TEACHERS AND STUDENTS:
AN ARENDTIAN APPROACH TOWARDS EDUCATION

by

Jialin Chen

B.Sc., B.A., Central China Normal University, 2014

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(Educational Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

December 2019

©Jialin Chen, 2019
The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Teachers and Students: An Arendtian Approach Towards Education

submitted by Jialin Chen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Educational Studies

Examinining Committee:

Samuel David Rocha, Educational Studies Supervisor

Anne Phelan, Curriculum and Pedagogy Supervisory Committee Member

Barbara Weber, Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education Additional Examiner
Abstract

This research is conducted with a conceptual and philosophical approach in the humanities field. In this thesis, I put forward claims and objections, and argue them from reading literature including articles, books, fictions, from my own experiences, other people’s experiences, and examples. I hope to better understand the teacher-student relationship in terms of faith, love, authority and responsibility and to provide a way of thinking for both teachers and students to decide what to teach, how to teach, what to learn, and how to learn.

In contemporary education, it has become common that teaching or learning is driven from the perspective of the students. The idea behind the emphasis on students lies in the pursuit for “equalization” between teachers and students. However, it is true that teaching or learning also involves the process of students being taught what they do not want or they do not know if they want it or not. Conflicts thus emerge and a new understanding of teacher-student relationship is required. Inspired by Hannah Arendt, I build up a theoretical framework about humans and an Arendtian society. I claim that human beings are defined by singularity and plurality, based on which I define an Arendtian society as a space where the private space of home and the public space of the world coexist. Within this framework, I argue that school should serve as both a private space and a public space. I explore the relationship between teacher’s authority and teacher’s responsibility and argue that teacher’s authority is necessary for the education process. I define teacher’s responsibility as a collective responsibility while student’s responsibility is a personal responsibility. Then, I discuss the problems of teacher-centered and student-centered education and propose a decentralization in education. My research falls back to the concept of faith in humanity and love of the world. I explore both teacher’s and student’s faith in each other and teacher’s love
for students and conclude that faith and love make education possible.
Lay Summary

This research contributes to the broader community of Arendtian studies in the field of education. By re-examining school space and the relationship between teachers and students in terms of authority, responsibility, faith, and love, my thesis aims at providing a way of thinking to better understand education conceptually and philosophically.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Jialin Chen.
Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... iii
Lay Summary ...................................................................................................................................... v
Preface ................................................................................................................................................ vi
List of Figures ...................................................................................................................................... ix
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... x
Dedication .......................................................................................................................................... xi
Prologue ............................................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1: The Past and the Now .................................................................................................. 11
  1.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 11
  1.2 From Equality to Authority ....................................................................................................... 15
  1.3 Love and Responsibility .......................................................................................................... 23
  1.4 Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 27

Chapter 2: Person and Persons ....................................................................................................... 32
  2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 32
  2.2 Human: Singularity and Plurality ........................................................................................... 34
  2.3 Arendtian Society ................................................................................................................... 42
  2.4 Faith in Humanity ................................................................................................................... 45
  2.5 Love of the World ................................................................................................................... 48
  2.6 Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 50

Chapter 3: Authority and Responsibility ......................................................................................... 52
  3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 52
  3.2 Private Space and Public Space at Schools .............................................................................. 53
  3.3 To Educate is to Act .................................................................................................................. 58
  3.4 Teacher’s Authority and Collective Responsibility ................................................................. 64
  3.5 Student’s Personal Responsibility ............................................................................................ 71
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 4: The Now and the Future</strong></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 From Teacher/Student Centralization to Decentralization</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Faith and Love</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Conclusion</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bibliography</strong></td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1 ......................................................................................................................... 54
Figure 2 ......................................................................................................................... 58
Acknowledgements

My research journey is a long and lonely journey. In this journey, I have experienced lots of stress and difficulties. However, I am lucky and I am grateful for the support, the care, and the love that I have received from every individual. Without any of these, I could never finish my thesis. First, I would love to express my gratitude to my beloved family and friends back home, especially my mom, my dad, my two sisters Jiaqi and Jiawen, my friends Zhuang and Curtis, for you encouraged and supported me to chase my dream in a foreign country. It was not an easy decision. But you made it possible. Thank you! I would love to thank my boyfriend, Gustavo, for your support, your care, your love, for always being there for me, and for holding my hands through those dark and depressed moments of my life. Thank you, and I love you. I would also love to thank all my friends I am lucky to have made in Vancouver, Canada, especially Johanna and Felix, for your empathy, your encouragement, and your support, for which I am brave enough to insist in my dreams and to continue my exploration in new areas. Thank you! I would love to thank all the support that I have received for my defense, especially Jingwun, for coming to my defense and supporting me with a bunch of beautiful flowers. Thank you! I would love to thank my supervisor Dr. Sam Rocha, for your guidance, your advice, and your support. Without any of this, I would not have come to this far in my research journey. Thank you! Last but not least, I would love to thank Dr. Anne Phelan for serving in my committee, and Dr. Barbara Weber for serving in my examiner committee. Thank you! I am grateful for everything.
To whom I love.
Prologue

I am interested in education. However, when I first applied to The University of British Columbia (UBC), I did not have a potential research topic. As a result, I applied to Master of Education (MEd) in Society, Culture, and Politics in Education (SCPE), which is a course-based program, instead of Master of Arts (MA) in Educational Studies, which is a research-based program. However, as I came to UBC and studied for nine months in several courses, especially after taking Dr. Sam Rocha’s course, I have come to know more about education and my research interests in love and education. I believe it is important for educational research to explore the humanistic ideas inclusive in love and education. Having read and studied Arendt’s essay—“The Crisis in Education,” I was so excited and surprised to find that her arguments in this essay speak to my concern, my belief, and my hope in education. At that moment, I decided to switch to the MA program and started my research journey.

My research explores the teacher-student relationship in terms of authority, responsibility, faith, and love based on Arendt’s thoughts. I mainly work on one of Arendt’s essays—“The Crisis in Education” in Between Past and Future, which is a very minor collection of Arendt’s essays. To understand “The Crisis in Education” better, I mainly consult Arendt’s other two books—Love and Saint Augustine and The Human Condition. Although my references cover her three books written in 1929, 1958, and 1961, they are only a tiny amount among all Arendt’s works. Thus, my thesis is only a small work that engages with only a small part of Arendt’s thoughts. And although I strive to be faithful to Arendt’s works, in no way I interpret her thoughts perfectly. Thus, what is presented in my thesis is only an approach to understand Arendt.
To begin with, I want to talk about my mathematics background. When I was in university, I studied mathematics and applied mathematics. I enjoy the subject a lot. I enjoy the pure logic and rigorousness embedded in mathematics. After I graduated from university, I worked as a mathematics teacher at an international high school in Shenzhen, China. During those years, I have gradually developed an organized way of thinking, which has impacted me in a variety of ways, including how I organized my thesis chapters. I hope that the arrangement of my thesis chapters provides some sense of clarification for my small work in education.

My thesis is divided into four chapters—The Past and the Now, Person and Persons, Authority and Responsibility, and The Now and the Future. The names of the four chapters and the way how they are arranged are inspired by Hannah Arendt’s book—Between Past and Future. I examine some previous literature in which people discuss the teacher-student relationship related to equality, authority, love, and responsibility. This part constitutes “the Past.” From there, I discover the crisis in education and an urge to re-examine the teacher-student relationship. This constitutes “the Now.” To discuss the current education situation and the teacher-student relationship, I build up a theoretical framework based on my readings on Arendt on Augustine. As education involves interactions between teachers and students, and teacher-student relationship is fundamentally a human relationship, I have then decided to discuss “Person and Persons.” “Person” represents each being, as each being is a singular being; while “Persons” represent beings, as beings are plural beings in this world who also live with other people. The singular form of person and the plural form of persons represent the twofold qualities of human beings—singularity and plurality. This argument serves as part of the theoretical framework and has shaped the entire discussion in my thesis. Within
this framework, I provide a further argument on the topics of authority and responsibility.

Based on the previous discussions, once again, I look into “the Now”—the crisis in education and the teacher-student relationship with some new insights, and provide some further thoughts on “the Future.” This constitutes “the Now and the Future.”

By studying Arendt’s thoughts, I am guided by her through the mist of education, and I am also inspired by her to more possibilities. My arguments on the teacher-student relationship come from the conclusion part of her essay—“The Crisis in Education” in *Between Past and Future*. Without the guidance and inspiration from Arendt’s works, I can never finish my thesis. In this sense, I am heavily in debt to her. In what follows, I quote one important passage from her works, from which I have learned a lot, and from which I have developed my arguments. She writes:

> What concerns us all and cannot therefore be turned over to the special science of pedagogy is the relation between grown-ups and children in general or, putting it in even more general and exact terms, our attitude toward the fact of natality: the fact that we have all come into the world by being born and that this world is constantly renewed through birth. Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.¹

Based on Arendt’s arguments, I include love and responsibility in my discussion in the teacher-student relationship. In my thesis, I connect the concepts of responsibility and authority and argue that educational responsibility takes the form of authority, while authority relies on educational responsibility. However, according to Arendt, the political equalization

---

between teachers and students has resulted in a crisis in education. In this process, teachers gradually lose their authority. As such, I have made two difficult claims in the first chapter in my thesis. Education cannot work without the teacher’s authority, and teachers and students are not politically equal. These are difficult facts for one to acknowledge as authority and equality appear to be sensitive topics. For instance, when I talk about authority, one might feel offensive immediately as it is easy for an authority to fall into authoritarianism or dogmatism. The very thin line between authority and authoritarianism or dogmatism makes it much harder to talk about authority. I notice that when I address this topic, I tend to be more careful with my wording. However, coming from a Chinese background, I have experienced teacher-centered education for a long time. Thus, authority is never a new topic for me. Indeed, it appears as a common and normal concept. Although I have seen the negative part of exercising authority, as one who has experienced teacher’s authority in education, I have also seen the positive part of it. Therefore, my Chinese background makes me feel more comfortable to talk about sensitive topics such as authority and equality. However, it does not make it less difficult. My discussion on authority and equality in my thesis is only a beginning. I have to admit that there are still weaknesses in these arguments. For instance, in the first chapter, I have differentiated equality to human equality and political equality. Based on my reading on Arendt, teachers and students share human equality as they face the same fate—mortality. However, teachers and students are politically not equal as they do not have equal rights to decide. Having read this argument again, I think the part of human equality requires further research. As my references on Arendt are very limited, I believe by consulting more of Arendt’s other works, I should be able to develop a clearer explanation of human equality between teachers and students.
With that said, my Chinese background also provides me with a different perspective to approach Arendt’s works. Although Arendt is a western German-American philosopher, I believe it would be wrong to read her works only from the western perspective. In fact, I see that part of Arendt’s thoughts resonates with a traditional Chinese Confucius philosophy—Zhongyong, which means the doctrine of the mean. Zhongyong is viewed as a virtue. It represents an attitude that pursues nothing more and nothing less, with the aim to achieve a balance. When I read Arendt’s works, I see her attempts to examine different concepts from a twofold perspective, which seems contradictory, yet stays as a whole. In these twofold approaches, I see Zhongyong in Arendt’s thoughts. For instance, based on Augustine, Arendt argues that human being is defined from a twofold perspective. She explains that human being is defined as an isolated person and as a member of the human race. Arendt’s twofold perspective provides a balanced approach to understand human beings. Nothing more, and nothing less. Specifically, one exists in this world as an isolated person; however, if we insist too much on isolation, then human beings will become apart and the world will become split. Also, one exists in this world as a member of the human race; however, if we insist too much on this dependence, then each being will lose his/her characters and so lose the meaning of their lives. I believe that Arendt is aware of the danger to understand human beings only from one perspective. Therefore, she provides a twofold perspective, a balanced perspective, a Zhongyong perspective. To name a few more, Arendt talks about public space and private space; she also talks about collective responsibility and personal responsibility. Her approaches to understanding space and responsibility are from two different perspectives, which, again, have resonated with the Chinese Confucius philosophy—Zhongyong. Although Arendt comes from a western background, I believe that it is never her intention to restrict
herself in western society. And that’s probably why I also see the Chinese traditional philosophy in her works. Arendt is a thoughtful philosopher. She is concerned about the people and the world. In “The Crisis in Education,” she uses the American society as an example. However, she never limits her discussion in the scope of western society. Her thoughts are always related to the human race and the whole world. I believe if one reads Arendt’s works only as westernized works, then there is a higher chance that one might interpret her thoughts wrongly.

However, it is never easy to read Arendt’s works as she is a philosopher with abundant and rich thoughts. Although I only mainly consult Arendt’s three books written in 1929, 1958, and 1961, her thoughts on some notions seem to change throughout time. This seeming inconsistency has created difficulties for me to understand Arendt’s works and to develop my arguments. For instance, in 1929, based on Augustine’s argument, Arendt concludes that the world comprises an earthly world and the inhabitants of the world. Thus, the world refers not only to this earthly world where we live but also refers to human beings who live in this earthly world. Based on this definition, I argue that human is defined by plurality since human depends on the world and so depends on the humans who are part of the world. In other words, human beings are related, which leads to human plurality. However, as I kept reading Arendt’s works, I found that Arendt’s concept of the world seems to change from the year 1929 when she writes Love and Saint Augustine to the year 1958 when she writes The Human Condition. In 1958, Arendt seems to change the concept of the world. There, she refers the world as a public space that separates and relates human beings. In this sense, the concept of the world does not include human beings. I was struggling so much when I found out the differences. At some point, I was lost. Since the concept of the
world seems to be different, my argument on human plurality, which is based on the previous concept of the world, appeared as a weakness or even did not make any sense. Since I did not want to abandon my argument immediately, I decided to re-examine Arendt’s works more closely, with the hope to find a reasonable explanation. I read through Arendt’s both books again, word by word, including the footnotes. Luckily, I found that Arendt mentions both concepts of the world in different parts of her book—*Love and Saint Augustine*, and also provides a more detailed explanation in the footnote. Indeed, she acknowledges both concepts of the world and interprets them as a twofold approach to understand the world. She uses both concepts in different situations. Thus, my argument on human plurality becomes reasonable as I only use one part of her definitions of the world.

When I read Arendt’s works, I try to be faithful to her thoughts as much as possible. I also try to be as precise as possible when interpreting her thoughts. When I encounter inconsistencies or difficulties in reading Arendt’s works, I dig into the contexts of her arguments; I also dig into the footnotes where she provides further explanations. By doing so, I understand Arendt better and so develop more reasonable arguments. In this case, when Arendt acknowledges a twofold perspective to understand the concept of the world, I interpret it as a time and space perspective. On one hand, the world is the human world and so human beings are part of the world. This concept of the world takes time into consideration. Throughout time, men act in the events that are happening in the world, which turns the world into a changeable human world. In this sense, “man makes the world and makes himself part of the world.”

Human beings are placed outside the world and so are not part of the world. This is the result of taking space into consideration.

Since Arendt is a German-American philosopher, she also writes in German. Thus, another difficulty that I have encountered is the language barrier. To better understand Arendt’s thoughts, I, therefore, consult different resources, including the English version and the Chinese version. Luckily, part of the Chinese version is the translation from the German resources directly. As such, I am “able” to read a few of Arendt’s thoughts written in German based on the Chinese version. For instance, in terms of Arendt’s concept of public space, the English version only provides a limited explanation. In the English version of The Human Condition, Arendt explains public space by writing: “everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity.”3 Compared to this, the Chinese version, which is the translation of the German version from her other works—Denktagebuch 1950 bis 1973 and Über das Böse, provides a more detailed explanation. There she explains, the public space is a space where everyone presents themselves; it is a space for people to see, to be seen, to hear, and to be heard; it is a space that requires the existence of other people. This more detailed version helps me to better understand Arendt’s concept of public space.

