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Post-Fascism and the Crisis of Critical Thinking*

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ABSTRACT

In today's new version of the neoliberal system, the tendencies of post-fascism are becoming more intense. Post-fascism takes as its fundamental principle the competition among independent individuals according to social Darwinism, and its core characteristic lies in depriving others of their citizenship based on the illusion of a homogeneous society. This paper focuses on the absence of critical thinking as one of the elements that has made such tendencies possible, centering on the intersection between the thoughts of H. Arendt and J. Butler.

Both thinkers share the concern that the absence of critical thinking makes possible not only hostility toward others but even genocide. For Arendt, plurality—the very condition of thinking—is also the condition of both political and human life. Butler reformulates this as the condition of cohabitation, in which we live together with others on the earth, and argues that this condition makes social bonds possible. Critical thinking means thinking heterogeneity on the basis of the principle of interdependency. The moment such thinking ceases, the citizens of a homogeneous society are likely either to tolerate or to participate in acts of hostility toward others.

Keywords : Post-Fascism, Hostility toward Others, Critical Thinking, Hannah Arendt, Judith Butler

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Ⅰ. Introduction

On December 3, 2024, an attempted coup d'état in South Korea was provisionally brought to an end through the passage of the presidential impeachment motion, the ruling on impeachment, and the subsequent 21st presidential election. This outcome could not have been achieved without the soldiers who refused to obey unlawful martial orders, the street demonstrations and rallies known as the "Revolution of Light," and the civic concern and expression of opinion for our shared destiny. Looking back on that long and difficult process—while investigations and trials of the forces behind the insurrection are still being carried out—it is impossible to avoid reflecting not only on the power of the people that can influence politics, but also on the dangers that extreme division among the populace can bring about.

That process revealed both the positive and negative possibilities of Korean democracy. On the one hand, its positive possibility appeared in the operation of democratic institutions and the rule of law—in what is often called a society where *common sense prevails*. It also manifested in the people's desire to restore ordinary life, as well as in their aspiration to create a new world free from discrimination. On the other hand, its negative possibility was exposed not only in the dangers revealed by the organization of the far right and its abuses of law and institutions, but also in the subtle, anti-democratic current that nullified differences under the pretext of resisting such dangers. At this point, however, we must, as Jin Tae-Won (2025:23) points out, focus not on "evidence of the resilience of Korean democracy" but on "symptoms of its fragility." To prepare for the dark future of Korean democracy, our society must confront the crisis of democracy that it already shares with

Western societies.

This paper identifies such signs of the crisis of democracy—or of anti-democratic tendencies—in the strengthening and diversification of far-right forces, and interprets them as manifestations of post-fascism. As became evident during the period of impeachment politics, the far right consolidated its power by organizing around various religious groups and by forming alliances with major political parties. Within the polarized confrontation between pro-impeachment and anti-impeachment camps, the wide spectrum of far-right movements became less visible. As a result, even though the far right's strategy in South Korea—combining anti-communism with anti-homosexual and anti-feminist campaigns—clearly corresponds to the typical features of far-right movements around the world today, even the democratic camp has failed to adequately address it.

Why is this the case? Within the confrontation between the two major parties, the democratic camp believes that, in order not to lose its political leadership, it must not lose the votes of the *moderate* majority. To achieve this, it assumes that it cannot reject the discourse of fairness grounded in the neoliberal logic of competition. Underlying this assumption is the belief that the majority does not support institutions that guarantee universal citizenship and fundamental rights—such as the abolition of discrimination and the protection of minority rights. For example, many in the majority are not only indifferent to the discrimination experienced by women, sexual minorities, persons with disabilities, and migrants, but even regard prohibiting such discrimination as an *unfair reverse discrimination*. At the core of this discourse on fairness lies a harsh meritocracy that views the social positions and circumstances of minorities as part of their individual ability.

In fact, there are probably not many people who can intuitively claim that hatred and discrimination against the weak are right. Nevertheless, when such issues are approached merely in terms of right and wrong and when the logic of protecting the weak is advanced, it often strengthens the affective politics of fear and hatred, together with the othering of the weak.[1] This is because, in a neoliberal society where much of social life is institutionalized around competition,[2] many people are more likely to react sensitively to the harm or loss inflicted on themselves or on the groups to which they belong. In such circumstances, the collective power of the people tends to be used in ways that turn others into rivals or enemies, and ultimately, in ways that expel them from the community.

Even after the presidential impeachment, the former ruling party has been unable to sever its ties with far-right forces, and the reason may lie here. In other words, even if there are not many people within the party who openly express far-right positions—characterized by hostility

1) For a detailed analysis of the mechanisms of this affective politics of hostility toward others, see S. Ahmed (2014). Her exploration of how emotions operate within and across our personal and social bodies highlights the indispensable role of affect theory in the study of post-fascism. Questions such as "Whom do we love, and whom do we hate?" and "How do our judgments shape the objects of our affection and aversion, and how are those judgments entangled with our emotions?" call for a more concrete engagement with the relationship between community and the Other. However, as such an investigation would require a separate set of methodologies and analytical frameworks, it will be reserved for future research. In this paper, I focus specifically on the problem of *thinking* as a point of entry into the issue of post-fascism.

2) Groupe d'Etudes du Néolibéralisme et des Alternatives (Research Group on Neoliberalism and Alternatives, GENA) (Dardot et al., 2024) systematically analyzes how explaining neoliberalism as a theory of the minimal state distorts its actual nature. They demonstrate that neoliberalism is a governing strategy based on a strong state whose goal is to reorganize laws and institutions in order to guarantee the economic freedom of individuals and corporations.

toward sexual minorities and foreigners, sexism and racism, and extreme nationalism, patriotism, and anti-democratic tendencies—it can be assumed that, as more people come to feel threatened in their own survival, they are likely to be drawn into the current of hostility toward others and to support policies that represent far-right positions. Both major parties share the same goal of winning the support of the majority that identifies as neither left nor right, and it can be said that they also share the same assessment of the potential radicalization of the center. If that assessment is correct, then as long as the rules of the game remain such that one can survive only when the other is eliminated, the democratic camp can never win this game. Above all, under this competitive system, not only various minority groups but the lives of the people as a whole—including those very groups—will inevitably become more precarious and vulnerable.

