RECOGNITION AND PUBLIC SPACE: THE CHALLENGE OF RECEIVING MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN OUR CITIES

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Resumen: Este texto pretende analizar y entender la visión política y categorización ética subyacentes a nuestro sentido común acerca del movimiento y la llegada de migrantes y refugiados desde la perspectiva de la cosmovisión occidental y como ciudadanos europeos del siglo XXI. Pretendemos explorar el concepto del espacio publico de Hannah Arendt con el concepto de aporofobia de Adela Cortina, cruzando las dos propuestas filosóficas en busca de los lazos y límites de la compasión en la vida pública y evaluando sus efectos emocionales en la intersección política entre necesidad y libertad. También pretendemos profundizar la construccíon de bienes comunes materiales y inmateriales en nuestras ciudades, principalmente en el acto de acoger a migrantes y refugiados; no solo en nuestro espacio físico, sino especialmente en nuestro espacio público. Estos actos locales de acogida van a reconocer a los migrantes y refugiados como a agentes merecidos y capaces de discurso y acción política, y no sólo como a pacientes de violencia y sufrimiento.

Palabras clave: reconocimiento, espacio publico, pluralidad humana, ciudades, compasión, migrantes, refugiados.

Abstract: This paper intends to analyze and understand the political vision and ethical categorization which underlie our common sense about the movement and arrival of migrants and

refugee, from the perspective of the Western worldview and as European citizens of the 21st century. We intend to explore Hannah Arendt's concept of public space with Adela Cortina's authentic practice of recognition, crossing the two philosophical proposals in a search for the bonds and boundaries of compassion in public life, and evaluating their emotional effects on the political intersection between necessity and liberty. To the greatest extent, our purpose is to deepen the needed construction of material and immaterial common goods in our cities, mainly in the act of receiving migrants and refugees; not only in our physical spaces, but especially in our public spaces. This local act of receiving, must recognize migrants and refugees deserving agents, capable of political discourse and action, and not only as patients of violence and suffering.

Keywords: recognition, public space, human plurality, cities, compassion, migrants, refugees.

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1. The aim of "open spaces between men". An introduction with Hannah Arendt

The Human Condition, a work that the thinker would have liked to entitle *Amor mundi*, Arendt contends:

> 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. (Arendt, 1998, 175-176)

Following these opening words, Arendt states that being distinct does not directly mean being the other or different from oneself. Distinction as a human quality must be accompanied by the skill of otherness, because, according to Arendt, "only man can express this distinction and distinguish himself, and only he can communicate himself and not merely something (…). In man, otherness, which he shares with everything that is, and distinctness, which he shares with everything alive, become uniqueness, and human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings." (Arendt, 1998, 176) This plurality is effective only if we recognize other human beings as equal but different, and when we use words and deeds to understand and receive them.

In the current historical moment, our contemporaneity, the media and social networks have brought us a distant, mostly stereotyped, view of refugees, conveyed by a show of commiseration and pity that progressively incites our fear or compassion. The plurality of refugees, who enter our lives and cities, does not contain one, two or three singularities. It is deprived of uniqueness, understood as the state or quality of being unique or one-of-a-kind. In fact, their distinctiveness does not become uniqueness as a human quality. Their images, as transmitted by most of the media, express lives unworthy of being lived, and are thus multiplied over and over in a categorization of faceless crowds, exposed to the dangers of precarious sea crossings in countless boats and across many borders. We can thus say that their lives represent one or more alterities to whom the privilege of uniqueness has been denied. Indeed, for these refugees, the privilege of recognition has also been denied. It only comes to the surface in discourse and action, and does not reach the public sphere despite feelings of fear and compassion.

