

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA UNIVERZITY KARLOVY

Ústav filozofie a religionistiky

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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Dvě koncepce myšlení v díle H. Arendtové

Two Conceptions of Thinking in H. Arendt's Writings

Praha 2018

Vedoucí práce

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Na tomto místě bych chtěl poděkovat vedoucí své diplomové práce, Mgr. Václav Němec, Ph.D., za průběžné konzultace a podnětné a cenné rady vedoucí k úspěšnému zvládnutí zvoleného tématu.

Abstrakt

Ve své diplomové se zaměřím na pojetí myšlení u Hannah Arendtové. Zejména se pokusím ukázat, že v díle Arendtové jsou přítomny dvě odlišné koncepce myšlení. První koncepce se opírá o komunikaci a svět. Podle této koncepce myšlení vychází ze společného světa a má sloužit k vybudování politických vztahů mezi lidmi. Druhá koncepce myšlení na rozdíl od první tvrdí, že myšlení je podle své definice mimosvětovou činností a nemůže sloužit k politickým účelům s výjimkou mimořádných případů. Porovnání těchto různých koncepcí myšlení bude uskutečněno na základě analýzy další mentální schopnosti člověka – schopnosti soudů. Budu hájit tezi, myšlení ztratí možnost a schopnost pronikat do společného světa, protože schopnost soudů přebírá řadu funkcí, které dříve vykonávalo myšlení.

Abstract

In my thesis, I will concentrate on the concept of thinking in H. Arendt's philosophy. I will try to demonstrate that there are two different conceptions of thinking in her writings. The first conception is based on communication and world. According to this conception, thinking arises from the common world and helps to found political relationships among people. Unlike first, the second conception claims that thinking is an activity that is placed outside the world by its very definition and therefore do not serve political purposes for the exception of extraordinary cases. The comparison of these different conceptions of thinking will be based on analysis of additional mental capacity of judgement. My claim is that thinking loses capacity to participate in the common world because capacity of judgement adopts some of the functions that were earlier performed by thinking.

Klicova slova

Myšlení, intersubjektivita, common sense, realita, význam, pravda

Key words

Thinking, intersubjectivity, common sense, reality, meaning, truth.

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Two conceptions of thinking in H. Arendt's writings.

It is surprising that several key ideas about thinking, which Arendt expressed in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, do not recur in her later works. One of these relates to the definition of thinking, which places greater emphasis on intersubjectivity and communication: "The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else."¹ In her later works, Arendt also fails to mention the topic of cliché, which was crucial in her description of Eichmann's behavior. Furthermore, the idea of thoughtlessness in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is described primarily as a defense against reality and others, not as a means of escaping from the self as it is described in *The Life of The Mind*.

As I will try to demonstrate, differences between the concept of thinking as described in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and her later concept of thinking are so pronounced that they cannot be understood as parts of the same paradigm. Instead, it will be demonstrated that these two conceptions are distinct and cannot be treated as a progressive development of one to the other. It will be argued that the key difference between these conceptions consists in their relation to truth and the world. The first conception is based on truth and communication with others. It converts subjective opinions of actors into truthful claims that are open to refinement, which requires cooperation with fellow men. The second conception, which relinquishes both truth and the world, is motivated by the quest for meaning that overcomes every possible evidence and leaves the thinker completely alone. The significance of this distinction has far-reaching consequences. Throughout her career, she answered differently to the questions: Can thinking provide reliable insights? What role does thinking play in individual life? Should thinking be politically relevant? These different conceptions will be investigated in sections 1 and 3 respectively. The first section will occupy the larger part of this paper since Arendt's early conception of thinking has not received enough attention from interpreters. The third section will not aim at an exhaustive analysis of her later concept of thinking, but rather try to reveal the most distinct characteristics that differ later conception from earlier one.

