

## Hannah Arendt (1906–1975)



Arendt was one of the most influential political philosophers of the twentieth century. Born into a German-Jewish family, she was forced to leave Germany in 1933 and lived in Paris for the next eight years, working for a number of Jewish refugee organisations. In 1941 she immigrated to the United States and soon became part of a lively intellectual circle in New York.

She is best known for two works

1. The first, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951, was a study of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes that generated a wide-ranging debate on the nature and historical antecedents of the totalitarian phenomenon.
2. The second, *The Human Condition*, published in 1958, was an original philosophical study that investigated the fundamental categories of the *vita activa* (labor, work, action).

Although some of her works now belong to the classics of the Western tradition of political thought, she has always remained difficult to classify. Her political philosophy cannot be characterized in terms of the traditional categories of conservatism, liberalism, and socialism.

**Her conception of politics is based on the idea of active citizenship, that is, on the value and importance of civic engagement and collective deliberation about all matters affecting the political community.**

If there is a tradition of thought with which Arendt can be identified, it is the **classical tradition of civic republicanism originating in Aristotle and embodied in the writings of Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Jefferson, and Tocqueville.**

According to this tradition politics finds its authentic expression whenever citizens **gather together in a public space to deliberate and decide about matters of collective concern.** Political activity is valued not because it may lead to agreement or to a shared conception of the good, but because it enables each citizen to exercise his or her powers of agency, to develop the capacities for judgment and to attain by concerted action some measure of political efficacy.

### **Approach : Phenomenology**

Within social sciences the common methods are empirical-quantitative tools used to measure and process data. In case of non-empirical humanities, regularities are constructed

through logic and argumentation – generalization, abstraction, drawing analogies and deduction.

Arendt's distinct approach as a political thinker can be understood through a **phenomenological understanding of Being**. She proceeds neither by an analysis of general political concepts such as state, sovereignty etc. nor by aggregative accumulation of empirical data as in the behavioral tradition. Instead, she starts from focusing on the **experiential character of human life**. She attempts to **uncover the fundamental structures of political experience**.

In fact, Arendt sees the **conceptual core of traditional political philosophy as an impediment as it inserts presuppositions between the observer and the political phenomenon in question**. She was opposed to any such dogmatic treatment of human nature or experience such as in the work of Hobbes.

Phenomenology is an anti-metaphysical philosophical method or school of thought. It was developed first by **Edmund Husserl** in early 20<sup>th</sup> century and later on by philosophers like **Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger**.

Phenomenology concerns with the **descriptive analysis of phenomenon – the way in which things appear to us in lived experience**. It says that there is no use bothering about **metaphysical abstractions which cannot be perceived by human beings**. Reality consists of **objects and events as they are perceived or understood in the human consciousness**. There is no relevant reality beyond our experiences.

**Phenomenology is a study of experience and of how we experience**. It studies structures of conscious experience as from a subjective or first person point of view. Experience here does not merely include passive sensory perception but **imagination, thought, emotion, desire and action**. It includes everything that we live through and perform. What makes an experience conscious is a certain awareness that a person has of the experience while living through it or performing it.

Thus, **phenomenology is the study of appearances as opposed to the study of reality**. It can be held in contrast to the Socratic school of thought which considered our experiences only as 'imperfect opinions' and treated reality as we perceive only a 'shadow of ideas'. In contrast, **phenomenology is concerned only in dealing with the subjective consciousness and experiences**.

Phenomenologists focus their attention on the phenomenon or appearance. They view human beings as situated selves, distinct from the natural world of objectivity. They are critical of a belief in a typical human nature or essentialism which is most closely observed in the metaphysical tradition. Arendt distinguishes between what we are and who we are. What we are is the sum total of all our objectifiable features such as – race, caste, class, physical appearances. Who we are is what Arendt is interested in, symbolizing our situated, non-objectifiable and unique life stories.

