

EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE SOCIAL AND THE POLITICAL IN THE
PUBLIC-PRIVATE DISTINCTION IN ARENDT

A Ph.D. Dissertation

by

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Ankara

September 2011

To my parents

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IN THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE DISTINCTION IN ARENDT

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

of

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF

POLITICAL SCIENCE

İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY

ANKARA

September 2011

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

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ABSTRACT

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September 2011

This dissertation basically asks the question of whether the public- private dichotomy in Arendt's theory is an absolute one. This question is a result of the fact that the intricate layers in the distinction between the public and the private in Arendt's works has not critically examined within the literature. In answering that question, this dissertation argues that the multi-layered terrain of Arendt's political theory makes it possible to point out some conceptual spheres that transcend a particular understanding of the mentioned dichotomy. This kind of inquiring reading enables one to escape the chains of dichotomous thinking and to come up with an alternative theoretical space for thinking Arendt's conception of politics. Correspondingly, this dissertation points out the concepts of work and social as possible loopholes that transcend the dichotomous thinking in Arendt's theory. Possible implication of pointing out these loopholes is to challenge to the fixed nature of the public-private distinction. This challenge directly effects how one positions the political within the dichotomy. If the political is not observed within the confines of the public-private distinction in every context, it means that it sometimes exists within an in-between space of sociability. The idea of civil society as an associational life in contemporary political experience corresponds to that in-between

space. This particular reading points out a contemporary political experience, in which the political and the social co-exist. It also offers an Arendtian perspective to critically reflect on how we experience politics within the space of contemporary civil society.

Keywords: Arendt, The Public-Private Dichotomy, Work, The Social, The Political, Civil Society

ÖZET

ARENİT'İN KAMUSAL-ÖZEL AYRIMINDA TOPLUMSAL OLAN İLE SİYASAL OLANIN OLANAKLARININ ARAŞTIRILMASI

Yıldırım, Senem

Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yard. Doç. Dr. Banu Helvacıođlu

Eylül 2011

Bu tez temel olarak Arendt'in siyasi teorisindeki kamusal-özel ikiliğinin mutlaklığını sorgulamaktadır. Arendt üzerine olan literatürde Arendt'in çalışmalarındaki kamusal-özel ayrımının komplike katmanlarının eleştirel olarak incelenmemesi bu sorgulamanın temelini oluşturmaktadır. Bu bağlamda tezde Arendt'in siyasi teorisinin çok katmanlı yapısı dolayısıyla bahsi geçen ikiliği aşan kavramsal alanların var olabileceği savunulmaktadır. Bu tarz bir okuma dikotomik düşünmenin zincirlerini kırabileceği gibi, Arendt'in tanımladığı 'siyaset' kavramı için alternatif teorik bir alanın varlığına işaret etmektedir. Bu açıdan tezde Arendt'in teorisindeki 'iş' ve 'toplumsal olan' kavramları dikotomik düşünmeyi aşan kaçış noktaları olarak sunulmaktadır. Bu sunumun olası sonuçlarından biri kamusal-özel alan ayrımının sabitliği sorgulanmayan doğasına meydan okumaktır. Bu meydan okuma ise belirtilen ikiliğin içinde 'siyasi olan'ın nasıl konumlandırıldığını doğrudan etkiler. Eğer siyasi olan her durumda kamusal-özel ayrımının içerisinde gözlemlenmiyorsa, bu pek tabii siyasi olanın zaman zaman toplumsallık adı verilen ara alanda gözlemlenebileceği anlamına gelir. Bu tezde bu ara alan günümüz siyasi hayatının deneyim alanı olan sivil toplum olarak nitelenmektedir. Bu nitelikteki bir okuma toplumsal ve siyasal olanın kaynaştığı siyasi bir deneyime işaret etmenin

yanında, günümüz sivil toplumunda siyaseti nasıl deneyimlediğimiz üzerine Arendtçi bir bakış açısı önermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arendt, Kamusal-Özel İkiliği, İş, Toplumsal Olan, Siyasal Olan, Sivil Toplum

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the intellectual and emotional support of my parents. During this long journey, they have always trusted in me and my choice of pursuing an academic career. Their devotion was beyond imagination.

In academic life, I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Banu Helvacıoğlu. She believed in my potential and my intuitive insights. She gave me the strength to cope with any kind of discouragement about writing a dissertation on political theory. It is also an honor for me to thank Prof. Dr. Metin Heper for being a mentor in this academic endeavor. Prof. Heper taught me that dedication and patience were the keys for successful academic life. I am also deeply grateful to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Norma Claire Moruzzi for providing me a priceless academic atmosphere in Chicago during my research. I benefited a lot from her deep knowledge on Arendt and insightful comments on my work.

I also like to thank Assist. Prof. Dr. William Wringe, Assist. Prof. Dr James Alexander, and Assist. Prof. Dr. Daniel Just for being a part of this dissertation with their valuable and insightful comments. I am also grateful to Güvenay Kazancı, our Department secretary, for her incredible support and help during my years in the PhD programme.

I owe a great debt to my family in Ankara: my friends. I could not have reached my goal in life without you by my side. I'd like to thank Selin, Duygu, Nazlı, Özen, Gül, Çiğdem and Evren for bringing joy to my life. I also want to thank Ali, Ege, and Can for never leaving me alone in every aspect of life. In addition, I specially thank Tolga for being always there for me.

Last but not least, I'd like to mention my special thanks to The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) for supporting this dissertation financially through National Scholarship Programme for PhD Students and International Research Fellowship Programme.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE STORY OF MY DISSERTATION

1.1 The Beginning

When I started writing my PhD dissertation proposal, I had nothing clear in mind except for the fact that I was going to write on Arendt. I was initially acquainted with Arendt's unique way of thinking in political theory classes, where we were supposed to read some sections from Arendt's books. Not until studying for the comprehensives, I noticed her originality and unique stance in Western political thought. When I was reading for the comprehensive exams, her unorthodox stance with regard to some of the basic concepts of political theory left a strong impression in my own thinking. For example, I could not situate Arendt's conceptualization of freedom (1993) within any of the categories provided by Berlin (1991), by liberal theories and by different perspectives on socialism and social contract theories. Similarly I noticed two main contentions in the secondary literature: that in Arendt's works there is no conception of the state that is comparable to other works in political theory and that modern constitutional state is not her main concern.

Tsao, however, (2004) argues that although Arendt does not mention the idea of modern state in most of her works, especially in one particular work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt presents her idea of the state, which suggests a similarity with Hegel's understanding of the state. To me what was striking about Tsao's interpretation was not his endeavor of presenting an affinity between Arendt and Hegel. Through Tsao, I realized for the first time that there is no consensus in the secondary literature on what Arendt really says or means while she is elaborating on something. In addition, I found out that works on Arendt do not mention a general theory of Arendt, but deal with her works separately. This is what makes reading Arendt both difficult and rewarding. As Canovan (1974: 15) argues Arendt's mode of thought is not a system. In her different works one sees different layers of her ideas as they change and develop from one work to another. But this does not mean that there is no consistent structure of her ideas. Arendt's political thought is not a random collection of ideas and concepts floating freely from context to context. They "constantly refer to and illuminate one another" (Canovan, 1974: 15). Although the unsystematic character of her thought sounds challenging, I was encouraged by the idea of seeing different layers of basic concepts of political theory from an Arendtian point of view.

For me the next step was to decide on which subject I was going to write about. For a period of time, I just read Arendt without focusing on a specific subject. The purpose of reading primary sources was to find out a particular issue in Arendt's theory. I came up with several subjects such as lying in politics, civil society, violence, and public sphere in Arendt. In those readings, I noticed how Arendt's line of thinking was shaped by different but related distinctions. Among these distinctions, the public and private one seemed important in terms of its key role in

defining what political is. Initially when I decided to focus on the distinction between the public and private spheres in Arendt's works, I was also reflecting on the relationship between the public sphere and the social context I live in.

In Turkish society, the public sphere is a controversial term. One could constantly hear about this term without being sure what it means in the specific context it is used. Like every dichotomous conceptions, the public and the private distinction is used to draw limits and boundaries in Turkish context. The distinction is used to include and exclude social actors from particular types of experience. Most of the empirical studies, which address the controversy, focus on the construction of the public sphere in the context of the binary opposition between secularism and Islam. When these studies problematize the public sphere in terms of the institutional regulations characterized by the binary opposition between the state and religion, what is often at stake is another dichotomous understanding of gender identities, especially with regard to the visibility of women's presence in the public space.¹ Although my initial interest in the concept of public sphere and its dichotomous relation with the private was formed in such a context, I wanted to understand the epistemological underpinnings of these discussions.

My initial intention was to present clear accounts of the public and the private spheres, and the dichotomous relation between them. From my own readings of Arendt, I was convinced that Arendt would provide me with an unorthodox but a well-formed conceptualization of the distinction between the public and the private. I also thought her original way of thinking would enrich any discussion of the public sphere in a specific context.

¹ For some of the studies on public sphere debate in Turkey see: Deniz Kandiyoti (1987); Alev Cinar (2008); Mary Lou O'Neil (2008).

After deciding on writing about the public and the private distinction in Arendt, I have made a quick literature review on the distinction itself. The distinction between the public and the private is a central one in discussions that take place in political and social contexts. Beside its importance, it is also a controversial one as different orientations refer to different meanings while using this distinction. Weintraub (1997: 3, 4, 7) explains the multiple and ambiguous character of the distinction perfectly. According to him, “the conceptual messiness” of the distinction stems from the fact that “what is being contrasted” differs from perspective to perspective. According to Weintraub the liberal model refers to the public and the private distinction in terms of the difference between the state and the market economy. The republican approach uses this distinction to differentiate political community and citizenship from the state and the market economy. Social historians and anthropologists seek to differentiate the public as sociability from any other relations. The feminist perspectives refer to the public-private distinction to distinguish the economic and political order from the family.

The ambiguous character of the distinction accompanied by different meanings in different perspectives, presented to me a theoretically rich domain in terms of pursuing an epistemological inquiry of the concepts of the public and the private. At the end of my inquiry for this dissertation, I came to the conclusion that the ambiguity in the public - private distinction is always attributed to the main assumption that although there is always a line separating the domains, the content of each domain or where the line is drawn is open to further inquiry. In addition to this ambiguity, the public-private distinction has a determining power over the question of what is political and this determining power keeps the interest in the ancient distinction still alive in political theory. The line between the public and the private is

usually accepted as the one drawing the boundaries of the political, defining what is political and what is not. For instance, Heller (1991: 340) defines the modern conception of the political as “the practical realization of the universal value of freedom”. According to her, this realization is only possible within the public sphere. The political is defined within the confines of the public. On a different theoretical plane, feminist critiques of western political thought is often based on questioning how the boundaries of the political and the public are drawn in the modern liberal state system. Feminists argue that within the liberal tradition, the distinction has been made in a way that confined women and female activity to the private sphere and, excluded them from the public agenda (Benhabib, 1992: 107-108). Those feminists, who take an essentialist position, oppose to the exclusion of women from political domain and argue that what is being undermined in the public–private distinction is that the private has a political character. The discussions on the essentialist distinction between the public and the private revolve around what is and what should be political.

Because of the determining role of the distinction on the political nature of a given phenomenon, I thought that looking into the constituting elements of each sphere in the distinction and how the dividing line has been drawn would provide a fresh outlook of the political. I thought that Arendt would be the best choice in providing a comprehensive and unconventional depiction of the distinction in question. The reason behind such an automatic expectation was that during my preliminary studies on Arendt, I noticed her difference in not accepting the given problematizations of the basic concepts of the political theory. I was particularly intrigued by how she was depicting different layers in each concept she analyzes, enabling scholars to examine different dimensions of the same concept in different

historical and theoretical contexts. I assumed I would find a similar mode of analysis on the distinction between the public and the private in general and the political in particular. I intuitively thought Arendt would open new doors and create new possibilities to look into the political in the context of the public and the private distinction.

I was, however, really surprised when I started reading Arendt with these tentative premises in mind. I assumed that originality is a result of flexibility and ambiguity in thought. For me, absence of standards would provide new possibilities for seeing different dimensions of a given phenomenon. I was expecting this mode of thinking from Arendt. But, I was mistaken. As Kateb (1977: 148) states Arendt's standards are so strict and she applies these standards so narrowly that her works are full of strict dichotomies. Every concept in her theory seems interrelated. She uses the concepts to define each other consequently. Every concept seems to belong essentially to one specific space or sphere. I asked to myself: if everything is based on unquestionable dichotomies then how could Arendt be so original and unconventional.

My confusion about Arendt's rigidity deepened when I read the critical secondary literature on Arendt. Some prominent scholars were criticizing Arendt in terms of her exclusionary stance. They argue that her boundaries are so strict that she excludes most of the subjects and issues of contemporary world as nonpolitical. For instance, Habermas criticizes Arendt's distinction of labor, work, and action and her attribution of the political only to the activity of action. Habermas (1977: 16) states that "...narrowing of the political to the practical permits illuminating contrasts to the presently palpable elimination of essentially practical contents from the political process". Heller (1991: 335) also criticizes Arendt for the exclusion of everyday

issues from the political realm. According to Heller, Arendt's conception of the political remains too narrow to cover contemporary daily practices.

Although Arendt is criticized for the rigidity of her dichotomous thinking, it is interesting that no one has critically examined the intricate layers in the distinction between the public and the private in her works. Most scholars writing on Arendt take a position of agreeing or disagreeing with Arendt's distinction of spheres of life as being public or private, political or nonpolitical, free or bound to necessity. These scholars, who do not question whether the distinctions she employs are put in absolute terms, close the doors for employing an Arendtian way of thinking on a specific contemporary political phenomenon. Most of the works on Arendt deals with such major concepts as evil, violence, freedom, action, revolution and the political. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, all of these concepts are interrelated in understanding the original character of Arendt's political theory.

The starting premise of this dissertation is that there is no scholarly work that examines how, in spite of her strict distinction, Arendt herself works through the public-private dichotomy in multiple yet inter-relational ways. We do not know to what extent the distinction between the public and the private in Arendt's thinking is an absolute one. Most importantly what would be the implications of this questioning on the reading of the political in Arendt? I had this question in mind while I started reading one of Arendt's major theoretical works, *The Human Condition* (1958).

When I was reading *The Human Condition*, I noticed that in that particular work of Arendt and in the secondary literature on that book, the public and private spheres are defined on the basis of a negation. The basis of negation is in prioritizing the definition of the public in such a way that once the public is defined, the rest

unquestionably becomes the private. This particular way of prioritizing the public, automatically assumes that the private sphere has a residual character. Everything that has to do with the public appears to be bright and positive and everything that belongs to the private sphere is associated with darkness and being hidden. My first reaction was to save the private from its residual character. I thought that in my dissertation I should try to show how the private in Arendt was valuable in itself, and how the public meant nothing without the private sphere. I was hoping to make a reading of the public from the residual private. Eventually, I realized that studying Arendt with prejudices and pre-identified findings would be a betrayal to her theory and originality. Although Arendt is prioritizing the public over private, she clearly indicates in several places that public and private needs each other. They have an interdependent relationship. Without the private being kept in its dark and protective sphere, the apparent character of the public means nothing. Arendt's objective is not to demonize the private but to insist on keeping the strict line that separates each sphere from each other. After realizing that, I gave up my idea of saving the private from its residual character. I accepted its residual character.

Nevertheless, there was something that still bothered me with the distinction itself. Later I realized that my unease originated from the way Arendt defined her concepts. In one of her works, she substantiates a particular concept in a particular way. However, in another work she uses the same concept in a completely different context under a different disguise. Even in the same book, for instance in *The Human Condition*, the public that she refers in the beginning of the book is different from the public that she refers at the end. In its first problematization, the public is a pre-defined physical space in which free and equal citizens act. In the second problematization, public is not a stable physical space but a constituted phenomenon

that is realized within the moment of performance and action. It gains reality in the moment of performance. It is realized within a particular instance almost momentarily, with nothing definitive left for the next moment of performance. I could not decide whether using the same concepts to refer to different meanings was simply an inconsistency. Was Arendt an inconsistent political thinker, who did not bother to present her ideas in a systemic and coherent way?

I have found out the answer to this question while reading the secondary literature on Arendt. It was a relief to realize that I was not the only one who was confused by Arendt's way of thinking. According to Canovan (1974: 109), Arendt is different from other thinkers who deal with one line of argument at a given time, because Arendt "has a great many linked trains of thought in her mind". Arendt's way of thinking is multi-dimensional as she thought several lines of thought at the same time without clarifying their relationship to her reader (Canovan, 1974: 109). Actually, this multi-dimensional way of thinking is what makes her theory rich. Arendt's way of thinking is full of new dimensions and possibilities. This is why questioning the absolute character of her distinction between the public and the private is important.

Based on the complexity embedded in Arendt's multi-dimensional way of thinking the way Canovan problematizes, the working premise of my dissertation is as follows: if the boundaries of the distinction between the public and the private are drawn differently in different contexts, then, any element, concept or phenomenon that is thought as belonging to a specific sphere could be seen as belonging to the other, or even not belonging either to the public or the private. If the public is defined in a particular way in a particular context, the concepts and activities that belong to that sphere gains a public character. But, if the same concept of the public is defined

differently in another context, then, the same concepts and activities may not correspond to that particular understanding of the public. What is public in one particular context could not be ascribed as public in another. The multi-layered terrain of Arendt's political theory raises the possibility of looking into a multitude of ambivalences and sometimes so-called inconsistencies in her thinking as a ground to investigate whether there are some conceptual spheres that transcend a particular understanding of the dichotomy between the public and the private. Such an inquisitive reading of Arendt enables the reader to escape the chains of dichotomous thinking and to come up with an alternative theoretical space for thinking Arendt's conception of politics.

Having these considerations in mind, I have done a detailed reading of her works. During my research, I realized that some instances and concepts in some works of Arendt could not be identified as belonging to a specific space, either public or private. The first concept that attracted my attention was the concept of 'work' in Arendt's theory. In *The Human Condition*, although Arendt relies on the public-private dichotomy, there are some questionable areas in her tripartite analysis. The activities of action and labor find their proper place within the spaces of the public and the private respectively. Action belongs to the political space of the public. Labor belongs to the space of cyclical movement and necessity, which is the private. Interestingly, the concept of work could not be categorized as belonging to a public or private sphere. On the one hand, work has some common characteristics with the concepts of labor and action, respectively. On the other hand, at some points, it has differences from the activities of labor and action. At another level, it has characteristics that transcend the dichotomy between the public and the private. Identifying such a convoluted understanding in Arendt's problematization of *vita*

activa in the context of her explanation of work in relation to labor and action gave me an opportunity to look at her dichotomous thinking from a different perspective.

The second concept, demonstrating both public and private characteristics is the concept of the social in Arendt. Its dual character is more obvious than the concept of work. In her critique of modernity, Arendt herself points out the concept of social as a hybrid phenomenon, where the private concerns become public. In fact, the duality in the character of the social bothers Arendt. She approaches the rise of the social in modern world in a negative way. At this point, identifying many often seemingly conflicting layers in her thinking gave me an opportunity to look into the possibility of examining the potential embedded in what appears to be an inconsistency. In Arendt's different works, the concept of the social refers to different phenomena, processes and activities. I turned this multi-dimensionality into my advantage and took the liberty of focusing on one of the implications of the social that has an affirmative meaning in Arendt's theory. I thought that this particular social, which had the characteristics of both public and private, could serve as an alternative space, in which an unchartered territory of political reality could be incorporated into an understanding of the political. An analysis of this alternative space would at the same time address some criticisms of Arendt's work by examining the so-called excluded daily life through a reconsideration of the in-between phenomena of daily life.

As a result of my reading and research, I ended up with two different concepts, namely the concepts of work and social that did not fit in either the public or the private spheres. In my reading of Arendt's theory, their in-between character, having elements of both the public and private, brought them together. Relatively speaking, in *The Human Condition* the concept of work, transcends the dichotomy of

public and private ‘smoothly’ without raising the question of the (in)consistency in Arendt’s political theory. When it comes to the concept of social, although it was already demonized by Arendt, I continued searching for different socials in Arendt’s convoluted thinking and at the end constructed an affirmative meaning/facet of the social. I am well aware of the fact that the alternative affirmative reading of the social, I offer in this dissertation, might receive skeptical response from those who read Arendt in a certain way. There is, however, a plenitude of alternative readings of Arendt.

At first, I did not think of any existential link between the concepts of work and social other than seeing them as possible loopholes that transcend the dichotomous thinking in Arendt’s theory. However, when I was reading Canovan’s (1974) book, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, I realized that my choice to focus on these two concepts was not a mere coincidence. Canovan states that in Arendt’s critique of modernity there are critical concepts. The first one is the social (Canovan calls it society) and the second one is the worldlessness. Worldlessness is a concept that refers to a problem for the modern human being. According to Arendt, human beings create the world, in which they could become free individuals by acting. The world is the only place where people could become free. They have a common purpose of preserving this world in which they could actualize themselves as true human beings by being political and free. According to Arendt, under modern conditions, action is replaced by labor and people lose their ability to act. Being kept inside the cyclical movement of laboring they have been losing their ability to become political and free. They have been losing the common world that binds them together as true human beings. Arendt identifies this modern condition as worldlessness.

In her critique of modernity we could observe two realities simultaneously: the rise of the social and the worldlessness. The concept of work in this context is pivotal, as it is the activity that creates the world. At this point, I argue that Arendt's emphasis on the concepts of work and the social are related with her existential concerns of modern conditions for life. Her unease with the modern conditions of life such as worldlessness led her to bring forth the importance of the world and its constitutive activity. Within the same context, she points out the rise of the social realm as a modern and hybrid one that challenges the necessary separation between the public and the private realms of life. I argue that in addition to their in-between character, these two concepts – work and the social - can be understood within the context of her critical remarks on modernity.

At the end, I was left with a basic question with regard to the strictness of Arendt's dichotomy between the public and the private. Even though the two concepts – work and the social - that I chose to focus on as two particular instances of complexity in Arendt's thought emerge from the same context of Arendt's critique of modernity, when examined separately in relation with Arendt's main concerns in her other works raised the possibility for me to identify two different conceptual contexts in pointing out loopholes in Arendt's conceptualization of the public-private dichotomy.

1.2 From Story Telling to Writing the Dissertation

The starting point of this dissertation is that Arendt's theory is full of dichotomies, such as the public versus the private, freedom versus necessity, labor versus action, political versus non-political (or pre-political), open versus the hidden,

light versus darkness. The public-private dichotomy is an important one as it draws the limits of what is political and what is not. With respect to this dichotomy, Arendt is criticized for narrowing down the sphere of politics because she attributes the politics to the public. In addition, her idea of the public is strictly separated from private and social concerns. This results in exclusion of many issues of contemporary daily life from agenda of politics.

With respect to this dichotomous thinking in Arendt's political theory, this dissertation mainly asks the basic question of whether the public-private dichotomy in Arendt's theory is an absolute one. I develop my critical inquiry in three main parts.

The first part consists of chapters 2 and 3. This part presents Arendt's political theory in general and secondary literature on the public-private distinction in particular. It starts with Arendt's unique methodology of storytelling and the key concepts in her theory. I argue that story telling is the source of her original way of thinking within Western political theory. For the purpose of this dissertation this original way of thinking led me into developing a method of my own. To start with Arendt's own works, her methodology of telling the stories of actual political events leads her into a thought pattern where she tries to understand the elements that are crystallized into the political phenomenon in question. In doing that Arendt, extracts different dimensions of these political elements instead of relying on the already substantiated concepts of the political within the Western political thought. As each story refers to a different context, hence crystallization of different elements, each concept within the story is worked out in a different way. I identify this unique methodology in Arendt's thinking as multi-layered thinking, which originates from story telling and develops into an elaborate analysis of the political. I, however, note

that Arendt's method of telling the stories of actual political experiences of actual political actors in different contexts and in relation to different concepts leaves the reader with an unsystematic structure in Arendt's works.

To delineate this problem I develop a method of my own which I provisionally call interdefinitonality. Although Dossa (1989: 74) coined the term "mutual interdefinition", in this dissertation I transformed Dossa's definition into a tool of analysis by incorporating Weintraub's (1997) identification of "the conceptual messiness" in the public-private distinction within the political theory literature, Benhabib's (1993; 1996) questioning of this distinction from within the feminist literature, Canovan's (1974) cross referencing to Arendt's works, and Kateb's (1977) critical analysis of the strict dichotomies in Arendt's works. As a result what I mean by interdefinionationality as a method is as follows: The concepts delineated in Arendt's works are not defined in isolation from each other, but they are interrelated. Although they are fluently presented within the plot of the same story, it becomes difficult to arrive at a specific and clear definition of each concept when they are used in different stories, in different political, historical, and theoretical contexts. Moreover when this fluidity in Arendt's different works is accompanied by the dichotomous way of thinking it presents particular difficulties in understanding whether or not Arendt sees the public-private distinction as the fixed core of her thought pattern. For instance, the concepts of freedom, action, and political are defined by referring to each other. Acting is the way of attaining freedom. Becoming free is synonymous with being political. Being political means acting. All of these concepts are basically situated within the public sphere in the specific context of the public-private dichotomy.

Having these considerations in mind, Chapter 2 first analyzes some works of Arendt, in which Arendt deals with actual political events as part of her methodology of story telling. Then, based on my selection from the works of secondary literature, I present two specific concerns of Arendt with regard to her theoretical insights. These are: understanding the meaning of unprecedented phenomenon of contemporary political experience and being critical of modernity. These two concerns are selected deliberately as they provide the contexts for the discussions in the dissertation. They at the same time enable me to make use of my own method of reading Arendt and other's works by means of interdefinitionality.

My elaboration on Arendt's methodology and key concepts in her theory lead me to argue that 'the mutual interdefinition' in her theory results in separation between specific sets of concepts. For instance, while freedom, political, and action are used to substantiate each other, they necessarily compose a theoretical set. On the contrary, the concepts of necessity, non-political/pre-political, and behavior are used to substantiate each other and compose another theoretical set. These different theoretical sets become meaningful with regard to each other within a dichotomous line of thinking. The public-private dichotomy in Arendt's theory provides a theoretical context to uncover these theoretical sets in a comprehensive way. In addition, with regard to Arendt's critique of modernity elaborated in Chapter 2, I observe that Arendt is critical of the rise of the social and disappearance of the separating line between the public and the private. In this specific context I argue that keeping the separating line between the public and the private realms is of crucial importance for Arendt. This insistence makes many readers of Arendt to elaborate on the distinction in non-negotiable terms.

In respect of these observations, in Chapter 3, I focus on the public-private dichotomy in Arendt's theory, which is seen as the backbone of her theory. The chapter is composed of two main parts. In the first one, mainstream secondary literature on Arendt's separation between the public and the private is elaborated. The mainstream secondary literature affirms the importance of the public versus private dichotomy in Arendt's theory and sees this distinction in non-negotiable terms. They do not challenge the strict distinction as the core of Arendt's thought nor do they pay particular attention to the constantly shifting story lines and changing theoretical contexts in Arendt's different works. They do not search for any concepts, spheres, or any experiences in Arendt's theory that might transcend the basic distinction in Arendt's thinking. The second part of the chapter is reserved for feminist readers of Arendt who have an alternative perspective on the public versus private distinction. They make a critical reading of the distinction. These feminist scholars are also divided into two. The first group is not critical of where the dividing line between the public and the private is drawn, but they are critical of Arendt's prioritizing of the public sphere as the political one. They try to reassert value and political character to the private sphere. The second group of feminist scholars does not deal with a gendered reading of each sphere. Through using Arendt's original perspective, especially on politics, they make use of her theoretical concepts and insights in feminist theory. The latter group of feminists' perspective is welcomed in this dissertation.

Secondary literature is delineated so as to clarify the original stance of the dissertation, which sees the distinction in question not in absolute terms. These feminist scholars are the ones who encourage me to make use of Arendtian perspective and her conceptual originality in the areas that are thought to be excluded

by Arendt's theory. In relation to that, this dissertation accepts that there is basically a strict separation of the public and the private in Arendt's theory. However, I also argue that there are loopholes in Arendt's theory through which one could explore other possibilities in Arendt's thought. As Arendt is telling the stories of historical experiences, sometimes the empirical reality she refers to challenges her own strict dichotomous thinking. Because of the contingency of a given actual event, some experiences could not easily be situated within the public- private dichotomy.

The second part of the dissertation presents particular instances in Arendt's theory that emerges as loopholes. This part consists of Chapters 4, 5, and 6. In chapter 4, I present the 'work' in Arendt's theory as an in-between concept in the context of public-private dichotomy. Its importance lies in the fact that its in-between character with regard to public versus private dichotomy is not a result of historical contingency. It does not emerge under different disguises in different contexts of different stories. It is an in-between concept in itself. It is conceptualized as one of the activities of *vita activa* in *The Human Condition*. These activities are labor, work, and action, respectively. In the context of the dichotomy in question, action is associated with the public and the labor is associated with the private. However, the concept of work could not be situated in the dichotomy between the public and the private. It has similarities with and distinctive characteristics from the concepts of labor and action. Work does not have a proper and stable position within the cyclical and consumable sphere of the private, fluid and ephemeral domain of the public. Sometimes it transcends the characteristics of each sphere and sometimes those spheres are combined within the experience of working. It presents a particular analysis to understand the public and private distinction in an original way. I argue

that the concept of work becomes important for showing the intrinsic flexibility of Arendt's theory with respect to the dominant dichotomous thinking.

Following the concept of work, Chapter 5 presents the concept of social as yet another instance to explore a more flexible understanding of the public-private distinction in Arendt's thought. The concept of social is a modern phenomenon and is the subject of Arendt's critique of modernity. The difference between the concept of social and work is that Arendt clearly states the former is a hybrid sphere, in which the public and the private intertwine. According to Arendt, the rise of the social in modern times has damaged the dividing line between the public and the private. The private concerns become public. Both the public and private spheres suffer from this modern condition. What is hidden and dark come before the light of the public. Behavior rather than action, necessity rather than freedom has started to dominate truly human life. This is surely a negative depiction of the phenomenon of the social. By supporting its claim through a particular secondary literature, this dissertation takes up the concept of the social as a hybrid sphere in which the public and the private are combined. However, it also argues that thanks to the multidimensional character of Arendt's thinking, one could encounter different facets of the social in Arendt. In her different works, while telling the stories of different historical figures from different contexts, Arendt depicts different layers of this phenomenon.

With respect to several dimensions and facets of the social, Chapter 6 states that in some specific works of Arendt, one encounters four different facets/dimensions of the social. By referring to each work, I present these socials as the economic social, the biological social, the social as mass society and the social as sociability. I focus on one of the mentioned accounts: the social as sociability. Benhabib (1995) also

points out this facet of the social. She defines this “social” as a space of sociability in terms of the quality of life in civil society and civic association. Following this definition, I make my point by referring to one of Arendt’s earlier works, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, in which Arendt herself tell the life story of a historical figure as a combined experience of public and private. I argue that the story of *Rahel Varnhagen* is a depiction of how a political experience could flourish in a social context of sociability that is neither public nor private. This is an affirmative conception of the social within Arendt’s theory that is not detrimental to political experience. This co-existence of the social and the political, which is usually attributed as public, in Arendt’s own work allows me to introduce the concept of social in Arendt as one of the possibilities to explore the relationship between an alternative, more flexible understanding of the social and the political.

The third part deals with the possible implications of pointing out loopholes in Arendt’s theory in terms of the public- private dichotomy. It consists of Chapters 7 and 8. In respect of these implications, I argue that seeing affirmative social as an alternative space for human activity of action would give us the chance to see the political in Arendt from a different and more inclusive perspective. As the separating line of the dichotomy determines what is political and what is not, challenging that separation or seeing it in a combined way would change the conception of political. Detaching the political from the public in a specific instance and attributing it to the social, which partially has the public characteristic, points out an instance of the co-existence of the political and the social in the political experience of the individual. Stating this togetherness in a specific experience raises the possibility of understanding the political in Arendt in a more inclusive way by focusing on the notion of contemporary political experience.

My argument is that any challenge to the strict, fixed nature of the public-private distinction directly effects how one positions the political within this dichotomy. In Arendt's theory the political is situated within the public. But, if the political is not observed within the confines of the strict separation between the public and the private in every context, it means that it sometimes exists within an in-between space. This dissertation argues that this in-between space can be the social as sociability in Arendt's thinking. I argue that even in Arendt's own works there is the depiction of the existence of a political experience in a social context, the existence of the political within a social space has further implications for the contemporary political experience of an ordinary citizen, whose life experience could not be divided into two convenient spheres of life as public and private.

To elaborate on that experience, Chapter 7 clarifies the concept of the political in Arendt. I argue that the concept of the political in Arendt is a dynamic concept that has many dimensions. As it is the case with the social, this dynamism is a result of, firstly, Arendt's multi-layered way of thinking, and secondly, the interdefinitionality in her theory. With regard to Arendt's multi-layered way of thinking, I argue that it is possible to challenge predetermined position of the concept of the political within the public space. The public in the context of the public-private dichotomy is a tangible, pre-defined space that draws the limits of the political. However, while Arendt tells the stories of political experiences of different actors, the contexts and actual experience do not correspond to this fixed relation between the political and the public space. In different contexts, the political does not necessitate a pre-defined tangible public. It emerges within the space of sociability.

With regard to interdefinitionality, I indicate that the political in Arendt is synonymous with the concept of action and it has the conditions of plurality,

equality, and exclusion of necessity. It is also a constitutive concept as during its performance it constitutes reality, freedom and the public sphere. With regard to the aim of this dissertation, the constitutive characteristic of the political in terms of the public space is prominent. I argue that if one takes into account this constitutive characteristic, the widely accepted predetermined relationship between the political and the public in the mainstream literature will be dismantled. The public space starts to appear not as a pre-requisite but as a constituted element of the political. I think that this is why we observe the political in spaces of sociability rather than in a pre-defined tangible public sphere. The political that emerges in a social context of sociability, constitutes its own public. In other words, the particular reading of the political enables it to emerge within a social context.

Chapter 8 argues that while in some of Arendt's own works the separating line between the public and the private shifts in different directions, in specific political experience of actors, this situation opens the door for further discussion on the contemporary political experience. Presenting that in some specific instances, the political could emerge and survive within the social context of sociability gives me a chance to elaborate on contemporary political issues. Arendt is criticized to exclude social issues from the political agenda. In relation to that, in Chapter 8, I relate the particular reading of Arendt that questions the essentialist separation between the public and the private to one of the contemporary issues/context: civil society. The reason behind my choice of civil society is partly related with my reading of the social as sociability. This particular reading presents civil society as an affirmative in-between space. I analyze how this co-existence of the political in an affirmative third space could possibly be actualized. Moreover, in the literature, civil society is presented as the space for an ordinary citizen to participate and contribute to the

political process. I argue that this idea of civil society as an associational life based on the idea of civility could act as a space of experience for Arendt's vision of participatory politics. At the end, besides pointing out a contemporary political experience, in which the political and the social co-exist, I offer an Arendtian perspective to critically reflect on how we experience politics within the space of contemporary civil society.

In Chapter 9, I argue that this dissertation is important in three ways. Firstly, by pointing out specific loopholes in Arendt's theory in the context of the public versus the private dichotomy, the dissertation challenges the idea that the dichotomy of public versus private in Arendt's theory is an absolute one. Secondly, by making use of a more flexible, interdefinitional reading of Arendt's works, this dissertation suggests a new perspective to look into the concept of the political experience in Arendt. This new perspective points out a different account of the political experience in Arendt's theory, in which the political emerge within a social context of sociability. In general, these particular readings of the social and the political point out instances of their co-existence in Arendt's theory. This is important in terms of questioning the mainstream literature on Arendt's works, which attributes the political to the public and undermine the possibility of the co-existence of the political and the social. Thirdly, this co-existence of the political and the social as sociability within the civil society provides space for further discussion on the contemporary political experience. The particular reading of each concept enables the dissertation to suggest the civil society as a space of political experience, in which the lost treasure of the political can make its revival.

