

REPRINT

BY CÉLINE CONDORELLI

What is friendship? A vital alliance, a sharing of acts and thoughts, an exercise in freedom. Céline Condorelli explores the territory of elective affinities, tracing back to the classical roots of thinking about friendship and rediscovering, in the relationship between Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, the prototype of a friendship capable of incrementing the *potentia agendi* of the individual. The French artist tells us the story of how Hannah and Mary met, through their letters and writings, revealing the inner nature of a friendship capable of defying death.

The main things which seem to me important on their own account, and not merely as means to other things, are knowledge, art, instinctive happiness, and relations of friendship or affection.¹

I have selected different types of fragments for reprint, that I am putting in relationship with each other, as is often the case in my practice. So that the cumulative sum of these things, words, ideas, somehow proposes something that each part alone could not; through this I speak, not so much through an individual authorial voice, but also through a multiplicity of voices. To try to say something, I try to think, and find my position through collecting and navigating through material; I also try and make work that speaks in the same way, that works by articulating a complexity of material, explicitly in both form and content. Perhaps this is a way of doing things that creates close ties and connections between things, people, and myself, and that is something that more often than not has the feel of a friendship of sorts. I work by spending time with things I have collected, the references that I carry along, like friendly voices in my head, the numerous voices that are part of the process of thinking through and developing work—of friends, acquaintances and peers—but which also include the essential voices of inspirational thinkers from the past, that populate our thoughts and conversations and are in this way, also present.

Friendship then, is perhaps a condition of work in my practice—even though it may never be the actual subject of the work, however close it is to a long term object of my practice, support—but a formative, operational condition that works on multiple, simultaneous levels. With this peculiar awareness in mind, I collected here material that exposes what it may mean to consider friendship as a condition for thinking, and does so through the specific friendship of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy. Much of the following thoughts and observations have developed in conversations with philosopher Johan Hartle, who very generously offered his knowledge and time to think with me. Also, a note: age thirty-seven, I decided to stop apologizing for being an intellectual and an artist.

Friendship is a fundamental aspect of personal support, a condition for doing things together; I'd like to address it as a specific model of relationship in the large question of how to live and work together—and autonomously—towards change, as a way to act in the world. Friendship, like support, is considered here as an essentially political relationship, one of allegiance and responsibility. Being a friend entails a commitment, a decision, and encompasses the implied positionings that any activity in culture entails. In relationship to my practice, friendship is, at its most relevant in relation to a labour process: as a way of working together. The line of thought that threads through the following material therefore, is that of friendship as a form of solidarity: friends in action. Also, as we know, working together can

both start from and create forms of solidarity and/or friendship, which are therefore pursued as both condition and intent, motivating actions taken and allowing work undertaken.

There is in Hannah Arendt a concept of culture that is, to my view, close to what I would call friendship as outlined above: she defines it as “the company that one chooses to keep, in the present as well as in the past.”² She quotes Cicero saying he'd rather go astray with Plato, than hold the truth with Pythagoras; what he means by this, I imagine, is that he prefers the company of Plato than a so-called truth, especially if proclaimed by a bore like Pythagoras. The politics of such a judgement are of an alliance, of whom one would rather be with. The word friendship does not actually appear in her text, and the company one keeps as I understand it is neither the exclusive group of friends nor the production of life, but *cultura animi*, a kind of humanism. In this way the choices and alliances that we make all the time, (like which books to read and refer to, or whom to work and think with) are instrumental in the formation of culture. I find this notion of friendship and/or culture quite empowering, perhaps even liberating, and I was interested in not just understanding it in general, abstract terms, but through the specific situation of Arendt's friendship with McCarthy, taking place and speaking to me through twenty-five years of letters they exchanged, and numerous books and publications that they helped each other with.

