

An Evaluation of Violence and Power in Arendt's Political Philosophy BY

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Abstract

Arendt's radical thinking of the conceptualization of violence and power was a response to the failings of global democracies. Those who wield power used violence to perpetrate their "frescos stupidity". Her thought was also a response to the negative implication of violence that is presently bedeviling our contemporary world today. These fundamental challenges facing our world today include wars, kidnapping, corruption, social injustices, inequality, inhuman conditions, abject poverty, hunger, poor economic system, food shortages, national insecurity, inflation, lawlessness, lack of social order and rule of law, oppression, rigging of elections, poor infrastructures, low life expectancy, poor health care system, international diplomatic conflicts, manufacturing of nuclear weapons for mass destruction, political assassination, terror and terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and human nature. Arendt's notion of power presupposes the fact that political power should aim at promoting the public good and to ensure the normative possibility of the good life in democratic society. Politics is aimed at the common good and by giving meaning to the existence of the human being. This paper, therefore, concludes that one of the strengths of Arendt's theory is that politics is not just a process but a socio-cosmic and praxiological imperative of human existential dimension. Politics retains an epistemological outlook in terms of human political and existential relationship. Finally, the epistemic realism of politics is anchored on the normative framework of the common good of all in any democratic society.

Keywords: Violence, Power, State, Politics, Community, Society.

1.1. Introduction

Arendt's radical thinking of the conceptualization of violence and power was a radical response to the failings of global democracies. Those who wield power used violence to perpetrate their frescos stupidity (Nietzsche, 2008, 143-144). Her thought was also a radical response to the negative or metaphysical implication of violence that is presently bedeviling our contemporary global society. These fundamental challenges facing our contemporary global or cosmopolitan society includes wars, kidnapping, corruption, social injustices,

inequality, inhuman conditions, abject poverty, hunger, poor economic system, food shortages, national insecurity, inflation, lawlessness, lack of social order and rule of law, oppression, rigging of elections, poor infrastructures, low life expectancy, poor health care system, international diplomatic conflicts, manufacturing of nuclear weapons for mass destruction, political assassination, terror and terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and human nature. Arendt's notion of power presupposes the fact that political power should aim at promoting the public good and to ensure the normative possibility of the good life in democratic society. Politics is aimed at the common good and by giving meaning to human politico-existential relationship.

1.2 The Bases and Influences on Arendt's Political Thought

Hannah Arendt was a radical political thinker of the twentieth century. She has been influenced by various philosophers such as Socrates, Aristotle, Nietzsche, Augustine, Fanon, Lenin and Weber. She argues that power and violence are antithetical and that power is relational. The word "relational" relates to an approach that stresses that individuals and collectivities only find their identity in relationships with one another (Hoffman and Graham, 2009:500). Arendt posits that power is a relational concept that tends to exert pressure on a person or a group of people in a political community. Power means the capacity to exert pressure on a person or group so that they do something they otherwise would not have done (Hoffman and Graham, *Ibid*). On the other hand, violence is synonymous with force. Violence is synonymous with force. The word "force" means a pressure that undermines the agency of individuals by physically harming them (Hoffman and Graham, 497-498). However, it is germane to assert that violence and force are interrelated and both concepts do not mean the same thing. Arendt's conceptualization of power and violence presupposes the ability of the state to maintain its structures for the sake of the normative justification of human society. Power means different thing to different people. Power means the ability to control people or change (Hornby, 2010:1146). Violence means violent behavior that is intended to hurt or kill (Hornby, 1959). Arendt's notion of power and violence reflects on the ideals of politics as a public process that involves – resolving conflicts of interest. Politics is undermined by force, and is inherent at every level in all society (Hoffman and Graham, 502). Ferrante sees power as the probability that an individual can achieve his or her will even against another individual's opposition (Ferrante, 2003:543). The conceptual clarification of power and violence given by Hoffman, Graham, Ferrante and Hornby is a narrow one. The whole idea of power and violence given by these scholars and Arendt is misleading and complex. Power ought to be used by the state in a positive sense by ensuring the notion of the public good rather than in a negative sense of harming the individuals in the state. Violence cannot create power but it destabilizes the power structure of the political state. Arendt's political thought has both strengths and weaknesses. Her view on justified violence is very misleading because violence and civil disobedience do not convey the same meaning. This paper is therefore saddled with the sole objective of critically evaluating Arendt's notion of power and violence in the state. Violence has moral, ethical, and metaphysical implications. Arendt's political thought is aimed at promoting the nature of human freedom, moral judgement and it is aimed at addressing the fundamental issues of the public good in society. Violence has divided our world. A world divided into compartments, a motionless, manicheanistic world, and a world of statues (Fanon, 1975:240). But since human nature is multidimensional, it is reasonable to assume that the highest and most satisfying form of happiness is linked to what is the very best within us. By fulfilling what it means to be human (Lawhead, 2002:85). Arendt's political

