

**The Power of Love: Hannah Arendt and Discipleship<sup>1</sup>**  
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Throughout her career, Hannah Arendt explored the question of how persons act together to address common concerns. Her writings are a tremendous—and largely untapped—resource for those of us who want to rethink an activist church. But, while her insights do suggest constructive possibilities, her approach is problematic because she does not consider the role that God or belief in God plays in community and action and because she explicitly rejects or does not consider the role of love in community and action.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I will bring Arendt’s understanding of human action, as outlined in *the Human Condition*, in conversation with a Lutheran understanding of discipleship in order to consider the role of love in action and community. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate the usefulness of bringing these trajectories together in rethinking “the Church.”<sup>3</sup>

Arendt on Action

For Arendt, power is defined as existing only in the context of community. It is in community—and only in community—that we come together to address our common concerns and it is in this coming together that power is generated. But, community as the context for human action is also problematic. She elaborates on this in *The Human Condition*, where she argues that action is not merely doing something, it is doing something in such a way that we both become and reveal who we are. For action to have this revelatory quality it must be tied to speech. Speechless activity is not action, because

without speech, there is no actor. "The action . . . becomes relevant only through the spoken word in which (the speaker) identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he does, has done, and intends to do."<sup>4</sup>

The connection between action and speech expresses the way that action involves us in stories and entangles us in relationships. Our stories organize and bring coherence to our actions. Without stories to house them, "human affairs would be as floating, as futile and vain, as the wanderings of nomad tribes."<sup>5</sup> Who we are is essentially narrative because who we are is part of our "enacted stories."<sup>6</sup> Unlike my physical appearance, which is observable absent any activity on my part, who I am—my self—is revealed only through my acting and speaking. I was born into the world, a not-yet-developed self. The world acted upon me, I acted back. By that action, I revealed myself as a self and, through my speaking about and organizing that action into a single story, my self, who I am, is formed. My story is not incidental to my self, it is an indelible aspect of a human self that is formed through action: "the reason why each human life tells its story and why history ultimately becomes the storybook of mankind is that both are the outcome of action."<sup>7</sup>

Action not only draws us into stories, it entangles us in relationships. It is not possible to act and speak when we are alone, because the revelatory qualities of action and speech only emerge when we are with others. Human plurality, the condition of being both the same and distinct, is the basic condition of action and speech. Human beings must speak and act, because we are distinct from one another, but when we do speak and act, we can understand one another, because we are also the same. Speech and action as the defining

characteristic of "who" we are, is rooted in distinction: it is through speech and action that we distinguish ourselves, rather than being merely distinct.

Action loses its power absent the disclosure of the agent—which happens when togetherness is lost. The relationships formed through this revelatory action are not shallow, however, as though we were posing in front of a mirror. Posing is insufficient to form persons, first because our actions must reveal who we really are—action is not revelatory when words and deeds have “parted company.”<sup>8</sup> Further, these relationships have depth because action and speech form who we are. It is through my actions in the world and my speech about those actions that I become who I am. For Arendt, what we do forms who we are.

Action entangles the actor in relationships, because while my actions are forming me, they are also influencing and forming others. These relationships have depth because action and speech draw us into the intangible but real "web of relationships." This web exists wherever human beings are together and comes into being because we are born into a world full of already acting human beings. Our actions are felt by others. These actions eventually emerge as unique life story, “affecting uniquely the life stories of all those with whom he comes into contact.”<sup>9</sup>

When we act, we become entangled with others, and because of this entanglement in the web of relationships, "in which action alone is real," our actions produce stories, "as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things."<sup>10</sup> Action, story, personhood and community are intertwined. And it is this intertwining that frustrates human action and

personhood. Action must occur within relationships, but because it does, it becomes impossible for us to accomplish our goals.

### Frustration of Action

Action has two relevant characteristics. The first, as mentioned above, is that it entangles us in the web of relationships. The moment someone initiates an action, that action comes into contact with persons who are capable of their own actions. The actions of others are in part a response to that original action (which was also, in part, a response to the actions of others), but each of these actions is also “a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others.”<sup>11</sup> An actor has no control over how people respond to or interpret their actions, and is therefore helpless to bring any action to fulfillment without the help of others. Action has a two-fold character: initiated by one, it is completed by many.

