

## **POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF HANNAH ARENDT'S STAND ON MULTICULTURALISM: A CASE WITH KYMLICKA**

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### **Abstract**

*The states that result out of this dissolution like Poland, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the Greek and the Turkish republics, have territories in which large numbers of national minorities reside. Also the scramble for, the colonization and partition of Africa resulted in the many countries with the conglomeration of many ethnic and national minorities living together. A case in point is Nigeria, a multiethnic and multicultural nation. This work beats drums with Kymlicka by submitting that his philosophy of political could be evoked to address multicultural and multiethnic nature of our societies and their complex problems. With it we can enter into multinational multicultural and multiethnic dialogue aimed at willful respect for indigenous people and their inalienable Human right as it is to be the owners of their own destiny.*

**Keywords:** Political, Hannah Arendt, Multiculturalism, Africa, Kymlicka.

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### **Introduction**

As it is today, as a result of global political situation, most countries are culturally diverse. The world democracies are becoming more complex and increasingly multi-cultural and multi-national. "The formation of the democratic people with a particular history and culture could be seen as an ongoing reflexive transformation and experimentation with collective identity"<sup>i</sup>. According to recent estimate, the world's 184 independent states contain over 600 living language groups, and 5,000 ethnic groups. In very few countries, can the citizens be said to share the same language or belong to the same ethno-national group. The most recent UNESCO report of the world commission on culture and development

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suggest that the minority issue is indeed a kind of global citizenship. Actually, the last two or three decades have seen more people living across or between national borders than ever before. Open society being adopted by many Western countries is also a major contributing factor, A minority within a majority culture turns us to Hannah Arendt's celebrated phrase "from being engaged into becoming enraged"<sup>ii</sup>. With this situation the problem in many contemporary societies is that of equality and right.

### **Equality, Righty and Identity**

Arendt believes that human beings are members of the same species, to whom life on earth is given under the conditions of natality, plurality, labour, work and action. And from "standpoint of Arendt's philosophical anthropology, all forms of cultural, social and historical differentiations are secondary when measured up against the fundamentals of this condition"<sup>iii</sup>. She rejects the notion of shared identity if that identity is understood as resting on an inherent sameness, be it a shared essence, a shared experience of oppression, or what have you. She removes identity from the realm of political proper to that of social. It remains a question of private affairs rather than that of public. In the light of this, Elizabeth Young-Bruehl has this to say:

*"she felt that the European Jews of her parents and her own generation, being politically inexperienced and failing to distinguish between their social lives and their political lives, had misestimated the threat of political anti-Semitism. Specifically, they had sought social acceptance, assimilation not realizing that this would be worth nothing unless their rights were politically and legally secured".<sup>iv</sup>*

As it is "by marking as inherent qualities the effects of shared historical circumstances radicalized identities serve to naturalize subordination of marginal groups, subjecting them to continuing social control as distinct, transparent and permanent minorities".<sup>v</sup> She insists that identity is not given but it is rather an achievement, the product of action. It is only through entry into the public realm that enables this achievement.

Indeed for her, sameness cannot be the basis for any political action because the "unitedness of many into one is basically antipolitical; it is the very opposite of the togetherness prevailing in political...communities...from the view point of the

world and the public realm, life and death and everything attesting to sameness are non-worldly, antipolitical, truly transcendent experience".<sup>vi</sup>

Arendt believes strongly that all communication and action in concert would be unnecessary, even superfluous, if we were all the same; because if we are all the same, everyone would immediately intuit the needs, wants, hopes, aspirations and dreams of others, for they would be the same as one's own needs, wants, hopes and dreams. Hence "the very fact that communication and concerted action are necessary in political life indicates the truth of the claim that sameness - and, thus, any notion of group identity and/or solidarity that is predicated on an appeal to an inherent sameness - is antipolitical"<sup>vii</sup>. But another side of this issue is that communication and action in concert would be totally impossible if we were all radically different. That is to say if we have no commonalities whatsoever. So communication and action in concert depend on some sort of commonality between individuals; without that commonality, I would be impossible to formulate political goals and/or achieve them".<sup>viii</sup>

### **Dialectical relation between identity, equality and distinction**

Arendt makes a statement, which seems to place her at the middle position on the issue of identity when she asserts:

*"Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood. Signs and sounds to communicate immediate, identical needs and wants would be enough".<sup>ix</sup>*