The rules of the game must be changed. We must move beyond the institutions and discourses grounded in neoliberal competition. It is necessary to build various institutions through which everyone can enjoy the basic rights of life—such as the right to housing, migration, labor, education, and health care. To achieve this, the support of the majority is essential, and a discourse capable of countering neoliberalism must be formed so that such majority support can move toward the protection of universal basic rights. At the same time, the collective intelligence of the people must be actively exercised around that discourse. For this to happen, the critical thinking of the people—thinking that transcends existing discourses—is indispensable. Meanwhile, T. W. Adorno (2020), in his lecture *Aspects of the New Right-Wing Radicalism*, uses the terms right-wing radicalism and fascism synonymously, while emphasizing the need to pay attention to the differences between the fascism of the Nazi

era and the new right-wing radicalism of the mid-1960s. This statement not only calls for attention to difference but, more importantly, warns that the newly emerging fascism may be difficult to recognize precisely because it appears different from the militaristic fascism of the past. The same applies to the twenty-first century: we must clearly grasp the dangers of the fascist tendencies of the new right-wing radicalism that has merged with neoliberalism.

Therefore, this paper seeks to examine the main characteristics of post-fascism today and to address the problem of critical thinking by focusing on the people's fundamental capacity to resist such tendencies. During the period of impeachment politics, when the people were divided and turned against one another, critical thinking in many cases disappeared from both sides. According to H. Arendt and J. Butler, critical thinking is fundamentally grounded in relationality with others. Of course, we remember those fleeting moments of solidarity in difference that shone during the pro-impeachment rallies and the gatherings at Namtaeryeong. Yet, during that period, we also recall that it was often easier to make enemies than friends, and that many preferred quick conclusions to long and difficult discussions. In section II-1, I will examine the features and tendencies of post-fascism; in section II-2, I will explore what critical thinking means through the thought of Arendt and Butler; and in section III, I will clarify the conditions of thinking and action through their key concepts of plurality and cohabitation. Finally, following Butler, I will propose interdependency as a basic principle of social relations, as part of constructing a discourse that can counter neoliberal fascism.

II. Post-Fascism and Critical Thinking

1. Post-Fascism and Hostility toward Others

In today's new version of the neoliberal system, the tendencies of post-fascism are becoming more intense. Because of its common feature of promoting or tolerating xenophobia and violence, post-fascism is often equated with right-wing populism.[3] Although the term populism is widely employed, this paper retains the term post-fascism to make explicit that we are dealing with a new form of fascism. In recent years, political forces that openly advocate nationalism and racism have become mainstream in major powers, and in several countries, wars of military aggression have actually been waged to pursue territorial subjugation and even genocide. For this reason, the term populism fails to convey the full gravity of the current situation.[4]

Of course, populism is indeed a useful term in that it reveals the ambivalence of democracy—and, more specifically, how democracy can become vulnerable within its own institutional framework by enabling the *tyranny of the majority*. C. Mudde (2021:14), in discussing the relationship between the far right and populism, defines populism as "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, *the pure people* versus *the corrupt elite*, and that argues politics should be an expression of the general will (*volonté générale*) of the people." Within the spectrum of

3) Finchelstein (2023:14) clearly defines populism as a form of post-fascism—that is, as fascism transformed to fit the democratic age.

4) Riemen (2020:14) even criticizes the very use of the term populism for encouraging a tendency to deny the phenomenon of fascism itself.

the far right, Mudde (ibid:13-14) classifies the extreme right as fascism, which rejects popular sovereignty and majority rule altogether and is, by its nature, anti-democratic. By contrast, the radical right accepts popular sovereignty and majority rule but opposes such liberal-democratic principles as the rule of law, separation of powers, and minority rights. Thus, while the extreme right cannot be populist, the radical right can be.

This distinction is not made merely from a synchronic perspective. It is rather derived from a diachronic analysis that traces how far-right movements have evolved from the postwar period to the present. Mudde (ibid:13) basically interprets the right as an ideological position that views *inequality* in human society as both natural and positive, and therefore believes that the government should maintain or protect such inequality as it is. In the early to mid-twentieth century, fascists radicalized this position by asserting that humanity was hierarchically divided into superior and inferior races, and that because the inferior races sought to dominate the superior ones, the latter had to eliminate the former preemptively. Following this claim, Jews, communists, sexual minorities, Roma, persons with physical or mental impairments and disabilities, and the ill were identified as target groups; many of those regarded as belonging to these groups lost their basic rights, were expelled, or perished in concentration camps. After the war—particularly between 1945 and 2000—a third wave of far-right politics emerged. The related social phenomena and movements were initially called neo-fascism, later the extreme right in the 1980s, and the radical right in the 1990s. Subsequently, another form of far-right politics appeared in the early twenty-first century, termed the populist radical right. From this point on, far-right politics entered what Mudde calls its fourth

wave, a current that continues to this day. At present, the term far right has become the most commonly used designation.[5)]

However, this shift in terminology reveals that the far right has moved— at least in theory—from an explicitly anti-democratic stance toward one that professes to support democracy. As a corollary, in the 2020s, the overt expression of sexism or racism is sometimes perceived as a form of honesty, and thus openly anti-democratic positions occasionally gain popular support. The problem is that, despite these changes in appearance, the institutional and value structures grounded in the legacy of fascism—particularly those based on hostility toward others—remain intact. Moreover, precisely because of these changes, such structures and values have become normalized, expanding the range within which actual policies tolerate hostility toward others. For example, both the extreme right and the radical right share a form of anti-immigrant exclusionism that combines nationalism and xenophobia. Once they begin to compete with one another, they cease to question this exclusionism itself, and as a result, discriminatory immigration policies come to be widely accepted. Similarly, anti-communism, anti-feminism, and anti-homosexuality follow comparable processes of

5) This typology is, of course, approximate. In concrete developments, populist forms adapted to the social atmosphere of each period appeared relatively early. According to Mudde's more detailed classification (ibid:23-38), neo-fascism persisted between 1945 and 1955, while in the period from 1955 to 1980, far-right organizations continued to exist and new parties were founded, alongside the emergence of the populist radical right. From 1980 to 2000, radical right populists began their bid for entry into parliamentary politics, and since the 2000s, the mainstreaming of the far right—most notably through the exploitation of the events of 9/11, the 2008 financial crisis, and the 2015 refugee crisis—has become characteristic. For a detailed historical account of far-right politics after 1945, which inherited the legacy of fascism, see chapter 7, "Other Times, Other Places," in R. O. Paxton (2024:391-459).

normalization through partisan rivalry and the mobilization of supporters.

