

Reimagining Politics, Policy, and Power:

How Hannah Arendt's interpretation of Augustinian *caritas* challenges zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity in an evolving landscape

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Abstract

This project suggests that Hannah Arendt's definition of Augustinian *caritas*, as developed in her dissertation, *Love and St. Augustine*, challenges zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity in a contemporary and evolving landscape. Much has been said about applying well-known Arendtian concepts to contemporary situations. There is also an existing and emerging body of literature that discusses and identifies concepts such as natality, plurality, and the iterations of *caritas* defined within her dissertation. Work is also being done to illustrate how these concepts influence her later writings. This project will specifically address the less-researched topic regarding how the *caritas* of her dissertation can contribute to real-world situations, conversations, and circumstances. This project argues that the definition of *caritas* developed in her dissertation not only informs her later works but can also capably contribute to thoughtful individual judgments and community decision-making processes in the real world. Evaluating Arendtian concepts such as plurality, individuality, thinking, political power, and belonging through this lens changes how the neighbor is understood, acknowledged, and recognized in tangible ways. Productively contributing to conversations about belonging, community, and placelessness, a *caritas*-informed approach speaks to the individual and the neighbor's "right to have rights" in the real world. The project will begin by discussing the development of *caritas* in her dissertation, focusing on how it establishes the relevance of the neighbor; it will then move to a discussion about the necessary withdrawal from the world in *caritas* (and the subsequent required return), which will later be compared to the withdrawal necessary for thinking and subsequent re-entry to public space in

order to act in concert with others. It will then address the importance of stories, memory, narratives, and new beginnings through the conditions of natality, plurality, and freedom through a *caritas*-informed lens. Lastly, it will consider thinking, judgment, and meaningful action from this evaluative vantage point and conclude with a discussion about its potential impact on political realities.

Dedication and Acknowledgments

Dedicated to the neighbor, in friendship.

I would like to thank Dr. David Webb and Dr. Patrick O'Connor for their patience, expertise, insight, and assistance. Without their encouragement and support, this project would not have been possible.

To my family: thank you for being the love in the world. I am so grateful for you.

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Introduction

To appreciate how Hannah Arendt's scholarship can contribute to contemporary conversations about human and political rights, one must first recognize the crucial influence her definition of Augustinian *caritas* has on the development of her views. This project will address the philosophical significance that her understanding of Augustinian *caritas* has on facilitating the conditions that lead her to conclude that natality is the "miracle that saves the world."¹ Her consideration of *caritas* as expressed in *Love and Saint Augustine*, the book based on her dissertation, persists throughout her oeuvre; I am arguing it is a sustaining thread of continuity running throughout her works, impacting her discussions about thinking, imagination, judgment, and action.² While it is reasonable to suggest that natality and plurality are established and developed Arendtian concepts, the significance of *caritas* has been less investigated; its prominence is evident but often hidden in plain sight. Following the research of Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, I will argue that Arendt's view of *caritas* in her dissertation work is pivotal to, not separate from, her later writings. Continuing to support Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark's claims regarding the importance that Arendt's interpretation of Augustinian *caritas* has on her political philosophy, my research proposes that her dissertation work contains critical previews and elements to her later insights about navigating the political realm, understanding the roles plurality and individuality play in the

¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, introduction by Margaret Canovan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 247.

² For the purposes of my research, I relied on the English translation and compilation of her edited dissertation, *Love and Saint Augustine*, as presented by Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark: Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, eds. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

public and private spheres, and the processes required to help determine what constitutes “moral ground for action in the public realm.”³ I am proposing that her definition of Augustinian *caritas* challenges zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity in an evolving landscape.

The prognostic concepts found in her dissertation work—*caritas*, natality, our twofold origin, the relationship between the individual and community (vis-à-vis the discussions of the neighbor, the relevance of the neighbor and the definition of loving the neighbor), and even our understanding of time—become decisive to her later discussions about the dangers of non-thinking, freedom, power structures, plurality, value attributions, and societal interactions. While much has been said, and continues to be discussed, regarding the applications of Arendtian thought to real-world scenarios, there is a gap in the literature regarding *caritas* and its role in making sense of human agency and imagination in the post-WWII world, specifically regarding how it may contribute to productive conversations and challenge zero-sum approaches to contemporary political realities. According to Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, Arendt’s “dissertation provides even more clues—not only about Arendt’s views on the context for judgment and its phenomenological dynamics, but also about the will’s links to the human world.”⁴ They argue that Arendt’s version of Augustinian *caritas* is a love that dwells in the realms of both the theoretical and “of human experience.”⁵ As Lindsey Stonebridge asserts,

³ Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” in Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, eds. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1996, 116.

⁴ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 138.

⁵ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 192.

for Arendt, navigating a post-WWII world philosophically, theoretically, academically, politically, and in day-to-day life terms meant acknowledging that the systems that had been in place were no longer capable of imagining the function they were intended to address. It meant navigating a system of justice, for example, including the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal and the Eichmann trial, in “a world unable to imagine a justice big enough for the crime which those courts attempted to try.”⁶ Stonebridge argues

In this realm, as in the camps and in the refugee community, existence is dependent not on the law, but on the luck of friendship and the grace of love. Here, it is the simple Augustinian injunction, ‘I want you to be,’ Arendt says, not the political entitlement to rights, which grounds existence. To ground a politics solely on rights is to forget this merely human interchange.⁷

To forget this “merely human interchange” is to limit the insight Arendt’s scholarship can bring to addressing crises surrounding human rights, dignity, and placelessness. I will argue that including Arendt’s consideration of *caritas* as an integral part of her assertion about “the right to have rights” amplifies the potential influence her contributions can make to the ability to

⁶ Lindsey Stonebridge, *The Judicial Imagination Writing after Nuremberg* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 9.

⁷ Stonebridge, *The Judicial Imagination Writing after Nuremberg*, 112. This translation of Augustine’s statement is contentious. There is currently little evidence to suggest that this statement is accurately attributed to him. As Stonebridge suggests on page 113 in *We Are Free to Change the World* (New York: Hogarth, 2024), it is one that “Arendt would repeat often throughout her life. But Saint Augustine never said it. It was Heidegger who in one of his early letters to his student girlfriend sagely, seductively, explained that ‘to be *in* one’s love = to be forced into one’s innermost existence. *Amo* means *volu ut sis*, Augustine once said: I love you—I want you to be what you are’ (*AMH* 20). . . . Except that it turned out that Heidegger was extrapolating overenthusiastically, and Augustine did *not* once say exactly that, according to specialists at least, who report that while he had a great deal to say about love, the Saint of Hippo never wrote *volo ut sis*. (In his eighth sermon on the first letter of John he did write: *non enim amas in illo quod est; sed quod vis ut sis* (you do not love what is in him, but what you want it to be.) He meant, however, not that you should love someone for who they are, but for what God might turn them into, which is significantly different.) Stonebridge then adds a citation to this passage and goes on to refer, in endnote 7 on page 320, to “See Margaret Miles, “*Volo ut sis: Arendt and Augustine*,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 41, no. 3 (2002), 221-24; R. Coyne, *Heidegger’s Confessions: The Remains of Saint Augustine in Being and Time and Beyond*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015, 67.” She concludes the endnote with “Thanks to Christopher Smith and Kate Kirkpatrick for expert guidance on Augustine on this point.”

confront human rights violations.⁸ I propose that a *caritas*-driven approach supports an imagination “big enough,” as Stonebridge would say, to respond to these crises effectively in part because *caritas* remembers this very “human interchange.” As Stonebridge suggests, Arendt’s scholarship clears space for discussions about rights, identity, freedom, place, and placelessness without compromising the fundamental necessity of preserving the individual.⁹ I propose that Arendt’s definition of Augustinian *caritas* in her dissertation work informs her well-known passage in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. She argues that

The human being who has lost his place in a community, his political status in the struggle of his time, and the legal personality which makes his actions and part of his destiny a consistent whole, is left with those qualities which usually can become articulate only in the sphere of private life and must remain unqualified, mere existence in all matters of public concern. This mere existence, that is, all that which is mysteriously given us by birth and which includes the shape of our bodies and the talents of our minds, can be adequately dealt with only by the unpredictable hazards of friendship and sympathy, or by the great and incalculable grace of love, which says with Augustine, “Volo ut sis (I want you to be),” without being able to give any particular reason for such supreme and unsurpassable affirmation.¹⁰

Existing in the commonality of our human condition, with specific consideration to the individual, her definition of Augustinian *caritas* resides in both the summed whole of human possibility and the individual within it. Reading Arendt through the “lens of *caritas*” (as defined in her dissertation) allows for a conversation about what the impetus and the effect of love, and specifically, love of the neighbor, does to our human action in the world—how it holds the possibility of the potential, of newness, and of imagination. Evaluating Arendtian works and terms through the lens of *caritas* contributes to the explanation of how both the individual and the community can be considered and understood as independent concepts and entities, even

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1976), 296.

⁹ Stonebridge, *Placeless People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4.

¹⁰ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 301.

though they are intimately connected and influenced by one another, particularly when discussing rights, freedom, judgment, and the will. Reading Arendt through the lens of *caritas* has implications for understanding her separation between political, public, and private spheres, and therefore introduces a framework to understand more deeply her ideas surrounding the ethics of resource distribution, rights, identity, and movement within the physicality of space. I argue that it is also Arendt's version of Augustinian *caritas* that capably responds with hope to the famous passage in *Origins of Totalitarianism* so often quoted by scholars, including Stonebridge:

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, representing nothing but his own absolutely unique individuality which, deprived of expression within and action upon a common world, loses all significance.¹¹

Arendt's definition of Augustinian *caritas* delineates between the individual and the "human being in general."¹² She argues that, "love does not turn to humankind but to the individual, albeit every individual. In the community of the new society the human race dissolves into its many individuals."¹³ It is through her consideration of *caritas* that Arendt is able to suggest that there is a way to preserve the integrity of the individual while dignifying the role of the community and acknowledging the human need for belonging.

¹¹ Arendt, 302.

¹² Arendt, 302.

¹³ Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, eds., Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 111.

At the beginning of her dissertation, in Part One, Chapter One, she says that “Augustine defines life itself by what it craves” and that “no earthly goods can lend support to life’s instability.”¹⁴ She argues that the wrong type of love, a love of this world (*cupiditas*), is a “love that desires a worldly object, be it a thing or a person, is constantly frustrated in its very quest for happiness.”¹⁵ In focusing on *caritas* as Augustine’s “right love,” she is able to address “the actual problem of how to live in this world.”¹⁶ This careful identification of the different types of love assists her in establishing the groundwork necessary to resolve one paramount issue while defining another later in her dissertation work. She explains how Augustine’s right love allows for a resolution to the question about the relevance of the neighbor. And, she recognizes the elements of normativity that exist in the world and juxtaposes those with the elements of freedom that exist independently from these pressures and influences that form our perspectives of reality.¹⁷ She concludes the first section by presciently referencing Augustine’s warning from his *Commentaries on the Psalms*, “Love, but be careful what you love.”¹⁸

In Part One, I will follow the development of her definition of Augustinian *caritas* by framing the discussion from the following angles: first, as a structural understanding; secondly, as a contrast, focusing on the difference between *cupiditas* and *caritas*; and lastly, as a negative relation (the absence of *caritas*). In the second chapter of Part One, I will review the interplay

¹⁴ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 17.

¹⁵ Arendt, 19.

¹⁶ Arendt, 41.

¹⁷ Arendt, 17.

¹⁸ Arendt, 17. Arendt cites this sentence with the following footnote (37): “Ibid., 31, 5. [The next sentence reads, “*Caritas* says: love of God and love of neighbor; *cupiditas* says: love of the world and love of this age (*saeculum*).” Footnote 36 reads: *Commentaries on the Psalms* 90, 1, 8. [Augustine cites Eph. 3:17, “that you may be rooted and grounded in love (*in caritate*),” and 1 Tim.6:10, “For the love of money is the root of all evils.”

between *caritas*, creature, Creator, and memory. In this section, I will address how the definition of *caritas* that she presents in her dissertation work creates the necessary conditions to understand natality as possibility (to be discussed in Part Three of my dissertation as newness of thought and as the possibility for discerning systems thinking and solution-making related to judgment and meaningful action). This section will also address how *caritas* explains the relevance of the neighbor within the context of consciousness and memory. This part of the chapter will specifically focus on *caritas* and its relationship to natality, with particular concentration on viewing these concepts through the understanding of Augustinian time. The third and final chapter of Part One will introduce how *caritas* affects the determination of meaning and judgment within her dissertation.

Part Two will identify how Arendt's consideration of *caritas* informs specific parts of her later writings and influences particular parts of her observations in political theory. The second part of my dissertation draws upon the scholarship of Vecchiarelli Scott, Chelius Stark, Jerome Kohn, Seyla Benhabib, and Stonebridge, among others, to demonstrate this influence.¹⁹ In the first chapter of this section, I will identify the correlations between *caritas*, thinking, natality, freedom, and plurality. In particular, I will focus on Jerome Kohn and his commentary in the introductions of *Responsibility and Judgment* and *Thinking without a Banister*, among others. In

¹⁹ As will be noted again in Part Two, I owe enormous credit to the Virtual Reading Group series facilitated by Prof. Roger Berkowitz through the Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at Bard College. My argument, that Arendt's view of *caritas* in her dissertation informs many of her later works, was strengthened and contested by Prof. Berkowitz's lectures about *The Human Condition* throughout this series. The conversations from this series challenged some of my assumptions and forced me to revisit the entirety of the assertions I had made in Part Two of my dissertation, requiring me to hone my premises and deductions about the intersections between *caritas*, freedom, possibility, and agency. (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHYEknCM4nxmyNnTCTwsEkQ>; <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYW5qHLZjOWFp3IbuTIJVA-jU8Lkh3QGS>)

the second chapter of Part Two, I will refer to Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark's suggestions that "*caritas* bridges not only the 'monstrosity' of a will divided against itself, but also the realms of human experience."²⁰ In the third chapter of this section, I will begin to show how these concepts support the capacity for the human action of judgment by comparing and contrasting the solitude of *caritas* to the solitude characteristic to thinking. I will argue that the act of choosing *caritas* that Arendt discusses in her dissertation mimics choosing to engage with the *vita contemplativa* and that this choice influences concepts and realities of freedom, the collective good, and the preservation of rights, i.e., the very "right to have rights."²¹ I will illustrate how Arendt avoids the exclusively theoretical realm of discussion by anchoring the influence of *caritas* to action by focusing, as Leora Y. Bilsky explains, on how "in the realm of action, natality means that people can initiate new beginnings, and judgment, since it is directed to human action, should be capable of judging the new without subsuming it under pre-given categories."²² I will show that there are correlations between how *caritas* necessitates the "concrete realization of referring back beyond the world, and in so doing it thrusts the other out of the world that he considers the point of his being"²³ and the *vita contemplativa* that is essential to a fully human experience. In recognizing these similarities, I will propose that the act of ignoring or dismissing the *caritas* of her dissertation, the act of rejecting the invitation to refer "back beyond the world," mimics the rejection of thinking that

²⁰ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," 192.

²¹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 296.

²² Leora Y. Bilsky, "When Actor and Spectator Meet in the Courtroom: Reflections on Hannah Arendt's Concept of Judgment," in *Judgment, Imagination and Politics Themes from Kant and Arendt*, eds. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 266.

²³ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 96.

contributes to the loss of rights, encourages alienation, and allows for landscapes that enable totalitarianism through, in part, the loss of the individual.

Part Three will discuss how the application of an Arendtian concept of a *caritas*-driven framework effectively contributes to productive conversations regarding the preservation of plurality and genuine recognition of real-world crises surrounding rights, refugees, homelessness, and placelessness. In this section, I will propose that applying Arendt's *caritas*-informed evaluative approach can impact private individual action and inform the development and implementation of collective action at local, national, and global levels, as seen through the works of contemporary authors. The first chapter addresses the definition of politics Arendt used as it applies to the space for freedom and subsequent action, relying on Jerome Kohn's insights and interpretations. His commentary regarding the importance of Arendtian stories directs this chapter. This second chapter will discuss how *caritas*-informed approaches support responses that facilitate an understanding of the importance of plurality while preserving individual senses of identity and belonging. In this section, I will first discuss how a *caritas*-driven framework, one that assumes natality-as-possibility and the fundamental role of plurality, supports an imagination big enough to elicit positive change in the "human world."²⁴ Stonebridge's writings will anchor significant parts of this conversation. Community, from a *caritas*-informed perspective, will be discussed as an opposing force, a ballast against totalitarianism.

²⁴ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," 138.

I will conclude by returning to the issues of thinking, freedom, and possibility while placing the concepts in the context of rights, freedom in the political realm, and worth attributed to the individual in a pluralistic society. I will discuss how evaluating these concepts—through the lens of her definition of *caritas*—gives context for understanding the roles natality as possibility, critical thinking, and revision of thought play in determining just action in the political realm. The last chapter will explore how Arendt's conceptual framework may be acknowledged in the public sphere as an aid to a type of methodology for political discernment and productive discussions about rights while considering both belonging and placelessness. In particular, in the last chapter of my dissertation, I will focus on Peg Birmingham's work specifically in regards to human rights. This conclusion will reassess what it would mean to imagine a *caritas*-informed view of political power and individual agency as an alternative to zero-sum approaches, while recognizing the existing and ongoing work of contemporary Arendtian scholars. I will show how it is possible to consider alternatives to zero-sum approaches that often regulate our relationships with so many areas of contemporary life, from resource distribution to environmental policy, from legal protections to healthcare.

This dissertation will rely on the work of many Arendtian scholars, several of whom have featured In *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt*, edited by Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky. This anthology explores Arendt and Kant's theories as they are frequently applied in real-world, contemporary systems. Community and the neighbor, even if they are not discussed in such terms, are central focuses in these essays; they are not

exclusively abstract concepts addressed in these selections, but rather circumstances and relationships that exist in the world that affect policy, legal practices, and everyday life. They are relationships that are worthy of investigation in order to understand the effects Arendtian principles of action and judgment, freedom and plurality, and thinking and imagination have in the real world. I propose that reading the work by these scholars with a *caritas*-informed lens helps not only to contextualize and analyze their work but it also illuminates and enlarges, and sometimes limits, the possible applications of Arendtian concepts in real-world scenarios. Reading their work from a *caritas*-informed approach supports the argument that it is possible to argue for the logical benefits plurality provides when addressing both existential and material placelessness. It aligns with Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark's assertion that "the negative social phenomenology of modernity—materialism, mass society, and violence—that besets the city of man can be reconstituted in a temporal city of *caritas*."²⁵ In addition to the authors included in the anthology, I will review and refer to excerpts from select essays, books, and materials from contemporary authors such as Stonebridge, Lisa Guenther, Shin Chiba, Roy T. Tsao, and Peg Birmingham.²⁶ I will also address how a *caritas*-informed approach helps to identify the prejudices and problematic themes within Arendt's understanding of the private, political, and social spheres, and how this approach supports a critical, unapologetic review and analysis of Arendt's work. In part through the authors' commentary, I will discuss the

²⁵ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," 192.

²⁶ Please also see Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott's article: "What St. Augustine Taught Hannah Arendt about 'how to live in the world': Caritas, Natality and the Banality of Evil." *COLLEGIUM: Studies Across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume 08: Hannah Arendt: Practice, Thought and Judgement. [8https://helda.helsinki.fi/server/api/core/bitstreams/9028a3b9-f5c1-47b4-9ed1-180e70c78ab4/content](https://helda.helsinki.fi/server/api/core/bitstreams/9028a3b9-f5c1-47b4-9ed1-180e70c78ab4/content) .

importance of recognizing these discriminatory assumptions when applying her work to contemporary situations.

Many of these authors contradict and disagree with one another regarding their interpretations and applications of Arendt's thought. I am proposing that not despite this, but rather, perhaps because of this, there are academic and real-world benefits to reviewing their dialogues and conversations (with one another, in their responses to one another, and as isolated commentaries) through a *caritas*-informed lens. In addition to the direct impact that this has on this particular body of literature, this approach also challenges the assumptions behind the value and meaning attributed to belonging and placelessness in contemporary political space. It offers opportunities to evaluate how we judge the efficacy and ethical qualities of our shared, common world, our place in it, and our neighbor's place in it. Incorporating a *caritas*-informed approach has real-world consequences to institutions, policies, systems, and governance—consequences that impact the “right to have rights.”²⁷ Engaging in a discussion using a *caritas*-informed approach allows for a productive dialogue about Arendt's notion of a political space. This affords an alternative to routinely accepted approaches, based on zero-sum premises, designed to address real-world issues. It also may help to imagine how the enlarged mentality could work in the real world vis-à-vis the understanding of the role of the neighbor as an individual—by the great incalculable grace of love—and not as a human being in general.²⁸ In doing so, this approach reinforces the importance of a pluralistic community, comprised of

²⁷ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 296.

²⁸ Arendt, 301.

autonomous individuals, and affirms the community's pivotal role as a bulwark against totalitarianism.²⁹

It would be wise to reiterate a sentiment from Kohn at this juncture before beginning the overview of some of the afore mentioned scholar's works: there is a "genuine perplexity encountered by any impartial reader who attempts to form a judgment of Arendt in terms of traditional academic disciplines or traditional political categories."³⁰ This genuine perplexity applies to her interpretations, too, particularly as they apply to her views on Kant. As Nedelsky and Beiner point out in the Introduction of *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt*, their project recognizes that "while the accuracy of Arendt's interpretation of Kant can be debated,"³¹ —and certainly is—they believe it can be widely recognized that

basing judgment in actual community is at the heart of her contribution—both its potential and its problems. For Arendt, the common sense that makes judgment possible is based not in universally shared cognitive faculties, but in shared community. She also implies that not only is membership in a community necessary for judging, but the practice of judging is part of what constitutes one's membership.³²

I am bracketing the debates that exist within the essays as their own issues to which I cannot adequately or appropriately address. They stand on their own merit and are both supported and criticized by scholarship I have no intention of challenging; I do not propose to resolve the

²⁹ Please see the article by Prof. Spiros Makris, "Hannah Arendt in the Light of Saint Augustine. From Political Onto-theology to Republican Phenomenology" for reference. (*International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science*, No. 6, Year 4 (2020): 5-19. https://www.ifiasa.com/_files/ugd/378e6f_f11d44a7e9ad4c11b44bc67b1090363f.pdf) His substantial contribution to this discussion is especially informative when read with Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott's article mentioned in footnote 26.

³⁰ Jerome Kohn in the "Introduction" to Hannah Arendt's, *Essays in Understanding 1930-1965 Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), x.

³¹ Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky, "Introduction," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt*, eds. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), xi.

³² Beiner and Nedelsky, "Introduction," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt*, xi.

many arguments surrounding Arendt's interpretation of Kant or attempt to speak to what may have been included or proposed in her final chapter in *The Life of the Mind* regarding judging. Instead, what I am proposing is that there is value in reading these essays and the larger body of scholarship on Arendt from a *caritas*-informed approach. This not only offers a lens to critique her scholarship and the scholarship of Arendtian experts from an academic viewpoint (perhaps, as Benhabib says, to "think with Arendt against Arendt"), but also as a practical means of contributing to the conversation and to the understanding of how to live in the world with an awareness of the possibility that political space preserves plurality, freedom, imagination, and possibility.³³ This practical application may facilitate conversations that consider the capacity for solitude, thinking, human plurality, imagination, the valuing of the neighbor as an individual, an enlarged mentality, the preservation of dignity that is not dependent upon citizenship, and meaningful belonging and membership to a community. These conditions, actions, and capacities are necessary to prevent totalitarianism. They are antithetical conditions to the totalitarian landscape of loneliness, habit, conformity, violence, and obliteration of diversity.

Reading Beiner and Nedelsky's framing of the essays in the introduction is congruent with a reading that recognizes the importance of the neighbor in the *caritas* of her dissertation. The dynamics between an individual and the community of individuals described in Arendt's dissertation—which, I argue, is what informs her later ideas on plurality, the agency of the

³³ Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and Politics in Arendt's Thought" in *Judgment, Imagination and Politics Themes from Kant and Arendt*, eds. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 185.

individual to act, to think, to judge, to be part of a political space, and to be free—are dynamics addressed in the introduction to the book. They preface the essays by stating that there are “strong challenges to Arendt’s account of what it means to judge impartially, imaginatively, and pluralistically, and anyone sympathetic to Arendt’s account must think hard about how to respond intellectually to these (and other) criticisms.”³⁴ The conversations and investigations between the intersections of truth and judgment, between validity and decisive opinions, they argue, are still meaningful, even if the conclusions lack permanency or consensus. “The claims for validity are, thus, not universal, but for the community of judging subjects whom one invokes in the exercise of the enlarged mentality.”³⁵ And they posit, “One might say that the shared common sense and the ongoing exercise of judgment are a central part of what constitutes the political community.”³⁶ They do not limit Arendt’s framework of judgment to politics, however, but they caution that the application of judgment to other realms should not be confused with the “claim that judgment in each is identical.”³⁷ In fact, they acknowledge that their applications are controversial but argue that they are worthy of consideration:

Our view is that one should have an open mind about the nature of judgment in these different spheres and, indeed, about the nature of judgment in all the daily forms it takes: in the evaluation of character, of policy, of books, of films, and all the other assessments and choices we face in our personal and professional lives. We think it is likely that all of these forms of judgment share a basic nature; they all pose the problem of making thoughtful, defensible judgments that cannot be determined by rules or concepts. It also is likely that there are interesting differences between judgments made by judges in courts and those made by legislators or ordinary citizens in evaluating policy. And, yet again, there may be interesting differences between these judgments and those about poetry, novels, or films. A full theory of judgment would articulate both the core similarities and differences.³⁸

³⁴ Beiner and Nedelsky, “Introduction,” *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt*, xix.

³⁵ Beiner and Nedelsky, “Introduction,” xi.

³⁶ Beiner and Nedelsky, xi.

³⁷ Beiner and Nedelsky, xii.

³⁸ Beiner and Nedelsky, xii.

Pivotaly, they continue with this: “As we have already said, Arendt did not provide us with a full theory. Instead, her illuminating and provocative framework leaves a host of questions unresolved. Perhaps the most central is how exactly the enlarged mentality is to work.”³⁹ The featured authors each offer clarifications and differing interpretations regarding Arendt’s use of Kant’s concept of the “enlarged mentality.” By proposing certain definitions of the enlarged mentality and postulating what the possible implications of those definitions could be in the real world, these authors attempt to address some of those “unresolved questions.” The following overview of several of the main points of the works mentioned above will illustrate how the authors respond to some of these “unresolved questions” directly and indirectly to address judgment and the concept of the enlarged mentality covering a wide-variety of topics, a wide-variety of real-world concerns, and a wide-variety of identified problems within real-world systems. I intend to show by the conclusion of my dissertation that it is helpful to evaluate, through a *caritas*-informed lens, what it means to talk about a community of autonomous agents who have the faculty to judge and who are capable of developing an enlarged mentality.⁴⁰

In his essay, *Modernity, Alienation, and Critique*, in Beiner and Nedelsky’s book, Dana Villa responds to several well-known debates about categorizing Arendt’s work as “modernist” or

³⁹ Beiner and Nedelsky, xii.

⁴⁰ I will do this by first analyzing the specific development, definition, and use of Augustinian *caritas* from her dissertation in Part One; secondly by the impact that this definition has on understanding plurality and the importance of the neighbor in the real world in Part Two; and thirdly, by illustrating what this means for political spaces, freedom, and judgment, specifically in conjunction with natality and critical thinking in Part Three.

“antimodernist.”⁴¹ He argues that it is his “contention that this debate is poorly framed.”⁴² He writes that “When Arendt writes about the destruction, loss, or decline of the public world, she is not bemoaning the fragmentation wrought by the collapse of the religion/tradition/authority triangle. . . .”⁴³ He argues that she is also not “lamenting the loss of animating, shared public purposes, as contemporary communitarians are wont to do.”⁴⁴ Rather, he argues, she is concerned “with the integrity and viability of a specific phenomenological realm—the public sphere, which she conceives as a theatrical ‘space of appearances.’ Arendt sees this space as undermined by an array of characteristically modern forces (including capitalism, the ‘rise of the social,’ and the ‘world-destroying’ force of technological automatism).”⁴⁵ Importantly, Villa points out that he is not in agreement with the scholars Seyla Benhabib, George Kateb, or Ronald Beiner’s takeaways (Benhabib’s interpretation, according to Villa is too sympathetic to a Habermasian view, and Beiner’s has a communitarian bias). Specifically, he argues that Benhabib and Beiner’s “‘corrective’ readings radically devalue the aesthetic dimension of Arendt’s theory of judgment.”⁴⁶ He argues that “both see Arendt’s appeal to Kantian taste judgment as a symbol for another (more palatable) ultimate concern.”⁴⁷ Villa suggests instead that a “somewhat different emphasis is detected in Arendt’s appropriation of Kant. What matters now is not the translation of the ‘enlarged mentality’ into a concrete decision procedure, but the maintenance of the ‘thinking withdrawal,’ of the distance that makes

⁴¹ Dana R. Villa, “Modernity, Alienation, and Critique,” from *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt* eds. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 289.

⁴² Villa, “Modernity, Alienation, and Critique,” 289.

⁴³ Villa, 290.

⁴⁴ Villa, 290.

⁴⁵ Villa, 290.

⁴⁶ Villa, 290.

⁴⁷ Villa, 301.

judgment in Kant's sense possible."⁴⁸ He goes on to say that "In this reading it is precisely the *imaginative* character of representative thinking that needs to be preserved if the autonomy or independence of judgment is to be maintained." Through a *caritas*-informed lens, one can appreciate the value of the criticisms offered while also focusing on these cited sentences regarding the enlarged mentality and the "imaginative character of representative thinking." The withdrawal from the world to maintain autonomy or independence of judgment (which I will show parallels the withdrawal needed for critical thinking) will be explored throughout this dissertation. As will be discussed, I argue that this is also the same withdrawal that is characteristic to *caritas*. This is not to say that Villa's entire interpretation is validated through a *caritas*-informed lens, or that his critique of Benhabib and Beiner's work is supported through this lens; rather, it supports attributing and recognizing the importance of a withdrawal to the faculty of judgment while also dynamically considering other interpretations. By considering, comparing, and contrasting how judgment and the enlarged mentality are connected through, and interdependent upon, the withdrawal through the lens of a *caritas*-informed approach, Villa's analysis becomes contextualized in real-world systems, with real-world implications to the neighbor, preservation of autonomy of the individual, and participation in the public sphere. This moves the conversation from the theoretical to the actual without minimizing the scholarly critique of other interpretations. Clearly, it also impacts the conversation about community and judgment through the recognition of the very real struggle to clarify how to encourage and maintain an enlarged mentality *in the world*.

⁴⁸ Villa, 302.

To this point, in her essay “Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought,” Iris Marion Young suggests that the enlarged mentality required for judgment must take into account not simply a commitment to reciprocity, but an acknowledgement of and a commitment to engaging with a reciprocity that she argues is not “symmetrical.” Young offers an addendum to what enlarged thought should consider beyond “taking account of one another’s interests and perspectives.”⁴⁹ She suggests we need to consider the “collective social processes and relationships that lie between us and which we have come to know together by discussing the world.”⁵⁰ She argues that a “communicative ethics should develop an account of the nonsubstitutable relation of moral subjects. Each participant in a communication situation is distinguished by a particular history and social position that makes their relation asymmetrical.”⁵¹ This type of “asymmetrical positioning” according to Young, “forms the best basis for understanding why dialogue with others produces what Arendt, following Kant, calls the ‘enlarged thought’ that moves people from their merely subjective understanding of issues to a moral objective judgment.”⁵² Young’s definition of asymmetrical reciprocity is one that captures the challenges, pitfalls, and dangers of assuming that people can “think from the perspectives of all the others” without taking into account the variables that make up “nonsubstitutable” experiences and identities. She explains that

⁴⁹ Iris Marion Young, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought,” from *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt* eds. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 224.

⁵⁰ Iris Marion Young, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought,” 224-5. In the endnote (29) to this passage on page 228, Young writes, “I have learned to think about objectivity in this sort of way from Donna Haraway; see ‘Situated knowledges: /the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,’ in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (New York: Routledge, 1991). She also writes, “For a particularly interesting account of objectivity as the enlargement of the circle of one’s thinking, see Lisa M. Heldke and Stephen H Kellert, ‘Objectivity as Responsibility,’ ms., Gustavus Adolphus [sic] College, 1994.

⁵¹ Young, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity,” 206.

⁵² Young, 206.

If you enter a dialogue with all the best intentions of taking the other people's perspectives, and then in the course of the discussion they express anger and frustration at you for misunderstanding their position, you are likely to become defensive and shut down the dialogue. It is more appropriate to approach a situation of communicative interaction for the purpose of arriving at a moral or political judgment with a stance of moral humility.⁵³

She continues this explanation when she relays that, "If I assume that there are aspects of where the other person is coming from that I do not understand, I will be more likely to be open to listening to the specific expression of their experience, interests, and claims. Indeed, one might say that this is what listening to a person means."⁵⁴ Certainly, the argument could be made that this clarification differs from the traditional threshold of academic or philosophic sophistication characteristic of a conventional analysis or application of Arendt's thought. However, I am going to argue that embedded in this evaluation is a very practical deconstruction of how one engages in the process of enlarging one's mentality—how discernment and judgment manifest in action. Through a *caritas*-informed lens, this aligns with the concept Arendt attributes to Augustine regarding "wanting the other person to be," not as a means to end, not as a human being in general, or as a neighbor who is valued because they homogeneously experience and subsequently evaluate the world as the observer does. Rather, the neighbor is understood as a unique individual in a community of other unique individuals.⁵⁵ In addition, willing the neighbor to be—*volo ut sis*—shifts the intention of the conversation from the actor dictating what the spectator roles should be, as defined by how the actor believes they should fit into the actor's world, to a starting point of curiosity and respect. Assuming asymmetrical reciprocity challenges the actor to avoid making the spectator fit into

⁵³ Young, 215.

⁵⁴ Young, 223.

⁵⁵ Here, the parallels, consistencies, and connections between Arendt's own views and her interpretation of Kant's views, particularly as they relate to the "kingdom of ends" are clear.

the narrative that makes the actor's world make sense. Employing an approach of asymmetrical reciprocity encourages a reconsideration of the variables impacting the neighbor (and their importance), and it therefore affects judgment. Young argues that there is an arrogance in assuming—even if not ill-intended—that we can “represent others to ourselves in the sense that we can be substitutable for one another.”⁵⁶ Among several dangers that this type of symmetrical reciprocity presents, she argues, is that, “as an interpretation of enlarged thought, it thus fails to emphasize the plurality of perspectives that Arendt found constitutive of publicity.”⁵⁷ Young argues that for Arendt, “The public world that lies between us is a creative product of the dialogue among our multiple perspectives, but distinct from them because it is an objective relation between us.”⁵⁸ This is not to say, however, that it follows that judgment from asymmetrical reciprocity is absent of consequences. Young makes the next point:

Just because social life consists of plural experiences and perspectives, a theory of communicative ethics must endorse a radically democratic conception of moral and political judgment. Normative judgment is best understood as the product of dialogue under conditions of equality and mutual respect. Ideally, the outcome of such dialogue and judgment is just and legitimate only if all the affected perspectives have a voice.⁵⁹

Young simultaneously challenges and endorses some of Arendt's ideas in this passage. She defines normative judgment with very specific contingencies: as a product of dialogue under conditions of equality and mutual respect. This challenges a traditional interpretation of judgment in an Arendtian-defined public space by insisting that equality and mutual respect mean “all the affected perspectives have a voice” in the process. From a *caritas*-informed lens, this idea could align with Arendt's belief in beginning anew and having the courage to interrupt

⁵⁶ Young, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity,” 223.

⁵⁷ Young, 223.

⁵⁸ Young, 224.

⁵⁹ Young, 225.

habit with critical thought, while also pointing out that “judgment is just and legitimate” only when certain conditions are met. In this case, it means including “all the affected perspectives,” not only those traditionally awarded access to the dialogue. Evaluating this passage through a *caritas*-informed lens illustrates how this approach can accommodate conversations about judgment that are dynamic and subject to change when new information emerges and affected voices are heard. Young’s message reiterates that new circumstances require new assessments and may need different responses than what habit dictates.

As Villa does, Young responds to Benhabib in many parts of her essay. I would like to once again refer to Benhabib’s statement regarding thinking with Arendt against Arendt.⁶⁰ Thinking with Arendt against Arendt means adapting to new information and new circumstances with new responses—even if that means challenging what existed and worked before. It means dealing with reality *as it is*, not as an idealized memory, not as a previous situation that existed, not as a circumstance revised to fit into a narrative from which people wanted to, or even previously did, operate. A *caritas*-informed lens aligns and is consistent with the need to address situations *as they are*. In other words, to refer to Kohn’s paramount reminder: Arendt believed that political thought in the twentieth century had to “break with its own tradition in as radical a sense as the systematic mass murder enacted by totalitarian regimes broke with the traditional understanding of political action.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Benhabib, “Judgment and Politics in Arendt’s Thought,” 185.

⁶¹ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Essays in Understanding 1930-1965 Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, xxvi.

Young ends her essay with the proposition that “By learning from others how the world and the collective relations they have forged through interaction look to them, moreover, everyone can develop an enlarged understanding of that world and those relations that is unavailable to any of them from their own perspective alone.”⁶² It is essential to draw attention to the definition of critical thinking at this juncture. If critical thinking involves the “review, evaluation, and revision of previous thinking,”⁶³ then Arendt’s *caritas*-informed political space is constantly evolving with not only new membership and new relationships formed within dynamic political space, but with new information and perspectives brought into the already existing dynamics, changing those individual relationships and understandings of the world, too.⁶⁴ Young offers an approach for developing an enlarged mentality in the world; a *caritas*-informed lens helps to contextualize her evaluation.

In “When Actor and Spectator Meet in the Courtroom: Reflections on Hannah Arendt’s Concept of Judgment,” Leora Bilsky directly addresses practical judgment as it manifests and happens in the courtroom setting. Bilsky discusses other scholars’ criticism of Arendt’s “reflections on judgment” and specifically mentions Beiner’s claim that Arendt “produced two distinct conceptions of judgment.”⁶⁵ She writes that for both Beiner and the Arendtian scholar Richard Bernstein (although they reach this point according to Bilsky from different initial critiques),

⁶² Young, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity,” 225.

⁶³ Jon Stratton, *Critical Thinking for College Students*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 10.

⁶⁴ The idea of thinking with Arendt against Arendt should be kept in mind when reviewing her essay, “Reflections on Little Rock.” Also, please refer to the commentary of Lyndsey Stonebridge, including but not limited to, her chapter “How to Think—and How Not to Think—About Race” included in *We are Free to Change the World*.

⁶⁵ Leora Y. Bilsky, “When Actor and Spectator Meet in the Courtroom: Reflections on Hannah Arendt’s Concept of Judgment,” from *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt* eds. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 258.

Arendt's "vacillation between the actor's and spectator's points of view poses a problem that has to be resolved."⁶⁶ Bilsky responds by suggesting

...instead, this tension should not be resolved. On the contrary, the reciprocity between the judgment of actor(s) and that of spectator(s) should be seen as essential to Arendt's conception of judgment. Caught in the dichotomy between actor and spectator (and trying to answer the wrong question), we lose sight of the way in which Arendt's theory of judgment is directly informed by her understanding of action and her experience of legal judgment. Thus, in her lectures Arendt attempts to formulate a theory of judgment that will be capable of accommodating action's tendency to force open all boundaries and bring the unprecedented into the world. This point is obscured in Arendt's more theoretical writings but is illuminated in the book dedicated to an actual legal judgment—*Eichmann in Jerusalem*.⁶⁷

As is true with many other scholars, Bilsky recognizes that the "unprecedented" for Arendt is not limited to positive newness. Likewise, Bilsky's focus on the paramount influence that the Eichmann trial had on the development of Arendt's theory of judgment reflects Kohn's observations which will be discussed later. For the purpose of reviewing her work as an influential contribution to this conversation, I would like to direct the discussion to address how a *caritas*-informed evaluative lens can be used in understanding and considering her interpretation. I would like to draw attention to the last two sentences of the above-referenced passage. A theory of "bringing the unprecedented into the world" as it relates to "actual legal judgment" may not have originated in Arendt's dissertation, but "natality" as a concept of newness and as an interruption of habit can certainly be identified in *Love and Saint Augustine*.⁶⁸ Bilsky says that

Eichmann's case presented Arendt with the problem of how to judge the unprecedented. She had previously considered this problem in her discussion of human action, ascribing a term coined by Augustine, "natality," to the human capacity for beginning, rooted in the fact of

⁶⁶ Bilsky, "When Actor and Spectator Meet in the Courtroom: Reflections on Hannah Arendt's Concept of Judgment," 258-59.

⁶⁷ Bilsky, 259.

⁶⁸ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 51.

human birth.⁶⁹ Human beings, she explains, have the ability to initiate actions and to begin a new route, and human history provides examples of unprecedented actions.⁷⁰ The dark side of this insight is the realization that human beings can bring into the world terrible and unprecedented horrors such as the Nazi concentration camps.⁷¹ It also means that we can expect judgment (itself a human action) to face up to new crimes, perceive their novelty and create the conceptual tools (rules, concepts, laws) with which to confront them.⁷²

Bilsky reiterates in the above passage that newness does not always mean improvement in equality, rights, or situation. She points out that the unprecedented can bring unprecedented horrors just as easily as it can bring unprecedented goodness and positive, imaginative creativity. This recognition aligns with Arendt's later comments in the Epilogue of *The Promise of Politics*. Here, Arendt warns that acclimating to an environment that deprives humans of their "faculty to judge—to suffer and condemn—" ⁷³ translates to the loss of the ability to "summon up. . . the courage that lies at the root of action, of becoming an active being." ⁷⁴

To be an active being for Arendt means to possess the faculty of judgment, and action happens in community with others. Bilsky concludes the above-referenced paragraph with the following sentence, which I quoted earlier: "In the realm of action, natality means that people can initiate new beginnings, and judgment, since it is directed to human action, should be capable of

⁶⁹ Bilsky, "When Actor and Spectator Meet in the Courtroom," 266 and 281. Her endnote (47) cited here references and attributes this idea to "*The Life of the Mind*, 109."

⁷⁰ Bilsky, 266 and 281. Her endnote (48) cited here references and attributes this to "*The Human Condition*, 177."

⁷¹ Bilsky, 266 and 281. Her endnote (49) here states: "As explained in her essay, 'Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps,' *Jewish Studies* 49 (1950): 60-63, it was the novel purpose of Nazi totalitarianism to experiment with the human condition itself, i.e., to eradicate the conditions of natality and plurality for the occupants of the camps by erasing their individuality and spontaneity."

⁷² Bilsky, 266.

⁷³ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 201.

⁷⁴ Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, 202.

judging the new without subsuming it under pregiven categories.”⁷⁵ This sentence has a clear, linear point of comparison to the *caritas* of Arendt’s dissertation, specifically the idea of natality as presented by Augustine. The *caritas*-informed lens is also helpful when considering the point of judgment in community, as Bilsky’s essay does. Bilsky suggests that, “the common humanity that is assumed in every trial is based upon our ability to occupy both roles of actor and spectator, i.e., our ability to ‘go visit.’ It is a human potential that can become an actuality.”⁷⁶ She reminds her readers that Arendt changed her definition of evil between writing *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.⁷⁷ She proposes that “Arendt argues that we can comprehend the banality of evil and judge totalitarian crimes.”⁷⁸ And, she also argues that “her report is motivated by a strong belief in the obligation we owe future generations to judge these new crimes so that the abyss between past and future will be bridged.”⁷⁹ She argues that Arendt’s turn “to reflexive judgment as a mode of judgment that can confront the new and endow it with meaning” allows Arendt to render “her judgment as a beginning of a process of narration and expected others to come forward with their own narratives.”⁸⁰ This means, according to Bilsky, that Arendt concluded *Eichmann in Jerusalem* with the “deeper message of her book, an optimistic note about the possibility of human beings to tell the story in order to feel at home again in this world” when she “confronts the greatest horror of this century with a

⁷⁵ Bilsky, “When Actor and Spectator Meet in the Courtroom” 266 and 281. Bilsky’s endnote (50) to this passage reads, “Even though we have lost yardsticks by which to measure, and rules under which to subsume the particular, a being whose essence is beginning may have enough of origin within himself to understand without preconceived categories and to judge without the set of customary rules which is morality.” She cites: “Hannah Arendt, ‘Understanding and Politics,’ *Partisan Review* 20 (1953): 391.”

⁷⁶ Bilsky, 277.

⁷⁷ Bilsky, 277.

⁷⁸ Bilsky, 277.