Here we see that Arendt rejects the idea that bases political action on an appeal to sameness, while at the same time she insists that we cannot understand political action at all if we abandon any and all notions of commonality among actors. In this manner, she highlights the dialectical relationship between equality and distinction, commonality within difference. For her all action involves this dialectical relationship because it is an unchangeable aspect of the human condition in that "we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live".<sup>x</sup> Therefore, according to Arendt's

train of thought, action in the political sphere always involves both appearing before our equals and revealing ourselves as unique, distinct persons. It both individuates and establishes relationships that sets us apart and binds us together. For this reason, it seems clear that Arendt would refuse to accept the terms of the identity-politics debate, opting instead for an account that stresses the dialectical relationship between identity/non-identity, commonality/difference, and equality/distinction. So far, we have concentrated our efforts in dealing with Arendt's discussion of the human condition. The essence of the human condition of freedom and action is plurality. It is a characteristic of the human condition of plurality that we are both set apart and at the same time bound together through action.

### **Identity Politics/ Intermediate zone of group identity**

Let us now focus our attention to identity politics; what we may call politics of difference, or what Nancy Fraser calls "the intermediate zone of group identity".<sup>xi</sup> This zone is the intermediate between the universal level of the human condition and the particular level of the unique individual. In this zone, we deal with,

*"people as members of collectivities or social groups with specific cultures, histories, social practices, values, habits, forms of life, vocabularies of self-interpretation and narrative traditions".<sup>xii</sup>*

It is actually in this zone that we discuss Arendt and Kymlicka's position on the issue of multi-national and poly-ethnic society.

The dialectic of commonality and difference present in Arendt's account of the human condition plays major role in her reflections on ethnic/group identity. For example, in her address on accepting the Lessing Prize of the Free City of Hamburg she illuminates some of the implications of her account of plurality and action for her conception of group identity. There, Arendt claims,

*"the basically simple principle in question here is one that is particularly hard to understand in times of defamation and persecution: the principle that one can resist only in terms of the identity that is under attack. Those who reject such identifications on the part of a hostile world may feel wonderfully superior to the world, but their superiority is then truly no longer of this world; it is the superiority of more or less well-equipped cloud-cuckoo-land".<sup>xiii</sup>*

Arendt believes that to "accept some people for their humanity by over looking their social identity, is not to respect difference".<sup>xiv</sup> One can be respected as a human being and still be hated as a Jew. Hence the principle that one can resist only in terms of the identity that is under attack. She maintains the same position in a 1964 interview in a German television. She says "if one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew. Not as a German, not as a world-citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of man, or whatever".<sup>xv</sup> When she speaks of "a Jew", she does not mean "a special kind of human being but rather a political fact"<sup>xvi</sup>. Moreover, responding "in terms of identity under attack" means challenging interpretations of that fact, not denying its worldly reality".<sup>xvii</sup> At this juncture what we regard as Susan Bickford's classic description is apt. Referring to Arendt's thought on identity under attack she says:

*"Although she defended a conception of the world in which there were firm distinctions between what should be private and what public, Arendt recognized that worldly conditions may require actions that are perverse in those terms; the political importance of social identities may vary with the conditions under which one lives. Speaking as "a Jew" was a necessity brought about by the existence of totalitarian regimes who used social identities to determine not only who could be citizens, but who could live as human beings on earth. Under such conditions, Arendt could only resist "in terms of identity under attack". Not surprisingly, she could only regard the necessity of such resistance with something like regret".<sup>xviii</sup>*

However, for her, identity is not something internal. She conceives identity as something created through being present in the public sphere. This identity "takes seriously the political significance of the connection between "what" and "who" we are; it obscures neither our distinctiveness, nor our location in the world".<sup>xix</sup> That means, as "a political actor, I do not require a mask that conceals these givens; I require from others an attentiveness to what I do with them, a listening and a looking flexible enough to perceive my activity. Indeed, political equality for Arendt is the very opposite of social homogeneity and it is the latter that she fears is being manifested in demands of integration in multicultural society. It undermines the conditions of plurality that makes citizenship possible. Moreover, it makes common world of plurality, the condition for political life of citizens impossible. Also, it tries to create a common will rather than a common world. In multicultural society, "one reason not to abolish social discrimination Arendt argues is that it is an important factor in preserving group formation in large-scale societies".<sup>xx</sup> In mass society all group distinctions and interests have disappeared,

and thus distinction is an important mechanism for preserving plurality, even when it inevitably entails social discrimination.

