

The Role of The Will in Hannah Arendt's Theory on Political Conflicts

El papel de la voluntad en la teoría de Hannah Arendt sobre los conflictos políticos

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ABSTRACT Hannah Arendt's work is notably ambiguous in handling the concept of will. On the one hand, willing appears as an anti-political faculty; on the other, it is named as the spring of political action. This paper asks what does this shift mean to her political theory—hoping that it could also help us to think our current political conflicts. The main argument is that will's consistency with the plurality of public-political life becomes intelligible only if we have in mind its contentious feature as well as its bonding role among the several faculties that compose a multiple self. However, the anti-political notion of the will as a command that imposes itself as a sovereign decision seems hard to avoid. I conclude by suggesting that Arendt's reappraisal removes its arbitrary and violent character by means of what she calls the transformation of will into love.

KEYWORDS Will; Sovereignty; Conflict; Love.

RESUMEN *La obra de Hannah Arendt es notablemente ambigua en el manejo del concepto de voluntad. Por un lado, la voluntad aparece como una facultad antipolítica; por el otro, es nombrada como la fuente de la acción política. Este artículo pregunta qué significa este cambio para su teoría política, con la esperanza de que esto también nos ayude a pensar nuestros conflictos políticos actuales. El argumento principal es que la coherencia de la voluntad con la pluralidad de la vida político-pública sólo se hace inteligible si tenemos en mente su carácter contencioso y además su papel de vinculación entre las diversas facultades que componen un múltiple self. Sin embargo, la noción antipolítica de la voluntad como un comando que se impone tal cual una decisión soberana parece difícil de evitar. Concluyo sugiriendo que la reevaluación de Arendt elimina su carácter arbitrario y violento por medio de*

lo que ella llama la transformación de la voluntad en amor.

PALABRAS CLAVE *Voluntad; Soberanía; Conflicto; Amor.*

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The reading presented here follows the agonistic interpretations of Hannah Arendt. I do not take hers as a theory of democratic deliberation toward consensus, but as a political theory in which the possibility to argue, to dissent, to disobey, to transgress, to resist, and even to conflict all play a crucial role. Every agreement is accompanied by the possibility to disagree.¹ We can only truly say 'yes' when we could likewise say 'no'. In this possibility, in this contingency, therefore, freedom and politics —“two sides of the same matter” (Arendt, 1961/2006, p. 147)— find its groundwork. In other words, the *raison d'être* of politics is the freedom to do or not do.

With that said, my goal is to examine the concept of will in Arendt's political theory. In several of her writings, willing appears as an anti-political faculty, which is manifest in at least three directions: the worldlessness of a spiritual faculty which takes men out of the common reality to throw them inside themselves; a tendency to homogenize, eliminating differences; and the fact that the will imposes itself in the public sphere as a sovereign decision. But willing has also another aspect in her work. At the end of her life, Arendt was engaged in an extensive research on the faculties of mind. The chapter on “Willing” in *The Life of the Mind* is the last she was able to write before her death. At that moment, the will was not opposed to politics anymore; rather, it was named as “the spring of action” (Arendt, 1978, p. 6).

What does this shift mean to the relation between the faculty of the will and the possibility of political conflicts? Is this really a shift in Arendt's thought on will? How does this happen? After all, how is the will related to the human capacity to act and to start something new, that is, to the exercise of freedom? What about the other faculties of the mind? These are questions to be thought about in this paper. It starts by briefly presenting the intricate critique of sovereign will in two of her major works: *Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Human Condition*. Then it shows the ambiguity in the treatment of this subject matter in a peculiar essay written by her in the mid-fifties, *On the nature of totalitarianism*. This is the ambiguity between the will as an inward, thus anti-political faculty and, otherwise, the will to act in a public sphere.

¹ “Dissent implies consent, and is the hallmark of free government; one who knows that he may dissent knows also that he somehow consents when he does not dissent” (Arendt, 1972, p. 88).

But this is also the duality between an inner freedom, experienced by a person with oneself, and the experience of public or political freedom.

Thereafter, I intend to show how philosophers, in Arendt's account, were unable to deal with freedom. At this point it is imperative to compare an essay named *What is Freedom?*, written by her half a decade after the one on totalitarianism, and the chapter on *Willing* in *The Life of Mind*. In both writings the guiding question and the authors called upon to provide answers are quite similar, but the outcomes are strikingly distinct. While in the former Arendt dispenses with its dual nature in order to present an image of the will as strictly anti-political and restrict to inner life, in the latter the link between will and political freedom is highlighted. My assumption is that Arendt's equivocal position on will depends on her standpoint, that is, whether she is thinking along with philosophers or men of action. The displacement between these points of view results in two different but slightly discerned concepts: the will-to-power and the will-to-act.

Arendt's twists around the will reveals a genuine and intricate problem, which is handled in *The Life of the Mind* through a more meticulous investigation on the link between will, action and freedom. We must then be able to note whether all the anti-political features of will have been somehow reversed, forgotten or transformed in her late thought, and what this could mean to her theory on political conflicts. I assume that in this undeclared review Arendt is not denying that willing is experienced in inner life, though this is no longer the experience of a lonely and sovereign subject. What is anti-political in the faculties of the mind is the illusion of a solipsistic self, which results in the onslaught of a philosopher-king, a sovereign will, or a supreme judge over the public-political sphere. On the contrary, when will is considered close to action, consistent with the plurality of public-political life, it is understood as the experience of a multiple "self". However, the problem of decision does persist, whether we think of the personal or the collective will. I conclude by suggesting that Arendt's reappraisal of will as a faculty consistent with the political experience, though it cannot transform it into a democratic deliberation, removes its arbitrary and violent character by means of what she calls the transformation of Will into Love.

The Critique of Sovereign Will

Hannah Arendt's approach on will as an anti-political faculty cannot be fully understood apart from her critique of sovereignty. In her first book, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, there is a manifold and tortuous approach on the subject. Although the state—either in a republic or in a monarchy—had as its primary function the protection of all inhabitants in its territory, it was forced “in the name of the will of the people” to guarantee full citizenship only for nationals, that is, “those who belonged to the national community by right of origin and fact of birth”. Curiously, nationalism was cemented by the decline of another form of sovereignty: the enlightened despotism. Hence, being born and raised upon the same soil became the “only remaining bond between the citizens of a nation-state without a monarch to symbolize their essential community” (Arendt, 1951/1985, p. 230).