CHAPTER 2

KEY METHODS AND CONCEPTS IN HANNAH ARENDT'S THEORY

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to introduce Arendt's unique way of thinking and her original approach to political theory by presenting my method of reading Arendt's works with the main premise based on conceptualizing actual political experience. Arendt tells the story of an actual political event. While doing that, she sometimes relies on the basic concepts in Western political thought and other times she introduces new concepts in her theory. Her reflections on these well-established concepts of the Western political thought are still original. By looking into the experience of actual events, Arendt discloses the contingencies, different facets, and different dimensions of a given phenomenon. This original method of looking into the historical and contemporary events for revealing new theoretical insights is vital for this dissertation. In fact, this aspect of Arendt's thinking is what makes this dissertation possible. Her multi-layered theoretical conceptualization of a specific concept provides the Arendt reader to find different aspects, dimensions, and facets of the same concept in different works, which tell different stories. Throughout the

dissertation, I use these different facets and dimensions of the social and the political in Arendt as loopholes to challenge the dichotomy of public and private that dominates Arendt's political theory.

For fulfilling its aim, this chapter starts with presenting Arendt's methodology of storytelling. Arendt tells the stories of actual political events in order to understand the experience itself. She does not provide causal relationships but rather points out the elements that are crystallized into the experience in question. In the following part of the chapter I look into several of her works, which are key demonstrations of her method of analyzing actual political events in order to demonstrate how Arendt makes use of this methodology. These works are selected not only for their ability to show Arendt's methodology, but also for serving as primary contexts for Arendt's theoretical concepts. Her basic concepts that constitute the theoretical backbone of this dissertation, such as freedom, political, action, public realm, and the social as the modern society push themselves forward within the stories of each delineated political event. The order of her works presented is a chronological one just to keep track of Arendt's line of thinking through time.

Looking into Arendt's different works that delineate different events leaves the reader with another challenging dimension of reading her theory that Arendt is not a systematic thinker. I mentioned in the previous chapter that Arendt did not write systematic theoretical books in which she substantiates her concepts separately. When she uses one concept it is often to substantiate another concept. The analysis of inter-related concepts is also contextualized according to different claims, which were brought up in the initial problematization of these concepts. I refer to this constant shift of the contexts, concepts and claims as the method of inter-definitonality which leaves the reader with the uncharted territory of analyzing the

relationship between such concepts as action, freedom, revolution, public realm, private realm, the social, the reality, violence and the evil. In coming up with an analysis of the inter-definitonality of any of these given concepts, the reader has to extract each related concept from the story she tells. This, however, does not imply that Arendt's political theory is the aggregation of related concepts that float in thin air like stories unfold in story telling. Arendt's theorizing has a consistency in itself as her main concerns led her to look into specific contexts and instances to understand the political experience. Although there is a disturbing disagreement in the secondary literature on what Arendt really means by each concept she refers, there is more or less an agreement on what her main concerns are.

With regard to that, the last part of the chapter presents what I think as Arendt's main concerns in her political theory. I extract two main concerns from her different works and I refer to related secondary literature in order to support my points. It should be pointed out that these two concerns are selected on purpose, because they serve as the contexts for this dissertation. The section on Arendt's concern of understanding the meaning of unprecedented phenomenon in contemporary political experience presents Arendt's eagerness on dealing with the actual phenomenon by clarifying its conceptual elements. This section introduces the concepts of freedom, action, and the public as important concepts emerged from Arendt's endeavor of understanding the unprecedented phenomenon in contemporary political experience. These are also the main concepts in the dissertation in dealing with the dichotomy of public versus private. The second section is on Arendt's critique of modernity, which could be thought as the context inspired the basic inquiry of the dissertation. As argued in Chapter 1, the concepts of work and social, which are presented as loopholes in challenging the strict dichotomy in Arendt's theory, become meaningful

in the context of her critique of modernity. Before making detailed elaborations of these concepts in Chapter 4, 5, and 6 respectively, it is crucial to point out the related context of modernity.

2.2 Hannah Arendt: A Distinguished Political Theorist with an Original Methodology

Hannah Arendt is one of the outstanding figures of 20th century political theory. In spite of the general assumption that she is a political philosopher, in some of her works, notably in “What is Freedom?” (1993), she had taken a critical stand in favor of political theory while explicitly discussing her objections to philosophical claims on will and sovereignty. Elsewhere, in a letter she wrote to Jaspers in 1955 Arendt introduced her ideas, which were subsequently published in *The Human Condition* as follows: “I would like to bring the wide world to you this time ... I want to call my book on political theories ‘Amor Mundi’” (Quoted in Young-Bruehl, 2006: 79). What lie at the heart of her insistence on political theory is her idea of politics as plural, contingent and unexpected phenomenon. In its simplistic form, she does not want to suggest a blueprint or a prescription that tells people what to do in the future (Canovan, 1998: viii-ix). She tries to understand the phenomena of contemporary political experience by analyzing its constitutive elements in relation to the basic concepts of political theory such as freedom, the political, and action.

In relation to her unique stance in political theory, she is thought as having written the master pieces of political analysis of 20th century (Young-Bruehl, 2006: 1). In fact, her uniqueness lies both in her style of thinking and in the way of presenting her thoughts. Firstly, her striking originality and disturbing unorthodoxy

rests on the fact that she writes about actual political events as a political theorist (Canovan, 2002: 1). As indicated by Canovan (2002: 7) “the entire agenda of Arendt’s political thought was set by her reflections on the political catastrophes of the mid-century.” She develops her ideas on the basis of actual events as she builds her theory of politics on the basis of rethinking the actual actions of political actors. This is a fundamentally creative approach to political theory, based on conceptualizing actual political experience.

Before delineating this creative aspect of Arendt’s political thinking, it would be essential to elaborate on the second original aspect in her political thought: her methodology. Her usage of actual political experience as the basis of her political theory has its implications in her original way of writing. Arendt never wrote a systematic political philosophy (Villa, 2007: 1). Her methodology of storytelling as critical theory fits well within her motivation of turning to actual political events for substantiating the basic concepts of her political theory through ‘understanding’ the existing and experienced phenomena. The endeavor of ‘understanding’ present phenomena requires some kind of phenomenological impulse for the explanation of the mentioned phenomena through experiencing it. In this way one could free oneself from any tradition that could blind one’s judgment (Canovan, 2002: 4). The experience needs to be told to other people to become a reality; in this context the experience of story telling requires plurality of people similar to Arendt’s conceptualization of action. Since both the story teller and those who read the story experience different things, the plurality in action challenges a number of given conventions.

With regard to this characteristic of Arendt’s methodology, Disch indicates that Arendt’s conception of storytelling redefines conventional understanding of

objectivity and impartiality. According to Disch (1993: 666), Arendt's storytelling proposes an alternative version of impartiality, which is 'situated impartiality', which could be summarized as detached reasoning. It involves telling oneself the story of an event from the plurality of perspectives that engenders the event as a public phenomenon. With regard to Arendt's point on the plurality of perspectives that makes an event a public one, one should underline that in principle Arendt challenges the Western political tradition initiated by Plato that abandons the plural experience of politics and requires the withdrawal of the political thinker from the plural 'social' world. She is critical of political thinker's abandonment of the world for the singular activity of contemplation. Arendt wants to reassert the importance of action as a political activity that actualizes political freedom among plurality of equals.

Stating that Arendt's methodology is an endeavor of narrating a story of an event through different perspectives would not be sufficient to cover her unique way of theorizing the actual political events. There is another approach that could be named as "configuration" and the "crystallization of elements" (Benhabib, 1990: 172). This second approach in Arendt's methodology is derived from her major work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), in which she "gives a historical account of the elements which crystallized into totalitarianism, and this account is followed by an analysis of the elemental structure of totalitarian movements and domination itself" (Arendt, 1953: 77-78). Following Arendt's claim, one could state that, through looking into the past, Arendt detects different layers and fragments of the past and gives the account of how these fragments crystallized into the form they are in the present. Benhabib argues that in Arendt's account, all historical writing is the writing of the story of crystallized elements of the past into the present time. On this point,

Arendt is apparently influenced by her friend Walter Benjamin, who is thought of as the ‘poetic thinker’ who was nourished by the fragments and aphorisms that he was collecting (Canovan, 2002: 4-5).

This method of narration is used by Arendt to tell the stories of actual political experience. At this point, it is crucial to look into Arendt’s several works that are key demonstrations of her method of analyzing actual political events in order to arrive at new theoretical insights.

2.3 Actual Political Events as the Source of Arendt’s Political Theory

The first work that will be discussed is *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1954), not only because of the place it occupies in the chronological list of Arendt’s works, but also because it is the first prominent work of Arendt that gives account of her line of thinking, her political and theoretical concerns, and her methodology. *The Origins* is an endeavor to understand the unprecedented modern phenomenon of totalitarianism. In the introduction, Arendt (1966: xxi) clearly states her aim as dealing with totalitarianism, its origins, and its elements; however it is again Arendt who indicates that the book does not really deal with the origins of totalitarianism, but rather gives an historical account of the elements, namely Anti-Semitism, Imperialism, and Totalitarian domination itself, which were crystallized into Totalitarian phenomenon. Having this motivation in mind, she commences the book by identifying her concern with the establishment of totalitarian governments in Russia (1929) and Germany (1933), respectively, as she sees them as the decisive events of the 20th century. *The Origins* is a perfect example of how Arendt finds out and presents the different layers and fragments of the past by referring to the history of Anti-Semitism and

Imperialism, and gives the account of how these fragments crystallized into the form of Totalitarianism as a modern concept. It is beyond the aim of this part of the chapter to reflect upon how these historical fragments has brought about the modern phenomenon of totalitarianism. It is suffice to say that *The Origins* is Arendt's first work, in which Arendt gives the account of her critical stance of the modern society's totalizing effect that destroyed man's capacity to experience and to act in political terms in his engagement in totalitarian movement. While telling the story of totalitarianism, Arendt makes the reader feel that her conception of the political or political experience is different than the one experienced in the modern totalizing society. She also presents her uneasiness with respect to associating the term social with a mass society. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, her understanding of the social and the political will be examined in a detailed manner.

The second work that demonstrates her narration of the actual political experiences would be *On Revolution* (1963). In this work, Arendt argues that the physiognomy of 20th century is composed of the phenomena of wars and revolutions. But she also claims that the ideologies of the 19th century, such as nationalism, internationalism, capitalism, imperialism, socialism and communism, have been exhausted. Therefore, for the phenomena of 20th century, namely wars and revolutions, there is only one motivating cause, which is freedom versus tyranny (Arendt, 1990: 11). In this context, she is highly critical of the loss of the concept of freedom from the vocabulary of revolution. Within the literature and discourse of the political experience, freedom has become a concept that is only used in the discussions of war and as justification of the use of violence (Arendt, 1990: 12). These discussions and justifications take up the concept of freedom in the sense of negative and positive freedom, i.e. freedom from and freedom to. But as it is argued

in Chapter 1, Arendt's understanding of freedom is different. Her conception of freedom is based on acting of plurality of equal people in the public sphere. It is synonymous with being political and being political could only be actualized through acting, i.e. through starting something anew such as founding of the political bodies.

Within this line of thinking, Arendt attempts to resituate the concept of freedom into the vocabulary of revolution by re-examining historical facts about two great revolutions of 18th century: the French Revolution and the American Revolution. Between these two revolutions, Arendt praises American revolutionaries for their capacity to act and founding anew body politic. She approves that the American Revolution was made for the sake of freedom, as revolutionaries acted and found a new federal state. However, she thinks that the French revolution failed because French revolutionaries made the revolution for the satisfaction of immediate biological needs, such as hunger. Their motivation was not the attainment of freedom through acting for the sake of beginning something anew. By elaborating on the two great revolutions of the 18th century, she underscores her concern about the concept of freedom as one of the central concepts of her political theory. *On Revolution* is a great example of how Arendt extracts her theoretical tools from the contexts of actual political events.

In her later works, Arendt continued to search for understanding the unprecedented modern phenomenon through looking at the actual political events. In this way she could write the history of the present in order to make sense of the political experience of the past. One of her best examples of this endeavor is *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1968), which has been written just after *On Revolution*. This book considers an actual political event while it is happening: the public court room trial in Israel of Adolph Eichmann, the German

Nazi Party and SS official who was administratively responsible for the emigration and evacuation of Jewish people from national territories under Nazi control. In 1960 he was caught in Buenos Aires and flown to Israel nine days later. He was brought to trial in the District Court in Jerusalem on April 11, 1961, accused of committing crimes against the Jewish people, against humanity and, war crimes (Arendt, 1976: 21). The trial is supposed to be focused on what has Eichmann done: Arendt is adamant that it is not supposed to be a trial focused on the enormous suffering of the Jews, not about the responsibility of the German people and mankind, and not about anti-Semitism and racism (Arendt, 1976: 5). Reporting on the trial for the American magazine *The New Yorker*, Arendt was able to be present in the courtroom, providing her a rich source of detail for narrating the meaning of the event. Compatible with her unique methodology stated above, she narrates and extracts the significant fragments in the story. In this way, she arrives at two original insights that are important for her political theory.

The first is the concept of the banality of evil: what Eichmann has done is evil. But this evil is banal because Eichmann's accomplishment is administrative rather than passionate, thoughtless rather than intentionally provocative. Eichmann refused to think about what he was doing, and therefore, gave up one of the most important universal mental faculties of mankind, which for Arendt are thinking, willing, and judging. Thoughtlessness of his deeds, in other words obeying the commands without thinking, is exactly what makes Eichmann's evil banal. In this case, although his actions were monstrous, the doer was ordinary and common place. (Arendt, 1978: 4). So as to demonstrate the uniqueness of the phenomenon, Arendt (1976: 288) points out:

That such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in men- that was, in fact, the lesson one could learn in Jerusalem. But it was a lesson, neither an explanation of the phenomenon nor a theory about it.

The uniqueness lies in the fact that because of its unprecedented damaging consequences, this specific evil of being thoughtless is beyond all evil activities people know up to that specific moment.

The second new concept Arendt (1976: 246-247) introduces in this book is a unique and unprecedented type of crime, ‘a crime committed *en masse*’, which should be treated differently from other crimes. This new crime Arendt is talking about is against human status and anything that is related with the nature of mankind. She defines it as “an attack upon human diversity as such, that is, upon a characteristic of the “human status” without which the very words “mankind” or “humanity” would be devoid of meaning” (Arendt, 1976: 268-269). Therefore it is against freedom, against the necessary plurality of mankind and the human status of the individual. This new type of crime clearly negates everything Arendt appreciates about the political possibilities of human life. Its unprecedented character makes it hard to handle and cope with. In addition to these difficulties, Arendt is also worried about its reproductive and repetitive potential. She clearly says that “[i]t is in the very nature of things human that every act that has once made its appearance and has been recorded in the history of mankind stays with mankind as a potentiality long after its actuality has become a thing of the past” (Arendt, 1976: 273). Arendt recognizes Eichmann’s crime as a threat to human diversity, freedom, and plural existence of mankind. She tells us the story of Eichmann in a way emphasizing what she cares about the political possibilities of human life: diversity, freedom, and plurality. These are among the core elements of her conception and theory of politics.

Arendt's concern for the preservation of human freedom as the substance of politics and the content of public affairs could also be observed in *On Violence* (1970). This book is also a great example of how she makes use of actual political occurrences for developing the content of her political theory, as this book is composed of reflections on events and debates of the 20th century. The immediate historical context of the book is the Cold War period. Arendt (1970: 3) sees the twentieth century as a century of violence, but the danger of the Cold War context is that the technical developments of implements of violence come to a deadly point that could not be justified with any kind of political goal. More specifically, according to Arendt, in the 20th century war as a phenomenon, which is associated with the implements of mass violence, becomes the basic social system. Even its potential becomes the principle structuring force in society (Arendt, 1970: 9). In addition, Arendt is highly critical of the idea that categorizes politics within the context of domination and legitimate use of violence. She does not equate political power with the organization of violence. She indicates that "one should cease to reduce public affairs to the business of domination" (Arendt, 1970: 6). This point is another possible motivation behind Arendt's eagerness in conceptualizing and contextualizing concepts like violence, power, action, strength, force, and authority in this book. This conceptualizing and contextualizing activity gives us some clues about her political theory.

Tracing the fundamental concepts of Arendt's political theory in her reflections of the actual political events is also possible in her thoughtful essays that are gathered under the heading of *Crises of the Republic* (1972). The first essay, "Lying in Politics", is composed of reflections on the Pentagon Papers, which were issued as forty seven volumes, subtitled as a "History of U.S Decision Making

Process on Vietnam Policy,” and published in *The New York Times* in June 1971. This political development inspired Arendt to write on the act of lying that the Pentagon Papers revealed had become a crucial element in contemporary politics. In her own words “[s]ecrecy-what diplomatically is called “discretion”, as well as the *arcana imperii*, the mysteries of government- and deception, the deliberate falsehood and outright lie used as legitimate means to achieve political ends, have been with us since the beginning of recorded history” (Arendt, 1972: 4). Her concern revolves around the distortion of reality, and therefore the limitations on mental freedom and imagination in the context of politics, action, and public realm. She is critical of lying-the deliberate denial of the factual truth- and wants us to see the connection between lying and action- the capacity to imagine an alternative and to act in order to change facts. The common denominator is imagination.

The second essay, *Civil Disobedience*, elaborates on organized campaigns of civil disobedience, at the end of 1960s and beginning of 1970s which posed the question “Is the Law Dead?” (Arendt, 1972: 51). In her analysis of the mentioned debate Arendt depicts the phenomenon of civil disobedience as plural and political. According to Arendt (1972: 56), civil disobedients are “organized minorities, bound together by common opinion, rather than by common interests”, and “their concerted action springs from an agreement with each other.” In her conceptualization she states the difference between the criminal act and civil disobedience to law in terms of public versus private distinction. She states that “[t]here is all the difference in the world between the criminal’s avoiding the public eye and the civil disobedient’s taking the law into his own hand in open defiance” (Arendt, 1972: 75). The criminal’s violation of law is a private act. On the contrary, the civil disobedient challenges the law in front of the plurality of people. This is what makes the act of

civil disobedient a plural and political one. Once again, it could be observed that in her elaborations of the actual political events she underscores some basic concepts of her political theory while substantiating her arguments. These concepts are freedom, action, the public sphere and reality.

All in all, from the above-mentioned summary and analysis of Arendt's works, it is seen that Arendt substantiates the prominent concepts of Western political tradition through telling the stories of actual political events and their crystallized elements. With regard to that specific methodology, the reader observes that her area of interest varies from totalitarianism to revolution; violence in political experience to freedom. The next step in understanding her way of thinking and unique stance in political theory is to interrogate her main concerns that motivate her to look into mentioned specific events.

2.4 Basic Concerns in Arendt's Political Theory

2.4.1 Understanding the Meaning of Unprecedented Phenomenon of Contemporary Political Experience

The key point in extracting the basic concerns in Arendt's political thinking from her most important texts is that Arendt's main motivation is 'to understand'. Understanding the nature of contemporary phenomena of 20th century has become the main motivation behind her journey in political theory. In relation to that motivation of understanding, she gives great importance to elaborating the meaning of the basic concepts of the tradition of Western political theory. At this point one should bear in mind that her work is not a repetition of already substantiated political

concepts through a literature review. On the contrary she uses her knowledge of the tradition as a deep foundation for making an original and unique re-conceptualization of the basics of political theory in order to understand and explain the unprecedented events of 20th century.

Her eagerness in understanding through dealing with the meanings of the well-known concepts of Western political thought is also indicated by Arendt scholars. Maurizio Passerin D'Entréves (1994: 1) states that "...she grappled with the most crucial political events of our century, trying to grasp their meaning and historical import, and showing how they affected our categories of moral and political judgment." Besides revealing the effects of actual political events in our understanding of contemporary political experience, she has the concern for preventing the recurrence of evil developments and experiences of 20th century's mass society, which is associated with meaninglessness with its totalizing and homogenizing effects. According to Michael Gottsegen (1994: 3) what inspires "Arendt is the hope that an understanding of the phenomenon might offer some protection against its recurrence." In fact, this is why Arendt looked into the actual events of her time as well as in the past. As is stated in the previous section, she examines the actual events and points out the new concepts such as mass society, banality of evil, or *crime en masse*, arising from these events. In this way, Arendt offers the reader a clearer conceptual understanding of politics historically and critically. The clarified new concepts in turn challenge and reformulate both classical political arguments and our ability to use these different formulations to comprehend our present reality.

In relation to Arendt's agenda that shed light on the nature of politics, the public realm, and the new form of barbarism that becomes the main characteristic in

our modern lives the first work that one should turn to is *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Villa, 2007: 2). This should not be surprising. In this book she tries to make sense of modern phenomenon of totalitarianism that seems to have destroyed the very capacity for experience and caused isolation and lack of normal social relationships by making people abandon the self into the mass (Arendt, 1966: 308, 316-317). With its totalizing claims this new phenomenon of the 20th century that concretely functioned in the form of death camps of the Second World War, has led to the abolition of the separation between the private and the public life (Arendt, 1966: 336). What is at stake with this prominent piece is that Arendt tries to understand the meaning of a specific phenomenon by giving a historical account of the elements that turn out to be totalitarianism. While fulfilling this aim, she makes a clear cut definition of the totalitarian government through indicating the difference between totalitarianism and other forms of domination. In this respect, one of her reference point in demonstrating the difference between totalitarian government and other dictatorships and tyrannies is the concept of terror. According to Arendt (1966: 6) “[a] fundamental difference between modern dictatorship, and all other tyrannies of the past is that terror is no longer used as a means to exterminate and frighten opponents, but as an instrument to rule masses of people who are perfectly obedient.”

Her eagerness to define the totalitarian form of government comes from her concern that there is a scarcity of knowledge with respect to totalitarianism. Although the modern phenomenon of totalitarian rule of government destroys humanity and the essence of man, Arendt has a hope to understand the mechanic of this destructive process. *The Origins* is the result of Arendt’s conviction that it is still possible to discover the underlying elements of a context such as totalitarian rule, in which everything becomes unrecognizable for human comprehension (Arendt, 1966:

xxx). This discovery would be crucial to prevent the recurrence of this destroying phenomenon of totalitarianism. According to Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (2006: 35), Arendt's main question in *The Origins* can be summarized as "Would it be possible, by understanding totalitarianism, to judge future totalitarianisms accurately as they arose or in their infancy?"

Just after *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, we come across with one of Arendt's most crucial works, in which she reveals her insistence on understanding and offering conceptual reformulations of the basic elements in Western political thought, namely *The Human Condition* (1958). Although this work would be analyzed in Chapter 4 "The Concept of Work in Arendt's Theory: A Loophole" in detail, it would be essential to point out main arguments in order to have an idea of her way of conceptualization of the basic elements of Western political thought.

This is Arendt's most influential philosophical work before she shifted her concern from dealing with thinking what we are doing to what we are doing while we are thinking (Young-Bruehl, 2006: 160).² In this master piece, she suggests we reconsider the human condition through thinking about what we are actually doing. Arendt argues that the reconsideration could be realized through dealing with those activities that are traditionally within the range of every human being, which are the basic parts of human condition, namely labor, work and action. These three activities correspond to one of the basic conditions for man who lives on this earth. The human condition for labor is life; the human condition for work is worldliness; and the human condition for action is plurality (Arendt, 1958: 7). Labor is presented in relation with the individual survival; work is presented in relation with permanence

² On the latter issue see Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1978: 3-238.

and durability upon the futility of mortal life; action is presented in relation to founding and preserving political bodies. This is actually the theoretical context where Arendt conceptualizes one of her basic concepts in her theory, which is action. Within this context, action and speech are the activities that create human life and are the means to attain human excellence. They are the activities that reveal man's unique distinctness while he is among his equals (Arendt, 1958: 176). In her conceptualization, acting refers to "to begin" and speech refers to "to disclose" and they are interrelated, as she argues that speech is what activates action's revelatory character.

The sphere in which action takes place is related to another important component in Arendt's theory, which is the public realm. Again in this book, Arendt conceptualizes the public sphere and differentiates it from the nature-bounded private sphere of necessity and labor. With regard to the public sphere that is actually the sphere of human affairs, Arendt (1958: 25) argues that two activities namely action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*) constitute this realm from which the necessity and usefulness is strictly excluded. In her understanding, the difference between the public and the private corresponds to the distinction between the political and household in ancient city state (Arendt, 1958: 28). This distinction is related with Arendt's fascination with political life in ancient Greece that presents us two orders of existence: *idion* (man's own) and *koinon* (communal). According to this understanding, the human capacity for political organization is in direct opposition to *oikia* (home) and the family (Arendt, 1958: 24). In relation to this kind of agonistic understanding of the separation between the public and the private, we could argue that Arendt is clear with the distinctions and definitions. In her understanding, the political could exist within the confines of the public sphere that is constituted by the

actions of human plurality. This understanding is a perfect example of her efforts on making distinctions while conceptualizing the basic elements of her political thought.

Arendt's eagerness on conceptual distinctions continues in her latter works. In spite of her insistence on the meaning, she does not define her concepts absolutely or finally; many of her key concepts reappear in slightly reconfigured contexts in her different works. One exception to that situation is *On Violence*. In this book by substantiating the concept of violence in relation to the concept of action, and by indicating its difference from other concepts such as power, force, strength, and authority, Arendt develops a whole political vocabulary of the constitutive categories of what she understands as violence . It should be pointed out that this is not a simple definitional theoretical exercise on Arendt's part, rather it aims at (and aids) the construction of a theoretical framework for political theory on the basis of conceptual distinctions. Arendt argues that power "corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert...it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together," (1970: 44). In this statement she situates the concept of power within the public realm where human action in concert is possible. On the other hand, by emphasizing the singular and individual characteristic of strength, and the arbitrariness and instrumental character of violence, which is designed and used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength, Arendt excludes these concepts from the political realm of the public (Arendt, 1970:4, 44, 46).

Arendt's concern to differentiate the concepts that are compatible with and appropriate for each other centers on one major concept, namely freedom. Her treatment of the concept of freedom as the essential characteristic and aim of human political life is best depicted in *On Revolution*. As it is indicated in the previous section, she is highly critical of the loss of the concept of freedom from the

vocabulary of revolution, which is one of the composing elements of the physiognomy of 20th century. In order to comprehend the central role of freedom in Arendt's theory, it will be important to recall two points. First, Arendt never defines her concepts in isolation, but relates them to other central concepts in her theory. Arendt elaborates on the central concern in *On Revolution* in her essay "What is Freedom?". In this essay she indicates that *raison d'être* for politics is the attainment of freedom. The second important point to recall is that these two works are also indicative of what I refer to as inter-definitonality as a method to read Arendt's main conceptual and political concerns. With regard to inter-definition, Arendt (1993: 146, 149) argues that action is the sphere of politics and action takes place within the public realm, in which a plurality of human beings interact and perform. She points out that at first instance, freedom could be experienced mundanely in a pluralistic public sphere through action. She criticizes those who conceive freedom as a quality of interaction between "I" and "the self". According to Arendt, freedom is not a quality of reason but of an action. In relation to this, she states that experiencing of freedom within the self and at the level of the mind starts with the conversion of Paul who thinks that freedom to convert is a result of the conversation between "I" and "the self" (Arendt, 1993: 158). She opposes the idea that conceives of freedom as an inner quality of the individual and within the same line of logic, she criticizes Mill's idea that thoughts could not be restricted but to some extent action could be. Related to this point she claims that the individual firstly experience freedom through action, then after it is turned inwards and conceptions like freedom of thought comes to the stage at the second level (Arendt, 1993: 148). She also indicates that the construction of 'free will' as an inner quality of individual's freedom led to control over other people through the application of 'free will' discourse such as in the 'contract

theories', and it has become the very source of domination and subjugation in the name of the sovereignty of free will (Arendt, 1993: 163-165). Pointing out this characteristic of freedom in Arendt's theory is not only crucial for understanding one of her basic concepts of an inter-definitional context, but also important for understanding her motive in her reflections like in *On Revolution*.

2.4.2 Arendt's Critique of Modernity

Arendt's critique of modernity is a rich source that nourishes her theoretical engagement. In this context, most of the Arendtian scholars see her as the political theorist who has contributed to the reassertion of the value of politics in the modern world in which politics had become subordinate to social and economical interests (Canovan, 2002: 1). Arendt's critique of modernity could be traced back to her philosophical elaboration on complex relationship between thought and action. She identifies the separation of thought from the action as the problem that lies in the heart of the tradition. (Arendt, 2005). As Jerome Kohn (2005: viii-ix) puts it in the introduction part of *The Promise of Politics*:

[T]hinkers, who in their solitary activity are withdrawn from that world, tend to consider *man* in the singular, or, which amounts to the same, *men* as multiples of a unique species, and to ignore, or in Marx's case misconstrue, the experience of political freedom that Arendt sees action's greatest potential. Hence action, as Arendt came to understand it, is largely missing from the tradition of political and philosophic thought established and handed down by these thinkers.

At this point Arendt appreciates Marx's break with this traditional thinking to a certain extent. According to Arendt, Marx put the concept of labor of the human being at the centre of political activity instead of promoting the traditional view that sees philosophic contemplation as the source of right and truth in politics. However,

she does not claim that Marx puts an end to the tradition. On the contrary, she is also highly critical of degradation of political action into the category of means and ends. Seeing action as the means necessary to achieve a higher end disturbs her as much as she is bothered by the idea which subordinates politics to economics (Kohn, 2005: xxvii-xxviii; Dossa, 1989: 21).

Following that concern, Arendt specifies her uneasiness with modernity by referring to the establishment of totalitarian governments in Russia and Germany. As Canovan (2002: 11) puts it “[t]he special danger of modernity, as she saw it, was that those who felt the impulse to act tended to look for some kind of irresistible trend to side with, some natural or historical force with which they could throw in their lot”. With regard to the totalizing and homogenizing effect of the modern mass society, what bothers Arendt is the withering of the sense of the self in human beings as a centre of value (Gottsegen, 1994: 4).

Although there are discussions on whether Arendt is a “reluctant modernist” or a “great anti-modernist”³, her critique of the rise of modern conditions within the context of modern society becomes one of the central focuses of her work. Arendt’s critique of modernity can be felt in her reflections of the political reality. For instance, in *On Violence*, Arendt becomes critical of the idea of progress which is an important component of the Left’s discourse of the modernization process. I think Arendt sees the concept as a tool, which supports the legitimization of violence. Although she refers to how the concept of violence comes to stage in 17th century

³ See Dana R. Villa, “Hannah Arendt: Modernity, Alienation, and Critique” in *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics*, eds. By Craig Calhoun and John McGowan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 179-206. In his essay Villa elaborates on the Benhabib’s arguments that Arendt is in fact a reluctant modernist with her theory of action that stresses intersubjectivity, dialogue, and democratic will formation and George Kateb’s depiction of Arendt as a “great antimodernist” as she yearns for a place on earth that becomes stable and permanent through memorable deeds.

and becomes a dogma in 19th century, she especially has problems with an obsessive belief in the concept of progress that leads to technical developments of implements of violence, which in turn becomes politically uncontrollable. (Arendt, 1970: 30). In addition, in *Crisis of the Republic*, after clarifying the concept of civil disobedience, Arendt clarifies the conditions that make civil disobedience come into existence. In her explanations, the increasing bureaucratization of modern representative government render the initiation of creative and unique political action impossible by means of alienating human beings from their human potential with its machine like organization (Arendt, 1972: 89).

Although these minor points reveal her unease with the phenomenon of modern society and the process of modernization, one could find her major critique of modernity in her prominent theoretical work, *The Human Condition*. While elaborating on the concept of work as one of the constitutive activities of *vita activa*, Arendt situates her analysis of this concept in the context of her critique of modernity. In her endeavor, Arendt's critique of modernity would be limited to her discussions on the relationship between the concepts of labor, work, and action.

Within the context of the activities of *vita activa* Arendt's criticism of the modern age is that *animal laborans*, who is associated with the private sphere of human life, has become dominant. At this point, as Levin (1979: 521, 523) suggests, one has to be careful about what Arendt refers to while she is talking about *animal laborans*. She is not talking about a social class or a social category, rather she indicates "an activity, a way of life, even a relationship to the world." Arendt's criticism that laboring as a private activity has conquered the public space of the political is less concerned with the working class movements of that time. She is instead more concerned with the change in the attitudes of people in their relation to

public life. According to Arendt, as everyone becomes *animal laborans* in their relations to the world, what is left is the private activities that are displayed in the public sphere. As the society turns into a society of laborers, in modern times, the activities that are attributed to the necessity becomes valuable. Never-ending and self-defeating circle of production and consumption starts to rule the lives of people (Suchting, 1962: 48). The modern world creates people being able to think but lacking thought, engaging activities without taking meaningful actions and having jobs without any ethic of productive work (Applebaum, 1992: 500-501). The futility of modern times raises the tension between the dichotomies of public versus private, politics versus economics, freedom versus necessity as “[t]he private has superseded the public, politics yielded to economics and freedom has been submerged by necessity” (Levin, 1979: 529).

At the outset, within the context of the modern world, Arendt’s criticism seems to fit well within the dichotomy of public versus private. However, the concept of work is also at the stage. This point is supported by Applebaum (1992: 494) as he indicates that use-values, which are related with what the end product and the goal are, and have been associated with work, have given way to exchange value, which values automation and productivity, and are associated with labor and quantity. From that argument, it is clear that Arendt’s criticism of the modern world is not limited to the intrusion of the sphere of labor, which is private into the sphere of action, which is public. Work as a third category has been also affected by labor’s triumph in terms of dominating people’s relations to the world. Different from both action and labor, work has an indispensable share in Arendt’s political thinking.

Arendt’s critique of modernity that is depicted in *The Human Condition* is not limited with her elaborate analysis of the concept of work. In my own reading of

Arendt's critique of modernity, the concept of the social is more important than the concept of work. While substantiating the concepts of the public and the private, Arendt (1958: 28) introduces the concept of social, which is an element of the modern age and finds its political form in the nation-state. Specifically, Arendt draws our attention to the phenomenon of the rise of the social in modern age. According to her, today, politics becomes a function of society. The rise of the household (*oikia*) or of economic activities in relation with the public realm has had the effect of blurring the distinction between the public and the private (Arendt, 1958: 33). In her understanding, this signifies a danger, as society, on all its levels, excludes the possibility of spontaneous action and outstanding achievement under the name of normalization as long as it expects certain kind of behavior (Arendt, 1958: 40). At this point, Arendt sees modernity as damaging to the clearly defined distinction between the public and the private spheres and a loss of our capacity of action and political experience. In the broader context of contemporary political structure, the social in Arendt

includes not merely the shift from *oikia* to market economy without central direction but also central control of that economy; it includes not only "free market" *laissez faire* but also socialist or communist regulation, economies directed by a government on a technical, administrative basis, in a sort of "gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping"(Pitkin, 1998: 11).

This idea of modernity having the connotations of 'damage to' and 'a loss of' can be identified in her other works as well. In *On Revolution*, in the contexts of French and America Revolutions, Arendt argues that entering of social and economic matters into the public realm does not commence with the outburst of the revolutions in the eighteenth century. Arendt points out that transformation of government into administration, rule of the bureaucracy, and transmutation of law into decrees become the prominent characteristics of the absolutism before the revolutions

outbreak. However, with the downfall of political and legal authority that also corresponds to the outburst of revolutions the concept of *the people* gains prominence. The power of the people shifted into a chaos of violence as “their need was violent, and, as it were, pre-political; it seemed that only violence could be strong and swift enough to help them” (Arendt, 1990: 91). With the entrance of violence into the public realm through the emergency of fulfillment of the needs of the poor, the public realm is damaged. The results are total misery and total terror (Arendt, 1990: 112).

In addition, in *On Violence* Arendt talks about how her conception of the political and freedom have been damaged by the modern conceptions of politics. While indicating the mutually exclusive character of the relation between power and violence, Arendt (1970: 81) argues that “the greater the bureaucratization of public life, the greater will be the attraction of violence.” The important point here is that in Arendt’s thinking bureaucracy is a form of government that is deprived of political freedom. Political freedom means the power to act. Therefore, bureaucratization, which is a fertile ground for violence, becomes a dead spot for Arendt’s basic points of concern: the political, freedom, power, and the public realm.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter points out Arendt’s unique and original stance within the Western political thought by presenting her methodology and key concepts. By challenging some of the traditional views of Western political thought and presenting a critique of unprecedented conditions of modern society, Arendt tries to understand our actual experiences and offers her readers different ways of grasping what it

means to experience political reality as experience. She tells the readers stories of the actual events by revealing different layers in them. In this way, she presents a unique way to her readers to understand the contemporary political experience.

With respect to this dissertation, this unique way is important for two different reasons. Firstly, by revealing the different layers of a given phenomenon Arendt offers her readers different perspectives to look into the same phenomenon. This multi-layered way of thinking should not be thought as inconsistency. It is a richness that inspired me and made this dissertation possible. If Arendt did not give different accounts of the social and the political in her different works, this dissertation could not have offered an analysis of the reconfiguration of these concepts.