¹ Arendt, H. *Eichmann in Jerusalem. – A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: The Viking Press, 1964. – p. 27

Furthermore, the introduction of the concept of judgment (or representative thinking) will be shown to be a turning point in Arendt's thinking. It takes over political and communicative functions (that earlier were performed by thinking) and consequently frees the activity of thinking from its worldly limitations. (This aspect will be explored in the second section. Again, it will not be possible to give full attention to her theory of judgment. Instead, the focus will be on how it affects her general ideas concerning thinking)

1. Early Conception of Thinking

1.1. Thinking, experience and reality.

A) Reality and common sense

To start with, we should keep in mind that Arendt's notion of common sense (which is closely related to her notion of reality) is rooted in the Aristotelian tradition.² The sense of reality is guaranteed by the fact that individual senses disclose the same world and the same objects in different ways. The special and internal sense coordinates the activities of the other senses and transforms them into a perception of one specific object. Combined together, private senses serve as the foundation of a sixth sense that is common to everybody: "What since Thomas Aquinas we call common sense, the *sensus communis*, is a kind of sixth sense needed to keep my five senses together and guarantee that it is the same object that I see, touch, taste, smell, and bear."³

Arendt adds to this Aristotelian understanding of the sixth sense a more significant intersubjective aspect. The real guarantee of the existence of the object is not the unity of my perceptions, but its appearance to other humans, although the "mode of appearance may be different."⁴ Others help us to separate illusion from reality and evaluate the latter appropriately. The context of these different "modes of an appearance" will therefore still be the same for everyone who perceives this appearance because they live in the same intersubjectively verified world⁵;" "only because we have common sense, that is only because not one man, but men in the plural inhabit the earth can we trust our immediate sensual experience."⁶ The process of verification is not simply a transformation from reality to a common reality. Instead, it is the way reality and truth as such are discovered.⁷ The sense of reality is essentially associated with a constant process of refinement and a plurality of perspectives that make refinement and verification possible. In other words, reality is dependent upon public space. Withdrawal from it means destroying the plurality of

² Aristoteles, De Anima Book III. – Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2002. – line 425a27

³ Arendt, H. The Life of the mind. – Harvest Books: New York, 1981. – p. 50

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Arendt, H. The Origins of Totalitarianism. – Meridian Books: New York, 1962. – p. 476

⁷ Canovan, M. Hannah Arendt. A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought. – Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995. – p. 111; Arendt, H. The Human Condition. – The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1998. – p. 208

perspectives and, along with it, its richness. More importantly, it also presupposes the loss of certainty and the possibility to be certain of reality.

Common sense is not only the way of constituting a common world, but also a universal medium among people. Because they exist in the same homogenous space, communication and ordinary interactions among people are basic processes that usually cause no complications. People are able to understand each other's intentions easily because there is a normativity common to everyone, which dictates what should exist and how exactly it should exist. Everything that belongs to it attains its natural or common perspectives owing to the very process of communicating with others, which means a constant specification of reality and a readiness of thought to adapt and to grasp the changes in it. The sixth sense ensures for everyone the sense of a common reality. This sense is the result of communication with the world and with other people. It is determined by social and cultural conditions, and so it is prone to change and, under certain conditions, it can (and has) disappeared and left man alone, without any means of connecting with reality and other people. It is through daily activities and interactions with others that my world acquires heft, tangibility, and a natural hierarchy. It has nothing to do with some universal principles of communication. It is for this reason that Arendt says that common sense is a "political sense par excellence."⁸

B) Ideology

According to Arendt, the loss of a sense of reality is one of the ills of modern times. To analyze this phenomenon and its impact on the activity of thinking it is useful to consider its counterpart – ideology.

