

Examining hate speech from the perspective of Arendt's political theory

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Abstract

This paper intends to contribute debate on hate speech from the perspective of political theory derived from Hannah Arendt's theoretical works. Although Arendt does not deal with hate speech head-on, her theory has been selected for this study partly due to the strong emphasis on speech as a precondition for being a part of public life and political being. This study argues that although Arendt would have certain reservations about the restriction of hate speech, her conceptual framework gives us clues about what is wrong with hate speech and at least displays a minimal philosophical criticism of hate speech.

Key words: Hannah Arendt, hate speech, public sphere, publicness.

1. Introduction

With the advent of ever more far-reaching social media networks and international news organizations, hate speech – be it from the mouths of politicians, or one of the many legions of semi-anonymous “keyboard warriors” commenting on online newsfeeds and articles – has become inescapable. It should come as no surprise perhaps then that hate speech has once again become a hot topic in legal circles. The issue of regulating hate speech is a hot potato whenever it occurs, as the issue inevitably involves a clash of even more complex issues, such as the limits of free speech and individual expression on the one hand, and the protection of minorities, and discrimination on the other.

In this study, I would like to discuss the issue from a political theory perspective derived from Hannah Arendt's theoretical works. As interesting as the

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analyses of more practice-oriented scholars and those against all censorship of hate speech, I maintain that Arendt's political theory can contribute to the issue in a unique way. Thus I limit myself to her work. Although Arendt does not deal with hate speech head-on, the study is more concerned with what can be derived from her theory in regards to hate speech. Because she has generated an enormous literature, I will limit my scope to those concepts of hers which can be related with the debates concerning hate speech. In that respect, in addition to the principles of publicness and public sphere, concepts forwarded by Arendt, such as "judgment", "enlarged mentality", "communicability", "*sensus communis*" and "truth claim" can be employed to contribute to the hate speech debate.

Arendt's theory has been selected for this study partly due to her strong emphasis on speech. According to her, speech is a precondition for being a part of political life. Without speech, or expression, an individual cannot be a political being. This being the case, it is important to try to find grounds for the restriction of hate speech with respect to Arendt's theory. I will try to show what can be derived from her theory that points to normative criteria of the disqualification of hate speech from discourse.

In light of her political theory, I will try to present and discuss whether hate speech effectively destroys the pluralistic and egalitarian nature of the public sphere, and explore what the effects on publicness, visibility in public sphere, and speech are, when hate speech occurs. I will also question as to whether hate speech is an obstacle to being active citizen in the public sphere. I will also try to demonstrate the losses we experience as citizens when hate speech enters public debate.

2. Hate speech and its harms

Before delving into the subject in more detail, however, a brief overview of hate speech is due. According to Cortese (2006:3), until the 1980s, hate simply referred quite generally to "any intense dislike or hostility whatever its object". However, the term gained a social dimension after mid-1980s, when it began to be used as that which "characterizes an individual's negative beliefs and especially feelings about the members of some other category of people based on their ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, or physical or mental disability" (Cortese, 2006: 3).

Although there is a diversity of definitions of hate speech, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers defined the concept in a 1997 recommendation as follows (Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, 1997:107):

The term 'hate speech' shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia,

anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.

Briefly, hate speech can be described as any expression that abuses or insults individuals on the basis of characteristics such as race, religion and gender (Heyman, 2008: 164). The concept of hate speech consists of a multiplicity of circumstances which refer to racial based hatred, hatred on religious grounds, and hateful intolerance reflected by nationalism and ethnocentrism. She adds that homophobic speech also falls under hate speech category (Weber, 2009:4).

In the recommendation of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers (1997:107), it was stated that all forms of expressions which "incite racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and all forms of expressions" endanger democratic society, pluralism and cultural diversity. While destruction of democratic society, pluralism and cultural diversity can be seen as the negative consequences of hate speech at a social level, it can also be directly harmful at an individual level. According to Gelber (2002: 83), the specific effects of hate speech are "a limiting of victims' personal liberty, the internalization of discriminatory messages, such that the hearer begins to believe the claims of appropriate inequality, the perpetuation of further acts of subordination and silencing." It is widely accepted that the most significant result of hate speech is the silencing of the victim (Gelber, 2002: 83, Alğan and Şensever, 2010: 16; İnceoğlu and Sözeri, 2012: 24). This is crucial for understanding what is wrong with hate speech at its root, particularly with the Arendtian notion of speech in mind. Delgado (2006: x) also supports this assertion by suggesting that hate speech is "rarely an invitation to dialogue". Rather, it silences and marginalizes the victim, and discourages targeting group to proclaim its voice. In other words, it prevents a diversity of ideas (Delgado, 2006: xii).

