

Caring for the ‘soul’ with Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault

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My aim in this paper is to clarify the views of Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault on the relation between ethics and politics, by way of comparison. Even though Arendt and Foucault are in many ways strange bedfellows, several scholars have recently compared their philosophies, especially their political ideas.¹ Starting point for such comparisons are a number of similarities in their philosophies, their obvious differences notwithstanding. Both are influenced, for example, by the anti-metaphysics of Heidegger and Nietzsche, and engage in historically informed reflection on the (political) present. On a more substantive note, Arendt and Foucault are both critical of the normalizing impact of social scientific rationality on modern subjectivity, and draw attention to the human capacity to take our ethical and political life in our own hands.

Their many differences, not only in ideas but also in style, make such a comparison an endeavour with many pitfalls. Some of these difficulties can be resolved, I think, by introducing a ‘mediator’, viz. the Czech phenomenologist Jan Patočka. Under the heading of ‘care for the soul’ he suggests a framework that on the one hand takes its lead from Heidegger’s ontology, but on the other moves beyond it in the realms of ethics and politics. This allows me to frame the philosopher’s role with regard to ethics and politics in a way that renders Arendt and Foucault comparable, but without having to discuss the philosophy of one in terms of the other. Moreover, it highlights their shared debt to Heidegger, while acknowledging where they move beyond his ontological framework. The first section will introduce Patočka’s framework.

1. Introduction: three forms of care

The term ‘care for the soul’ stems from Plato’s *Phaedo*, where Socrates instructs his listeners to live truthfully, in the sense of being concerned with what shows itself as *the present as such*, that is, with the things themselves. Socrates calls for an examined life, oriented towards truth rather than ordinary understanding.² Influenced by Heidegger’s anti-metaphysics, Patočka interprets this metaphysical symbolism negatively, by combining Plato’s idea of ‘learning to die’ (*melete thanatou*) with the Heideggerian notion of ‘care’ (*Sorge*) into ‘care for death’.³ Both Plato and Heidegger suggest that the authentic way to ‘care for life’ is to ‘care for death’ (in the sense of caring about your morality), and that the soul is what connects life and death, mortality and eternity. For Plato, the soul is essentially what is capable of seeing absolute truth. Authentic living entails placing the care for the soul (truth) above the preservation of your finite self (life). Under influence of Heidegger, Patočka inverts this Platonic idea: the soul is no longer the place of certainty,

¹ Dolan, “The paradoxical liberty of bio-power” (2005); Havercroft, “Heidegger’s bastards” (2003); Allen, “Power, Subjectivity and Agency” (2002), Gordon, “On Visibility and Power” (2002), Edwards, “Cutting off the King’s Head: The ‘Social’ in Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault” (1999).

² Patočka, *Plato and Europe* [1979], p. 77. The concept (not the term) first appears in Democritus.

³ E.F. Findlay, *Caring for the soul in a postmodern age* (2002), p. 62. The notion ‘soul’, to which Arendt and Foucault would certainly object in its literal sense, should thus be read with some irony.

but the seat of fundamental uncertainty; rather than seeing a pre-existing truth authenticity involves *seeking truth*. This negative Platonism is ‘care for the soul’.

More important for our purposes is how Patočka uses this re-interpretation of the metaphysical symbolism of ‘care for the soul’ for clarifying the relation between ethics and politics. Care for the soul has a threepartite structure, consisting of (1) the ‘care for the self’, and (2) the ‘care for the polity’, which are made possible by (3) ‘care as an ontological arrangement’.⁴

To begin with the latter, it is drawn from Martin Heidegger’s phenomenology of being. According to Heidegger, *Sorge* is not primarily an act of the self towards the self, but rather an existential a priori that constitutes the human mode of being (*Dasein*), and precedes all human activities and situations.⁵ The *da* (‘there’) of *Dasein* means that originally we do not stand over against distinct objects (contra Descartes), but find ourselves within a totality of instrumental relationships, which Heidegger calls the (work) world. That we *are* in this world (the *sein* of *Dasein*) means that we *open up* this world ourselves. Through the pre-theoretical understanding presupposed in all our activities we disclose a ‘space of significance’. ‘Care’ is *how* we disclose our Being, the way we are ‘in the world’, which only comes into view if we bracket the opposition between ‘object’ and ‘subject’. So, the acts of caring for the self or the polity are always already preceded by care as the ontological structure of a being (*seiende*) that is infinitely interested in the disclosure of his own being (*sein*). By drawing attention to this openness toward being Heidegger points to a freedom more fundamental than freedom of will.

Care as an ontological structure consists of three moments: thrownness (*Geworfenheit*), projection (*Entwerfen*), and fallenness (*Verfallenheit*).⁶ The first means that we are always already *thrown* in a finite world, alongside a definite range of entities, which conditions the possibilities of Being we may disclose. In other words, the range of options that are potentially available to us is limited by a historically and culturally pre-given horizon. Being-in-the-world means being conditioned by things. The second moment explains why this conditioning does not preclude freedom, but is its precondition. Freedom fundamentally means that we *project* ourselves ‘ahead of ourselves’, in creatively appropriating the potentialities of Being that are hitherto unrealized but are already ‘given’ to us *as our own*. The last bit is crucial: freedom is not a free-floating potentiality of being ‘just anything’, but appropriating a definite range of potentialities that *constitutes* who you are. This interdependence of thrownness and projection is expressed in the term ‘thrown projection’.

The third moment, *fallenness*, is the *uneigentlich* counterpart of projection. Conditioning means that not all ways of being have the same standing for us, that there is one way of Being that is truly your own, *eigentlich*, and another *uneigentlich*. I said that according to Heidegger we *originally* do not stand over against distinct objects. Now I should add that we *ordinarily* do understand the world in terms of the subject-object distinctions. This term ‘originally’ (and the term ‘moment’) should not be taken to suggest a temporal primacy, but an *ontological* primacy: our innermost possibility is not standing over objects, but letting them be as they are. This is not our usual or ordinary way of being, nor is it easy to accomplish. Normally we stand over objects, and returning from this way of being is a constant struggle, ‘being yourself’ does not come naturally but is an

⁴ Cf. Findlay, *Caring for the soul*, p. 108

⁵ *Zijn en Tijd* [1927], §41

⁶ *Ibid.*, §58, p. 358. Cf. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger. The Fate of the Political* (1996), p. 119-130. My discussion of Heidegger is much indebted to this book.

achievement. It is a struggle and an achievement because all the time we ‘fall back’ into ordinary understanding.

This almost inevitable tendency is *fallenness*, which is best understood as a self-alienation to which we are ontologically vulnerable. We tend to take the ways of being that seem natural to us as the whole of existence, a partial disclosure is taken for the full truth. This leads to a reification of life as it is, and a forgetting of our share in letting things be this way. We tend to forget our projective nature and the freedom it implies. We are absorbed by the work world, in which we disclose only those possibilities that are of immediate interest to us, and close off other possibilities. In sum, Heidegger points to ‘care’ as the peculiar condition of being constituted in such a way that on the one hand you have an *eigentlich* possibility of ‘being yourself’, in the sense of projecting yourself on a definite range of possibilities, while on the other hand you are ontologically vulnerable to the denial of that possibility, to the point even that this *uneigentlich* way of being appears ordinary or normal to us.⁷ We are ‘thrown’ to be free, and inevitably vulnerable to ‘falling’ into unfreedom, but the actuality of fallenness is a historical rather than an ontological condition. This is the other side the fall: because we have *become* unfree, fallenness can ‘un-come’, we can undo it. This is a freedom more fundamental than freedom of will.

