

Volition as an inner capacity in Arendt's *Willing*

Rika Abe

Willing, Hannah Arendt's last work, is known for the concept of "beginning"; however, a remarkable argument has arisen over its notion of "volition." "Volition," which means "the power to decide" or "the will to choose" in Latin, refers to man's capacity to decide on the form of his worldly presence. His choice of and wish for a certain appearance are his own.

With regard to the differences between thinking and willing, the former deals mainly with appearance and not with the self. Thinking permits the self to come to terms with the world by watching it as a spectator. In contrast, willing, by withdrawing from the world, is not concerned with appearance but only the inner self. This caring for the self is caused by the internal, command-resistance division of the will; it is precisely "volition" that permits inner man to resist the orders of the will. While Arendt sees "volition" as a paradoxical, self-contradictory faculty, it provides the foundation for human inwardness as a special region of existence.

Although Arendt's arguments about the inner capacity have been criticized as a negative aspect of her thought, we should notice the imperative role of this capacity in history and ethics. Arendt explored the inner capacity not only in her last work but also in her middle writings, such as *The Human condition*, *On Revolution*, and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Some of Eichmann's behaviors and words show us that he reflected on his past acts by turning away from history and eventually discovering himself. According to *Willing*, we can understand this fact as a process in which "volition" creates the person who can be held responsible both for his action and his character.