3. Hate speech in the context of Arendt's Political Theory

In the light of the overview of hate speech and its harms on victims, Arendt's conceptual framework would contribute to the debate on what is wrong with hate speech.

3.1. Public sphere and the principle of publicness: Twofold reading on hate speech

Arendt regards the public sphere as the ground for the political. The public sphere is constituted as the political space by distinct and equal individuals through speech and action. Acting as equal and distinct citizens, being heard by others, and

sharing a common word with other peers are important characteristics of the public sphere, which is at the heart of Arendt's concept of the political.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt explains the changing face of the public sphere from ancient Greek to modern world. In Greek city states, there was a clear distinction between the *oikos*- the private realm of the household - and the *polis* - the public realm of political life. With the rise of the city-states, the individual began to receive, "besides his private life, a sort of second life - the *bios politicos*" (Arendt, 1958: 24). The emergence of city-states enabled humans to spend their lives in a political realm in harmony with "equals" (Arendt, 1958: 25-32). She adds that the essence of this state in which one was compelled to live among and to have to deal only with one's peers", was freedom by which one could in neither rule nor be ruled (Arendt, 1958: 32-3).

The citizens of the Greek city-states, were conscious that to act in unison through a public sphere shared by equals, was to be preferred over an entirely private life, as this would essentially mean to be "deprived of things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an 'objective' relationship with them that comes from being related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself" (Arendt 1958:58). Thus the concept of the public sphere is best surmised as a community in which one can be seen and heard by equals who shares a common world of things.

For Arendt (1958: 50), the public sphere consists of two "distinct but interrelated" dimensions. The first is the space of appearance, in which "everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody, and has the widest possible publicity". The second dimension of the public sphere is that it represents a common world to the extent that "it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place" (Arendt, 1958: 52). This common world is only possible by its transcendence into immortality; the common world is what we enter by birth and what we leave behind at death; it transcends our life span into the past and the future. The only means of surviving the common world is in the "coming and going of generations to the extent that it appears in public". This meaning of public sphere refers to the "publicity of the public realm" (Arendt, 1958: 55).

However, the subsequent rise of the social realm, "which is neither private nor public", leads to the blurring of this distinction (Arendt, 1958: 28) and results in shrinkage of the public realm (Arendt, 1958: 257; 1972: 178). With the rise of society -"the rise of housekeeping, its activities, problems and organizational devices" (Arendt, 1958: 38)-, the political sphere lost its character of being arena in which people acted and participated in public matters. With the emergence of mass societies, the realm of the social finally reached the point at which it embraced and

controls all members of a given community equally and with equal strength. Since the rise of the social realm, our capacity for action and speech has been corrupted (Arendt, 1958: 49).

For Arendt, political dimension of public realm should be regulated according to the principle of publicness. This principle refers to the condition of being political in public sphere; it is about how the political sphere should be regulated and is related to the question of which ideas, actions or interests are welcome in the public sphere, and which are not. It determines how individuals should conduct themselves in the public sphere, how people can play their part, and – vitally – what should be excluded from the public realm. As Deveci states, only the principle of publicness can enable togetherness of politics and morality. It is also the one that we have to obey when we evaluate political events in terms of true, false, wrong and right. It has also an important contribution in drawing distinction between the political and non-political (Deveci, 2007: 112).

Kant has an important influence on Arendt regarding her conceptualization of publicness. In Kant's moral philosophy, publicness is the "criteria of rightness" (Arendt, 1992b: 49). For Kant, publicness is the "transcendental principle" that should rule all action (Arendt, 1992b: 60). All actions connected with the rights of other men are unjust if their maxims are inconsistent with the principle of publicness. A maxim which cannot be clarified publicly is one whose purpose remains secret and loses its publicity (Arendt, 1992b: 48).