To understand post-fascism, we must focus on the legacy of fascism and examine its core features and tendencies. G. M. Tamás (2000) identifies the central characteristic of post-fascism as a "hostility toward universal citizenship," making clear that this is what connects it to classical fascism. According to Tamás, before modernity, citizenship was a restricted privilege determined by criteria such as lineage, class, race, and gender. With the Enlightenment, however, citizenship emerged as a universal right that allowed every human being to belong to a political community. In other words, the ideal of modern democracy rests on the principle that the very fact of being human constitutes the foundation of political rights. On this basis, the state is obligated to guarantee various rights enabling all individuals, as equal legal subjects, to participate in the political community. Yet, whereas the fascist state destroyed this principle through terror, post-fascism preserves it formally while effectively dismantling it without the use of terror.

This destruction takes place, as H. Arendt (2004) once argued, through the deprivation of *the right to have rights*. It exploits the fact that the modern nation-state is, in practice, obligated to protect only the rights of those who hold its citizenship. Fascist regimes deprived their opponents and those deemed unfit of citizenship, thereby rendering them stateless. What became clear in this process was that exclusion from citizenship meant, quite literally, exclusion from humanity itself. Despite the proclamations of the modern declarations of human rights, those without nationality—the non-citizens—were left without any legal protection of their so-called universal rights and, consequently, found even their right to life imperiled. This is the aporia of human rights that emerged within the framework of the modern nation-state. The problem

is that today's societies, where post-fascist tendencies are intensifying, still exist within that same framework. Those outside citizenship continue to be denied effective legal protection, and their basic rights are violated through numerous discriminatory laws that distinguish between citizens and non-citizens.

Within the framework of the nation-state, hostility toward universal citizenship is grounded in the illusion that only a single ethnicity or race can constitute the people. This hostility rests on the fantasy of national homogeneity and manifests itself as enmity toward those whose very presence calls the qualification for citizenship into question. It also carries the implicit claim that the Other cannot be granted the same rights as *us*, the supposedly homogeneous collective. Outside relations of equality, the Other can never be a friend or even a human being, but only a competitor or an enemy. Building on this hostility toward others, both fascism and post-fascism share the ideology of social Darwinism, which the GENA define as "an ideology that conceives of society as a place where nations and races engage in a general and perpetual struggle for survival" (Dardot et al., 2024:290). In traditional totalitarian regimes, fascism—understood as a principled form of social Darwinism—granted national membership, and thus human status, to certain races or ethnicities deemed superior, while actively stripping both citizenship and humanity from those branded as unworthy. By contrast, post-fascism under the neoliberal order no longer rigidly measures citizenship by race or ethnicity, nor does it directly revoke citizenship or take lives. Yet it effectively de-nationalizes and de-humanizes the Other by refusing to protect the rights of those who have *lost* in the so-called competition of life—through a complex web of legal and administrative classifications.

It should also not be overlooked that both phenomena arose from

modern capitalist mass society, whose fundamental unit is the atomized or independent individual. The hostility toward others that appears in fascism and post-fascism is nourished by the isolation and loneliness of politically powerless individuals (Arendt, 2004:610-612). When people feel that they cannot change the miserable conditions of their lives—either by themselves or together with others—they begin to seek someone who can deliver them from their state of abandonment and to long for a homogeneous collective in which they can escape isolation and experience belonging (Hertz, 2022:64-70). At first glance, it may seem that, whereas the fascism of the past enforced the idolization of the leader and the subordination of individuals to the whole, post-fascism in the present achieves the same effect voluntarily. Yet both arise from the same condition: people whose right to live is not protected seek survival by belonging to homogeneous groups and excluding others.

In summary, post-fascism is characterized by the deprivation of others' citizenship on the basis of the illusion of a homogeneous society, while taking competition among independent individuals—according to social Darwinism—as its fundamental principle. What, then, are the main manifestations of post-fascism, which may be regarded as the fourth wave of far-right politics? In the fully developed neoliberal world, post-fascism is most clearly expressed in the *division of the people* and the *radicalization of the center*. As is well known, a society in which neoliberal rationality is fully realized operates on competition as its basic principle, making inequality and discrimination not only legitimate but normative (Brown, 2017:80). In such a society, as G. M. Tamás (2000) points out, citizenship becomes a privilege. Citizens, wishing to secure an advantageous position in competition, are unwilling to share their privileges with non-citizens; consequently, majorities do not oppose

restricting refugees, stateless persons, and migrant workers from legal protection, welfare, or political participation. For example, the far right's defining traits—"nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy, and advocacy of a strong state" (Ebner, 2021:16)—have gradually become generalized positions, differing only in degree between parties or factions that assert them openly and those that claim to defend national interests while opposing the far right. In the same way, domestic minority claims to rights are increasingly perceived by the majority as infringements on their privileges or as encroachments upon their advantageous position, and such sentiments are becoming ever more normalized. Compared with the present moment in 2025, it almost appears that in the 2000s, the idea that universal citizenship is a right for all people—and thus must be upheld—was accepted by most as a matter of common sense.[6)]

Post-fascism has deepened as inequality and discrimination have become normalized within the neoliberal system of competition. This condition manifests itself in two closely connected forms: the division of the people and the radicalization of the center. The majority of citizens are now divided—not uniting in solidarity to claim equal rights, but competing with and separating themselves from one another into homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. Citizens distinguish between citizens, non-citizens, and second-class citizens, excluding the latter from the human community while failing to recognize such exclusion as

6) S. Ahmed (2014) analyzes concrete cases of post-fascism under the neoliberal order through emotions such as pain, hatred, fear, disgust, shame, and love. They examine examples from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia in the 2000s. The discourses about refugees and migrants, sexual minorities, and indigenous peoples that Ahmed treats as key texts reveal, in comparison with the present, how the subtle rationalization of exclusion at that time now seems almost to define what counts as common sense. It is clear that this very process has deepened the phenomena of post-fascism.

an act of violence. In neoliberal society, inequality and discrimination based on merit are taken for granted, and the violence of expulsion and exclusion is legitimized as legal procedure or administrative management.

Power arises only through solidarity among the people, yet as divisions become more minute and antagonistic, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to act as political subjects capable of determining the conditions of their lives. Moreover, the instability of labor and the growing number of people whose lives are left unprotected in neoliberal society intensify hostility toward others and processes of exclusion. Within this dynamic, overt hatred toward minorities, as well as explicit racism and nationalism, gain strength. As a result, institutional decisions that differentiate and selectively apply rights among the people come to appear more reasonable, gradually gaining support from the political center. Thus the people, in the name of sovereignty, become judges who decide who does and does not belong to the civic community.