With its laws transformed into an instrument of the nation, subdued to something that romantics called the “national soul”, state sovereignty was then “surrounded by a pseudo-mystical aura of lawless arbitrariness” (1951/1985, p. 231). Otherwise, while they were linked to a territory that was a permanent home for a people with common historical and cultural background, national laws served as a dam that contained imperialist enterprises. That is precisely where its difference towards the nationalism of tribal movements lies. Considering the pan-movements as forerunners of the totalitarian contempt for law, Arendt affirms that since they have arisen in places where there have never been constitutional governments, it was just natural that power was conceived as arbitrary decisions. “In its complete arbitrariness, power as such was held to be holy [...]. The government, no matter what it did, was still the ‘Supreme Power in action’, and the movement only had to adhere to this power and to organize its popular support, [...] a colossal herd, obedient to the arbitrary will of one man” (1951/1985, p. 248).

This Supreme Power, still according to the complex analysis provided in the book, was foretold by the ingenuity of Thomas Hobbes, whose philosophy of power resulted in a political theory that has enlightened all future considerations on sovereignty. But the paradoxes

of the nation-state² became an issue only in twentieth-century, when an unprecedented flux of stateless individuals forced the nation-states to use their “sovereign right of expulsion” (1951/1985, p. 283). It turns out that the new sovereign became also a tyrant. Human rights were then evoked as a safeguard. But this shield has proved inadequate since the abstract Man could not be found anywhere. In fact, the rights of the individual depended on the emancipation of the people, that is, they were linked to the fact of living and belonging to an independent nation. So the paradox of human rights was that only an emancipated sovereign people was able to guarantee them. “[The] people, and not the individual, was the image of man” (1951/1985, p. 291).

In its ultimate form, sovereignty intends to command and regulate every aspect of human life, even those that belong to “the dark background of mere givenness, the background formed by our unchangeable and unique nature”, that is, all that is “mysteriously given us by birth”. This mere existence, as the mere existence of an “alien” seen “in its all too obvious difference”, should remind us of “the limitations of human activity”, indicating those things that “men cannot change at will” (1951/1985, p. 301). In other words, it must remind us those domains where nobody is sovereign. Instead, a tendency to homogenize leads to nullify, cast out or even to destroy all differences. Some years later, in *The Human Condition*, the Promethean feature of sovereignty is labeled with the absolute freedom of an individual able to do whatever one wants, without restrictions or commitments, that is, considering only one’s own will. This kind of freedom, Arendt says, does not exist in the public realm.³

2 Bonnie Honig calls it the paradox of politics, depicting it as follows: “Popular sovereignty is supposed to solve the problems of (il)legitimacy and arbitrariness. But once the people have power, that ‘solution’ suddenly looks like a problem, for the people, too, can be a source of arbitrariness” (Honig, 2001, p. 19). The departing point of her analysis is Rousseau’s General Will, and her brilliant insight is to discuss this problem under the figure of the foreign-founder. See also her essay on decision and deliberation (Honig, 2007), whose conclusion inspires—perhaps in a skewed way—my reading of Arendt’s reappraisal of the will in *The Life of the Mind*.

3 “If it were true that sovereignty and freedom are the same, then indeed no man could be free, because sovereignty, the ideal of uncompromising self-sufficiency and mastership, is contradictory to the very condition of plurality. No man can be sovereign because not one man, but men, inhabit the earth” (Arendt, 1998, p. 234).

Still, there is another standpoint. Arendt uses the same term to describe the strength of the promises that keeps a community united. "Sovereignty", she states, "which is always spurious if claimed by an isolated single entity, be it the individual entity of the person or the collective entity of a nation, assumes, in the case of many men mutually bound by promises, a certain limited reality. The sovereignty resides in the resulting, limited independence from the incalculability of the future" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 245). Looking to the future as if it were present, committing ourselves to keep and remember today's feats in the days to come, we become, to some extent, sovereigns over time. In this way, men are bonded together not, she stresses, "by an identical will which somehow magically inspires them all, but by an agreed purpose for which alone the promises are valid and binding" (1958/1998, p. 245). The strength of the promises does not come from inside, as an impulse or instinct that forces us to keep our words; but it rather arises from the commitment to something common to all partners, something that lies among them.

In this context, it seems that Arendt recovers the political relevance of a specific notion of sovereignty, keeping will—as the impulse or the command that each one feels inside oneself, or that is imposed to all by a single entity—apart from the public and political realm. Nonetheless, the concept of will is also revisited. She recalls Nietzsche's account on promise as the "memory of the will", besides stating that promising and forgiving are the only "moral precepts [...] that are not applied to action from the outside"; rather they arise "directly out of the will to live together with others in the mode of acting and speaking" (1958/1998, p. 246). In another passage, she links the heroic character—that serves as model for the political agent—to "a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own"; a sort of "courage, without which [...] freedom, would not be possible at all" (1958/1998, pp. 186-187). Thus, the concept of sovereign will is marked by an astonishing ambiguity that somehow is related to a twofold meaning of freedom.

The Will's Dual Nature

The ambiguity in Arendt's critique of sovereign will has a peculiar form in a sequence of her essays written in 1954 concerning the nature of totalitarianism and the difficulties to understand it. In one of these essays—as also in the chapter on ideology and terror added to *Origins of Totalitarianism* in the previous year—she resorts to Montesquieu in order to consider the novelty of the totalitarian form of government. Following the tradition of political thought, Montesquieu sustained that a sovereign power is exercised in all three forms of government known by then: the republic, the monarchy, and the tyranny. In the first two, the sovereign power lies in the hands of the people and in the hands of just one man, respectively, but in both cases it does respond to and it is limited by law. For the republic is “a constitutional government”, and the monarchy is “a lawful government”. Only tyrannies dispense with the law, for its “power is exercised by one man according to his arbitrary will” (Arendt, 2005, p. 330).

248

Therefore, though he is well-known for his theory on the division of powers, one does not find in Montesquieu a critique of sovereignty itself. It is Kant, says Arendt, who carries it on through the distinction between forms of domination and forms of government. The former, in which an “undivided sovereign power” rules, are regarded as illegal whether the power is in the hands of the prince, of a class of nobles, or of the people taken as one single subject. “Constitutional or lawful government is established through the division of power so that the same body (or man) does not make the laws, execute them, and then sit in judgment on itself” (2005, p. 330).

But one does find in Montesquieu, or at least in Arendt's reading of his work, a critique of sovereign will. This is not only seen in his description of tyranny as the command of an arbitrary will, but also in the very fact that his search for the principles of political action is not the scrutiny of inner motives and goals, appetites or desires, that is, it does not aim man as an individual, but as a citizen in a public world. The discrepancy between man and citizen reveals the impartial character of law, and shows the limits of legal governments: they cannot interfere or determine private and personal lives. Moreover, Arendt says, the

problem aroused by this discrepancy is that "the very standards of right and wrong in the two spheres are not the same and are often even in conflict" (2005, p. 334). Conflicts, she continues, that seem insoluble.