To put it bluntly, this difference between us and the refugees discards equality, and their isolation

eradicates their freedom. According to Arendt, human beings, in their truest sense can only exist in a world, and there can only be a world where plurality is more than the mere multiplication of a single species. In Arendt's conception of public space, the ability to open spaces between men and to maintain them, works as a kind of second birth, in which recognition and liberty appear and are given visibility. Birth gives human beings the possibility of entering the world. Through freedom, Arendt assumes, Man creates spaces among his peers, initiates something new from himself, a capability to start, to begin something, in accordance with the true meaning of the verb "to act". For Arendt, "to act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, 'to begin', 'to lead', and eventually, 'to rule' indicates, to set something into motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin agere)." (Arendt, 1998, 177) And this action can bring the unexpected, the improbable into the world. In this sense, action distinguishes us from others, as brand new things thus far unknown are brought into the world: "In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance to the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and the sound of the voice." (Arendt, 1998, 179)

The problem here lies in the recognition of this unique personal identity exposed by Arendt. Discourses and acts of hatred, for example, do not recognize this uniqueness of each human being and the lack of this recognition betrays plurality. Discourses and acts of hatred are turned against the collective character of a community, a religion, a race or a social class. Like the poor, the needy and the persecuted, the refugees are certainly targeted in and affected by these discourses and acts of violence because they are included in a certain group or groups and are, consequently, potential victims of these hate crimes. Sometimes, the membership of individuals in

a particular community restricts the development of their very identity and quells the uniqueness of its members, who need to acquiesce to its cultural ideas and practices or, if they disagree, to reject them. The challenge of *receiving* migrants and refugees needs to be justified not from a cultural point of view, but from a humanitarian one.

The article 33 of the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, regarding the prohibition of expulsion and return ("*refoulement*"), states preciously this humanitarian angle: "No Contracting State shall expel or return ('*refouler*') a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." (UNHCR, 2010, 30) This first point (of non-refoulement) is only restricted by the second, the principle of state security and based on the principle of self-determination of states: "2. The benefit of the present provision may not, however, be claimed by a refugee whom there are reasonable grounds for regarding as a danger to the security of the country in which he is, or who, having been convicted by a final judgment of a particular serious crime, constitutes a danger to the community of that country." (UNHCR, 2010, 30) Here, we are dealing with a huge problem, because the principle of non-refoulement can often clash with the principle of self-determination of states, and if the media continue to disseminate and promote a stereotyped view of migrants and refugees, a view of growing insecurity, the doors of the cities will keep closed more and more, not dwelling and receiving those who most need their hospitality.

Thus, the persecution of refugees for religious reasons or membership of a low social class is prohibited on the grounds of international human rights, and as we know, it breaches immigration rules in benefit of the asylum, as the Convention stipulates. As Jürgen Habermas remarks in his book *Inclusion of the Other*: "since the discovery of America, and

especially since the explosive increase in worldwide immigration in the eighteenth century, the great bulk of those wanting to immigrate has consisted of individuals immigrating in order to work as well as refugees from poverty who want to escape a miserable existence in their homeland." (Habermas, 1998, 230) As an example, the author refers to the immigration from the impoverish regions of the East and the South of Europe, of people looking for work and better conditions of life, both material and political, in the rich countries of Europe. Still for Habermas: "From the moral point of view we cannot regard this problem solely from the perspective of the inhabitants of affluent and peaceful societies; we must also take the perspective of those who come to foreign continents seeking their well-being, that is, an existence worthy of human beings, rather than protection from political persecution." (Habermas, 1998, 230) If we recall the news about the thousands of refugees and migrants that have been force-marched into the Sahara desert by Algerian security forces, between 2014 and 2018, we can understand the true meaning of the words "existence worthy of human beings" and the difficult path to achieve it, against social, religious or political prejudices which insist on oppressing the refugees personal identities and their freedom too. A path of recognition strengthened in the belief that the human beings are beings able of act, speak, discourse and think, not only as patients of violence and suffering. Are our cities prepared for this challenge of receiving and dwelling migrants and refugees, an action based on and inspired by the principle of human dignity? If not, what work and practices do we need to do in our cities to empower these people? In its spatial connection with the city or cities, can philosophy help us, today, to react and respond to this ethical and political challenge?

