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Political Ethics Revealed in 'Action' by Arendt

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Abstract: Human practice has been divided into three categories of labor, work and action in Arendt's discourse of human conditions. While labor and work are considered corresponding with human biological life and worldliness respectively, action is expounded explicitly by Arendt as the agent of political ethics in the forms of plurality and singularity. The political value revealed in her action theory manifests itself mainly in human action for freedom, accomplishing its process of natality, creation, happiness, and the right to have rights. As a political remedy to the devaluation and instrumentalization of human being in his labor and work, Arendt endeavors to cast light on the mentality ingrained in human action as to evidence human dignity and initiative in defiance against totalitarian ideology and its various regimes. Distinguished from arbitrary willfulness, freedom inherent in political ethics would invariably exhibit its social merit in the process of action to compensate its irreversibility and unpredictability with human conscious promise and forgiveness. Freedom as the motivation and aim of human action and its compensatory principles in promise and forgiveness may adequately constitute a moral equilibrium of modern politics.

Keywords: action, freedom, participatory democracy, plurality, totalitarianism

Action illustrated as theory for human condition is a very important aspect of Arendt's political thoughts, being even described as 'her most original attempt to the aporias of the modern age'(d'Entreves, 1994: 64), which aims at reviving the importance of action (*praxis*) by illuminating its merits eclipsed by fabrication(*poiesis*) instrumentally emphasized in modern age. In this essay I would examine (1) the features of action as human peculiar way of active life, (2) the conditions manipulating human action with reference to speech and its relative activities, (3) the politics and ethics revealed through human action in terms of plurality and freedom, and (4) my conclusive argument for freedom as basic political ethics supplemented by promise and forgiveness.

Action as Human Practice with Its Peculiarity

Among human practices, Arendt made distinctions between labor, work and action. She described these three forms of human practice with their peculiar features, innate logic and specific criteria to evaluate them. In her phenomenological description and political analysis, labor means the consumption of human physical force in the exchange of energies with the natural world for substantial goods barely necessary for sustaining human life as biological being, in other words, labor is taken as condemned suffering for life's necessities. At this level of human practice, men are subject to nature for obtaining life's necessities, often accompanied by fatigue, hard work and physical pains. In such circumstance, they are both mentally and bodily constrained and conditioned by nature beyond their own initiative and freedom. Labor, therefore, can be conducted 'in complete solitude' (Arendt, 1998: 22), belonging to the so-called private realm bereft of

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publicity. It comes into the category of human body activities accompanying human beings with neither start nor end of its own accord. We may, therefore, account it as '*animal laborans*' whose work sustains the *zoe* and thus makes it possible to transform this animal life into human life, the *bios*.

To Arendt, work means human activities engaged with hands fabrications. These activities are carried out for certain objectives with substantial materials in an appropriate mould. These are the typical cases of work like the creation of God, the design of Plato's philosopher-king for polis, the artifacts of the sculptor, and other works of mortal hands. Comparing with 'the labor of our body', 'the work of our hands' has visible durability and human originality. But this human artifice is more oriented by utilitarian motive. The work of our hands can also be completed in individual solitude, but its working process is purposely controlled with both start and end. The work of our mortal hands can help create a realm in nature for human civilization, the world of human artifice as distinguished from the world of nature.

The third form of human activity is action. According to Arendt, action in human activities manifests itself in establishing relations with its own human members, distinguished from the relations between men and nature in the activity of *animal laborans*, or the relations between men and the things they 'work upon' in the activity of *homo faber*. In this sense, action is the most typical form of human activities by its own initiative, being free from both biological necessities and utilitarian volitions. It is the activity motivated and realized by the presence of others, yet not subject to the manipulation of others in the presence. It is thus the human capacity embracing both its own initiative and the participation of others, 'The grammar of action: that action is the only human faculty that demands a plurality of men' (Arendt, 1990: 175). In this action other human members should be mutually related, since action starts from certain point of time and space, but expects no end in its process of action. And it is this peculiar attribute of action that human beings are distinguished from animals, hence, constituting 'a second birth'(Arendt,1998: 176). What is implied in 'birth' with human life is 'a new beginning' which might initiate another action in a progressive motion from beginning, leading and ruling as being regularly occurring in human social practice.

