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Rethinking Hannah Arendt in the Context of politics in 1990's Japan

- Focusing on Arendt's Critique on Karl Marx-1)

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1 Introduction

There have been a lot of studies about Hannah Arendt. Especially in 1990's, influenced by the impact of recent academic turn, for example, second wave feminism, cultural studies, post-colonial critique, Arendt was reconsidered and reevaluated not only by political theorists, but also several thinkers and researchers of various fields. This is an international trend, and it is also true in Japan.

This reevaluation of Hannah Arendt in 1990's is not a mere academic trend. It is also deeply rooted in the political context. But the question about the relationship between this reevaluation of Hannah Arendt and its political context is still open. In this paper, based on Arendt's concept of "the social", I will focus on the formation of public education in post-war Japan. This approach will make it possible to examine the specificity of political context in 1990's Japan. This can be comprehended within the light of the breakdown of "the social", which is partly due to the breakdown of the Cold War, and following the rise of "the political".

By doing so, I want to make clear why Arendt was reevaluated in 1990's Japan, and then I would like to seek the possibility of reconstruction of "the political". In order to

do this task, I focus on Hannah Arendt's critique on Karl Marx in 1953. From her critique on Marx I extract two specific features of Arendt's political thought which have an important implication for the rise(or return) of "the political". One is the relationship between philosophy and politics, and the other is her concept of natality. Both were shaped during the very period between the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*(1951) and that of *The Human Condition*(1958), a turning point in her thinking. Neither the fact that these two features were shaped in this period nor the meaning for her thought has fully investigated yet. I would like to argue that these two features extracted from her critique on Marx could be key categories to politicize Arendt's political thought.

2 The Political Context in Japan before 1990's - Between "the Social" and the "Political"

(1)The rise of "the social"

The economic system in modern society cannot produce human beings who can act in accordance with this system. So the economic system needs to find a place for the raising of children outside of itself. Modern families and modern schools are among the most important places for bringing up children.

Hannah Arendt calls such places "the social." According to Arendt, "the rise of the social" took place in the modern age, "society is the form in which the fact of mutual dependence for the sake of life and nothing else assumes public significance and where the activities connected with sheer survival are permitted to appear in public"(Arendt 1958:46).

Jacques Donzelot, focusing on the theory of power developed under the influence of Michel Foucault, uses the same concept as Arendt's "the social", in order to conceptualize the social expansion of the space for tutelage and protection, such as the family, school, juvenile court, and social workers during the 18th and 19th century (Donzelot 1979). Philippe Ariès also said "[the modern] family and school together removed the child from adult society"(Ariès 1965:413).

Gilles Deleuze gave a foreword to Donzelot's book titled "The Rise of the Social". In this foreword, he said that "the social" does not "merge with the public sector or the private sector, since on the contrary it leads to a new hybrid form of the public and the private"(Deleuze 1979:).

According to Arendt, Donzelot, and Deleuze, the rise of "the social" in the modern age brought about the subordination of "the public(or the political)" to "the social". As Donzelot said, the modern family and the modern school are an important agent of "the social". Even if modern schools were organized as the institution for public education, the meaning of "the public" here is identical to that of "the social."

(2)The Rise of "the Social" in Post-war Japanese Public Education

Until the early 1950's public education in Japan was not completely organized. Students were not so teacher-dependent, or over protected as they are now. Political debates about how public education should be organized were opened on many diverse topics. But from the late 1950's, public education became depoliticized and regulated by bureaucracy.

The turning point of this change was the 'Asahigaoka Junior High school affair', which happened in Kyoto in 1954. This incident was a conflict between the school board of Kyoto city and the teachers union of Asahigaoka Junior High School, over the students' participation in May Day and their involvement in the political movement against the government. After this incident public education in Japan became subjected to bureaucratic control, and students became considered as apolitical and dependent on school tutelage.

From 1950 to 1974 the rate of students entering high school rose from 42.5 per cent to 90 per cent. Thus the "mass education society" was formed (Kariya 1995:12). As in Western European countries and the United States, Japan's opportunity for secondary education had expanded to all areas of the society during the 1960's.