Arendt's approach of  
**hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology** is evident from her introductory remarks to *The Human Condition*: 'what I propose is very simple, it is to think what we are doing'.

In the *Origin of Totalitarianism*, she writes, "This book is an attempt at examining and bearing consciously the burden that events have placed upon us - neither denying their existence nor submitting meekly to their weight as though everything that in fact happened could not have happened otherwise".

For Arendt, **experiences remain the true and the only reliable teachers of political scientists** as they are the most trustworthy source of information for those engaged in politics. Any research should remain bound to experience as circle is to its center.

Arendt's explication of the constitutive features of the *vita activa* in the *Human Condition* can also be viewed as the phenomenological uncovering of the structures of human action as experienced rather than as abstract conceptual constructions.

### Major themes of Arendt:

#### Arendt's Conception of Modernity

In her major philosophical work, *The Human Condition*, Arendt articulated a fairly **negative conception of modernity**. For Arendt modernity is characterized by the **loss of the world**, by which she means the **restriction or elimination of the public sphere of action and speech in favor of the private world of introspection and the private pursuit of economic interests**. Modernity is the age of mass society, of the rise of the social out of a previous distinction between the public and the private, and of the **victory of animal laborans over homo faber** and the **classical conception of man as zoon politikon**. Modernity is the age of **bureaucratic administration and anonymous labor**, rather than politics and action, of **elite domination and the manipulation of public opinion**. **It is the age when totalitarian forms of government, such as Nazism and Stalinism, have emerged as a result of the institutionalization of terror and violence**. It is the age where history as a "natural process" has replaced history as a fabric of actions and events, where homogeneity and conformity have replaced plurality and freedom, and where isolation and loneliness have eroded human solidarity and all spontaneous forms of living together. Modernity is the age where the past no longer carries any certainty of evaluation, where individuals, having lost their traditional standards and values, must search for new grounds of human community as such.

Arendt's negative appraisal of modernity was shaped by her experience of totalitarianism in the twentieth century, and that her work provides a number of important insights that may help us to address certain problematic features of the modern age.

#### Hannah Arendt on Totalitarianism -

Arendt's first major work, **published in 1951**, is clearly a **response to the devastating events of her own time** – the rise of Nazi Germany and the catastrophic fate of European Jewry.

Arendt

insisted that

*these manifestations of political evil could not be understood as mere extensions in scale or scope of already existing precedents, but rather that they represented a completely 'novel form of government', one built upon terror and ideological fiction. Where older tyrannies had used terror as an instrument for attaining or sustaining power, modern totalitarian regimes exhibited little strategic rationality in their use of terror. Rather, terror was no longer a means to a political end, but an end in itself. Its necessity was now justified by recourse to supposed laws of history (such as the inevitable triumph of the classless society) or nature (such as the inevitability of a war between "chosen" and other "degenerate" races).*

For Arendt, the **popular appeal of totalitarian ideologies with their capacity to mobilize populations** to do their bidding, rested upon the devastation of ordered and stable contexts in which people once lived. **The impact of the First World War, and the Great Depression, and the spread of revolutionary unrest, left people open to the promulgation of a single, clear and unambiguous idea that would allocate responsibility for woes, and indicate a clear path that would secure the future against insecurity and danger. Totalitarian ideologies offered just such answers, purporting discovered a "key to history" with which events of the past and present could be explained, and the future secured by doing history's or nature's bidding.** Accordingly the **amenability of European populations to totalitarian ideas was the consequence of a series of pathologies** that had eroded the public or political realm as a space of liberty and freedom. These **pathologies included the expansionism of imperialist capital with its administrative management of colonial suppression, and the usurpation of the state by the bourgeoisie as an instrument by which to further its own sectional interests.** This in turn led to the **delegitimation of political institutions, and the atrophy of the principles of citizenship and deliberative consensus** that had been the heart of the democratic political enterprise. The rise of totalitarianism was thus to be understood in light of the accumulation of pathologies that had undermined the conditions of possibility for a viable public life that could unite citizens, while simultaneously preserving their liberty and uniqueness, a condition that Arendt referred to as "plurality".