⁷⁹ Bilsky, 277.

⁸⁰ Bilsky, 277.

simple and encouraging observation: ‘One man will always be left alive to tell the story’.”⁸¹

Bilsky ends her essay by arguing that

A legal system capable of fostering equality among our diverse embodied selves requires several components: the guidance of a commitment to a formal notion of equal moral worth; attention to the contexts in which it is to be given effect; a conception of impartiality both grounded in this commitment and attentive to difference; and ongoing attention to education of effect and the promotion of diversity in legal education, scholarship and membership. These commitments and calls to attention will enable us to take up the challenges of embodied diversity.⁸²

A *caritas*-informed reading of that conclusion supports recognizing the starting point of a discussion by acknowledging neighbor difference—in autonomy and plurality of community and in embodied diversity—while being able to honor similarity within shared space and assumed moral worth. This is a critical component to consider when discussing the rights of displaced people, unhoused people, and those whose dignity currently depends upon recognition of their citizenship, through a *caritas*-informed lens.⁸³ This will continue to be discussed at length in Part Three when Peg Birmingham’s work directs the conversation about human rights.

In comparing and contrasting—between Arendt’s dissertation, Bilsky’s interpretation, the application of Arendtian ideas of judgment, and Arendt’s own words in later writing—the through-thread from a *caritas*-informed lens creates a space that acknowledges that judgment is part of the human condition of being in the world (reinforcing that it is a part, in fact, of action). It is intimately linked to natality, plurality, freedom, and thinking. These connections allow Nedelsky, Bilsky, Young, and others to apply this concept of judgment to new

⁸¹ Bilsky, 277 and 285. Bilsky’s endnote (104) cites “*Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 233.”

⁸² Bilsky, 277.

⁸³ Its importance is not limited to those examples, however, as the relevance is apparent in many cases involving embodiment, such as accessibility, accommodation, bodily autonomy, reproductive rights, equity, and so forth.

circumstances in public spaces and in the in-between space of politics. A *caritas*-informed approach to discussing judgment not only recognizes the individual and the plurality within a community, but it can help to respond to new circumstances without conflating cohesiveness, habit, and homogeneity with successful “outcomes” of critical thinking. Community is not wrongly equated with stasis or uniformity through a *caritas*-informed lens; rather, it is understood as a dynamic, changing, diverse, and plural interaction of autonomous agents. It also allows for a substantive review of when, why, and where particular tenets of judgment are appropriately, or in some cases inappropriately, applied.

When critical assessments reveal problematic and erroneous assumptions (or inappropriate applications), a *caritas*-informed approach would demand a recognition of that reality. This includes the possibility of rejecting pieces (or totalities) of Arendt’s corpus and its applications to particular systems. A *caritas*-informed evaluation demands an assessment of how things are, not what one wishes they might be (for example, a non-violent, nurturing, safe, private household). Therefore, critiques and assessments of thought, language usage, bias, discriminatory practices, and failure to treat individuals and communities with dignity—the failure to recognize a right to have rights—are integral parts of its evaluative lens.

In Lisa Guenther’s article, “Political Action at the End of the World: Hannah Arendt and the California Prison Hunger Strikes,” she discusses the Pelican Bay State Prison hunger strike in which over 30,000 prisoners in California joined together across racial and regional lines to

launch the largest hunger strike in state history.”⁸⁴ She argues that this situation affords an opportunity to “think what we are doing” as Arendt encourages people to do.⁸⁵ She posits, “if Arendt is correct in thinking that human rights are impossible to enforce in the absence of an accountable civil structure, then the prisoners at Pelican Bay are engaged in a movement that is both broader and narrower than a human rights struggle.”⁸⁶ She explains that it is narrower in the sense that the strikes are a direct appeal to a governmental institution and broader in the sense the strikes “are not just a struggle for rights, they are a struggle for meaning: for a meaningful sense of the world, of political action, and of human existence.”⁸⁷ Guenther suggests that the Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit (SHU) “is a world unto itself” and for those there, she argues, “it can seem like the end of the world and the destruction of a meaningful existence.”⁸⁸ The citation she includes at the end of this sentence posits that this despondent destruction of a meaningful existence may also extend to “the correctional officers who spend 8-12 hours a day in such facilities [sic] and other prison staff.”⁸⁹ Guenther explains that the “supermax” prison is a “world-destroying world.”⁹⁰ She argues, while referencing *The Human Condition*, that “the condition for political action is natality in a shared world, understood as the

⁸⁴ Lisa Guenther, “Political Action at the End of the World: Hannah Arendt and the California Prison Hunger Strikes,” *Canadian Journal of Human Rights*, (2015) 4:1, 34, <https://cjhr.ca/articles/vol-4-no-1-2015/political-action-at-the-end-of-the-world-hannah-arendt-and-the-california-prison-hunger-strikes>. Guenther cites this source in the first sentence of her article: Rory Carroll, “California prisoners launch biggest hunger strike in state’s history”, *The Guardian* (9 July 2013), www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/09/california-prisoners-hunger-strike.

⁸⁵ Guenther, “Political Action at the End of the World,” 34. Guenther cites Arendt’s statement as follows: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958) at 5 [Arendt, *The Human Condition*].

⁸⁶ Guenther, 35.

⁸⁷ Guenther, 37.

⁸⁸ Guenther, 37.

⁸⁹ Guenther, 37. The quoted material is cited from footnote 15. She also references Ted Conover, *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing* (New York: Random House, 2000).

⁹⁰ Guenther, 39.

site of our emergence as singular beings in relation to others.”⁹¹ This understanding of singular beings in relation to others is echoed in a statement from one of the organizers of the strike, Todd Ashker, who Guenther cites from an interview with *Democracy Now*: “We’ve come to know, and in large part respect, one another as individuals with the common interest of bringing change to our conditions in ways beneficial for all concerned.”⁹² Guenther postulates that “There is an argument to be made for theorizing the California prison hunger strikes as an example of political action in Arendt’s sense of the word, even if she herself might not have evaluated it in these terms.”⁹³ However, Guenther recognizes that the ability to apply some of Arendt’s observations to a particular situation does not equate to an endorsement of the entire analysis. Once again, Benhabib’s statement “to think with Arendt against Arendt” is helpful to consider.⁹⁴ Guenther states: “It is improbable that Hannah Arendt would have recognized the California prison hunger strikes as an example of political action” because, among other reasons, “her definition of political as the discourse of free and equal citizens whose bodily needs have already been taken care of, such that they do not need to bring the needs of the body into the political sphere” means that she is “unable to account for the possibility of people who have been excluded from public life as unfree and unequal to insert themselves in to the realm of the political and claim their freedom and equality.”⁹⁵ Guenther also refers to “Arendt’s disastrous response to school desegregation” as an example of her failure to account for the

⁹¹ Guenther, 41.

⁹² Guenther, 51. Guenther cites: Todd Ashker, “CA Prisoner Todd Ashker on His Evolution From Violence to Peaceful Hunger Strike”, *Democracy Now* (23 August 2013), online: www.democracynow.org/blog/2013/8/23/exclusive_audio_california_prisoner_on_strike_and_how_he. She also references Jose Villareal and his open letter from the Pelican Bay SHU in this footnote.

⁹³ Guenther, 54.

⁹⁴ Benhabib, “Judgment and Politics in Arendt’s Thought,” 185.

⁹⁵ Guenther, “Political Action at the End of the World,” 54.

possibility of people who have been excluded from public life.⁹⁶ Here, it is helpful to repeat Bilsky's insistence to consider "embodied diversity" and Young's argument that it is possible to produce legitimate dialogue and judgment only if all the affected perspectives have a voice. Again, Guenther's evaluation offers an opportunity to think with Arendt against Arendt; she concludes with a proposal regarding "the opportunity for critically engaging with Arendt's work . . . in a way that Arendt would have been keen to pursue, given her commitment to 'think what we are doing' in every historical situation, and to revise existing concepts or create new ones in order to address the particular problems raised by any given situation."⁹⁷ A *caritas*-informed approach supports the possibility for a "review, evaluation, and revision of previous thought."⁹⁸ This includes recognizing, learning from, and valuing the neighbor as an individual, enlarging one's mentality, acknowledging community, and respecting the plurality of true political space. It also means re-thinking how we view and define the in-between-ness of political space as it relates to action, agency, and plurality.

In her essay, *Judgment, Diversity, and Relational Autonomy*, Jennifer Nedelsky argues that "Arendt grounds judgment in an appeal to a common sense that is shared by virtue of sharing an actual community. When we form our judgment in the process of imagining trying to persuade others, it is the perspective of real others that is involved."⁹⁹ While Nedelsky's essay

⁹⁶ Guenther, 54. Here, Guenther is referring to Arendt's essay "Reflections on Little Rock" and cites: *Dissent* 6 (1959) 45.

⁹⁷ Guenther, 55.

⁹⁸ Stratton, *Critical Thinking for College Students*, 10.

⁹⁹ Jennifer Nedelsky, "Judgment, Diversity, and Relational Autonomy," in *Judgment, Imagination and Politics Themes from Kant and Arendt* eds. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky, eds. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 109.

aims to “see how a relational conception of autonomy helps resolve the theoretical problem which in turn helps us understand the practical one” of judgment, she is specifically applying her analysis to the legal profession, and to judges in particular.¹⁰⁰ Nedelsky argues that “the answer to the particular question of autonomous judgment requiring attention to the perspectives of others implicates the deeper question of how we can understand autonomy as dependent upon others.”¹⁰¹ She turns to relational feminism as a source of clarification, stating that

Autonomy is not a static characteristic to be posited as part of human nature, but a capacity that can flourish or wither throughout one’s life. Identifying autonomy with independence distorts our understanding of the conditions for autonomy. What makes autonomy possible is not being independent of all others, but constructive relationships—with parents, teachers, friends, colleagues and officials of the state. Autonomy is thus also not a characteristic that we simply achieve with adulthood; its flourishing depends on the kinds of relationships, both intimate and social, of which we are a part.¹⁰²

Nedelsky posits that from this perspective, “for truly autonomous, truly free judgment we must liberate ourselves (as much as possible) from the ‘private conditions’ that distort or constrain our judgment.”¹⁰³ Doing so encourages the “multiplicity of perspectives” necessary to break free from the conditions that “include biases, fears, emotions that cloud rather than facilitate judgment.”¹⁰⁴ She argues that “when we are locked into one perspective whether through fear, anger, ignorance, or even through our notions of virtues such as duty, courage, or responsibility, we are not judging freely.”¹⁰⁵ She continues to explain that “we need multiple perspectives so that we are really exercising judgment, not just acting out of habitual reaction

¹⁰⁰ Nedelsky, “Judgment, Diversity, and Relational Autonomy,” 105.

¹⁰¹ Nedelsky, 111.

¹⁰² Nedelsky, 111. Nedelsky references her earlier work in the sentence before the quoted passage, indicating that she has published her conception of autonomy as relational in cited works.

¹⁰³ Nedelsky, 111.

¹⁰⁴ Nedelsky, 111.

¹⁰⁵ Nedelsky, 111.

or drives we don't understand."¹⁰⁶ Nedelsky claims that a plurality of perspectives—as specifically applied to the judicial system and to judges in particular—is necessary in order to judge with “a sophisticated understanding of what judgment entails” and to judge optimally.¹⁰⁷ She argues that optimal judging requires both a self-reflective commitment and an acknowledgement that “real judgment requires diversity” and the common sense of a community.¹⁰⁸ She recognizes that “communities that do not share the ‘common sense’ of the dominant community can never expect the judgments of the dominant to be valid for them.”¹⁰⁹ Similar to the topics discussed by the other scholars, a *caritas*-informed approach to Nedelsky's application and inquiry regarding the judgment specific to the legal profession and the definition of community (of judges, of actual people, of those who do not share the dominant community's “common sense”) helps to illuminate the importance of keeping the people affected by discriminatory systems at the forefront of the discussions.

I am arguing that a *caritas*-informed lens (and a *caritas*-informed alternative to zero-sum approaches), developed from the *caritas* of her dissertation, assumes an autonomous agent in discussions about the relevance of the neighbor; this lens assumes the neighbor is an individual community member with the right to have rights. It recognizes that an individual's capacity to withdraw and return to the community supports critical thought, new beginnings, and opportunities to engage with spectator/actor roles. Doing so assists in developing an enlarged mentality and fosters the capacity for creative, imaginative thinking that allows for positive,

¹⁰⁶ Nedelsky, 111.

¹⁰⁷ Nedelsky, 116.

¹⁰⁸ Nedelsky, 114.

¹⁰⁹ Nedelsky, 117.

discerning action and judgment in the public space. Reading the works of Arendtian scholars through a *caritas*-informed lens supports and can contribute to a productive dialogue about rights, placelessness, and dignity in a evolving landscape.

Part One

Chapter One: *caritas* and *cupiditas*: structural understanding, contrast, and negative relation

In the introduction of her dissertation, as presented by Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark in *Love and Saint Augustine*, Arendt writes that her “essay offers three analyses” on the concept of love.¹¹⁰ The first analysis is “love understood as craving,” the second is love as “neighborly love,” and the third focuses on “proving the neighbor’s relevance in a wholly different context.”¹¹¹ She presents Augustine’s concept of love while contextualizing it against the backdrop of “Plotinus’s terms” and the Stoic ideals that influenced the development of his Christian belief system.¹¹² She differentiates *cupiditas* from *caritas* in the second chapter of Part I, by explaining that while the terms share the root meaning of love, a “love understood as craving desire, and desire understood in terms of the Greek tradition from Aristotle to Plotinus,” they are contradictions to one another in that “they are distinguished by their objects.”¹¹³ Regarding *cupiditas*, Arendt writes that it is “the love of this world”¹¹⁴ and in choosing it, “man has cast the die that makes him perishable.”¹¹⁵ By contrast, *caritas*, “whose object is eternity,” is characterized by transforming man into an “eternal, nonperishable being.”¹¹⁶ Both *cupiditas* and *caritas*, then, share the notion of desire, but they differ in their objects of craving by this definition. *Cupiditas* is a love of the world, and *caritas* is a love of God,

¹¹⁰ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 7.

¹¹¹ Arendt, 7.

¹¹² Arendt, 22.

¹¹³ Arendt, 18

¹¹⁴ Arendt, 19.

¹¹⁵ Arendt, 18.

¹¹⁶ Arendt, 19.

a love of neighbor, or often simply translated as charity. According to Arendt, for Augustine, *cupiditas* is a love anchored to the immediate world; it is a desire for satisfaction with and in the world. *Caritas* is a love anchored to eternity; it is a desire for the world to come.

Early in her analysis, Arendt argues that “the right love consists in the right object” and the wrong love has “the wrong object.”¹¹⁷ She writes, “Augustine’s term for this wrong, mundane love that clings to and thus at the same time constitutes the world, is *cupiditas*. In contrast, the right love seeks eternity and the absolute future.”¹¹⁸ The difference between the “right” love, *caritas*, and the “wrong” love, *cupiditas*, is foundational to understanding the structural importance of the Augustinian concept of being in the world but not of it. *Caritas* forms the vantage and entry point of the world to come. Arendt offers another way to think about these comparisons and contrasts by stating that “we decide about our abode, whether we wish to belong to this world or the world to come, but the faculty that decides is always the same.”¹¹⁹ *Caritas* requires thinking about the object of love, choosing to pursue the world to come, and acting upon that choice willingly; it requires an intentional decision to commit to *choosing* what is to be recognized as beloved. *Cupiditas*, by contrast, requires a suspension of thinking and an acceptance of fleeting moments of worldly validation, gratification, or pleasure.¹²⁰ Arendt argues that this is what Augustine was referring to when he cautioned, “Love, but be careful

¹¹⁷ Arendt, 17.

¹¹⁸ Arendt, 17.

¹¹⁹ Arendt, 18.

¹²⁰ Arendt, 32.

what you love.”¹²¹

Cupiditas can, in fact, facilitate objectively neutral or even kind acts; it can also encourage acts that appear altruistic, and it can instrumentally cause actions that ease or stop the suffering of a living being. *Cupiditas* can manifest as neighborly love, but it is not the neighborly love that results from *caritas* or the processes required to attain *caritas*-driven neighborly love. In fact, Arendt writes that it is not the case

that neighborly love has no place in Augustine’s thinking. On the contrary, we shall meet it again in an altogether different context developed as the specifically Christian and particularly explicit version of the natural, prereligious, and secular law of not doing to others what we would not have them do to us (*quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*).¹²²

However, regardless of its potentially positive outcomes, including as a negative injunction, *cupiditas*-driven neighborly love is still motivated by a worldly desire—its object of desire is still one that is *in the world*. While capable of initiating positive acts that contribute to individual or collective well-being and flourishing, *cupiditas* is still motivated by owning, experiencing, or having worldly objects of desire. Arendt punctuates this difference by referring to Augustine’s statement in *Commentaries on the Psalms* that not only is it true that “temporal things cannot extinguish *cupiditas*,”¹²³ but it is also true that “they can be lost, and death, the loss of the

¹²¹ Arendt, 17. Footnote 37 of the text references *Commentaries on the Psalms* 31, 5. Arendt notes that “[The next sentence reads, ‘*Caritas* says: love of God and love of neighbor; *cupiditas* says: love of the world and love of this age (*saeculum*).’” And, as referenced on page six of this paper (footnote 18), the citation prior to her footnote 37, (footnote 36) reads: *Commentaries on the Psalms* 90, 1, 8. [Augustine cites Eph. 3:17, “that you may be rooted and grounded in love (*in caritate*),” and 1 Tim.6:10, “For the love of money is the root of all evils.”

¹²² Arendt, 39.

¹²³ Arendt, 32. She cites *Commentaries on the Psalms* 105, 13 in the footnote to this sentence. The editors noted: [Arendt added these texts: Desire ‘for things which are sought for the sake of something else should not be called cupidity’ (*Soliloquies* I, 11, 19); and ‘to enjoy means to cling to something with love for its own sake’ (*Christian Doctrine* I, 4, 4).]

world, will deprive us of all of them.”¹²⁴ In this way, *cupiditas* “desires and makes me dependent upon things that, in principle, are beyond my control...”¹²⁵ Arendt writes Augustine’s argument suggests becoming dependent on that which is out of our control, through *cupiditas*, creates an enslavement; and, this “enslavement becomes manifest in fear.”¹²⁶ Emphasizing the Stoic influences acting upon Augustine, Arendt argues that this train of thought “could just as well have been written by Epictetus.”¹²⁷ She then argues that this place Augustine finds himself between “Plotinus’s terms” and Stoic ideals leads to an unavoidably inconsistent, if not an outright contradictory problem: how to define *caritas* and clarify its primary difference from *cupiditas* if the two terms are separated only by their objects of craving and desire.¹²⁸ How can Augustine argue that *caritas* is not simply sophisticated *cupiditas*? The answer can be found in the characteristic of *caritas* and in its being an “entirely different kind of love,” a love that is divine, not of human origin.¹²⁹ She writes that Augustine does not contradict himself with the “statement that all craving is determined by its object and turns into *caritas* or *cupiditas* by what it seeks” because he delineates divine love and human-originated, or worldly, love when he argues that *caritas* indicates “the grace bestowed by the Creator upon his creature.”¹³⁰ The implication of the origin of *caritas* directly points to the differences in fear between these two types of love, too. Arendt reiterates that for Augustine, “no one who depends upon what is outside himself can be fearless” and “*caritas* is free precisely because it casts out fear.”¹³¹ Thus,

¹²⁴ Arendt, 33.

¹²⁵ Arendt, 20.

¹²⁶ Arendt, 20.

¹²⁷ Arendt, 20.

¹²⁸ Arendt, 22.

¹²⁹ Arendt, 22.

¹³⁰ Arendt, 23.

¹³¹ Arendt, 23.

because *caritas* is defined by the relationship of creature to Creator, and recognizes eternal love, “...chaste fear arises out of *caritas* and has the task of shielding us from *cupiditas*.”¹³² As we will see later, connecting fear with freedom will resurface in Arendt’s later political writings.

Arendt addresses the nuances and reciprocity within the relationships between *caritas*, *cupiditas*, freedom, and fear when she summarizes Augustine’s explanation of *caritas* from a passage in *The City of God*. Specifically, she targets the summary around the complexities of the concepts of fear and how it is intimately connected to objects of desire. The differences between the fear elicited by *cupiditas* and the fear elicited by *caritas* are addressed when she states

... the freedom of *caritas* is a future freedom. Its freedom on earth consists in 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.¹³³

Insofar as *caritas* is capable of eliciting fear, then, it is distinctly a fear of forgetting, or losing sight of, the possibility of eternal love. She writes, “life on earth remains subject to the fear of losing the “highest good.”¹³⁴ Pivotal to the resolution of apparent contradiction is the concept of the highest good. When Arendt explores Augustine’s hierarchical iterations of love in Part I, Chapter Three of her dissertation, “The Order of Love,” she writes about the seemingly illogical characterization of *caritas* both to cast out fear and to preserve fear. She identifies several variables in this issue and then provides several considerations that reconcile the incongruities. She explains that one concern can be partly attributed to language issues, remarking that

¹³² Arendt, 35.

¹³³ Arendt, 35.

¹³⁴ Arendt, 35.

Augustine “had three terms at his disposal where we have only one, at best two, love and charity.”¹³⁵ Greek and Latin allow for clarification between these terms that is simply limited and inadequate when the concepts are translated into other languages. However, even with this linguistic caveat, she recognizes that examples of Augustine’s “terminological inconsistency” still exist, such as his use of “licit and illicit caritas.”¹³⁶ It is worth referencing her warning in the introduction when considering this inconsistency:

This incongruity is pointed up in the question of how the person in God’s presence, isolated from all things mundane, can be at all interested in his neighbor. This is illuminated by proving the neighbor’s relevance in a wholly different context. The illumination of incongruities is not tantamount to the solution of problems arising from a relatively closed conceptual and empirical context. It only answers the question of how these incongruities come to appear, that is, what completely different intentions lead to such contradictions, incomprehensible as they are to systematic thought. We must let the contradictions stand as what they are, make them understood as contradictions, and grasp what lies beneath them.¹³⁷

This, of course, does not mean that inconsistencies are allowed to be conveniently ignored. Rather, Arendt differentiates between those inconsistencies which she believes are resolvable and those which she believes are irreconcilable. Her selective identification is not without controversy, but it is possible to trace the processes she uses to reach her deductions. This will be addressed in more depth in the next chapter, specifically when discussing R. Tsao’s criticisms regarding the attribution of natality.

As mentioned earlier, the problem of neighborly love and the individual’s relationship to the neighbor-in-the-world is of paramount importance. Structurally, this relationship addresses (and represents) the problem of how to live *in* the world while not being *of* it. The resolution of

¹³⁵ Arendt, 39.

¹³⁶ Arendt, 39.

¹³⁷ Arendt, 7.

the contradiction is found, and is seemingly resolvable, through the understanding the “right order” of love. In order to reconcile this incongruity, Arendt suggests that Augustine offers an analysis requiring a recognition that *caritas*, when understood as a “love that has yielded to the right order can no longer be understood as craving and desire because its direction is not determined by any particular object but by the general order of everything that is.”¹³⁸ In this section of her dissertation work, she writes that “Augustine’s order of love is an indication of the utterly derivative character of all relations that go beyond the mere use of worldly data.”¹³⁹ Arendt continues to explain that in order for Augustine’s definition of *caritas* to accommodate both being in the world while not being of it, “it is rather the projection of happiness and fulfillment into an absolute future and hence the impossibility of perfection in the present that bring him back to the actual problem of how to live in this world.”¹⁴⁰ She concludes this section by introducing the idea that a “different concept of love comes into play” when trying to understand love of neighbor as deriving “from a source altogether different” than that of “appetites and desires.”¹⁴¹

Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark propose that Arendt’s assessment here should be attributed to her own deductions rather than to Augustine’s arguments. They argue that Arendt “is interested in Augustine’s struggle with the contradictions between the ‘tradition’ of philosophy

¹³⁸ Arendt, 39.

¹³⁹ Arendt, 41.

¹⁴⁰ Arendt, 41.

¹⁴¹ Arendt, 44.

he inherited and the Pauline Christian worldview.”¹⁴² Continuing this observation, they suggest that

Contradictions, mostly unacknowledged, seem to her to be the essence of Augustine’s project and will be the focus of her reading of him. It is her own ‘single question’ about *caritas* as neighborly love that serves as a “connecting link” amidst the “disjointedness of Augustine’s own work” and “mak[es] explicit what Augustine himself has merely implied.”¹⁴³

They point to the passage in her introduction to emphasize this observation:

The parallel trains of thought to be shown here defy systematic conjunction. They cannot even be joined in antithetical form, unless we wish to impose on Augustine a systematic and logical exactitude he never had. The several parts of this essay are linked only by the question concerning the other human being’s relevance. And for Augustine this relevance was simply a matter of course (A:033242).¹⁴⁴

Arendt argues in the rest of that referenced passage that

Nothing but a belief in the importance of each of the trains of thought shown (an importance verifiable only in the showing itself) can justify the seeming disjointedness of this inquiry. This disjointedness is merely apparent because a single question posed by the author serves as a connecting link, and this disjointedness rests fundamentally on the disjointedness of Augustine’s own work, which at the same time make for its particular abundance and fascination.¹⁴⁵

Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, then, write that “the linkage, in other words, is Arendt’s and not Augustine’s.”¹⁴⁶ They restate and, importantly, even expand their criticism when they note that this is not uncommon for Arendt to approach texts in this manner. They argue

Arendt’s interest in the saint, however, is determinedly nontheological. Following a pattern she repeats in her encounters with Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Kant, and Marx, Arendt abstracts and transfers only those aspects of Augustine’s thought that are useful in formulating her own and leaves the rest offstage. Augustine as a bishop and scourge to heretics does not interest her, but Augustine as author of the *Confessions*, *The City of God*, and commentaries on the letters of John and Paul, Genesis, and the Psalms does compel her attention.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 122.

¹⁴³ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 122.

¹⁴⁴ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Arendt, 4.

¹⁴⁶ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 122.

¹⁴⁷ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 122-123.

I do not argue against this claim. The crux of my research depends on the impact that her interpretation—her “linkage”—has on her later thought trains; I am not arguing that her interpretation is absolute. Whether or not she “leaves the rest offstage,” or only transfers and extracts the “aspects of Augustine’s thought that are useful” to her own thoughts is not the focus of my claim; rather, I am concerned with evaluating her abstractions as they stand on their own merit, and then recognizing how they informed her later work. I am proposing that not only does this “linkage” represent and punctuate the importance in and of itself of this “different concept of love”, i.e., her interpretation of Augustinian *caritas*, but it also signifies the influence that the linkage has on the development of human relationships and states of being in later writings. The “links” between Augustine’s definition of *caritas* and the establishment of the relevance of other human beings conceptually helps to explain the dynamic interplay between Arendt’s descriptions of spectator/actor, individual/community, freedom/plurality, judgment/action, and natality/imagination. It supports her assessment of legitimate plurality in the political realm, and it allows for natality and the possibility of imaginative responses to the world that require “thinking without a banister.”¹⁴⁸ These links help to form the validation of existence, suffering, potential, and life of the neighbor in this world through the “incalculable grace of love,” the injunction attributed to Augustine (again, not without controversy) that Arendt references: “*volo ut sis.*” I want you to be.

The Augustinian *caritas* of Arendt’s dissertation operates on this injunction: expanding the definition of neighbor to include all people while simultaneously preserving the neighbor as an

¹⁴⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Thinking without a Banister*, ed. by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2018).

individual. It recognizes this individuality, it avoids the dangerous designation of the neighbor as a “human being in general.” Acknowledging the individual’s worth as both an agent of particular specificity as well as a component of the community, *caritas* negates the risk associated with *cupiditas* that allows for limiting the love of the neighbor to those with whom space, ideology, culture, or religious beliefs are shared. It refuses the potential of othering based upon worldly constructs because it is not based *in* worldliness. Arendt writes, “The lover reaches beyond the beloved to God in whom alone both his existence and his love have meaning.”¹⁴⁹ While this may seem exclusive to those who share the same belief in God, she argues that “the Christian can thus love all people because each one is only an occasion, and that occasion can be everyone. Love proves its strength precisely in considering even the enemy and even the sinner as mere occasions for love.”¹⁵⁰ She continues explaining the limitless of this application of love from a logical perspective when she writes, “this necessity of *caritas* is concerned, in the explicitness of man’s own being, with the human being as a creature, that is, with the whole human race. Its sole determinant is what is common to all.”¹⁵¹

It is once again in identifying the motivating factors behind these two types of love and in their objects of craving that the difference is made clear: *caritas* is rooted in a desire for the world to come and to honor the same source that “is loved in each individual human being.”¹⁵² *Cupiditas* is rooted in a desire of worldly cravings. Therefore, *cupiditas* is vulnerable to nefarious modes

¹⁴⁹ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 96.

¹⁵⁰ Arendt, 97.

¹⁵¹ Arendt, 109.

¹⁵² Arendt, 96-97.

of validation, in its willingness to engage with justifications of unethical acquisitions, and rationalizations that excuse collateral damage as acceptable harms—necessary means even—to achieving desired ends. In fact, Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark emphasize the importance of this difference when they claim that “[c]upiditas is routinized as habit.”¹⁵³ They propose that this definition of *cupiditas* accommodates an “avoidance of thinking and responsibility for behavior” that “may be the paradigm for her [Arendt’s] notorious exploration of the ‘banality of evil’ in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.”¹⁵⁴ My claims support their deduction that “expressed as *caritas*, *appetitus* leads to the reconstitution of the world on the basis of shared values; expressed as *cupiditas*, it reinforces the existing world of materialism and force.”¹⁵⁵ In the following chapters, I will return to this definition of neighbor to argue that it not only showcases the potential impact Arendt’s interpretation of Augustinian *caritas* has on offering insight into how to “live in the world” but how it also informs her non-religious methodology for judgment.

¹⁵³ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 144.

¹⁵⁴ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 144.

¹⁵⁵ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 144.

Chapter Two: the Creator and creature, origin memory, natality, and time

In Part II of her dissertation work, 'Creator and Creature: The Remembered Past,' Arendt focuses her commentary, in part, on the relationship between the Creator and creature, the creature's origin, and the process of memory. Arendt writes that Augustine equates man's memory to self-consciousness.¹⁵⁶ She explains that

. . . the simple fact that in order to desire happiness we must know what happiness is and that this knowledge of the desired object necessarily precedes the urge to possess it. Within the context of desire, this knowledge appears as the "referring back" to the self for whose sake man aims at whatever he desires.¹⁵⁷

Augustine, she writes, believes "the happy life is not simply an innate idea, but is specifically stored up in memory as the seat of consciousness. Hence, this knowledge points back to the past."¹⁵⁸ Remembering the notion of a "happy life" is key to projecting the concept into the absolute future.¹⁵⁹ Arendt suggests that "I can only seek that thing of whose existence I have some kind of knowledge," and she goes on to say that "For Augustine this knowledge is preserved in man's memory, which he equates with self-consciousness as such."¹⁶⁰ She continues, "the whole question in this context does not turn about goals and *with*er I shall go, but about origins and *whence* I come, and not about the faculty of desire but the faculty of remembrance."¹⁶¹ To remember, then, is not exclusively to desire the "happy life"; rather, it is "the quest for the origin of existence, the quest for the One who 'made me.'"¹⁶² Arendt writes

¹⁵⁶ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 46.

¹⁵⁷ Arendt, 46.

¹⁵⁸ Arendt, 47.

¹⁵⁹ Arendt, 46.

¹⁶⁰ Arendt, 46.

¹⁶¹ Arendt, 48.

¹⁶² Arendt, 49.

that Augustine discovers that “the absolute future turns out to be the ultimate past and the way to reach it is through remembrance.”¹⁶³ The Creator is part of the human being by virtue of memory.¹⁶⁴ And, “only in referring back from mortal existence to the immortal source of this existence does created man find the determinant of his being.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, the creature, through remembrance, is capable of returning to the Creator; through recollection, the creature is able also to “return to oneself.”¹⁶⁶ Arendt argues that “the very fact that man has not made himself but was created implies that the meaningfulness of human existence both lies outside itself and antedates it.”¹⁶⁷ The logical moves in Arendt’s analysis both propel and reinforce the connections between the creature’s path to remembrance (allowing for the return to the Creator), the space that holds memory, and the consequences of the return (i.e., the authentic awareness of self and acceptance of *caritas* as neighbor-love through this awareness). The impact these components have on freedom, newness, and imagination will be discussed later in this dissertation. The enormity of this idea is captured in her statement: “the decisive fact determining man as a conscious, remembering being is birth or ‘natality,’ that is, the fact that we have entered the world through birth.”¹⁶⁸ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark comment on this pivotal idea when they write that

Arendt’s rendering of Augustine’s *caritas* entails a move ‘out of the world’ followed by a triple ‘return’: a return to the future of death and reunion with the Creator; a return back to the historical origin of life in creation; and a final return to the constituted world, which is born anew in ‘natality.’¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³ Arendt, 49.

¹⁶⁴ Arendt, 49.

¹⁶⁵ Arendt, 50.

¹⁶⁶ Arendt, 50.

¹⁶⁷ Arendt, 50.

¹⁶⁸ Arendt, 51.

¹⁶⁹ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 148.

(Perhaps adding a fourth return, the requisite of love—the literal return of love by loving the neighbor as an individual in the world vis-à-vis the remembrance of the Creator’s love—is appropriate.)¹⁷⁰ They point out that “Arendt’s understanding of time, mediated most directly by Augustine, is *memoria*.”¹⁷¹ They argue that

as a mental faculty explored in depth in the dissertation, memory provides the means by which future and past meet in the mental *nunc stans*, or space of memory. . . . *Caritas* bridges reason and judgment in the space provided by memory.¹⁷²

“Augustine’s *memoria*” they continue to explain, “allowed her to locate the drama of alienation and reconciliation in the ‘timeless present,’ removed from ‘they’ but not unconnected to the ‘world’ of remembered existence.”¹⁷³ Once again, the logical moves illuminate Arendt’s explanatory inferences; as Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark emphasize, according to Arendt’s assessment: “Memory is the precondition for the human being’s search for his true origin and source...”¹⁷⁴ And because Arendt “invokes ‘conscience’ as the inner voice ‘of God’” and because conscience is the seat of memory, Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark explain it follows, then, that “conscience is evidence of *caritas*, which links the creature to his Creator and then to his

¹⁷⁰ It is worth mentioning here that in Arendt’s later writings, particularly in *Between Past and Future*, she addresses the relationship between past, present, and future, and memory, thought, and action. In the Preface, on page nine, she writes: “the appeal to thought arose in the odd in-between period which sometimes inserts itself into historical time when not only the later historians but the actors and witnesses, the living themselves, become aware of an interval in time which is altogether determined by things that are no longer and by things that are not yet. In history, these intervals have shown more than once that they may contain the moment of truth.” Again, she writes several pages later on page 11 that “Only because man is inserted into time and only to the extent that he stands his ground does the flow of indifferent time break up into tenses; it is this insertion—the beginning, to put it into Augustinian terms—which splits up the time continuum into forces which then, because they are focused on the particle or body that gives them their direction, begin fighting with each other and acting upon man in the way Kafka describes.” (Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Group, 1993). The idea that there exist similarities between the withdrawal characteristic to *caritas* and the withdrawal characteristic to thinking—as alluded to in the subsequently cited passage by Vecchiarelli and Chelius Stark’s—will be discussed in later chapters.

¹⁷¹ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 142.

¹⁷² Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 142.

¹⁷³ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 144.

¹⁷⁴ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 144.

neighbors.”¹⁷⁵ The encounter, the space where the future and past meet in memory, links not only the creature to the Creator but the creature to its neighbors, too. This link also impacts Arendt’s later idea of freedom in the public sphere.¹⁷⁶ They point out that

Projected outward in her later works, the locus of encounter is transformed into the “public space,” where immortal acts of word and deed take place. . . . It is *caritas* and its targeted mental faculty, free will, that transform Heidegger’s anxiety-ridden “they” into the community of “neighbors” in the world, who are loved both for themselves and for the sake of their common Source.¹⁷⁷

Before continuing to untangle the themes threading origin memory and creatures to the Creator and neighbors, and the transformation of these themes to the “public space” of Arendt’s later works, several trajectories must now be acknowledged and charted. The first issue to address is how this step, linking the Creator to the creature through *caritas* via origin memory and the process of remembrance, makes it possible to resolve the problem of loving the neighbor for the “right reason” (with the right intention) instead of as a means to an end. This first consideration also must justify the linkage of natality to the logical process of the return to the Creator. The second issue is how this resolution represents one of the commonly disputed methodologies in Arendt’s scholarship. The third is how my research specifically addresses these polemics and relies on them as part and parcel in showing how *caritas*-driven approaches can challenge zero-sum methodologies to rights, placelessness, and human dignity

¹⁷⁵ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 148.

¹⁷⁶ It is prudent to include here the following passage from Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark indicating the influence of Karl Jaspers, Arendt’s mentor, confidant, colleague, and friend had in directing and encouraging her on this specific topic: “In the same year, Arendt transferred the themes of her dissertation to another article for a prestigious New York journal, *Partisan Review*. The occasion was the answer to her own Augustine-like *quaestio*, “What is Existence Philosophy?” It afforded Arendt the opportunity both to declare her independence from Heidegger and to express her admiration for Jaspers on the question of the location and potential for human freedom.” Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” in Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, eds. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1996, 118.

¹⁷⁷ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 142.

in an evolving landscape. The first two concepts will be explicitly discussed in this chapter. The last will be discussed in the next chapter and in Part Two and Three. Specifically, this proposition by Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark previews the lineage of thought discussed in my final sections:

When Arendt came to America and shifted her conceptual venue to an explicitly public space, her Augustinian neighbors in the “world constituted by men” would become citizens of similarly constituted republics, bound by social and political contracts at the “founding.” Then, too, the *nunc stans* as mental space in which past and future meet in a “sempiternal” present would appear in her American works as the vantage point for an observer/actor—the foundation for judgment as well as for thought and free will.¹⁷⁸

In later parts of this paper, particularly in the last chapter, I will also address how authors Jennifer Nedelsky, Iris Marion Young, and Leora Bilsky direct their attention to the observer/actor (spectator/actor) relationship. As they converge on the ideas Arendt expressed in her *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* as they apply to plurality, judgment, and freedom in the contemporary “public sphere,” I will also acknowledge Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark’s premise that the applicability of her ideas to policy has its primordial beginning in her dissertation. Through these discussions, I will introduce my thesis proposal that *caritas* and the injunction Arendt attributes to Augustine, “I want you to be,” anchor not only her approach to human rights, but that it contributes an alternative to zero-sum political practices and structures.

As has been established, Arendt’s interpretation of Augustine is not without controversy. This is as true regarding the philosophical details of the Creator/creature relationship and origin

¹⁷⁸ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 142-143.

memory as it is with the criticism of the more general doctrinal issues from religious scholars regarding her interpretation of Augustine's work. My research operates from Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark's translated version of Arendt's dissertation. While I recognize that there are disagreements about her interpretation of Augustine's writings, my discussion primarily concerns itself with how her specific understanding of Augustinian *caritas*, as it is presented in the English text *Love and Saint Augustine*, informs her later works.¹⁷⁹ There are, however, points of this controversy that warrant further explanation at this juncture. Not only would it be remiss to avoid acknowledging these contentious points, but paradoxically, avoiding them would weaken my argument. These disputed points offer insight into how, as was stated earlier by Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, Arendt's "linkage," while often comprised of only her own associations and deductions, is more powerful and novel *because* of its originality, not in spite of it.

The impact that the Creator/creature relationship has on the relevance of the neighbor and, subsequently, the importance of natality in this context, is addressed by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl. In her book, *Hannah Arendt - For the Love of the World*, Young-Bruehl in Appendix 3, "Arendt's Doctoral Dissertation: A Synopsis," writes that Arendt circles back to the beginning of her investigation after the first part of the dissertation ends at an impasse.¹⁸⁰ She offers the following summary of how Arendt resolved concerns about how to "love thy neighbor" for their own sake and not for the wrong reasons or motivations. Loving the neighbor for the wrong

¹⁷⁹ Specifically, I discuss Young-Bruehl, Kohn, and Tsao, in addition to the commentary and conversations in the collection of essays from Beiner and Nedelsky (from *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*).

¹⁸⁰ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 493.

reasons (not for their own sake) would make loving the neighbor meaningless. How can one avoid the problem of having to render the commandment “Love thy neighbor as thyself” meaningless if “love of our neighbors for their own sakes is impossible and that our neighbors are *used* (not enjoyed) when we desire rightly”?¹⁸¹ She writes,

So Hannah Arendt began her investigation again, circling back to the beginning. The proposition that every *appetitus* is tied to a definite object was reexamined. The happy life, if it is to be the object of desire, must be known; but, if this is so, knowledge must precede desire, knowledge must present the object of desire. Put in another way: past knowledge is the basis for a projection into the future. . . . Augustine constructed the possibility of a transmundane memory on the basis of an analysis of the working of memory in general.¹⁸²

Referring back to Arendt’s interpretation of Augustine’s descriptions of memory from his *Confessions* as described in the dissertation, Young-Bruehl summarizes Arendt’s account:

For example: when we are sad, we remember joyful times hopefully, as we remember sadness fearfully when we are joyful. The past is remembered as part of the present—so to speak, inspirationally. . . . The question is, ultimately, the question “who made me?” In the “camps and vast places of memory,” as Augustine said, the creature finds his Creator; he finds the Creator in himself as the determinant of this being, the reason for his existence.¹⁸³

I am arguing that, for Arendt, this recognition does not necessitate a complete agreement with Augustine’s religious beliefs. Rather, it means that in her evolution as a thinker, Arendt revisited the idea of remembering while connecting it to natality. To this point, Young-Bruehl concludes that

At this turn in her interpretation, a contrast which became fundamental to Hannah Arendt’s later work was revealed, a contrast which provided one of the most forceful conceptual frameworks for *The Human Condition*. With the clarity that comes with years of familiarity, years of thinking and rethinking, Arendt stated the contrast in her 1963 notes for revision of the dissertation thus: “The decisive fact determining man as a conscious remembering being is birth or natality, that we have entered the world through birth, while the decisive fact determining man as a desiring being is death or mortality, the fact that we shall leave the world in death. Fear of death, and the inadequacy of life are the springs of desire, whereas, on the contrary,

¹⁸¹ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 493.

¹⁸² Young-Bruehl, 493.

¹⁸³ Young-Bruehl, 493.

gratitude for life having been given at all—a life cherished even in misery—...is the spring of remembrance.¹⁸⁴

Young-Bruehl acknowledges that there was a shift in Arendt's thinking, a maturity and clarity that comes with "years of thinking and rethinking" that introduces the issue of natality as both an early concept in her writing and as a later, fully-formed "conceptual framework." This does not run contrary to Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, nor does it necessarily confirm their propositions regarding her dissertation. Certainly, this does not represent a comprehensive consensus between the authors, but it does acknowledge their opinions regarding a recognizable thought train that began its journey in her dissertation work.

In fact, it seems that Young-Bruehl's explanation could support the idea that origin memory and subsequent return to the Creator connect the creature to its neighbors through *caritas*, albeit in a tangential way. She stops short of concluding that *caritas* specifically links the creature to its neighbors, but she does follow the same logical steps in her analysis that Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark use to reach this conclusion. She argues,

The shift in Arendt's dissertation from love as *appetitus* to love as memory of our nature as God's creatures has another important echo in Arendt's later work. To the confusion of many of her readers, Arendt argued in *The Human Condition* that action is not a matter of means and ends, as fabrication is. This claim seemed to imply that action does not involve planning or policy-making. But what Arendt meant, I think, is that action conceived as planning alone is as insufficient as love conceived as *appetitus* alone. Ends-means categories, like *uti-frui* categories, result in neglect—for the sake of the future—of present being-with-others or neighborly love. Recalling the past or the source of action or love—natality or creatureliness—gives men a principle rather than an end for their orientation. We act so that action is possible, which means that freedom is the principle of action.¹⁸⁵

This passage echoes Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark's:

¹⁸⁴ Young-Bruehl, 493-494.

¹⁸⁵ Young-Bruehl, 494.

In her later works, Arendt transfers the natality theme (“*initium ut esset*”) from its original phenomenological context to its new location as part of her analysis of free will and action in the public space. In *The Human Condition*, she uses the same technique to shift *caritas* from its original definition of love of God and others for the sake of God to the basis of community bonding, albeit “for-the-sake-of.” The transition is already at work, however, in the central question of her dissertation: “the relevance of the neighbor” to an “out of the world” phenomenology.¹⁸⁶

Still, even with these similar assessments, they criticize Young-Bruehl of “marginalizing the dissertation.”¹⁸⁷ They argue that, “for Arendt, remembrance is a major axis of analysis that links natality to temporality, since memory is the ‘space’ between past and future in which the ‘questing search’ for the Creator takes place.” Identifying this piece in the dissertation, between natality to temporality via remembrance, inextricably connects the concept to *caritas*. So, while Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark’s accusation against Young-Bruehl may very well be a claim with merit, I would like to again return to the poignancy of what the logical references illustrate: the framework that Arendt used in her dissertation work to identify the process of recalling the past, returning to the Creator, and principally connecting the creatures to their neighbors is consistently ascertained by the three authors.