According to Arendt, without publicness, people cannot test their ideas against other people's thinking (Arendt, 1992b: 42). In *The Human Condition*, she defines this principle as "being seen and being heard" (Arendt, 1958: 71). She suggests that "everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody" is the condition for the principle of publicness (Arendt, 1958: 50). At this point, it is the "publicity of the public realm" in which everything appears in the public domain and everybody is seen and heard by others (Arendt, 1958: 55).

Arendt considers restrictions of rights and the destruction of publicness as one of the sources of totalitarianism. Isolated individuals that lose their publicness can easily be part of totalitarianism. "Uprootedness"- which means "to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others – and to be "superfluousness" – not to belong to world at all – have become the characteristics of modern masses since the industrial revolution, and totalitarianism has been grounded in these feelings (Arendt, 1966: 474-475). At this point, the path to totalitarianism is opened by the destruction of publicness and public sphere (Arendt, 1966: 474-475). In other words, totalitarianism emerges when the political space is no longer regulated by the principle of publicness (Birmingham, 1994: 31). In this respect, by destroying the public sphere and isolating human political capacities, one enables the emergence of totalitarian governments (Arendt, 1966:475).

In shaping how the public sphere ought to function, publicness for Arendt, is constituted by equal and distinct citizens. Equality¹ is the most important aspect of public realm. However, victims of hate speech are represented as being no longer equal citizens of the public sphere. Living as distinct and unique individuals is one of the distinctive qualities of human life, yet when hate speech is used, this distinctness is under threat as, as it leads one to question oneself as to whether they do represent equals with others within a plurality. And thus, the egalitarian understanding of the public sphere is the ultimate victim of hate speech.

By destroying publicness and the notion of equality amongst individuals in the public sphere, hate speech is detrimental to individuals' potential for participating in the *bios politicos* by making their contributions to public debate difficult, or undesirable (Arendt, 1958: 12). Their exclusion from debate is the ultimate consequence of this - something Kant would literally describe as "evil" on the basis that, to be forced to live a life in the private realm alone is to be deprived of a truly human life. This is a point echoed by Arendt (1958:58). In this respect, hate speech destroys the uniqueness and plurality which are necessary conditions for the public realm. Hearers of hate speech are intended to be excluded from public sphere and forced to live in a "deprived" area of life. Victims of hate speech are more vulnerable to being deprived of the essentials for human life and necessary relationship with other, and by extension, are deprived of the possibility of achieving immortality.

It is possible to advocate that hate speech is not something that can fully exist in a genuine and pluralistic public realm in that it closes the effectiveness and thus damages the very means of communication and public examination, and also harms the general equality principle of publicness as some people are discriminated against because of their so-called distinct characteristics. We also see that the most crucial elements of publicness are to be seen and heard by others. But when an individual is discriminated against due to certain features and characteristics, she may be inclined to doubt whether these different perspectives can survive together at all, thus undermining not only debate (or further debates), but the very means.

By aiming for the destruction of publicness even in part, it can be claimed that the link between politics and morality in modern society is destroyed. Through its undermining of publicness, hate speech intends to destroy the equality principle of enjoyed by all perspectives in a community, shutting down public deliberation, and destroying people's capacity for being political beings, leading the victims to withdraw from the public sphere entirely. As mentioned, this is at least a step in the direction of totalitarian forms of governance. In this sense, publicness can be

¹ I want to remind that one of the important reason why she approves city states is that in this city states, public realm was constituted by equals. She also approaches critically to mass society because such an understanding of equality id replaced by sameness.

thought as a barrier against totalitarianism. Its maintenance prevents individuals from becoming part of totalitarian regimes. Through its erosion of publicness, hate speech thus poses an affront to the whole system and leads the way to tyranny in which the community of equals is replaced with a narrowing of public debate which forms an essential characteristic of totalitarian regimes.

This is one way of reading hate speech from the angle of the principle of publicness. However, it is also possible to make another reading. The principle of publicness assumes that all opinions should be welcomed in the public realm. In other words, as Deveci (2007: 116) states, there is no view that should be legitimately excluded and supposed as wrong before that view comes to public. This aspect of publicness allows for another interpretation in which there should be no criterion used for exclusion of any speech before its manifestation in the public realm. It can be suggested that the opinion, even if it contains hatred based expression, cannot be marginalized before public debate. Moreover, prevention of expression of hate speech before its manifestation may lead to a disciplined, domesticated, and altogether sterile public sphere which destroys the visibility and spontaneity needed for its survival. From this perspective, restriction on hate speech seems not desirable for Arendt. Therefore, the principle of publicness gives us a twofold reading on hate speech.