The ancient tradition defines friendship as an exercise in freedom, which needs to be exercised in freedom, meaning exclusively by and with free and equal subjects. As usual, such a freedom is defined negatively: freedom from oppression, coercion, from unreasonable external constraints on action, but also from affects and inclination, from the slavery of desires etc. However, jurisdictional equality is what counts—so that in a world in which women and slaves are not considered part of the polis, of the democratic space of the city, but just occupy the physical space of it, then friendship can only take place amongst men. Which means that according to that tradition, freedoms like friendship can only be exercised by free men, and that in a world in which women are subaltern, they cannot be addressed in friendship, and are therefore also excluded from its discourse. As the discourse around friendship is born and develops in ancient Greece, where women and slaves are excluded from democracy, this rather heavy footnote is bizarrely carried through the history of philosophy all the way—but only sometimes consciously so—until it reaches us; so that this discourse, like many things, replicates the same exclusions it was born in. Hannah Arendt—the only woman on the philosophers' shelf—revives the polis model of freedom and places politics in the realm of

action (what she calls *vita activa*, active life), but in her terms separates it from labour (the production of humanity's own survival) and work (the construction of the material world). She doesn't explicitly exclude slaves or women from the space of democracy, but neither does she include them; and she continues to disqualify what has traditionally been attributed to women and slaves: sensuousness and materiality.

So I started visiting the—small but rich—philosophical discourse on friendship, through Aristotle, Montaigne, Derrida, Agamben, and Blanchot, and found that it is a discourse of friendship amongst men. It is shocking how powerful these definitions still are in modern philosophy; Nietzsche argues like this: “Are you a slave? Then you cannot be a friend. Are you a tyrant? Then you cannot have friends. All-too long have a slave and a tyrant been concealed in woman. Therefore woman is not yet capable of friendship: she knows only love.”³ Derrida does address this problem in one chapter of *The Politics of Friendship*, and yet the issue remains: no women philosophers have written about friendship, to the best of my knowledge, and more crucially, there seems to be something inherently patriarchal, perhaps fraternal about these constructions of friendship, that are based on the idea of a nation of brothers (and the terrifying notion that we can only live together because we are the same, we share the same land, the same birth, the same blood, the same language, etc). Simple, haunting questions emerge from this: can I use a discourse that excludes me, and how? Should I produce my own? And how would a discourse on friendship that includes women be structured?

So Nietzsche says: not yet. What is the yet to be reached? Which qualification does woman need to fulfill in order to graduate to the capacity for friendship? And how about the friendship that women and slaves could have together and with each other? Freedom from affects begs another question: I could never accept Socrates' decision that women should not be present at his death because they would be overemotional. Why should affect not be part of how to die? And why should the discourse of philosophy, that one imagines is what Socrates wanted to die surrounded by, be free from affects? I guess we know that this could never really be the case, but what kind of freedom does the exclusion of desires propose? Surely there is also a desire for freedom in freedom too?

So one question is concerned with the possibility of friendship between men and women, and of course between women themselves within philosophical discourse. But another question, which is perhaps more constructive, is to think less of the whys of exclusion, and instead focus on how to produce an inclusive discourse on friendship, or how to include women, as well as the territories historically attributed to them like affects and materiality, in a discourse on friendship. For this to happen I needed to think through how friendship, as a relationship, takes place.

Johan Hartle responded to this saying that “friendship is an affectionate relationship in and through which humans mutually increase their *potentia agen-*

Piazza Salterelli, 1
Firenze
June 14, 1958

Dearest Hannah:

What has happened to you and how did your lectures go? Someone here said they'd read in a newspaper about a lecture you'd given in Zurich, but that is all I know.

I ought to have written sooner, but you know me and besides everything has been in a wobble of indecision until a few days ago, when I cabled Bowden to come here, aux secours. The photography hasn't been going well; everything I wanted photographed turns out to be unphotographable or so the camera-artist declares. And she herself turns out to be a handful, a dark bird all a-flutter, fear-~~ful~~ ful and obstinate, with as much temperament as twenty divas. In her late thirties (I had thought younger), man-shy and man-crazy, having an unhappy love-affair with a married man always in the back of her thoughts. An imperious will directed toward unachievable ends; the conditions she wants never exist, in photography or anything else. The light is wrong; the object to be taken is too high or too distant, or, if every other condition is satisfied, she has brought the wrong camera and will have to come back another day. She is the same in everything; if the perfect ~~apartment~~ apartment is finally found for her, she laments that there isn't a good butcher nearby. She has the capacity for making everyone or at least me feel helplessly at fault, apologetic, as though one were the personal ruler of these arbitrary external conditions.

In the end, I wired Bowden to come and see what he could do with her, and he arrived yesterday. How they will make out, I don't know, but at least he ~~can~~ can rent a car and drive her; one of her handicaps is that she can't drive. And neither can I; at least not in Italy.