However, another important debate to acknowledge for the purposes of my research is the disagreement about when particular ideas of Arendt’s formed, how they were formulated, and when they were revisited. I propose that this debate indicates that there is an ongoing willingness on Arendt’s part to revisit, rework, and rethink—and possibly improve—the ideas and concepts with which she wrestles in her writings. I will come back to this topic, and the

¹⁸⁶ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 168.

¹⁸⁷ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 128.

implications that this has on policy, judgment, and justice, in Parts Two and Three of my dissertation.

One scholar addressing the issue of Arendt's evolving thinking and the questions surrounding the attribution that others—both correctly and erroneously—give to her scholarship is Roy T. Tsao. Two points of Tsao's speak directly to this debate. First, Tsao argues that Arendt has a pattern of thinking about Augustinian religious beliefs without asserting their truth. A practice that he states consists in transposing "the Augustinian pattern into a strictly secular register—and therefore, inevitably, compressing its range, reassigning its parts."¹⁸⁸ Tsao's skepticism about Arendt expressing her completely developed ideas—about natality—and plurality and freedom—in her dissertation work is, of course, a warranted one. While he does not necessarily endorse the dissertation work, particularly as it presented in the English edition *Love and Saint Augustine*, as an embryonic text that incubates the concept of natality, he does acknowledge that Augustine's words from *The City of God* "recur as a *leitmotive* in the writings of Hannah Arendt, where they are invariably associated with a concept of great importance to her: natality, the condition of having come into the world through birth."¹⁸⁹ He concurs that "her reading of Augustine...had a profound and lasting impact on her. It was still reverberating in her mind twenty years later..."¹⁹⁰ Notwithstanding this statement, however, he argues that "the concept of natality belongs to the later period only."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Roy T. Tsao, "Arendt's Augustine," <https://philarchive.org/archive/TSA444>. Originally published in *Politics in Dark Times: Encounters with Hannah Arendt* edited by Seyla Benhabib (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 39-57.

¹⁸⁹ Tsao, "Arendt's Augustine," 39.

¹⁹⁰ Tsao, 39.

¹⁹¹ Tsao, 39.

Perhaps it is possible that Tsao might concede that there is space for him to offer a nuanced, partial agreement with Young-Bruehl's statement since he recognizes the "profound" and lasting impact that Arendt's reading of Augustine had on her, even if he disagrees with her readings and the way that she transposes the "Augustinian pattern into a strictly secular register." Perhaps not. But, it seems that Tsao, Young-Bruehl, Vecchiarelli Scott, and Chelius Stark all acknowledge that Arendt can resect a concept from a text with surgical precision and then develop it into something all her own while still crediting the transplanted portion.

Tsao maintains that the idea of natality belongs to the later period only, but his summary of Arendt's statement in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is complementary to the universality of the neighbor as expressed in her dissertation work that depends upon the concept of natality through *caritas*. He states, "If there is hope for us to hold on to a sense of our common humanity, it must be an idea of humanity that extends not just to the decent and the innocent, the admirable and the diligent, but also the backward and the compromised, the brutal and the misguided."¹⁹²

Again, my research does not intend to resolve the debate regarding which time period Arendt's later concept of natality belongs; rather, it suggests that her definition of Augustinian *caritas*, as presented and discussed in her dissertation work, informed her views throughout her scholarship. It suggests that it helped her to develop the natality that "belongs to the later

¹⁹² Tsao, 48.

period” after “years of familiarity, years of thinking and rethinking.”¹⁹³ In other words, her engagement with the *caritas* of her dissertation forms a conceptual bridge to the natality of her later works.

To this end, the conversation can return to the topic of the origin of the creature and the intersectional, reciprocal concept of time as presented in her dissertation. Time, understood through natality and *caritas*, has dual characteristics. It is both a concept in and of itself and a tool to understand the relationships between origin memory, the creature’s being, and the creature’s relationship to the Creator. According to Arendt,

In contrast to our own understanding, time for Augustine does not begin in the past in order to progress through the present into the future, but comes out of the future and runs, as it were, backward through the present and ends in the past. (Incidentally, this was the Roman understanding of time, which found its conceptual framework solely in Augustine.) Moreover, as far as human existence is concerned, past and future are understood as different modes of the present.¹⁹⁴

In other words, she explains, because past and future are different modes of the present, and “[s]ince craving is the basic mode of human existence, men always ‘forget over something,’ namely, over whatever they happen to desire. Desire itself is a state of forgetfulness.”¹⁹⁵ This state of forgetfulness, then, can alter our perception with time:

This change of the point of reference that occurs in the course of desire, such that the lover forgets himself in the pursuit of the beloved, is the “transit” (transitus) characteristic of all craving.¹⁹⁶ The “transit” indicates the moment when the lover no longer loves with reference to

¹⁹³ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 493.

¹⁹⁴ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 28.

¹⁹⁵ Arendt, 28.

¹⁹⁶ As noted in the footnote of *Love and Saint Augustine*, Arendt is referencing Augustine’s Sermon 142, 3 when discussing “transit” (transitus). The passage referenced between the two citations is as follows: “If the future and the past exist, I want to know where they are. And if I cannot yet know this, at least I do know that wherever they are, they are there not as future or past, but present. If wherever they are they are future then in that place they are not yet; if past, then they are there no more. Thus wherever they are and whatever they are, they *are* only as

himself, when his whole existence has become “living.” In a similar way, *caritas*, the craving love of God, achieves the “transit” to the future eternity.

In so doing man not only forgets himself, but in a way he ceases to be himself, that is, this particular person with this particular place in time and space. . . . The transit achieves the oblivion of the “from” over the “toward,” whereby the forgetting of the origin obliterates the entire dimension of the past.¹⁹⁷

Indeed, this forgetfulness is associated with the loss of self which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter (and in Part Two where the implications of this type of forgetfulness, a forgetfulness that places a person entirely *in* the world, blocks the removal from the world that precipitates the solitude and that is necessary to access *caritas*—and thinking.) This loss of self also initiates the process of remembering the origin memory and the return (to the Creator and, eventually, to the world); this, too, will be addressed in depth in the next chapter. At this point, however, I want to maintain the focus of the discussion on the perception of a “particular person” in a “particular place in time and space” and what this means for linear time and natality.

Arendt writes, “Augustine distinguishes between the beginning of the world and time, both of which existed before man and the beginning of man.”¹⁹⁸ In differentiating these, Arendt argues that it follows that “man was created into time, but time itself was created simultaneously with the world, namely, together with motion and change.”¹⁹⁹ This is also a pivotal point connecting perception and newness, Creator to creature. She refers to Augustine’s writing in *The City of*

present. When we relate the past truly, it is not the things themselves that are brought forth from our memory—for these have passed away: but words conceived from images of the things: for the things stamped their prints upon the mind as they passed through it by way of the senses.” Augustine, *Confessions*, Second Edition, translated by F.J. Sheed, introduction by Peter Brown (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing, 2006), Book Eleven, XVIII, p. 245.

¹⁹⁷ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 28-29.

¹⁹⁸ Arendt, 55.

¹⁹⁹ Arendt, 55.

God to claim, “Not only is time unthinkable without the existence of ‘some creature by virtue of whose movement time could pass,’ but movement is unthinkable without the notion of passing time.”²⁰⁰ Critically, this leads to one of the links between perception (as it relates to time), newness, and origin memory:

...the beginning that was created with man prevented time and the created universe as a whole from turning eternally in cycles about itself in a purposeless way and without anything new ever happening. Hence, it was for the sake of novitas, in a sense, that man was created. Since man can know, be conscious of, and remember his “beginning” or his origin, he is able to act as a beginner and enact the story of mankind.²⁰¹

Arendt offers many examples of these links and interdependencies throughout this chapter, sometimes focusing on the relationship between perception and origin memory, sometimes magnifying the relationship between perception and newness, and sometimes concentrating on the dynamic between newness and the origin memory. She also constructs the framework to highlight the relationship between time, perception, and the Creator as Being. She encapsulates many of the complexities within this scaffolded representation—and includes one of Augustine’s most oft-quoted statements—in her synopsis:

Man initiates the quest for his own being—by asserting “I have become a question to myself.” This quest for his own being arises from his being created and endowed with a memory that tells him that he did not make himself. Hence, the quest for his Being is actually the quest for his origin—for the Creator of the creature. In this quest, which takes place in memory, the past comes back into the present and the yearning for a return to the past origin turns into the anticipating desire of a future that will make the origin available again. In other words, by virtue of man’s quest for his own being, the beginning and end of his life become exchangeable.²⁰²

Again, sifting through these complex relationships, Arendt explains that the Creator is immutable and everlasting. The creature is not everlasting. By understanding its own mortality,

²⁰⁰ Arendt, 55. The footnote (39) to the clause designated by single quotation marks cites *The City of God* XII, 21, XI, 6.

²⁰¹ Arendt, 55.

²⁰² Arendt, 57. The footnote (49) to the claim that is designated by quotation marks cites *Confessions* X, 33, 50 as the source of Augustine’s famous statement.

the creature understands that both its beginning and its end are inextricably linked with the *sempiternal*, but by *its condition of being*, the creature embodies both newness (possibility) and limits (temporality). She uses the metaphor of a tree from Augustine's *Literal Commentary on Genesis V* to explain this phenomenon.²⁰³ She argues, "For Augustine, the temporal senses of parts arise from this inconceivable simultaneity."²⁰⁴ The comparison of a seed containing all the necessary invisible components for it, with time, to become a tree is likened to the creature, or "the parts themselves, which come into existence and pass away"... "unaware of this simultaneousness."²⁰⁵ She argues, "Since men themselves are parts of the whole, they cannot for this very reason ever see it."²⁰⁶ Extracting the importance of time and the creature's perception of mortality through its worldly lens, Arendt connects Augustine's explanation to the origin memory:

In this context, the mortality of man is no more than a special case of temporality of the parts in the universe. In this way, temporality is not based on man's mutability and transiency, but is inherent in the relationship between parts and the whole. Time exists because, for the part, simultaneousness unfolds itself in the guise of a sequence. . . . eternity is the essential structure of the whole, that is, of the universe. . . . In other words, what endures independently of the parts' coming and going is the imperishable harmonious whole in which the parts find their place. If sequence is the mode in which the whole appears to the parts, time is the mode in which man understands it.²⁰⁷

Herein lies another problem, however. While this reference of parts to whole gives a satisfying explanation of the perception of the creature's limited perspective of universality via the temporality that is characteristic to worldly time, Arendt identifies a contradiction that goes

²⁰³ Arendt, 58. Arendt cites *Literal Commentary on Genesis V*, 23, 45 when writing: "To be sure, the universe seen as God's creation must be understood as containing all things simultaneously, for 'God created all things at once,' and they exist in a hidden way 'just as all those things which in time grow into a tree are invisibly in the very seed and [in this sense] simultaneous' with the whole of creation."

²⁰⁴ Arendt, 59.

²⁰⁵ Arendt, 59.

²⁰⁶ Arendt, 59.

²⁰⁷ Arendt, 59.

beyond “inconceivable simultaneity” and lands squarely in absolute contradiction. If eternal Being is equated with an “ever-present universe,” and “the whole is by definition the totally encompassing and as such is indifferent to its parts,” the parts “have no meaning outside of their integration to the whole.”²⁰⁸ She poses the conundrum again several pages later in this way: “If man and his life are parts of some encompassing whole, they cannot be said to have an origin and their mortality has become irrelevant.”²⁰⁹ The resolution of this conflict requires, in part, a clarification of the meaning of terms in this inquiry. First, Arendt specifies what “Being” means to Augustine. She argues, “Being is for Augustine, as it was for the Greeks, the everlasting, forever lawful structure and the harmony of all the parts of the universe.”²¹⁰ This definition has implications for the existence of evil, too. She differentiates between Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus’ theories of the cosmos and its structure, noting that

The reason that Plotinus was so important for Augustine’s own thought is that Plotinus, in contradistinction to his ancient predecessors, is primarily interested in the fate of man in this everlasting cosmos. Hence, Plotinus raises the question of the origin of evil, which is of no great interest to either Plato or Aristotle but is of compelling significance for Augustine.

Arendt defers to Augustine’s writings in both his *Confessions* and *Eighty-Three Different Questions* to elaborate on this significance as it relates to understanding the relation between parts to wholes and the perception of time and worldliness. Augustine’s concept of the “evil man” is one who is out of congruence with its whole; the opposite of a “part” congruent with its whole (i.e., a well-ordered man).²¹¹ She deduces that

²⁰⁸ Arendt, 60.

²⁰⁹ Arendt, 62.

²¹⁰ Arendt, 61

²¹¹ Arendt, 65.

We share in events in the world by our will. And, insofar as things also happen as a result of divine action, God is not the eternal, all encompassing one who embraces us and our actions—the relationship is half and half. Thus, the world is the place where things happen.²¹²

This passage provides insight into Arendt's later discussions about freedom, but for now, the focus will remain on how this relates to the Creator, creature, origin memory, natality, time, and the resolution of how a "part" can be independently meaningful. Arendt suggests that by following this logic, "this world is initially brought into being, but not out of nothing, as in the case of the creation. Rather, it is from the divine fabric (*fabrica Dei*), from the pre-existing creation, that man makes the world and makes himself part of the world."²¹³ She continues to explain the nuanced relationship when she writes,

The world cannot be worldly until man's making and loving occur independently of pure createdness.

Only insofar as there is a world at all can man be in the necessary state of being of the world.... However, since he is born into the world and is thereby of the world, this pre-existing world is for him a present and accessible one....His own being lies before him and is accessible to him only as presented past, that is in memory. His every search for himself, his every possible discovery of himself rests on this fact of being created. Thus man is "later" than his own being. As a matter of principle, man's being is "prior" to his creation. . . . Thus being "of the world" precedes any explicit love of the world and it means belonging to the realm of created things.²¹⁴

In other words, the "createdness of the world has a twofold meaning for the creature."²¹⁵ On one hand, the world is the "wrong 'before'" as Arendt says, because for the creature to return to its creation is to misunderstand the fabric of the divine, i.e., the creature was created "into the world" and therefore is "after the world."²¹⁶ It is a flawed search for the creature to seek

²¹² Arendt, 65.

²¹³ Arendt, 66.

²¹⁴ Arendt, 68.

²¹⁵ Arendt, 68.

²¹⁶ Arendt, 68,

“himself as the sole source of his ‘being in the world’” because the state of being in the world is “later than his own being.”²¹⁷ In this way, the

searching inquiry into his own being is specific to human existence, but not for the divine fabric of the world. . . . This world alone exists before and after man and, though created, this world provokes no searching inquiry after its being. The fabric of the world knows no such inquiry because, while changeable, it is not perishable.²¹⁸

Arendt once again emphasizes the importance of clearly defining the terms being used and understanding the context of their use in order to understand the conceptual difference between the fabric of the divine, eternity, the constituted world, and the creature’s being, both in the world and before it. For example, she writes

In asking about his own being, man who is guided by the Greek concept of being, asks about imperishable being, and he does so precisely out of his experiences of the world as heaven and earth. The primary experience is not that God is imperishable, but that the world is. . . . When Augustine speaks of the transiency of the world, he is always thinking of the world constituted by men and never the world as heaven and earth.

It is apparent how important the concept of time, and the creature’s perception of time, is to the interplay between natality and memory. Arendt reiterates its significance when she expounds on Augustine’s perception of time again by explaining that “every creature comes from ‘not yet’ (*nondum*) and heads for ‘no more’ (*iam non*).”²¹⁹ This means that “this in-between position of man, between being and non-being, is now viewed essentially as a matter of time. Indeed, it is time itself.”²²⁰ She continues,

Time is not only the index of transience—time itself is transience. Insofar as human life owes its possibly positive aspect to its past alone, memory becomes the real possibility of holding on to

²¹⁷ Arendt, 68.

²¹⁸ Arendt, 68-69.

²¹⁹ Arendt, 70.

²²⁰ Arendt, 72-3. The footnote in the text (108) to this passage states: “Since time comes from the “not yet” and rushes toward the “no more,” it is understood as time “tending not to be” (*Confessions* XI, 14, 17).

the past and of arresting transience. This is because in memory the past is not pure past (not just “no longer being”), but the past is “presented” as present.²²¹

Thus,

Death throws the living back upon their own source. It throws them back before the world and their entrance into the world, and thus on their own “not yet.” . . . We exist only insofar as we relate directly to the “before” and “not yet” of our existence.²²²

She continues by suggesting that this framework only works if it is understood that the “end” is also the “source,” i.e., that

since man’s own being as the point of reference continues to be understood as absolute immutability, being also continues to be encompassing because its eternity includes temporality as well. It is at the end what it was at the beginning. The direction or goal of life is identical to its source.²²³

Nativity must be able to accommodate this juxtaposition of the direction of life, i.e., death, being identical to its source. As is characteristic of an Arendtian approach, this means assessing a theory, revisiting the definitions of the words used within that theory, building upon the clarified definitions, and then testing the efficacy and strength of the theory. To do so, in this particular case, means being able to dissect, differentiate, and compare nativity from being. For example, is it possible to say that nativity’s “eternity includes temporality,” too.²²⁴ And, Arendt refers to Augustine’s sentiment as reflected in *The Way of Life of the Manichaeans* II (1, 1) and *The Nature of Good* (19) when she argues, “For Augustine it is a matter of course that true Being and perishability are mutually exclusive.”²²⁵ If nativity is partially defined as newness in a perishable world, Being and nativity must be able to account for the differences or explain the

²²¹ Arendt, 73. The footnote in the text (109) cites *Confessions* XI, 27, 35 and states: “Therefore, I do not measure these syllables which no longer exist, but something in my memory which remains as a fixed impression.”

²²² Arendt, 73.

²²³ Arendt, 75.

²²⁴ Arendt, 75.

²²⁵ Arendt, 51. The footnote to this passage (21), Arendt cites *The Way of the Life of the Manichaeans* II, 1, 1 and *The Nature of Good* 19.

similarities in their relationship to perishability. This requires revisiting the earlier sections of her dissertation to reevaluate natality within the context of the created world as the constructed entity in which the creature has a specific experience, not in the context that the world is the location and space from where the creature originated. In other words, natality has a specificity to the created world that speaks to the creature's worldly experience, but it does not predicate its newness on the perishability of the creature's Being. Rather, natality describes a characteristic of the Being of Augustine's creature in the world. Natality is not necessarily a simple consequence of perishability, but it is most definitely a characteristic of what it means for a creature to be *in* the world. It is a manifestation of possibility inherent to the human condition. Importantly, as meaningful action is later discussed in the context of remembrance in *The Human Condition*, through the lens of *caritas* meaningful action certainly can elicit worldly acknowledgment and result in worldly praise (though arguably this does not often happen in real-time when the action is being evaluated by contemporary people or institutions). The crux of understanding the dynamic of *caritas* is to underline that while it *may* receive worldly recognition (though often in hindsight or through a historical understanding), it is *not* motivated by it. Instead, and in contrast to *cupiditas*, *caritas* participates in the real world, but does not seek to be *of the world*. *Caritas* does not seek validation or notoriety from the world, but it operates and responds to the real world, its inhabitants, and the neighbor-relation. It impacts worldliness, but is not measured by it nor does it seek its approval. Natality, in this sense, then, offers an opportunity for *caritas* to flourish; an opportunity through, with, and for new relations, new action, and new interruptions to happen in the world. In this sense, *caritas* and natality work symbiotically—in reality—with respect to possibility, hope, creativity, and

love *in the world*. *Caritas* shares the qualities of natality by encouraging, recognizing, and embodying meaningfulness. Their relation bridges action and thought, meaningfulness and memory. In mathematical terms, their logical relationship is multifaceted and multidimensional, with multiple set possibilities and variants, and subsequent unions and intersections, but also with particular complements and exclusions.

Therefore, for the purposes of my argument, it is necessary to compare the definition of natality in her later works in an effort to test the consistency of meaning and application.

Arendt argues that, to understand natality through the Augustinian lens,

It is important to realize that though man was made “out of nothing,” he does not come from nothingness or nobody-ness. Man’s cause of existence is the one who *is*. If man returns to where he came from, he finds his Creator.²²⁶

She punctuates this progression of thought by pointing out that Augustine’s logic dictates that “[t]he very fact that man has not made himself but was created implies that the meaningfulness of human existence both lies outside itself and antedates it. Createdness (*creatum esse*) means that essence and existence are not the same.”²²⁷ The creature’s presence on earth, its existence in that particularity, is not encompassing of its entire existence nor its essence. Rather, as discussed earlier, it is worldly time that warps this perception and leads to the error of thinking that the one particularity is representative of the whole, or in other words, eternity. She continues, “[t]o put it differently, the decisive fact determining man

²²⁶ Arendt, 51.

²²⁷ Arendt, 50-51.

as a conscious remembering being is birth or 'natality,' that is, the fact that we have entered the world through birth."²²⁸ Natality as beginning, then, is an introduction of the new into the constructed world. "Since created things have come into existence, they change and alter."²²⁹

And, as was pointed out earlier when focusing on time and the perception of time,

the beginning that was created with man prevented time and the created universe as a whole from turning eternally in cycles about itself in a purposeless way and without anything new ever happening. Hence, it was for the sake of *novitas*, in a sense, that man was created. Since man can know, be conscious of, and remember his "beginning" or his origin, he is able to act as a beginner and enact the story of mankind.²³⁰

With every human being comes the possibility of new action. This is a key, if not *the* key, to understanding natality and its relationship to plurality, action, and the political realm in her later works. By entering the world through birth, natality is a hallmark of the creature. But, it is also the hallmark of the capacity the creature has to act as a beginner *in* the world. To bring new actions *into* the world. As has been mentioned, Tsao argues that natality belongs to the later period only. However, its formulation in her dissertation seems to fit seamlessly with the passage in *The Human Condition* in which Arendt famously refers to natality in the first chapter, assigning its importance to action and the political. In designating "three fundamental human activities: labor, work, and action,"²³¹ Arendt argues:

All three activities and their corresponding conditions are intimately connected with the most general condition of human existence: birth and death, natality and mortality....Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is for history. Labor and work, as well as action, are also rooted in natality in so far as they have the task to provide and preserve the world for, to foresee and reckon with, the constant influx of newcomers who are born into the world as strangers. However, of the three, action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer

²²⁸ Arendt, 51.

²²⁹ Arendt, 52.

²³⁰ Arendt, 55.

²³¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, introduction by Margaret Canovan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 7.

possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities. Moreover, since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought.²³²

Natality, then, is not limited to entering the world by birth; it is inherent in initiative and “in all human activities.” To review: in her dissertation, Arendt defines the relationship between the Creator and creature in part by clarifying how the perception of worldly time, according to Augustine, distorts the understanding of the “whole” that is eternity. By differentiating between the existence of the creature in the temporal world, and the creature in the context of eternity, she explains that Augustine argues that the creature exists “before” the world and will exist “after” the world. The beginning of the world does not equate to the beginning of eternity, nor is it equivalent to the beginning of the creature. The creature’s origin does not coincide with the beginning of the world; rather, what is novel is the creature’s entrance into the constructed world. Natality is the human condition marking the creature’s introduction into the world; it is not the origin of the creature. Therefore, the origin memory is not the recollection of the world’s creation, but the recollection of the Creator. This recollection is what *caritas* facilitates through the loss of self, and it is what the loss of self allows *caritas* to facilitate through recollection to reenter the world of neighborly connection and importance.

²³² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 8-9.

Chapter Three: *caritas*, the loss of self, the return, and the neighbor

Caritas is the conduit for the return to the creator after the creature's realization that the beginning and the end are the same. To revisit an earlier passage: "Death throws the living back upon their own source. It throws them back before the world and their entrance into the world..."²³³ Following this train of thought, Arendt begins the second chapter of Part II reiterating that

We have seen that the return to the Creator is the original structural definition of the creature's being. Yet, the return is not an issue until man has the structural connection pointed out to him by the awareness of death. There is no "before" as "before" until man positively takes it up. This positive turn to his own reality in his relation to God is achieved in *caritas*.²³⁴

Caritas facilitates the "positive turn," whereas *cupiditas* is characterized as the "missing of the turn" and specifically, it is "a turn to the wrong 'before'" because it mistakes "the world that exists before and after man for eternity."²³⁵ Critically, Arendt writes that, "It is not only the object of love that distinguishes *caritas* from *cupiditas*, but the choice itself."²³⁶ And, she continues, "Even the choice of *caritas*, in which the referring back becomes reality, requires something prior,"²³⁷ meaning that the Creator loved first; it is the choice of the creature to acknowledge this and reciprocate the action through choosing *caritas*. This, she writes, is what Augustine defines as "the true 'grace of God.'"²³⁸ When the grace of God is chosen, it indicates the choice "out of this world."²³⁹ That choice means it is possible to "live in accord with God"

²³³ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 73.

²³⁴ Arendt, 77.

²³⁵ Arendt, 77.

²³⁶ Arendt, 77.

²³⁷ Arendt, 77.

²³⁸ Arendt, 78.

²³⁹ Arendt, 78. Arendt references the *Tractates on John's Gospel* LXXVI, 2 in footnote 6: "For those who love are chosen because they love. . . . The holy ones are distinguished from the world by that love which makes the single-minded to dwell together in a house."

removing the fear of death.²⁴⁰ Reassessing Arendt's delineation between *caritas* and *cupiditas* through this lens (from Part I in her dissertation) makes the effect of the choice more evident and more impactful with the knowledge of the return and eternity:

Caritas knows no fear because it knows no loss. Death is transformed into the worst evil (as contrasted with the "highest good") for a life governed by *cupiditas*.

...

Thus, the freedom of *caritas* is a future freedom. Its freedom on earth consists in 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."²⁴¹

Cupiditas is of the world, and because it is anchored to the world, it is not eternal. The individual self is a product of the constructed world; however, the creature exists before and after the world. The correct turn, the return to *caritas*, illuminates the falsity of importance attributed to the worldly-created self. *Caritas* takes the individual out of the world and "destroys the individualization and isolation of man that are derived from the world."²⁴² This means that "[a]s man advances in *caritas* to Being as such, which at the same time and with the same absolute generality and omnipotence is his own being, he casts off all that belonged to him as a specific individual."²⁴³ The "casting off" of that which belonged to the individual does not remove the importance of the creature, or its autonomy; rather, it removes the veneer of the importance of the self that is fashioned in relation to the world. Instead, it places the purposefulness of the creature's origin into the context of eternity. Arendt writes, "In taking up *caritas*, the necessary and ontologically based imitation of every man becomes an explicit

²⁴⁰ Arendt, 78.

²⁴¹ Arendt, 34-35.

²⁴² Arendt, 79.

²⁴³ Arendt, 79.

assimilation to God (*sicut Deus*).²⁴⁴

This imitation, through *caritas*, leads to an authentic return to the Creator. Without *caritas*, Arendt explains, man's imitation "is free, though only for himself and not for God."²⁴⁵ Within the *caritas*-driven imitation, there is a particular thread of humility in explicitly recognizing "createdness."²⁴⁶ Arendt explains

The object of this assimilation is God as the Supreme Being, as Being pure and simple, which makes all individual distinctions vanish because they pertain to createdness. Self-rejection is the same as being more like God. In performing this imitation, the reality of which is the absolute denial of self found in the world, man comprehends his existence as the outright opposite of God, expressed in the impossibility of equality between him and God.²⁴⁷

Instead of becoming "detached and taken as an independent being," the creature must choose to recognize its createdness and dependence.²⁴⁸ This paradigm shift through *caritas* will not only result in the loss of the self that facilitates the return to the Creator—the self as an independent being capable of complete individual sufficiency existing in the world—but it will also serve as the opportunity to access the entry back into the world of neighbors.

Choosing *caritas* is not without struggle nor is choosing it necessarily valued as something constant, stable, or worthy in the constructed world. Arendt points out that for Augustine, in part, "[t]he temptation to miss this way lies in habit (*consuetudo*)."²⁴⁹ She refers to passages in the *Confessions* and his *Homilies on the First Epistle of John II* to explain that for Augustine,

²⁴⁴ Arendt, 78.

²⁴⁵ Arendt, 79.

²⁴⁶ Arendt, 80.

²⁴⁷ Arendt, 80.

²⁴⁸ Arendt, 81.

²⁴⁹ Arendt, 82.

habit is connected to the perception of worldly importance and embodies the “wrong before,” i.e., the before of the worldly construct as the point of creation, not the Creator’s eternity.²⁵⁰ She writes, “Through habit, covetousness constantly seeks to cover this real source by insisting that man is ‘of the world,’ thereby turning the world itself into the source.”²⁵¹ It is important to remember the role that the erroneous perception of worldly time plays in allowing the perpetuation of this flawed, but persuasive, explanation of habit that distorts the importance and understanding of the worldly self. The misperception of eternity, experienced as only linear worldly time, shields the creature from its mistaken acceptance of habit as an accurate descriptor of its nature. Arendt explains,

Once human life has turned to the world and once it has denied its own createdness as determined by God, it clings to habit. Habit can only justify having once loved the world. Habit shrouds the dangers that this past turn to the world necessarily involves, since it contravenes the meaning of the creature as such. Death is a peril only where man’s dependence on his source has not been uncovered.²⁵²

She writes that Augustine argues that habit connects the wrong turn, the wrong “before,” to a lack of free will. For example, [h]abit opposes both past and future by making man cling to the wrong ‘before,’ once he has taken it up. Habit is the eternal yesterday and has no future.”²⁵³ Habit is in direct opposition to *caritas*. Arendt once again summarizes Augustine: habit is associated with sin insofar as the “inclination to sin springs more from habit than from passion itself, because the world man has founded in covetousness is consolidated in habit.”²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Arendt, 82. In the passages about habit on this page, she has four pertinent citations to note. In footnote 27, she cites: *Confessions* VIII, 5, 12; in footnote 28, she cites: *On Music* VI, 19; in footnote 29, she cites *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* II, 11; and, in footnote 30, she cites *Confessions* VIII, 7, 18; *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁵¹ Arendt, 82.

²⁵² Arendt, 83.

²⁵³ Arendt, 83.

²⁵⁴ Arendt, 83

Whereas *caritas* helps to initiate the act of *choosing* to recognize the eternity of the Creator, habit reinforces the wrong turn; it places value on the self's successes associated with worldly importance and significance. Arendt punctuates this point by showing, that

The actualization of the return in *caritas* is a choice tied to free will. In this act of willing, man simultaneously wills his very own source, which is the utmost limit of the past and the future. For him past and future coincide in reference to eternity.²⁵⁵

As will be discussed in the sections that follow, and was previewed with the citation from *The Human Condition* (mentioned in the last chapter), the idea that *caritas* is tied to natality, which is key to action and free will, plays a contentious but paramount role in her later works. The concept of the loss of the self, as referenced in her dissertation, is directly related to the creature's rejection of the false idea of its worldly origin. *Caritas* is the mechanism for losing the worldly self to access the return to the Creator; it robs death of its power as a terminal threat and instead empowers the creature to reach the correct "before." Reaching toward the correct before, understanding that the beginning and the end are the same, the creature can now reenter the world but with a very different understanding of meaning, agency, eternity, and dependence—and will. As Arendt foreshadowed early in her discussion,

From the absolute future, to which *caritas* prompted him to surrender, man returns necessarily to the world as it now exists, only to find that the world has forfeited its original significance, and that in loving or desiring it he no longer loves or desires it for its own sake. Yet, in the absolute future he has at the same time acquired a point of reference that lies, in principle, outside the world itself, and which therefore can now serve as a regulator of all things inside the world as well as of the relationship by which they are interconnected.²⁵⁶

She goes to great lengths to parse the relationship Augustine formulates between grace, *caritas*, divine law, the action of willing, and the return to the world. Again, she will revisit these

²⁵⁵ Arendt, 82.

²⁵⁶ Arendt, 37.

topics later, but it is important to note that within her subsequent works, there appears to be a shift in the role that grace plays in her secular assessment of *caritas*.²⁵⁷ Within her dissertation, however, she maintains that Augustine recognizes that “[t]hough the command to return to Being as our source is within ourselves as conscience, the granting of the power to do so, which is divine grace, comes from outside ourselves.”²⁵⁸ Conscience, or the “voice of the Creator” challenges human habituation in the world.²⁵⁹ It is a constant challenge to “choose” *caritas* in the sense that man “has turned himself into a resident of this world, one who is no longer of God alone but owes what he is to this world which he helped to establish.”²⁶⁰ Estrangement from the world is necessary to allow for the loss of the worldly self that is required to return to the Creator. She writes, “The estrangement from the world is essentially an estrangement from habit. While man lives in habit, he lives in view of the world and is subject to its judgment.”²⁶¹ Here, she articulates the specific causal association Augustine sees between habituation and worldly judgment. She elaborates: “In the testimony of conscience, God is the only possible judge of good and evil.”²⁶² She continues, “[t]he world and its judgments crumble before this inner testimony. There is no fleeing from conscience.”²⁶³ Therefore, discernment’s reference point is not a worldly one for the creature that has returned to the Creator; it is grace that encourages the return via conscience, and it is the creature’s understanding of its right origin

²⁵⁷ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 137. Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark write that “[h]er exposition of Augustine in *Willing* is so narrowly focused on rescuing free will from external entanglements that the effect is not only to jettison grace and the providential order but the link to public life and judgment as well.”

²⁵⁸ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 88.

²⁵⁹ Arendt, 84.

²⁶⁰ Arendt, 84

²⁶¹ Arendt, 84.

²⁶² Arendt, 84.

²⁶³ Arendt, 85.

source that allows it to differentiate between habit and the meaning inherent to its createdness. Arendt writes of the Herculean task set before conscience: “Driven by the divine law, conscience speaks into the world-entangled life of man and puts him into God’s presence to face his source.”²⁶⁴

Here, there is a distinction made between awareness of the divine law and the ability—perhaps even capability—of having the power to follow conscience, not just one time, “but as the ever-present authority that man keeps confronting on his way through life.”²⁶⁵ Arendt clarifies: “man’s inability to comply with the law does not consist in a lack of will but a lack of power, since in seeking the Creator rather than the world he has already made his law-bidden choice not to covet.”²⁶⁶ This again reframes the power differential—and dependence—between Creator and creature. She writes,

God’s function is changed from that of a Creator to a giver and helper. God’s help is grace, and this can be attained and accepted only by one who has been humbled (*humiliatus*), that is, by one who has recognized the sinfulness of his own incapacity and inferiority to the command.²⁶⁷

It is in recognizing that help is still required to follow the command of the law that the creature humbly acknowledges its dependence upon God. God’s help is grace, and it responds to the humble request of the creature.²⁶⁸ The differentiation between the charge the Law carries, to

²⁶⁴ Arendt, 85.

²⁶⁵ Arendt, 87.

²⁶⁶ Arendt, 87.

²⁶⁷ Arendt, 89. In footnote 64, Arendt references Augustine’s *Letter* 217, 12, citing: “Therefore, the grace of God is not found in the nature of free will, or in the law, or in doctrine, as the Pelagian aberration falsely claims, but it is given to separate acts of the will.”

²⁶⁸ Arendt, 87. In footnote 52, Arendt refers to *Propositions from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* 40 and *Letter* 177, 5, and she cites: “There has to be a distinction between the Law and grace. The Law knows how to command, grace how to help. The Law would not command if there were no free will, nor would grace help if the will were sufficient.”

command, and the charge embedded in the role grace plays, to help, illustrates how “the gulf between ‘to will’ and ‘to be able’ marks the creature that has no power over its own being. It’s lack of power makes the creature depend on the Creator once again and more decisively.”²⁶⁹ Grace, then, “is God’s renewed acceptance of the creature He has made and corresponds to the pleas for help in the renewed turn to God.”²⁷⁰

This discussion about the creature’s agency, adherence to habit, and its simultaneously necessary dependence upon the Creator offers an insight into several concepts within Arendt’s dissertation that, in retrospect, are formative concepts for her later writings. First, habit as a tool that reinforces the misplacement of value by attributing worth to worldly successes via the “wrong return” connects Augustine’s framework to the issue of judgment. For Arendt, the faculty of judgment operates between the common world and the individual. Therefore, while both are susceptible to misplacement of value via habit and worldiness, and discernment is dependent upon the ability to recognize this vulnerability, both are necessary conditions. As will be proposed subsequently in this work, Arendt will echo this connection in her later writings, too. Secondly, this discussion reveals how natality, as both opportunity and potentiality, demands the recognition of its limitations in order to understand its possibilities.²⁷¹ Thirdly, the function that *caritas* plays in these specific explanations helps to highlight its multifaceted importance in the relationship between the individual and their neighbor within the framework of her Augustinian analysis, but it also creates a particular continuity between

²⁶⁹ Arendt, 87.

²⁷⁰ Arendt, 89.

²⁷¹ This differentiation also influences impacts discussions about judgment and agency in her later works, too.

subject themes of plurality, freedom, and natality in her later works. In addition, this contextual framework allows for the creature's embodiment of natality, the creature's worldly experience, and the return's requirement of both a denial of self and a recovery of the mandate to love the neighbor as oneself. This apparent contradiction will be addressed in the next discussion.

The discussions around the individual creature, its connectedness with the Creator, and the characteristic interactions of the creature with the world frame the relationships as dynamic and vulnerable. The changeability, tentativeness, and vulnerability do not make the relationship untenable or weak; rather, they showcase how the relationship is not a one-time interaction or static, permanently defined status. For this reason, Arendt repeats the importance of "choosing" *caritas* as a commitment to action, not as a belief system adhered to in isolation or in name only. For example, she writes, "If the will were entire, it would not need to command." She explains that

If its attempted actualization of the return in conscience had made the creature feel the demand inherent in itself as a law given by the Creator (a demand concretely met by that very actualization), its inadequacy to comply with that law makes it feel the Creator once more as bestowing the power. In this process man experiences grace.²⁷²

This process is an ongoing, active commitment while the creature is in the world. To be in and not of the world is an ongoing choice because habit percussively bombards and insidiously surrounds the creature in the world with opportunities to return to the "wrong before." In this way,

Man on his own is always sinful in God's presence, whether steeped in covetousness or trying by his own will to surmount his nature as a creature in the searching quest of his own source. Each time the Creator has really been forgotten, in the first instance over the world, and in the second over man's own possible independence. In this independence, or pride, man misses the

²⁷² Arendt, 88.

very chance of actualization.²⁷³

The opportunities to forget the Creator, or to succumb to the false belief of “man’s own possible independence” perpetually appear throughout the creature’s worldly experience. It is through *caritas* that the creature can commit to return again and again, to choose “truth” instead of “habit.” Because the temptation of habit is not removed by simply finding the correct “before,” the creature must humbly accept its dependency upon the Creator for grace throughout the worldly experience. Grace is called upon repeatedly; it is not a one-time moment of enlightenment. She continues,

The comprehension and choice of divine grace happens in *caritas*. Corresponding to the necessity of referring back, *caritas* is also defined as “loving back” (*redamare*). Only in this return of love can man refer back so as to come to the truth of his existence (“uplifted by truth, weighed down by habit”). *Caritas* alone lets him fulfill the law in accepting the help of the Creator, the giver of all powers,” for only in the accepted grace of God is the world truly renounced.²⁷⁴

In renouncing the world, “[e]ven though man’s deliverance permits him fully to understand the world as a desert again, he is no longer lost in this desert.”²⁷⁵ It is because of *caritas* that the creature is able to enter the world of neighbors, and to enter it as a neighbor, without being “lost in the desert.” This, however, is only possible to reconcile when the definitions and proper order of love, specifically the differences between *caritas* and *cupiditas*, are understood within the context of time and with the knowledge of the “right before.” And, this renunciation of the world happens with self-denial which is dependent upon *caritas*. Arendt writes,

This self-denial can only be achieved in *caritas*, because nothing else provides a reason for the sacrifice. Only through love can man renounce his own will, and this renunciation born of love is the prerequisite for choosing grace.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Arendt, 90.

²⁷⁴ Arendt, 90.

²⁷⁵ Arendt, 90.

²⁷⁶ Arendt, 91

Renouncing the will through love, denying the self, and then loving the neighbor as oneself are problematic edicts without the context of the right “return,” *caritas*, and grace. With these definitions, the process required to be capable of loving one’s neighbor as oneself is paradoxical but not illogical.

Arendt begins the third chapter of Part II, *Love of Neighbor*, with the claim that

In Augustine’s view, self-denial is expressed in man’s attitude toward the world. Man loves the world as God’s creation; in the world the creature loves the world as God does. This is the realization of a self-denial in which everyone, including oneself, simultaneously regains his own God-given importance.²⁷⁷

Once again, she systematically moves through Augustine’s argument, identifying the syllogistic inferences and defining the terms necessary to validate the claim that it is possible for the creature to lose the worldly self, renounce the world, and love the neighbor in the world.

Working backwards, she says, “[I]ove of neighbor is man’s attitude toward his neighbor, which springs from *caritas*.”²⁷⁸ In this same vein, she writes

Self-denying love means loving by renouncing oneself; and this [A:033343] in turn means to love all people so completely without distinctions that the world becomes a desert to the lover. Moreover, it means to love them “as oneself.” By the fact of referring back, man as creature gains his own being. . . . This return through recapturing his own being, and the isolation achieved in it, is the sole source of neighborly love. The prerequisite of the right comprehension of my neighbor is the right comprehension of myself. It is only where I have made sure of the truth of my own being that I can love my neighbor in his true being, which is in his createdness.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Arendt, 93. Arendt includes a lengthy footnote to the first paragraph of this chapter acknowledging Karl Holl’s statements regarding Augustine’s interpretation of the commandments from the Sermon on the Mount; Holl’s scholarship challenges some of her deductions.

²⁷⁸ Arendt, 93.

²⁷⁹ Arendt, 95. The distinction in brackets [A:033343] indicates the editing system that Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark used to distinguish the footnote approaches included in different copies of Arendt’s dissertation and in her revisions. I have left the information in this passage to acknowledge the change in numbering methodologies.

Here the paradox is explained: in understanding the origin of one's own createdness, I understand and recognize the origin of the neighbor's createdness. This denies the worldly self its false place of importance; losing the worldly self allows the creature to dispose of its perception of the neighbor's worldly self, too. In doing so, the creature can love the "neighbor in his true being, which is in his createdness."²⁸⁰

Arendt explains that "[i]n self-denying love I deny the other person as well as myself, but I do not forget him" and "[t]his denial corresponds to 'willing that you may be' and 'carrying off to God.'"²⁸¹ She continues to explain the connection when she writes, "I deny the other person so as to break through to his real being, just as in searching for myself I deny myself."²⁸² Critically, she punctuates, "the denial of the other person is not the end of the process of searching back; it is the beginning."²⁸³ This means that the return, connecting the creature to its neighbors' origin and their createdness, is a connection of love. She writes,

Moreover, the neighbor's original being is pointed out in the denial that is a comprehension of his being. Thus, love of neighbor is the concrete realization of referring back beyond the world, and in doing so it thrusts the other out of the world that he considers the point of his being.²⁸⁴

Arendt translates this to mean that love of the neighbor, precipitated from the "right before" correlates to loving "the being that lives in him as his source."²⁸⁵ This is the "same source" that

²⁸⁰ Arendt, 95.

²⁸¹ Arendt, 96. While Arendt does not specifically invoke the injunction attributed to Augustine at this point ("I want you to be"), it is worth pausing to compare its similarity to what she does write. As will be discussed in Part II and II of this dissertation, the relevance of the neighbor pivotally matters to the conversation about human rights in her later works.

²⁸² Arendt, 96

²⁸³ Arendt, 96.

²⁸⁴ Arendt, 96.

²⁸⁵ Arendt, 96.