Thus, Totalitarianism is seen by Hannah Arendt as "**radical evil**" **executed to destroy politics** since people accept propaganda, critical thinking is essential to overcome totalitarianism. Ideology and terror are the instruments. Terror is not incidental rather essential. In her concept of banality of evil she projects Eichmann as a product of totalitarian government. According to her, totalitarianism aims to seek total domination. Totalitarianism wants to destroy the tradition. Totalitarian leaders project themselves as God that is omni potent who can never be wrong. Totalitarians want to establish society based on their ideas destroying everything that is old. Totalitarianism emerges by destroying the class and establishing the mass.

### **Eichmann and the Banality of Evil**

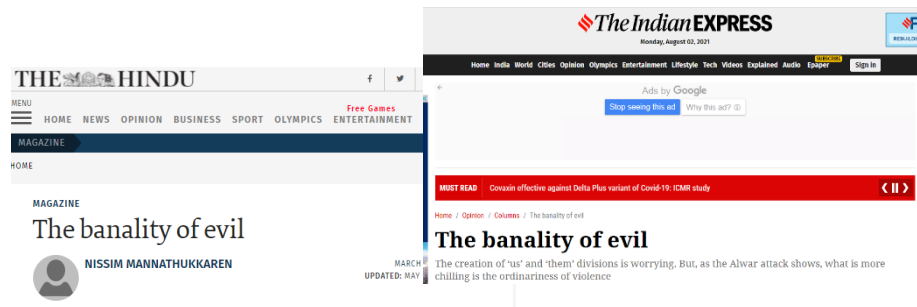
Arendt introduced the concept of Banality of Evil to show that the **most heinous of crimes need not be committed only by psychopaths and sadists but even by perfectly normal people** who refuse to think about the outcomes of their actions.

She wrote

*Eichmann in*

*Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* about the trial of Adolf Eichmann, who was one of the **chief architects of Hitler's Holocaust**. Eichmann was captured in Argentina and brought to Israel for trial.

During his defense, Eichmann gave the defense of 'befehl ist befehl' (orders are orders) and that he was merely following orders of his



superiors. He described the orders handed out to him as a **categorical imperative in the Kantian sense**. He carried neither regret, nor hatred with him. However according to Hannah Arendt, Kant always argued to use reason to reject immoral commands.

As far as Arendt could discern, Eichmann came to his willing involvement with the program of genocide through a **failure or absence of the faculties of sound thinking and judgement**. From Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem, Arendt concluded that far from exhibiting a malevolent hatred of Jews which could have accounted psychologically for his participation in the Holocaust, Eichmann was an utterly **innocuous individual**. He **operated unthinkingly**, following orders, efficiently carrying them out, with no consideration of their effects upon those he targeted.

The human dimension of these activities were not entertained, so the **extermination of the Jews became indistinguishable from any other bureaucratically assigned and discharged responsibility for Eichmann and his cohorts**. This is what made the ghastly act banal or dull. It carried a cold blooded indifference to the human costs of violence.

Arendt concluded that **Eichmann was incapable of exercising the kind of judgment** that would have made his victims' suffering real or apparent for him. **It was not the presence of hatred that enabled Eichmann to perpetrate the genocide, but the absence of the imaginative capacities that would have made the human and moral dimensions of his activities tangible for him**. Eichmann failed to exercise his capacity of thinking, which would have permitted self-awareness of the evil nature of his deeds. This amounted to a **failure to use self-reflection** as a basis for judgment, the faculty that would have required Eichmann to exercise his imagination so as to contemplate the nature of his deeds from the experiential standpoint of his victims.