2. Critical Thinking and Relation to the Other

Analyzing the psychological structure of fascist society, G. Bataille (2022:33) defines sovereignty as “the imperative form of heterogeneous existence,” in contrast to the degraded form of the heterogeneous. Fundamentally, he divides society into two domains: that of homogeneity and that of heterogeneity. The former is grounded in production, where activity centers on productivity and utility. The common measure underlying such activity is money, that is, exchange value—the principle of calculable equivalence among different products—so that even human beings become functions of measurable production. The latter comprises everything expelled by homogeneous society: “the entire outcome of

unproductive expenditure" (ibid:25), including both those beings regarded as filth and waste and those considered to possess transcendent, superior value.

In connection with the domain of heterogeneity, Bataille argues that fascist leaders such as Mussolini and Hitler belong to the category of heterogeneous beings. At the same time, he claims that the lowest stratum of society—the poor, who are regarded as untouchables—also belongs to this category. According to Bataille (ibid:30-31), in so-called advanced civilized nations, poverty represents "this disgusting form of degradation," which, like filth, "provokes an unbearable repugnance, so that to express or even to allude to it is considered improper." In other words, heterogeneous beings are regarded as those who cannot be assimilated into humanity. However, the heterogeneity of the former type is linked to the state, which represents another facet of social homogeneity; this kind of heterogeneity is understood as an imperative *souveraineté* (sovereignty) that exercises *supériorité* (superiority). Bataille (ibid: 30) notes that the word *souverain* (sovereign) is derived from the Latin adjective *superaneus*, meaning *supérieur* (superior). Human domination over other humans—that is, domination among those of the same kind—is thus justified through this notion of superiority. In this way, the relationship between ruler and ruled is established: the heterogeneous nature of the ruled becomes entangled with filth and waste, while the nature of the ruler is formed through the very act of judging and excluding the existence of the other (ibid:34-35).

Even in the case of post-fascism, the same mechanism operates, but sovereignty is exercised not through a totalitarian or authoritarian government led by a single ruler, but rather through a series of policies, practices, and everyday procedures that reflect the choices of the

majority. According to Bataille (ibid:16-17), the state functions through the dual operation of authority and conformity: in a democratic state, conformity prevails, whereas in a dictatorial state, authority prevails. In a democratic state, however, sovereignty inevitably weakens as the people become more diverse, and it strengthens when they are unified around a single object of support or hostility. Yet in the latter case, unless the majority supports universal citizenship and diversity itself, democracy is again destined to weaken. In such circumstances, conformity takes the form of submission to the authority of a homogeneous majority.

Moreover, neoliberalism requires a strong sovereign state in order to establish a society based on competition, and under the protection of such a state, it even legitimizes a form of "liberal dictatorship" (Dardot et al., 2024:24-25). Even without coups or dictatorships, the neoliberal state adopts competition as the principle of governance, dividing winners and losers in every domain of social life and refusing to protect the lives of the latter. If, on the basis of neoliberal rationality, the majority continues to choose and conform to policies and institutions that denationalize the other— whether the other who has entered the national community or the other within it—such choices will strengthen the sovereignty of a homogenized people, be rationalized through claims of superiority, and thereby neutralize equality, the principle of action that animates democracy. In fact, since the 2000s, the full-scale implementation of neoliberalism has rendered demands for political and economic equality powerless by institutionalizing competition and legitimizing the discrimination and inequality between winners and losers as expressions of meritocratic superiority and inferiority. Therefore, the post-fascist tendencies of the 2020s are not only a legacy of fascism—which divided human beings into superior and inferior kinds and justified inequality—but also the

result of the majority's conformity to the institutionalization of competition. I would argue that this situation arose, in the first instance, because even as a series of policies, institutions, everyday procedures, and practices were reorganized around the logic of competition, both overtly discriminatory ideologies—such as sexism, racism, extreme nationalism, and patriotism—and more insidious forms of discrimination, such as meritocracy, were at work, yet the majority of the people failed to think critically about them.

I also contend that this absence of critical thinking among the people has intensified hostility toward others, and that this generalized hostility, in turn, has further diminished the very possibility of critical thinking. For critical thinking is fundamentally bound up with the practice of questioning the hostility toward others that sustains a homogeneous society. This means, in turn, that at the heart of the people's political capacity to preserve and enliven democracy lies critical thinking itself.

How is this so? To answer this question, it is first necessary to clarify what critical thinking is. To this end, I turn to Arendt and Butler, both of whom have examined the meaning of thinking by revealing the connection between the absence of thought and genocide. Their reflections on thinking are best illustrated in the debates surrounding Arendt's notion of the "banality of evil" in relation to the trial of Adolf Eichmann.[7] Arendt (2003:159) emphasized that by this term she meant "no theory or doctrine but something quite factual, the phenomenon of evil deeds, committed on a gigantic scale." What she sought to describe

7) For studies that explore the meaning of Arendt's concept of thinking and its relation to moral action in connection with this debate, see Han Gil-Seok (2023) and P. Formosa (2016). For another study that connects Arendt's concept of thinking with Butler's notion of relationality to elucidate its contemporary significance, see Yang Chang-Ah (2023).

was the phenomenon in which individuals functionally serve an organization or system that commands the expulsion and extermination of others. With respect to this phenomenon, Arendt (2006:287) discovered in Eichmann a personal trait that she called an "extraordinary shallowness." She (ibid:288) considered this shallowness extraordinary because it confirmed Eichmann's "sheer thoughtlessness," even though the crime he participated in was not merely mass murder but, more precisely, what she called "administrative massacres."

According to her, Eichmann knew what his job was and how to perform it efficiently, but he was unable to think about what the work as a whole actually meant. Arendt (2003:163) distinguishes thinking from knowing, the latter being related to "certain, verifiable knowledge." Thinking, by contrast, is a mental activity concerned with "the quest for meaning" (ibid:165), the outcome of which is "uncertain and unverifiable" (ibid:166), and is therefore not only useless for the ordinary course of affairs but also "somehow self-destructive" (loc. cit.). Butler (2011) remarks that Arendt's concept of thinking refers to "a more reflective mode of rationality." *They*[8] elaborates on Arendt's controversial claim that Eichmann could not be said to have intention as follows: "To have *intentions* in her view was to think reflectively about one's own action as a political being, whose own life and thinking is bound up with the life and thinking of others."