“is loved in each individual human being.”²⁸⁶ Herein lies the opportunity to claim that “The Christian can thus love all people because each one is only an occasion, and that occasion can be everyone. Love proves its strength precisely in considering even the enemy and even the sinner as mere occasions for love.”²⁸⁷ Arendt then refers to the *Homilies on the First Epistle John* IX, 10 in a footnote, citing, “Can one love his brother and not love Love? Of necessity he must love Love. . . . In loving Love, he loves God.”²⁸⁸ From this passage, she argues “It is not really the neighbor who is loved in this love of neighbor—it is love itself. Thus the neighbor’s relevance as a neighbor (which was previously described as a discrepancy) is overcome and the individual is left in isolation.”²⁸⁹

It is prudent to pause at this point and address the complexity within this last sentence and the impact its implications have on the thesis of this dissertation. In the chapter “Jaspers: Arendt and *Existenz* Philosophy,” from Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark’s essay, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” they write that Arendt “owes much to Jaspers,” including “her refusal to force an alien resolution onto the tensions in Augustine’s thought.”²⁹⁰ Even so, it is a valid question to ask if it is possible to argue that Arendt’s understanding of Augustinian *caritas* informs her later works if the individual is left in isolation but is also in a community of creatures bound by their “whence,” or by a love that is understood as their collective origin and createdness. If leaving the individual in isolation is a necessary step to understanding the community of createdness in

²⁸⁶ Arendt, 96-97.

²⁸⁷ Arendt, 97.

²⁸⁸ Arendt, 97. Arendt also directs the reader to *The City of God* XI, 27 in the accompanying footnote.

²⁸⁹ Arendt, 97.

²⁹⁰ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 199.

neighbors, it seems fair to ask if coalescence is possible with this passage from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*:

The paradox involved in the loss of human rights is that such a 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, representing nothing but his own absolutely unique individuality which deprived of expression within and action upon a common world, loses all significance.²⁹¹

Conceptually, it seems contradictory for the individual to be “left in isolation” as part of the return to the world that allows for “the love of neighbor,” while also observing that the loss of human rights coincides with the moment a person becomes a human being in general, “representing nothing but his own absolutely unique individuality which deprived of expression within and action upon a common world, loses all significance.” I will address this apparent contradiction now, but I will also revisit the subject in the later chapters when I discuss how this isolation mimics the contemplative state upon which critical thought and freedom are contingent.²⁹²

In Part III of her dissertation, *Social Life*, Arendt explains how being in the world via *caritas* allows for both individual uniqueness and a loss of self. The loss of self, specific to her interpretation of Augustine’s definition as the loss of the changeable, ego-centered self, is possible while also recognizing its uniqueness because choosing *caritas* acknowledges the relational dynamics of the individual within a community of neighbors (in the world) and as a

²⁹¹ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*,. 302.

²⁹² This nuanced definition will also be discussed later as it relates to human rights, zero-sum politics, plurality, and freedom in the public and private spheres.

self-discovery of essence (separate from the worldly self).²⁹³ As is characteristic of her analytical methodology, she dedicates part of this discussion to defining the terms and the vocabulary employed in the discussion. It is evident through this discussion how she is able to differentiate terms such as “individuality” as applied to the worldly self that is a construct of the wrong return and the imaginative, creative possibility expressed through the individual’s beginning embedded within natality. While inconsistencies and obviously problematic explanations exist, one of the ways that she avoids artificial “resolutions” to Augustine’s work is by defining the terms that, when sufficiently and transparently explained and etymologically described, provide cohesiveness and consistency within the larger framework. This is more than a game of semantics; for example, the isolation of the individual who renounces their worldly self to find their origin and recognize their createdness in the Creator need not be equated identically with the isolation of the individual who is generalized and loses their agency, autonomy, and ability to act in the world. Augustine’s individual who engages in self-denial to return to the Creator becomes part of the community of neighbors is actualized; the term “individual” which refers to one who is denied expression and is no longer seen as a beginning, but rather as a generalized human being has been denied their opportunity to be actualized. These clarifications are not limited to the discussion of the individual. It includes the definition of the relevance of the neighbor, too. And, the relevance of the neighbor will impact judgment and the understanding

²⁹³ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 22-25. In the “Love as Craving” chapter, Arendt argues that for Augustine, “Self-discovery and discovery of God coincide, because by withdrawing into myself I have ceased to belong to the world” (25). And, she argues that “since this human essence is immutable by definition (*incommutabilis*), it stands in flagrant contradiction to human existence, which is subject to time and which changes from day to day, from hour to hour, appearing through birth from non-being and disappearing through death into non-being. So long as man exists, he *is* not. He can only anticipate his essence by striving for eternity, and he will be only when he finally holds and enjoys (*frui*) it. The right kind of self-love (*amor sui*) does not love the present self that is going to die but that which will make him live forever” (26).

of agency and natality “in the world” not only in actual content but also in its illumination of Arendt’s analytical strategy and how that allowed *caritas* to inform her later works.

For Arendt, the importance of “the world” cannot be overstated. In her dissertation, she obviously needs to spend substantial time acknowledging Augustine’s differentiation between the City of God and the City of Man as it relates to *caritas*. I am arguing that this paramount theological point of Augustine continues to influence her efforts at making sense of the critical philosophical and political issues that are central to her work. The world, and all of its absurdities, its injustices, its beauty, its contradictions, its meaning—and the love human creatures can have for it because of and despite these qualities, happenings, and characteristics—will remain a central focus of Arendt’s scholarship.

She asks this question at the beginning of Part III:

The question remains: why does love of neighbor, despite the repeated discrepancies, play so large a role even in these originally alien contexts of Augustine’s work? Is there, perhaps, another empirical context, different in origin, that would give the neighbor a specific relevance, apparently voided in the theory by what we have said before, but with a de facto impact on Augustine that might explain his concern with this aspect of Christian tradition?²⁹⁴

Breaking down the issues within this question, she addresses three primary concerns: how separation is necessary for community and kinship, how it is possible that while equality in sin severs social ties, the equality of all people cannot be severed, and how the individual’s relationship with the neighbor is innately tied to being in the world but not being of it. First, however, she begins with defining particular terms and concepts. She explains:

²⁹⁴ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 98.

True fellowship rests on the fact of the common faith. Therefore, by observation we can define the society of believers by two distinguishing marks. First, since the society of believers is established by what in principle is not mundane, it is a community with others grounded not in a pre-existing reality in the world, but in a specific possibility. Second, because this possibility is the most radical of all possibilities available to human existence, the community of faith that is realized in loving each other calls for and demands a total response from each person.²⁹⁵

She continues defining terms and concepts when she moves from the definition of the society of believers to the definition of worldly communities. She differentiates between these two cohorts when she writes, “In contrast to all worldly communities, which always isolate only one definition of being in regard to which the community is a community, the community of faith demands the whole man, as God also demands him.”²⁹⁶ She references this in the context of *Sermon 34, 7* as indicated in footnote 2 of this section, in which she cites, “He who made you demands the whole you.” So, while the community of faith demands the whole of the person (echoing the parts and whole conversation earlier), the earthly communities allow for the definition of specific characteristics, qualifications, or abilities that restrict or enable membership. (This is helpful in understanding the later discussions about the value of the plurality of worldly communities.) From that differentiation, she acknowledges that although “this faith is understood as a last and most radical possibility of being human,” it is also true that “this very faith will thrust the individual into isolation from his fellows in the divine presence.”²⁹⁷ She poses the conundrum this way:

The simple sameness of the God in whom they all believe does not as yet bring about a community of the faithful. How does the mere concurrence of believers turn into a common faith, that is, into a community of faith itself that regards all people, even unbelievers, as brothers since everyone is my neighbor? It is only by posing the question in this way that we obtain the common ground of experience on which the Christian community becomes decisive for the individual believer. And we continue to ask: where does this experiential ground come

²⁹⁵ Arendt. 98-99.

²⁹⁶ Arendt, 99.

²⁹⁷ Arendt, 99.

from that can no longer be traced by the inner dialectics of faith?

She responds to this question by separating “craving,” “referring back,” and grace from faith.²⁹⁸

Specifically, she argues that “faith is tied to the factuality of history and to the past as such.”²⁹⁹

She writes:

The redeeming death of Christ did not redeem an individual but the whole world (*mundus*), understood as the man-made world. However faith may isolate the individual, the object of faith (redemption by Christ) has come into a given world and thus into a given community. Faith takes man out of the world, that is, out of a certain community with men, the *civitas terrena*.³⁰⁰

Continuing, she argues that the “earthly city is always a society as well, that is, a social organism defined by people’s living with and for each other and not just alongside each other.”³⁰¹ In a footnote to the above passage, she also refers to *The City of God* XIX, 17, citing: “Because, of course, any community life must emphasize social relationships.”³⁰²

She points to Augustine’s argument, as stated in *The City of God*, that people are united not by accident but by a “common descent from Adam and in a kinship beyond any mere likeness.”³⁰³

This means that “This kinship creates an equality neither of traits nor of talents, but of situation. All share the same fate. The individual is not alone in the world. He has companions-

²⁹⁸ Arendt, 99.

²⁹⁹ Arendt, 99.

³⁰⁰ Arendt, 99-100.

³⁰¹ Arendt, 100.

³⁰² Arendt, 100.

³⁰³ Arendt, 100. In footnote 10, Arendt cites *The City of God* XIV, 1: “I have already said in previous books that God had two purposes in deriving all people from one man. His first purpose was to give unity to the human race by the likeness of nature. His second purpose was to bind all humanity by the bond of peace through blood relationship, into one harmonious whole. . . . The sin which they committed was so great that it impaired all human nature, in this sense, that human nature has been transmitted to posterity with a propensity to sin and the necessity to die.” She also quotes from section XII, 22 from *The City of God* in the same footnote: “God created one sole individual, not that he was meant to remain alone deprived of human companionship, but in order that the unity of society and the bond of harmony might mean more to man, since all people were to be united not only by the likeness of nature, but also by the affection of kinship.”

in-fate (*consortes*), not merely in this situation or that, but for a lifetime.”³⁰⁴ This fate in which “lies the kinship of all people and at the same time their fellowship (*societas*) is mortality.”³⁰⁵ She then offers this deduction: “Though this equality is only implicit in the earthly city it permits us to understand interdependence, which essentially defines social life in the worldly community.”³⁰⁶ Augustine, Arendt explains, distinguishes between belief and knowledge through the lens of history and time.³⁰⁷ This characterization leads to the claim that “[w]e comprehend all history, that is, all human and temporal acts, by believing—which means by trusting, but never by understanding (*intelligere*). This belief in the other is the belief that he will prove himself in our common future. Every earthly city depends upon this proof.”³⁰⁸ However, a clarification of this claim is presented in the sentence that follows that passage. Referencing Augustine in *Faith in Things Unseen* 2, 3, Arendt summarizes that “The continued existence of humankind does not rest on the proof. Rather, it rests on necessary belief, without which social life would become impossible.”³⁰⁹ In other words, humanity will exist without the proof that earthly cities are dependent upon, but not the other way around. She argues that “this belief that arises from our mutual interdependence precedes any possible proof,”³¹⁰ differentiating the social from the private, the earthly from the other-worldly, belief from

³⁰⁴ Arendt, 100.

³⁰⁵ Arendt, 100. In a footnote in this section, Arendt cites Augustine’s statements about mortality from *Confessions* X, 4, 6.

³⁰⁶ Arendt, 101.

³⁰⁷ Arendt, 101.

³⁰⁸ Arendt, 101.

³⁰⁹ Arendt, 101. In footnote 15 of Part III, Social Life, Arendt continues to reference *Faith in Things Unseen* 2, 4-3, 4, and cites: “If this faith in human affairs is removed, who will not mark how great will be their disorder and what dreadful confusion will follow? Therefore, when we do not believe what we cannot see, concord will perish and human society itself will not stand firm.”

³¹⁰ Arendt, 101. Arendt references *Faith in Things Unseen* 2, 3: “But surely, to test your friend you would not submit yourself to dangers if you did not believe. And since you thus submit yourself that you may prove him, you believe before you prove.”

understanding, proof from trust. This is another insight into how we can be in the world, but not of it; separate from our neighbor but not separated from the kinship of neighborliness. Of course, uncertainty accompanies natality, and possibility is preserved through natality. This uncertainty, possibility of newness, and relational potential is a shared characteristic between individual people, neighbors, and neighbor communities.

Once again, while Augustine's trajectory seemingly reaches a crossroads, Arendt methodically approaches the perceived options with close analysis and characteristic attention to word choice and etymology. As Arendt explains, the equalizing factor of all people is that they are "equally sinful."³¹¹ In fact, she states "[h]umanity's common descent is its common share in original sin. This sinfulness, conferred with birth, necessarily attaches to everyone. There is no escape from it."³¹² To reconcile the denial of the self with the edict to love the neighbor as one's self, then, is partly to understand this equality. She writes,

Though freedom of choice recalls the individual from the world and severs his essential social ties with humankind, the equality of all people, once posited, cannot be canceled out. In this process, equality receives a new meaning—love of neighbor. Yet the new meaning denotes a change in the coexistence of people in their community, from being inevitable and matter of course to being freely chosen and replete with obligations. The individual takes up these obligations on the ground of the common trait, which is made explicit as a community-in-sinfulness. This common situation makes each belong to everyone.³¹³

The next explanation offered, about how it is possible to straddle both being in the world but not being of it, is very specifically connected to the above passage and the understanding of time, the "right before" and the "wrong before." Arendt writes, "[i]t is a pre-existing

³¹¹ Arendt, 102.

³¹² Arendt, 102.

³¹³ Arendt, 102.

community into which the individual comes by birth. . . . His being is sinful prior to any free choice.”³¹⁴ In this community,

Human equality is not just an equality of those who happen to be living together. . . . Just as the creature derives its true and God-given being from its origin in the most distant and unworldly past, so, too, historic man exists in this world and derives his being from the earliest past that is historically established—from the first man.³¹⁵

Therefore, “[i]n the society founded on Adam man has made himself independent of the Creator. He depends on other persons and not on God. . . . The world’s independence from God rests on historicity, that is, on mankind’s own origin, which possesses its own legitimacy.”³¹⁶

Arendt continues to address the dynamics in the puzzle of how the flawed, or innately sinful, individual must both deny their worldly self and love their worldly neighbor who has perhaps, or perhaps not, denied their own worldly self. The commonality of sin once again illuminates the answer. She elaborates

Man’s origin is at the same time both the beginning of the man-made world in Adam’s original sin and the origin of his separation from God. His descent is defined by generation and not creation. The world is no longer an utterly strange place into which the individual has been created. Rather, by kinship in generation the world has always been familiar and belongs to him. In this conception of the being of man, we can understand the obligatory function of equality.³¹⁷

She writes that it is only from understanding one’s own past sinfulness as not “pure past” but rather as “absolute obligation because it is past sinfulness” that the neighbor’s relevance can be understood in terms of equality.³¹⁸ This means that

Only in this reinterpretation can the pre-existing past continue independently, beside the newly experienced being. Thus, it is only from this pre-existence that the neighbor derives his specific relevance. The neighbor is the constant reminder of one’s own sin, which does not cease to be sin because divine grace has made it a thing of the past. The neighbor is a living warning of pride, because he is never viewed as he happens to be in the world. (see Part I, chapter 3, and

³¹⁴ Arendt, 103.

³¹⁵ Arendt, 103.

³¹⁶ Arendt, 103.

³¹⁷ Arendt, 104.

³¹⁸ Arendt, 105.

Part II, chapter 3).³¹⁹

In this reinterpretation, the neighbor either represents someone “in whom God has already worked his grace”³²⁰ or the neighbor represents who the individual “was and would still be but for the grace of God.”³²¹ Pivotaly, this leads to the understanding that:

one should love one’s neighbor not on account of his sin, which indeed was the source of equality, but on account of the grace that has revealed itself in him as well as in oneself (*tamquam te ipsum*). By being made explicit, equality obtains a new meaning; it becomes an equality of grace. However, it is no longer the same equality. While the kinship of all people prior to Christ was acquired from Adam by generation, all are now made equal by the revealed grace of God that manifests everyone’s equally sinful past.³²²

While this constitutes a substantial explanation of how to live in the world but not of it, and to do so with the understanding of the relevance of the neighbor, it is not a complete explanation. Arendt continues to follow the thought trains Augustine’s framework initiates as she prefaced that she would in the introduction of her dissertation. She admits that “there is another fact indicating that alienation from the world and its desires by means of faith does not simply cancel out the togetherness of men.”³²³ And, then, she responds to that observation by stating that “the fact that the same sinful past remains a constitutive factor for the state of grace”³²⁴ indicates that “[t]he rights of the past are preserved in the continued existence of the world.”³²⁵ Therefore—and here is the piece needed to see the puzzle’s continuity—insofar as

the believer is estranged from the world, he continues to live in the world. . . . Here the human world takes on the singular relevance of its own past. Its own past lives on in the world, and

³¹⁹ Arendt, 105-106. Arendt includes a footnote referencing the *Homilies on the first Epistle of John* VII, 8: “So then the Christian ought to be, that he glory not over other men. . . . I say then, man has past bounds; he is greedy for more than his due and wants to be above men, he that was made above the beasts; and this is pride.” She also directs the reader to see Part I, chapter 3, and Part II, chapter 3 within parentheses in the text, as I have indicated.

³²⁰ Arendt, 106.

³²¹ Arendt, 106.

³²² Arendt, 106.

³²³ Arendt, 106.

³²⁴ Arendt, 106

³²⁵ Arendt, 106.

both the fight against the world and the concern with it are comprehensible only by this fact of belonging to the world.³²⁶

To negate the individual neighbor's agency that is necessary in order to choose to return (or by rejecting the neighbor altogether) is to rob them of the opportunity to change. To isolate one's self in the world, to separate from the neighbor and remove obligation, harms the individual and denies them the potential opportunity to engage with their neighbor; therefore, they are denied the opportunity to assist with the process of returning. "Thus," Arendt writes, "is estrangement from the world, divine grace gives new meaning to human togetherness— defense against the world. . . . This new social life, which is grounded in Christ, is defined by mutual love (*diligere invicem*), which replaces mutual dependence."³²⁷

What is "common to all" is not the same as what constitutes a "human being in general." A loss of self or, in other words, when the "individual is completely forgotten"³²⁸ over the community, is not the same as the moment when a person becomes a human being in general, indicating the moment when an individual loses their human rights.³²⁹ The mutual love that is required through *caritas* is a love that negates the ego of the self while requiring a validation of the individual. This means that the required love of *caritas* acknowledges the love that exists between individuals, individuals making up a community, their shared commonality, but it does so relationally and without ego (and rejecting self-fulfilment as the impetus of returning an extended love). Recognizing that it is with this which

. . . *caritas* is concerned, in the explicitness of man's own being, with the human being as a

³²⁶ Arendt, 107.

³²⁷ Arendt, 108.

³²⁸ Arendt, 109.

³²⁹ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 302.

creature, that is, with the whole human race. Its sole determinant is what is common to all. This commonality alone is taken up in faith. What is common to all, as the common past of the human race, is sin. And it is only as sin that the past concerns the believer. However, the common past determines *caritas* at the same time.³³⁰

As she comes to the end of her dissertation, Arendt punctuates the importance of the relationship between the individual and the community once again, clarifying the role of the community of faith and the role grace plays in the world. She writes

Love extends to all people in the *civitas Dei*, just as interdependence extended equally to all in the *civitas terrena*. This love makes human relations definite and explicit. Coming from the thought of one's own danger that is experienced in conscience in God's presence, that is, in absolute isolation, this love (*diligere invicem*) also thrusts the other person into absolute isolation. Thus, love does not turn to humankind but to the individual, albeit every individual. In the community of the new society the human race dissolves into its many individuals. Hence, the human race as such is not in danger, but every individual is.³³¹

She concludes the final chapter by revisiting Augustine's answer to the question about the neighbor's relevance. She argues that in raising that question, "we find that the question about humanity's origin is doubly posed and doubly answered by Augustine."³³² She returns to the concept of the "twofold origin" as she summarizes the process Augustine followed and the conclusions he reached while inquiring "about the being of man as an individual" or "whence this being comes."³³³ She writes, "[t]he answer is that God is the source of each and every individual. It is at this point that the individual is discovered. The individual then becomes decisive for neighborly love as the focus of concern for the other's salvation."³³⁴ This is not the complete answer, however. She posits, "when Augustine asks about the origin of the human race, the answer, as distinct from the self-sameness of God, is that the origin lies in the

³³⁰ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 109.

³³¹ Arendt, 111.

³³² Arendt, 111.

³³³ Arendt, 111.

³³⁴ Arendt, 111-112.

common ancestor of us all.”³³⁵ In fact, she argues, “Analogous to this, man is seen in the first sense as isolated and coming by contingency into the world viewed as a desert. In the second sense, man is seen as belonging to mankind and to this world by generation.”³³⁶ This means that,

Although we can meet the other only because both of us belong to the human race, it is only in the individual’s isolation in God’s presence that he becomes our neighbor. By virtue of this isolation in God’s presence, the other is lifted out of the self-evident dependence in which all people live with each other, and then our connection with him is subject to the explicit obligation of kinship.³³⁷

I will return to this passage later because of the implications of a possible kinship beyond a religious context. I argue that the “individual’s isolation in God’s presence” that is required to connect with the neighbor in kinship parallels the isolation needed for an individual to think. The need to separate from the world in order to think critically, and return with a Kantian enlarged mentality, is what helps to protect individuals and communities from becoming isolated, devaluing plurality, and preventing kinship. It is, in fact, “the very possibility of isolation that enables us to detach ourselves from human history and from its irrevocable enchainment by generation.”³³⁸ She reminds us of the consequential nature of habit when she states, “While man lives in habit, he lives in view of world and is subject to its judgment.”³³⁹ To be “in view of the world” means that we are forgetting the removal, and are therefore subject to the world’s judgment; this has obvious implications for the human capacity for discernment, imagination, and thought. The ability to remove from the world, we will see, is not limited to

³³⁵ Arendt, 112.

³³⁶ Arendt, 112.

³³⁷ Arendt, 112.

³³⁸ Arendt, 112.

³³⁹ Arendt, 84.

the context of her dissertation. It mimics the same isolation necessary for creative, critical (and imaginative) thinking, which in turn holds the possibility of interruption; it allows for the newness promised in natality.

Part Two

Chapter One: *caritas*—the context of thinking, natality, freedom, and plurality

In the following sections, I will show how many of Arendt's arguably signature and most important insights can be understood most effectively through a *caritas*-informed lens. Through this lens, continuity and connection appear between the concepts from her earlier writings and later works. For example, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, concepts such as the isolation necessary to *caritas* can be connected to the isolation necessary for thinking. In addition, this approach lends itself to understanding the revision, critique, development, application, and subsequent adjustment of particular ideas throughout her *oeuvre*, such as her definition of the will, the role of the private and the public in tradition and community, and her framework of political possibility. I will argue that the *caritas* of her dissertation continues to inform her later ideas, creating space for her to discuss issues such as rights, placelessness, and human dignity without defaulting to common zero-sum approaches .

In the first chapter of Part Two, I will show that the isolation required to access, grasp, understand, and experience *caritas* (the same isolation that Arendt argues is required to “detach ourselves from human history”³⁴⁰) mimics the act of withdrawing characteristic to thinking. I will also show how this isolation is comparable to the solitude characteristic to her discussions about the contemplative state, the *vita contemplativa*, not to show that she

³⁴⁰ Arendt, 112.

believes that they are the same, but that the issues of isolation, solitude, freedom, and plurality continue to be concerns that occupy her scholarship.³⁴¹

To establish the correlation between these periods of required isolation and the effect they have on the individual's capacity for thinking "freely," the first chapter will address the relationship between *caritas* and thinking, and then introduce the connections between natality, freedom, and plurality. Viewing her work in this way makes a compelling argument for identifying the impact that the *caritas* of her dissertation had in framing, influencing, and informing her later ideas. I will argue that recognizing the influence that the characteristics of *caritas* have on her work provides a distinctive insight into how she addresses apparent contradictions between Aristotelian and Kantian frameworks in her later discussions on universalities as they pertain to the individual and the political. In particular, I will show how *caritas* shifts the conversation, framed by Seyla Benhabib in her essay "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Hannah Arendt's Thought," about Arendt's interpretation of Kant's "enlarged mentality" with respect to reflective versus moral judgment in the political sphere.³⁴² Specifically, I will show that considering *caritas* in the discussion deepens Benhabib's proposition that while "Arendt was primarily interested in the interrelationships between thinking and judging as moral faculties," she was also interested "in judgment as a moral faculty," and she focused "on judgment as the retrospective faculty of culling meaning from the

³⁴¹ The concept of the *vita contemplativa* that I am referring to here is specific to her discussions in *The Human Condition* and *The Life of the Mind*, but I hope to show that it is not limited to those works.

³⁴² Benhabib, "Judgment and Politics in Arendt's Thought," 183-204.

past, as a faculty essential to the art of storytelling.”³⁴³ In addition, Benhabib posits that Arendt attempted “to bring together the Aristotelian conception of judgment as an aspect of *phronesis* with the Kantian understanding of judgment as the faculty of ‘enlarged thought’ or ‘representative thinking.’”³⁴⁴ I argue that *caritas* contributes to understanding this interpretation of Arendt’s work and, in doing so, as I will discuss in Part Three, offers an alternative to zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity.

In the second chapter of Part Two, I will specifically focus on the commentary of the renowned Arendtian scholar Jerome Kohn and his discussions in the introductions to *Responsibility and Judgment* and *Thinking without a Banister*, among others. Through Kohn, Vecchiarelli Scott, Chelius Stark, Benhabib, and Lindsey Stonebridge’s contextualizing of Arendt’s writings, speeches, and activities, the continuity, iterations, challenges, and fractures of Arendt’s lifelong intellectual concerns around *caritas*-informed concepts become recognizable. The enormity of the impact that *caritas* and *caritas*-adjacent concerns have on the concepts of thinking, natality, plurality, freedom, and normativity emerges clearly through these discussions.

The third and final chapter of Part Two will address how *caritas* can help clarify the relationship between thinking, meaningful action in the public realm, and the potential for judgment (in Part Three, I will argue that this is part and parcel of the individual’s capacity for freedom, their

³⁴³ Benhabib, 184.

³⁴⁴ Benhabib, 185.

agency of action, and ability to make judgments *in the world*).³⁴⁵ I will show how the isolation of *caritas*, analogous to the isolation characteristic of the *vita contemplativa*, contributes to the human potential for both thinking “freely” and the capacity for capable judgment. In other words, the relationship between *caritas*, natality, the relevance of the neighbor, freedom, and action presents both distinct and muted similarities with the relationship between the *vita contemplativa*, natality, neighbors, individuality, freedom, plurality, and action. These comparisons offer insight into the themes that consistently run through Arendt’s work: tension and uncertainty; navigating how to be in the world but not of it; individuality and freedom juxtaposed with plurality; and, operating in the space between action and judgment. The individual’s journey with *caritas* and the individual’s habitation within the realms of the private, social, and political spheres as they pertain to thinking and action will be compared and contrasted along with the characteristics specific to these spheres.

So, to begin to discuss the relationship between *caritas*, thinking, natality, freedom, and plurality, then, it is once again important to acknowledge Arendt’s attention to etymology and word choice. Of course, as has been established, her clear differentiation between the Augustinian definition and use of *cupiditas* and that of *caritas* is no small distinction. *Cupiditas* is decidedly worldly, and *caritas* originates from a decidedly unworldly place of value. Critical to understanding the connection between *caritas*, thinking, natality, freedom, and plurality,

³⁴⁵ While I had crafted this connection prior to listening to Prof. Berkowitz’s *Virtual Reading Group* (discussing *The Human Condition*), from the Hannah Arendt Center at Bard College, I must acknowledge that his focus on the importance of “meaningfulness” to Arendt’s definition of a fully human life validated and cemented my belief regarding the role that Arendt’s idea of Augustinian *caritas* plays in contemplation, thinking, plurality, and freedom. (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYW5qHLZjOWFp3IbuTIJVA-jU8Lkh3QGS>)

however, involves not only acknowledging the distinction between *cupiditas* and *caritas* but also revisiting why she approached the iterations and specific evolutions of *caritas* in the ways that she did.³⁴⁶

As Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark note, her different definitions of *caritas* (those variations presented in her dissertation) manifest in political and social concepts in her later works:

By the late 1920's, Arendt no longer regarded *caritas* as a simple "resoluteness" or "letting be," as in Heidegger and Kierkegaard, but as [*sic*] an active engagement with the "neighbor" made possible by prior self-reflection. The passport on this journey was provided by Augustine's methodological imperative, "*quaestio nihi factus sum*" ("I have become a question to myself").³⁴⁷

The second clause in the first sentence that focuses on the idea of "active engagement with the 'neighbor' made possible by prior self-reflection" emphasizes the contingency upon which understanding the neighbor rests: a *caritas*-driven period of isolation necessary for self-reflection. This self-reflection is, of course, multifaceted. On the one hand, self-reflection is solitary and isolated; on the other hand, it is required to appreciate what is possible, to appreciate individual agency and the agency of other individuals, to comprehend community, value "the neighbor," and to negotiate the world as it occurs. This understanding of *caritas* bridges the chasm between self-reflection (being out of the world) and "being in the world" — and sharing that world with the neighbor. Arendt argues, "this 'being out of the world' destroys

³⁴⁶ Underlying part of the importance of differentiating the distinct terms at this junction is to prepare for the discussion in the third chapter when I will address how Arendt defines the "meaningful life" in her later works. I argue that her differentiation of *caritas* here not only informs how meaningfulness is defined in *The Human Condition* but also how action is understood.

³⁴⁷ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," 121. The cited passage had several errors, which have been edited (repeated words and an erroneous quotation mark placement).

the individualization and isolation of man that are derived from the world” while also bringing with it the possibility of newness.³⁴⁸

It is possible, then, that this *caritas*-driven isolation is Arendt’s departure point from Heidegger and Kierkegaard.³⁴⁹ Instead of an acceptance of “resoluteness” or “letting be” as an intellectual, academic, philosophical strength, Arendt seems to challenge the assertion that they are complete and conclusive on their own merit. Instead, Arendt’s *caritas* “of engagement” suggests that isolation is not an all-inclusive summation or *telos*, but instead, the necessary step to accepting uncertainty; an engagement with possibility. Accepting uncertainty reveals the existence of possibility. Possibility, of course, can lead to an entire gamut of potential situations from tragedies to triumphs, from ironic and unintended dire consequences to unpredicted, imaginative, once-deemed-unfeasible positive resolutions. I will argue in the next several sections that this form of *caritas* is what, in part, enables Arendt to continue to love the world despite full knowledge of the horrors it is capable of encouraging, harboring, and inflicting.

Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark note that

the dissertation is an important pathway to the enigma of Arendt’s *nunc stans*, her authorial vantage point. As a bridge between decades and texts, the revised dissertation provides a missing foundation for Arendt’s work. The Augustinian faculty of memory is substituted for Heidegger’s “woodsman’s path” or “clearing.” Significantly, it is a much broader and more

³⁴⁸ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 79.

³⁴⁹ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 122. It is prudent to reiterate that her interpretation of Kant’s political philosophy aligns with this conceptual understanding that the results of an action will not necessarily reflect the action’s intended consequence. In addition, Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius point out on page 122 that “Augustine’s *caritas* is the basis for founding new communities on common moral judgment as well as the existential, determining ‘fact’ of shared history. In other words, the culminating section of Arendt’s 1929 dissertation is the first appearance, in a prepolitical conceptual context, of a major theme in her later political writings. She would keep this argument unmodified in the early 1960s revisions. At the same time, in her political theory texts of the same period, she would insist that it is precisely this common ground of ‘plurality’ in the human social experience and ‘natality’ in public life that have been lost to the tradition of Western philosophy—but not to its ‘unsystematic’ new beginners, such as Augustine and herself.”

temporal terrain than the epistemology of thinking and willing presented in the 1973 Gifford Lectures (*The Life of the Mind*).³⁵⁰

Arendt's "authorial vantage point" is key. If Augustinian ideas frame the foundation of her work, acknowledging the *caritas*-informed influence is not only helpful but necessary to understand applications, takeaways, and implications to zero-sum alternatives, as I will discuss in Part Three. It is necessary to contextualize the relationship *caritas*-informed influences have with thinking, natality, freedom, and plurality, not just theoretically but as they appear in her texts and *in the world*. This is particularly true for understanding how a specific iteration of a *caritas*-driven period of isolated, self-reflection interrupts habit, challenges status quo systems, and reveals the importance of the neighbor.

Self-reflection in isolation (specifically in the dissertation as "absolute isolation in God's presence"³⁵¹) "actualizes the return" and "explains how divinely ordained love serves to realize self-denial."³⁵² Specifically, Arendt says, "This return through recapturing his own being, and the isolation achieved in it, is the sole source of neighborly love."³⁵³ *Caritas* disputes the idea that a self-denying love leads to the inevitable deduction of denying the neighbor or reducing the neighbor's existence as a "neighbor-as-self." Instead, she argues that this *caritas*-driven denial of self "corresponds to a 'willing that you may be...'"³⁵⁴ to the neighbor because the

³⁵⁰ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," 139.

³⁵¹ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 95.

³⁵² Arendt, 95.

³⁵³ Arendt, 95.

³⁵⁴ Arendt, 96.

neighbor is not loved as the self, but rather as “love itself.”³⁵⁵ The individual, then, while “left in isolation,”³⁵⁶ alters the status quo by interrupting habit, established relational dynamics, and social constructs. By removing oneself and then re-entering the world, space has been created for new communities and new relationships to manifest. Through self-denial, self-reflection, and removal, re-entry manifests as natality; natality, then, *is* an interruption. The isolated individual returns to the world with a newness that impacts several relationships: first, it disrupts established patterns; secondly, it initiates diversity and perpetuates the preservation of plurality by allowing the individual to think with freedom and to remember (or re-engage) agency of free thought (and imagination); thirdly, the individual is introduced “anew” to an existing situation, thereby changing what could have been a static, or predictable (perhaps even certain) outcome dynamic. Natality through *caritas* is a return, a disruption, and a renewal.

In “Remarks,” an essay included in *Thinking without a Banister*, Arendt says

Now let me elaborate—I believe in this business, that to act is to begin. And I want to stress, also, the difficulty, namely, that all beginning—as every one of you knows who ever wrote a paper—has an element of utter arbitrariness. You know the difficulty each one of us has to write the first sentence. And this element of arbitrariness should never be forgotten. But at the same time this arbitrariness somehow mirrors the fact of natality. You know, if you try to think about your own birth in these terms, that whatever is meaningful must be necessary. That is an old notion of philosophy: that only that which cannot not be, is meaningful. Yet everything which we live in, every single particular thing, could as well not be. So the only eternity is the all, the whole.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Arendt, 97. This passage is cited in the dissertation as a reference to the “*Homilies on the First Epistle John IX, 10*. ‘Can one love his brother and not love Love? Of necessity he must love Love. . . . In loving Love, he loves God.’ See also *The City of God XI, 27*.”

³⁵⁶ Arendt, 97.

³⁵⁷ Hannah Arendt, “Remarks,” in *Thinking without a Banister*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: The Literary Trust of Hannah Arendt and Jerome Kohn, Schocken Books, 2018), 480-481.

Setting the stage for the definition of natality as she employs the term, Arendt challenges the traditional philosophical association of meaningfulness and the idea of necessary being, particularly as it relates to the notion of beginnings. Instead, she argues that natality is not limited to an automatic accompaniment of meaning in the sense of a predestined necessity of being; rather, natality is the *capacity* for new beginnings, which in and of itself is both, on the one hand, arbitrary, and on the other hand, capable of possibility, imaginative disruption, and newness. There is a component to natality that is an intrinsic characteristic of the human condition; it holds a capacity for freedom and free-thinking, but it does not guarantee it. She continues:

However far you go back, you will never find an absolute, compelling cause. Augustine said, “that there be a beginning, man was created,” and he did not mean by this beginning the same as “in the beginning—*bereshith*—God created heaven and earth.” For the first verse of Genesis he used the Latin word *principium*, for the beginning that man was he employed the word *initium*, which is the root of our word “initiative.”

What Augustine somehow was saying was that all of this is the price we pay for being free—and now really free to a terrifying extent. And the question we can ask ourselves is, “Do I like being alive, and being a person so much that I am willing to pay that price? To believe that we can somehow escape this question seems to me rather doubtful. I don’t believe it. I think the crisis is really very deep.”³⁵⁸

The agency to initiate is a catalyst to freedom, i.e., a facilitator to create. The next passage holds a paramount piece of the connecting sinew between thinking and freedom. Thinking exercises agency. Thinking makes space for newness and meaningful action. It addresses the crisis within the question: Am I willing to pay the price for being free?

Thinking is one way of confronting this. Not because it gets rid of it, but only because it prepares us ever anew to meet whatever we do meet in our daily lives. So I think that this “thinking,” about which I wrote and am writing now—thinking in the Socratic sense—is a maieutic function, a midwifery. That is, you bring out all your opinions, prejudices, what have you, and you know that never, in any of the dialogues, did Socrates discover any child in this midwifery that was not

³⁵⁸ Arendt, “Remarks,” in *Thinking without a Banister*, 481.

a wind egg. It is true you remain in a way empty after thinking. And this is what I also meant when I said that there are no dangerous thoughts—thinking itself is dangerous enough.³⁵⁹

The relationship between thinking and freedom is interdependent, but it is not analogous to the relationship between thinking and acting, or freedom and acting. Even though it is evident that a period of isolation is necessary to think, and thinking is freedom—and that acting with judiciousness is dependent upon thinking—it is critical to recognize Arendt takes time to emphasize and reiterate that “thinking and acting are not the same, and to the extent that I wish to think I have to withdraw from the world.”³⁶⁰ Thinking is a way to confront the “price we pay for being free.” To act does not require thinking, but to act in an informed way, in a meaningful way, in a way that will allow us to judge with prudence and discernment, *does* require thinking. It is, in fact, dependent upon it.

To think requires one to “withdraw from the world.” According to Arendt, “this enterprise of thinking is the only one that somehow corresponds to the radicality of our crisis.”³⁶¹ To punctuate, she argues that “It is true you remain in a way empty after thinking.” She argues that “once you are empty, then (in a way which is difficult to say) you are prepared to judge—that is, without having any book of rules under which you can subsume a particular case...”³⁶² Of course, this is indicative of and consistent with her responses and interpretations of Kant’s theory of judgment and her discussions in *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*. However,

³⁵⁹ Arendt, “Remarks,” in *Thinking without a Banister*, 481.

³⁶⁰ Hannah Arendt, “Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt,” in *Thinking without a Banister*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: The Literary Trust of Hannah Arendt and Jerome Kohn, Schocken Books, 2018), 444.

³⁶¹ Arendt, “Remarks,” in *Thinking without a Banister*, 481.

³⁶² Arendt, “Remarks,” 481.

there are two points to consider before moving on to discuss the specific relationship between the isolation required to understand the importance of the neighbor—through *caritas*—and the solitude required to think as it relates to freedom, judgment, and plurality.³⁶³ The first point is to address what Benhabib suggests is Kant’s moral quandary, i.e., that “we are free only when we act, yet become unfree as soon as we act.”³⁶⁴ Benhabib proposes that to understand the “way out of this quandary” is “not to deny the distinction between the morally good and the morally right but to reject the two-world metaphysics of Kantian theory in favor of a social epistemology which can do justice to the description and explanation of human action and interaction.”³⁶⁵ Her proposal is by no means accepted by all Kantian scholars, but it sheds particularly important light on how Arendt understands and interprets Kant; in turn, it subsequently sheds light on how Arendt’s Kantian views align with her understanding of Augustinian *caritas*. Benhabib cites Richard Bernstein to explain “one of the most perplexing aspects of Arendt’s discussion of judgment.”³⁶⁶ Quoting Bernstein:

Arendt well knew that, even though she invokes the name of Kant, she was radically departing from Kant. There is no question in Kant that the ‘ability to tell right from wrong’ is a matter of practical reason and not the faculty of reflective judgment which ascends from particulars to generals or universals.³⁶⁷

Benhabib states that “judgment is not the faculty of subsuming a particular under a universal but the faculty of contextualizing the universal such that it comes to bear upon the

³⁶³ I want to recognize, at this point, that I am glossing over extraordinary academic disagreements to make a point about Arendt’s interpretation of Kant, Benhabib’s interpretation of Arendt, and Benhabib’s interpretation of Arendt’s interpretation of Kant.

³⁶⁴ Benhabib, “Judgment and Politics in Arendt’s Thought,” 193.

³⁶⁵ Benhabib, 193 and 202. There is a footnote (14) to the quoted passage in which Benhabib discusses Kant’s return “to the question of moral judgment in the *Metaphysik der Sitten*, this time in the context of distinguishing perfect from imperfect duties.”

³⁶⁶ Benhabib, 191.

³⁶⁷ Benhabib, 191 and 202. Benhabib cites Bernstein in a footnote (9) to this passage. It reads: “‘Judging—The Actor and the Spectator,’ pp. 232-233.”

particular.”³⁶⁸ She continues by explaining that she believes Arendt “discovered a procedure for ascertaining intersubjective validity in the public realm.”³⁶⁹ She claims that “Arendt intimated that intrinsic to Kant’s model of ‘reflective judgment’ may be a conception of rationality and intersubjective validity which would allow us to retain a principled universalist moral standpoint while acknowledging the role of contextual moral judgment in human affairs.”³⁷⁰ This is an extraordinary claim. Not only do I need to pause to recognize that, but I need to acknowledge that I am assuming that what Benhabib is proposing is true when I suggest that *caritas* fits well into this intimation. I am arguing that it is possible that *caritas* is, in part, the enlarged mentality that can contextualize “the universal such that it comes to bear upon the particular.” Stated another way: *caritas* allows us to contextualize the universal so that we can be in the world with our neighbor, with human affairs and particulars, without abandoning practical reason, thinking, freedom, or plurality. In this way, *caritas* offers real-world examples of the enlarged mentality—bridging the theoretical with the actual. With this definition and understanding, the strength of a traditionally abstract concept is confronted by and in the real world. The theoretical becomes materialized as action or politics, for example, but without abandoning the Arendtian critique and caution regarding universalizing tendencies that minimize or compromise the world of human affairs. As I stated in the introduction, Arendt’s consideration of *caritas* is also an integral part of understanding her assertion about “the right to have rights.” *Caritas* has something to contribute to conversations about an individual’s grief and the suffering that happens under authoritarian regimes, it speaks to creativity, and it recognizes the

³⁶⁸ Benhabib, 193.

³⁶⁹ Benhabib, 194.

³⁷⁰ Benhabib, 195.

agony of oppressive spaces. It amplifies the potential influence her contributions make to confronting human rights violations, even if she does not discuss *caritas* explicitly or extensively in her later works. Again, I will address this in greater detail in the next chapter.

The second point is that later in her essay, Benhabib argues that while Arendt was “right in maintaining that judgment is the most political of all human faculties, for it leads to the recovery of the perspectival quality of the public world in which action unfolds” she says that she departs from Arendt “in her attempt to restrict this quality of mind to the political realm alone, thereby ignoring judgment as a moral faculty.”³⁷¹ Benhabib argues that

once we reject the two-world metaphysics of Kantian theory, as well as the definition of our moral identities in purely rational terms, and we proceed to the perspectives of natality, plurality and the narrativity of action, we have to see that “to think from the standpoint of everyone else” entails sharing a public culture such that everyone else can articulate indeed what they think and what their perspectives are. The cultivation of one’s moral imagination flourishes in such a culture in which the self-centered perspective of the individual is constantly challenged by the multiplicity and diversity of perspectives that constitute public life.³⁷²

She continues to explain that while thinking “with Arendt against Arendt” she is able to evaluate what she sees as deficiencies in Arendt’s argument when she insists on the separation between the moral and the political.³⁷³ Benhabib suggests that Arendt’s “own theory of action can be made fruitful for the exploration of moral judgment and that furthermore this theory of action leads to a reformulation of the essence of Kantian moral theory in terms of a dialogic procedure of enlarged thought.”³⁷⁴ Clearly, this is an enormous and controversial claim.

However, it is also an extraordinarily relevant and insightful one when considering how *caritas*

³⁷¹ Benhabib, 201.

³⁷² Benhabib, 201.

³⁷³ Benhabib, 185 and 199.

³⁷⁴ Benhabib, 201-202.

can help to make sense of these seemingly problematic notions. Benhabib concludes that she has “attempted to mediate between this perspective of enlarged thought and its political embodiment in a public culture of democratic ethos.”³⁷⁵ Again, if “enlarged thought” accompanies Arendt’s definition of *caritas* as identified earlier, the public culture of democratic ethos, of loving the neighbor, is not a contradicted measure but rather a supported one. It is hard not to see the possible synthesis between Benhabib’s takeaways from “thinking with Arendt against Arendt” (about enlarged thought and its political embodiment in a public culture of democratic ethos) and Arendt’s comments in her dissertation when she says: “love does not turn to humankind but to the individual, albeit every individual. In the community of the new society the human race dissolves into its many individuals.”³⁷⁶ While *caritas* is a necessity³⁷⁷ that not only initiates the isolation necessary to understand the neighbor’s relevance and kinship, Arendt also argues that Augustine believes the “necessity of *caritas* is concerned, in the explicitness of man’s own being, with the human being as a creature, that is, with the whole human race. Its sole determinant is what is common to all.”³⁷⁸

I am proposing that the isolation accompanying and required by *caritas* continues to inform and challenge her later works, and it represents her willingness to revisit, rethink, and readdress conclusions when she is presented with new information or reevaluate situations after her

³⁷⁵ Benhabib, 202.