Patočka builds on Heidegger’s ontological structure but believes that in itself it is not enough to understand humans as acting and social beings, who relate not only to their own being, but also to their bodies and to other people. It can explain human life in its ‘fall into non-humanity’ but is on itself insufficient to account for its historicity, not enough for a philosophy of the community. For this reason, Patočka adds the elements of ‘care for the self’ and ‘care for the polity’.⁸ The first has to do with responsibility, which for Patočka not only has to do with an understanding for being (as Heidegger suggests), but also with the ‘shaking’ or ‘collapse’ of our everyday understanding. This amounts to a recognition of the problematicity of life and meaning, which means refraining from all objectivity. Care for the polis, secondly, involves transmitting this insight to society at large by shaking shared prejudices, and criticizing attempts to ground the order of social life in objectivity. If care for the self means facing the truth yourself, care for the polis entails speaking truthfully in the public realm. Taken together these forms of care point to the *political* role of the philosopher implied by Heidegger’s ontological framework.⁹

There is no need to concern ourselves further with the anti-metaphysics of Heidegger and Patočka. What matters is the suggestion that Arendt and Foucault, like Patočka, re-interpret Heidegger’s notion of care in a way that is more attentive to ethics and politics. This parallel justifies my use of Patočka’s threepartite framework of ‘care for the soul’ to clarify the relation between Arendt and Foucault. It suggests that we should look beyond their views on ethics and poli-

⁷ Heidegger’s writings remind of the Christian myth of the fall, and not only in the wording. He remains close to a long Christian tradition of holding the good to be more fundamental than evil. This is precisely what the myth symbolizes: our origin is paradise, to which we must return, not the world as we know it. Kant, for example, said that we have a predisposition (*Anlage*) to do good, but a propensity (*Hang*) for evil. The novelty of Heidegger is not the suggestion of a dissymmetry, but its ontological (de-moralized) reinterpretation as *modes of being*.

⁸ Cf. Findlay, *Caring for the soul*, p. 108. Patočka draws for these extensions on Arendt (my presentation must not be taken to suggest that Patočka is the most originary of the three).

⁹ Or as Patočka prefers to say, the ‘spiritual individual’. Foucault comes close to this description of the philosopher when he says that what links problems of government and truth is just “political spiritualité”, that is, “the will to discover a different way of governing oneself through a different way of dividing up true and false”. Cf. “Questions of Method” (1991), p. 82. See also “The ethic of care for the self” [1984], p. 14.

tics to an underlying structure that accounts for the possibility of truth, which is likely to be an ontologically tempered alternative to Heidegger's notion of care.

The approach is complicated by terminological differences. Whereas Arendt and Patočka describe the problematic of 'care for the self' in terms of philosophy, and associate ethics with politics, Foucault often refers to it in terms of ethics, which he opposes to politics. I shall return to these differences in the concluding section. For now, I will use Foucault's terminology: 'ethics' refers to "the situated and finite engagement of one's freedom",¹⁰ and corresponds to care for the self; 'politics' refers to the structures of governance, corresponding to care for the polity. For me, then, the issue is to determine how Arendt and Foucault see the philosopher's ethical and political task, in light of their ontological assumptions.

To conclude this introductory section, my question can be formulated as follows: *how do Arendt and Foucault theorize the relation between care of self (ethics) and care for the polis (politics), and what in their theories (if anything) takes the place of Heidegger's ontological framework?* My answer will unfold in three steps. In sections two and three, I will discuss the ideas of Foucault and Arendt, respectively. The main purpose of these sections is to clarify their positions on the three aspects of what Patočka calls 'care for the soul' in a way that renders their theories comparable. In the third section I will draw the conclusions from these discussions.

2. Foucault: questioning the present

Foucault's notion of 'care for the self' is closest to Patočka's terminology.¹¹ The theme first comes to the fore in Foucault's later work (1976-1984), which was characterized by a shift from politics to ethics. Looking back at his work, Foucault said that he "tried to locate three major types of problems: the problem of truth, the problem of power and the problem of individual conduct", but that in his early work he "considered the first two experiences without taking the third one into account".¹² The ethical turn corrects this hiatus, and is best understood as a shift of emphasis. From the beginning, Foucault intended not just to "analyze the relations among science, politics, and ethics", but rather to see "how these processes may have interfered with one another", that is, to emphasize one aspect whilst showing "how the other two were present" as well.¹³ In his later work this one aspect is ethics.

Underlying Foucault's threefold intention is his idea of the task of a philosopher. Following Kant, he considers himself a *critical philosopher*, who aims at understanding the present: what is going on, what is happening right now?¹⁴ Similar to Socrates, the function of such a philosopher is not normative, telling people what to do. On the contrary, he "destroys evidence and generalities" and "locates and marks the weak points, the openings" in the "constraints of the present time".¹⁵ Contra Heidegger, Foucault does not pursue this in a metaphysical fashion. The critical attitude to-

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 4

¹¹ On this connection, see Szokolczai, "Thinking Beyond the East-West Divide" (1994)

¹² *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, p. 243.

¹³ "Polemics, Politics and Problematizations" (1984), at p. 386-7.

¹⁴ Cf. "The Art of Telling The Truth" [1983]. Present is used here not in the sense of the immediate present, but in the sense of the "cultural totality" that characterizes it (p. 88).

¹⁵ "Power and sex", p. 124

wards the present is not based on its *Ursprung* (the ‘present as such’) but on its *Herkunft* in a largely contingent play of forces, a heterogeneity of coincidences.¹⁶ The philosophers’ task is thus genealogical, not metaphysical: to analyze the *Herkunft* of what appears to be evident for us.

“We must try to trace the genealogy”, Foucault specifies, “not so much of the notion of modernity, but of modernity as a question”.¹⁷ Clearly, his present is modernity, whose two faces continue to haunt us in the guise of Kant’s two questions ‘What is *Aufklärung*?’, and ‘What is the Revolution?’.¹⁸ Understanding the present means seeing how and why reason (truth, rationality) have become so important for us, how and why we have come to believe in constant progress. Since Kant, the philosophers’ dual task is to “prevent reason going beyond the limits of what is given in experience” and “to keep watch over the excessive powers of political rationality”.¹⁹ For Foucault this entails challenging the excesses of power through the genealogy of reason.

This may seem a very general project, but Foucault’s critical philosopher is not a generalist who produces a theory of the world. Rather he is a ‘specific intellectual’ who addresses a particular problem, and works in a particular field of experience. He tries to understand how and why such experiences as ‘madness’ and ‘sexuality’ have become a problem for us. Why are different practices and phenomena drawn together and treated as a single problem? Why do they matter for us the way they do? Foucault’s genealogical activity is directed at the specific techniques immanent in particular fields of experience, at their emergence, mutations, spread and application. Even so, it remains important to see the more general theme running through these specific investigations. Underlying Foucault’s work on truth, power and self, then, is the conviction that *together* they constitute such experiences as crime, madness, and sexuality, and that focusing on a particular experience is the best way to clarify this mutual interference. In the same spirit, I will focus on the science of sexuality, and ask how it depends on specific manifestations of ‘care of the self’ (§2.1), and on ‘care for the polity’ (§2.2), and what fundamental structure underlies them (§2.3).