By examining the teacher-student relationship in terms of authority, responsibility, faith, and love from an Arendtian perspective, my thesis aims at providing a way of thinking to better understand education conceptually and philosophically. Specifically, I hope to provide a way of thinking for both teachers and students to decide what to teach, how to teach, what to learn, and how to learn. Although my thesis provides a way of thinking, it is not the

---

answer or the solution. However, I still see my discussion in my thesis valuable as I believe in the power of words. I hope that by reading my thesis, both teachers and students will at least be encouraged to re-think their mutual relationship and to re-think education.

I enjoy the beauty of the words. I also believe in the power of the words. In Dr. Sam Rocha’s class, we were assigned to read a literature story—*Frankenstein*. Before the class, I had only watched the movie *Frankenstein* and knew it as a horror movie. Having read the story, I found that I was absolutely, completely wrong. *Frankenstein* is a great story, and I just fell in love with it immediately. I cried when I read the story as my heart broke for Frankenstein and the monster. The monster cries:

> Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a friend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.  

I cry as I see the humanity in the monster, yet I also see the conflicts between Frankenstein and the monster; I see the vulnerabilities in both of them. Although it is a story about a monster, it is, in fact, about humans and life. I enjoy reading Echo Chen’s works. Echo Chen, or “Sanmao” in Chinese, is my favorite writer. I don’t remember for how many times, I was reading her books experiencing her happiness, her sadness, her life as if I became her. That’s the magic of words. It exposes our vulnerability and guides us to experience another soul, and so to appreciate our lives more. I cry, I enjoy, I experience, and I become part of them. In my thesis, my arguments fall into the love of the world and the faith in humanity. Specifically, in terms of the teacher-student relationship, I argue that teacher’s authority becomes possible as students have faith in their teachers; while teachers take responsibility for students since

---

teachers have faith in students and teachers love their students. These arguments involving love and faith seem to be “too romantic” that they appear to be weak arguments. Love and faith may seem weak compared to a scientific argument, yet, I believe in the power of the words in love and faith. Love and faith are the most important elements in life. We love, we have faith, because we live in this human world, and because we are all humans. With love and faith, we can be more.

Before ending this prologue, I want to revisit the two questions that I mention both at the beginning and at the end of my thesis. What is education? And what is education for? Still, these all difficult questions that I do not have answers for. But, at this moment, please allow me to address the questions by thinking about what education is about. And yes, education is definitely about knowledge. But perhaps more importantly, education is about faith and love. Together, these faith and love make education possible.
Chapter 1: The Past and the Now

1.1 Introduction

Nietzsche asks, “what origin our terms good and evil actually have.”\(^5\) What is good? And what is evil? These are significant questions for the continuity of humanity and the world. While they seem to be too far the topics from education, they are important questions to think about as education is about humans and this world. Following this question, Nietzsche continues to ask:

under what conditions did man invent the value judgments good and evil? And what value do they themselves have? Have they up to now obstructed or promoted human flourishing? Are they a sign of distress, poverty and the degeneration of life? Or, on the contrary, do they reveal the fullness, strength and will of life, its courage, its confidence, its future?\(^6\)

Do the value judgments about good and evil hinder or promote human flourishing? Is it possible that the evil is lurked in the good, while the good is hidden in the evil? How could we tell? How could we know? The story of Frankenstein might provide us with a perspective to think about these questions.

I love the literature story—Frankenstein.\(^7\) While I enjoy so much reading the story, I feel sad for both Frankenstein and the monster. Frankenstein creates a new life into this world. Although this new life is kind and with no aim to harm anyone, he is rejected by Frankenstein and other humans because of their horror and disgust on the ugly and scary countenance of


\(^6\) Ibid., 5.

\(^7\) I want to thank Dr. Barbara Weber and Dr. Sam Rocha for suggesting me to put the story of Frankenstein at the beginning of my thesis. It emphasizes, again, the theme of my thesis, which is faith and love.
him. Unfortunately, this new life then turns into a monster\textsuperscript{8} while seeking for revenge. The monster kills the beloved of Frankenstein for he is brought into this world by Frankenstein yet is abandoned by this world. The monster asks for a female counterpart so he can feel happy again; in exchange, he promises to stay away from the human world and will harm no one. The monster cries:

How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion? Believe me, Frankenstein, I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity; but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn and hate me.\textsuperscript{9}

However, Frankenstein is so worried that more humans will be killed that he rejects the monster’s request and decides to kill the monster instead. At the end, the monster killed Frankenstein and declares to kill himself. I cried when I read the story as my heart broke for Frankenstein and the monster. I would never forget what the monster says:

Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a friend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.\textsuperscript{10}

What is good? And what is evil? Is Frankenstein good? If Frankenstein is good, why does he reject the monster at first just because the monster looks ugly and scary? Can he decide to kill the monster in the name of protecting other human beings? Is the monster evil? If the monster is evil, why does he help the farmers when he is hiding away? Why does he feel lonely and miserable and why does he care? I do not try to argue what good is or what evil is. This is not the focus of my thesis. What I want to convey is that, these are difficult

\textsuperscript{8} Although the monster is not human, I believe it is fair to view it as a symbol for “bad human.”

\textsuperscript{9} Shelley, Frankenstein, Chap. 10.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
questions. The distinction between good and evil could actually lead to a danger, which could be the extinction of humans (the extinction of both Frankenstein and the monster). In this story, I also see the importance of faith, love, and forgiveness. If Frankenstein has faith in the monster that he will not harm people anymore; if Frankenstein can extend his love to the monster, then Frankenstein will not decide to kill the monster. If the monster can forgive Frankenstein, he will not kill the beloved of Frankenstein. However, it is not easy to have faith, to love, and to forgive. They come with the risks that the monster might still harm people; or Frankenstein might still decide to kill the monster. But without these difficult faith, love, and forgiveness, as we can see the story’s ending, Frankenstein is killed, and the monster declares to kill himself. In this story, we see the importance of faith, love, and forgiveness in life. As education is about humans and this world, faith and love are also important in education. Indeed, this is what my thesis is about. It is about faith and love. It is about life.

While I was working in an international school in Shenzhen, China, I was assigned to teach mathematics in two classes for three years. Each of the class included around 25 students. According to the result of the entrance exam students took before they started senior high school years, the mathematics skills of the students in class 1 were on average slightly higher than those in class 2. However, although I applied similar teaching pedagogies in these two classes, I received different results. It turned out that students in class 2 achieved better scores than students in class 1 in the AP Calculus BC exam. As a teacher, I have always

\[\text{11 While forgiveness is also important, I do not address this topic in my thesis.}\]

\[\text{12 In China, usually teachers follow students, which means that teachers teach their students from Grade 10 to Grade 12 in senior high school.}\]

\[\text{13 AP Calculus stands for Advanced Placement Calculus offered by College Board and includes two}\]
questioned the results. Why were the results different even though I applied similar teaching pedagogies? What were the possible reasons? As I had spent more time with my students and thought through the phenomena, I have realized the importance of the relationship between teachers and students. Better teaching pedagogies might work more efficiently in the education process. However, if a teaching pedagogy were to affect a student’s development, it would be not just because the teaching pedagogy is a good technique, but also because the teacher and students build up an engaging and supportive relationship, and students interpret and try to make sense of the education content.\(^{14}\) It is only then that education becomes possible.\(^{15}\) Thus, we should never forget that education process is also an interaction process between teachers and students. The relationship between teachers and students matters.

During those three years, I had built up a more mutual friendly and supportive relationship with students from class 2 than students from class 1. The relationship between me (as a teacher) and students were more harmonic and interactive. Students in class 2 were more willing to engage in learning mathematics since the second year, while students in class 1 became less engaged. During the education process, students from class 2 were more willing to spend more time studying mathematics, asking questions, helping each other, and thus had a more positive learning experience. To conclude, students in class 2 were more active in learning mathematics. They took more responsibility for themselves as learning mathematics became something that they needed or were willing to learn rather than being


\(^{15}\) Ibid.
told or required to learn. By comparing what had happened in these two classes, I have realized that the relationship between teachers and students plays an important role in the education process and that students taking responsibility for themselves is important too.

By providing this example, I am not trying to argue that a better score represents a better learning outcome. To some extent, a better score does show that student achieves a better learning result. However, it is also true that a better score is not everything, or sometimes it is even nothing. I am also not trying to argue the direct reasons that students in class 2 achieved a better result. Instead, what I want to argue is the importance of the relationship between teachers and students.

As time goes by, I have then figured out my research area interest and decided part of my thesis title as “Teachers and Students.” I want to explore the relationship between teachers and students, and how it affects the education process.

### 1.2 From Equality to Authority

Education involves interactions between teachers and students. In contemporary education, it has become common that teaching or learning is driven from the perspective of the student, which is also known as student-centered education. In this mode of education, active partnerships between teachers and students have become increasingly important, which encourage students’ participation and engagement in decision making in classrooms and

---

16 In my thesis, I only focus on education that happens between teachers and students. I do not discuss the situation when one educates oneself.

This phenomenon has shown a growing interest in student voice. The emphasis on student voice comprises student’s voices being heard, students collaborating with adults to address problems in schools, and students taking part in decision making in and outside classrooms. Research has shown that a greater emphasis on student voice can have a positive impact on student engagement and contributes to youth development from developing thinking and reasoning skills to setting up self-esteem. To name a few, Mitra’s research shows that students’ abilities to articulate opinions, critique, speak publicly, and solve problems are improved and a greater sense of leadership is developed, which in return will foster student success in society. Both Quinn and Owen also discover that students are able to “develop the skills of communication, negotiation, active listening, facilitation of discussions and delegation of responsibilities to accomplish their goals” by involving in “dialogue, discussion and debate before deciding on an avenue to solve problems.”

---


19 Ibid., 61-62.


22 Mitra, “The Significance of Students,” 662.

return, has increased students’ self-esteem and self-efficacy as a sense of belonging to the school community is built and students believe that they are able to make a difference by participating and engaging in the decision making process. By conducting interviews with school staffs, Quinn and Owen find that “by encouraging students to act as equal partners with teachers in their education,” students will invest and commit more in the learning process and so develop a deeper level of understanding. The emphasis on student voice can also improve the relationship between students and teachers by encouraging more interaction and by building up mutual trust and understanding. These empirical claims have shown positive outcomes when the focus of education is on the students. Education is a process that involves not only teachers teaching, but students learning as well. Thus, both teachers and students should have the rights to decide the education process. However, as education also involves the participation from teachers, I cannot stop thinking, what about the teachers? What about the teachers’ voices? At this moment, is it possible that we focus too much on students with the student-centered educational approaches, that we forget teachers also have a say in education, as they are the ones who teach?

Biesta criticizes that the emphasis on student-centered learning has turned the language of education into a language of learning. He argues that the complexity and difficulty of educational relationship have been lost during the transition from a language of

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 65.
education to a language of learning. As such, Biesta calls for a renewed emphasis on the language of education itself. He re-examines the role of educators and calls for critical research about the relationship between teachers and students. While student voice is important, teaching or learning also involves the process of students being taught what they do not want or they do not know if they want it or not. Thus, whether students should have the same rights as teachers to decide the education process becomes questionable. In fact, the idea behind the emphasis on student voice lies in the pursuit for equalization between teachers and students. The equalization between teachers and students is a political equalization as it emphasizes the equal rights that both teachers and students should have regarding education. Notice that Arendtian human equality differs completely from political equality, which usually means equal rights. Arendt explains the concept of human equality in *Love and Saint Augustine*. There she writes:

This kinship creates an equality neither of traits nor of talents, but of situation. All share the same fate. The individual is not alone in this world. He has companions-in-fate (*consortes*), not merely in this situation or that, but for a lifetime. His entire life is regarded as a distinct fateful situation, the situation of mortality. Therein lies the kinship of all people and at the same time their fellowship (*societas*).

Therefore, human equality is an equality that is derived directly from the fact of belonging to

---


30 Stolz and Biesta, “Gert Biesta on thinking philosophically about education; thinking educationally about philosophy in education and educational research,” 63-64.

31 Ibid.

32 In my thesis, I use equalization and equality. Equalization is the process to achieve equality. The two concepts are further divided into human equalization, political equalization, human equality, and political equality.

33 Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 100.
the human race. This is different from the political equality. Teachers and students are equal because they belong to the human race and share the same fate—the situation of mortality. However, since students are “not-yet-human-beings” who do not have the full capacity to make every decision, I doubt that students will be in a politically equal position as teachers even if we promote the political equalization between teachers and students. Thus, political equalization between teachers and students becomes questionable. A new understanding of the teacher-student relationship is then required.

In fact, Hannah Arendt warns that the equalization between teachers and students from the political sense has resulted in a crisis in education. In this process, teachers gradually lose their authority. She writes:

Thus, what makes the educational crisis in American so especially acute is the political temper of the country, which of itself struggles to equalize or to erase as far as possible the difference between the young and old, between the gifted and the ungifted, finally between children and adults, particularly between pupils and teachers. It is obvious that such an equalization can actually be accomplished only at the cost of the teacher’s authority and at the expense of the gifted among the students.  

In the education realm, within the process of political equalization between teachers and students, teachers lose their authority, which, according to Arendt, has led to a crisis in education. In The Beautiful Risk of Education, a book deeply influenced by Arendt, Biesta mentioned, “After all, if teaching is about presenting students with something that is ‘neither derivable from nor validated by’ what they already know, then they have to take it on the authority of the teacher.” Therefore, education cannot work without teacher’s authority. To conclude, with this point of view, I propose an answer to O’Byrne’s question. O’Byrne asks, “the question of whether or not the classroom can function if there is no inequality between

34 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 180.

teacher and student is the same as the question of whether or not education can work without authority."\textsuperscript{36} To answer this question, I argue that education cannot work without teacher’s authority; the classroom cannot function if there is no inequality (political inequality) between teachers and students, though teachers and students share human equality.

While education cannot work without teacher’s authority, the concept of educational authority should be exercised in the education realm which is separated from the realm of public and political life. Arendt says:

The problem of education in the modern world lies in the fact that by its very nature it cannot forgo either authority or tradition, and yet must proceed in a world that is neither structured by authority nor held together by tradition. That means, however, that not just teachers and educators, but all of us, insofar as we live in one world together with our children and with young people, must take toward them an attitude radically different from the one we take toward one another. We must decisively divorce the realm of education from the others, most of all from the realm of public, political life, in order to apply to it alone a concept of authority and an attitude toward the past which are appropriate to it but have no general validity and must not claim a general validity in the world of grown-ups.\textsuperscript{37}

Arendt uses both the words—teachers and educators. To clarify, I use educator as a broader concept than teacher. Educators refer to people who educate, for example, parents who educate their kids and museum educators who educate visitors through tours or events. Teachers refer to people who teach in the classroom, whether it is a physical environment or an online space, for example, people who teach at schools and people who offer courses online. Based on these distinctions, teachers are educators while educators are not necessarily teachers. In this thesis, I mainly focus on teachers instead of educators. According to Arendt, teachers must treat students differently from the way teachers will treat other grown-ups, as


\textsuperscript{37} Arendt, \textit{Between Past and Future}, 195.
students are growing and developing into grown-ups. The educational realm should be separated from both the public and political life. In this education realm, teachers are entitled to the educational authority.

Arendt sees authority as “a natural and necessary condition for education, upon which the continuity of any civilization depended.” In education, it always involves processes where teachers decide for students since teachers know what is right or correct. As children are developing individuals, some rules that come from teachers are more than advice, yet less than commands, and require voluntary acceptance. Based on Arendt’s teaching style, Stern and Yarbrough define it as obedience, which comes along with authority. Authority is not the power itself, instead, it legitimates power. Biesta points out that, with teacher’s authority, “a violation” is entailed in education as student’s sovereignty is challenged by teacher’s authority. However, it does not mean that education should be violent or should not be violent. In fact, he says:

It is only meant as a reminder that as educators we are always interfering in the lives of our students and that this interference can have a deep, transforming, and even disturbing impact on our students.