3.2. *Can restriction of hate speech be the solution?*

According to Arendt, the peculiarity of the public realm depends on the power of action and speech (Arendt, 1958). Among the human activities, speech and action are the only political ones which together constitute *bios politikos* (Arendt, 1958: 25). Together they “constitute the fabric of human relationships and affairs. Their reality depends upon human plurality, upon the constant presence of others who can see and hear, and therefore testify to their existence” (Arendt, 1958: 95).

For Arendt, speech is *sine quo non* of action², which is the most political human activity (Üstüner, 2006: 31). Action corresponds to the “human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world” and such plurality is the condition of all political life (Arendt, 1958: 7). Action has the

² Action is one of the fundamental human activities in addition to labor and work. These three human activities- action, labor and work- constitutes *vita activa*. Labor is the “activity which corresponds to biological process of human body” (Arendt, 1958: 7) and it refers to humanity as *animal laborans* (Arendt, 1958: 22). On the other hand, work is the activity which corresponds to the “unnaturalness of human activities” and it provides “artificial world of things” (Arendt, 1958: 7) and it refers to humanity as “homo faber” (Arendt, 1958: 22). Because this article deals with the debate on action and speech, and politics is closely related with the action rather than labor and work, the other components of *vita activa* is not included.

highest connection with the human condition of natality and, combined with speech, action articulates natality in that it refers to a capacity for new beginnings.

For Arendt, action cannot be performed without speech. She says that “without the accompaniment of speech, action would lose its subject, which means that there would no longer be an actor”. Thus, speechless action “would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words” (Arendt, 1958: 178-9).

Speech is the capacity that inserts us into the human world; in other words, human beings insert themselves into the public realm through speech (Arendt, 1958: 200). Arendt lauds the concept of the polis as the “most talkative of all body politics” (Arendt, 1958:26). According to Arendt, to be political in the classical sense, was defined as making every decision through words and rhetoric³ (Arendt, 1958: 48) and thus she sees speech as the precondition for being political. Speech is the “decisive distinction between human and animal life” (Arendt, 1958: 205). Benhabib (1992: 126) explains the significance speech holds for Arendt thusly:

Speech differentiates action from mere behavior; the one who speaks is also the one who thinks, feels and experiences in a certain way. The individualization of the human self is simultaneously the process whereby this self becomes capable of action and of expressing the subjectivity of the doer.

Speech corresponds to “the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals” (Arendt, 1958:18). Humans insert themselves into the public realm through speech, and it is the complement of action which makes a human political being. Only speech has a capacity to show the distinctness of individuals (Benhabib, 1992: 126). What speech enables is the recognition of a “plurality” of individuals. Human plurality is the basic condition of speech and it assumes equality and distinction (Arendt, 1958: 175). Acting as unique and distinctive individuals is only possible by the virtue of plurality which is possible through speech. The plurality of individuals is rooted in human equality, i.e. that which refers to the “equality of unequal who stand in need of being equalized in certain respects and specific purposes” (Arendt, 1958: 215). Arendt 1958: 175-6) explains the importance of equality and distinctness:

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 would 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

³ Arendt (1958:48) states that with the rise of social sphere, speech lost its quality in modern world.

neither speech nor action to make themselves understood. Signs and sounds to communicate immediate, identical needs and wants would be enough.

Before continuing to discuss what this means if the speech includes hate, it pays to reflect on the meaning of hate speech for the victim. As has been discussed, one significant effect of hate speech is muting an individual or group; in other words, it silences its intended victim (Gelber, 2002; Alğan and Şensever, 2006; İnceoğlu and Sözeri, 2012). We can see hate speech's impact of silencing in our daily life, too. When sexual, cultural and ethnic minorities in Turkey become the target of hate speech, what is aimed is to maintain their silence. However, this situation is very problematic for Arendt since plurality and the condition of political life are provided by speech. However, by rendering them speechless, the plurality of human beings is also destroyed. With the destruction of speech, the individual's potential for being political is also destroyed. If hate speech deprives someone of using speech, she/he is also deprived of being part of the public realm, too. We also saw that for Arendt, life without speech is essentially a death, and it ceases to be a human life worth living. The fact that hate speech makes its hearers speechless means that victims of hate speech no longer pursue a goal of human life; they are as though dead, because their ability to speech is destroyed.