Hence for Arendt, social equality undermines plurality and produces sameness. This being the case, demands for equality lead to the loss of plurality that is typical of the modern public world. In this respect, she saw social exclusion not only as an inevitable result of spontaneous, free association, but also as a positive mechanism for preserving diversity in large-scale, mass society. But more than in terms of the positive and intrinsic value of diversity, Arendt argues that sameness undermines the conditions of genuine plurality that is manifested most completely in politics. According to James Bohman:

*"Arendt opposed all political theories and philosophical ideas that she thought undermined such politics of plurality, and here she included not only the traditions emphasis on "rulership" but more important the theories of Marx and Rousseau who dangerously advocated norms of unanimity and equality and replaced politics with social concerns of household management in the form of bureaucratic institutions" <sup>xxi</sup>*

For the same political reason, Arendt opposed all historical trend to produce homogeneity rather than plurality including demands for natural communities of race and ethnicity, as well as the communities of religion and other authorities that demand creedal unanimity and a united will. According to her vision of politics, "citizens are held together not by a common will but by a common world, by sharing a set of worldly institutions". <sup>xxii</sup>So citizenship is not a matter of people having enough similar beliefs and desires, or even some minimal "overlapping consensus", but of the plurality of different persons inhabiting a common public space together. People can act in concert only by maintaining their plurality in their common action. The political mechanism here is the free and plural consent of all citizens who both generate, share and limit power by acting together. Joanne Cutting-Gray supports Arendt by emphasising the aspects of her that "focus on difference, and attempts to draw out of these aspects a 'politics of alterity'"<sup>xxiii</sup>. Hence, she "praises Arendt for realising that 'difference is our human condition', and claims that Arendt's "alterity" reconceived in terms of multiplicity opens the possibility for the community of plurality, a coalitional politics based on difference"<sup>xxiv</sup>. Cutting-Gray bases much of her argument for supporting non-identitarian view of Arendt from her analysis of the following passage from *The Human Condition* which we have quoted before:

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*"While all human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically the condition - not only the conditio sine qua non, but the conditio per quam - of all political life.... Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live " .xxv*

Cutting-Gray gives a striking interpretation of the above citation as meaning: "we are both infinite and yet particular, possessing 'the paradoxical plurality of unique human beings'. It is Paradoxical because we are indefinable unrepresentable, contingent yet particular; unique but not self-made because we are shape in concert with others".<sup>xxvi</sup> Furthermore she contrasts her interpretation of the above passage with what she calls an 'essentialist concept of our being', which she takes as being really a form of identity.

*"The Arendtian account of our being is to be preferred over the essentialist one, according to Cutting-Gray, because identity reduces all to a false unity, the projecting and controlling self; plurality multiplies our sense of the great variety of the world and in exchange grants us our own uniqueness " .xxvii.*

Over and above all, we think that what Arendt means by plurality is that we are all the same, that is human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as *anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live*. Put in other words, there is a dialectical tension between identity and non-identity, between sameness and difference, at the heart of Arendt's definition of plurality. In any case, for her identity based on sameness, shared fix essence is antipolitical. Identity is achieved in the public space of action and speech not assumed in advance.

Again in a multicultural society, a question of the right of participation is always in the fore. Arendt vehemently insists that "rights are tied to specifically political goods and action and therefore could never be natural" <sup>xxviii</sup>.

*"We become 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 emerge who had lost and could not regain these rights because of new global political situation.... The right that corresponds to this loss and that was never even mentioned among the human rights cannot be expressed in the categories of the Eighteenth century because they presume that rights spring immediately from 'nature' of man".<sup>xxix</sup>*

We recall to mind that for her the political is specifically human creation and rights are human-made, just like everything political. Her understanding of rights entails that they cannot be universal. For her, we do not have rights simply by the virtue of our being human. She speaks of equal rights of access to the public world, her "right to have rights"<sup>xxx</sup>. Or better the right of individual to belong to humanity, which she maintains should be guaranteed by humanity itself. Frank Michelman observes that:

*"As matters have actually developed the having of rights depends on receipt of a special sort of social recognition and acceptance - that is, of one's juridical status within some particular concrete political community. The notion of a right to have rights arises out of modern-statist conditions and is equivalent to the moral claim of a refugee or other stateless person to citizenship, or at least juridical personhood, within the social confines of some law-dispensing state"* <sup>xxxi</sup>.

From the above illuminating observation of Frank Michelman we may in line with Seyla Benhabib, ask: But what kind of a moral claim is the one advanced by the refugee and the asylant, the guest worker and the immigrant to be "recognised" as a member? What kind of a right is entail in the "right" to have rights?