So we shall stay here for the summer or anyway till the photographing is finished, which I hope may be in mid-July. Then we might go to France or Austria and Bavaria or Switzerland. How long will you stay in Zurich? I should love to come up for a few days to see you or have you come here. If you're leaving soon, I might be able to come while the photographing is going on, for a slight vacation. All this has been so distracting (I forgot to say that this girl is completely helpless and has to have everything done for her) that I still have my last chapter to write. But it shouldn't

take more than two weeks. If there were a nice cool place in Switzerland, we might ~~even~~ even come there after we're through in Florence. But how long would you be staying?

I've not heard from Shawn about the New Yorker's reviewing your book, and Bowden, before he left, had heard nothing from Dwight on the subject. I shall write to Shawn this afternoon, sending him my penultimate chapter and asking what his decision about the Vita Activa is. I learn from B. that the Readers Subscription has taken it; that is excellent.

By the way, Italian is a language which exhibits quite a few peculiarities in respect to your distinctions. The regular verb ~~for work~~ for work is lavorare; the noun is lavoro. The word, travagliare (noun travaglio) is only used to mean grinding toil or dolour; it is not the regular word for labor in the sense of labor-union, etc.; this would be lavoro. The usual verb for worker is still different; operare; a day-laborer is a manovale. Opera ~~can~~ can apply to the body of work of an artist; an individual work is a lavoro; "masterpiece" is capolavoro. A "hand" in the sense of a farm-hand is an operaio. The pains of childbirth are dolore.² What all this means, I don't know. Either Italian discriminates more finely or has confused everything. It would seem to me, on the basis of my sparse Italian, that opera is the old word for labor; operoso means "laborious," also "active." But by a strange development, it also seems to be the highest verb for "work" in the sense of a work of art. It can be used (contrary to what I say above) of an individual work of art provided that the artist is a genius and (usually) dead. That is, I could speak of an opera bellissima of Donatello, but of one of my own works or the work of a friend, I would have to say "lavoro". Tell me what you make of all this. A craftsman, of course, is an artigiano. It would seem to me that all words for labor and work (except travaglio, rarely used) in Italian tend to approximate to craftsmanship, indiscriminately, and that manovale is the only word that sees the worker as a pure laborer. To work the soil and to work (embroider) a piece of material are the same, and of course Italian farming looks like a work of art.

Please write soon. I loved the jewel-case; my few pieces of jewelry were always teasing about loosely before and in danger of being lost. Many thanks, dear Hannah. I miss you and long to see you. Don't forget to tell me how the lectures went.

Jack
Harris

di, their vital capacities. Spinoza sees, in a classically philosophical way, friendship's highest potential in the communal development of the intellect. But the intellect here just functions to differentiate and develop the body and its affects. Spinoza's approach to friendship is to some extent exceptional, as he does not accept any ontological separation between mind and body. The formation of the common or the *res publica* is, in that sense, as much an agreement in terms of bodies as it is in terms of intellects. In this way, the construction of a people is the construction of shared affects.

"One must therefore also consent that his friend exists" I read, "and this happens by living together and by sharing acts and thoughts in common. In this sense, we say that humans live together, unlike cattle that share the pasture together..."⁴

I really like and am drawn to the idea of living together and sharing acts and thoughts in common, in a way that what is shared is not things, objects, property, qualities (being brothers, men, French, artists, or whatever) but an activity, a process of coexistence through doing and thinking. What this proposes is a process of association that remains open as to what or whom may partake in it. Furthermore, could a woman speak in friendship? And in that way overcome the structure of classical philosophical discourse by occupying it, and acting within it? If we were to engage in the work of friendship this could lead to what Arendt recalls in her friend Mary McCarthy: "It's not that we think so much alike, but that we do this thinking-business for and with each other." The thinking-business is work in friendship, and friendship in work.

So the next few pages gather fragments of what that friendship consisted of, that originate from different places, books and archives, and open up moments of the *thinking-business* in terms of a common production. It starts with a letter written by Mary in which she responds to Hannah's definitions of work by offering the clues given by Italian language. Most inspiring for me perhaps, that while *lavoro* is work, *opera* is the oeuvre, in some instances even a great work, yet *operaio* is the (factory) worker. It is between *opera* and *operaio* that I suspect there may be something useful for us, relating work and labour with both object and subject. In the term cooperation we also have the opus (*opera*), that announces a production beyond labour (which in Latin means suffering). I have then included the very last lines of "The Crisis in Culture", that for me root friendship in the production of culture, a text I first encountered thanks to Jeremiah Day in our weekly Arendt seminars (to the amused disbelief of staff and fellow residents) while on residency at Platform Garanti Istanbul in 2008. Following this is a spread from McCarthy's Postface to *the Life of the Mind*, Arendt's unfinished book that was put together by her lifelong friend made literary executioner, which articulates so poignantly how this work in friendship continues in her absence, with her absence. Finally, a spread from *Thinking in Dark Times*, a beautiful book given to me by Elizabeth Felicella, with on either side of the page, different aspects of this communal development of the intellect, or put more simply, what it means to act in friendship.

