

# **“Attitude toward the Past” and its Role in the Succession and Renewal of “the World”: The Temporality of Hannah Arendt’s Critique of Modern Education**

Tomoki TANAKA  
*Rikkyo University*

## **Abstract**

Arendt suggests that the purpose of education is to renew “the world,” which is, otherwise, inevitably ruined without the coming of the new and young. However, as she acutely points out, education today faces a crisis. According to Arendt, this crisis takes place against the following backdrop: although education cannot forgo either authority or tradition, it must proceed in a world that is neither structured by authority nor held together by tradition. The question now arises, how can we deal with the past without a tradition that is able to explain it? Arendt’s interpretation of Walter Benjamin in *Men in Dark Times* may be helpful in answering this question—she regards Benjamin as a master who has discovered new ways of dealing with the past. To borrow Arendt’s phrase, he did his thinking without a banister. This article consists of three attempts; first, to examine the difficulty and possibility of education she indicates in her educational criticism. As the second, to clarify the meaning of “an attitude toward the past” in terms of the unique tense at the base of her argument. As the third and last, to present the significance in education, as well as in politics, of such attitude.

## **Keywords**

Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Critique of Modern Education, Temporality

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The purpose of this paper

Is it possible for past events and memories to be passed on? To begin with, what would the workings of this succession of past events and memories be? Such questions have been addressed in a variety of discussions, which are at the roots of our communal activities. Take for instance questions of ethics in the sense of response and responsibility to others or issues of politics pertaining to who the people to be remembered in various cases are. These points of interest also appear in pedagogy. However, when discussed in relation to education, there is one indispensable aspect—the matter of inheritance across generations. In the field of pedagogy, there has been much discussion about how much attempts to pass on past events and memories relate to character building and community formation, as well as what roles the teachers play in those efforts [Shirokane 2003, Kodama 2001, Yano 2000]. These discussions have severely criticized “past events” (as subjects in modern education) for solely focusing on presenting a singular narrative that supports the nation-state and suggested the need for reconstructing semantic spaces by retelling various narratives as well as the possibilities for this as an approach to education.

Nevertheless, contrary to the aforementioned theoretical attempts, there has also been a growing movement that seeks a single “correct history”; this is an outcome of the return of nationalism amidst globalization. This trend cannot be overlooked. Under these circumstances, it is important to address the questions on the state of education that contributed to the unification of communities by converging past events into a single narrative. In other words, more in-depth consideration is necessary for dealing with questions regarding how education can enable the conveyance of past events and memories without tying them together as a single story and whether we can ensure cooperation across generations. Additionally, this examination needs to be based on a thorough criticism of modern education, as modern education itself is inextricably linked to the formation of the nation-state.

Regarding the matters mentioned, this paper will seek to make a consistent response by beginning with Hannah Arendt’s (1906-1975) critique of modern education; furthermore, it will seek to clarify how she believed succession and renewal of “the world” could be achieved through the “attitude toward the past.” Arendt was a political thinker, who also became widely known in pedagogy for her acute criticisms of modern education based on her unique perspective. She centrally addressed these critiques in her

work “The Crisis in Education” (first published in 1958) and expanded upon them in “Reflections on Little Rock” (first published in 1959), as she built upon criticisms of the United States' inclusive education policy. However, exploring the totality of her theory of education or providing thoughts on specific educational phenomena based on it is beyond the objectives of this paper. Rather, this article will focus on the issues suggested in Arendt's critique of modern education, including those not explicitly discussed.

The detailed discussions presented in this paper show that education requires an “attitude toward the past” based on Arendt’s argument about education’s responsibility in aiding the succession and renewal of “the world.” However, regarding the meaning of the term “attitude toward the past,” she provided no further explanation in her theory of education. Still, her work does offer some clues, though fragmentary. For instance, “The Crisis in Education” appears as an essay in the book *Between Past and Future*, where, in the preface, Arendt emphasizes that the aim of each essay in the collection is “to gain experience in *how* to think” [BPF: 14, emphasis from the original text] in the gap between the past and the future.