Secondly, in her unorthodox way of engaging in political theory, Arendt is not following a systematic way of conceptualization. Her main concepts simultaneously emerge as her story telling unfolds. These concepts do not seem as separate notions in a systematic theory but as related elements of a plot. As Pitkin suggests, Arendt tried to show us that we have lost what is valuable to us. By stressing our collective powers and responsibilities, politics and public life, Arendt tries to help us to get rid of our modern tendency to privatize and personalize (Pitkin, 1998: 2). Within this context public life, freedom, action, public realm, plurality, reality and political emerged as the key concepts in her theory. These are the interrelated elements of our modern story. It is very hard to separate these concepts epistemologically and ontologically. In her line of thinking, the *raison d'être* of politics is freedom; to be free means both not to be subject to the necessity of life or command of another and not to command oneself (neither to rule, nor to be ruled). Freedom is ontologically rooted in the fact of natality; the concept of natality

signifies new beginning/ to begin something a new, which is the capacity for action. Freedom's field of experience is action; through politics one realizes one's individuality in the sphere of action. Action takes place in the public sphere which exists due to human plurality. At the same time, politics articulates reality that is the fact of being seen and heard by others. At the end politics is a means to attain human excellence.

Every concept is related to one another and they are defined in the context of the public versus the private dichotomy. Politics, action, reality, and freedom are the elements defined in the domain of the public. This interrelatedness and interdefinitionality provides a kind of fixed nature. Concepts are essentially bound to each other in terms of definition. In the following chapters this dissertation examines whether it is possible to break this fixed nature caused by the dichotomous thinking of the public and the private.

CHAPTER 3

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

When we look through the works on Arendt, it is interesting to note that there is not much critical work on the way she identifies and conceptualizes the public versus private dichotomy. As indicated in Chapter 1, the concepts of evil, political, freedom, violence, action and revolution are among the ones which are frequently studied in the context of Arendt's political thought.

It is patent that all of these works entail the conceptualization of public and private spaces as Arendt's political theory is structured on "mutual interdefinition" (Dossa, 1989: 74). In other words, she defines her key concepts with reference to other concepts. Her conceptualization of freedom on the basis of action, the public, and the political is a good example. The mentioned mutual interdefinition leads some thinkers to view the conceptual contrast between the public and the private as the founding element of Arendt's political theory (Villa, 1992: 712; Dossa, 1989: 74). As a consequence, they depict the dichotomy in non-negotiable terms. The boundaries

are left intact, because there is no doubt on the possibility of fluidity of the strictly defined boundaries between the public and the private in Arendt.

The most important reason behind the mentioned lack of interrogation is the fact that in *The Human Condition* (1958), where Arendt makes her conceptualization of the public and the private explicitly, Arendt turns to Athenian political life, which strictly separates two orders of existence: *idion* (man's own) and *koinon* (communal). In Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is strictly excluded from the privacy of *oikia* (home) and the family (Arendt, 1958: 24). Arendt (1958: 25) argues that activities of action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*) constitute the realm of human affairs. The notions of necessity and usefulness do not belong to this realm of human affairs, because they are seen as belonging to the private sphere of life. Arendt's underlying motive behind holding such a strong distinction between the public and the private could be thought of as her critique of the traditional liberal division between those two realms. Liberalism valorized the private and prioritizes the protection of economics, family and religion from any interference on the side of the state (Zaretsky, 1997: 212). Arendt celebrates an earlier tradition that valorizes the public as the space of the free representation of equal citizens, as opposed to a private space of social inequality and embodied coercion.

In relation to that critique, Zaretsky argues that Arendt agrees with Marx that politics should be rooted in a conception of the fundamental human condition. Nevertheless, her understanding of the basis of this conception lies in the distinction between the public and the private, rather than in labor (Zaretsky, 1997: 220). In other words, her distinction between the public and the private and her reversal of the accustomed order between them become the backbone of her critique of the modern

liberal dichotomy between these realms and its reformulation of freedom as the ability to avoid participation in politics. Therefore, Arendt's public/private distinction is an essential part of her theoretical engagement, but one that cannot be taken for granted in its definition.

The important point is that Arendt sees a weakness in the separation between the public and the private in the liberal conception, but she tries to overcome this weakness by constructing a tighter separation. At this point, her endeavor of understanding the modern phenomenon of totalitarianism comes to the stage as the explanation of insisting on the distinction between the public and the private. According to Calhoun (1997: 236), Arendt defines the key feature distinguishing the totalitarian form of government from tyranny in relation to the fact that totalitarianism controls the private life of people in addition to limiting their public existence. Calhoun also states that Arendt's critique of modernity sees the modern phenomenon of totalitarianism and the emergence of a new hybrid sphere of the social as shaking the stables boundaries between the public and the private. This situation makes the distinction of the public from the private vital. Public space, which "is the crucial terrain of the humanly created as distinct from the natural world, of appearance and memory, and of talk and recognition," and the private space of necessity should each be kept intact against penetration of the other. (Calhoun, 1997: 233). In other words, in her elaboration on and substantiation of the new phenomenon of totalitarianism, Arendt needed this separation between the public and the private.

Keeping all of these considerations and arguments in mind, the question of this dissertation is whether Arendt relies on that strict separation all the time. Does Arendt keep this strict separation between the public and the private in all of her

political reflections? Are there any theoretical spaces and concepts that transcend this strict dichotomy, which could be identified as a loophole? Before trying to find answers to these questions, it would be crucial to look through secondary literature on the public and the private distinction in Arendt's theory. By pointing out that there is a lack of critical interrogation in terms of the questioning the limits of the mentioned dichotomy, the original contribution of this thesis would become explicit.

In this chapter, the secondary readings on the public and the private distinction are divided into two main sections. The first one includes the mainstream secondary readings, which covers the writings of scholars who would not be associated with any kind of particular tradition or movement within the field of political theory. The second one is composed of feminist writers who engage in a more critical analysis of the public and private distinction. Although, none of the writers specifically deals with the essentialism of the distinction itself as opposed to the essentialism of the categories, their insightful elaborations define the context for the main argument of the dissertation: that there are possibly indistinct concepts and spaces in Arendt's theory that transcend the non-negotiable distinction between the public and the private.

3.2 Mainstream Secondary Reading

When one looks through the conventional conceptualizations in secondary readings, one would come to the conclusion that the Arendtian conceptualization of the public versus the private is made in non-negotiable terms. There is no mention in the secondary literature of the possibility of mingled spaces or concepts, which carry the dual traces of the public and the private. These works are loyal to Arendt's

conceptualization of the public versus private distinction that is depicted in *The Human Condition*. They do not just reaffirm the strict dichotomy between these spaces, but they also assert that the conceptualization of public versus private in Arendt's political theory is made through a negation. To be more precise, these works argue that, firstly, the public is constructed; and secondly that the ones excluded from the construction of the public engender the private through the negation of the affirmative elements of the public.

One of the most crucial examples of the works on Arendt's political theory is Dossa's *The Public Realm and The Public Self: The Political Theory of Hannah Arendt*. In his comprehensive analysis of Arendt's theory, he argues that the notion of the public realm is the key to Arendt's political theory. With regard to the public/private distinction, Dossa (1989: x) depicts the private realm as having a secondary place, and as a peripheral phenomenon unfit for appearing in the central space of the public. While he is elaborating on Arendt's conception of politics, he demonstrates a perfect example of interdefinitionality in Arendt's theory. Dossa (1989: 73) states that in Arendt's theory, the content of politics is the exercise of freedom in action and speech in the public realm, which is the space of appearance. In fact, he enumerates two factors for being political. The first one is contempt for natural privacy and the second one is the obligation of being an actor who could be seen and heard by others (Dossa, 1989: 64).

As it could be observed from that argument, Dossa reads Arendt's conception of public and private spheres as opposites in the context of the political. As he directly puts it "Arendt's theory formally defines the public realm in opposition to that which is private, natural and removed from the common." (Dossa, 1989: 73).

This type of negation is also apparent in Dossa's elaboration on public space and human status in Arendt's political theory. Dossa states that in our shared human condition there are two possible distinct ways of life: bodily life and worldly life. In this account, bodily life is private and immanent; it is nearly beastly. On the other hand, worldly life is public and transcendent; it is truly human (Dossa, 1989: 96). While substantiating the public in Arendt as the space for fulfillment of the human potential *par excellence*, Dossa is eager to rely on the non-negotiable distinction between the public and the private by depicting these spaces as existing in a negated relationship.

The mentioned relationship between the public and the private based on a negation is also pointed out by other prominent Arendt scholars. For instance, Michael G. Gottsegen (1994: 50) argues that the public in Arendt is the lasting space and world, which is built by action. In his reading of Arendt, he argues:

She depicts the public realm as filled with the light of speech which illuminates all that appears within the realm; the private realm, by contrast, is depicted as an essentially mute sphere, a sphere of darkness, a hiding place, a place of privacy, into which the light of the public does not- or should not- penetrate.

He also points out that what is shared in the common realm of the public is political, therefore, by default, he refers to the private as non-political. This is also another good example of the interplay between Arendt's concepts: the public, action, and the political. While underscoring the relationship of the mentioned concepts, Gottsegen relies on the non-negotiable distinction between the public and the private. They are simply the opposites. The boundaries of the one should be protected against the other's intrusion.

The mentioned interplay between Arendt's concepts based on non-negotiable distinction between the public and the private is also patent in George Kateb's work. In his endeavor of interrogating the features of politics in Arendt, Kateb (1977) constructs his argument on the basis of the public versus private dichotomy. Basically, Kateb (1977: 142) argues that, in her discussion of the political, Arendt gives special importance to two concepts: freedom and worldliness. In Arendt, the freedom could only exist in the engagement of political action, and the political action could only take place in the 'world' out there. Kateb (1977: 148) states that in political action a person reveals himself through presenting himself publicly. This public life is basically his political life. Besides his public engagement, the person in question has also a nonpolitical life, in which "he is reduced to his biological species-being, or to the typicalities of social conduct, or to a losing struggle to preserve an amorphous personality against social pressure..." (Kateb, 1977: 149). Therefore, the publicly engaged action signifies the political life and politics. This is "the only vehicle of freedom" (Kateb, 1977: 148). However, what is biological, domestic, social, intimate and private could not be associated with freedom (Kateb, 1977: 144). They are simply nonpolitical.

What Kateb is doing while presenting his argument on Arendt's conception of politics is to point out two completely different spheres of life of a person, namely the political and the nonpolitical, respectively. The first one corresponds to public and the second one corresponds to private and/or social. The dichotomy of the political versus the nonpolitical life is presented through another dichotomy of the public versus the private, which is apparently non-negotiable.

With regard to preservation of the integrity and viability of the mentioned public as the space of freedom, one should look through the work of Dana R. Villa.

He argues that Arendt sees the public sphere as a theatrical space of appearances, and she tries to protect the integrity of this theatrical space from the attacks of modern monsters: capitalism, the social, and world destroying force of automatism. In Arendt's concern for the protection of the specific space of public, one could recognize her eagerness for providing a space for action. At this point Villa (1997: 183) argues that Arendt's concern for the protected space of action relies on the presence of stable boundaries between the "space of freedom", which is obviously the public space, and the automatism of nature and labor that are situated within the private sphere.

As indicated above, what lies beneath the need for the clear distinction between the public and the private, is Arendt's conception of politics as talk and shared opinion that gives central importance to human plurality and the equality between citizens. The political that rests on the exchange of opinions through speech could only take place in a distinct space of the common public. This common public excludes the private life concerns of each and every citizen. Villa argues that this conception is inspired by Athenian political life. Villa (2007: 9) suggests:

Foremost amongst these fundamental experiences [experiences of talk and exchanging opinions] was the sheer clarity of the distinction between the public and private realms, a distinction which the Athenian citizen experienced every time he left the household in order to take part in the assembly or talk in the agora.

The clearly defined distinction through the negation between the public and the private is marked by the residual character of the private. This point is also stated by those who do not share the idea that what is public in Arendt is also political. For instance, Canovan (2002a: 116) indicates that the private is composed of the material and natural side of human life-all the labor in Arendt's terminology- such as necessity, consumption, production, procreation, which are away from the light of

the plural public space. Moreover, in her unorthodox article, “Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm”, where she makes an analogy between high culture and Arendt’s concept of political, Canovan (1994: 183) argues that Arendt’s focus on the public realm relies on the claim that “human mortality can be transcended by the durability of the public world and the public memory of individuals’ deeds.” In this article, she demonstrates a good example of the interdefinitionality in Arendt by describing the relationship between the political action, the public realm, and freedom as the specific characteristic of public realm. She underlines that freedom is not an element of private life (Canovan, 1994: 179).

In fact, Canovan’s conception of the public realm is extracted from Arendt’s major work, *The Human Condition*, because Canovan starts her argument by defining two characteristics of the public in that book. The first characteristic is being seen and heard by others. This characteristic what makes the public a space of appearance. It is important because of the fact that the public throws light on the subjects and make them of common concern. The other characteristic is ‘the world’, which is different from the natural environment that is signified by the earth. The world is the stage for the public that hosts the action. The world is relatively durable and permanent. It gathers people together but also prevents them falling over each other by creating built and human institutions. By doing this, the world creates the public space (Canovan, 1994: 180-181). In Canovan’s (1994: 181) words “[t]his is the world of civilization, composed of buildings and machines, of works of art and lasting institutions such as states.”

The mentioned conception of the public in Arendt’s theory leaves Canovan with a clearly marked distinction between the public and the private. In relation to that distinction Canovan states that the private has a definite location as it is based on

the household. All the economic production, all the natural and economic side of human life take place within the private. Following that point Canovan (1994: 183) indicates:

According to Arendt, then, the private and the public realms are in principle quite different concerns. The private realm, away from the public eye, is concerned with the life and welfare of the species, and with whatever can minister to that: but the public realm is there to conduct the affairs of the world in a blaze of publicity.

Therefore, it is clear that Canovan also reads Arendt within the secure boundaries between the public and the private.

3.3 The Alternative Perspective: Feminist Readings Of Arendt

Besides the elaborations on how Arendt criticizes the modern liberal distinction between the public and the private, one would expect to come across more critical considerations of the distinction itself among feminist scholars of Arendt's work. Feminist political theorists have criticized the split between the two realms in the tradition of Western political thought, because according to them this distinction is a product of patriarchal power relations. While Arendt is critical on her own terms of the modern blurred position of the necessary distinction between the public and the private, the feminists are critical of the distinction itself and the patriarchal political system that decides what is politically valuable within each realm. They are challenging the power of decision making that ascribes value to each realm, and are trying to show the value of the ignored content of the private.

With regard to this aspect, feminist interpretations could be classified in two different camps. The first one tends to criticize Arendt not on the basis of where she draws the line between the private and the public, but how she treats each realm. In

other words, they are not fully critical of the existential side of the distinction. They tend to keep the distinction intact but try to assert value or nomination to what exists in each realm. They usually do not criticize a gendered reading of the public and the private, but endeavor to assert an equivalent given value from one gendered realm to the other. In respect of Arendt's writing, the common argument is that the activities associated with *animal laborans* such as child rearing and housekeeping, which are situated within the private and usually attributed to females, should be treated as equal in terms of value with any male activity that takes place within the public.⁴

The second camp, having the former's critiques in their minds, makes an effort to appropriate the rich possibilities in Arendt for feminist theory, and demands a transformation or modification of Arendt's basic statements. Although these feminist scholars make a great contribution in terms of making use of Arendtian theory within feminist understanding, they do not challenge Arendt's insistence on keeping the distinction intact. In addition, they do not try to point out any loopholes in Arendt's theory. These scholars simply try to use elements of Arendt's political thinking, such as plurality, performative characteristics, distinctiveness, and participatory aspect of her conception of politics, as enriching possibilities to their political and theoretical understandings. This chapter basically deals with this group of feminist scholars, as their approach is more critical in terms of existential concerns of the public and the private distinction in Arendt. They do succeed in making an alternative reading of Arendt, but fail in questioning the flexibility of the distinction within the political theory of Arendt.

⁴ See Adrienne Rich, 1979; Mary O'Brien, 1981.

The first feminist writer who demands a transformation in Arendt's political theory in order to attain more plausible results in contemporary political life is Hanna Fenichel Pitkin. In her thoughtful essay, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public", Pitkin (1981: 327) re-examines of the meaning of public and private in Arendt's political thought by arguing that we are experiencing a widespread turning away from public life. Pitkin (1981: 328), like the conventional readers of Arendt, gives a good account of the interdefinitionality in Arendt by stating that the public is synonymous with the political and the political implies action in a community of peers in Arendt's theory.

Pitkin reads Arendt's distinction between the public and the private as corresponding to that between the political realm and the household. In this relation, Pitkin states that the private in Arendt, affected by ancient Greece, is the pre-political, even non-political realm. The political realm, on the other hand, is composed of equals, but made up so by equality that has nothing to do with universal or natural rights, wealth, talent, or ability. Their equality of status is artificial, which is not at all a pejorative term for Arendt, since it indicates a human achievement based on the worldly realm of human work and creativity (Pitkin, 1981: 331).

Within this context, Pitkin reads the public realm as the gendered space of the agora. She is highly critical of the exclusion of any phenomena that are associated with necessity and usefulness from public life. Pitkin (1981: 336) argues:

On this account, the exclusion of "everything merely necessary or useful" from political life means simply the exclusion of the exploited by their exploiters, who can afford not to discuss economics, and to devote themselves to "higher things," because they live off the work of others. But there is more wrong here than injustice.

Therefore, Pitkin suggests, within this context, it is hard for one to make sense of politics itself.

According to Pitkin, what is missing in Arendt is a higher goal that keeps the citizens together and provides meaning to their conversations on political events in the public. Pitkin thinks that Arendt is so obsessed with the protection of the public realm and political freedom from the interference of 'the social' with its concern in modern times that she fails to assign an account of what is at stake. For Pitkin, political action and the public needs a substantive content, motivation, in other words an account of what is at stake. She argues that we need to include social and economic issues to the public concern, and can do so without destroying the political freedom. The balancing concept is justice, as "justice is precisely about the connections between profit and right, utility and meaning, private claim and public policy." (Pitkin, 1981: 343).

It is patent that Pitkin is critical of Arendt's existential stance in terms of the public and the private distinction. She argues that social questions should be incorporated with the public sphere in order to provide content and motivation for politics through the medium of social as well as political justice. However, it is also obvious that Pitkin does not recognize the possible existence of flexible points in Arendt's theory that mingle the public and the private and therefore would ease the transformation that she demands. In her reading, Pitkin, rather than exploring other possibilities in other of Arendt's works, is eager to hold on to the distinction in the way Arendt defined it in *The Human Condition*.

Another feminist writer who takes the public in Arendt as depicted only in *The Human Condition* is Mary G. Dietz. In her essay, "Hannah Arendt and Feminist Politics", Dietz sees the public realm in Arendt *-bios politicos-* the realm of

citizenship- as the domain of freedom. Dietz (1994: 231) argues that Arendt's political vision was Hellenic, as her model of public was the Greek polis of male citizens. According to Dietz, the public in Arendt needs its other to assert itself. Not surprisingly, the other for the public is the private, which is a space of necessity, painful labor, and blackness (Dietz, 1994: 239-240).

After presenting her conception of the public in Arendt, Dietz discusses the work of feminists that elaborates on the political theory of Arendt. Basically there are two mainstream positions. The first argues that Arendt's denial, in *The Human Condition*, of the status of the reproductive labor, is a reaffirmation of the superior position of masculinity in today's patriarchic society. Arendt's positioning of the female realm of reproduction as a private space that cannot be the site of freedom is a crucial point for feminists like Adrienne Rich and Mary O'Brien. From the other position, feminists such as Nancy Hartstock, Hanna Pitkin, and Terry Winant point out the feminist dimensions of Arendt's political thought. For Instance, Arendt's appreciation of the concept of natality, while talking about political action as the new beginning/beginning something anew, is an important case for them (Dietz, 1994: 232).

By taking these interpretations into consideration, Dietz (1994: 232) argues that "an "Arendtian feminism" must continue to maintain an analytical distinction between political life on the one hand, and reproduction on the other, and also recognize the problematical nature of a feminist politics grounded in reproductive processes." Dietz argues that one should read the activities of *vita activa* with a genderless perspective, as there is nothing intrinsically or essentially masculine about the public realm, or feminine about the private realm of necessity and labor. Dietz suggests we leave behind such a gendered reading and focus on Arendt's visionary

and liberating conception of human activity in terms of politics. In Dietz's (1994: 247) perspective:

By articulating a conception of politics and political equality as collective action and the mutual engagement of peers in a public realm Arendt has us focus on what it means to be "speakers of words and doers of deeds" whose particular and distinctive identities deserve revelation in the public space of citizen politics. As a result, we shift our focus on human practices away from sheer biological, bodily processes on the one hand, and economic productivity on the other, and toward the constitution of public, political life.

Dietz calls for an alternative perspective in reading Arendt that appreciates the collective action and mutual engagement in Arendt's theory of the political. Although Dietz makes an original reading that releases the gender concern in Arendt's thinking, she does not challenge or abandon the public/private distinction itself.

Like Dietz, another important feminist Arendt scholar, Bonnie Honig, argues that Arendt's agonistic and performative account of politics could be a good source for feminist theory. According to Honig (1995: 136):

In spite of Arendt's insistent reliance on her public/private distinction, the resources for its politization are present within her account of politics and action. A reading of Arendt that grounds itself in the agonistic and performative impulse of her politics must, for the sake of that politics, resist the a priori determination of a public/private distinction that is behind augmentation and amendment.

In Honig's point of view, an open, resistible, creative conception of politics that rejects narrowly expressive, identity-based politics opens the doors of feminist politics to the political theory of Arendt.

With regard to this hope of possible contribution of Arendt to feminist politics, Honig creates an alternative perspective not in terms of the public and private distinction but in terms of applying the agonism in Arendt to feminist

politics. In fact, Honig (1995: 136) does not hesitate to state that the public vs. private distinction in Arendt's theory is rigid; so rigid that this distinction does not allow the politization of social justice and gender issues. She also states that the distinction is nonnegotiable (Honig, 1995: 146). Honig (1995: 145) supports this reading by arguing that binary oppositions in Arendt secures her public/private distinction with "a multilayered edifice" as Arendt is so careful to protect the public from the private but at the same time other way around. This multilayered edifice is composed of the following binary oppositions : performative versus constative, "We hold" versus "self-evident truth", multiple self versus univocal body, male versus female, resistible versus irresistible, courageous versus risk-averse, speech versus mute silence, active versus passive, open versus closed, power versus violence, freedom versus necessity, action versus behavior, extraordinary versus ordinary, inimitable versus imitable, disruption versus repetition, light versus dark, in short: public versus private (Honig, 1995: 144).

In her gendered-free reading, Honig valorizes Arendt's theory in terms of its performative character. The diverse and distinct people within the public realm do not share *a priori* solid identity before taking an action. Their common concerns are just the care for the world and an agonal passion for distinction. Within the same line, Honig is in favor of development of individuality during participation in concerted political action. Although Honig combines two different accounts of the public in Arendt, namely agonism and associationism, she does not make a critical elaboration on how Arendt draws the line between the public and the private and whether there are some points that transcends this distinction in Arendt's political theory.

Similarly, Seyla Benhabib also differentiates the agonistic account of the public realm in Arendt from the associational one. Benhabib (1993: 97) also starts with enumerating the characteristic distinctions in Arendt that disappoint feminists: freedom versus necessity, the public versus private and the male versus the female; therefore, she commences her analysis in the secure area of distinctions.

What is striking about Benhabib's analysis is that she is explicitly stating the phenomenological essentialism in Arendt. She makes her point by starting the questioning of what is and what is not an appropriate matter to be discussed in the public realm. According to Benhabib (1993: 104), the problem is Arendt's phenomenological essentialism, in which:

‘public space’ is frequently either defined as that space in which only a certain *type of activity*, namely action as opposed to work and labor, takes place, or it is delimited from other ‘social’ spheres with reference to the *substantive content* of the public dialogue.

The mentioned fixed nature is in fact what this dissertation puts into question. Is this fixed nature valid in all Arendt's political works and reflections?

Benhabib's (1993: 99) controversial but enlightening interrogations pose the following question: “Have feminist theorists told us where this line needs to be drawn, or is the phrase ‘the personal is political’ an invitation to another version of authoritarian politics?” This is also one of the basic questions of this chapter, while questioning to what extent feminist writings that have the claim of making an alternative reading of Arendt's political theory are successful in questioning the rigid boundaries of the public and the private distinction.

Having these considerations in mind, Benhabib states that feminists like Nancy Hartsock and Ann M. Lane opt for the modifications of the agonal model of politics in Arendt's theory. According to them, Arendt's vision of the political

community as a shared common world in which the individual engages the political activity with his equal peers and distinguishes himself, offers a great opportunity. Seeing power as a collaborative, liberatory empowerment is also effective. According to Lane, Arendt's account and experience of the social world and its relation with the pariah identity also shed light on women's struggle (Benhabib, 1993: 100).

At this point Benhabib modifies Arendt's conception of the public as a dialogic and procedural model. She differentiates between two models of the public as the agonistic and associational and then opts for the latter in the context of modern politics. "According to the 'agonistic' view, the public realm represents that space of appearances in which moral and political greatness, heroism and preeminence are revealed, displayed, shared with others"; different from that associational public space emerges whenever men act together in concert. It is not topographical or institutional (Benhabib, 1993: 102).

Differentiating different accounts of the public sphere in Arendt, and trying to extract a dialogical and procedural model from the associational account is a great contribution in terms of making an alternative reading of Arendt. However, Benhabib, does not give a satisfactory answer to the question that she asks with regard to feminists theorists. Neither does she interrogate on the essential distinction between the public and the private and question the possibility of grey areas in Arendt's theory.

Nevertheless, there is one point where Benhabib implicitly questions this fixed distinction when she raises the possibility of action within the private realm. Although Benhabib does not state explicitly that there is a possibility of flexibility in the fixed distinction between the public and the private, she gives a context in which we could say so. By referring to Arendt's essay "The Crisis in Education", Benhabib

(1996: 135-136) argues that education that is given while raising one's child is such an important activity within the private space that essentially being a private activity child rearing at the same time opens the space for the formation of future actors in the public space. Thus, there is a small but crucial link between the shaping of the citizen within the private, and the actions of the citizen in the public. This small detail could be thought as a supporting point for the dissertation's main interrogation of finding out in-between spaces and concepts in which the public and the private mingles in Arendt's political theory.

In fact, a newer work on Arendt revitalizes the hope for searching for the possibility of co-existence of the public and the private in a specific instance or experience. In her book, *Speaking Through the Mask: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Social Identity* Norma Claire Moruzzi (2000) makes a political reading of Arendt. Moruzzi says that she reads Arendt's works against Arendt in order to break down the widely accepted strict distinctions in Arendt's thought (Moruzzi, 2000: 1). In her reading of Arendt, Moruzzi employs psychoanalytic lenses and uses Joan Riviere's conception of feminine masquerade as an enacted social identity. With regard to this reading, Moruzzi (2000: 3) argues, "if social identity can be understood as artifice, the self-conscious enactment of a social role can be a specific aspect of political agency." In this respect, Moruzzi accomplishes to make an Arendtian reading in the context of social identity, which is thought as a doubtful concept in Arendt's political theory.

In her work, Moruzzi takes up historical figures, such as Rahel Varnhagen and Benjamin Disraeli, who are the leading actors in Arendt's political reflections. Within same lines, while constructing her argument on social identity and political practice, Moruzzi elaborates on a historical figure who is absent in Arendt's analysis.

This historical figure is Alcibiades. Moruzzi (2000: 142) argues that although Arendt refers to political experience in Greek city state while she is making her point on the public, action, and freedom, Arendt does not mention any life story from that time that is a “performative political experience that enacts social identity in the public realm”.

According to Moruzzi, Alcibiades’ story is that kind of life story from ancient Greece, which incorporates action, story-telling and self-enactment on the one hand, and transgression of the strict boundaries of the public and the private life in Ancient Greece, on the other hand. As Moruzzi (2000: 142) puts it, “Arendt’s public realm is based on a norm of masculinity that precludes not reproductive physicality, but a differently social identity.” What is striking about Alcibiades is that he was an exemplary Athenian: a great citizen, a great soldier and a great political leader. However, besides these public characteristics, he also constantly enacted a feminine masquerade. Moruzzi (2000: 143) argues that “he challenged the exclusion of the feminine from the public sphere” with his addiction to “luxuriating in pleasure”, which is thought as slavish and feminine at that time. Even by the way he dressed up (a crown with a garland of ivy and violets) he confused the social identity codes of that time, because one could see a combination of “ideal masculinity” and “a masquerade of femininity” in him at the same time (Moruzzi, 2000: 147).

Although, Moruzzi does not challenge the fixed distinction between the public and the private in Arendt’s theory, she uses the historical figure of Alcibiades to challenge the reality of the distinction within the actual events on which Arendt is basing her conception. This example is a perfect depiction of how a historical public figure, who embodies all characteristics associated with Arendtian public life and politics, could embrace essentially private traits in the same context. This line of

thinking motivates one to question the fixed distinction between the public and the private by searching for any mingled concept and/or space that entails both the public and the private in Arendtian sense.

3.4 Conclusion

All in all, this chapter points out the secondary literature on the distinction between the public and the private spheres in Arendt's political theory. In the mainstream reading, the dichotomy between the public and the private is not read critically. The Arendtian scholars, who are making the mainstream reading, base their own argument on Arendt without questioning the fixed distinction between the public and the private. This distinction is usually made through a negation that is non-negotiable.

When it comes to feminist Arendtian scholars, one comes across two different camps. The first camp criticizes Arendt not on how fixed the distinction is. According to them, Arendt ignores the private realm that is associated with femininity and prioritizes masculine public over feminine private. For the second camp, which is the main focus for this chapter, there exists critical reading of the public and the private distinction in Arendt's theory. They try to make use of Arendt's agonistic and associational understanding of the political and the public sphere in their feminist conceptualization of politics. However, in their endeavor they tend to keep the public and the private distinction in Arendt intact. There are some theorists like Benhabib and Moruzzi who refer to the possibility of flexibility of the distinction by arguing that in real life experience any public experience could be given rise within the private or mingled with a private trait. However, there is no critical work that questions the possibility of intermediate/in-between concepts and

spaces in Arendt's theory that would ease usage of Arendt's theoretical way of thinking in various political contexts and concerns. The following chapters will try to provide this kind of alternative insight by presenting examples of an intermediate/in-between concept of work, and space of the social in Arendt's theory, respectively.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONCEPT OF WORK IN ARENDT'S THEORY: A LOOPHOLE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter elaborates on the concept of work in the political thought of Hannah Arendt. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the concept of work has a distinguished place, which emerges as a loophole in the context of the public versus private dichotomy in Arendt's political thinking. In order to develop this argument I present a close reading of Arendt's *The Human Condition*. This text has been chosen for two important reasons. Firstly, the mentioned book is counted as one of the most prominent of Arendt's political writings. Secondly, and more importantly, it is in this project that Arendt conceptualizes the three activities of *vita activa*: labor, work, and action. It is also crucial to note that there is no time-specific historical context for the concept of work in Arendt. However, one should bear in mind that *The Human Condition* privileges the Greek city state ideal of politics, and considers other actions against this ideal.

With regard to the arguments that would be proposed in this chapter, one should look at how Arendt has been read in the mainstream way in terms of the public

versus private dichotomy generally and the concept of the work specifically. In this respect, it could be stated that in the mainstream reading of Arendt, labor as one of the fundamental activities of *vita activa* is associated with necessity and is situated within the private. Additionally, the concept of action, which is also another fundamental activity, is associated with the concepts of freedom and the political and situated within the public. In this chapter, I argue that the third activity of *vita activa*, work, emerges as a loophole. It is an intermediate concept that has characteristics which could be associated with both the private and the public realms. Moreover, I argue that at some points work transcends this categorical dichotomy. In relation to that argument I conclude that work is a crucial concept in itself as it shows how the strict dichotomy between the public and the private could be loosened. As the concept of work becomes a loophole, I argue that the strong distinction between public and private is blurred one when we make a closer reading of *The Human Condition*.

In terms of the structure of the chapter, it begins with an overview of *The Human Condition* as Arendt conceptualizes the three composing activities of *vita activa* in this book. This overview presents the dichotomies and concepts in the context of activities of *vita activa*. In order to clarify my point about how Arendt herself differentiates the concept of work from other two activities in the context of the public versus private dichotomy, I carefully underscore the differences between labor, work, and action, respectively. In the name of a comprehensive analysis, I also underscore the interdependent relationship between these concepts. Then after, I present a discussion on whether it is possible to situate the concept of work spatially within the dichotomy of the public versus the private by elaborating on the work's ability to create a world for both *animal laborans* and acting/speaking men, public

character of the work of art and *homo faber's* capacity of establishing his own public. As a conclusion I argue that the concept of work in Arendt has an in-between character and transcends the dichotomy between the public and the private.

4.2 Overview: The Human Condition

The Prologue to *The Human Condition* is the perfect piece through which one could identify Arendt's motivation and purpose behind writing one of her most important works. In the Prologue section, Arendt clearly indicates her proposal, namely reconsidering the human condition in the contemporary world. Arendt (1958: 5) simply suggests us to consider what we are 'doing'.

Her motivation behind the apparently simple suggestion is ascribed to two important phenomena. These phenomena could also be thought as the context in which Arendt speaks to us. The first event that marks a turning point and activates Arendt's reaction is the launching of the first "earth-born object made by man" into the universe in 1957 (Arendt, 1958: 1). According to Arendt the importance of the event lies not in itself, but in the 'strange' reaction that it provokes. It is seen as the first step toward man's escape from the imprisonment to the earth (Arendt, 1958: 1). Arendt states that what is new in this event is not the level of the scientific and technological development that is attained by human beings, but rather is seeing the earth as the prison for men's bodies. She is highly surprised by this repudiation of the earth by mankind. According to her, the earth is the quintessence of the human condition and any attempt to escape from this very essence would mean a desire to escape from the human condition itself (Arendt, 1958: 2). This problematic, even self-destructive desire allows her to propose rethinking what we are doing.

In terms of scientific and technological developments that enable us to fulfill our strange desire, Arendt argues that we test our limits of our ability to destroy all organic life on earth. However, she thinks that this is actually a political question and the discussions of the human beings' ability to destroy all organic life on earth cannot be left to professional scientists (Arendt, 1958: 3). Their language of mathematical symbols and formulas does not have an ability to express political questions. In its simplest terms, their language is speechless⁵. Through the mathematical formulas we could not talk about our capacities and abilities, and the choices we should make among them. Arendt fears that as a result of such exclusively technical focus, we would rely on artificial machines for solving practical problems, and we would end up with a situation in which we lose the meaning of our abilities, and become helpless and thoughtless creatures (Arendt, 1958: 3).

In relation to the above mentioned situation, Arendt draws a picture of a world in which speech has lost its power. According to her, all that we do, know, and experience can only make sense through speech. Speech is the act that makes us human, and makes human life meaningful and political (Arendt, 1958: 3). Moreover, at this point one should keep in mind that she is writing in the heyday of the Cold War and under the shadow of the arms race of weapons of mass destruction. In relation to this context, it should not be surprising that she is highly critical of man's desire to escape from the 'insecure' earth whose insecurity has been created by man himself because of his inability (lost ability) to speak and think.

⁵ I am using speech in Arendt's and Aristotle's specific meaning as the ability to decide moral values such as the right and the wrong. As Aristotle (1992: 60) says speech indicates what is useful and what is harmful; what is just or unjust.

The second decisive phenomenon for Arendt's unease with our contemporary situation is automation. Arendt argues that automation's claim that it would liberate the laboring from labor, and the theoretical glorification of labor that ends up with factual transformation of the contemporary society into a laboring one, are threatening and self-defeating events (Arendt, 1958: 4-5). In relation to this, the characteristic of self-defeating could be understood in two different ways. Firstly, labor in Arendt's theoretical line of thinking could be thought as self-defeating as it is seen in the context of consumption, rather than production. In a society that is identified as laboring one, what is produced is doomed to be consumed. The defining activity for the existence of the society could not escape from consumption, and therefore from consuming itself. Secondly, with the help of the automation, a society of laborers demands to be liberated from labor. As a result of this demand, the members of this society would be without the only activity that is left to them, namely labor. Laborers without labor, they would be nothing more than consumers.