³⁷⁶ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 111.

³⁷⁷ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 108. Arendt refers to The City of God XIX, 19 in footnote 43, citing: “However, once it is imposed [righteous engagement in activity], it should be undertaken because of the necessity of *caritas*.” She also writes: “See also this entire chapter, which distinguishes the necessity of *caritas* from the voluntary practice of contemplation.”

³⁷⁸ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 109.

perspectives (or assumptions) are challenged. This is not to say that there is a definitive conclusion to be reached by analyzing the relationship between the “withdrawal from the world” that is necessary to think and the *vita contemplativa* that she discusses in *The Human Condition*. However, a powerful example of this willingness to think without a definitive claim to prove is when she comments explicitly on the issue of thinking and its problematic relationship to the *vita contemplativa* in the essay, “Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt.” She discloses that

The main flaw and mistake of *The Human Condition* is the following: I still was looking at what the tradition calls *vita activa* from the viewpoint of the *vita contemplativa*, without ever saying anything real about the *vita contemplativa*.

Now I think that to look at it from the *vita contemplativa* is already the first fallacy. Because the fundamental experience of the thinking ego is in those lines of the older Cato which I quote at the end of the book. . .

All this is spoken out of the experience of thinking. . . it’s very easy to talk about metaphysical fallacies, but these metaphysical fallacies—which are indeed fallacies—has each one of them its authentic root in experience. That is, even as we throw them out of the window as dogmas, we have got to know where they come from. That is, what are the experiences of this ego that thinks, that wills, and judges: in other words, an ego that is busy with sheer mental activity.

. . . ‘What is thinking good for independent of writing and teaching?’ It’s very difficult to give an answer and certainly more difficult for me than for many.

. . . But anyhow I feel that the Human Condition needs a second volume and I’m trying to write it.³⁷⁹

This passage epitomizes what Benhabib meant when she said it is possible to think “with Arendt against Arendt.” The above passage is, in fact, an example of Arendt thinking “with Arendt against Arendt.” Arendt’s focus on what thinking involves—including a time to revisit and evaluate biases, a time to reconsider and think anew—is remarkably similar to the relationship

³⁷⁹ Arendt, “Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt,” *Thinking without a Banister*, 446-447.

between *caritas*, the return, remembering, and the pull, push, and seeming contradiction of being in the world and not of it, particularly in the context of our relation to the worldly neighbor. Thinking and *caritas* discern between remembrance and habit, differentiate the self-as-ego from the two-in-one self, and they eschew formulaic guarantees. They both influence the world as a world comprised of individuals, as a world of neighbors, as a world of politics, power, and political space, as a world of labor, as a world of work, and as a world of action. They inhabit different worlds not necessarily in material and immaterial ways, but in the different worlds of possibility, solitude, and relation. In both thinking and *caritas*, the goal is not a point-in-time resolution or a tidy conclusion; the essential purpose is not to achieve a one-dimensional, static deduction. Instead, there is a shared willingness in both cases to revisit, to recommit, and to reconsider. It is both a commitment to reject the stifling of the new, the creative, and the imaginative, and it is a resolve to evaluate with critical thought. This commitment to independent quietness, a preservation of newness, and an enlarged mentality is also what connects thinking to freedom and plurality.

It is not, then, the directive of this chapter to reach a decisive conclusion regarding how Arendt would define the purpose of thinking consistently throughout her works. The objective is to identify, observe, and recognize what thinking requires: an isolation, a withdrawal from the world. This is a component shared with the Augustinian *caritas* from her dissertation. The concerns she presented and wrestled with in her dissertation remain concerns for her throughout her lifetime. There may not be a resolution of these concerns, *per se*, but the interrogation about what they mean and why they are important holds value and commands

her focus. Inquiring about these concerns and their importance to her provides insight into how we can use her approaches to address—and then act to alleviate—the suffering that exists *in the world*. Perhaps it even gives us an original way to connect the moral and the political, to see, as Benhabib states, “judgment as a faculty of contextualizing the universal such that it comes to bear upon the particular.”³⁸⁰ The importance of thinking—and all of its accompanying characteristics and contingencies—cannot be overstated when analyzing how Augustinian *caritas* informed her work.

Arendt states, in *The Life of the Mind*, that

it would be wrong. . . to establish a hierarchical order among the mind’s activities, but I also believe that it is hardly deniable that an order of priorities exists. It is inconceivable how we would ever be able to will or to judge, that is, to handle things which are not yet and things which are no more, if the power of representation and the effort necessary to direct mental attention to what in every way escapes the attention of sense perception had not gone ahead and prepared the mind for further reflection as well as for willing and judging. In other words, what we generally call “thinking,” though unable to move the will or provide judgment with general rules, must prepare the particulars given to the senses in such a way that the mind is able to handle them in their absence; it must, in brief, *de-sense* them.³⁸¹

She goes on to state that she has spoken of “the special predicaments of thinking that may be ascribed to the radicalism of its withdrawal from the world”³⁸² but “by contrast, neither willing nor judging, though dependent on thought’s preliminary reflection upon their objects, is ever caught up in these reflections....”³⁸³ And, she argues, “Historically, this kind of withdrawal from doing is the oldest condition posited for the life of the mind.”³⁸⁴ At this point, I would like to

³⁸⁰ Benhabib, “Judgment and Politics in Arendt’s Thought,” 193.

³⁸¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind (One/Thinking)*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 1971), 76-77.

³⁸² Arendt, *The Life of the Mind (One/Thinking)*, 92.

³⁸³ Arendt, 92.

³⁸⁴ Arendt, 92.

compare how the “predicament of thinking ascribed to the radicalism of its withdrawal” from the world mimics the message from the final sentence of the second to last paragraph of her dissertation: “Moreover, it is the very possibility of isolation that enables us to detach ourselves from human history and from its irrevocable enchainment by generation.”³⁸⁵ In both statements, Arendt acknowledges how being out of the habitual current of worldly life—whether a withdrawal from the world or an isolation from it—is what preserves thinking and allows for a disruption from enchainment. This solitude is the common denominator that allows for thinking and embodies *caritas*. It is this solitude that preserves the capacity for freedom through natality; it is this solitude that produces the conditions to challenge habit and produce the freedom of thought necessary for plurality. I am arguing that the logic of *caritas* and its philosophic characteristics emerge in her later works as the necessary qualities for protecting plurality in public and political life. *Caritas* is not simply the precursor to Arendt’s later notion of natality, but it is—possibly—a key element to clarifying the marriage between her theoretical ideas of judgment and the practice of judging in the real world. Understanding how natality affects plurality through the development of *caritas* helps to punctuate the relevance of the neighbor as a critical piece to understanding how her later works continue to contribute to conversations about rights, dignity, and the rejection of zero-sum politics.

To understand the later connections, it is imperative, then, to examine these questions: how does withdrawing from the world mimic the solitude needed to obtain the capacity for

³⁸⁵ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 112.

“enlarged thought?” How does enlarged thought connect to the relevance of the neighbor?

And, how does this solitude and isolation differ from loneliness?³⁸⁶

³⁸⁶ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 110-111. “Voluntary contemplation” is different from choosing *caritas* in that we cannot choose our “beloved.” This is consequential to the idea of Christian grace and warrants distinction.

Chapter Two: *caritas*, the individual, and thinking—transitions, comparisons, and connections

In this chapter, I would like to develop further the proposal that the isolation required for *caritas* mimics the isolation required for thinking. Still, I want first to contextualize the themes and “thought trains” Vecchiarelli Scott, Chelius Stark, Benhabib, Lindsey Stonebridge, and Jerome Kohn identify within and throughout her works. By locating particular focuses, transitions, comparisons, and connections between Arendt’s works, these scholars offer opportunities to investigate the concerns and accuracy of the meanings and implications of the different definitions of *caritas*, ascertain the effects and applications of those different definitions, and subsequently evaluate the implications of those concerns and accuracies as they relate to *caritas*-informed challenges to zero-sum approaches. The following discussion includes isolating how these scholars address the concepts of *amor mundi*, judgment, and thinking as specific thematic concerns and how these concepts influence the discussion of *caritas*.

In her dissertation, Arendt makes clear that the Augustinian *caritas* upon which she focuses requires a return to the world after the period of isolation. As Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark state:

In Parts I and II, Arendt critiqued Neoplatonic and Greek traditions through the prism of Augustine’s “original” definition of Christian *caritas*. By the end of the dissertation in Part III, Arendt clearly shows her preference for Augustine’s “Creator” God over the Neoplatonic and Heideggerian, God of death and desire. The Creator-creature connection roots *caritas* in a search for “the twofold before” of Being, but it also mandates a “return” to the world.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 122.

The isolation of this *caritas* must be remembered, recalled, and revisited with earnest commitment, but the individual still returns *to the world*. This isolation is not a linear, one-time experience to complete. The Creator-creature origin roots the individual's return into a historical commonality while simultaneously preserving the agency of the individual that is inherent to *caritas*. This allows *caritas* to inform the relationship and interactions between the individual and the neighbor and to inform the private and public spheres. Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark continue:

Augustine's *caritas* is the basis for founding new communities on common moral judgment as well as the existential, determining "fact" of shared history. In other words, the culminating section of Arendt's 1929 dissertation is the first appearance, in a prepolitical conceptual context, of a major theme in her later political writings. She would keep this argument unmodified in the early 1960's revisions. At the same time, in her political theory texts of the same period, she would insist that it is precisely this common ground of "plurality" in the human social experience and "natality" in public life that have been lost to the tradition of Western philosophy—but not to its "unsystematic" new beginners, such as Augustine and herself.³⁸⁸

Caritas mandates a "return" to the world through a "choice tied to free will."³⁸⁹ The *caritas* of Augustine's "Creator" God is not one of death and desire; rather, it is a twofold, radical combination of both the possibility of newness (natality) through individual introduction to the world and one of community, of "kinship." Arendt explains, "This kinship creates an equality neither of traits nor of talents, but of situation. All share the same fate. The individual is not alone in this world. He has companions-in-fate (*consortes*), not merely in this situation or that, but for a lifetime."³⁹⁰ On one hand, the individual is isolated, but on the other hand, the individual is not alone. This definition of *caritas*, as it is tied to free will and kinship, drastically differs from a definition of *caritas* that mandates love of neighbor as a love of self

³⁸⁸ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 122.

³⁸⁹ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 82.

³⁹⁰ Arendt, 100.

transactionally and one-dimensionally (as opposed to a love of neighbor that recognizes the “neighbor in his true being, which is in his createdness”³⁹¹), or an iteration that removes the importance of *caritas* as a love *in* the world. Arendt says, in the second part of *The Life of the Mind* (Two/Willing), that

No doubt every man, by virtue of his birth, is a new beginning, and his power of beginning may well correspond to this fact of the human condition. It is in line with these Augustinian reflections that the Will has sometimes, and not only by Augustine, been considered to be the actualization of the *principium individuationis*. The question is how this faculty of being able to bring about something new and hence to “change the world” can function in the world of appearances, namely in an environment of factuality which is old by definition and which relentlessly transforms all the spontaneity of its newcomers into the “has been” of fact—*fieri; factus sum*.³⁹²

To this end, Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark propose that

On the assumption that immortality can be achieved only in the relationship of the soul to God or in the common practice of faith, the public realm is emptied of its significance. *Caritas* functions as the moral equivalent in civil society of natality in politics.³⁹³

They go so far as to state, “Arendt’s idea of freedom flows from Augustine’s notion of *caritas*.”³⁹⁴ I am arguing that this is a critical clarification because inherent to this particular iteration of *caritas* is meaningfulness and what, in part, constitutes for Arendt, a meaningful life. It is a meaningfulness that requires thought and action; a meaningfulness that requires the individual to be in the world but not of it. It is this concept of meaningfulness that will resurface in Arendt’s later works and in the ideas of purposefulness; those that ultimately, I argue, will

³⁹¹ Arendt, 95.

³⁹² Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind (Two/Willing)*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 1971), 6-7.

³⁹³ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 130. This statement is part of their criticism of Young-Bruehl’s “dismissive approach to the Augustine-Arendt connection.”

³⁹⁴ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 138.

explain why she can still discuss “*amor mundi*” rationally and validly from a non-sentimental but loving place.³⁹⁵

What I am interested in pursuing—what I am proposing, in fact—is that the contemplation required to access *caritas*, as discussed in her dissertation, is a concept that informs her later works and helps to clarify the connection between thinking, natality, freedom, and plurality. A *caritas*-informed approach to finding meaning and purposefulness is not to reach a state of enlightened understanding and appreciation, but rather to embrace—perhaps admit—to accept that wrestling with the concept of *amor mundi* is an inherent, inevitable, and necessary struggle. It is an uncertain struggle, *and* it is a struggle with the reality of uncertainty. In the same way that natality does not provide an algorithm for predicting positive outcomes (instead, it only preserves possibilities and ensures the existence of impartial variables within uncertainties), to love the world does not mean to accept, rationalize, or minimize its ugliness. Rather, to commit to love the world means to accept that it is worth the struggle and the uncertainties; it must be grappled with and chosen as an approach over and over again.

Critically, this is not to say that Arendt’s notion of *amor mundi* is sophomoric in its definition, nor are the conclusions consistent that one can draw from her meaning of the term throughout her works. Jerome Kohn, the renowned Arendtian scholar, comments on these issues in several

³⁹⁵ Many authors, articles, and scholars have suggested this line of thought; a quick internet search will reveal the vast amount of information available on this subject. My research specifically focuses on the importance of *caritas* as the concept that informed her later works, not only that she returns to find the world worth loving. (For example, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/what-does-it-mean-to-love-world-hannah-arendt-and-amor-mundi/> and <https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/what-love-hannah-arendt-and-amor-mundi> are two great examples of how Arendt’s work is experiencing a renaissance in multiple different areas of study.)

different places in his introductions to Arendt's work, specifically in *Thinking without a Banister*, *Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, and in *Responsibility and Judgment*. In the introduction to *Thinking without a Banister*, *Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, Kohn cites Arendt's statement about the decision to love the world when he says that he wants "to emphasize what she says about *amor mundi* regarding the Terror that emerged within the French revolution itself, turning its goals inside out: 'What is most difficult is to love the world as it is, with all the evil and suffering in it.'"³⁹⁶ However, he goes on to caution readers, supporters, critics, and scholars of Arendt from misunderstanding her use of *amor mundi*; he warns them to avoid reducing it to a cliché, an inaccurate aphorism, or a generalization that is mistakenly applied as a representation of her work. He argues that it does not capture the complexity of her thought. He states, "since thinking's reconciliation to the world is hardly the same as love, all of this tends to make one a bit skeptical of the worldly wise Hannah Arendt's *amor mundi* in her later years."³⁹⁷ He then points out that, when she was eulogizing Auden and identifying what made him so remarkable, she pointed to the "unprotesting willingness with which he yielded to the 'curse' of his vulnerability to 'human *unsuccess*'—vulnerability to the crookedness of the desires, to the infidelities of the heart, to the injustices of the world."³⁹⁸ Kohn then admits, "That, too, is not harmonious to my ear, with *amor mundi*. It is rather the courage of human resolve that Arendt finds in all great poets."³⁹⁹ It is with intent and awareness, then, that a discussion of what Arendt meant by *amor mundi* must be rigorously protected from becoming a

³⁹⁶ Jerome Kohn in the "Introduction" of Hannah Arendt's, *Thinking without a Banister*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: The Literary Trust of Hannah Arendt and Jerome Kohn, Schocken Books, 2018), xv-xvi.

³⁹⁷ Kohn, "Introduction," *Thinking without a Banister*, xvi.

³⁹⁸ Kohn, "Introduction," xvii.

³⁹⁹ Kohn, "Introduction," xvii.

discussion that reduces the phrase to naïve, saccharine optimism. I will again address this point in Part Three of my dissertation.

In the introduction to *Responsibility and Judgment*, Kohn also dissects and isolates the relationships between love, freedom, plurality, possibility, thinking, acting, and judgment. Without question, that is a hefty list of concepts to discuss. It emphasizes, however, the interconnectedness of these list items to one another while also highlighting their distinct characteristics and roles. He begins his piece by citing Arendt's remarks that were later published in *Christianity and Crisis: a Christian Journal of Opinion*:

Particular questions must receive particular answers; and if the series of crises in which we have lived since the beginning of the century can teach us anything at all, it is, I think the simple fact that there are no general standards to determine our judgments unfailingly, no general rules under which to subsume the particular cases with any degree of certainty.⁴⁰⁰

He goes on to comment, "With these words Hannah Arendt (1906-75) encapsulated what throughout her life she regarded as the problematic nature of the relation of philosophy to politics, or of theory to practice, or, more simply and precisely, of thinking to acting."⁴⁰¹ Her remarks here, and Kohn's takeaways, certainly warrant revisiting Benhabib's claim that "judgment is not the faculty of subsuming a particular under a universal but the faculty of contextualizing the universal such that it comes to bear upon the particular."⁴⁰² I will discuss this at length in Part Three, but to reiterate: I am arguing that through a *caritas*-informed lens,

⁴⁰⁰ Jerome Kohn in the "Introduction" of Hannah Arendt's, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), vii. Kohn cites at the bottom of the page that "Arendt's brief remarks that were later published in *Christianity and Crisis: a Christian Journal of Opinion* vol. 26, no. 9 (May 30, 1966): 112-14."

⁴⁰¹ Kohn, "Introduction," *Responsibility and Judgment*, vii.

⁴⁰² Benhabib, "Judgment and Politics in Arendt's Thought," 193.

it is possible both to reject the concept of “general rules under which to subsume the particular cases with any degree of certainty” and also to contextualize “the universal such that it comes to bear upon the particular.” The degree of detail in which Kohn scrutinizes these points slows down the analysis in this very important way: he will not acquiesce to an interpretation that attempts to tidy Arendt’s thought in order to reject her ideas, nor will he fail to challenge what he sees as manipulations of her ideas to support particular systems of belief.⁴⁰³ I will attempt to anchor the following discussions, subsequent deductions, and implications to his interpretation standard.

In the introduction to *Responsibility and Judgment*, Kohn again directly quotes Arendt (from “Collective Responsibility”): “In the center of moral considerations of human conduct stands the self; in the center of political considerations stands the world.”⁴⁰⁴ He remarks on this quotation by suggesting that

This case can be made still stronger by adding that morality and also religion tend to negate (though not destroy as totalitarianism did) the fundamental political propensity, rooted in the condition of human plurality, to care more for the world than for either oneself or the salvation of one’s soul.⁴⁰⁵

It may appear that there is deep irony in arguing that a concept like *caritas*, one rooted in religious belief, could possibly inform Arendt’s later works, particularly if it negates the “condition of human plurality.” But Arendt approaches *caritas* philosophically in her

⁴⁰³ This is reminiscent of what Matthew Altman cautioned against in his book *Kant and Applied Ethics, The Uses and Limits of Kant’s Practical Philosophy* when he warned Kantians to “be careful not to make him say what we wish he would have said.” *Kant and Applied Ethics, The Uses and Limits of Kant’s Practical Philosophy* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 287.

⁴⁰⁴ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xx.

⁴⁰⁵ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xx-xxi.

dissertation, not religiously. While it is a religious concept, her use of it is not a religious endorsement. This may seem like semantics, but I argue that it is actually something more. In fact, it is the crux of my argument: *caritas* is a part of a philosophical explanation that offers insight into how human interaction (our interactions with one another, the environment, technology, the past, the future, etc.) can be understood, evaluated, revisited, and assessed at both the individual and collective level. Arendt's Augustinian *caritas* is a lens through which we can view our human condition and the relationship between thinking and acting; *and*, as used in her dissertation, it is a philosophical concept. As a philosophical concept, and not a religious one, it has the potential to, at one point, embody necessary qualities and, at another, embody contingent characteristics. It, at one and the same time, specifically offers a capacity to respond to how it is possible to navigate the universal and the particular. In an extreme sense, this philosophical concept of *caritas* arguably attempts to bypass the innate, perennial conundrums that plague the morality of traditional, religious concepts of *caritas*. Arendt's dedication to picking apart the differences between habit, religious constructs, and normative societal edicts does not ignore or make concessions to accommodate the issue of morality, freedom, and judgment. Rather, by blatantly, directly taking issue with these problematic concepts as they apply to human behavior (and judgment and freedom), the case for *caritas* as a philosophical lens becomes stronger.

To return to the statement by Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, we encounter an opportunity to test the capacity of *caritas* as a philosophical concept: "*Caritas* functions as the moral

equivalent in civil society of natality in politics.”⁴⁰⁶ How is it possible to claim that *caritas* avoids perennial “morality” problems while also endorsing the statement that it acts as the “moral equivalent in civil society?” How is it possible to reconcile this when Kohn literally argues that for Arendt, morality and religion destroy plurality? I would argue that one answer is that *caritas* can be the moral equivalent without destroying plurality because it mimics *thinking*. Though morality and religion are anathema to the Arendtian notion of plurality, according to Kohn’s assessment and earlier referenced statement, the *caritas* of her dissertation is an expansion of thought (in the Kantian sense of an enlarged mentality) akin to her definition of *thinking*: it preserves both the individual and freedom. *Caritas* as a moral, religious concept is terribly problematic as a methodology for judgment. However, as a philosophical concept that mirrors the characteristics of Arendtian thinking, it serves as an integral piece of understanding our human condition as individuals and as contextualized, relational neighbors. Again, I would turn to Arendt’s focus on etymology and the use of specific definitions.

The *caritas* of her dissertation is concerned with the self that is *independent of the world* and the self that is *in the world* without defaulting to becoming part *of the world*. It does so in part by recognizing both the autonomy of the self and the importance—and relevance—of the neighbor. It does not have to sacrifice plurality to preserve continuity; it does not adhere to that false binary, so there is no contradiction.⁴⁰⁷ *Caritas* is individual in its act of withdrawing,

⁴⁰⁶ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” p. 130. This statement is part of their criticism of Young-Bruehl’s “dismissive approach to the Augustine-Arendt connection.”

⁴⁰⁷ Of course, this is again an echo of Kant and the enlarged mentality. The *caritas* of her dissertation seems to inform her interpretation of Kant’s spectator/actor dynamic as represented in her *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*.

but collective and relational when it informs action and judgment *in the world* by the individual self. *Caritas* requires both the individual's solitude and the individual's return to the relational collective of neighborly existence. If *caritas* is defined as a personal, religious "universal," a calculus to determine or justify an action, upon which an "enlightened" individual assumes the capacity to rate and rank a priority of moral understanding and obligation for themselves and the rest of the world, to impose their mandates on their neighbors *in the world*, it would be antithetical to Arendt's understanding of thinking, power, plurality, freedom, and diversity. She cautions explicitly against confusing judgment based on morality or religious commandments and judgment based on thinking.

Kohn presses this point by suggesting that "Arendt was close indeed to Machiavelli: when moral and religious commandments are pronounced in public in defiance of the diversity of human opinions they corrupt both the world and themselves."⁴⁰⁸ The *caritas* of her dissertation seems contradictory to public pronouncements of "moral and religious commandments" that defy "the diversity of human opinions." Rather, the *caritas* of her dissertation seems concerned with *preserving* diversity—even demanding it—by, among other things, respecting the individual through the necessity of solitude, removal from the world, and re-entry as an autonomous entity (natality). The solitude of *caritas* helps to inform and direct the actions in neighborly relationships, to preserve the autonomous agent in part by their removal from the habitual. *Caritas* does not attempt to homogenize the relational nature of being *in the world* of neighbors. It is this definition of *caritas* that explicitly connects the concepts of individuality,

⁴⁰⁸ Kohn, "Introduction," *Responsibility and Judgment*, xxi.

thinking, and freedom to one another. When an individual has the opportunity to withdraw, reflect, and re-enter, an opportunity for a new set of interactions is made possible. In this creation of potential newness through detachment from the world and subsequent re-entry, the individual disrupts the enchainment of history. Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark echo this evaluation:

The theme of the individual's relationship to the human community pervades all of Arendt's works, both in Germany and America. Her 1929 gloss on Augustine provided her with a way of rooting "plurality" in the "multiplicity" of human society while balancing it against collective common purpose. In the dissertation, not unexpectedly, she makes this move within the framework of the Christian commandment to love one's neighbor. In a footnote to Part II chapter 3 of the dissertation Arendt writes, "The fundamental question for an understanding of neighborly love, as commanded by Jesus, reads as follows: As one seized by God and detached from the world, how can I still live in the world?" (A: 033345). The answer is only by "founding society anew." As a result the "new social life . . . is defined by mutual love." It replaces "mutual dependence" and therefore "dissolves the bonds that tied men to the world in its original sense of the earthly city" ((A: 033361). It does not deal with "mankind" but with "the individual, albeit every individual." The collectivity is the sum of the ties that bind "many individuals" rather than an abstract "human race" as such.⁴⁰⁹

Caritas is deeply personal in one sense but radically relational in another. However, because it is relational, it does not follow that it must be abstract, universal, or specifically situational. The *caritas* that an individual experiences following the isolation and return is not different from the *caritas* that is extended to a neighbor or the *caritas* that informs and motivates an action. But, it is also not universally applied. The *caritas* of Arendt's dissertation is a constant that must be committed to again and again by an individual; the individual freely choosing to follow *caritas*, in turn, impacts the collective individuals with whom they share the world.

⁴⁰⁹ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," 153.

I am arguing that it is not coincidental that Arendt's definition of Augustinian *caritas*—the definition that requires solitude of the recognized individual and yet mandates the love of the neighbor in its return to the common world—speaks to this passage so poignantly from *Origins* cited previously. As the discussion of *caritas* evolves, this passage accommodates the developing interpretations and amplifies the relevance of the human being as an individual to the “right to have rights”:

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, representing nothing but his own absolutely unique individuality which, deprived of expression within and action upon a common world, loses all significance.⁴¹⁰

Of course, Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark are careful to point out that Arendt's “dissertation does not contain any of the distinctions between the *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* or between the political and social realms that so mark *The Human Condition*.”⁴¹¹ In fact, they argue that “Augustine's conceptual originality is noted repeatedly and thus, by implication, is tied more directly to the ‘natality’ theme, at least with respect to philosophical creativity.”⁴¹² And again, they argue that “Arendt makes fleeting references to the external manifestations of *caritas* in *societas*. The ‘world’ as the locus of action makes only a brief, tantalizing appearance as the ‘place where things happen’ (A:033299).”⁴¹³ I want explicitly to connect these concepts by referencing several statements from Arendt's essay, *Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship*. The following is part of her discussion about the differences between personal and political responsibility. She states that “even a restricted problem of morality and its

⁴¹⁰ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 302.

⁴¹¹ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 153.

⁴¹² Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 153.

⁴¹³ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 153-154.

foundations demand the clarification of one general question as well as a few distinctions which, I fear, are not generally accepted.”⁴¹⁴ She comments that personal responsibility “must be understood in contrast to political responsibility which every government assumes for the deeds and misdeeds of its predecessor and every nation for the deeds and misdeeds of the past.”⁴¹⁵ She then states:

To set the time aright means to renew the world, and this we can do because we all arrived at one time or another as newcomers in a world which was there before us and will still be there when we are gone, when we shall have left its burden to our successors.⁴¹⁶

She points out at the end of this passage that “this is not the kind of responsibility” that she is “talking about here”⁴¹⁷ and goes on to clarify the type of responsibility that she is, in fact, going to focus on (personal, not political), but the section is important for the purpose of connecting the *caritas* of her dissertation that is the “moral equivalent in civil society of natality in politics” to thinking, and therefore to our capacity for judgment.⁴¹⁸ Again, connecting the importance of the role of the individual and the individual’s interaction with the world as neighbor in the *caritas* of her dissertation, I would like to reference a later sentence from this same essay: “There is no such thing as collective guilt or collective innocence; guilt and innocence make sense only if applied to individuals.”⁴¹⁹ Contextualizing the dissertation and the reworking and editing of it into the timeframe of her other works illuminates the recurrence of her thematic intellectual concerns, including the individual, freedom, thinking, and judgment. It is worth

⁴¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship,” ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 27.

⁴¹⁵ Arendt, “Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship,” 27.

⁴¹⁶ Arendt, 28.

⁴¹⁷ Arendt, 28.

⁴¹⁸ It should be explicitly noted that the above-cited passage is also reflective of the Augustinian notion of time as it relates to *caritas*.

⁴¹⁹ Arendt, “Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship,” 29.

noting the following citation in which Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark identify particular repeating Arendtian themes:

In effect, had Arendt published the dissertation in 1964-65, it would have become part of a triptych uniting her work on human *Existenz* in the world (*The Human Condition*) and the phenomenology of revolution in history (*On Revolution*). All three texts were written or revised in the late 1950s and early 60s, and were thus important formative influences on each other and on *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The published dissertation might have provided a paradigm for the illusive “point of reference . . . out of the world” Arendt had sought as she struggled with the problem of “judgment.” From 1929 to 1973, when she presented the Gifford Lectures in Aberdeen, Arendt’s “thought trains” had come full circle.⁴²⁰

Kohn, too, identifies specific influences affecting Arendt’s scholarship. In the introduction to *Thinking without a Banister*, he argues that there was a specific, impactful event influencing the first half of her career:

It is fair to say, in my judgment, that attending the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 was the most momentous event in Arendt’s life during the period covered by this second volume of unpublished and uncollected writings, that is, from the mid-1950’s to 1975, whose subtitle is *Essays in Understanding, 1953-1975*. To put it as clearly as I can, the event that most affected Arendt during the first half of her career, which is reflected throughout the first volume of *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954*, was the appearance, for the first time in two millennia, of a new form of government in the world: totalitarianism.⁴²¹

Returning to his statements in *Responsibility and Judgment*, it is telling that Kohn reminds the reader that “Arendt wrote *Eichmann* in a state of “euphoria,” not because rootless evil could be thought but because it could be overcome by *thinking*.”⁴²² I will continue to discuss the particular connection between the solitude that thinking requires and the solitude *caritas* requires in the next section, but at this point, I want to once again focus the attention on thinking and its relationship between *caritas*, the individual, natality, freedom, and plurality. In *Responsibility and Judgment*, Kohn argues that

⁴²⁰ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 154.

⁴²¹ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Thinking without a Banister*, xviii.

⁴²² Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xx.

Arendt was neither a nihilist nor an amoralist, but a thinker who followed where her thinking led. Following her, however, imposes a task on her readers—not so much on their intelligence or knowledge as on their ability to think. She advances not theoretical solutions but an abundance of incentives to *think for oneself*.⁴²³

For Arendt, thinking for oneself is indicative of freedom, but dependent upon solitude. Thinking *for oneself* is individual and also self-reflective. In thinking, an individual exists independently from others. Thinking preserves the individuality that manifests as the collectivity that is “the sum of the ties that bind ‘many individuals’ rather than an abstract ‘human race.’”⁴²⁴ Still, it is absolutely different from acting. Thinking happens in solitude, but acting happens in the company of others; it *requires* the company of others. “The *raison d’être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action.”⁴²⁵ Kohn explains

Moreover, if human freedom, as Arendt believed, is the *raison d’être* of politics, and if the experience of freedom is unambiguous only in action, which despite Kant she also believed, then in distinguishing thinking from acting she is pointing out two activities that differ essentially from one another. Thinking is *self*-reflective, whereas an agent can act only with others than himself; and the activity of thinking, which takes place in solitude, stops when a thinker begins to act, just as the activity of acting, which requires the company of others, stops when the agent begins to think with himself.⁴²⁶

He goes on to explain that

Arendt was deeply indebted to Augustine for his experience of thinking as an activity guided by love of the goodness of what exists. Because thinking cannot be guided by evil, since evil destroys what exists, she came to believe that the activity of thinking conditions whoever engages in it against evil-doing.⁴²⁷

In reference to the above passage, Kohn also points out that Arendt is not naïve to think that “thinking determines the goodness of specific acts;”⁴²⁸ rather, he suggests in a footnote that

⁴²³ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xx.xi.

⁴²⁴ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 153.

⁴²⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 146. Also, in the introduction to *The Jewish Writings*, Jerome Kohn cites this page after making a reference to page 246 in *The Human Condition*.

⁴²⁶ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xxi.

⁴²⁷ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xxv.

⁴²⁸ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xxv.

“Heidegger provides a case in point, but by no means the only one. Arendt believed in part the *deformation professionnelle* of philosophers was a proclivity for tyranny.”⁴²⁹ So, “the activity of thinking conditions whoever engages in it against evil-doing,” but it does not guarantee the prevention of evil-doing.⁴³⁰ This is critical in understanding the capacity for judgment, which I will discuss in great detail in Part Three. Kohn argues:

With some degree of confidence it may be said that the ability to think, which Eichmann lacked, is the precondition of judging, and that the refusal as well as the inability to judge, to imagine before your eyes the others whom your judgment represents and to whom it responds, invite evil to enter and infect the world.⁴³¹

This, of course, brings us back to Benhabib (and Kant, too—and Arendt’s interpretation of Kant, and Benhabib’s interpretation of Arendt’s interpretation of Kant). In *Thinking without a Banister*, Kohn reiterates this connection (and the contingencies and relationships) between thinking, action, freedom, natality, plurality, and judgment. To compare and contrast the differences and similarities between thinking and acting, it is necessary to identify and extract the components that the activity of thinking requires and the components that acting requires. In turn, when the necessary characteristics for action are identified, they can be placed in contrast to the characteristics of natality as a condition of entering into the world as a human being. When natality is defined, in part, as a beginning manifested, the relationship and interdependency of plurality to natality becomes clearer, i.e., that plurality is part of our human condition by the nature of our entrance into the world. Subsequently, defining the interplay of these relationships can help contextualize and understand Arendt’s contingencies required for judgment. In fact, Kohn remarks that Arendt “found the mind’s obscurity to be the clearest

⁴²⁹ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xxv.

⁴³⁰ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xxv.

⁴³¹ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xxix.

indication of the need to consider anew the meaning of human responsibility and the power of human judgment.”⁴³² He states again, in the introduction to *Thinking without a Banister*, while explaining the contentious, complicated, condemning, and celebratory responses to Arendt’s judgments expressed in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, that

At first, to her the total domination of totalitarian governments, that is, their elimination of human freedom, was the appearance of radical evil in the world. Her judgment then was generally approved of and acclaimed. On the other hand, her startling new understanding of the evil of the crime against humanity, and her judgment of its perpetrator Eichmann, were generally denied and condemned. There is no relativism possible here. Plurality itself, including human plurality, is a universal law for Arendt, and whoever infringes upon it, wittingly or not, loses his or her right to live under it. But at the same time this is decidedly not a matter of absolutes. Without standards to judge the unprecedented, the faculty of judgment is fallible in matters of self-interest; it is reliable only in a community of judges, a public entity that discerns the common concerns engendered by, and engendering, public *spirit*.⁴³³

Stonebridge, in *We Are Free to Change the World*, references *The Life of the Mind* in her discussion about how Arendt “shifted her perspective to better see what life looked like from a new angle.”⁴³⁴ Quoting Arendt from *The Life of the Mind*, she points to her statement that, “[Practically,] thinking means that each time you are confronted with some difficulty in life you have to make up your mind anew.”⁴³⁵ Stonebridge then argues that “making up your mind again does not simply mean adapting to a new reality by learning to fit in or lowering your expectations. For Hannah Arendt, it meant comprehending what was new about that reality so as, when necessary, to resist it.”⁴³⁶ I would like to quote the passage that follows the quotation from *The Life of the Mind* that Stonebridge cites. This is from the same page; comparing it with the aforementioned commentary from Kohn (that is quoted above from *Thinking without a*

⁴³² Kohn, “Introduction,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, xi.

⁴³³ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Thinking without a Banister*, xxix.

⁴³⁴ Lindsey Stonebridge, *We Are Free to Change the World* (New York: Hogarth, 2024), p. 24.

⁴³⁵ Stonebridge references, on page 24 of *We Are Free to Change the World*, page 177 of Arendt’s *The Life of the Mind*, (New York: Harcourt, 1981).

⁴³⁶ Stonebridge, *We Are Free to Change the World*, 24.

Banister) shows direct connections between thinking, the dangers of non-thinking, and action, particularly in the political realm:

However, non-thinking, which seems so recommendable a state for political and moral affairs, also has its perils. By shielding people from the dangers of examination, it teaches them to hold fast to whatever the prescribed rules of conduct may be at a given time in a given society. What people then get used to is less the content of the rules, a close examination of which would also lead them into perplexity, than the possession of rules under which to subsume particulars. If somebody appears who, for whatever purposes, wishes to abolish the old “values” or virtues, he will find that easy enough, provided he offers a new code, and he will need relatively little force and no persuasion—i.e., proof that the new values are better than the old—to impose it. The more firmly men hold to the old code, the more eager will they be to assimilate themselves to the new one, which in practice means that the readiest to obey will be those who were the most respectable pillars of society, the least likely to indulge in thoughts, dangerous or otherwise, while those who to all appearances were the most unreliable elements of the old order will be the least tractable.⁴³⁷

To think is “to make up your mind anew,” and to not think is to adhere to a code out of habit; to avoid solitude and to avoid the hard work that thinking requires—the thinking that engaging with an “enlarged mentality” requires. Arendt continues this discussion on the following page and says that Socrates argued

there is nothing more to be said than that life deprived of thought would be meaningless, even though thought will never make men wise or give them the answers to thought’s own questions. The meaning of what Socrates was doing lay in the activity itself. Or to put it differently: To think and to be fully alive are the same, and this implies that thinking must always begin afresh; it is an activity that accompanies living and is concerned with such concepts as justice, happiness, virtue, offered us by language itself as expressing the meaning of whatever happens in life and occurs to us while we are alive.⁴³⁸

This type of meaningfulness recalibrates the starting point of defining purposefulness; in doing so, it challenges common zero-sum approaches to belonging, rights, and placelessness.⁴³⁹ To be fully alive, one has to think. To think, one has to be in solitude. To act with agency, freedom and imagination, one has to have engaged with thinking. Kohn, in the introduction to *Essays in*

⁴³⁷ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind (One/Thinking)*, 177.

⁴³⁸ Arendt, 178.

⁴³⁹ In particular, the idea of a limited amount of resource.

Understanding 1930-1954 Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, comments that for Arendt, “thinking—understanding, endowing an event with meaning—was an engagement with oneself, solitary and private.”⁴⁴⁰ This concept of thinking, as he recounts in the introduction, was a result, in part, because of her “initial contact as a student, which was to develop into the lifelong attachment, with two great thinkers in the vanguard of existential philosophy: Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers. The second event was the consolidation of the National Socialist movement in Germany.”⁴⁴¹ Kohn speculates that “in addition to the content of the thought of Heidegger and Jaspers, there was opened to the youthful Arendt an inner spiritual realm, invisible and immaterial, which she could literally inhabit in solitude.”⁴⁴² He posits

The originality of her political thought stems from the fact that what was phenomenally revealed to her as new and without precedent was actually going on *now*, in the ordinary world that previously had been of little significance in her reflective life. Thus the political became a reality for her, not only as the arena of “politics” in which politicians get on with the business of governing, harnessing power, determining goals, and formulating and implementing the means to achieve them, but also as the realm in which novelty, for better or worse, can arise, and in which the conditions of human freedom and unfreedom are cast. In one way or another political reality would henceforth orient all her attempts at understanding—not least when, at the end of her life, she turned to the reflective mental activities of thinking, willing, and judging as the source of that understanding.”⁴⁴³

There are two points from this citation to consider in relation to the thesis of my dissertation:

First, Kohn, like Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, identifies specific influences and events that shaped and developed Arendt’s views of solitude and the political. I am focusing on how this, in turn, informed her understanding of thinking, freedom, natality, judgment, and plurality. I am arguing that *caritas* helps us to evaluate this shaping and influencing from a lens that

⁴⁴⁰ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954 Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, x-xi.

⁴⁴¹ Kohn, “Introduction,” xi.

⁴⁴² Kohn, “Introduction,” xi.

⁴⁴³ Kohn, “Introduction,” xii-xiii.

clarifies the continuity of her thought and reinforces the idea (as Benhabib and Stonebridge argue) that evaluating, reevaluating, assessing, and reassessing are hallmarks of an informed, thinking—of an enlarged mentality. The second point is that inseparable from the skillset necessary to engage in thinking with an enlarged mentality is the presence of possibility. Enlarged mentalities facilitate, produce, and require new perspectives and new possibilities. It is important to note that while Kohn can contextualize the development of Arendt's ideas, essays, works, and correspondence and place them historically against the backdrop of both personal encounters of hers and catastrophic, unprecedented world events, he also offers this specific evaluation about her dissertation in *The Jewish Writings* in the preface:

The passion of Heidegger's teaching reveals no-thing, no-thingness, and caused his loving and most receptive student to experience the reality of the present, the world of existing things, the historical time in which strictly human events occur, and, it may be added, the biographical time in which human substance or character is formed, as shadows disappearing across his paths of thinking. Three years later, in a work that no less than any other of her writings is embedded in her "living experience," Arendt attempted to understand the profound, never-to-be-forgotten, and in more ways than one vexed experience of loving a man whose life, as much as any man's has ever been, for better and worse, was spent in pursuit of one overriding thought, the meaning (as he first called it) or the truth (as he later called it) of being.⁴⁴⁴

There is much to unpack in this evaluation. For now, I would like to focus on Kohn's statement that Arendt's dissertation is "no less than any of her other writings embedded in her 'living experience.'"⁴⁴⁵ Stonebridge, too, argues that there is a connectedness between her living experience and her work:

she was a product of the same totalitarianism that uprooted her, or more accurately perhaps, she was its intellectual nemesis. Everything about Hannah Arendt's life—how she thought, loved, lived, worked, wrote, and taught—was anti-totalitarian either by default or intent. Her capacity to always see the world anew and be accordingly perplexed, surprised, and appalled

⁴⁴⁴ Jerome Kohn in the "Preface" of Hannah Arendt's, *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: The Literary Trust of Hannah Arendt and Jerome Kohn, Schocken Books, 2007), xii.

⁴⁴⁵ Kohn, "Preface," *The Jewish Writings*, xii.

was her most adaptable weapon in this struggle. To grasp at reality as though it mattered because it *does matter* was her first response to the moral lifelessness of her age.⁴⁴⁶

The *caritas* of her dissertation is not separate from this focus, but rather indicative of the concerns that she considers throughout her life. Kohn does not gloss over the motivation behind Arendt's interest in her dissertation topic or shy away from pointing out how it differs from her other works in its approach and in the voice she brings to her analysis of Augustine's work. He argues:

This work is unique in Arendt's oeuvre, however, in that it is written from an artificially imposed distance, elaborately embroidered as an academic dissertation on Augustine, the philosopher who some fifteen hundred years earlier had distinguished forms of love: *appetitus* or craving, *cupiditas* or wrong desire, *caritas* or right desire, and neighborly love, love for those with whom one shares the world.⁴⁴⁷

Kohn points out that the dissertation could be a response to, or a reflection of, her relationship with Heidegger. I am not arguing with his assessment or challenging his insight about the attitudes intimated, intended, or expressed regarding her personal relationship with Heidegger. Rather, I am commenting on the fact that while her dissertation may be written from an "artificially imposed" distance, the content still informs her later concerns. If Arendt uses her dissertation in part to address Heidegger in a tangential way vis-à-vis a discussion about love, I am arguing that it does not lessen the influence or the importance of *caritas* in her later works.

Kohn continues:

As an analysis of Augustine's conception of love, Arendt's work is appropriately theological: all forms of human love lead to the love of God, for Augustine the eternal entity that alone can be enjoyed in and for itself (*frui*), and to attain which—to attain one's own future life—all temporal objects, including the world itself, are rightly to be used (*uti*). The work is fraught with tensions, especially regarding neighborly love. How can one who is drawn out of the world by the love of God—let alone drawn beyond God by the thought of being—still live in the world and enjoy anything or love anyone within it? The Augustinian version of that question is tucked away at

⁴⁴⁶ Stonebridge, *We Are Free to Change the World*, 24.