Nonetheless, Montesquieu's principles of action show that "there must be some underlying ground from which both man as an individual and man as a citizen sprang", which means that "there was more to the dilemma of the personal and the public spheres than discrepancy and conflict, even though they might conflict" (2005, p. 335). Montesquieu adds a new question to the traditional inquiry on the nature of government: "What makes a government act as it acts?" The answer is that beyond each political structure there is also a principle that sets it in motion. The principle of action in a republic is virtue, in a monarchy it is honor, and in a tyranny, fear.

Each of these principles arise from "authentic elements of the human condition and are reflected in primary human experiences" (2005, p. 338). Virtue is the experience of equality between men, honor is the experience of distinction, and fear □whose outlines are not sketched by Montesquieu himself□ is the experience in which man cannot be equaled to nor distinguished from other men, that is, the experience of loneliness. Insofar as action is always action in concert, "fear as a principle of action is in some sense a contradiction in terms, because fear is precisely despair over the impossibility of action". Hence, it is in fact an anti-political principle. In a detour of Karl Marx's famous sentence, she writes that fear "can only be destructive", and tyranny "is therefore the only form of government which bears germs of its destruction within itself" (2005, p. 337).

It is also noteworthy the link between lawlessness, fear, loneliness, impotence, violence, domination, and the will to power.

Out of the conviction of one's own impotence and the fear of the power of all others comes the will to dominate, which is the will of the tyrant. Just as virtue is love of the equality of power, so fear is actually the will to, or, in its perverted form, lust for power. Concretely and politically speaking, there is no other will to power but the will to dominate. For power itself in its true sense can never be possessed by one man alone; power comes, as

it were, into being whenever men act 'in concert' and disappears not less mysteriously, whenever one man is all by himself. Tyranny, based on the essential impotence of all men who are alone, is the hubristic attempt to be like God, invested with power individually, in complete solitude. (2005, pp. 337-338).

Thus, tyranny is the violent and arbitrary command of a person whose impotence, that is, the fact that he is by himself, leads to the will to dominate. Nevertheless, totalitarian power, the new phenomenon that needs to be examined in its novelty, is not exercised by a tyrannical will. Arendt is careful enough to say that totalitarian rule is not arbitrary. In fact, "it obeys with strict logic and executes with precise compulsion the laws of History or Nature", that is, a "higher form of legitimacy" (2005, p. 339-340). But if law is what prevents a sovereign will to impose itself upon all the others, the enforcement of a Law of laws directly upon men is the suppression of all and any will, which is also the suppression of freedom.

250
The traditional concept of law provides men with some relative permanence and stability, inasmuch as the source of its authority—a supreme law—is situated out of time and never shows up to the contingent and mutable sphere of human affairs. It does stabilize the world in order to allow men to move within it. In turn, totalitarian laws become laws of movement, the movement of Nature and History, while men are immobilized.

If law, therefore, is the essence of constitutional or republican government, then terror is the essence of totalitarian government. Laws were established to be boundaries [...] and to remain static, enabling men to move within them; under totalitarian conditions, on the contrary, every means is taken to 'stabilize' men, to make *them* static, in order to prevent any unforeseen, free, or spontaneous acts that might hinder freely racing terror. [...] no free action of mere men is permitted to interfere with it. Guilt and innocence become meaningless categories; 'guilty' is he who stands in the path of terror, that is, who willingly or unwillingly hinders the movement of Nature or History. (2005, pp. 341-342).

Willingly or unwillingly... In totalitarian regimes, being guilty is not related to any deed or will to act in a way or another. One is born guilty or innocent by the simple fact of being what he or she is. From the point of view of superhuman laws, not only the command of a sovereign but also the very human capacity to act and to start something new seems to be arbitrary and meaningless. That is why in a perfect totalitarian government no principle of action is required. In turn, it is moved by a "new principle, which, as such, dispenses with human action as free deeds altogether and substitutes for the very desire and will to action a craving and need for insight into the laws of movement according to which the terror functions" (2005, pp. 348-349). This principle of movement is ideology, understood as the imperative coherence of a logical thinking that reduces reality as a whole to a single superhuman force capable of explaining all human events.

In fact, the notion of human freedom as irrelevant or subject to superhuman forces has become preponderant in modern political thought long before the rise of totalitarian regimes. Insofar as Nature or History are regarded as overwhelming forces that vanquish all human efforts, the belief in necessity renders any notion of freedom purely illusory. Hence, in the totalitarian claim to execute higher laws, the "Hegelian definition of Freedom as insight into and conforming to 'necessity' has [...] found a new and terrifying realization" (2005, p. 346). The difficulties of philosophers to deal with freedom, and consequently with the faculty of willing, must be shown below. Before that, I would like to finish this section following some of Andreas Kalyvas's arguments in order to stress Arendt's ambiguity in the treatment of the will.

As we have seen, Arendt criticizes the will "for its solipsistic, silent, violent, anti-political, arbitrary, and unstable nature" (Kalyvas, 2004, p. 326). But it is not a matter of refusing it altogether. In some of her writings, Arendt holds a place for the will: it concerns the experiences of a person within himself. In the essay on the nature of totalitarianism, for example, one reads that totalitarian ideologies find "a great and pertinent danger" in "the human freedom to change one's mind" (Arendt, 2005, p. 351). In this sense, the will is a partner of thinking: they are free activities of an inner life.

The will becomes “dangerous and harmful”, according to Arendt’s critique of sovereignty, only insofar it is “introduced into politics in the form of monarchical, national, or popular will” (Kalyvas, 2004, p. 326). Once again, thinking and willing are partners. Both can become tyrannical when they leave the inner life to be expressed in the common world.⁴ Then sovereignty “conjures up the practices of command and coercion, separating the ruler from the ruled”, and jeopardizing “the multiperspectival and plural nature of the public sphere by homogenizing and annihilating all differences and distinctions in the name of ‘One Man of gigantic proportions’” (2004, p. 326). Once it is seen as the suppression of conflicts, the sovereign will can also be regarded as the elimination of agonistic wills.

In fact, Arendt describes totalitarianism as the effort to get rid of human will altogether. It is not only —and surely not primarily— the appetite or desire to satisfy personal interests that is at stake, but the *will to act* in a public-political sphere. “It is precisely this will to act that informs her notions of courage and heroism that correspond to her peculiar understanding of citizenship. To be a citizen entails a willingness to suffer the consequences of such a decision to leave one’s private hiding place and disclose or expose one’s self in front of one’s peer”. This “decision to act”, continues Kalyvas interpreting the excerpt of *The Human Condition* mentioned above, “seems to arise ‘directly out of the will to live together with others in the mode of acting and speaking’ [...] a decision that flows directly from the will and the inner self” (2004, p. 332; cf. Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 246).