**Evil, according to Arendt, becomes banal when it acquires an unthinking and systematic character. Evil becomes banal when ordinary people participate in it, build distance from it and justify it, in countless ways. There are no moral conundrums or revulsions. Evil does not even look like evil, it becomes faceless.**

### Hannah Arendt Concept of Thinking/Judgement

Thinking is different from knowing. Thinking goes beyond knowledge and conceals questions that cannot be answered simply by using knowledge. Thinking is does not refer to gaining a solid answer rather asking more questions. Thinking is fundamental to political action. Thinking was not a part of “Eichmann” that led to banality. Her concept of judgment is linked to her concept of thinking. She planned to write her concept of judgment in third volume of “the life of the mind by sadly died before” however she wrote on judgement in her lectures on Immanuel Kant. **She described judgment as enlarge mentality** means it allows us to compare your thinking with others. Judgment is possible only during action.

### Arendt’s Theory of Action

**Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality ... this plurality is specifically the condition — not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* — of all political life.**

Arendt’s theory of action and her revival of the ancient notion of **praxis** represent one of the most original contributions to twentieth century political thought. By **distinguishing action (praxis) from fabrication (poiesis), by linking it to freedom and plurality, and by showing its connection to speech and remembrance.**

Arendt is able to articulate a conception of politics in which questions of politics can be addressed in a fresh and original manner. Moreover, by viewing **action as a mode of human togetherness**, Arendt is able to develop a conception of participatory democracy which stands in direct contrast to the bureaucratized and elitist forms of politics so characteristic of the modern epoch.

In her work *The Human Condition*, Arendt introduces the term **vita activa (active life)** by distinguishing it from a **contemplative life (vita contemplativa)**. She categorizes the *vita activa* in three categories of labor, work and action which are in an ascending hierarchy of importance.

#### **Labor: Man as Animal Laborans**

Labor is that activity which corresponds to the biological processes and necessities of human existence, the practices which are necessary for the maintenance of life itself. Labor is characterized by its never-ending character. It does not lead to the creation of something permanent. Its efforts are quickly consumed and it must be performed anew everytime. While performing labor, humanity is closest to animals and is the least human.

*The activity of labor is commanded by necessity and the human being as laborer is equivalent to the slave. Labor is characterized by unfreedom. Thus, Arendt was highly critical of Marx in whose opinion labor represented creative freedom and an end of human alienation.*

*She also believes that the prioritization of the economic which has attended the rise of capitalism has all but eclipsed the possibilities of meaningful political agency and the pursuit of higher ends which should be the proper concern of public life.*

### **Work: Man as Homo Faber**

*Work corresponds to the fabrication of an artificial world of things, which can endure beyond temporarily beyond the act of creation itself. Work creates a world distinct from anything given in nature, a world which is durable, semi-permanent and relatively independent from the individual actors.*

*Humanity in this mode of its activity is termed as Homo Faber by Arendt. Homo Faber is the builder of walls (both physical and cultural) which divide the human realm from that of nature and provide a stable context and institutions within which human life can unfold. Homo faber's typical representatives are the builder, the architect, the craftsman, the artist and the legislator, as they create the public world both physically and institutionally by constructing buildings and making laws.*

*Work stands in clear distinction from labor in a number of ways. Labor is bound to the demands of animality, biology and nature whereas work shapes and transforms nature according to the plans of humans. Work is a distinctly human activity. It is under human sovereignty and control and carries some degree of freedom. While labor is concerned with satisfying the individual's life-needs and so remains essentially a private affair, work is inherently public.*

### **Action: Man as Zoon Politikon**

*Labor occupies the lowest rung in the hierarchy of vita activa. Then we have work which is a distinctly human activity which fabricates the enduring world of our common existence. However, the activity of homo faber does not equate with the realm of human freedom. It cannot occupy the privileged apex of the human condition. Work is still subject to a certain kind of necessity, that which arises from its essentially instrumental character.*

*The quality of freedom is to be found elsewhere in the vita activa, with the activity of action proper. Action is to be understood as participation in political affairs, an affirmation of Aristotelian view of man being a political animal. It is the interaction between people without the intermediary of things or matter.*

**The two central features of action are freedom and plurality.** By freedom Arendt means the capacity to begin, to start something new, to do the unexpected, with which all human

*beings are* *endowed by*  
**virtue of being born.** Action as the realization of freedom is therefore rooted in **natality**, in the fact that each birth represents a new beginning and the introduction of novelty in the world.