§2.1 From self-knowledge towards scientific objectivity

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault sets out to explain two things: how ‘the will to truth’ regarding sex for the first time became constituted in *scientific* terms, and how it nonetheless continued to depend on a pre-existing moral practice and political structure.²⁰ The moral practice, to which we will confine ourselves for now, is what Foucault calls the ‘*scientia sexualis*’: the individualizing procedures that produce the truth of sex. It should not be confused with the *science of sexuality*, which is the form the sex discourse takes in modernity (p. 12). It is a way of producing truth about sex that is characteristic for our Western civilisation (p. 85), which relies for the authentication of the individual on truth techniques such as testing rituals, testimony of witnesses, learned methods of demonstration, and confession. This individualizing form of

¹⁶ Foucault, “Nietzsche, de genealogie, de geschiedschrijving” (1981)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89

¹⁸ “The art of telling the truth”, p. 94

¹⁹ “Politics and Reason” [1981], p. 58

²⁰ In this section, parenthetical references in the text are to this book.

power has its roots in Socratic or philosophical *parrèsia* ('speaking the truth'), which extended truth-practices to the self, in order to rise above ignorance.²¹

In this form, *parrèsia* refers to the 'art of living' directed at the achievement of harmony between life (*bios*) and speech (*logos*).²² This harmony can only be achieved by yourself, but can benefit from the confrontation with a 'touchstone' (*basanos*). For Socrates, this is the role of the philosopher: confronting others with disparities between what they say and how they live, and so stimulating others to care for themselves. As Foucault holds that every practice of truth-telling that involves the presence of an other is a power relation, philosophical *parrèsia* established an individualizing power relation between the *basanos* and the confessing subject.²³ This was not a problem as long as the *basanos* derives his authority from the achievement of harmony between life and speech in his own life. But Socratic *parrèsia* gave rise to two forms of truth-telling: the original, aesthetic, one and a metaphysical one, where the authority of the *basanos* derives from technical expertise (after the Platonic model of the craftsman). This second form is the basis for later forms of truth-telling and individualizing power, where the authority of the *basanos* is institutional (the pastor), or professional (the psychoanalyst), and is of a technical nature. These expert-dominated truth games constitute what Foucault elsewhere calls *pastoral* power, as opposed to *political* power.²⁴

Developed originally as instruments to achieve individual *self-knowledge*, self-examination and the guidance of conscience developed into techniques for the production of *expert knowledge* of individuals. In the Middle Ages, the principal expert was the pastor, in the religious sense of the word: the priest to whom one confesses one's sins. Care for the self becomes intertwined with religious obedience.²⁵ The individual is no longer confronted with a philosopher, who merely tests for 'formal' self-consistency, but with the pastor who judges the 'content' of one's life. In time, the expert function differentiated, giving rise to the medical doctor, the teacher, the judge, and more recently, the social scientist as secular experts in matters of the self. So, in modernity care for the self became intertwined with scientific objectivity.

In sum, individualizing power was first professionalized or 'pastoralized', then secularized and differentiated. Despite this change of character, the classical *parrèsia*, Medieval confession, and modern science are all species of the same, individualizing, form of power, fuelled by the 'will to truth'. On the one hand, Foucault emphasizes continuity: throughout its history the Western civilisation has known some kind of *individualizing* power. On the other hand, he points to discontinuities in the procedures for individualisation and the kind of knowledge they produce. The constitution of sexology as a science, to return to the case at hand, amounts to the re-inscription of pastoral procedures for individualization (continuity) in scientifically acceptable observations that make objectified knowledge possible (discontinuity).

According to Foucault, sex has for several centuries been the privileged theme of this form of power, and continues to be that now, in the form of a science of sexuality. The objectification of the truth about sex was justified by the portrayal of sex as the 'hidden' cause of pathologies, which

²¹ The extension of *parrèsia* to ethics makes individualizing power possible. Thomas Flynn writes that Foucault said in his last course that the emergence of philosophical *parrèsia* introduced three irreducible but interrelated poles into philosophical discourse, viz. truth, politics and ethics. Cf. his "Foucault as *parrhesiast*" [1987], p. 106.

²² *Parrèsia*, p. 43

²³ Flynn, "Foucault as *Parrhesiast*", p. 103-111

²⁴ "Politics, and Reason"

²⁵ "Politics, and Reason", p. 70

could only be made visible and controllable through the mutual work of the confessing subject and the interpreting expert. The subject was no longer considered to be capable of telling the truth about sex, which was not only hidden to others, but also (at least partly) to himself.²⁶ On the other hand, he was left no choice but to articulate his sexual peculiarity, which can only mean: confess himself to a ‘truth’ that is not really his own. The expert’s grid of sexual normality and peculiarities was determined beforehand, leaving the subject only two options: guaranteeing to be sane, or admitting to be sinful or sick.

In this way, sexuality provides the most intimate example of a more general problematization of care for self underlying the increasing reliance on scientific rationality.²⁷ In an interview Foucault suggested that this opposition is indeed central to his genealogy. He said: the “critical function of philosophy, up to a certain point, emerges right from the Socratic imperative: ‘Be concerned with yourself, i.e. ground yourself in liberty, through the mastery of self’”.²⁸ Elsewhere, the interviewer asks: “Should we actualize this care for self, in the classical sense, against this modern thought?”; to which Foucault responds: “Absolutely, but I am not doing that in order to say: ‘Unfortunately we have forgotten the care for the self. Here is the care for the self. It is the key to everything’”.²⁹ Notice the implicit critique of Heidegger: the classical care for the self was *their* expression of freedom, from which we can learn but to which we cannot return.

The subject is not given, but is constituted by a multiplicity of knowledge practices. What we can learn from the Greeks is that these practices need not be based on a rationality that claims to be objectivist, but can also be based on knowledge that admits to being finite and situated. The role of the philosopher is to point to the limits of this rationality, to unmask what appears to be ‘normal’ as a historical construct that is no rational absolute, but depends on contingencies. In “Power and sex” Foucault describes it as follows: “trying to turn off these mechanisms which cause the appearance of two separate sides, ... dissolving the false unity, the illusory ‘nature’ of this other side with which we have taken sides” (p. 120-1). The philosopher should re-open the closed off possibility of knowing ourselves in an ethical rather than scientific way.

But our complex system of power brings it about that we do not relate to ourselves in one way, but in many ways, corresponding to various historically constituted knowledge practices, each with their own rationality. This is why today the philosopher must be a ‘*specific* intellectual’: specific research is the shape questioning the general ontology of the present takes today, because this is how rationality is at work in our lives. There is not one normal way, there are many, and the task of the philosopher is to reveal them in their plurality. This is very much a political task; more than ever, care for the self implies care for the polity. Care for the self is gradually transformed into disciplining the body, became ‘government of the self’, which allowed its integration with what has become of that other form of care: ‘government of the state’. How and why in modernity the individualizing and political forms of power have become so intertwined is the topic of the next section.

²⁶ The intransparency of the self was not a modern novelty. As Patočka suggests, the Christian conception of the self already involved the idea of a ‘mysterious depth’ that is inaccessible humanly. Thus, both religious and secular experts have claimed privileged access to knowledge (divine or scientific) of what is inaccessible for lay people.

²⁷ For these concluding remarks I am indebted to McNeill, “Care for the self: Originary Ethics in Heidegger and Foucault”, *Philosophy Today* 42: 53–64 (1998).

²⁸ “The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom” (1988), p. 20.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14

§2.2 From sovereignty towards mass government

In part four of the *The will to Knowledge* Foucault turns to the “political economy” of sexuality, and draws attention to the power strategies immanent in the will to knowledge, and especially in its modern variant: the science of sexuality. Having seen the moral practice on which this science depends, we now turn to the political structure implicated in sexology.