The second characteristic of action is that it is boundless. Action has a beginning, we initiate it; there is a time before an action. But, once initiated, an action’s effects do not end: “The process of a single deed can quite literally endure throughout time until mankind itself has come to an end.”<sup>12</sup>

These two characteristics make action unpredictable. The effects of our actions moving through the web draw in the intents and desires of countless others. Persons unknown and unforeseen can continue to respond to what we have done, in a complex and endless and therefore exponentially unpredictable way. Unpredictability is the first frustration of action. It is the price we pay for plurality, the joy of being with others.<sup>13</sup>

Unpredictability is coupled with the second frustration of action: irreversibility. Action is irreversible simply because we cannot undo what we have done. "Not even oblivion and confusion, which can cover up so efficiently the origin and the responsibility for every single deed, are able to undo a deed or prevent its consequences."<sup>14</sup> Whenever human beings act, the "incapacity to undo what has been done is matched by an almost equally complete incapacity to foretell the consequences of any deed."<sup>15</sup> Thus, uncertainty is the decisive character of human affairs.

Given this uncertainty, it might be tempting to not act at all, because those actions can lead to unintended and unforeseen trouble, and are unlikely to come to fruition anyway. But, even if it were possible to simply do nothing, this is a poor alternative to action, because it renders us less than human. Without action, there are no "whos", no stories and no relationships. If it were possible to avoid action altogether, one would cease to be a self.

There are, of course, ways to control action. One can refuse to be among others, to never act in the web of relationships. This is to treat oneself as fully self-sufficient or sovereign, it is to abstain from realm of human affairs and attempt to act alone and control one's actions from beginning to end. But, while it may seem that sovereignty is freedom from the frustrations of action, it is not because it contradicts the human condition of plurality: "No man can be sovereign because not one man, but men, inhabit the earth."<sup>16</sup> To do this is to lose one's personhood, for without relationships, the ability to speak and act is lost, it is the creation of a fantasy in which there are no others.

It can also lead to domination. Violence, forcing others to hold to a particular course of action, is another antidote to the frustration of action. Violence is the attempt to destroy human unpredictability and to guarantee that a goal will be achieved. This is the solution of despots, whether in totalitarian governments or abusive relationships. If getting something done were the point, than violence would make sense, because goals are “much more easily attained in mute violence.” In this sense, “action seems a not very efficient substitute for violence.”<sup>17</sup>

But, the purpose of action is not merely to reach a goal, or even to reach it together. The purpose of action is to create community so that we can be persons and so our actions can come to completion. Through violence it is possible to destroy human unpredictability, but in the process it also destroys spontaneity and freedom, which is to destroy human beings as human beings.<sup>18</sup> Action is more than a means to an end. Its real purpose is to create community, first so that we can be persons; second, so that our actions can have meaning (in the context of a story) and, finally, so our actions can come to completion. In order to be persons, it is necessary for us to act in the world and to do so in the context of relationships with other human beings.

Action, personhood and community are connected in such a way that bringing them together undermines their very purpose<sup>19</sup>. What is needed is a way through the thicket of action that will allow us to act and sustain human spontaneity and freedom, while sustaining personhood and community. Because we cannot be without community—that is, because we are not sovereign—if we are to be persons and if there is to be human

freedom, action must contain its own antidote. That antidote—two particular forms of action and speech—is forgiveness and promise.

### Unpredictability and Promise

Domination, the attempt to force others to respond to our initiative in the way we intend, is one way to address unpredictability. The only alternative to domination is promise: "binding oneself through promises, serves to set up in the ocean of uncertainty, which the future is by definition, islands of security without which not even continuity, let alone durability of any kind, would be possible in the relationships between men."<sup>20</sup> Promise makes it possible for my actions to achieve their purpose. But promise, unlike violence or domination, leaves human spontaneity and freedom in place. Promise is not as certain as domination, at least in the short run, providing that one has sufficient strength to impose one's will on others. But while it sacrifices some certainty, it more than makes up for it by retaining creativity and freedom.