From the above reference, we can see that how to handle the past is an underlying theme in her theory of education. Even more precisely, at the root of Arendt's contemplation, there is a concern as to the kind of attitude we are to take between the past and the future, and it may be best to say that she derived her theory of education from such concerns. This paper therefore begins with Arendt’s theory of education and also extends some consideration to the multiple texts in which she moved beyond the theory of education itself and addressed question regarding the “past.”

## 1.2. The Subjects in this Paper

Several research studies focusing on Arendt have been undertaken based on myriad concerns involving pedagogy, and they offer a certain amount of theoretical accumulation and active discussion of new reading possibilities. Among these prior research studies, some are deeply related to the subjects of this paper. We will point out discussions that rely on Arendt’s theory of education while looking at the succession of “the world” and the bridging of the gap between generations. Focusing on Arendt’s key concepts of “natality” and “the world,” the reconstruction of political semantic spaces through education and the reinterpretation of children as political actors are used to address the teacher's positionality within that context [Biesta 2013, Levinson 1997, Kodama 2013, Tanaka 2016, Park 2006]. Such discussions are not necessarily monoliths under close examination; many contain a number of important issues. Among at least a few, there is

a shared perspective that Arendt's theory of education is inextricably linked to her political thought with relation to the concern of ensuring that "the world" is a stage for free speech and activity. This paper also shares this perspective and focuses on the "attitude toward the past" as essential for the succession and renewal of "the world", as Arendt does.

However, previous studies have not addressed Arendt's "attitude toward the past" as a central subject. This is because her references to it have been extremely limited and fragmented. Meanwhile, H. Gordon presented one of the few studies that touch upon this point. Supporting Arendt's strict delineation between the public and the educational realms, he stated that teachers who aim to provide an education for promoting democracy cannot create a public realm in the classroom but can encourage the thinking of children[Gordon, H: 55]. In keeping with working toward encouraging children to think, the importance of an "attitude toward the past" in education from Arendt's theory is acknowledged. Issues including how thinking and an "attitude toward the past" overlap and how the encouragement of thinking contributes to the succession and renewal of "the world" have not been discussed even in the writings of H. Gordon.

M. Gordon's research also poses a similar problem. His essay evaluates the importance Arendt placed on the "attitude toward the past" in education in the affirmative. He extended Arendt's views regarding "attitude toward the past" to the practice of teaching classical works and discussed the significance of doing so. In contrast to the conservatives, represented by A. Bloom, who expected classical works to complement traditional moral norms, Arendt's theory of education focused on children's "newness" and highly valued "attitude toward the past" as an agent, specifically with regard to using it to create new things[Gordon, M: 57]. However, some questions remain in the wake of M. Gordon's observations: whether Arendt's suggestion of an "attitude toward the past" should involve teaching classical works in the first place, and even if there is something that can be transferred over, how learning from classical works can lead to the creation of new things.

As has been mentioned, previous studies have shown that Arendt's "attitude toward the past" has certain pedagogical implications. Nevertheless, the fundamental question regarding the "attitude toward the past" relates to the creation of new things, and as a result, the succession and renewal of "the world" has remained unexplored. Additionally, this issue is not limited to Arendt's theory of education. How can we address the past in a way that does not base itself on "tradition" or a single narrative? Arendt explores this through her own experiences of thinking. Through her thinking experiences, Arendt discovered the concepts of past, present, and future different from continuous time.

Therefore, to interpret Arendt’s suggestion regarding an “attitude toward the past,” we must begin by clarifying what kind of consciousness of time she is referencing as a premise for the “attitude toward the past.”

Considering the above, by the existing research, the implications of her “attitude toward the past” being important in the educational effort for succession and renewal of “the world” have not been sufficiently covered. Therefore, this study attempted to clarify the nature of the “attitude toward the past” that Arendt seeks in education by going back and examining the underlying temporality of her critique of modern education.

First, when we traverse Arendt’s critique of modern education, it is important to recognize why so much significance is accorded to the “attitude toward the past.” In this study, the focus of this consideration will be her work “The Crisis in Education,” where it is treated as a central topic.