According to Arendt, freedom is not an inner, contemplative or private phenomenon. It is rather active, worldly and public oriented. We are free in our intercourse with others and not in our intercourse with ourselves. Men are free as long as they act, to be free and to act are the same.

**Plurality refers both to equality and distinction**, to the fact that all human beings belong to the same species and are sufficiently alike to understand one another, but yet no two of them are ever interchangeable, since each of them is an individual endowed with a unique biography and perspective on the world. It is by virtue of plurality that each of us is capable of acting and relating to others in ways that are unique and distinctive, and in so doing of contributing to a network of actions and relationships that is infinitely complex and unpredictable.

This makes action necessarily political which occurs in the public realm. It creates something lasting in the world. By viewing action as a mode of human togetherness, Arendt is able to develop a conception of participatory democracy which stands in direct contrast to the bureaucratized and elitist forms of politics so characteristic of the modern epoch.

Action entails speech: by means of language we are able to articulate the meaning of our actions and to coordinate the actions of a plurality of agents. Conversely, speech entails action, not only in the sense that speech itself is a form of action, or that most acts are performed in the manner of speech, but in the sense that action is often the means whereby we check the sincerity of the speaker. Thus, just as action without speech runs the risk of being meaningless and would be impossible to coordinate with the actions of others, so speech without action would lack one of the means by which we may confirm the veracity of the speaker. **This link between action and speech is central to Arendt's characterization of power, that potential which springs up between people when they act "in concert," and which is actualized "only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities "** .

### Action and Speech as Disclosure

Arendt discusses the concept of the disclosure of the identity of the agent. In action and speech, she maintains, individuals reveal themselves as the unique individuals they are, disclose to the world their distinct personalities. **Neither labor nor work enable individuals to disclose their identities, to reveal "who" they are as distinct from "what" they are.**



In **labor** the individuality of each person is submerged by being bound to a chain of natural necessities, to the constraints imposed by biological survival. When we engage in labor we can only show our sameness, the fact that we all belong to the human species and must attend to the needs of our bodies.

In **work** there is more scope for individuality, in that each work of art or production bears the mark of its maker. It does not tell us who the creator was, only that he or she had certain abilities and talents.

It is thus only in **action and speech**, in interacting with others through words and deeds, that individuals reveal who they personally are and can affirm their unique identities.

### Action, Power, and the Space of Appearance

The metaphor of the polis recurs constantly in the writings of Arendt. This is indeed a 'metaphor' because in employing this term Arendt is not simply referring to the political institutions of the Greek city-states, bounded as they were to their time and circumstance, but to all those instances in history where a public realm of action and speech was set up among a community of free and equal citizens. "The polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be" .

For Arendt, therefore, the **polis stands for the space of appearance, for that space "where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly."** Such public space of appearance can be always recreated anew wherever individuals gather together politically, that is, "wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action" .

**The space of appearance** must be continually recreated by action; its existence is secured whenever actors gather together for the purpose of discussing and deliberating about matters of public concern, and it disappears the moment these activities cease. It is always a potential space that finds its actualization in the actions and speeches of individuals who have come together to undertake some common project. It may arise suddenly, as in the case of revolutions, or it may develop slowly out of the efforts to change some specific piece of legislation or policy. Historically, it has been recreated whenever public spaces of action and deliberation have been set up, from town hall meetings to workers' councils, from demonstrations and sit-ins to struggles for justice and equal rights.

