

Second World War, Kristeva was educated by the Dominican nuns and in the Kom-somol alike. An exile from behind the Iron Curtain, Kristeva settled in Paris only to decline the invitation of the University of Chicago to continue the research of René Girard there. However, since 1974 when she published her 'D'Ithaca à New York' in *Promesse*, Kristeva has written on America and lectured as Visiting Professor at Columbia. In a discussion between Philippe Sollers, Marcelin Pleynet and Kristeva entitled 'Pourquoi les États-Unis?' which appeared in the 71/72 issue of *Tel Quel* in 1977, she argues that polyvalence is a distinctive feature of American culture, which proves, however, highly ambivalent: 'It can be said that this polyvalence, that is, the multiplicity of social, ethnic, cultural and sexual groups, of discourse – in brief, the multiplicity of subdivisions that are economic, cultural, political, artistic, and so on – ends up 'ghettoizing' the opposition'.² In her 1993 *Nations without Nationalism*³, Kristeva returns to the exploration of the American experience when arguing that polyvalence did not produce polyphony (her favourite concept derived from the literary criticism of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin) which could prevent America from xenophobia and racism.

Despite federalism and postulates of multiculturalism, it is racism and xenophobia which dominate the United States. Polyphony is a prerequisite, but not a guarantee of a dialogue, not to mention a polylogue. Did the South converse with the North, the East with the West, does a WASP dialogue with a Jew, Afro-American or Hispanic culture with Asian? But a mosaic, a cultural intertextuality is in itself a value. Let us think of the spaces where a monoculture dominates: Central and Eastern Europe where the Holocaust tragically put an end to multiculturalism, the Baltics which when independent desired to build a state of one and only nation. A resentment towards the Russians resulted in their exclusion from citizenship. The 'young' states are then far from welcoming strangers. Investing in its mythic identity, inventing the tradition and monolithic expressions of a 'national spirit' they excel in entrenching themselves against foreign infections. Purity may be soiled by social evil supposed to have come from the outside: an alien pathology and decadence. But resentment is also strong in the United States although its ethnic polyvalent coupled with federalism did persevere against Nazism and Communism while welcoming the refugees from both totalitarianisms.

The United States welcomed the victims of totalitarianism. However, from 1921 on, during and after the Second World War, the admittance of refugees came up against a quota system based on national belonging; as Alvin Johnson, president of the New School and founder of the University in Exile said: 'America kept

² J. Kristeva, 'Why the United States?', translated by Sean Hand, in *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 274.

³ Ead., *Nations without Nationalisms*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993.

her doors closed except for a narrow chink, the quota system. There was a narrower chink, the non-quota visa. Ordained ministers and priests, university professors with regular appointments could enter irrespective of quotas, if an American university invited them if budgets allowed for it. The New School arranged 189 non-quota visas'.⁴ However, it is the United States which literally guides the struggles against totalitarianisms and continued as a singular, albeit restricted haven for thought and art, banned elsewhere. As Arendt wrote in *We, Refugees* the community of European nations collapsed when its weakest member had been cursed; America, in contrast, did not fully open its door then, but did not remain indifferent, either. Restricting the number of immigrants nowadays while at the same time integrating special entrants (without all social benefits), continuing ghettoization and demanding 'positive discrimination' the problems of immigration seem to follow a painful dialectic. On account of the restrictions imposed on immigration in the 1920s, the proportion foreign-born in the total population of the United States declined steadily until it bottomed out in 1965 at a mere five percent, the lowest level since 1830.⁵ American attitudes towards newcomers vary plainly from assimilationism to differentialism, from inclusion to exclusion. Whereas to Europeans the figure of the threatening invading other is invested in Islam, in the Arab nation, the equivalent phenomenon in the US is the English-Only movement in response to the spread of Spanish, as Aristide R. Zolberg and Long Litt Woon argue. Developments of the last three decades constitute a departure from this baseline. A young lawyer and activist of the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund in Los Angeles, daughter of illegal migrant workers who has gone on to Harvard and Berkeley, says what a second-generation immigrant in Berlin or London could never say: 'We (second-generation Mexican immigrants) also feel very strongly that we are American'.