Second, we will consider what the “attitude toward the past” as suggested by Arendt is and try to clarify the matter of what sort of consciousness of time it is based upon. Here, we will consider Arendt’s interpretation of an approach to the past as suggested in the fables of W. Benjamin and F. Kafka.

Third, it is important to examine the “attitude toward the past” revealed by the aforementioned sources for any political or pedagogical significance. This section will reveal the “attitude toward the past” sought by Arendt as well as the possibilities it holds with regard to facing the past—especially with regard to attempting to construct an education for the succession and renewal of “the world.”

## **2. Arendt’s Critique of Modern Education**

### **2.1. “Loss of Tradition” and the Education Crisis**

Why did Arendt, who was renowned as a political thinker, discuss the subject of education? Her reasoning can be inferred in various ways, but she offers at least two specific points. First, she asserts that education is indispensable in bringing persistence to “the world.” As stated before, the concept of “the world” is central to Arendt’s thinking and forms a key concept. Although we will not discuss the concept of “the world” in too much detail here, the central tenets are as follows. For Arendt, “the world” refers to the space of free speech and action, or in her own vocabulary, “the public realm.” This space is important because it is where each of us can appear individually as unique entities. However, “the world” is lost if no people are present there through actions and speech.

Arendt viewed education as a means of countering such a crisis and stated her views as follows.

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.[BPF:193]

As clearly shown here, Arendt's motive for discussing education is with regard to the concern of supporting her whole ideology; in other words, it is rooted in what she calls "love for the world." To put it differently, Arendt's interest in education stems from the roots of her thinking.

This interest alone does not make it clear why she came to discuss the "crisis" of education. Arendt stuck her neck out as an amateur in the field, having almost no knowledge from experts because such a "crisis situation" provided an opportunity to identify the nature of the problems that become exposed [BPF: 171].

That being the case, what is this "crisis situation," which is being described here? Arendt locates it in the "loss of tradition" [BPF: 191]. According to Arendt, the educator bears authority, and the bridge that can join the past and the future should rely on being rooted in epic origins; in Western history, this principle is exemplified in the founding of Rome. However, with the advent of modernity, that tradition was lost. Arendt described it as follows: "politically speaking, it was the decline and downfall of the nation state; socially, it was the transformation of a class system into a mass society; and spiritually it was the rise of nihilism" [MDT: 228].

This notion, which views tradition as an origin to return to, was thus lost. Until then, it had been the bridge between the past and the future in education. As a result, the fundamental mission of education—that is, aiding the succession and renewal of "the world"—has become elusive. Arendt believed that this situation caused numerous distortions in education. Now, "we have lost the thread (the Ariadne's thread) which safely guided us through the vast realms of the past;" [BPF: 94, addition by the quoter] it can no longer be relied upon, and now generations cannot be linked using the same origin. This is how a crisis was already created in the establishment of modern education, and the history of modern education became a history of responding to a crisis situation because of the "loss of tradition." Thus, the essay "The Crisis in Education" not only points out that modern education has faced the crisis of losing tradition since its inception,

but it also includes the criticism that the responses to that crisis had amplified it in a certain direction.

## 2.2. Critique of Progressive Education

How has modern education handled the crisis of the “loss of tradition?” According to Arendt’s insights, in place of the lost tradition, what supported education was an illusion arising from the pathos of the new [BPF: 174]. This illusion extends from the blind belief in the absolute newness of children and points to seeing this newness as an established fact. This originated in Rousseau’s educational philosophy, which came under the banner of progressive education and spread through educational circles. Arendt criticized these educational movements because they regarded the newness of children as an established fact and believed that, as long as “the world” were left to children, it would progress and develop naturally; they abandoned education’s responsibility with regard to the succession and renewal of “the world.” Therefore, Arendt suggested that children were not led to “the world” where they ought to be, and that the absolute newness of each individual was being overlooked; simultaneously, they would only be driven toward new things.