2. Migrants and refugees in our cities: how to overcome Aporophobia?

In her latest work published in Spain, *Aporophobia*: the refusal of the poor, Adela Cortina deepens the concept of *aporophobia*, which she created in 1995, helping us to reveal and analyze a social reality and a political problem that consists in keeping the poor and the needy, the persecuted too, at the door of the city. "*Aporophobia* is a real attack against human dignity." With these words, Cortina initiates her Ted talk about the creation and the systematization of the concept *aporophobia*. For the philosopher, "it is also an attack against democracy because there cannot be democracy with *aporophobia*." (Cortina, 2018) The basis of democracy is equality, reminds Cortina. And to relegate and disparage groups of people who have nothing to give in return, like the poor, the needy and the outcasts, is to disregard the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and, on the subject of the refugees, the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. But, as we know, in philosophy we need much more than principles to face this reading framework of *aporophobia*. We need to make and reach the philosophical experience of *receiving* and *dwelling*.

In the context of the reflections about the links between philosophy and city, or the philosophy of the city, this reality of contempt for migrants and refugees does not agree with the real aim of this link, as Paula Pereira, underlines: "Our common future depends on *the ability to think and make the city*, which means, the growing need to think and make the city *a common space*." (Pereira, 2020, 253) Furthermore, the author sustains that: "philosophical experience is manifested in the ability to translate what happens into what happens to *us*, into meaningful experiences, to think based on that which touches *us*, that which affects *us*, especially with regard to a 'regulated and normalized' world, which has debilitated our experience of

receiving and dwelling." (*ibidem*) The principles, "regulated and normalized", come from the ideal of a modern subjectivity, an ideal subject, as López Soria remarks: "without belonging, without territory, universal, abstract, axiologically neutral, secular… who has no eyes to see precise and differentiated locations." (Soria, 2003, 4) An *ethics of coexistence*, as Soria intends, or an *ethics of common goods*, material and immaterial ones, as Pereira remarks, is crucial here to ensure the openness of difference to dialogue, a dialogue exposed to the stranger, the challenge of making them, migrants and refugees, locally, our neighbors and equals, because: "the ability to *receive* is that which underpins an essential vulnerability within us, in our capacity to give and to grant, and which ensures our ability to endure strangeness, the precluding of denial experience." (Pereira, 2020, 253-254) This experience of openness, recognizing others as our equals, implies another reading of rationality, more ambiguous and oblique, but in the search of meaning and understanding. As López Soria remarks:

> Each rationality would be, in this case, an only particular expression of the rich and varied human experience, an experience that would be nourished by the ex-position, to putting into motion and in common, of all the rationalities. (…) The universal is not then a self-imposed discourse as universally valid. (…) The universal is rather a network of paths where rationalities meet, intersect, dialogue and argue with each other. (Soria, 2003, 11)

In fact, denying the possibility of entry to migrants and refugees into our cities, constructs a barrier only explained, once again, because they belong tout court to a specific and rejected group, nation or religion. They are not recognized as a singularity, as a rationality that intends to entry into a dialogue for creating "open spaces between men." As Jürgen Habermas asks in *Inclusion of the Other*: "can a theory of rights elaborated on individualistic terms do

justice to the struggles for recognition that deal with the articulation and affirmation of collective identities?" (Habermas, 1998, 189) The response needs to be affirmative as the author continues to state out: the modern law is universally individualistic in order to include all persons who exist in the formal principle of dignity. If a cultural or a comprehensive way of life contains racist, xenophobic or aporophobic behaviors, inside or outside the community, these practices must be analyzed and criticized by this principle without "a conservation of the species point of view." (Habermas, 1998, 210) This critical principle will thus be the most appropriate moral resource for rebuilding a civil society and inspiring the human capacities leading to dialogue, mutual understanding and commitment, as well as moral resources. Taking on Offes' conception of civil society, Garciá-Marzà assumes: "these are resources because they allow interactions, the coordination of different and plural plans of action. These are moral because they can increase practical reason, which must recognize others as human beings deserving of dignity and respect." (Garciá-Marzà, 2008, 43) In sum, this conception of moral resources fits Pereira's conception of material and immaterial common goods, in the framework of the articulation between philosophy and cities:

> The city is, in fact, a common good, in its material and/or immaterial dimension; both parks and streets are common goods, as are the corporative capacity, instruments and energy needed to create institutions and to make the city. Goods are not mere artifacts but also cultural, social and relational common goods. (…) To make the city can, then, be related to mode of work, as a means to establish closeness and mutual help. (Pereira, 2020, 259)

This collaborative work, which is a philosophical, political and social one, implies a renewed *making of the city*, with rationalities increasingly closer to each other, working on this proximity, through the

experience of *receiving* and *dwelling*, and seeing in each person a unique one, a different one, not primarily, from this or that group, this or that religion. Confirming this ethical view, in her book *Aporophobia*, Cortina diagnoses that: "The difference between discourses and hate crimes from other types of violations is that the victims are not selected for their personal identity but because they belong to a particular collective, endowed with characteristics which generate disgust or contempt from the aggressors." (Cortina, 2017, 35) In Greek, the word *áporos* means the poor, the needy, and *phóbeo* means to be amazed by, to be afraid of, as we can see both in the construction of words like xenophobia, homophobia or islamophobia, and so on. Adela Cortina coined the concept of aporophobia in order to respond philosophically to a social reality that can undermine any political context or, indeed, can destroy it completely. As the author notes, the foreigners who visit our countries, beaches or cities, and bring enough money in their pockets, do not mean or pose a problem for us. We are only afraid of those who arrive with nothing and do not come to visit our beaches and cities. They come looking for a safe place where they can live and rest, hoping to find a good host. Unfortunately, History, and the times we live in, tells us a different story and a much harsher reality. Every day, televisions and networks, expose life stories of people who have run away from war and disaster, from hunger and cold, for the most part, peaceful people who encounter in each boat and at each border the non-host, facing indeed more guards and guns than they had left behind in their countries.

If we cross Cortina's *aporophobia* concept with Arendt's understanding of the social question of poverty, we find that for the latter, "poverty is abject because it puts men under the absolute dictate of their bodies, which is, under the absolute dictate of necessity as all men know it from their most intimate experience and outside all speculations." This "absolute dictate of necessity" is a reality that dawned

with the French Revolution, when the multitude of the poor appeared on the political stage and where "freedom had to be surrendered to necessity, to the urgency of the life process itself." (Arendt, 1990, 60) This social question or condition leads us to economic grounds, crucial to the course of political life, but which do not exhaust it. It is important to align rules of necessity with a *politics of justice*, with a very sense of generalization, which the *politics of pity* described by Hannah Arendt so often forgets today. [1] Unfortunately, at times, public life and discourse insist on the social question or economic conditions as the sole scope of political life, arguments which are often used to refuse the arrival of migrants and refugees. As Adela Cortina says regarding the creation of the concept of *aporophobia*,

> those who want to be free of political refugees and poor immigrants say that they come to take our jobs, to take advantage of our social security and, in recent times, that their arrival includes terrorists sent by the Islamic State, ready to commit attacks like those of Paris, Nice, Brussels, Frankfurt and Berlin. Unfortunately, Donald Trump is not the only one who thinks this way.

And Cortina gives an example to make us think about these issues:

> The case of the Tunisian Anis Amri, suspected of having caused the Berlin massacre on December 18, 2016, gave strength to the aporophobic and xenophobic parties because he was a refugee who landed in Lampedusa in 2011 and was welcomed by a family for being minor.