TO REVOLT AND TO RETURN

Let us explore the founding of the American political experience; Hannah Arendt conceptualizes the differences between the American and the French Revolutions.⁶ Revolution as such typifies modernity which undergoes the crisis of a lack of the public sphere (conversely, the Greek *polis*, as idealized by Arendt, favours the public realm). As it is the case with Kristeva who in her recent study

⁴ A. Johnson, *Lest We Forget*, quoted by Judith Friedlander in *The New School Bulletin*, volume 53, number 8, July 1996, pp. 7–8

⁵ On the problems of immigration see Aristide R. Zolberg and Long Litt Woon, *Why Islam is like Spanish? Cultural Incorporation in Europe and the United States*, paper for the International Sociological Association's meeting on 'Inclusion and Exclusion: International Migrants and Refugees in Europe and North America', 5–7 June 1997, New School for Social Research, New York.

⁶ See H. Arendt, *On Revolution*, Viking, New York, 1965.

Le sens et le non-sens de la révolte and in her Nobel Symposium speech⁷ views revolt in its etymological sense of a revival, Arendt equates revolution with a restoration of what is public. Likewise, in her recent book Kristeva traces the etymology of revolt to the primitive forms of *wel and *welu which indicate a voluntary act of protection and wrapping up and evolves towards the semantics of return, circular movement of planets, restitution, recovery. Hence, Kristeva's concept of revolt, revolt against the current collapse of subjectivity, revolt as a reconstruction of memory and of sense. And Arendt's interpretation of revolution as reinstatement of the liberties of the public sphere, if not paradoxically a restoration.

In response to Burke, Thomas Paine calls the French and American Revolutions counterrevolutions, a definition which Arendt explicates as an epitome of the revolutionists' idea of reversion, return, revival. Explicitly, she argues that Paine's objective was to restore the original sense of revolution: when referring to its antonym, he reversed the current events of his time to a past, not a seventeenth-century imaginary state of nature, but a period of history before the submission. What Athens had been in miniature, America would be on a large scale. However, Paine's rights of man had no historical reference to point out to and their novelty unsettled Burke and Paine alike.

Everywhere Paine remains alien. Does he belong anywhere if not to a space of crises, process, revolt? His subjectivity and citizenship is without end, inconclusive, cosmopolitan. A Quaker or a deist of English origin, Paine participated by word and deed in the American Revolution. In turn, the French Republic elected the Anglo-American Thomas Paine to its National Convention. Coming back to the revolution, let us repeat after Arendt that in its first stage revolution fights economic and political oppression; this is where the French Revolution was brought to a standstill when abusing violence and destruction. By contrast, the American Revolution was based on the previously operating local self-governed bodies and, consequently, succeeded in establishing public institutions. Although the bourgeois ideology of economic activity separated Americans from politics, the public has remained a sphere of action and plurality in the United States.

Arendt's and Kristeva's theories of the revolution and of the public space find themselves in the middle of burning issues and topical debates. Between communitarianism and individualism, constructionism and essentialism, so-called left and right, conservatism and postmodernism, inner life and society of the spectacle in political pageantry or on the Internet. We diagnose lack of debating on the global or county level, deficit in representation not to mention participation, in-differ-

⁷ J. Kristeva, *Sens et non-sens de la révolte, Discours direct*, Fayard, Paris, 1996; Julia Kristeva, 'Monstrueuse intimité (de la littérature comme expérience). Communication au Nobel Symposium "Language and Mind", Stockholm' in *L'Infini*, Gallimard, Paris, n 48, Hiver 1994, s. 60.

ence no care for the other or oneself, ban on differences, and instead a uniformization Coca-colonization. But with pop-culture, the motto 'all men are born equal' is exported, together with an insistence on human rights, although sometimes traded for Airbuses. This is the song of American diplomacy, including the cultural diplomacy: multiculturalism, feminism, a new mission of the U.S. satirized, but fortunately bought by the WASPs of the Second World, proud of its own moral majority. Will the U.S., the epitome of Fukuyama's posthistory, continue a global policy or, as John Gray predicts, withdraw into regionalism because of its debt, ethnic violence and shift of power to Asia?