Let us now organize our thoughts based on the discussion in the previous section; modern education responded to the crisis of the “loss of tradition” by avoiding—instead of seeking—the “story origin” (tradition) of the shared principles that the community relied on. The principles that one was to rely on were replaced by the “story of progress.” In the past, the succession of “the world” over generations was fulfilled by a shared origin (tradition). Now, it is the narrative of progress that links generation to generation. However, the “narrative of progress” is an illusion that does not tie to a real image, and people only share the spirit of seeking something newer. Therefore, in progressive education, sharing “the world” is no longer the purpose. Through the loss of tradition, education confronted difficulties regarding the succession and renewal of “the world,” but modern education’s response to this challenge was to abandon the original purpose.

Arendt provided this harsh critique of modern education in a passage that closes the essay “The Crisis in Education”: “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” [BPF 193]. How can we take on the responsibility for the succession and renewal of “the world” at such a fork in the road? Arendt does not explicitly explain how this can be done. However, she seems to have left some indications of possibilities in the

her statements.

Arendt pointed out that the loss of tradition was at the root of modern problems and elaborated this notion in the following way: “Thus the undeniable loss of tradition in the modern world does not at all entail a loss of the past”[BPF: 93]. Indeed, Arendt states that tradition was the thread that guided us through the realm of the past, but at the same time, “this thread was also the chain fettering each successive generation to a predetermined aspect of the past”[BPF: 93-94]. Therefore, the loss of tradition also signifies liberation because one is released from this “chain.” Thus, Arendt states that the loss of tradition does not only cause negative consequences. The loss of tradition does not mean that “the world” itself is incapable of being passed on; it shows that a singular narrative that can be identified as “tradition” will not be inherited. As a result, we must ponder the question of how we can share “the world” with people in a way that does not tie to the single narrative that is tradition. When Arendt states that “learning inevitably turns toward the past, no matter how much living will spend itself in the present” [BPF: 192], it is not representing a kind of nostalgia—something she is often criticized for. Rather, instead of returning to tradition, this means reconstructing “the world” in a way that does not destroy the past and betting on education for the succession and renewal of “the world” across generations.

### **3. An “Attitude toward the Past” from Arendt**

#### **3.1. A New Way to Discuss the Past**

As the previous section showed, the loss of “tradition” noted by Arendt may not necessarily have only negative consequences. What is lost is simply the continuity of past events. That being said, how should we handle the past? While this question is being thrown at us, from the content of *Between Past and Future*, this is clearly an issue that Arendt herself pondered upon frequently.

It should be noted here that Arendt took important clues from W. Benjamin’s way of thinking. She dedicated a chapter from *Men in Dark Times* to Benjamin’s theories and noted that he became a master of handling the past via new methods [MDT: 193], describing it more fully as follows. “Walter Benjamin knew that the break in tradition and the loss of authority which occurred in his lifetime, were irreparable, and he concluded that he had to discover new ways of dealing with the past” [MDT: 193]. This method of Benjamin resulted in his manuscript *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, but oddly enough, the draft was entrusted to Arendt, who rushed to get it published following his

death. From this, we can also see that they deeply shared circumstances, areas of concern and interest, and thinking.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the confluent relationship between the two was not isolated with biographical truths<sup>2</sup>. This paper will not provide a detailed consideration of the ideological relationship between the two; however, as far as the “attitude toward the past” is concerned, the following three points demonstrate their shared ideological affinity in general terms.

First, Arendt and Benjamin shared an awareness regarding the times surrounding the crisis. Second, during the crisis, they rejected leaning toward “progressivism” as well as returning to tradition (in Benjamin’s terms, “historicism”), and thus shared the same critical perspectives. Third, through these critiques, they shared in the ideological challenge of trying to reframe how time itself is captured. Let us now look at Benjamin’s theory, which is presented in *Men in Dark Times*.