As a matter of fact, Arendt's famous thesis of "right to have rights" can be interpreted as supporting the argument that specific rights are to be decided publicly and politically. Against "natural rights" theorists, whose presuppositions illustrate another instance of determining the political from a ground outside itself, Arendt maintains that "rights" are themselves a topic of political debate and hence the primacy of freedom in her conception of the political. It follows therefore that without being able to participate in the common world and to have equal footing and standing within it, the abstract "right of man" have no reality. Without this right to have rights, we are deprived of a place in the world that makes opinions significant and actions effective. The crucial question remains whether exclusion rather than mutual recognition is more effective mechanism for maintaining diversity and plurality? We shall come back to this question after we have examined the position of Kymlicka on multicultural citizenship.

### **Politics and cultural difference**

As a result of the immigration in late twentieth century, many countries are being challenged by politics of cultural difference. Many people see the new trend in



politics as a threat to liberal democracy. In his view, many Western democracies are presently 'multinational' and 'polyethnic' states. In USA for example, national minorities include "the American Indians, Puerto Ricans, the descendants of Mexicans (Chicanos) living in the southwest when the United States annexed Texas, New Mexico, and California after the Mexican War of 1846-48, native Hawaiians, the Chamorros of Guam, and various other Pacific Islanders".<sup>xxxii</sup> Canada involves "the federation of three distinct national groups (English, French and Aborigines)".<sup>xxxiii</sup> Obviously a nation-state can be both multinational and polyethnic. For example, apart from containing the aforementioned national minorities, the USA contains many immigrant ethnic groups such as Japanese-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Israeli-Americans etc.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Kymlicka tries to show that many but not all the demands of ethnic and national groups are consistent with liberal principle of individual freedom and social justice. The increasingly multicultural nature of modern societies has given rise to many new issues and conflicts, as ethnic and national minorities demand recognition and support for their identity. The term "minority" here refers not to a group's numerical strength in the population but to groups that are marginalized or disadvantaged in some way. He sees the groups as being motivated by hatred, intolerance, not justice, and have no interest in treating others with good will. Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Biafra of Eastern Nigeria are reminders of the injustices, which have been committed in the name of ethnic and national differences; from "racial segregation and religious pogroms to ethnic cleansing and genocide".<sup>xxxv</sup> Kymlicka notes that disputes over local autonomy, the drawing of boundaries, language rights, and naturalisation policy have engulfed much of the regions in violent conflict. Thus modern liberal-democratic nation-states have developed in the context of the struggle of various subordinate groups to overcome domination by other groups based on differences of religion, class, nationality, race, ethnicity and gender. Today the liberal creed claims to possess the entire moral, epistemological, and political resources required to expose and eliminate inter-group domination, intolerance, and injustice. Liberalism's egalitarian doctrine of human dignity and universal rights of citizenship seems to suffice for this purpose. It promises to treat all groups in society as equal before the law while freeing individuals to affirm their own particular cultural, religious, or ethnic needs and identities in the private sphere, without prejudice or disadvantage.

Yet contemporary liberal-democratic societies remain torn by persistent division and conflicts between racial, ethnic, and national groups. These divisions raise doubts about the link between liberal individualism and the promise of social justice. How are we to understand this phenomenon? Does the persistence of disenfranchised and marginalized groups simply embody the chasm between ideals and reality - to be closed by a more consistent practice of liberalism? Or does it reflect a more fundamental chasm within liberal ideals themselves - to be closed by a revision of liberalism, or some new post-modern political conception? The persistence of this question, and the new discourse of multiculturalism it has inspired, mark a crises in contemporary political understanding.

### **Multicultural Politics**

In his book on multicultural citizenship published in 1995, Kymlicka discusses these central issues in multicultural politics. He tries to show that certain sorts of collective rights for minority cultures are consistent with liberal-democratic principles. That standard liberal objection to recognising such rights on grounds of individual freedom, social justice, and national unity can be answered. In the light of this, no single formula could be applied to all groups. Moreover, that needs and aspirations of the immigrants are very different from those of the indigenous peoples and national minorities. He advances a clear, powerful, rigorous, and plausible argument concerning how we should understand and resolve this troubling historical predicament. This is a crucial move to demonstrate the inextricable link between cultural membership and the freedom of Citizenship, which suggests that culture is crucial to and necessary for individual freedom. He argues (1) that liberalism needs to be revised to make room for various group rights, alongside individual rights, and (2) that liberalism can be revised in this way without jeopardising either individual rights or fundamental liberal ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. Indeed, Kymlicka contends that for all liberal democratic states, that contain national and ethnic minorities , these liberal ideals can be actualised only if various 'group-differentiated'<sup>1</sup> rights are properly recognised and protected. This argument favours minority protection (in form of special rights) within the liberal philosophical doctrine. According to him, special rights are sometimes needed in order to preserve the threatened identities of minority groups (such as national and ethnic minorities).