The conditions of human existence as they appeared to be 'life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, plurality and the earth'(Arendt, 1998: 11). And these conditions are invariably linked with their respective human activities: labor coincides with life's necessities, work coincides with the man-made world of things, and only action is associated with human initiative and plurality. And this initiative and plurality accompanied with action manifests 'revelatory quality of speech and action' in 'sheer human togetherness'(Arendt, 1998: 180). Such 'revelatory quality' discloses the peculiar distinctness of man in his speech and action in human relations rather than his being solitude in relations with the nature as *animal laborans* and with the objects of his making or creation as *homo faber*. For activities in the status of *animal laborans* or *homo faber*, we might tell 'what are there with these activities' like life's necessities or the world of things by ignoring the subjectivity silently suggested in their activities. But in action, we might tell 'who is the subject with his activity'. In the statement of 'who I am', the individual and peculiar attribute of a person is revealed, and his singular capacity in social relations is thus reinterpreted and reaffirmed through action, being the perspective, we usually approach politics. Whereas in the statement of 'what I am', a person is cast in a stereotyped mould, and he can be fixed as 'an animal' or 'a thing' that is passive and stagnant in being quasi object like a human slave and instrument-oriented

fabricator. For Arendt, 'who I am' is always reaffirmed with acting and speaking in a way 'individuals reveal themselves as the unique individuals they are' and 'disclose to the world their distinctive personalities' (d'Entreves, 1994: 72). Thus in 'who I am', man is freed from his 'being bound to a chain of natural necessities' and 'the constraints imposed by biological survival' (ibid.) and being able to exhibit his originality and individuality. Since action is originated from individual with his initiative and peculiarity, it needs the agency of speech to identify its own capacity and explain the sense of action in the public realm, and therefore, the action naturally functions as communication between the subject and others in the presence.

Comparing with labor and work, the originality and peculiarity of action is also justified in illustration with the distinction between *vita activa* (active life) and *vita contemplativa* (contemplative life) in ancient Greek. In Platonic tradition of political philosophy, the contemplative life is stressed in supremacy over the active life, or the pride and enmity of theory over practice if I may parallel this way, as to authorize the life in its true sense by a philosopher. Also in Aristotle, though he acknowledges the value of active life to certain extent, still he considers the contemplative life to be superior to active life:

'...in the first place, this Working is of the highest kind..., Next, it is also most Continuous..., the pursuit of Science is thought to contain Pleasures admirable for purity and permanence..., the Self-Sufficiency which people speak of will attach chiefly to the Contemplative Working..., Again, this alone would seem to be rested in for its own sake..., Also, Happiness is thought to stand in perfect rest' (Aristotle, 1999: 249-250)

And his evaluations made on the relations between contemplation and happiness can be briefed as in that happiness consists purely of contemplation concerning these six aspects, that is, contemplation 1) is the best part of human nature in realization; 2) is most durable with our life; 3) brings life with happiness of perfect purity; 4) is the most self-sufficient; 5) is the end of itself; and 6) can bring about the most anticipated leisure. This Greek tradition of preference of *vita contemplativa* to *vita activa* was challenged by Romans who would like to build up a republic or even an empire by radical social activities rather by contemplation in solitude and quietness. And the tendency to prioritize active life over contemplative life by those innate political animals of Romans was echoed positively by both the civil humanitarians in Renaissance Italy and the Jacobins in French Revolution. Yet what they advocated, even inherited by Karl Marx, is the form of making, which 'they felt that for this supreme "end" (to establish the public-political realm) all "means," and chiefly the means of violence, were justified' (Arendt, 1961: 139), i.e., to make a table is justified by cutting down trees or to make an omelet is justified by breaking eggs, and therefore, to make a republic is justified by killing people. As a modern proletarian revolutionary leader Marx was famously quoted as saying: 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.' By stressing 'to change' Marx intends to prioritize the active life in political realm, but he is still engaged in the activity of making instead of political action. Like all modern revolutionary thinkers, their 'activities within the *vita activa* to rise to the position formerly occupied by contemplation were the activities of making and fabricating-the prerogatives of *homo faber*' (Arendt, 1998: 294) They did not distance themselves from the Greek political tradition that keeps in check the individual initiative and plurality attributed to action, yet more obviously subject to political ideology and radical madness of mass movements.