Arendt likens Benjamin to a “Pearl Diver,” and discusses his “new ways of dealing with the past” as follows. According to Arendt, Benjamin’s thinking is like that of “a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past” [MDT: 205-206]. Here, the “pearl” is compared to a fragment of the past or a “thought fragment.” Unshared fragments of the past are destined to decay on the seabed, but Benjamin reaches for those fragments, uses thinking to snatch them from their fate of decay, and gathers them up into stories that have not yet been told [MDT: 205-206]. When he does this, he may take the fragment and “resuscitate it the way it was,” but not in order “to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages” [MDT: 205-206]. Rather, his objective is to use these crystallized fragments of the past to dismantle the constancy of the obvious story shared as “history” until then. Only by breaking the chain of already-told events can fragments of the past of as yet untold stories be carried to the surface. Arendt points out that the “Theses on the Philosophy of History” represents Benjamin’s clearest statement regarding his thinking in this way. In the ninth section of the “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, the “Angelus Novus,” while looking to face the past, does not perceive a “chain of events,” but “one single catastrophe.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Starting from 1934 or 1935, Benjamin and Arendt exchanged their thoughts each other and came to hold discussions regularly after they defected to Paris [Bruehl: 122]. The days of their friendship coincided with the period Benjamin wrote “Thesis on Philosophy of History”. The hand-written draft of it was entrusted to Arendt at their last meeting with Benjamin in Marseilles. After she flew to the United States, seeking refuge, she made every effort to publish the manuscript left by the deceased [Bruehl: 166-168].

<sup>2</sup> [Kodama 2001] and [Morikawa 2010] indicate the influence of the thought of Benjamin on Arendt’s idea of “natality.”

A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.[Benjamin: 249]

In this "Theses", the attitude of the "Novus Angelus" toward the past is in opposition to the two views of history Benjamin himself was critical of. In other words, it goes against "historicism" and the progressive view of history. From the perspective of "historicism," past events are understood as part of a continuity or constancy. Benjamin believed that this was the story of rulers, which was built up for forgetting losers and the dead. This "chain of events" does not reach the eyes of the "angelus" (angel). The "angel" observes debris that piles up from the story of the ruler. However, there is a power greater than the "angel," and that power is "progress," which sweeps the angel into the future. The storm of progress, while giving rise to successive sacrifices, propels the "angel" away as the "pile of debris before him grows skyward."

On reflection, for Benjamin, talking about the past, both in terms of "historicism" and progressive history, refers to the history of those who are fated to be forgotten. Additionally, what is told there cannot be recovered as a continuous history, and in that sense, it must always be treated as being fragmentary. Nevertheless, in the daily temporality of everyday life, these fragments may also be recovered as a singular narrative of history that is connected as a "chain of events." Therefore, when the past is told as fragments, it is fundamentally thought to be a consciousness of time that differs from the continuous sequence of time. Based on these suggestions, Arendt moves to recapture temporality itself.

### **3.2. The Clash of Time**

With the past not in continuity, when a newness emerges from the disruption of

stories that have been told before, in what temporality can we find this newness? Here, what Arendt puts forth for discussion is temporality experienced in thinking. This is because, according to her, handling fragments of the past as fragments originally is only in thought, and time experienced through the “thinking ego” differs entirely from the linear time that we experience in daily life [LMT: 212].

According to Arendt, the time experienced in “thinking” is caught in the gap between the past and the future. Seeking to express this temporality, Arendt cites a passage from Franz Kafka’s collection of aphorisms titled “He.”

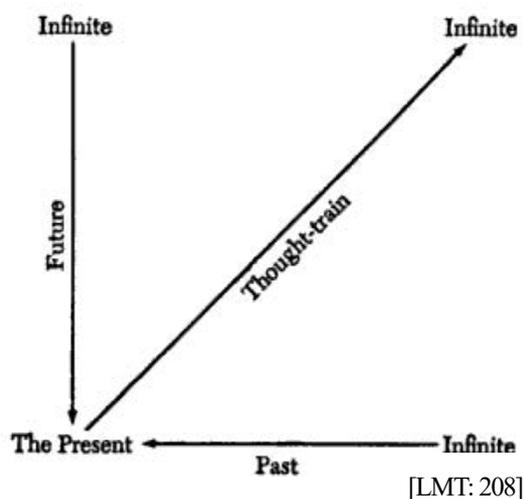
He has two antagonist: the first presses him from behind, from the origin. The second blocks the road ahead. He gives battle to both. To be sure, the first supports him in his fight with the second, for he wants to push him forward, and in the same way the second supports him in his fight with the first, since he drives him antagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really unguarded moment—and this world require a night darker than any night has ever been yet—he will jump out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience in fighting, to the position of umpire over his antagonists in their fight with each other.[BPF: 7]