But there is an important difference in the characteristics of this expansion of educational opportunity between the West and Japan. In the West, this expansion was initiated by the policy of the welfare state. In Japan, however, the role of the welfare

state was less important than in the West, because the problem of social inequality was not so manifested in Japan's public sphere. In Japan the depoliticized triangle of family, school, and private enterprise replaced the welfare state and thus the problems of inequality was repressed.

(3) Defeat of Repoliticization

In the 1970's, legitimacy of the policy taken by the welfare state was confronted with crisis(Habermas 1976). For example, in the West, presupposition that equality could be achieved through the expansion of public education was theoretically doubted by the so-called 'reproduction theory', advocated by Althusser, Bourdieu, Bowles and Gintis (Bowles and Gintis 1986, Kodama 1999).

On the other hand, in Japan such a theory was not fully developed because, as previously stated, manifestation of the problem of inequality was repressed through the depoliticized triangle of the family, school, and private enterprise.

But in practice some teachers and students criticized public education as a device for equality. For example, in 1970 three teachers in Denshukan High School in Fukuoka prefecture were punished by the school board for their political educational practices, such as the class struggle, and the political movement against the Vietnamese War ('Denshukan High School affair').

A multiple network of movements, which tried to support and defend these three teachers, were formed. Although these movements remained in minority, their argument contained the importance of criticizing modern public education and constructing a new post-modern education.

One of these movements is 'Saitama Kyoiku Juku ', a group consisting of teachers in the Saitama area. They condemned their own position as an agent of "the social". They did not abandon their position as an agent of "the social", but tried to take this position in order to construct "the public" and "the political" by deconstructing the teachership.

By taking the position as an agent of "the social", they thought they could get the power to educate their students. This power contains both the social power dominant in the modern school, and a form of political power which cannot be reduced to the

social power. Their strategy focused on the latter political power. This had ambivalent meaning in the context of Japanese public education after the 1970's.

First, their argument made an important critique to the progressive current that was dominant in the educational thought during postwar Japan (Kodama 1998). This progressive current of education was made up of two elements; the child-centered approach, and protecting children from the public world. In Japan this progressive current linked with the above-mentioned triangle of family, school, and private enterprise. So progressive current of education in Japan was closely connected to the rise of "the social" in post-war Japan.

In this context, teachers in 'Saitama Kyoiku Juku' , trying to put the political authority of teachers against the natural authority of parents, might reconstruct "the political" of education.

However, second, teachers' authority was supported by their position as the agents of modern school. In other words, a paradox formed in which the authority teachers in 'Saitama Kyoiku Juku' put against "the social", was supported by "the social" which they would oppose. Then "the social" in Japan began to break down, particularly during the 1990's. And so, the strategy adopted by teachers in 'Saitama Kyoiku Juku' became more conservative than before. In order to maintain their authority they were forced to defend "the social", and their argument became educational cynicism, in which teachers exercised their power while knowing they were agents of "the social". This educational cynicism cannot create a new public concept, but at best could defend the given social order against the break down of "the social" in Japan.

How can we avoid this cynicism without getting back to the progressive current? I would argue that at this point Arendt could be reevaluated in the context of 1990's.

3 1990's: Beyond the Cold War Style Thinking

(1) Breakdown of "the Social" and the Rise of "the Political"

In the 1990's, Japan experienced two major social and political changes.

First, the bubble economy, which had prevented the economic disruption from being

manifested, burst in early the 1990's. Then the legitimacy of the depoliticized triangle of family, school, and private enterprise, which had replaced the welfare state and thus repressed manifestations of the problem of inequality, fell into a crisis. For example, in private enterprise, the Japanese employment system, consisting of lifetime employment guarantee and the seniority-based pay scale, began to change in the face of increased bankruptcies and restructuring. As for schooling, the number of elementary and junior high school truants, and the number of high school students who withdraw from their schools, have been on a steady rise during these ten years. As well as were many social incidents in family, such as domestic violence and child abuse, throughout the 1990's. Moreover, gay and lesbian movements, as well as queer movements occurred, causing the hetero-sexual reproduction system based on modern family to come into question.