Foucault’s approach to political power is similar to that of individualizing power. Here too, the ultimate roots can be found in *parrèsia*. Its political form is the practice of free speech or criticism in dangerous circumstances: in the presence of the majority (or later: the king) that can punish you for speaking the truth.³⁰ Parallel to the ‘art of living’, there was the ‘art of governing’, concerned with the proper conduct of the ruler, which persisted throughout the Middle Ages in political treatises presented as ‘advice to the prince’.³¹ Originally, the ruler’s task was not to care for his individual subjects, but merely to ‘gather together’, to secure the unity and stability of the polis. This changes when government is modelled after technical *parrèsia* and pastoral power.

In the *feudal state*, the rationality of government was Christian and judiciary.³² For the king or sovereign to be just, he should rule his territory after God’s government of nature, and adhere to an extra-political system of laws. This power was exercised in a juridical way, through an interplay of obligation and interdiction. In the 16th century, the sovereignty model is gradually replaced by forms of government based on other forms of rationality and power.

Machiavelli’s *The prince* is an important turning point, because he was the first to see government as a relationship of *forces*, rather than as a juridical one, and to recognize its distinctive rationality (p. 97). For Foucault, power relations that are based on an equilibrium of forces are *strategic*, in the sense that they can be *reversed* through resistance.³³ If a state of domination is a contingent equilibrium, this means that a new equilibrium can be reached, where domination may be minimized. This is why Machiavelli’s observation is so important. The anti-Machiavellian literature went a step further away from the model of governmentality. They defined government no longer as the rule over a territory, but as “the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end”.³⁴ These ‘things’ are people, or rather, the strategic relations between them. This gave rise to a new phase, that of the *administrative state*, which did not free itself completely from the link to territory: the management of the population now represented the end of government, rather than the power of the sovereign.³⁵

Foucault emphasizes that the administrative state aims “to develop those elements constitutive of individuals’ lives in such a way that their development also fosters that of the strength of the state”.³⁶ It achieves this aim by incorporating the economy or the science of government, which allowed for the identification of the specific problems and regularities of the population and thus to extend government outside the juridical framework of government.³⁷ The state no longer relied on uniform law, imposed by a singular prince, but replaced them by a political economy involving

³⁰ *Parrèsia*, p.7

³¹ “Governmentality” [1978]

³² “Politics and Reason”. p. 75

³³ Cf. “The ethic of care for the self” [9184], p. 18

³⁴ Guillaume de La Perrière, quoted in “Governmentality”, p. 93

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 96, 100

³⁶ “Politics and Reason”, p. 82

³⁷ “Governmentality”, p. 92-3.

a multiplicity of techniques. The government of the self and the government of the state become more and more intertwined, which results in a range of administrative apparatus that together constitute the modern self.

The last phase of development is that of *mass society*. Government is no longer concerned with territory, but rather with the mass of its population. The apparatus of administration develops into an apparatus of security, and revolves around what Foucault calls 'bio-politics' (p. 145). Now the two forms of government constitute two axis of a single rationality: disciplining the body (self) and regulating the population (polity) in the service of security. Sexuality was employed in the service of *power over life*, which had two poles (P. 138). The first centred on the body, seen as a 'machine' that can be optimized through disciplinary techniques, so that it can be integrated efficiently into systems of economic control. The second targeted the population, the body insofar it is imbued with the mechanisms as life, insofar it belongs to the biological process (what Arendt will call 'labour').

Foucault's study of sexuality shows how these two poles of bio-politics intersect in four strategies: the hysterization of women's bodies, the pedagogization of children's sex, the psychiatrization of perverse pleasure, and the socialization of procreative behaviour (p. 114). The first two draw on regulations for disciplining the body, the second two attempt to regulate the population through disciplinary techniques. In this way a whole intermediate cluster of relations links together discipline (what has become of care for the self) and regulations (what has become of care for the polis). These four power houses constitute the extraordinary complex power relations characteristic for the modern welfare state. Foucault criticizes these power relations as power *excesses*: they are states of domination, which are not reversible without fierce social struggle. They call for resistance, because they are based on a dubious legitimatization.

The objectification of the sex discourse, and the more general ritualization of individual conduct in modernity, is legitimized by the danger not of what we see people do, but in what we know they are.³⁸ It is true that ancient virtue ethics was already concerned with character traits, but these were not yet the objective 'personality traits' we know today. The science of sex provides us not only with the identification procedures that allow the expert to determine who is a 'dangerous individual', but also with the disciplinary techniques that should allow them to better such individuals. These techniques contribute in their own way to the "human dressage by location, confinement, surveillance, [and] the perpetual supervision of behaviour and tasks" Foucault also observed in schools, hospitals, and prisons.

The historical transformations of pastoral and political power, and their increasing interlacing, warrant critique on the way political power is usually analyzed, which is still modeled after the sovereignty model. Applied to sexuality, it suggests that power suppresses sexuality by means of punishment, and has the same formal structure on each level: the legislative power versus the obedient subject (p. 83). This is readily accepted precisely because it hides the positive side of power, which only becomes visible if we acknowledge that in modern societies sexuality is not in fact governed by law. Foucault wants to replace the juridical model of power with a strategic model, which focuses on the productive effectiveness of specific techniques.³⁹ Only then sexuality can

³⁸ Cf. "The Dangerous Individual" [1978]

³⁹ "Power and sex", p. 123

be recognized as a historical construct that fulfils a political function rather than being a ‘natural given’ that is restrained by power.

To conclude, Foucault draws attention to the interplay of two forms of power: the individualizing power of ‘government of the self’, and the centralizing form of power aimed at the ‘government of the state’. The art of government has freed itself from the juridical model of sovereignty only at the price of succumbing to political economy as the scientific model of human relations. This ‘governmentalization’ of the state is of crucial importance for our present, as it is connected to the excesses of political power in bureaucracy, and eventually totalitarianism. The task of the philosopher is also to keep watch over political forms of power and rationality, and to show that we may care for the polity differently. The combination of this centralizing power with the individual power from the previous section produces a complex system of knowledge that involves a specific modern type of ethico-political rationality. In the end, ethics should be considered with regard to its political import, and vice versa.

§2.3 *Problematization*

How do Foucault’s observation relate to Heidegger’s ontological structure? How extensive is his debt to Heidegger?⁴⁰ I believe this debt to be more extensive than is commonly recognized, and want to suggest that its recognition brings out more clearly in what ways Foucault moves beyond Heidegger. The main advantage of understanding Foucault as a re-interpretation of Heideggerian ‘care’ is that this helps to distinguish his historical from his ontological insights. One of the myths about Foucault (one in which he may have seem to believe himself in his earlier work) is that he would not allow for freedom and resistance. It results from confusing his historical claim that the modern subject is constituted by an interplay of disciplines and regulations with an ontological denial of the possibility of freedom. But against the background of ‘care’ he can be recognized as saying: we *are* in this way, but this is not a necessity, rather a contingent equilibrium that we can reverse.

At the beginning of this section, I suggested that Foucault’s ethical turn should be read as a mere change of emphasis within a framework that remains the same. This continuity notwithstanding, a recent article attributes a decisive transformative role to Foucault’s ethical turn.⁴¹ According to Rayner, this turn enabled Foucault for the first time to explicate his threefold methodological apparatus, and their vantage point, viz. problematization: the “event of thought” that “conjoins a domain of knowledge, a field of power relations, and a set of ethical practices of the self”.⁴² In his own terms, Foucault is concerned with “the *problematizations* through which being offers itself to be ... and the *practices* on which basis these problematizations are formed”.⁴³ If the semantic proximity between Foucault’s ‘care for the self’ and Heidegger’s ‘care’ suggests a substantive link, can the notion of problematization provide it?⁴⁴ I think it can.