[1] This distinction between the *politics of justice* and the *politics of pity*, historically achieved in the contexts of the American Independence and the French Revolution, respectively, is established by Luc Boltanski in an interview on Hannah Arendt thought. We will return to this distinction in a third point on compassion. Boltanski, L. (1999). *Distant suffering: morality, media and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

And she continues:

> In this case, the reaction of parties and people who reject the coming of the poor is to extend suspicion and refusal to a whole collective of refugees and immigrants who come to our lands in subhuman conditions. This is the distinguishing feature of the hate crimes, which are not addressed to a specific person because of who they are, but because they belong to a certain collective. (Cortina, 2017, 37-38)

Thus, collective membership of a certain group, gender or even class, isolates people from each other, and hinders political communication with other discourses and acts that differ from ours. Most particularly, communication and dialogue with other identities and cultural point of views are also encumbered. Here, taking seriously the movement of refugees and migrants, leads us to think that their isolation restricts their freedom, and affects the human ability to externalize words and deeds, the openness to the world through which we can meet our equals and corroborate our own identity. In the essay "Introduction into Politics", Hannah Arendt also points out that: "The isolated individual is never free; he can only become free when he leaves his isolation to enter the polis and there assume the action. Before freedom can become a mark of honor attributed to a man or a type of man (…). Freedom has a space, and whoever is admitted into it is free, whoever is excluded from it is not free." (Arendt, 2005, 177) It is important to remark that Hannah Arendt begins this same essay with the following words, expressive of the issue that concerns us here: "Politics is based on the fact of human plurality. God created man, but men are a human, earthly product, the product of human nature." And later the author reiterates: "Politics arises between men, and so quite outside of man. There is therefore no real political substance. Politics arises in what lies between men and is established as

relationships. Hobbes understood this." (Arendt, 2005, 93-95)

Man is apolitical, Arendt tells us, but men are political. To be together is the quality of a community that has been constructed by free men and women, who choose to communicate and act among themselves. A community constructed by free members capable of exteriorizing words and deeds, and therefore to be heard and seen by their equals. To be free is to have become free, in the pursuit of what takes us closer to our equals. It is to have done something, "to act", "to set into motion", in the conquest of this liberty. In the chapter called "Ideology and Terror", from the book Origins of Totalitarianism, Arendt declares that terror and fear undermine the spaces between men and block the conquest of liberty. The terror which appears today, almost unpredictable, exists at the expense of the growing isolation and loneliness of human beings. This isolation is increasingly used as a political reason to refuse poor and persecuted refugees, for fear that they would bring with them hunger and terror, as Cortina explains in the Tunisian case. According to Arendt, the lack of freedom in a context of terror, forces us to deal with an apolitical reality:

> By pressing men against each other, total terror destroys the space between them. (...) It destroys the one essential prerequisite of all freedom, which is simply the capacity of motion that cannot exist without space. (…) Terror, therefore, as an obedient servant of natural or historical movement, has to eliminate from the process not only freedom in any specific sense, but the very source of freedom which is given with the fact of the birth of man and resides in his capacity to make a new beginning. (Arendt, 1951, 466)

The ideology underlying this doctrinal thought uses terror as its best vehicle, dogmatically closed in its own intrinsic logic and conveyed within the idea of

the "One Man Only", an oppressive conduct that restrains human plurality and consequently restrains the openness of spaces between men. This "One Man Only" is a fixed idea that promises to drive us to the end of the course of human history before it has even begun. Ideology, any ideology, which defends and explains the need of terror to implement this "One Man Only" idea closes, in fact, the spaces around them, prohibits the possibility of discourse and action. For Arendt: "No guiding principle of behavior, taken itself from the realm of human action, such as virtue, honor, fear, is necessary or can be useful to set into motion a political body which no longer uses terror as a means of intimidation, but whose essence *is* terror." (Arendt, 1951, 468) In fact, terror is not only the political ideology of totalitarian doctrines, as Arendt highlighted in the last century. It is also the efficient cause of oppressive behaviors, based on the anthropological distortion of liberty as such, a distortion of the human ability to achieve the *common sense*, the sense of community, a reflexive one indeed, beyond our particularity. The fixed idea of "One Man Only" is thus assumed as the natural or naturalized idea of the human who does not know the course of history. History does not obey any necessity, much less its experiences and contingencies, because the logic of this fiction about human nature repeatedly collides against the facts. It is assumed and propagandized as a fate. Deep down, this idea of "One Man Only" forgets reality. It does not feed on it. It actually distorts it, increasingly isolating human beings from each other, dooming them to isolation, impotence and loneliness, which gradually lead to disregard human affairs.