Arendt's and Butler's explanations of the kind of thinking Eichmann failed to perform contain the first meaning of critical thinking: it is the kind of thinking that opens oneself to others and to the world, thereby making public examination possible. To think reflectively about one's

8) Butler identifies as non-binary, a status legally recognized in California, and is therefore referred to in this paper with the singular they pronoun.

own action means to undertake an effort and a process of understanding how one's actions affect others and the shared public world constituted by one's relations with others. Although this process of thinking as a political being takes place within oneself and therefore is not identical with political action in which people share opinions through speech, it closely resembles such action in that it involves a dialogue between two positions that question and respond to each other. The internal dialogue that takes the form of critique proceeds by placing two opposing positions on an equal footing, articulating each, and asking for their justification. Arendt (1982:37) names Socrates as the paradigmatic figure who practiced this kind of thinking in life, and she describes his practice as follows: "What he actually did was to make *public*, in discourse, the thinking process—that dialogue that soundlessly goes on within me, between me and myself."

As Socrates famously declared that *the unexamined life is not worth living*, his philosophical practice shows that he never knew the answers to the questions he himself raised when examining the virtues spoken of in the public world. He examined them not in order to gain knowledge but for the sake of examination itself (loc. cit.). Why, then, engage in such *useless* examination that yields no definitive answers? It is because encountering another standpoint makes it possible to undo the limits of one's previous position. For this reason, critical thinking is both self-reflective and, at the same time, *self-destructive*.

This point is confirmed once again in Arendt's decisive description of Eichmann. Eichmann's inability to think means precisely his inability to think from the standpoint of others; this is evident in his incapacity for meaningful speech with others. The impossibility of communication with him stems from the fact that he had imprisoned himself, shutting

himself off from others and from the world (Arendt, 2006:49). Without exposing oneself to others and to the world, one never encounters the limits of oneself, nor examines one's own position. In this sense, critical thinking requires the willingness to expose oneself publicly.

Second, critical thinking is a kind of practical activity that suspends one's own judgments formed within pre-established cognitive frameworks by admitting the other into oneself. Returning to the case of Eichmann, he knew that his work of deportation amounted to the killing of people. It was not that he failed to understand what he was doing out of ignorance, but that he was unable to think about the meaning of his actions because he could not take any distance from the orders given to him. Butler (2011) notes that what Arendt actually criticized in Eichmann was "his failure to be critical of positive law, that is, a failure to take distance from the requirements that law and policy imposed upon him." In other words, "his failure to think" derived from "his obedience, his lack of critical distance" toward the cognitive frameworks and norms of the society to which he belonged.

Butler (2024:6), in their early essay "What Is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," offers a dense exploration of the meaning of critique beyond mere "fault-finding." According to Butler (ibid:13), critique is "a practice in which we pose the question of the limits of our most sure ways of knowing." Why do we raise such questions? Because heterogeneous beings that cannot be reduced to existing frameworks already encounter those limits within them. We question the limits of prevailing ideologies, habits, and conventions "because one has already run up against a crisis within the epistemological field in which one lives" (loc. cit.). The act of opening oneself to public examination, mentioned earlier, is in this sense also a practice of admitting the other

within oneself. Therefore, as Butler (ibid:14) explains, the exposure of the limits of existing cognitive frameworks is connected to the "practice of virtue." Foucault even suggests that "this critical attitude" that reveals such epistemological limits "is virtue in general," and Butler interprets this to mean that "it belongs to an ethics which is not fulfilled merely by following objectively formulated rules or laws" (loc. cit.).

Third, critical thinking can be understood as an exercise in ethical and political action through which one learns how to live with others and to build a common world. At first glance, in matters of ethics and politics, where following rules and laws seems crucial, thoughtlessness might appear more recommendable. Yet, as Arendt (1978:176-177) points out, the search for meaning through critical thinking entails a thorough questioning and dismantling of all existing doctrines and rules. For this reason, it carries the risk of moving merely to the opposite pole —mistaking such movement for the attainment of a new value—or of falling into nihilism, the belief that all values are meaningless. Nevertheless, if people do not cultivate the habit of critical thinking—of examining the content of the rules and laws they are to follow—they will simply obey whatever rules and laws exist. As a result, like Eichmann, they will easily follow and just as easily discard them, regardless of whether it is during the Nazi era or after. In the realm of ethics and politics, which concerns our shared life, thoughtlessness is far more dangerous than thinking. Human beings build a common world by learning how to live with others, and to this end, they establish rules and laws. Precisely for this reason, it is necessary to examine whether these are indeed worthy of being followed by all and whether they exclude anyone. In the actual realm of action, however, changing the rules and laws that are at issue is never an easy task. It can be achieved

only through a long and arduous process of persuasion. Persuasion is the process of making one's position intelligible to others, which is impossible without first understanding the position of the other. At its core, it requires the practice of both receiving the standpoint of others and articulating one's own. In this regard, Arendt (1982:41) traces the origin of critical thinking to the Socratic Method, which she interprets as a refinement of the method of question and answer that began when Athenian citizens demanded that politicians give an account of economic and political matters. To "give an account" (*Logon didonai*) means "not to prove, but to be able to say how one came to an opinion and for what reasons one formed it" (loc. cit.). This act of explanation takes the form of responding to questions raised by others: the questioning of the other comes first, and it is through this questioning that one articulates one's own position.

According to Arendt (ibid:41), critical thinking thus began as the act of holding politicians accountable, and later evolved—while retaining its political implications—into a philosophical attitude and activity through which every person, as a being responsible for their own thoughts and words, responds to the questions posed by others. Moreover, in a democratic society, all citizens endowed with legal rights must learn the "art of critical thinking" (ibid:42) in order to assume their share of responsibility for common concerns. The objects of such thinking include not only the "doctrines and concepts" one has uncritically taken over from one's environment or "the prejudices and traditions" one has inherited, but also those things one has learned and acquired on one's own (loc. cit.). Importantly, this art of thinking—which applies standards of critique to these objects—"cannot be learned without publicity, without the testing that arises from contact with other peoples' thinking"

(loc. cit.).[9] Ultimately, critical thinking can neither originate from a condition of homogeneity nor be sustained by the pursuit of it. It takes place within public practices in which one learns the art of living together through contact and engagement with others as heterogeneous beings.

Ⅲ. The Conditions for Critical Thinking: Plurality and Co-habitation

Accordingly, critical thinking is directly linked to the responsiveness and accountability of the *I* who is called upon to respond to the questions of the other. Butler (2005:7-8), in analyzing the violence that arises from the uncritical obedience to existing laws and norms, points out that the *I* is implicated in a set of moral norms that condition its very existence and cannot be fully separated from the social conditions that make it possible. Yet the *I* is also never fully identical with those social relations and norms—an incongruity that becomes apparent precisely through encounters with others. It is within this gap of implication and non-identity that the *I* can critically examine how the norms it follows have come into being and what they mean, thereby coming to understand the significance of its own actions, responding to others, and giving an account of oneself.[10]

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9) R. Esposito (2017:11-15) states that he was deeply influenced by S. Weil and H. Arendt, and at the core of this influence lies an insight into the public nature of thinking—the understanding that thinking is not a merely personal or inner experience.