Here, “he” stands between the two antagonists—who are no-longer of the past and not-yet of the future—who crash onto the present “Now.” “His” battle, on the one hand, involves “the fear of a future (whose only certainty is death), driving him backward toward ‘the quiet of the past’ with nostalgia for and remembrance of the only reality he can be sure of” [LMT: 205]. Nevertheless, “he” must withstand the force of the “past.” “This past, moreover, reaching all the way back into the origin takes him and “presses forward” [BPF: 10]. The force of the “past” seeks to push him to origins as “not-yet” things. If “he” remains thinking in the “now,” “he” must remain locked in the battle between these two antagonists.

However, according to Arendt, this parable is not enough to fully understand the temporality of thought. Here, the issue she raises is about “his” dream of jumping out of the fighting line and taking the position of an “umpire.” “He” dreams that, by escaping from the battle, “he” can observe the world and free himself from any interests in it or any real engagement with it [LMT: 207]. However, if “he” were to jump out of this the “world,” the two antagonists would vanish at the same time, and only the circular movements of the universe, an indifferent flow, would remain. This lacks a human perspective and indicates that only the natural circulation will remain. Arendt points out

that, despite this, “his” being trapped in a dream of escaping from the battle results from Kafka himself adhering to the traditional image of linear time. “Obviously what is missing in Kafka’s description of a thought-event is spatial dimension where thinking could exert itself without being forced to jump out of human time altogether”[BPF: 11].

Thus, using this new perspective, Arendt reconceptualizes this not as a clash between the past and the future but in a way that is similar to what physicists call a “parallelogram of forces.” In this image, “he” originates in the present, while advancing “his thoughts along a diagonal line composed of the force pushing into the future and the force pushing back into the past. This diagonal extends into infinity, but the starting point is always the present.



Arendt declares that the good thing about this image is that “the region of thought would no longer have to be situated beyond and above the world and human time” [LMT: 208]. Thinking here does not mean a complete departure from “the world.” “The fighter would no longer have to jump out of the fighting line in order to find the quiet and the stillness necessary for thinking” [LMT: 208]. This is rooted in “the world”; while going a distance from the association of system and meaning in “the world,” amidst the clash between the past and the future, new events are always being discovered and thinking directed toward this continues to be stimulated.

Here, let us organize Arendt’s newly shown sense of time. Regarding the time continuity that extends from the past to the present and then to the future, she offers the criticism that the unrecoverable fragments of the past from that cumulatively developed story could be doomed to oblivion. Turning from this critique, she directs us toward a way to think of time by using new methods to discuss the past. While doing this, a gap in thinking formed by the clash between the past and the future is discovered. Within this consciousness of time, neither the past nor the future is privileged, and while constantly maintaining a distance from both, a position can be found that allows for events to be understood in myriad ways.

The consciousness of time this is now revealed was discovered embodied in the foundation of Benjamin’s work on thinking. However, Arendt states that, at last, the experience of time has ceased to be the exclusive property of those who have the special destructive power to create a rift between the past and the future. This is because “when

the thread of tradition finally broke, the gap between past and future ceased to be a condition peculiar only to the activity of thought and restricted as an experience to those few who made thinking their primary business,” and “it became a tangible reality and perplexity for all” [BPF: 14]. As has already been observed, the loss of tradition puts educational efforts in a position where the past and the future collide. If so, the “attitude toward the past” Arendt mentions in discussing her theory of education would be implied to originate from first assuming a consciousness of time built from a clash between past and future.