Within the liberal tradition, justice requires political guarantees of individual freedom and equality. Kymlicka argues that in nation-states that contain national

and ethnic minorities - so-called 'multinational and 'polyethnic' states, our freedom and equality require and therefore justify group rights. Kymlicka's key move is to reread the liberal ideal of individual freedom to show that it requires persons' access to a culture which provides them with options that are meaningful and valuable to them, given who they are and how they identify themselves.

Liberals grant "certain basic rights and freedoms to individuals in order to enable them to lead lives of their own choosing, in accordance with their own beliefs and values, which they are free to question and revise as they see fit"<sup>xxxvi</sup>. The liberal ideal is classically read to require the absence of coercive impediments - oppressive laws and others' interference. With the democratic and welfare state tradition, the ideal is reread to require the additional presence of certain enabling resources and policies - education, health-care, income, employment, and etc.

His argument is based on a specific view of cultures. In his opinion, cultures should be seen as contexts of choice for individual human beings. That is, one's embeddedness within a culture is a precondition for individual autonomy. For Kymlicka, " freedom further requires the access of persons to a framework of options or choices which are meaningful and valuable to them, and that in turn requires persons' access to an appropriate societal culture"<sup>105</sup>. By 'societal culture' he means common language, institutions, customs, practices, and traditions - a shared way of life for people living within certain territorial boundaries, which reaches "across the full range of human activities"<sup>106</sup>. Access to such a culture provides persons with cultural identity, a sense of who they, and others they identify with are, and thus a framework of shared meanings, values, and projects sufficient for meaningful options and choices. Someone standing outside any such societal culture - permanent stranger in a strange land - might be formally and materially free yet be unfree to do anything, or much of anything, that mattered to him or her, or anyone else, which is precisely to lack meaningful options. But if Kymlicka reasonably insists that freedom require access to a societal culture, will any such culture do? Kymlicka argues that "national and, to a lesser degree, ethnic minorities acquire access to their own societal cultures"<sup>xxxvii</sup>.

For contemporary liberalism, the importance of societal culture to freedom is non-problematic, a taken-for-granted background condition. This rests on the assumption that there is but one important dominant societal culture in each liberal nation-state that is both accessible and appropriate to all individuals who will but embrace it and learn its ways. More accurately, liberalism can recognise

problems of access, rooted in prejudice and discrimination - which it hopes to eliminate, on the assumption that 'the' societal culture, once accessible to all, is appropriate for all majorities and minorities alike. Liberalism can thus acknowledge the importance of societal culture as a background condition of individual freedom. But with one dominant societal culture, and one national identity, doing all the necessary work for freedom, 'culture' understandably falls by wayside, outside the equation of freedom for liberalism. This is the picture Kymlick's work seeks to discredit. For him, national minorities, as he has defined them, possess their own societal cultures - distinct from the dominant societal culture of the nation-state as a whole. Let us note that on his definition, a national minority is a group where members presently embrace a distinct cultural identity - an identification of self with separate societal culture (language, institutions, customs, etc.) inherent in its historical origins as an independent people and nation. While this separate cultural identity can change and indeed dissolve over time, it is a slow, painful process; and not one that should be reasonably expected of or forced on, a national minority, through a politics of assimilation, discrimination, or benign neglect.

Kymlicka maintains that the "nation groupings provide a domain of freedom and equality, and a source of mutual recognition and trust, which can accommodate inevitable disagreement and dissent about conception of the good in modern society".<sup>xxxviii</sup>

For him each ethnic group should be included in the mainstream of economic, academic and political life of the society. Talking about the case of Africans in multicultural American nation he says:

*"The situation of African-Americans, therefore is unusual. They were not allowed to integrate into the mainstream culture; nor were they allowed to maintain their earlier languages and cultures, or to create new cultural associations and institutions. They did not have their homeland or territory, yet they were physically segregated"*<sup>xxxix</sup>.

We can see now that Kymlicka holds the view that "freedom is intimately linked with and is dependent on culture"<sup>xl</sup> in a multination state. He means that giving the close relationship between culture and freedom, measures of cultural protection can be allowed without necessarily restricting freedom.

