

# Love and Worldliness in Psychoanalysis and in the Work of Hannah Arendt

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**ABSTRACT:** Despite Hannah Arendt's scepticism about psychoanalysis, this essay shows the relevance of Freud's psychoanalytic notions of love and sublimation for Arendt. In her rejection of a political relevance of love, Arendt does not take into consideration the libidinal aspects of collective bonds, nor does she give an account of the passionate aspect of being together despite the crucial role of *amor mundi* in her work. Following Freud, I demonstrate that love and sublimation are fundamental to worldliness, central to our understanding of forgiveness and the making of promises, all of which is pivotal to understanding Hannah Arendt's political thought. In Freud's writing love and sublimation expand knowledge and creativity and enable community building. By negotiating between Arendt's and Freud's writings on love and politics, this article demonstrates that sublimated love mediates between the private and public spheres. The ultimate question I ask concerns the relation between love of the world and its negation by radical evil.

**KEY WORDS:** love, forgiveness, politics, Arendt, Freud

*What is Love?—Ask him who lives what is life; ask him who adores what is God.  
—On Love, Percy Bysshe Shelley*

## LOVE BETWEEN THE PRIVATE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERES

Hannah Arendt was fundamentally sceptical about psychoanalysis, which she saw as reductionist and solipsistic rather than encouraging political activity. Psychoanalysis, writes Arendt, destroys the world of the in-between that enables us to form relationships since it recommends that

people focus on an inner world of sensations in order to explain failures in the public sphere. Rather than encourage revolutionary ideas and actions aimed at bringing about change in the world, psychology instructs us to “‘adjust’ to those [bad] conditions, taking away our only hope, namely that we, who are not of the desert though we live in it, are able to transform it into a human world” (2005, 201). Arendt finds that psychoanalysis and totalitarian movements have something in common for they both deaden the faculties of passion and action that could help us to change the world and make it better, more inhabitable. Taking a psychoanalytic approach, or living under totalitarian rule might, in some ways, lessen our suffering, but the cost is that we relinquish our courage—a courage that allows us to act.

Despite Arendt’s adamant resentment of psychoanalysis I would like to initiate a dialogue between Arendt and Freudian psychoanalysis. Hannah Arendt’s explicit discussion of love occurs in her *Love and Saint Augustine*, where Arendt differentiates between Eros, erotic love, *philia*, friendship, and *agape*, love of God. In her subsequent work, however, Arendt does not take into consideration the libidinal aspects of collective bonds, nor does she give an account of the passionate aspect of being together despite the crucial role of *amor mundi*. By contrast, Freud views libidinal and sublimated love as forces that bind people together so that they may form political cooperation and bring about artistic and technological innovation in civilization. In this sense, Eros becomes a meaningful force that introduces worldliness into the individual’s life. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud presents love as a force capable of subduing violence and enhancing the in-between world of relationships that functions as the basis of our joint activity in work and in the formation of civilization. Because love, or Eros, is not just discrete but a political force, it enhances worldliness rather than withdrawal from the world.

By juxtaposing Arendt and Freud I will argue that love is basic to worldliness, central to the *amor mundi*, forgiveness, and the making of promises, which are pivotal components of Hannah Arendt’s political thought. I will argue that the desire for love enhances friendship/forgiveness and thinking/respect of the others and of worldliness as such. In psychoanalysis and in the work of Hannah Arendt worldliness or *amor mundi* comprises a move away from the realm of need to that of thinking, which in turn inaugurates action in the public sphere by realizing the bonds of aim-inhibited love or friendship. By juxtaposing Arendt’s and Freud’s relation to love I will suggest that without love the relation of humans to the world is swayed by interdictions of the obscene superego. Such a loveless relation to the world engenders anxiety and doubt. The ultimate question I want to ask concerns the relation between love of the world and its negation by radical evil.

## LOVERS OF THE WORLD

To begin staging the dialogue between Arendt and Freud I want to juxtapose their texts that were written at the same time. *Love and Saint Augustine* was published in 1929 while *Civilization and Its Discontents* was published in 1930. While Freud's text studies the importance of the divine decree "love thy neighbor as thyself" for the formation of communities and nations, Arendt's text inaugurates a research question about "the relevance of the neighbor," and demonstrates that Augustine's philosophy is engaged in the world. "[Her] philosophical approach . . . was essentially unchanged even in the completely different context of New York in the early 1960s," write the editors of the book (Arendt 1996, x).

Freud is most strongly associated with the oedipal drama and the failure of primary narcissism. But in order to understand love in Freud's theory we need to go beyond these complexes and study sublimation or aim-inhibited love that forms communities and engenders knowledge and art. Aim-inhibited love is prevalent among human beings and thus they join forces at work and create families and communities sustained by bonds of friendship and love. And although mothers exhibit tender erotic feelings towards their offspring, maternal love evolves and the infant develops in the vein of sublimation. I will focus on the complex role of sublimation in relation to civilization, art and knowledge.

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud states:

Love with an inhibited aim was in fact originally fully sensual love, and it is so still in man's unconscious. Both—fully sensual love and aim-inhibited love—extend outside the family and create new bonds with people who before were strangers. Genital love leads to the formation of new families, and aim-inhibited love to 'friendships' which become valuable from a cultural standpoint because they escape some of the limitations of genital love, as, for instance, its exclusiveness. But in the course of development the relation of love to civilization loses its unambiguity. On the one hand love comes into opposition to the interests of civilization; on the other, civilization threatens love with substantial restrictions. (Freud 1961, 58)

Because love and the prohibition of incestuous love appear together in Freud's psychoanalysis it may seem that the discipline is averse to erotic love. Yet Freudian psychoanalysis presumes that civilization is grounded in love. However, with the development of both the unconscious and the ego, this relation of love to civilization is complicated. Since both genital love and aim-inhibited love are valuable and must not be made irrelevant to civilization or harm its organization, "It [civilization] aims at binding the members of the community together in a libidinal way as well and employs every means to that end. It favours every path by which strong identifications can be established between the members of the community, and it summons up aim-inhibited libido on the largest scale

so as to strengthen the communal bond by relations of friendship” (Freud 1961, 65). Civilization deploys libidinal love for its own preservation, but how is this symbolized and how does civilization benefit from the libidinal energy that circulates in cultures?

Following Freud’s speculations on communal bonds, I will argue that concepts such as forgiveness, recognition, duty, natality, and thinking are grounded in the capacity to love the other. These notions are at the heart of every psychoanalytical and political exploration of “worldliness” and constitute the core of Freud’s and Arendt’s studies of the relations of the individual to both the domestic and the public spheres. Although in Arendt’s correspondence with Gershom Scholem (Scholem 2002, 394) and in *The Human Condition* she rejects the possibility that love can be functional in the public sphere, I will show that precisely her analysis of the banality of evil (Arendt 1963) and of forgiveness prove that forgiveness can, in fact, be a gift of love. Such practice of sublimation enables one to love the neighbor as one loves oneself.<sup>1</sup>

### *Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself*

A biblical commandment requires that human beings saturate communal ties with aim-inhibited, libidinal love, “It runs, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself’” (Freud 1961, 65). And yet this decree is perplexing for Freud. He asks, “Why should we do it? What good will it do to us? But, above all, how should we achieve it? How can it be possible?” (Freud 1961, 66). In reply to the question “Why should we do it?” Freud argues that people only willingly support laws that enable them to keep the objects of their love close to them or that enable them to protect friendships or that facilitate the creation of new love relations with other members of the community. I will love my neighbor because this particular commandment focuses on and enhances my desire to create love relations with my neighbors. People do not support laws that introduce nothing but interdiction and dread of punishment into the lives of the individuals and communities. I will not support such a law because that introduces paranoia and anxiety into my social interactions with the others; in relation to such a law I am likely to become an inactive, dysfunctional citizen. To the question “how shall we achieve it?” Freud, in fact, develops one of his most sustained accounts of sublimation. “The clue may be supplied by one of the ideal demands . . . of civilized society. It runs: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ It is known throughout the world and is undoubtedly older than Christianity, which puts it forward as its proudest claim. Yet it is not very old; even in historical times it was still strange to mankind” (Freud 1961, 65–66). I think that the decree *love thy neighbor as thyself* is essentially about creating a new language—an Ur-language of sublimation. Culture symbolizes the human desire of sublimated love relations with others—that is as powerful as the taboo on incest from which cultures emerge. According to this interpretation

sublimation is not a defense mechanism of the unconscious, like repression, but a function of the ego that enhances the availability of Eros—desire and love—to consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