Kalyvas is successful in collecting excerpts of Arendt’s writings in which she affirms the political relevance of the will. He is even more perspicacious in noting that the “will’s dual nature” shows up in the final chapter of *Origins* when she describes the terror of totalitarian regimes and the coercive force of its ideological deductions as two

4 “This has been the professional risk of the philosopher, who, because of his quest for truth and his concern with questions we call metaphysical [...] needs solitude [...]. As the inherent risk of solitude, loneliness is, therefore, a professional danger for philosophers, which, incidentally, seems to be one of the reasons that philosophers cannot be trusted with politics or a political philosophy. [...] [Their interest] to be left alone, to have their solitude guaranteed and freed from all possible disturbances [...] has naturally led them to sympathize with tyrannies where action is not expected of citizens” (Arendt, 2005, pp. 359-360).

different, yet related, menaces to the freedom of movement and to inner freedom, that is, to the political and non-political freedom. It may not seem accurate to identify this inner freedom with the faculty of will, as does Kalyvas, since in this context Arendt explicitly refers to thinking (cf. Kalyvas, 2004, pp. 333-334; Arendt, 1951/1985, p. 473). Also in the essay on the nature of totalitarianism, she describes "spontaneity" as "the specifically human unpredictability of thought and action" (Arendt, 2005, p. 350). But this seeming misconception does not quash the argument. One can say, for example, that in the early fifties she had not yet distinguished the faculties of mind □ thinking, willing, and judging. Anyway, the strength of Kalyvas's account lies in the duality between two kinds of freedom, one that is experienced in solitude and the other that is lived in public. And that is a problem to which Arendt returns over and over again.

The Philosophical Discovery of the Will

The duality between an inner freedom and the freedom experienced in the outer world receives a new formulation in one of her lectures given in 1960 and published one year later in *Between Past and Future*. Not by chance, it is titled with an eminently philosophical question: "What is Freedom?". Here —and this is the key for my argument in this section— Arendt is approaching will in a very traditional way, even if her approach of freedom is quite unconventional.

She starts by presenting the traps found by those who ask about freedom. While our consciousness and conscience tell us that we are free and responsible for our decisions, every time we stop to think about our deeds, the principle of causality is imposed on us, that is, we feel that everything has a reason. So our practical, moral, and political assumptions on freedom are opposed to our theoretical endeavors. In other words, anyone can find a cause to the decision that was taken as if there were no motifs, that is, as if it was an absolutely free choice. In fact, no one could fail to find it, albeit we cannot really know all the causes involved in human affairs, whether they are inner motivations or external interferences.

In this ineluctable contradiction between practical freedom and theoretical non-freedom, it is not scientific theory, but “thought itself [...] that seems to dissolve freedom”. For even if nature itself is not ruled by the principle of causality, “it certainly is a category of the mind to bring order into all sensory data” (Arendt, 1961/2006, p. 143). Kant’s answer to this predicament is the distinction between a pure reason and a practical reason, the subject of knowledge and the free-willing agent, the understanding of reason as such and the dictate of the will. By detaching the freedom of human action from the necessary search for causes in thinking, his solution is able to lay down a moral law that has the same status as the natural laws. “But it does little to eliminate the greatest and most dangerous difficulty, namely, that thought itself [...] makes freedom disappear—quite apart from the fact that it must appear strange indeed that the faculty of the will whose essential activity consists in dictate and command should be the harbinger of freedom” (1961/2006, p. 144).

254
 The predicament of thought before freedom has important consequences to political philosophy. Since one could not talk about politics without referring to—or believing in—the human capacity to act freely, it seems that those who have thinking as their main activity are the less suitable to engage in such affairs. In fact, she states, philosophical tradition “has distorted, instead of clarifying, the very idea of freedom such as it is given in human experience by transposing it from its original field, the realm of politics and human affairs in general, to an inward domain, the will” (1961/2006, p. 144). It all began, according to Arendt’s history of the will, with the stoic experience of estrangement from the world of which Epictetus’s ideas would be the more representative.

As slaves, despoiled of their own place in the world, those men lacked the ancient precondition for freedom and could not participate in the political realm. Hence, they turned the unknown experience of public freedom into an experience within one’s self whereby a man could be a slave and still be free.⁵ The reversal of Roman political categories such

⁵ In fact, the denial of public freedom and the escape to inwardness—“whether in the form of an inner dialogue which, since Socrates, we call thinking, or in a conflict within myself, the inner strife between what I would and what I do”—is attributed to all philosophical tradition (Arendt, 2006, p. 155).

as power, domination and property, which came to be understood in the intercourse of a man with himself, prove the derivative character of the notion of inner freedom. "Before it became an attribute of thought or a quality of the will, freedom was understood to be the free man's status, which enabled him to move, to get away from home, to go out into the world and meet other people in deed and word" (1961/2006, p. 147).⁶ Here, as in the excerpts of *The Human Condition* mentioned above, action is accompanied by courage. But it is noteworthy that this courage to leave the private life is not understood as the will to act. In this essay, action and freedom are not phenomena of the will at all. As a matter of fact, there is a link between action, the will, and the other faculties of mind. Yet it has nothing to do with freedom.

Action insofar as it is determined is guided by a future aim whose desirability the intellect has grasped before the will wills it, whereby the intellect calls upon the will, since only the will can dictate action [...]; to recognize the aim [of action] is not a matter of freedom, but of right or wrong judgment. Will, seen as a distinct and separate human faculty, follows judgment, i.e., cognition of the right aim, and then commands its execution. The power to command, to dictate action, is not a matter of freedom but a question of strength or weakness. (1961/2006, p. 150).

Action, in this sense, is understood as a tool employed by the will on behalf of the intellect, whose goals are recognized as adequate by a precise judgment of the pertinent issues.⁷ Notwithstanding, according to Arendt's theory, this is not a genuine sort of action. For her, as the possibility "to call something into being which did not exist before", action must be free from motifs and goals, it should be "neither under the guidance of the intellect nor under the dictate of the will" (1961/2006, p. 150). So what boosts action? Arendt recalls her discussion of Montesquieu affirming that action "springs from something altogether different which [...] I shall call a principle", and that "becomes fully

⁶ The experience of thought in general would be secondary: "an intercourse between me and myself begins the moment the intercourse between me and my fellow men has been interrupted for no matter what reason" (Arendt, 2006, p. 157).

⁷ In *The Life of the Mind* she reverses it saying: "a will that is not free is a contradiction in terms — unless one understands the faculty of volition as mere auxiliary executive organ for whatever either desire or reason has proposed" (Arendt, 1978, p. 14).

manifest only in the performing act itself” (1961/2006, pp. 150-151). Then, in a parallel between political and artistic concepts, she turns to one of her favorite political writers. Machiavelli’s concept of *virtù* is compared to the excellence of performing arts that found their end not in a product but in the performance itself, which requires the presence of an audience. These notions will be important in a contradistinction between sovereignty and virtuosity. But let us keep this aside for a while.

