

Hannah Arendt: the Fragility of the Human Condition

Jon Nixon

Hannah Arendt characterised the human condition in terms of *plurality* and the *unpredictability* and *irreversibility* of human action that flows from that plurality: we cannot know what the consequences of our actions are going to be and we cannot reverse those consequences once they have been set in motion. This human predicament defines – for Arendt – the vulnerability and fragility of the human condition. But against the unpredictability of human action she affirms the power of *promise* – the means by which we can make the world a little less unpredictable; and against the irreversibility of human action she affirms the power of *forgiveness* – the new beginning, the entirely new thing, the *natality*. So, we are irredeemably fragile, but through our collective action can make of our shared fragility a common world.

Biographical note

Jon Nixon is an independent scholar based in the UK and affiliated to the Education University of Hong Kong as an Honorary Professor and as an Honorary Senior Research Fellow within the Centre for Lifelong Learning Research and Development. His most recently authored books are: *Gadamer: The Hermeneutical Imagination* (Springer, 2017) and *Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Friendship* (Bloomsbury, 2015). Other recently authored books are: *Interpretive Pedagogies for Higher Education: Arendt, Berger, Said, Nussbaum and their Legacies* (Bloomsbury, 2012), *Higher Education and the Public Good: Imagining the University* (Bloomsbury, 2011) and *Towards the Virtuous University: The Moral Bases of Academic Practice* (Routledge, 2008). Recently edited books include: *Academic Identities in Higher Education: The Changing European Landscape* (with Evans, Bloomsbury, 2015) and *The Reorientation of Higher Education: Challenging the East-West Dichotomy* (with Adamson and Su, Springer 2012).