1. Quoted from Bertrand Russell.

2. Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance", *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, Faber and Faber, London, 1961, p. 226.

3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, 1883-1885.

4. Giorgio Agamben, *The Friend*, Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 33.

DI CÉLINE CONDORELLI

Che cos'è l'amicizia? Un'alleanza vitale, una condivisione di atti e pensieri, un esercizio di libertà. Céline Condorelli perlustra il territorio delle affinità elettive, risalendo alle origini classiche della riflessione sull'amicizia e ritrovando, nel rapporto tra Hannah Arendt e Mary McCarthy, il prototipo di un'amicizia capace di accrescere la *potentia agendi* dell'individuo. L'artista francese ci racconta la storia dell'incontro tra Hannah e Mary attraverso le loro lettere e i loro scritti, rivelando l'intima natura di un'amicizia in grado di resistere alla morte.

*Le cose principali che mi sembrano importanti in sé, e non semplicemente come mezzi per altre cose, sono la conoscenza, l'arte, la felicità istintiva, e le relazioni amicali o affettive.*¹

Ho selezionato diversi tipi di frammenti per "Reprint", mettendoli in relazione gli uni agli altri, come spesso faccio nella mia pratica. In modo che la somma cumulativa di queste cose, parole e idee, in qualche modo, proponga qualcosa che ciascuna parte da sola non potrebbe; in questo modo parlo, non tanto con una voce autoriale individuale, ma attraverso una molteplicità di voci. Nel tentativo di dire qualcosa, provo a pensare a come trovare una mia posizione, mettendo insieme e navigando attraverso il materiale; tento anche di fare un lavoro che parli nello stesso modo, che funzioni articolando una complessità di materiali, sia nella forma che nel contenuto. Forse questo modo di agire crea stretti legami e connessioni fra le cose, le persone e me stessa, ed è qualcosa che assomiglia a una sorta di amicizia. Lavoro passando del tempo con le cose che ho collezionato, le fonti che mi porto dietro, come voci amichevoli in testa, innumerevoli voci che fanno parte del processo di riflessione e di sviluppo del lavoro – voci di amici, conoscenti e colleghi – ma anche voci fondamentali di pensatori del passato che ci ispirano e popolano i nostri pensieri e le nostre conversazioni, e che sono, in questo modo, a loro volta presenti.

L'amicizia, allora, è forse una condizione di lavoro nella mia pratica – sebbene non possa mai essere il vero e proprio soggetto del lavoro, per quanto sia vicina a un importante oggetto del mio lavoro, il sostegno – ma sicuramente una condizione formativa, operativa che funziona su livelli molteplici e simultanei. Con questa particolare consapevolezza in mente, ho collezionato, per quest'occasione, materiale che rivela cosa possa significare considerare l'amicizia come condizione di pensiero, e lo faccio attraverso la particolare amicizia tra Hannah Arendt e Mary McCarthy.

Molti dei pensieri e delle osservazioni che seguono si sono sviluppati in conversazioni con il filosofo Johan Hartle che, molto generosamente, ha offerto la sua conoscenza e il suo tempo per riflettere con me. Aggiungo una nota: all'età di 37 anni ho deciso di smettere di scusarmi di essere un'intellettuale e un artista.

L'amicizia è un aspetto fondamentale del sostegno personale, una condizione per agire insieme; vorrei

occuparmene come se fosse un modello specifico di relazione nella più ampia questione sul come vivere e lavorare insieme – e autonomamente – per il cambiamento, come modalità d'azione nel mondo. L'amicizia, come il sostegno, è in quest'occasione considerata come una relazione essenzialmente politica, di alleanza e responsabilità. Offrire amicizia richiede un impegno, una decisione, e riguarda le relazioni che qualsiasi attività culturale implica. In relazione alla mia pratica, l'amicizia è soprattutto legata a un processo operativo: un modo di lavorare insieme. La linea di pensiero che attraversa il materiale che segue quindi, è quella dell'amicizia come forma di solidarietà: amici in azione. Inoltre, come sappiamo, lavorare insieme può sia originare che creare forme di solidarietà e/o amicizia, le quali vengono quindi perseguite sia come condizione che come fine, motivando le azioni intraprese e facilitando il lavoro che si porta avanti.