Even without a comprehensive theory of sublimation, Freud attaches great significance to this libidinal and intellectual capacity that humans engage and sophisticate. For Freud those laws that protect the love relations that people have with their neighbor can hope to receive the support of individuals. His study of sublimation is not romanticized and takes full account of the aggression and hatred of the other. Freud turns to Hobbes, who famously argued that humans are inherently hostile to each other, and that, left to our own devices and to our nature, humanity would inevitably devolve into a war of all against all: “Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man” (Hobbes 1909, 96). In an implicit reference to Hobbes, Freud states: “*Homo homini lupus*. Who, in the face of all his experience of life and of history, will have the courage to dispute this assertion?” (Freud 1961, 69). This is the phrase that Freud uses to describe the deterioration of culture and the betrayal of civilization. According to Freud, civilization inoculates us against our inherent propensity towards oppression:

Civilization has to use its utmost efforts in order to set limits to man's aggressive instincts and to hold manifestations of them in check by psychical reaction-formation. Hence, therefore, the use of methods intended to incite people into identifications and aim-inhibited relationships of love, hence the restriction upon sexual life, and hence too the ideal's commandment to love one's neighbour as thyself—a commandment which is really justified by the fact that nothing else runs so strongly counter to the original nature of man. (Freud 1961, 70)

Thus it is clear that Freud views psychoanalysis as more than a diagnostic tool for the individual; indeed, he sees psychoanalysis as equally useful for its ability to engender an ethical imperative in civilization. It is for this reason that Freud often uses *ought to* sentences, as in the passage quoted above: “Civilization has to use its utmost efforts.”<sup>3</sup> Elaborating on this theme, Freud suggests that in addition to the various tools that civilization puts into place to contain the human being's aggressive drive, communities and nations must also offer relatively safe outlets for human aggression. Thus it is imperative that people be permitted to *fight* one another, so to speak. According to Freud, arrangements that allow for neighborly, reciprocal pestering exist among distinct communities that have much in common, “like the Spaniards and the Portuguese, for instance, the North Germans and South Germans, the English and Scotch, and so on. I gave this phenomenon the name of ‘the narcissism of minor differences.’ . . . We can now see that it is a convenient and relatively harmless satisfaction of the inclination to aggression,

by means of which cohesion between the members of the community is made easier" (Freud 1961, 72). Freud notes that the Jewish people present an interesting phenomenon: As a nation dispersed among so many different nations in Europe, they serve as a unifying force: As assimilated cosmopolitans, they bring together members of different nations uniting them through the bonds of work, friendship and/or love. At the same time, as the perceived enemy of Christian Europe, the Jews serve to unify their host nations through the nations' shared hatred of the Jew. Thus the Jews of Europe are the victims of a violence that emerges from the "narcissism of minor differences."<sup>4</sup> Human beings can create strong bonds that are based not on mutual love but on the hatred of a third party. When the European citizen ostracizes a fellow Jew s/he expresses narcissistic love.

While love is normally directed toward an object, it is also directed toward the ego, which is the definition of narcissism. Freud stresses that object-love succeeds when the object reflects the image of an ideal ego, and hence narcissism and object-love have something in common. Nevertheless, Freud insists that "civilization is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, people and nations, into the great unity, the unity of mankind. . . . These collections of men are to be libidinally bound to one another. Necessity alone, the advantages of work in common, will not hold them together" (Freud 1961, 82). In this context the commandment *love thy neighbor as thyself* is a means that civilization deploys in order to provide an outlet for the libidinal bonds of love that pervade society and enforce them on human beings whose relationships with one another are based on kindness. The command needs to enforce libidinal bonds of love so that this libidinal energy does not turn to violence that emerges from anxiety or loneliness. The commandment implies that kindness is no less an instinct than is sadism and that within the global scheme of things attention must be given to the fact that people need to impress their affection on the other and that they need to express their kindness toward her/him. According to scholars Adam Philips and Barbara Taylor, kindness is an id impulse that enhances identification with the other's vulnerability. "When God is dead, kindness is permitted. When God is dead, kindness is all that people have left" (Philips and Taylor 2009, 13).

The second quality of sublimation is related to how individuals experience happiness in civilization. Sublimation transforms infantile love to love of knowledge and art. As Arendt shows such love of art and knowledge transpires in the public sphere at the same time that it contributes to the creation of the public sphere.<sup>5</sup> Freud expounds the relation of sublimation to the taboo on incestuous love. Laplanche and Pontalis suggest that one possible function of sexuality is described in Freud's study of Leonardo: "'They [non-sexual-functions] must serve as paths for the attraction of sexual instinctual forces to aims that are other than

sexual, that is to say, for the sublimation of sexuality.' A hypothesis of this type underpins Freud's study of Leonardo Da Vinci" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 433).

For Freud, Leonardo Da Vinci is a genius because he "represented the cool repudiation of sexuality" (Freud 1985, 158). In "Leonardo Da Vinci: A Memory of His Childhood" this is explained to mean that Leonardo is incapable of *falling* in love, for he first carefully studies the object and only if he knows the object as worthy is he then able to love it.<sup>6</sup> Freud believes that if one initially devotes one's passion to knowing the object and only later to loving it, one begins to love knowledge more than the sexual body. From this relation of love to thought emerges what I would call the law of sublimation: "The postponement of loving until full knowledge is acquired ends in a substitution of the latter for the former. A man who has won his way to a state of knowledge cannot properly be said to love and hate; he remains beyond love and hatred" (Freud 1985, 165). Such a person is more inclined to extend recognition to the other rather than to eliminate the threat of otherness through repression of, or through submission to, sexual or violent affects toward the other. Sublimation ensures that strong affects toward the other are subordinate to symbolization; Leonardo loves the object through studying it and through painting the object as loved, or through representing his knowledge of the object on the canvas.

This also explains the fact that virtually all of Leonardo's paintings remain unfinished. His interest in dissected animals, anatomy, mechanics, flying and astronomy led him to acquire a thorough knowledge of the subjects of his paintings, which, in turn, rendered him unable to feel aroused by the sensuality of these objects/subjects, and thus incapable of completing the paintings. Instead of reacting to a visceral, sensual pull, Leonardo studied the objects with his faculty of reason, and his preoccupation with such knowledge affected his ability to create art. Leonardo was thus compelled to leave the canvas unfinished because he was unable to adequately represent the myriad factors that bring the loved object into existence, both in the world and in his painterly imagination.

The bar separating the libido from the object does not produce neurosis, for sublimation overpowers the effects of repression. Sublimation enhances the libido and causes it to look for satisfaction in consciousness, too, not just in the drive. Through constantly investigating the object the libido attains a satisfaction that cannot be achieved through sexual consummation, which is tantamount to the object's annihilation.

In order to elaborate his theory of sublimation that values symbolic interaction with objects Freud focuses on a particular memory from Leonardo's childhood, recorded in the artist's diary. Through exploring this memory, Freud seeks to demonstrate that Leonardo's libido was enhanced rather than inhibited by his attachments to his mother. Leonardo writes about being an infant in the cradle when a vulture came into the room and struck him several times on his



lips, parting the lips with its tail. For Freud this recollection is in fact a fantasy that registers the pleasure that Leonardo felt when his mother suckled him. The image also suggests that a penis was inserted into the infant's mouth. Freud's interpretation taps into Egyptian mythology, according to which the goddess *Mut*—whose name resembles the European *Mutter*—was sculpted as a vulture. More important, vultures were believed, according to Egyptian lore, to be uniquely female and it was thought that they were inseminated by the wind. Several fathers of the church used this legend to show that it is possible that Mary, too, was impregnated by the wind. According to Freud, Leonardo must have come across this legend before construing his fantasy. In addition, the Egyptian sculptures depict the vultures with both breasts and penises. For Freud the reason that the vulture is androgynous has to do with how the human psyche develops. Initially, the male child believes that both his parents have penises, and only later on in life does he come to the realization that a maternal penis does not exist. The androgynous vultures represent potent maternity. Freud was aware of the fact that Leonardo grew up without a father during the first five years of his life, and assumes that Leonardo's mother would have lavished tender sexual kisses on his mouth, which is why his memory conjures up feelings of being sucked rather than of being suckled. The infant is passive; he is in a homosexual posture in relation to the vulture and takes the metaphoric penis or the tail into his mouth enjoying the repeated strikes.