Prompted by these decisive and threatening contemporary phenomena, reconsideration of what we are doing becomes the main theme of *The Human Condition*. Arendt argues that the reconsideration could be realized by dealing with those activities that are traditionally within the range of every human being and are the basic parts of our shared human condition, namely labor, work and action. So as to have an understanding of the nature of contemporary society, she traces back modern world alienation, which is composed of escaping from the earth to the space and from 'the world' to the self (Arendt, 1958: 6). Thus, at the end of the prologue section, in response to her presentation of the contemporary crisis, Arendt states that she will make an historical analysis.

4.2.1 Introducing the Vita Activa

The first chapter, “The Human Condition”, begins with the introduction of the three composing human activities of the *vita activa*. Each of these three activities, which are labor, work and action, correspond to one of the basic conditions for man who lives on earth. The human condition for labor is life; the human condition for work is worldliness; and the human condition for action is plurality (Arendt, 1958: 7). Within the context of *vita activa*, labor is presented in relation with individual survival; work is presented in relation with permanence and durability imposed upon the futility of mortal life; and finally, action is presented in relation to founding and preserving political bodies. Action is the activity that creates the condition for remembrance and history (Arendt, 1958: 8).

With regard to these activities and their corresponding conditions, Arendt states that the most general condition of human existence is birth-death/natality-mortality. All of the mentioned activities (labor, work, action) are related to this most general condition. However, the closest one to the condition of birth-death/natality-mortality is action, as it is related to new beginning and could be defined as beginning something anew. She even states that action is the political action *par excellence* and natality might be the central category for the political (Arendt, 1958: 9).

In order to give a more detailed analysis of the term *vita activa*, Arendt also looks through the changes in meaning. According to her, with the disappearance of the city state, the term *vita activa* lost its original meaning and commenced to be understood as all active engagement with the things of this world (Arendt, 1958: 14). Originally, *vita activa* means a life devoted to public-political matters, and this

situation is highly related to Aristotle's understanding of freedom. According to Aristotle, freedom means being in full independence from the necessities of life and the obligatory relationships they originated. Men could choose three different ways of life in freedom. One of them is the life devoted to matters of politics. Therefore, one could argue that the *vita activa* is highly related to the concept of freedom and Arendt's conception of freedom was influenced by Aristotle's line of logic. As Arendt puts it; the change in the meaning of *vita activa* results in a change in the hierarchical order between the revised *vita activa* (now a debased form of busyness) and the *vita contemplativa* (now the exalted realm of thought). She states that the superior position of the *vita contemplativa* is not a product of Christianity but could already be found in late antiquity, which could be marked by the fall of the self-governing city state. Despite the hierarchical presumption in debates of Western political thought tradition about the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, Arendt (1958: 17) clearly indicates that her account of the activities that compose *vita activa* is neither the same as nor superior to the central concern of the *vita contemplativa*. This point is a crucial one for comprehending the way in which Arendt constructs her arguments about the activities of *vita activa*.

4.2.2 The public and the Private in The Human Condition

The second chapter of the book is where Arendt clearly puts forward the arguments about her understanding of the distinction between the public and the private realms. This chapter could be thought as the conceptualization of her theoretical understanding with regard to *The Human Condition*, because one encounters many of her prominent definitions within the chapter. Firstly, the terms

action and political are defined in relation to the condition of plurality and the exclusion of necessity. Borrowing from Greek thought, she begins with two orders of existence: *idion* (man's own) and *koinon* (communal). According to Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is in direct opposition to *oikia* (home) and the family (Arendt, 1958: 24). Two activities, namely action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*) constitute the realm of human affairs from which necessity and usefulness (efficiency) are strictly excluded (Arendt, 1958: 25). Free action is defined as "finding the right words at the right moment" and to be political within the context of the polis means deciding everything through speech (words and persuasion), not through force and violence (Arendt, 1958: 26). Within the light of these definitions and activities of man, a fully realized human being is a political animal making free decisions with others, not a social one constrained by urgent physical necessity.

After defining the constituent concepts of her understanding of the distinction between the public and the private, Arendt endeavors to substantiate the definitions of the public and the private through different means. One of them is using dichotomies. The distinction between the public and the private corresponds to the distinction between the political and household in the ancient city state (Arendt, 1958: 28). It also corresponds to dichotomies of freedom versus necessity, permanence versus futility, and honor versus shame (Arendt, 1958: 73). Concepts in each dichotomy correspond to specific realm in the context of the public versus the private dichotomy. While the concept of freedom corresponds to the public realm, the concepts of violence and force correspond to the private realm (Arendt, 1958: 31).

In her endeavor of substantiating the concepts of the public and the private, Arendt introduces another category in this chapter. It is the social. According to

Arendt (1958: 28) the concept of the social is an element of the modern age and finds its political form in the nation-state. Arendt draws our attention to the phenomenon of the rise of the social in the modern context of nation-state governance. According to her, today, politics has become a function of social obligations linked to the management of necessity, and the entrance of household concerns (*oikia*) or of economic activities into the public realm has blur the distinction between the public and the private (Arendt, 1958: 33). In her understanding, this signifies a danger, as this model of society, on all its levels, excludes the possibility of spontaneous action and outstanding achievement under the name of normalization and the expectation of certain kinds of behavior (Arendt, 1958: 40). Through defining the concept of social as a third category that carries the traces of both the public and the private in a distorted way, Arendt conceptualizes the public and the private in a subtle manner. By indicating the disappearing characteristics of both of the public and the private, Arendt, in a way, defines and draws the conceptual limits of both concepts. The hybridized concept of the social becomes a schizophrenic space, whose negated parts in a way indicate the constituting parts of the both the public and the private.

Despite her substantiating strategies, Arendt, at some points, clearly defines what the public and the private are. In this work, she favors the agonistic public space of the Greek city states, where everybody had constantly distinguish himself from all the others, showing through unique deeds or achievements that he was the best of all (Arendt, 1958: 41). On the other hand, “the private realm of the household was the sphere where the necessities of life, of individual survival as well as of continuity of species were taken care of and guaranteed” (Arendt, 1958: 45). After defining the private, she turns to the public realm and continues to substantiate it by indicating that public signifies two closely interrelated but not identical phenomena.

Firstly, “everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity” (Arendt, 1958: 50). In relation to this context, appearance constitutes reality; she substantiates the public through appearance and reality. Secondly, the public “signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it” (Arendt, 1958: 52). In direct opposition to this definition, being private is pointed out as being deprived of seeing and hearing others and of being seen and heard by them (Arendt, 1958: 58). To be private is to be alone and therefore without external verification of one’s own reality. It is to be deprived of truly human life, objective relationships, and any achievement of permanence.

4.2.3 Labor

After defining the spatial contexts for the activities of the *vita activa* and their conditions, Arendt analyzes each activity in a detailed manner. The first activity in *vita activa* that Arendt deals with is labor. It is identified with the body and necessity of the biological life. Throughout the chapter named “Labor”, she tries to make a detailed analysis of the difference between the ‘labor of our body’ and ‘work of our hands’ and how the concept of labor occupies the first place in the hierarchy within the *vita activa* in the modern age.

The activity of labor is identified with consumption, and defined as having a cyclical characteristic as it has no definite beginning and end. Arendt (1958: 105-106) indicates that “[o]f all human activities, only labor, and neither action nor work, is unending, progressing automatically in accordance with life itself and outside the

range of willful decisions or humanly meaningful purposes.” Arendt (1958: 143) tells the consumption process as follows:

Labor, to be sure, also produces for the end of consumption, but since this end, the thing to be consumed, lacks the worldly permanence of a piece of work, the end of the process is not determined by the end product but rather by the exhaustion of labor power, while the products themselves, on the other hand, immediately become means again, means of subsistence and reproduction of labor power.

The exhaustion of labor power could be interpreted in a way that labor is a self defeating concept in the context of consumption.

As indicated above, Arendt states that there is an absence of worldly permanence in the context of labor. This could be thought of as worldlessness. In fact, in Arendt’s understanding, worldlessness corresponds to the activity of labor. Arendt (1958: 115) puts this argument as follows:

The only activity which corresponds strictly to the experience of worldlessness, or rather to the loss of world that occurs in pain, is laboring, where the human body, its activity notwithstanding, is also thrown back upon itself, concentrates upon nothing but its own being alive, and remains imprisoned in its metabolism with nature without ever transcending or freeing itself from the recurring cycle of its own functioning.

In this analysis, transcending cycle of physical immediacy is not possible, not because the body is locked in pain, but because it is locked within its own physical preoccupations, including also pleasure and desire. For *animal laborans*, who is the subject of the activity of labor, having the notion of a world becomes impossible.

Spatially the *animal laborans* and their activity of labor are situated within the private. As the bodily functions of the life process are private and labor has the relation with the human condition of life, labor is thought as belonging to the private space. But ironically, it is also the least private. Arendt (1958: 111) states:

Of these [bodily functions, including fertility], labor, because it is an activity and not merely a function, is the least private, so to speak, the only one we feel need not be hidden; yet it is still close enough to the life process to make plausible the argument for the privacy of appropriation as distinguished from the very different argument for the privacy of property.

Nevertheless, as we are dealing with the activities, labor takes its proper place within the private in Arendt's theoretical understanding.

4.2.4 Work

After a detailed conceptualization of labor, chapter four gives a detailed account of the second activity within the *vita activa*: work. In this chapter, Arendt distinguishes 'the work of our hands' from 'the labor of our bodies'. This differentiation also finds implication within the distinction between the subjects of labor and work respectively. Arendt (1958: 136) clearly differentiates the laboring body, *animal laborans*, from *homo faber*, who constructs the human artifice and human world. Arendt (1958: 137) indicates the importance of the world and human artifice by indicating that "[w]ithout a world between men and nature, there is eternal movement, but not objectivity." Moreover, she also states that human artifice is what gives the stability and solidity to the unstable and mortal man (Arendt, 1958: 136).

In this chapter, the work of *homo faber* is defined through the activities of fabrication and reification. Arendt (1958: 139) indicates that fabrication and reification, that create human artifice, consist of violation of the nature, in other words they correspond to violence against nature. In addition, fabrication also goes hand in hand with the process of making. There is a predictable end in fabrication, i.e. in the work of *homo faber*. The work of *homo faber* is the reification of a thought through physical means and attainment of a final product. *Homo faber* thinks in

terms of ends and means as he is a fabricator. *Homo faber* is incapable of understanding the meaning of the world that he creates. The anthropocentric utilitarianism prevents him to understand the meaning of his creation as it becomes “the paradoxical “end in itself”” for him (Arendt, 1958: 155).

After making the conceptualization of work, Arendt clearly puts her argument that labor, work and action, and their subjects, namely *animal laborans*, *homo faber*, and acting/speaking man respectively, are in an integrated and interdependent relationship. Arendt (1958: 173) argues:

If the *animal laborans* needs the help of *homo faber* to ease his labor and remove his pain, and if mortals need his help to erect a home on earth, acting and speaking men need the help of *homo faber* in his highest capacity, that is the help of the artist, poets and historiographers, of monument builders or writers, because without them the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all.

But she also points out that for the world to become a home for the acting/speaking men, a home whose stability will endure and outlast the ever-changing movement of men’s life and actions, the determining measure could not be the sheer necessity of biological life or the utilitarian instrumentalism of fabrication and usage. This is the point where she commences a detailed analysis of action and its characteristics, as it is the activity that could only take place within the world that is constructed by the work of *homo faber*.

4.2.5 Action

In chapter five, Arendt elaborates on the third activity in the *vita activa*. In her account, action and speech are the activities that create human life and are the means to attain human *excellence*. They are the activities that reveal an individual

man's unique distinctness while he is among his equals (Arendt, 1958: 176). In her conceptualization, acting is "to begin" and speech is "to disclose" and they are interrelated, as she argues that speech is what activates action's revelatory character. In this chapter, Arendt identifies the public as the space for action. It is the realm of acting and speaking men, who are different from *animal laborans*-the slaves of the biological necessity-and *homo faber*-the fabricating and producing utilitarian. In relation to this conceptual identification, another concept, namely the political, takes its proper place in her conceptualization of action within the context of the public. Arendt (1958: 198) argues that "the political realm rises directly out of acting together, the "sharing of words and deeds"". Thus action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it." From this quotation we could easily see that Arendt sees the public realm as the political one.

In this chapter, Arendt also enumerates the characteristics of action. The first one is boundlessness. Arendt (1958: 190) argues that "since action acts upon beings who are capable of their own actions, reaction, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others." According to Arendt (1958: 190), action "always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries." This boundlessness is kind of a signifier for the frailty of human affairs that belong to the public realm. The second characteristic of action is defined as unpredictability. Although one can identify a definite moment for its beginning, its consequences and ends are unpredictable, as it is a process. The reason behind this unpredictability of the ends and consequences of action is the fact that action has no end, as it is a

continually renewing process of action and reaction as new beginnings. Action would endure until mankind comes to an end (Arendt, 1958: 233).

The interdefinitionality in Arendt's mode of thinking emerges once again in her endeavor of substantiating the concept of action and the public realm. At this point the concept of reality comes to the stage as a complementary one. In relation to reality, Arendt (1958: 208) states that "without a space of appearance and without trusting in action and speech as a mode of being together, neither the reality of one's self, of one's own identity, nor the reality of the surrounding world can be established beyond doubt." The space of appearance, namely the public space and the presence of action within this space, are the guarantee of reality of oneself and one's existence.

In the chapter, Arendt also points out that there has been a frustration with action throughout the Western tradition, because of the unpredictability of action's outcome, the irreversibility of the process, and the anonymity of its authors. This is in fact the reason behind the substitution of acting with making within the tradition (Arendt, 1958: 220). Arendt indicates that, beginning with Plato, there is an escape from 'action' to 'rule'. In fact, the concept of "to rule" takes its roots from the household, from the private. Plato was successful in isolating beginning from action, as he is successful in differentiating acting from thinking and thinking (the *vita contemplativa*) from the *vita activa* more generally. Therefore, knowing what to do (philosophy) and doing (*techne*) have become two different performances. The motivation behind this revision was to bestow upon the realm of human affairs the solidity inherent in work and fabrication, and to provide action with the solidity of a means and ends connection, rather than the open-ended ambiguity inherent in the

open-ended process (Arendt, 1958: 222-225). The reasons behind the substitution of making for acting are indicated by Arendt (1958: 229) as follows:

The substitution of making for acting and the concomitant degradation of politics into a means to obtain an allegedly “higher” end-- in antiquity the protection of the good men from the rule of the bad in general, and the safety of the philosopher in particular, in the Middle Ages the salvation of souls, in the modern age the productivity and progress of society--is as old as the tradition of political philosophy.

In the last parts of the chapter, Arendt raises different arguments by introducing different concepts in relation to the characteristics of action. Firstly, in relation to irreversibility of action, the faculty of ‘forgiving’ is seen as the possible redemption from it. Forgiving fulfills the condition of plurality as you would need another man to be forgiven. Forgiving is very important for the preservation of the faculty of acting as Arendt (1958: 237) argues “[w]ithout being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover, we would remain the victims of its consequences forever.”

Secondly, in relation to unpredictability, we have the concept of ‘making a promise’. The power of promise in fact could heal the unpredictability and this is very important for the maintenance of the public sphere as it injects trust within the relationships between acting and speaking men. According to Arendt (1958: 244), the unpredictability of action is twofold: “the basic unreliability of men who never can guarantee today who they will be tomorrow, and out of the impossibility of foretelling the consequences of an act within a community of equals where everybody has the same capacity to act.” It could be observed that unpredictability has potential

damaging effects for acting in a plurality in the absence of trust. With the darkness it imposes, it could make acting together impossible. The power of making a promise reveals itself at this point. It makes acting together possible through constructing bonds of trust between equals, and it sheds some kind of a light onto the darkness of human affairs, becoming the only alternative to a mastery that is based on domination as a form of rule over oneself or over others (Arendt, 1958: 244).

4.2.6 The Vita Activa and the Modern Age

The last chapter, “The *Vita Activa* and the Modern Age”, is not directly related to the public versus private dichotomy, but includes crucial implications of the situation of *the vita activa* in the modern world. Arendt commences with enumerating three different events that have contributed to the two-fold world alienation. These events are the discovery of America and exploration of the whole earth, the reformation that was affected by and resulted in individual expropriation and the accumulation of social wealth, and the invention of the telescope and rise of a new science, which considers the nature of the earth from the view point of the universe. The last one is also related with the discovery of the Archimedean standpoint. Arendt argues that with the rise of the new science and the discovery of the Archimedean standpoint, which is accompanied by the rise of Cartesian doubt, human beings lose their common sense, their fundamental sense of a common knowledge and experience. The loss of common sense is also accompanied by the rise of the social and the reversal of the hierarchical order between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*. All of these events resulted in the victory of *animal laborans*, in other words, the rise of a society of laborers without labor, which

is seen as a threatening development that motivates Arendt to look through ‘what we are doing’.

4.3 Identifying the Loophole in the Concept of Work

After presenting the prominent dichotomies and concepts in *The Human Condition*, in this section I will do a critical reading of the concept of work. As it is stated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, the concept of work is a crucial one in Arendt’s critique of modernity. In her critique, Arendt draws our attention to modern condition of worldlessness, in which people lose the world that binds them together. The reason behind this modern condition is labor’s triumph over activities of action and work. Action and work are replaced by labor. Use-values related with the end-product gave way to exchange values associated with labor and quantity. As a consequence, people have been losing their ability to preserve the common world constructed by activity of work, and their ability to act upon this world at the same time. Within this context, I argue that work, as one of the composing activities of *vita activa* is an in-between concept in the context of the public versus private dichotomy. Arendt herself differentiates the concept of work from both labor and action. In addition, the concept of work could not be situated spatially in terms of the public and private distinction. Although the activity of labor essentially belongs to the private and the activity of action essentially belongs to the public, the activity of work could not be situated in one of these spaces. Some of its characteristics and abilities as an activity transcend the binary opposition between the public and the private. There emerges a loophole in the concept of work, which challenges the strict dichotomous line of thinking in Arendt’s theory.

4.3.1 Differences Between Labor, Work, and Action

In order to clarify the in-between position that the concept of work occupies within the context of public versus private dichotomy, it is crucial to start with underscoring its differences between labor and action, respectively. Looking into the differences depicts how Arendt situates the concept of work by differentiating it from the other activities of *vita activa*. This endeavor leads to questioning the place of work within the mainstream dichotomy.

4.3.1.1 Labor versus Work

As it is already mentioned the concept of work is among the activities of the *vita activa*. The basic difference between the concepts of labor and work is that while labor is related to the activities done because of the bondage to necessity, work is related to production. It is the production of an unnatural and artificial, man-made world. At this point, it is important to note that this differentiation between ‘labor of our body’ versus ‘work of our hands’ is thought to be one of the most prominent contribution of Arendt to this literature. With regard to that, Applebaum (1992: 492, 495) suggests that Arendt’s most important contribution is to differentiate between work and labor, as she is critical of John Locke, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx, who elevate labor to the highest rank in the *vita activa*. They all equated labor with work, as labor for them is the source of property, wealth, and productivity, respectively. At this point Arendt makes a similar distinction between Marx’s differentiation between the quantitative and qualitative aspects of labor. Her signature is that she calls the former labor and the latter work. This point is also supported by Parekh (1992: 502),

who states that “[l]abor assimilates man to nature, while work distinguishes from it.” In labor man adopts to the mechanical and cyclical process in nature, on the other hand, in work, man is free to produce his own project through manipulating the natural material.

The difference between labor and work could also be observed in the context of means-ends category. Arendt states that the process of making in work is totally determined by the means-ends category. According to her, labor also has the end of consumption but the end product, which is the thing to be consumed, lacks worldly permanence, as it would be consumed immediately after the production for the sake of subsistence and the reproduction of labor power. This is why production in labor is a self-defeating activity within the context of the means-end category. In Arendt’s (1958: 143) words, in the process of laboring, “the end of the process is not determined by the end product but rather by the exhaustion of labor power, while the products themselves, on the other hand, immediately become means of subsistence and reproduction of labor power.”

On the contrary, in the process of making, the end product is the ultimate end. It is durable and stands as an independent entity in the world of human artifice (Arendt, 1958: 143). In relation to that, within the context of the means-end category in line with her criticism of the modern world, Arendt is highly critical of channeling nature’s never-ending process into the human world. Because the modern world’s mode of production is driven by automation, the distinction between the operation and product and the product’s precedence over operation no longer make any sense (Arendt, 1958: 151-153). The importance of end product fades away within the process of operation. At this point Arendt does feel uneasiness at the invasion of the public realm by labor as a private activity. Never-ending process interrupts the world

that is created by the activity of work. The world as the product of work becomes obsolete when its prominent activity becomes laboring. The stable end product of work becomes disposable.

With regard to the difference between the labor as a self-defeating activity and the work as the activity of producing stable and solid end products, another important point corresponds to the difference between repetition and multiplication. The cyclical movement in laboring repeats itself is endless. However, when something is produced through laboring, it is doomed to be consumed for further production. This is how the cyclical movement in laboring is preserved. On the other hand, work corresponds to multiplication. The image or the model that guides the fabrication of work does not disappear. In Arendt's (1958: 142) words, "[m]ultiplication, in distinction between from mere repetition, multiplies something that already possesses a relatively stable, relatively permanent existence in the world." This difference between repetition and multiplication is highly related with the difference between the natural cyclical laboring of our body and creative and manipulative making of the world through the activity of work.

4.3.1.2 Action versus Work

At first glance, it is much easier to differentiate the concept of work from action if one looks through the means-ends category. While work has a definite and ultimate end as the final product, action has no definitive end. Arendt (1958: 140-141) clearly states:

The actual work of fabrication is performed under the guidance of a model in accordance with which the object is constructed. This model can be an image beheld by the eye of the mind or a blueprint

in which the image has already found a tentative materialization through work. In either case, what guides the work of fabrication is outside the fabricator and precedes the actual work process much the same way as the urgencies of the life process within the laborer precede the actual labor process.

At this point, the model for the product of work foretells how the end product would look like. On the other hand, as already mentioned, action has the characteristic of unpredictability. Its consequences and ends are unpredictable (Arendt, 1958: 233).

Arendt does not elaborate much on the differences between action and work other than in the context of means-ends discussion. But, there are some points, where concepts of action and work come closer in terms of the space they belong. For instance, in the context of world building, just like action, the activity of work as fabrication and reification is done outside the private. Arendt (1958: 141) makes her point as follows:

What claims our attention is the veritable gulf that separates all bodily sensations, pleasure or pain, desires and satisfactions- which are so “private” that they cannot even be adequately voiced, much less represented in the outside world, and therefore are altogether incapable of reified- from mental images which lend themselves so easily and naturally to reification that we neither conceive of making a bed without having some image, some “idea” of a bed before our inner eye, nor can imagine a bed without having recourse to some visual experience of a real thing.

In this quotation one could come to the conclusion that the things that are attributed to labor are labeled as private. On the other hand, the reification process within the concept of work links it to reality and visibility that are attributed as public. Reification needs contact with the real world of action at some level.

Pointing out the differences between the concepts of labor, work, and action shows that Arendt herself differentiates the concept of work from other activities of *vita activa*. The concept of work has a unique stance in Arendt’s political theory,

because it is different from private labor and public action. In addition, it has a unique stance with respect to interdependent relationship between the activities in question. The concept of work emerges as a loophole in the context of dichotomous thinking as it becomes a bridge between the concepts of labor and action. Both the *animal laborans*, the subjects of activity of labor, and acting/speaking men of the public, need the help of the subject of work, namely *homo faber*. *Animal laborans* needs *homo faber* to ease his labor and remove his pain. Acting and speaking men need him for reification of the story of their activity. Both of them need *homo faber* to have a home on earth for their life on earth and human artifice to fit for action and speech. *Homo faber* constitutes the common ground in this interdependent relationship. Without him, both *animal laborans* and acting/speaking men could not survive. In reality, his activity of work, which does not correspond to labor or action totally, emerge as a third activity that nourishes the other activities of *vita activa*.

4.3.2 The Concept of Work: Neither Public, Nor Private

All of the above mentioned differences and similarities lead one to question the space to which the concept of work belongs. As is indicated, the concept of work has differences from the concept of labor, which belongs to the private space.⁶ On the other hand, although there are clear differences between work and action, there are some points where the concepts of creative work and action come closer, and are definitely closer to each other than either is to the disposable achievements of labor. Work becomes indispensable for acting and speaking man as *homo faber* builds the

⁶ For the discussion on private labor versus public action see Levin, 1979: 523.

solid world that action turns into the public. However, Arendt did not explicitly discuss the semi-public character of work and identify exactly which space it belongs to.

It is interesting to observe that some readers of Arendt situate the concept of work within the public without engaging in a thorough discussion of its implications for the fixed dichotomy between the public and the private. For instance, Applebaum (1992: 491) situates work versus labor within the framework of the public versus the private along with the same lines of power versus violence, story versus history, thinking versus knowing. Additionally, while stating the difference between the activity of labor and working activity, Frampton (1979: 102) says:

Arendt amplified on her unusual distinction between work and labor--that labor, by being a constantly transforming but repetitive producer akin to the cycle of biological survival, is inherently processal, private, and impermanent, whereas work, by virtue of being the precondition for the reification of the world as the space of human appearance is, by definition, static, public, and permanent.

In addition Parekh (1992: 502) also says that work-things are public and objective entities that are produced independently by *homo faber*. Keeping in mind these evaluations, this section does not take work's public character for granted and tries to make a closer reading of that concept in order to question the public character of work. Following that I argue that the concept of work in Arendt's theory has a flexible in-between position within the public versus private dichotomy, which acts as a loophole that transcends the dichotomous thinking. I state my argument by pointing out:

a) work's ability to create the world for both *animal laborans* and acting-speaking men.

b) the public character of the work of art

c) *homo faber's* capacity of establishing his own public.

4.3.2.1 Work's Ability to Create the World

Although Arendt emphasizes the interrelated qualities of the three activities within the *vita activa*, it is clear that action is the most privileged category as it is the only activity that can result in human *excellence*. However, one should not ignore the important place that work occupies in Arendt's political theory, because work provides self-assurance, satisfaction, self-confidence, and provides the conditions, both in terms of the made world and human subjectivity, in which human action can be performed (Arendt, 1958: 140).

Besides these characteristics Arendt (1958: 19) appreciates the concept of work as follows:

The task and potential greatness of mortals lie in their ability to produce things-works and deeds and words- which would deserve to be and, at least to a degree, are at home in everlastingness, so that through them mortals could find their place in a cosmos where everything is immortal except themselves.

This kind of appreciation of work may be partly due to the fact that in Greek language the word *erga* corresponds to both work and deed. Arendt (1958: Footnote 19) indicates that “if they are durable enough to last and great enough to be remembered” to same word can encompass both works and deeds.

The relationship between work and deeds is constructed through the concepts of durability and stability. Both of them help mortals to find their places in the world. This is one of the most crucial points, through which public action –words and

deeds-, and work come closer. More importantly, in relation to this, Arendt states that the activity of work and its subject, *homo faber*, create the conditions of stability and solidity for unstable and mortal man. Work, as an activity category, creates the world in which political man acts and speaks with his equals (Arendt, 1958:136). Moreover, the activity of work and its end products are important for the achievement of a stable individual identity that is one of the crucial determinants for acting within a space in which the citizen is equal with others but also distinct from them. Arendt (1958: 137) puts this argument as follows:

...the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that-in contradiction to the Heraclitean saying that the same man can never enter the same stream-men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is their identity, by being related to the same chair and same table.

Without the products of work, man would be deprived of a stable world and chance to acquire a distinctive human identity (Parekh, 1992: 503).

It is apparent that ‘worldliness’, which is “the environment of humanly constructed artifacts” is created by the work of *homo faber*, and it alone transcends the insubstantial futility of both labor and action (Suchting, 1968: 48). Arendt (1958: 173) makes this point as follows:

The man-made world of things, the human artifice erected by *homo faber*, becomes a home for mortal men, whose stability will endure and outlast the ever-changing movement of their lives and actions, only inasmuch as it transcends both the sheer functionalism of things produced for consumption and sheer utility of objects produced for use. Life in its non-biological sense, the span of time each man has between birth and death, manifests itself in action and speech, both of which share with life its essential futility. The “doing of great deeds and the speaking of great words” will leave no trace, no product that might endure after the moment of action and the spoken word has passed.

In this quotation, it is clear that work differs from the concepts of labor and action in terms of its ability to creating a world of durable artifacts. Therefore, one could argue that the concept of work could be thought as having a quasi-public character, because its products have similar characteristics with deeds in terms of durability, and the activity of work could not be situated within the public, because it somehow transcends the elements of the public with its ability to build a world.

This transcendental character of the concept of work and its situation of being in-between could also be sensed in points where Arendt prioritizes *homo faber* over *animal laborans*, whose domain is private, and acting/speaking men, whose domain is entirely public. In accordance with this, Arendt identifies *homo faber* as lord and master of his doings and himself. Arendt (1958: 144) continues as follows:

This is true neither of the *animal laborans*, which is subject to necessity of its own life, nor the man of action, who remains in dependence upon his fellow men. Alone with his image of the future product, *homo faber* is free to produce, and again facing alone the work of his hands, he is free to destroy.

If *homo faber* is the only truly independent activity subjectivity, then that is another way in which it is in between the other two categories. This kind of subjectivity is different from the subjectivity of *animal laboran's* and acting/speaking man. The subjectivity being inherent in the activity of work has a characteristic of being free in the process of working activity. At this point the subject of working activity also emerges as a loophole in Arendt's theory as he has the distinct characteristics of being his own master. His distinct characteristic transcends the characteristics of *animal laborans* and acting/speaking men, who belong to private and public spatially in the context of the public versus private dichotomy.

4.3.2.2 The Public Character of Work of Art

According to Arendt, the reality and reliability of human action and human actors rest on a stable and permanent world that is created by work. Human life depends on a constant reification of human artifice, namely worldliness as a condition (Arendt, 1958: 95-96). This reification is different from the production of impermanent consumer goods that are the products of labor. The reification process of worldly permanent use-objects is “performed under the guidance of a model in accordance with which the object is constructed ... an image beheld by the eye of the mind or a blue print” (Suchting, 1962: 48). As Arendt (1958: 167) puts it the best example of this reification process would be work of art:

Among the things that give the human artifice the stability without which it could never be a reliable home for men are a number of objects which are strictly without any utility whatsoever and which, moreover, because they are unique, are not exchangeable and therefore defy equalization through a common denominator such as money; if they enter the exchange market, they can only be arbitrarily priced.

The reification process of the work of art is crucial as action and speech which are the fundamentals of human and political relations, must be transformed into written pages, printed books, paintings, records, and/or sculptures in order for them to become worldly things of memory and durable recognition (Applebaum, 1992: 493). The work of art is also an important concept as in modern times it remains the only example of a product of work that constitutes worldliness. As the process of automation starts to control our lives and as craft-work gave way to factory production, we no longer use human standards of utility or beauty in the design of ordinary things, other than for the work of art. Now we design for the

fulfillment of a function whose shape is determined by the operation of a machine and the economic considerations of profit, efficiency, and consumption rather than beauty, durability, or worldliness (Apllebaum, 1992: 498). Therefore work of art seems to remain as the only example of a product of work, which transforms and reifies action, speech and thought into deeds, facts and events.

The reification process in the work of art is a good example of the fluidity of human action and its need of work in order to become public and visible. This example shows us that, once again, work as a concept transcends the definition of its public character as it is also the source of that public character in question. Beside this situation, Arendt also points out the difference of the activity of work from the activity of labor in the context of the work of art. According to Arendt, the source of art work is the human capacity for (creative) thought. This capacity is different from capacities that are attributed as private, such as feelings, wants, and needs. It is a consequence of some type of transformation. Arendt (1958: 168) says:

Thought is related to feeling and transforms its mute and inarticulate despondency, as exchange transforms the desperate longing of needs- until they all are fit to enter the world and to be transformed into things, to become reified. In each instance, a human capacity which by its very nature is world-open and communicative transcends and releases into the world a passionate intensity from its imprisonment within the self.

At this point reification of a thought image is important in terms of its entrance into the world and becoming visible. This point is also important in the sense that it depicts the process of transformation of a phenomenon from one realm to other. A feeling that belongs to the private transforms into a thought and through reification it becomes a stable and solid element of the public world. It shows that the transition from one realm to another is possible. The bridge activity of the transition from the private to the public is the activity of work. It does not essentially belong to one

specific realm. It emerges as a loophole in the context of the public versus private dichotomy.

4.3.2.3 Homo Faber's Capacity of Establishing His Own Public

When it comes to the subject of activity of work, namely *homo faber*, it is interesting to observe that he also has in-between characteristics in terms of the public versus private dichotomy with regard to his capacities. In the context of antiquity, Arendt (1958: 159) states:

...antiquity knew full well types of human communities in which not the citizen of the *polis* and not the *res publica* as such established and determined the content of the public realm, but where the public life of the ordinary man was restricted to "working people" at large, that is, to being a *demiourgos*, a worker for the people as distinguished from an *oiketes*, a household laborer and therefore a slave.

With regard to this, Arendt argues that *homo faber* is capable of having public realm of his own. His public realm is the exchange market, but it may not be a political one. Although it fulfills the condition of plurality, *homo faber* finds himself in a relationship with other men only by exchanging his products with theirs, not exchanging the words and the deeds. Moreover, these products are produced in isolation and this is related to the privacy and private realm (Arendt, 1958: 160-161). Consequently, we could argue that the activity of work can be identified with the characteristics of both the public and the private. While establishing relationships through exchanging refers to a quasi-public character, creating the products of exchange in isolation refers to a private experience.

The important point in here is that although Arendt accepts the possibility of the existence of different publics, such as medieval market places, she calls them

non-political. The reason behind this evaluation is the concept of isolation. Arendt (1958: 161) states: “[t]his isolation from others is the necessary life condition for every mastership which consists in being alone with the “idea”, the mental image of the thing to be. This mastership, unlike political forms of domination, is primarily a mastery of things and material and not of people.” As *homo faber* is alone with the mental image of his future product, he is deprived of the plurality and the condition of being with his equals, which are important elements of existing in a public political sphere. However, Arendt (1958: 162) also states:

The people who met on the exchange market, to be sure, were no longer the fabricators themselves, and they did not meet as persons but as owners of commodities and exchange values, as Marx abundantly pointed out. In a society where exchange of products has become the chief public activity, even the laborers, because they are confronted with “money or commodity owners,” become proprietors, ‘owners of their labor power.’ It is only at this point that Marx’s famous self alienation, the degradation of men into commodities, sets in, and this degradation is characteristic of labor’s situation in a manufacturing society which judges men not as persons but as producers, according to the quality of their products.

At this point I argue that the activity of exchange is a quasi-public activity. With regard to its public character, I state that it is a type of relation to others. There is no identity beforehand. The identity of the producer is established as a consequence of the mentioned relation in the exchange market. Even though it is mediated between things, the important point is the relationship that is established between people. But it is still an intermediate relation between the isolation of the private laborer and the public/political presence of the actor among equals; the workers come together in an intermediate public space of exchange, yet always constrained by the fetishization of their commodity-product.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of work in Arendt's theory is a distinguished one. Arendt separates clearly the activity of work from two other activities of *vita activa*. While doing this, she points out its differences, and also its important function as a bridge in the context of interdependent relation between three composing activities of *vita activa*. Work as an activity is vital for providing life on earth and producing human artifice to be acted upon. The work with its reification capacity enables the transformation of a private feeling into a stable human artifice of the public world. In addition, with regard to subjectivity, *homo faber* as the subject of working activity has the capacity to establish a limited public realm of his own. However, during the working process of reification, *homo faber* is an isolated-private subject and is deprived of the fundamental condition of plurality of belonging to a public realm. In his capacity, the subject of working activity experiences both the public characteristic of establishing relations to others through exchange of his end products, and the privacy of producing the very same product in solitude. These points show that work as an activity could not be situated within a dichotomous categorization. It could not be fully public or private. Its in-between position in Arendt's theory creates a loophole in the context of public versus private dichotomy.

CHAPTER 5

THE SOCIAL IN ARENDT: SECONDARY READINGS ON MULTIPLE SOCIALS IN ARENDT

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter elaborates on the concept of the work in Arendt's political theory. It argued that the concept of work has a crucial place in Arendt's theory not only for being the activity that creates the 'world', but also it is a concept where the strict dichotomy between the public and the private is transcended. In the context of the public versus the private dichotomy, the concept of work could not be situated spatially. Along with labor, work as an activity is not included within the public. However, it has some quasi-public characteristics that differentiate it from labor. Because of its vital role in establishing the world for the survival of activities of labor and action, and *homo faber's* capacity of establishing his own limited public space, work transcends the public versus private dichotomy. Therefore, it is argued that the concept of work in Arendt belongs to an in-between space that is neither public nor private. It emerges as a loophole in Arendt's dichotomous way of thinking.