Following her narrative in this essay, early Christianity is presented as the second great moment in the philosophical discovery of the will. Indeed, it is a crucial moment. Arendt goes so far as to say that Paul was the first to find out some non-political freedom, and that freedom as such had no space in philosophy prior to Augustine. So what is the difference between the notion of will derived from the stoic removal from the public-political world and the notion of will as conceived by Christianity? First, more than a conflict between an inner life and the outside world, or between reason and passion, two different faculties, what emerges is “a conflict within the will itself” (1961/2006, p. 157). Until then, the only duality within a faculty of the mind recognized by our tradition was the dialogue between me and myself, that is, the thinking dialogue. But this is not a conflict. On the contrary, one knows that is thinking well when one does not contradict oneself.⁸ Moreover, the dichotomy in willing does not set the self in motion as in thinking. Rather “it paralyzes and locks it within itself; willing in solitude is always *velle* and *nolle*, to will and not to will at the same time” (1961/2006, p. 157).

It is astonishing that the faculty that should be able to command and dictate action ends up stuck in a battle within itself, as if someone could disobey her/himself. This “monstrosity” is explained by the fact that the will is once again lived as an experience of impotence, as if the I-will were detached from the I-can. “Historically, men first discovered the will when they experienced its impotence and not its power, when they said with Paul: ‘For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not’ (1961/2006, p. 160). This situation gives

8 In *The Life of the Mind*, one reads that the possibility of the will to contradict itself is the hallmark of its freedom (Arendt, 1978, p. 5), an utterance inconceivable in the essay on freedom.

rise to the notion of will-to-power or, more precisely, that is why "will, will-power, and will-to-power are for us almost identical notions; the seat of power is to us the faculty of the will as known and experienced by man in his intercourse with himself" (1961/2006, p. 158). However, the Christian notion is distinguished from the stoic one inasmuch as the willing ego feels the impotence "within one's self, in the 'interior dwelling' (*interior domus*), where Epictetus still believed man to be an absolute master" (1961/2006, p. 160).

Forbidden to do whatever it pleases, the I-will devotes itself to a destructive enterprise. In the vein of her analysis of imperialism qua origin of totalitarian regimes, Arendt describes the will-to-power as a will-to-oppression brought forth by an anti-political situation, where man is not only isolated from the others or at war with them, not only focused in his or her own interests and goals, but also captured by one's own self. The I-will "remains subject to the self, strikes back at it, spurs it on, incites it further, or is ruined by it" (1961/2006, p. 161). The expansion of power—understood as the ability to acquire, possess, and accumulate more power—is unable to take someone beyond oneself. "However far the will-to-power may reach out, and even if somebody possessed by it begins to conquer the whole world, the I-will can never rid itself of the self; it always remains bond to it and, indeed, under its bondage" (1961/2006, p. 161).

This bondage to the self gives us the opportunity to come back to the problem of sovereignty, described in this essay as "the ideal of free will, independent from others and eventually prevailing against them", just the opposite of virtuosity, where "men need the presence of others before whom they can appear" (1961/2006, pp. 152, 162). If my reading is correct, the one who wants to prevail against the others is at the same time subject to one's own self, servant of oneself. Behind the idea of sovereignty lies the assumption that a political body must be almighty, unique, and indivisible as the self. Such a community would be built on quicksand, able to stand upright only through the constant use of violence. The steadiness of a political community, on the opposite, is achieved insofar as the political affairs are "transacted within an elaborate framework of ties and bonds" (1961/2006, p. 162) between men who live together and commit themselves to keeping

their words. These are not relations between sovereigns, but a relation of non-sovereignty.

In the last section of the essay on freedom, Arendt recalls the original Greek and Roman notions of action —*archai* and *prattein*; *agere* and *gerere* or *res gestae*— understood as a twofold and interrelated event, the beginning of something new and its collective achievement. We must keep this in mind henceforward in order to understand how the renounce of sovereignty—that is also the renounce of oneself—is articulated with the capacity to act, to start something new, to be free, and, furthermore, to the possibility of political conflicts.

The Spring of Action

In the introduction to the discussion on “Willing” in *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt presents a problem quite similar to the one that opens her essay on freedom, i.e., the dilemma of how to reconcile human freedom with the laws of causality, the imperatives of Nature and History, or the omniscience of an almighty God. But an important shift is already evident in the second page, when she affirms that the greatest difficulty in a discussion on will is the fact that this faculty had been “consistently doubted and refuted by so eminent a series of philosophers” (Arendt, 1978, p. 4). Thus, the history of will written here, even if it enrolls the same characters □Epictetus, Paul, Augustine, Scotus, Hobbes, Montesquieu, among others□ is seen from another perspective. It is no longer a matter of attributing to the philosophical tradition the discovery of the will as a reversal of public freedom. Just the opposite, now she is saying that philosophers were unable to deal with the matter, and such inability comes up precisely from its “inevitable connection with Freedom” (1978, p. 5; see also p. 26). In a striking turnaround, she brings will and action near, naming the former as the “spring” of the latter, and asking “whether men of action were not perhaps in a better position to come to terms with the problems of the Will than the men of thought” (1978, p. 6).

This section intends to show the late shifts in Arendt’s thought on will, focusing mainly in the anti-political aspects seen above: the loneliness, the thirsty impotence, and the bondage of the willing to one’s

own self; its tendency to homogenize and to destroy all differences; and its command over the others as a sovereign, unprecedented, and unconstrained decision. The main assumption here is that Arendt is not denying that willing is experienced in inner life, just like thinking does, though this is not anymore —or not necessarily— home for a lonely and sovereign subject. Before showing that, I would like to briefly highlight the unavoidable prerequisite to Arendt's politicization of the will: the rectilinear concept of time.

Time was not a topic in her earlier considerations on will, but it became crucial and takes up much of the first chapter in *The Life of the Mind*. Indeed, not the concept of time itself but the future tense, in which our words must be confirmed, is thematized in a passage of *The Human Condition* where promise is depicted as "the memory of will" (1958/1998, p. 245). In another sense, the will is now described as "our mental organ for the future" (1978, p. 13). In fact, though she did not spell it out, both promise and will deal with the future.⁹ Then, both deal with things that are absent, things that do not exist and may never come to being. In other words, they deal with contingency. The Greeks had an expression to what comes to being by accident: *kata symbebekos*. However they did not have a word for the will.¹⁰ This lacuna, Arendt argues, is in agreement with their circular concept of time. Just as the Hebrew-Christian credo of a divine beginning, and its corresponding rectilinear time concept, are in agreement with the notion of will.