It is at this point that "the social", which had been formed as the triangle of family, school, and private enterprise in post-war Japan, began to breakdown, and an alternative to this triangle was to be required. In this situation, there emerged the actual possibility of the rise of "the political" as an alternative to "the social".

Then what kind form could "the political" take? Two scenarios could be considered. One is to enhance hierarchical authority in the family and state at the expense of the democratic accountability, which Bowles and Gintis calls "neo-Hobbesian" approach (Bowles and Gintis 1986:180). For example, the National Commission on Educational Reform sponsored and organized by Prime Minister Obuchi, reported "17 Proposals For Changing Education" in December 2000. This report states that, "Schools should not hesitate to teach morals", and "Community services should be performed by all school students". This proposal was conducted by Ayako Sono, a high powered member of this commission. She is also a famous writer and one of the representative conservative(right wing) intellectuals in Japan. The other scenario is to reconstruct the political significant space, where various social identities are recognized and everyone could appear and meet with each other in a condition of plurality and democratic accountability. Arendt's political thought has been reevaluated in this latter scenario. For example, Arendt's concept of "the social" was reinterpreted

with regard to Foucault's concept of bio-power, or Donzelot's concept of "the social". Also, the possibilities and limits of Arendt's image of "the political" or "the public" was to be taken into consideration to investigate the feminist politics, queer politics, politics of educational reform, and so forth (Chiba 1995, Kawasaki 1998, Kodama 1999, Tazaki 2000, Saito 2000)2).

Second, the Cold War system broke down in 1989, promoting the structural change of political discourse in post-war Japan. Under the Cold War system the in-party had been only one party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP, founded in 1955) which had been the representative conservative (right wing) party during post-war Japan. And the out-parties (oppositions) had consisted mainly of progressive (left wing) parties, Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Japanese Communist Party (JCP). The political decision making of international and diplomatic matter under the government of LDP had been dependent on that of the United States of America. Dependent on the USA, the LDP government would not take political responsibility for the world, especially for Asian countries. On the other hand, Japan's left wing party proposed the political independence from America. But their political thought, not only JCP but also SDP, had been deeply influenced by Marxism, and lacked any realistic political strategy to seize political power and win the national election. So they would not replace the LDP government, but only opposed it. This political system was titled the 'system of 1955', which had stabilized LDP hegemony for thirty five years during post-war Japan (Asada 2000).

Under the Cold War system in Japan, Hannah Arendt had been read by conservative wing intellectuals. They had introduced Arendt's political thought to criticize left wing Marxism. Certainly they were pioneers in finding in Arendt's thought the autonomy of "the political" which could not be reduced to "the social". But nonetheless the specificity of Arendt's political thought had not been fully realized. On the other hand, most progressive (left wing) intellectuals had ignored or taken little consideration to Arendt's political idea. Against Arendt's own thought (as I examine later), Arendt had been introduced and interpreted under the Cold War context in Japan.

But after the breakdown of the Cold War, this situation changed. Japanese government could no longer depend on America, and the LDP began to lose legitimacy. In 1993 a coalition of reformist oppositions won the national election, and Morihiro Hosokawa became Prime Minister of the first non-LDP government in four decades. SDP joined the Hosokawa cabinet (on the other hand, JCP remained opposition), and then the 'system of 1955' broke down. Prime Minister Hosokawa admitted that in the Second World War, Japan committed an act of aggression, suggesting that government has a responsibility for their colonial domination over other Asian countries. He became the first Prime Minister to admit this responsibility.

In this context Arendt was reevaluated to deepen the political responsibility and political judgement. For example, Tetsuya Takahashi, referring to Arendt's notion of political judgment, stressed that judgment to the past, in order to be responsible for Asian people, particularly to "comfort women" who were forced to be sexual slaves during the Second World War (Takahashi 1999, Sato 1999).

