

what we think of as political action by which men or human communities intervene in their own destiny.

If without action or speech [she suggests], without the articulation of natality, we should be doomed to swing forever in the ever-recurring cycle of becoming, then without the faculty to undo what we have done, to control at least partially the processes we have let loose, we would be the victims of an automatic necessity. . . . We have seen before that to mortal beings this natural fatality. . . can only spell doom. If it were true that fatality is the inalienable mark of historical processes, then it would indeed be equally true that everything done in history is doomed. And to a certain extent this is true.

Miss Arendt continues with the thought that this process of man toward doom would continue "if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born to die but to begin. . . . Thus action, seen from the viewpoint of the automatic processes which seem to determine the course of the world, looks like a miracle. In the language of natural science, it is the 'infinite improbability which occurs regularly.' Action is in fact the one miracle-working faculty of man."

Miss Arendt concludes this chapter with a reference to the event of birth, the fact of "natality." She may, she surely does, have something to say to all of us, whatever our place in the controversies of the moment relating to modern youth, and to modern youths themselves:

The miracle that saves the world [she writes], the realm of human affairs, from its normal, "natural" ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth

of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human experience faith and hope, those two essential characteristics of human existence which Greek antiquity ignored altogether, discounting the keeping of faith as a very uncommon and not too important virtue and counting hope among the evils of illusion in Pandora's box. It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their "glad-tidings": a child has been born unto us.