This sensual childhood memory becomes an example of sublimation when we take into consideration the fact that in all of Leonardo's paintings the mouth is staged as the site of an enigma. The most famous example of the ambiguous smile is Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, the joy and pride of Western civilization. The smile of the Florentine *Mona Lisa del Giocondo* is enigmatic because it is both beatific and seductive. It is as if the representation of purity created a bridge leading the painter back to his childhood and connecting him with the tender sexual pleasure that these lips could incite. In the adult's life sublimation reveals itself in substituting pleasure with symbolization, and specifically by painting the mouths of women so that they convey the sensation of something virginal while also communicating the capacity to offer and receive sensual pleasure.

Freud concludes: "It seems at any rate as if only a man who had had Leonardo's childhood experiences could have painted the *Mona Lisa* and the *St Anne*, have secured so melancholy a fate for his works and have embarked on such an astonishing career as a natural scientist, as if the key to all his achievements and misfortunes lay hidden in the childhood fantasy of the vulture" (Freud 1985, 230). It seems to me that Freud sees the sexual origin of beauty as the most meaningful aspect of symbolic representation in Leonardo's oeuvre. His repeated portrayal of the mouths of women indicates that symbolic language is designed to investigate the secret of love. The meticulously worked, enigmatic smiles in Leonardo's



paintings demonstrate how beauty can guide one in the quest for knowledge of beauty; a quest that may never be satisfied nor fully relinquished. This brings me back to my contention that *love thy neighbour as thyself* is a law that encourages people to relate to otherness through symbolic systems such as speech or painting to symbolize otherness. This is a law that Leonardo “follows” by turning to art, since it enhances the desire to study the nature of love rather than dissuading one from being overly preoccupied with questions about what the other really is and/or why one ought to love the other altogether.

### *Thou Shalt Not Covet*

Arendt’s most explicit discussion of love occurs in her dissertation which was published in 1929, a year before *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Hans Jonas, Arendt’s friend and colleague, thought that Augustine appealed to her because “both Heidegger and Jaspers turned to such thinkers and would have responded to ‘the existentialist message of Augustine’” (quoted in Arendt 1996, xv). Yet Arendt was not versed in the critical tradition about Augustine. In the introduction to the book, Scott and Stark assert, “Though deemed oblivious to history, tradition, and the established canon of Augustinian scholarship, Arendt was nonetheless given full marks for originality and insight” (Arendt 1996, xvi). Arendt imported the methodology of *Existenz* to the study of Augustine at the same time that she imposed Augustinian categories of love on the modern study of existentialism. She does this by foregrounding the neighbour: “Augustine’s *quaestio*, ‘What is the relevance of the neighbour?’ has many, possibly irreconcilable, responses for Augustine, all of which Arendt wishes to submit to phenomenological review” (Arendt 1996, xvii).<sup>7</sup> In the early works of Hannah Arendt, especially in *Love and Saint Augustine* and *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, love, or what after Freud we could call sublimated love, plays a central role. For her, too, the split between erotic and sublimated love implies two kinds of love: one is unworldly and even faulty—intimate love, or *Eros*, that belongs only to the lovers; the other is worldly—love of God, *agape*, and of charity between people. From the love of God it follows also that worldly love is necessary in the political life of action, speech and friendship, *philia*. From Arendt’s later work, *The Promise of Politics* demonstrates that non-totalitarian societies facilitate friendship, enhance love and the creation of new beings. In the public sphere such affects as friendship and respect emerge from action but, from the point of view of Freud, they might be called aim-inhibited love relations in contrast to erotic love in the private realm.

Arendt is aware that for Augustine love is the means of transcendence for humans. Humans are estranged from the world because their origin is in God. Yet humans love the world which was created for them by God. Humans love the neighbour and hence love is tied up with worldliness, too, not just with transcendence. Through love there is a return to the world. Arendt vacillates about whether love

can play a constructive role in the public sphere of human plurality. She seems to be asking whether love is an action and whether the exposure of love to the others can both bring a new beginning into the world and disclose the identity of the actors, and show who the lover and the loved one are. Arendt begins by clearly stating that, "For instance, love, in distinction from friendship, is killed, or rather extinguished, the moment it is displayed in public. ('Never seek to tell thy love / Love that never told can be.')

Because of its inherent worldlessness, love can only become false and perverted when it is used for political purposes such as the change or salvation of the world" (Arendt 1958, 51–52). To reformulate what Arendt calls the worldlessness of love in Freudian terms: "[A] pair of lovers are sufficient to themselves, and do not even need the child they have in common to make them happy. In no other case does Eros so clearly betray the core of his being, his purpose of making one out of more than one; but when he has achieved this in the proverbial way through the love of two human beings, he refuses to go further" (Freud 1961, 65). But we have seen that sublimated love goes a long way to change the world and introduce a new beginning to it, both aesthetically and ethically, in the example of Leonardo Da Vinci.<sup>8</sup>

Arendt favours love explicitly but her distinctions follow Augustine who specifies three different kinds of love: erotic, love of the world, and love of God. This is useful to her because even though love of God requires transcendence it still requires a return to the world. It is love of God that commends love of the neighbour. Love of God has a worldly and interhuman dimension. In *Love and Saint Augustine*, Arendt differentiates between carnal and divine love, that is, between *cupiditas* or passionate love and *caritas* or the love of God. As Augustine examines the world from the vantage point of loss he finds that the love that is directed at either the things of the world or at other people is bound to produce unhappiness for in *cupiditas* either the lover or the loved one dies thus introducing pain to life. And yet the value of *cupiditas* is that it enables human beings to become "Lovers of the world" (Arendt 1996, 17) and to transform the world into an inhabitable place by loving it and by living in it: "So the world consists of those who love it," Arendt asserts. "It is the human world, which constitutes itself by habitation and love. . . . Love of the world, which makes it 'worldly,' rests on being 'of the world'" (Arendt 1996, 66). For Arendt worldliness is tightly related to *amor mundi* or to sublimated love in the language of Freud. At the same time these lovers of the world are aware that they came into a world that was already created by God. It is structurally important that in Arendt's work human beings do not exactly fit the world; they are in a state of temporality, not simultaneity, in relation to the world. Humans are "before" the world for without their love of the world it would not be inhabitable, but they are also "after" the world because it was created before they were born and will continue to exist after they die. To put it differently, man is a foreigner in a world that exists for him. This precisely

demonstrates that love of the world, *amor mundi*, which is conditional, is not love of the world for itself but because it belongs to God. No simple transcendence is possible—love of the world must exist—but it is always dependent on the love of transcendence or the love of God.

The fact that “time is out of joint,” in the words of Hamlet, directly influences the quality of love that is given to earthly objects and people. *Cupiditas* is the wrong kind of love in the world—the one that will disappear with the death of man. The love that looks for eternal things is *caritas*. Evil deeds emerge from *cupiditas*, good ones from *caritas*. Both kinds of love emerge from craving and desire. Craving indicates that the human being suffers from some sort of lack and that s/he needs objects from the outside in order to love the self. However, in *cupiditas*, the human being craves the world in order to be part of the world and hence s/he misses her/his aim, that is, herself/himself, that is, the self that aspires to unite with God and thus exist beyond the world. *Cupiditas* is hostile to a good will that can attain freedom. A spirit that is interested in objects desires “its own good” (Arendt 1996, 21), that is, sensual desire. Augustine believes both that we can love the creator and that God is outside of us. For Augustine, *caritas* is the only love of the good, “the love that is shed in our hearts” (Arendt 1996, 22). We share in Being if we do not share in want and this means that we are fearless. But as long as man is fearful, freedom is “essentially freedom from fear” (Arendt 1996, 23). “What do I love when I love *my* God?” asks Augustine. He answers this by explaining that to love God is to love the essence of being, since God is internal in the sense that God is the good that I lack, which is eternal being. Love of God confers being and the “inner man” loves God “because his proper good is in the eternal” (Arendt 1996, 26). Indeed to be free is to belong to eternity. But the split between *cupiditas* and sublimated love soon recurs for in order to love God man must hate the self, which is attached to earthly objects that are subject to death.