(2) Dilemma in the Rise of "the Political"

Hosokawa's cabinet didn't continue for very long. The LDP returned to the government, but lacked the power they had during the 'system of 1955'. This political change since 1993 has not completed and continues to date. And as mentioned earlier, the political transition process of today consists of two scenarios for the rise of "the political" as the alternative to "the social". One scenario is an enhanced hierarchical authority in the family and state at the expense of the democratic accountability. The other scenario is a reconstructed political significant space, where everyone could appear and meet with each other in a condition of plurality and democratic accountability.

Currently in Japan, the former scenario seems to gain predominance by the LDP government that seeks to reconstruct its political power using the new conservative ideology. But the success of this scenario is unlikely, due to the inability to pay much cost to maintain the authority of family and state at the expense of democratic accountability.

So in order to reconstruct "the political" as the alternative to the "social", we must seek the possibility of the latter scenario. Hannah Arendt should be reintroduced to accomplish this project. It is within this context that politicizing Arendt's political thought could have a specific significance.

But there is a kind of dilemma in pursuing this scenario. Reconstructing "the political" requires political authority and political power, but cannot be identified with the authority of family nor nation-state which new conservative (or neo-Hobbesian) scenario depends on.

Progressives(or left wing) tend to escape this dilemma, refusing to take all kinds of authority and political power. But as Arendt states, "Disintegration often becomes manifest only in direct confrontation; and even then, when power is already in the street, some group of men prepared for such an eventuality is needed to pick it up and assume responsibility."(Arendt 1972:148)

Then what kind of political power should we construct ? Or in other words, how can we reconstruct "the political" without falling into the Cold War-like meaningless dichotomy between the progressive(or the left wing) and the conservative(or the right wing) ?

The key concept to solve this problem could be found in two specific features of Arendt's political thought. One is her conception about the relationship between politics and philosophy, and the other is her concept of natality. Both were shaped in her critical research on Karl Marx during the period between *The Origins of Totalitarianism*(1951) and *The Human Condition*(1958).

4 Arendt's Critique on Marx

(1) Philosophy and Politics

After the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*(1951), Arendt embarked on a new research project regarding Karl Marx. It was not published, but the fruits of this research remain as three manuscripts; the first draft, the first draft(short manuscript),

and the second draft in the Library of Congress in the U.S.3)

From these manuscripts I will extract two important features of Arendt's thought. One is the relationship between philosophy and politics, and the other is her concept of natality.

As for the former, I will focus on the first draft(short manuscript) entitled "Karl Marx and the Tradition of Political Thought".

When Arendt was engaging this research project on Karl Marx in the early 1950's, the Cold War system was established, while in America the vigorous attack against Marxism and communism titled "McCarthyism" began. In this situation, criticizing Marx could be accepted as a conservative(or right) wing ideology. But Arendt would not affirm this Cold War style thinking. According to Arendt,

"In the case of Marx, the difficulty obviously was even greater because it concerned from the very beginning politics so that pro and contra fell into the conventional lines of party-politics: whoever spoke for Marx was a progressive, whoever spoke against him was a reactionary."(Arendt 1953a:1)

So Arendt's purpose in studying and criticizing Karl Marx was to overcome this Cold-War like dichotomy between the progressive and the conservative(reactionary). To pursue this purpose, she focused on Marx's thesis(no.11) on Feuerbach, "The philosophers have interpreted the world, the time has come to change it"(Arendt 1953a:7). For Arendt, Marx's thesis had two meanings.

First, "under tradition, Marx always understood the tradition of philosophy to which ultimately the one surviving class which was to represent humanity as a whole was to become the heir."(Arendt 1953a:7) And this "tradition of philosophy " was the "occidental philosophical tradition", which was begun by Plato and Aristoteles(Arendt 1953a:5).

This "occidental philosophical tradition" begun by Plato and Aristoteles "was made in a time when everything political had come to an end"(Arendt 1953a:5). In other words, "Plato & Arist. were the end, rather than the beginning of Greek philosophical

thought which began its flight when Greek had reached or was near to reach its climax."(Arendt 1953a:5) For Arendt, "tradition of philosophy " under which Marx thought was formed as depoliticization of philosophy as a result of the conflict between politics and philosophy in ancient Greece.