10) According to Butler (2005), the act of giving an account of oneself is also a

In Eichmann's case, he was unable to offer even the slightest account that demonstrated such responsiveness and accountability. What makes his failure to think so alarming—and what led Arendt to name his thoughtlessness *the banality of evil*—is that the laws and policies he in effect actively supported and complied with were those that systematically organized the extermination of others.[11] The crucial point here is that within a fascist regime, where the expulsion and killing of others have become rules and norms, it becomes possible to produce subjects capable of executing genocidal policies without ever harboring the intention to kill. At the same time, the refusal to think about such policies and the practices that sustain them can itself become an ordinary condition.

Butler (2011) writes that "she feared that what had become *banal* was non-thinking itself." What is terrifying about this condition is not only that the thoughtlessness of the many makes administrative massacres possible, but also that it extinguishes the very possibility of halting or transforming such a system. As Butler (2011) notes, for Arendt, "This fact was not banal at all, but unprecedented, shocking, and wrong."

Another crucial aspect that Butler (2011) identifies in Arendt's analysis of the Eichmann trial is that Arendt insists on the unprecedented nature of these massacres not in order to establish an exceptional case for

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process of reconstituting the *I* through encounters with others within the very social relations in which it has been formed. From the outset, it is the relation to the other that constitutes the self. Moreover, because the relation to the other can never be one of complete identification, any account of oneself remains necessarily partial and can never be brought to completion or closure.

11) As is well known, Eichmann was a principal official responsible for implementing the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" (English translation of the official euphemism of *Endlösung der Judenfrage*, as expressed in Nazi policy documents). This policy was a systematic plan for the mass extermination of Jews in Europe, and his task consisted in deporting Jews from their places of residence across the continent and transporting them to extermination camps.

Israel, but rather to understand the meaning of *the crimes against humanity* that annihilated Jews, Roma, homosexuals, communists, persons with disabilities, and the ill. Arendt objected to the fact that the trial was carried out exclusively in the name of the Jewish people by a particular nation-state, Israel. She argued that the expulsion and extermination of entire heterogeneous populations was not merely an attack on one specific group but an assault on humanity itself.

Here, *humanity* does not refer to a homogeneous essence that defines humans as a species or distinguishes them from nonhuman animals. Both Arendt and Butler were well aware that such essentialist definitions of the human have historically served as criteria for excluding others from relations of equality and for rendering them inhuman (Arendt, 2004:380; Butler, 2012:148). For Arendt, humanity refers to the singularity of each person,[12] which can be guaranteed only within politically equal relations — that is, to "the plurality of humanity itself" (Butler, 2012:165). Butler (ibid:148) elaborates on this point as follows: "If to be human is to be in a relation of equality with others, then no one can become human outside of relations of equality. … Indeed, if there is no equality, no one is human."

As Butler (ibid:165) points out, for Arendt, genocide constitutes an

12) See A. Cavarero (2000:21), who criticizes Arendt for overlooking bodily identity and argues that when one's singular selfhood is exposed to others, its primary mode of appearance is bodily—constituted by the gaze of others—and that singularity is thus "an embodied uniqueness." See also Butler (2005:31), who partly shares this critique, noting that Cavarero discerns in Arendt a relational conception of the political, wherein exposure to others and vulnerability provide a primary ethical demand for the *I*. For a study that emphasizes how both Arendt and Butler understand the political not as an attribute or substance but as a relation, while also elucidating their divergence concerning corporeality, see E. Ingala (2018).

attack on humanity's plurality and is therefore an unforgivable “crime against humanity.” Plurality refers to the plurality of perspectives—that is, the fact that human beings each hold a distinct standpoint from which they perceive and judge the world. Yet the plurality of perspectives is not only revealed through political action but is also the very condition that makes political action possible. Politics arises because people see the world differently depending on where they stand, and it comes into being through the differences among them. If everyone were to see the world from the same perspective, no conflict would ever arise, and politics would no longer be necessary; likewise, if everyone shared the same opinion, politics as a new beginning—the activity of imagining and constructing a different world— would be impossible.

For instance, if a community fails to legally guarantee relations of equality among its heterogeneous inhabitants and to protect the right to express different opinions, the plurality of perspectives will gradually disappear. In other words, if democratic institutions and practices do not preserve plurality, critical thinking also becomes impossible. As we have seen, critical thinking cannot even begin without the presence of others, nor can it unfold without the exchange of different perspectives and opinions. For this reason, under fascism, genocide is “an assault against thinking” (Butler, 2011). Once the conditions for political action and thinking are destroyed, protecting the life and rights of heterogeneous others not only becomes difficult but is even deemed unnecessary.

Arendt (2004:588) made it clear early on that the essence of the fascist regime “strives not toward despotic rule over men, but toward a system in which men are superfluous.” The form of “total domination,” which she called “totalitarianism,” reveals its true nature in the concentration camps, where human beings are reduced to creatures

capable only of obedience— that is, beings incapable of both action and thought.

According to Arendt (ibid:588-591), the camp system was established on the legal procedures of the modern nation-state that had already functioned as a machine for producing stateless persons during the interwar period through the massive deprivation of citizenship. Those who supported and implemented such policies not only realized that they could free themselves from the legal obligation to protect the lives of refugees, but also discovered that, with the loss of juridical personality, the process of dehumanization itself could be accomplished. The deprivation of one's juridical personality ultimately enabled the destruction of one's moral personality and the singular personality of the individual. By expelling people from relations of equality and severing all forms of connection with society, total domination made possible the eradication of humanity itself. The camp system thus became a system for producing superfluous beings—an laboratory designed to turn human beings into entities incapable of anything beyond mere reaction or mechanical function.

Butler (2012:154-167) clarifies the implications of genocide—what Arendt understood as the destruction of plurality—through their analysis of Arendt's fictional judgment on Eichmann. Arendt (2006) points out that the policy Eichmann uncritically carried out and actively endorsed was, in essence, "a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations" (2006:279). She immediately adds that "as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world" (loc. cit.).

Butler (2012:166) interprets the core significance of this judgment— addressed to the defendant but also a response to those who suffered

from his actions and to the world itself—as follows: "there is no right to choose with whom to cohabit the earth or world." They (loc. cit.) further clarifies this meaning: "To exercise a right to decide with whom to cohabit this earth is to invoke a genocidal prerogative."