Promise also allows for the emergence of power. Domination and violence do not empower persons, quite the opposite; they destroy even the possibility of human association by destroying human personhood and the ability to act. Promise enables persons—actors—to act together, and thus makes power possible. Arendt specifically links power to the "space of appearance," which is the public sphere where persons are free to come together and act in concert through mutual promise which binds us to a particular course of action—a particular outcome—while leaving spontaneity and creativity in place. The space of appearance is created within the web of relationships whenever we come together through speech and action and disappears the moment we

stop speaking and acting. Power and the space of appearance are mutually dependent, because it is power that keeps us together, and it is being together that creates power.

Unlike domination, which destroys human beings or eliminates the possibility of action, promise requires personhood. I cannot promise unless I am a who. Promise is the ability to say today who I will be tomorrow such that I can commit my self to a particular way of being, a particular course of action. A promise involves self that does not yet exist except as I am able to project it into the future. A person that does not know who she is, cannot make or keep promises.

Personhood is more than a condition for promise, however. Promise also reinforces personhood by allowing us to commit to a course of action and then follow through on it. “Without being bound to the fulfillment of promises, we would never be able to keep our identities; we would be condemned to wander helplessly and without direction in the darkness of each man’s lonely heart, caught in its contradictions and equivocalities.”<sup>21</sup> One can be a self in action only to the extent that one is able to display constancy throughout action and this requires promise, keeping one’s word and carrying through on past commitments and projecting commitments into the future.<sup>22</sup> Promise means knowing who you are, to the extent that you know who you will be. It reflects the narrative connection between past, presents and future: the memory of what I have done (my story), allows me to construct a coherent account of who I am, which enables me to say who I will be (promise, commitment, constancy).



## Irreversibility and Forgiveness

Before I move on to Luther, I want to say a word about Arendt's solution to the predicament of irreversibility. Arendt claims that the cure for irreversibility is forgiveness. Forgiveness, by freeing us from an endless burden of past decisions, makes it possible for life to go on despite our mistakes. Forgiveness keeps us from being trapped in the past: "Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever, not unlike the sorcerer's apprentice who lacked the magic formula to break the spell."<sup>23</sup> Forgiveness also frees us to act in the present because we know we will not be forever trapped by those actions, even if we later change our minds. Without the possibility of forgiveness, fear of guilt and the burden of responsibility would hinder our ability to act. Forgiveness removes these barriers, making action—and thus personhood and community—possible.

Note again that this allows the possibility of human spontaneity and freedom. Unlike revenge, or punishment, which is another way of trying to stop the echoes of action, forgiveness is creative. It starts over. "Forgiving . . . is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven."<sup>24</sup> Forgiveness is unique, the ultimate expression of human creativity and spontaneity. It is utterly radical.

It is important to note that Arendt's conception of forgiveness is fairly narrow. Forgiveness, for Arendt addresses those things that we cause to happen unknowingly,

those everyday occurrences that arise out of the unpredictability of action. It is not aimed at what she terms “willed evil,” or what might be called sin, which she sees as rare. Arendt argues that we can “neither punish nor forgive such offenses” because they “transcend the realm of human affairs.”<sup>25</sup> For Arendt, willed evil has nothing to do with our life together on earth.

### Problems with Arendt

As fruitful as Arendt’s analysis might be, it has limitations, particularly related to her lack of a divine presence—God—and her explicit rejection of love in the context of human communities. Thus, in describing forgiveness Arendt addresses only what might be called the tragic dimension of existence—our doing things which we later regret. While we certainly need this kind of forgiveness in order to live in community, and to be freed to act, Arendt’s conception of forgiveness lacks depth. We need something deeper because willed evil—violence, racism, abuse, sexism, murder, genocide—are also part of the human condition. Arendt might be correct in her assertion that these transcend the realm of human affairs, but this is all the more reason for a story of forgiveness that *also* transcends the realm of human affairs, while also being very much a part of it. I believe that this lies in the Christian story of forgiveness.