A teacher’s authority creates conflicts as it disturbs the student-centered position.

---


40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 161.

42 Biesta, _Beyond learning_, 29.

43 Ibid.
However, we should never forgo teacher’s authority. Indeed, we should always insist on such authority as it is required by the nature of education. A teacher’s authority does not come from force. In fact, in what follows, I argue that teachers’ authority comes from love and is embedded with responsibility. The interference from teachers to students should not involve force or selfish; instead, it should involve love and responsibility.

In “The Crisis in Education” in Between Past and Future, Arendt provides us with an insight to examine the relationship among education, love, and responsibility. While her concern is related to the education crisis in the 1960s, it still works to address the contemporary issues in the education field. She writes:

What concerns us all and cannot therefore be turned over to the special science of pedagogy is the relation between grown-ups and children in general or, putting it in even more general and exact terms, our attitude toward the fact of natality: the fact that we have all come into the world by being born and that this world is constantly renewed through birth. Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.45

---

44 In “The Crisis in Education” in Between Past and Future written in the 1960s, Arendt describes “equality” as a general factor that has exacerbated the crisis in education. She says, “[i]t is obvious that such an equalization can actually be accomplished only at the cost of the teacher’s authority and at the expense of the gifted among the students.” (180) Teachers have gradually lost their authority in the crisis in education. Besides, children are rejected from the world of adults in the name of respecting the children’s independence, which has broken off “the natural relationship between grown-ups and children.” (184) Also, “the adults refuse to assume responsibility for the world into which they have brought the children.” (190) This education crisis mentioned by Arendt happens in the 1960s. However, as has been discussed in the beginning of Section 1.2, it has become common that teaching or learning is driven from the perspective of the students in contemporary education, which can be traced back to the “equalization” between teachers and students. Therefore, the crisis in education in the 1960s is similar to the crisis in education in contemporary society. Thus, although Arendt’s concern is related to the education crisis in the 1960s, it still works to address the contemporary issues in the education field.

45 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 196.
Arendt emphasizes the importance of the relationship between grown-ups and children and distinguishes it from the special science of pedagogy. The teacher-student relationship is not a set of formulas and data. It involves the interactions among human beings, which comes with a sense of uncertainty. Education cannot work without authority. However, this does not mean that teachers may decide everything they want for the students. In fact, teachers’ love and the responsibility they take for students have made the education process possible. In what follows, I explore the teacher-student relationship from the perspective of love and responsibility.

1.3 Love and Responsibility

There is nothing new about the topics related to the teacher’s and student’s mutual relationship in terms of love. Throughout time, the relation between love and education has been discussed by many philosophers such as Plato and Paulo Freire who have claimed that love is essential in education and pedagogy. Paulo Freire states, “Teaching cannot be a process of transference of knowledge from the one teaching to the learner.” It is impossible to teach without the courage to love.” Thus, teaching should not only be viewed as a knowledge transfer process; instead, it involves love, and it only works with teacher’s love for his/her students. In Daniel Cho’s paper, he claims that with love, teacher and student


48 Ibid., 95.
seek knowledge from the world with each other rather than from or of each other.\textsuperscript{49} Love changes teacher’s and student’s positionality. With love, education becomes an open space where teacher and student experience self-awareness and seek and produce knowledge through inquiry and thought.\textsuperscript{50}

However, not every kind of love in between teachers and students works in the education process. Jasinski and Lewis criticize three types of love including tough love, love actually and (new) world love. Tough love turns students into instruments that are loved towards an end and so puts students’ potentiality at risk, while love actually appears to be a negative love as it turns down students’ unforeseen possibilities.\textsuperscript{51} The problem with (new) world love is that it comes with a premise that students are expected to experience the world and bring something new to it within the teachers’ perspective and so might restrict students’ potentiality.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, Jasinski and Lewis suggest whatever love, in which students’ potentiality to be and not to be is loved as such.\textsuperscript{53} It is not guided by an end and thus opens a space for students’ personal development.\textsuperscript{54} However, as “whatever love is radically indifferent,”\textsuperscript{55} I suspect that teachers might end up rejecting their educational responsibility for his/her students’ personal development in the name of whatever love. As whatever love from teachers opens up the education space, students decide what they want to be or what

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 94.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 94, 95.


\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 435, 436.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 439, 440.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 440.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 439.
they do not want to be. As a result, teachers’ responsibility for students might gradually disappear.

According to Arendt, teachers’ love for children involves a sense of responsibility.\textsuperscript{56} However, as discussed above, in the name of teachers’ love for children, teachers might lose their responsibility to decide for children in this process. Then, how do teachers’ love and responsibility work in tandem? Määtä and Uusiautti’s detailed and practical discussion about teachers’ love in \textit{Many Faces of Love}, which involves a sense of responsibility, might provide an insight to understand Arendtian love and responsibility. According to Määtä and Uusiautti, love contains many perspectives including maternal love, love for fellow humans, love of one’s country, romantic love, and pedagogical love.\textsuperscript{57} Määtä and Uusiautti connect pedagogical love with good teacherhood and claim that pedagogical love plays an essential role in good teacherhood in every education level.\textsuperscript{58} Within pedagogical love, teachers show patience, empathy, concern, trust, and forgiveness to their students in support for their development “for the sake of themselves and the whole society.”\textsuperscript{59} Thus, pedagogical love is a twofold love that contains not only the love for students but also the love for society and so the world. When students experience failures and make worthless choices, a teacher has the responsibility to intervene and provide appropriate guidance.\textsuperscript{60} They further conclude that pedagogical love does not keep a student in dependency or independence with a teacher;

\textsuperscript{56} Arendt, \textit{Between Past and Future}, 196.

\textsuperscript{57} Kaarina Määttä and Satu Uusiautti, “Pedagogical love and good teacherhood,” In \textit{Many Faces of Love}, pp. 93-101, (SensePublishers, Rotterdam, 2013), 94.

\textsuperscript{58} Määttä and Uusiautti, “Pedagogical love and good teacherhood,” 94, 98.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 95, 98, 99.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 98.
instead, pedagogical love creates an interdependence relationship between teachers and students.\textsuperscript{61}

However, Määttä and Uusiautti also warn that pedagogical love is not “\textit{the solution}.”\textsuperscript{62} Learning is not always pleasurable and joyful, and what students are learning is not always what they want to learn or what the teachers want them to learn.\textsuperscript{63} On one side, teacher’s love cannot always turn the learning experience into an enjoyable one and so students might refuse to accept the teaching process. This is not because the teacher does not love his/her students, but because learning could be a painful process. On the other side, a teacher cannot request the students to follow his/her instructions or to control the learning process in the name of his/her love. This is because a student is an individual, but not an instrument. And the education process is not an assembly line, but a process that involves uncertainty. Another risk is that “a pupil’s failure, fatigue, reluctance, or inability to concentrate would be interpreted as the pupil’s inefficiency or the shortcomings of a teacher’s proficiency.”\textsuperscript{64} Thus, when a student does not follow the expected education process, either the student or the teacher would be blamed for the student does not learn hard enough or the teacher does not teach in the right way. This is problematic as it tries to turn education into “a risk-free experience,” as criticized by Biesta.\textsuperscript{65} In fact, a student could still fail no matter how hard he/she tries, and a teacher could still fail no matter how much he/she loves his/her

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 100.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{65} Biesta, \textit{The Beautiful Risk of Education}, 146.
students and how great his/her teaching skills are. Biesta argues that education should not just focus on generating specific learning outcomes. Education should embrace the potential risk. Biesta calls such risk as the beautiful risk of education. If education keeps focusing on eliminating risk and turning everything into predictable outcomes, then education will again fall into the trap of treating students as instruments rather than real persons.

Since education involves potential risks and is not always predictable, teachers and students need to take responsibility for their actions in the process of education. Biesta claims that educational responsibility is defined from a twofold perspective—it is a responsibility for the unique and singular individuals to come into the world, and for the world with plurality and difference. He further argues that educational responsibility is taken without knowing what one is responsible for. While Biesta discusses teacher’s responsibility from a twofold perspective, he does not talk about student’s responsibility and how these two responsibilities interact with each other. Thus, in what follows, I further discuss the teacher’s and student’s responsibilities and their mutual relation.

1.4 Conclusion

Five years ago, I started my first career as an AP Calculus teacher in an international school in Shenzhen, China. To become a better teacher, I had read several books that discuss approaches to education and pragmatic solutions for teachers, from which I gradually formed

---

66 Ibid., 140.
69 Ibid., 116.
a more mature teaching style and teaching method. At first, I focused more on pedagogical
techniques, believing that students’ personal development would benefit the most from them.
However, the more time I spent teaching, the more teaching experience I gained, the more I
started to question education itself instead of pedagogical techniques. While pedagogical
techniques are important, I believe that a deeper understanding of education is also important
for teachers to make decisions for lesson planning and delivery. Each student is a unique
being. While pedagogical techniques might be effective or efficient for some groups of
students, Biesta reminds us that research related to educational techniques only shows what
worked in the past instead of what will work or what works.\textsuperscript{70} Thus, there is no guarantee that
the same educational technique will work.\textsuperscript{71} Thus, I realized that teachers should pursue more
than just improving their teaching skills to provide a better education for students. While I am
interested in the relationship between teachers and students, how should I approach this topic?
What is \textit{the more} that I should pursue as a teacher?

Four years ago, I read the book \textit{What Is Education?} by Phillip W. Jackson. My
questions about education started to become clearer. According to Jackson, education
involves not only the teaching of knowledge but also the development of human beings and
society.\textsuperscript{72} Inspired by this book, I started to ask myself questions beyond those involving
teaching skills. For example, should everyone learn to understand math? If not, should
teachers decide for students or should students decide for themselves? How should we


\textsuperscript{72} Philip W. Jackson, \textit{What is Education?}, (London and Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012), 94.
educate different students? What do we want to achieve when educating students? These have finally led to the most basic yet important questions, what is education and what is education for? I realize that technically-oriented research about curriculum and pedagogy cannot answer these questions. No matter how good a teacher is at teaching skills, without a deeper understanding of education from a conceptual perspective, he/she cannot answer these questions. If a teacher does not understand what education is and what education is for, there is a higher chance that he/she might make poor decisions in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. For instance, if a teacher believes that exam results as the only representation of how hard a student works, then a teacher might teach in an exam-oriented way and focus only on the improvement of a student’s score while ignoring other aspects. Thus, decisions in curriculum and pedagogy in terms of what to teach and how to teach are fundamentally influenced by how one knows and understands education. It is important for teachers to understand education from a conceptual perspective before making any technical decision. As a result, I have conducted my research from a conceptual and philosophical approach in the humanities field, with the purpose of re-thinking the current relationship between teachers and students in the education process and re-thinking education. Different from people who have a philosophy background and enter the field of education, I enter the field of philosophy with an education background. My past personal education experiences have provided me with a solid foundation, where I develop my claims on education and argue them with a philosophical research approach that I learn in the field of philosophy. I come from education; I explore education with a philosophical approach; and I aim to return to education.

In this thesis, I focus on one’s understanding of the teacher-student relationship in terms of love, faith, authority and responsibility. I put forward claims and objections, and
argue them from reading literature including articles, books, fictions, from my own experiences, other people’s experiences, and examples. By conducting this research, I hope to understand the teacher-student relationship from the conceptual and philosophical perspectives and to provide a way of thinking for both teachers and students in terms of what to teach, how to teach, what to learn, and how to learn.

In chapter 2, I build up a fundamental theoretical framework about humans, human relationship, and an Arendtian society. I start my argument based on the premise that the teacher-student relationship is a human relationship. Based on this, I first explore the basic qualities of human beings and argue that human beings are defined by singularity and plurality. Singularity guarantees each person the possibility of growing into unique beings, while plurality provides a possibility for people to act together and to live together. With these two distinct qualities, I define an Arendtian society as a space in which the private space of home and the public space of the world coexist. In an Arendtian society, people live alongside each other as we are singular individuals; people live with each other as we possess plurality; people live for each other for human flourishing as we have faith in a better future possibility. This faith I claim as faith in humanity, which comes from a deep love of the world. As “the world” consists of an earthly world and the inhabitants of the world, love of the world thus includes the love of this earthly world and the people living in it.

In chapter 3, I explore the concept of school space and teacher-student relationship in terms of authority and responsibility within the framework I build up in chapter 2. Arendt insists on separating the realms of authority and equality. She believes that the realm of

---

education should be separated from the political sphere. Based on that, I argue that school should serve as both a private space and a public space. In the school space, to educate is to act, which involves potential risks and responsibility. Then, I explore the relationship between teacher’s authority and teacher’s responsibility and argue that teacher’s authority is necessary for the education process. I define the teacher’s responsibility as a collective responsibility while the student’s responsibility is a personal responsibility. As students are becoming human beings, I argue that they will not stay in one space; instead, they are moving in between, sometimes in private space where they take less responsibility and receive instructions from the teachers about what and how to do; and sometimes in public space where they take more responsibility for their actions.

In chapter 4, based on the previous argument, I extend the scope of students from pre-college students to school students in different age groups. I discuss the problems of teacher-centered and student-centered education. On one side, teachers who believe in teacher-centered education view the education field only as a private space and teach with absolute authority, ignoring the existence of public space at schools. As a result, there appears no public space for students to take personal responsibility. On the other side, teachers who teach with student-centered method do not recognize that private space exists at schools and so refuse to assume responsibility for students. In fact, teachers and students should realize that they should take collective responsibility and personal responsibility, respectively. To conclude, I propose decentralization of both teacher and student in education. I go back to the concept of faith in humanity and love of the world and explore both the teacher’s and student’s faith in each other and teacher’s love for students in the education realm. This faith and love in education make education possible.
Chapter 2: Person and Persons

2.1 Introduction

In Hannah Arendt’s doctoral dissertation, she raises the question about the neighbor’s relevance and love of neighbor in Saint Augustine’s work. Following these two questions, Arendt studies Augustine’s arguments and concludes that the human is seen as an isolated person and as a member of the human race. Only in this sense can someone become a neighbor and is loved as such. I quote the translated text:

In raising the question about the neighbor’s relevance, we find that the question about humanity’s origin is doubly posed and doubly answered by Augustine. … Analogous to this, man is seen in the first sense as isolated and coming by contingency into the world viewed as a desert. In this second sense, man is seen as belonging to mankind and to this world by generation.

These diverse ways of putting the question suggest that the contradiction in this theory of the twofold origin is merely apparent. Man is the other, whether he understands himself as an isolated individual or as conditioned and essentially constituted by the fact of belonging to the human race…

…It is only through this conjunction derived from the two fold origin that we can understand the neighbor’s relevance. The other person is our neighbor as a member of the human race and in this capacity, too, is singled out with the explicitness that results from the realized isolation of the individual.74

By examining questions about neighbor’s relevance and love of neighbor in Augustine’s arguments, Arendt argues that human being is defined from a twofold perspective. This twofold perspective has provided a thoughtful angle to better understand human being’s position in this world. First, human being is seen as an isolated individual. Second, human being is seen as a member of the human race and is thus among others. In this twofold perspective, I see Arendt’s thoughts resonates with a traditional Chinese Confucius philosophy—Zhongyong, which means the doctrine of the mean. Zhongyong is viewed as a virtue. It represents an attitude that pursues nothing more and nothing less, with the aim to

74 Arendt, Love and Saint Augustine, 111-112.
achieve a balance. Arendt explains that human being is defined as an isolated person and as a member of the human race. This twofold perspective provides a balanced approach to understand human beings. Nothing more, and nothing less. Specifically, one exists in this world as an isolated person; however, if we insist too much on isolation, then human beings will become apart and the world will become split. Also, one exists in this world as a member of the human race; however, if we insist too much on this dependence, then each being will lose his/her characters and so lose the meaning of their lives. I believe that Arendt is aware of the danger to understand human beings only from one perspective. Therefore, she provides a twofold perspective, a balanced perspective, a Zhongyong perspective. Although Arendt comes from a western background, I believe that it is never her intention to restrict herself in western society. It would also be wrong to read her works only from the western perspective. In this sense, it is reasonable to read Arendt from the Chinese traditional philosophy perspective.