To Arendt, both treating human political life as contemplation and making something is detrimental to human activities, for it provides the guidelines for activities on a false assumption

of human social essence, i.e., all human beings are subject to compulsions, be they from physical laws and mental wills. On contrary, Arendt believed that it is the men, not Man, who live in the world with other social members in presence, not merely on the Earth as other animal or things dependent on natural laws, and their originality and plurality are manifested invariably in their actions instead of laboring and making. For this originality and plurality, every social member has his own peculiar initiative in the beginning of life, the capacities for new action in his active life fully witnessed in public realm. Therefore, I consider one of the purposes Arendt wrote her *The Human Condition* was to rediscover and expound the capacities of human beings as social or political agents and to reshape the western political tradition since Plato.

Plurality as Human Condition of Action

Human beings as a peculiar form of life in the nature are expressive of their attributes; their births into the world are the testimony of a new beginning, and this beginning also implies the possibilities of unprecedented actions, unexpected ideas, and even undesired end, i.e., the death of life insinuated in its beginning. If we agree that human life is accompanied with thoughts and activities, we thus cannot depict human beings as merely individual biological entity in its solitude nature, they are living in the state of worldliness where they share natural resources including their peer members on the earth either as producers or consumers, broadly speaking as co-existent beings. The conditions seen in this state of worldliness are basically the relations among people with so-called bare life which constitutes the base for human beings to develop and distinguish other capacities in social or political life. And such a base paves the way for us to observe and appreciate the correlations between the plurality and the mortality bound to occur to human beings in the public realm. For the plurality, every member with the worldliness is living together by being individual, peculiar, unrepitative and distinctive; for the mortality, every member with the worldliness is living together by being bound to death, anticipating to invest his limited life with the unlimited sense. And this unification between the plurality and the mortality conditions men in their political and social contexts, thus making them both conditioned and yet initiative.

Compared to the attributes of labor and work as human conditions, which corresponds to biological life and artificial worldliness respectively, the attributes of action as human condition is explicitly exhibited in its plurality, which is related to politics as the sufficient condition of human beings. The plurality as human condition is always adequately expressed in human relations, i.e., it requires the presence of others in forming public realm and political arena much like the Romans in relating their activities to other human fellows in public addresses and conquering wars or even in much enthusiastically engaged conspiracies. Anyway, by referring to the Romans, the most political people in the western tradition, the plurality as the condition of human action is illustrated 'in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live'(Arendt, 1998:8). Therefore, in the social context of action, no human being can be reduced to the predictable model of life like a slave in labor condition or an artisan in work condition. He just stands up conspicuously with all his initiative and potential like his creator, the God, implicitly anticipating him in his own image. Among all mythological stories about the making of man in ancient world, why only God, rather than other spirits in different realms like poet, soldier, sculptor, merchant, smith, Jupiter and Zeus, is worshipped as the source of human creation. This clue, it seems to me, might reveal some insights in that God's creation with his limitless and miraculous possibilities may inspire human beings in their actions to begin, to create and to

distinguish.

As being related to political life, the plurality of action implied as sufficient human condition often testifies its vitality and validity in speaking and acting. Why should we associate speaking with acting? I would assume that action has a tendency to reveal its importance in the public realm with its plurality, which could be abundant in bringing about its uniqueness and originality by exposing itself to thoughts via media of language rather to physical motions ascribed to action with limits in both quality and quantity. In one way, the action of human condition in Arendt is drastically alien to the political radicalism in which the term 'action' is always applied to altering social structure by violent revolution or even upheavals, driven by certain moral motives or ideologies or even religious doctrines in essence as being witnessed in the contemporary political events like Khmer Rouge and Iranian Islamic Revolution. In these radical activities, the originative and creative thoughts implicit in action are extremely impaired by blotting out language in its political performance. While in political context, Arendt introduced into the action the extraordinary role of language or speech in the form of political conversation, debate or negotiation positively occurring in participatory democracy or civilian politics. In observing and interpreting action as human condition, the involvement of language or speech has at least three advantages, *i.e.*, the first is the expressive richness of thoughts, the most original and productive in distinctive personality; the second is the visible capacities to participate in politics through communication and negotiation via speech; the third is to act as a buffer zone between political activities. The importance of language in action is acknowledged as:

‘A fully authentic human existence includes at least the potential for meaningful speech and action. Without action, which includes speech, we are left only with the private struggle with necessity and the fabrication of worldly objects. The right to have rights guarantees that one can speak and act in a meaningful way’(Parekh, 2008: 166).