⁴⁰ On this connection, see Milchman & Rosenberg (eds.), *Foucault and Heidegger: Critical Encounters* (2003).

⁴¹ Cf. T. Rayner, “On Questioning Being: Foucault’s Heideggerian Turn” (2004)

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 130

⁴³ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, p. 11 (cited in Rayner, *op. cit.* p. 434). ‘Being’ is used here not in the Heideggerian sense, but refers to what is given through practices.

⁴⁴ For a different view see McWhorter, “Subjecting Dasein” (2003).

The establishment of coherent problematizations opens up possibilities of being in a way that reminds of Heidegger's thrownness. He pointed towards a historical failure to realize the freedom we ontologically already have *as possibility* but which we fail to remember. Heidegger therefore discerns two worlds, and two selves, much like Plato (and Kant): we are ontologically free because *qua essence* we belong to a world behind the transient world of appearances to which we belong *qua self*. Rather than positing a 'hidden essence', Foucault suggests that it is enough to unmask the finite self as a contingent construct, which can always be de-constructed and re-constructed. To insist that we (and with us the 'things') can be otherwise, does not suggest an a priori essence, but can equally be based on the rejection of the normality or naturalness of the phenomena.

How, then, can Foucault say that "[l]iberty is the ontological condition of ethics"?⁴⁵ Rather than 'eternal' ontological then means 'constitutive': by saying that we are 'ontologically' free Foucault means that we are not merely accidentally free, but that we are (historically) constituted in such a way that we are free. In this sense, we can still speak of a freedom that is 'our own' and can we still say that we are 'always already' free. On this view, that we are ontologically free has nothing to do with an 'essence' we should have. That means that rather than trying to locate an a historical structure underlying ethics and politics, we should acknowledge that for Foucault *thrownness* and *fallenness* could never be opposed as they are in Heidegger.

The implications of this difference comes into view when consider what in Foucault might be the equivalent of *projection*. Recall that for Heidegger projection is *thrown* projection: we are free in that we have are constituted in such a way that we have *eigentlich* possibilities to return to. This is similar to Foucault's suggestion that there are unrealized possibilities which we can recognize as our own. But for the latter those possibilities are not found within ourselves, but within the very power networks that constitute us. We do not return to ourselves, remember what was forgotten, but we use the patterns we find in our culture to create something new, to rearrange relations.⁴⁶ Moreover, when Heidegger speaks of relationships, he means by that a single totality. Foucault, on the other hand, says that we (moderns) live not in a single world but in a plurality of practices, constituted by a variety of power networks. Those networks are intertwined, and in combination constitute a multiplicity of practices and multifaceted selves. In sum, the projection of unrealized possibilities takes a distinctively modern shape: rather than questioning Being, it is a matter of criticizing the alleged objectivity of problematizations by historicizing them.

3. Arendt: enduring the wonder of human plurality

Despite the influence of Heidegger, Arendt's terminology does not reflect the notion of 'care'. But she is concerned with the same problematic, and has in fact influenced Patočka's writings. What we have discussed in Foucault under the headings of 'ethics, politics and problematization' seems to correspond to the triad 'thought, action, and conditioning' in Arendt. In *The Human Condition* these three concepts figure prominently. I will thus start with a discussion of this book, and at-

⁴⁵ "The ethic of care for the self", p. 4

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11

tempt to clarify the way these concepts are used here. The first two are associated with the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*, the third with the human condition in general.

Aristotle discerned three ways of free (social) life, which were concerned with the beautiful rather than the necessary: *bios theōrētikos* (contemplative life), *bios politikos* (political life) and *bios apolaustikos* (the life of pleasure).⁴⁷ Since Medieval philosophy, the term *vita activa* refers to a diluted form of Aristotle's *bios politikos*, which was originally restricted to public life in the *polis*, and the action necessary to establish and sustain it. Aquinas' translation still reflects this narrow meaning, but in later Medieval theory *vita activa* assumes broader meaning, denoting all human activities: all the 'un-quiet' that is opposed to the quietness of contemplation.

Arendt goes against this tradition, and uses the term for three fundamental activities: the natural life of necessity (labour), the fabrication of the artificial world (work), and the unmediated activity going on between a plurality of people (action). This threefold parallels another distinction in Aristotle, between three forms of cognition: practical (*epistēmē praktikē*), productive (*epistēmē poiētikē*) and theoretical (*theoria*).⁴⁸ Labour is then the 'practical' form of human activity, and is directed at life itself, the fulfillment of physical needs; work is its productive form (craftwork, art), which brings about the artificial 'work' world of reifications; action is the 'theoretical' activity of constituting the common public realm and appearing therein, both of which are directed at beings that are ends in themselves.⁴⁹ For Arendt, only the last form of activity is truly political. On the one hand, this is clearly in agreement with Aristotle's opposition between acting and making. On the other hand, Arendt criticizes Aristotle's conception of action for still being teleological.⁵⁰ For Aristotle, action only ranks higher because it aims at a higher good (happiness). Even though it can only be actualized through performance, the aim is not performance but the production of a work, viz. character. Action is in Aristotle ultimately a means to the actualization of virtue; only contemplation is really self-sufficient. By contrast, Arendt tries to think action as self-sufficient, as outside the teleological framework. If Aristotle would be right that anything real is preceded by potentiality, all action would be conditioned by the past. New beginnings would be impossible.

The *vita contemplativa* is the Latin translation of contemplative life, and suffers similar difficulties. In Greek philosophy, we find two kinds of contemplation.⁵¹ On the one hand, *theoria* proper, which is another word for *thaumazein*: the shocked wonder at the miracle of Being that Aristotle held to be the beginning of philosophy. In this sense, contemplation is a speechlessness that overcomes you. On the other hand, there is the sense that later became predominant, but is 'contaminated' by "experiences of the craftsman, who sees before his inner eye the shape of the model according to which he fabricates his object".⁵² The Platonic doctrine of ideas is based on this idea, suggesting to make the models that guide fabrication objects of contemplation by renouncing all fabrication, all movement. So conceived, contemplation is rather a consciously chosen state of motionlessness, which is not the state of the philosopher, but of '*homo faber* in disguise'.

⁴⁷ Nicomachean Ethics, 1095a 17-20. Cf. *The Human Condition*, p. 12-17.

⁴⁸ *Metaphysics* 1025^b

⁴⁹ According to Aristotle, the moving principle of things made is in the maker, that of things done is in the doer, but a third class of beings has the principle of its movement in itself. Similarly, only action concerns the sheer actuality (*energeia*) of men.

⁵⁰ See Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, p. 42-59

⁵¹ *The Human Condition*, p. 303

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 303

Thought, then, is the term Arendt uses for the privileged form of philosophical reasoning, that of the Socratic school. Similarly, action is her term for the privileged form of activity, which is truly non-teleological. The common core in her criticism of Aristotle's teleology, and Plato's doctrine of ideas is that they both elevate necessity over contingency, contemplation of the eternal over the participation in dialogue and action. Instead, Arendt insists on the autonomy of human affairs and opinion, including both ethics and politics, vis-à-vis matters of truth. This critical aim clearly echoes the Kantian distinction between theoretical and practical reason, and his suggestion that practical matters have their own rationality.⁵³

The first two terms of Arendt's triad have been accounted for, but what about 'conditioning'? I have hesitated what label to use here, for a number of concepts are important. But conditioning is the most general term and as such seems to be closest to Heidegger's conception of care. Having introduced the conceptual apparatus, I will now turn to Arendt's ideas on thinking (§3.1), action (§3.2), and conditioning (§3.3).