### Conception of Power

This capacity to act in concert for a public-political purpose is what Arendt calls power. Power needs to be distinguished from strength, force, and violence . **Unlike strength, it is not the property of an individual, but of a plurality of actors joining together for some**

common

political

**purpose. Unlike force, it is not a natural phenomenon but a human creation, the outcome of collective engagement. And unlike violence, it is based not on coercion but on consent and rational persuasion.**

For Arendt, **power is a sui generis phenomenon**, since it is a product of action and rests entirely on persuasion. It is a **product of action** because it arises out of the concerted activities of a plurality of agents, and it **rests on persuasion** because it consists in the ability to secure the consent of others through unconstrained discussion and debate.

Arendt maintains that the **legitimacy of power** is derived from the initial getting together of people, that is, from the original pact of association that establishes a political community, and is reaffirmed whenever individuals **act in concert** through the medium of speech and persuasion. For her **“power needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities; what it does need is legitimacy ... Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow”**

Beyond appealing to the past, power also relies for its continued legitimacy on the rationally binding commitments that arise out of a process of free and **undistorted communication**. Because of this, power is highly independent of material factors: **it is sustained not by economic, bureaucratic or military means, but by the power of common convictions that result from a process of fair and unconstrained deliberation.**

**Power is also not something that can be relied upon at all times or accumulated and stored for future use. Rather, it exists only as a potential which is actualized when actors gather together for political action and public deliberation.** It is thus **closely connected to the space of appearance**, that public space which arises out of the actions and speeches of individuals. Indeed, for Arendt, **“power is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence.”** Power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse” .

Power, then, lies at the basis of every political community and is the expression of a potential that is always available to actors. It is also the source of legitimacy of political and governmental institutions.

### **Conception of political and citizenship**

Hannah Arendt has produced original thought on the nature of Politics. In Arendt view, the term **‘politics’ is applied in two different situations**. In the first situation, it refers to the **process of interest articulation and the struggle for power**. This is the familiar meaning of politics. Interest articulation refers to the process whereby the view, attitudes and preferences of a group of people concerned with or interested in a particular matter, are expressed in term of specific demands on which political decision or action is sought by

them. It involves an attempt at influencing the decision-making organs of government for taking a favourable decision for the group in question. Through this process, **people seek to serve their narrow interests disregarding the larger public interest although they may pretend to serve the public interest.** When this method is combined with the struggle for power, **it may involve reliance on lies, propaganda and manipulation.** This view of politics implies a **condemned activity.** Arendt has described it as 'the lowest level of human affairs'. In fact Arendt has dwelled on this meaning of politics in many of her earlier works. **the second meaning of politics** is particularly elaborated in her **The Promise of Politics (2005)** for the first time. This leads us to the second situation where **the term "politics" is applied in its ideal form.**

Accordingly, in the second situation, **politics turns out to be the major achievement of human civilization. It is made possible only when people actualize their human potential of acting in concert.** In this sense, politics refers to '**the highest level of human affairs**'. Arendt argues that the first view of politics does not tell the whole story. If we confine ourselves to the usual meaning of politics, we shall remain unaware of the richer content of political life—the joy and the gratification that arise out of being in company with our peers, out of acting together and appearing in the public, thus acquiring and sustaining our personal identity. It is precisely the situation where Arendt's ideal of genuine politics may be realized.

In **The Promise of Politics (2005)**, Arendt again refer to the two different levels of politics which correspond to the aforesaid distinction between the two meaning of politics. At the first level, **politics could be defined in its usual sense, as 'a relationship between the rulers and the ruled'**. This again refers to the condemned meaning of politics which gives rise to our prejudice against politics. **This image of politics implies a situation where domestic policy of the rulers appears to be a fabric of lies and deception woven by shady interests and even shadier ideologies, while foreign policy vacillates between dull propaganda and the exercise of raw power.** This image of politics fails to attract those who wish to lead a noble or decent life toward taking interest in public affairs.