Arendt herself makes an important comment on the speechless in referring to violence. According to her, "violence makes mute" (Arendt, 1958: 26); in other words, violence is the "acting without argument or speech" (Arendt, 1972: 161). In that respect, violence makes its target speechless; i.e., violence is speechless in the sense that speech may begin only where violence ends. The claim that hate speech makes speechless can thus be evaluated in the way that hate speech can be seen as a form of violence that Arendt obviously opposes in her work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. For Arendt, violence is instrumental by nature and it cannot be evaluated as irrational; "it is rational to the extent that it is effective in reaching the end that must justify it" (Arendt, 1972: 176). Violence is the main characteristic of totalitarian regimes. In *On Violence*, she criticizes the normalization of violence in the twentieth century and attacks thinkers who affirm the role of violence. It is possible to suggest that because Arendt is clearly against violence, she would disapprove of hate speech as the consequences of both violence and hate speech are the same. She admits that racism, as a powerful ideology of imperialistic policies, bears violence by definition because it objects to natural phenomena which cannot be changed (Arendt, 1969:70). Arendt (1972: 173) explains her assumption by stating that "racism is fraught with violence by definition because it objects to natural organic facts- a white or black skin- which no persuasion or power could change". She accepts that the concept of racism is loaded with violence and violence is the rational and logical consequences of racism (Arendt, 1969: 76). We know that racism represents a form of hate speech when its principles are vocalised, and thus,

we can expect that Arendt falls in opposition to hate speech in its generality on the same grounds. Moreover, because all hate speech contains a potential for violence (Alğan and Şensever, 2010:17), we can anticipate Arendt's objection to hate speech.

However, the prevention of hate speech is essentially the restriction of someone else's speech. Arendt makes no claims on the restriction of speech; on the contrary, she sees restriction of freedom of expression and speech as characteristic of totalitarian regime. She states that freedom of speech and thought is "the right of an individual to express himself and his opinion in order to be able to persuade others to share his viewpoint" (Arendt, 1992: 39). Therefore, restrictions on hate speech can be evaluated as the destruction of an individual's plurality, capacity for action, and political agency. In that respect, it is difficult to deduce about how hate speech can be restricted with ensuring plurality.

3.3. *The theory of judgment: The base for the restriction of hate speech*

It is Arendt's theory of judgment which plays a central role for understanding how she approaches to the concepts such as political, publicness or enlarged mentality. In *Life of the Mind*, Arendt talks about three human faculties: willing, thinking and judging. Judgment is the most political faculty of human beings and it is the only faculty that enables political reasoning. Individuals are political beings through their use of their faculty of judgment (Deveci, 2007:111). Arendt defines judgment as "one of the fundamental abilities of man as a political being in so far as it enables him to orient himself in the public realm, in the common world" (Arendt, 1968: 221). Judgment is the faculty which faces cases peculiar to politics and enables political actors. It also includes binding political principles that also have moral implications. It is the faculty that makes human beings political and gives clues about the characteristics of public sphere.

For Arendt, the power of judgment depends on a potential agreement with others and thinking process which is active in judging. It calls for dialogue with others with whom there is a need to come to some agreement in anticipated communication. Judgment depends on dialogue in which there is an expectation of coming to some agreement in anticipated communication with the standpoints and perspectives of another. When hate speech is the motion, however, how can one expect a dialogue? Hate speech is speech which effects to shut others, on an individual and group basis, out of the debate. Thus, if one speaks using, rather than simply rhetorical devices and words aimed to affect opinion, terms and claims which attempt to alienate others from the community of equals therefore closing down effective dialogue, then the very essence of the public sphere has been eroded. Moreover, in judgment there is an expectation of agreement even if this agreement is not sine qua non. However, it is difficult to assume anticipated agreement between the victim of hate speech and its speaker. Essentially then, hate speech

destroys our faculty of judgment which opens a path for totalitarian regimes that rely on the complete ignorance of individuals' judgments.