⁴⁴⁷ Kohn, "Preface," *The Jewish Writings*, xii-xiii.

the end of a long scholarly footnote, and is never answered; the fact that it is not answered, in my opinion, holds the key not only to Arendt's dissertation but also to the seeming paradox of her changed but lasting love for Martin Heidegger.⁴⁴⁸

I defer to Kohn when he notes that the dissertation "is fraught with tensions, especially regarding neighborly love." When he argues that the question of how to live in the world while not being of it is not answered, but that "the Augustinian version of that question is tucked away at the end of a long scholarly footnote," I would respectfully add perhaps *caritas* offers a very Arendtian opening to a very Arendtian response. It could be that *caritas* plays a very important role in making sense of this paradoxical discussion, even if a conclusive, tidy answer is not offered. Perhaps *caritas* is bigger than the limits of the applications in the dissertation, bigger than the catalyst and impetus to respond to Heidegger. I cannot answer those questions adequately, but I do maintain that regardless of the potential conclusions to those inquiries or observations, *caritas* plays a paramount role in the question of meaningfulness: how the world can be meaningful even in the face of catastrophe. Perhaps the answer is partly in the question *caritas* prompts, more than the question it answers.

Stonebridge argues that Arendt believed that "it was *because* the world was out of joint that things could be different, that things might, indeed they must, begin again."⁴⁴⁹ I argue that the *caritas* of her dissertation speaks to the challenge of how to bridge the reality of what is, to the possibility, the imagination, of what could be. It offers insight into thinking, natality, and action,

⁴⁴⁸Kohn, "Preface," *The Jewish Writings*, xiii. A citation after the comma in the last sentence of the referenced passage on page xxx reads: "H. Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin: Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1929), 68 n.2: 'Wie kann ich al sein von Gott Ergriffener und von der Welt Abgetrennter dennoch in der Welt leben?' Arendt once remarked in conversation that if Heidegger were ever to write a theology the word 'being' would not appear in it."

⁴⁴⁹ Stonebridge, *We Are Free to Change the World*, 27.

to “the realm in which novelty, for better or worse, can arise, and in which the conditions of human freedom and unfreedom are cast.”⁴⁵⁰ Stonebridge goes so far as to argue that Arendt knew “you cannot simply will this evil off the face of the earth with a few good ideas, let alone with the old ones that allowed it to flourish in the first place. You have to start anew.”⁴⁵¹ To start anew requires thinking.

The final chapter of Part Two discusses how thinking and meaningful action are intimately related, and then how thinking and judgment are manifested not simply in theory, but *in the world*. Chapter Three will be the final section of my dissertation before I move to how these explanations challenge zero-sum approaches to politics, policy, and power through specific discussions about rights, placelessness, and human dignity.

⁴⁵⁰ Kohn, “Introduction,” *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954 Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, xii-xiii.

⁴⁵¹ Stonebridge, *We Are Free to Change the World*, 29.

Chapter Three: the private and the political—thinking, judgment, and meaningful action

My suggestion is that the definition of *caritas* Arendt uses in her dissertation is akin to thinking; *caritas* is “dangerous” in the same way that thinking is, and it is also connected to freedom and individuality in the same way that it mimics thinking’s need for solitude.⁴⁵² The individual nature of thinking is strikingly comparable to the solitude—the isolation—required to access *caritas*. I am proposing that *caritas* requires, demands even, a re-entry into the world of neighbors. Solitude is necessary for thinking, and this thinking both encompasses and assumes critical and creative thinking, but the individual must re-enter the world of neighbors “for the saving grace of companionship.”⁴⁵³ Stunting the return to the world, choosing instead to stay in isolation, would prevent the requisite step needed for *caritas* to manifest in the world. For kinship, to actualize grace, *caritas* requires a return to the community of worldly neighbors. This return, executing the choice to be *in* the world—despite knowing its messiness and contradictions—is also a necessary step to allow for the possibility of newness in the world. *Caritas* is not *caritas* if it remains in isolation. To punctuate this point, in her dissertation, Arendt explains that it is the duty of the Christian “to bring one’s neighbor to this explicitness of his own being.”⁴⁵⁴ She cites Augustine from *Confessions* X, 43, 70 and *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* VIII, 2 when she explains that for Augustine, “this is why a flight [A:033361] into solitude is sinful.”⁴⁵⁵ She continues, failing to reenter the world and extend kinship to the

⁴⁵² Hannah Arendt, *The Last Interview and Other Conversations*, “Hannah Arendt: The Last Interview,” interview by Roger Errera, *Un Certain Regard*, ORTF TV, France, October 1973, trans. by Andrew Brown (Melville House Publishing, 2013), 123.

⁴⁵³ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 476.

⁴⁵⁴ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 108.

⁴⁵⁵ Arendt, 108. The footnote (40) reads: *Confessions* X, 43, 70. Again, please see that the bracketed information indicates the methodology for designating Arendt’s revisions and Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Scott’s editing system.

neighbor “robs the other of the opportunity to change.”⁴⁵⁶ While this passage explicitly discusses Christianity and the failings of reentry to the world from a Christian perspective, the effects can be more broadly applied, particularly when comparing the relational aspect of the individual to the community in Arendt’s political writings. That *caritas* must be allowed to manifest *in* the world, that it cannot be preserved by avoiding the city of man, mimics the importance Arendt places on recognizing the social characteristics and innate interdependence of humankind *in* the world. It mimics the need for both the individual and the community to be recognized. So, preventing the re-entry, diminishing the power of *choosing* to re-enter, restricts, negates, and suffocates natality; staying in solitude does not preserve love, it robs it of its inherent potential for possibility. The world of neighbors is the world of relations.

Arendt very distinctly differentiates between the solitude required for thinking, and the loneliness experienced when I am “neither together with myself nor in the company of others but concerned with the things of the world.”⁴⁵⁷ Loneliness is a disconnection from meaning, purposefulness, and sense of place in the world; solitude is the literal and figurative space needed for independent, free-thinking with regard to the world. Solitude is necessary to understand and, to a certain extent, claim our place in the world. The isolation of loneliness and the “isolation” required for solitude are entirely different and should not be conflated with one another. Loneliness, as she discusses in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, is “the common ground

⁴⁵⁶ Arendt, 108. The footnote (41) reads: *Homilies on the first Epistle of John* VIII, 2: “Did he mean to say we should hide from people’s eyes whatever good things we do, and fear to have them seen? If you fear observers, you will have no imitators; hence, you ought to be seen.” See also VIII, 9: “For if you hide it from people’s eyes, you also hide it from their imitation. In so doing you withdraw the praise from God.”

⁴⁵⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 99.

for terror.”⁴⁵⁸ She explains that “loneliness is not solitude. Solitude requires being alone whereas loneliness shows itself most sharply in company with others.”⁴⁵⁹ In fact, she argues that “isolated men are powerless by definition.”⁴⁶⁰ Arguing for the importance of understanding the conceptual difference of loneliness in the political sphere versus isolation in the private sphere, she states:

What we call isolation in the political sphere, is called loneliness in the sphere of social intercourse. Isolation and loneliness are not the same. I can be isolated—that is in a situation in which I cannot act, because there is nobody who will act with me—without being lonely; and I can be lonely—that is in a situation in which I as a person feel myself deserted by all human companionship without being isolated. Isolation is that impasse into which men are driven when the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed. Yet isolation, though destructive of power and the capacity for action, not only leaves intact but is required for all so-called productive activities of men.⁴⁶¹

The solitude needed to think—the removal from the world in order to think creatively, imaginatively, independently, and freely—mimics the removal of the individual required in *caritas*. It “is required for all so-called productive activities of men.” And, the re-entry into the world for the neighbor mimics the re-engagement of action after thinking. The re-entry of *caritas*, to be *with* the neighbor, to be *in* the world, illustrates the point of departure between the solitude necessary for freedom, for action, and for natality, and the alienation of isolation that is loneliness. The alienation of disconnection is the absence of possibility; this absence of possibility is characteristic to the despair required for totalitarianism. Totalitarianism preys on and exploits the “stuckness” of alienation and non-belonging. Navigating the world of *cupiditas* (and rejecting the mandate to love the neighbor as a means to an end) is curiously similar to

⁴⁵⁸ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 475.

⁴⁵⁹ Arendt, 476.

⁴⁶⁰ Arendt, 474.

⁴⁶¹ Arendt, 474.

the solitude necessary for critical thinking in the world of normative, habitual influences. Remaining in the theoretical, denying the reality of the world, and refusing to engage with an enlarged mentality carries real dangers to meaningful action in the same way staying removed from the world carries dangers to the *caritas* that allows for neighborly love. In this chapter, I will contrast and compare these characteristics, discuss how Arendt differentiates between thinking and action (specifically focusing on passages within *Responsibility and Judgment*), and identify the qualities and conditions pertaining to thinking and action that allow for judgment. In doing so, I will show how the private and political spheres depend on these dynamics for functionality and meaningfulness, a topic addressed in Part Three.

To start this discussion, I will begin by evaluating specific references to the comparisons and contrasts between the solitude necessary for thinking and the removal from the world required to access *caritas*. In the Prologue to *Responsibility and Judgment*, Arendt states:

For thinking itself, as distinct from other human activities, not only as an activity that is invisible—that does not manifest itself outwardly—but also and in this respect perhaps uniquely, has no *urge* to appear or even a very restricted impulse to communicate to others. Since Plato, thinking has been defined as a soundless dialogue between me and myself; it is the only way in which I can keep myself company and be content with it.⁴⁶²

In her dissertation, she explains that through the return, solitude, and remembrance, *caritas* allows for the comprehension of neighborly love and understanding of the self:

This return through recapturing his own being, and the isolation achieved in it, is the sole source of neighborly love. The prerequisite of the right comprehension of my neighbor is the right comprehension of myself. It is only where I have made sure of the truth of my own being that I can love my neighbor in his true being, which is in his createdness.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶² Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, “Prologue” ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 8-9.

⁴⁶³ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*,. 95.

And again, she continues in the Prologue to *Responsibility and Judgment*:

Philosophy is a solitary business, and it seems only natural that the need for it arises in times of transition when men no longer rely on the stability of the world and their role in it, and when the questions concerning the general conditions of human life, which as such are properly coeval with the appearance of man on earth, gain an uncommon poignancy. Hegel may have been right: "The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk."⁴⁶⁴

In these passages, and in the following references, Arendt discusses the importance of removing oneself from worldly interactions in order to think—with clarity, creativity, imagination, and freedom. This removal, this solitude, mimics the same removal she discusses in *Love and Saint Augustine* when she explains Augustinian *caritas* as a mode, method, and entity regarding how to love—and how to be—in *the world* but not *of* it. To review, she argues that this denial of the self, through isolation, is not a denial of the neighbor or an annihilation of the neighbor's importance. It is a denial which illuminates the real being of the self; a denial required to appreciate the real being of the neighbor. She states: "This denial corresponds to 'willing that you may be' and 'carrying off to God.' I deny the other person so as to break through to his real being, just as in searching for myself I deny myself."⁴⁶⁵ She states that

Yet the denial of the other person is not the end of the process of searching back; it is the beginning. The denial is intended to provide the impetus for self-denial. Moreover, the neighbor's original being is pointed out in the denial that is a comprehension of his being. Thus, love of neighbor is the concrete realization of referring back beyond the world, and in so doing it thrusts the other out of the world that he considers the point of his being.⁴⁶⁶

A critical point to highlight in this passage is the claim that the denial of the other person is not the end, but the beginning. She finishes this passage with: "Thus the neighbor's relevance as a neighbor (which was previously described as a discrepancy) is overcome and the individual is

⁴⁶⁴ Arendt, "Prologue," *Responsibility and Judgment*, 9.

⁴⁶⁵ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 96.

⁴⁶⁶ Arendt, 96.

left in isolation.”⁴⁶⁷ There are two more points to specifically compare: the self-denial of *caritas* that isolates the individual (in order to grasp the importance of the neighbor) with the solitude necessary for thinking; and, secondly, the roles of willing and choosing in both *caritas* and thinking as they then affect and inform judgment.

The self-denial of *caritas* that isolates the individual manifests as the removal necessary for understanding the self, i.e., in its createdness; this removal arms the individual, upon re-entering the world, with the knowledge of how to love the neighbor in *their* createdness. Again, the denial is not the “end of the process of searching back,” but rather, the beginning. The similarities between the removal from the world necessary for *caritas* and the solitude necessary for thinking are extraordinary. In both situations, the individual must choose—must actively participate—in the removal and the reentry. This choosing connects the idea of grace to the will. Choosing, as opposed to a happenstance, experience, or circumstance, involves the will. It is a choice to deny the self, not a foregone conclusion or an epiphany resulting from chance experiences. It is the will *to choose* to sacrifice. In choosing self-denial through love, the individual accesses grace. In the dissertation, Arendt states: “This self-denial can only be achieved in *caritas*, because nothing else provides a reason for the sacrifice. Only through love can man renounce his own will, and this renunciation born of love is the prerequisite for choosing grace.”⁴⁶⁸ This is all the more telling when considering this sentiment: failing to re-enter the community of the world is not the correct choice. “This is why a flight into solitude is

⁴⁶⁷ Arendt, 97.

⁴⁶⁸ Arendt, 91.

sinful.⁴⁶⁹ It robs the other of the opportunity to change. Thus, is estrangement from the world, divine grace gives a new meaning to human togetherness—defense against the world.”⁴⁷⁰ (Again, the negative solitude here—avoiding the reentry into the world of neighbors—should not be confused with the temporary solitude necessary for thinking. The sinful solitude is a choice that avoids returning to the world.) I am arguing that “human togetherness” as a defense against the world is not a concept that is limited to spiritual or religious doctrines for Arendt. There is a deeply pragmatic impact to this idea of community and of a community of plurality in her later works; I am again arguing that her understanding of Augustinian *caritas* in part, informs these ideas. In the dissertation, she states:

The comprehension and choice of divine grace happens in *caritas*. Corresponding to the necessity of referring back, *caritas* is also defined as “loving back” (*redamare*). Only in this return of love can man refer back so as to come to the truth of his existence (“uplifted by truth, weighed down by habit”).⁴⁷¹

There is a component of grace that is critical to understanding the individual’s relationship—and responsibility—to community and human togetherness. Grace helps the individual understand their place in the community by referring back to the “truth” of the individual’s existence and, therefore, grace aids the individual’s understanding of the “truth” of the neighbor’s existence. Of course, this characteristic of grace shapes the perspective and dynamics of the explanation of community and kinship in her dissertation, without a doubt, as a world of creatures originating from a source (the Creator); but there is a “non-religious” grace-like concept to consider in the role of thinking, solitude, and the capacity for judgment in a community, or common, context, too. With both definitions, there is a distinction between the

⁴⁶⁹ Arendt, 108. This sentence is cited in the text in footnote 40, referencing *Confessions* X, 43, 70.

⁴⁷⁰ Arendt, 108.

⁴⁷¹ Arendt, 90.

private and the political, and there is also an explanation of the interplay between the two. For example, discussing a Kantian explanation of the common, which I argue informs her own explanation, Arendt writes: “Common sense for Kant did not mean a sense common to all of us, but strictly that sense which fits us into a community with others, makes us members of it and enables us to communicate things given by our five private senses.”⁴⁷² In fact, she argues in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that

Even the experience of the materially and sensually given world depends upon my being in contact with other men, upon our common sense which regulates and controls all other senses and without which each of us would be enclosed in his own particularity of sense data which in themselves are unreliable and treacherous.⁴⁷³

Being in contact with other people helps us, at a very primal level, to process sensory data and understand what is reliable and what is subject to distortion. At the same time, the importance of the individual is paramount; again, from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,

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, representing nothing but his own absolutely unique individuality which, deprived of expression within and action upon a common world, loses all significance.⁴⁷⁴

Human togetherness requires that the individual have the capacity to express and act “upon a common world.” Without the individual, the understanding of the neighbor cannot manifest; without the common world and the membership of the individual in a community, the individual becomes a human being in general. The return to the community is necessary for the individual; without that return, without the re-entry to the common world, the individual is left without the capacity for action (and without the understanding of the self that comes through

⁴⁷² Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, 139.

⁴⁷³ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 475-476.

⁴⁷⁴ Arendt, 302.

kinship). She states, “only because we have common sense, that is only because not one man, but men in the plural inhabit the earth can we trust our immediate sensual experience.”⁴⁷⁵ The plurality of the common world—and the individual’s inclusion in that world—is necessary to make the world and the individual “whole.” Again, from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*:

For the confirmation of my identity I depend entirely upon other people; and it is the great saving grace of companionship for solitary men that it makes them “whole” again; saves them from the dialogue of thought in which one remains always equivocal, restores the identity which makes them speak with the single voice of one unexchangeable person.⁴⁷⁶

Identity is confirmed through other people—the saving grace of companionship. If one is only in dialogue with one’s self, the individual’s identity as a community member is not whole.

Conversely, if one is incapable of having an internal dialogue, one is compromised in the ability to think. So, she reminds us that the solitude required to access *caritas* and to think is not the end goal; it is only the beginning. The individual must be able to access this solitude and then re-enter the world, or the community, many times over. This requires deliberate *choosing*. In choosing, there is an innate recognition of the will, the human capacity for freedom of thought, and the dynamic of plurality within community. This choosing enables the individual’s capacity—and the community’s—for action and for judgment. Of course, this is not without complication. She points out, when discussing the problematic nature of the question of collective responsibility while recognizing that political philosophy has yet to offer a satisfactory answer to this perplexity, that “we live our lives not by ourselves but among our fellow men, and that the faculty of action, which, after all, is the political faculty par excellence, can be actualized only in one of the many and manifold forms of human community.”⁴⁷⁷ There is a

⁴⁷⁵ Arendt, 476.

⁴⁷⁶ Arendt, 476.

⁴⁷⁷ Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, 158.

need, then, to preserve the individual and the individual's autonomy through freedom of thought, which is accessed through solitude, which acknowledges and strengthens the community through plurality, enabling action in the political sphere. This also, as will be discussed in both this chapter and the final chapter of my dissertation, enables the capacity for judgment. While not linear nor restricted by a particular process or series of reactions, these components are intimately related; they are interconnected and dependent upon one another. Arendt examines these connections explicitly in many of her texts, but I am going to focus particularly on her observations in *Responsibility and Judgment* and again in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The echo and import of *caritas* is evident in the following passages and citations.

She begins "Thinking and Moral Considerations" in *Responsibility and Judgment* by revisiting her reporting of the Eichmann trial and her famous statement, "the banality of evil." She explains that "the only specific characteristic one could detect" in Eichmann's "past as well as in his behavior during the trial and the preceding police examination was something entirely negative: it was not stupidity but a curious, quite authentic inability to think."⁴⁷⁸ In another famously provocative series of statements, Arendt declares that

There are no dangerous thoughts; thinking itself is dangerous, but nihilism is not its product. Nihilism is but the other side of conventionalism; its creed consists of negations of the current, so-called positive values to which it remains bound. All critical examinations must go through a stage of at least hypothetically negating accepted opinions and "values" by finding out their implications and tacit assumptions, and this sense nihilism may be seen as an ever-present danger of thinking.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁸ Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," *Responsibility and Judgment*, 159.

⁴⁷⁹ Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," 177.

Dispensing evaluations, observations, and warnings, she makes the case for the connection between thinking, acting, and discernment. She repeats the importance of the criteria necessary to allow for thinking. She states,

the paralysis of thought is twofold: it is inherent in the *stop* and think, the interruption of all other activities, and it may have a paralyzing effect when you come out it, no longer sure of what had seemed to you beyond doubt while you were unthinkingly engaged in whatever you were doing.⁴⁸⁰

And then, she adds this next piece: “If your action consisted in applying general rules of conduct to particular cases as they arise in ordinary life, then you will find yourself paralyzed because no such rules can withstand the wind of thought.”⁴⁸¹ In this case, she argues that the aforementioned consequences of potential nihilism accompany the danger of “being taught how to think without being taught a doctrine,” and this allows for the mistake of changing “the nonresults of the Socratic thinking examination into negative results; if we cannot define what piety is, let us be impious—which is pretty much the opposite of what Socrates had hoped to achieve by talking about piety”⁴⁸² (she points to Alcibiades and Critias as examples of this failure⁴⁸³). She elaborates:

But this danger does not arise out of the Socratic conviction that an unexamined life is not worth living but, on the contrary, out of the desire to find results which would make further thinking unnecessary. Thinking is equally dangerous to all creeds and, by itself, does not bring forth any new creed.⁴⁸⁴

Arendt cautions against the often-ignored propensity of nonthinking that allows for the easy substitution of one set of ideological precepts for another. As noted earlier, those who hold fast

⁴⁸⁰ Arendt, 176.

⁴⁸¹ Arendt, 176.

⁴⁸² Arendt, 176.

⁴⁸³ Arendt, 176-178.

⁴⁸⁴ Arendt, 177-178.

to one creed are often the first to abandon it to follow a new one: "The faster men held to the old code, the more eager will they be to assimilate themselves to the new one; the ease with which such reversals can take place under certain circumstances suggest indeed that everybody is asleep when they occur."⁴⁸⁵ Thinking provokes the sleeping nonthinkers to awaken, just as the Gadfly stung the Athenians to life. If thinking is dangerous, Arendt reminds us, not thinking is more so because "every thought actually undermines whatever there is of rigid rules, general convictions, et cetera."⁴⁸⁶ She continues, "Everything which happens in thinking is subject to a critical examination of whatever there is."⁴⁸⁷ "Examining whatever there is" does not lead to comfort, nor consensus, nor a tidy solution. To avoid it, however, means to rob people of part of what it means to be human, autonomous, free, imaginative, and political. It robs people of the faculty of judgment and the capacity for meaningful action. Again, from "Thinking and Moral Considerations"

However, nonthinking, which seems so recommendable a state for political and moral affairs, also has its dangers. By shielding people against the dangers of examination, it teaches them to hold fast to whatever the prescribed rules of conduct may be at a given time in a given society. What people then get used to is not so much the content of the rules, a close examination of which would always lead them into perplexity, as the possession of rules under which to subsume particulars. In other words, they get used to never making up their minds.⁴⁸⁸

In "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship," Arendt offers an analysis of different groups of people and their responses to the Nazi regime. She separates the groups into those who followed the rules and those who did not. She reports that those who did not participate, who did not "obey," and who did not "support" the Hitler regime were different from those who did

⁴⁸⁵ Arendt, 178.

⁴⁸⁶ Arendt, "The Last Interview," 123.

⁴⁸⁷ Arendt, 123.

⁴⁸⁸ Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," 178.

in one critical way: they *thought* for themselves. She suggests that those who conducted internal, silent conversations with themselves, the dialogues that determined “to what extent they would still be able to live in peace with themselves after having committed certain deeds,” were the individuals who did not participate. “To put it crudely,” Arendt writes, “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.”⁴⁸⁹ She continues:

The precondition for this kind of judging is not a highly developed intelligence or sophistication in moral matters, but rather the disposition to live together explicitly with oneself, to have intercourse with oneself, that is to be engaged in that silent dialogue between me and myself which, since Socrates and Plato, we usually call thinking.⁴⁹⁰

Those who have the “disposition to live together explicitly with oneself” are the ones choosing to engage in the difficult work of thinking. Referring to Socrates frequently, Arendt argues that engaging with oneself—which includes conversing with oneself, accepting the struggle to consider challenging ideas, choosing to grapple with the reasons why certain assumptions are used to establish particular rules, rejecting immediate acceptance of preconceived habits, reconsidering the impetus for certain social constructs and then starting all over when the answers are elusive—means, at the fundamental level, being o.k. with the two-in-one that is the self. This is the human condition, which she later argues not only creates a meaningful life but frames the faculty of the will and allows for the capacity for judgment. The silent dialogue, what “we usually call thinking,” is not specific to a gifted set of intellectuals, to the devoutly religious, or to the highly educated. “This kind of thinking,” she argues, “though at the root of

⁴⁸⁹ Hannah Arendt, “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship,” *Responsibility and Judgment*,” ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), p. 44.

⁴⁹⁰ Arendt, “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship,” 45.

all philosophical thought, is not technical and does not concern theoretical problems.”⁴⁹¹ In

fact, Arendt goes to lengths to point this out that the capacity to think is a *human* capacity not a characteristic present in the few:

This kind of thinking, though at the root of all philosophical thought, is not technical and does not concern theoretical problems. The dividing line between those who want to think and therefore have to judge by themselves, and those who do not, strikes across all social and cultural or educational differences. In this respect, the total moral collapse of respectable society during the Hitler regime may teach us that under such circumstances those who cherish values and hold fast to moral norms and standards are not reliable: we now know that moral norms and standards can be changed overnight, and that all that will be left is the mere habit of holding fast to something.⁴⁹²

Connecting the capacity to think with the ability to judge, she challenges our propensity to want to believe that individuals and societies with commitments to strong moral standards, such as those who adhered to “Thou shall not kill,” are less likely to do harm or more likely to reject those who do harm. She reflects again on the fact that traditionally accepted structural guardrails failed to protect against the “moral collapse of respectable society” during World War II. She proposes, instead, that it would be prudent to consider a different indicator to understand what resists the “moral collapse.” She argues that people who think for themselves possess the ability to oppose harm and are more likely to resist totalitarianism:

Much more reliable will be the doubters and skeptics, not because skepticism is good or doubting wholesome, but because they are used to examine things and to make up their own minds. Best of all will be those who know only one thing for certain: that whatever else happens, as long as we live we shall have to live together with ourselves.⁴⁹³

At the end of “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” she admits that thinking

remains a marginal affair for society at large except in emergencies. For thinking as such does society little good, much less than the thirst for knowledge in which it is used as an instrument for other purposes. It does not create values, it will not find out, once and for all, what ‘the good’ is, and it does not confirm but rather dissolves accepted rules of conduct.

⁴⁹¹ Arendt, “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship,” 45.

⁴⁹² Arendt, 45.

⁴⁹³ Arendt, 45.

But this is not to minimize its value, nor its contributions. She goes on to suggest, while referencing Yeats and his poem “The Second Coming,” that it is often in moments of crisis in which we most need thinking; it is at these moments we understand thinking’s importance to the private and its impact to the political. It is in these “rare moments,” when “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,”⁴⁹⁴ that thinking’s “political and moral significance comes out.”⁴⁹⁵ She observes that

At these moments, thinking ceases to be a marginal affair in political matters. When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action.⁴⁹⁶

I will argue in Part Three that not only do large-scale political situations call for thinking, situations at local levels also rely on thinking for meaningful action, discernment, and judgment. I will argue that thinking informs action, frames judgment, and preserves plurality in both small and large communities, in political spaces involving neighbors. The importance of thinking in the political sphere scales up and down.

The purging element in thinking, Socrates’ midwifery, that brings out the implication of unexamined opinions and thereby destroys them—values, doctrines, theories, and even convictions—is political by implication. For this destruction has a liberating effect on another human faculty, the faculty of judgment, which one may call, with some justification, the most political of man’s mental abilities. It is the faculty to judge particulars without subsuming them under those general rules which can be taught and learned until they grow into habits that can be replaced by other habits and rules.⁴⁹⁷

Kant is both anticipated and referenced: thinking requires stopping, but it also involves returning to the community with the enlarged mentality. If the “stopping to think” does not

⁴⁹⁴ Arendt, 45. Parts of the first stanza of William Butler Yeats’s poem, “The Second Coming” is referenced in this passage.

⁴⁹⁵ Arendt, 45

⁴⁹⁶ Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 188.

⁴⁹⁷ Arendt, 188-9.

involve the eventual return to the world, as was previously addressed, both the individual and the human community are compromised. In just a moment, this will be explored in depth, particularly as it relates to Kant and Arendt's interpretation of the particular and the universal. First, however, I will focus on why and how her interpretation of Kant is important when considering how *caritas* influenced her political ideas of plurality, freedom, and judgment.

She argues that "there are no general rules, as in legal proceedings, which could be applied and which would be valid for all. But this, I am afraid, will be the bane of all moral judgments which are not supported by or derived from religious commands."⁴⁹⁸ But, she does propose that "The only activity that seems to correspond to these secular moral propositions and to validate them is the activity of thinking, which in its most general, entirely nonspecialized sense can be defined with Plato as the silent dialogue between me and myself."⁴⁹⁹ To think is the only activity that is capable of responding to secular moral propositions; I argue that, in part, this is because of the similarity of thinking to that of *caritas*. Not only does *caritas* demand a period of removal and solitude, as does thinking, but it bridges discernment between the individual and the community by validating the neighbor, and therefore, the community of neighbors. In part, it mimics the movement between thinking, action, and judgment by catalyzing the removal that allows for the return, facilitating the enlarged mentality and subsequent possibility of evaluating action and judgment. She argues:

Kant assumed that no such problem existed for Truth and Right, since he believed that just as human reason in its theoretical capacity knows truth by itself, without any help from another

⁴⁹⁸ Hannah Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 156-7.

⁴⁹⁹ Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," 157.

mental faculty, the same reason in its practical capacity knows 'the moral law within me.' He defined judgment as the faculty which always comes into play when we are confronted with particulars; judgment decides about the relation between a particular instance and the general, be the general a rule or a standard or an ideal or some other kind of measurement.⁵⁰⁰

She continues by discussing the relationship between judgment and common sense. She says that "common sense, by virtue of its imaginative capacity, can have present in itself all those who actually are absent."⁵⁰¹ Kant, she states, "claims assent from others because in judging he has already taken them into account and hence hopes that his judgments will carry a certain general, though perhaps not universal, validity."⁵⁰² This is what she argues Kant means by the term, "enlarged mentality."⁵⁰³ She decidedly acknowledges that Kant is referring to aesthetic and not moral judgment, but she posits:

From our discussion today about Kant, I hope it became clearer why I raised, by way of Cicero and Meister Eckhart, the question of whom we wish to be together with. I tried to show that our decisions about right and wrong will depend upon our choice of company, of those with whom we wish to spend our lives. And again, this company is chosen by thinking in examples, in examples of persons dead or alive, real or fictitious, and in examples of incidents, past or present.⁵⁰⁴

The choice of company—the community with whom we choose to spend our lives—influences, often dictating and determining, our decisions about right and wrong; the shared examples, to which this community can refer to and reference, form our capacity to accept, challenge, debate, and understand our judgments and the reasons behind those beliefs and judgments. Of course, one key complication with this postulate is how to address the ways in which the community evolves, compresses, and expands.

⁵⁰⁰ Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 137.

⁵⁰¹ Arendt, 140.

⁵⁰² Arendt, 140.

⁵⁰³ Arendt, 140. Arendt explains that for Kant, matters regarding the judgment of taste are different from matters of moral action, of course, but she concentrates the discussion on the importance of examples of particulars in understanding judgment of what is right and wrong.

⁵⁰⁴ Arendt, 146.

There is agency in this community of company as described above because we can, to a certain extent, reject, invite, share, or exclude the ideas of those with whom we want and do not want to share the world. Of course, community can be defined several different ways, one being the group into which an individual is born, a historical community of which the individual did not necessarily agree to become part of (i.e., the community of humans) and the subsequent smaller categories such as geographic areas, the locale and people by whom an individual was raised, and so forth. Arendt suggests that regardless of those unnegotiated circumstances, entry into the worldly community suggests a disruption, an introduction of newness. With newness rests the potential for possibility and unpredictability, imagination and invention—characteristics inherent to the human condition. Of course, community is also the company of the group we choose: our friends, our political sphere, our geographic locations, etc. I would like to take a moment to break this discussion down into several parts, defining and discussing the following concepts: company, community, choice, and historicity of humanity. By using *caritas* as a means to define these concepts, it becomes clear that it is possible to scale them to size, i.e., *caritas* allows these relational explanations to describe the company of one, the community of two, and the entirety of the world, with its history of stories and unfolding actions of both individuals and groups.

As they pertain to understanding the relationships between the private, the political, thinking, and judgment, the definitions of the terms “communities” and “company” are critical. Those with whom we belong and/or associate, those with whom we do not belong and do not

associate, and those with whom we choose or have no choice in being associated play a pivotal role in these spheres. The “examples of persons dead or alive, real or fictitious, and in examples of incidents, past or present” belong to communities, to a certain extent, through their history. In one sense, we are born into a set of examples—we inherit a history of examples. To this point, contrast the above comments about the “company ... with whom we wish to spend our lives” with the definition of community in the dissertation: “It is a pre-existing community into which the individual comes by birth. . . . Based on kinship, the human community is thereby a society from and with the dead; in other words this community is historical.”⁵⁰⁵ The human individual, by nature of being human, is part of the human condition. The individual arrives in the world as part of a historical community. Again, from the dissertation:

Mutual love lacks the element of choice; we cannot choose our “beloved.” Since the neighbor is in our same situation, he is already there before any choices can be made. Love extends to all people in the *civitas Dei*, just as interdependence extended equally to all in the *civitas terrena*. This love makes human relations definite and explicit..⁵⁰⁶

At one point, then, we are born into a pre-existing world. We do not get to “choose” the beloved because the neighbor was there before a choice could be made as to who we pick to recognize or “be” our neighbor. In the city of God, love extends to all people, just as “interdependence” extends equally to all in the earthy city. The capacity for agency within the individual, then, does not begin with choosing our neighbor; rather, it manifests as the choice to validate the same source of love: “The same source is loved in each individual human being. No individual means anything in comparison with this identical source.”⁵⁰⁷ This means that

⁵⁰⁵ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 103.

⁵⁰⁶ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 110-111.

⁵⁰⁷ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 96-97.

“[t]he Christian can thus love all people because each one is only an occasion, and that occasion can be everyone. Love proves its strength precisely in considering even the enemy and even the sinner [A:033345] as mere occasions for love.”⁵⁰⁸ Of course, this has implications for understanding the relationship and comparisons to grace, too. Insofar as grace is not chosen, but rather it is accessed *by* (and through) the conditions created by choosing *caritas*. Again, she discusses the isolation necessary to understand the relationship between the individual and the neighbor, the individual and the community:

Coming from the thought of one’s own danger that is experienced in conscience in God’s presence, that is, in absolute isolation, this love (*diligere invicem*) also thrusts the other person into absolute isolation. Thus, love does not turn to humankind but the individual, albeit every individual. In the community of the new society the human race dissolves into its many individuals. Hence, the human race as such is not in danger, but every individual is.⁵⁰⁹

She continues, and ends Part II by reiterating Augustine’s statement from *Homilies on the First Epistle John IX, 10*, “It is not really the neighbor who is loved in this love of neighbor—it is love itself. Thus the neighbor’s relevance as a neighbor which was previously described as a discrepancy) is overcome and the individual is left in isolation.”⁵¹⁰ *Caritas* is a choice the individual makes to that community through a remembrance and a return (in the religious sense, and specifically speaking, of course, a Christian sense, vis-à-vis the Creator) and to the neighbor *in the world*. The neighbor, then, becomes recognized as an individual but also as a fellow creature with whom the individual shares the pull of *cupiditas* and the possibility of *caritas*: choosing how to be *in* the world and not *of* it, while loving the neighbor as oneself—as

⁵⁰⁸ Arendt, 97.

⁵⁰⁹ Arendt, 97.

⁵¹⁰ Arendt, 97. Footnote 13 from this section, cited from the first sentence, is as follows: “*Homilies on the First Epistle John IX, 10*: ‘Can one love his brother and not love Love? Of necessity he must love Love...In loving Love, he loves God.’ See also *The City of God XI, 27*.”

an occasion to love and validate the same source of love. *Remembering* and *returning* are choices the individual makes over and over again. Recognizing the individual and requiting love to the neighbor's created self (with all of the possibility, potential, and so forth that comes with being human) are choices the individual makes over and over again in *caritas*. Making the choice in isolation enables the individual to return to the community. Once again, from the dissertation, she states, "To put it differently, the decisive fact determining man as a conscious, remembering being is birth or "natality," that is, the fact that we have entered the world through birth."⁵¹¹ *Choosing to return love for love through love (redamare)*⁵¹²—to requite love for love's sake—is also a choice. Individuals have the potential to choose to remember. By the nature of being human, they have the capacity to choose the potential to return to the world to love their neighbor, and they have the potential *to think*—simply being in the world and by the sheer situation of being human—they have agency *to think*.

And, Arendt proposes that we have the opportunity to think about—and therefore critique, accept, reject, and question—the examples we inherit and share through our historical, geographical, cultural, and familial placement in the world. She argues "that our decisions about right and wrong will depend upon our choice of company, of those with whom we wish to spend our lives. And again, this company is chosen by thinking in examples, in examples of persons dead or alive, real or fictitious, and in examples of incidents, past or present."⁵¹³ Every

⁵¹¹ Arendt, 51.

⁵¹² Arendt, 90.

⁵¹³ Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 146.

new person offers an opportunity to think differently about the examples, to question why we choose to keep the company we do. Natality disrupts the historical by adding a new variable; it disrupts habit by preserving the possibility for new interpretations of old examples, the possibility of returning to and remembering old examples, the possibility of adding new examples, and the possibility of new comparisons between old examples and new examples. Supporting this disruption, *caritas* helps create new examples in three ways: by facilitating requited love via isolation and return, resulting in an enlarged mentality of the individual; by introducing new relationships through the recognition and awareness of new neighbors, thereby interrupting perception of status quo and actual habit; and, by offering new interpretations of understanding of the existing dynamics through the identification of “new” relational dynamics between existing neighbors, encouraging “re-thinking” of that which already is present (relationships, resource allotment, judgments, policies, etc.) These approaches hold great potential for new solutions and possibilities for the interactions, stories, and examples of situations requiring creative action.

And, also akin to *caritas*, the capacity for judgment—with discernment—requires thinking and remembering. Thinking, as has been established, requires isolation. Comparing the concept of judgment in her later works to the idea of requited love resulting from isolation, remembrance, contemplation, solitude, and the eventual return to the community of neighbors illuminates these connections. When Arendt discusses the capacity of judgment in the context of remembering and community in “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” she posits, “For us, it is decisive that, as we mentioned before, the faculty of remembering is what prevents

wrongdoings.”⁵¹⁴ Historical remembrance, coupled with the commitment to embracing an enlarged mentality, anchors thinking to the capacity for judgment. This thinking includes critical, free, creative, imaginative, and rational thinking. Remembering helps us to contextualize, via examples, how we intend to determine the “rightness” of the behaviors, judgments, and actions of those with whom we share our time. Remembering, coupled with an enlarged mentality, helps us also both to think anew and learn from previous situations and historical figures; when political plurality is valued, when diversity of thought is viewed as something necessary, as something that enhances and increases the quality of information required to make the most comprehensive, the most complete decisions possible, and this commitment is coupled with remembrance, critical thought is preserved. Preserving critical thought involves choosing freedom via the will. When identifying these relationships, between critical thought, freedom, and the will, it is valuable to recall that Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark assert that “Arendt’s idea of freedom flows from Augustine’s notion of *caritas*.”⁵¹⁵ They note that Arendt addresses this issue by referencing Augustine not only in the dissertation, but later in *The Life of the Mind*, in particular, in the section, *Willing*. There are two specific points of consideration, then, upon which to elaborate: how freedom is viewed from this Augustinian vantage point, through *caritas*, and how the will is defined in this context. Both are specifically Arendtian in their definitions.

First, Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark assert that in her essay, “What is Freedom” in

⁵¹⁴ Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 124.

⁵¹⁵ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 138.

Between Past and Future, “Arendt imports the Augustine of her dissertation and adapts him to a discussion of the exemplary power of natality and foundation in the world.”⁵¹⁶ Arendt’s approach to understanding Augustine’s definition of the will changes throughout her writings, and according to Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark Arendt’s definition recognizes that “free will, judgment, and human community are in constant danger. In *Willing*,” they argue, “Arendt’s Augustinian remedy for the divided will is still *caritas*.”⁵¹⁷ In Arendt’s section of *Willing* titled, “Augustine, the first philosopher of the Will” she grapples, among other things, with the problem of the conflicted will and Augustine’s response to the dilemma of explaining “good” and “evil” wills, and ultimately the “healing” of a divided will. This is the explanation she arrives at in *Willing*:

Augustine does not say here how these conflicts are resolved except that he admits that at a certain moment a goal is chosen “with the one entire will may be borne which before was divided into many.” But the healing of the will, and this is decisive, does not come about through divine grace. At the end of the *Confessions* he returns once more to the problem and relying on certain very different considerations that are explicitly argued in the treatise *On the Trinity* (which he was to spend fifteen years writing, from 400 to 416), he diagnoses the ultimate unifying will that eventually decides a man’s conduct as *Love*.⁵¹⁸

She continues:

Love is the “weight of the soul,” its law of gravitation, that which brings the soul’s moment to its rest. Somewhat influenced by Aristotelian physics, he holds that the end of all movement is rest, and now he understands the emotions—the motions of the soul—in analogy to the movements of the physical world.⁵¹⁹

And then concludes that this is what Augustine meant when, in *The Confessions*, he addresses the “weight is my love”⁵²⁰: “The soul’s gravity, the essence of who somebody is, and which as

⁵¹⁶ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 138.

⁵¹⁷ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 136.

⁵¹⁸ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, (Two/ *Willing*), 95.

⁵¹⁹ Arendt, 95.

⁵²⁰ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, (Two/ *Willing*), 95. The accompanying citation is: *Epistolae*, 157, 2, 9; 55, 10, 18; *Confessions*, bk. XIII, chap. ix.

such is inscrutable to human eyes, becomes manifest in this love.”⁵²¹ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark not only acknowledge that there is a shift in Arendt’s definition but they also recognize that Arendt’s later interpretations and explanations are probably going to be challenged by Augustinian scholars. They note that

while in the dissertation *caritas* was directly linked to divine grace bestowed on the creature who stand *coram Deo* (in the presence of God) and to the resulting love of neighbor, in *Willing* love functions as an internal binding force with no apparent external mediation. *Caritas* is the internal evidence of the efficacious will, but its origin and external manifestation remain unspecified.⁵²²

They explain that

Arendt remarks only, citing Augustine, that “compared to the will which nature has implanted in us, love is the stronger will.” Her exposition of Augustine in *Willing* is so narrowly focused on rescuing free will from external entanglements that the effect is not only to jettison grace and the providential order but the link to public life and judgment as well. In a statement that no doubt would surprise scholars of Augustine, Arendt insists that for the saint, “the healing of the Will, and this is decisive, does not come about through divine grace. . . . He diagnoses the ultimate unifying Will that eventually decides a man’s conduct as Love.”⁵²³

Putting aside the controversy of the interpretation, I want to again focus not on the merit of her analysis in the context of what religious scholars may have to say about it, but rather, on the way that she returns to a “*caritas*-infused” will and the influence and importance that her interpretation of Augustinian *caritas* has on challenging zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity in our contemporary, evolving landscape.

Again, from *Willing*, Arendt states:

The emphasis here is on the mind *thinking* of itself, and the love that stills the will’s turmoil and restlessness is not a love of tangible things but of the “footprints” “sensible things” have left on the inwardness of the mind. . . . In the case of Love, the lasting “footprint” that the mind has

⁵²¹ Arendt, 95.

⁵²² Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 137.

⁵²³ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 137. Also, this passage refers to Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, (*Two/Willing*), (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 95.

transformed into an intelligible thing would be neither the one who loves nor his beloved but the third element, namely, Love itself, the love with which the lovers love each other.⁵²⁴

This perspective is, of course, reflected in her dissertation, too, when she cites the *Homilies on the First Epistle John* IX, 10 saying, “It is not really the neighbor who is love in this love of neighbor—it is love itself.”⁵²⁵ The threading of the earlier ideas of love as *caritas* in the dissertation to the later application of freedom exercised as discernment and judgment in the political sphere is once again evidenced in *Willing*. Again, connecting love to the will, she says

this Will of Augustine’s, which is not understood as a separate faculty but in its function within the mind as a whole, where all single faculties—memory, intellect, and will—are “mutually referred to each other,” finds its redemption in being transformed into Love. Love as a kind of enduring and conflictless Will has an obvious resemblance to Mill’s “enduring I,” which finally prevails in the will’s decisions. Augustine’s Love exerts its influence through the “weight”...it adds to the soul, thus arresting its fluctuations. ...What is saved, moreover, in this transformation of his earlier conception is the Will’s power of assertion and denial; there is no greater assertion of something or somebody than to love it, that is, to say: I will that you be—*Amo: Volu ut sis*.⁵²⁶

In endnote 16 to “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy” in *Responsibility and Judgment* (in which “Basic Moral Propositions” is referenced and cited), Arendt says:

At this point it becomes clear that neither reason nor desire are free, properly speaking. But the will is—as the faculty of choosing. Moreover, reason reveals what is common to all men qua men, desire is common to all living organisms. Only the will is entirely my own. By willing I decide. And this is the faculty of freedom.⁵²⁷

There are, again, comparisons to be made between choosing involved in *caritas* and Arendt’s Augustinian idea of willing that is inherent to the faculty of freedom. In a non-religious context, Arendt argues that “By willing I decide” and this willing “is the faculty of freedom.”⁵²⁸ In her

⁵²⁴ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind, (Two/ Willing)*, 103.

⁵²⁵ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 97.

⁵²⁶ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind, (Two/ Willing)*, 103. This specific citation is referenced in note 116: *On the Trinity*, bk. X, chap. xi, 18.

⁵²⁷ Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 114 and 281. Endnote 16 information is found on 281.