In his view, Kymlicka, established societal cultures are the source of meaningful options, freedom and identity - all to the good. In reality, societal cultures are also the source of prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, hatred, and *violence - not just between* groups, but within them as well - all to the bad. Societal cultures can be enemies of the very freedom and justice to which Kymlicka appeals in his defence of the need to protect such cultures. After all, this is why liberals are typically suspicious of groups, with their local, particularistic cultures, loyalties, and identities. The question that follows from the above is, can Kymlicka really succeed in providing a liberal justification of special protections for non-liberal cultures that restrict or undermine the very freedom and equality to which his justification appeals? This crucial question makes us not to endorse completely Kymlick's proposals for differentiation "since the strength of his proposal is also its weakness". We can say that Kymlicka's idea articulates the theoretical conception of multicultural public sphere, which encourages discursive approach to democratic cultural pluralism that involves language rights, education, recreation, identity and other socio-economic issues. This is the type of public sphere that takes care of recent contemporary countries that have "adopted more tolerant and pluralistic policy which allows and indeed encourages groups to maintain various aspects of their ethnic heritage".<sup>xli</sup> For this, Kymlicka deserves our compliment. His idea is an important tool for addressing many multicultural societies characterized by internal conflicts and disagreements. For example, my country Nigeria is a multinational and multiethnic nation brought together under the British colonial rule in 1914. About two hundred and fifty different ethnic and cultural groups make up this country with a population of about 122,000,000 people. The Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo are the three major dominant ethnic groups. Others like the Ogonis, Efiks, and the Ijaws belong to the numerous minority ethnic groups. The Ogonis in particular have been waging a fierce struggle for some years now to assert their minority right and a separate entity within Nigeria nation, "while the Igbos"<sup>113</sup> are demanding for autonomy and self-determination. So Kymlicka's theory of group rights and identity can be explored and appropriated in solving our problems of group identity in Nigeria. It can therefore help to shed more light on how to restructure and build the foundation for stable and prosperous multicultural and multiethnic federalism in Nigeria.

On the other hand, Arendt's theory appears to have too little or nothing to offer in case of identity laden conflict that we witness today in many multinational democratic societies. So we can say that for her, to "saddle politics with welfare

issues is utterly futile, because politics and political institutions cannot successfully address such issues".<sup>xlii</sup> Her notion of purified praxis and rigorous distinction between the social and the political, the private and the public, the instrumental and communicative or deliberative has a fatal weakness. Indeed, Richard Bernstein states,

*"the distinction between the social and the political engenders self-contradiction at the heart of her theory. For how are we to take serious a political theorist who insist that each person must be given opportunity to participate, but who turns a blind eye to the problem of how to create, through political means, the condition that would help guarantees this opportunity?"<sup>115</sup>.*

Unlike Kymlicka, Arendt's idea of freedom fails to address the issue of persistent social inequalities and deep conflicts with majority culture that face the minorities. So giving the fact that the increasingly multicultural fabric of modern societies has given rise to many new issues and conflicts, as ethnic and national minorities demand recognition and support for their cultural identity, she fails to capture the central issues in multicultural public sphere. For example, during the early Sixties Arendt found herself embroiled in the dispute over racial segregation especially in Little Rock, Arkansas. She felt that there was need to carefully distinguish between the political and the social dimensions of the situation in order to tackle that contemporary problem.

Clearly on constitutional grounds Blacks deserved equal treatment under law, and they should not be denied equal access to public institutions. Social groups organised in America along lines of profession, income and ethnic origin were discriminatory by nature. Arendt holds that social discrimination, manifest in social groupings, is an important barrier against mass society; that is a society in which group distinctions and interests have disappeared. Commenting on her idea on the Little Rock, James Bohman says:

*"Arendt's narrow version of political equality ignored the fact that segregation also produced a situation in which African Americans could initiate political action and deliberation.... For this reason her arguments in favour of maintaining social discrimination as a bulwark against mass society ring false in a racist society, because there is no common sphere of citizenship and plurality that is needed to be preserved and protected from inroads of social equality"<sup>xliii</sup>*

Arendt is not sensitive to minority rights in modern multicultural democratic states as we have them today in many countries of the world. Thus her

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"*Reflections on Little Rock*" published in *Dissent* in 1959, met with serious opposition and rejection from the minority Jews. This controversy is merely a prelude to one to come over her book on the trial of "Adolph Eichmann".

In the same line of thought, Dana R. Villa observes that the "insistence upon self-containedness of action results in an apparently untenable and misguided attempt to sever the public from the private, political from the social".<sup>xliv</sup> Even if one could possibly separate these complexly intertwined strands, what would be left for citizens to talk about once such "extrapolitical" topics as wage, justice, racial and gender inequalities, language rights, cultural and group identities, social welfare and environmental issues are excluded from the public. Also, Hanna Pitkin expresses the frustration of many readers of Arendt's concept of political freedom when she asks, "What keeps these citizens together as a body? What is it that they talk about in the endless palaver of the agora?"<sup>xlv</sup>