This isolation results in a lack of discernment that needs to separate reality from fiction; true from false; right from wrong, in sum, liberty from necessity. According to Arendt, the issue of isolation that discards liberty and its conquest, is based on the fact that "what makes loneliness so unbearable is the loss of one's own self which can be realized in solitude, but

confirmed in its identity only by the trusting and trustworthy company of my equals. (…) Self and world, capacity for thought and experience are lost at the same time." (Arendt, 1951, 477) In this line of reasoning, migrants and refugees seem to be confined to this environment of distrust, barred from the possibility that a sound political thought about an open public space, which we also want to share, may one day restore them to their full human condition as free and equal beings and that they be, consequently, recognized as such in a plural context.

3. The path of recognition: a tension between compassion and rationality

The recognition of different and equal beings, the dual aspect of human plurality according to Arendt, cannot be achieved through the experience of compassion or pity - safeguarding that there are differences between them - or within a series of emotions that we feel when we see images of refugees in the media or social networks. The ability to feel something should be allied with the ability to think, because human beings, although not always simultaneously, are spectators and agents, dependent on and independent from others, and it is in this dialectical tension that we need to establish the possibility of our humanity as such. This is a path made of necessity and freedom, bearing in mind that the experience of compassion or the sentiment of pity are not at all the final discourse of recognition. Compassion awakens the path of recognition, but does not establish it. Its development, or its true evolution, entails serious political reasoning, an ability to think within the world about *human affairs*, which once it becomes discourse, may result in much more than mere feelings of pity. As Hannah Arendt points, in her book *On Revolution*, true compassion draws us closer, locally, but we cannot be closer to those who are far from here, distant from our surroundings. For the author:

> Because compassion abolishes the distance, the worldly space between men where political matters, the whole realm of human affairs, are located, it remains, politically speaking, irrelevant and without consequence. (…) As a rule, it is not compassion which sets out to change worldly conditions in order to ease human suffering, but if it does, it will shun the drawn-out wearisome process of persuasion, negotiation, and compromise, which are the process of law and politics, and lend its voice to the suffering itself, which must claim for swift and direct action, that is, for action with the means of violence. (Arendt, 1990, 86-87)

And this lack of distance, in terms of compassion, abolishes the process of persuasion, negotiation and compromise, essentials for a politics of justice, as Luc Boltanski noted. This distance sustains our ability for reasoning and not only our capacity to feel while we are viewing the pain of others. For Boltanski, "distance is a fundamental dimension of a politics which has the specific task of a *unification* which overcomes dispersion by setting up the 'durable institutions' needed to establish equivalence between spatially and temporally local situations." (Boltanski, 1999, 7) A new political discourse, a just one, is urgently required here, averse to a *politics of pity*, so as to spark the interest of every single person in an authentic *being together*, suffering, but also capable of discourse and action, in the open field of public spaces and spheres, where we need to understand and examine, the origin, the class or the religious creed of those who are welcomed, and not only to feel pity for the "low people", for those who want and need to come and to be helped: *le peuple*.[2]

[2] As Hannah Arendt explain: "The words *le peuple* are the key words for every understanding of the French Revolution, and their connections were determined by those who were exposed to the spectacle of the people's sufferings, which they themselves did not share. For the first time, the word covered more than those who did not participate in government, not the citizens but the low people. The very definition of the word was born out of compassion, and the term became the equivalent for misfortune and