§3.1 The thinking dialogue of two-in-one

Like Foucault, Arendt takes her lead from Socrates' teachings, in which she finds the discovery of thinking. But where Foucault emphasizes the *parrèsia* role the philosopher as *basanos* has towards others, Arendt is more interested in the exceptional self-relation that is its precondition: the inner dialogue of thought we know as the *conscience*.⁵⁴

The conscience has occupied Arendt since her doctoral dissertation *Love and Saint Augustine* (1929), and reappears in her later work on the 'banality of evil'. In Socrates and Augustine alike, the conscience denotes the counterpart of common sense, which derives its authority not from agreement but from truth. In the previous section we have seen that Socrates understood this truth in terms of a harmony between life and speech.⁵⁵ Arendt points to a related aspect of Socrates' philosophy: he introduced a specific form of speech to achieve this harmony, viz. the method of dialectic. Dialectic should bring forth the truthfulness of an opinion (as opposed to its persuasiveness).⁵⁶

According to Arendt, the criterion of self-constancy was an internalization of public judgment or opinion. For the Greeks something was only real if it appeared to others who could judge it, and because there was no all-knowing transcendent God, actions could be unknown by men and gods. This posed a problem: how can such actions be real? Socrates revolved this problem through the discovery of an inner 'spectator', who was contained within the same person, but yet had enough distance to judge his actions. The individual was not considered to be one, but two-in-one. Conscience is the witness from whom one cannot escape, in Arendt's terms: "the fellow who awaits you if and when you come home".⁵⁷

This 'coming home' occurs only when you commit yourself to judge and act according to your own standards. It is a willingness to endure the wonder of Being, which does not convey a positive truth, but reminds of the inner voice of conscience. This attitude, this readiness to endure the

⁵³ See Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, p. 50

⁵⁴ For this paragraph I am much indebted to A.J. Vetlesen, "Hannah Arendt on conscience and evil" (2001)

⁵⁵ Cf. *On Revolution*, p. 96-100. See Foucault's remarks on the problematization of *parrèsia* in the 5th century B.C.

⁵⁶ "Philosophy and politics", p. 80

experience of wonder, distinguishes the philosopher from his fellow citizens. This is the form care for the self takes in Socrates. Arendt summarizes: “thinking – the two-in-one of the soundless dialogue – actualizes the difference within our identity”, which “results in conscience as its by-product”.⁵⁸

Later developments challenged the assumptions underlying Socrates’ proposal, and questioned the problem to which it was a response. The problem of the reality of unseen actions disappeared when the Socratic conception of truth was problematized. Platonic and Christian metaphysics posited a transcendent Being behind the world of appearances. The truth was not ‘in the eye of the beholder’, in ordinary opinion, but in the philosophical or religious experience of Being. The experience of Being was no longer conceived of as a ‘silent call’, but as the disclosure of the eternal truth behind the transient world of appearances.

In Augustine, the Socratic conscience is re-interpreted (following Plato) as ‘remembering’ the true voice of God, which directs the individual away from habituation. The individual who criticizes the majority or the king now derives his authority not from his own truthfulness, but from God (who, much like the oracle of Delphi, never lies, but may speak in riddles). Evil is what leads men away from God’s truth, viz. succumbing to worldly habits. It corresponds to what later thinkers call alienation: serving something that is external to your being (the apparent world) rather than something internal (the eternal world). It brings Arendt to the conclusion, in her dissertation, that evil springs forth not from passion but from habit, from failing to remember (which is close to Socratic’ ignorance).

Arendt herself describes, in *The Human Condition*, habituation in terms of the normalization and isolation she finds in mass society.⁵⁹ The emergence of society, of ‘the social’ has blurred the line between public and private, and made it impossible to act. I will not linger on this transformation now, which I will discuss in the next section, but merely want to point out its consequences for the ‘care of self’. Arendt grants behaviorism the law of large numbers: “the more people there are, the more likely they are to behave, and the less likely to tolerate non-behaviour” (p. 43). This makes statistical or economical analyses of behaviour possible, and even likely, in mass society. In turn, it reinforces the modern spirit of social equality based on conformism. “Society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to ‘normalize’ its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action” (p. 40).

Like Heidegger, Arendt maintains that “the meaningfulness of everyday relationships is disclosed not in everyday life, but in rare deeds” (p. 42). In mass society this meaningfulness and these rare deeds are lost, not unlike the tyranny of totalitarianism. In both cases, people have become wholly private, deprived of public appearance among others, of judgment by others. *En masse* people are ‘imprisoned’ in their own experience, in the *loneliness* of being alienated from the world and from other people. This is not only characteristic for the laborer, but also for the Christian ‘doer of good deeds’ (p.73-8). Goodness (like action and philosophy) differs from labour in that it comes to an immediate end. But for it to be good (in the Christian sense), it must hide itself from appearance, not only from others but even from the actor himself. Because God sees everything, sees ‘in the heart’, the reality of ‘what does not appear’ ceases to be a problem. Like the laborer, the Christian

⁵⁷ *Life of Mind*, vol. I, p. 193 (cited in Vetlesen, p. 12).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 191

thus lacks the company of his conscience, and falls prey to ignorance or thoughtlessness. This is what characterizes loneliness. Loneliness is thus the very opposite of the philosopher's solitude, in which thought occurs.

The theme of conscience and evil is also central to *Eichman in Jerusalem*. Eichman, she writes, "did not need to 'close his ears to the voice of conscience', as the judgment has it, not because he had none, but because his conscience spoke with a 'respectable voice', with the voice of society around him". In the Third Reich, evil has lost its quality of temptation, it had become the social norm rather than an a-social inclination. This shift was made possible by the normalization which she holds characteristic for mass society. Evil has become a routine, goodness a temptation. Thus, in the last year of the war, Eichman conscience (not his fanaticism) brings him to sabotage the more 'moderate' orders of Himmler that ran counter to Hitler's 'radical' orders, which for him had the force of law.⁶⁰ This lawfulness is essential: Eichman reduced the conscience to familiarity with a higher *social* law, rather than with the absolute (an 'eternal' law that is not external but that is constitutive of who you are). In other words, he was a social conformist.

Arendt's use of the term conscience in *The Human Condition* and in *Eichman* seem to contradict each other: in the last case it denotes social conformism, in the first case its very opposite. But the two are related, I think, in that they are both grounded in judgment. The philosophical conscience results from the judgment of one's 'inner fellow', the ordinary conscience from the judgment of one's fellow citizens. The case of Eichman points to a kind of normalization that not only results in loneliness, but also in a distorted conscience: a normalization not only of behaviour, but also of judgment. This normalization of judgment occurs precisely when your judgment is absolutely subordinated to an external law, at which point it ceases to be *your own* judgment. These are the two ways in which the social dominates the political. Care for the self, to conclude, Arendt understands in terms of opening yourself to spontaneous ideas and actions that are based on contingency rather than objectivity, and putting them to the test of dialogue (inner or actual). In the next section, I will discuss how this relates to 'care for the polity'.

§3.2 *Establishing a common world*

In this section I will focus on the changing nature of the political, and its relation to the ethical. In "Philosophy and Politics", Arendt describes the development of a gulf between contemplation and action, which has its origin in Socrates conflict with the polis. In Arendt's view, this conflict broke out precisely because Socrates wanted philosophy to play a new, political, role. We have seen that Socrates internalized philosophical dialectic in the figure of the dialogue of two-in-one. Now we should point out the political implications of this innovation, which takes us closer to Foucault's observations about the importance of *parrèsias* for the sound judgment of the majority or the king ('advice to the prince'). In a similar vein, Arendt suggests that Socrates wanted to make the polis more truthful by making its citizens more truthful. He did not so much want to teach them anything in particular but aimed to improve their judgment and their opinion (*doxa*), which in his view constitutes political life.