C'è in Hannah Arendt un concetto di cultura che, dal mio punto di vista, si avvicina a ciò che chiamo amicizia come descritta poco sopra: lei la definisce come "la compagnia che si sceglie di avere, nel presente così come nel passato"². Arendt cita Cicerone quando dice che preferirebbe perdersi con Platone piuttosto che possedere la verità con Pitagora; quello che credo significhi, è che egli preferisce la compagnia di Platone a una presunta verità, specialmente se proclamata dal noioso Pitagora. L'idea alla base di tale giudizio è quella di un'alleanza, con chi si preferisce stare. La parola amicizia in realtà non appare nel testo di Arendt, e la compagnia che uno sceglie, per come la vedo io, non è né il gruppo esclusivo di amici né la produzione di una vita, ma *cultura animi*, un tipo di umanesimo. In questo modo le alleanze e le scelte che facciamo continuamente, (come per esempio quali libri leggere e avere come punti di riferimento, o con chi lavorare e pensare) sono strumentali alla formazione della cultura. Trovo che questa nozione di amicizia e/o cultura conferisca potere e sia perfino liberatoria. Mi sono interessata alla sua comprensione non solo in termini generali, astratti, ma attraverso la specifica situazione di amicizia fra Hannah Arendt e Mary McCarthy, che mi parlava attraverso i 25 anni di lettere che le due si sono scambiate, i numerosi libri e pubblicazioni con cui si sono aiutate l'un l'altra.

L'antica tradizione definisce l'amicizia come un esercizio di libertà che necessita di essere esercitato in libertà, e cioè esclusivamente da e tra soggetti liberi ed eguali. Come al solito, una libertà di questo tipo è definita negativamente: libertà dall'oppressione, dalla coercizione, da irragionevoli costrizioni esterne sulle proprie azioni, ma anche dalle emozioni e dalle inclinazioni, dalla schiavitù dei desideri ecc. Tuttavia, l'uguaglianza giurisdizionale è ciò che conta – quindi in un mondo in cui le donne e gli schiavi non siano considerati parte della *polis*, lo spazio democratico della città, ma ne occupino solo lo spazio fisico, l'amicizia può avere luogo solo fra gli uomini. Ciò significa che secondo quella tradizione, la libertà, come l'amicizia, può essere esercitata solo da uomini liberi, e che, in un mondo in cui le donne siano subalterne, esse non possono dedicarsi all'amicizia, e quindi sono anche escluse dalla sua discussione. Dal momento che la discussione sull'amicizia è nata e si è sviluppata nell'antica Grecia, dove le donne e gli schiavi sono esclusi dalla democrazia, questa pesante nota a margine si è stranamente mantenuta attraverso la storia della filosofia – ma solo sporadicamente in maniera consapevole – fino a noi; cosicché questa discussione, come molte altre cose, replica le medesime esclusioni del contesto in cui è nata. Hannah Arendt – la sola donna sullo scaffale dei filosofi – rianima il modello di libertà della *polis* e col-

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of Plato is right, Plato may still be better company than his critics. At any rate, we may remember what the Romans—the first people that took culture seriously the way we do—thought a cultivated person ought to be: one who knows how to choose his company among men, among things, among thoughts, in the present as well as in the past.

Editor's Postface

the fact, which she did not consider, that in the course of years I had learned a great deal from her.

I mention these things now to cite my qualifications for editing *The Life of the Mind*. It was not a job I had applied for, and when, in January, 1974, she made me her literary executor, I doubt very much that she foresaw what was coming, i.e., that she would not live to finish those volumes and that it would be I, without benefit of her assistance, who would see them through the press. If finally she did foresee it, at least as a distinct possibility, after the heart attack a few months later in Aberdeen, she must have known how I would set about the work, with all my peculiarities and stringencies, and have accepted the inevitable in a philosophical spirit. Knowing me, she may even have foreseen the temptations that the new freedom from interference would dangle before me, freedom to do it "my" way, but if she read me as well as that, she would also have foreseen the resistance the mere glimmer of such temptations would muster in my still-Catholic conscience. . . . If she divined, in short, that there would be days when I would become a battlefield on which allegiance to the prose of my forefathers fought my sense of a duty to her, the picture of all that furious contention—the contest of the scruples and the temptations—so foreign to her own nature, would probably have amused her. I must assume that she trusted my judgment, had faith that in the end no damage would be done, that the manuscript would emerge unscarred from the fighting; lacking that basic confidence in her confidence, I would have soon had to throw in the sponge.