So, Arendt says, it is striking that modern philosophy, with its notion of progress and an unprecedented faith in the future, is so suspicious of the will. Indeed, the same distrust is found whether in the early modern —or post-medieval— thought or in the most contemporaneous philosophers. From Hobbes to Heidegger, including Descartes, Spinoza, Schiller, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and others, nearly the same questions are found. How can the notion of a free will

⁹ The link between will and promise is made clearer in a lecture given in 1966: "The broken will is the will exerted in solitude, not with respect to others. I give and take promises with others, no promise given only to myself is really binding" (Arendt, 1966, p. 024554).

¹⁰ Greeks knew the voluntary act, *hekon*, in which a man is in possession of his physical and mental capacities. It does not mean free choice. Arendt argues, in the seventh section of *The Life of the Mind*, that Aristotle's *proairesis*, the preference between two possibilities, is a kind of forerunner of the will.

be conceived? How could something had come to being at the same time that it could have been left undone? How can we live in a history that has no sense, no ultimate cause or goal? How can we bear the sheer contingency? The unanimous answer is: We cannot.

The philosopher's solution for this dilemma is always to submit freedom to the reign of necessity—which is the reign of thought insofar as it is always looking back in order to sort and know what came to pass. Actually, anything that happens becomes necessary, so to speak, merely because it happened. "In the perspective of memory, that is, looked at retrospectively, a freely performed act loses its air of contingency under the impact of now being an accomplished fact, of having become part and parcel of the reality in which we live. [...] [The] act appears to us now in the guise of necessity" (1978, p. 30). The great model of this backward glance is Hegel's philosophy of history.

In sum, Hegel tries to reconcile two opposite views on time, one that recalls the past and another that projects the future, the thinking ego and the willing ego; and does so by transforming the circle into a progressive line, in a sort of spiral concept of time. So the future is always determined to fulfill the past, that is, the future is the return to and overcoming of the past. One of the problems raised by Arendt to Hegel's contribution to the understanding of the will, which is the problem that runs through all the book, is that its power of negation—the possibility of saying 'no' to the present, transcending what is given in order to start something that did not exist before and that may not happen either—would be determined by the very existence of what is.

The reason Hegel could construe the World-Historical movement in terms of an *ascending* line [...] is to be found in his never-questioned assumption that the dialectical process itself *starts* from Being, takes Being for granted (in contradistinction to a *Creation ex nihilo*) in its march [...]. The initial Being lends all further transitions their reality, their existential character, and prevents them from falling into the abyss of Not-Being. (1978, p. 50).

The preponderance of Being over Not-Being or Becoming is thematized several times along the book. Let us leave the question

aside. For now, it is important to note that in Arendt's account a fundamental part of Hegel's thought is also concerned with freedom and, consequently, with the willing ego relation towards the future. "The primacy of the past", she says following Alexandre Koyré, "disappears entirely when Hegel comes to discuss Time". More precisely, history finds its fulfillment in the future, and is by denying his present that man "creates his own future" (1978, pp. 40-41). Hence the auto-production of man is for Hegel the auto-constitution of time, because man—as Augustine had also stated—¹¹ is not only in time; man *is* time.

Without him there might be movement and motion, but there would not be Time. Nor could there be, if man's mind were equipped only for thinking, for reflecting on the given, on what is as it is and could not be otherwise; in that case man would live mentally in an everlasting present. [...] [The] mind produces time only by virtue of the will, its organ for the future. (1978, pp. 42-43).

By now it should be clear that the Will as an organ for the future is identical with the power of beginning something new. In this approach, one of its anti-political features is dismissed. The will is no longer experienced as the reversal of public freedom, the estrangement from the world, and a retreat to inwardness; rather it is concerned with the world. "The will always wills to *do* something" —while thinking "depends on 'doing nothing'" (1978, p. 37). Thus, in clear contrast to her earlier considerations, there is a fundamental connection between willing and action.

The "impatience, disquiet, and worry" of the will are due to the fact that its "project presupposes an I-can that is by no means guaranteed. The will's worrying disquiet can be stilled only by the I-can-and-I-do, that is, by a cessation of its own activity and release of the mind from its dominance" (1978, p. 37). The willing ego cannot save itself from the conflict between *willy* and *nilly*. It waits for a redemption that would come only through action. Nonetheless, there is no guarantee since "to

¹¹ "But what, then, was God's purpose in creating man, asks Augustine; [...] creating '*temporal man* [*hominem temporalem*] who has never before been', that is, a creature that does not just live 'in time' but is essentially temporal, is, as it were, time's essence. [...] He then gives a very surprising answer [...]. In order, he says, that there may be novelty, a *beginning* must exist; 'and this beginning never before existed', that is, not before Man's creation" (Arendt, 1978, p. 108).

will and to be able to perform, *velle* and *posse*, are not the same. The tension can be overcome only by doing, that is, by giving up the mental activity altogether” (1978, p. 38). It depends, therefore, on a decision that takes the self out of oneself, throwing him or her in a common world where actions can be performed. A world shared by men. So, the will is no longer servant of the self. It does not unfold as will-to-power but in a will-to-act.

In spite of its need of redemption, willing is no longer an experience of impotence. The connection between willing and acting is “startling”, she says in a dialogue with Augustine, because the “‘Will must be present for power to be operative’; and power, needless to say, must be present for the will to draw on” (1978, p. 88). However, as in her treatment of other concepts, the connection is made by a distinction; it is a “contrasting bond” (Duarte, 2013, p. 51), the relationship between “things that are inseparable and yet distinct” (Arendt, 1978, p. 99). In this case, although related to the outer world, the “freedom of the Will” lies “exclusively on an inner power of affirmation or negation that has nothing to do with any actual *posse* or *potestas* —the faculty needed to perform the Will’s commands” (1978, p. 88). Hence, both against Paul and Epictetus, the will is neither impotent nor omnipotent.

To be sure, while discussing Epictetus’ philosophy, the will seems to be nothing but sovereign; it is the “great achiever”, “the organ capable of command”. But in the stoic experience of this faculty, its power

rests on its sovereign decision to concern itself only with things within man’s power, and these reside exclusively in human inwardness. [...] [S]ince man, in other words, is entirely powerless in the real world, he has been given the miraculous faculties of reason and will that permit him to reproduce the outside [...] inside his mind, where he is undisputed lord and master. (1978, p.78).