⁵²⁸ Arendt, 114 and 281. Endnote 16 information is found on 281.

dissertation, choosing to return *through* love is the way in which a person can “renounce” their own will. Through the self-denial involved in choosing *caritas*, the individual exercises the faculty of freedom. As Arendt writes, the Augustinian idea that “[o]nly through love can man renounce his own will, and this renunciation born of love is the prerequisite for choosing grace.”⁵²⁹ Arendt asserts, while again citing Augustine, that “this is why, compared to ‘the will which nature has implanted in us,’ love is ‘the stronger will.’”⁵³⁰ The solitude that accompanies (and is required by) the decision to choose *caritas* is intimately connected to the will.

I would like to once again emphasize the similarities between the focus on the will (and the choosing of love) in her dissertation and the will and its relationship to freedom in her later works. There are two more sections I want to highlight; both are from “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy” in *Responsibility and Judgment*; one is from the main text and one is specifically from endnote 21, referencing “Basic Moral Propositions.” In the main text, Arendt argues that, while she is “not interested in Nietzsche’s philosophy here,”⁵³¹ she wants to acknowledge “that he at least made the distinction between two factors which, in the traditional as well as in the modern discussions of the will, are left in confusion.”⁵³² She explains the problem is with parsing the specific meanings, isolating the problematic deductions within the discussions, and identifying the assumptions within the definitions:

...its commanding function and its function as arbiter, the will as called upon and then sitting in judgment over conflicting claims, whereby the assumption is that it knows how to tell right from wrong. Within the tradition, you find the whole question of free will usually discussed under the

⁵²⁹ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 91.

⁵³⁰ Arendt, 91. In footnote 7, the quotes “the will which nature has implanted in us and “the stronger will” are attributed to *The Trinity* XV, 21 and 41.

⁵³¹ Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 136.

⁵³² Arendt, 136.

title of *liberum arbitrium*, free arbitration, so that in the discussion of moral issues the emphasis has shifted entirely from the cause of action as such to the question of what goals to seek and which decisions to make.⁵³³

Historically, she argues, “the commanding function of the will (which raised such difficulties in Paul’s and Augustine’s minds) disappeared into the background, and its judging function (that it could clearly and freely distinguish between right and wrong) came into the foreground.”⁵³⁴ She argues that a key issue is deciding where the Christian will resides. Does man possess

an organ within himself that could distinguish between conflicting voices. This organ, according to the meaning of the Latin word *liberum arbitrium*, was characterized by the same disinterestedness which we demand for the judging function in legal proceedings, where judge or jury are disqualified when they have a stake in the matter under jurisdiction. The arbiter was originally the man who approached (*adbitere*) an occurrence as an unconcerned spectator, an eyewitness, and because of this unconcern was held to be capable of impartial judgment. Hence, the freedom of the will as *liberum arbitrium* means its impartiality—it does not mean this inexplicable source of spontaneity that prompts into action.⁵³⁵

This passage carries a footnote that refers to “Basic Moral Propositions.” In it, she reiterates:

What we have lost sight of entirely is the will as arbiter, that which chooses freely. Free choice meant free from desire. Where desire intervened, the choice was prejudged. The arbiter was originally the man who approached an occurrence as unconcerned spectator. He was an eyewitness, and such noncommitted. Because of his unconcern he was held to be capable of impartial judgment. Hence, freedom of will as *liberum arbitrium* never starts something new, it is always confronted with things as they are. It is the faculty of judgment.⁵³⁶

Viewing Arendt’s discussion about the will through the lens of *caritas*, as Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark do, continues to shed light on the evolution of her approach to explain the will’s role in judgment and freedom. Returning to their earlier statement

In *Willing*, Arendt’s Augustinian remedy for the divided will is still *caritas*. But while in the dissertation *caritas* was directly linked to divine grace bestowed on the creature who stands *coram Deo* (in the presence of God) and to the resulting love of neighbor, in *Willing* love functions as an internal binding force with no apparent external mediation.⁵³⁷

⁵³³ Arendt, 136.

⁵³⁴ Arendt, 136.

⁵³⁵ Arendt, 136-136 and 283. Endnote 21 is cited after this passage, and I reference the text from this footnote in the text.

⁵³⁶ Arendt, 283, (Endnote 21).

⁵³⁷ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 136-137.

Arendt's subsequent assertion is that Augustine would identify "the ultimate unifying Will that eventually decides a man's conduct as Love"⁵³⁸ (as Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark point out, as earlier mentioned, would certainly "surprise scholars of Augustine"⁵³⁹). They argue that "Arendt sets aside the issue of power in the sense of 'being able' to act in the world as a questionable phenomenon, fraught with problems of violence and 'sovereignty.' Instead, power is given its internal meaning as *caritas* generated within the mind-will-memory trinity."⁵⁴⁰ This is expanded upon when they argue "by freely willing *caritas*, the individual is bound by conscience not only to know the good but to perform the good by returning to the world constituted by men and acting accordingly in concert with others."⁵⁴¹ They assert that there is a thread that connects the dissertation's focus to her later works, not only by way of influence, but by way of understanding, too. Concluding that "without the dissertation not only is Arendt's last work a puzzling, constrained inquiry, but the possible connection to judgment remains elusive."⁵⁴² In their interpretation, "*Caritas* constitutes a decisive burst of purposive activity that ends the 'hot contention' of the will."⁵⁴³ My point of emphasis does not depart from this, but it highlights how qualities and conditions necessary to *caritas* mimic the qualities and conditions characteristic to critical thinking. The focus of my analysis turns, then, to how critical thinking manifests in practice and what that means for relating to others (and others' actions) in the real world. Subsequently, this connects the qualities and conditions of *caritas* to

⁵³⁸ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," 137. The citation Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark refer to is from *Life of the Mind, (Two/Willing)*, 95.

⁵³⁹ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," 137.

⁵⁴⁰ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 137.

⁵⁴¹ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 151.

⁵⁴² Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 137.

⁵⁴³ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 137.

the enlarged mentality needed for discernment and judgment. I am arguing that the implications extend to the critical thinking and freedom required to challenge zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity in an evolving landscape.

Therefore, I am claiming that the *caritas* of Arendt's dissertation is connected to her definition of thinking in her later works; I am arguing that the concept of *caritas*—in its characteristics, influences, and manifestations—parallels the characteristics, influences, and manifestations of thinking. Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark's proposition is that the *caritas* of Arendt's dissertation informs her later discourse about the struggle of navigating what being in the world means—a world of real people, real traditions, real beliefs, real resources, real identities, real rights, real oppressions, real discriminations, and of real neighbors. Being in the real world, for Arendt, meant navigating the world of judgment; and this capacity for discernment and judgment comes from thinking, the faculty of the choosing, the will, and the faculty of freedom. Without thinking, discerning judgment is impossible. Without a withdrawal from the public sphere, as is characteristic and necessary to *caritas*, thinking is impossible. Arendt, quoted in *The Last Interview*, says that freedom

...rests on the conviction that every human being is a thinking being and can reflect as well as I do and can therefore judge for himself, if he wants to. How I can make this arise in him, this I don't know. The only thing that can help us, I think, is to *réfléchir*. And to think always means to think critically. And to think critically is always to be hostile. Every thought actually undermines whatever there is of rigid rules, general convictions, et cetera. Everything which happens in thinking is subject to a critical examination of whatever there is. That is, there are no dangerous thoughts for the simple reason that thinking itself is such a dangerous enterprise. So how can I convince... I think, that thinking is even more dangerous? I don't deny that thinking is dangerous, but I would say not thinking, *ne pas réfléchir c'est plus dangereux encore* [not thinking is even more dangerous].⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁴ Arendt, *The Last Interview*, " 123.

For Arendt, freedom rests on the capacity and willingness to engage in thinking. The final and next section of my dissertation will discuss how Arendtian thinking, and the willingness to engage in thinking through the lens of *caritas*-informed approaches, determines the working definitions not only of the individual rights we claim for ourselves (and how we attach or reject those rights based on geography or citizenship) but those of our neighbors, the company of those with whom we choose to spend our lives, and the communities that make up the world. In this next section, I will illustrate the way that thinking, through the lens of Arendtian defined *caritas*, can help us determine how we can best judge and discern what we deem acceptable, unacceptable, worthy, unworthy, meaningful, and meaningless *in* the world.

Part Three

Chapter One: political realities: plurality and rights

I am arguing that Arendt's development of *caritas* in her dissertation offers us a roadmap to apply her early ideas to her later works. A *caritas*-informed approach allows us to evaluate issues that affect people *in the world* while adhering to a fidelity of what Kohn refers to as her commitment to acknowledging "political reality." Returning to the passage from the Introduction to *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954 Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* referenced earlier, it is worth repeating that Kohn argues that the "originality of her political thought stems from the fact that what was phenomenally revealed to her as new and without precedent was actually going on now, in the ordinary world that previously had been of little significance in her reflective life."⁵⁴⁵ It is critical to remember that from this point on she understood politics as the space "in which the conditions of human freedom and unfreedom are cast."⁵⁴⁶ Over the next three chapters, in addition to addressing particular definitions, I will illustrate how the ways in which we evaluate how we consider and value thinking will, in turn, inform how we improve political realities, deliberate, recognize or reject zero-sum policy approaches, and resist totalitarianism and the "political conditions and mental attitudes from which it rises."⁵⁴⁷ In part, this will include discussions about how we perceive and understand placelessness and belonging, isolation and loneliness.

The first chapter of the final part of my dissertation will focus on the impact that *caritas*-

⁵⁴⁵ Kohn, "Introduction," *Essays in Understanding 1930-1965 Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, xii-xiii.

⁵⁴⁶ Kohn, "Introduction," xii-xiii.

⁵⁴⁷ Kohn, "Introduction," xxvii.

informed approaches can have on understanding—and productively discussing —political realities such as rights and freedom, our capacity to judge, and our attribution of worth in a pluralistic society. Jerome Kohn’s insight will anchor the discussion regarding how we understand the importance of Arendtian stories as “thought-things,”⁵⁴⁸ i.e., as Kohn writes: “Stories are thought-things, and though we think in the past dimension of time (‘every thought is an after-thought’),* we judge in the present.”⁵⁴⁹ This, Kohn argues, helps to explain why “mentally remaining in the world of plural men and women with their multiplicity of meanings or strictly relative truths, is at least as important and perhaps more urgent than experiencing the meanings of past events.”⁵⁵⁰ I also refer to his commentary to justify the premise upon which my argument is made, that “Arendt’s rejection of the theory that rationally discovered truth corresponds to phenomenal reality”⁵⁵¹ as it relates to being *in the world* of political reality. I will defer to Kohn’s argument that, for Arendt, not only had Kant “crippled the mind’s pursuit of metaphysical truth ‘beyond’ the particular meanings of appearances, or, as she puts it, ‘the unity of thought and Being,’” but also because “she had seen the consistency as well as the correspondence theory of truth politically perverted in the totalitarian attempt to fabricate both reality and its truth at the price of human plurality.”⁵⁵² I will begin the first chapter by specifically highlighting how a *caritas*-informed approach refuses to accept the loss of plurality

⁵⁴⁸ Jerome Kohn, in the Introduction to Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), p. xxiv.

⁵⁴⁹ Kohn, “Introduction,” *The Promise of Politics*, xxiv. The asterisk refers to this citation by Kohn: “H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol .1 *Thinking* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 87.

⁵⁵⁰ Kohn, “Introduction,” *The Promise of Politics*, xxiv.

⁵⁵¹ Kohn, “Introduction,” xxi.

⁵⁵² Kohn, “Introduction,” xxi. This citation had a footnote stating: “*Essays in Understanding 1930-1954*, 168, 354. CF. ‘The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man,’ H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 270-77.”

as collateral damage for societal function and efficiency achieved through homogeneity. Kohn's deductions also drive my commitment to recognize Arendt's warning about our human tendency to want to understand politics through ideological terms. As Kohn states, Arendt

convinced us our predilection to view the realm of politics through ideologies—left, right, or center—as substitutes for inspiring principles of action is a means of abolishing our own spontaneity, apart from which action of any kind is incomprehensible, just as human ingenuity, by applying “pure” scientific knowledge to technology, already possesses the means to destroy the entire world.⁵⁵³

In this view, it is not a simple cliché to appeal to the idea of a paradigm shift; I argue that Arendt's definition of the political space—a space to be free and to be political, to share the potential for political power, to act in and with others in the public sphere—challenges our idea of how to be human in a pluralistic world in an elemental manner. Key to this point is that Arendt specifically did *not* assume that the plurality of humankind is a challenge to navigate; rather, it is the fundamental necessity for freedom and the dynamic that is both required and generated from the possibility of political space. A *caritas*-informed approach to operating in the political sphere, while acknowledging the necessity of plurality, directly challenges “our predilection to view the realm of politics through ideologies” and it offers an alternative and an interruption to zero-sum habits.

The second chapter will focus on belonging and placelessness. In particular, this section will discuss the political realities of statelessness, homelessness, and neighbor-identity in communities through a *caritas*-informed evaluation. In this chapter, I will discuss how *caritas*-informed approaches support responses that facilitate an understanding of the importance of

⁵⁵³Kohn, “Introduction,” xxiii.

plurality while preserving individual senses of identity and belonging. Again, not only does this bridge her earlier work to her later work, but it also illuminates why a *caritas*-informed approach is necessary to grasp the importance of thinking and the relevance of the neighbor when challenging zero-sum approaches to discussions about rights, placelessness, and human dignity from an Arendtian lens. This approach punctuates the importance of the neighbor while highlighting the enlarged mentality required for judgment when reading works such as *Introduction into Politics*. Through a *caritas*-informed lens, the emphasis on plurality as a necessary part of the enlarged mentality vis-à-vis the neighbor becomes clear in this passage:

no one can adequately grasp the objective world in its full reality all on his own because the world always shows and reveals itself to him from only one perspective, which corresponds to his standpoint in the world and is determined by it. If someone wants to see and experience the world as it “really” is, he can do so only by understanding it as something that is shared by many people, lies between them, separates and links them, showing itself differently to each and comprehensible only to the extent that many people can talk about it and exchange their opinions and perspectives with one another, over against one another.⁵⁵⁴

Stonebridge’s writings will anchor significant parts of the conversation in this chapter. Her writings contribute invaluable insight into the practical application of Arendt’s work in understanding contemporary issues related to rights, placelessness, and human dignity.

The third and final chapter will introduce possible alternatives to zero-sum habits and norms. This last chapter will discuss the political realities of rejecting totalitarian isolationism and nationalism through *caritas*-informed approaches to thinking and acting. While placing these concepts in the context of rights and freedoms in the political realm (worth attributed to the individual in a pluralistic society), I will discuss how evaluating norms and habits through the

⁵⁵⁴ Hannah Arendt, “Introduction *Into Politics*,” in *The Promise of Politics*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 128.

lens of her definition of *caritas* emphasizes the importance of the roles that natality as possibility, critical thinking, and revision of thought play in determining just action *in* the world. Peg Birmingham's work on human rights will drive the discussion in the last chapter.

As is true with so many pieces of Arendt's scholarship, and indicative of my approach to arguing how the *caritas* of her dissertation contains the origin points that inform her later views, defining the terms that she uses and then connecting the interrelationships and dependencies of the meaning of those terms is critical to understanding the causal, correlative, and connecting threads between concepts, activities, and spaces. To begin this final section, I will first define Arendt's use of the political, move to how political space needs, depends upon, and values plurality, and then discuss how the political space operates on the freedom that preserves the individual while challenging habit, and how *caritas*-informed understandings of these explanations reveals the role of the neighbor as a person worthy of rights that transcends citizenship.

In her essay, "Introduction *into* Politics," Arendt begins by asserting that "Politics is based on the fact of human plurality. God created *man*, but men are a human, earthly product, the product of human nature."⁵⁵⁵ Arendt identifies that one of the problems of understanding what politics is—the space for political discourse and freedom—is the commonly accepted meaning of the word "politics." She states that it is erroneously conflated and understood from the lens of the Christian idea of the family. In fact, she argues that this concept of the family originated

⁵⁵⁵ Arendt, "Introduction *Into* Politics," *The Promise of Politics*, 93.

in common beliefs that the family is understood as a response to political dynamics. She writes that the plural “men” is problematic from this perspective in that the individual is not granted political agency but requires a family, or kinship to shelter and fortress against “an inhospitable, alien world.”⁵⁵⁶ This observation requires continued examination. On the surface, it glaringly opposes my proposition that *caritas*, love of the neighbor in the world, and *caritas*-informed approaches not only influence Arendt’s later work, but also offer an alternative approach to zero-sum habits and methodologies. However, this is indicative of a characteristically Arendtian manner of identifying common assumptions and exposing their fallacies before continuing the conversation. I am arguing, here, that it is possible for her to identify that the definition of family and the problem with kinship are specific to this understanding of how we use the term politics; they are not antithetical to the *caritas* or love of neighbor. In fact, the particularities that she exposes in the application of these specific definitions amplify the importance of understanding the value of the neighbor, kinship as defined and understood in her dissertation, and the neighbor’s representation of plurality.

Arendt explains that the world is “organized in such a way that there is no place within it for the individual, and that means for anyone who is different.”⁵⁵⁷ When kinship is erroneously substituted for plurality, via the idea of the family, it “leads to the fundamental perversion of politics, because it abolishes the basic quality of plurality, or rather forfeits it by introducing the concept of kinship.”⁵⁵⁸ She continues to differentiate man from men in its conceptual and

⁵⁵⁶ Arendt, “Introduction *Into Politics*,” 94.

⁵⁵⁷ Arendt, 94.

⁵⁵⁸ Arendt, 94.

consequential meanings; she argues

There are two good reasons why philosophy has never found a place where politics can take shape. The first is the assumption that there is something political in man that belongs to his essence. This simply is not so; man is apolitical. Politics arises between men, and so quite outside of man. There is therefore no real political substance. Politics arises in what lies between men and is established as relationships. Hobbes understood this.⁵⁵⁹

She continues to explain (and to reference Hobbes) when she offers the assessment that if man is “created in the likeness of God’s solitariness” then it explains why the state of nature is understood as the “war of rebellion of each against all the others, who are hated because they exist without meaning—without meaning for man created in the likeness of God’s aloneness.”⁵⁶⁰ She then posits that history, as it is commonly construed, is the “West’s solution for escaping from the impossibility of politics.”⁵⁶¹ In doing so, “the multiplicity of men is melted into *one* human individual, which is then also called humanity” and this constitutes “the monstrous and inhuman aspect of history, which first accomplishes its full and brutal end in politics.”⁵⁶² Political, then, is not a description of an innate characteristic of being human; Arendt defines the political it as the space created “between men.” It is the space that makes us human because it is the place in which we act, exercise our freedom, and share the world publicly with others. It is the space in which possibility through plurality and the natality born in between non-static relationships, allows for newness, and creativity. She argues, and this is both her definition and the point of the essay, that “Freedom exists only in the unique intermediary space of politics”⁵⁶³ and that “The meaning of politics is freedom.”⁵⁶⁴ Politics, by

⁵⁵⁹ Arendt, 95.

⁵⁶⁰ Arendt, 95.

⁵⁶¹ Arendt, 95.

⁵⁶² Arendt, 95.

⁵⁶³ Arendt, 95.

⁵⁶⁴ Arendt, 108.

her definition, *is* a plurality. She writes that politics “begins where the realm of material necessities and physical brute force end.”⁵⁶⁵ The political not only depends on plurality, but the annihilation of plural perspectives equates to the annihilation of the world. She writes:

The world comes into being only if there are perspectives; it exists as the order of worldly things only if it is viewed, now this way, now that, at any given time. If a people or a nation, or even just some specific human group, which offers a unique view of the world arising from its particular position in the world—a position that, however it came about, cannot readily be duplicated—is annihilated, it is not merely that a people or a nation or a given number of individuals perishes, but rather that a portion of our common world that has revealed itself to us until now but can never reveal itself again. Annihilation is therefore not just tantamount to the end of a world; it also takes its annihilator with it. Strictly speaking, politics is not so much about human beings as it is about the world that comes into being between them and endures beyond them.⁵⁶⁶

Of course, we can hear the idea of Kant’s enlarged mentality in this longer passage, but we can also hear it here, when she says just a bit later in the essay, “The more standpoints there are within any given nation from which to view the same world that shelters and presents itself equally to all, the more significant and open to the world that nation will be.”⁵⁶⁷ For Arendt, the enlarged mentality, of course, requires not only an understanding of thinking and its processes (the withdrawal from the world, subsequent re-entry, etc.) but also a recognition and attribution of value to the plurality of viewpoints. She articulates this specifically when she states: “In other words, human beings in the true sense of the term can exist only where there is a world, and there can be a world in the true sense of the term only where the plurality of the human race is more than a simple multiplication of a single species.”⁵⁶⁸ This is critical for several reasons: first, politics is defined, from an Arendtian perspective, as the space in which humans

⁵⁶⁵ Arendt, 119.

⁵⁶⁶ Arendt, 175.

⁵⁶⁷ Arendt, 176.

⁵⁶⁸ Arendt, 176.

are free to act with agency and in which they have the capacity to act with creativity. To act with creativity and to challenge normative constructs, both thinking and action are required. While thinking happens in isolation, action only happens in the company of others. Both are needed for the political space to be possible. Secondly, this space both requires and facilitates plurality; it requires a collective community of different individuals, again, by definition. Political space requires community, as thinking requires individual isolation. Lastly, this “space of politics” catalyzes action, including acts of newness, of beginnings, of interruptions to habits, of challenges to normative constructs. Politics and political space are not inevitable nor do they necessarily, organically occur without intention. Rather, there is a decidedly purposeful creation of political space, and with its creation, there must be a tending to it—a commitment to keep that space from becoming anything other than a space for freedom, action, and plurality.

A *caritas*-informed approach—an explanation and an analysis—to the political sphere as it is defined by Arendt, not only complements the Arendtian concept of politics, its space, and its characteristics, but it also helps to translate how rights, judgment and freedom operate *in the real world*. This discussion provides insight, too, into the inherent challenge *caritas* poses to utilitarian concepts that are often justified and assumed in zero-sum negotiations in a political discussion, including rights based on citizenship. As Kohn states in the preface of *The Jewish Writings*, “A ‘right to have rights’ is not a civil but a political right, and politics is always for Arendt what goes on between a plurality of individuals speaking together about what concerns them in common, generating the power to do what they determine can be done by acting

together.”⁵⁶⁹ When summarizing several of Arendt’s thoughts on the idea of rights and governance, Kohn says this about her views advocating for a localized, self-governing system of councils:

The condition of the council system of governing does not entail loving one’s neighbor but rather entering into political friendship with him. Political friendship, which Arendt later traces to Aristotle’s *philia politikê*, is much as the same as the public spirit in which promises are made to be kept; the rule of one people over another would be ruled out in a public-spirited polity of different peoples.⁵⁷⁰

Just as it was important to clarify the term “kinship” from the earlier passage as it applies to this specific part of the discussion, it is important to clarify the phrase “not entail loving one’s neighbor” here and to recognize the difference between *philia* and *caritas*. Kohn argues that Arendt’s idea of a self-governing system of councils is not conditional upon loving one’s neighbor, but rather “entering into political friendship with him” tracing this to Arendt’s identification of the Aristotelian concept of *philia politikê*. I argue that this does not include or refer to *caritas*-informed love of neighbor. That is not what is being rejected. I propose that what is being rejected is the idea of a mandate to love the neighbor as a designated extension of a community defined by characteristics that are decidedly worldly, such as shared belief systems, geography, or citizenship. Kohn’s reference to political friendship enlarges and extends the political relationships between people, where his use of the term neighbor limits and restricts it. This is the neighbor that we love “as oneself” not as “love itself.” So, I propose that there is still a distinct correlation between the political friendship mentioned in the above passage and the *caritas*-informed definition of neighbor in her dissertation. If the above passage means loving one’s neighbor in the worldly sense, not in the spirit of *caritas* that

⁵⁶⁹ Kohn, “Introduction,” *The Jewish Writings*, xxv.

⁵⁷⁰ Kohn, “Introduction,” xxvi.

suggests love of the neighbor because of a shared createdness, then love of neighbor is indeed problematic. However, if political friendship not limited by the idea of rights based on nationality or national identity, it *is* complementary to the idea of *caritas*, a love that is not restricted to particular shared characteristics, geography, or belief systems in the definition of a neighbor. As the above passage states, governing based on “love of neighbor,” if done in the worldly sense, causes a host of problems because, among other things including a misreading of *ordo amoris*, it allows for a rejection of others based on worldly determinants such as citizenship, geographical location, and discord in belief systems. Designating love of neighbor in the worldly sense as described above runs the risk of devaluing plurality. Love of neighbor in *caritas* does the opposite. Political friendship aligns with the *caritas*-informed view that there is an inherent commonality we can recognize (if not appeal to) in order to govern while preserving plurality, freedom, and creative, critical thought. Human agency through a *caritas*-lens is not what gets to decide whether or not the neighbor is worthy of being recognized, acknowledged, or loved. And, political friendship is possible through a *caritas*-informed approach because it assumes this. Conversely, a love of neighbor that is contingent upon worldly recognition allows for the withholding of dignity and adversely affects plurality. This, as described in Kohn’s remarks, is clearly dangerous because of the predilection of otherizing that accompanies “choosing” who to recognize as a neighbor. Consequently, if political friendship depends upon worldly-established attributes or interests, plurality is compromised. Constraining or minimizing plurality in the arena of judgment limits the enlarged mentality, directly undermining the capacity for discernment.

This interpretation obviously has implications for both rights and judgment, particularly as it relates to the definition of politics as the space that “lies between men and is established as relationships”⁵⁷¹ and her claim that “human beings in the true sense of the term can exist only where there is a world, and there can be a world in the true sense of the term only where the plurality of the human race is more than a simple multiplication of a single species.”⁵⁷² Contrast and compare Arendt’s (and Kohn’s) statements from above coupled with the idea of the *caritas*-informed definition of neighbor and community with this passage from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: “The calamity of the rightless is not that they are deprived of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion—formulas which were designed to solve problems within given communities—but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever.”⁵⁷³ And, again, from the same text: “The fundamental deprivation of human rights is manifested first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinion significant and actions effective.”⁵⁷⁴ The loss of political space, when defined as the space in between people established as relationships, is part of the deprivation inherent to totalitarianism. Its loss accompanies, if not predicts, the loss of human rights. In contrast to this negation, *caritas* confronts loneliness and isolation by insisting upon the return *into* the community, into the space “in the world which makes opinion significant and actions effective.” A *caritas*-informed understanding of political space is one that mandates the preservation of human rights by attributing worth to the community (extended to “all people”⁵⁷⁵) and

⁵⁷¹ Arendt, “Introduction *Into* Politics,” *The Promise of Politics*, 95.

⁵⁷² Arendt, “Introduction *Into* Politics,” 176.

⁵⁷³ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 295.

⁵⁷⁴ Arendt, 296.

⁵⁷⁵ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 97.

recognizing the worth of the neighbor as a valuable, necessary member of the community. Rights in this sense are not dependent upon nation-state membership or national identity, or citizenship; rather, they are given because *caritas*-informed approaches to understanding the political space begin with understanding the inherent plurality of individuals within the world of neighbors that share the characteristic of “love itself.” A *caritas*-informed political space does not, however, equate to a political world incapable of judgment.

To reiterate, in the *Promise of Politics*, she says:

If a people or a nation, or even just some specific human group, which offers a unique view of the world arising from its particular position in the world—a position that, however it came about, cannot readily be duplicated—is annihilated, it is not merely that a people or a nation or a given number of individuals perishes, but rather that a portion of our common world that has revealed itself to us until now but can never reveal itself again.⁵⁷⁶

To annihilate human plurality, to annihilate a “people, a nation, or even some specific human group,” means to shatter the possibility of a unique view of the world existing in humanity. It equates to an annihilation of a portion of our common world. Having a *caritas*-informed approach to the common world does not equate to a world that is free from, or incapable of, judgment. In fact, Arendt makes this point clear in the epilogue of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, explaining that annihilating a unique view of the world *is* annihilating the world; destroying a people and refusing to share the world with them—annihilating them and with them their unique view of the world—is a punishable crime against humanity. To return to the previous *caritas*-informed discussions about willing, freedom, and judgment, and the importance of memory to discuss “examples” of those with whom we wish to share a community, I would like

⁵⁷⁶ Arendt, “Introduction Into Politics,” *The Promise of Politics*,. 175.

to now focus on to what Kohn refers to as Arendtian stories—“thought-things”—and their role in enlarging mentality, exercising judgment, and developing political space.

Chapter Two: belonging and placelessness

As Kohn notes, “stories are thought-things, and though we think in the past dimension of time (‘every thought is an after-thought’),* we judge the present.”⁵⁷⁷ He also posits that

Arendt’s stories were painful, and she pulled no punches in telling them, and did not allow us to do so either, in our responses to them. No excuses or rationalizations of any kind were permitted for what had happened, yet curiously, the pain her stories inflicted was gradually supplanted by an emerging sense of the often terrible meaningfulness of the events themselves.⁵⁷⁸

Stories and examples are part of what help us to remember, choose whom we emulate, what actions we celebrate, endorse, reject, and condemn, and decide with whom we spend our lives. In a very real way, we learn to whom we belong and where we belong. Understanding how the role *caritas*-informed approaches can influence storytelling illuminates the importance of thinking, creating political space, interrupting habitual narratives and normative constructs, acting freely in political spaces, and judging with discernment and enlarged mentalities in the real world.

Arendt dedicates much of her scholarship to unpacking the dynamics, similarities, and differences between thinking and action, willing and judgment, freedom and community. These topics have been discussed in Part One and Part Two of my dissertation through the many referenced examples of her writings and contextualized through the lens of *caritas* as described in her dissertation. While I argue that the *caritas* of her dissertation echoes throughout her oeuvre and continues to inform how she frames, assesses and understands the characteristics

⁵⁷⁷ Kohn, “Introduction,” *The Promise of Politics*, xxiv. The asterisk references the following: H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol 1 *Thinking* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 87.

⁵⁷⁸ Kohn, “Introduction,” xxiii.

and qualities of her categorized social, political, and private spheres, there are also many indications that there is value in considering *caritas*-informed approaches when reading the works of Arendtian scholars such as Lindsey Stonebridge, Jennifer Nedelsky, Seyla Benhabib, Iris Marion Young, and Leora Bilsky. This chapter will begin juxtaposing some of the stories Arendt discusses in her essays, “The Eggs Speak Up” and “We Refugees” and select stories and comments from Lindsey Stonebridge’s *We Are Free to Change the World, The Judicial Imagination*, and *Placeless People* through a *caritas*-informed perspective.

In Arendt’s essay, “The Eggs Speak Up,” she references how Stalin “changed the old political and especially revolutionary belief expressed popularly in the proverb ‘you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs’ into a veritable dogma: ‘You can’t break eggs without making an omelette.’”⁵⁷⁹ This shift, to suggest—absurdly—that “the breaking and breaking of eggs were suddenly and automatically to produce the desired omelette,”⁵⁸⁰ also intimates that the eggs were viewed as “justifiable” collateral damage for the greater “cause,” as a means required to achieve an end goal by using utilitarian decision making processes. In this longer passage, she explains:

To return to our specific example proverbs like “You can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs” owe their general common-sense appeal to the fact that they represent, albeit in a vulgar form, some quintessence of Western philosophical thought. Their wisdom, like their imagery, comes from Western mankind’s experience of fabrication: You can’t make a table without killing a tree. Their wisdom becomes very dubious even when applied in general to the interaction between man and nature; it can result, and has often enough, in the misrepresentation of all naturally given things as mere material for the human artifice—as though trees were nothing but potential wood, material for tables. The element of destruction inherent in all purely technical activity becomes preeminent, however, as soon as its imagery and its line of thinking is

⁵⁷⁹ Hannah Arendt, “The Eggs Speak Up,” *Essays in Understanding 1930-1965 Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, “The Eggs Speak Up,” ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 275.

⁵⁸⁰ Arendt, “The Eggs Speak Up,” *Essays in Understanding 1930-1965 Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, 276.

applied to political activity, action, or historical events, or any other interaction between man and man.⁵⁸¹

This entire section, of course, offers insight into how the stories, told and crafted through the embedded axioms in the cultural, intellectual, political, and academic narratives of a society's structure and history, impact how we view the "eggs." The last line is of particular importance to this specific discussion: "The element of destruction inherent in all purely technical activity becomes preeminent, however, as soon as its imagery and its line of thinking is applied to political activity, action, or historical events, or any other interaction between man and man."⁵⁸² Using irrelevant and poorly applied catchphrases, or erroneously conflating proverbs intended to help navigate one situation with an inappropriate application to another, not only confuses base values but also disorients and disengages individuals and groups from reality. It is not difficult to identify "vulgar" examples of political slogans used today, nor is it difficult to identify the harm and violence that they initiate, encourage, and sustain in contemporary situations.⁵⁸³ By inaccurately flattening the human story to a distorted and oversimplified explanation, one that appeals to a perversion of a utilitarian means-end value system, plurality is not only compromised and diminished, it is framed as a liability and danger. When critical thinking is substituted for ideology and zero-sum approaches become not only the default but the preferred methodology for determining action and rights, the faculty to judge with discernment, the capacity to exercise freedom, and to evaluate situations with an objective intent become impossible.

⁵⁸¹ Arendt, "The Eggs Speak Up," 283.

⁵⁸² Arendt, 283.

⁵⁸³ The comment about "the element of destruction inherent in all purely technical activity" also speaks to Arendt's descriptions about *Homo Faber* and *Animal Laborans* as discussed in *The Human Condition*, but for the purpose of this discussion, I will table those connections.

Citing another example of reductive and vulgar attempts to reframe objective realities into convenient distortions in “The Eggs Speak Up,” Arendt uses the account of “the ex-Communists return to the ‘normal’ world.”⁵⁸⁴ She uses this situation as both an example of how particular events are explained, distorted, and minimized, as well as a warning about people’s predictable tendency to attempt to “return to the ‘normal’ world” after violating tenets of basic human dignity via this methodology. Among other themes addressed, she writes about the integration efforts of the people who had been tied irrevocably to their ideologies and desired entry back into “normal society” with little acknowledgement of their contributions to terror, attachments to totalitarian ideologies, or propensity for the breaking and breaking of eggs: “having lost their ‘ideal,’ [they] are on the lookout for substitutes and so carry their extremism into Catholicism, liberalism, conservatism, and whatnot.”⁵⁸⁵ She describes the false binary choice offered to justify their “normalcy in its most banal aspects.”⁵⁸⁶ Arguing that the presented evaluations from individuals and groups involved in the breaking and breaking of eggs, upon rejoining “normal” society, frequently conclude that there is “no other choice between the totalitarian hell and philistinism.”⁵⁸⁷ Then, Arendt makes this claim, explaining that while this type of justification is annoying and illogical, it becomes truly dangerous when it used in the political sphere. Again, cautioning against this *and* the dangers of applying a utilitarian means-end idea to politics, political institutions, and bodies politic, she states:

⁵⁸⁴ Arendt, “The Eggs Speak Up,” 280.

⁵⁸⁵ Arendt, 280.

⁵⁸⁶ Arendt, 280.

⁵⁸⁷ Arendt, 280.

Annoying as this fervor may be, it is certainly not dangerous. It becomes dangerous only if applied to existing political institutions or bodies politic, verbally transforming them into a “cause” whose realization, by definition, lies in the future.

...Democratic society as a living reality is threatened at the very moment that democracy becomes a “cause,” because then actions are likely to be judged and opinions evaluated in terms of ultimate ends and not on their inherent merits. The democratic way of life can be threatened only by people who see everything as a means to an end.⁵⁸⁸

This is a consistent recognition in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, when Arendt writes that “crimes against human rights, which have become a specialty of totalitarian regimes, can always be justified by the pretext that right is equivalent to being good or useful for the whole in distinction to its parts.”⁵⁸⁹ She continues by pointing out that, “The survivors of the extermination camps, the inmates of concentration and internment camps, and even the comparatively happy stateless people could see ... that the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human was their greatest danger.”⁵⁹⁰ She ends “The Eggs Speak Up” with this thought:

There is indeed only one principle which announces, with the same uncompromising clarity as the principle that “you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs,” the diametrically opposite maxim for political action. It was expressed almost incidentally in a lonely phrase of one of the loneliest men of the last generation, Georges Clemenceau, when he suddenly exclaimed during his fight in the Dreyfus Affair: “L’affaire d’un seul est l’affaire de tous” (“The concern of one is the concern of all”).⁵⁹¹

Not only does Arendt offer an alternative proverb that is meaningful and appropriate in application, but her reference also punctuates the importance of the accuracy of the stories and accounts we represent as truths; these stories, these accounts, must be differentiated from those we tell as fables, or those drenched in lies and prejudice but presented as historical accounts, particularly if they are used to navigate the political sphere, educate, influence, and

⁵⁸⁸ Arendt, 280-281.

⁵⁸⁹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 298-299.

⁵⁹⁰ Arendt, 300.

⁵⁹¹ Arendt, “The Eggs Speak Up,” 283-284.

inform the body politic, and impact political institutions and policies.⁵⁹² The quote from Clemenceau, when read from a *caritas*-informed framework, reminds us that the political relationship *between* neighbors, is the basis for the concern of, and for, all. As *caritas* requires extending love to the individual neighbor (eventually constituting the community through the relationships of the many individual and collective neighbor-relationships *in the world*) by attention, recognition, and intentional engagement, so does the idea that the political sphere—a space of plurality—requires attention, recognition, and intentional engagement. It requires both truth-telling and true storytelling. It requires attention to the narrative, to memory, and to the possible.

In “We Refugees,” Arendt tells what Kohn would perhaps refer to as the “painful stories” of refugees and placeless people, stripped of their rights, particularly those that are determined by citizenship. Of course, she can share parts of these stories (and her own story as part of the collection of experiences) through a personal recollection. She begins with the famous line, “In the first place, we don’t like to be called ‘refugees.’ We ourselves call each other ‘newcomers’ or ‘immigrants.’”⁵⁹³ Stonebridge reflects on this famous line when she states that it is this line that “masks and unmasks the reality of refugee existence at one and the same time.”⁵⁹⁴ She

⁵⁹² It is important to acknowledge that Arendt writes extensively about history, and the perception and misperceptions, of what we deem “historical.” I could not adequately address all of her contributions to discussions about history here, but I would be remiss if I did not mention her attention to this area of her work, particularly in the context of discussing the accuracy of stories told to educate, inform, understand, and identify, as she says on page 278, “generally shared, deep-rooted modern political prejudices.” Of course, this does not preclude, nor should it make her historical references immune from, criticism. Many legitimate concerns exist about her own prejudices, inaccuracies, omissions, and mistakes.

⁵⁹³ Hannah Arendt, “We Refugees,” in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 264.

⁵⁹⁴ Stonebridge, *We Are Free to Change the World: Hannah Arendt’s Lessons in Love and Disobedience*, 99.

continues to reflect on Arendt's development of thought when she suggests that

...she had also come to realize that for refugees the best defense is to know the reality of your existence without giving in to despair. It was possible to wear the mask of the refugee with the kind of creative and critical defiance that comes from knowing exactly what your place in the world is and what that says about the condition of that world. The final paragraph of "We Refugees" is at once a minibiography of her own refugee journey and a call from her century to those migrants, refugees, and activists in ours who also understand that it is with their existence, and their rights, that the truth of our current predicament is revealed most starkly...⁵⁹⁵

The next section of Stonebridge's book cites the last paragraph in "We Refugees." In it, Arendt directly suggests that the refugees who are able to tell their stories, who literally speak the truth of their own experiences and share their narratives, are included *into* the political space.

If, and this caveat is enormous, they are able to keep their identity. Arendt writes,

Those few refugees who insist upon telling the truth, even to the point of "indecenty," get in exchange for their unpopularity one priceless advantage: history is no longer a closed book to them and politics is no longer the privilege of gentiles. They know that the outlawing of the Jewish people in Europe has been followed closely by the outlawing of most European nations. Refugees driven from country to country represent the vanguard of their peoples—if they keep their identity.⁵⁹⁶

Not included in this passage referenced by Stonebridge is the last sentence of Arendt's paragraph in the essay. It warrants inclusion in relation to this discussion about *caritas*-informed approaches: "The comity of European peoples went to pieces when, and because, it allowed its weakest member to be excluded and persecuted."⁵⁹⁷ *Caritas* challenges this approach and counters with the foundational reminder that humanity depends on the insistence that "concern for one is concern for all"; it is not supported in any way by an approach that allows for the neighbor to be used as a means to an end, or that the weakest

⁵⁹⁵ Stonebridge, 100.

⁵⁹⁶ Stonebridge, 101. This passage cites Hannah Arendt's essay, "We Refugees," that is in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 274.

⁵⁹⁷ Arendt, "We Refugees," *The Jewish Writings*, 274.

member is allowed to be excluded and persecuted. A *caritas*-informed approach rejects exclusion and persecution based on ideological premises; it repulses the idea that a preference for worthy qualities and similarities in the neighbor must be identified to justify neighborly love; rather, it is loving for the sake of love. A reciprocity of meaning in the neighbor's existence, and a love for the neighbor as defined as a *will* for them to be, is a means to resist totalitarianism and refusal to accept an incorrect invocation of the *ordo amoris*. The story of the refugee is the counterweight to the disappearance of the individual (literally, figuratively, and metaphorically speaking) that can happen when rights are dependent on citizenship status and nation-state identity. Or, as Stonebridge puts it, "The consequences of exile—for Arendt, for the Jewish people, for refugees present and future—could not be assimilated into the conditions of literature itself, quite simply because those consequences had transformed the social and political terms of fiction. At least for Kafka, and for Arendt, who both knew a thing or two about how crossing borders could cause you to disappear entirely."⁵⁹⁸ Arendtian scholars identify that Arendt's elevation and acknowledgement of the importance of writers and storytellers brings the importance of painful stories—and beautiful stories—back into the context of their political influence. The nature of telling stories, of sharing with and in communal spaces, enlarging our mentality through reading, listening, sharing, and active spectatorship, aligns with *caritas*-informed critical thinking that challenges zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity in an evolving landscape.

Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark also explicitly note Arendt's use of storytellers. They point

⁵⁹⁸ Stonebridge, *Placeless People: Writing, Rights, and Refugees*, 45.

out that in *Between Past and Future*, she writes “Only insofar as he thinks, and that is insofar as he is ageless—a ‘he’ as Kafka so rightly calls him, and not a ‘somebody’—does man in the full actuality of his concrete being live in this gap of time between past and future.”⁵⁹⁹ They argue that when Arendt “discussed the ‘gap’ between past and future, and the freedom of the individual ‘inserted’ between them, Arendt evoked Augustine—together with an assortment of similarly [*sic*] pivotal thinkers such as Kafka, Heidegger, Hegel, and Nietzsche.”⁶⁰⁰ They also observe that for Arendt, “These men were storytellers, invoking the realm of memory with poetry as well as rational discourse.”⁶⁰¹ They continue by explaining that

Arendt often remarked that the storyteller creates the mythology of the modern world by recalling and reconstructing events in the timeless realm of memoria. Later, whether citing Kafka, Rahel Varnhagen, or Isak Dinesen, Arendt put into play the insights of the dissertation. In *The Human Condition* she quotes Dinesen: “All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them.”⁶⁰²

There is a confluence here between storytelling (and the truth of particular narratives) and belonging, place, time, and political space. Storytelling’s impact is felt in all these areas of Arendtian distinctions. Storytelling is a mechanism of natality; it can catalyze new beginnings, new understandings, and new relationships through its twofold communicative characteristics (spectator/actor) and its ability to capture the individual story as a guard against the default status of becoming an account of the “human being in general.” Storytelling (and, perhaps, in particular, literature) also protects plurality by esteeming and valuing individual perspectives. Among other contributions to plurality, storytelling has a remarkable ability to talk about individuals’ different experiences with different happenings, of course, but it also allows the

⁵⁹⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, (New York: Penguin Group, 1993), 13.

⁶⁰⁰ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 145.

⁶⁰¹ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 146.