thought exemplifies the need for us to be human. Her political theory is geared towards the Aristotelian conception of the state. The sole objective of the formation of the state is to guarantee the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Aristotle has argued that happiness is achieved by living in accordance with our nature. Arendt's notion of politics reflects the real world situation and it showcases the necessities of life, and the correct institutional reproduction of society that is prior to the good life and the epistemic realism of politics as the normative foundation of the common good (Habermas, 1973:54). Arendt had reservations about democracy more generally (Ritzer and Stepnisky, 2014:13). It is worthy of note that her work on power and violence was also influenced by the human nature on labour as the epitome of the human specie. Marx influenced her in this objectification of labour. For Ritzer and Stepnisky, labour is thus at the same time (1) the objectification of our purpose (2) the establishment of an essential relation between human needs and the material objects of our need and (3) the transformation of our human nature (Ritzer and Stepnisky, 53).

Furthermore, Arendt's Aristotelian notion of the state as a republican government is characterized by constructions of rational natural law correctly as the attempt to find a theory by which one can produce with scientific precision, political institutions which will regulate the affairs of men with the reliability with which a clock regulates the process of nature (Arendt, 1960:291). Her political thought presupposes a reciprocal contractual obligation and a constitutive assembly of democratic citizens (Habermas, 1973:73). Her political thought was a radical response to a growing pessimism, even a depression stemming from feelings of alienation, divisiveness and impersonality. What is needed is a global value system that promotes social cohesion, vibrant community life and ecological vision of living and a sense of predictability in human affairs. She therefore suggested cultivating community feelings through democratic liberalization that strengthens social cohesion to thwart the negative features of economic globalization and render our global society more responsive to human needs (Patricia, 2013:153).

Arendt's intellectual ingenuity is radical rethinking of classical natural law and it is prior to a transference of normative categories of rational compacts of a democratic state (Habermas, 64-65). She reminds us that society is natural, and indeed, prior to the individual, and that is the fact that whenever an individual is obliged to live on their own, they find it difficult to survive. For that reason, the social instinct is implanted in all men by nature (Cohen, 2008:50). For Arendt, every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good (Foster, 2001:123-124). Moreover, her conception of the state presupposes the normative possibility of the good life. The idea of the good for Nietzsche is a useful drive of the habits of nobler hearts and it has a universal dimension where there will be no need to depend on metaphysics and the errors of religion, on harsh and violent acts, as the most powerful bond between man and man, people and people (Nietzsche, 143). He sees the states to have in common a demagogic character and the intention of influencing the masses with frescos stupidity (Nietzsche, 199). In this regard, Nietzsche and Arendt's have theoretical affinity in their conceptualization of man and the state. For Arendt, the state is a distinctly modern form of political organization. The state is two-sided: it embodies power over the people within its territory, and it expresses the power of the people as it acts on their behalf (Mackenzie, 2009:51-52). The defining feature of a state is that it uses its authority and power within a territory as a basis upon which to found external or what we usually call international

relations with other states (Mackenzie, 52). Arendt's political thought is the task of renewing a common world in a way unforeseen by the current generation; it reveals precisely the opportunity to consider the future anew, in the light of the past, according to values which may – or may not – accord with the values of the present (Howie, 2009:20). The philosophical hermeneutics of Arendt reminds us that philosophy is based on understanding and she so beautifully describes philosophy as the non – time space in the very heart of time. For Hasen, thinking in Arendt's eyes is about our readiness to wonder and it is through thinking in the existential sense that we prepare the way for the good ethical judgement (Hasen, 2009:208-209). From the Nietzschean tradition, Arendt argues that power and strength were desirable qualities that justify all things in the state. For them the state is a political term that includes people, territory, sovereignty and government (Arendt, 1978:201).