Arendt does not merely corroborate this interpretation as true, but renders it problematic by assuming that “only when will power has reached this climactic point, where it can will what *is* and thus never be ‘at odds with outward things’, that it can be said to be omnipotent” (1978, p. 81). Once again, as in her discussion of Hegel’s philosophy of

history, the will is conceived by men of thought along with the primacy of Being.¹²

But this is not the only safeguard of philosophers. Since willing is the experience of "an ongoing 'struggle' (*agon*)", "a never-ending fight with the counter-will" in which man finds "himself *as his own enemy*", sovereignty is achieved only by means of the reduction, destruction, or victory of one over another. This would be "the worst that, from the view-point of the thinking ego, could happen to the two-in-one" (1978, pp. 82-83). Actually, to maintain the dialogue between me and myself requires not only the permanence of this duality, but also that both are in agreement. However, our experience of wanting something—which is different from craving or desiring—is always the experience of not wanting too. The will is always accompanied by the counter-will, indeed, by "various wills" (1978, p. 94). Thus our most contentious faculty "has an infinitely greater freedom than thinking, which even in its freest, most speculative form cannot escape the law of non-contradiction" (1978, p. 5).

The "possibility of resistance" and the "power to disobey, [...] to assent or dissent, say Yes or No [...], agree or disagree with what is factually given [...] regardless of necessity and compulsion", its indifference and indeterminacy, summing up, the power to "transcend the very factuality of Being", seems to be unbearable for men of thought (1978, pp. 27, 68, 83, 129-30).

This power must have had something awful, truly overpowering, for the human mind, for there has never been a philosopher or theologian who, after having paid due attention to the implied No in every Yes, did not squarely turn around and demand an emphatic consent, advising man, as Seneca did in a sentence quoted with great approbation by Master Eckhard, "to accept all occurrences as though he himself had desired them and asked for them". (1978, p. 83).

¹² For Epictetus, Arendt argues, "it is impossible that what happens should be other than it is [...] because even an absolute negation depends on the sheer inexplicable thereness of all that is, including myself [...]. Hence, as Augustine will later argue, those who believe they choose non-being when they commit suicide are in error; they choose a form of being that will come about one day anyhow and they choose peace, which of course is only a form of being" (Arendt, 1978, p. 82).

What is unbearable to the philosophical need for unity and coherence is the very possibility of conflict, dissent, disobedience, and disagreement. That is precisely the reason why Arendt criticizes the tradition of political thought. By now it should be clear that what is anti-political in the faculties of the mind is the illusion of a solipsistic self, and its consequence is the onslaught of a philosopher-king, a sovereign will, or a supreme judge over the public-political sphere. On the contrary, when the faculties of mind are considered as close to action, consistent with the plurality of public-political life, they are understood as experiences of a multiple self. A multiplicity that could not be reduced to one single subject, in the same way that human plurality could not be reduced to one single man.

To be sure, the multiplicity of human condition does not concern only the experience of the agonistic will. The self is partitioned in its several faculties. It is split not only between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, for, as she argues in *The Human Condition*, the very activities are distinguished as well as the faculties of mind. There is no precedence in these fragmented capacities. The self, in the words of Bonnie Honig, "is the site of several struggles", the "subject as multiplicity [...], a plurality whose parties, in the absence of any hierarchical ordering, often engage in a struggle for dominion" (Honig, 1993, pp. 82-83). Notwithstanding, in *The Life of the Mind* one of these faculties is in charge of gathering all of them. But before discussing the "Will's binding force" (Arendt, 1978, p. 100), it should be made clear that one among the three anti-political tendencies of the will seems to be unsolved so far. If my reading is correct, there still remains the problem of a sovereign decision.

In order to better understand this crucial question, it can be helpful to go back a few pages and quote her summary of the discussion on Augustine. I would like to suggest that we could read this having in mind an analogy with the public and political world.

First: The split within the Will is a conflict, and not a dialogue,¹³ and it is independent of the content that is willed. A bad will is no less split than a good one and vice versa. Second: The will as the

¹³In the sense of a dialectical conversation between two-in-one that must come to an agreement, that is, the dialogue of thinking.

commander of the body is no more than an executive organ of the mind and as such quite unproblematic. The body obeys the mind because it is possessed of no organ that would make disobedience possible. The will, addressing itself to itself, arouses the counter-will because the exchange is entirely mental; a contest is possible only between equals. A will that would be 'entire', without a counter-will, could no longer be a will properly speaking. Third: Since it is in the nature of the will to command and demand obedience, it is also in the nature of the will to be resisted. Finally: Within the framework of the *Confessions*, no solution to the riddle of this "monstrous" faculty is given; how the will, divided against itself, finally reaches the moment when it becomes "entire" remains a mystery. (Arendt, 1976, pp. 95-96).

Such a decision seems to come out of nowhere, based on nothing, and guided by no rule. It seems to be, in an expression recurrent in contemporary political theory, an exceptional decision. Actually, while Arendt discusses the consequences that Duns Scotus draws from Augustine, a similar political concept comes into play along with a theological one. The "redemption"¹⁴ comes from the act which—often like a *coup d'état*, in Bergson's felicitous phrase—interrupts the conflict between *velle* and *nolle*" (Arendt, 1978, p. 101). Are we then, at the end of this whole journey, faced with an arbitrary decision? No other solution is given by Augustine, she says, "except at the very end of the *Confessions*, when he suddenly begins to speak of the Will as a kind of Love, 'the weight of our soul'" (1978, pp. 95-96).¹⁵

¹⁴ This redemption, according to Augustine, could not come through divine grace. Arendt argues jocosely that it would be "difficult to imagine God's gratuitous grace deciding whether I should go to the theater or commit adultery" (Arendt, 1978, p. 97).

¹⁵ Here, I would like to situate my reading between Honig's account, according to which *The Life of the Mind* does not represent a substantial change in the Arendtian corpus, and Kalyvas' argument on the "abrupt shift" in her latter work. According to Kalyvas, in her "confusing" and "self-defeating" account, Arendt "fails [...] to link her own penetrating observations on the will to action and political freedom and to place them within a coherent and systematic framework" (Kalyvas, 2004, p. 338). Such an effort would be able to untie theoretical knots within her work, including the relationship between liberation and freedom. "If, however, we take seriously her re-definition of the will [...], would it not be legitimate to suggest that the genuine political decision [...] could [not only be thought as liberation from oppression, therefore a pre-political condition, but] also be re-conceptualized as a faculty to collectively make new beginnings, and therefore, as collective freedom?" (Kalyvas, 2004, p. 341). In

The insight comes from Augustine's treatise on the mystery of Christian trinity. "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three substances when each is related to itself, can at the same time form a One". This is a relationship among equals. And since man was created in the image of God, also in us there should be a relationship like this. Augustine finds it in the human mind. He distinguishes between Intellect, Memory, and Will, which are mutually related to each other. "These three faculties are equal in rank, but their Oneness is due to the Will" (1978, p. 99). For it is the Will who tells what should be understood and remembered, putting those capacities together. It does so calling our attention, and since its force "unites the mind's inwardness with the outward world", the will can be called "the spring of action" (1978, p. 101).