In the time I have left I want to address a concern that arises in regards to promise. Arendt is unclear as to what sorts of promises we should bind ourselves with and what sorts of actions we should commit to. Power is a neutral concept for Arendt, and her approach therefore lacks a moral center. It makes it impossible to distinguish between

(e.g.) the power of a lynch mob and the power of Non-Violent Resistance.<sup>26</sup> I will address this issue through the concept of discipleship, as understood in a Lutheran context.

### Luther and Discipleship

Luther's understanding of discipleship—as all things about Luther—is a manifestation of the so-called doctrine of justification by grace. I say so-called doctrine because it is not a doctrine at all but a dialectic that runs through the totality of Lutheran thought. Justification is the doctrine upon which the Lutheran church stands or falls, because it is the **only** doctrine, appearing in many manifestations: Spirit and flesh; Law and Gospel; *simil iustus et peccator*—justified and sinner.

Justification is the assertion that who I am—as a Christian—is not something that I am in myself, but something that I am as I live in Christ and as Christ lives in me. Justification means that the life of a Christian is the life of faith leading to love. Through faith our being is taken up into God, because of this relation to God we love our neighbor. If our faith does not lead to love, it is not faith. If love does not lead to action—if it is not discipleship—it is, in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer—cheap grace.

Understood in a Lutheran context, discipleship is the human response to the outpouring of divine love. God's love changes who we are and changes how we act in the world. Discipleship is love guided—and produced—by faith, which is itself a response to God's love. Faith is our attitude towards God and it produces love, which is our attitude towards our neighbor. Real decisions about right and wrong are not based on rules but emerge from faith, which produces love towards the neighbor. Faith **forms** love. Love is

the overriding principle. It is the physical, embodied expression of the spirit working in us. Faith works through love: faith is the laborer, love is the tool.

### Arendt and Discipleship

I want to conclude by suggesting two points of convergence—one where Luther contributes to Arendt and the other where Arendt contributes to Luther—and then suggest some additional points that will be fruitful for thinking about the church, or any community of faith.

First and foremost, Luther gives a moral center to Arendt. As noted above, Arendt asserts that we should act, but says little about what sort of action we should initiate.<sup>27</sup> This lack of direction carries over into her conception of promise, for while Arendt discusses the power of promise, she says nothing about the kind of promise we should bind ourselves with.

Bringing action into the context of discipleship makes it clear that all action is not created equal. Action must arise from love that is itself a response to God's continual outpouring of love. Furthermore, when it comes to the question of **which** promise we should bind ourselves with, for Christians the answer is, or should be, the promise of God, which we claim is the promise of ongoing, unconditioned grace. And, for Lutherans, grace is just another way of saying divine love. If I believe that the future is to be a fulfillment of God's promise of redemption, then that vision, and my understanding of it, shape who I am, and what I do.<sup>28</sup>

Arendt offers two important pieces to this puzzle. First, discipleship is inseparable from community. Action, even Godly action (especially Godly action) entangles us in

community. Discipleship does not pertain to *the* Christian, but defines the Christian *community*. There can be no church without discipleship; there can be no discipleship without a church. We cannot be persons unless we act, and we cannot be a church unless we act on our faith.<sup>29</sup> In a real sense, for the Christian community it is the action of God—in the person of Jesus Christ—that forms and initiates the Christian community. But God’s actions do not reach fulfillment until and unless they draw us in. Fulfillment of God’s promise happens in our response to God’s action, and our participation in the world and in our relationship with our neighbor. Arendt reminds us of the tremendous potential within communities that bind themselves with a promise. This is a perspective that offers a way to think about the power of an activist church (i.e. the Civil Rights Movement, Farm Workers Strike).

Second, to this definition of discipleship—action that flows from divine love—Arendt offers a corrective to a tendency to give a somewhat tepid interpretation to the word “love.” “Jesus *loves* me” . . . the West (although it is by no means exclusive to the West) tends to subjectively interpret God’s love—Jesus loves *me*. In so doing, we have lost our understanding of what it means to be “the Church.” Love is not an ontology or an abstraction, love is action. Love doesn’t count unless it does something. The Levi and the Priest might have loved the heck out of the man who was set upon by thieves, but it was the actions of the Good Samaritan that counted. In the Christian tradition, God’s love is not an abstract, it is represented in the concreteness of the cross and the God who acted there. The problem with subjective interpretations is that they can easily become inappropriately comforting.