1.3 Violence and Power in Arendt's Political Philosophy

Hannah Arendt was a twentieth century political philosopher whose theoretical reconstruction and political discourse rests on thoughts about totalitarianism, revolution, freedom, human rights, thoughts and judgment. Arendt grapples with the most fundamental political events of our contemporary times and tries to navigate through their historical and philosophical imports as it affects our moral and political dimensions. The issues Arendt raises are most fundamentally and frequently the issues concerning the domains of the nature of politics, moral judgment and the nature of freedom in democratic state. For Arendt, the fundamental objective of political power in every democratic government is to enable men and women to live amicably and to guarantee the promotion of the general happiness of all individuals in order to realize the normative possibility of a classless society. Arendt's political theory aims at addressing contemporary challenges such as freedom, nuclear weapons, terror and terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, ethnic crises, political assassination, kidnapping, violence, revolution, political power and conflicts or wars. Arendt's political theory can be deeply understood in terms of the understanding of political power which has now become an instrument of violence and arbitrary control of political power which has become very destructive or detrimental to the well being of humans in their democratic society. Power has taken a violent dimension whereby the fundamental rights of the individuals to life, freedom, conscience and property have been denied by the state. What we are experiencing in contemporary democratic society is all forms of inhuman treatments which have rendered political power useless. It is worthy of note that political power has become very useless to our humanity due to the recourse to violence in human society. For Arendt, violence has been taken to be the norm of the society. According to Arendt, the notion of power and violence are conceptually distinct and even antithetical in nature. Violence destabilizes power. Accordingly, Arendt posits that violence can destroy power and cannot create power (Arendt, 11-12). Arendt's political philosophy was deeply influenced by the works of Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Jasper, and Fanon. Arendt's political thought covers a wide range of theoretical discourse but the focus on this theoretical discourse centers around her ideas of power and violence. Her theoretical discourse was a response to the worldwide students uprising, the civil rights movement and the rising level of terrorism and terror with every other form of violent activities that are prevalent in both Europe and America. Arendt just like Lenin believed that the twentieth century has become a century of wars and revolution, hence, a century of violence which has become their common denominator (Arendt, 56). The century of wars and violence has led to the technical development of the implement or instrument of violence which has reached the nodal point where no political

goal could convincingly correspond to or match their destructive potential or justify their actual use in armed conflict. Arendt's work has made a valuable intellectual contribution in the concepts of violence, politics, power; she tries to draw a distinction between power and violence. In her conceptual clarification of power, she sees power as the central political phenomenon which has become an extension of brute actions. For Arendt, power corresponds to the human ability; it is never the property of the individual but the essence of government. She stresses the relational and the potential character of power and that power springs up whenever people get together and act in unison; but it derives its political legitimacy from the initial getting together rather from any action that may follow (Arendt, 3-4). She contends that the prioritization of power over violence is not absolute; sometimes power needs violence to maintain itself. She opines that an analysis of violent act which is described as an instrumental, mute and solitary activity which can destroy, but never generate power and which therefore can never be more than poor substitute for acting together (Arendt, 44-45). For Arendt, violence is dissident revolution. For Arendt, power is effectively a mandate for an actor to take action; it is in effect the political capital that is fostered by democracy or popular support... the state needs power to be able to sustain violent actions and that the use of violence erodes this power. For Arendt, violence appears as the last resort where power is in jeopardy (Arendt, 51-52). Arendt sees violence as a form of reform or change which may lead to the situation where political loss of power will tempt men to resort to terrorist acts. Arendt challenges the whole conception of power and the point is not merely one of the linguistic property but it goes to the very heart of her political thinking (Anene, 2019:5-6). Arendt posits that power and violence are not only distinguishable but antithetical. She believes that violence is the antithesis of power. Arendt sees violence to be anti-political. Thus, for her, the very idea of political violence is self-contradictory. When there is a loss of power, there is an enormous temptation to resort to violence. The revolutionary spirit of power in the state is the public tangible freedom. Here she argues that the American Revolution is the exemplar of the revolutionary spirit, and not the French revolution which turns to terror and violence. She provides us with critical perspective for thinking about our current political life. It advances the contemporary universal effort to make political power people-oriented, friendly and responsive to the aspiration of the people to live in normative peace, harmony, self-actualization or self-determination with a deep sense of security of life and property, as well as to tame the menace of social violence in our globalized world order.

