⁵ Arendt prefers using the concept of freedom rather than liberty, since she claims that liberty and freedom have different meanings. According to Arendt While the term liberty can be used as any kind of unencumbered things and ideas, the term freedom can be only used if it refers political meaning in the sense of participating public sphere. See. Nemesio, Que. 1997. "Hannah Arendt on Freedom and Political Action." *Journal of Ateneo* 6 (1): 123-137

cannot enjoy it together. In other words, she criticizes him by claiming that he confines the notion of freedom to faculties of *Vita Contemplativa* and reduces it to personal will which prevents realising freedom within the realm of action (Ibid:149). More importantly, Arendt argues that this kind of understanding of freedom in Plato, does not resonate at all with the Greek polis where freedom is best enjoyed in public sphere (Arendt, 2006: 147). Similarly, Arendt critically examines the Stoics in the Hellenistic period in order to elucidate how platonic approach to the concept of freedom has been used by Stoics, especially by Epictetus. By making a clear-cut distinction between the inner and exterior freedoms, Epictetus, for Arendt, trivializes worldly reality in the sense that an individual can only be free provided that he or she is not hindered from outside. Such a definition of freedom in Epictetus legitimizes the idea that even a slave can be free if he or she contemplates truth which is isolated from the outside. Arendt argues that both Platonic and Epictetusian understandings of freedom are nothing but reversing the strict connection between freedom and politics in Greek city states (Canovan, 1974:150). More importantly, Arendt argues that such an understanding of freedom in Greek philosophers leads to freeing human beings from the real world in which people have to isolate themselves from public.

Arendt argues that the notion of freedom in Christianity, which was a dominant institution of Middle Ages, has been identified with *freedom from material world*. That is, Christian theology legitimizes those who want to live in seclusion in order to reach spiritual salvation (Ibid: 153). Such an understanding of freedom in Christianity thus, for Arendt, has similarities with those of the Greek philosophers in the sense that they both try to free human beings from the world, worldly life, and the arena of politics, namely from public sphere.

As far as the understanding of freedom in the modern times is concerned, Arendt claims that some philosophers such as Spinoza and Hobbes have also regarded the notion of freedom as something which can be exercised beyond political area. Moreover, that these philosophers aim at equalizing freedom with security is another critical argument that Arendt raises. Such an understanding of freedom during the early modernity process, for Arendt, does not aim at describing freedom in public sphere. Rather, it aims at protecting the private and biological life in which freedom cannot be exercised (Arendt, 2012: 79). In addition to the 17th and 18th centuries, Arendt argues that the 19th and the 20th centuries' understandings of freedom have almost made a clear-cut distinction between politics and freedom. Government practices such as a stringent bureaucracy, social policies, and security policies, in this sense, have been regarded as real politics in which the notion of freedom and politics were excluded under the tyranny of political regimes (Arendt, 1958: 68). Therefore, the conditions of the modern world, for Arendt, have philosophically and practically cut the internal connection between politics and freedom during the last five hundred years.

The paragraphs above clearly reveal *what freedom is not* for Arendt. Freedom is not a notion which an individual can practice in his or her inner world. It cannot be practised as an inner will, or as a way of being rescued from the real world for the sake of spiritual salvation. Also, it cannot be identified with the idea that human beings cannot be free unless they are independent of what goes on in the world of

human affairs. Rather, freedom, according to Arendt, is a notion which can be exercised in a public place or in an *Agora* in Nemesioan sense⁶. It can be constructed and be exercised in political area. Freedom, in this respect, for Arendt, develops fully only when it is not hidden but appears in a worldly space” (Arendt, in Kateb, 1977: 148). In other words, the Arendtian motto that *we are free only in political* clearly indicates that freedom can only fulfil its meaning in public life under the idea of *togetherness*. In Arendt’s view “if freedom refers to nothing but an inner feeling, or if it is empty of some manifestation in the world that lies between people, then it is politically irrelevant” (Arendt, 2006: 149).