But whatever she foresaw, or failed to foresee, she is not here now to consult or appeal to. I have been forced to guess her reaction to every act of editorial interference. In most cases, previous experience has made that easy: if she knew me, I also knew her. But here and there problems have come up which in the past I would surely not have attempted to solve on my own, by guesswork. Whenever I was unsure, I would pepper a manuscript with question marks meaning "What do you want to say here?" "Can you clarify?" "Right word?" Today those points of interrogation ("What do you suppose

promise
↓
ambition
for a
struggle not
the end

life
in
the
mind

active
relation
of
negotiation

Knowledge & responsibility
of hisship → duty to
the work,
the books

Editor's Postface

Speaking & acting together
in life & in death / in absence
with

she means by that?" "Does she intend this repetition or not?") are leveled at me. Yet not in my own person exactly; rather, I put myself in her place, turn into a sort of mind-reader or medium. With eyes closed, I am talking to a quite lively ghost. She has haunted me, given pause to my pencil, caused erasures and re-erasures. In practice, the new-found freedom has meant that I feel less free with her typescript than I would have felt if she were alive. Now and then I have caught myself leaning over backwards for fear of some imagined objection and have had to right myself with the reminder that in normal circumstances the page-long sentence staring at me would never have been allowed to pass.

Or on the contrary it has happened that I have firmly crossed out a phrase or sentence whose meaning was opaque to me and substituted language that seemed to make better sense; then, on a second reading, I have had misgivings, gone back to consult the original text, seen that I had missed a nuance, and restored the passage as written or else made a fresh effort at paraphrase. Anybody who has done translating will recognize the process—the repeated endeavors to read through language into the mind of an author who is absent. Here the fact that several years ago—and mainly, I suppose, because of my friendship with her—I started taking German lessons has turned out to be a benign stroke of fate. I know enough of her native language now to make out the original structure like a distant mountainous outline behind her English phrasing; this has rendered many troublesome passages "translatable": I simply put them into German, where they become clear, and then do them back into English.

In any event, so far as I know, no change has been made that in any way affects the thought. A few cuts, mostly small, have been made, usually to eliminate repetitions, when I concluded that these were accidental rather than deliberate. In a very few places, not more than two or three, I have added something, for the sake of clarity, e.g., the words "Scotus was a Franciscan" to a passage that otherwise would be obscure to a reader lacking that information. But with these minor exceptions, what has been done is just the habitual "Englishing" that all her texts underwent.

with

more
languages
to commu-
nicate
with

translation into a language
she already wrote in
↳ multiple editing by multiple
people, part of writing practice

Top - Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance", *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, Faber and Faber, London, 1961, p.226

Above - Postface by Mary McCarthy to Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978)

loca la politica nel reame dell'azione (ciò che chiama *vita activa*), ma la separa dal lavoro manuale (la produzione della stessa sopravvivenza dell'umanità) e dal lavoro (la costruzione del mondo materiale). Arendt non esclude esplicitamente gli schiavi e le donne dallo spazio della democrazia, ma neppure ve li include; e continua a squalificare ciò che è stato tradizionalmente attribuito alle donne e agli schiavi: la sensualità e la materialità.

Così ho iniziato ad affrontare il discorso filosofico – limitato ma denso – sull'amicizia, attraverso Aristotele, Montaigne, Derrida, Agamben, e Blanchot, e ho scoperto che è un discorso di amicizia fra uomini. È scioccante il potere che queste definizioni ancora hanno nella moderna filosofia; Nietzsche argomenta in questo modo: “Sei uno schiavo? Allora non puoi essere un amico. Sei un tiranno? Allora non puoi avere amici. Per troppo tempo si celò nella donna uno schiavo e un tiranno. Perciò la donna non è ancora capace di amicizia: essa conosce solo l'amore”³. Derrida affronta questo problema in uno dei capitoli de *Le politiche dell'amicizia*, e tuttavia il problema rimane: nessuna donna filosofo ha scritto sull'amicizia, per quanto ne so, e, cosa ancor più importante, sembra esserci qualcosa di inerentemente patriarcale, forse fratriarcale in queste interpretazioni dell'amicizia, che sono basate sull'idea di una nazione di fratelli (e sulla nozione terrificante che possiamo vivere insieme solo perché siamo gli stessi, dividiamo la stessa terra, la stessa nascita, lo stesso sangue, la stessa lingua, ecc.). Ne emergono interrogativi semplici e ineludibili: posso servirmi di un discorso che mi esclude, e come? Posso produrre uno mio? E come sarebbe strutturata una discussione sull'amicizia che includa le donne?