Along with the same lines, the present and following chapters will introduce another concept in Arendt's political theory, which emerges as a loophole. I argue that the concept of social challenges the strict dichotomy of public versus private. In this dissertation, the concepts of work and social are not selected randomly from Arendt's political theory. I argue that both of these concepts could not be situated spatially in the context of a dichotomous thinking. In addition to that, the context of modernity appears to be a common ground. In her book, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, Margaret Canovan (1974) states that in her critique of Modernity, Arendt develops critical concepts. Among these concepts two of them have an utmost importance. The first one is "worldlessness" that has been experienced in modern times, and the second one is the society⁷ that is a modern phenomenon in Arendt's theory (Canovan, 1974: 81). As it is indicated in Chapter 1, the former concept refers to the loss of the human world of artifacts that hosts action and the political, i.e. the loss of means of being truly human. This situation is a consequence of totalizing modern conditions of living that destroy human potential and capacity to act individually, as the modern life expects conformity and obedience. As a consequence, people become worldless. At this point, the activity of work in Arendt's theory becomes relevant, as it is the activity that creates the world in question. As is also indicated in Chapter 2, the activity of work in Arendt becomes meaningful in the context of Arendt's critique of modernity.

Being related to the same context of modernity, the social is the second concept that I chose for displaying how the strict dichotomy between the public and the private is loosened in Arendt's own political theory. The social as a noun rather

⁷ In her book Canovan uses the term 'society' instead of the social. This may be a result of Canovan's preference for using the noun form of what Arendt refers as the social. This may be also a result of the fact that Arendt is also using these two terms interchangeably in her different works.

than an adjective is a modern phenomenon that signifies a hybrid realm in which the borderline between the public and the private becomes blurred (Arendt, 1958: 28). The fixed characteristics of the public and private realms are combined within this newly emerging realm. This leads to the emergence of an absorbing and transformative phenomenon of the social. When it comes to her critique of modernity, the rise of the social is considered as the main theme in Arendt's theory.

Arendt's well-known insistence on keeping the public and the private intact leads to a negative conception of the term social, which is essentially neither public nor private. This situation also leads to a one-dimensional reading of the term social in Arendt. It is simply read as the intrusion of what is essentially categorized as the private into the political realm of public (Villa, 1996: 20, 24; McGowan, 1997: 263) or it is equated with economics and is seen as the expression of Arendt's reaction to communism, socialism and the welfare state (Pitkin 1998: 16). This one-dimensional and negative perception closes the doors for any in-between conception that could be constructive in terms of contemporary political experience and leads to the exclusion of many social issues from the agenda of politics. In order not to be trapped in this kind of negative conception of the social in Arendt's political theory, this dissertation suggests making use of a multi-dimensional perspective that points out different facets of the term social in Arendt. I argue that because of the mentioned multi-layered way of thinking in Arendt, one could find out different facets of the same concept in different works of Arendt. Pointing out the different facets of the social in different historical contexts could open the doors for an in-between space that could eliminate the difficulties of reading Arendt in the light of the public versus the private dichotomy. Finding out a positive and constructive meaning of the social in

Arendt's political theory paves the way for a fresh outlook of Arendt's concept of the political in contemporary political context.

Before, analyzing the multi-dimensionality in Arendt's works in terms of the concept of the social, and presenting my multi-dimensional reading that construct the theoretical framework for this concept in the dissertation, it is crucial to look into the secondary literature that inspire me in this direction. Baring the general reading of the social as the intrusion of the private into the public in mind, this chapter basically aims to look through a secondary literature that has a multi-dimensional perspective on the concept of the social. In order to fulfill this aim, the works of Margaret Canovan, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, and Seyla Benhabib are referred respectively. Each writer, one way or another, emphasizes multiple facets of the social in Arendt. Reviewing their work would open the door for developing a positive understanding of the term social in Arendt's political theory, which embraces both the public and the private in an affirmative way. This kind of positive reading of the social would enable a new reading of the political, which would lay a claim to socially labeled phenomena.

5.2 Call for a Multi-Dimensional Perspective: Different Facets of the Social in Arendt

Defining the social in terms of the intrusion of the activities that belong to the private, such as economic activities or any activity that is connected to necessity and survival of human species, could not draw a clear picture of this term in our minds. Besides the development of complex economy in modern world and accompanying division of labor, the social becomes an administrative phenomenon in which life

process of the members of society is organized and regularized. It's the very same society that expects a certain totalizing behavior from each member in order to sustain its existence. If one looks through this definition carefully, it would be seen that there is no one single dimension of the social in Arendt. It's multi-dimensional in terms of definition. It refers to intrusion of economics and biological survival into public concern as well as rise of mass society whose chief characteristic is conformism.

In addition to this one-dimensional reading in the literature, there is also a multi-dimensional and broader reading of the social. This alternative reading designates different facets of the social in Arendt by referring to different historical and political contexts that exist in Arendt's works.

5.2.1 Canovan's Reading of the Social: The Society as a Critical Concept in Arendt's Theory

This kind of multi-dimensional perspective is firstly presented in Margaret Canovan's book, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*. As it is indicated, in her book, Canovan presents the concept of society as a critical one. According to Canovan, in Arendt's analysis of modernity, there are certain concepts, through which Arendt invites us to evaluate our age critically. Society is one of these concepts (Canovan, 1974: 81). With regard to this concept, Canovan claims that Arendt is not just a critical theorist of mass society, but she is critical of the concept of society itself, which "constitutes a new and specifically modern mode of organized living together..." (1974: 85). The basic characteristic of this new mode of living together is the disappearance of separating line between the public and the

private realms. According to Canovan (1974: 85), Arendt sees the modern society as an “inflated form of ancient household”. The biological and natural cares of the private become public concerns. The best example for that is the intrusion of economics as the most crucial activity of the whole society into public realm in modern world. This kind of intrusion gradually makes people come together around a common interest, and necessitates them to behave in a certain manner and to conform the dynamics of society (Canovan, 1974: 85).

Canovan (1974: 86) argues that Arendt’s first reference to the idea of society as a space of conformity is in the context of “‘polite society’ of modern Europe, ... the world of the salons...”. In addition to ‘polite society’ in 19th century Europe, for Canovan, Arendt also makes reference to the way modern people live under gigantic supervisor/administrator, which is the nation state. According to Canovan, Arendt makes analogy between ancient Greek household and nation state. Both of them are dominated by natural and biological needs; they are united around one common interest that is represented by the head of the household or nation state; and members of both need to show conformity to orders of the unit to which they belong. Therefore, it could be argued that the modern society is a larger type of ancient Greek household (Canovan, 1974: 86).

Following this substantiation of the term society, Canovan (1974: 105) says that there are two different strands of meaning in Arendt’s political thought, and the connection between them is not clear. The first meaning refers to high society that is dominated by conformity and hypocrisy. The second meaning that corresponds to a different conception refers to modern society administered by nation state, which is dominated by nature and biology. Therefore, Canovan basically argues that there are two different conceptions of society in Arendt, whose connection stays ambivalent.

This dissertation adopts this kind of multi-dimensional approach and argues that there are multiple conceptions of the social in Arendt's political thought. In order to clarify the approach in question, it is crucial to cover the scholars of Arendtian political theory, who have a multi-faceted perspective on the social. Although Canovan's analysis led many Arendtian scholars to make use of different meaning of the social in different contexts, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin and Seyla Benhabib are the ones, who make a profound analysis of the social from a multi-dimensional perspective.

Before elaborating on each work separately, it should be stated that the space that is given to analysis of works of Pitkin and Benhabib would seem not equally distributed. There is a reason behind this treatment. As it will be indicated below, Pitkin wrote a whole book on the concept of the social in Arendt and its analysis. Benhabib elaborates on the subject in one section of a broader project. This is why this chapter elaborates on Pitkin's work more in terms of quality and quantity. As Pitkin makes a book length detailed analysis, this is also why one could have a chance to observe similarities between her points and other Arendtian scholars' readings of the social in Arendt. Therefore, the following section, does not only gives Pitkin's multi-dimensional reading of the term social. It also contains references from other Arendtian scholars, who underline a specific dimension of the social in Arendt. Through inserting references of similar points that is indicated by other Arendtian scholars, this section shows that Pitkin's is a comprehensive work on the social that indicates many facets of the term in question.

5.2.2 Attack of the Blob: Pitkin's Reading of the Social in Arendt

The most comprehensive work on Arendt's conception of the social is Pitkin's book, *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social*. This book simply tries to clarify the meaning of the concept of social in Arendt's political thought by tracing the gradual formation of the concept in Arendt's works. Pitkin (1998: 1) argues that the social in Arendt merits attention as the concept is ambiguous and confused. Pitkin also draws our attention to the fact that Arendt uses an adjective as a noun and she personifies and demonizes this noun. The guilty behind the alarming situation of modern life is simply the social. In Pitkin's (1998: 3) words "Arendt depicts it [the social] as a living, autonomous agent determined to dominate human beings, absorb them, and render them helpless." In fact, this very specific reading of Pitkin is derived from the mentioned sections of *The Human Condition*. According to Pitkin, the social in Arendt is highly related with the paradox of modernity, in which we have to deal with the problematic consequences of our growing powers as an alien force. In this context, Pitkin (1998: 196) says:

The social is Arendt's way of talking about a collectivity of people who, though they are interdependent and active- their doing therefore continually shaping the conditions under which they all live- behave individually in ways that preclude coordinated action, so that they cannot (or at any rate do not) take charge of what they are doing in the world.⁸

This kind of reading of the social as in the form of the denial of the human agency as a consequence of an illusion, which is self-imposed helplessness against human-made conditions, is new to the literature. However, this newer reading is a combination of two different conceptions of the social that are derived from other works of Arendt. In order to understand the newer reading of the social in Arendt, we

⁸ For similar elaboration see also Pitkin (1998: 8).

should indicate how Pitkin traces the works of Arendt that include different facets of the social.

Basically, Pitkin talks about three different facets of the social in Arendt. The first one is high society or respectable society, which is also referred as the conformist parvenu social. It is the opposite of the nature and at the same time of the state. The second one is the economic/biological social that sees society as a bourgeois minded agent combined with the idea of inevitability that is inherited in nature. This idea of the social is a consequence of the emergence of imperialism, anti-Semitism and racism, in which human created arrangements and categories started to be seen as natural and inevitable. The last conception of the social is the above mentioned one: social as the other of the political, which refers to the defiance of human agency. Pitkin argues that the last conception of the social as denial of the human agency is the combination of two different facet of the social that are depicted in earlier works of Arendt, which are the conformist parvenu social and economic/biological social.

Vague terms like conformist parvenu social or economic/biological social need more elaboration in order to track the changes in the ways Arendt uses this term. Firstly, conformist parvenu social is a concept that could be derived from Arendt's earlier works. The main source for this concept of the social is *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*. This book will be analyzed profoundly in the following chapter. However, at this point we should look into what parvenu means in the 18th century Romanticism in Europe. *Rahel Varnhagen* is a biographical work. Arendt wrote the biography of a Jewish woman. It is the life story of Rahel who tried to survive in the social life of the 18th century Berlin.

This is in fact the story of self-realization of a German-Jewish woman, who had a salon that had a significant importance in the social life of that time. Through Arendt's narration, we are exposed to the private experience of being a Jew within a non-Jewish society. Personal strategies for joining that society had become the story of assimilation. This is the context that gives rise to the concept of respectable society to which social striving parvenu tries to join.

The parvenu who is one of the subjects of the social as the respectable society, is associated with the characteristics of tactlessness, political stupidity, inferiority complexes, and money grubbing (Arendt, 1978: 66). Being a Jew was a personal problem for them. Parvenus tried to get rid of Jewishness through becoming a member of respectable society that excluded them. They either became assimilated or present themselves as 'exceptional Jews' to the society.

The parvenu's counterpart in the context of respectable society is 'conscious pariah'. 'Conscious pariah' status was a result of the specific attitudes of specific people at that time. 'Conscious pariah' was an outsider. S/he was outside of the respectable society that was composed of non-Jewish people and assimilated parvenu Jews. They are associated with the characteristics of Jewish heart, humanity, humor and disinterested intelligence and being engaged in politics (Arendt, 1978: 66). Pariah people were aware of their outsider status and affirmed that. Contrary to parvenu people they welcomed their Jewishness and stayed consciously outside of the society. Pariah people also contribute to construction of the social as they signify the other of the social that is known as being conformist parvenu.

With regard to this kind of depiction, Pitkin argues that Arendt sees Jews as always had been paying with "political misery for social glory and with social insult

for political success” (1998: 72). Pitkin continues that “[h]ere political seems to mean no more than state-related, but “social” could mean either civil society, in the conventional contrast to the state, or respectable society, the object of parvenu striving.” (1998: 72). In this respect, what is biologically given and inescapable, such as being Jewish at that time, is related with nature that also signifies the simple pleasures directly enjoyed such as gratifying green things. Pitkin argues that in both respects, nature is the other of society, social artifice and parvenu deception. “Being social meant turning away from nature, giving up the simple pleasures, and striving to overcome or conceal the club foot.” (Pitkin, 1998: 76). Pitkin also underlines that, for the parvenu, social norms must be obsessively obeyed and social classifications should be absolute and definitive. The content of these norms has no importance. The only thing that matters is the legitimate source of these contents, which is superior “they”. Therefore, the social attitude demands from the parvenu not just conformity but also loving the source of these norms, which is members of respectable society (Pitkin, 1998: 185). In this context, social is depicted as a superior norm-enforcing entity that is also called high society.

According to Pitkin, the second facet of the social in Arendt’s political theory is economic/biological social. Pitkin argues that the rise of the social involves the development of trade, money, division of labor and a market system. In this system of production and exchange, everybody is interdependent and the regulation is actualized through the invisible hand of the market. Outcomes are not under the control of the members of this market economy. The market seems to control each and every consequence as an alien irresistible power. People’s own conduct confronts them as an inevitable uncontrollable power. Pitkin (1998: 11) argues that

this situation of irresistibility and inevitability fits well to Arendt's linking of economics to biology and natural necessity.

This new idea of the social as economic and biological necessity is articulated in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Pitkin (1998: 70) argues that the second part of this book, "Imperialism", added economics and biology, the body and its needs, any kind of activity that satisfy these needs, natural processes and necessity to the notions of high society and social climbing. What Arendt talks about in "Imperialism" is how the content of the political has changed with the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie. Arendt argues that imperialism emerged when bourgeoisie opposed national limitations to their economic expansion. Because of the economic necessity, bourgeoisie turned to politics and wanted impose the law of economic growth (expansion for expansion's sake) as a political goal (Arendt, 1966: 126). Politically emancipated bourgeoisie saw the expansion of power for power's sake as the only principle of politics. Therefore, private practices and devices of economics were gradually transformed as the rules for conducting public affairs. In Arendt's (1966: 138) words, "private recklessness elevated to the one publicly honored political principle." Never-ending process of wealth growth replaces political action (Arendt, 1966: 147).

At this point, Pitkin is not the only one who directs our attention to economic social. Young-Bruehl indicates that the rise of the social has corresponded to relentless expansion of capitalism in geographical and political terms. The rise of the social signifies the rise of the business-minded European states, which were also the modern nation states that were intolerant of and prejudiced against their minorities and colonials (Young-Bruehl, 1997: 319). James Barry (2007) also underlines the consequences of more productive labor in the context of the nation states when he is

depicting the social in economic and biological terms. Barry argues that when the waves of more productive labor crashed the protective boundaries of the state, the modern nation state commenced to be called with a different name: modern mass society. In this new structure, it becomes impossible to find a stable centre as the nation changes daily by its metabolic impulses. This is the sign of the arrival of the social realm. New economic and industrial priorities of the imperialist project led to rise of an absorbing living organism. (Barry, 2007: 115, 117).

Within the same lines, D' Entrèves (1994) also points out that the rise of the social has started in the 18th century. The social means the expansion of economic activities to a point in which they become a political concern of the society in the context of modernity. This situation led to the destruction of the public realm and creation of a society of job holders, in which conformity and the isolation are the principles (D' Entrèves, 1994: 45-46). In a way, D' Entrèves seems to refer to mass society as another conception of the social in Arendt by emphasizing conformity and isolation of mass man. However, he does this by relating the phenomenon of mass society to economics, because he elaborates on the conformity to the dictates of economic necessity (D' Entrèves, 1994: 25).

Moreover, in this context of economic social, writers like Wellmer (2007: 225) argue that the social in Arendt is a shortcoming of liberal thought, which forgets the political in favor of the social, the private and an instrumental conception of action that can be called behavior. The interesting point in this analysis is the way it takes the private and the social as referring to not the same but to similar realms. Along with the private, the social is presented as the opposite of the public. This confusion of core distinction between realms could result from the effort that

prioritizes the conception of politics, which is autonomous in terms of being valuable in itself and not relying any higher aim or purpose (Wellmer, 2007: 225).

Different from the other writers, who emphasize economic conception of the social in Arendt, Pitkin's argument proceeds by stating that assimilation of society to nature is the central theme of "Imperialism". The idea of process is the key that substantiates the concept of social with economics, biology, the body, and necessity all of which defies human agency. Introducing human created arrangements and categories, such as the idea of market and the idea of race that is a main political device of imperialist rule, as inevitable and natural, market society defies human agency and its capacity to start anew. Pitkin (1998:187) elaborates on this point by saying that

Arendt is talking about the development of wage labor and a market society, so that a central model for her biological version of the social seems to be the market itself: people so organized that each is arrayed separately and competitively against the rest, yet all affecting each other so that their individual activities result in large-scale consequences that none of them can control or even intentionally influence. ... Although primarily and originally economic, this market model of human organization can be applied to all sorts of processes and systems in which "values" are collectively produced by a system of exchange among individuals.

However, Pitkin's emphasis on the biological social in the context of economy by calling it simply the market would not be sufficient in terms of covering the social as biological necessity. With regard to this, it should be noted that Arendt (1990: 59-114) reserves a whole section in *On Revolution* that elaborates the physical intrusion of the body into the realm of politics as "The Social Question". Although, this idea of the social as the intrusion of human body into the public realm will be analyzed in the following chapter, it should be pointed out that it is another way of substantiating the social as the biological. In relation to that point, Moruzzi (2000:

14) argues that in *On Revolution* physical bodies confront directly to the political. Contrary to the strict distinction between the private realm of the necessity and the public realm of free political subjects in *The Human Condition*, *On Revolution* revolves around “The Social Question” that is a characteristic of modern political life.⁹ In this respect, Moruzzi tries to show that according to Arendt, the essentialist body of physical reality breaks through the secure borders of the political space. This situation signifies the collapse of any possibility for political identity, freedom and action. The socially marked body intrudes into the political through bursting into the streets. The biological social, i.e. the social as the body, appears and transforms the political into itself. It is a “mixed category within which private needs become matters of public policy” (Moruzzi, 2000: 18). This analysis of the social as the body is much clearer and more direct conceptualization of the biological social.

Apart from above-mentioned different facets of the social in Arendt, emphasis on the defiance of human agency brings us to the third conception of the social in Arendt that is underlined in *The Human Condition*. The social as the denial of human agency presents the social as “the lack of politics where politics could and should be.” (Pitkin, 1998: 240). Pitkin is talking about our self-imposed helplessness in front of humanly created processes. She is talking about how we start to see things, which are our own making, as inevitable and natural, and therefore unchangeable. This situation is the result of the combination of acquisitive greed of the bourgeoisie and surface conformity of the parvenu. The competitive individualism and the anxious self-concern led to isolated self-abnegation, in which illusions of helplessness in dealing with our problems become the main characteristic

⁹ Moruzzi’s original attempt is to deconstruct Arendt’s idea of revolutionary politics of speech and action through negotiating the so-called impossible relationship between the social and the political.

of the modern world (Pitkin, 1998: 92-93, 192). In Arendt's understanding the main characteristic in question is nothing more than the rise of the modern phenomenon of social.

5.2.3 From La Bonne Société to Mass Society: Benhabib's Insightful Reading of the Social

The other Arendtian scholar who writes extensively on the concept of the social in Arendt is Seyla Benhabib. Benhabib argues that there are different socials in Arendt. The first part of her book, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (1996), is dedicated to Hannah Arendt's biography of Rahel Varnhagen.¹⁰ Benhabib's main motivation in this part is 'asking women's question', which she sees as a movement from margin to center. With regard to this intension, Benhabib (1996: 4-5) prefers to start her search in the marginalia, in the less recognized works of Arendt. This is why Benhabib turns to *Rahel Varnhagen* as a source of her political interrogation about Arendt.

Benhabib begins with a general conceptualization of the term social. She presents the social in Arendt as amorphous, anonymous, and uniformizing reality, which corresponds to "glorified national housekeeping in economic and pecuniary matters" (Benhabib, 1996: 23). This is the concept of the social that is prominent in *The Human Condition*. After stating this comprehensive but still vague conceptualization of the social, Benhabib argues that there are three dominant meanings of the social in Arendt's work. The first one is capitalist commodity

¹⁰ This is a longer version of Benhabib's article: Benhabib, Seyla. 1995. "The Pariah and Her Shadow," *Political Theory* 23 (1): 5-24.

exchange economy; the second one is mass society; and the third one is the social as sociability, which refers to the quality of life in civil society and civic associations (Benhabib, 1996: 23). Similar to Pitkin, Benhabib points out three different facets of the social in Arendt. However, except for the third one, which is apparently extracted from *Rahel Varnhagen*, Benhabib does not specify books for each conceptualization like Pitkin does.

The first conceptualization of the term social in Arendt, the social as the capitalist commodity exchange economy, is related with spread of free exchange relations, which signifies the change of everything into commodity. Benhabib argues that this kind of understanding of emergence of commodity exchange economy is compatible with Marxian point of view. In this regard, bourgeois society is the first one in history that legitimizes social and political relations of power and inequality on the basis of human relations rather than on the basis of nature (Benhabib, 1996: 24). Moreover, exchange relations emerge as an open and unrestricted medium of social interaction for all people who own commodity (Benhabib, 1996: 25). This type of understanding corresponds to Arendt's conceptualization of newly emerging hybrid realm of social, which is the intrusion of the market economy into public affairs, which are essentially political.

According to Benhabib, the second meaning of the social in Arendt is mass society, which is introduced through the contrasts between behavior and action. This insight comes from Arendt's idea that society excludes possibility of creative and spontaneous action. Society demands certain type of behavior from its members under the labels of normalization, leveling, and homogenization. At this point, Benhabib does not go into a detailed elaboration. The reason behind this lack is her

idea that in Arendt's works, there is no analysis of mechanisms of social control and integration (Benhabib, 1996: 26).

In Benhabib's view, the last conception of the social in Arendt is the social as the sociability that signifies civil and associational life. Being a product of modernity, the social as sociability corresponds to tastes and manners of high or refined society of the 18th century. Benhabib defines this understanding of society as the aggregation of social patterns of human interaction; modalities of taste in food, dress and leisure time activities; differences in aesthetic, religious and civic manners; socialization patterns that contains formation of marriages, friendships, acquaintances and commercial exchanges (Benhabib, 1996: 28). This realm of social as sociability differs from economics, politics and any administrative structure.

It could be argued that this kind of conception of the social as sociability demonstrates great similarity with Pitkin's idea of the parvenu social that corresponds to respectable society for which the parvenu strives. The similarity is that in the social as sociability we still have the parvenu as an actor. Parvenu demands acceptance and equality from the social realm that could function as a homogenizing medium of tastes, manners and attitudes in the form of *la bonne société*. This is exactly what Pitkin calls as parvenu social. The difference is that Benhabib adds the other actor of the social outsider context, namely the conscious pariah and the space in which this actor really acts. As is mentioned before, the conscious pariah is an outsider in terms of manners, tastes and socialization patterns. He has a political stance and is fully aware of his distinctiveness. In fact, he needs the others, i.e. the society or small group of friends/acquaintances in order to make his distinctiveness visible. According to Benhabib (1996: 29), this is exactly what Rahel Varnhagen's salon was: a space of sociability, in which you could express

difference and distinctiveness. Besides *la bonne société*, these types of salons are the product of modernity, in which you can be exposed to new forms of social interaction, patterns of association, manners and life styles. This is the social as sociability for the conscious pariah.

5.3 Conclusion

As it is stated in the introduction of this chapter, along with the concept of work, the social occupies an important place in the context of Arendt's critique of modernity. Beside this commonality, I argue that these concepts also the ones, through which the strict dichotomy between the public and the private in Arendt could be loosened. They could not be attributed as belonging neither to the public nor to the private. They are the sites that combine the public and the private. The previous chapter elaborates on the concept of work and tries to show its in-between character that transcends the public versus the private dichotomy. This chapter is a kind of an introductory one with regard to the other important in-between concept: the social.

The social in Arendt is simply read as the intrusion of the private into the public in modern conditions. Although this general conception is valid, I argue that the concept of the social in Arendt has multiple facets. It has many dimensions. Before presenting the multi-dimensional reading of this dissertation in relation to the social, this chapter introduces the secondary literature on the concept of the social that emphasizes the multiple meanings of the term. These are the works of Arendtian scholars, who inspire the multi-dimensional reading in this dissertation.

For this aim, the works of Canovan as the first one to draw attention to multiple meanings of the social, Pitkin, and Benhabib are indicated respectively. Canovan argues that there are two strands of meaning for the concept of social in Arendt. These are high society and a modern way of living together that is dominated by nature and biological needs. Pitkin argues that there are three different socials in Arendt. These are the conformist parvenu social that refers to high or respectable society, economic/biological social, and the social as denial of human agency. And as the last one, Benhabib also thinks that the social has three different meanings in Arendt. The first one is the social as the capitalist commodity exchange economy, the second one is the mass society, and the third one is the social as sociability.

In spite of the differences between Pitkin's and Benhabib's readings of the social in Arendt, the way they present the existence of different facets of the term in question is remarkable for the purpose of this dissertation. The subsequent chapter (Chapter 6) is basically shaped by following their multi-dimensional perspective, and presents my reading of the four different facets of the social in Arendt.

CHAPTER 6

THE SOCIAL AS SOCIABILITY: AN ALTERNATIVE SPACE FOR THE POLITICAL

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 demonstrates that in the secondary literature about Arendt's conception of the term social, some Arendtian scholars, such as Canovan, Pitkin, and Benhabib, make a multidimensional reading of the term social. Basically, they are arguing that there is no single dimension of the social in Arendt. The concept of the social is multi-dimensional in terms of definition. In its broader sense, it refers to intrusion of economics and biological survival into public concern, as well as the rise of the mass society, whose chief characteristic is conformism. It has economic, biological, and conformist elements in it. In addition to these elements, Pitkin and Benhabib refer to the earliest work of Arendt (1957), *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, and argue that the social refers to the society in eighteenth century Europe. In this context, Benhabib is the one who extracts an affirmative meaning from the term social by saying that the social in that work of Arendt denotes the aggregation of social patterns of human interaction; modalities of taste in food, dress and leisure time activities; differences in aesthetic, religious and civic manners; socialization

patterns that contains formation of marriages, friendships, acquaintances and commercial exchanges.

In relation to this meaning, this dissertation also adopts mentioned multi-dimensional reading of the term social. Furthermore, I argue that seeing the social in Arendt as sociability in terms of the quality of life in civil society and civic associations refers to a possible in-between space in which the political in Arendtian terms could be actualized under modern conditions. This affirmative social represents that in-between space which challenges the strict dichotomy between the public and the private spheres in Arendt. This challenge would answer the criticisms asserting the exclusive character of Arendtian conception of politics that is based on the exclusion of any private and social issues of modern age. Adopting an understanding of the social as sociability in Arendt's theory would leave us with an inclusive and comprehensive idea of a social space. This is the very same social space in which the lost treasure of the political could be re-discovered.

In order to substantiate my argument on affirmative social as an in-between space that includes the political in modern times, firstly, I present my multi-dimensional reading of the social in Arendt. By following the path that is opened by mentioned prominent Arendtian scholars, I also argue that there are four different facets of the social in Arendt that touch upon different dimensions, such as economic, biological, conformist (the social as mass society) and civic (the social as sociability). I argue that the mentioned multi-dimensionality could be situated in a broader context, which is the dichotomy between the public and the private in Arendt. With regard to that, the social could be read as the intrusion of what is private into the public realm. However, reading the social in Arendt as a space neither public nor private could seem vague unless you substantiate essentialist

characteristics of the public and the private in Arendt's political thought. In fact, what Arendt means by the term social as well as the elements in her famous dichotomy of the public versus the private, are still controversial issues. In order to understand this phenomenon of modern age, one has to start with the dichotomy in question and see how Arendt, herself, deals with the issue on the basis of public versus private dichotomy. Therefore, in the first section of this chapter, how Arendt substantiates the modern phenomenon of the social is indicated by referring to her prominent theoretical work, *The Human Condition*. *The Human Condition* is a major source to resort in dealing with this challenging task as Arendt (1958: 27-78) devotes a whole chapter for the public and the private realm and also two separate sections in this chapter for the concept of the social.

After substantiating the term social in Arendt in the context of public versus private dichotomy, I elaborate on four different dimensions of the term social by referring to different works of Arendt. In the third section, I represent the social as sociability in terms of the quality of life in civil society and civic associations as a possible in-between space, in which the political in Arendtian terms could be actualized under modern conditions. In support of this argument, I mention works of Seyla Benhabib, Carolina Armenteros, and Jennifer Ring, who write on several political characteristics of the social space. All of these Arendtian scholars elaborate on alternative conception of the social by referring to *Rahel Varnhagen*; but they are doing this on different levels. In the last section of the chapter, I also argue that this early work of Arendt (*Rahel Varnhagen*) is a tremendous source to analyze the co-existence of the public and the private in a personal life story. If we depict the social in Arendt as a third space, which is neither public nor private, Rahel Varnhagen as a case of personal life story, provides us an excellent example of how a political figure

could engage in both public and private experiences at the same time in sociability context; and how this kind of experience would not be detrimental to the political experience of that person.

6.2 The Human Condition: The Social in the Public versus Private Dichotomy

As it is mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, *The Human Condition* is a major source to resort in dealing with the challenging task of situating the modern phenomenon of the social within the strict dichotomy of the public versus the private. In the section that Arendt elaborates on the difference between the *polis* and the household, she identifies the social realm as a modern phenomenon whose political form arises in the form of the nation state. In this text, she clearly puts that the social realm is neither public nor private and the dividing line between these two realms is entirely blurred. While arguing that, Arendt substantiates the essential characteristics of these realms respectively. She indicates that the dividing line between the *polis* (which corresponds to the public) and the household (which corresponds to the private), as well as, the line between the activities that constructs the common public world and the private activities that are related with the maintenance of life, have been evaporating. This situation leads us to see communities of people in the image of a family that is taken care of by “nation-wide administration of housekeeping.” (Arendt, 1958: 28)¹¹. In other words, in modern age, the idea of the family, which in fact, belongs to the private, and whose maintenance is an administrative issue rather than a political one, commences to capture the public. What is private in its origin becomes a public concern. Moreover, the public concern in question, which is

¹¹Also see “collective housekeeping” (Arendt, 1958: 29).

political in its origin, starts to be dealt with administratively. In Arendt's words, "with the rise of society, that is, the rise of the "household" (*oikia*) or of economic activities to the public realm, housekeeping and all matters pertaining formerly to the private sphere of the family have become a "collective" concern." (Arendt, 1958: 33).

The rise of the society¹² in which life processes in the private realm is exposed to light of the public realm, has distinctive characteristics. Most importantly, this new realm assumes one interest for the whole society and its conformist demands excludes the possibility of action. Arendt states that society, through imposing rules and regulations, expects one type of behavior from its members. This kind of unifying and homogenizing imposition leads to the destruction of spontaneous, creative and contingent idea of action. Moreover, the gradual absorption of different social groups under the umbrella of one interest would eventually lead to the idea of mass society, in which all members of the society is controlled and embraced equally. The distinction and difference are absorbed by the mass society in its totalizing efforts (Arendt, 1958: 40-41).

This idea of society as "the form in which the fact of mutual dependence for the sake of life and nothing else assumes public significance and where the activities connected with sheer survival are permitted to appear in public" is an exemplar of how Arendt (1958: 46) substantiates the concept of the social on the basis of the public and the private dichotomy. The social is depicted as an intrusion of the private into the public. However, this depiction should not be understood as the victory of the private over the public realm. Arendt carefully underlines that the rise of the

¹² Arendt uses the social and the society interchangeably.

social realm is destructive to both realms. The social devours the public and the private at the same time. The nature of the specific realm changes when an activity, which essentially belongs to another realm, is engaged in that specific realm. Moreover, nature of the activity that is engaged changes, too (Arendt, 1958: 45-47). Therefore, engaging the activities connected with sheer survival within the public realm ruins the nature of both private activity and the public realm, respectively.

Comprehensive substantiation of the social in *The Human Condition* points out to three different dimensions in the conceptualization of the term in question. The first dimension is the intrusion of the economics into public concern. The second one refers to the intrusion of the necessity that corresponds to biological survival. This dimension could also be read as the intrusion of the body into politics and the public realm. The last one is the emergence of the mass society that demands a conformist attitude from its members. These dimensions are underlined one way or another by the Arendtian scholars, who make a multi-dimensional reading of the term social. As is stated in the previous chapter, Pitkin argues that there are three different conceptions of the social in Arendt's works. The first one is the social as high and respectable society which she calls the conformist parvenu social. The second one is economic/biological social that relates economics with the idea of inevitability in nature and biological survival. The last one is the combination of the conformist parvenu social and economic/biological social: the social as the other of the political that denies human agency and refers to alienation from being active political human being. Benhabib also talks about three different meanings of the social in Arendt. The first one refers to capitalist commodity exchange economy; the second one is mass society; and the third one is the social as sociability, which refers to the quality of life in civil society and civic associations.

Within same lines, I also argue that there are different facets of the social in Arendt. As stated in Chapter 1, the reason behind these different facets is Arendt's multi-layered way of thinking. While telling the stories of different historical figures from different contexts, Arendt depicts different layers of a given phenomenon. At this point, although my reading of the social is a combination of the readings of Pitkin and Benhabib, it differs in certain ways. I argue that there are four different dimensions of the social in Arendt that are substantiated in different works. These are economic social, biological social, the social as mass society, and the social as sociability.

6.3 Four Different Dimensions of the Social in Arendt

Following the same lines with Pitkin, I argue that starting with *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the concept of social emerges as the intrusion of economic concerns into the public affairs. Especially, "Part 2: Imperialism" of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is loaded with Arendt's concern with the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie and how the basic tenet of imperialism, which is economic expansion for its own sake, becomes a political goal. At this point Arendt argues that there is a sharp contrast between the economic and political structure. The political structure cannot be expanded indefinitely like the economic structure (Arendt, 1966: 126). Therefore, bourgeoisie turned to politics out of economic necessity, because capitalist production came up against national limitations and necessitated more markets outside the national borders. In this context, basic principle in politics became attainment of power. Searching for the expansion of power for power sake had its origins from the capitalist principle of expansion of economic growth for its

own sake. So, power becomes the content of politics and private recklessness of the bourgeoisie became publicly appreciated political principle (Arendt, 1966: 138). This is how the intrusion of economics into public and political space corresponds to rise of the social as intrusion of private space into public one.

Baring the relationship between economics and any kind of activity that could satisfy biological/bodily needs in mind, I argue that social as the interference of bodily/biological needs into public space corresponds to different course of events in history. This course is elaborated in Arendt's (1990) another tremendous work, *On Revolution*. Therefore, unlike Pitkin, I would rather treat the intrusion of the body into politics and public concern as a separate conception of the social. In relation to that, Arendt saves a whole chapter in the book. "Chapter Two: The Social Question" highlights Arendt's main concern, which is the rights of freedom and citizenship rather than rights of life. Since she is concerned with re-discovering the lost treasure of the political life, in which man is acting with his equals, Arendt is highly critical of the burst of the biological needs of the body into the realm of action. The historical example that affirms her insight is French Revolution. In French revolution poor people, who were driven by their bodily needs burst on the scene (Arendt, 1990: 59). Under the rule of biological necessity multitude of the poor sent the French Revolution to its doom. "When they appeared on the scene of politics, necessity appeared with them, and the result was the power of the old regime impotent and the new republic was stillborn; freedom had to be surrendered to necessity, to the urgency of the life process itself." (Arendt, 1990: 60). Poverty becomes a political concern. This is what social question is. The most dangerous thing is to solve this private problem, which is called The Social Question by Arendt, through political means (Arendt, 1990: 114).