Arendt equates revolution with a restoration of what is public. In its first stage, however, revolution fights economic and political oppression; this is where the French Revolution was brought to a standstill when abusing violence and destruction. By contrast, the American Revolution was based on the previously operating local self-governed bodies and, consequently, succeeded in establishing public institutions. Although the bourgeois ideology of economic activity separated Americans from politics, the public has remained a sphere of action and plurality in the United States. Hannah Arendt analyses the discourse of the Founding Fathers, including that of John Adams who, as Grzegorz Leopold Seidler documents, commented the decline of Poland. It is tempting to juxtapose the American and the Polish political theory and praxis of the eighteenth century; as Norman Davies words it, 'like the slave-owning Fathers of the American Constitution, or the original inventors of democracy in ancient Athens, they [the szlachta] saw no contradiction between a political system based on the liberties of the ruling estate and a social system based on the complete subjugation of the lower orders'. According to Arendt, it is Montesquieu whose thought inspired the American Revolution; remarkably, what Kristeva proposes as a golden mean between nationalism and a lack of national identity is 'esprit général' (as opposed to 'Volkgeist') derived from Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. Thus I wish to explore the problematics of political subjectivity in the writings of Arendt and Kristeva.

The consolidation of a nation-state is a product of the French Revolution as demonstrated by Hans Kohn.⁸ Frankfurt and postmodernist theoreticians emphasize the link of the state with violence; the 1996 Nobel Prize winner, Szymborska encapsulates the process in her coinage *państwo się*, a fusion of 'state' and 'cruelty, maltreatment', rendered by the American translators as 'brutalitarian'. However, the United States do not fit easily into the category of a nation-state and its genesis. Henry Steele Commager's works are an account how the Founding Fathers construct 'practically' overnight' a national commonality of territory, tra-

⁸ H. Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, Macmillan, New York, 1951; cf. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.

dition, and language. ‘The American experience, far from being harmonious with past history, reversed the processes of history.’ Commager analyzes John Adams’s comment ‘Thirteen clocks were made to strike together – a perfection of mechanism which no artist had ever before effected.’ Commager defines the exceptional character of American nationality: ‘in the Old World the nation came before the state; in America the state came before the nation [...] the nation was a product of history. But with the United States, history was rather a creation of the nation, and it is suggestive that in the New World the self-made nation was as familiar as the self-made man’. Cosmopolitans, Arendt and Kristeva, do not reject the very idea of the national, but define a need to keep ‘one’s sights on the twenty-first century, which will be a transitional period between the nation and international or polynational confederations’.

Hannah Arendt’s emphasis is laid on the political thought of Thomas Jefferson who, by popular hearsay, advocated ‘humanitarian reforms’. Indeed Arendt examines Jefferson’s proposal of ‘elementary republics’ which she views as an echo of her idealized *polis*. Towards the end of her book *On Revolution*, the author criticizes party systems and opts for such small social organizations as ‘elementary republics’ which do not alienate the ruling from the ruled.

Here belong such groupings as “the townships and councils of revolutionary America, the populist National Farmers Alliance, the sit-down strikes of the 1930s, the civil rights movement, the soviets of the Russian Revolution, the French political clubs of 1789, the Spanish anarchist affinity groups, the KOR (Workers’ Defense Committee) in Poland, the ‘mothers of the disappeared ones’ in Argentina”.⁹

The Arendtian idea of the councils is embedded in the Jewish tradition. Shlomo Avineri depicts the internal institutions of the Jewish communities in the Diaspora.¹⁰ In the midst of autocratic empires with no representation, self-governing structures appear: here belongs the Council of the Four Lands, the Jewish council held in Lublin.