So we contend that any concept of freedom that will fit the contemporary man has to be aware of the prevalent and disturbing dilemmas of difference in modern politics of pluralism and multiculturalism. Democratic pluralism is difficult to achieve and even hard to maintain, it means coming in terms with and more important, even compromising with people not only with whom we "reasonably disagree", but also with the very groups we may even morally abhor. If the public world has truly many-sided opinions, and the society contains citizens in democratic and pluralistic politics within these vibrant spheres, then members of plural groups with different points of view and cultural backgrounds should be given opportunity to be involved in the public sphere and also to engage in a shared political life of common citizenship. What it means is a situation of non-discrimination based on ethnicity, colour, gender etc; and when this situation fails to obtain in a politic then it brings political unrest. A case in point is the situation in the Middle East. Badi Hasisi and Ami Pedahzur made a point that is worth mentioning in this context. According to them,

*"Arab Israelis, similar to other ethnic minorities in countries all over the -world, are subject to the centralist effect of the state. Violence committed by a minority group often finds its roots in the strong feelings of discrimination springing from policies of exclusion practiced by the state...the state can regulate levels of violence by adjusting its policies and principally by adopting a more inclusive policy towards the minority"*.

We can deduce from the above citation that a policy that supports the exclusion of the variety of groups be it ethnic, religious, gender-based from the public sphere intensifies the minority's feels of discrimination by so doing. In our contemporary multi-ethnic, multi-national and multi-religious society the policy of inclusion should be a more moderate and acceptable political strategy. Politically speaking, "it appears that a dominant factor in the transition of political systems, to a genuine democracy is indeed the inclusion of peripheral minority, and especially ethnic groups, whom are structurally prevented from political engagement both symbolically and practically".<sup>xlvi</sup> It is evident that many conflicts between ethnic and religious groups may be traceable to discrimination policy. The most recent examples are civil wars and/or disturbances in the Middle East, Kosovo, Macedonia, Sudan and Northern Ireland. According to J. Yishai,

*"The source of violence in a minority group often finds its roots in strong feelings of discrimination owing to policies of exclusion practiced by the state. Therefore, the formula for preventing the outbreak of political violence among the minority can at least be partially found in the expansion of practices of inclusion and the diminishment of strategies of exclusion"*.

This supports our argument that in the modern society of ours, inclusion rather than exclusion as Arendt maintains in Little Rock issue in pretence that it destroys plurality is a more acceptable mechanism. To ignore this phenomenon would tantamount to a disregard of contemporary political fact. Bonnie Honig throws her support on our view by remarking:

*"I endorse Arendt's concern about the homogenizing effects of an identity-politics. But I depart from her in arguing that since political action is always imbricated in identitarian issues and assumptions, it is more effective to engage and interrupt established identities agonistically than to insist in a separatist way, as Arendt does, on their fixity or privacy".<sup>xlvii</sup>*

By and large, her conception of the content of politics is highly exclusive. Her idea of political exclusion leaves an important lacuna in contemporary political set-up unfilled. For in a discriminatory polity, not all voices will be given opportunity to be heard and not all people will be allowed to enter the political arena. But facts do not support this view. To be sure, Western experiences suggest that inclusion rather than exclusion policies can help build the foundation for stable and prosperous multi-cultural and multi-ethnic democracies.



## Conclusion

So for Arendt, identity politics is antipolitical and cannot produce proper political freedom. But according to Kymlicka identity politics is not a stumbling block to freedom, for liberal democratic principles can still obtain in a multicultural arrangement. Consequently, "Arendt's conceptualization of identity politics (Politics of difference) does not capture the way modern multicultural public sphere is structured"<sup>124</sup>. On pragmatic political grounds, it shows that it is not suitable for our complex plural societies. In fact her view does not fit into modern national and international political realities. Hence, if her conception of political freedom is to be critically useful to the challenges of our time, it must be expanded to take into account the multinational citizenship which is, an irreducible dimension of politics in the modern world. Therefore, I beat drums with Kymlicka by submitting that his philosophy of political could be evoked to address multicultural and multiethnic nature of our societies and their complex problems. With it we can enter into multinational multicultural and multiethnic dialogue aimed at willful respect for indigenous people and their inalienable Human right as it is to be the owners of their own destiny.