Nietzsche sostiene: non ancora. Cosa c'è ancora da raggiungere? Quali qualifiche la donna deve soddisfare al fine di acquisire la capacità amicale? E cosa dire riguardo all'amicizia che le donne e gli schiavi potrebbero stringere fra loro e le une con gli altri? La libertà dalle emozioni introduce un'ulteriore questione: non avrei mai potuto accettare la decisione di Socrate per cui le donne non dovevano essere presenti alla sua morte perché troppo emotive. Perché l'emozione non dovrebbe essere parte di come morire? E perché il discorso filosofico, che c'immaginiamo essere ciò di cui Socrate voglia essere circondato nel momento della morte, dovrebbe essere scevro dalle emozioni? Credo che sappiamo che questo non potrebbe mai essere il caso, ma che tipo di libertà propone l'esclusione dei desideri? Ci deve anche essere necessariamente un desiderio di libertà nella libertà?

Quindi una domanda riguarda la possibilità dell'amicizia fra uomini e donne, e ovviamente fra le donne stesse all'interno della discussione filosofica. Ma un'altra domanda, che è forse più costruttiva, è quella di pensare meno ai motivi dell'esclusione, e focalizzarsi piuttosto sul modo in cui dare vita a una discussione inclusiva sull'amicizia, o sul modo in cui annettervi le donne, così come i territori storicamente loro attribuiti, come gli affetti e la materialità. Affinché questo avvenga, ho avuto bisogno di pensare a lungo a come l'amicizia, in quanto relazione, abbia luogo.

Johan Hartle risponde dicendo che “L'amicizia è una relazione affettiva nella quale, e attraverso la quale, gli esseri umani aumentano reciprocamente la loro *potentia agendi*, le loro capacità vitali. Spinoza vede, in un modo classicamente filosofico, la più alta potenzialità dell'amicizia nello sviluppo comunitario dell'intelletto. Ma l'intelletto qui fun-

The Human Condition. Why is it important? Because what she does is make I think the most important point all of us have to deal with, which is that none of us start on this planet with a perfectly clean slate, saying, “and here's how we can remake the world and we can go out and do that.” And in fact, we are in a particular setting, in a particular time, we're given our parents, we're born in a particular language and place. All of this has a real role in shaping where we are and what we're doing. And, most importantly, we have to work on our own experience and accept what we are given and figure out where to go from there, rather than to say, “Wouldn't it have been wonderful if I had been given this, that, and the other thing?”

The other book that has intrigued me is the book that she didn't finish, but Mary McCarthy did, *The Life of the Mind*. And there the idea—and this is a real set of problems that bothered Heinrich to no end as well—is thinking very carefully about thinking. The question as she framed it and as she and Heinrich discussed it is: When you are thinking, to whom are you talking? And when you're debating an issue in your own mind, with whom are you debating? And what happens when you're actually talking to someone else? How does that suddenly unify and where does the composite that you're giving to somebody else come from? These are very difficult questions to play around with.

RB: Are there any other memorable stories about Hannah Arendt you'd like to share?

JB: I had one memorable evening sitting with her and [W. H.] Auden, and she introduced me to Auden as the man who taught her English and who was very helpful in editing her work, which I thought was astonishing. Who would've known? And then I heard the tale of how she and Mary McCarthy cleaned Auden's apartment. What happened was that they knew that he was living in absolute filth with his lover in this apartment on the Lower East Side, and they couldn't bear it, and so the two of them went down there with buckets and mops and literally got down on the floor and cleaned the apartment.

RB: That is quite a story! There is a book by Jacques Taminiaux called *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker*, referring to Arendt and Martin Heidegger respectively. I wonder what he would make of Arendt scrubbing Auden's floor.