A colleague of mine was pastor of a medium sized congregation in Texas, and had been engaging the congregation in struggling to come to terms with some contentious social issues, the most recent one being the ordination of lesbians and gays. One member of the congregation, she described him as an extremely prosperous older man who was an executive in a multi-national corporation, continually complained to her that these issues were causing strife in the congregation. In yet another confrontation in her office, he explained that he had a tough job out in the world. “You know,” he said, “I don’t need to come to church and listen to all these difficult issues and all of the trouble they bring. Jesus says, right in the Bible, ‘Come to me all who are weary and heave laden and I will bring you rest!’”

I suggested that while Jesus had might have said that, he wasn’t necessarily talking to him. And he certainly wasn’t saying it to him all the time.

Our churches can and should be places of comfort, but they should not be places of comfort for comfort’s sake. The rest that we find in our religious communities is for a purpose: so that we can be energized to go about the work—the action—of the congregation: participating in God’s initiated action. In this sense, the Church corresponds to what Arendt calls the private sphere, which is necessary for comfort, reflection and thought, a life only in public is “shallow.”<sup>30</sup> Discipleship is important, but not without discernment.

It is just as true that, while discernment is important, it must happen in relation to discipleship. The private realm, and the depth that it brings, is only meaningful in relation to the public sphere, the sphere of action. A life spent only in the comfort of the

private sphere is as problematic as a life only in public. A life lived only in private is a life of privation, “deprived of things essential to a truly human life.”<sup>31</sup> This includes the reality of the world, and our relationship to it, as well as the possibility of achieving anything in the world.

The Church should not be the place that we go to rest up from a tough week. It should not be where we go to feel good about ourselves (especially if we are up to no good!). It should not even be where we go to “hear God’s word,” if by this we mean “sit and listen.” The Church is the place we go to nurture one another in our response to God’s action, which is God’s love. It is where we go to bind ourselves with and actively participate in the Promise of Christ’s death and resurrection. Again, without action, there is no discipleship and, just as important, no community and no church.

A couple more quick points. First, I want to return to the question of what kind of action we should engage in. The more astute among you might have noticed that Luther is really no more helpful than Arendt in answering these “what” questions. This is another reason which is it not possible to talk about discipleship without discernment, and I think my previous comments should have indicated that Arendt, and her understanding of the relationship between the public and the private is helpful here. In addition, she offers the guideline of truthfulness, suggesting that our words and acts must match, that we need to be truthful about what we are doing in order for power to be actualized in our communities. Communities form and generate power "only where words and deeds have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds are not brutal, where words

are not used to veil intentions but to disclose reality, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities.”<sup>32</sup>

For Luther, our relationship with God unmask the structures of evil in the world. Those who are in relationship with a crucified God—this is the Theology of the Cross—can “call a thing what it is.” Love speaks the truth, which leads to truthful action. Our relationship with God allows us to name the spirits of our age, and those words demand a concordant action. Words and deeds, discernment and discipleship go together. The church must tell a true story, and a true story always changes how we see the world and act in it. Story changes practice. Otherwise, it is mere entertainment. Unfortunately, in the modern world we have lost our sense of the importance of story, so that our stories are often, mere entertainment. It is this misunderstanding of narrative that leads us to think that “hearing the word of God” is passive, mere entertainment. Arendt (and a narrative approach in general) challenges this.

Finally, the even more astute among you might have picked up on an important difference between Luther and Arendt. As I mentioned above, for Arendt what we do leads to who we are. For Luther, on the other hand, who we are (in response to God’s love) leads to what we do (our actions towards our neighbor). While there is not time to fully explore this point, suffice to say that both are far too dynamic in their thinking for this to be the end of it. While each might emphasize one particular side of the relationship between who we are and what we do—and it is a relationship—this emphasis is merely that, an emphasis. One value on bringing them together is that each teases out the other side of the relationship: who we are shapes what we do, and what we do shapes



who we are. But, both agree that what we do and who we are entangles us in and is inseparable from relationship. We cannot separate discipleship from the life of the Church. And we cannot separate the church from discipleship. Action, me and we are inextricably intertwined.