A distinctive feature of ideologies is their ultimate totality. According to Arendt, they resolve "all the riddles of universe"⁹ by reducing them to one fundamental problem, whether it is the struggle of social classes for means of production, or the struggle of races for survival. It is this totality that distinguishes ideologies from what Arendt calls irresponsible opinions, meaning merely subjective opinions without inherent truth. Everything the world, appearances, historical events and the future in an ideological context gains its meaning only as a result of its relation to a fundamental problem. To understand reality ideologically means that being is essentially understood as the "unfolding" of some "process which is in constant change."¹⁰ This

⁸ Arendt, H. Understanding and politics. In: *Essays in Understanding*. – Schocken Books: New York, 1994. – p. 318

⁹ Arendt, H. The Origins of Totalitarianism. – Meridian Books: New York, 1962. – p. 457

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 469

“idea” of ideology becomes immanent logic, according to which historical “movement... is set into motion.”¹¹

In the end, the all-encompassing power of ideological explanation destroys the very possibility of actual experience. By reducing to the “idea” of ideology past, present and future with the whole range of its possibilities and perspectives, ideology isolates us from everything fundamentally new, which means from anything that can give us reason to reconsider our positions. In other words, ideology becomes independent of all experience and substitutes reality, with all its concreteness and uniqueness, with a “truer” reality. Every appearance gains its “epistemological basis.” Its relation to ideology and reality is measured by this relation and is conceived only in this ideological way. Appearances lose their being “for themselves” and their uniqueness. The ability to understand every phenomenon occurring in reality only as a manifestation of something else Arendt ironically calls the sixth sense by analogy, with the sixth sense ensured by common sense. In this way, the space of communication and phenomena are replaced by an epistemological space, where everything is “automatically assumed to signify something else.”¹²

The principal reason why it is possible to establish ideologies is something Arendt calls “bankruptcy of common sense.” Historically, isolation from a sense of what is real was the result of the critical development of modern thought, philosophy, science and, in particular, the industrial revolution.¹³ This development led us to the realization that “our categories of thought and standards of judgment”¹⁴ – something Arendt calls “crutches”¹⁵ of our thinking or “yardsticks by which to measure”¹⁶ – had been bankrupted. The unfortunate consequence of this bankruptcy was that social institutions, common normativity and traditions were no longer able to serve as a normal medium of communication. Common sense, the very feeling of a common world, had vanished. Establishing normal communication between two people – the very process that constitutes common sense – stopped being an ordinary, relatively straightforward procedure. Consequently, people were tended to substitute communication and reaching agreement by the means of mere logicity of thought. Vacuous logical consistency became sufficiently convincing criterion (“the Jews spread diseases, so we need to

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 471

¹³ Arendt, H. *The Human conditions*. – University Of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1998. – p. 47

¹⁴ Arendt, H. *Understanding and politics*. In: *Essays in Understanding*. – Schocken Books: New York, 1994. – p. 318

¹⁵ Arendt, H. *Men in Dark Times*. Harcourt: New York, Brace & World, 1968, p. 10

¹⁶ Arendt, H. *Understanding and politics*. In: *Essays in Understanding*. – Schocken Books: New York, 1994. – p. 321

eradicate the Jews” is an example of such logicity), which replaced the necessity to talk things through with a fellow man to reveal what is real. This created conditions for replacing a sense of reality with ideology. The person, as an autonomous being does not appear in ideological thinking. Instead, humans are understood as the means by which History or Nature reach their goals.¹⁷ Mutual understanding among people has been already secured by the ideology, owing to the fact that the area of their interaction and understanding is ultimately narrowed to the limits proposed by meta-thesis. In reality, however, this kind of “understanding” only isolates people from each other. Interaction is not a contact between two independent people, or individuals in need of finding a common ground, but only the interaction of the “cogs”¹⁸ of history. In such a way, the destruction of common sense by ideology leaves humans completely alone, without any possibility of making contact with their fellow man.

C) Consequences for the Activity of Thinking

What does such a substitution of experience by ideological meta-thesis mean? Arendt focuses on two consequences: First, the loss of a sense of reality is equivalent to the loss of common sense, the political sense that opens the world to us. What is more specific and distinct in her earlier writings is the fact that this loss has a direct effect on our capacity to think.