As the correspondence between labor and biological necessity and the correspondence between work and the fabricated things of the world, the correspondence between action and people is justified only in public space where humanity is dialectically manifested in both singularity and plurality. In the first instance, such manifestation might appear to be paradoxical, but a second thought in observation might tell their innate coherence. Just as that no abnormal activities could sustain in their social effects and political integrity, no speech could remain communicative and significant unless it gears into being singular and plural in the public space or community where each member is respected and appreciated for his peculiar personal quality, a paradigm of ‘unity in diversity’ in the human condition of action.

By creatively integrated with speech, Arendt also distinguished action from behavior, which is easy to be confused with action in many cases. In a social process, behavior might be human activities with mechanical force or physical inertia that knows no moral orientation or the subjective purpose, while action has its own peculiar social function ‘to interrupt what otherwise would have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably’(Arendt, 1972: 133). As speech is invariably related to thought as its contents, action implicit in meaningful speech is thus distinguished from mere human behavior in that the latter exhibiting the certainty and stability of physical body in its motions, comparable to life’s necessity of labor and the certainty of fabricated things of work. But the essentials of action is manifested in the initiative and originality implied in the beginning of life, and it should expose itself to the requirements set for the phenomenology of life by Arendt in human political life. When Arendt herself stressed the directness of action

between men unconditioned by biological necessities of labor and fabricated things of work, she actually insinuated ‘two models of action, an expressive and a communicative one’, but unfortunately, many of her critics ‘have concentrated almost exclusively on the expressive model at the expense of the communicative one’(d’Entreves, 1994:65). With this warning clue, I would propose to understand that the plurality of action can be effectively exposed in expressive model while the singularity of action in communicative one.

By plurality expounded in Arendt’s action theory, I would argue for two dimensions, i.e., one for the implicit correspondence between speech and originative thought and another for the explicit correlation between plurality and the phenomenology of life in the form of ‘who I am’ instead of ‘what I am’. In this regard, I consider it worthwhile to say a few more words in clarification. As Arendt firmly convinces the coherence between singularity and plurality in human action, she would naturally prioritize ‘who I am’ to ‘what I am’ in a way expected for a phenomenologist. From her statement that:

‘If action as beginning corresponds to the fact of birth, if it is the actualization of the human condition of natality, then speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals’(Arendt, 1998: 178),

we may reasonably conclude that it is only through the condition of action that a person is treated as person with all his dignity and political rights based on his words and activities before we know who he is. On the contrary, if a person is reduced to a mere biological beast or alienated to the things of his own fabrication as attributed to human conditions of labor and work, then the person is treated only as an animal or an instrumental gadget. Thus, by differentiation between ‘who’ and ‘what’ implied in different human conditions, Arendt does provide some insights in the actualization of human dignity and happiness revealed in life experience relative to the conception of ‘plurality’.

Political Ethics in Action Theory

The action theory of Arendt appears to describe objectively the phenomenological situation of human condition more dynamic and diverse than it seems in the form of labor and work. Yet when it coincides with political life in a public space, her action theory cannot be said so objective as to refrain from her relentless political censure and personal indignation against totalitarianism and the banality of the evil prominent in the Nazi regime. As politics is the best manifestation of action as human condition, totalitarianism is naturally set up as flagrant object for Arendt to discuss human nature. This might be one explicit clue for political ethics to justify her commitment in investigating the origins and logic of totalitarianism. Another clue might come from the implicit comparative analysis attributed to the gradual ladder of human conditions with its highest leg in action. The grounding that bases Arendt to merit action more than labor and work also discloses her ethical attitude towards human conditions. I assume that both clues, explicit and implicit in her works of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Human Condition*, fortify her morale in advocating and insisting on freedom as political ethics in her action theory.