Arendt calls the capacity for representatively thinking or putting oneself in the place of everyone else as "Kantian enlarged mentality" which is the basis for human's ability for judgment (Beiner, 1992a:10). She states that in *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant mentions different way of thinking in which agreement with one's own self is not enough; in this way of thinking, one must be able to "think in the place of everybody else" – which Kant calls "enlarged mentality" (Arendt, 1961: 220). She states that for Kant, "enlarged mentality" is seen as the "condition sine qua non of the right judgment; one's community sense makes it possible to enlarge one's mentality" which refers to one's ability to abstract from private conditions and circumstances (Arendt, 1992b: 73). While enlarged mentality is related to morality in Kant's emphasis on "right judgment", Arendt draws this term into the political sphere, in which enlarged mentality is related to political judgment and the public sphere.

From the viewpoint of Arendt, judgment necessitates communication with others which means judgment exceeds private conditions of individuals; essentially, this communication requires validation in the public realm, whereby the validation can best be summed up as "putting oneself in the thoughts and in the place of everyone else" (Arendt, 1992b: 71) Enlarged way of thinking cannot function in isolation or solitude; it needs the presence of others, "'in whose place' it must think, whose perspective it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all" (Arendt, 1961: 220-1). To clarify the meaning of enlarged mentality for Arendt, Beiner (1992b: 107) refers to her assumption that:

The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, the better I can imagine how would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion. I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion.

Benhabib warns us that the capacity for enlarged thought differs from empathy in that it doesn't refer to either assuming or accepting the point of view of the other. Enlarged thought signifies asking oneself "what the perspectives of others involved are or could be, and whether I could 'woo their consent' in acting the way I do" (Benhabib, 1992: 137). Arendt (1967:9) also explains this by suggesting that:

I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the

world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or to feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining majority but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not.

If we look at those who use hate speech, it is questionable whether they use, or have the capacity for enlarged mentality. Given that if they were to put themselves in the place of victims, they would not engage in speech that discriminates against others based on their ethnicity, gender, race etc. It can be suggested that those using hate speech cannot abstract themselves from private conditions and circumstances - which are necessary for an enlarged mentality. They remain at the level of private conditions and cannot rise to public level as they lack political judgment. Moreover, while enlarged mentality/enlarged way of thinking is required in the presence of others, and alternative perspectives, with hate speech, this otherness is also destroyed as there is no longer a perspective of others, so there is no need to think. With destruction of the other, and her/his opinion, the opportunity for enlarged mentality is simultaneously destroyed by hate speech.

In enlarged mentality, there is an emphasis on communication as a spontaneous outcome of enlarged mentality, and enlarged mentality can only be acquired through communication. In that respect, the term “communication” or “communicability” gains importance for Arendt’s thought. Arendt argues that the underlying principle necessary for publicness is the “communicability principle” which makes actions moral and which is also essential for true politics (Üstüner, 2006: 35). For her, communicability obviously implies a community of people who can be addressed, who are listening, and who can be listened to (Arendt, 1992b: 40).

According to Arendt, communicability can also be seen as the test of one’s ability to adapt an enlarged mentality (Cascardi, 1997: 115). It is also the necessity of presenting the interests of a community to the public in a way that is communicable for others, introducing itself within the accepted confines of communicability, and defending it regardless of how much limited support it will receive. Inevitably, making one interests, ideas or purpose communicable assumes a process of transformation – transformation of something particular to generalizable language in which the whole public can understand, discuss, compare and judge (Deveci, 2007: 118).

In *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, Arendt mentions communicability and refers to Kant’s suggestion that communicability is “the need of men to communicate, and publicity, the public freedom not just to think but to publish—the ‘freedom of the pen’” (Arendt, 1992b: 19). For Kant, it is necessary for humans to communicate and speak their minds, especially in all matters concerning their fellow humans (Arendt, 1992b: 40). She also links

communicability to enlarged mentality, in that “communicability obviously depends on the enlarged mentality; one can communicate only if one is able to think from the other person's standpoint; otherwise one will never meet him, never speak in such a way that he understands” (Arendt, 1992b: 75).