Based on Arendt’s argument about human being’s twofold perspective, I conclude that human being is defined by both singularity and plurality. With this premise that human possesses singularity and plurality, an Arendtian society is built, where people not only live beside each other but live with and for each other as well. Such an Arendtian society comprises both the private space of home and the public space of the world. I argue that the foundation of an Arendtian society lies in the faith in humanity, which is grounded in the love of the world.

---

75 Ibid., 100.
2.2 Human: Singularity and Plurality

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt describes “the world” as a public space common to all human beings and as an in-between “table” that separates and relates humans at the same time. Here I quote Arendt’s argument:

Second, the term “public” signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. This world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human lands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together. To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.  

As a public space, “the world” exists as an in-between “table,” which human beings sit around, and by which human beings are separated and related. These coexisting separations and relations among human beings have determined human beings’ dual qualities—singularity and plurality. Every human being is born into this world by its nature. According to Arendt, “the creature has been created into the world and is thus ‘after the world’ (post mundum).”

In this sense, this world, where human beings inhabit, exists both before and after the birth of human race. On one side, this earthly world thus becomes a condition for human being’s coming into being; on the other side, this earthly world is also what human beings depend on for their becoming into full human beings. That human being is born into this world, as a singular person and so is separated, and as a member of the human race existing among others and so is related, has determined human being’s dual qualities—singularity and plurality. Here I quote Arendt’s work again:

---

76 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52.

77 Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 68.
Analogous to this, man is seen in the first sense as isolated and coming by contingency into the world viewed as a desert. In this second sense, man is seen as belonging to mankind and to this world by generation.

These diverse ways of putting the question suggest that the contradiction in this theory of the twofold origin is merely apparent. Man is the other, whether he understands himself as an isolated individual or as conditioned and essentially constituted by the fact of belonging to the human race…

By studying Augustine’s work, Arendt claims that human being is defined from a twofold perspective. A human is seen as an isolated individual, and also as a member of the human race. Based on her argument, I conclude that human being possesses dual qualities—singularity and plurality. Scott and Stark argue that, while Heidegger serves as a precursor for Arendt’s concept of “plurality,” Arendt still preserves human being’s singularity in her concept of community.

On one side, human being is defined by singularity for two reasons. First, each human being is born into the world as a singular person, which by its nature has determined singularity. In the footnote of Arendt’s work—The Human Condition, Arendt refers to Augustine and concludes that singularity is human being’s special quality. Arendt explains:

> Especially interesting in this respect is Augustine (De chitate Dei xii. 21), who not only ignores Genesis 1:27 altogether but sees the difference between man and animal in that man was created *umtm ac singulum*, whereas all animals were ordered “to come into being several at once” (*plum simul iussit exsistere*). To Augustine, the creation story offers a welcome opportunity to stress the species character of animal life as distinguished from the singularity of human existence.

Human beings differ from animal since God created humans one by one, while animals are created several by several. Thus, to Augustine and Arendt, human beings possess singularity

---

78 Ibid., 112.

79 Ibid., 182.

80 Arendt, The Human Condition, 8. In the footnote of page 8, Arendt explains “*umtm ac singulum*” as one by one.
at the moment when they are created.

Second, even after one has been created, one still possesses singularity during the growing process. According to Arendt, “…individual entities may come and go, grow and perish in their singularity.” ⁸¹ Singularity is with human beings throughout their whole lives. Arendt says, “Since the creature is created into the world, he seeks himself as the sole source of his ‘being in the world,’ which is later than his own being.” ⁸² Since each person exists as the sole source of his/her ‘being in the world’, one is defined as an individual by his/her own, but not as part of another person. One decides for oneself. Also, as what Arendt argues, a person is a human being because he/she loves and desires. ⁸³ Such love and desire for things in this world have transformed human beings into worldly beings. ⁸⁴ However, as one loves and desires things outside oneself, “he is seen by Augustine in his isolation as separated from things as well as from persons.” ⁸⁵ In this situation when one is looking for things outside oneself to love and to desire, one is looking for a sense of belonging to things that one loves or desires. Since this sense of belonging can only be determined by oneself instead of by the things outside oneself, one is put into the situation of isolation. Some might argue that it is the things that one loves or desires determines oneself. However, if we take a second thought, the things that one loves or desires are, in the end, determined by oneself. Thus, the sense of belonging can only be determined by oneself. In this sense, one possesses singularity.

---

⁸¹ Arendt, Love and Saint Augustine, 62.

⁸² Ibid., 68.

⁸³ Ibid., 18.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.
Such singularity endows human beings with the possibility of growing into unique beings. This uniqueness “distinguishes every human being from every other” and has determined each person as “not only a stranger in the world but something that has never been here before.” Arendt argues that, “it is the very possibility of isolation that enables us to detach ourselves from human history and from its irrevocable enchainment by generation.” Singularity provides individuals with the possibility to detach oneself from the old and the past and to create a new world. Thus, one can act according to his/her own will based on one’s faith.

On the other side, human being is defined by plurality for two reasons. First, each human being is born into the world as a member of the human race, which by its nature has determined plurality. Arendt argues:

…what unites all people is not an accidental likeness (simultudo). Rather, their likeness is necessarily founded and historically fixed in their common descent from Adam and in a kinship beyond any mere likeness.

Arendt’s argument comes from Augustine who claims “the human race was instituted, as if rooted [tamquam radicaliter], in Adam.” Arendt then extends the concept of Adam to the human race and claims that human beings belong together because of the common historic descent. The concept of plurality can also be seen in her later work—The Human Condition. There she claims that plurality is the human condition for action, the only activity that

---

86 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 189.
87 Arendt, Love and Saint Augustine, 112.
88 Ibid., 100.
89 Cited in Arendt, Love and Saint Augustine, 100.
90 Arendt, Love and Saint Augustine, 95, 102.
happens among people with no intermediary.\textsuperscript{91} She further explains plurality by adding “men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world.”\textsuperscript{92} The plural “men” instead of “Man” shows that the basic nature of human beings is plurality.

Second, similar to singularity, one still possesses plurality after one is born into the world. Since one is born into the world and is therefore after the world, one by nature depends on the world.\textsuperscript{93} Based on Augustine, Arendt builds up the concept of “the world” in her doctoral dissertation—\textit{Love and Saint Augustine} written in 1929. There she quotes Augustine’s work, “For we call ‘world’ not only this fabric which God made, heaven and earth … but the inhabitants of the world are also called ‘the world,’ … Especially all lovers of the world are called the world.”\textsuperscript{94} Based on this argument, Arendt concludes that “the world” comprises an earthly world and the inhabitants of the world. Thus, “the world” refers not only to this earthly world where we live but also refer to human beings, the people whoever live in this earthly world. According to this premise, one depends on the world and so depends on the people who lived, live, or will live in this earthly world. In this sense, an interdependence among human race is embedded. In other words, human beings are related. Thus, human beings also possess plurality.

Some might find this argument that “the world” comprises an earthly world and the inhabitants of the world contradictory to the argument that “the world” is a public space that separates and relates human beings mentioned in the beginning of this section. Although

\textsuperscript{91} Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}, 7.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{93} Arendt, \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, 68.

\textsuperscript{94} Cited in Arendt, \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, 17.
these two arguments are different, I do not find them contradictory. Indeed, Arendt believes in these two arguments and explains them as a twofold approach to understand the concepts of the world.\footnote{Arendt, \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, 66. In footnote 80 in page 66, Arendt further explains the concepts of the world based on Heidegger’s work. She says, “Heidegger also distinguishes two Augustinian meanings of \textit{mundus}: on the one hand, it is \textit{ens creatum} (which in our context coincides with the divine fabric, heaven and earth), and on the other, it is the world conceived as the lovers of the world.” Heidegger only interprets the second concept of the world. However, in Arendt’s \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, she interprets both concepts of the world. She explains, “the aim of our interpretation is precisely to make this twofold approach understood.”} On one hand, “the world is the place where things happen,”\footnote{Arendt, \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, 65.} which in her later work—\textit{The Human Condition}, is further defined as a public space. Human beings are placed outside the world and so are not part of the world. On the other hand, the world consists of this earthly world and the people who live in it.\footnote{Arendt, \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, 66.} The world is the human world and so human beings are part of the world. The first concept of the world views the world as a space. However, when taking “time” into consideration, the world becomes the human world as the world is turned into a changeable human world due to things that are happening in the world. In this changing process, men are the ones who act in the events that are happening in the world. To conclude, “man makes the world and makes himself part of the world.”\footnote{Arendt, \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, 66.} Thus, the two distinctive concepts of the world are not contradictory. Instead, they serve as a twofold approach to understand “the world” from “the space and time” perspective. In this world, human beings are related. Thus, to restate, human beings possess plurality.

Plurality provides a possibility for people to act together, and so a possibility to create

\end{quote}

\footnote{Arendt, \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, 66. In page 66, Arendt quotes Augustine’s work again, “For the ‘world’ is the name given not only to this [A:03300] fabric which God made, heaven and earth; but the inhabitants of the world are also called the world … all lovers of the world are also called the ‘world.’” Based on this citation, Arendt concludes that “the world” consists of an earthly world and the inhabitants of the world.}
a new world together, which shows a new world for everyone instead of for one person or for some people. Arendt says that “This relatedness of human existence is actualized in imitation.” Therefore, human plurality is realized by people imitating another. One obvious example is that students learn by imitating their parents, their teachers, or others. Another example would be that, suppose a child is isolated from humans after he/she is born, it is hard to imagine that the kid will develop human skills such as speaking or thinking. From these two examples, we see that human plurality is a foundation for one’s growth, and imitation is a key factor for one’s growth.

Plurality also provides a possibility for people to share the same memory, which, in a broader sense, includes the human history and the past. According to Arendt, it is through memory that the past is recalled and “the good part of the past” will possibly be presented again. She says, “In this process of re-presenting, the past not only takes its place among other things present but is transformed into a future possibility.” Memory thus guards the past, undoes the past, and transcends both the past and present experience into a future possibility. Therefore, plurality unites human beings to work towards a future possibility of a new world. Without plurality, when the world “is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective,” the common world where we live will eventually end.

99 Ibid., 53.
100 Ibid., 55-56.
101 Ibid., 55.
102 Ibid., 47, 48.
103 Arendt, The Human Condition, 58.
To conclude, that one is born as a singular person, and as a member of the human race, has determined two seemingly contradictory human qualities—singularity and plurality. These two qualities provide a foundation for human beings to act based on their own wills, but also to act coordinately. It also builds up a foundation for human equality. Notice that the concept of equality by Arendt has changed throughout time. To Arendt at the year of 1929, equality is a contradictory concept towards distinction as she writes, “This equality is the predominant fact that wipes out all distinctions.”104 However, in *The Human Condition* which she finishes 29 years later, she claims that “Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction.”105 To her at the year of 1958, equality and distinction exist at the same time as the characters of human plurality. A contradiction thus appears in her ideas. However, notice that these ideas are developed at different times; it makes sense that Arendt has developed a new understanding of equality. She realizes that equality and distinction can both exist, and equality exists as a character of human plurality. Referring back to her doctoral dissertation, Arendt argues that, “This equality exists because, as Augustine writes, ‘the human race was instituted, as if rooted [*tamquam radicaliter*], in Adam.’”106 Thus, equality among all people exists because of the common descent from Adam (human race). We can see the emergence of an initial idea that equality is rooted in human plurality. On this basis, I extend Arendt’s idea and argue that equality is not only the character of human plurality but the character of human singularity as well. Both human singularity and plurality build up a foundation for human equality. On one


105 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 175.

side, since each person is a singular individual in this earthly world, singularity provides a foundation for each person to view other individuals as their equal counterparts. On the other side, equality is a comparison concept in the sense that we can never say one is equal; instead, we say one is equal to another. Thus, plurality provides a foundation for equality as equality exists among all people rather than in a singular being.

2.3 Arendtian Society

In Love and Saint Augustine, Arendt claims that “This earthly city is always a society as well, that is, a social organism defined by people’s living with and for each other and not just alongside each other.”\(^{107}\) Thus, in such a society, people live as singular individual units alongside each other, which is determined by human singularity. Meanwhile, people live with each other, which is determined by human plurality. In this living with each other lies the mutual dependence for the sake of life. This interdependence defines an Arendtian society in this earthly world. In the Arendtian society, human beings are basic units that possess both singularity and plurality. In this section, I claim that an Arendtian society is a space in which the private space of home and the public space of the world coexist. Both the private space and the public space are so important that none of them can be replaced. On one side, singularity provides human beings with the possibility of growing into unique individuals in the private space. On the other side, because of plurality, people live with each other in a public space. These two spaces together constitute an Arendtian society, where people live alongside each other, with each other, and for each other.

In an Arendtian society, people live for each other, which leads to human flourishing.

\(^{107}\) Ibid.
as people care about each other. In this care lies a common faith for a better future possibility, which is derived in a private space of home. As argued by Arendt, “The private realm of the household was the sphere where the necessities of life, of individual survival as well as of continuity of the species, were taken care of and guaranteed.”\footnote{Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}, 45.} Thus, an Arendtian society is constructed with the basic singular individual units and the connection among them as a plural whole. In this society, we live alongside each other as we are singular individuals; we live with each other as we possess plurality; we live for each other for human flourishing as we have faith in a better future possibility.

One thing worth clarifying is that an Arendtian society differs from the society in the contemporary perspective, or, a contemporary society. Arendt explains this distinction in detail in her later work--\textit{The Human Condition}. She says, “In the modern world, the social and the political realms are much less distinct. That politics is nothing but a function of society.”\footnote{Ibid., 33.} Nowadays, social space (society) has become merely the same as a political space.

According to Arendt, contemporary society is a “curiously hybrid realm.”\footnote{Ibid., 35.} She writes:

The emergence of society – the rise of housekeeping, its activities, problems, and organizational devices – from the shadowy interior of the household into the light of the public sphere, has not only blurred the old borderline between private and political, it has also changed almost beyond recognition the meaning of the two terms and their significance for the life of the individual and citizen.\footnote{Ibid., 38.}

Based on her argument, contemporary society is derived based on the family structure, the structure of a private space. It is then exposed in the public space, blurring the borderline
between private space and public space. Therefore, contemporary society is a strange middle stage between private space and public space. Such a contemporary society has the tendency to devour the private realm and to threaten humanity.\textsuperscript{112} She further explains:

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.\textsuperscript{113}

It the contemporary society, what existed before in the private space has been exposed in the public realm and has been endowed with a political character. This has resulted in issues such as human equality.

In an Arendtian society, everyone is equal by sharing the same fate—the situation of mortality. It is an equality that is derived directly from the fact of belonging to the human race. In this sense, teachers and students are equal, not because they have the same right to decide, but because they all belong to the human race and share the same fate.

However, one objection might be that living for each other in a society is difficult to realize as singularity and plurality are two contradictory concepts. While this is true, I argue that living for each other requires a certain extent of the sacrifice of singularity as one needs to step out from one’s own private space and work for the good for other people in a public zone. Such sacrifice is indeed grounded in a common faith in human. According to Arendt, “True fellowship rests on the fact of the common faith.”\textsuperscript{114} A society of believers is grounded in a specific possibility. While the fact of death limits one’s existence in the world and thus

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 45-46.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 46.

\textsuperscript{114} Arendt, \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, 98.
leads to “the impossibility of perfection in the present,”\textsuperscript{115} the fact of natality that one is born into the world brings possibilities of getting closer to perfection as one has the ability to act and to create something new. In fact, this possibility lies in a faith that is realized in love, which requires participation from each person.\textsuperscript{116} Therefore, living for each other in a society is possible because of faith and love in human.