Arendt points out that this reality of the social question corresponds to a modern imagery that is called society. It is “one supernatural body driven by one superhuman, irresistible ‘general will’” (Arendt, 1990: 60). And this idea of the social question or society has not been apparent since the revolution has opened the gates of the political realm to the poor. In fact, this gate-opening moment is the exact moment when the political realm had indeed become social (Arendt, 1990: 90).

Arendt (1990: 90-91) argues that

It is true that social and economic matters had intruded into the public realm before the revolutions of late eighteenth century, and the transformation of the government into administration, the replacement of personal rule by bureaucratic measures, even the attending transmutation of laws into decrees, had been one of the outstanding characteristics of absolutism. But with the downfall of political and legal authority and the rise of revolution, it was people rather than general economic and financial problems that were at stake, and they did not merely intrude into but burst upon the political domain. Their need was violent, and, as it were, prepolitical; it seemed that only violence could be strong and swift enough to help them.

By the age of revolution, rather than expansionist power politics, it was the needs of people’s bodies became a political/public concern. This is why the biological social or the social as the intrusion of bodily concerns into the public/political realm should be treated as separate conception of the social in Arendt.

Thirdly, we have the social as mass society. Despite the fact that Arendt sees the social as a modern phenomenon, mass society refers to more contemporary facet of the social. The social as a mass society firstly appears in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. In “Volume 3: Totalitarianism”, Arendt speaks of the masses of modern times, which make emergence of totalitarianism possible. In this context of totalitarianism, the movement’s claim is the abolition of the separation between the public and the private life (Arendt, 1966: 336). Atomized and structureless masses contribute to emergence of the modern condition of the disappearance of the

separating line between the public and the private. The subject of this modern phenomenon is the mass man. He is in isolation and abandons himself into the mass (Arendt, 1966: 316-317). The movement starts to dominate each isolated member in each and every sphere of life (Arendt, 1966: 326). On the one hand, the isolated individual loses any kind of private family relationship. On the other hand, he loses his sense of belonging to the world of public, as he belongs only to the totalitarian movement any more (Arendt, 1966: 324). The private and the public perish at the same time. They merge into a new space of mass society.

With regard to this reflection, it is patent that Arendt sees the social as a modern phenomenon. However, she uses the term of mass society to refer to the contemporary condition of society. In her article, "Society and Culture", she clearly separates the idea of society from mass society. She argues that "[m]ass society comes about when "the mass of the population has been incorporated into society"" (Arendt, 1960: 278). At this point, Arendt argues that the mass society is the enlarged "good society" constituted by elites. Mass man's characteristics of loneliness, excitability, capacity for consumption, inability to judge and alienation from the world have been present in the elites of "the good society" of the 18th and the 19th century (Arendt, 1960: 278). The only difference is that these are the characteristics of each and every individual anymore. The mass society becomes a different, more contemporary facet of "the good society" of the 18th century.

In fact, Arendt emphasizes this difference in *The Human Condition*, too. She states that with the emergence of mass society the social has reached the point at which it embraces and controls every member. The mass society equalizes every one in every way. This equality is based on conformism. In this context of conformism, behavior replaced action. The social conquered the public realm, which was the only

space to display difference and distinctness. But, now the difference and distinctness have become the matters of the private (Arendt, 1958: 41). The separating line between the public and the private disappears. In the social as mass society “social behavior” has become the standard for all spheres of life (Arendt, 1958: 45).

The fourth facet of the social in Arendt is the social as sociability in terms of the quality of life in civil society and civic associations. This conception of the social in Arendt is firstly underlined by Seyla Benhabib as it is stated in the previous chapter. Benhabib argues that there is a different conception of the social in Arendt in her search for the recovery of the public world under conditions of modernity. This is a kind of “alternative genealogy of modernity” in Arendt (Benhabib, 1995: 14). Benhabib suggests that we can discover a different genealogy of modernity at the beginnings of Arendt’s works. By beginning she means *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*. Benhabib (1995: 14) argues that in this book the rise of the social, as the prominent characteristic of modernity, “designates the emergence of new forms of sociability, association, intimacy, friendship, speaking and writing habits, tastes in food, manners and arts, as well as hobbies, pastimes, and leisure activities”. In terms of spatial distinction, this newly emerging sociability types, associations and activities take place in an in-between space neither private nor public. This space, named as the salon, is “a curious space that is of the home yet public, that is dominated by women yet visited and frequented by men” that is based on egalitarian principle (Benhabib: 1995, 14). The members are the outsiders who come from different classes and religious groups. They are excluded by the norms and rules of the dominant high society of the 18th century German society. Through the spacial facility that is provided by the salon’s atmosphere, these outsiders express their difference and distinctiveness, which finally turns into an intersubjective reality

(Benhabib, 1995: 17). New members of the newly emerging civil society create bonds that culminate in the idea of friendship through conversation and communication (Benhabib, 1995: 17-18). This kind of conception of the social as a space of civic associations that is created through sociability could be thought as an alternative in-between space, in which politics in Arendtian terms (sharing of words and deed among peers) could be actualized in contemporary context. In order to support this point, one should look through the characteristics within this alternative conception of the social that could be thought as carrying political connotations.

6.4 How Political the Social Could Be: Alternative Political Spaces and Alternative Political Actors

In support of my argument that the social as a neither private nor public space could be thought as an alternative space of modern times, in which the lost treasure of the public world of the political could be actualized, Benhabib remarks the commonalities between the salons of the eighteenth century and the agonal public sphere of Greek city state. Before pointing these commonalities, she, firstly, draws our attention to differences. Benhabib accepts the fact that predominance of women in salons and the forms of interaction, speech and writing is in contradiction with the characteristics of the agonal public space of the polis that predominates *The Human Condition*. Besides the women presence in salons, the serious form of speech within the public space of polis is absent in the salons. The speech in the salons is rather playful and fluid. Although visibility is an ideal that rules both of the public space of the polis and the eighteenth-century salon, transparency is the rule of the game only

in the former one. Self-revelation and self-concealment take the place of transparency in the salon (Benhabib, 1995: 19).

Besides these differences, Benhabib also talks about commonalities on which we can build modern public space in Arendtian terms. These commonalities become the characteristics of the social in Arendt as sociability through/in which contemporary political actor could act. The first common point between the salon and the agonal public sphere is that both of them are based on the principle of equality. In the polis the equality principle corresponds to equal political rank of the participants as citizens. In the salon, beside the differences in participants' existing social, economic and political inequality, they are equal in terms of the humanity they shared and their specific talents, abilities, and capabilities as individuals sharing certain tastes and sensibilities (Benhabib, 1995: 19). The second important commonality according to Benhabib is that both the agonal public sphere and the salons create bonds among their members. At this point Benhabib (1995: 19) gives reference to Aristotle and indicates that "'friendship" among citizens of the polis is the virtue that good lawgivers try most to cultivate". Benhabib sees the salons as the places where friendship is also cultivated. Although these are personal rather than political relationships, Benhabib thinks that the line between them is not clear. She argues that in both of the spaces civic friendship is cultivated and it does not change the nature of the friendship in question whether the subjects are a group of citizens or a group of private, like-minded individuals who can gather for a common political purpose. The friendship that is formed in the private atmosphere of the salon may result in political bonding, which is called networking in contemporary civil societal life (Benhabib, 1995: 19). This is why Benhabib argues that the salon could be seen as a

transitory space that allows at the same time a certain amount of transgression between the boundaries of the public and the private.

Benhabib is right in emphasizing the concept of friendship and its potential in terms of the political. Arendt herself underlines the importance of friendship as a source of political engagement in the context of “dark times”. It is well-known that the concept of the political is pluralistic in Arendt’s thought. This pluralism comes from the idea that the political could only be engaged in public between equal citizens. However, throughout the history, there were exceptional times. Arendt calls these times as “dark times”. In her book *Men in Dark Times*, Arendt (1995: viii) states that there are times when the public realm could not fulfill its functions, which are mainly “throw[ing] light on the affairs of men by providing a space of appearances in which they can show in deed and word, for better and worse, who they are and what they can do...”. There were times in the history this light of the public is extinguished by “credibility gaps” and “invisible government” who used speech not to disclose but to “degrade all truth to meaningless triviality” (Arendt, 1995: viii). At this point Arendt (1995: 11) talks about the dark totalitarian times, in which public realm has been obscured by the invasion of vital self interest and personal liberty. In these times flight from the world is justified as long as reality is not ignored. In this flight, humanity could be fulfilled through friendship among certain groups of people, pariah peoples, for whom “the times become so extremely dark” (Arendt, 1995: 13). Here Arendt does not refer friendship as a phenomenon of intimacy between private people. She refers to the concept of friendship as Greeks did. Arendt (1995: 24) remarks:

[F]or Greeks the essence of friendship consisted in discourse. They held that only the constant interchange of talk united citizens in a *polis*. In discourse, the political importances of friendship, and the

humanness peculiar to it, were made manifest. This converse (in contrast to the intimate talk in which individuals speak about themselves), permeated through it may be by pleasure in the friend's presence, is concerned with the common world, which remains "inhuman" in a very literal sense unless it is constantly talked about by human beings.

It is apparent that the bond of friendship is not totally an apolitical or pre-political phenomenon in Arendt. This specific type of relationship has the potential to create the political as long as the world is the object of the discourse. Therefore, the friendship bond and the form of sociability that are created in the salon atmosphere have the potential of being political as long as the content of the discourse is related with the world.

Benhabib is not alone in arguing that the salon is a kind of public sphere which hosts the political in Arendtian sense. Carolina Armenteros (1998: 94, 96) also presents the concept of the salon in *Rahel Varnhagen* as a "social area outside society" which is "the prototype of the public sphere" in Arendt's theory. Armenteros argues that any historical explanation of Arendt's philosophical originality is highly related with intellectual, personal and historical circumstances in her book on Rahel Varnhagen. Armenteros elaborates on this argument by emphasizing the concept of freedom in Arendt's theory. She argues that from the beginning Rahel Varnhagen has some romantic qualities that resonate Arendt's conception of freedom. In the first place, Rahel is original in terms of her enthusiasm in combining different ideas in unexpected and new ways. Rahel's curiosity and the way she values knowledge as something desirable for its own sake is the attribute that is inherent in the nature of freedom (Armenteros, 1998: 93). Freedom is an ultimate end in itself. You perform your freedom, you act with your equals for no higher aim than being free. In a nutshell, Armenteros argues that this pattern of

thinking in Arendt's political theory starts to be shaped in her very first work on Rahel Varnhagen.

With regard to this argument what is important for the sake of my point on the social as being an alternative in-between space for the performance of political action in contemporary period is that Armenteros also argues that the salon as a social space in Rahel Varnhagen is also a preliminary conception of the public sphere in Arendt's political theory. Armenteros represents this in-between space as a public sphere as the romantic virtues such as curiosity, originality, and unconventionality in that salon attracts people. According to Armenteros (1998: 94), "[I]ack of convention meant freedom of ideas and from social rigors: Rahel's salon was the ideal forum in which to achieve the kind of humanity central to Arendtian political philosophy." At this point, Armenteros differentiates the society and the social atmosphere of the salon. Rather than arguing that the social in *Rahel Varnhagen* refers to the 18th century high society or different emerging traits or life styles within that society as Pitkin does, similar to Benhabib Armenteros sees the social in Arendt as a space that emerges as a specific exclusion of the dominant societal traits of the 18th century. The important contribution of Armenteros' (1998: 94) argument is that the social in *Rahel Varnhagen* is a social area outside the society that "excluded the possibility for action; and that one could create truly public spaces for political action- become truly human- only outside of it. ...the salon was a stage where people represents themselves...". The self-realization through self display is the dominant characteristic of Rahel's salon. Armenteros argues that this characteristic makes Rahel's salon the prototype of the public sphere in Arendt. Social outsidership and theatricality in this type of Jewish salons are the essentials in Arendt's re-appropriation of the Aristotelian concept of the polis (Armenteros, 1998: 96). This

does not mean that the salon is the ultimate public sphere. Armenteros (1998: 96) also states that it is a “liminal space” between public and private; but it is uniquely liberating sphere of self-actualization and action. This supports the argument that the social as an in-between space could include Arendtian conception of political action.

Rahel Varnhagen not only becomes a source for pointing out the spatial possibility of the social in Arendt as an alternative conception that inherits the potential of being political for Arendtian scholars. Besides the spatial argumentation, this early work of Arendt also becomes a source for alternative reading of the social in Arendt by presenting an alternative political actor, who is the subject of the very same social, namely the pariah. As it is argued in the preceding chapter, according to Arendt, Rahel Varnhagen is one of the important figures in history who has become a ‘conscious pariah’ at the end of her life. Moreover, the guests of her salon are social outsiders of the eighteenth century, which is the distinctive characteristic of a pariah people. At this point, one asks the question in a reverse direction. Before assigning a political character to eighteenth century salon, we could interrogate to what extent the subject of the eighteenth century salon is a political figure or an actor.

With regard to that question, by referring to *Rahel Varnhagen* in the first place, Jennifer Ring (1991) argues that apart from the Greek hero within the polis, pariah could be thought as the alternative political actor in Arendt’s political theory. This kind of argumentation needs to point out a divergence or a shift in the context of Arendtian political action. The shift is from a need for permanent place for the action to intangible conception of power that is portable and emerges simultaneously when actors acts among themselves. Ring emphasizes the fact that in earlier parts of *The Human Condition* the public sphere is a tangible physical space of the polis. However, later in the book the political action itself starts to create public space

(Ring, 1991: 439-440). According to Ring, the reason behind this shift is the political character possessed by the pariah. The pariah is a political actor without a tangible, physical public space. His public space has been taken away from him in one of the previously mentioned “dark times”. In these times, freedom could go underground and the light of the public space could only shine in hiding places (Ring, 1991: 444). Although the pariah does not act among his peers or for community of equals, he acts as a member of outsiders, like the outsiders of the eighteenth century society, who find their peers in the salons. Ring argues that conscious pariahdom invites combination of the public and the private concerns. According to her, Arendt seeks to highlight the public aspects of the pariah’s private life, which is still defined by politics. Even though the pariah knows that his outsider status is not an essentialist characteristic, he accepts the fact that he has some choices for and responsibility in what he is going to do with that status (Ring, 1991: 441). He could make the world aware and conscious of the intrusion of politics into his private existence (Ring, 1991: 443). This is his political role. This combined character of the pariah as the actor in Arendt’s political theory also demonstrates the possibility of the existence of politics in an in-between space (the social) that emerges as a consequence of his actions. The pariah, whose concerns are the combination of the public and the private, is political in terms of his conscious actions among other outsiders. Within same lines, Rahel and her guests in her salon are conscious of their outsider status and they act among themselves out of their private concerns. This is a perfect representation of how an in-between character (who could turn his privacy into public concern) could become political within an in-between space (which is neither private nor public) that is a product of his own actions.

As it is mentioned in the above sections, the idea that there is a different conception of the social in Arendt that allows for the emergence of the political in an essentially neither private nor public space could be driven from Arendt's earliest work, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*. This conception of an alternative social in Arendt is supported by different Arendtian scholars in different levels. Benhabib and Amerentos support the argument by saying that the concept of the salon in *Rahel Varnhagen* resonates the conception of public sphere in Arendt's political theory. Even Amerentos argues that the salon is the prototype of the public sphere in Arendt's later works. Other than this spatial analysis, another Arendtian scholar, Ring, points out the political character of the subject of the social space in question. Ring argues that the pariah of the 18th century is the alternative political actor in Arendt's political theory. The in-between character of the social space has its implications on its subject this time. The pariah is the political actor, who combines the public and the private concerns. Through his actions, he reconstructs the political space, which corresponds to the social as a distinct space of the outsiders in the 18th century's society.

6.5 The Social as the Political: A Personal Life Story

Besides these argumentations, in this section, I would like to make another case that supports the main argument in this chapter. By referring to *Rahel Varnhagen* as the main text, I would argue that this early work of Arendt is a tremendous source to analyze how the co-existence of the public and the private in a personal life story is possible. Taking up *Rahel Varnhagen* as the main text, I argue that in Arendt, parvenu versus pariah identities correspond to public versus private dichotomy in

Arendt. Throughout the text in question, I show that at some points it is difficult to separate these two distinct identities from each other. A person could experience both the pariah and the parvenu experiences at the same time in a societal context. This kind of experience should not be detrimental the political experience for that person. The person (Rahel in this case) could manage both identities in the associational atmosphere of the 18th century salons. She could carry the private concerns to the public space of equals through sociability.

6.5.1 Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess

This book is the biography of a Jewish woman who had a significant position within the Romanticism of the 18th century Berlin. It is among the earliest works of Arendt, which is often treated as a separate/isolated piece in relation to her later political writings. In this work, Arendt endeavors to narrate the story of Rahel's life through giving quotations from her diaries, and her correspondences with her friends. However, Arendt's endeavor does not correspond to writing within the context of classical genre of biography. With regard to this, Arendt (1957: xii) states that "[w]hat interested me solely was to narrate the story of Rahel's life as she herself might have told it." This is somewhat a challenge to the genre of biography as throughout the whole book the line between auto-biography and biography is not clear. In relation to this Liliane Weissberg (1997: 5) suggests that Arendt wants to slip into Rahel's skin.

This factual biography of an important salon figure of the late 18th-early 19th century Berlin society is in fact a narrated story of a self-realization. It is the private and intimate self-realization attempt of a German-Jewish woman, whose salon had a

great significance for the social history of that period. This is actually why the book is considered to have a claim of historical (re)construction “from within” (Weissberg, 1997: 17). Arendt basically narrates the story of how Rahel tries to deal with her Jewish identity in a social context, which holds the idea that being a Jew is an individual and at the same time private matter. In other words, Rahel’s story is a culmination of unique strategies for assimilation into a non-Jewish society.

In relation to these strategies, the first eleven chapters of the book, which were completed by 1933, somewhat constructs the identity of Rahel as if she is one of the ‘exceptional’ parvenus of 19th century Germany. However, surprisingly, the last two chapters of the book, which were completed in 1938 depict a brand new identity for Rahel, namely the pariah.¹³ In fact, in her essay, “We Refugees”, Arendt (1978: 65-66) depicts Rahel as a member of pariah tradition.¹⁴

The concept of ‘conscious pariah’ emerged as a result of the attitudes of a few people within the mentioned pariah tradition. ‘Conscious pariah’ is an outsider status that is marginal among European society and parvenu Jews. By definition, s/he affirms her/his Jewish particular identity and her/his right to have a place in general European life (Feldman, 1978: 18). The pariah is a political person and her/his duty is to stay outside of the society consciously and to awaken his/her fellow Jews to a similar consciousness in order to rebel against the society (Feldman: 1978: 33). The pariahs were new class/anti-class of the intellectuals, journalists, the critics, and the free-lance writers in the 19th century European society (Cahnman, 1974: 163). They are associated with the characteristics of Jewish heart, humanity, humor and

¹³ For a detailed analysis of the difference between the first eleven chapter and the last two chapters of *Rahel Varnhagen*, see (Moruzzi, 2008: 31, 33, 36-37).

¹⁴ In Arendt’s essay Bernard Lazare, Heine, Sholom Aleichem, Franz Kafka, and Charlie Chaplin are also associated with pariah tradition.

disinterested intelligence and being engaged in politics (Arendt, 1978: 66). In fact, in Hannah Arendt's personal lexicon, *Wirkliche Menschen*, real people, were "pariahs" (Young-Bruehl, 1982: xv).

On the other hand, the pariah's counterpart in the social outsider context, namely the parvenu, is depicted as an upstart "who tried to succeed in the world of Gentiles but could not escape her/his Jewish roots." (Feldman, 1978: 18). The parvenu is associated with the characteristics of tactlessness, political stupidity, inferiority complexes, and money grubbing (Arendt, 1978: 66). They were the financial magnet and monied upstarts in 19th century European society (Cahnman, 1974: 163). Parvenus' conception of their Jewish identity as an individual problem and their efforts in getting rid of their Jewishness through assimilation and depicting themselves as 'exceptional' Jews were actually what make them anti-political in Arendt's typology.

With regard to above-mentioned dichotomy in the context of the social outsiders in the 19th century Europe, namely the pariah versus parvenu, it is stunning to observe that they are situated as opposites in terms of 'the political'. The pariah is political, where as the parvenu is politically blind. Therefore, they have their proper places within the prominent dichotomy in Arendt's political theory: the public versus private dichotomy. As it could be seen in the second chapter of *The Human Condition*, the distinction between the public and private corresponds to the distinction between the political versus household, freedom versus necessity, permanence versus futility, and honor versus shame (Arendt, 1958: 28, 73). As a consequence of this interdefinitionality, the political pariah finds her/his place within the framework of the public, and the anti-political parvenu finds her/his proper place within the private realm.

In the light of this categorization, I argue that the book, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, could not be read through the safe ground that is provided by this strict dichotomy. In other words, it is not easy to claim that Arendt's Rahel Varnhagen is actually a pariah or a parvenu. Throughout the text, she shifts between both categories and there are times that she carries the traces of both. Although she is depicted as a conscious pariah and a political figure by Arendt, her life story shows us that the life story of that particular historical figure has an in-between character. At some parts of her life, parvenu characteristics of her become dominant. At other times, she becomes a conscious pariah. And from time to time, she is both of them. These shifts do not prevent Arendt in exemplifying Rahel as a political figure. She is a political figure with her "social" life, which could not be classified solely as a public or a private experience. By this way, I also try to show that a life of a political figure could not be read/analyzed easily through basing it on the strict dichotomy between the public and the private. Besides the shift between two realms, Rahel's life story also provides an in-between space of sociability that we could call the social space. So as to clarify this argument, in the following sections, I will state the parts of the book, in which Rahel is an actual parvenu, a genuine pariah and an obscured status that shifts between parvenu and pariah identities, respectively.

6.5.2 Rahel as the Actual Parvenu

Rahel's parvenu status puts its seal throughout the first eleven chapter of the book. This situation is highly related with her own conception about being a Jew. In her own words, having born a Jewess was the "greatest shame, which was the misery and misfortune of my life..." (Arendt, 1957: 1). Her definition of her own problem is

in fact not isolated from the common depiction of the status of being a Jew in the 18th-19th century of Europe. Jews of that period see ‘being Jewish’ as a personal problem, a personal misfortune. As Arendt (1957: 4) puts it, “Jews did not even want to be emancipated as a whole; all they wanted was to escape from Jewishness, as individuals if possible.”¹⁵ Their conception of their status within the society as a personal problem signifies their position within the private realm. Personal strategies for coping with their status fail in becoming political, as they do not act collectively to heal the conditions for the Jewish identity. In accordance with this, Rahel’s experience also turned out to be a private one, and turned into herself. Arendt (1957: 9) indicates that “Rahel’s struggle against the facts, above all against the fact of having been born a Jew, very rapidly became a struggle against herself.”

In order to get rid of uneasiness that would be a result of the struggle against oneself, Rahel did not hesitate to employ personal strategies in order to be a member of the society, to which she never belonged. In fact, Rahel’s strategies for being accepted into ‘the world’, to the society that she wants to be a member of and her willingness to have a place within, are general feminine strategies for assimilation of that time. These strategies namely are loving and being loved, being proposed to and marrying with the members of non-Jewish society. (Benhabib, 1995: 12-13; Moruzzi, 2008: 36). Arendt (1957: 27) exemplifies this attempt by saying that Rahel’s engagement to Finckenstein, who was a member of a non-Jewish noble family, was seen as the only choice left to Rahel for social assimilation.

¹⁵For a more detailed analysis of personal identification of ‘being a Jew’ by Jewish people in 19th century European context Arendt (1966), “Chapter 2: The Jews, the Nation-State, and the Birth of Anti-Semitism” of Volume 1: Anti-Semitism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Rahel's on-going attempt for assimilation to the society is closely related with her conception of reality. As Arendt (1957: 144) puts it: "The world and reality had, for Rahel, always been represented by society. 'Real' meant to her the world of those who were socially acknowledged, the parvenus as well as the people of rank and name who represented something lasting and legitimate." In relation to the reality, feeling herself as real was also up to make her presence felt. Rahel wanted no originality or naturalness. All she wanted was to be a person among others by acquiring higher social position. With regard to that Arendt (1957: 96) says:

If she wanted to live, she had to learn to make her presence felt, to display herself; she had to unlearn her previous acceptance of the bareness and sketchiness of her external existence as something final; she had to renounce originality and become one person among others. She had to prepare to occupy a higher social position.

So as to fulfill her aim and become another person outwardly, she even changed her name from Rahel to Friederike Robert (Arendt, 1957: 96-97). Therefore, it could be argued that Rahel did her best to become an actual parvenu through her personal strategies that were headed solely to be accepted as a person who had a social status. In relation to these strategies, Arendt (1957: 164) also underlines Rahel's parvenu status and claims that "[l]ike all parvenus, she never dreamed of a radical alteration of bad conditions, but rather of a shift of personnel that would work out in her favor, so that the situation would improve as if by the stroke of a magic wand."

At this point, it is interesting that although Rahel provided a great space for sharing of the personal stories in a warm and friendly atmosphere in her salon, and despite her talent in abstraction and generalization of human experience, she lacked the ability to comprehend her Jewish identity as a general one and was stuck in her

parvenu status. Arendt (1957: 144) indicates Rahel's fixation in the parvenu status as follows:

Her passion for generalizing, for making apparently absolute privacies communicable to all, experienceable by all, for feeling out the general human lot in the most personal details-her whole gift for abstraction had, characteristically never led her to the point of regarding her fate as a Jew as anything more than a wholly personal misfortune. She had never been able to fit her private ill luck into a scheme of general social relationships; she had never ventured into criticism of the society or even to solidarity with those who for other reasons were likewise excluded from the ranks of the privileged.

Interestingly, towards the end of the book, one could encounter the emphasis on the negative effects of parvenu status. These negative effects and characteristics of being a parvenu were recognized by Rahel. Parvenu is depicted as a condemned existence, who is experiencing a pseudo-reality in a world that has not been designed for her/him (Arendt, 1957: 183). S/he loses the abilities of grasping generalities and recognizing relationships. Arendt (1957: 174) says "[t]he parvenu pays for the loss of his pariah qualities [to be grateful, to be considerate to others] by becoming ultimately incapable of grasping generalities, recognizing relationships, or taking an interest in anything but his own person." Through experiencing these losses Rahel "discovered that it was necessary for the parvenu- but for him alone- to sacrifice every natural impulse, to conceal all truth, to misuse all love, not only to suppress all passion, but worse still, to convert it into means for social climbing." (Arendt, 1957: 169-170). At this point it is interesting that a person like Rahel, who failed to comprehend her identity as a part of a general scheme or to criticize the society that she wanted to be a part of, experienced a turning point and became one of the important figures, who signifies the conscious pariah in Arendt's political thinking.

6.5.3 Rahel as the Genuine Pariah

Did Rahel suddenly become a pariah out of nothing? Is her pariah status only an artificial characteristic that signifies Arendt's political awareness that she acquired during writing the last two chapters of the book? Although, the pariah status of Rahel is mostly emphasized in the last two chapters of the book, her pariah characteristics are present from the beginning. For instance, Rahel is demonstrated as a figure of liberation as she had the gift of being a social outsider (Arendt, 1957: 45). As she did not belong to a specific world, her desire to be a part of the world led her to discover and experience everything by herself. She needed to learn everything from the beginning. At this point, her ignorance became a chance, and "she provided an example of liberation and lack of fixation upon a particular historically conditioned world." (Arendt, 1957: 26).

Rahel herself was born outside of the world. With people like her, who are standing outside of the world but not necessarily born outside of the world, she was able to find out the reasons for demanding a better world (Arendt, 1957: 61). Consciously staying out of the world, criticizing and rejecting the conditions within that world, and desire to acquire a better one are exactly the characteristics of the conscious pariah.

Although Rahel is depicted as an actual parvenu in the first place, Arendt attributes the characteristics of a genuine pariah to Rahel and she clearly defines Rahel as a conscious pariah at the end of the book. One of Rahel's friends, Marwitz, prepared the ground for Rahel's transition to conscious pariah throughout their friendship. Arendt (1957: 136)states:

Rahel interpreted her own alienation accordingly, no longer believed it inflicted by an incomprehensibly abstract fate which could be understood only in generalized categories –life in itself, *the* world. She now saw it as the specific misfortune of having been born in the wrong place, assigned by a history of a doomed world like Marwitz.

It is patent that Rahel changed the way she conceived her Jewish identity. In fact, this was the moment at which she understood the world that she wants to be a part of is in fact a corrupted one.

Thereafter, Rahel becomes an example of the conscious pariah, who possesses more reality than the parvenu. Throughout her parvenu experience, “Rahel had always stood outside, had been a pariah, and discovered at last, most unwillingly and unhappily, that entrance into society was possible only at the price of lying, of a far more generalized lie than simply hypocrisy.” (Arendt, 1957: 169). Although, as it is mentioned above, Arendt claims that Rahel could not truly escape from her parvenu stance in relation to her own understanding of her Jewishness, Arendt does not hesitate to indicate that Rahel always had been a pariah. Accordingly, in Arendt’s (1957: 185) words “Rahel [who had a rebellious spirit] had remained a Jew and pariah.”

6.5.4 Between Parvenu and Pariah

Up to this point, it could be argued that at some points *Rahel Varnhagen* could be easily read within the context of the private realm, and at other points, it could be read within the context of the public. Therefore, one may argue that this work of Arendt is strictly divided between the two social status, namely the parvenu and the pariah, which correspond to the private and the public respectively. One may also point out that this work could easily be read within the safe ground that the

public versus private dichotomy in Arendt's political theory creates. With respect to these arguments, I would like to underline the points where Rahel Varnhagen could not be situated within either of the status and distinctions.

Firstly, in terms of the personal parvenu strategies that Rahel employed during her struggle to be a part of the social world, it is seen that her strategies were not exclusively related to feminine strategies that were mentioned above. In other words, her parvenu strategies were not confined to the privacy of the concepts of marriage and family. Besides the strategies for acquiring a place within the world that are conducted through relating oneself to others in terms of intimate relationships, Arendt also tells Rahel's story of personal exit strategies in getting out of the problem of 'worldlessness'. For instance, in Chapter 5 the reader witnesses how Rahel decided to be devout in order to acquire a link to other beings, namely through God (Arendt, 1957: 65). Another personal experience was her celebration of her Prussian citizenship after getting married her husband, August Varnhagen (Arendt, 1957: 166). Although at first she resisted becoming a nationalist, requiring the sense of reality which she lacked and her desire to be a member of some entity constitutes her personal experience and stance in the 19th century European context afterwards. With regard to this point, one could accuse Rahel of being an opportunistic parvenu as she wanted to be a patriotic person when she realized that otherwise she would be isolated from the society (Arendt, 1957: 101). Even though these were the endeavors of a parvenu, it is interesting to observe that they are not limited to the feminine private strategies but had something to do with the concepts of the grand projects, such as nationalism. The dilemma she went through is that although she tried to maintain her "self" i.e. her privacy to some extent, she understood that this maintenance was impossible to achieve in solitude. She had a

desire to get to know herself through a third party, namely God or the idea of national belonging. This demonstrates clearly that a concern for the private self construction could result in having public concerns. This is an in-between “social” experience that is neither private nor public.

Moreover, in relation to the above mentioned point, one could argue that they are all personal strategies, therefore, are cursed to remain as the strategies of the parvenu, and they do not carry the traces of the pariah status. A possible reply to this objection would come from Arendt. Arendt (1957: 102-103) says that “For all that her later patriotism may have seemed opportunistic, for all that it assumed parvenu forms, the fact remains that she reached it strictly by insight, reason, principled convictions.” This is actually what a conscious pariah would do. We witness how a parvenu act could be combined with a pariah insight. Private concerns could be acted through public and political insight. This is an excellent example of how the private and public could be combined and still denotes an experience of a political person.

Rahel’s intertwined experience of her parvenu and pariah status could also be observed in contradictions she experienced while she shifted from one status to another. With respect to Rahel’s attempt to change her name from Rahel to Friederike Robert, the contradiction she experienced is expressed as follows: “The former was not socially acceptable; the latter could not summon up the resolution to make a fraudulent self-identification.” (Arendt, 1957: 172). On the one hand she would be deprived of anything that the general social conditions could offer, but on the other hand her attempt of acquiring a social existence would mean sacrificing her nature (Arendt, 1957: 173). This also shows the contradictory requirements of self-survival. With regard to these contradictions, Arendt states that Rahel could not get rid of her faults: gratitude and considerate. These attributes kept Rahel from being a

true parvenu, or in other words to live happily as a parvenu. Arendt (1957: 174) says “Rahel never rid herself of her ‘faults’. They kept her from becoming a real parvenu, from feeling happy as a parvenu.” Additionally, for being a real parvenu one should abandon truth, one should abandon who s/he really is, and Arendt (1957: 167) indicates that Rahel was not ready to do this. However, it is also difficult to get rid of the achieved parvenu status as Arendt (1957: 171) puts it:

This tendency to undo what she had achieved gathered strength as she became aware that her rise was only a semblance, that a pariah remained, in truly good society, nothing but a parvenu, that she could not escape her intolerably exposed position, any more than she could escape insults.

This great contradiction that Rahel has gone through demonstrates how it is difficult to separate her parvenu experience from the pariah one. Despite the fact that at some part of her life she lived as an actual parvenu, she also carried the characteristics of the pariah. When she is characterized as the conscious pariah, she was also aware that she remained as a parvenu in the eyes of the society against which she rebelled. A woman who had remained as a conscious pariah and a political figure in Arendt’s eyes acquired this characteristics through an intertwined experience that is neither private nor public. This clearly shows that a political experience could flourish in a social context of sociability, which is also neither private nor public.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter elaborates on the affirmative conception of the social as a third space in Arendt that could be thought as a fertile ground for the flourishing of the political in modern political context. To that end this dissertation adopts an

alternative reading of the social in Arendt that has been pioneered by Canovan, Pitkin and Benhabib. In the light of this alternative reading, I argue that there are different layers of meaning of the term social in different works of Arendt. Different from these writers, whose works are discussed in the previous chapter, I argue that there are four different facets of the social in Arendt. These are economic social, biological social, the social as the mass society, and the social as sociability. The social in Arendt is usually referred as a negative phenomenon of modern age that is detrimental to political experience, because of its in-between character in terms of the public and the private distinction. However, seeing the social as a space of sociability in terms of the quality of life in civil society and civic associations as Benhabib sees it, would give us the possibility of drawing a more inclusive picture of politics in Arendtian sense. Demonstrating that an affirmative conception of the social space, which is still neither private nor public would facilitate to include several social issues into the space of politics. It would also pave the way for creating political spaces in modern conditions, which do not allow ancient conception of politics that is confined to *polis*.

After elaborating on four different facets of the social by giving reference to different works of Arendt, I underscore the fourth conception of the social as sociability as a possible third space that could include the political in modern political setting. At this point, my argument is built upon the works of Arendtian scholars, who also point out political characteristics of the social in question. In the last section, by taking *Rahel Varnhagen* as the main text, in which the social as sociability is apparent, I exemplify a political figure's life story as an in-between experience. Therefore, I support my point that a political experience could survive in a "social" context of a life story.

Following that line of thinking, I argue that finding out a different and affirmative conception of the social as a third kind of space (which would be called “civil society” as an associational one in the following chapter) that brings together the public and the private gives us the possibility of including contemporary political issues into the public/political space in Arendt’s theory. Before elaborating on how we could read the social realm of civil society as a space of experience for the Arendtian vision of politics in the contemporary political context, firstly, I am going to elaborate on Arendt’s conception of the political in the following chapter. In this way, I try to clarify the conception of the political in Arendt’s theory that could be included by the social space of sociability.

CHAPTER 7

THE POLITICAL IN ARENDT

7.1 Introduction

Arendt's political theory is shaped by certain strict dichotomies. Among these dichotomies the public versus the private is more important than others in terms of drawing the limits of what is political and what is not. In analyzing this dichotomy, I argue that there are in-between concepts and spaces in Arendt's theory. Chapter 4 on the concept of Work, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 on the concept of the social in Arendt elaborate on this kind of concept and space respectively. With regard to the concept of work, I argue that this specific concept could not be situated spatially within the public versus private dichotomy. It has both public and private characteristics. In addition, at some points it transcends the dichotomy in question. With regard to the concept of social, I argue that there are multiple facets of that concept in Arendt's theory. Among these different facets, I represent 'social as sociability' as an affirmative conception of the term. 'Social as sociability' in terms of the quality of life in civil society and civic associations depicts the very same concept as a third alternative space, in which the public and the private experience co-exist.