It is in the context of Augustine that Arendt like Freud also discusses the commandment to love the neighbor: this is the worldliness important to both of them. How then should we understand the commandment *love thy neighbor as thyself*? Love eliminates the situation of being godforsaken in the world. Love that manifests craving could be a vehicle in the creation of the attachment of man to God. In love of the neighbor I engage in the question “Who is my neighbor? . . . Who is next to me?” (quoted in Arendt 1996, 43). The reply to the question clarifies that my neighbor is a person just like me and this means that all human beings are sisters/brothers. Hence *cupiditas* is a necessary evil, “Thus, the freedom of *caritas* is a future freedom. Its freedom on earth consists of anticipating a future belonging for which love as desire is the mediator. The sign of *caritas* on earth is fearlessness, whereas the curse of *cupiditas* is fear—fear of not obtaining what is desired and fear of losing it once it is obtained” (Arendt 1996, 35).

*Love thy neighbor as thyself* also means that the neighbor puts a limit to *amor sui* or self-love. It also means that one must not love the neighbor more than one loves oneself, which is to say that love of the neighbor is not an end in itself. Rather, the neighbor is my equal and I must love the neighbor for the sake of a higher good, which is love of God. This is also why I must love my enemy, for the enemy, too, is my neighbor and I cannot choose between people but must love all my neighbors equally.<sup>9</sup> All of this serves to highlight the fact that love is uneven; the temporality manifests itself in the future hope, and as recollection of the lost past.

However, happiness, according to Augustine, is something that each person has experienced in the past. Moreover, in order to be happy in the future one must recall the happiness that one had before when the “I” belonged to God. Here love and recollection coincide with each other. The human being is dependent on God and because s/he recalls that God is eternal s/he has a notion of happiness in the world of mortality.<sup>10</sup> The way to discern God is through recollection and not through desire, since God exists in our consciousness. “If man returns to where he came from, he finds his creator” (Arendt 1996, 50). We are conscious beings because we were born into the world, i.e., what Arendt calls “natality,” and we are desiring creatures because we die, what Arendt calls “mortality.” Frustration engenders desire while gratitude brings about remembrance of our origin in God. Arendt writes, “What ultimately stills the fear of death is not hope or desire, but remembrance and gratitude” (Arendt 1996, 52).

In order to attain God the human being recalls the past and imitates God. Human love is related to natality: “Imitation can be actualized explicitly through love: ‘They loved by believing; they imitated by loving’” (Arendt 1996, 54). What Arendt stresses in her reading of Augustine is the fact that the human being is a principle of newness in the world because natality means that s/he remembers her/his origins and because through her/his consciousness s/he is able to begin new speech and action in the evolving story of mankind. The human being is mortal, yet it is her/his mortality that signifies her/his union with God, since death signifies the human being’s return to God. Since God is eternal the human being’s past and future exist simultaneously. When the human being recalls her/his beginnings s/he is united with her/his end or with a return to God. “Wither-he-came reveals itself as identical to the Wither-he-goes” (Arendt 1996, 56). The human being gains immortality: “The presentation of past and future in which both coincide annihilates time and man’s subjection to it” (Arendt 1996, 57). Mortal human being’s conception of time has no bearing on God; God exists outside of such notions of time. What is interesting for Arendt is that even though the human being is part of God’s eternal Being, s/he is nevertheless subject to mortality. The human being has to express the principle of natality in his interaction with the other and to impart earthly love that enables natality. Friendship is a form of

earthly love for Arendt and it is sublimated love in Freud. These create the world in the form of strong communal relations between people.

The world is inhabited by those who love it and who keep it going through love. Heaven and earth become the world through our love of the world. But this is not creation *ex nihilo* for we create with divine material, *fabrica Dei*; we use heaven and earth, that is, God's creation to re-create. (There is a Kabbalistic/Chasidic notion that God is constantly in the act of recreating the universe, that were it not for his continuous reiteration of the words that brought the universe into being the world would cease to exist.) The human being loves God through loving the world even though s/he is a foreigner in the world. "Do not love to dwell in the building, but dwell in the builder," said Augustine (Arendt 1996, 66). This means that humans make this world the home of creatures specifically by virtue of the fact that they do not belong to the world but to God. Humans are the fabric of the world and their desire for happiness leads them to recall their unity with the creator. In their quest for the "before" or for the creator humans implement love of the highest order.

I deduce from the above that estrangement from the world is consubstantial with love. Arendt stresses that people often feel estranged from God because life begins from cessation, that is, when man is "not yet" of the world, and ends in death, when man is "no more" of the world. This is the principle that in her later writing Arendt will refer to as the "desert." Human beings belong to the condition of the "desert." In her reading of Augustine she focuses on the fact that "We exist only insofar as we relate to the 'before' and 'not yet' of our existence" (Arendt 1996, 73). The transience of the human being means that s/he is removed from the world s/he was born into and the world that s/he created through love (Arendt 1996, 74). Death enables the transcendence of the human being: "Death shows man that he is nothing if man does not understand himself as a part of the whole" (Arendt 1996, 75). Arendt insists that the transcendent human being has to love but must choose what to love. We cannot choose to love the world, for it seduces us, but we can look to the "before" and choose to love God: "Man knows himself as a creature when he chooses the Creator in *caritas*" (Arendt 1996, 77).

According to Augustine the human being is subject to the law *Thou shalt not covet* which means that love of the world for its own sake is denied to humans. "The knowledge we have from the law is the knowledge of covetousness" (Arendt 1996, 81). Covetousness is love of the world for its own sake. Man ignores his nature by loving the things that are made rather than loving the maker. He follows habit and habit leads to certain death for it blinds him from the reality of death. "Habit is the eternal yesterday and has no future," said Arendt. In Christianity love of the world for its own sake has to be translated into the prohibition of covetousness. Conscience is divine; it calls man back from habit and reminds man of the law which is his essence: *thou shalt not covet*: "The fulfillment of the law is the 'perfect-

ing of good' and the 'consuming of evil'" (Arendt 1996, 86). Coveting is forbidden but through this prohibition love of the world for its own sake is revealed. The paradox of love means that the call for betrayal of the world actually testifies to the genuine love of the world. Grace enhances sublimated love. When man turns to God asking for His help to complete the requirements of the law, then God offers help to man and He no longer functions as the creator but as "a giver of help" (Arendt 1996, 89), or as the origin of grace. God helps man follow the law even as man knows that he is inferior to the law. Once he is delivered from the world the human being understands that it is merely a desert and that the only reason s/he is able to live in this desert is because of *caritas*. "Thus *caritas* accomplishes the 'tending to be,' as *cupiditas* accomplishes the 'approach to nothingness'" (Arendt 1996, 90). In *caritas* the human being loves herself/himself the way God loves her/him, that is, the human hates her/his passions and denies herself/himself everything that is of the world. This poses a problem for Arendt who does not see the love of the other as mediated through the love of God. Freud, too, does not think that sublimated love is necessarily a form of belief. But both Arendt and Freud join neighborly love to trust and hope in the human kind.

Love of neighbor is man's attitude toward his neighbor, which springs from *caritas*. It goes back to two basic relations: first, a person is to love his neighbor as God does . . . ; and second, he is to love his neighbor as he loves himself. . . . In line with these basic relations, we propose two questions: first, how does the self-denying person meet his neighbor; and second, in this encounter what is the neighbor's role? (Arendt 1996, 93)

The notion of sublimation comprises a clear distinction between *cupiditas* and *caritas*. *Caritas* is sublimated love and it is love as *caritas* that is necessary for the existence of the world and for relations between human beings. When *cupiditas* or carnal love is deferred then *caritas* binds the self and the neighbor so that they become lovers of the world.