From the perspective of publicness, communicability enables self-interested ideas and actions to gain political character. Actions that fit communicability also act according to publicness and *sensus communis*. An idea or action that we cannot take trouble for making communicable is not suitable for publicness; therefore, they don't deserve to become political. In that respect, we can see that this notion of communicability is necessary for publicness and politics.

When we come to communicability, we have argued that it is the necessity for both enlarged mentality and publicness. In *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Arendt (1992b: 41) quotes from Kant on communicability about the external power which deprives humans of the freedom to communicate their thoughts publicly. At this point, hate speech can be seen as “external power” which deprives humans of the freedom to communicate their opinions publicly and deprives them of thinking freely. While hate speech destroys the communicability of its victims, it can also be suggested that those who apply to hate speech are generally far away from communication; as they also destroy their own communicability. It is debatable whether those who employ hate speech do or do not feel responsible for explaining themselves in public. Therefore, their actions do not fit to communicability principle because this principle requires the individual's claim to be explained in the public realm.

3.4. *Hate speech as a truth claim*

In addition to public sphere, publicness and judgment, politics is also evaluated with respect to truth-opinion dichotomy, by Arendt. She argues that politics is the realm of opinion and it does not concern itself with the claiming of truths; rather, truths have a potential to depoliticize the political. Arendt (1967: 8-9) claims that modes of thought and communication which deal with truth - neither factual nor rational - are necessarily “domineering” in that they fail to take other people's opinions into account. Arendt (1967:12-3) has never seen truthfulness as a political virtue, because it has no real capacity to contribute to changing circumstances, which she claims is one the most legitimating of political activities. In that respect, to look at politics from the “perspective of truth”, for her, means to “take one's standpoint outside the political realm” i.e. being “outside the community to which we belong and the company of our peers” as one of the characteristics of the various modes of being alone (Arendt, 1967: 16).

In Arendt's view, all truths are opposed to opinion in that they assert validity. Truth carries an element of coercion, and carries somehow tyrannical tendencies.

Truths are not constructed via agreement, dispute, opinion, or consent. Truth has a coercive nature, not persuasive one. Therefore, persuasion and discussion is not possible in the claim for truth. Opinions which are not welcomed can at least be debated, rejected, or compromised upon. However, truth precludes debate - and as discussed, debate is the essential for political life (Arendt, 1967:8). Because philosophical truth concerns the individual in her singularity, it is apolitical by nature. In terms of truth, the political realm is no more a battlefield of partial, conflicting interests (Arendt, 1967: 18). Furthermore, opinions are comprised of free agreement and consent; they are the consequences of discursive, representative thinking and are communicated by means of persuasion and dissuasion (Arendt, 1968: 247). At this point, she debates the claim that “all men are created by equal” as a matter of opinion, not of truth, as this claim is not self evident and cannot be proved. The reason for defending this claim is that freedom is possible only amongst equals. We only reach the statement by consent and agreement. Thus, even equality is a “matter of opinion, not ‘the truth’” (Arendt, 1967:10). In this respect, she clearly distinguishes truth and opinions to the extent that truth is outside the political realm because it restrains debate and discussion due to its domineering and coercive haecceity.

It is debatable whether hate speech can be seen as a “truth claim” in the Arendtian sense, i.e., as a claim transcending the realm of opinions. Whereas opinions consist of free agreement and consent; they are the results of discursive, representative thinking and are communicated by means of persuasion and discussion, hate speech is not a communicative practice and is not a consequence of communication or deliberation. It cannot flourish from communicative action; moreover, we cannot talk about free agreement and consent, either. Hate speech has a potential for bearing a factor of cohesion, it may be “domineering”, and tends to repress other people’s opinions and ignores the opponent, even when it intends to suppress the other. What we specify as the characteristics of hate speech are also one with the particularities of truth in the sense that hate speech can be evaluated as truth claims that aim to absorb politics and eliminate a plurality of opinion. As such, for Arendt, this clearly prepares the public for totalitarian regime and ought to represent a clear danger.

4. Concluding remarks

In this article, it is aimed to discuss the issue of hate speech from a political theory perspective derived from Hannah Arendt’s theoretical works. Hate speech’s destructive impacts on the egalitarian understanding of public sphere, judgment, enlarged mentality and communicability are examined. It is also claimed that hate speech shows similar characteristics to truth claims in its narrowing the means of debate, absorbing politics and eliminating a plurality of opinion. Criticism towards

hate speech and bases for restriction of hate speech can be derived from the debate around these concepts.