\subsection*{2.4 Faith in Humanity}

Based on Augustine, Arendt argues that a society of believers is built based on a common faith, which “is understood as a last and most radical possibility of being human” as it requires the response from each person.\textsuperscript{117} This common faith brings a better future for human flourishing into possibility. As claimed by Arendt, “faith is tied to the factuality of history and to the past as such.”\textsuperscript{118} The concept of a possible “happy life” lies in memory, which guards and undoes the past, and transcends the past and present experience toward a future possibility.\textsuperscript{119} However, Arendt does not explain the common faith she mentions. What exactly is this common faith that brings a society for human flourishing possible? Borrowing Adams’ and Preston-Roedder’s definitions of faith, I claim that this common faith is a faith in humanity.

Adams claims that having a faith involves “believing something that a rational person

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 41.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 98-99.

\textsuperscript{117} Arendt, \textit{Love and Saint Augustine}, 98-99.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 99.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 47, 48.
might be seriously tempted to doubt, or even not to believe.”

His focus is moral faith which he refers to as “faith in the common good.” Based on this, I extend Arendt’s faith into a faith in the common good. One who has faith in the common good believes that “the good of different persons is not so irreconcilably competitive as to make it incoherent to have the good of all persons as an end.” Thus, pursuing human good is not a zero-sum game. Instead, it is “fundamentally for everyone and against no one.” With such faith, an Arendtian society for human flourishing becomes possible. However, another question comes, what is the faith in the common good? How does one maintain such faith? The answer lies in Preston-Roedder, who builds up the concept of faith in humanity and refers it as faith in human’s decency. I argue that the faith in the common good is the faith in humanity. Preston-Roedder defines faith in humanity as “a centrally important moral virtue,” which involves investment from the person who has faith in humanity. His definition serves as a more active and practical perspective to extend both Arendt’s and Adam’s concept of faith. Having faith in human decency involves risk, yet, it is the investment that people devote that reduces the potential of risk and makes a better future possible.

However, some might argue that having a common faith in humanity is difficult to maintain as it might be easier for one to do something bad rather than good in some situations. My response to that is based on Arendt’s argument that “faith is the individual’s approach to

122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
the question of his own being.”125 Having faith in people’s decency is rooted in having faith in oneself, which is guaranteed by human plurality. In this process, one questions oneself, and thus one understands oneself more. Although each human being is a singular individual, he/she belongs to humankind and thus is the same as the rest of the human individuals, no more and no less. Thus, a better understanding of oneself provides a better understanding of others. In this sense, one trusts others as one trusts oneself; one has faith in others as one has faith in oneself.

Some might also argue that having faith in humanity is risky as one might end up putting oneself or others at risks. While this is true, Preston-Roedder argues that one who has faith in humanity will “take these risks in a responsible way, limiting which risks she takes and how she takes them.”126 Having faith in people’s decency motivates people to “act rightly, helps one avoid treating them unjustly, and constitutes a morally important form of support for them.”127 However, while responsibility might lower or avoid the risks, one cannot avoid all the risks. One might experience some extent of sacrifice by taking the risks. In fact, this is the sacrifice of some extent of human singularity in hope of the realization of human plurality. It is rooted in love. Arendt claims that, “This new social life which is grounded in Christ, is defined by mutual love (diligere invicem) which replaces mutual dependence.”128 With mutual love, one forms a strong faith in humanity and is willing to take the risks. In the next section, I argue that this love is the love of the world from an Arendtian perspective.

125 Arendt, Love and Saint Augustine, 99.
127 Ibid., 665.
128 Arendt, Love and Saint Augustine, 108.
2.5 Love of the World

As mentioned above, Arendt concludes that “the world” comprises of an earthly world and the inhabitants of the world.\(^{129}\) Love of the world thus includes the love of this earthly world and the people living in it. Such love prevents the world from ruin and provides a possible future for human flourishing. In the chapter “The Crisis in Education” in *Between Past and Future*, Arendt applies this concept of love in the education realm. She concludes:

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it ... And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices...\(^{130}\)

Therefore, as a teacher, one should not only love this earthly world to save it from ruin but also love the children so they are not left alone. In the following part, I use Arendt’s understanding of love of neighbor to explain love of the inhabitants of the world. In Arendt’s *Love and Saint Augustine*, neighbor refers to every individual other than oneself. Since “the neighbor occupies a place beside my self,”\(^{131}\) the neighbor is at the same level as oneself and should be loved as oneself, no more and no less. Arendt claims “the reason one should love one’s neighbor is that the neighbor is fundamentally one’s equal and both share the same sinful past.”\(^{132}\) Thus, one loves others because one loves oneself, and one loves oneself because one loves others. According to Arendt, one is loved as well for “what is eternal in him,”\(^{133}\) that is, for what is possible in him. With the following two examples, I further

\(^{129}\) Ibid., 17, 66.

\(^{130}\) Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 196.

\(^{131}\) Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 42.

\(^{132}\) Ibid., 106.

\(^{133}\) Ibid., 96.
illustrate this argument.

In April 2000, a German family of four was stabbed to death by four burglars in China.\textsuperscript{134} It turned out that the burglars were unemployed farmers who had barely received any education. They committed a crime to accumulate money for a living. Finally, the four burglars were sentenced to death based on the law. However, the family’s other members believed that if the burglars had received a good education, they would have had jobs and would not do something bad. Thus, they appealed to the court not to kill the burglars as they believed that the death penalty would not help with the situation. While the four burglars were sentenced to death, the family forgave them and even established a nonprofit charity organization intending to provide funds for underprivileged children to attain an education. In this situation, the family showed the love of the world. They had strong faith in humanity.

Another example is based on a literature story—Frankenstein. In Frankenstein, the monster kills several people in the pursuit of revenge. Later he requests Frankenstein to create a female companion who he could share his life with and thus promises not to harm humans anymore. Frankenstein does not trust the monster. He says, “how can you, who long for the love and sympathy of man, persevere in this exile? You will return and again seek their kindness, and you will meet with their detestation; your evil passions will be renewed, and you will then have a companion to aid you in the task of destruction.”\textsuperscript{135} He does not believe that the monster could regain the goodness and is afraid that he would be creating another monster who would end up killing more people. Thus, Frankenstein decides not to


\textsuperscript{135} Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, \textit{Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus}, (Sweden: Wisehouse Classic, 2015), Chap. 17.
create a female companion for the monster. He abandons the monster and decides to destroy him. However, the monster explains himself:

Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a friend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.136

From his monologue, we can see the potential that the monster wants to become virtuous again, provided that Frankenstein would create a female companion for him. The risk is that two monsters might end up killing more people. Here, I argue that Frankenstein does not love the monster. If he would have loved the monster, he would have faith in him and would have never abandoned him. If Frankenstein and the monster would have loved each other, faith would have been created. They would have forgiven each other, which will eventually bring peace.

Based on these two examples, I argue that love of the world creates the strongest faith in humanity, by which a better world for human flourishing becomes possible.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued human beings’ two distinctive qualities—singularity and plurality. First, one is born as a singular person and so possesses singularity by its nature. Besides, one possesses singularity as one decides for oneself for what one loves and desires. Such singularity endows each person with the possibility of growing into unique individuals. Second, one is born as a member of the human race and so possesses plurality. What is more, by living in this world, human beings are related and so an interdependence among them is

136 Ibid., Chap. 10.
inherited. Such plurality provides a potential for human beings to live and to act together. In the education realm, since teachers and students are humans in this world, singularity and plurality can be applied to them and so in teacher-student relationship. Both teachers and students are singular beings. They have the rights to decide according to their own wills as unique beings. They also need to act together in the education realm as they are plural beings.

With the premise that human beings are both singular and plural persons, an Arendtian society is constructed with human beings as the basic units that possess both singularity and plurality. An Arendtian society is a space in which the private space of home and the public space of the world coexist. In the private space, each person has the opportunity to grow into a unique individual and to be introduced into this world. In the public space, people live together with each other. They have the right to act according to their own wills, but also to act together in relation to others. These two spaces together make up an Arendtian society, where people live alongside each other as we are singular individuals; people live with each other as we possess plurality; people live for each other for human flourishing as we have faith in a better future possibility. This faith I claim as faith in humanity. It includes faith in human’s possibilities and so involves potential risks. One who has faith in humanity is willing to take the risks, which comes from a deep love of the world. As “the world” consists of an earthly world and the inhabitants of the world, love of the world thus includes the love of this earthly world and the people living in it. It cares about the humans living in it, but also this earthly world where people live in.
Chapter 3: Authority and Responsibility

3.1 Introduction

Arendt claims, “the essence of education is natality, the fact that human beings are born into the world.”\textsuperscript{137} In Natasha Levinson’s paper—“The paradox of Natality: Teaching in the Midst of Belatedness,” Levinson applies the idea of “natality” and discusses teaching from three different perspectives—“Teaching to ‘Preserve Newness,’ Teaching in the Midst of Belatedness, Teaching in the ‘Gap Between Past and Future.’”\textsuperscript{138} There she concludes that the term “natality” from Arendt means the human capacity for renewal.\textsuperscript{139} In education, the task for teachers is to preserve natality and so the newness.\textsuperscript{140} Each individual comes into the world as a new and unique person. During this process, they need to be introduced into the world and about the world. As contemporary education mostly takes place in schools, teachers thus play an essential role in this process. I will illustrate my point based on the story of the wolf kid. The kid is abandoned in the forest and raised up by wolves. He is living his life as if he is a wolf. In this case, the kid was born into the world but not introduced to the world or about the world by humans. No one has played a role as an educator to provide any guidance or support. As a result, the kid knows nothing about this human world. From this example, we can tell the importance of educators in the kid’s growing process. However, the concept of natality is paradoxical. That human beings are introduced into the world involves

\textsuperscript{137} Arendt, \textit{Between Past and Future}, 174.


\textsuperscript{139} Levinson, “The paradox of Natality,” 13.

\textsuperscript{140} Arendt, \textit{Between Past and Future}, 193.
actions for creating something new and to develop into a unique person, however, it also relies on acting against the new as the world is the old world, and the new world is not yet to come. Thus, in the present where the old and the new, the past and the future meet, there is always a gap. This gap is where the paradox takes place. In this gap, teacher’s role is essential yet paradoxical.

School is a space where students come to be introduced into the world and about the world. However, as the students who are educated in the school space are “not-yet-human-beings,” school by its definition should differ from the public world. Based on the theoretical framework that I build up in chapter 2, I claim that schools should serve as both a private space and a public space where students as “not-yet-human-beings” become full human beings.

### 3.2 Private Space and Public Space at Schools

Arendt describes schools as distinctive institutions compared to home and the world. She writes:

Normally the child is first introduced to the world in school. Now school is by no means the world and must not pretend to be; it is rather the institution that we interpose between the private domain of home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world possible at all.142

School is a typical example of the education realm. From an Arendtian perspective, school is neither the home nor the world and so should be distinguished from them. It is a middle institution between two different spaces (the home and the world). In this space, teachers educate children so they have the chance to step out from the private domain of home and to

---


142 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 188-189.
possibly transit to the public world. Based on Arendt’s argument that the school is “the institution that we interpose between the private domain of home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world possible at all,”¹⁴³ Biesta concludes the school as “a kind of ‘halfway’ institution,”¹⁴⁴ as shown in Figure 1.

![Diagram of Private Domain of Home, Halfway Institution (School), and The World]

**Figure 1**

However, while both Arendt and Biesta provide a more detailed description of school as a halfway transition institution between the home and the world, the question is, what is this “halfway institution?” How do we define it? To answer this question, I will start from the relationship between teachers and students based on the theoretical framework built in chapter 2.

In the education realm, as teachers and students are humans in this world, human being’s two characters—singularity and plurality—can be applied in them and so in the teacher-student relationship. Since each person is born as a singular individual, one possesses the possibility of growing into unique individuals. Singularity provides individuals, including teachers and students, with the opportunities to act according to their own wills. In this sense, both teachers and students have a say in the process of education. However, as a member of the human race, one possesses plurality. This requires both teachers and students to act

¹⁴³ Ibid.

together for coming into the world and for the world. Thus, while they have the opportunities to act according to their wills, other persons and the world should be taken into consideration. In this sense, teachers should take care of students as they are growing individuals. Therefore, there should exist a space at school where students act like full human beings to decide for themselves. No one should deprive their chances of growing into unique individuals.

However, as students are growing individuals, there should exist another space at school where students are protected, guided, and directed to be ready for the public world. Thus, I conclude that school should include two different spaces—the private space and the public space.

On one side, the school should serve as a public space where both teachers and students’ twofold characters—singularity and plurality can be preserved. “A public space” is a space where “other persons” and “I” exist; where everyone can show themselves, to speak, to act, etc; and where everything happens in it can be seen and heard. In this space, since students are singular unique individuals, they have the right to decide the education process as it is related to their introduction into the world and personal development. As mentioned by Arendt, educators should not deprive student’s chance to undertake something new.

---

145 This is a conclusion drew from two resources—the English version and the Chinese version of Arendt’s work. The English version comes from Arendt’s work—The Human Condition, on page 50. There she writes: “everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity.” The Chinese version comes from the book—Arendt-Handbuch Leben-Werk-Wirkung 阿伦特手册：生平·著作·影响 edited by Heuer, Wolfgang, Bernd Heiter, and Stefanie Rosenmüller and translated by Xu Wang-Hehenberger and Ying Kou, (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press (China), 2015). The Chinese version comes from a translation from the German version. On page 526, it writes: “公共性是一个人们表现自己的空间, 是一个看见和被看见、竞争和攀比、一切演讲和相互说服、听和被听的空间，是一个由其他人在场的空间。只有在公共性中，简单的事件才能成为一种借助想象力进入别人监督思考的广阔思想.” The Chinese version translated from the German version is more detailed compared to the English version.

146 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 196.
a person born with singularity, one has the right to decide one’s own life, to create something new, and to take the corresponding responsibility. In the public space, teachers play the role of education facilitators or education consultants. They provide guidance and support for students.

In Chapter 2, I have explained “the world” as a public space from an Arendtian perspective. However, the public space is not always “the world.” Although the school should provide a public space, it should not be treated as “the world.” Arendt has warned us that, “school is by no means the world and must not pretend to be.”\(^\text{147}\) Thus, while school should serve as a public space, it should not be treated as only the public space. In fact, on the other side, school should also serve as a private space where students’ survival in this world is taken care of as students are not yet full human beings. According to Arendt, “the private realm of the household was the sphere where the necessities of life, of individual survival as well as continuity of species, were taken care of and guaranteed.”\(^\text{148}\) Based on her argument, I extend the concept of private realm from home to a more general private space where one’s necessities, survival, and continuity are taken care of. Since the importance of the family as a social institution has decreased over time,\(^\text{149}\) school in contemporary society has taken over some education responsibilities from the family. Therefore, it is reasonable to extend such a concept of private space from home to a broader field. Based on the extended concept, school should also be viewed as a private space.

In the private space, individuals are not full human beings yet, “but only as a

---

\(^{147}\) Ibid., 188.


\(^{149}\) Peters, *Authority, Responsibility and Education*, 37.
specimen of the animal species man-kind.” In this space, the “not-yet-human-beings” are taken care of so they can grow and develop into full human beings to live in this world. As students are developing individuals, they are “not-yet-human-beings.” In “The Crisis in Education” in *Between Past and Future*, Arendt describes children from a double aspect:

These newcomers, moreover, are not finished but in a state of becoming. Thus the child, the subject of education, has for the educator a double aspect: he is new in a world that is strange to him and he is in process of becoming, he is a new human being and he is a becoming human being... The child shares the state of becoming with all living things; in respect to life and its development, the child is a human being in process of becoming, just as a kitten is a cat in process of becoming.  