The very possibility of correcting one’s own mistakes Arendt described earlier as co-existent with a sense of reality. Conversely, the disappearance of reality and other people would mean the exclusion of this possibility. Specifically, she writes, “the preparation {for the occurrence of ideological thinking} has succeeded when people have lost contact with their fellow men as well as the reality around them; for together with these contacts, men lose the capacity of both experience and thought.”¹⁹ If thinking loses touch with reality and others, it also loses the capacity to reveal anything, which is, in Arendt’s terms, equivalent to losing its connection to truth. Consequently, the human mind becomes inert and rigid. It is incapable of reflecting reality, nor can it adapt to it. (It seems as if something very similar happens with Eichmann according to Arendt’s description: “No communication was possible with him, not

¹⁷ Arendt, H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. – Meridian Books: New York, 1962. – p. 473

¹⁸ Arendt, H. *Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship*. In: *Responsibility and Judgment*. – Schocken Books: New York, 2003. – p. 29

¹⁹ Arendt, H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. – Meridian Books: New York, 1962. – p. 474

because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such."²⁰)

Second, the substitution of reality with ideology means that all that is left of the ability to think is its most basic and inferior capacity of forming a sequence of several propositions, something Arendt calls "logicality."²¹ Since the sense of reality has been destroyed, and with it the possibility of true experience, man tends to substitute the disclosure of reality, which is the only source of every possible truth, with logical consistency. According to Arendt, such a substitution means the "negation of truth" as such, because truth must reveal something. Logicality by itself is sterile and entails only interactions of judgments. And so, if reality is completely replaced by a "truer" reality of ideological meta-thesis and consequently lost as such, as it happened to some people in the 20th century, thinking is replaced by a systematic deduction of rules, the absolute sequence of which can neither be interrupted nor even questioned. The very possibility of going beyond the limits of strict logic was destroyed along with the sense of reality. To illustrate this process, Arendt cites Luther's claim, that the lonely man "always deduces one thing from the other and thinks everything to the worst."²² There is nothing that can stop this process from inside.²³ In such a case, in place of adaptation of thought to reality comes meta-thesis, essentially a general rule, under which other, more specific rules are subsumed. This process of deduction and subsuming eventually extends to the whole world in the systematic form of *a priori*: "This would mean that after ideologies have taught people to emancipate themselves from real experience and the shock of reality by luring them into a fool's paradise where everything is known *a priori*."²⁴

To summarize what has been stated in this section, according to Arendt, ideology is a the death of both reality *and* thinking.

²⁰ Arendt, H. Eichmann in Jerusalem. – A Report on the Banality of Evil. New York: The Viking Press, 1964. – 27

²¹ Arendt, H. The Origins of Totalitarianism. – Meridian Books: New York, 1962. – p. 472

²² "Ein solcher (sc. einsamer) Mensch folgert immer aus dem andern und denkt alles zum Ärgsten." In: Erbauliche Schriften, "Warum die Einsamkeit zu fliehen?"

²³ Canovan, M. Hannah Arendt. A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought. – Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995. – p. 91

²⁴ Arendt, H. On the nature of Totalitarianism. In: *Essays in understanding*, – Schocken Books: New York, 1994. – p. 356

1.2. Communicative Concept of Thinking

As already noted, according to Arendt, Eichmann's inability to think and his tendency to express himself using clichés were closely connected with his inability to look at anything "from the other fellow's point of view."²⁵ This idea plays a crucial role in the description of how an individual can overcome the rigidity of his subjective views and reestablish the possibility of experience. It is difficult to reconstruct the meaning of this phrase using only the context of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, however, since Arendt offers no additional explanation. The situation is further complicated by the fact that she appears to have lost interest in the connection of thinking and intersubjectivity after 1964, with only a few exceptions. We can nevertheless find exactly the same wording in her earlier essays and articles. In particular, her unpublished lecture entitled, "Philosophy and Politics," from 1953 will be crucial for an understanding of her early perspective on thinking.