Arendt presents the Augustinian claim that the human being loves her/his fellow through the exercise of self-denial, which is precisely how God loves the creature through the denial of her/his desire. The human being loves her/his neighbor as an equal, in isolation, according to the laws of the desert which are those laws that require that the human being does not love the world but its creator, does not exist in carnal but in divine love. The neighbor belongs to historical time and the human being may return to God if s/he loves unconditionally: "love amounts to renouncing any independent choice and any original established relation with the world" (Arendt 1996, 95). Arendt comments that the denial of the self and the practice of neighborly love enable man to return to God in the form of the one who accepts the renunciation of carnal love and desire. "This return through recapturing his own being, and the isolation achieved in it, is the sole source of neighborly love" (Arendt 1996, 95). One does not love what is of the

world in the neighbor but rather one loves in her/him what God loves in her/him, that is, what s/he hates in herself/himself: the human being's foreignness in the world is beloved to God, just as it is hateful to her/his own consciousness. These tenets are a form of sublimation very similar to Freud's categories. Just as Freud wrestles with love of neighbor Arendt thinks that love of neighbor is central to Augustine. Thus, "I deny the other person so as to break through to his real being, just as in searching for myself I deny myself" (Arendt 1996, 96). Every person is loved as much as another person for each person is just an occasion to love what is of God in that person. "It is not really the neighbor who is loved in this love of neighbor—it is love itself" (Arendt 1996, 97).

We believe in the other person and trust that he will prove himself to be worthy of our love. Our co-existence precedes proof of the other's worthiness, which is to say we choose to believe even before we are given reason to do so. We do this because we recognize that we are both before God. Since we all descend from primordial man, from Adam, our kinship makes it so that we believe in the right to give and receive love, to receive God's help to follow the law and thus we merit equality in grace.

#### LOVE IN THE STATE OF THE PLURALITY OF HUMAN AFFAIRS

Arendt specifically discusses religious love in *The Human Condition* in the context of good works. Religious love is related to Arendt's study of love in the realm of human affairs specifically with regards to doing good in the public sphere. Christianity tells us that one has to perform acts of goodness in secret for when good is done in public it loses its very quality of goodness. Arendt asserts that the doer himself must not be witness to his own good-doing. "Good deeds can never keep anybody company; they must be forgotten the moment they are done, because even memory will destroy their quality of being 'good.' . . . Good works, because they must be forgotten instantly, can never become part of the world; they come and go, leaving no trace. They truly are not of this world" (Arendt 1958, 76). This is similar to sublimation, for love's effects are not made public. Goodness, which is divine and secret, and sublimation, which is ethical, happen in solitude because they comprise consciousness, gratitude, and thinking. These are activities that the self performs in the form of an internal dialogue. Such knowledge is equivalent to deferring desire, *cupiditas*, and practicing sublimation, *caritas*. "The otherworldliness of religious experience, in so far as it is truly the experience of love in the sense of an activity, and not the much more frequent one of beholding passively a revealed truth, manifests itself within the world itself; this, like all other activities does not leave the world, but must be performed within it" (Arendt 1958, 77). Paradoxically though, true goodness negates the political sphere. "Goodness that comes out of its hiding and assumes a public role is no



longer good, but corrupt in its own terms and will carry its own corruption wherever it goes" (Arendt 1958, 78).

Yet it is hard to understand why Arendt is inspecting the lover of good deeds only from the position of the benefactor who must not know of her/his deed in order not to corrupt it and turn it into a transaction or self-interest. Neighbourly love does leave trace in the world. In psychoanalytical terms we could say that the emotional consequences of the good deeds influence the receiver and s/he is swayed to feel gratitude for the good that is done to her/him.

The paradox is between the worldly as corrupting and the worldly as emanating from divine being. In *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*, Peg Birmingham focuses the difference between good works and love on the soul itself which is seen both as temporal and hence integral in the world and as radical alterity and hence of divine origin:

Arendt points out that when Augustine grasps that God is "the essence of the heart," he discovers a radical alterity that marks the self "at the heart of the self, that which is in me but is not me." For both Augustine and Arendt, desire and questioning arise out of a double negative that characterizes the givenness of human existence in time: "This questioning beyond the world rests on the double negative into which life is placed. And this double negative (the 'not yet' and the 'no more') means exactly the same as 'before' and 'after' in the world..." This generative origin that cannot be remembered or reclaimed in desire nevertheless gives rise to memory, desire, and meaning. Memory, desire, and meaning are suffused with this generative origin that cannot itself be explicitly recalled or possessed." (Birmingham 2006, 80–81).

On the one hand goodness and love rely on a person's capacity for solitude or for divine consciousness and thinking, but whereas thinking that is directed toward the creator distances us from the world, thinking that is directed toward the neighbour helps us to confer love and concern for the world.

#### RADICAL EVIL: THE ABSENCE OF THOUGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY

If love and goodness negate the world even while they bring goodness and love to the world, then thinking, too, simultaneously dismisses the existence of the world for the very purpose of allowing it to exist, but thought is less of a solitary act than the performance of good deeds, because in thought one is in constant dialogue with oneself. The "I" is a witness to the judgments and thoughts that take place in the mind. Thinking is directly related to morality; in fact, moral actions prove that one is thinking. It is important to remember that for Freud thinking is a form of sublimation and it includes knowledge, ethical judgment. In the case of Leonardo Da Vinci without thinking there is not love. In Arendt without thinking there is not love of neighbor. Arendt will further argue that with no love of neighbor

there is murder. In "Collective Responsibility," Arendt asserts that the feelings of the goodness of the self are of consequence in Socrates's proposition: "It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong" (Arendt 2003a, 151). Here, thinking and self-criticism obviously influence the world and in this sense goodness emerges from thinking; it has visible political outcomes. Socrates cannot murder for he refuses to live with a murderer; only thinking can yield such a relation to the self. In the following section I will show that the position that Socrates takes in relation to good is essentially the same as a position in relation to the world that emerges from the love of the other. But in her attempt to elucidate the interconnectedness of thinking, responsibility, and love of the neighbour Arendt has to speak on the one being which is radically evil because he lacks the capacity to think, be responsible, and care for the neighbour. The flaw that explains Eichmann's evil is his inability to think.

Lack of self-reflection and critical thinking is a prime cause of evil. Arendt describes Eichmann as subject to a pathological condition that prevents him from engaging in a dialogue with himself, which is to say he is incapable of thinking. From this madness (a madness that pervades totalitarian regimes that reduce human beings to the lowest common denominator so that humans become similar to animals and cease to be able to think) emerges the "banality of evil." Eichmann could not think and although he understood that he was wrong morally he rationalized his actions as the fulfillment of orders. Eichmann represents a radical form of conformity, where conformity precludes thinking. Arendt further argues in relation to the offence itself, "This is the true hallmark of those offences of which, since Kant, we call 'radical evil' and about whose nature so little is known, even to us who have been exposed to one of their rare outbursts on the public scene" (Arendt 1958, 241). *Radical evil* emerges when a regime turns the commandment *thou shalt not kill* to its opposite, commanding the functionaries of the administration *thou shalt kill*, and thus destroys the realm of human affairs. There are also individual, isolated acts of evil that are not effected by a regime. Susan Neiman studies evil, "a way of marking the fact that it shatters our trust in the world," thus she clarifies that the effects of evil are crucial, not just its cause (Neiman 2002, 9). Under the Third Reich, "radical evil" included one more perverse imperative, *thou shalt bear false witness*.<sup>11</sup> "Radical evil" is also characterized as that which can be neither punished nor forgiven. This is what makes it so radical an offence, since it undermines and destroys our very humanity, where humanity is defined by our ability to forgive. In relation to the radical evil that Eichmann signifies Arendt favors a divine-like punishment that makes the criminal perish and repeats with Jesus: "It were better for him that a millstone hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea" (Arendt 1958, 241).