A number of labels have been used when discussing Arendt’s political stance: for ‘participatory democracy’ (Jürgen Habermas), against it (Sheldon Wolin), ‘skepticism’ (Bonnie Honnig), ‘storytelling from the position of a pariah’ (Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Lisa Jane Disch), ‘conservatism’ (Martin Jay), of ‘feminist post-modern’ tendencies, etc. As Ian Fraser recapitulates, ‘Some have seen the collapse of East European communism as an Arendtian moment of free human action; others see her as a precursor of postmodernism’. A displaced person between 1933 and 1951 when she became American citizen, Hannah Arendt returns to the Old continent in the work of such different philosophers as Habermas and Derrida

⁹ M. G. Dietz, ‘Feminism and Theories of Citizenship’ in *Daedalus*, Fall 1987, p. 18.

¹⁰ S. Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism. The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, Basic Books, New York, 1981.

(witness the former in his 'Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power' and Derrida's recent lecture at Oxford which dealt with lie and referred to Arendt's *Wahrheit und Lüge in der Politik. Zwei Essays*). Kristeva's work is only too easily seen as falling into the category of a feminist postmodernism, which seems a misreading of her thought.

Indeed the works of Arendt and in particular those of Kristeva explore the issues of nationalisms, strangers and cosmopolitanism, which is a critical issue not only in Europe, but also in the United States. Arendt's and Kristeva's is a cosmopolitanism coupled with a respect for singularity.

FROM THE OPEN PSYCHE TO THE OPEN POLIS

The roots of Arendtian and Kristevan thought are to be found in Heraclitus (the philosophy of process), Judaism, the Stoics, Christianity (both Arendt and Kristeva elaborate on Paul and his discovery of interiority as well as on *agape*), Hegel, Freud, Heidegger; e.g. the tradition which is evoked here stands behind the concept of 'polylogue', coined and categorised by Kristeva: Heraclitean, Stoic and Christian 'logos', 'Our God Logos' as the basis of Freudian treatment, the apophatic philosophy of Heidegger (almost all of these theorizations criticized by Derrida for their *logocentrisme*).

The subject as closed, inveterate and identical to itself seems to have dominated philosophy from Aristotle's *hypokeimenon*, Cartesian *cogito*, Kantian "I think" to the schemes of contemporary cognitive sciences. At the other reductionist extreme, postmodernism negates identity while declaring a death of the author or even of the subject. As a middle way, Arendt and Kristeva propose an open-ended, plural and heterogenous subjectivity. 'Arendt's actors do not act because of what they already are, their actions do not express a stable identity; they presuppose an unstable, multiple self that seeks its, at best, episodic self-realization in action and in the identity that is its award'.¹¹ Compare the Kristevan subject-in-process. Both thinkers postulate a development of subjectivity and an access to polyphonic transnational commonalities based on *esprit general*. The Greek *polis* and Jefferson's "elementary republics" are viewed as a space where no discrepancy between subjectivity and the public occurs.

In contrast to a traditional subject without subject and a process without subject (as Habermas calls deconstruction), I would situate the subject-in-process, embedded in the philosophy of Hegel, Heidegger, Arendt and recently theorized by Kristeva: heterogeneous, multiple, bifurcated, transfinite. Plural experiences of cultures favour processive subjectivity, which arguably underlies the notions of

¹¹ B. Honig, 'Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity' in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by J. Butler and J. W. Scott, Routledge, New York 1992, p. 220.