Associating her academics with her life frustrations bitterly experienced in Nazi Germany, Arendt developed a consolidated concept that politics can never be separated from ethics which invariably stimulates, sustains and orients political activities, and thence freedom is propounded with eminence in political activities, much similar to the reason in proposing truth as laws of

certainty and necessity for philosophy and science. At this point, she even believes that traditional advocacy for freedom is liable to confuse the laws of science with the ethics of politics, and her insight in this respect is expressed in:

‘Man is not born free, as Rousseau believed, but born *for freedom*. A first preliminary response to Arendt’s challenge might be, therefore, that freedom, as the great and identifying gift of human existence, is manifest in the activities that distinguish human from other forms of life’(Kohn, in(ed.)Villa, 2000:115).

From both her personal experience in the totalitarian Nazi regime and her academic investigations into the origins of totalitarianism and the human conditions, Arendt consistently states that ‘the world of things’ should be distinguished from ‘the worldliness’ in spite of their obligatory connections for human biological necessities and the physical frame to construct a public space that politics is substantially possible to conduct. If we believe in ‘man is born free’, we tend to take it for granted that freedom will occur to us in any case, and such naturalism in freedom may lead to political parasitism that can be suffering people with their natural rights in the totalitarian regime and may even dismantle human consciousness in political initiative and activities. To remedy the peril of the natural state of ‘born free’, Arendt insists that freedom be obtained and guaranteed only through action of his own awareness and endeavors. To be born for freedom means to begin with action, and to act for freedom inspired by political ethics,

‘Freedom as inherent in action is perhaps best illustrated by Machiavelli’s concept of *virtù*, the excellence with which man answers the opportunities the world opens up before him in the guise of *fortuna*. Its meaning is best rendered by “virtuosity,” that is, an excellence we attribute to the performing arts (as distinguished from the creative arts of making), where the accomplishment lies in the performance itself’(Arendt, 1961:153).

In this context, ‘virtue’ is the synonym attributed to freedom striven for in human action and politics is hence identical to ‘performing arts’ in order to show in the public space the gift of freedom inherent in human condition. For without action, we can hardly know where the natural gift of freedom is and what merit it contains for human beings, so ‘to be free’ is ‘to act’, ‘to act’ is ‘to evidence’ the human condition at its highest level. And if we are assured of the political ethics in the catchphrase of American revolution-‘Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death’(Patrick Henry), we are all the more reasonable to conclude that freedom is the political ethics in action where life accomplishes its process of natality, creation and happiness. By action as well as performing arts, freedom has been creatively transformed into the political ethics rather than an individual will holy in Saint Augustine who fixed his attention purely on human duty for his being created by God. In contrast, the political ethics in freedom for Arendt is distinguished in having ‘the right to have rights’, i.e., the base for human life and action, specifically in the form of political life.

But there is also peril or at least predicament in action that will obstruct the awareness and endeavors for freedom as the political ethics for action. Like being forever subject to the necessity of labor and consumption in labor and the devaluation of all values in instrumentalized *homo faber* in his work, people in the process of action might be lured into wrong track opposite to freedom as anticipated political ethics, and these are predicament of action in ‘irreversibility’ and ‘unpredictability’, depicted by Arendt as ‘being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not have known what he was doing’(Arendt, 1998: 237). These are the unavoidable predicaments inherent in action that urge people to learn from the past political and social experiences as the precondition of human being in their actions for freedom and the initiative to

explore within the moral capacities otherwise in oblivion and desolation. For a balanced comprehension of the predicaments of action and their remedies in comparison with labor and work, Margaret Canovan promptly reminded us in the following three aspects concerning Arendt's political ethics in action from her introductory work:

- (1) When Arendt looked for a paradigm of action in Greek antiquity, she turned in the first instance not to the Athenian polis but to the warlike deeds of the Homeric kings, and made a distinction between their 'action' and Athenian speech.
- (2) Not only do we find that Athens is not, as we might expect, the classic locus of action; we also discover that Arendt was prepared to be highly critical of the Athenian concern with self-disclosure and glory. She observes, for example, that in the Athenian polis 'life insisted in an intense and uninterrupted contest of all against all', and speaks of 'this agonal spirit,...which poisoned the domestic life of the citizens with envy and mutual hatred'....
- (3) ...the actions of the Homeric heroes appear in the manuscripts alongside and on equal terms with two other experiences of the human ability to start things that traditional political philosophy failed to articulate. One of these is the classic experience of founding a body politic with the authority to endure over time, achieved by the Romans, 'the political people par excellence'. The other and much more unexpected case Arendt cites is Christian experience of drawing a line under past events by means of forgiveness, enabling people to make a new start in their relations with one another(Canovan, 1992: 137-138).