2.3. Beyond Negative and Positive Freedom

In political theory it is generally argued that the notion of freedom can be categorized into two types of freedom which are called negative and positive freedom. Even though the idea of distinguishing between a Negative and a Positive sense of freedom dates back to the Kantian understanding of freedom, it is Isaiah Berlin who deeply examined and defended this distinction during the 1950s and 60s. According to Berlin, “the negative sense is contained in the answer to the question: What is the area within which the subject- a person or group of persons- is or should be left to do or be what he is able to be, without interference by other persons?” (Berlin, 1969: 122). The positive sense, on the other hand, is concerned with the answer to the question: “What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?” (Ibid: 123). Therefore, a general classification can be made based on the idea that while in negative liberty one can regard freedom as the absence of obstacles external to the agent, whereas in positive freedom one can regard freedom as the existence of power on the part of the agent. In other words, while negative liberty stresses the absence of obstacles or interference from others, positive freedom, stresses external facilities which enable human beings to exercise freedom (Constant, 1997: 16-17). Positive freedom can be distinguished from negative freedom in the sense that being free from interference is not enough to exercise freedom which is why individuals must have the opportunity to exercise freedom (Kymlicka, 1989: 208). Yet, the common idea between these two types of freedom is the stress on *individual’s freedom*. In other words, both negative and positive types of freedom stress individuality in the sense in establishing an area in which individuals can exercise the notion of freedom.

This kind of distinction between negative and positive freedom is regarded as meaningless by Arendt in the sense that they both stress *liberation from something* which cannot be the same thing as freedom. In this respect, Arendt argues that describing freedom exclusively in terms of liberation is to mean that freedom is something negative, that it is liberation from something (Arendt, In Bernstein, 1983: 209). More importantly, Arendt argues that both types of the liberal

⁶ Nemesio describes the term *Agora* as a place “where, not one man, but a multitude and plurality of men can rise to the fullest stature of their humanity by gathering and becoming related to one another through the twofold activity of word and deed” See. Nemesio, Que. 1997. “Hannah Arendt on Freedom and Political Action.” *Journal of Ateneo* 6 (1): 123-137

understanding of freedom legitimize the idea that someone is free provided that he or she can do what they will insofar as they do not harm others. Therefore, Arendt argues that *what am I able to do as an autonomous or atomistic individual* is not a question covering an action that can be related to freedom. In other words, since the liberal understanding of freedom prioritizes the individual against the collectivity, it undermines the connection between politics and freedom. More importantly, Arendt argues that both negative and positive understandings of freedom presuppose and apply to autonomous individual regardless of the fact that the individual is alone or in a collectivity. An autonomous self cannot exercise real freedom, since it aims at realising its own freedom. Arendt, in this respect, argues that the notion of freedom can be best described in terms of whether it constructs the *political* in the public realm or not.

3. Some Critical Notes on Arendtian Understanding of Freedom

As discussed above Arendtian understanding of freedom depends on the idea that whether the notion of freedom is exercised in public realm in order to be constructed politically or it is exercised by a pure atomistic self for the sake of her or his private interests. The main idea why Arendt claims that the notion of freedom can be exercised in public realm is based on her description of publicness in Greek city states. In this sense, Parekh points out that the Greek understanding of society, as an organic whole, ontologically makes room for taking community rather than the individual as the essence of theory. This understanding of the Greek society is shared in Arendt's work, which is why the Arendtian formulation of freedom is strictly different from that of liberals (Parekh, 2004: 65). Similarly, as Constant claims, while the supporters of the modern age, including liberals, think that politics and political institutions should maintain security in order to enable individuals to exercise freedom, the aim of the Ancient Greeks was to share social power as equal citizens in terms of enjoying the honour and glory of participating in the public life (Constant, 1997: 110-111). . Therefore, the Arendtian understanding of freedom invokes the aesthetic Ancient Greek conception of politics whereby the citizens participate freely by initiating unpredictable and irreversible actions. More importantly, the Arendtian understanding of freedom is distinct from liberalism, since while liberals describe the notion of freedom as something which can be practised in private life as an apolitical value, Arendt regards freedom as something which can only be practised within the idea of *togetherness* as a political construction in the public sphere (Arendt, in Zerilli, 2005: 169). In this sense, it can be claimed that the practice of the liberal understanding of freedom is located in the area of *labour and work*, which has nothing with the idea of action in Arendt's formulation of the political. Arendt, in this sense, claims that only those who carry out political action in the public realm are free. People participate in public issues, since they have principles such as honour and glory which urge people to act freely in public sphere (Ibid: 175).