Since children are new and are becoming human beings, they are “not-yet-human-beings,” who should receive more help and support from the teachers. Thus, the school should serve as a private space where children are nurtured and educated to live in the world. In the private space in school, children make mistakes, learn from the mistakes, receive help from others, and develop. Here I quote Arendt again:

Insofar as the child is not yet acquainted with the world, he must be gradually introduced to it; insofar as he is new, care must be taken that this new thing comes to fruition in relation to the world as it is.

As children are developing individuals, they are in an unstable stage. This implies that education is dynamic. First, education takes place either in the private space or in the public space; second, movements from the private space to the public space or vice versa take place during the education process. Therefore, the private space and the public space at school are not disconnected. In fact, it is linked through a bridge, where the movements from one space to another take place. To conclude, I claim that school should serve as a private space and a

---


151 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 185.

152 Ibid., 189.
public space, which are connected through a bridge, as shown in Figure 2.

![Diagram of school space with private and public spaces connected by a bridge]

Figure 2

In the school space, sometimes students act as individuals who are “not-yet-human-beings.” Thus, education moves away from “the bridge” and takes place in “the private space” where students are taken care of and educated as “becoming human beings.” Sometimes they act as individuals who are fully human beings and so education move into “the public space” where students are treated as fully human beings. In these movements, action takes place and risks are involved.

3.3 To Educate is to Act

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt divides human activities into three categories: labor, work, and action. Labor refers to the activity that involves “the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor.”\(^{153}\) Labor creates a basic condition for human existence. Work refers to the activity unnatural of human existence, which “provides an ‘artificial’ world of things” for human beings and has a predictable end.\(^{154}\) While in terms of action, Arendt writes:

---


\(^{154}\) Ibid., 7, 143.
Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world.155

Action refers to the activity that takes place in a space with plurality. It is an activity that happens directly between human beings with no intermedium. Based on the three categories of human activities, I argue that education that takes place at school is an action instead of labor or work. Since labor only provides basic condition such as food for human existence, education is definitely more than that. While men only create an ‘artificial’ world of things through work, the process of education involves more than that as it provides guidance for the development of human beings as living creatures. Therefore, education is not either labor or work. Education is an action. It takes place between teachers and students. Some might claim that books are a means to educate. However, what matters is the action and speech that happens in between teachers and students. Education can also take place without books. Some might also question lesson planning and classroom management as forms of work or labor.156 However, as a teacher is planning lessons or managing the classrooms, he/she should never leave students out of the process. Students should always exist as the objects in the teacher’s mind and should be always taken into consideration in the lesson planning and classroom management. While planning lessons, a teacher should always think about questions such as, what have the students already known? How should I deliver the lesson in terms of the students’ situation? Do they want to know? While managing the

155 Ibid., 7.

156 I want to thank Dr. Anne Phelan for her comment: “I agree completely with this framing but I wonder if labour and work can be eliminated entirely from the education that occurs within the institutions we call schools. For example, would creating artifacts such as unit and lessons constitute work? Or, would classroom management constitute a form of teacher labour?” Her objections help to clarify the relation character of education as an action.
classrooms, the objects should be the students rather than the classroom. This process requires the participation of both teachers and students. A classroom without teachers and students in it is meaningless. Thus, without the anticipation of both teachers and students, classroom management becomes meaningless. To conclude, education is an action that happens between teachers and students. As action “always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries,” education establishes relationships between teachers and students and creates unlimited possibilities.

However, according to Arendt, while the action builds up relationships among human beings and creates unlimited possibilities, there also exist three difficulties—“the unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of the process, and the anonymity of its authors.” Since education is an action, these three difficulties also apply in the process of education. In terms of “the unpredictability of its outcome,” since each student is a singular and unique individual, there is no guarantee that what worked for one person will surely work for another person. Biesta reminds us that research related to educational techniques only shows what worked in the past instead of what will work or what works. Thus, it is unpredictable that the same educational technique will work. In terms of “the irreversibility of the process,” once education is started, such action leaves an impact on both the teachers and students. For instance, a teacher might use radish as an example to teach students how to

157 Ibid., 190.
158 Ibid., 220.
calculate the volume of irregular objects. Students who are taught this example will develop different levels of understanding of how to calculate the volume of irregular objects. Therefore, students can never go back to the previous stage when they have not yet been taught. Although students can unlearn things by changing or forgetting what they have learned, they differ from reversing the learning process which has already happened and has left “a mark” in students. By changing what they have learned, that what they have learned previously will not be eliminated. By forgetting what they have learned, the previous process of learning will not be eliminated. Thus, the process of an action can never be reversed, but can only be influenced by another action.

One of the main reasons that action is unpredictable is the impossibility of defining human beings. While human beings can recognize things “with ‘natural’ qualities, including ourselves to the limited extent that we are specimens of the most highly developed species of organic life,”161 it is impossible to define “who we are.” The attempts to define humans will easily result in a belief in “superhuman,”162 which in fact does not exist in this world. It might also lead to another belief that every individual is possible to become “a superhuman” and so every action becomes a means and “superhuman” becomes the aim. With such belief, humans will gradually become more of “a thing” rather than “human beings.” Thus, “Superhuman” becomes the aim of education and the education process becomes the means. In this case, it is easy to focus too much on the “aims” and ignore the process. Another reason is that, since action takes place in a space with plurality, it is also impossible to tell “the consequences of


162 Ibid.
an act within a community of equals where everybody has the same capacity to act.” Since the action is unpredictable, it involves risks.

One problem for the contemporary education is that, to lower the risks, some attempt to change “education” into “work” as work refers to activity with a predictable end. Arendt names people who do “work” as homo faber. Within the concept of work, homo faber view themselves as the masters of the world. While the work of homo faber consists in reification, they would even treat a living object as a thing or “an end product,” In this sense, work becomes the process of making and is determined only by means and end. Thus, if education falls into the category of work, teachers will view themselves as the masters in the space of school and treat students as “end products” or as things instead of human beings. Also, curriculum and pedagogy will then become a means to develop certain people. Education will lose its meaning and beauty. Therefore, it is important to recognize that education is an action and should be an action. It can never get rid of risks and it involves unpredictable outcomes but also unlimited possibilities.

Each action can lead to a reaction. Among different kind of reactions, the response is one of them. Although there is no way to erase the unpredictability part of an action, there is a remedy for it, which is to make and keep promises. The response from promises brings

---

163 Ibid., 244.
164 Ibid., 139.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid., 143.
167 Ibid., 190.
168 Ibid., 237.
human beings faith and hope. Promises save human beings from the darkness of unpredictability and provide faith and hope that a better future will be created. Therefore, while the act of education is unpredictable, teachers make and keep promises to students that education is for a better future for both the students and the world. I argue that teachers making and keeping promises take the form of assuming responsibility for students.

Responsibility is one of the key concepts in Arendt’s work. In “The Crisis in Education” she describes adults’ responsibility as a responsibility for the world, including the inhabitants living in this world. People who refuse to assume responsibility for the world are not allowed to educate children. In education specifically, teachers assume responsibility to introduce children into the world and about the world. Responsibility is the ability to act, or to respond. It requires teachers to take actions to introduce children and youth into the world while engaging them about the world. For example, a teacher is responsible to deliver a lecture, or a teacher is responsible to assign homework and provide feedback and assessment. A student is responsible to participate in the class, or a student is responsible to write the assignment. In “Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship,” Arendt discusses responsibility from a different perspective. There responsibility refers to the accountability one assumes for the outcome of an action. For example, if a teacher makes a mistake in a lecture while teaching, then the teacher is responsible for the mistake. If a student makes noises in the class and affects the other student’s study, then the student takes responsibility for the outcome of his misbehavior. It is the responsibility for the outcome of an action. To clarify, in this thesis, I only discuss the first category of responsibility, the

---

169 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 189.

170 Ibid.
responsibility to act, or to respond.

Education responsibility is a relational concept between teachers and students. According to Levinas, responsibility includes both the responsibility for the others and for oneself.\textsuperscript{171} Therefore, in this thesis, first, I discuss the responsibility from teachers to students as a responsibility for the others, which I define as a collective responsibility. Second, I discuss the responsibility from students to themselves as a responsibility for oneself, which I define as a personal responsibility.

### 3.4 Teacher’s Authority and Collective Responsibility

Teachers’ educational responsibility takes the form of authority.\textsuperscript{172} According to Arendt, although authority always demands obedience, authority is not power, violence, or force.\textsuperscript{173} Tracing back to the history, Arendt finds that the earliest two models where the concept of authority could be found are from Greece and Rome.\textsuperscript{174} Within Greek thinking, Plato’s *Republic* where he proposes the rule of *reason* and *truth* is probably the closest to the concept of authority.\textsuperscript{175} Authority can be derived from reason and truth. During the process of transformation from ideas (which are related to reason) to measures, the concept of expert enters the political realm for the first time, where expert knowledge and specialization are

---


\textsuperscript{172} Arendt, *Between past and future*, 189.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 92-93.

\textsuperscript{174} Arendt, *Between past and future*. This conclusion comes from the essay—“What Is Authority?” in *Between past and future*.

\textsuperscript{175} Arendt, *Between past and future*, 107.
considered as the source of authority.\textsuperscript{176} Although the authority that Arendt mentions here is a political authority, the concept of it can be applied in the education realm. In this context, teachers’ authority relies on teachers’ knowledge and expertise. This is exactly why Arendt criticizes the idea that in the crisis of education, it is not important anymore for teachers to know his/her own subject,\textsuperscript{177} or at least, it becomes less important. In this process, teachers lose their authority. Within Greek thinking, another attempt is from Aristotle where he builds up the concept of authority in terms of rulers and the ruled, which he derives from “nature,” by which he means the natural difference between the younger and the older ones.\textsuperscript{178} However, conflict exists in this definition as Aristotle claims elsewhere that the natural difference between the younger and the elder is valid only for the home space.\textsuperscript{179} Yet, he also applies this standard in the political realm, which causes a conflict.\textsuperscript{180} In this situation, the concept of \textit{maiores} (models) from the Romans might work better. To Romans, authority comes from “the sacredness of foundation, in the sense that once something has been founded

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 100, 111.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 182. In “The Crisis in Education,” Arendt criticizes that the second assumption closely related to the crisis in education has to do with teaching. In page 182, Arendt says: “[..] Moreover, it has resulted in recent decades in a most serious neglect of the training of teachers in their own subjects, especially in the public high schools. Since the teacher does not need to know his own subject, it not infrequently happens that he is just one hour ahead of his class in knowledge. This in turn means not only that the students are actually left to their own resources but that the most legitimate source of the teacher’s authority as the person who, turn it whatever way one will, still knows more and can do more than oneself is no longer effective. Thus, the non-authoritarian teacher, who would like to abstain from all methods of compulsion because he is able to rely on his own authority, can no longer exist.”

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 116.

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 118.

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
it remains binding for all future generations."  

In this context, the elders are endowed with authority, which is rooted in the tradition and the past. Arendt explains:

Those endowed with authority were the elders, the Senate or the patres, who had obtained it by descent and by transmission (tradition) from those who had laid the foundations for all things to come, the ancestors, whom the Romans therefore called the maiores. The authority of the living was always derivative, depending upon the auctores imperii Romani conditoresque, as Pliny puts in, upon the authority of the founders, who no longer were among the living. Authority, in contradistinction to power (potestas), had its roots in the past, but this past was no less present in the actual life of the city than the power and strength of the living. Moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque, in the words of Ennius.

Again, although this is a political authority, it does acquire an educational character within the Roman concept of maiores. In this sense, teachers become the elders, the models, while students become the youngers. This natural relationship between teachers and students as the elders/models and the youngers endows teachers with authority. Based on the analysis on the Greek and Roman thinking, it makes sense to conclude that Arendt’s concept of authority is heavily influenced by them, which provides two different origins (reason and model in short), on which the concept of authority is based.

While Arendt does not define authority in detail, I find that Peters’ work might provide a fundamental perspective to help with the understanding of Arendt’s concept of authority. In Authority, Responsibility and Education, Peters argues that with authority, one is entitled to introduce new changes, to give orders, and to decide. He analyzes Max Weber’s

181 Ibid., 120.
182 Ibid., 122.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid., 119.
185 Peters, Authority, Responsibility and Education, 14.
arguments and concludes that authority can be divided into three categories. The first one is a legal-rational authority set up based on legal rules. Peters provides a chairman of a Civil Service committee as an example for this category. The second one is a traditional authority set up based on tradition. A priest would be a good example of this type. The third one is a charismatic authority which comes from personal history, personal credentials, training, or personal achievements. Based on this definition, teachers’ authority falls into the third category. For instance, as teachers received proper teacher education, they show more insights about how to educate students. In this sense, teachers are entitled with the authority to decide for their students in the education process. What is worth noticing is that authority should be distinguished from force or power. When one with authority introduces new changes or gives orders, people are willing instead of being forced to follow the changes or the orders. With that said, one with authority does not have the power to enforce the changes or the orders. Authority is not the power itself, but it legitimates power.\(^\text{186}\)

However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the equalization between teachers and students in the political sense has resulted in a crisis in education, during which teachers gradually lose their authority. Here I’m not trying to argue that the equalization between teachers and students should be dismissed. What I want to convey is that, while a political equalization has provided so much positive impact on life, we should not ignore the negative side that it brings to life, which, in education, is the sacrifice of teacher’s authority. Peters has noticed that since the early 1970s, pupil power has become a newsworthy topic, thanks to which people paid more attention to students’ rights in education. The whole society has changed from a

\(^\text{186}\) Ibid., 161.
paternal society to a fatherless society or a brotherly society.\textsuperscript{187} With such influence, we seem to also experience the passing of paternalism in educational institutions.\textsuperscript{188} People end up taking more responsibility for their own lives.\textsuperscript{189} Corresponding to these changes, people take less responsibility or refuse to take responsibility for other people. Arendt criticizes that adults including teachers refuse to assume responsibility for children’s lives.\textsuperscript{190} As an example provided by Arendt, parents might say to their kids, “‘…You must try to make out as best you can; in any case you are not entitled to call us to account. We are innocent, we wash our hands of you.’”\textsuperscript{191} Under the claim of respecting children’s independence, “the fact that the child is a developing human being, that childhood is a temporary stage, a preparation for adulthood” is ignored.\textsuperscript{192} As a result, the natural relationship between teachers and students is broken, and students are abandoned for coming into the world.\textsuperscript{193} Therefore, teachers’ authority should be rebuilt.

Some might still question, what if the teacher (the authority) is wrong? Even if we acknowledge the authority, there is no guarantee that the authority will be correct. Under this circumstance, how can I acknowledge the authority? While I argue that education cannot work without authority and teachers’ authority should be rebuilt, I have to admit that there is no answer to this question. The authority can also be wrong. As Peters points it out, authority

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{187} Peters, \textit{Authority, Responsibility and Education}, 22.
  \item \textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 44.
  \item \textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{190} Arendt, \textit{Between Past and Future}, 181, 191.
  \item \textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 191.
  \item \textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 184.
  \item \textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
is not always correct and sometimes can even be rejected. However, we need not conclude that teachers should not have the authority. Indeed, teachers should have the authority and we have to acknowledge that risk always exists in education. Either to educate or to be educated, both involve taking the risk. Such a risk can never be avoided, yet, it is this risk that leads to many unpredictable possibilities, which is exactly the beauty of life. Imagine that everything is predictable, every action is linked to a specific outcome, and everyone can see exactly his/her future, we might then question, are we still human beings? Or are we just robots living in this predictable world? Although risk exists and not everything is predictable, we need not be too pessimistic about this. While we cannot eliminate the risk, we can always try to lower the risk. I argue that promise and faith save us from the sense of insecurity and uncertainty. In the following part, I claim that teachers’ promises to students take the form of responsibility for students. Later in the last chapter, I will discuss students’ faith in teachers.