#### **4. An “Attitude toward the Past” from Arendt**

##### **4.1. The Politics of the “Attitude toward the Past”**

The preceding section showed that Arendt conceived a new way of thinking about the past based on Benjamin’s thoughts. When past events are related, they are always expressed as a singular narratives with a beginning and an end. They are spoken of as a chain of events that can be incorporated into a single time continuity. Therefore, in the background of a story that has already been told, countless past events remain unincorporated into the chain that remains. These unspoken fragments of the past are exposed to being forgotten. The “attitude toward the past” that Arendt found from Benjamin is directed toward saving these yet unrevealed events from being forgotten.

Let us return to the questions posed by this paper. To begin with, Arendt’s search for new ways to face the past with the loss of tradition came from an interest in protecting “the world” that is the stage of politics. Taking this context into account, we must determine how the “attitude toward the past,” which was clarified in this paper’s examination, is aligned with Arendt’s interest.

Arendt concludes *The Life of the Mind* “Part 1: Thinking” referring to historian and says that they are those who inquire and make judgments about the past. However, she also states that “History” is a pseudo-divinity of the modern age. That is to say that in the modern age, “History” itself acts as the ultimate judge, and by forgetting events that cannot be restored to its intended chain of events, it raises itself to the position of the ultimate. In this, “History” functions as a mechanism to make the existing political framework absolute. By criticizing the “History” of the modern age in this way, Arendt insists that the ability to relate history should be reclaimed by people[LMT: 216].

Based on the considerations raised by this paper, what this “ability to relate history”

refers to seems to overlap with the new way Arendt seeks to talk about the past. In the wake of the loss of tradition, Arendt does not seek the pseudo-divinity “History” of the modern age. This is because “History” tries to replace “tradition” by removing events and actions that do not contribute to the process, and because it is a thing that excludes different people, it is something that renders the succession and renewal of “the world” inert. To resist this “History,” this lie must be exposed; in other words, it is necessary to save the as yet untold events and otherwise possible stories. In this context, the “attitude toward the past” has a very political meaning. Arendt concludes *The Life of the Mind* “Part 1: Thinking” by quoting the following phrase from Cato, as a basis for understanding. “The victorious cause pleased the gods, but the defeated one pleases Cato” [LMT: 216]<sup>3</sup>.

As mentioned above, “attitude toward the past” is particularly political in resisting the “correct history” that supports the existing political system by saving events that have not yet been told. Finally, based on the politics of this “attitude toward the past,” we must consider what is the suggested form education itself should take, considering Arendt’s request for an “attitude toward the past” in education.

## 4.2. The Topos for Those Who Are Coming

Arendt’s critique of modern education revealed that it had lost the absolute story of “tradition” in its formation, but the “story of progress” became an alternate story; however, this could not fulfill the responsibility toward succession and renewal of “the world.”

Although, this is not to say that “the world” cannot be inherited. The “attitude toward the past” explored by Arendt is indeed an attempt to seek out a method of succession and renewal of “the world.” She showed that, by seeking yet unshared past events, the existing chain of events could be questioned, and therein lies a new story that could be brought out. As examined in this article, the relationship between past and future cannot be captured either as a straight line moving toward the future or as a circle representing the origin of traditions. The past and the future are in a relationship where they clash at a gap. This gap between the past and the future is the topos of education. This being the case, education is not aimed at closing this “gap” with a convenient story; rather it aims to discover fragments of the past in this rift and think about its various possibilities of new stories.

---

<sup>3</sup> Although Arendt wrote this sentence was the word by Cato the Elder in her book, Cato referred in the phrase means, in fact, Cato the Younger the great-grandson of Cato the Elder [Komori: 141].

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to explore H. Arendt’s critique of modern education while clarifying how she perceived an “attitude toward the past” aimed at the succession and renewal of “the world” that could stretch over generations. Through this, it was confirmed that Arendt’s criticisms concerning contemporary education were based on her own theory of time, and the succession and renewal of “the world” were not to be achieved in a continuous sense of time. Furthermore, the mission of education, that is the succession and renewal of “the world,” was shown to be fulfilled in the gap between past and future. From this, it became clear that the “attitude toward the past” could be understood as an attempt to explore and think about past events not yet spoken.