In "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship," Arendt writes, "The non-participants were those whose consciences did not function in this, as it were,

automatic way. . . . Hence they also chose to die when they were forced to participate. To put it crudely, they refused to murder, not so much because they still held fast to the command 'Thou shalt not kill,' but because they were unwilling to live together with a murderer—themselves" (Arendt 2003b, 44). In order to live with oneself one must constantly engage in an inner dialogue, which is to say one must never cease to think.

One of the effects of totalitarianism is the destruction of the space of love. Totalitarianism coerces the human being to live in isolation and fear of the other and hence actively destroys the space of intimate love. This means that totalitarian regimes institute laws that interfere with the very structure of the family. Thus, for example, the Nazis regulated marriage and prohibited "inferior" people from marrying "superior" Aryans. In totalitarian regimes the bonds between people are constantly under assault by policing practices that force family members to spy on one another and to inform on relations and friends alike. Totalitarianism destroys both public spaces—the political sphere—and personal space, or intimacy.<sup>12</sup>

Arendt could have argued straightforwardly but did not say that totalitarian regimes destroy a basic need and capacity for love. When this capacity for love is destroyed those who function according to the totalitarian laws are willing to do so because all the energy that is given to concern and gratitude for the other has been transformed into fear of the other and anxiety that laws of action might completely disappear from the totalitarian state. In *The Promise of Politics*, Arendt writes: "Once this world of relationships is destroyed, then the laws of political action . . . are replaced by the laws of the desert, which, as a wasteland between men, unleashes devastating processes that bear within them the same lack of moderation inherent in those free human actions that establish relationships" (Arendt 2005, 190). Democratic laws enhance the body politic as they enhance friendships but totalitarianism suspends these laws for the sake of the impersonal, inhuman "law" of history that Arendt calls "the laws of the desert."

This becomes truly tragic when a "wasteland" prevails between human beings who have lost their basic rights. The salient example that Arendt uses is the status of "statelessness" that Jews held after the Second World War. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt describes this emotional, intellectual and active barrenness that rules over the treatment of refugees and stateless people.

They [stateless persons] lack the tremendous equalizing of differences which comes from being citizens of some commonwealth and yet, since they are no longer allowed to partake in the human artifice, they begin to belong to the human race in much the same way as animals belong to a specific animal species. The paradox involved in the loss of human rights is that such loss coincides with the instant when a person becomes a human being in general—without a profession, without a citizenship, without an opinion, without a deed by which to identify and specify himself—and different in general, represent-

ing nothing but his own absolutely unique individuality which deprived of expression within and action upon a common world, loses all significance. (Arendt 1951, 297–98)<sup>13</sup>

Radical evil deprives the human being of the right to have rights. Without being a citizen, the subject of the right of action, one loses the right of agency both in the political and in the private sphere. The denial of the right to think, to act, to have a voice in the public sphere and to impart libidinal investment in both the public and the private spheres are equal to dehumanization.

### LOVE, FORGIVENESS AND MAKING PROMISES

Arendt vacillates about whether good deeds do or do not leave a trace on one's relation to the neighbour. This vacillation is particularly relevant to Arendt's appreciation of the role that love and forgiveness play in the public sphere. Does Arendt envision that sublimated love may become a political power? I believe that Arendt relates love to one of the most important political actions, forgiveness, possibly because forgiveness is seen as an initiative or a position that enables a new beginning. Forgiveness is defined as the ceasing of negative affect toward the perpetrator. In order to explain the structure of forgiveness, Arendt compares love and forgiveness. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt writes,

Forgiving and the relationship it establishes is always an eminently personal (though not necessarily individual or private) affair in which what was done is forgiven for the sake of who did it. This, too, was clearly recognized by Jesus ('Her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little'), and it is the reason for the current conviction that only love has the power to forgive. (Arendt 1958, 242)

Right from the beginning love and forgiveness enhance each other so that both of them are divine and contingent in the world.

For love, although it is one of the rarest occurrences in human lives, indeed possesses an unequalled power of self-revelation and an unequalled clarity of vision for the disclosure of *who*, precisely because it is unconcerned to the point of total unworldliness with *what* the loved person may be, with his qualities and shortcomings no less than with his achievements, failings, and transgressions. (Arendt 1958, 242)

Love is political because it is related to the structure of action. Only in action does the human being disclose *who* s/he is. Love is the natural habitat of self-revelation and hence it co-inhabits action.

Love, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others. (Arendt 1958, 242)

Despite the fact that love disregards the *what*, Arendt cannot explain forgiveness, which is implicated in sublimation, other than via using the structure of action. Love disregards the *what* and stresses the *who*, forgiveness stresses both the *what*, which is not forgiven, and the *who*, which is forgiven.

As long as its spell lasts, the only in-between which can insert itself between two lovers is the child, love's own product. The child, this in-between to which the lovers now are related and which they hold in common, is representative of the world in that it also separates them; it is an indication that they will insert a new world into the existing world. Through the child it is as though the lovers return to the world from which their love had expelled them. But this new worldliness, the possible result and the only possibly happy ending of a love affair, is, in a sense, the end of love, which must either overcome the partners anew or be transformed into another mode of belonging together. Love, by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces. (Arendt 1958, 242)

Arendt imagines sublimated love only in the form of raising a family and educating children. But in *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality*, Patricia Bowen-Moore writes, "the promise inherent in natality is rooted in the experience of love which takes into account the world of human existence. Natality's full expression of this type of love—a love open to the world and its promises—is amor mundi: love of the world" (Bowen-Moore 1989, 19). Natality equals sublimated love. The lovers become lovers of the world because of the fruits of their love but it is intimate loving that educates their affections and teaches them to love the world, rather than to merely be enclosed in discreet love.

Arendt explicitly compares symbolic love or sublimation and respect and friendship, and suggests that without it the activity of people in concert in the public sphere of politics is almost inconceivable. Arendt presents the analogy between respect and love:

If it were true, therefore, as Christianity assumed, that only love can forgive because only love is fully receptive to *who* somebody is, to the point of being always willing to forgive him whatever he may have done, forgiving would have to remain altogether outside our considerations. Yet what love is in its own, narrowly circumscribed sphere, respect is in the larger domain of human affairs. Respect, not unlike the Aristotelian *Philia politikē*, is a kind of 'friendship' without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us, and this regard is independent of qualities which we may admire or of achievements which we may highly esteem." (Arendt 1958, 242–43)

Sublimation is called by Arendt *Philia politikē*. The distance between people that sublimation enables thus introducing respect and friendship into politics is pre-

cisely what Freud calls aim-inhibited love between members of the community. Sublimation is interpersonal. Sublimation is necessary in order to feel respect and friendship in the public sphere. Friendship and respect, in turn, enhance the political world of action. Doing and acting can be affective when these deeds and words proliferate and expand the network of mutual relations between people. This network comprises friendships which rely on trust or faith in each other. Speaking and being heard both depend upon respect but they may also generate glory or fame. People acquire a place in history when their actions and words are discussed. To put it differently, people are remembered for being the originators or the carriers of new actions and also when they are the subjects of stories and histories, as is the case with Achilles in Homer's epic, for example. If friendship and respect emerge from sublimated love then acting in concert increases sublimation in the life of the city and the state. Political decisions and actions, such as forgiveness and the making of promises, are grounded in sublimation in order to effect change.

Yet Arendt clearly designates when forgiveness is inappropriate. "The alternative to forgiveness . . . is punishment," writes Arendt. "It is therefore quite significant, a structural element in the realm of human affairs, that men are unable to forgive what they cannot punish and that they cannot punish what has turned out to be unforgivable" (Arendt 1958, 241). This means, on the one hand, that one has to ask for forgiveness in order to receive it, but, on the other hand, it means that one cannot receive forgiveness even if one asks for it, when the transgression belongs to the realm of radical evil. Forgiveness can free one from a wrong that s/he committed in the past and enables one to continue living in the present as a participant in the world of new beginnings. The wrongdoer does not remain tied to an action that he committed in the past; is not eternally connected to guilt that emerges from the results of such wrongdoing. However, "radical evil" that eliminates the human capacity for thinking is neither punishable nor forgivable and this is the reason that forgiveness must transcend the realm of human affairs.