This kind of identification of the social as the third sphere, where the public and the private coincide, would provide a space for the political to be actualized under modern conditions. As the political is thought to be the synonym for the public, pointing out such a hybrid space of the social means that political could survive in its co-existence with the private. In other words, within such a hybrid space of sociability, private concerns of the modern times such as economic and social issues could be handled politically. This kind of understanding carries the possible answers to the criticisms that emphasize the exclusivist characteristic of Arendtian conception of politics, which is based on the preclusion of any private interests and social issues of the modern age.

Before showing how this co-existence of the private and the public in a social space of civic associations is possible through an Arendtian perspective, i.e. how public/political experiences of private persons could be handled within a social context, we need to elaborate on what political is in Arendt. The main objective of this chapter is to give an account of the political in Arendt. Although throughout the dissertation, the concept of the political is stated in the context of the public versus private dichotomy several times, a clear definition of the term political has not been made. This chapter on the political, firstly, reviews previous chapters to point out where political stands within the dichotomous context. It is seen that the political in Arendt could not be substantiated easily. It is not given and has many dimensions. It has many dimensions, firstly because political appears under different disguises in different works of Arendt, and secondly in Arendt's theory there is the complex interplay of different concepts. The concept of the political is substantiated by different eminent concepts such as action, plurality, equality, exclusion of necessity, freedom, reality, and the public space of Arendt's political theory. So, we cannot

deduce an essentialist/monolithic view of the political in Arendt. Therefore, my objective in this chapter, which is to clarify the concept of the political in Arendt, turns out to be breaking apart the fixed understanding/conceptualization of the political in Arendt and pointing out different instances of the political by questioning fixed/monolithic/given relation between the political and public. I conclude that splitting the concept of the political in Arendt into its different components would ease situating the political into the social space. As is already indicated in Chapter 6, I point out an alternative space, in which the concept of the political in Arendt could be actualized under modern conditions. In this chapter, I extract and present the compatible elements and dimensions of the political, which could make such co-existence possible.

7.2 The Concept of the Political in the Context of the Public versus the Private Dichotomy: A Review

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 refer to the concept of the political in the context of the public versus the private dichotomy several times. It is important to look through these points in order to have a comprehensive idea about how Arendt discusses what political is and where it stands in the mentioned dichotomous context. As was argued in Chapter 2, Arendt sees politics as a plural, contingent, and unexpected phenomenon. In terms of her theory of politics, Arendt develops her ideas on the basis of actual political events through re-thinking of actual actions of actual political actors. With regard to that, her idea of politically acting subjects/actors refer to politics of plurality of equals, who debates and deliberates for the sake of no higher aim than acting together (Villa, 2007: 7-8). Debate and deliberation is an important

component of being political as Arendt (1958: 3) defines speech as the act that makes human beings meaningful and political. Action in the form of words and deeds is what founds and preserves political bodies (Arendt, 1958: 8). Founding something new, founding something that has never existed before through words and deeds among the equals explains what action is. In relation to that Arendt defines action as “finding the right words at the right moment”, and consequently to be political means deciding everything through words and persuasion, not through force and violence (Arendt, 1958: 26). Moreover, while the actor is acting among his equals, he becomes free. The plurality of equals provide the plurality of perspectives for the specific event. They provide the public for that specific action. Arendt (1993) clearly makes the connection between freedom, action, the public and the political in her essay called “What is Freedom?”. In this essay she indicates that *raison d'être* for politics is attainment of freedom. The activity that assign political characteristic is action and action takes place within the public realm, in which plurality of human beings interact and perform (Arendt, 1993: 146, 149). Arendt (2005: 95) also makes this point by arguing that “there is ... no real political substance. Politics arises in what lies *between men* and is established as relationships.” To summarize, in Arendt’s theory of politics, *raison d'être* of politics is freedom. To be free means two things: not to be subjected to the necessity of life or command of another and not to command oneself (Arendt, 2005: 117). Freedom is ontologically rooted in the fact of natality, which signifies beginning something anew that is actually the capacity for action. Action is the field of experience of freedom. In this field of experience one realizes one’s individuality through acting and speaking, i.e. through performing and disclosing, within the public realm, which could only emerge through human plurality. This plurality signifies the fact of being seen and heard by others and this

brings us the concept of reality, which is articulated through politics. By being political one attains human *excellence*.

The account of the political stated in Chapter 2 is also supported by secondary readings on Arendt, which are indicated in Chapter 3. For instance, Dossa (1989) says that the content of Arendtian politics is the exercise of freedom in action and speech in the public realm. Public realm is the space of appearance (Dossa, 1989: 73). Dossa argues that there are two factors for being political. Firstly, the actor should degrade natural privacy, and secondly, the actor should be seen and heard by others (Dossa, 1989: 64). Here, Dossa refers to the exclusion of necessity that is attributed to nature, and reality, respectively. In this context, the public realm is depicted as the space for fulfillment of human potential *par excellence* through acting, i.e. through being political. Gottsegen (1994) also points out the co-existence of action, public realm and political. He argues that the public realm in Arendt is the lasting space and the world that is built by action. This realm is filled with the light of speech, which illuminates everyone and everything appeared within its confines (Gottsegen, 1994: 50). He argues that what is shared in the light of the common realm of the public becomes political. In relation to that space for appearances, Villa (1997) depicts that space as a space for action and underlines Arendt's insistence on preserving this space of appearances from necessity and privacy. Villa (1997: 183) argues that concern for the protection of public realm of appearances is based on the presence of stable boundaries between the "space of freedom", which is the public space, and automism of nature and labor that belong essentially to the private space. Exchange of opinions through speech, i.e. the political, could only take place in a distinct realm of the public that excludes the private concerns of each citizen. This understanding underscores plurality and equality at the same time.

Moreover, Pitkin (1981: 328) also gives us a great account of interdefinitionality in Arendt's conception of politics by arguing that in Arendt's theory the public is synonymous with the political and the political implies action in a community of peers. The political realm is composed of equals. This equality has nothing to do with universal natural rights, talent, wealth or ability. The equality in question is an artificial one that is the equality of status (Pitkin, 1981: 331). Seeing politics and political equality as collective action and mutual engagement of peers in the public realm is also pointed out by Dietz (1994). While depicting the political in Arendt as the collective action and mutual engagement, Dietz (1994: 247) presents Arendtian actor as "the speaker of words and doers of deeds." Plurality, equality, action and the public character in the context of the political are also underscored by Dietz.

7.3 The Political as a Dynamic Concept

In my review of the secondary literature I realized that conventional understanding of the political in Arendt is derived from her basic texts on action, public space, and freedom. For instance, in *The Human Condition*, according to Arendt, what makes people political and meaningful is their ability to act and to disclose their action through speech in the public sphere. Free and equal human beings found and preserve political bodies through acting in the form of words and deeds. Deciding everything through words and persuasion is what being political is. Moreover, in her famous essay "What is Freedom?", Arendt states that the purpose of politics is attainment of freedom. Action is what makes a phenomenon political and it takes place within the public realm composed of human beings, who interact

and perform. In this mainstream understanding of the political, there is a fixed relationship between the political, action, freedom and the public sphere. This essentialist relationship leads a monolithic understanding of the political that is based on a static rather than a dynamic conception of the political. In this chapter, while trying to give a clear account of what the political is in Arendt, I challenge this monolithic conception. I argue that in different works of Arendt, the political appears under different disguises. In addition, associating the concept of the political with other important concepts provides dynamism to the political. In each and every relation one could point out different instances of the political. The following sections point out these different disguises. It also indicates the relation of the political to other concepts, respectively, in order to depict the dynamism of the concept.

7.3.1 The Political Appearing Under Different Disguises in Different Works of Arendt

In some works of Arendt I observe that the mentioned predetermined relationship is somehow broken because of the context. Despite the fact that these alternative and/or marginal contexts do not completely challenge the essential characteristics of being political, they nevertheless question the strong connection between the political and freedom on the one hand, the political and the public on the other hand. For instance, in *“Men in Dark Times”* Arendt (1995) underscores the historical moments when totalitarian governments were in power as exceptional times. In these dark exceptional times the light of the public is extinguished by “credibility gaps” and “invisible government” who used speech to “degrade all truth

to meaningless triviality” (Arendt 1995: viii). In these times speech lost its function of disclosing. Again in these times self interest and personal liberty invaded public realm (Arendt, 1995: viii). So, it is all right for one to flight from the shared world into underground. This flight is justified as long as the reality is not ignored. According to Arendt (1995: 13), in these dark times, the web of relationship could be formed through friendship among certain groups of people, who are pariah people, for whom “the times become so extremely dark”. Pariah people would fulfill their human potential through constant interchange of talk in their friendships. Here, pariah people are the ones who lost their access to the world, who become spaceless in terms of the public. Through forming a new web of relationships, they construct their own public space. In this specific context, they act in Arendtian sense. This is a perfect example of how the political, which is isolated from accepted/approved political in fact constitutes its own public. Therefore, the predetermined relationship between the political and the public that is dominant in the earlier parts of *The Human Condition* is broken. The idea that the political could only emerge within a public sphere filled by free and equal citizens lost its determinant power. The political in the above mentioned context does not necessitate a given public. It creates its own public.

In addition, in the above mentioned context the political actor is the pariah. Arendt refers to political experience of the pariah in the context of his/her private life experience long before writing *Men in Dark Times*. As it is elaborated in Chapter 6, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* Arendt presents the pariah as the political actor in the life story of Rahel, which is the private and intimate self-realization attempt of a German-Jewish woman. Giving Rahel as an example, Arendt depicts the ‘conscious pariah’ as a political actor who has an outsider status that is marginal

among European society and parvenu Jews. By definition, conscious pariah affirms her/his Jewish particular identity and her/his right to have a place in general European life (Feldman, 1978: 18). The pariah is a political person and her/his duty is to stay outside of the society consciously and to awaken his/her fellow Jews to a similar consciousness in order to rebel against the society (Feldman, 1978: 33). The pariahs were new class/anti-class of the intellectuals, journalists, the critics, and the free-lance writers in the 19th century European society (Cahnman, 1974: 163). They are associated with the characteristics of Jewish heart, humanity, humor and disinterested intelligence and being engaged in politics (Arendt, 1978: 66).

Jennifer Ring (1991) is the one who draws attention to political/public character of pariah's private experience. Ring underlines that showing how the public intrudes into the private is also political in Arendtian terms. Ring argues that pariah's experience is composed of mingling of the public and the private concerns. Although, the pariah is aware of the fact that his/her outsider status is not naturally given, s/he accepts that s/he has some choices and responsibility in what to do with this given status (Ring, 1991: 441). His/her political duty is to stay outside of the society consciously and to awaken his/her fellow Jews to a similar consciousness as Rahel did. In other words, s/he could make the world aware of the intrusion of politics into her/his private existence (Ring, 1991: 443). Once again, from the political experience of the private life of pariah, we see that the predetermined relationship between the political and the public composed of equal and free human beings is broken. Pariah as a political actor, is devoid of the light of the public in question, but deals with his/her private condition politically within a limited public of his/her fellow Jews. In the early parts of *The Human Condition* any experience or activity within the private sphere is entitled non-political or prepolitical. (Arendt,

1958: 29, 31, 32). Therefore, what would be entirely non-political or prepolitical according to the core dichotomy between the public and the private in *The Human Condition*, becomes political in the above mentioned context.

7.3.2 Giving an Account of the Political: An Interplay of Different Concepts

When it comes to substantiating and understanding what political is in Arendt's works, above mentioned appearances of the political leaves us with a complex interplay of the eminent concepts of Arendt's political theory. As is argued, in addition to its different appearances in different instances in several contexts, the political in Arendt is not a monolithic conception because of its relations to other concepts. A different dynamic comes to the stage when one goes through its relation with each concept. In order to have a full picture of the political in mind, we need to look into how political is substantiated in its relation to the concepts of action, plurality, exclusion of necessity, equality, reality, the public and freedom through which Arendt constructs her theoretical framework.

7.3.2.1 Action: A Synonymous Concept

With regard to reviewing the conceptual interdependence in Arendt's theory, the starting point should be the concept of action. As it is indicated above, action is the activity that assigns the political character of a certain phenomenon. Action as performing and speech as disclosing of this performance are what make human beings meaningful and political (Arendt, 1958: 3). Within the moment of acting the actor is also experiencing being political. Therefore, action is thought to be the

synonym for the political. This is why the concept of action is the most essential concept for us to understand the political in Arendt.

In Chapter 4, I analyzed the important relationship between action and political. In this context, action as one of the activities is presented in relation to founding and preserving political bodies. It is actually what creates human history (Arendt, 1958:8). In her conceptualization of action, Arendt argues that *praxis* (action) and *lexis* (speech) constitute the realm of human affairs (Arendt, 1958: 25). A man who acts is fully human. For Arendt, this is why human being is a political animal, not a social one. Moreover, this is why Arendt argues that action and speech are the activities that create human life. They are the means of attaining human excellence. They are the activities, which reveal man's unique distinctness among his equals (Arendt, 1958: 176). In relation to that the political realm of affairs rises directly out of acting together, out of sharing words and deeds (Arendt, 1958: 198). Sharing words and deeds has also some characteristics such as boundlessness and unpredictability. Arendt argues that any reaction given to a specific action is also a new action, which strikes out on its own and affects others. Action always establishes boundless relationships that inherent new possibilities (Arendt, 1958: 190). Moreover, action is always unpredictable. As it is associated with beginning something anew, we can say that action has a definite beginning. However, its consequences and possible end/s are unpredictable, as action has no definite end. It would endure till the mankind comes to an end (Arendt, 1958: 233). This means that we could not evaluate an Arendtian conception of action within the confines of means-ends category. As it is also stated in Chapter 2, Arendt is highly critical of degradation of political action into the categories of means and ends. Depicting action as a means necessary to achieve a higher end rather than itself, disturbs her,

because this situation also connotes another disturbing modern experience of seeing subordination of politics to economics (Kohn, 2005: xxvii-xxviii).

7.3.2.2 Plurality, Equality, and Exclusion of Necessity: Conditions for the Political

The concept of the political emerges concurrently when the individual acts in Arendtian terms. However, there are some conditions for this performing moment to be political. I argue that the first condition for the political and action is plurality. As Arendt (2005: 93) puts it “[p]olitics is based on the fact of human plurality”. In *The Human Condition* Arendt reminds us the activities in *vita activa*, which are traditionally within the range of every human being. One of them is action and Arendt argues that human condition for action is plurality. Action could only create power in plurality (Arendt, 1958: 7). At this point, Arendt is talking about plurality as an inevitable condition for action, as she presents the concept of action in the context of founding and preserving political bodies. According to her, the political could only be engaged in the public between equal citizens. This is the heart of plurality in Arendt. Plurality of equal others is needed for the individual to show his unique distinctness to be remembered. Because what mattered for Arendt is “concrete experiences articulated within the context of thinking and acting in a community with others.” (Blattler and Martin, 2005: 89)

The community is based on the principle of equality. As it is discussed in Chapter 6, the concept of equality in Arendt has nothing to do with social or economic equality but is an equality of political rank of the participants as citizens. At this point, one has to be careful about the conception of equality in the mentioned

context of acting community, because Arendt's idea of equality here is nothing to do with modern conception of justice. Here it simply means "to live among and to have to deal only with one's peers..." (Arendt, 1958: 32). Arendt also points out that this kind of equality presupposes the existence of "unequals" who are outside of the realm of acting equals. Here, she turns to her original separation between human capacity for political organization that is based on communal order of existence (*koinon*) and home (*oikia*) and the family. Arendt (1958: 32) argues that the household and the concepts of life and necessity as its connotations are at the centre of "the strictest inequality". Men can only be equal as citizens when they step out from their home and enter the public sphere of their peers as citizens. In addition to the concept of equality, exclusion of private household life from the political life becomes condition for the political to be actualized.

7.3.2.2 Freedom, Reality and the Public Sphere: What the political constitutes

After indicating the conditions for the political to emerge, it is crucial to look into what the political constitute in the moment of performance. The first concept in Arendt's theory that is constituted by or attained through political action is the concept of freedom. As it is stated in Chapter 2, *raison d'être* for politics is the attainment of freedom. Freedom could only be experienced mundanely among acting plurality of equals. To begin something new, to take initiative among equals, to set something into motion, i.e. to act, is the only way for us to be free. This is why Arendt (1958: 177) states that "principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before" as it is the beginning of somebody, who emerge as the beginner himself. Acting as and becoming a free actor also creates another

phenomenon: reality. Reality is another concept that is constituted through action and emerges as a consequence of the political. In chapter 4, it is indicated that Arendt, in her conceptualization of the public space of acting equal citizens, emphasizes that anything that appears in the public in question is seen and heard by others. Arendt (1958: 208) argues that “without a space of appearance and without trusting in action and speech as a mode of being together, neither the reality one’s self, of one’s identity, nor the reality of the surrounding world can be established beyond doubt.” Reality emerges as a consequence of acting together in a specific space of the public.

The public space in question is the last constituted element in Arendt’s conceptualization of the political. The relation between the public and the political in Arendt is usually thought as simple: Political could only emerge within the confines of the public. Essentially, the proper space for the political is the public. This clear-cut relationship between the public and the political stems from the dichotomous fixed nature of Arendt’s thinking. As already stated in *The Human Condition* Arendt conceptualizes the public through differentiating it from the nature-bounded private space of necessity and labor. This dichotomy of the public versus the private corresponds to the distinction between the political and the household in ancient city state (Arendt, 1958: 28). The political could exist only within the public, which is constituted by the actions of equal citizens, who had actually distinguished themselves from all others by showing unique deeds and achievements (Arendt, 1958: 41). The function of this public sphere is to “throw light on the affairs of men by providing a space of appearances in which they can show in deed and word, for better and worse, who they are and what they can do...”. (Arendt, 1995: viii).

Although, the relationship between the public and the political is clear at this point, how the public is constituted by the political and the action is problematic.

This is why Arendt has different conceptions of the public at the beginning and at the end of *The Human Condition*. In Chapter Two of *The Human Condition*, “The Public and the Private Realm” Arendt depicts the public as a physical instituted space that is already there for the political to rise. However, in Chapter Five, “Action”, she argues that “the political realm rises directly out of acting together, the “sharing of words and deeds”. Thus, action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it.” (Arendt, 1958:198). This kind of conception of the public supports my point on the constitutive character of the political in terms of performance of an action.

In fact, Arendt’s different conceptions of the public are also pointed out by other Arendtian writers. For instance, as already stated in Chapter 6, Jennifer Ring argues that Arendt’s theory hosts a shift between a need for a permanent place for action to an intangible conception of power that emerges simultaneously when the actors act among themselves. Ring also states that in earlier parts of *The Human Condition* the public is a tangible, physical space of the *polis*. Later in the book, the public is created and constituted by the political action itself (Ring, 1991: 439-441). Ring argues that what lies beneath this shift is Arendt’s search for a political public sphere for her alternative political actor, namely the pariah. Moreover, Blattler and Martin (2005) also discuss the intangible public in Arendt, which is totally different from the world created by action. They argue that plurality and freedom are the characteristics of the political in Arendt. An intangible space is created within this plurality. They indicate that Arendt calls it “‘web’ of human relationships” (Blattler and Martin, 2005: 93). Actually, the understanding of the public as an intangible space that is composed of web of human relationships and created by political action

is the conception, to which I refer to as one of the constituted elements in Arendt's theory on the political.

To conclude, this section tries to give a clear account of what political is in Arendt. In summary, the political is synonymous with the concept of action and it has some conditions such as plurality, equality and exclusion of necessity. Moreover, the political in Arendt is a constitutive concept as it constitutes reality, freedom and the public sphere concurrently. In political's relation to the public, it is interesting to find out that the predetermined bond between the public and political in mainstream understanding of the term that necessitates a tangible public sphere for the political to emerge can be questioned. If we look at different instances and different contexts, the predetermined relationship is broken and the public space becomes a constituted element rather than a pre-requisite for the political. Demonstrating that the predetermined relationship in question could be broken in different instances and contexts also shows the dynamic characteristics of the concept of the political in Arendt. Before concluding this chapter, it would be crucial to analyze how political's relation to public space is flexible and can vary if we read the political from a different position. This analysis would support the point that the concept of the political is dynamic and has many dimensions as it is related to other concepts such as the public in Arendt.

7.4 The Political Within the Public: A Predetermined Relationship (?)

Looking into the nature of the relationship between the political and the public space requires an analysis of the relationship between action and the public space. As is indicated action and the political could be thought as synonyms, because

“the essence of politics is action”, i.e. “politics is action” (Villa, 1996: 4). Therefore, in order to question the essentialist bond between the political and the public, we need to question the bond between action and the public space. To put the point of interrogation differently, we firstly need to question whether action could only take place within the confines of the predefined and predetermined public.

With regard to the mentioned question Villa (1996: 28) raises an important point by arguing that “if action is... politics, not all politics is action.” Arendtian conception of action is what makes an event political in Arendtian sense. Villa (1996: 29) continues by saying that “[a]ny form of “politics” that replicates relations or functions appropriate to the household is unpolitical.” Here Villa is talking about intrusion of the coercive force of necessity into the realm of freedom. Moreover, Villa (1996: 29) adds that if the action is primarily purposive and defined by means-ends category again this particular kind of action is not political either. In fact, at this point, Villa points out the distinction between *praxis* (action) and *poiesis* (productive activity). What Arendt sees as action is in fact *praxis* and it is a self-contained activity. It has no higher aim than actualizing itself through performativity. Therefore, we could argue that deciding on whether some phenomenon is political or not has nothing to do with the question about in which domain it emerges. Instead, it is closely related with the nature of the action that assign the political character to the phenomenon in question. Any kind of activity that is determined by the force of necessity such as “domination, liberation, administration and representation” is not political at all. Their unpolitical or prepolitical character has nothing to do with whether they emerge within the *polis* (a predefined public sphere), but is related with the fact that they are not self-contained activities. They are not action. And as for self-contained activity, namely action in Arendt’s theory, we need to understand the

concept of *energia* (actuality). Arendt argues that there is no end to be pursued. The end lies in the activity itself and the work of the activity is embedded in the very same activity. The work is the performance itself (Arendt, 1958: 206). While acting you are performing and at the same time you are creating a work in itself. Action exists in the moment of its performance. As also pointed out by Keenan (1994: 306) “[t]rough action you create a tangible worldly entity, which is “embedded” in its own production- at once alive in its own right and yet entirely dependent on the moments of performance.”

If we understand the political as “the creation of an intersubjectively shared life-world”, then it becomes obvious that action as the self contained activity makes this intersubjective shared world possible (Knauer, 1980: 732). Free and equal people create the shared world, which is the public space that contains their present and future engagement, within the very same moment of acting. As the space is constituted by action itself, the political and action do not need a predetermined public sphere such as *polis*. If you assign a political character to a specific sphere beforehand by arguing that the sphere in question should exclude any private or social concern, it would be ignoring the constitutive character of action. Moreover, one could not escape the criticism of making essentialist distinctions. The reason behind this is the fact that the very meaning of the political and its public character are determined by the nature and the self contained character of action.

This kind of understanding of the political and the public would not necessarily destroy the crucial relationship between these two concepts. It, however, raises the possibility of rethinking the nature of this relationship by considering the public space as a space of ‘web’ of relationships, which is constituted by action. This approach excludes thinking the public as an fixed, exclusive, predetermined space.

Therefore, the public becomes a constituted element and a result of plural political engagement. Co-existence of the public and the political in a specific context remains intact.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter tries to open up the uncharted territory of the political. As it is suggested, the concept of the political in Arendt is not a monolithic concept, but it has many dimensions. What could not be classified as political in one work of Arendt could be categorized as political in a different context that is covered in another work. Moreover, because of the interdefinitionality in Arendt's mode of thinking, it is difficult to have a clear account of the political. Arendt constantly refers to the political by relating it to other concepts. By examining different appearances of the political under different disguises and analyzing its dynamic relation with other concepts, this chapter tries to depict a clearer conception of the political in Arendt. As a consequence, I come up with an account of the political that is synonymous with the concept of action. It has some conditions such as plurality, equality and exclusion of necessity. Additionally, the political in Arendt is a constitutive concept as it constitutes reality, freedom and the public space concurrently. Conceived as such, it questions the predetermined relation between the political and the public. At the end, I infer that if the political is read as creating of shared world through acting and speaking in its constitutive capacity, the public is constituted in the very same moment of acting. Therefore, rather than taking the public character of a given phenomenon for granted, the moment of acting assigns the political character to that specific phenomenon.

This kind of understanding that is constructed and depicted in this chapter has further implications in a broader context. As is stated in the introduction part of this chapter, two previous chapters present the social as the third space, where the public and the private coincide. This specific social would provide the space for the political to be actualized under modern conditions. Within the hybrid space of sociability, private concerns of the modern times such as economic and social issues could be handled politically. This chapter not only considers the political in question as a dynamic concept. It also questions the predetermined relationship between the political and the public. In this interrogation, I argue that if the moment of acting would assign the political character to a specific phenomenon regardless of where it is situated, the political could be actualized in any space including a social one. What matters is performance. This clearly shows that being political does not necessitate the public as a predetermined sphere. In the moment of acting/performance, being political itself constitutes any kind of context or space as public. Thus, this chapter introduces the first step for elaborating on how the social as sociability could be combined with being political, i.e. how the political defined as creation of shared world through acting could exist within a social context that is defined as civil society and civic associations.

CHAPTER 8

THE POLITICAL WITHIN THE SOCIAL SPACE: REVIVAL OF THE ARENDTIAN POLITICS IN MODERN CIVIL SOCIETY

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter not only gives an analytical account of the concept of the political in Arendt, but also questions the predetermined relation between the political and the public. Its main argument is that if the political in Arendt is taken as a constitutive concept, which creates a common world for all human beings through acting and speaking, then the public is also constituted at the very same moment of acting. In this understanding instead of assuming the political as belonging to a pre-defined public sphere, the moment of acting determines whether a phenomenon is political or not.

This kind of reading of the political opens up a new ground for further discussion within a broader context. If the political character of a specific phenomenon is constructed in the moment of acting and performance, then any space that is essentially labeled as social could also host the political as long as it includes

acting and performance. Thus, it could be argued that the political could exist within a social space, in which the public and the private coincide.

As it is stated in the previous chapter, political is a dynamic concept, which has many dimensions and appears under different disguises in different works of Arendt. In fact, Arendt herself denotes the possibility of how the political could emerge within a social context of sociability when she presents different accounts of the political in her different works. In this context, two prominent works become important and relevant in terms of showing how Arendt herself presents the possibility of being political within a social context, and how an actor's experience could combine the public and the private at the same time. As it is stated in the previous chapters these two works are *Men in Dark Times* and *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*. In both works, Arendt talks about exceptional times of the modern age, in which self interest and personal liberty ruled over the public realm. In these times, the public lost its character of being a sphere for disclosing and sharing different ideas. It was not open to all but a certain segment of the society. Therefore, the excluded one who became spaceless in terms of contributing the construction and maintenance of the 'world', became obliged to retreat from the society's public. So, through a different type of intimate relationship that was performed outside the public of the society, excluded ones created their own public space in the context of sociability. It shows how an actor could survive outside the so-called public realm of the few and still could act politically within a space of sociability that is not predefined as public. Here the important point to note is that the public and political character could only be assigned after the performance and action of the actor.

Moreover, even though it was outside the public sphere of the society, this experience of acting of the excluded *pariah* people is a political one. Being aware of

their private status of existence, they consciously stayed outside of the society and of the so-called light of the public sphere, in order to make other outsiders aware of their existence. This is a perfect depiction of how a private concern is acted upon, i.e. how a private concern becomes a public and political issue, in the experience of these pariah people. The social, which is experienced as sociability between these pariah people in the form of close intimate relationship, becomes a space of experience for their conscious political act. The political finds itself a space within a social experience.

Within this context, this chapter aims to take a further step. Up to this point, it is argued that if the social is read as an affirmative third space in Arendt's thought, which is in fact a space of sociability experienced in civil society, and the political is seen as a dynamic and constitutive concept in her theory, then it becomes possible to assert that the political could survive within the social as a combined space of the private and the public. But the crucial and concluding question is whether this argument has something to say about contemporary political experience. To be more clear, if the social and the political are read in the specific way that this dissertation suggests, does this specific reading have more to say on how an ordinary citizen in a contemporary democracy experiences this co-existence of the social and the political. With regard to that question, it is time to elaborate on the contemporary citizen's political experience in the social space of civil society from an Arendtian perspective.

The main motivation behind this inquiry and the inspiration for the preceding chapters are the fact that Arendt is not a systematic theorist. She did not write her thoughts systematically. When one has the feeling of comprehending the critical concepts in her theory, one would be surprised by how this very same concept is

conceptualized differently in an entirely different context in her another work. This is what makes reading her work challenging. As is stated in Chapter 1, the reason behind this challenge is multi-dimensionality in her thinking. There are different facets of her critical concepts. By pointing out this multi-dimensionality, the concepts of the social and the political are substantiated in the preceding chapters. The social is already depicted as a civic associational space, in which the political action could flourish. As a complementary one, this chapter aims to elaborate on this co-existence by trying to read civil society as a space of experience for the political from an Arendtian perspective.

This attempt should not be read as a redefinition of politics in Arendt's theory or her vision of politics. It is not a challenge to her conception of civil society either. It is rather my attempt to relate a particular reading of Arendt to one of the contemporary issues/contexts, namely civil society. This attempt of reading Arendt in a particular way and relating this reading to a contemporary and general issue is a characteristic trade mark of some of the secondary literature on Arendt's works. Some Arendtian feminist scholars relate Arendt's theory to feminism and social identity issues. Despite the general idea that Arendt is gender blind in her theory, as the concepts of gender, sexuality and the body are out of the concern of political sphere (Honig, 1995: 1), these scholars in their unique readings carry "Arendt to feminism as a political movement, or ...[bring] feminism as an "identity politics" to Arendt..." (Dietz, 1995: 20). For instance, Bonnie Honig (1995) through a careful reading of the concept of action in Arendt provides us with a new type of feminism, namely agonistic feminism. Additionally, Moruzzi (2000) makes a different reading of Arendt through employing the theory of agency as masquerade. Moruzzi (2000: 3) argues that "if social identity can be understood as artifice, self-conscious enactment

of a social role can be a specific aspect of political agency.” Therefore, she introduces us a “plural politics of enacted social identity” in the context of Arendtian politics. (Moruzzi, 2000: 154). This specific reading allows a negotiation between the political and the social.

These works have inspired me to present my own reading of Arendt of the concepts of the social and the political in particular and the public and the private dichotomy in general. I argue that the concept of the social in Arendt’s theory challenges the strict separating line between the public and the private. A particular reading of the social as civil society leaves us with an alternative third space in Arendt, in which the political could be performed through action and participation in the context of plurality. This reading of civil society as a space of experience through Arendt’s vision of politics would offer a perspective to critically reflect on how an ordinary citizen experiences contemporary politics.

8.2 Setting the Analytical Frame: Arendt and the Idea of Civil Society

Reading Arendt in the context of civil society is a challenging task. The reason behind this challenge is the general assumption that civil society is thought to be one of the cursed concepts if one is dealing with Arendt’s political theory. This is why Cohen and Arato (1992: 177) see Arendt as one of the most passionate critiques of modern civil society. Although there is no comprehensive work of Arendt on the concept of civil society that depicts her uneasiness with the term, most of the evaluations on Arendt’s critique of this concept are based on her critique of the modern society, i.e. the social. The civil society occupies an intermediate space in the context of the public versus private dichotomy. Just like

the concept of the social, or as an extension of the social, civil society could be easily seen as inappropriate for being political in Arendt's theory.

This inappropriateness is reinforced by a dominant understanding of civil society in the literature. Beginning with Hegel, civil society is associated with the emergence of market economy that created its own bourgeois society. This bourgeois society (civil society) is different from the political world of the public and the private concerns of the household. It is an intermediary sphere between the private individual and the state. Beside its hybrid character, Arendt would also criticize civil society's existential relation to market economy. This dominant conceptualization of the civil society would render my particular reading to a difficult position in terms of relating Arendt to the political experience in contemporary civil society. It would seem as if I am relating Arendt's vision of politics to an area that is already ruled out as nonpolitical. In dealing with this difficulty, I point out a specific reading of the social in Arendt's theory, which is an intermediate space that includes political action. This specific reading of the social is compatible with the idea of civil society, in which Arendtian participatory politics could be realized.

Moreover, as it is indicated above, the dominant understanding of civil society underlines the separation between the state, the society and the individual. It is well known that Arendt does not usually touch upon the modern constitutional state in most of her works. When she refers to the modern idea of state as a concept, she does it for depicting the failures and weaknesses of modern European nation state. (Arendt, 1966). Therefore, the absurd point is that, as the literature on civil society necessitates a differentiation between the state and the society in particular, I seem to suggest a differentiation between two phenomena in Arendt's theory while one

of them is in fact missing. We have the civil society as the social, but we do not have a concept of the state as a functional entity that exerts authority and coercive power when it is necessary. Different from this conception of the state, in Arendt's theory a new model of the state is presented: the council-state system.

At this point, what I am suggesting is that although the literature makes a differentiation between the state and civil society, when it comes to Arendt and her theory, we do not need this distinction. This point will be clarified in the following paragraphs as I clarify what council state is in Arendt. However, what I want to assert is that we should read the state as in the council state system, and civil society together, because I am reading Arendt not in the traditional context of state-civil society distinction, but in the context of Arendt's new model of the state that is based on action, plurality, and participation in terms of political experience.

8.2.1 The Council-State System as a new Model of the State: A Fertile Ground for Civil Society to Flourish

In this section, I will present Arendt's vision of council-state system as a new model of the state. As it is argued above, this new model of the state provides a fresh and fertile ground for civil society, in which actors experience political life. This new model of the state is based on action, plurality and participation that also summarize Arendt's vision of participatory politics and democracy. Arendt clearly indicates her thought on these matters in *Crisis of the Republic* (1972) where she explains her idea of the council-state system as an alternative to modern nation state bureaucracy. In this book Arendt (1972: 232-233) makes her point as follows:

We want to participate, we want to debate, we want to make our voices heard in public, and we want to have a possibility to determine the political course of country. Since the country is too big for all of us to come together and determine our fate, we need a number of public spaces within it. The booth in which we deposit our ballots is unquestionably too small, for this booth has room for only one. The parties are completely unsuitable; there we are, most of us, nothing but the manipulated electorate. But if only ten of us are sitting around a table, each expressing his opinion, each hearing the opinions of others, then a rational formation of opinion can take place through the exchange of opinions. There, too, it will become clear which one of us is best suited to present our view before the next higher council, where in turn our view will be clarified through the influence of other views, revised, or proved wrong.

In this lengthy passage, it is clear that Arendt's vision of politics is based on participation through deliberation at the grassroots level. The participators have a voice on and power over the political decisions that shape their future. The exchange of opinions takes place in a council that presents deliberated opinion to a higher one. Canovan (1999: 103) thinks that this type of future polity is the result of Arendt's belief on the decline of the nation-state. Arendt is talking about "a new federal system generated at the grassroots." (Canovan, 1999: 114). Along with the same line, Isaac (1994: 156, 157) argues that Arendt defends a distinctive conception of grassroots democracy that is based on contestable public concern.

In terms of membership and participation in this public debate of common concern Arendt (1972: 233) says:

By no means every resident of a country needs to be a member in such councils. Not everyone wants to concern himself with public affairs. In this fashion a self-selective process is possible that would draw together a true political elite in a country. Anyone who is not interested in public affairs will simply have to be satisfied with their being decided without him. But each person must be given the opportunity.

At this point, Arendt emphasizes the voluntary character of her vision of participatory politics. She depicts the self-selective political actor of her idea of

political life *par excellence*. This political actor is the citizen; s/he is the member of the mentioned civic/political association that is composed of her/his equals. In secondary literature these citizens sometimes are called “the collective people in action” (Canovan, 2002: 413), and sometimes they are depicted as “elites” (Isaac 1994). With regard to later naming/classification, one should be careful about considering Arendt as an elitist theorist. As Isaac (1994: 158) puts it, Arendt’s elites are “self-selected” and “self-constituted”. She is basically talking about voluntary participation, and the common concern in this participation process is caring about ‘the world’ that they share as equal and distinctive members. The common concern, which brings them together, is to constitute, preserve and maintain the world that is constructed through their action. No one is excluded as long as they want to participate.