JB: It is part of who Hannah was.

RB: Thank you so much for such an insightful talk.

JB: Thank you.

Facing: The gravestones of Heinrich Blücher and Hannah Arendt Blücher, Bard College Cemetery. Photos, Serena Randolph. Courtesy of the Hannah Arendt Collection, Stevenson Library, Bard College.

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Remembering Hannah: An Interview with Jack Blum

ziona proprio a differenziare e sviluppare il corpo e le sue emozioni. L'approccio di Spinoza all'amicizia è, in un certo senso, eccezionale, dal momento che egli non accetta alcuna separazione ontologica tra mente e corpo. La formazione della cosa comune o della *res publica* è, in quel senso, tanto un accordo in termini di corpi quanto lo è in termini d'intelletti. In questo modo la costruzione di una nazione è la costruzione di emozioni condivise".

"Si deve quindi anche consentire che la sua amicizia esista", leggo, "e questo succede vivendo insieme e condividendo atti e pensieri. In questo senso diciamo che gli esseri umani convivono, non diversamente dal bestiame che spartisce il pascolo..."⁴

Amo veramente e mi attrae l'idea del convivere e del condividere atti e pensieri, in modo che ciò che è condiviso non siano cose, oggetti, proprietà, qualità (essere fratelli, uomini, francesi, artisti, o qualsivoglia altra qualità) ma un'attività, un processo di coesistenza attraverso il fare e il pensare. Ciò che questa definizione propone è un processo di associazione che rimane aperto e guarda a cosa o a chi possa prenderne parte. Inoltre, una donna potrebbe parlare *in amicizia*? E quindi superare la struttura della discussione filosofica classica, appropriandosene, e agendo al suo interno? Se dobbiamo impegnarci nel lavoro dell'amicizia questo potrebbe condurre a ciò che Arendt ricorda della sua amica Mary McCarthy: "Non è che la pensiamo così tanto in maniera simile, ma piuttosto che compiamo l'attività di pensare l'una per l'altra e l'una con l'altra". L'attività di pensare è l'amicizia fattiva, l'amicizia in azione.

Quindi, le prossime pagine raccolgono frammenti di ciò di cui consiste l'amicizia, che originano da luoghi, libri e archivi diversi, e rivelano momenti del *lavoro del pensiero* nel senso di produzione comune. Inizio con una lettera scritta da Mary in cui risponde alle definizioni di lavoro di Hannah, offrendo i corrispettivi nella lingua italiana. La cosa di maggior ispirazione per me, forse, è che, mentre *lavoro* è "work" e *opera* è "oeuvre", per certi versi un lavoro anche maggiore, *operaio* è "factory worker". È fra opera e operaio che sospetto ci possa essere qualcosa di utile per noi, mettendo in relazione lavoro e lavoro manuale sia con l'oggetto che col soggetto. Anche nel termine cooperazione abbiamo l'opus (*opera*), che annuncia una produzione oltre il lavoro manuale (il cui corrispettivo latino *labor* significa sofferenza). Ho poi incluso proprio le ultime frasi de "La crisi della cultura", che per me radicano l'amicizia nella produzione della cultura, un testo che ho incontrato per la prima volta grazie a Jeremiah Day nei nostri seminari settimanali su Arendt (per la divertita incredulità dello staff e dei colleghi residenti) mentre eravamo in residenza a Platform Garanti Istanbul nel 2008. A seguire, un estratto dalla postfazione di McCarthy a *La vita della mente*, il libro non finito di Arendt, messo insieme dall'amica di una vita e sua esecutrice letteraria, che articola in maniera intensa come questo lavoro in amicizia continui in sua assenza, con la sua assenza. Infine, un estratto da *L'umanità in tempi bui*, un bel libro datomi da Elizabeth Felicella, che racconta su entrambi i lati della pagina, differenti aspetti di questo sviluppo comune dell'intelletto, o per dirla più semplicemente, che cosa significhi agire nell'amicizia.

1. Citazione da Bertrand Russell.

2. Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance", in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, Faber and Faber, Londra 1961, p. 226.

3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Così parlò Zarathustra*, a cura di Giorgio Colli e Mazzino Montinari, tr. di Mazzino Montinari, Adelphi, Milano 1968 (*Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, Ernst Schmeitzner 1883-1885).

4. Giorgio Agamben, *L'amico*, Nottetempo, Roma 2007.

