

NEGLIA Valeria, *Hannah Arendt : la πόλις tra amore e giudizio*, Tesi di Laurea, Corso di laurea specialistica in filosofia e storia delle idee, Università degli studi di Palermo, 2008, 160 p.

Hannah Arendt (1906, Hannover-1975, New York) was a German-Jewish refugee in the United States of America and an important political theorist of the last century.

In this thesis I study the role of love and judgement in Arendt's conception of citizenship, which she elaborates referring to the reality of the *polis*. Her thought is prompted by Nazi crimes and genocides and in particular addresses three mechanisms that led to them : the denial of plurality, the loss of "common sense" and of common world and the habit of uncritically following the rules. Her works assert the right to plurality and explore the possibility of a political life in exile and eradication. In her opinion, the historical narration is the only way to restore the dignity of the victims that Nazis menaced to erase from the collective memory. Moreover she identifies in the faculty of judgment and in the commitment to understand and to change the world the means to contrast with the presumed inevitability of the evil that produced holocaust.

Arendt usually talks about love in a polemical way since she regards it as the strongest impolitic feeling that has its fair place in the private realm marked by the principle of exclusivity, and not in the public realm ruled by the principle of equality. Nevertheless, in Arendt's works there is a link between politics and certain forms of love that we can put under the notion of *amor mundi* and that deal with men plurality and with the common world. Arendt's notion of *amor mundi* is mainly grounded on the notion of *philia politike* she inherits from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. Friendship is described by Arendt as a political and not private relationship because it is characterized by the principles of freedom, equality, reciprocity and dialogue.

The dialogue among free and equal men about the outside world is the condition of the political life, and in particular the only glimmer of a political life among people deprived of any juridical status like Jewish refugees.

Against the politics of those years exasperating the conflict between citizens and not-citizens, Arendt reminds the original meaning of politics that is at the same time love and *polemos*, i.e. passion for human plurality of opinions, showed and developed in the debate. From the agency of free and equal men in a common world, sharing opinions and actions, a collective political identity (the *politeia*) is generated. This identity does not depend on ethnic bounds, since politics belongs to the artificial dimension of life, and comes from choice. The *zoon politikon* shows himself to other men talking and acting and trying to understand the world he shares with other men.

Arendt's notion of political friendship is also enriched by the Greek craving for the durability of the world and for earthly immortality, and by the biblical notion of *agape*. While totalitarianism disregards facts and manipulate them, the *amor mundi* implies respect of memory and of facts, research of meaning and therefore redemption of life from senselessness. According to Arendt no man – even a "pariah" – has the right to evade from reality, however inhuman it may be, and however painful its understanding may be. Reality cannot be ignored without putting our political dimension – and therefore, according to Arendt, our humanity – at risk.

The most dangerous effect of escape from reality and from human responsibility is the "banality of evil". The evil is banal when it is committed without an understandable reason by people, like Eichmann, who are acquainted to follow rules and obey orders in an uncritical way, pretending to deny the freedom and responsibility implicit in every man's action and decision. The banal evil leads Arendt to study the faculty of judgement, developing the themes of the human "condition of natality" and of action as "beginning", rooted in the Greek conception of politics, in the Gospel and in Augustine's and Kant's thought.

Plurality is the condition and the result of the activity of the judgement, since a political judgement originates from the comparison among different opinions and has to respect and consider the plurality of other points of view. When everybody shares the same opinion, and the dispute becomes superfluous and stops, it means that an ideological view has prevailed. When judging, a man is a "beginner", since this activity implies the effort to understand what is wrong and what is fair, in every

different particular circumstance, without a given universal rule to apply. Arendt reads Kant's Third Critique, the one that refers to reflective judgement and its neither arbitrary nor objective status, from a political point of view, consciously disregarding the transcendental perspective. Judgements may not be arbitrary if they rest on the "common sense" or "community sense", a shared sense of reality that tries to achieve an "enlarged mentality" thanks to the faculty of imagination. On the contrary, logical skills may generate mad conclusions, and join an ideology when they are separated from the effective communication, the common sense, and the need of understanding.

"Impartiality" and "disinterestedness" seem to be the decisive criterion for Kantian judgement, as far as a valuable judgement results only when we bracket subjective private conditions, using our "imagination". Impartiality and disinterestedness may look far from a feeling like "love". Nevertheless, only putting in relation love and judgement, we can do justice to the ethic dimension of Arendtian thought.

The political interpretation of the Third Critique is something common to the two phases of Arendt's theory of judgement. Simplistically speaking, in the first phase the judgement is the faculty of political actors who debate about the future and it belongs to the "vita activa", while in the second one it is brought back to the solitude of the "life of the mind" and it refers to the past and to the biographical and historical narration. Arendt develops these topics referring to the Greek poetical and historiographic tradition, and, in a polemical way, to Kant philosophy of history, misunderstanding – I argue – Kant's notion of idea.

Even if removed from the *vita activa*, judgement still has a strong political dimension. If politics exists to satisfy men's craving for earthly immortality and for redemption of human life and world from meaningless, it has to deal with the dimension of memory and history telling. When judging events, men actualize their ability of beginning and, by exercising their responsibility and their freedom, can redeem the world from meaningless. This way they may redeem human dignity too – even when it is infringed by historical events that cancel human freedom and any chance of political action – denying the right of history to be ultimate judge : "*Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni*".