Authority relies on education responsibility. Teachers are entitled to educational authority only when they acknowledge and take responsibility for their students’ coming into the world. Educational responsibility and educational authority are two inseparable concepts. It is impossible for a teacher to have authority yet not take responsibility; it is also impossible for a teacher to take responsibility yet not have authority. For instance, imagine a classroom with some students talking loudly and not showing respect to other students, if a teacher refuses to take the responsibility to create a safe and welcoming environment for every student in the classroom and insists that it is only the student’s responsibility to do so, then it is hard to say that the teacher will have educational authority among his/her students. Also, sometimes teachers take the responsibility to decide what to teach, how to teach, and which

---

194 Ibid., 189.
aims to pursue. Students accept the “knowledge” and how it is taught. Here, teachers should have authority. If not, students may become suspicious about both the “knowledge” and the way it is conveyed and might decide to reject both (not because the teacher is wrong, but because the student does not believe the teacher), which leaves no room for teachers to take their responsibility. Thus, teachers’ educational responsibility is a reciprocal concept that exists within the relationship between teachers and students, which is rooted in the form of authority. It is a collective responsibility for it relies on the fact that students acknowledge the teacher’s authority. It is collective in the sense that it involves both teachers and students. Students need to “yield” to teachers’ authority so that teachers can take responsibility for their students.

In “The Crisis in Education” in Between Past and Future, Arendt discusses the relationship among education, love, and responsibility. She writes:

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.  

The process of education is unpredictable and so involves risks. It requires teachers to love the world and children to assume responsibility for both of them. Teachers are the representatives of all adults with the responsibility of introducing children into the world and showing them the details of the world. In Biesta’s work—Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future, he concludes that the role of educators “has to be understood

---

195 Ibid., 196.

196 Ibid., 189.
in terms of a responsibility for the ‘coming into the world’ of unique, singular beings, and a responsibility for the world as a world of plurality and difference.”

Thus, teachers take collective responsibility to create a safe educational environment for students who are “not-yet-human-beings” to grow into full human beings and to come into the world.

Some might worry about students’ freedom of developing their singularity and uniqueness since teachers have the rights to decide for students and tell them what they should do or what they should not do. To address this concern, Peters has clarified that “the teacher has to learn to be in authority and to be an authority without being authoritarian.”

Thus, even teachers in authority should exercise authority reasonably and take students’ needs into consideration. While this is not enough, Arendt also clarifies that teachers should love their students. To add to this, I claim that teachers should have faith in their students. Together, these faith and love lower the risk involved in education, prevent the authority from becoming authoritarian, and make education possible.

### 3.5 Student’s Personal Responsibility

Although students are “not-yet-human-beings,” they are human beings equal to other human beings including teachers. They have the right to decide on their own lives and preserve their singularity. Therefore, as singular individuals, students should have the opportunities to make their own decisions and take responsibility to act in the education realm. Teachers only act as facilitators or consultants to provide guidance and suggestions, but do not take over the responsibility and make decisions for them or force them to do

---


something. I claim that the responsibility students take to act in the education realm is a personal responsibility.

When students take personal responsibility, they are treated as full human beings. They share a political equalization with teachers. Therefore, a different standard should be applied in terms of the relationship between teachers and students. In being introduced into the world and about the world, students are encouraged to take responsibility for the education process. They are encouraged to participate in the education decision-making process and take responsibility to initiate. They have the chance to create something new for themselves and for this world into which they are introduced. They decide what they want to learn, when they want to learn, and how they want to learn. There is nothing much that teachers can do but to provide guidance and supports.

Notice that Arendt discusses personal responsibility in “Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship” in her book—*Responsibility and Judgment*. She argues that “where all are guilty, no one is.” Responsibility for guilt is, therefore, a personal responsibility. It only makes sense when it applies to individuals. In both cases when one feels guilty without having done anything wrong or when one does not feel guilty if one has done something wrong, Arendt clarifies that they are both wrong. However, to clarify, as mentioned in the end of Section 3.3, the responsibility for one’s guilt refers to the accountability for the outcome of one’s action and so is outside the range of the responsibility that I address in my thesis, which refers to the responsibility to act, or to response. Although, I argue that the personal concept of the responsibility for one’s guilt can be applied in the responsibility that

---

students assume to act in the education process. Students should recognize that they always have the responsibility to act in the education process for their own lives and for this world. For instance, when a high school student applies for universities, he/she should realize that it is his/her personal responsibility to decide where to study and what to study. Teachers might be responsible to provide guidance and support; however, teachers are not responsible to decide for the student and cannot force the student to do something that he/she does not want to do. Therefore, this responsibility that students assume for education is a personal responsibility.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I claim that school should serve as both the private space and the public space in the process when students are introduced into the world and about the world. A bridge connects the private space and the public space. In the private space, as students are “not-yet-human-beings,” their necessities, survival, and continuity are taken care of so they can grow into full human beings. In this journey, teachers hold students’ hands and lead them forward in this world, where everything is new to them, and where they are going to create something new into it. In the public space, teachers and students get to show themselves, to speak and to act. Their singularity and plurality are preserved. Especially for students, their newness and uniqueness as their ability to create something new are not deprived. In this journey, teachers release students’ hands, and they have opportunities to explore on their own.

To educate is to act. It involves risk and requires responsibility from both teachers and students to take actions and to respond. As students are “becoming human beings,” the word “becoming” in the present tense shows that the child will not stay in one space; instead,
he/she is moving in between in the education process, which is dynamic and full of challenges. In this chapter, on one side, I claim that teachers take collective responsibility to act in education. It is collective since it relies on teachers’ authority among students. Teachers can take responsibility to act only when they are entitled to authority. In return, education authority is possible only when teachers promise to take responsibility for students. Thus, authority and responsibility are two reciprocal concepts, which has determined that teacher’s responsibility is a collective responsibility. On the other side, students take personal responsibility to act for their lives since they also exist as singular individuals in this world.

The teacher-student relationship has determined that teachers always need to assume collective responsibility for students and students always need to assume personal responsibility for themselves. It is worth clarifying that, in the private space, teachers mostly assume a collective responsibility to act in the education process. As students’ necessities and their survivals require extra attention, many times they need teachers to decide for them and even force them to do something that they do not want to do. However, this does not mean that teachers do not take collective responsibility in the public space. In fact, they do. The difference is that teachers assume more collective responsibility in the private space than in the public space. As the education process proceeds and students are introduced into the world and about the world more and more, I argue that teachers assume less and less collective responsibility for students. In the public space, students mostly assume personal responsibility to decide the education process for themselves. Students are acknowledged as singular individuals who possess the rights to decide what they want and how they want to live their lives. They should not be forced to do something just because the teachers tell them to do so. However, it does not mean that students do not take personal responsibility in the
private space. In fact, they do. They are human beings born into the world as singular individuals; they are new; they are hopeful; and they are full of possibilities. These characters endow students with the rights to decide. I would argue that students take more and more personal responsibility as they grow to know more and more about the world and about themselves.

As mentioned in this chapter, education involves risk that can never be eliminated. Although it sounds pessimistic, I claim that there are always ways to lower the risk, which lie in love, faith, and promise. In the last chapter, I explain how teachers’ love and faith in students and students’ faith in teachers can lower the risks in education, and how promise plays an important role in between.
Chapter 4: The Now and the Future

4.1 Introduction

When I present my ideas to other people, I always receive a question—when you talk about the relationship between teachers and students, which age group does your research address? I have to admit that I did not spend too much time thinking about this question. At that moment when people asked me the question, I told them that my research focused on pre-college students and addressed the teacher-student relationship in the K-12 education system. The reason is that in Arendt’s work—“The Crisis in Education” in Between Past and Future, the student group she mentions refers to the children group. However, based on the discussion about the teacher-student relationship from the previous chapters, and after I re-think this question, it makes more sense to me to extend the discussion from K-12 education to a more general sense of education, which includes both K-12 education and beyond that. I believe that throughout the whole education process, both teachers and students need to take responsibility. The difference is to what extent do they need to take the responsibility. Thus, in what follows, I extend the scope of students from pre-college students to school students from different age groups.

As the education process proceeds and students are growing and developing, teachers take less and less collective responsibility while students take more and more personal responsibility. For instance, in kindergarten, teachers usually take the leading role and assume more responsibility as the children are almost new to the world. They require more “hands-on” guidance to introduce them into the world and about the world. While at university, students usually have a major role in the education process in terms of which courses they want to take and what learning process to follow, etc. They have known much
more about the world. At this stage, what they need are more opportunities for them to
discover more about the world from their perspective and to explore more possibilities. As a
result, students end up taking more personal responsibility.

In kindergarten, although teachers usually take the leading role and assume more
responsibility, it would be wrong to say that education should only be teacher-centered in the
early stage of children’s growth. After all, it is the children’s growth and they should also
have a say in it. Similarly, in the university, although students usually take the major role and
assume more personal responsibility, it would be wrong to say that education should only be
student-centered. Teachers always have the responsibility to provide guide and support, and
even point out the path for the students as students come to school to learn from the teachers.
This is determined by the nature of the teacher-student relationship. As opposed to
teacher/student centralization, in this chapter, I propose decentralization in education. It is
difficult to promote decentralization in education as it requires the participation from both
teachers and students. However, I argue that, by students’ faith in teachers and teachers’ faith
in and love for students, decentralization in education becomes and possible, and so
education becomes possible.

4.2 From Teacher/Student Centralization to Decentralization

In the previous chapter, I claim that schools should serve as both the private space and
the public space where students are introduced into the world and about the world. As “not-yet-human-beings,” students’ necessities, survival, and continuity are taken care of in the
private space. There they have the opportunities to be protected, to be introduced about this
world, and to be told what they should do or what they should not do. They make mistakes,
learn from mistakes and receive help from others. They acknowledge the teacher’s authority and sometimes the teacher lets them decide for themselves. While in the public space, student’s newness and uniqueness as their ability to create something new are maximized. They do not have to always follow the instructions from the teachers. Instead, most of the time, they decide for themselves in the education process. Based on the arguments I develop in the previous chapter, in this section, I explain the reason that only teacher-centered education or student-centered education will not work in the long term.

Teacher-centered education or teacher centralization is obviously not a new concept or a new topic. As children’s rights or student voice have gained more scholarly attention and even popular appeal, teacher-centered education, has been associated with descriptors such as authoritarian, dogmatic, undemocratic, inconsiderate, and uncaring. Most times, students do not welcome teachers who exercise teacher-centered education. For instance, a teacher might decide to teach in the way that he/she desires without taking students’ needs into consideration and without getting students involved in participating in the class. In this kind of classroom, it usually appears that the teacher is the only one in charge of the class, while students are only there to listen to the teacher passively with no initiation. Teachers in this situation might not enjoy the teaching process as they take too much responsibility on themselves, and students might not enjoy the learning process as their needs and presence are ignored. Less or even no interaction between teachers and students might lead to a result that students feel less than human beings as they are treated as “things” rather human beings.

However, teacher-centered education is not always negative. It does not always bring negative effects. When students are confused about where and how to move forward in their lives, a teacher’s firm and decisive demands might serve as a guiding light that directs the
students out of the darkness. From time to time, we might have heard people saying “thanks to my teacher who forced me to study mathematics; if not, I wouldn’t discover its beauty!” “Thanks to my teacher who applied to the art competition on my behalf, I got to participate in the competition and won an award. If not, I would never have had the courage to challenge myself.” “My homeroom teacher used to set up so many rules for the class, which were so annoying back then. But now that I look back, I realized that it was necessary and my classmates ended up behaving better.” In the first case, the teacher forces the student to study mathematics even though the student does not want to. However, it turns out that the student discovers the beauty of mathematics which he/she would not have discovered since he/she does not even want to try it. In the second case, the teacher decides for the student to push him/her to take part in a competition. Some might argue that the teacher is wrong as the application is against the student’s will at that moment. The teacher does not respect the student. However, what some people do not see, or even the student himself/herself does not realize, is that he/she is not brave enough to submit the application. The student needs the teacher to push him/her a bit and decides for him/her. In the third case, some might claim that the teacher is dogmatic that he/she enforces so many rules in class without a democratic discussion with the students. However, what one does not see is that there might be some misbehaving students in the classroom that rules need to be enforced to create a safe and effective educational environment for both teachers and students. With that said, teacher centralization has its own advantages and disadvantages.

Student-centered education or student centralization, as has been discussed in Chapter 1, has become a common and important value widely researched and applied. Different from teacher-centered education, student-centered education is always associated with positive
feedback. Much research has shown that student-centered education has a positive impact on student engagement and student’s personal development. It has also improved the relationship between teachers and students. For instance, if more course choices are provided to students, and students can decide which courses they want to take based on their interests, then students will probably engage more in the learning process and might achieve a better outcome. In this case, the relationship between teachers and students will be more harmonic and encouraging. Imagine that a student is forced to take a course that he/she does not like, it is less likely that he/she will put all the effort into the learning process.

With that said, since students are “not-yet-human-beings” who are not yet capable to make every decision, student-centered education can be questionable and ineffective for some situations. In chapter 1, according to Arendt, I have argued that student-centered education has created a crisis in education since teachers gradually lose their authority and students are left alone to their own devices even though they are not yet capable of it. Therefore, student centralization also has its own negative sides.

Then the question is, how should teachers educate students? What should education be? On one side, teachers who only teach with teacher centralization are the ones who ignore the existence of public space in the education realm and view school only as a private space. Students are treated as things rather than human beings. They do not have the chance to make their own decisions, which makes it hard for them to preserve their uniqueness. As a result, there appears no space for students to take personal responsibility. On the other side, teachers who only believe in student centralization do not recognize that private space also exists in schools. They refuse to take the responsibility to introduce the students into this world and to point out any direction for them. As a result, students are abandoned from this world and
might get lost when they try to find a way for themselves. To conclude, teacher centralization and student centralization do not work because they reject personal responsibility and collective responsibility, respectively. Throughout the education process which involves the interactions between teachers and students, teachers always take collective responsibility, while students always take personal responsibility. When teachers take collective responsibility, they always take students into consideration and they are always ready to leave spaces for students to take personal responsibility. Therefore, teachers have the authority, yet they are not authoritarian. When students take personal responsibility, they always respect teachers’ authority and understand that sometimes teachers are responsible to decide for them. Therefore, students have the right to decide for themselves, yet they are not entitled to do whatever they want. In the interactions between teachers and students, we can see that a center does not exist. Teachers are not the centers as students are taken into consideration; at the same time, students are not the centers as teachers have the authority. Therefore, to conclude, I propose decentralization in education as opposed to teacher/student centralization.

In what follows, I present two examples to explain decentralization in education.

Two years ago (2017) when I entered The University of British Columbia (UBC) as a master student in the Faculty of Education, out of interest and curiosity, I registered a workshop—Teaching in a Blended Learning Environment (T-BLE). There I had the chance to learn a new instructional method. Now that I look back, I realize that T-BLE serves as a good example of my proposal for decentralization in teacher-student relationship. In Bath and Bourke’s boo—*Getting Started With Blended Learning*, they define blended learning by quoting Krause’s work:

> Blended learning is realized in teaching and learning environments where there is an effective integration of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of
learning as a result of adopting a strategic and systematic approach to the use of technology combined with the best features of face to face interaction. (Krause, 2007)²⁰⁰

Krause’s definition of blended learning focuses on both teaching and learning as its key approaches, which show an equal emphasis on both teachers’ and students’ perspectives. The “different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning” including both the online education platform and face-to-face classrooms show that blended learning uses a large variety of educational approaches, which can address both teachers’ and students’ needs to a greater extent. In the T-BLE workshop, I redesigned the AP Calculus course using the blended learning method. For each segment of content in the course, I always compared whether it was better to teach with a teacher-centered method or a student-centered method. In either method, I tried to figure out a better education approach for a better teaching and learning experience. By following these processes, the way I would teach this course ends up being a combination of different education strategies that are either teacher-centered or student-centered. When designing the course using a blended learning approach, I always think about the education process from both the teacher’s and student’s perspectives, with the aim of providing a better education experience for both teachers and students. Thus, a center does not exist in the education process, which, I argue, is a decentralization in education.