Although the discussion of love is explicit in forgiveness Arendt also talks about the "passion" of making promises. How do we understand this? In politics, treaties between men are needed to protect us against two threats. The first is the "darkness of the human heart," an indirect reference to the passions and to love, that is, the fact that humans cannot vouchsafe who they will be from one day to the next. And the second is the unknown consequences of actions that men take in a community of peers, all equal to one another in power and in action and speech. Men are not masters of the reality that they live in and produce. Promises are islands of predictability, guideposts of reliability that the bodies politic erect. "The moment promises lose their character as isolated islands of certainty in an ocean of uncertainty, that is, when this faculty is misused to cover the whole ground of the future and to map out a path secured in all directions, they lose

their binding power and the whole enterprise becomes self-defeating” (Arendt 1958, 244). Arendt argues that the future always looks chaotic and uncertain to human beings, but the faculty of making promises introduces basic reliability to the future.

Arendt discusses this passion in the context of the biblical Abraham (then still called Abram). Making promises institutes a borderline between the private and the political. In relation to Abraham, Arendt asserts, “His whole story, as the Bible tells it, shows such a passionate drive toward making covenants that it is as though he departed from his country for no other reason than to try out the power of mutual promise in the wilderness of the world, until eventually God himself agreed to make a Covenant with him” (Arendt 1958, 244). This “passionate drive toward making promises” is related to sublimation and the need to turn the neighbor into a close ally bound by passion. From Kierkegaard to Derrida (Derrida 1995, 91), Western philosophy has always defined Abraham as the subject of the sacrifice of Isaac. He is a man of faith, since he believes in the need to preserve the law even when the law is not illuminated by the light of reason, even when duty resides in obscurity. This culminates in his decision to sacrifice his own son in order to preserve the law. Arendt brings to the fore a completely new understanding of Abraham. She does not speak about the “*Akedah*,” the sacrifice of Isaac, does not mention obedience to the law, but stresses the passion for making promises. Isaac was not sacrificed in the end—a lamb substituted for him as the divine offering. Yet Arendt is the only philosopher to argue that Abraham is a very particular believer, since he believes in the power of mutual promising. Long before the birth of Isaac a covenant was made between God and Abraham. It justified his exile from Ur, his leaving Chaldees, his subjecting his seed to being “a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years” (Genesis 15:13). Passion is the opposite of the desert that humans belong to without covenants. Abraham converts the desert into a world. What is outside human existence becomes world, is subject to *amor mundi*, when he forces God to make a contract with him: “In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates”<sup>14</sup> (Genesis 15:18).

In this sense, making promises is related to emotions such as trust and love. Breaching promises could lead to the demise of entire cultures and wreak havoc on personal relationships. This means that making promises enables people to trust one another and to trust civilization. Individuals and states know that whatever the situation is in the future they can rely on a set of treaties or promises that they made to guide them, to portray a known path in an otherwise unknown world. These are the reasons that promise-making is relevant to sublimated love and to natality for they substantiate the newness that action and speech bring into the world, but they introduce something of the present to the future and thus make



it less frightening and alienating. Both forgiveness and making promises signify that although the human being is mortal his actions and his words can introduce something new into the world and thus they make the new reverberate in the public sphere and create the body politic:

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope. . . . It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced the 'glad tidings': 'A child has been born to us.'" (Arendt 1958, 247)

Arendt's innovative study of hope comes to the fore when she connects it to birth and the glad tidings. She refrains from studying hope in the context of Saint Paul, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity [*agape*, love]" (1 Corinthians 13:13) According to Alain Badiou, "With Paul and his successors, hope is described as pertaining to justice. Faith allows one to have hope in justice" (Badiou 2003, 93). But Arendt is not interested in hope that is related to the day of judgment but in the hope that emerges from "natality." Man came into the world in order to introduce to it a new beginning in the form of action based on domestic love that culminates in giving birth to a new human being and in the form of love of neighbor that brings about cooperation between people and includes forgiveness and the passion of making promises. Hope does not pertain to the law and to justice but to people's ability to imitate God in the love that they impart to the world in order to turn it from desert to world.

#### LOVE IN THE LOOPHOLE OF EXISTENCE, BETWEEN PARIAH AND PARVENU

To close the circle I will show that another early text of Arendt pivots on the question of love. This time it is related to a Jewess and the genre in which love transpires is the autobiography. What is the story of love in the biography of the German Jewess Rahel Varnhagen? *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* is Arendt's volume that is wholly devoted to the function of love in the public sphere. Much has been written about this book both because it illuminates the institution of the *Salon* as a sphere that blurs clear distinctions between the private and the public, the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, the male and the female, the oral and the literary expressions, and because it offers a perspective on the political sphere of human plurality that is very different from the one that Arendt develops in *The Human Condition*. In "The Pariah and Her Shadow: Hannah Arendt's Biography of Rahel Varnhagen," Seyla Benhabib gives a trenchant analysis of the eighteenth-century salon as an institution that transgresses the boundary between the private and

the public sphere, thus determining Arendt's modern understanding of the social in the aftermath of totalitarianism and the Holocaust.

The salons must be viewed as transitory but also as fascinating precursors of a certain transgression of boundaries between the public and the private. Arendt developed her political philosophy to ward off such transgressions, but as a radical democrat she could not but welcome such transgressions if they resulted in authentic political activity, in a community of "speech and action." (Benhabib 1996, 21)

In fact, Rahel Varnhagen's biography may help us to relocate the role that love and psychoanalysis play in the thought and writings of Hannah Arendt.

In this biography Arendt specifically examines the love life of Rahel Varnhagen because love defines Varnhagen's loyalties to herself as an individual and delineates the structure of her social desire as it indicates that despite her need to transcend her Jewish origins and become fully assimilated she attains love of the world only as a pariah. The sublimation of love—Rahel Varnhagen's ability to turn insult into an opportunity for personal change, betrayal into longing, Jewish ethnic and religious particularism into transcendence offered by conversion, and most important, love into gratitude—is central to the biography. Though she starts her journey as an "injured soul" Varnhagen eventually finds for herself "a place in the history of European humanity" (Arendt 1957, 185). In "Between Pariah and Parvenu [social achiever]," the most celebrated chapter of the biography, Arendt signals that Varnhagen was pliant in her dealings with the outside world. She needed to be recognized as an equal although she remained attached to her identity as a Jewess and at the same time she was proud of her social achievements as a parvenu. According to Arendt a loophole in Rahel Varnhagen's existence propelled her search for meaning in her own life and enabled her to accept aging and her looming death:

That she succeeded in salvaging her pariah qualities when she entered her parvenu existence opened up a loophole for her, marked out a road toward aging and dying. It was the very loophole through which the pariah, precisely because he is an outcast, can see life as a whole, and the very road upon which the pariah can attain to his "*great* love from free existence." It is offered to the pariah if, though unable to revolt as an individual against the whole of society, he disdains the alternative of becoming a parvenu and is recompensed for his "wretched situation" by a "view of the whole." That is his sole dignified hope: "that everything is related; and in truth, everything is good enough. This is the salvage from the *great* bankruptcy of life." (Arendt 1957, 175)

Only the pariah can truly love existence, rather than be immersed in intimate love that shuts the world outside. Love of existence includes the passionate aspect of making agreements with others, and it is sublimated so that the pariah's love

appears in the form of friendships. Such love equals hope because it combines natality—the action and speech that the salon hosts—and a personal new beginning that the lover, Varnhagen, actively advances. Varnhagen is hopeful that she can change the world according to her desire so that it will accept her own change from a Jewess to a European intellectual. I am interested in this passage for two reasons. First, it shows how sublimated love can also equal sublimated violence or the sublimation of suicidal instincts. Rather than give up on having a life filled with knowledge, art, and friendship Varnhagen institutes a loophole in which she can exist and maintain the hope that love and sublimation are “everything” and that “everything is good enough” even if she remains a pariah. Second, the terms that Arendt is eager to use can be interpreted in psychoanalytic terminology despite her resistance to psychoanalysis.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to note that like Freud, and like Varnhagen, Arendt finds value in making the interstices of the mind available to the public sphere of friendship, a sphere that emerges from speaking to the other about the self, not just about the world, and from acting on the basis of sublimated love, not just on the basis of the political cause. The final page of the biography lists Varnhagen’s personal triumphs: as a parvenu Varnhagen had “freedom and equality” and as a pariah and a Jewess she maintained a connection with “true realities” (Arendt 1957, 183). Arendt concludes, “Only because she clung to both conditions did she find a place in the history of European humanity” (Arendt 1957, 185).