Second, Marx's thought was at the turning point of "the broken thread of tradition". Arendt states about Marx that

"The really anti-traditional and unprecedented side of his teachings is his glorification of labor, or his re-interpretation of the class which philosophy since its beginning had always despised and whose human activity it had thought to be so irrelevant that it had not even bothered to interpret and understand it: the working class and labor. Marx is the only thinker in the 19th century who took its central event, the emancipation of the working seriously in philosophical terms. Marx great influence today is still due to this one fact, which also, to a large extent, explains why he could have become so useful for totalitarian domination."(Arendt 1953a:7)

According to Arendt, Marx knew that the thread of tradition since Plato and Aristoteles was about to break, but Marx would theorize this situation in terms of traditional philosophy. As a result, he couldn't find the alternative way to the tradition of western philosophy. This is why Marx could have become so useful for totalitarian domination.

Arendt thought both the conservative(traditional) and the progressive(including Marxism) were within the tradition of philosophy. On the contrary, Arendt would seek another philosophical tradition. To pursue this, she returned to the "beginning of Greek philosophical thought which began its flight when Greek had reached its climax", when the vital check and balance between politics and philosophy had been maintained.

(2)"Natality" as a Transcritical Concept

The second key concept to solve this dichotomy between the progressive(or the left wing) and the conservative(or the right wing) is Arendt's concept "natality". Natali-

means the birth of a new beginning which conserve the world as new, and preventing it from being ruined. Arendt states,

"The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope, those two essential characteristics of human existence which Greek antiquity ignored altogether"(Arendt 1958:247)

Patricia Bowen-Moore investigated Arendt's concept of natality. According to Bowen-Moore, there were three sources "influencing Arendt's development of the category of natality", her teachers(Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers), her doctoral dissertation on the concept of love in St Augustine, and her experience as Jewess. Bowen-Moore says natality was conceptualized by Arendt as "the supreme capacity" to make beginnings. (Bowen-Moore 1989:6-21)

On the other hand, Frederick M. Dolan criticized Bowen-Moore's thesis. Dolan says in Bowen-Moore's reading "Arendt's perspective on action and the public self to which it gives rise would be grounded in a 'supreme human capacity' ". In order to challenge Bowen-Moore's interpretation, Dolan emphasized Arendt's "insistence that the public self is constituted discursively, not on the basis of a mimetic relationship with basic natural properties or attributes of 'man' as a creature".(Dolan 1995:331-332)

Whereas Bowen-Moore finds a positive moment in Arendt's concept of natality from a kind of existentialistic position, Dolan from a post-structuralistic position doesn't value the concept of natality so much as Bowen-Moore. Certainly in this point they oppose each other, but they have a common understanding of natality that it could be conceptualized as "the supreme capacity". But is that true ?

I would argue it isn't adequate to interpret natality as "the supreme capacity". If we examine the historical context where natality was conceptualized by Arendt, on which

Bowen-Moore didn't fully investigate, then we can find natality is rather a relative and structural category.

Before the publication of *The Human Condition* in 1958, the concept of natality had not been appeared as a key category of Arendt's published work (Schell 2003). So we can suppose the concept of natality was fermented by Arendt during the period between *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and *The Human Condition* (1958). When we examine Arendt's manuscript on Marx, it becomes clear that this presumption is correct. At the closing of the second draft, Arendt wrote,

“ ‘The metabolism with nature’ which is inherent in the human condition ends with death: the body politic and the human artifice which we erect on the earth, on the contrary, always begins anew, because it is ultimately related to the fact of natality, opposed to mortality,” (Arendt 1953c: 16)

So we can conclude that the concept of natality was established by Arendt when the research project on Karl Marx was carried out. This finding is very important for examining the historical context where natality was conceptualized by Arendt

For example, in "SUMMARY" of the second draft of "Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought", Arendt states two assumptions. First, "The thread of tradition is broken: the beginning is no longer with us or: our traditional concepts do not fit our actual experiences." With this assumption Arendt raised a polemical point which is "against liberalism which believes the thread can simply be spun on and on, as it were and against conservatism which believes that we can restore 'values' without actually restoring reality."