Another example is based on Arendt’s education style. Arendt teaches political philosophy at the New School for Social Research. Based on Arendt’s students Stern and Yarbrough’s description of her teaching style, she remains as a thoughtful teacher even though she seems to violate the common rules for effective teaching. They write:

²⁰⁰ Cited in Debra Bath, and John Bourke, Getting started with blended learning, (Griffith Institute for Higher Education, 2010), 1.
She made no attempt to attract students through polemics or flattery, and she did not try to entertain them. In fact, the format of her lectures probably sounds quite dull: for the first hour or so she would read from a fully written set of notes; then, for the remaining forty minutes, she would answer questions.\textsuperscript{201}

Arendt’s class is divided into two parts—the first part reading the lecture notes, and second part question-and-answer session. It seems that the lecture is exercised with a teacher-centered teaching approach with no special pedagogical technique. However, this is not true and Arendt remains as a thoughtful teacher, from whom students have learned widely and deeply in the area that she addresses. Arendt’s lectures are brilliant, original, and yet could be complicated and difficult to follow. As such, a prepared lecture note to read in the class might be more appropriate in terms of the complexity and difficulty of the content. Despite her “old-fashion” teaching style, her class is always full of students, or more than that. One can easily tell that Arendt has the educational authority. However, while she seems to be dominant in the lecture, she is always encouraging to her students, and creates conditions for open dialogue. In the lecture, 40\% of the time is always dedicated to the question-and-answer session, which encourages students’ participation in the class. She also makes her lecture notes available after class so that students can always go back to the lecture notes to reread and to take notes. From here, one can tell that Arendt does not put herself in the center position even though she has the educational authority. Instead, she takes students into consideration and thinks from their perspectives. Thus, in no way does Arendt apply the teacher-centered education method. Instead, she exercises decentralization in education. She is also accessible for discussions. She cares about the students and asks them about their lives. She is encouraging and willing to give compliments. She is a thoughtful teacher, and she is a

\textsuperscript{201} Peter Stern and Jean Yarbrough, “TEACHING: Hannah Arendt,” 371.
thoughtful person.

As I propose decentralization in education, it might turn the teacher-student relationship into a friendship.\textsuperscript{202} Here I want to emphasize that the teacher-student relationship is not a friendship and should not be a friendship. A friendship is an equal relationship between two human beings, which includes characteristics such as trust, care and love towards each other. However, first, as I have mentioned in chapter 1, political equalization between teachers and students is questionable. In fact, teachers and students are not politically equal as education involves the process of students being taught what they do not want or they do not know if they want it or not.\textsuperscript{203} This political inequality has decided that the teacher-student relationship is not a friendship. Second, I have argued that teachers should have educational authority. This has also determined that the teacher-student relationship is not a friendship as individual’s authority should never be involved in a friendship. For instance, it would be weird and wrong to say that my friend has the authority in our friendship. Third, the love and faith involved in a friendship are reciprocal, while love is not reciprocal in the teacher-student relationship. This third reason has again distinguished the teacher-student relationship from the friendship. I claim that teachers should have love for and faith in their students and students should have faith in their teachers. I believe that students need not have love for their teachers. It is possible that a student does not love the teacher, yet still holds the faith in the teacher and respect the teacher’s authority. Love in

\textsuperscript{202} I want to thank Dr. Anne Phelan for her question related to friendship in my thesis defense. She asked me if the teacher-student relationship is a friendship or not. By answering her question, my arguments on the teacher-student relationship became clearer. By comparing the teacher-student relationship with friendship, the political inequality, teacher’s authority, and the one-way love from teachers to students have been clarified again.

\textsuperscript{203} Stolz and Biesta, “Gert Biesta on thinking philosophically about education; thinking educationally about philosophy in education and educational research,” 63-64.
education is not reciprocal. The reason lies in responsibility. Students need not have love for their teachers because they need not take responsibility for their teachers, while teachers need to have love for their students because they need to take responsibility for their students. This love from teachers to students is embedded in teachers’ educational responsibility.

4.3 Faith and Love

Teachers’ collective responsibility is a relational concept between teachers and students. Responsibility takes the form of authority, while authority relies on responsibility. However, the authority can also be wrong. Unpredictability and risks are always embedded in the education process including to educate or to be educated. Biesta argues that “education ought to be risky” as “without the risk, education itself disappears.”

Although we cannot eliminate the risks, I have argued that promise and faith can lower the risks to some extent. First, teachers’ authority relies on students’ faith in teachers. Students believe that teachers teach for preparing them for living in a world new to them, and to prepare them for creating a better world. Second, teachers’ promises to students take the form of responsibility, which is rooted in teachers’ faith in and love of students.

However, having faith in and love for people is not easy. Arendt has warned us about the loss of “common sense” in the current world. “Common sense” is a shared feeling people have towards a single world. It is “not the rational being’s possession of self-evident and

---

204 Biesta, The Beautiful Risk of Education, 140, 146.

205 Dong Liu and Gang Peng, ed., 过去与未来之间, translated by Yinlin Wang and Lili Zhang, (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2017), 167. In the footnote, the translators explain the reason that they translate “common sense” into “共同感”, which includes Arendt’s definition of common sense. They write: “阿伦特把’常识’ (common sense) 一词解释为人们对一个共同世界的共有感觉，共同世界消失了，常识也就丧失了，因此译作’共同感’更恰当.”
natural truths but an active and complex sharing of a necessarily partial view of the world.”

As human beings, we usually possess five different senses—seeing, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. However, by only relying on these five senses, it is not enough for us to live in a world with singularity and plurality. As claimed by Brightman, “logic” cannot guide us through the world. It is common sense, which is “the control instance for the possible errors of the five other senses,” that makes living in a world with singularity and plurality possible.

Common sense is the sixth sense. This sixth sense requires one to engage “oneself” with “others” and to sense things from one’s perspective and from others’ perspectives.

In fact, faith and love for oneself and for others do not come from the five senses or from the logic; instead, faith and love come from common sense. One decides to have faith or love in someone not because one sees/hears/smells/tastes/touches something, but because one has a common sense in this world that we are born as equal human beings; we belong to the human race, and we have faith in humanity. Common sense provides support for one’s faith and love towards the other.

The gradual loss of common sense constituted a crisis in the 1950s, as warned by Arendt. I believe that losing common sense also comprises a crisis in the present day, including a crisis in the teacher-student relationship, which leads to the loss of faith and love between teachers and students. For instance, the switch from teacher-centered education to

---


208 Ibid.

209 Ibid.
student-centered education shows a loss/decrease of faith in teachers in terms of education for better development of the students. The concept of love has also been threatened by the development of self-centered awareness and individualism. Therefore, I re-claim students’ faith in teachers and teachers’ faith in and love of students, as it is only by such means that education becomes possible.

In chapter 2, I have argued that a common faith is a faith in the common good among all human beings. In terms of teacher-student relationship, it refers to a faith from the students to the teachers that teachers educate to help the students become full human beings. When students believe/have faith in their teachers and follow their instructions in the education process, teachers are then entitled to authority and can take responsibility for the education process. I will provide two examples to illustrate my argument. For instance, a student interested in computer science might refuse to take mathematics as the student does not see the practical use of this subject. However, a teacher with academic experience sees the importance of mathematics in computer science and so will persuade the student to take mathematics. Another example is that a student might refuse to take more mathematics as it is known to be a difficult subject. However, a teacher might insist that the student should keep taking mathematics as the teacher sees the weakness of the student’s personality that the student is not brave enough to take any challenges and so might give up when encountering difficulties. In these two cases, the student should believe that the teacher is helping with his/her personal development and is providing the right instruction and so should follow it. If the student chooses not to have faith in the teacher, then the teacher will not have the authority. Therefore, even though the teacher suggests the student take mathematics, the student will not take it and there is no way that the teacher can take responsibility in the
education process.

From the teachers’ perspective, the common faith is a faith in students that students are learning to become fully human beings. I used to have a student who behaved badly in class. Sometimes he kept talking in class and interrupting classroom activities. Based on his misbehaviors, I could have judged that student as a bad student, which might have a negative influence on the student’s future opportunities. For instance, if I were to pick up team leaders for group projects, I will probably not choose that student as I judge him as a bad student. However, I decided not to judge the student at that moment; instead, I took the risk to believe that he would behave rightly (given some encouragement from others and his own efforts). I looked for evidence to support my belief and thus became more sensitive to potential evidence. By observing my student, I found that he would greet his teachers every time when he met them; he would help collect homework for his teachers; sometimes he volunteered to stay after class to clean the classroom; he also appreciated my effort for trying to help him. All this evidence suggested a different perspective of the student. Based on this evidence, I started to look for reasons that the student behaved badly in class. In fact, one of the student’s experiences resulted in his abnormal behavior in the classroom to a great extent. I talked more with the student about his situation and showed more concern about his issue. I have faith in my student that he would eventually become a better person. Thus, I positively provide supports for his personal development.

The concept of faith in common good lies in faith in humanity. One who has faith in others believes in that person even though he/she might be seriously doubted by a rational person. One reason that teachers gradually lose their authority is student’s loss of faith in teachers’ humanity. Specifically, the reason that a student does not acknowledge the teacher’s
authority might be that the student does not believe that the teacher is professional and is working towards students’ good. Therefore, for education to become possible, students should have faith in their teachers even though the teachers could be wrong. Also, from the teacher’s perspective, a teacher should have faith in students even when there seems to be no hope for the students to improve. In this sense, faith is irrational. However, it is this irrationality that stimulates many possibilities which seem to be impossible. These possibilities do not come from nowhere. They require investment and effort from the people who have faith. In the experience just recounted, I had faith in my students. Even though he kept interrupting classes and other teachers were complaining about it, I believed that the misbehaving student would eventually change his behavior. I observed my student both in and outside classrooms. I talked to him and showed my concern and care. I provided support as much as I could. These were my investment and the effort that I spent in that student. I have to say that even towards the end of the last senior high school year, the student still misbehaved from time to time. I do not argue that my faith in my student finally turned my student into a well-behaved student. In fact, it did not. The student did appreciate my effort spent on him. However, he kept misbehaving from time to time. What I want to argue is that even the student did not turn better at that timeframe, it might work at some moment as it is normal that the education effect might have a delay in showing up or even do not show up. What is positive is that having faith in students increases the possibility for the students to become full human beings. Imagine that I did not have faith in my student. I would have also blamed my student for misbehaving and I would not have provided any support or help. Within this situation, it is hard to believe the chance for the student to become a well-behaved student would be higher.
As mentioned above, even though teachers have faith in students, there is no way that teachers can guarantee the effect of education. The education process always involves risks. To lower the risks, teachers should make promises to students and love their students. To Arendt, the concept of love includes the love of the earthly world and the people living in it. This love saves the world from ruin and provides a possible future for human flourishing. In terms of education, teachers should love both the world and the students. Here I quote Arendt again:

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it … And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices…

As a teacher, one should not only love this earthly world to save it from ruin but also love the students so they are not left alone. As quoted in Martel’s work, Arendt clarifies concept of love in human relationship—“‘Amo: Volo ut sis,’ ‘I love you; I want you to be’—and not ‘I want to have you’ or ‘I want to rule you.’” For teachers, they love students not because they want to have students or they want to rule students; they do not force students to be what they want them to become in the name of loving them. Instead, teachers love students for teachers want students to be. “To be” is a state. It is neither to be what the teachers want them to be nor to be what they want themselves to be. “To be” is a state where one learns to be oneself, to be with oneself, to be with others, and to be with this world in this earthly world.

Love creates the strongest faith in students. To love, one is required to act. Among all different actions, to make and keep promises is one of them. Based on Arendt’s work—

---


Human Condition, Martel concludes that the need for promising is generated from unpredictability.\textsuperscript{212} It is a “remedy for the uncertainty of the future.”\textsuperscript{213} Promises make the anticipation towards the uncertain future possible. Thus, while the education process involves risks and uncertainty, teachers’ making and keeping promises serve as a remedy for that, which shows their love for the students.

4.4 Conclusion

By re-examining school space and the relationship between teachers and students in terms of authority, responsibility, faith, and love, my thesis aims at re-defining school space and the responsibility that teachers and students should assume in the education process. I propose a decentralization in education and argue that only by having faith and love can education become possible. Specifically, students should have faith in teachers, while teachers should have faith in and love for students.

My research on teacher-student relationship has provided me with an opportunity to re-think education. What is education, and what is education for? These questions are hard questions, ones that are difficult to settle once and for all. While it is hard to define what education is, at least, we can think from the perspective of what education can do. In The Beautiful Risk of Education, to better understand education, Biesta provides three domains of education purpose—qualification, socialization, and subjectification, which help to

\textsuperscript{212} Cited in Martel, “Amo: Volo ut sis: Love, willing and Arendt’s reluctant embrace of sovereignty,” 300. There she writes: “In her own treatment of the promising and the future, in The Human Condition, Arendt tells us that the need for promising arises out of the ‘basic unreliability of men who can never guarantee today who they will be tomorrow.’”

understand the aim of education from an Arendtian perspective. In the domain of qualification, individuals gain knowledge and skills to do certain things; in the domain of socialization, individuals are educated to become part of the society; as opposed to that, in the domain of subjectification, individuals are educated to become independent and autonomous. Thus, one obtains education for gaining knowledge and skills to improve one’s capacities; one obtains education for being educated to live as a singular person in this world with plurality. Education is for the sake of oneself and for the sake of others and the world. According to Arendt, education helps the newcomers as “not-yet-human-beings” to become full human beings. I do not want to associate full human beings with human beings with full capacities. As I do not believe that when one becomes a full human being, one then possesses full capacities; nor do I believe when one obtains full capacities, one becomes a full human being. They are not the same. If we associate full human beings with full capacities, then human beings only become products that need to fulfill different capacities, while education only becomes “work” instead of “action.” Education is an action. In this process, with faith and love, one is educated to be. To be in this earthly world, not just to be oneself, but also to be with oneself and with others. To be a person with singularity and plurality.

At the beginning of my thesis, I mentioned that technically-oriented research about curriculum and pedagogy cannot answer these questions—what is education, and what is education for. Although it is still important to explore pedagogical techniques, they are fundamentally influenced by one’s understanding of education, including one’s understanding on the teacher-student relationship.

In my thesis, by examining the teacher-student relationship in terms of love, faith,

---

214 In my thesis, “capacities” refer to one’s “abilities” to do something.
authority and responsibility, I provide a way of thinking for both teachers and students in terms of what to teach, how to teach, what to learn, and how to learn. When they are educating or being educated, they always think about what education is and what education is for from the humanities perspective rather than just considering the outcomes of some technically-oriented research. When thinking about their relationship with each other, they always start from the perspective that the teacher-student relationship is a human relationship between and among human beings who are both singular and plural. They always consider their respective responsibilities. And they always have faith and love.

While my thesis provides a way of thinking in terms of the teacher-student relationship from the perspective of love, faith, authority and responsibility, there are still questions worth exploring. In my research, I have proposed to re-build teacher’s authority since the loss of authority authority has created a crisis in education. Although Arendt argues that educational authority will not be prohibited from preparing students to become political equals,215 one possible further question would be, “if teacher authority trumps the practice of judgment throughout schooling, how will students make the transition from authoritarian relationships based upon adult/child inequality to egalitarian relationships based upon political equality?”216 During the education process, teachers take collective responsibility, while students take personal responsibility. However, the question is, when should they take collective/personal responsibility? How do they decide? These are potential questions for future research.


216 Ibid., 86.
Bibliography


Biesta, Gert. “Why “what Works” Won't Work: Evidence-Based Practice and the Democratic


Mayes, Eve. “Negotiating the Hidden Curriculum: Power and Affect in Negotiated


Quinn, Sarah and Susanne Owen. “Digging Deeper: Understanding the Power of ‘Student


Toshalis, Eric, and Michael J. Nakkula. Motivation, engagement, and student voice. Boston,