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<sup>1</sup> Although this conference itself clearly represents a great diversity of religious traditions, this paper just as clearly reflects a particular tradition: Christianity and Lutheranism provide the narrative frame for my thoughts (although Arendt herself is Jewish, she often takes account of the Christian tradition and its influence on Western thought, culture and politics), and should be considered in this context. Despite this particularity—or, because of it—I hope that these remarks will be helpful for people from a variety of traditions.

<sup>2</sup> The extent and nature of her rejection are not completely clear. In *The Human Condition* she asserts that love is inherently worldless (51, 242) and anti-political (242), and that it is extinguished “the moment it is displayed in public” (52) becoming “false and perverted when it is used for political purposes.” (52) This is in part because love “by reason of passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others.” (242) As this last quote suggests, the “kind” of love Arendt is referring to is most likely erotic love or passion.

This does not indicate a rejection of all forms of love. In fact, in her discussion of forgiveness, Arendt rejects love as a motivator for forgiveness in the public sphere and suggests respect—which she likens to *philia politiké* or “friendship without intimacy”—as the alternative (243), suggesting some forms of love have a place within community.

Be that as it may, I do not think that she is including love as understood in the Christian tradition, nor does she consider the role of divine love. And this is what I will be dealing with in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Here I am thinking of the concept of “the Church” as it has been developed within Post-liberal trajectories. This is a theme throughout the work of Stanley Hauerwas. For Hauerwas, the primary social task of the church is to be the Church:

the most important social task of Christians is to be nothing less than a community capable of forming people with virtues sufficient to witness to God’s truth in the world. . . . it is not the task of the Church to try to develop social theories or strategies . . . rather, the task of the Church . . . is to become a polity that has the character necessary to survive as a truthful society. (Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, IN, 19813))

<sup>4</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 178-79. Arendt consistently used gender-specific language in her writing and, where altering this would be stylistically awkward—and thus more distracting than the language itself—I have left it as written.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>7</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 184. See also Paul Ricoeur's discussion of the irreducible connection between history and narrative in volume I, part 2 of *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>13</sup> A colleague of mine, going through a particularly rocky period in her relationship, commented to me that all she really wanted was less drama. "Drama," I replied, "is the price we pay for the joy of being with others." A paraphrase, but not outside the bounds of what Arendt meant.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 232-33.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>18</sup> This is how Arendt describes radical evil in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, new edition with added preface (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovitch, 1973), 455.

<sup>19</sup> There is a third frustration of action, which I am not addressing here, and this is anonymity of authorship.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> See Calvin O. Schrag, *The Self After Postmodernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 64.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>26</sup> For an excellent discussion of the distinctions—and lack thereof—in Arendt’s work, see Margaret Canovan, “The People, the Masses, and the Mobilization of Power: the Paradox of Hannah Arendt's "Populism" *Social Research*, Summer, 2002, v.69 no. 2. Available online at [www.findarticles.com/cf\\_0/m2267/2\\_69/90439538](http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m2267/2_69/90439538).

<sup>27</sup> This may be in part due to the existentialist influence on Arendt’s thinking. She does say, however, that action and speech should be congruent. In other words, we should not lie about what we are doing. This becomes important in the context thinking about “the church.” One of the criteria that Hauerwas gives for a good story is that it helps us to avoid self deception and makes us tell the truth about what we are up to. (See, e.g.,” Self-Deception and Autobiography: Reflections on Speer's Inside the Third Reich” in Stanley Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations in Christian Ethics*, with Richard Bondi and David Burrell (Notre Dame: University of Notre dame Press, 1977), 82-98

<sup>28</sup> Although I did not fully address her treatment of forgiveness, it is important to note that in the Christian tradition, promise and forgiveness—the two conditions necessary for human action and togetherness—are represented together, the promise of forgiveness. God is a God who promises, God is a God who forgives (God promises to forgive).

<sup>29</sup> This is fully compatible with the Lutheran tradition.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 58.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 200. As mentioned in note 27 above, this notion of truthfulness is resonant with Hauerwas’s understanding of the commitment of the Church.