According to Arendt, the political is grounded on the public sphere, which is constituted by distinct and equal individuals through speech and action. It is stated that hate speech has devastating effects on ideal conceptualization of public sphere by Arendt through destruction of its egalitarian understanding, erosion of the notion of equality and distinctness amongst individuals in this sphere and by targeting uniqueness and plurality which are the necessary conditions for the existence of such a realm.

It is stressed that because hate speech suppressed the presence of others, alternative ideas and perspectives, the opportunity for enlarged mentality is destroyed by hate speech. It is also argued that judgment depends on dialogue in which there is an expectation of coming to some agreement in anticipated communication with the standpoints and perspectives of another. However, hate speech closes down effective dialogue, and erodes very essence of the public sphere. Moreover, in judgment there is an expectation of agreement; however, it is difficult to assume anticipated agreement between the victim of hate speech and its speaker. Essentially then, hate speech destroys our faculty of judgment which opens a path for totalitarian regimes that rely on the complete ignorance of individuals' judgments.

The debate so far displays a minimal philosophical criticism of hate speech from Arendt's conceptual framework. However, the principle of publicness and Arendt's notion of speech bring with some hesitations concerning restriction of hate speech. It is argued that the principle of publicness implies a twofold impact on hate speech; on the one hand, allowance of hate speech contributes to the destruction of the egalitarian spirit of publicness but on the other, it claims that to exclude hatred based expression is to deny one's political agency. It is plausible to argue that the opinion, even if it bears hatred based expression, cannot be marginalized before public debate. Moreover, prevention of expression of hate speech before its manifestation may lead to a disciplined, domesticated, and sterile public sphere. This aspect of publicness allows for another interpretation in which there should be no criterion used for exclusion of any speech before its manifestation in the public realm. From this perspective, restriction on hate speech seems not desirable for Arendt. Therefore, the principle of publicness gives us a twofold reading on hate speech.

The impact of hate speech on speech does not give us clear clues about the right to limit one's freedom of expression for the sake of hate speech. Because hate speech makes its victim speechless and attacks plurality and the condition of political life provided by speech, its restriction is required. However, the prevention of hate speech is essentially the restriction of someone else's speech which is

regarded as characteristic of totalitarian regime, by Arendt. The restriction on hate speech can be evaluated as the destruction of an individual's plurality, capacity for action, and political agency. In that respect, it is difficult to deduce about how hate speech can be restricted without resort to measures which would equally narrow plurality.

This tension in Arendt's theory is remarkable. However, it is note-worthy that this tension is not only inherent in Arendt's political theory. Any framework prioritizing freedom of expression, most of which is liberal, shows this tension. Freedom of expression and opinion is one of the fundamental freedoms for liberal theory and its restriction is possible only in limited circumstances; whether hate speech can be one of these circumstances is still open to debate. My argument in this work is that although Arendt would have certain reservations about the restriction of hate speech, her conceptual framework gives us clues about what is wrong with hate speech and at least displays a philosophical contempt for hate speech based on its consequences.

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Özet

Nefret söyleminin Arendt'in teorik perspektifinden incelenmesi

Bu makale, nefret söylemi tartışmalarına Hannah Arendt'in teorik çalışmalarına dayanan bir siyaset felsefesi ışığında katkı sunmayı amaçlamıştır. Arendt doğrudan nefret söylemi tartışmasına değinmemiş olmasına rağmen, önerdiği siyaset felsefesi, siyasal bir özne ve kamusal hayatın bir parçası olmanın koşulu olan söze yaptığı vurgu nedeniyle tartışmaya ve incelemeye değer görülmüştür. Bu çalışma, Arendt'in sunduğu teorik çerçevenin, nefret söyleminin sınırlanması konusunda belirli çekinceler içerdiğini tartışmakla birlikte, Arendt'in siyaset felsefesinin nefret söylemi ile ilgili probleme dair ipuçları verdiğini ve nefret söylemini felsefî düzeyde eleştirmek için imkan sağladığını savunmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hannah Arendt, nefret söylemi, kamusal alan, kamusalılık.