A) Truth and Persuasion

The basic problem described in Arendt's lecture is Socrates' trial. The problematic character of this trial reflects the larger problem of the relationship between the philosopher and the plurality. Socrates spoke with his judges in the same way he spoke with his friends. He "addressed his judges in the form of dialectic,"²⁶ asking questions and seeking answers to them in an effort to arrive at the truth. In reality, discussion in a court was not the kind of dialogue to which Socrates was accustomed. He was used to a dialogue among friends. Faced with judges, however, he was addressing a plurality. Dialectic is not suited to this kind of task, because it is preoccupied with the quest for truth. Inside the courtroom, persuasion aimed at shaping opinion is more appropriate. Truth, which is a traditional area of interest to the *sofoi*, or wise man, loses its essential characteristics to a degree when it enters the public space, where it can be seen and judged by the multitude, because "the moment the eternal is brought into the midst of men it becomes temporal."²⁷ Interaction with the public excludes the very possibility of dialogue, a succession of questions and answers, united in a desire to find the truth. In public settings, thought loses its own inherent context, the way it was achieved, its inherent *responsibility*, and quest for truth, and turns in the opinion, at that in merely subjective one. Because of all these losses, the rivalry among opinions takes the form of persuasion, which

²⁵ Arendt, H. *Eichmann in Jerusalem. – A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: The Viking Press, 1964. – p. 26

²⁶ Arendt, H. *Philosophy and Politics*. In: *Social Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1, Spring 1990. – p. 79

²⁷ Arendt, H. *Philosophy and Politics*. In: *Social Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1, Spring 1990. – p. 79

according to Arendt “does not come from truth.”²⁸ The rivalry among them takes the form of violence, a collision among different effects (even though it is expressed in speech): “To persuade the multitude means to force upon its multiple opinions one's own opinion; persuasion is not the opposite of rule by violence, it is only another form of it.”²⁹

Let us now take a closer look at the role of Socrates and how he overcame the violent struggle of opinions.

B) Thinking from the Standpoint of Somebody Else

According to Arendt, a key feature of Socrates's approach is his attempt to reveal the truth hidden in the opinions of judges. Unlike Plato, he did not discount the value of *doxai*, opinions. Arendt gives her special attention to the primordial connotations of this Greek word “*doxa*,” which have been lost in translation: “*doxa*” comes from “*dokei moi*,” meaning “it seems to me.” “It seems to me” refers to our position in the world, and seemingness assumes some point of view and, as such, is significantly different from illusions, although it is not “something absolute and valid for all.”³⁰ Such subjective seemingness is combined with “commonness”³¹ of the world, i.e., the recognition that despite any differences, “both you and I are human”³² living in one, objective world. Objectivity is always present in the subjectivity of opinions since the latter is a consequence of a common object presented to different people with different perspectives. Socrates's dialectic was aimed at this concealed objectivity. It was an attempt to reveal the truth hidden in every opinion.

Thinking, or the art of the *maieutic* in the way Socrates used it, is a means of communication, which makes it possible to turn a subjective opinion into a truthful one provided that the speaker understands and accepts the condition of his opinion: his point of view from which his view “seems.” Admitting his ignorance and the inability to achieve complete knowledge, Socrates believed that truth is revealed to mortals only through an appreciation of the limitations and the conditionality of truth. This discovery led him to an understanding of the necessity of communication. Uncovering the truth of a companion is only possible by learning from what point of view his opinion seems to be right, which is an impossible task without questioning that has no other motive than the desire to understand.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

The main task of “talking something through”³³ is therefore not to dismiss the opinion of one’s companions, but to “reveal *doxa* in its own truthfulness.”³⁴ In this way, it is possible to achieve a common truth for all who are involved in a discussion and to replace a competition among opinions with dialogue. This is the only way of achieving compromise in the mortal world, where no final truth is possible and, therefore, any form of coercion or tyranny by truth is excluded. The necessary condition for such a conversation is the absence of any clear goal for the discussion and any specific “interests” related to it. Dialogue is a form of communication among friends.