⁵⁹ p. 38-49

⁶⁰ *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 138-150.

But Arendt goes beyond Foucault in indicating that Socrates' political activity was not limited to engaging in critical dialogue with other citizens (his famous 'midwifery'). In addition, he wanted to stimulate friendship, as the kind of relation in which such a critical dialogue is possible. To use the terminology of Aristotle, the community comes into being through political equalisation, as a non-economical alternative to monetary exchanges.⁶¹ For Arendt, this equality of 'civic friendship' is the commonness that makes mutual judgment possible.

According to Aristotle (following Socrates), civic friendship is the bond of communities. It enables citizens to communicate with each other in a way that is simultaneously agonistic and equalizing. This can be achieved by showing that even though the world opens up differently to each person it is in some sense the same world. This is how the statesman 'gathers together' and protects the unity of the polis: enabling citizens to see the commonness of the world in between them. This is done by aiding their mutual understanding, by teaching citizens to see the world from the other's point of view. The virtue of the statesman is therefore to understand as many different points of view as possible. Arendt suggests that Socrates saw the establishment of a common world through the enlargement of understanding as the political task of the philosopher, and it is to this end that truthfulness must contribute. In this sense, care of the polis entails care of the self.

For several reasons, Socrates' extension of philosophy to the political realm led him into conflict with the polis. Of course, the individual conscience might conflict with the polis. But more important is that the search for the truth of opinion may lead to its very destruction, to the problematization of truth and appearance (which happened to Oedipus). Crucial in Arendt's view is that the conflict ended with a defeat for philosophy. Not because Socrates could not convince the polis and died, but because his trial led Plato to a denunciation of opinion, which in post-Platonic philosophy is reflected by a denunciation of politics.

Plato came to distinguish truth, in the sense of eternal knowledge, from contingent opinion. He answered the city's contempt for philosophers with contempt for the polis, paving the way for a time in which philosophers would no longer feel responsible for the polis. It was received wisdom at the time that because philosophers were concerned with eternal things, they were the least fit of all to rule. Plato challenged this view, claiming that absolute knowledge (Ideas) does have political relevance. It resulted in a separation of thought and action, on which the entire Western tradition of political thought is founded. For Arendt, this fundament is based on a misunderstanding. Plato failed to understand that Socrates did not claim to be wise, that philosophy came to be politically relevant only by interpreting the wonder of being negatively, by teaching 'nothing'. Socrates did not tell others what to do, let alone claim absolute knowledge. He did not teach anything positive, but had a merely negative aim: destroying ignorance.

The challenge today is to remember the original foundation of political philosophy on the Socratic conviction that philosophical experience is related to ordinary experience in a way that does not place the philosopher outside the political realm, nor above other citizens, but among them. This conviction is grounded in the experience of not-knowing. Because he can only experience this wonder outside the political realm, it leads to a conflict within the philosopher who also wants to maintain the common sense necessary for understanding. The willingness to endure this wonder is what distinguishes the philosopher from his fellow-citizens, but solitude, the thinking dialogue

⁶¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1135. Compare modern discussions about the anthropological theory of 'gift-exchange'.

of two-in-one is what characterizes the *political* philosopher. For unlike wonder, solitude belongs to the realm of human affairs based on opinion rather than absolute knowledge, and can become part of the common world by being expressed in judgment. Like conscience is the by-product of thinking, says Arendt, “judging” is “the by-product of the liberating effect of thinking, [it] realizes thinking, makes it manifest in the world of appearances, where I am never alone and always to busy to be able to think”.⁶² *Conscience is to thinking-in-solitude what judgment is to speaking-in-public.*

Like Foucault, Arendt analyzes why and how we have come to understand the things as we do, in order to reminds us of our potentiality for freedom. She, too, focuses on mass society as the end point of this development. The rise of the social has replaced action with the social conformism of normalized behaviour. It results from what Arendt calls ‘loss of the common world’. “What makes mass society so difficult”, she says, is “that the world between them [between the people] has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them”.⁶³ This common world is the ‘community of things’ that we enter when we are born and which transcends our life span. This transcendence gives the common world an earthly immortality, which has little to do with the metaphysical assumption of the existence of an eternal world behind and beyond the appearances. Metaphysical eternity (other-worldliness) distracts from politics, but without earthly immortality (this-worldliness) no politics is possible. The existence of a public realm depends on earthly permanence.

The kernel of Arendt’s philosophical diagnosis is that a shift has occurred in the way we ground the reality of ‘the common’ or the universal. The social’ grounds reality in the ‘common nature’ of people, not in the commonness of the world of opinions. For Arendt, what is distinctive for the realm of human affairs is the way its reality and durability is assured.⁶⁴ Both life and the world derive their reality from the thing-character of the world: life assures the means of its survival through consumer goods, which belong to the world of durable things until they are consumed. The world derives its permanence from use objects, which are not consumed but are used. That is why, in using them, we become accustomed to them, conditioned by them. The fabric of human affairs, by contrast, is constituted by the transient ‘products’ of action and speech constitute. They lack the tangibility of things, and depend for their reality on being heard, seen and affirmed by a plurality of people. *The political implies a specific kind of ‘worldliness’ that does not depend on objectivity but on visibility or recognition.* This is the thread that ties together the phenomena of thought and action. “Viewed ... in their worldliness”, says Arendt, “action... and thought have much more in common than any of them has with work or labour.

The care for the polity, to conclude, is neither care for others (good deeds) nor care for the world (making), but care for the *commonness* of the world, for the mutual orientation towards the same world of works, and the acknowledgement that no matter how different our opinions are, they are not isolated appearances, but appearances of the same world that appears differently to me. This is the sense that appearances are not *merely* appearances: we know that they more not because we can see behind them, but because we have part of them in common. The ultimate ground of this common world lies in ‘natality’, the capacity for beginning anew, without which no action

⁶² *Life of Mind*, vol. I, p. 193 (cited in Vetlesen, p. 12).

⁶³ *The Human Condition*, p. 52-3 (my insertion)

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93-96

would be possible “The miracle that saves the world, 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” (247). This ‘natality’ is part of the ontological structure underlying thought and action, to which we will turn next.

§3.3 Conditioning

In Arendt’s case, her relation to Heidegger is often overstated rather than overlooked.⁶⁵ Although the influence is unmistakable, it would be a mistake not to recognize the many ways in which she departs from Heidegger, often in the same direction as Foucault. What corresponds to ‘care’ in her work? I have focussed on conditioning, as this most clearly brings out their differences.

The expression ‘human condition’ refers to the ways in which the beings we encounter condition our existence.⁶⁶ Arendt discerns four fundamental conditions: life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, and plurality. Life (biological), worldliness (artificiality), and plurality are the specific conditions for labour, work and action, respectively. All three are connected with natality and mortality as the most general conditions of human existence. They are connected to mortality in being directed at some kind of durability: biological survival, artificial permanence, and historical remembrance. They are connected to natality in having to reckon with the beginning inherent in every new birth.