## Endnote

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<sup>i</sup> BEBHABIB, S.10

<sup>ii</sup> ARENDT H, *On violence*, (New York: Harcourt,Brace & World , 1969) , 65

<sup>iii</sup> BENHABIB, S,. 8

<sup>iv</sup> YOUNG-BRUEHL, E, "Hannah Arendt for the love of the Worl (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 319

<sup>v</sup> HONG, B (ed). "Introduction: The Arendt Question in Feminism in "Feminist Interpretation of Hannah Arendt", ( Pennsylvania State Press, 1995). 6

<sup>vi</sup> ARENDT H *The Human Condition*, ( university of Chicago Press, 1958), 214-215

<sup>vii</sup> ALLEN A, "Arendt and feminist theory", *philosophy and social criticism*, vol. 25. No. 1., 107

<sup>viii</sup> ALLEN A, "Arendt and feminist theory

<sup>ix</sup> ARENDT H *The Human Condition*, ,175-176

<sup>x</sup> ARENDT H *The Human Condition*, 8

<sup>xi</sup> ALLEN, A, ALLEN A, *Arendt and feminist theory*, 108

<sup>xii</sup> FRASER, N. "Towards a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity", *Praxis International*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1986, pp. 425-429

<sup>xiii</sup> ARENDT H, *Men in Dark Times*, ( A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & company, 1968), 18

<sup>xiv</sup> BERNASCONI, R, "The Jewish Question" (Review), *Continental Philosophy*, (kluwer Academic Publications, vol. 32, No. 4, 1999), 476

<sup>xv</sup> KIHN, J, (ed.) *Essays in Understanding*, (New-York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 11-12

<sup>xvi</sup> ARENDT H, *Men in Dark Times*,17-23

<sup>xvii</sup> ARENDT H. *Men in Dark Times* 23. )

<sup>xviii</sup> BICKFORD, S. "In the presence of others: Arendt and Anzaldua on the Paradox of Public Appearance" in: *Feminists Interpretation of Hannah Arendt*, 326

- <sup>xix</sup> For Hannah Arendt, “Man has no substance (*Substanz*); he consists in the fact that he is. We cannot inquire into the What of man the way we can into the What of a thing. We can only inquire into the Who of man
- <sup>xx</sup> ARENDT H *The Human Condition*
- <sup>xxi</sup> ARENDT H. *The Human Condition* 60
- <sup>xxii</sup> CANOVAN M, Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought, (Cambridge University Press, 1995),. 226
- <sup>xxiii</sup> ALLEN, A, Arendt and feminist theory 104
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Ibid. see also J. CUTTING-GRAY, “Hannah Arendt, Feminism, and the Politics of Alterity: what Will We Lose if we Win”? (*Hypatia*, vol. 8, no. 1 1993),, 41
- <sup>xxv</sup> ARENDT H *The Human Condition*, 7-8
- <sup>xxvi</sup> CUTTING GRRY, J., 47
- <sup>xxvii</sup> CUTTING GRRY
- <sup>xxviii</sup> MCGOWAN, J., Hannah Arendt: An Introduction (University of Minnesota Press, 1998). 25
- <sup>xxix</sup> ARENDT H *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966.), 176-177
- <sup>xxx</sup> ARENDT H *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 298
- <sup>xxxi</sup> MICHELMAN, F. “Praising ‘The Rights’,” in: *Constellations*. An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory, vol. 3, no 2, 1996, pp. 200-209
- <sup>xxxii</sup> KYMLICKA, W, *Multicultural Citizenship*, (Clarendon, Oxford Press),. 11
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> KYMLICKA, W, 12
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> KYMLICKA, W 13-17
- <sup>xxxv</sup> KYMLICKA, W, 93. Cf. Ojukwu, E. *The Ahiara Declaration*, (*The Principles of the Biafran Revolution*) Mark Press, Geneva, Switzerland, 1969, p. 28. Here Emeka Ojukwu says, “The Biafran Revolution stands firmly against genocide – against any attempt to destroy a people, its security, its right to life, property and progress. Any attempt to deprive a community of its identity is abhorrent to the Biafran people. Having ourselves suffered genocide, we are all the more determined to take a clear stand now and at all times against this crime”.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> KYMLICKA, W 80-82
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> KYMLICKA, W. 84-90
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> . KYMLICKA 105-106
- <sup>xxxix</sup> . KYMLICKA, W 24
- <sup>xl</sup> . KYMLICKA, W 75
- <sup>xli</sup> KYMLICKA, W 14
- <sup>xlii</sup> KYMLICKA, W
- <sup>xliii</sup> ANOWAI E., The Concept of Political Freedom: Hannah Arendt and the Dilemma of Non Polical World of Socio-Economic Realm (Doctoral Dissertation, Catholique Universite De Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium)
- xliv** VILLA D. R, Arendt and Heidegger, The Fate of the Political ( Princeton University Press, 1996),76
- <sup>xlv</sup> VILLA D, 36
- <sup>xlvi</sup> VILLA D, 69
- xlvii** BONNIE, B, “Feminist Interpretation of Hannah Arendt, 7