

**A PHENOMENOLOGY OF POLITICS: PRIMACY  
OF EXPERIENCE IN *THINKING*, *WILLING*,  
AND *JUDGING* IN HANNAH ARENDT'S  
POLITICAL THOUGHT**

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by

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**Submitted**

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# CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled “**A Phenomenology of Politics: Primacy of Experience in *Thinking, Willing and Judging* in Hannah Arendt’s Political Thought**”, being submitted by Pritika to **the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi**, for the award of the degree of “**Doctor of Philosophy**”, is a record of bonafide research carried out by her. She has worked under my guidance and supervision and has fulfilled the requirements, which to my knowledge, have reached the requisite standard for the submission of this thesis. The results contained in this thesis have not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the role of the three mental activities of thinking, willing and judging in politics in Hannah Arendt's posthumous phenomenological work, *The Life of the Mind*. My interpretation of Arendt's phenomenology points to a continuity between her earlier phenomenological project in *The Human Condition* and her later views in *The Life of the Mind*. The central argument of my dissertation is that the primacy of experience of the world in the activities of thinking, willing and judging amounts to Arendt's phenomenological perspective of political nature of these activities in *The Life of the Mind*. By insisting on the role of experience of the plurality of the human world, she connects the activities of thinking, willing and judging with the political world of action. They are understood as worldly activities of thinking, willing and judging done by political agents, which is not the same as the individual centric cognitive faculties corresponding to them. Thinking as a worldly activity finds its subject matter in the experience of the world. It always occurs in the medium of speech and language derived from ordinary experiences, which further connects it with the world. Willing always exists in the context of a shared world with others in response to which human actions are possible. The consideration of the plural perspectives of others is a requirement when political actors make judgments. This requirement cannot be fulfilled without an experience of plurality in the actual world. Some of the features common to all mental activities include autonomy, withdrawal, reflexivity, freedom and invisibility. Nevertheless, they are not isolated and internal. They are always connected with the experience of the world through language, in the freedom to act in the external world and in judgments based on common sense. Together they form the 'Political world'. Following Arendt, I defend the inter-subjectivity of thinking, willing and judging as well as their independence from any consensus formation in the socio-political world.

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