I said that for Arendt the ‘products’ of action derive their permanence from being remembered, which depends on but is irreducible to their reification in tangible things: the records, documents and monuments that remind us of the living spirit of who preceded us. But that means that the world of human affairs is always vulnerable to forgetting. It is at this point that Arendt’s debt to Heidegger stands out most clearly. Heidegger’s *Time and Being* is directed precisely against such forgetfulness. In his everyday mode of being, the individual concerns itself with beings, and is ‘fallen’ from a life that relates to Being.⁶⁷ According to Heidegger, the conscience confronts the individual with Being, by disclosing his indebtedness (*Schuld*) to something beyond himself. This is the condition of *Geworfenheit*: being thrown ‘in the world’, before and beyond your choices and actions. Unlike Augustine, the voice of conscience is not conceived of as the voice of God, but as the voice of *care*: anxiety (*Angst*) for your own death, for the possibility of being-no-more. Not the fall but *Geworfenheit* is the most fundamental human condition, and conscience calls forth to live up to this possibility. Unlike Foucault, Arendt retains a dissymmetry between *Geworfen* and *Vervallen*.

But for Arendt, Heidegger’s view is still too metaphysical, as it posits a Being behind appearances. Rather than trying to go behind and beyond the appearances, we should locate the truth *within* the world of appearances. This requires not a relation to Being, but *thoughtfulness*. As long as we think, speak and judge according to our own opinion (rather than that of others), we will be able to remedy forgetting through a process of renewal. Thought for Arendt does not take place outside language, but has the capacity to renew language *from within*. In this she is close to Foucault’s belief that we resist practices from within those practices rather than from the outside.

⁶⁵ On this relation, see in addition to Villa’s book, J. Tamineaux, *Het Thracische dienstmeisje en de professionele denker. Hannah Arendt en Martin Heidegger* [1992].

⁶⁶ *The Human Condition*, p. 7-11

Unlike Heidegger, Arendt does not associate forgetting with *das Man*: the life of common sense, of being-with others in the ‘common world’.⁶⁸ On the contrary, she believes it to be a precondition of remembrance. The difference becomes more clear when Heidegger in his later work turns away from action to making as the locus of projection: art is what discloses new possibilities.⁶⁹ Arendt, by contrast, regards any focus on making as an attempt to bring in the Platonic craftsman model. Precisely because its ‘products’ are never permanent, only action can truly be self-sufficient, and is as such the principle manifestation of natality.

4. Conclusion

My strategy in this paper has been to use Jan Patočka as a mediator in the comparison of Arendt and Foucault. This final section will harvest the fruits of this strategy, and evaluate its limitations. To begin with the latter, Patočka’s framework of ‘care for the soul’ may have concealed some of Arendt’s distinctions. So far I have associated ‘care for the self’ with the conscience and ‘care for the polity’ with ‘the common world’. The category of ‘action’ has been strangely missing from this picture, however. This indicates a confusion on my part of two distinctions: between the ‘invisible world’ of unconditioned mental activities and the ‘visible world’ of conditioned appearances, and between ‘beginning’ (natality) and ‘permanence’ (mortality). Now, it seems to me that for Arendt ‘care for the self’ would have to include both forms of beginning (thought and action), and ‘care for the polity’ both forms of permanence (remembrance and recognized appearance).⁷⁰ Thus, in the final analysis, Arendt’s theory is first of all structured on a temporal distinction, and points to different ways of being-temporal. This betrays the influence of Heidegger (for whom it is *Dasein*’s temporality that distinguishes it from other ways of being), and points to a new research angle, which I will not pursue any further here.

That said we can not turn to the positive fruits of the framework. The main advantage, I think, is the ambivalent relation to Heidegger that it foregrounds. On the one hand, Arendt and Foucault both retain in some form the discordance between ontological freedom and historical unfreedom, while on the other hand replacing its metaphysical foundation in Being.⁷¹ This might be just the kind of ‘in between’ Arendt holds necessary for a dialogue. On this basis the differences between the two thinkers may come more clearly in view. I can impossibly discuss all those connections here, but I will limit myself to two illustrations.

First illustration. Several commentators have tried to clarify the differences in the way Arendt and Foucault use the word ‘normalization’, which has led them to different conclusions. On the one hand, Dolan observes “a crucial difference between Arendt’s and Foucault’s understanding of normalizing society. Where Arendt sees normalization as the result of anonymous, informal social pressures to conform, Foucault understands normalization to proceed in a manner that is to a

⁶⁷ *Zijn en tijd*, §38

⁶⁸ *Zijn en tijd*, §27

⁶⁹ Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, p. 132

⁷⁰ Implicit is the common association of renewal with the individual and permanence with the community.

⁷¹ Of course, others have recognized their mutual debt to Heidegger as well (i.e. Havercroft and Gordon), but they have not so explicitly tried to exploit the ambivalence of their relations to Heidegger.

considerable extent agonistic”.⁷² Edwards, on the other hand, associates normalization with the economy, which he sees as “the point where the two philosophies come closest together”.⁷³

Do Arendt and Foucault agree or disagree on the point of ‘normalization’? I would say that their relation is ambivalent. Edwards rightly suggests that they agree on a general phenomenon that is best characterized as the rise of the ‘technical’ control of human relationships. He is confused, however, when he concludes that in Arendt the political dominates the social, whereas in Foucault the social would dominate the political.⁷⁴ In both case, ‘the social’ refers to an intersection of two domains: the public and the private (Arendt) and discipline and regulation (Foucault). These two intersections are not of the same kind, however. Arendt points to the use of objective measures in politics, which establish a form of permanence that does not allow for new beginnings. The social for her is indeed opposed to politics. Foucault, by contrast, points to the intersection of two kinds of objective measures, which *together* make new forms of permanence possible by presenting as natural what is contingent. The intersection itself is not opposed to political resistance, but is its medium, it is the site of both normalisation and resistance. This is what Dolan rightly points to, although he fails to take into account the distinction I suggested between the normalization of judgment and the normalization of behaviour.

To conclude, the principle difference is that Foucault is only concerned with the normalization of behaviour, which leaves still place for resistance (Foucault) and thought (Arendt). Arendt is also concerned with the normalization of judgment, which destroys the solitary place where the will to resist or speak up could come from. This difference in scope explains why their shared perception of the same global phenomenon (the technical control of human conduct) leads them to different proposals. *Whereas Arendt finds it necessary to restrict the social in order to secure a forum for public action and speech, Foucault merely has to unmask and transform the social to secure a place for resistance.*

Second illustration. Commentators have struggled with the different ways Arendt and Foucault criticize and replace the sovereignty conception of power. Allen concludes that Foucault opposes an obligation-interdiction model of power with a purely strategic model, which emphasizes the productive over the restrictive nature of power; by contrast, Arendt targets a command-obedience model with a purely communicative form of power, which emphasizes the unity of knowledge and action over their separation.⁷⁵ On this view, the analyses are both too limited and complement each other in this respect. Gordon, similarly, emphasizes that Arendt retains more of the sovereignty concept than Foucault, viz. the idea that power is associated with the subject. Where for Foucault the subject is merely an effect of power and knowledge practices, Arendt believes it can transcend such practices (from within). As I see it, Allen’s formulation is more to the point than Gordon’s. The difference between Arendt and Foucault lies not in the extent to which the subject can transcend the practices in which he is embedded, but in *how* he goes about it. *Whilst Arendt points to the renewal of language in thought and speech as the birth place of new possibilities, Foucault points to practical resistance as a reversal of strategic relations that already ‘exists’ as possibility.*

⁷² Dolan, “The paradoxical liberty of bio-power”, p. 375

⁷³ Edwards, “Cutting of the King’s head”, p. 9.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.16

⁷⁵ Allen, “Power, subjectivity and agency”, i.e. p. 132/144-145

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