Erlebnis and *Erfahrung* in Hegel and Heidegger and constitutes the realm of being as opposed to belonging. There is a parallelism between the plural experiences of cultures and subjectivities: first and foremost I would like to trace the conceptual history of the two notions, which would lead to epistemological and culturalist conclusions. It is not accidental that ‘there is nothing more indefinite than the word culture’ (Herder) as indeterminacy and ambivalence is inscribed in the very term. Arendt refers to the etymology of culture, to *colere*, ‘take care, tend, preserve, cultivate’¹² only to define culture as an ‘attitude of loving care’. Thus care, crucial in European philosophy from *epimeleia* to *Sorge*, combines in the writings of Arendt with love, which Kristeva continues in her call for a new polyphonic code of love in her study *Histoires d’amour* (1983) and in her recent speech at the Nobel Symposium in Stockholm (1994). Let us also remember that in antiquity care is inseparable from the *psyche*: *psyches epimeleia*, although Foucault in his otherwise insightful chapter on the *culture de soi* omits this aspect. The Greek care for the soul, Roman *cultura animi* as well as religious care for interiority returns in Freud’s *Seelsorge*; in opposition to culture-show, culture-ideology, culture-information, Kristeva postulates a culture of the plurality of experience which encompasses alterity and strangeness.

Both Arendt and Kristeva detect the discovery of subjectivity in monotheist religions as well as openness to the stranger in Judaism and Christianity; compare ‘And if a stranger sojourn with thee in thy land, ye shall not vex him [...] and thou shalt love him as thyself: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt’ (Leviticus 19, 34), the story of Ruth the Moabite, the project of peace in the Prophets (in particular, Isaiah 2:1–4), Paul’s universalism (Colossians 3, 9–11). As Michael Walzer rightly observes, inspired by the Biblical phrase “Do not oppress the strangers, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt”, Kristeva “changes the pronoun, the verb tense, and the geography for the sake of contemporary reiteration: do not oppress the stranger, for we are all strangers in this very land. Surely it is easier to tolerate otherness if we acknowledge the other in ourselves”.¹³

While illuminating the tradition behind plural subjectivity and culture, Arendt’s and Kristeva’s enterprise is to theorize the experience that avoids inveterate identity. Dynamic, polyphonic, inclusive subjectivities follow a polylogic and find themselves in flux far from a monological stability. Human beings actualize in cherishing the strangeness within themselves and in others, which constitutes cultures.

¹² H. Arendt, ‘The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Political Significance’ in *Between Past and Future. Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, Viking Press, New York, 1968, p. 211; cf. Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1952.

¹³ M. Walzer, *On Toleration*, Castle Lecture in Yale’s Program in Ethics, Politics, and Economics, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 89.

The paradox of what she terms sameness in difference is dear to Hannah Arendt: we are the same, that is human, in such a way that no-one is the same who lived, lives or will live. Plurality becomes the not only a *conditio sine qua non*, but also a *conditio per quam* of political life as it exists in the interspaces between people in their diversity.¹⁴ The Arendtian theory of plurality is coupled with the philosophy of what the thinker calls natality, a faculty of beginning anew: everybody is a new stranger in a world which precedes her in time. Hence a gratitude that life has been given. The human being is not only a stranger who arrives in the world, but also someone who has never been here, which guarantees her uniqueness. We are all guests of a common world. The Greek noun *xenos* denotes a 'stranger', 'guest' and a 'host' alike; we owe hospitality to fellow-guests of this world. Here Arendt continues the Stoic, Judaic and Christian cosmopolitanism. In her doctorate *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin* she analyzes the Augustinian formula *Proximus quis? Omnis homo*¹⁵: the response 'Everyone' to the question 'who is a neighbour' is qualified by Arendt as equivocal as it can indicate that everyone is close, next to me, therefore I have no right to choose or judge: all are brothers. But another meaning emerges: everybody is equally close, the matter then is rather the abstract quality of being human which we all share than uniqueness. "I love people because they are people' heedless of "who or what" the neighbour is, regardless of identity.