Arendt's work is a leitmotif test for a better understanding of human society that will be better organized to utilize power effectively and reduce to the barest minimum, all arbitrary uses and abuses of power and violence. Her theoretical discourse on power and violence reminds us with the full knowledge that power lies with the people. Violence is inherent in human beings and it is called violent action when situation arises and permits and when disorder is introduced into an ordered social or human environment, the result is chaos, which is tantamount to violence. Violence involves the deliberate infliction of personal injury by episodes of physical or psychological force or trauma. For Arendt, violence inspired by a short term goal can be rational. Violence is rational to the extent that it is effective in reaching the end that justifies it. Violence may be justified but it never would be legitimate. Power has many aspects and understanding and it connects with diverse aspects of human life. Power may be acquired as a means of governmental direction or in opposition to governmental group. According to Arendt, power is never a property of an individual, it belongs to a group and remains in existence only as long as the group keeps it together... what makes a man a

political being is his faculty of action; it enables a man to reach out for goals and enterprises that would never enter his mind, let alone his heart, had he not been given this opportunity to embark on something new. However, Arendt sought to understand politics as a process of truth, action and change. Arendt ex-rays the inhumanness of wars or the metaphysical implication of violence as well as decry the misconceived idea of political power, political obligation, and sovereignty which traditional political philosophy has misconstrued. Her view on politics is linked to her dissatisfaction with the origins of totalitarianism. For her, modern totalitarianism reflects government with total political power without competition; and it is a new and distinct form of government that uses terror to control the mass society (Arendt, 1958:180-181). She however, argues that politics is built on ensuring that while human life always evolves within societies, the social being as part of human nature, reflects the political life of man. He has been intentionally constructed by only a few of these societies as a space for individuals to achieve freedom through the consolidation of a common world. The human politico-existential condition has been manipulated by violence as an extreme manifestation of the use of power. Arendt raises the fundamental question of violence in political realm of democratic society. For her, power is egalitarian and non-hierarchical relation between people. It is a sheer human togetherness, a life with others and neither for or against them. For Arendt, power must be understood as relational; it exists only relationally in a plurality. The place of power falls together with the space of appearance. Power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse (Arendt, 143). However, the emergence of power is reflected in the coexistence of people. Violence, on the other hand, is politically marginal and anti-political phenomenon. Violence destroys precisely the solidarity of world order and deed that is necessary for political action. According to Arendt, power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds are not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relation and create new realities (Arendt, 46). Arendt's work is an ethical theory or moral ideal with political consequences. Her intellectual contribution reflects the most central phenomenon that touched upon the conduct of public life. Her political ideology is a clear testimony that philosophy has its "bearing on our socio-political existence". It becomes another means by which we cannot ignore reality. The aim of philosophy as the clarification of concepts is emancipatory (Wisniewski, 2007:90-91). It is worthy of note that her political thought designates the African approach to reality as harmonious monism: the human person is more existential and practical than theoretical (Iroegbu, 2000:45-46). Arendt's work reflects the democratic impulses that emanates from civil society. It is the diagnosis of the democratic constitutional state. Her conception of communicative power is formed only in the public spheres that produce inter-subjective relationships on the basis of reciprocal recognition of democratic citizens. She was even more deeply entangled in the bureaucratic net of domination and how so many people were caught in the boot-trap of the political power machine of the invisible state (Anene, 56-57). Violence diminishes power in the contemporary world. For Arendt, mankind will learn little of value concerning its perchance for violence. Violence depicts an instinctive urge or drive, the frustration of which builds energy, leading to a more outrageous explosion on account of deferral. Man will ameliorate his violent plight only by sublimating instinctual energies into useful or non-injurious activities (Baradat, 2008:293). Scholars such as Fanon, Sorel, Lorenz and Pareto believe that violence represents renewal and expresses vital force necessary to societal prosperity (Hasen, 2009, Baradat, 2008:297). The most likely outcome of employing violence to achieve one's ends is to create a