Such understandings of Arendtian freedom have problematic aspects. Before anything else, not only those who do not care about their selfish goals but also those who seek their self interests can take part in public sphere for the sake of honour and glory. Even though Arendt's criticisms of the liberal understanding of freedom that it isolates human beings from the community for the sake of

exercising freedom is plausible, her clear-cut distinction among labour-work-action separates the notion of freedom from labour and work. Such a clear distinction among labour-work-action inevitably undermines the possibility of exercising freedom in the area of work. There is no a satisfying answer in Arendt's political thought to the question of 'why people cannot be free in the work place?'

Another disputable aspect of the Arendtian formulation of freedom can be based on the idea that Arendt criticizes the modern public sphere as something where the notion of freedom has been strictly related to security and individuality. Arendt, in this sense, argues that modern capitalist societies have lost their potential to act in terms of constructing the political, since they are encapsulated in a world where individual consumption dominates all aspects of the life (Gambetti, 2007: 52). Yet, such an approach in criticizing the modern consumption society focuses only capitalist consumption and ignores the problems stemming from capitalist production. She claims that in ancient Greece, after the economic necessities were met in private life people participated in public life, which is why all matters related to economic issues should not be raised as public issues in public life. Yet, it is known that citizens in the Ancient Greek world have not participated in public life only for the sake of aesthetics, glory, and honour but also in order to solve their economic needs. Therefore, since it does not link the demands and struggles of economic needs or any action to alleviate economic inequalities to the notion of freedom within the context of the political in public sphere, the Arendtian formulation of freedom can be considered partly utopian. Is it not illusory to claim that people can participate in politics freely and equally if it is defined merely as an aesthetic endeavour? Such a reductive approach to politics can only hollow the content of the notion of politics where people should exercise freedom purely. More importantly, the strong dilemma between equality and freedom is confined to the equality of citizenship in Arendtian thought. In other words, the conflict between equality and freedom is resolved by Arendt only by means of a mask which participants to the public life must wear. It can be argued that in the modern world a public sphere which includes every person indiscriminately, in which people participate equally regardless of their economic and social status, does not exist. People participate in their own public spheres which they share with others of similar social standing. That is, a religious person, an atheist person, a bourgeois, a proletarian, etc. rarely come together to discuss a common issue in modern societies. Therefore, merely putting a mask may not be enough in realising the notion of Arendtian *togetherness* in order to enjoy freedom. More importantly, by becoming blinded to economic inequalities, Arendt gives priority to the equality of citizenship rather than problematizing the capitalist mode of production which hinders people from exercising freedom together even in the Arendtian sense.

It should also be said that Arendt's negative assessment of the term *Vita Contemplativa* has some problematic points. Arendt claims that the notion of freedom cannot be reduced to individual will that is why the Platonic, Epicteticus, and Christian understandings of freedom refer to inner freedom which has lost its political and public dimensions. In other words, she claims that once the notion of freedom is reduced to a dialogue between me and my own as a philosophical and

metaphysical argument, it is automatically isolated from the public sphere or the notion of real freedom. Thus, it can be said that what enables Arendt to describe the notion of freedom in this way is her clear cut distinction between *Vita Activa* and *Vita Contemplativa*. It is true that only the notion of *willing* can be described as something related to strength or power rather than to freedom. Yet the dialectical relation among thinking, willing and judging can in fact be the starting point of an action, notwithstanding the fact that they are initially inner processes. The Arendtian understanding of the relation between *Vita Activa* and *Vita Contemplativa* disregards the dialectical connection between the two by isolating and trivialising *Vita Contemplativa*.

Another disputable aspect of the Arendtian formulation of freedom is about her claim that the notion of freedom cannot be exercised in every place where there is a community. Arendt argues that existing in a collectivity is not enough on its own for enjoying freedom for instance one cannot talk of freedom in primitive communities. The main reason for this is that unlike the Greek city states, such communities do not have political organization and political community in which equal citizens can participate in public life, thus, they cannot politically act in terms of exercising real freedom (Rosenmüller, 2007: 27). This claim is easily refutable owing to the fact that some anthropological works clearly indicate that it was common even in primitive communities to participate in politics in order to change or legitimize power relations by means of non-violent political actions.