In this context, Butler (loc. cit.) reformulates plurality as "cohabitation with others we never choose." Cohabitation—that is, living together with others on this earth—is a condition of human life that precedes any particular community or nation-state. According to both thinkers, those who supported and implemented genocidal policies such as the *Final Solution* acted as though they possessed a sovereign privilege to decide who could and could not share the earth with others. As discussed earlier, such privileged action was justified through the othering of victimized groups as inferior and through the assertion of sovereign superiority. Yet cohabitation is both a given reality and a fundamental condition of being human—not as a homogeneous species, but as a plurality of beings, each manifesting singularity. In this sense, no individual or collective can, in principle, claim a genocidal privilege within human society. This is why Butler (2012:125) writes that "the heterogeneity of the earth's population is an irreversible condition of social and political life itself."

Plurality and cohabitation are key concepts that indicate the fundamental condition through which the heterogeneity of others makes social bonds possible. They oppose the fascist social psychology—and its corresponding policies—that position the heterogeneity of others either as the attribute of an inferior group or as the sovereignty of a superior one. Viewed as a whole, the genocides of fascist regimes revealed that violence—"a way in which we are given over, without control, to the will of another, a way in which life itself can be expunged by the willful action of another" (Butler, 2004:28-29)—can be meticulously carried out by the

invisible majority.

At the core of this fascist psychology lies the familiar desire to establish relations of domination and subordination among people, and the equally familiar desire to submit to authority in order to escape responsibility. Opposed to this is a political desire—the democratic desire for non-domination, for forming relations of equality with others. Critical thinking is indispensable to this kind of social bond: it is the people's practical capacity and mode of responsibility through which a democratic politics—one that reveals heterogeneity among members and builds a shared world—can be sustained.

Yet in a society where the structure of competition has become all-encompassing—where both inter-state and interpersonal rivalries intensify—how can the desire to form relations of equality be sustained? How can we take the perspective of a competing or even antagonistic other into ourselves, turning them into a partner in dialogue, even a friend? Although the concrete ways to protect democracy and revitalize critical thinking cannot be discussed here, on the basis of the foregoing analysis we can at least turn to the conditions and the social principles that make them possible.

In this regard, Butler (2004:31-32) relocates the very concept of the human—our way of understanding what it means to be human—from the superiority of sovereignty and national belonging to the site of vulnerability, where exposure to violence is most acute. They draws our attention to the primary bodily vulnerability that precedes the formation of the *I*. Human beings are beings given over to the touch of others—unable to sustain even their most basic needs for life without assistance—and thus can never exist as independent individuals. Such dependency is directly visible in infancy, yet it persists throughout adulthood as well. Human

life is fundamentally interdependent; it is supported and sustained through relations of dependence on others, and also—Butler (2021:60) adds—on the "social and material structures" and the "environment" that make life possible.

The problem lies in the fact that "lives are supported and maintained differently" (Butler, 2004:32). Genocides are still carried out today, not always through direct violence, but through policies that treat human bodily vulnerability unequally—protecting certain lives while withdrawing the obligation to protect others. Within neoliberal rationality, people not only find it difficult to grasp how the conditions for protecting the bodily vulnerability of others are denied and exploited, but also how the same conditions for protecting their own bodily vulnerability are negated and exploited. This is because, in a neoliberal society, the individual is assumed to be the basic unit of society and an independent being who attains economic freedom through their own capacities. Butler (2021:59) argues that only by breaking away from this "presumptive individualism" can thinking and acting in ways that do not collude with mass violence begin to emerge.[13)]

Butler (ibid:64-65) also argues that because of presumptive individualism, vulnerability tends to be understood as a subjective state, and equality is often formulated merely as an individual issue. As noted earlier, however, vulnerability should not be regarded as the condition of any single individual but rather "as a feature of our shared or

13) On the other hand, as Esposito (2017:29) points out, Arendt evaluates the ancient Greek spirit of agon in a positive light, yet she also notes that it degenerated into an excessive passion for distinction and an extreme individualism that ultimately led to the ruin of the polis. This pursuit of superiority and radical individualism, she argues, rendered impossible the interdependent solidarity that forms the very foundation of a shared life.

interdependent lives," that is, as an attribute of a common life constituted through relations with others (ibid:65). For example, in order to live, I depend on the people I love, on a basic income, on political institutions that guarantee freedom of speech, and on a public health system that allows me to receive care when I am ill. Yet if I lose these—if I lose loved ones, my job, or if democratic and medical institutions collapse—I become so vulnerable that I can no longer sustain my life. Within this relational understanding of vulnerability—"not my vulnerability or yours, but rather a feature of the relation that binds us to one another and to the larger structures and institutions upon which we depend for the continuation of life" (ibid:66)—we can never exist as complete individuals separated from the very conditions that make life possible.

Equality, too, must be understood and demanded within these conditions of interdependence—that is, not as an individual right, but as a property of social relations. As discussed earlier, neoliberal society has institutionalized the principle of competition across all spheres of life, thereby legitimizing and normalizing inequality and discrimination among people. According to Butler (ibid:65), in order to resist this, equality must not be conceived or demanded as an individual right against discrimination, but rather as a collective and social right—one that enables the construction of egalitarian relations through concrete practices and institutions. For instance, the rights to housing, mobility, or healthcare can be understood and claimed not as the rights of discriminated individuals with specific identities, but within the framework of Universal Basic Services, which aim to secure the fundamental rights of all residents. Of course, asserting equality as a social right cannot be achieved without reexamining individual conceptions of equality and imagining concrete practices and institutions that realize it.

Nevertheless, Butler (ibid:64) points out that when equality is formulated merely as an individual issue, “that formulation, as important as it is, does not tell us by virtue of what set of relationships social and political equality becomes thinkable.” In other words, they emphasizes that the relations of dependency upon others constitute the very foundation of life itself. If this point is not taken into account, equality —when formalized as an individual right within neoliberal society—ends up serving merely to compare individuals within the system, thereby obscuring the shared political responsibility and social obligations we owe to one another (loc. cit.).

Ⅳ. Conclusion

M. Blanchot (2009:154-156) observes that, in the aftermath of the May ’68 revolution in France, when people around him were declaring the political death of Charles de Gaulle, he suddenly realized that what such statements referred to was not merely the president himself: “He himself is nothing. He is only the representative of our own political death. He too is a victim, a mask behind which there is nothing but emptiness” (ibid:155). This means that when people believe that the death of the president alone signifies change while the existing order and practices remain the same, what is actually revealed is the political death of the people. Blanchot’s insight is that when the people give up politics as the action of a new beginning or as the enactment of living democracy, they cannot help but repeat the meaninglessness produced by the existing system and its conventions.