However, a new issue emerged in the course of this analysis. While this paper revealed the feature of the “attitude toward the past” and its significance, it did not consider the possibilities of discovering past events that have not yet given a story. Dealing with this matter will necessarily involve examining the issues surrounded by media in education. In particular, given Arendt’s discussions surrounding world alienation and in light of it being pointed out that artifacts that leave a trace of people’s activities lose durability, these issues should be discussed within the framework of her theory of world alienation and theory of education.

## References

### Works of Hannah Arendt

- BPF: *Between Past and Future*, Penguin Books, 1977.  
 LMT: *The Life of the Mind*, Harcourt, 1978.  
 MDT: *Men in Dark Times*, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1968.  
 RL: “Reflections on Little Rock”, *Dissent*, Vol.16, No.1, 1959.

### Other Works

- Benjamin, W. (1999) *Illuminations*, edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt ; translated by Harry Zorn, Pimlico.  
 Biesta, Gert.J.J. (2013) *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, Paradigm Publishers.  
 Bruehl, E. Y., (1982) *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, Yale University Press.  
 Gordon, H. (1998) “Learning to Think: Arendt on Education for Democracy”, *the*

- educational Forum*, 53(1), pp.49-62.
- Gordon, M. (2001) “Hannah Arendt on Authority: Conservatism in Education Reconsidered”, edited by Mordechai Gordon, *Hannah Arendt and Education*, Westview, pp.37-65.
- Kodama, Shigeo. (2001) “Hajimari no Sōshitsu to Kindai: Arendt ni okeru Syusseï to kyōiku”, *Hannha Arendt o yomu, (Loss of Beginning and Modernity: Natality and Education in Arendt)*, Jyōkyōshuppan, pp.153-163.
- Kodama, Shigeo. (2013) *Gakuryoku Gensō*, (Ideology of Academic Competence), Chikumashinsyo.
- Levinson, N. (1997) “Teaching in the Midst of Belatedness: The Paradox of natality in Hannah Arendt’s Educational Thought,” *Educational Theory*, Vol.47, No.4, pp.435-451.
- Morikawa, Terukazu. (2010) “*Hajimari*” no Arendt: “Syusseï” no Shisō no Tanjyō, (*Hannah Arendt of “Beginning” : The Birth of her Thought and “Natality”*), Iwanamisyoten.
- Paku, Sun-nam.(2006) “Hannah Arendt ni okeru “Sekai” Gainen: Kyōiku to Ken-i no Ichizuke o megutte, (World and Authority in Arendt's View of Education), *Tetsugaku*, 115, pp.25-43.
- Shirokane, Natsuki. (2003) “Ningenkeisei ni okeru Jikanteki Renzokusei ni kansuru ichi Kōsatsu: Jikan Ishiki o neguru Adorno no Shisō o tegakari to shite”(A Critical Study on the Continuity of Human Life: From the Perspective of Theodor W. Adorno's Thoughts on Time-Consciousness), *Kindaikyōikufōramu*, 12, pp.221-223.
- Tanaka, Tomoki. (2016) “Kyōiku ni okeru “Ken-i” no Ichi: H.Arendt no Bōryokuron o tegakarini” (The Position of "Authority" in Education: A Study of One Strand of Hannah Arendt's Argument on Violence), *Kyōikugakukenkū*, 83 (4), pp.461-473.
- Yano, Satoji. (2000) *Jikohenyō to iu Monogatari: Seisei, Zōyo, Kyōiku, (A Narrative Called "Self-transformation": Becoming, Gift, Education)*
- Yano, Satoji. Yamana, Jun.(2017) Saigai to Yakusai no Kioku o tsutaeru: *Kyōikugaku niha naniga dekirunoka,(Passing Memories of Disaster and Calamity down : What Education Studies Could Do?)* , Keisōsyobō.

This work was supported by KAKENHI JP17K13976.