After depicting her idea of the participatory actor of her idea of future polity, she clearly says that this presents us a new concept of the state. Arendt (1972: 233) continues:

In this direction I see the possibility of forming a new concept of the state. A council-state of this sort, to which the principle of sovereignty would be wholly alien, would be admirably suited to federations of the most various kinds, especially because in it power would be constituted horizontally and not vertically. But if you ask me now what prospect it has of being realized, then I must say to you: Very slight, if at all. And yet perhaps, after all- in the wake of the next revolution.

In this quotation, beside the importance of Arendt’s declaration that hers is a new concept of the state, whose principle has nothing to do with totalizing idea of sovereignty, and whose power is constituted horizontally among various councils, the last sentence is also equally important. In this sentence, Arendt explicitly states her view that the actual political experience has been experienced in ‘real’

revolutions. This idea obliges us to turn to one of the most important works of her political thought, namely *On Revolution*. Throughout the dissertation this work of Arendt is referred several times. In these references, it is argued that in this work, Arendt tries to resituate the concept of freedom into the vocabulary of revolution, which becomes a composing phenomenon for the 20th century. With respect to that she re-examines the historical facts of the two great revolutions of the 20th century: French and American Revolutions. There is no doubt that the revolution she is talking about in the above-quoted part from *The Crisis of the Republic* refers to the latter. The wakening moment of the American Revolution in its capacity to constitute new institution based on mutual promises corresponds to Arendt's idea of political action based on voluntary association. As Canovan puts it, at this point, Arendt deals with power constructed when people act together in revolutionary moments. According to Canovan (1999: 109), Arendt basically refers to "the action in concert of many small grassroots communities, linked into a federal structure." What matters most in these grassroots communities is the capacity of people that constitutes it. It is the capacity of constructing and maintaining the institution of common shared world. The materialization of this institutionalization process could be found in the act of constitution making, which is thought as "the true culmination of ... revolutionary process" by Arendt (1990: 142). This capacity to found and institutionalize is based on mutual promises of these subjects/citizens.

8.2.2 Secondary Literature: Arendt and Civil Society

These ideas of a new concept of council state system and the political character of constitutive foundation moment in revolutions lead many Arendt scholars to

search for the ways in which her ideas could be adopted into contemporary democratic system. They are somehow left with a simple question: How an ordinary citizen in a democratic system of government could experience political life *par excellence* in Arendtian terms? This question explains their endeavor of relating her ideas to contemporary discussions of civil society. One of the reasons behind this endeavor could be Baker's (2001) observation that the rhetoric of self-government is in rise on the political agenda. According to Baker (2001: 59) call for "build[ing] civil society', 'creat[ing] active citizenship', 'empower[ing] communities', or 'widen[ing] political participation' are growing day by day." This rising trend is closely related to the category of civil society. As Arendt is seen as one of the prominent thinkers of the idea of self government, it becomes easier to understand why many scholars try to situate her political thought within the discussion on civil society.

In relation to these discussions, Wellmer argues that her idea of politics as the joint action of free and equal citizens could find a proper place within today's democracies. However, this could only be possible in the context of democratic civil society. The society in question is different from the political society, whose main function is to conduct policies, state and private lives of individuals. Wellmer (2007: 224) states:

I therefore take her idea of the council system to be a metaphor for a network of autonomous or partially autonomous institutions, organizations, and associations, in each of which something like the self-government of free and equal participants takes place-in each case in different ways, with different aims, and with different means for recruiting new members: a network whose units might be both horizontally and vertically connected, related to or dependent upon one another.

At this point the general idea he refers to is Arendt's idea of experience of freedom within the political space through participation in the name of common concerns. At times, this idea of participatory active political citizen within civil society is seen so compatible with Arendtian theory, that scholars like Brunkhorst (2007: 190) does not hesitate to argue as follows: "The egalitarian potential for initiatory action turns out to be the origin of the peculiarly non-violent power wielded by ordinary citizens (the "people") in civil society." It seems that Wellmer and Brunkhorst use the concept of civil society without separating it essentially from council-state idea in particular or politics in general. Although they have such a stance, which is compatible with my suggestion that one should read the new model of the state and civil society in Arendt together, they do not do this through questioning Arendt's core distinctions. Additionally, any detailed interrogation on literature's separation between the civil society and the state is missing.

Dismissing Arendt's core distinction of spheres of life as public, private and social, or not elaborating on them carefully before engaging a discussion on Arendt's vision of participatory politics and democracy in relation to civil society, causes problems. Wellmer and Brunkhorst refers to civil society as they both see the political questions of contemporary world as the common concerns of people, which also include the social issues. However, as it is stated at the beginning of this chapter, conventional literature on Arendt, which keeps the strict separation between the public and the private intact, argues that Arendt would oppose any kind of conception of civil society that is trapped between the public and the private. So, it could be argued that any conception of civil society that includes social issues and common concerns of people, as of Wellmer and Brunkhorst, is not compatible with Arendt's vision of politics and democracy. In order to avoid such criticisms, firstly,

one should substantiate the concept of social and, secondly, set an analytical frame that elaborates on the relationship between the state and the civil society.

Elaborating on contemporary civil society through Arendt's vision of politics is not difficult just because of the reason mentioned above. Additionally, within the same line, Canovan (2002: 403) says "...while ... [Arendt] welcomed direct action by people, she also feared and deplored almost all actual cases of grassroots mobilization..." that intends any higher aim than establishing a new political 'world'.

This is mainly related with the fact that in Arendt, there is no higher goal than the politics. Acting in the public sphere is freedom *par excellence* that actualizes the human potential. Speech and action are the components of the political. Action is contingent, spontaneous, and creative. It has a beginning but not a definable definite end. One could not talk about any particular interest or intention of any sort in the context of action. It becomes hard to talk about common concerns or interests that would motivate people to act in concert. So, one should be careful about elaborating on civil society in modern democracies while employing Arendt's vision of politics.

Beside these difficulties, there are Arendtian scholars, who find a way to refer to civil society while discussing Arendt's idea of participatory politics. One way to do that is to associate Arendt with republicanism. For instance, Baker (2001: 61) argues that Arendt is a member of republican body of thought on civil society, which considers the sphere of civil society "as a democratic end in itself." This idea is not far from Arendt's idea of politics for the sake of politics and freedom. Along with same lines, Isaac also argues that Arendt's discussions are conceptually related to the idea of civil society. Isaac (1994: 156) states that Arendt's idea of "insurgent politics,

rooted in civil society,” is not an alternative to state power. According to Isaac (1994: 159-160) Arendt is talking about “pluralization of political space” by, for instance, decentralization of political authority in terms of governance. In addition, Cohen and Arato (1992: 191) argues that Arendt’s appreciation of the idea of revolution, such as American Revolution, in terms of “the self-constitution of “civil bodies politic”” is directly related to her revival of “the ideal of civil society as *politike koinonia*”. This idea of civil society consists of politically active citizens who have the power to shape their present and future. Therefore, it is still possible to argue that Arendtian vision of politics could make its revival in the context of active participation in civil society. The following section elaborates on this co-existence of the social context of civil society and the political engagement. Civil society is not a hollow concept. It has its own literature that defines and substantiates it. It is already loaded with specific characteristics and conditions. Keeping this in mind, I try to read the civil society in question as a space of experience, in which action, plurality, and participation is experienced. This is not a new conceptualization of civil society in Arendtian terms, but an elaboration on it by using theoretical tools provided by Arendt’s theory of politics.

8.3 Reading Civil Society as a Space of Experience Through Arendt’s Vision of Politics

The above mentioned inquiry is partly the result of the fact that there is no single definition of the civil society. In the literature on what civil society is and is not or which ones are the civil society organizations and are not are still controversial

issues. There is even an attempt of differentiating civil society from an uncivil one (Kopecký and Mudde: 2003).

Within this controversial framework, civil society is usually referred as an intermediate “*realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules.*” (Diamond, 1994: 5) This intermediate realm is thought to be populated by members of society, who constitute diverse organizations in order to advance their concerns and interests (Encarnación, 2001: 56).

In this broader context of civil society, the important point for my analysis is to pursue a conceptualization of civil society in modern democracies that would be compatible with Arendt’s understanding of politics, and her alternative conception of council-state system. In this regard, I argue that one could develop an idea of civil society as a space of sociability that could act as the political sphere in Arendt. In fact, Benhabib (1995: 20) also argues that revitalization of political life of public sphere could only be possible in civic and associational society, but she does not state what she understands from civil society. Moreover, Benhabib does not make a further elaboration on how Arendtian politics could co-exist and be experienced in that civic and associational society. With respect to that, I argue that the concept of civil society, which could be conceptualized and elaborated through Arendtian vision of politics would be a buffer zone between the political society and the state on the one hand and the private individuals on the other. It is composed of voluntary associations that are institutionalized by the voluntary engagement of active citizens. It rests on the active participation with regard to common concerns of these citizens. Their action would directly contribute to the policy making. This kind of understanding of civil society has its own extant literature. In developing this

understanding of civil society, which has a distinct tradition of its own, I benefited from my joint research with Heper (2011). In this work we refer to main impediments to, pre-requisites, and characteristics of the kind of civil society as a social entity within an already consolidated democracy that contributes to policy making. The following review is based on our research findings.

8.3.1 Different Civil Societies

With regard to the literature in question on civil society, Michael W. Foley and Bob Edwards (1996) make a clear distinction between two different conceptions of civil society. According to Foley and Edwards (1996: 39), the first conception of the civil society underlines “the positive effects of association for governance”. They argue that this conception is depicted by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* and contributed by Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, and Francis Hutcheson. Their approach emphasizes “the ability of associational life in general and the habits of association in particular to foster patterns of civility in the actions of citizens in a democratic polity.” (Foley and Edwards, 1996: 39). Foley and Edwards (1996: 39) calls this conception “Civil Society I”. In addition to this conception, the grassroots resistance movements in post-communist Eastern Europe countries and “redemocratization” process in Latin America inspired the second conception of the civil society, which is also the most common in the literature. According to this view, civil society is “a sphere of action that is independent of the state and that is capable-precisely for this reason-of energizing resistance to a tyrannical regime.”, which can be named as “Civil Society II” (Foley and Edwards, 1996: 39).

The latter conception is thought to be more widespread within the literature because of the accepted essential link between existence of a vibrant civil society and democratization. This understanding of civil society is seen as a vital prerequisite for getting rid of an authoritarian system of government. However, as it is stated Arendtian conception of politics is plural and participatory that is based on contingent, spontaneous, and creative action. The main purpose of Arendtian politics is to constitute, but most importantly to preserve a common world in which acting and at the same time freedom are guaranteed. Although Arendt gives special importance to the founding moment of a new body politic, she also insists on preservation of that founding moment of action. She does not ask for a single founding moment but continuous founding moments within the political experience of that body politic. In this respect, Arendt's conception of politics would have much more to say on former conception of civil society, in which citizens of 'a more or less consolidated democracy' act in their capacity of contributing to policy formation.

If one looks through the primary characteristics of civil society in question that is stated in the literature, one sees that it has Arendtian elements in it. Although Arendt is not referred in the literature of such type of civil society, her vision of participatory politics has something to say on this kind of civil society, which is composed of voluntary associations that are institutionalized by the voluntary engagement of active citizens. The following section tries to read 'Civil Society I' as a space of experience, in which important elements of Arendtian vision of politics could be found.

8.3.2 Civil Society as a Space of Experience for Arendtian Politics

As it is already indicated in Chapter 7, one of the conditions of the political in Arendt is the condition of *plurality*. When it comes to sharing and interaction of different views and ideas in the form of disclosing, this condition of plurality becomes the basic condition of action and politics. In Arendt's (1958: 7) own words "...this plurality is specifically *the condition-* not only *condition sine qua non*, but the *condition per quam-* of all political life. Political bodies could be founded and preserved within the equality and plurality of citizens. As Arendt (1972: 233) indicates in *The Crises of Republic* citizens would sit around a table for expressing their own opinions, and at the same time for hearing the others'.

This kind of understanding based on plurality of opinions is also central to the idea of civil society in question. The literature on civil society emphasizes plurality of opinions and differences between them. These differences appear in the form of disagreement and conflict. In fact, civil society is a place for conflict. At this point, the nature of the disagreement is a friendly one as the members of civil society are expected to reach some sort of solutions and conclusions with regard to their present concerns.

Nevertheless, arguing that the pluralism principle in civil society and Arendt's idea of plurality are referring exactly the same thing would be dismissing Arendt's originality on this issue. It is true that civil society is seen as a problem solving area that facilitates reaching the optimum interest in the literature. Although Arendt appreciates the condition of plurality for its capacity to offer different perspectives, she is not interested in reaching the most beneficial solution that serves the best interest for all. What her concerns is to provide reality to the action itself with the presence of others. This understanding of plurality as a condition of action transcends any pragmatic end that could be sought in the civil society. However, taking Arendt's

condition of plurality as the condition for civil society in question in the first place would not challenge the pluralism idea in the civil society literature. Plurality in Arendtian terms would provide the needed enriching perspective for the civil society. This is actually why Arendt makes citizens sit around a table to express their opinions and hear other's views. Discussions on concerns and/or interest would eventually be solved within the atmosphere that would be created by the condition of plurality.

Reaching some sort of solutions and conclusion with regard to friendly disagreement between the members of civil society is in fact reaching *consensus* between the members of civil society in the context of debate and dialogue. With regard to civil society, "dialogue rather than the imposition of certain views upon others is the name of the game" (Heper and Yıldırım, 2011: 4). In this context of debate and dialogue, Arendt has a point about reaching consensus. She is saying that while we are disclosing our own views and listening the views of other people "a rational formation of opinion can take place through the exchange of opinions. There, too, it will become clear which one of us is best suited to present our view before the next higher council, where in turn our view will be clarified through the influence of other views, revised, or proved wrong" (Arendt, 1972: 232). People share their ideas with each other. This is not a purposeless and endless activity. At the end they reach a consensus. In Arendtian terms, the consensus in question is the formed opinion. Consensus in Arendt's theory is something a result of performance. It is the product of speaking, disclosing, listening, approving or disapproving. In short, it is the product of action. Within the civil society people would make their points through speaking and disclosing. They would form their opinion and their

view would be shared with others. By this way, they would experience becoming a part of policy formation. They would experience being political.

Last but not least, performative characteristic of consensus in Arendtian terms leaves us with another important characteristic of civil society in the literature, namely the formation of *common good*. If plurality of actors is expected to reach consensus, they would need a common cause or common concern that would motivate their participation in the process. In other words, if the members of civil society are expected to reach a consensus on specific issue, one should talk about an idea of common good that would bring them together. This idea of common good could diverge in specific time and place; therefore, it necessitates a dynamic conception of consensus. As indicated by Walzer (1992: 98) and Shils (1997: 346) this conception of common good needs a future orientation. What is good for a specific society in specific time may not be good for that society in the future. Therefore, the idea of common good should harmonize the particular interest of that specific time with the general care for future generations.

The problem with this idea of common good is that one's particular interest in that specific time would override any future concern. Additionally, as the term common good is a vague one, vulnerable to being exploited as a means for totalitarian tendencies as in the rhetoric of 'national interest' or 'general will', Arendt's critical outlook would be most useful to offset possible misunderstandings. In Arendt's conception of politics, there could not be any higher aim or interest other than politics itself. As it is indicated before, the idea of politics is based on the engagement of active and voluntary citizens. It relies on the active participation of each member in accordance with their common concern. However, if a specific idea of common good is presented in a specific society, it would offer a concrete purpose

and end. Acting for the sake of fulfilling that purpose, reaching that specific end would overrule acting for the sake of being political. In addition, presenting a specific common good could result in ignoring diverse opinions of different members of the society who could have various concerns and interests. Ignoring this diversity would make us see everybody as a part of one single common interest, and this would sound too totalitarian for Arendt.

Nevertheless, Arendt underlines the importance of communication between the citizens. According to Arendt (1993: 164), if each citizen would think only his own thoughts, we would face with a tyranny. She underlines sharing of ideas. As it is already stated with regard to the idea of consensus, Arendt sees formation of an opinion as the result of this sharing. The question is what makes these people come together and sit around a table. There should be a common concern for all of them to agree on coming together. This inquiry leads me to look into the possibility of reconciling the idea of common good in civil society literature and Arendt's vision of politics. This reconciliation attempt could be realized in two levels: common good in general and common good in particular. Firstly, for Arendt, in the context of politics, there is a general and higher concern. This is the respect for and maintenance of the 'world', which is objectively created by action. All acting citizens have this common concern of preserving and maintaining the 'world'. (Arendt, 1993: 186, 189). This is the driving force behind their togetherness. This is what makes them sit around a table and discuss their ideas with each other. This could be called common good for all citizens in general.

Secondly, elaborating on common good in particular in the context of Arendt's vision of politics would be much more challenging. Critiques argue that Arendt's

idea of politics and action has nothing to do with the issues of the real world.¹⁶ Any concern, aim, or motivation with regard to one's present interest would be detrimental to Arendt's idea of politics and action. One's particular interest cannot play any role as the motivation for action, because Arendtian action could not be evaluated within means-ends category. As the action has a beginning but not a presumed end, presenting a particular common good as a desired end becomes problematic. At this point, we could employ a different lens to see this problem. This different point of view is offered by Knauer (1980). He basically argues that in Arendt meaning of action transcends any motive or goal. Knauer (1980: 729) accepts that in Arendt we could not evaluate an action in a means and ends framework. However, action's characteristic of not having any predefined end does not automatically mean that the actor has not got any motive or goal while he or she acts. As Knauer puts it, in Arendt's theory, the meaning of the action could be understood in the framework of a general principle such as 'greatness'. The action is evaluated on the basis of whether it is great or not. The motives and goals do not affect its greatness and play no part in its evaluation. Besides this, being transcended by the general principle of greatness would not destroy the already existing motive and goal. Knauer (1980: 725) says:

The particular ends of action are always transcended by the general principles which give them significance and meaning. Insofar as a universal principle is manifested in a particular act, it becomes possible to judge that act in terms of what Arendt calls the "greatness" of the act that is the greatness of the manifestation of principle.

In this respect, any specific actor in the civil society could have any kind of motive and goal that could overlap with motives and goals with other members of

¹⁶ For critiques see Pitkin (1998); Habermas (1977); Heller (1991).

that particular civil society. This could be their common concern or common good in that specific moment. The greatness of their action that is motivated by this or that reason would not be determined by these goals but its performance. If we use the lenses that is offered by Knauer to look into the problem of a particular interest in Arendt's concept of action, we would not be limited by the perspective that identifies the motives and goals of the actor. Action continues to be evaluated on the basis of greatness principle, and any motive or goal of the actor need not to be ruled out. Seeing the situation from that point of view provides us with the insight that there could also be a common good in particular in Arendt's vision of politics experienced in civil society. This common good in particular is a contingent one in terms of time and space and should be defined as the common good of the people as they themselves see it at a given time and space. It would be reached through debate and discussion. It could be their driving force for engaging in any action in civil society. It would not be decisive in evaluation of whether their action is great or not. In a civil society, in which Arendtian politics is performed through active participation on the side of the members, the members would reconcile general concern for the 'world' with their particular contingent interest.

8.4 Conclusion

My attempt to elaborate on how Arendt's vision of politics could be experienced in civil society that is based on active participation of members of voluntary associations poses some challenging questions. Although, some Arendtian scholars like Benhabib see the future of Arendtian politics in the civil society, she does not explain how this co-existence of a particular understanding of politics and

specific type of social could co-exist. The primary challenge is first to accept that, on the one hand, civil society is seen as a concept that is unwelcome in Arendt's theory on politics, and on the other hand, the concept of civil society has its own tradition accompanied by a particular literature on its own.

In my attempt, I employ a specific reading of the terms social and political in Arendt's theory, which I substantiated in the preceding chapters. I argue that if we read the social in Arendt as sociability in terms of the quality of life in civil society and civic associations, we will end up with a third realm, in which modern political experience could take place in Arendtian terms. In this specific reading, the political is taken as a dynamic and constitutive concept. Such a reading of the political leads to a possibility to situate the political in the social, as a political space of sociability experienced in civil society.

In relation to the concept of civil society, I point out different civil society conceptions that exist in the literature. In order to be clear and specific, I chose one of these conceptions of civil society that underlines abilities of active citizens in an associational life based on the idea of civility. In this specific society, the active citizens contribute to policy formation through engaging debate and dialogue.

In this context, the absence of traditional conception of constitutional state in Arendt's theory could be seen problematic in the context of civil society-state relation. I argue that as Arendt does not deal with a conventional understanding of state and she has a conception of state of her own (council-state system), one does not need to differentiate the concept of state and civil society while reading the issue of civil society through Arendtian vision of politics. Instead of differentiating them, I suggest to read them together. Reading them together would not create a problem as I

am not reading Arendt's new model of state as council state in the context of traditional state-civil society distinction but in the context of her vision of politics based on action, plurality and participation.

After setting this analytical frame, in the last section I point out parts of Arendt's theory of participatory politics that would have a say on the idea of civil society as a space of experience. While doing this, I do take into account the fact that the concept of civil society is already a loaded and substantiated concept. I put forward the primary characteristics of that civil society that would serve as a space of experience for plural, participatory, and consensual politics. By presenting how Arendtian politics could survive within the social space of civil society, I try to point out a contemporary political experience in Arendtian terms. In this experience political and social co-exist. Secondly, in relation to the concept of civil society, I offer an Arendtian perspective to critically reflect on how we experience politics within the space of contemporary civil society.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Arendt's theory is composed of dichotomies. Among these dichotomies, the public versus private dichotomy is important to note in so far as the boundaries of the political are drawn within the context of this dichotomy. Based on Arendt's method of telling stories of actual political events, in this dissertation I developed a method of my own, provisionally referred to as an interdefinitional approach, which, enabled me to analyze two concepts in Arendt's theory – work and the social - from within an uncharted territory in the secondary literature on Arendt's works. My main contention is two-fold: that these two concepts have in-between characteristics, within Arendt's primary distinction of the public and private spheres and that both concepts become significant in the context of Arendt's critical understanding of modernity.

In her critique of modernity, Arendt complains about our loss of the commonly shared world, in which people act freely and become political. She is critical of our lost ability to act. In the modern world, attitudes of people change with regard to their relationship to the public life. Labor, rather than work and action, becomes valuable and the society turns into a society of laborers. Necessity rules over freedom in this society of laborers. Work and action are undermined by the

triumph of labor. At this point, work as an activity is valuable as it creates the common world, where action takes place. In this argument, labor is associated with the private realm of necessity and action is associated with public realm of freedom and politics. Work does not belong to any of these. It has an in-between character that transcends the dichotomy between the public and the private. It has commonalities and differences with labor and action respectively. In particular in the experience of working, the characteristics of each realm coincide. I identify the concept of work as one instance where the dichotomous thinking in Arendt's theory is surpassed leaving us with a particular loophole to examine the contingency of the public-private distinction.

With regard to the social as the second conceptual context, I begin my inquiry by noting how Arendt is highly critical of the rise of the social as a modern phenomenon, because in modern world the core distinction between the public and the private disappears. Private concerns are dealt publicly. The private invades the public realm. As a result, each realm is ruined. With regard to the private realm in the modern world, what should be hidden is exposed to the light of the public. The private realm loses its confidentiality. In addition, the content of the public realm is subject to decay too. The realm of action, freedom, and the political is invaded by private, social, and economic concerns. In this respect, Arendt clearly presents the social as a hybrid space in which the public and private are combined. However, hers is a negative account of the social.

At this point, I underline the importance of Arendt's multi-layered way of thinking by analyzing different conceptualizations of the term social in Arendt's different works. This unique analysis provides me with a positive account of the social in Arendt's theory where on the one hand the concept of social refers to

intertwining of the public and the private, and on the other it refers to different, particular instances and processes in different historical contexts. Among these different layers of the social, I present the social as sociability in terms of the quality of life in civil society and civic associations as a positive account. This positive account of the social does not challenge Arendt's theory of politics, but rather it opens up an alternative space to analyze both the public and the private, in which the political could emerge and survive. I identify this particular positive account of the social in Arendt's theory as a loophole, which enables us to examine different accounts of the political experience.

The general conclusion is that the concepts of work and the social as in-between concepts can help us with a more flexible view to what is otherwise understood as the strict dichotomy between the public and the private in Arendt's theory. Moreover, I draw attention to certain implications of this particular understanding. The first implication of reading Arendt in a particular way is to be able to relate this particular reading to a contemporary issue namely the contemporary political experience of an ordinary citizen in the social space of civil society. The particular reading in question points out the instances of experience, in which the citizen could politically act within the sociability of civil society.

In developing this argument, I employed a particular reading of the social in Arendt. I argue that the social in Arendt is among the most fruitful concepts, through which Arendt's multi-layered mode of thinking could be observed. With regard to this, I state that there are different facets of the social in Arendt. With the help of some works on Arendt, which also emphasize the multi-dimensionality in Arendt's theory, I present four different layers of the term social in Arendt's different works. The first layer of the social that one can observe in Arendt's works is the economic

social. Economic social refers to the intrusion of economic concerns into public affairs as a consequence of the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie. The second layer of the social is the biological one, which refers to the interference of bodily/biological needs into the public realm starting with the French Revolution. The third one is the social as the emergence of mass society that demands a conformist attitude from its members. The fourth layer of the social is sociability in terms of the quality of life in civil society and civic associations. This fourth layer of the social can be seen as a strategy of recovering the vitality of the public world by establishing different social relations of survival under the conditions of modernity.

Among these different layers of the social in Arendt, the social as sociability is an affirmative conception in that the location of the social as a space of civic associations raises the possibility of including specific political experiences under specific conditions of modernity. In fact, in her different works, Arendt herself points out these specific experiences of political actors under certain conditions. As I argued in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, Arendt, in *Men in Dark Times*, draws our attention to the political experiences under conditions of modernity where the mass totalitarian movements expect nothing but conformity and exclude, even destroy, what is different. Arendt argues that in those dark times, public loses its function to lighten and speech loses its function to disclose. Self-interest and personal liberty invade the public realm. In those times, the shared world retreats to underground. The web of relationships is established through the intimacy of friendship. As Arendt also states in *The Promise of the Politics* (2005), through that friendship the ‘world’ goes up in flames. These intimate relationships are what Arendt (2005: 202) calls the oases in a desert. In these oases of sociability, the political emerges through action and speech of pariah people, and it creates its own public space.

In this dissertation, the political experience of a pariah people in a societal context is also examined in one of Arendt's earliest works, *Rahel Varnhagen*. Rahel is a Jewish woman, who is one of the significant salon figures of the 18th century Berlin. Rahel's story is important for this dissertation as it depicts the political experience of the 18th century salon figure within the social space. In her life story, Rahel deals with her private identity of Jewishness in a political way. In addition, this work is also significant in understanding how Arendt writes the life story of that Jewish woman in a way that enables us to view the public and the private in a combined way. In so far as Arendt's story telling as her main method is concerned Rahel's story itself is the depiction of how the public and the private intertwine in the life story of a political figure. In this respect, Rahel is a true pariah as she consciously stays out of the world. She criticizes and rejects the conditions of that world. However, when one reads her whole story, one sees that there are times when Rahel also acts as a parvenu. Rahel as a parvenu employs private and personal strategies of assimilation in order to overcome her Jewishness. Moreover, there are times that Rahel experiences contradictions, in which she employs private and personal strategies reached through a pariah's insight. The important point to note here is Rahel experiences the public/political pariah identity and the private/personal parvenu identity at the same time. This combined experience in the context of public - private dichotomy does not prevent Arendt to see Rahel as a political actor, i.e. as a true pariah. It instead shows how the political could survive within the combined space of sociability.

Inspired by Rahel's story, I argue that from these political experiences of private people within the social space of sociability one can begin to challenge the predetermined relationship between the public and the political in Arendt's theory.

As I argued throughout this dissertation the fixed relation between the concepts of action, freedom, the political, and the public not only limits our understanding of the political but also closes the space for inquiring particular political experiences of certain historical figures/actors within the social space of sociability. When we start questioning the predetermined character of the public and the political, we begin to imagine the existence of a possible contingent realm where these actors do not necessarily act within the confines of the already existing public space, but instead emerge as political actors from within the social space created by their intimate relations of sociability. This type of critical thinking leads me to look into the concept of the political in Arendt in a way which has not been discussed in the secondary literature on Arendt's works.

As stated in Chapter 7, the political in Arendt is a plural, contingent, and unexpected phenomenon. The political is engaged by plurality of equal people, who acts through debate and deliberation for the sake of acting together. These people found something that has never existed before by words and deeds. When I look into this phenomenon of the political from the point, where the predetermined relation between the public and the political is broken, I come across with a dynamic conception of the political. In this particular conception, the political is synonymous with action and it emerges within the moment of performance of that action. It has conditions of plurality, equality and exclusion of necessity. It is also a constitutive concept, as within the moment of performance the political constitutes freedom, reality, and the public space simultaneously. The original perspective of my argument is that an understanding of the political as a constitutive concept does not require an assumed, predetermined existence of the public space, it instead creates its own particular boundaries at the moment of action.

The main implication of viewing the emergence of the political within the social space of sociability in Arendt's own works is to challenge the mainstream criticism that the social issues is excluded from the political agenda in Arendt's theory. Pointing out the particular instances, in which the political and the social can co-exist in Arendt's theory, leads to an argument that contemporary political experience of an ordinary citizen's concerns are a combination of the social and the political. The particular readings of the social as the realm of experience in civil society and, the political as both a constitutive and constituted concept, provides me with the possibility to examine how Arendtian conception of politics could be experienced within the civil society.

With regard to this main claim, in Chapter 8, I read the civil society as a space of experience for Arendt's plural participatory conception of politics. While doing this reading, I point out that civil society is a complex concept in its own, because there is no consensus on what it really includes. I consider the civil society as a space composed of voluntary associations institutionalized by voluntary engagement of active citizens. I argue that such an associational space that contributes to policy formation is a hospitable space for action, plurality, and participation in Arendtian sense.

In addition, I also underline the fact that this reading of civil society through Arendt's vision of politics as action and experience is not analyzed within the prevalent understanding of state-civil society relations. In most of Arendt's works there is no coherent conception of the state. In her elaboration on politics, freedom and action she offers the reader a new conception of the state. Hers is an idea of new council state system, in which power is horizontally directed, and each unit check and control the power of each other. In this new conception of the state, people

voluntarily participate in the course of policy making by creating their own public spaces. Because of these characteristics of the new model of the state, I suggest to read the civil society with this idea of council state system together. As some of the authors argue, it is difficult to put Arendt's theory and civil society in the same context. By taking this cautionary point into account I do not situate civil society in its conventional position with regard to the state. Instead, I approach Arendt's conception of plural and participatory politics as one instance which opens up the possibility of elaborating on the idea of civil society.

In my reading of the civil society, I argue that Arendt's emphasis on plurality is important for the idea of civil society in terms of establishing the space for reaching a consensus. In the literature, civil society is a space for sharing and interaction of different views and ideas in the form of disclosing. It is a space for conflict and friendly disagreement, as the parties reach some sort of consensus at the end. I argue that Arendt's depiction of actors who sit around a table and express their own opinions provide the space for reaching consensus. For Arendt, consensus is not a vague term but the rational formation of opinion that emerges as a result of debate and deliberation. In addition, I argue that Arendt's conception of politics also substantiates the idea of common good in civil society literature as a motivation for coming together. Although in Arendt's theory there is no higher aim than coming together for the sake of acting in the context of politics, she elaborates on the motivation for coming together in two levels. Firstly, in Arendt's theory respect for the 'world' that is preserved and maintained by action is a general motivating force for people to engage in political action. I argue that the respect for the common world could be thought as common good in general. Secondly, in Arendt's theory, an evaluation of action is based on the principle of greatness. The aims and concerns of

the actors have nothing to do with whether an action is great or not. This is why Arendt argues that the action could not be situated within a means-ends category. Its end could not be foreseen. At this point, I argue that one does not need to rule out the aims and concerns of the actors at the beginning and could accept their existence. One should simply accept that these aims and motivations have nothing to do with the greatness of the action. I state that if we employ such a perspective that does not deny the aims and motivations of the actors in civil society, we would end up with an idea of common good that is contingent. This idea of common good is formed at a specific time and place as the actors themselves see it. This could be also thought as common good in particular.

The importance of providing such a reading of civil society through Arendt's vision of politics is two-fold. Firstly, some of the secondary literature could not put the idea of civil society and Arendt's theory together, because of Arendt's critical approach to the idea of society and the social in general. I argue that if we read the social and the political in Arendt in a specific way, and clarify the idea of civil society as a space composed of voluntary associations institutionalized by voluntary engagement of active citizens, we could do an Arendtian reading of civil society.

Secondly, in general, elaborating on Arendtian political experience within a social context presents the instances of experience in which the social and the political co-exist. If we view membership in civil society as a voluntary act in which citizens contribute to policy formation through debate and deliberation among their equals, this type of action can be understood within the sociability context of civil society. The moment of deliberation spatially refers to the spontaneous co-existence of the political and the social. While a fixed reading of Arendt's core distinction between the public and the private situates the social and the political in a mutually

exclusive position, it is important to note that even in Arendt's own writings, this mutually exclusive character is often dismantled in telling the stories of political experiences within a social context. This is inspiring enough to point out instances of experience that brings Arendtian participatory and plural politics and civil society as a space of experience together. This moment of two realms coming together enables the Arendtian reader to employ an Arendtian perspective in dealing with contemporary concerns and issues.

Finally, this dissertation has something to conclude about the idea of politics as a lost treasure in Arendt's theory. This study sees the civil society as an alternative space of experience, in which Arendt's participatory vision of politics could be actualized. This perspective carries the idea of politics inspired by the political experience in Greek city-states into the contemporary political context. The civil society that combines both the public and the private realms in the specific context of sociability provides a space for an ordinary citizen to act, to participate, to debate and to have a say on the political course of his/her country. This type of political engagement is the lost treasure of the political that Arendt had longed for in her works. According to Arendt, the world is the only place, in which meaningful human action could take place. Humans act upon this world, and they guarantee its existence by acting constantly. In modern conditions, with the emergence of totalitarian movements, human beings stop acting and start behaving in a totalizing movement. To stop acting also means to stop being political as one could be political as long as one acts.

In this regard, ceasing to act becomes detrimental for the existence of the world whose maintenance is guaranteed by action. In the Epilogue of *The Promise of Politics* Arendt (2005: 201) refers to withering away of everything between us,

which results in losing of hope that we are able to transform a desert that is the desert we live in now into a human world. The withering away of everything between us also means losing of plurality. The lost hope, the lost ability to act that could recreate the world, in which humans could be humans again by acting, is to reinstate the lost treasure of the political.

This idea of lost treasure is also stated clearly in Arendt's reflections on revolution. As this dissertation argued, the concept of revolution is important for Arendt's vision of politics and freedom. According to Arendt, true revolutions emerge out of the experiences of actors who have the will to participate in the course of future public affairs. The founding moment of a new body politic as the result of this willingness to participate is political action *par excellence*. It is that specific moment of acting people becoming truly free. This is the spirit of action observed in the course of revolution which Arendt had also longed for. According to her, in French Revolution, even though the Revolution had given freedom to people it could not provide a space for its performance. For Arendt public speech in expression and discussion is important. If people do not have their space to express and discuss their views, the public space for freedom, which is created as a consequence of revolution, would vanish. People would surrender their power to representatives. Then, some experts start to decide political matters as matters of administration (Arendt, 1990: 235-237). As a consequence, people would lose their ability to act and their plurality. This dissertation presents such an idea of civil society as a space of experience for Arendtian politics, which keeps the moment of action alive. As the members of that civil society would express and discuss their views in front of plurality of equals, and as they contribute to policy making regarding their future, they would become political and free as Arendt would have wanted them to be.

With regard to this political experience, I argue that the idea of civil society that emphasizes abilities of active citizens in an associational life based on the idea of civility constitutes an alternative third space where the citizen would be determined to act, to have joy in action, and to be able to change things through action. In fact, these are the abilities, which Arendt (1972: 202) had implied as the lost treasure of the political. I conclude that seeing the political experience within the sociability context of the civil society is a way to re-discover that lost treasure.

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