Second assumption is that "What broke down when the thread of tradition broke, is primarily our public political sphere.", and with this assumption she raised a polemical point "against psychologism and spiritualism : as though something were the matter with each of us in individual singularity which could be healed by healing all of us through psychoanalysis or thru making us behave." (Arendt 1953b:1)

The concept of natality could be considered to be conceptualized closely connected to

these two assumptions and polemical points. To take these two assumptions into consideration, it is reasonable to suppose that Arendt's natality was conceptualized in a highly political context.

Then in this context, natality could be understood not as "the supreme capacity", but as a kind of transcritical concept(Karatani 2001), by which we can get a critical position both to the conservative and to the progressive. So it is the key category in solving the aporia of dichotomy between the conservative and the progressive, or the dichotomy between past and future. I would argue this concept enables us to avoid falling into the earlier mentioned educational cynicism.

According to Tetsuji Suwa, a high school teacher belonging to 'Saitama Kyoiku Juku',

" teachers, belonging to the old culture, always face the 'future'. They, ruled by the old culture, are vocationally forced to teach the future to the 'future' of students. Teachers face 'the subject of the future' who will go beyond the old culture, imposing the old culture upon them" (Suwa 1998:124).

Natasha Levinson, in her article about the educational thought of Hannah Arendt's natality, also argues the importance of "teaching in the 'Gap between past and future' ". According to her,

" to teach in this gap is to commit ourselves to teaching about the past --- for understanding and guidance, and for the preservation of memory that underlies both --- and to motivate students to try to set things right. At the same time we have to resist the temptation of attempting to determine and control our students' futures"(Levinson 1997: 450).

Both Suwa and Levinson say that school teachers have a responsibility both for the future and for the past. The strategy they put forward is to take a position responsible both for the past and for the future. In this strategy we can find a hint in going beyond the educational cynicism.

5 Conclusion

Focusing on two features of Arendt's critique on Marx, I think we can find out a way to be able to reconstruct "the political" without falling into the dichotomy between the progressive and the conservative.

First, Arendt's conception of the relationship between philosophy and politics taught us to return to the beginning Greek philosophical thought where the vital check and balance between politics and philosophy had been maintained. This point of view is important especially for the University reform now ongoing not only in U.S. but also in Japan. Progressives as well as liberals tend to subordinate universities to the needs of "the social". On the other hand, Conservatives, like Allan Bloom and his teacher Leo Strauss, usually think that universities should be independent and autonomous from both "the social" and "the political".

But either approach would not contribute to reconstructing "the political". According to Arendt, what is required is to make universities a kind of critical space and then to recover the vital check and balance between universities and the public sphere.

Second, Arendt's concept of natality gave us a key category to avoid falling into educational cynicism. And this point of view is also important for educational reform, especially for national curriculum reform and the reform of teacher education of elementary and secondary schools in Japan. Whereas progressives and liberals tend to commit to a kind of child-centered education and curriculum deregulation, conservatives tend to commit to the tradition and moral. But this dichotomy would not bring about a productive effect. What is required is to take a position responsible both for the past and for the future.

What I have done here is only a first step to politicize Arendt's political thought. These two features of Arendt's thought could be a key category to politicize her thought not only in Japan but also in other countries and all over the world where the alternative order to the Cold War system is required, but has not formed yet.

Notes

1) This paper is a revised version of my paper, "Rethinking Hannah Arendt in the context of politics in 1990's Japan- For Politicizing Arendt's Political Thought -", Paper prepared for Arendt Symposium in Kyoto, "Politicizing Arendt's Political Thought: How did we read Arendt in 90's ?", December 1, 2001, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan.

2) In this context, *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (Honig 1995) was translated into Japanese in 2001 by Kiyoko Shimizu and Yayo Okano.

3) I and my associates translated these whole manuscripts completely into Japanese and published in 2002, September. This is the first publication of these manuscripts in the world. I am grateful to co-translator, Kazuo Sato, Shu Fujitani, Kiri Sakahara, and Ryutaro Inamoto for giving me valuable suggestions. Immediately after that the excerpts of the first draft was placed on *Social Research*, volume 69, no.2 (Kohn 2003). But it is only a part of these manuscripts.

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