Thus in the 'distinction between action and speech', 'the highly critical of self-disclosure and glory', and 'the classic experience of founding a body politic and Christian forgiveness', Arendt may convince her readers the freedom as political ethics with feasible approaches in the form of 'promise' and 'forgiveness'. Unlike the previous forms of remedy for the predicaments in labor and work, these remedies for the predicaments confronting the realization of freedom are subjectively motivated and continuously self-enforced. These human capacities to remedy the predicament inflicted by action with irreversibility and unpredictability are manifest in promise and forgiveness represent exactly two virtues that guarantees and sustains freedom as the normative virtue for human action.

As for irreversibility, forgiveness is introduced as a feasible virtue originated in Roman political experience. For their actions, either in the form of wars with foreign people or domestic rivalries, the defeated or wrongdoers, must somehow be forgiven, then the defeated or wrongdoers may be liberated from their past bitter experience and start a new life, making possible a new life for these people, the new relations among men, and finally the secured and sustained public realm. These are the social and human conditions for politics observed and complied with by the Romans.

As for unpredictability which often occurred as unanticipated side-effects of human plurality and singularity, the possible compensation lies in human moral awareness, often evidenced as human innate capacity to make and keep promises. When being isolated as individual, the promise may not have feasible abiding and supervising effects, but in getting together with human plurality, the human predilection for social covenant might place 'islands of predictability' into 'the ocean of uncertainty', thus creating a new kind of assurance that makes public space a harbor for human political ethics, and the typical example of this assumption is seen in the political experience of

the Mayflower Compact, which show that 'this mutual promise engendered power and eliminated the unpredictability of human affairs without constraint or violence' (Parekh, 2008:74).

These two remedies as ethical principles to freedom as Basic Norm of ethics (a term borrowed from Hans Kelsen) from which all concrete political and legal principles derive their validities remind me of Chinese ancient philosopher Mencius with his dialectical politics in 'politics would not be applied by pure ethics, and legality would not be implemented by mere enforcement' (Mencius, in (trans.) Bojun, 1989:408). To Confucian political tradition, the political ethics in a harmonious society for 'humanity' must be worshipped as the cardinal doctrine while other applicable ethical principles must be introduced and abided by before the harmonious society or a public space can be assured of safe island in the ocean of mad political enthusiasm and democratic participation, if the rule of mob or totalitarianism in any form is to be politically inoculated.

Concluding Remarks

As a political philosopher of phenomenology, Arendt combined her own life experience under the Nazi Totalitarian Regime and western political tradition in framing her action theory basically illuminated, not exclusively confined, in the two works of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Human Condition*. Her life experience from being a heathen, an ethnic Jewish people, a stateless person and international refugee in Nazi Germany, in France and even in America, engendered her academics to investigate and reflect the human life in social contexts facilitated by reevaluating the western political tradition based on both social practice or *vita activa* and conceptual insistence or *vita contemplativa*. More or less her investigation and exploration into the western political tradition establishes the links between Greek philosophers and modern totalitarianism and between the Romans and the political life. In the *vita contemplativa* the Greek philosophers developed an ethically despised arrogance over the *vita activa* that constitutes the main origin of modern totalitarianism aiming at reducing people to human animal and fabricator status and alienating them from being active in political life with singularity and plurality. As a political remedy to the devaluation and instrumentalization of human being, Arendt attempts to revive the inherent capacity of human being in action as its highest form of life condition, which implies a sort of political ethics manifest of human innate dignity as intellectual challenge to totalitarian ideology. This implied political ethics in action, I would argue for, is freedom, which is established as the moral base in all her works to protest the political evils to human life, either in the form of totalitarianism or the banality of human conditions of labor and work. And the very ethics in freedom is also exhibited in the compensation of promise and forgiveness as moral remedies for the potential perils to human action in irreversibility and unpredictability. With freedom and its compensatory principles in promise and forgiveness, the political ethics implied in human action may disclose another true statement in politics, i.e., in the public space of human political life, freedom as grand norm and promise and forgiveness as implementing principles should always go hand in hand, and no political insistence could ever endure without compromise to its potential resistance. This might be accounted as the art of human life as political actors.