C) Partner in Dialogue

Thinking as a succession of questions and answers requires a partner in a dialogue. The “friend” Arendt has in mind does not necessarily mean another distinct individual. Instead, I alone can be my own company. A human being is essentially a plural being, and he is able to talk with himself. As Arendt puts it, in solitude man becomes two-in-one and, therefore, he is able to have an internal dialogue with himself, which Arendt always understood to be the essence of thinking. Because of this inherent plurality, I can have a relationship with myself, and this relation is by no means predetermined. I can either respect or despise myself. In the latter case, no dialogue is possible, because, as has been stated, dialogue is the privilege of friends. Here we approach Arendt’s usual definition of thinking that should be familiar to readers of her later works. It remains relevant throughout her career. The functional content of this silent dialogue with myself in her earlier period is distinctly different, however. According to Arendt’s early conception, a friend or the “self” with whom a person has his silent inner dialogue is a kind of mediator of communication between that person and others. A human’s “self” determines his point of view, and the only possible way of reaching an understanding with other people is through an understanding of this self. More importantly, man sees the world through the prism of his own self, i.e., through his ideas about how one should behave, think, etc. In this sense, it is obvious that a relationship with myself is more fundamental than relationships with others: “living together with others begins with living together with oneself.”³⁵

³³ Ibid., p. 80

³⁴ Ibid., p. 81

³⁵ Ibid., p. 86

In other words, self, this general *doxa* of man is “the way in which the world opens up to him and is part and parcel of the political reality he lives in.”³⁶ His self is his understanding of the world *in nuce*. This is why Arendt says: “we all change the human world constantly.”³⁷ Again, this moment belongs exclusively to her earlier theory: although thinking reduces a human’s plurality to a duality, I am still capable of having a connection with others and the world. Because this is so, I constitute my understanding of the world, the other, and myself as part of a common world. Such a concept of thinking can be called “communicative.” It does not break with common sense and does not isolate a thinking person from other people. It is only on this basis that Socrates’s task of making philosophy useful for the polis can be comprehensible at all. For this reason, Arendt calls the *maieutic* method political capacity per se,³⁸ and says that friendship as such is a form of political organization.

D) Political Character of Communicative Thinking

It is well known that, for Arendt, the most distinctive characteristic of politics is its concern with the common world. In “Philosophy and Politics,” she interprets friendship in an Aristotelian way, as a relationship based for the most part on talking something through with someone else. It mainly consists in discussing *doxai*, their points of view which *a priori* assures them that they live in the same world. The common world can become common owing to an equality that makes their views equally relevant and, as well as the need to live together. In discussing their opinions, friends find a way of reaching consensus by uncovering the truth hidden in their opinions. They begin “to constitute a little world of its own which is shared in friendship.”³⁹ Friendship in this sense is truly the highest political relationship, which can build or rebuild a common world, because friendship is essentially connected with equalization of friends in relation to the public realm, i.e., an equalization of their claims to be right.

Socrates’s project consisted of trying “to make friends out of Athens’s citizenry”⁴⁰ with the help of thinking and good-natured dialogue, because the citizens of Athens understood the public space to be a place of competition and mutual struggle. Socrates wanted to replace this space of contending opinions by “equalizing”⁴¹ communication and achieving understanding. Arendt clearly states that the capacity to see “the world (as we rather tritely say today) from

³⁶ Ibid., p. 88

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 81

³⁹ Ibid., p. 82

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 83

the other fellow's point of view—is the political kind of insight par excellence⁴² which is, incidentally, the same formulation she used to describe Eichmann's thoughtlessness. In fact, Arendt claims that "If we wanted to define, traditionally, the one outstanding virtue of the statesman, we could say that it consists in understanding the greatest possible number and variety of realities...as those realities open themselves up to the various opinions of citizens."⁴³ Socrates wanted every citizen to take up this activity as his own responsibility. According to him, this was the "political function of the philosopher."⁴⁴ This point is especially important, since, as we have already seen, common sense can be ruined — and indeed has been ruined — in the 20th century. Thinking, however, offers a potential means of rebuilding it.