## CONCLUSION

By reading Arendt through Varnhagen’s elusive love, and particularly sublimation, we see that these concepts play a central role in her work. The split between erotic and sublimated love implies two kinds of love, one is unworldly and even faulty, that is, intimate love, *Eros*, that belongs only to the lovers; the other is worldly—whether it is the Christian love of God, *agape*, and of the good or the Greek *philia* or friendship and forgiving. Worldly love is necessary in the political life of action, speech and friendship, *philia*. In Arendt’s work it is especially true that action in non-totalitarian societies produces friendship and respect between people. Such action in turn requires forgiveness and the passion for making promises. At the same time, the alliance for action depends on our capacity to have aim-inhibited relations of love in order to augment interactions that might create new activities and introduce new ideas into the world. In the public sphere such affects as friendship and respect emerge from action but they might be called aim-inhibited love relations for they are consubstantial with love in the private realm of personal relationships.

In Freud’s writing love and sublimation bring people together in such a way that the individual becomes libidinally connected to his fellowmen when s/he

engages in actions such as working together and building the community. Here love is sublimated although the ties between the actors are also libidinal. In politics such sublimated love relation brings about the creation of civilizations. In art, specifically, sublimation brings about the expansion of knowledge in aesthetics and in ethics. Thus for both Freud and Arendt, love is central and it exists in both the private sphere and in the realm of worldliness.

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## NOTES

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1. Even outside of psychoanalysis, in *Inventing Human Rights*, Lynn Hunt suggests that the eighteenth century based its understanding of human rights, *droits de l'homme*, on the capacity to feel empathy toward others. Love is a primary affect and an event—it is unpredictable—in the lives of human beings, without which we cannot fully experience ourselves as being alive, cannot reply to the question “am I alive?” with a “yes!” Human rights do not subsume only those phallus-oriented rights, such as autonomy, knowledge and justice but are also concerned with desires that are fundamental to the development of healthy, socially active human beings. Chief among these desires are love and empathy. Also, Jonathan Lear views psychoanalysis as a system that produces love and binds it to sublimation in each and every act of interpretation that the analyst and the analysand undertake. Here empathy and love coincide with each other. “It [interpretation] is a conceptualization that is lovingly directed toward and in touch with its ‘object.’ A good-enough interpretation is thus structured like an emotion. For the interpretation is itself sublimation, an organized manifestation of love, and it is lovingly directed toward the drives which are less organized manifestations. And so the acceptance and internalization of a good-enough interpretation is part of an emotional reorientation toward one's inner and outer world” (Lear 1990, 213–14).
2. Sublimation is a difficult Freudian concept. Laplanche and Pontalis criticize Freud's conviction that, “This capacity to exchange its originally sexual aim for another one, which is no longer sexual but which is psychically related to the first aim, is called the capacity for sublimation” (quoted in Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 432). They argue that “Freud's formulations regarding sublimation were never very far reaching . . . for example does it include all work involving thought or merely certain types of intellectual production?” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 432). They ask if sublimation is given high social esteem or if it covers the realm of adaptive activities including work and leisure. What poses difficulty is “the question . . . whether it [sublimation] concerns the aim alone, as Freud long maintained, or both the aim and the object of the instinct” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 432).

3. In *The Neighbor*, I am closer to Kenneth Reinhard's study of love of the neighbor, as will be shown further on.
4. In 1938, before the Second World War breaks out, Freud recognizes that Thanatos, too, can combine humans into larger units which can be murderous as well as bonding, but here the death drive is active, not Eros. "We live in very remarkable times. We find with astonishment that progress has concluded an alliance with barbarism. . . . It was a real weight off the heart to find, in the case of the German people, that retrogression into all but prehistoric barbarism can come to pass independently of any progressive idea" (Freud 1967, 66–67).
5. See Arendt's discussion of the institution of the "Salon" in *Rebel Varnhagen: The Life of A Jewess* (Arendt 1957).
6. In Leonardo's case, it would not be correct to quote Shakespeare, who says that "Love looks not with the eye, but with the mind, and therefore is winged cupid painted blind," for using the eyes of a painter Leonardo examines the object carefully before he can love it (Shakespeare 1997, Act 1, Scene 1, Line 234).
7. It is also important to remember that the circumstances of writing books about *Love and Saint Augustine* and *Civilization and Its Discontents* in Germany and in Austria between two world wars strongly influence Arendt and Freud. Surely economic difficulties and national and racist rhetoric that undo sociability prompted these thinkers to claim that love propels culture and politics.
8. For an inclusive study of Arendt's interpretation of Augustine, see *Arendt, Augustine, and the New Beginning: The Action Theory and Moral Thought of Hannah Arendt in the Light of her Dissertation on St. Augustine*, by Stephen Kampowski (Kampowski 2008).
9. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud declares that "love thine enemy" is a greater imposition than "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Freud 1961, 67).
10. In psychoanalytical terms we might say that this is an instance of original oneness between sexuality or passion and the divine, enriching the experience of the sacred or of the love of God. (See Loewald 1988, 11.)
11. See also Elizabeth Young-Bruehl who confirms that totalitarianism "is the disappearance of politics: a form of government that destroys politics, methodically eliminating speaking and acting human beings and attacking the very humanity of first a selected group and then all groups. In this way totalitarianism makes people superfluous as human beings. This is its radical evil" (Young-Bruehl 2006, 39). To deprive people of the possibility to be in relationships that are focused on the world is the equivalent of eliminating politics and eliminating the humanity of such people. They cannot talk to one another about their worldviews nor can they humanize the world by having views about it and by trying to change the world according to views that come into existence when people talk about the world and act on their opinions.
12. In "Toward a Political Theology of the Neighbor," Kenneth Reinhard interprets Arendt's analysis of the neighbor in totalitarianism: "Arendt's analysis suggests that what is lost in totalitarianism is the spacing proper to the function of the neighbor. To destroy the relation of the neighbor is to eliminate the breathing space that keeps the subject in proper relationship to the Other, neither too close nor too far, but in proximity, the 'nearness' that proximity entails" (Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard 2005, 26). "Nearness" is the space of both love and action in which the *who* of the agent/neighbor is disclosed.

13. In *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*, Peg Birmingham understands the relation of human rights to the creation of a world in which people have the right to belong to a community. By the same token she also explains the wilderness, the lack of love between people. "For Arendt, more fundamental than the rights of justice and freedom is the right to action and opinion and the right to belong to a political community in which one's speech and action are rendered significant" (Birmingham 2006, 36).
14. Paradoxically this covenant disrupts the creation of a common world to be shared by the modern Israel and Palestine, for Israel contends that the vast territory between Egypt and Iraq belongs to it while Palestine thinks that the people who have for centuries been living off this land own it; they have been loving it by inhabiting it.
15. Arendt makes no secret of the fact that she is averse to the ways in which psychoanalysis makes political use of communication between people. Arendt believed that psychoanalysis teaches people to resolve unhappiness through conformity and she saw this as harmful to both the individual and the larger community. Arendt views psychoanalysis as promoting complacency of both doctor and patient. "Modern psychology is desert psychology," writes Arendt.

When we lose the faculty to judge—to suffer and condemn—we begin to think that there is something wrong with us if we cannot live under the conditions of desert life. In so far as psychology tries to "help" us, it helps us "adjust" to those conditions, taking away our only hope, namely that we, who are not of the desert though we live in it, are able to transform it into a human world. Psychology turns everything topsy-turvy: precisely because we suffer under desert conditions we are still human and still intact; the danger lies in becoming true inhabitants of the desert and feeling at home in it. (Arendt 2005, 201)

Arendt wrongly accuses psychoanalysis of escaping from the loopholes of existence—for Freud's probing of the unconscious is consubstantial with the assumption that meanings that reside within this "desert," to borrow the term from Arendt, can establish one's identity despite environmental pressures.

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