What Blanchot feared as the political death of the people signifies the

death of politics itself—the extinction of the very possibility of living critical thinking and democratic action. Within so-called democratic nations, the disintegration of democracy becomes most apparent when the majority denies universal citizenship and revives the old ideologies of hostility toward others. When the people otherize those who inhabit the same community and support policies that deny equality in order to preserve the privileges of a homogeneous group, they damage the very foundations of social solidarity and bring about division. Today, both domestically and internationally, the rise of various forms of the far right can be seen as a masquerade representing this collective psychology—a spectacle of the people's desire to preserve privilege by rejecting equality.

Yet behind the masks that represent homogenized collectives bound together by hostility toward others, there is nothing but meaninglessness and emptiness. As the preceding analysis of critical thinking has shown, meaning arises only through relations with others. When the heterogeneity of others grounds the very fabric of social relations, and when the principle of interdependence makes possible an equality among plural perspectives, we can open a different kind of masquerade within our shared world—one in which each life reveals itself in manifold and meaningful ways. Only when people are capable of entering into legal and moral relations with others can the singularity of each person appear within those relations. By contrast, when individuals fail to form meaningful relations with others, they easily succumb to the fascistic desire for homogeneity and superiority, a desire that can lead only in circles back to the void. Since no one can ever be identical to another, any structure of domination based on the hierarchy of superiority and inferiority destroys the very possibility of forming those relations with

others through which life itself comes to have meaning.

What is crucial, then, is to resist the system that divides heterogeneous individuals and groups through competition and hostility. Arendt and Butler, in opposition to such a system, propose plurality and cohabitation as the fundamental conditions for the constitution of human society, exploring the possibilities of politics and ethics that can bind heterogeneous beings together. They argue that the potential for such politics and ethics does not lie in some transcendent entity beyond human society, but within it—that is, in our shared political responsibility to respond to one another. In this sense, both thinkers oppose the fascist desire to occupy the place of the superior being by affirming the solidarity of vulnerable lives that cannot survive without each other.

Mudde (2021:143) discusses a long-standing debate concerning the rise of far-right parties—namely, the question of whether people vote for such parties primarily for economic or cultural reasons. The first position holds that support for the far right arises as a response to the economic insecurity caused by neoliberal globalization. The second position, by contrast, views the same phenomenon from another angle, arguing that people vote for far-right parties because they feel that mass immigration and the rise of multicultural societies threaten the cultural identity of the nation. According to Mudde, the outcome of this debate suggests that voters driven by cultural backlash outnumber those motivated solely by economic insecurity, and that the two factors are not in opposition but rather operate in a significantly complementary way. He (ibid:144) argues that most of the support for far-right politics can be understood as a socio-cultural translation of socio-economic anxiety. One of the clearest manifestations of this dynamic can be found in welfare chauvinism—the belief that welfare benefits should be

reserved exclusively for citizens of the nation, that is, those recognized as members of the national community—where this synthesis becomes most apparent.

When hostility toward others and the assertion of privilege by homogeneous groups continue to recur within democratic nations, no amount of rationalization can prevent democracy from weakening and collapsing from within. The vitality of democracy lies in its capacity to embrace heterogeneity. To oppose such heterogeneity, according to Arendt and Butler, is to deny—or to evade responsibility for—the fact that no life can persist without the social ties that bind it to others, that our lives are fundamentally connected and entangled. When the people themselves attack the plurality that can only be achieved through relations with others, they destroy the very conditions of political action and thinking; and in doing so, they destroy the very conditions of human life itself. *The failure to think*, as Butler (2011) puts it, is precisely the failure to think this connectedness—the failure to consider the necessity and value of the relations with others that make thinking itself possible.

This further demonstrates that fascism is not an exceptional event confined to a particular historical moment, but an enduring force that can recur at any time, depending on the choices of the people. Therefore, the possibility of interrupting and transforming existing structures of relations grounded in competition and hostility depends on the people's capacity for critical thinking. Critical thinking, in the end, is the practice of thinking heterogeneity on the basis of the principle of interdependence. The depth of thought arises not from withdrawal from the world and immersion in the self, but, above all, from encounters with others and with a plurality of perspectives. The ground and source of thinking lie

in others and in the world—in the complex, shared reality that people build together and in which they leave traces of one another. Thinking, in this sense, is never a purely private activity that can be carried out in complete isolation. When people lose the capacity to understand the world and to connect themselves with others—when the public function of thought ceases to operate—democracy loses its vitality. Post-fascism arises and intensifies alongside a democracy that, within the homogeneous structures of a society governed by the principle of competition, has already lost its life force. For democracy to endure, it is essential that we develop the capacity to relate to heterogeneous others in order to think critically, and to protect the plurality without which no shared world can ever be sustained.

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국문초록

포스트 파시즘과 비판적 사유의 위기

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오늘날 새로운 버전의 신자유주의 체제에서 포스트 파시즘의 경향이 심화되고 있다. 포스트 파시즘은 사회진화론에 따라 독립된 개인 사이의 경쟁을 근본 원리로 삼고, 동질 사회의 환상을 근간으로 타자의 시민권을 박탈하는 것을 핵심 특징으로 한다. 그것은 인민의 분열과 중도의 극단주의화 양상으로 잘 드러난다. 이 글은 한나 아렌트와 주디스 버틀러 사상의 교차점을 중심으로 이 양상을 가능하게 한 하나의 요소로서 비판적 사유의 결여에 주목한다.

두 사상가는 비판적 사유의 결여가 타자 적대는 물론이고 학살까지도 가능하게 한다는 문제의식을 공유한다. 아렌트에게 사유의 조건인 '복수성'은 정치적 삶과 인간적 삶의 조건이기도 하다. 버틀러는 이를 우리가 지구상에서 이질적 타자와 함께 산다는 '공동거주'의 조건으로 명료화하고, 이 조건이 사회적 유대를 가능하게 한다고 주장한다. 또한 그는 어떤 삶도 타자와 묶여 있는 사회적 삶 없이 존속할 수 없다고 말하며, '상호의존'을 사회존재론의 원리로 제시한다. 비판적 사유는 결국 상호의존의 원리를 바탕으로 이 질성을 사유하는 것이다. 이러한 사유를 멈추는 순간, 동질 사회의 시민은 공동체의 타자 적대를 방치하거나 거기에 가담하기 쉽다.

주제어: 포스트 파시즘, 타자 적대, 비판적 사유, 한나 아렌트, 주디스 버틀러

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