Although a communitarian Charles Taylor confesses his debt to the Bakhtinian dialogical principle, he retains the traditional concept of identity, albeit immersed in a dialogue with community: 'my own identity critically depends on my dialogical relations with others'.¹⁶ Communitarians are far from admitting the other within oneself, an alterity-within-subjectivity Arendt and Kristeva disclose. Nor do philosophers of dialogue or postmodernists à la Rorty or Bauman who propose solidarity of 'aliens next door' while ignoring the inner alien and intrasubjective conflict. Not only in his Warsaw debate with Habermas and Gellner, Rorty expresses his nostalgia for a Whitmanesque epic of America. Moreover, Rorty makes the word *ethnos* a decisive part of his vocabulary – *ethnos* rather than humanity: not a discovery of my own diversity, but a naive description of 'the inclusion among 'us' of the family in the next cave, then of the tribe across the river, then of the tribal confederation beyond the mountains, then of the unbelievers beyond the seas'.¹⁷ To Arendt and

¹⁴ H. Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1968, p. 31.

¹⁵ Ead., *Love and Saint Augustine*, edited and with an interpretive essay by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, p. 43.

¹⁶ C. Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in *Multiculturalism. Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited by Amy Gutman, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, p. 34

¹⁷ R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 196.

Kristeva, it is the American Enlightenment which is a crucial point of reference while Rorty's vocabulary is that of American Romanticism, although he himself would view his legacy as pragmatist, American pragmatist.

In their political philosophy Hannah Arendt and Julia Kristeva alike proceed from a conceptualization of an open-ended subject to a theorization of a polity of flexibility and plurality. Theirs is an attempt of reconciling opposites: caring for singularity and togetherness: a project of so contradictory an ambition. It would be accused of a two-headedness by Parmenides. When banning any synthesis of contraries, the Eleatic philosopher termed Pythagoreans and Heraclitus 'the two-headed ones'. After them it is the Stoics and monotheisms that desire to conciliate unity and diversity and dream of a citizen of the world. Here joins the transnational Enlightenment, and in particular Kant who propounds the oxymoronic self (*die ungesellige Geselligkeit*) and a perpetual peace of *Foedus Amphictyonum*.¹⁸ This path is taken by Arendt and Kristeva.

In opposition to identity set and stone, the trajectories and writings of Hannah Arendt and Julia Kristeva epitomize open and cosmopolitan subjectivity. In a century when nations and continents tend to fight each other, the two scholars-exiles adopt and adapt the Stoic idea of the cosmopolis: we are the inheritors of all traditions. Both thinkers put forward a theory of an open subject only to arrive at a proposal of an open body politic. Theirs is a project of dynamizing the inner and the public space alike. Arendt and Kristeva fall heir to the Athenian analogy of the psyche and the polis: the political macrocosm follows the human microcosm. Process within and without brings hope for a culture of cherishing the body politic of cosmopolitan singularities. Democracy, a way of life in heterogeneity and plurality, is to attempt a vexed task of cherishing subjectivity in the public life.

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł przynosi próbę komparatystycznego spojrzenia na filozofię polityki Hanny Arendt i Julii Kristevej. Idąc za ateńską analogią psyche i polis, obie myślicielki tworzą teorię podmiotu, a zarazem intersubiektywności – mnogich, otwartych, tyleż swojskich, co obcych. Arendt i Kristeva przeszły przez doświadczenie totalitaryzmu i opisywały go. Totalitaryzmowi przeciwstawiły dziedzictwo Oświecenia amerykańskiego: *constitutio libertatis* jako wielokulturowe Stany Zjednoczone; określiły także wady tego społeczeństwa (gettoizacja). Za ideami obu myślicielek stoi dziedzictwo stoickie, monoteistyczne i oświeceniowe – ich projekt bowiem to rewolta wobec współczesności jako (nie tylko etymologicznie) powrót.

¹⁸ I dwell on the problems of Kantian compromise in 'Kompromis jako tolerancja – Kant, Hegel, Arendt', in *Pluralizm i tolerancja*, edited by K. Wiliński, Maria Skłodowska-Curie University Press, Lublin 1998, pp. 71–81.