world that is fundamentally more violent. Violence breeds more violence. Arendt's theoretical discourse presupposes that the human condition is thwarted. Her work reminds us that violence is presently glorified because freedom of action is solely frustrated in modern societies. Our societies have become enormous and unworkable. The danger of violence skyrockets and paucity of genuine power beckons gun and bomb. Violence dehumanizes man whose inhumanity and destructive effectiveness increases in proportion to the distance that separate the opponents (Baradat, 297-298). Nevertheless, the emergence of violence is the clearest sign of dehumanization. For Arendt, violence does not promote causes; it promotes neither history nor revolution, but it can indeed serve to dramatize grievances and to bring them to public attention. The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is a more violent world. Arendt sees violence as a last resort to keep the power structure intact (Anene, 60-61). Power is an end in itself and a means to an end. Arendt's political thought reflects the notion of the state. For Raphael, the notion of the state has implications not only for the character of government regulation within the society but also for the relation of that society to others (Raphael, 1976: 28-29). Her political thought is a response to the triumph of social and economic concerns that tend to destroy action and politics. Her work reveals the revolutionary spirit that spells out the innermost political story of the modern age. Her analysis of the revolutionary spirit defines our understanding of the relation between politics, power and violence (Anene, 61-62).

1.4 Evaluation

Having critically examined Arendt's political thought on violence and power Arendt is not naïve to the prevalence of violence in the real world. She tries to separate politics from violence. Violence, although it can be lethal, is mute; it is instrumental. But power requires speech and articulation. She seeks to show that power must be distinguishable from violence. As observed by Arendt, the revolutionary spirit which can be read as a radical challenge to, and refutation of, the long tradition that sees all politics as having its origin in violent crimes (Arendt, 11-12). For Raphael, politics concerns the behavior of groups and individuals in matters that are likely to affect the course of government (Raphael, 27). Arendt's reflections on power and violence displays her intellectual ingenuity about an exercise of political thought as it arises out of the actuality of political incidents, the type of exercise that takes place in the gap between the past and future events. Arendt provides us with a critical perspective for thinking about our current political life (Bernstein, 2011:30-31). It is germane to note that her work is a reflection on the real world situation. The real world that confronts us here is the reality of our contemporary challenges of good governance. Her work presents us with an entirely different picture of human relations and the sharp conceptual distinction between violence and power is reasonable if we consider the moral and ethical ideals of her notion of justified violence and theory of political power. Her theoretical reconstruction of violence and power reveals the utopian vision of politics. Arendt seems to justify violence through the use of reform and civil disobedience. For McGowan, Arendt allows violence to be considered justified as a weapon of reform when the government is no longer responding to the needs of citizens and citizens wish to reform government through civil disobedience only then violence is justified. McGowan argues that conflicts are exiled from politics (McGowan, 1997:267). Violence has a destructive tendency and does not aim at addressing the public good in human society. Violence cannot be justified and cannot be misconstrued for civil disobedience. For Arendt, violence still causes destruction and does not address issues of the public good. Violence is anti-political and therefore, it is unacceptable in addressing certain grievances of