Conclusion: The Act of Love

This research intends to show an undeniable ambiguity in Arendt's treatment of the will along her work. I understand this ambiguity as follows. On the one hand, she takes on the philosophical discourse about the inwardness of the will—even though she does so by refusing

sum, the reappraisal of the will could bridge the gap between these two notions of liberty. By doing so, he intends to elaborate a theory of decision consistent with democratic forms of deliberation. In fact, Honig does admit that "the will in LOM is not consistent with her earlier account", stating however that these moments are "marked by important continuities, in light of which the shift in her view turns out to be of limited import" (Honig, 1988, p. 79). The crucial difference in relation to Kalyvas' view concerns the possibility to bridge the gap between liberation and freedom. "Here, as elsewhere, Arendt's account of inner life parallels her political theory. Just as liberation from necessity sets the stage for the constitution of freedom in the political world, so the liberation from the private self, won by the will's *coup d'état*, sets the condition for the appearance of the acting self whose action makes freedom manifest in the human world. But willing itself is neither free nor unfree in Arendt's strict sense. And there is no overlap between liberation and freedom, between willing and acting" (Honig, 1998, p. 80). It is startling such an effort to keep the frontiers between the inner and outer life, coming from an author who insists so enthusiastically in occupy and resist to Arendt's "nonnegotiable" and "uncompromising public-private distinction" (Honig, 1993, p. 118). And it seems to me that one does not find in *The Life of the Mind* a "rigorously dismissive approach to the inner life of the self" (Honig, 1988, p. 78). Action not only "happens" to the "subject in the private realm" (Honig, 1993, p. 120). If so, we could not say that "the inner plurality of the self is the source of its vigor", the "spur to action" (Honig, 1993, p. 117). However, I agree with her insistence on the abyss between willing and acting, or at least, with the assumption that is not so easy to cross this bridge: "there is a hiatus marked by contingency □ for a moment everything is uncertain" (Honig, 1993, p. 80). It seems to me that what is absent in both Kalyvas' and Honig's account is a view on the transformation of the Will into Love.

the anti-political idea of an inner freedom. On the other hand, the will acquires a political scope when she wonders whether political actors would not be more able to understand this faculty.

What is anti-political in the faculties of the mind is the illusion of a solipsistic self. Contrariwise, the connection between will and action—in which the former is thought as the “spring” of the latter, therefore consistent with the plurality of the public-political world—depends on the partition of human faculties. In fact, the human condition as a whole is understood as the experience of a multiple and conflictive self. However, the problem does persist of how these several faculties are brought together; how someone stops thinking or willing and starts to act; in which direction a conflict between desires and moral statements, or between a personal dream and an obligation is solved. Moreover, how can the willing ego decide the direction of our attention while it is stuck in a lasting battle within itself? Its redemption, as we saw above, comes from action; but action, paradoxically, springs from the will. In other words, in the battle that each one of us brings inside ourselves, there remains the problem of how decisions are made. As I have suggested, the same could be thought analogously about collective decisions.

The solution “comes about through a transformation of the Will itself, its transformation into *Love*”; which is “obviously the most successful coupling agent”. Love attracts, binds, and holds things together. Unlike the will itself, which finds its end in the achievement of what was willed, love “enables the mind ‘to remain *steadfast* in order to *enjoy*’ it”. As anyone in love knows, “the whole mind ‘is in those things upon which it thinks with love’” (1978, pp. 102-103). There is a sense of permanence that is not the absolute stillness, the end of a movement, the absolute quietness of death. Love keeps moving. Still, it calls our attention; it makes us stand without paralyzing us. Love forces us to persist.

Hence the will transformed into love not only unifies the multiple self as also creates, so to speak, an “enduring I”.¹⁶ In the words

¹⁶ This “enduring I” can thus be held accountable for his/her actions. According to Bethania Assy, these two occurrences are the main outcomes of the relationship between the will and action: “the will can be regarded as action’s mental parallel that achieves our singularity (*principium individuationis*), as also is perforce linked to the notion of responsibility” (Assy, 2002, p. 34).

of John Stuart Mill quoted by Arendt: “[...] it is obvious that ‘I’ am both parties in the contest; the conflict is between me and myself. [...] What causes Me, or, if you please, my Will, to be identified with one side rather than with the other, is that one of the Me’s represents a more *permanent* state of my feelings than the other does” (1978, p. 96). The continuous confirmation or reiteration of my acts gives shape to my personality. The willing, insofar as it becomes love, “creates the self’s character and therefore was sometimes understood as the *principium individuationis*, the source of the person’s specific identify” (1978, p. 195). It is the “soul’s gravity” (1978, p. 104), the ‘weight’ that stabilizes us like the ballast of a ship.

Then, Arendt's reappraisal of the will as consistent with political action removes its arbitrary and violent aspect through what she calls the transformation of will into love —besides an appeal to the faculty of judgment, which remained unexplored in the limits of this paper. It is worthy to recall that the concept of love, which also deserves a discussion about its different meanings throughout her work, is related to another important concept in Arendt’s political thought: the *Amor mundi*. As Bethânia Assy asserts, “*Amor mundi* is the love for what is created through action in concert, the love that renders durable the inventions of political freedom, as also provides a stable reality to future generations” (Assy, 2002, p. 51).¹⁷

In concluding, it does not seem an overstatement saying that Arendt’s account on willing shed a different light on her political theory. Most importantly, though it cannot be easily transposed into a theory of democratic deliberation, I believe it could also give us a key to think the current political conflicts in our societies, and outline an understanding of how decisions are —or could be made in our public-political reality. In this sense, it is important to highlight her critique of the sovereign will as the renounce of one’s own self,

¹⁷ It would be interesting to compare Arendt’s concept of love and the one presented in the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. Departing from the notion of constituent power as a sovereign and exceptional act, they claim it as an “act of love”. The time has come for a rupture, they proclaim in a sort of prophetic voice that is not so far from Arendt’s *détournement* of theological concepts. The moment of this rupture is the “sudden expression of *Kairós*”, “the moment in which a decision to act is taken”. The event that will lead us to this moment will be “the true act of political love” (Hardt & Negri, 2005, pp. 439, 446-447).

the acknowledgement of a multiple self. Political arrangements are not made by a single man or an identical collective, it is not achieved in the intercourse with one's self but precisely in the abandonment of oneself, that is, when someone leaves the private sphere, the deep background of his heart and mind, in order to be exposed in public, to be lost among the others, and finally find in there a self who was unknown, and could not show up in loneliness.

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