

## WHICH CRISIS? WHOSE RATIONALITY? RETHINKING ARENDT'S CONCEPT OF NATALITY IN VIEW OF CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

**Tatiana Shchytsova**

European Humanities University

ORCID: 0000-0003-0014-3856

**Abstract.** *The crisis in higher education is a hot topic since at least the late 1990-s both in the Western and Eastern European societies. Focusing on the interrelation between education and political life in Arendt's thought, author suggests that Arend's legacy encourages to analyze the crisis of contemporary university in terms of freedom, creativity and democracy. In this regard, Arendt's concept of natality is taken into consideration as an apparent cornerstone of any positive changes and development in human world. The concept combines three perspectives: the philosophical image of person as an initiator, the idea of politics as a free realization of individual initiatives in the public sphere on the principles of plurality and equality, and the idea of education as a field whose ultimate task is to help young people in realization of their existential mission to be initiators.*

*Drawing on the critical re-thinking of Arendt's legacy in contemporary literature, the article is aimed at clarifying the question: To which extent Arendt's theory can be helpful for overcoming the institutional and moral crisis of university we are facing today? In the first part, the destructive consequences of the neoliberal shift to a consumer model of higher education are identified. Moreover, it is shown that in post-Soviet universities neoliberal logic is combined with authoritarian patterns. It is argued that the neoliberal and authoritarian models of management, despite their crucial difference as for genesis and constitution, are correlative in that both hinder solidary democratic initiatives aimed at developing alternative forms of life. In the second part, the ambiguity of Arendt's political theory (namely, its both democratic and antidemocratic character) is analyzed from the perspective of the contemporary challenges for university education which are conditioned by neoliberal ideology. It is revealed that the concept of natality is a result of conjunction of humanistic anthropology rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition on the one hand and of Heidegger's existential ontology on the other hand. It follows that education built on the principle of natality has an ambivalent meaning as well. On the one hand, it can be seen as an antidote*

*to consumer society, on the other hand it seems incommensurable with the ethos of democratic solidarity.*

*The author claims in this regard that Arendt's theory, despite of its strong democratic principles, can be inspiring and useful both for authoritarian leaders and for neoliberal managers. For the former ones, because they can read her texts as a philosophical legitimation and existential heroization of their anti-democratic decision-making; for the latter ones, because they can borrow from her texts a concept of human authenticity which builds on an outstanding individualistic self-fulfillment and has nothing to do with political solidarity. Therefore, the question is risen: How to read Arendt's texts today given we want to be on the one hand as antiauthoritarian as Arendt was antitotalitarian and on the other hand as anti-neoliberal as Arendt was humanistic.*

**Key words:** *crisis of university, neoliberal ideology, authoritarian patterns, education, natality, democracy*

The full version of the article is available in Russian.