Finally, Arendt insists that it is the action that stems from togetherness that is capable of transforming the political and social structures which lead to anti-democratic power relations. This optimistic approach disregards or overlooks the complexity and power relations among different social agents. Arendt claims that togetherness can be realised if equal citizens participate in common public issues. This means that people should leave aside their distinctive ethnic, religious class based etc. identities, in order to re-constructing the public sphere and politics by means of free actions. Yet, the question why a fanatic narrow minded religious person, or a feminist who claims that exploitation is everywhere including the area of *labour* – area of biological needs-, or a proletarian who claims that it is not possible to exercise freedom unless the bourgeoisie exploitation is eliminated, etc. come together within the context of equal citizenship is unresolved in the Arendtian formulation of freedom and politics. In other words, given that, in Arendt's political thought, the private sphere is strictly distinguished from public sphere, the term exploitation is never questioned, and democratic principles are not satisfactorily defined, the term togetherness will never be realised under the guise of equal citizenship.

4. Conclusion

In defining herself as a political thinker rather than a political philosopher Arendt aims at understanding the causes of the existence of totalitarianism during the 20th century she witnessed in her life time. To this aim, Arendt's methodology enables her to sort the facts out by taking Ancient Greek city states as a model in analysing contemporary modern public sphere. After reading the 20th century's political life with reference to the Ancient Greek politics and political philosophers, she concludes that politics has lost certain ontological features since the disappearance

of the polis and on. The reason is that different categories human faculty and activities which correspond to each faculty have been intertwined and their respective hierarchies have been degraded.

Inspired by the theories, practices and structures of the Ancient Greek world Arendt claims that the categorization of *Vita Activa* and *Vita Contemplativa* helps analyzing the political which comprises the public sphere, the notion of freedom, power, equality, citizenship, etc. As far as the notion of freedom as an aspect of the political is concerned, Arendt argues that not only the Platonic and Epictetian understandings but also the Christian assessment and modern description of freedom fail to reflect the real meaning of freedom, for they both reduce the notion of freedom to inner issues and isolate its ontological aspects from politics. More importantly, Arendt criticizes the liberal types of negative and positive freedom in the sense that they ignore the idea of collectivity for the sake of restricting freedom to modern atomistic selfish individuals. Therefore, these two types of freedom are thoroughly criticized and regarded as illusions which exclude the notion of politics and togetherness. In this regard, by identifying what freedom is not, Arendt finds a solution to the modern problem of unfreedom in a world in which the terms politics and freedom have been distorted. To this aim, Arendt revitalizes the Ancient Greek type of public sphere in order to construct an ideal society in which the real meanings of freedom and politics can be achieved. Equal citizenship, common public issues, the aesthetic aspect of politics, masks, and the dichotomy between private and public sphere are all concepts that Arendt uses in analysing the modern world with reference to Ancient Greek political life. She claims that if the biological needs of human beings are met in private life, human beings can participate in public sphere in which they freely act as equal citizens as it was in Greek political life in order to exercise freedom. It is noteworthy that the Arendtian understanding of freedom, compared to modern political thinkers, has groundbreaking aspects in the sense that she makes a strong connection between freedom and politics. She transfers the notion of freedom from inner world of the individual to the worldly public sphere which is a space of appearance. By doing this, she undermines the ontological and epistemological aspects of the liberal understanding of atomistic individuals and prioritizes the notion of freedom in togetherness. Yet, there are problems with Arendt's account which stem from the flaws of her formulation of freedom. First off, her understanding of freedom is restricted to the political sphere and excludes all private affairs which make thinking of freedom in workplace impossible. Secondly, the fact that people participate in the public sphere in order to seek honour and glory does not preclude self-seeking on its own. Self-seeking individuals might very well be after honour and glory and hence pursue their self interests in the public sphere. Finally, as long as certain inequalities which belong to the private sphere which are the points of departure for the political actions of feminists and the proletariat are not dealt with, or in other words, the dichotomy of the private and public sphere as separate domains is not problematized, togetherness in Arendtian sense cannot be achieved. Only after the unequal power relations of this type are resolved, can people enjoy freedom as equal citizens and participate in politics in an aesthetic sense.

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