the peoples in society. For McGowan, the question of violence always stands in need of justification (McGowan, 66-67). Arendt's work reminds us of the need for political obligation. Political obligation is concerned with the clash between the individual's claim to freedom and the right of the state to claim obedience. Political obligation may be seen as any form of commitment or an allegiance a citizen has towards a constitutional authority (Hoffman and Graham, 497-498). Power must be defined within the ambit of law and politics that must be people oriented in any democratic modern society. For Arendt, the active engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of their democratic community provides them not only with the experience of public freedom and the joys of public happiness, but also with a sense of political agency and efficacy. The sharing of power that comes from civic engagement and common deliberation can provide citizens with a sense of effective political agency. Arendt advocates for direct democracy that establishes the connection between active citizenship and effective political agency. It is only by means of direct political participation and by engaging in common action and in public deliberation that citizenship can be reaffirmed and political agency effectively exercised (Anene, 73-74). Democracy reveals the need for shared political action and truth. Arendt political theory reflects the need for political obligation to provide a needed normative dimension or framework of the relations between the members of a political community and in the absence of normative justification, political community cannot claim legitimacy. Arendt's political theory indicates the need for a strong civil society and cherished liberal values that promotes the general happiness of all members. Her theoretical reconstruction implies our normative understanding of moral ethical ideals and politics, power and violence. She is a proponent of a substantive, Aristotelian form of democratic republicanism that takes political engagement to be the good life (Anene, 77-78). Every human being wants a good life. Arendt's work is geared towards feminist movement or gender equality whereby she believes that men and women should live together which is based on the tenet of gender equality. One positive sides of violence is that according to the Marxian orientation it could serve as a litmus test for social change. Arendt's democratic liberalization is deeply rooted in citizens' education. For Parry, citizen education has to be continuing education (Parry, 2001:264-265). Violence has always had a negative connotation and it is a threat to our global humanity. When we consider the instrumental character and the contemporary political significance of violence, it is worthy of note that violence is not intrinsically negative. It has its own positive side and metaphysical implication. Sometimes the state can resort to violence as the only legitimate means to guarantee the normative principle of social order because of the complexities of human nature. Arendt's postulations that violence can only be employed legitimately as a means for ensuring social order and as a last resort when other options have proved unsuccessful is somewhat misleading. It is not meant to overthrow the government but it only serves as a toll to enforce law and order. It guarantees a legitimate use of power and not to promote hegemonic influence on others. Arendt's political discourse reflects a moral ethical ideal and the normative justification of her theory of political action, violence and power helps us to reevaluate our contemporary world in which we live in, and it enunciates the power existential imperative of human action. Her theory of action, violence and power showcases political realism or political praxis. Violence is ultimately counterproductive and it has a destructive tendencies. Violence is ultimately counterproductive to human democratic society and that the use of violence in democratic society runs the risk of incorporating violence into politics generally and is very likely to bring about a more violent act. In other words, violence breeds more violence.

Arendt's postulation of power and violence raises certain fundamental issues both theoretically and practically. Many fundamental problems have been raised from the abstract theoretical discourse of her political theory. Resort to violence by the state government showcases the fact that the state has absolute power to coordinate the excesses of its members whenever there is a breach of law and order. However, the roots and causes of civil disobedience are arguably inadequately explained. Violence and civil disobedience are two separate concepts that should not be misunderstood. Violence is more lethal than civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is a legitimate way for the people to air their grievances whenever the government does not meet up to their expectations or demands. The notion of violence has contemporary significance in Arendt's theoretical discourse, and this broader conceptual clarification of violence is what linked to her notions of power and politics. Violent outburst has caused deaths, casualties, damages, human sufferings and sorrows to our contemporary world.

There is an inconsistency between her democratic and elitist stance. Her theory of action incorporates both an expressive model and a communicative model of human action which she was able to integrate adequately in her theoretical reconstruction. She stresses on the expressive model of politics and produced a vision of politics which was both too elitist and individualistic (Anene, 78-79). As observed by Arendt, her defense of politics is very difficult to wish out. Her intent in the sustainability of true democracy has been vindicated by the respect for the rule of law by most countries globally that practice democracy. Although, some other countries are still hobbled by their inability to adopt the proper ingredients of democracy build around the good intention of Arendt instances abound globally especially in African countries like Nigeria. Democratic practices in our contemporary world today have its own peculiar impairments (Anene, 79-80). The factors of corruption, poverty have been major hindrances or major setbacks or drawbacks to the success of credible elections and democratic practices all around the world. She reminds us of the fundamental problem of human nature as one of the endless challenges of our humanity. Her work is deeply rooted in the moral-ethical re-evaluation of our human politico-existential relations in democratic society. She sees democracy as that which is based on the tenets of truth, action and ethics. She believes that ethical relation and the tenet of the good life have political consequences of the public good. For her, the major objective of the state is the public enhancement of the good life. The weakness of her political theory includes the uncertainty about her political thought to practical functionality (Wisnewski, 91-92). It is worthy of note that her theory has democratic and elitist attitude. Her conception of justified violence is highly misconstruing. She misunderstood the concepts of violence and civil disobedience. For Kersting, the concepts of violence and civil disobedience have been misconstrued by various scholars in the history of political philosophy (Kersting, 1992:342-343). However, her theoretical reconstruction presupposes a radical thinking of human democratic society. She fails to draw a distinction between radical changes and gradual reform of human society.

