The collective memory of a political community and its identity according to Hannah Arendt

Memory constitutes an important element in the life of every political community, necessary to the formation of its identity. It is for this reason that Hannah Arendt reconstructed the vision of memory on the basis of assumptions she had adopted in regard to politics (multitude, freedom, freedom to initiate new vistas, morbidity). The German scholar deals with memory both on the level of an individual, interpreting it as complementary to the thinking, will and power to make judgments, and on a level of collective. The author focuses, in particular, on the description of the emergence process of political communities and the role performed in this context by memory. Arendt refers here, in particular, to the myths of origin (Greek, Hebrew and Roman) and of revolution (France and the United States). In the opinion of the author of The Origin of Totalitarianism, they provide components of self-interpretation. The article concludes with a meta-query as to what form of ‘remembering’ or of exercising history is adopted by Hannah Arendt herself, presented in the context of her research method of storytelling.