⁶⁰² Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, 146.

telling of individuals' different experiences regarding the *same* occurrences. Storytelling can create pluralistic communities through the sharing of our different interactions and experiences regarding the same shared historical events. Storytelling with a *caritas*-informed approach supports and invites the creation of a political space in which we are welcomed as individual human beings. In *Placeless People: Writing, Rights, and Refugees*, Stonebridge argues that "For rights to be meaningful, we need to create new myths and stories, not about human dignity, but about the origins of human community—a new *Weltliteratur* perhaps."⁶⁰³ She proposes this after referring to the "1958 appendix to *Origins*,"⁶⁰⁴ in which Arendt argues that human rights

can again be meaningful only if they are redefined as a right to the human condition itself, which depends on belonging to some human community, the right never to be dependent upon some inborn human dignity which *de facto*, aside from its guarantee by fellow-men, not only does not exist but is the last and possibly most arrogant myth we have invented in all our long history.⁶⁰⁵

Stonebridge states that "It is worth stressing just how original Arendt's thinking about human rights was (and remains) at this point."⁶⁰⁶ She echoes other Arendtian scholars when she states that it was the concept of Herodotus' *isonomia* that "kept politics responsive for the post-war Arendt."⁶⁰⁷ She argues that

the lesson Arendt took from the crooked timber of Gurs, therefore, was that whilst human essence or dignity could not possibly ground human rights without political and civic rights, in turn those political rights depended on the fiction-generating world of the human condition. If the calamity witnessed by the refugees of the 1930s and 1940s—their message of ill tidings—was that human rights meant nothing, post-war, the groundlessness of human rights was also what eventually allowed Arendt to cast the terms for a new politics of human rights.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰³ Stonebridge, *Placeless People: Writing, Rights, and Refugees*, 60.

⁶⁰⁴ Stonebridge, 60.

⁶⁰⁵ Stonebridge, 60. Cited in part from the passage attributed to Endnote 50: "Arendt, *Origins*, p. 331."

⁶⁰⁶ Stonebridge, 60.

⁶⁰⁷ Stonebridge, 60.

⁶⁰⁸ Stonebridge, 60.

Stonebridge goes on to argue that this means, for Arendt, “Humans simply are their rights, which is not at all the same as saying that merely being human gives us rights. Rather what keeps us pirouetting between the dark background of our mere givenness and the power and security of political representation is an ever-active human reciprocity.”⁶⁰⁹

Stonebridge focuses on the reciprocity of both storytelling and speech, connecting what she argues are the fundamental principles of what Arendt believed constituted being human. She cites Arendt’s comment in *The Human Condition*, that “A life without speech is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men.”⁶¹⁰

Referencing Primo Levi’s “unforgettable chapter” from *If this is a Man*, Stonebridge argues that Levi’s account of “walking through the camp with Jean . . . is a representation of absent persons speaking about World Literature.”⁶¹¹ She argues that when “Levi begins to translate Dante’s *Inferno* from Italian into French” and when he speaks “the poem—not any poem, but *the* poem about how to survive hell in the Western tradition—” he actualizes “his merely passive existence: this *is* a man because he is speaking.”⁶¹² According to Stonebridge, this “scene can be described as a moment of pathos, a point of still time amid Levi’s forensic cataloguing of the Hobbesian reality of the *Lager*—comparable to the pause in Arendt’s description of Augustinian friendship in the dark background of difference.”⁶¹³ The *caritas* of Arendt’s dissertation also aligns with this sentence from Stonebridge’s reflection of Levi’s famous chapter: “Quoting,

⁶⁰⁹ Stonebridge, 61.

⁶¹⁰ Stonebridge, 61; in reference to *The Human Condition*, 176.

⁶¹¹ Stonebridge, 63.

⁶¹² Stonebridge, 63.

⁶¹³ Stonebridge, 63.

remembering, reciting, translating, listening, repeating, disclosing their patent suffering selves in an act of brilliant disobedience, Levi and Jean call one another back from the dead, through Dante, through memory, across languages.”⁶¹⁴ Later, Stonebridge cautions her reader that “Levi’s Dante does not stand outside the modern history of nations, politics, the history of rights, democracy and totalitarianism, but from deep inside it, resurrecting the prospect of human plurality from a place where the very idea of community is under the most sustained attack in modern history.”⁶¹⁵ Stonebridge’s cautionary statement is reminiscent of Kohn’s warning to pick apart—diligently—what Arendt meant by love of the world. This is not a saccharinely sweet ideal; it is a decidedly courageous commitment to choose to believe in the possibility of political space. It is a political space that preserves plurality and holds natality as part of the human condition. It is the space that promises imagination and creativity and the potential of newness. I argue that it is this space that defines love of neighbor with a *caritas*-informed understanding of what it means to share the world with one another while still refusing to acquiesce being of it. In part, this space bridges the understanding of the concepts of human rights, the individual, placelessness, and belonging. It is from this vantage point of storytelling that narratives occupy political space. Stories enlarge our mentality by “resurrecting the prospect of human plurality from a place where the very idea of community is under the most sustained attack” to use Stonebridge’s words. It is here, by challenging a narrative that silences, demeans, and alienates, that individual accounts and stories mount a concrete push-back to a zero-sum approach to rights and dignity. Narratives and stories, from a *caritas*-

⁶¹⁴ Stonebridge, 63.

⁶¹⁵ Stonebridge, 64.

informed definition of the neighbor, support plurality and create political space by fostering judgment that is rooted in freedom and the common world. Narratives and stories strengthen the community and the independent actors—and their identities as individuals—who constitute that community. Narratives and stories help energize the political space into collective action through political power.

In *The Judicial Imagination*, Stonebridge refers to the passage I will cite in a moment from “We Refugees” as part of her argument that Arendt

was already teasing out and reciting the perplexities at the heart of the concept of universal rights in her 1943 essay: foregrounding the paradoxes that come with the effort of trying to inhabit the category of human rights, politically, historically and existentially, through the very medium seen as central to democratic notions of rights, through her voice. In ‘We Refugees’ this voice is doubled not only against itself, but also against the conditions of its own disentanglement.⁶¹⁶

The passage Stonebridge cites from “We Refugees” returns us to the dangerous identification of being outside the community of political actors, without agency to be individuals who have the capacity to act within the political sphere—to be reduced to human beings in general.

Arendt writes

If we should start telling the truth that we are nothing but Jews, it would mean that we expose ourselves to the fate of human beings, who unprotected by any specific law or political convention, are nothing but human beings. I can hardly imagine an attitude more dangerous, since we actually live in a world in which human beings as such have ceased to exist for quite a while; since society has discovered discrimination as the great social weapon by which one may kill men without any bloodshed; since passports or birth certificates, and sometimes even income tax receipts, are no longer formal papers but matters of social distinction. It is true that most of us depend entirely upon social standards; we lose confidence in ourselves if society does not approve us; we are—and always were—ready to pay any price in order to be accepted by society.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁶ Lindsey Stonebridge, *The Judicial Imagination*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 109.

⁶¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, “We Refugees,” *The Jewish Writings*, 273.

Acceptance, belonging, and meaningfulness are obviously core principles present in many of Arendt's stories. These principles are intimately related to her definitions of plurality, freedom, thinking, judging, willing, and action. Belonging to and having a space in the political sphere brings meaningfulness and dignity to what it means to be human; having a place among other human beings allows for action. Creating space between individual human beings—in a plural community—allows for newness and possibility and political participation. In *We are Free to Change the World*, Stonebridge argues that “As the prisoners of Gurs knew as well as the New York friends, without a world in which there are others, where there are stories in which a life might be recognized, narratives with beginnings and ends, there is nothing ...”⁶¹⁸ It is in the in-betweenness of love, explained by Stonebridge as “the private passion that makes us both individuals and, whether we like it or not, part of a bigger collective human story”⁶¹⁹ that we become our most individual *and* our most collective, relational selves. Stonebridge elaborates: “precisely because of this singularity, to love is also to affirm the plurality of the world; our differences from one another and our ability to love those differences. Because love is unique, because nobody has ever loved as we two, we join the many.”⁶²⁰ And again, she explicitly addresses how “in her dissertation, Hannah Arendt scooped out the existential humanist from Augustine and turned him into a thoroughly modern lover for an age of extremes.”⁶²¹

⁶¹⁸ Stonebridge, *We Are Free to Change the World: Hannah Arendt's Lessons in Love and Disobedience*, 119.

⁶¹⁹ Stonebridge, 118.

⁶²⁰ Stonebridge, 118.

⁶²¹ Stonebridge, 119. It is important to note that on page 122 of this book, Stonebridge states, “Charity, as she would later argue is also the case with violence, is a failure of politics.” She also states in the next sentence of the following paragraph: “This later insight gave her even more reason to be wary of the sublime indifference of love as *caritas* that had first troubled her as a student reading Augustine.” I do not disagree with Stonebridge; however, I do think the *caritas* of Arendt's dissertation wrestles with the translation of “charity” and rejects the simple definition that is dependent upon an appeal of generosity generated from worldly values and importance. Charity

Stonebridge argues that Arendt used Heidegger's *vol ut sis* against him when she was able to argue that "the world *is* other people, your neighbors, and both they and you exist—if the circumstances allow—because of love."⁶²² Stonebridge goes as far as to say that

Volo ut sis is no blind love born of desperate faith in a loveless world. I want, Arendt tells us—no, not just want—I *will* you to exist (as she would argue at greater length in the unfinished *Life of the Mind*.) For Arendt, we do not love out of faith alone, there is a restless moral reason at work too, which begins with the recognition of just how meaningless our existence can be, not only for ourselves but for everyone. We are *all* strangers in need of welcome, which is why *I want you to be* remains one of the most powerful statements in her thought.⁶²³

A *caritas*-informed approach to understanding the importance of the neighbor, of the stranger, and of what it means to be in the world also tells us a great deal about the space of the political. *Caritas*, as love of the neighbor, dwells in the political; in fact, it is the political. A *caritas*-informed discussion challenges traditional and contemporary conversations about rights, place, and placelessness, and zero-sum approaches in the political context.

initiated by worldly constructs and understandings would clearly be problematic. Instead, I argue that the *caritas* of her dissertation is a "love of neighbor" *as love itself*. It manifests not as an indifferent love, but rather as an attentive, nondiscriminatory love. It encompasses the return, the isolation, and the requiring of love *in* the world, yet it remains decidedly not of it.

⁶²² Stonebridge, 119.

⁶²³ Stonebridge, 119.

Chapter Three: contextualizing the neighbor: *caritas*-informed alternatives to zero-sum approaches and the impact on understanding rights and placeness

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt writes that totalitarian movements, and the men who lead them, “constantly underestimate the substantial power of stable communities and overestimate the driving force of a movement.”⁶²⁴ This last and final chapter will address the importance of contextualizing the neighbor out of the theoretical and into the real world while using Arendt’s interpretation of Augustinian *caritas* to challenge zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity in an evolving landscape. This means understanding how the relevance of the neighbor substantiates the “power of stable communities” and interrupts the momentum of a totalitarian movement. By reevaluating what it means to have rights that are not determined by or dependent upon traditional definitions of citizenship (based on nationality, for example), Arendt offers an alternative approach to the assumption underlying zero-sum belief systems and hierarchies. When viewed through the *caritas*-informed definitions of community and the neighbor, a substantial challenge is mounted to zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity.

Caritas-informed conversations help to keep the real neighbors—in the real world—at the forefront of considerations when discussing approaches to concerns regarding how to encourage optimal judgment. These concerns are rightfully understood as not happening exclusively in theory or in isolation—judgment affects all aspects of everyday life: resource distribution, environmental issues, access to healthcare, affordable housing, educational

⁶²⁴ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 387.

opportunities, etc. In challenging zero-sum methodologies, a *caritas*-informed approach operates with the assumption that the neighbor is inherently worthy and is an individual critical to the plurality of the community. Membership in the community of neighbors is not specifically dependent on a traditional definition of citizenship, likability, geography, proximity, or shared belief systems; rather, a *caritas*-informed definition of community membership assumes that the individual is part of the necessary relationship, whether between two neighbors or between a larger collective. It exists in the in-between space that is the political. Both the Arendtian interpretation of the Kantian “enlarged mentality” and the Arendtian notion of Augustinian *caritas* reinforce the importance of the individual neighbor in the social realm while also ensuring the capacity for judgment in community. A *caritas*-informed approach to judgment is independent of state sanctioned, recognized, or validated citizenship based on nationality. It insists on the practice of judgment that considers the community, whether a community of two or a community of many. To violate that dynamic is to violate the dynamic of plurality and therefore the capacity for judgment. To violate the dynamic of plurality is to violate the condition of being human.

To this end, *caritas*-informed political space assumes a relational existence, an inherent neighborly importance, and a necessary human plurality. It adheres to and represents the “right to have rights.”

Through this lens, then, it is helpful to revisit *We Refugees*. This particular piece offers insight into why the definition of community from a *caritas*-informed approach challenges common

zero-sum methods used to attribute rights and determine the worth of the neighbor. This piece also illustrates how plurality (within this *caritas*-informed definition of community) encourages enlarged mentalities, facilitates discerning judgment, and in turn, protects freedom. In addition, this chapter will discuss Peg Birmingham's book *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility* to illustrate how the "right to have rights" supports a *caritas*-informed approach.

In *We Refugees*, Arendt identifies the changing labels and identities given to displaced people while dissecting the processes immigrants are required to go through, from the mundane yet extraordinarily difficult activities of daily life, such as grocery shopping and taking public transportation, to completing mandated government paperwork. She captures the magnitude of the challenges faced in several well-known passages:

Our new friends, rather overwhelmed by so many stars and famous men, hardly understand that at the basis of all our descriptions of past splendors lies one human truth: once we were somebodies about whom people cared, we were loved by friends, and even known by landlords as paying our rent regularly. Once we could buy our food and ride on the subway without being told we were undesirable. We have become a little hysterical since newspapermen started detecting us and telling us publicly to stop being disagreeable when shopping for milk and bread. We wonder how it can be done; we already are so damnably careful in every moment of our daily lives to avoid anybody guessing who we are, what kind of passport we have, where our birth certificates were filled out—and that Hitler didn't like us. We try the best we can to fit into a world where you have to be sort of politically minded when you buy your food.⁶²⁵

She also points out that categorization of immigrants changes constantly and consistently, morphing from one discriminatory reduction to another. She argues that "our identity is changed so frequently that nobody can find out who we actually are."⁶²⁶ Continuing to explain

⁶²⁵ Arendt, "We Refugees," *The Jewish Writings*, 269.

⁶²⁶ Arendt, "We Refugees," 270.

she states

I can hardly imagine an attitude more dangerous, since we actually live in a world in which human beings as such have ceased to exist for quite a while; since society has discovered discrimination as the great social weapon by which one may kill men without any bloodshed; since passports or birth certificates, and sometimes even income tax receipts, are no longer formal papers but matters of social distinction. It is true that most of us depend entirely upon social standards; we lose confidence in ourselves if society does not approve us; we are—and always were—ready to pay any price in order to be accepted by society.⁶²⁷

This, of course, is echoed in her assessment of the conditions that allow for totalitarianism. In

The Origins of Totalitarianism (in Part Two: Imperialism, “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man”), she famously describes how people

became aware of the existence of a right to have rights (and that means to live in a framework where one is judged by one’s actions and opinions) and a right to belong to some kind of organized community, only when millions of people emerged who had lost and could not regain these rights because of the new global political situation.⁶²⁸

Reviewing the relational nature of the human condition—as a neighbor, as a being introduced into the world with a dependence upon others for survival, as a new beginning, etc.—this passage bridges *caritas* to “rights” as something separate from government-designated citizenship based predominately on characteristics like nationality:

The fundamental deprivation of human rights is manifested first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective. Something much more fundamental than freedom and justice, which are rights of citizens, is at stake when belonging to the community into which one is born is no longer a matter of course and not belonging no longer a matter of choice, or when one is placed in a situation where, unless he commits a crime, his treatment by others does not depend on what he does or does not do.⁶²⁹

The above passage speaks directly to the connection between the “meaningfulness” of the individual and the claim that there is a “right to have rights;” and, it speaks to the possibility of a *caritas*-informed approach to rights, placelessness, and human dignity that challenges the

⁶²⁷ Arendt, “We Refugees,” 273.

⁶²⁸ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 296-297.

⁶²⁹ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 296.

common assumptions underlying zero-sum approaches. This passage punctuates the effects in the real world not only of how rights are theoretically defined but also the real-world effects of how politics and the political realm are defined. Reiterating the implications that definition has on political space and the actors, spectators, citizens, noncitizens, and neighbors inhabiting, affecting, dwelling, and moving in and out of that political space, Arendt presses for a rethinking of how we define and therefore recognize rights and attribute worth of the individual in a community of neighbors independent of their nationality status and as a “human being in general.” She concludes *We Refugees* with the statement referenced earlier: “The comity of European peoples went to pieces, when, and because, it allowed its weakest member to be excluded and persecuted.”⁶³⁰ As Peg Birmingham notes, this statement should not be interpreted as a proposal for a system of ontological political thought or a conclusive, concrete, ontological, political framework. She argues

Arendt is not providing an “ontological politics,” if by that is meant a politics that finds its firm ground in a set of enduring truths that can then be realized in the political realm. The ontological foundation of the political provides only the universal principle that inspires and orients political action; it neither provides a model for political action nor prescribes any particular political actions.⁶³¹

Birmingham argues that “the event of natality is the *arche* in the double etymological sense of origin and rule.”⁶³² It is in this sense that she posits, “two principles, the principle of *initium* and the principle of givenness, provide the principle of humanity that founds the right to have rights.”⁶³³ In identifying these two principles, she explicitly acknowledges the connection to

⁶³⁰ Arendt, “We Refugees,” 274.

⁶³¹ Peg Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 15.

⁶³² Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*, 9. It is important to note that, like the other authors cited throughout my dissertation, Birmingham’s discussion of natality is not in any way an indorsement, associated with, or shares characteristics of the “pronatalist” movement in right-wing, contemporary political circles.

⁶³³ Birmingham, 34.

Augustine. In fact, she he argues that “Arendt’s debt to Augustine,”⁶³⁴ is widely recognized regarding his “insight that the event of natality carries the promise of beginning,”⁶³⁵but suggests that it is the following passage (referenced by Stonebridge and cited earlier in this paper) in which “Arendt refers to Augustine” in the context of the loss of human rights.⁶³⁶ Birmingham argues that “Arendt describes those stateless refugees (including herself) who, having lost their political status as citizens, have also lost any and all recourse to human rights.”⁶³⁷She quotes the passage at length:

The human being who has lost his place in a community, his political status in the struggle of his time, and the legal personality which makes his actions and part of his destiny a consistent whole, is left with those qualities which usually can become articulate only in the sphere of private life and must remain unqualified, mere existence, that is, all that which is mysteriously give us by birth and which include the shape of our bodies and the talents of our minds, can be adequately dealt with only by the unpredictable hazards of friendship and sympathy or by the great and incalculable grace of love, which says with Augustine, “*Volo ut sis* (I want you to be)” without being able to give any particular reason for such supreme and unsurpassable affirmation (*OT*, 301).⁶³⁸

The referenced passage, Birmingham argues, illustrates the connection between these two principles and argues that it can be specifically deduced that “Arendt points to another dimension of natality, pointing approvingly to the Augustinian insight that the event of natality is also about that which is given.”⁶³⁹ For Birmingham, these two principles are the cornerstone to her analysis; she argues that

Arendt’s writings on post-World War II Europe and her essays on Palestine in the 1940s and early 1950s provide insights for rearticulating notions of sovereignty and the nation-state, which in turn, allow us to consider the kinds of immigration, naturalization, and citizenship practices that would be compatible with an Arendtian commitment to the right to have rights.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁴ Birmingham, 33.

⁶³⁵ Birmingham, 33.

⁶³⁶ Birmingham, 34.

⁶³⁷ Birmingham, 34.

⁶³⁸ Birmingham, 34.

⁶³⁹ Birmingham, 34.

⁶⁴⁰ Birmingham, 3.

Birmingham expands on this idea throughout her book, substantiating her analysis by including comparisons and contrasts from scholars such as Amartya Sen. Birmingham argues that “Arendt’s understanding of the originary right to belong to a public space is close to Amartya Sen’s articulation of rights and capabilities that are features of persons rather than characteristics of goods.”⁶⁴¹ She goes on to say, “Sen argues that human rights articulate positive freedoms; namely, what a person can and should be able to do.”⁶⁴² She continues: “Arendt’s notion of the right to have rights as an originary positive freedom is inseparable from the obligation of common responsibility to enact this right.”⁶⁴³ And, she argues that here, it is helpful to refer to Sen’s examples to understand this concept:

To use Sen’s example, we are obligated to say “yes” not only to the person who has been robbed (whose negative freedom has been violated); we must also say “yes” to those who have suffered loss from flood, drought, or political displacement (even though none of the negative freedoms have been violated). Responsibility for others is at the very heart of freedom.⁶⁴⁴

She continues by pointing out that while there are some important shared understandings, “there is, however, an important difference between Arendt and Sen on the issue of these positive freedoms.”⁶⁴⁵ She goes on to explain:

For Sen, positive freedoms are always embodied. While he agrees with Arendt that freedom must be understood as the “I am able,” he insists on the consequence of this understanding. Freedom is always embodied: “Depending on our body size, metabolism, temperament, social conditions, etc., the translation of resources in the ability to do things does vary substantially from person to person and from community to community, and to ignore that is to miss out on an important general dimension of moral concern.”⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴¹ Birmingham, 60.

⁶⁴² Birmingham, 60.

⁶⁴³ Birmingham, 61.

⁶⁴⁴ Birmingham, 61. Birmingham cites Sen, *Resources, Values, and Development*, 314-317 in citation 46 on page 61, referring to *Notes to pages 45-72*, on page 147.

⁶⁴⁵ Birmingham, 61.

⁶⁴⁶ Birmingham, 61. Birmingham cites Sen, *Resources, Values, and Development*, 323 in citation 47 on page 61, referring to *Notes to pages 45-72*, page 147.

Birmingham continues her comparative analysis by arguing that “Henry Shue’s notion of ‘basic rights’ also adds to Arendt’s account of positive freedom.”⁶⁴⁷ Stating that Shue argues “it is not enough to have the right; one must be able to enjoy it.” She elaborates: “The last requires the accompanying right to the fulfillment of vital needs such as food, shelter, health care, and education. Only with these basic rights fulfilled are we able to enjoy civil and political liberties.”⁶⁴⁸ She then argues that

It is striking that Arendt ignores this dimension of freedom. While she writes eloquently and at length on freedom as the freedom to move, she seems to forget entirely that this movement is always an embodied movement. Such forgetfulness allows her to make too strict a distinction between the political and the social.⁶⁴⁹

Birmingham continues to recognize these gaps in Arendt’s thought while also pointing out overlapping similarities and characteristics to other scholars’ work. By putting Arendt’s oeuvre in conversation with others’ work, and testing the efficacy of the claims against historical and contemporary situations, horrors, predictions, de-escalations, crises, and events, she not only offers an opportunity for conversation between the scholars, but she also allows Arendt’s earlier work to respond to her later writings. Specifically, she references her dissertation and suggests that there is an important insight into “her insistence on loving the isolation of the neighbor” in the “elliptical passages . . . on Augustine’s belief (*credere*) in the neighbor.”⁶⁵⁰ She expands:

There is something prescient in Arendt’s emphasis on this aspect of Augustine’s thought just before those events in which the world becomes literally for her a desert and every attempt is made to destroy her isolation as a mere human being. It is as if already in her dissertation on Augustine, completed in 1929, she has an uncanny understanding that this commandment to love the neighbor in his or her isolation, in his or her unqualified uniqueness, was about to be

⁶⁴⁷ Birmingham, 61.

⁶⁴⁸ Birmingham, 61

⁶⁴⁹ Birmingham, 61-62.

⁶⁵⁰ Birmingham, 88.

violated in the most unimaginable ways. It is as if she understood that the state she was living in was about to undertake the final insurrection against this law of *caritas* to love the neighbor in his or her unqualified existence.⁶⁵¹

Birmingham offers concrete examples of how this contextualized, real-world neighbor's existence connects to rights and citizenship, state and sovereignty. She argues that Arendt sees that "the legitimate origin of state power lies in the twin principles of publicity and givenness themselves inherent in the archaic event of natality."⁶⁵² And, she suggests that Arendt knows that "these twin principles demand that power always be based upon right, most fundamentally the right to have rights—that is the right of a plurality of actors to appear in a public space."⁶⁵³ She argues that

Arendt is allowing for a notion of "active citizenship"—that is, citizenship granted to all who live in and want to participate in the political space of a state or federation. Perfectly consistent with the articulation of the right to have rights, this last principle means that all those who live in a state have the right to political membership—that is, to vote, to seek political office, and to have political representation. It is the experience of citizenship, of living and working in a political space, that is the condition for citizenship.⁶⁵⁴

Birmingham does not make excuses for areas that Arendt may have, for whatever reason, ignored in her argument for the right to have rights. By recognizing that certain issues are not conclusive but still terribly important and worthy of consideration and deliberation, such as how embodiment impacts (and both restricts and allows) freedom, Birmingham strengthens her own claim that Arendt offers a substantive consideration to the "new notion of citizenship

⁶⁵¹ Birmingham, 8. In citation 19 of this chapter, on page 149, in *Notes to pages 88-103*, the entry reads: "Here Kristeva's analysis of *caritas* illuminates Arendt's claim. In *Strangers to Ourselves* she writes: 'Differences in love are not to be erased but forgiven. . . . Differences between the worthy and the unworthy, the faithful and the unfaithful, the good and the bad—and even the heretics; those are not to be reconciled but brought together through the possibility of giving and the acceptance of what is given. The pilgrim gives and receives, his wandering have become gift is an enthusiasm: it is known as *caritas*' (translated by Leon S. Roudiez [New York: Columbia University Press, 1992], 84).

⁶⁵² Birmingham, 135.

⁶⁵³ Birmingham, 135.

⁶⁵⁴ Birmingham, 140.

whose rightful condition now is the experience of living in and belonging to a particular political space, a belonging that is guaranteed by the inalienable right to active participation in both the economic and political spheres.”⁶⁵⁵ For Birmingham, this means that “[i]n her essays on Europe and her essays on Palestine, Arendt gives us clues about how she understands the political institution of the right to have rights.”⁶⁵⁶ And, she concludes that she believes for Arendt, “[t]he institution of this fundamental right depends upon the collective limited sovereignty of states, regional federations with open borders, and international institutions, both legal and economic.”⁶⁵⁷

A *caritas*-informed approach to rights and to understanding the “institution of this fundamental right” only enhances the challenge to zero-sum political practices. For example, returning to Birmingham’s focus on embodiment: if an Arendtian “notion of citizenship” is in part “belonging to a particular political space” and involves the “right of a plurality of actors to appear in a public space,” that space must be accessible to a plurality of actors. That accessibility includes being aware of such physical, economic, and social barriers that would prevent or discourage participation in the political space. *Volo ut sis* does not contain qualifiers that justify or allow for exclusion or limits of the political space based upon convenience, homogeneity, or habit.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁵ Birmingham, 142.

⁶⁵⁶ Birmingham, 142.

⁶⁵⁷ Birmingham, 142.

⁶⁵⁸ As has been discussed, the attribution of *volo ut sis* to Augustine is not without controversy. However, the use of the phrase in Arendt’s work, here specifically, reiterates the importance that the political space is not limited to those with particular resources, or housing security, or physical abilities, or gender, or education, or any other commonly used restrictions to limit access to public, political spaces (intentionally or not).

When the neighbor is defined not as burden, but as an opportunity for the preservation of plurality, the landscape changes. When the neighbor is viewed not as a liability and a drain on resources, but a positive interruption of habit potentially holding new solutions for old problems, assumptions are challenged. When, an Arendtian notion, as Birmingham argues, of “political space is primarily marked by the upsurge of the new, and therefore our notion of citizenship must be understood as the ongoing activity of redefinition and reformulation of who we are,”⁶⁵⁹ communities are just not static data points of membership, but dynamic spaces of interaction. They become spaces for creative improvement, inclusion, and equity in addition to holding and protecting the capacity for discerning judgment and enlarged mentalities. For Birmingham, this means that “this ongoing activity of citizenship. . . must also be animated by gratitude and pleasure for the pluralities and singularities that constitute the public space.”⁶⁶⁰ *Caritas*-informed approaches align with this understanding in several critical ways: *caritas* as love of the neighbor supersedes worldly assessments of meritocracy or means-end evaluations; *caritas* requires a relational recognition that is at once singular (recognizing the individual) and dependent upon plurality; and, *caritas* recognizes the dynamics of solitude, and private, public and political spaces in preserving freedom, critical thinking, and the capacity for judgment. Practically speaking, this offers alternative ways of approaching contemporary crises involving rights, placentenesses, and human dignity.

⁶⁵⁹ Birmingham, 142.

⁶⁶⁰ Birmingham, 142.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, I will revisit how evaluating the political and public realm through the lens of Arendt's definition of Augustinian *caritas* gives context for understanding the roles that thinking, freedom, and possibility play in determining just action. I will recap how this definition of *caritas* supports a conceptual framework within the public sphere that fosters robust political discernment and community decision-making, including judgment processes and determinations. This final section will conclude with a reassessment of what it would mean to imagine a *caritas*-informed view of political power and individual agency as an alternative approach to zero-sum practices.

Analyzing political and public space through a *caritas*-informed lens magnifies the necessity of plurality as a critical, real-world component to freedom, discernment, creative thought, and natality as possibility. Plurality is not simply a theoretical characteristic of functioning democracies but a non-negotiable component for protecting against totalitarianism. As mentioned earlier, defining "community" through a *caritas*-informed lens productively contributes to the conversation about how to live *in the world*. Of course, as Beiner and Nedelsky said, Arendt did not provide a full theory of judgment. Rather, "her illuminating and provocative framework leaves a host of questions unresolved."⁶⁶¹ However, they also argue that, despite the absence of a full theory, she nonetheless gives us real-world practices and approaches to consider.⁶⁶² This sentiment is demonstrated in Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius

⁶⁶¹ Beiner and Nedelsky, "Introduction," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt*, xii.

⁶⁶² Beiner and Nedelsky, "Introduction," xii.

Stark's work, the essay topics by Arendtian scholars in Beiner and Nedelsky's book, as well as by authors such as Stonebridge, Kohn, Lisa Guenther, and Peg Birmingham. Their concerns about incarceration, legal proceedings, deliberation, decision-making and consequences within systems of justice, gender equality, refugee protections, and human rights contextualized from an Arendtian perspective contribute to productive conversations that recognize alternatives to zero-sum politics. Again, this is not to say that these authors agree with one another, agree entirely with Arendt, or that they directly engage with *caritas* as a lens to understanding Arendt's work. Rather, I have suggested that reading Arendt's work through a *caritas*-informed lens supports the conversations in which these authors engage regarding the real-world applications and implications of Arendtian thought in preserving human rights and dignity. In doing so, they offer concrete ways of encouraging an enlarged-mentality approach—a *caritas*-informed approach—that can facilitate the possibility of decision-making processes that prioritize just action in the political and public realms. As I noted in the introduction of this text, Stonebridge argued in *The Judicial Imagination Writing after Nuremberg* that post-WWII, Arendt found herself in a world “unable to imagine a justice big enough for the crime which those courts attempted to try.”⁶⁶³ Thinking, requiring a removal from the world, assists in critical assessment and supports imaginative responses when returning to the world to face the real circumstances that exist *in the world*. By codifying *caritas*-informed practices and approaches, communities have the potential to consider ways to preserve plurality and acknowledge the individual importance and worth of the neighbor.

⁶⁶³ Stonebridge, *The Judicial Imagination Writing after Nuremberg*, 9.

A *caritas*-informed approach to real-world issues acknowledges the complications that occur when we think, and particularly, when we think with an enlarged mentality. Thinking pressures the acceptance of arbitrary habits and questions routine assumptions. A *caritas*-informed approach insists, as Young argues, within dialogues about judgment, that “the affected perspectives have a voice.”⁶⁶⁴ A plurality of thinkers produces productive political space. Thinking encourages creativity and newness (natality as possibility), contributing to a dialogue that values plurality and a diversity of thought. Again, to reiterate from Part Two, Chapter One: to act does not require thinking, but to act in an informed way, in a meaningful way, in a way that will allow us to judge with prudence and discernment, *does* require thinking. It is, in fact, dependent upon it. By engaging with the concept of *caritas* as one that aligns with the notion of natality as possibility, the dialogues surrounding issues that require critical thinking emphasize the need for plurality and diversity of input rather than assuming that they are nonessential, should be minimized, limited, or diminished. A *caritas*-informed approach does not assume that plurality is contradictory to efficiency or efficacy; rather, it posits the idea that plurality is a necessary component to the political realm’s ability to function as a space for discerning judgment, thoughtful action, and community-based decision making. Contradicting the definition of power that zero-sum approaches rely upon, one that suggests power is a resource (or entity) to be captured or gained, a *caritas*-informed lens aligns with Arendt’s description of power as that which “corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert.”⁶⁶⁵ To act in concert is to act with the neighbor. A *caritas*-informed approach supports this

⁶⁶⁴ Young, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity,” from *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes from Kant and Arendt*, 225.

⁶⁶⁵ Arendt, *On Violence* (New York, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1970), p. 44.

relational definition of political power. Among other aspects, it recognizes that acting in concert necessitates multiple participants and that one person cannot “hold” power. By recognizing this, it acknowledges that both the individual’s capacity for an enlarged mentality and the dynamic relationship between political participants is present in political space. Thus, natality-as-possibility exists as a characteristic of this relationship between political participants through new connections, interactions, and the exchange of ideas. Plurality, then, exists as (and among) the actors, spectators, and neighbors in the political and public realm, creating the conditions for, and benefiting from, freedom and thinking. A *caritas*-informed approach offers an alternative to habitual, formulaic, transactional, and zero-sum dynamics.

According to Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Arendt’s rendering of Augustine’s *caritas* entails a move ‘out of the world’ followed by a triple ‘return’: a return to the future of death and reunion with the Creator; a return back to the historical origin of life in creation; and a final return to the constituted world, which is born anew in ‘natality.’⁶⁶⁶ I have argued that a fourth return should be considered: the requisite of love as exemplified by loving the neighbor as an individual, and as love itself, signaling the magnitude of the impact that *caritas* can have in the world and in political spaces. When kinship and the “incalculable grace of love” accompany the foundational presupposition of wanting the neighbor to be, not just to exist, but to flourish—when one party says, “*volo ut sis*” and that sentiment is reciprocated—the in-betweenness of political relationships changes, and the potential for newness shifts. An enlarged mentality materializes in the real world.

⁶⁶⁶ Vecchiarelli Scott and Chelius Stark, “Rediscovering Hannah Arendt,” 148.

Using a *caritas*-informed approach to guide decisions and actions made within the political space celebrates new ideas while also remembering and contextualizing the stories that help us make sense of our place in the world. Storytelling not only has the potential to educate the individual and place their experiences within their own community's narrative, but it also encourages both an enlarged mentality and facilitates critical thinking by allowing for individuals and communities to revisit their past decisions, norms, and policies when new information presents itself. Critical thinking, in part defined as the review, evaluation, and revision of previous thinking, supports an analysis that assesses the effects of particular actions and practices, even if that is possible only through "the backward glance" of history.⁶⁶⁷ Political space is dynamic, and the stories within that space affect power relationships, judgments, and policies. Arendt argues that the "inherent unpredictability" of the body politic is part of its character.⁶⁶⁸ Speaking presciently to current concerns while focusing on storytelling and history, Arendt writes in *The Human Condition*

This is not simply a question of inability to foretell all the logical consequences of a particular act, in which case an electronic computer would be able to foretell the future, but arises directly out of the story which as the result of action, begins and establishes itself as soon as the fleeting moment of the deed is past. The trouble is that whatever the character and content of the subsequent story may be, whether it is played in private or public life, whether it involves many or few actors, its full meaning can reveal itself only when it has ended. In contradistinction to fabrication, where the light by which to judge the finished product is provided by the image or model perceived beforehand by the craftsman's eye, the light that illuminates processes of action, and therefore all historical processes, appears only at their end, frequently when all the participants are dead. Action reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁷ Stratton, *Critical Thinking for College Students*, 10.

⁶⁶⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 191.

⁶⁶⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 191-192.

This passage speaks to zero-sum approaches and *caritas*-informed alternatives, particularly as they relate to storytelling. Arendt's statement that "whatever the character and content of the subsequent story may be, whether it is played in private or public life, whether it involves many or few actors, its full meaning can reveal itself only when it has ended" highlights both the uncertainty of actions in the world and the importance of stories in framing our view of the past, present, and future. Kohn reminded readers that while stories are vitally important thought-things, "we judge in the present."⁶⁷⁰ The stories, experiences, and context in which we live our lives affect our capacity for judging *in the present*. In this way, it is all the more important to withdraw from the world to think, to re-enter with the potential to listen to others, and to enter a political space that allows us to hear the stories, experiences, and context in which others live their lives. This is necessary for us to enlarge our own mentalities and contribute to dialogues that produce discerning judgments. The stories, experiences, and context of neighbors' lives must be taken into consideration for a community to act and judge with discernment. A *caritas*-informed approach, then, does not rely on appealing to a neighbor-ethos that is premised upon treating the neighbor as oneself; rather, it is an approach that assumes that the neighbor is an individual representing love itself; a neighbor who has a story that is worthy of learning; an individual with a story that belongs in the community. This challenges the idea that a community can edit particular stories or narratives and expect the political space to produce discerning, informed judgments. "Solving" issues surrounding rights, resource distribution, dignity, and meaningfulness is not an effective strategy when it does not meaningfully, thoughtfully, or genuinely take a plurality of involved stories into consideration

⁶⁷⁰ Kohn, "Introduction," *The Promise of Politics*, xxiv.

(or, again, as Young argues, “judgment is just and legitimate only if all the affected perspectives have a voice”⁶⁷¹).

When Arendt discusses stories, it is a multi-layered discussion. She addresses how stories are powerful tools to understand and include participants in political space, and she addresses how some stories are used to exclude and alienate people from participating in political space.

Specifically, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and in her essays, “The Eggs Speak Up” and “We Refugees,” she discusses the ways in which some stories are told with the intention to manipulate narratives and influence constituents, even if they are not true or complete.

Referring to stories about the very real displacement, marginalization, disappearance, and extermination of individuals, communities, and plurality itself, Arendt exposes the enormity of what it means to have someone decide what content a story will contain and how it will be told. In doing so, she highlights the importance and the consequences of stories about placeless—and stateless—people. Lindsey Stonebridge argues in *Placeless People - Writing, Rights, and Refugees* that Arendt and Edward Said along with George Orwell, Simone Weil, and Samuel Beckett, refused, in their writings, “to concede the political experience of mass displacement to literary humanism.”⁶⁷² Stonebridge argues that “All three” (referring to Orwell, Weil, and Beckett) “refused to concede the historical experience of displacement to narratives of humanity.”⁶⁷³ Instead, she argues that the writers included in the discussions in her book recognize that

⁶⁷¹ Young, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity,” 225.

⁶⁷² Stonebridge, *Placeless People*, 12.

⁶⁷³ Stonebridge, 12.

There is an important moral and political lesson here that was appreciated by the writers in this book: that compassion, empathy, and pity do not stand outside the story of the modern refugee, but are fundamentally intrinsic to its unfolding—and ongoing—tragedy.⁶⁷⁴

She continues, and I will quote at length the next part of the passage:

The ‘ethical turn’ in literary studies has placed a lot of emphasis on ‘responsibility’ and ‘obligation’ in recent years. All the writers in this book understand rightlessness to be an ethical question, but, just as importantly, indeed for most of them more importantly, each also insists that ethics traffics with politics. That trafficking is often a matter of literary or aesthetic form—of imagining statelessness and, importantly, the alternatives to nationalist conceptions of political sovereignty. As such, the ‘rights’ in the title of this book are also to be understood—as rights always have been understood—as occupying a position between moral imagination and politics, and between ethics and history.⁶⁷⁵

Stonebridge explains that “Part of my argument in this book is that for literary ethics to amount to something more than literary humanitarianism, it too must reckon with political and moral judgment.”⁶⁷⁶ When discussing the geographic scope and the breadth of the generational timelines spanning the writers included her book, Stonebridge argues for a recognition of how important it is to “read, listen, and compare these refugee writers today not only to acknowledge statelessness for the modern trauma that it was and is, but also to learn from what this archive reveals about the prospects for different kinds of citizenship that might still exist.”⁶⁷⁷ She posits that Arendt’s writing, like W.H. Auden’s, “is a thought experiment in imagining different forms of human and political belonging.”⁶⁷⁸ She suggest that “For rights to be meaningful, we need to create new myths and stories, not about human dignity, but about the origins of human community—a new *Weltliteratur* perhaps.”⁶⁷⁹ She argues that

The lesson Arendt took from the crooked timber of Gurs, therefore, was that whilst human

⁶⁷⁴ Stonebridge, 14.

⁶⁷⁵ Stonebridge, 14.

⁶⁷⁶ Stonebridge, 14. She includes an endnote (44) on page 189 to this passage: “I make this argument at more length in the *Judicial Imagination: Writing after Nuremberg* (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 3-19.”

⁶⁷⁷ Stonebridge, 25.

⁶⁷⁸ Stonebridge, 24.

⁶⁷⁹ Stonebridge, 60.

essence or dignity could not possibly ground human rights without political and civic rights, in turn those political rights depended on the fiction-generating world of the human condition. If the calamity witnessed by the refugees of the 1930s and 1940s—their message of ill tidings—was that human rights meant nothing, post-war, the groundlessness of human rights was also what eventually allowed Arendt to cast the terms for a new politics of human rights.⁶⁸⁰

Stonebridge summarizes Arendt’s “new politics of human rights” with the following statement:

“Humans simply are their rights, which is not at all the same as saying that merely being human gives us rights. Rather, what keeps us pirouetting between the dark background of our mere givenness and the power and security of political representation is an ever-active human reciprocity.”⁶⁸¹ Loving the neighbor as love itself fulfills this ever-active human reciprocity by insisting upon plurality in political spaces. A new politics of human rights demands that a plurality in political spaces is inclusive; a space in which participation is *not* determined by, or dependent upon, traditional definitions of citizenship. This translates to a political space in which diversity is dignified and valued; a space that recognizes the right to have rights. This politics of human rights embraces critical thought, fosters enlarged mentalities, preserves plurality, and supports a potential for political power that allows for discerning judgment and community-based decision making. A *caritas*-informed approach aligns with this definition of politics.

A *caritas*-informed approach to rights, placelessness, and human dignity in an evolving landscape most certainly involves a recognition of what it means to belong to a community. It challenges the notion that statelessness is an unavoidable phenomenon and that statelessness, however unfortunate, still inevitably equates to rightlessness, as some type of inescapable,

⁶⁸⁰ Stonebridge, 61.

⁶⁸¹ Stonebridge, 61.

accompanying collateral damage. To this point, Stonebridge states that

When Arendt used the word ‘stateless’ she was describing a diverse group of people—refugees, political exiles, temporarily denaturalized citizens, those, like many Jews, who had been stripped of their citizenship altogether, others like Arendt herself, who were illegal immigrants. Out of place, these people were also out of law, and out of political and historical time.⁶⁸²

A *caritas*-informed approach challenges the idea that citizenship guarantees dignity. Instead, a *caritas*-informed approach responds to the “human being who has lost his place in a community” with the “great and incalculable grace of love.”⁶⁸³ Displacement through the lens of *caritas*, regardless of its cause—natural disasters, violence, economic collapse, disease, government demands, forced migration, state policies, or discrimination—appears differently than when it is viewed through the lens of zero-sum approaches. Defining love of neighbor through a *caritas*-informed lens removes the option of withholding dignity or rights. In *caritas*, attributing worth or deciding whether or not someone is worthy of being treated with dignity based upon worldly considerations of such designations as their citizenship status or statelessness is simply not an option. A *caritas*-informed approach considers the neighbor as someone to whom the shared world belongs, and to whom relational importance already exists. *Caritas* acknowledges the neighbor as an individual, not as a human being in general, but also as someone belonging to the community. Stonebridge reminds us that Arendt recognized in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that “People had rights only so long as nations recognized them as citizens; rights, unlike refugees, did not travel.”⁶⁸⁴ *Caritas* is not geographically dependent; it is not constrained to specific borders or limited by particular association. It does not discriminate based on citizenship status. A *caritas*-informed approach recognizes both the

⁶⁸² Stonebridge, 15.

⁶⁸³ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 301.

⁶⁸⁴ Stonebridge, *Placeless People*, 30.

individual and the community of individuals as constituting the necessary plurality for the political space to produce thoughtful, discerning judgment.

I have argued that Arendt's interpretation of Augustinian *caritas* is capable of challenging zero-sum approaches to rights, placelessness, and human dignity in an evolving landscape. This is, in part, by suggesting that they operate from very different premises. As Arendt explains in her dissertation, "And just as I do not love the self I made in belonging to the world, I also do not love my neighbor in the concrete and worldly encounter with him. Rather, I love him in his createdness."⁶⁸⁵ I will conclude with the proposition that *caritas* offers an approach "big enough" to accommodate the neighbor's createdness in the world; it acknowledges the neighbor's right to have rights.

⁶⁸⁵ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 94.

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