About migrants and refugees, and in the *case for open borders*, Joseph Carens expounds in his paper "Aliens and Citizens", that the *original position* of John Rawls, as an example, together with the *veil of ignorance* principle, can be used as the basic assumption of this new political thought of openness and understanding for our public spaces. For Carens, indeed, the *original position* serves as a strategy of moral reasoning and "The veil of ignorance offers a way of thinking about principles of justice in a context where people have deep, unresolvable disagreements about matters of fundamental importance and yet still want to find a way to live together in peaceful cooperation on terms that are fair to all." (Carens, 1987, 257) For Rawls, here lies the difficulty and the challenge of liberal political thought: "we need to find a point of view apart from this comprehensive basic structure, not distorted by its particular characteristics and circumstances, a point of view from which an equitable agreement between persons considered free and equal can be established." (Rawls, 2006, 53) For Rawls, the priority of liberty needs to take precedence over any communitarian values like partnership or economic affiliation. The opportunities that arise in our own society or culture need to be shared by all, open to them, as free and equal moral persons. This anteriority of freedom over the community is rooted in the principle of moral personality, which must take precedence over all others in order to protect the identity and inviolability of every human being.

To this end, Carens rejects the analogy that Michael Walzer uses to justify the self-determination of states to exclude aliens and refugees. For Walzer, in his communitarian thought, states should behave like clubs, choosing and selecting their members in their right of freedom of association, giving priority to this in relation to the right to equal treatment rooted in the moral personality principle. Taking Rawls' original position as a moral reasoning, Carens defends:

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unhappiness – *le peuple, les malheureux m'applaudissent*, as Robespierre as want to say." (Arendt, 1990, 75)

> There is a deep tension between the right of freedom of association and the right to equal treatment. One way to address this tension is to say that in the private sphere freedom of association prevails and in the public sphere equal treatment does. (…) Drawing a line between private and public is often problematic, but it is clear that clubs are normally at one end of the scale and states at the other. (…) When the state acts it must treat individuals equally. (Carens, 1987, 267-268)

This tension between private and public, particular and general, is indeed the great path of recognition, an ethical one that needs to see and treat all human beings equally without the excuse of non-membership. To conclude this reflection, the issue of compassion as a social emotion, rather than a political one, is put to the test in this tension between private and public matters, particular and general thoughts, privileging the latter two. As Arendt contends:

> Compassion, by its very nature, cannot be touched off by the sufferings of a whole class or a people, or, least of all, mankind as a whole. It cannot reach out farther than what is suffered by one person and still remain what it is supposed to be, co-suffering. Its strength hinges on the strength of passion itself, which, in contrast to reason, can comprehend only the particular, but has no notion of the general and no capacity for generalization. (Arendt, 1990, 85)

To the greatest extent, we need political discourses and actions that promote and enable the experience of open spaces between men, an experience full of risks, unpredictable outcomes, undoubtedly, but only thus can we reject pity or commiseration, the two perversions of compassion, as Hannah Arendt has said. And here we should consider solidarity, the true alternative to pity, and open spaces to a generalization of thought: “this solidarity, though it may be aroused

by suffering, is not guided by it, and it comprehends the strong and the rich no less than the weak and the poor; compared with the sentiment of pity, it may appear cold and abstract, for it remains committed to 'ideas' of greatness, or honour, or dignity - rather than to any 'love' of men." (Arendt, 1990, 89) *Ce zèle compatissant*, thought by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and set into motion by Robespierre, in the context of the French Revolution, needs to be articulated with the recognition of the fact that human beings suffer, are patients and victims, but are also agents and independent, capable of discourse and action. Here, we aspire to an enriching experience of recognition, a path through which we have to receive and respect all migrants and refugees as they are and as they appear, and not just linking them to this idea of suffering beings, misfortune, *les malheureux*, first of all.[3]

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