On the other hand, Arendt proceeds to discover another level of politics where it **coincides with the urge for freedom.** In this sense, to be **political means to the free.** It is the ideal meaning of politics where freedom is treated as the essence as well as the 'reason of existence' of politics in the human world. In this sense, **politics refers to that sphere of life where human beings live together, act together, or even fight together with a view to gaining the joyous experience of being free. Freedom is the essence of political life because without freedom, action would deteriorate into behaviour, and speech would degenerate into rhetoric.** In other words, where people are not enlivened by the spirit of freedom, each individual would be pursuing self-interest through his speech and action, rather than the public interest. In Arendt's view, genuine political life consists in the interaction and communication of free and equal persons. When freedom; they tend to create a public space that cannot be generated in any other way. Acting freely in a public space ushers into the political action that is conducive to working miracles.

On the whole, Hannah Arendt has created a new, sublime image of politics as distinguished from its conventional, condemned image. In this new context, politics is regarded as an end-in-itself rather than as a means to an end lying outside of it. Here politics is seen as a process that binds people into community life; it inspires them to respect each other, and promotes a sense of cooperation among them from pursuing the public interest. It motivates them to determine their common goals and to strive for their fulfilment through a genuine, cooperative efforts.

For Arendt the public sphere comprises two distinct but interrelated dimensions.

1. The first is **the space of appearance**, a space of political freedom and equality which comes into being whenever citizens act in concert through the medium of speech and persuasion.
2. The second is the **common world**, a shared and public world of human artifacts, institutions and settings which separates us from nature and which provides a relatively permanent and durable context for our activities.

Arendt's conception of citizenship around two themes: (1) the public sphere, and (2) political agency and collective identity, and to highlight the contribution of Arendt's conception to a theory of democratic citizenship.

### **Citizenship and the Public Sphere**

For Arendt the **reactivation of citizenship in the modern world depends upon both the recovery of a common, shared world and the creation of numerous spaces of appearance in which individuals can disclose their identities and establish relations of reciprocity and solidarity.**

### **Citizenship, Agency, and Collective Identity**

Arendt's participatory conception of citizenship provides the best starting point for addressing both the question of the constitution of collective identity and that concerning the conditions for the exercise of effective political agency.

For Arendt, it is only by means of direct political participation, that is, by engaging in common action and collective deliberation, that citizenship can be reaffirmed and political agency effectively exercised.

### **Conception of Freedom**

For Arendt, the problem of freedom is the problem of how human beings live together; it is political freedom, the freedom to start something new, the freedom to be human. Freedom is the reason men live together in politics. To be free is to act. This makes you unique. Through your actions people notice you and you become meaningful.

*She does not believe in the concept of freedom as inner freedom, freedom of the will. Arendt says that this is not what freedom is about. She attributes the idea of freedom of the will to **Christianity, St Paul and Augustine.***

*For Arendt, freedom is never internal, never a retreat from the world, never a freedom of will (which is the mainstream, traditional idea of freedom), but instead a freedom to act. For Arendt, the highest political value is courage, which is indispensable for political action.*

*Lack of courage and the desire for safety and security encourages men to see freedom as an inward power, not as an outwardly action.*

*Freedom is a meaningful performative act, good or bad; an action in the world that people will see, where people are trying to work out how to live together in this complicated world without authority. Freedom makes possible new beginnings, the freedom to start to do things and make something new. To be free and to act are the same.*

*“... freedom, which only seldom – in times of crisis or revolution – becomes the direct aim of political action, is actually the reason that men live together in political organization at all. Without it, political life as such would be meaningless. The raison d’être of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action.”*

*Freedom is a central and important idea in Hannah Arendt’s work, because freedom allows us to act and be meaningful; it allows us to be human.*