Her theoretical discourse is characterized by a democratic republicanism and democratic cosmopolitanism. It is worthy of that her conception of justified violence is misleading. There is no clear cut distinction between violence and justified violence. Violence is lethal and dehumanizing; and there is no rational justification for violence whatever guise we may want to give it. Violence is evil. Her political theory is self-contradictory. She fails to distinguish between power and violence, revolution and reform, theory and practice, violence and civil disobedience. For Kersting, violence breaks into the order of the state, the continuity of the

order that guarantees the possibility of coexistence will be broken, and the fields of politics, on the contrary, stands under the.....of continuity (lexcontinui). The preservation of continuity is the presupposition of any state in human rights and social justice. For Kersting, civil disobedience and violent resistance are two distinct forms of political opposition, the concepts of which must be sharply distinguished (Kersting, 360-361). However, violent revolution could lead us backward and could return us to the state of nature. Arendt's political thought is strongly influenced by both Kant and Nietzsche. For Robert:

In Arendt's view, for reasons established by Kant and deepened by Nietzsche, there is a breach between being and thinking, one that cannot be closed by thought, one that cannot be closed by thought. Understood as philosophizing or contemplation, thinking is a form of egoism that isolates us from one another and our world. Despite Kant, modernity remains mired in egoism, a condition compounded by the emergence of a "mass" that consists of bodies with needs temporarily met by producing and consuming and which demands governments that minister to these needs. In place of thinking, laboring, and the administration of things now called democracy, all of which are instrumental but futile as responses to the "thrown" quality of our condition, Arendt proposed to those capable of it a mode of being political action, that she found in pronounced form in pre-Socratic Greece and briefly but gloriously at the founding of the Roman and American republics (Robert, 1999:37).

Arendt's thought is political action. Political action is initiation, the making of beginnings that can be explained neither causally nor teleologically. Political action requires the courage to initiate one knows not what. Its outcome is power; not over other people or things but mutual empowerment to continue acting in concert and thereby to overcome egoism and achieve (positive) freedom and humanity (Robert, Op.cit.).

1.5 Conclusion

We have articulated a conception of violence and power in Arendt's political philosophy, from which we realized that social injustices, imbalances, inequalities could lead to the possibilities of violent change in any democratic society. Violence could be an instrument of power although both concepts are antithetical in nature. The metaphysical implications of violence in society are destructive tendencies, human sufferings, underdevelopment, death, economic hardship, destabilization, dehumanization, economic depression, political instability, lawlessness, social-disorderliness, radical and social change rather than gradual reforms in democratic societies. Furthermore, power is prioritized over violence. Power relies solely on the instrumental nature of violence in order to adhere to its desired objective. Our democratic societies are becoming more complex and continuously insensitive to the plights of the people. However, laws and politics should be people-oriented and should aim at enhancing the promotion of the public good and the normative possibility of the good life. Violence cannot be a veritable tool for social change; and it cannot be the very best instrument for the democratic state to maintain or sustain its power structure. One of the strengths of Arendt's theory is that politics is not just a process but a socio-cosmic and praxiological imperative of human existential dimension. Politics retains an epistemological outlook in terms of human political and existential relationship. Finally, the epistemic realism of politics is anchored on the normative framework of the common good of all in any democratic society.

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