Arendt's suggestion that made this aspect possible was that thinking is irreducible to philosophy and a "speechless state of wonder"⁴⁵ that is essentially connected with it. Arendt agrees with Greek thinkers who claim that philosophy begins with which something that cannot be reflected in the search for specific knowledge, but in the "unending variations of what we call the ultimate questions."⁴⁶ An unlimited sense of wonder cannot have any limited result, and there is no opinion possible in the realm of wonder, because speech is useless. An inability to speak excludes man from the public space. He is left to himself, in solitude. Therefore, such experience will always contradict the common sense of the *polis* to some degree. Socrates's trial marked the beginning of a new era of thinking, where it abandoned "*vita activa*" and instead thinks in terms of conflict between metaphysics and politics. The first practitioner of this new era was Plato, who tried to abandon opinions, preferring a contemplative, theoretical way of life. The foregoing does not relate to thinking by itself, however. Socrates, as has been said, did not oppose *doxa* and truth: "what is true for this wonder, with which all philosophy begins, is not true for the ensuing dialogue of solitude itself."⁴⁷ Thinking, solitude, and internal dialogue constitute an "integral part of being and living together with others."⁴⁸ Thinking must arrive at its own opinion. This opinion is different from the irresponsible opinions of citizens, however. The thinking person is always ready to experience wonder, which saves him from dogmatic acceptance of a certain opinion as the ultimate truth. Thinking that seeks to be useful to the *polis* has to return to the public marketplace, to "move through opinions" and to be

⁴² Ibid., p. 84

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 98

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 101

⁴⁸ Ibid.

ready to wonder. For this reason, such thinking is essentially connected with the political life of the *polis*.

1.3. Solitude and Thinking

Arendt is convinced that thinking is impossible without some sort of withdrawal from the world. Her favorite example was Socrates, who often stopped reacting to the external world because of an internal dialogue he was having. Arendt uses the term “solitude” to describe this kind of withdrawal from the world and distinguishes it from other forms of unworldliness. It is crucial to analyze these terms and their interaction carefully, because the very relationship between worldly activities and withdrawal from the world was one of the main differences between her early conception of thinking and her later one.

It should be emphasized that in her early writings Arendt used three terms to describe unworldliness, and not two as later works might suggest. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she states that *isolation* is a kind of unworldliness that relates only to the political sphere. It is “that impasse into which men are driven when the political sphere of their lives ... is destroyed.”⁴⁹ What is essential for this political deprivation “is impotence ... fundamental inability to act at all.”⁵⁰ Such isolation of people from the political sphere is characteristic of every dictatorship. The reason why it is different from unworldliness in totalitarian regimes is that it leaves the social sphere intact. Isolated people preserve their common sense, “the whole sphere of private life with the capacities for experience, fabrication and thought.”⁵¹ Arendt claims, therefore, that these capacities are able to outlive the death of the political sphere. Without it, however, they also lose their foundation and become vulnerable. With the disappearance of the political sphere, all that remains is “the customs and traditions of society.”⁵² They can be relied upon only for a limited time.

To describe the type of unworldliness that cannot overcome isolation from the political sphere Arendt uses the term “loneliness.” Loneliness occurs when there is no possibility of escaping from political isolation to the private world. Loneliness is “the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man.”⁵³ Under this condition of total alienation from the world, people became separated

⁴⁹ Arendt, H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. – Meridian Books: New York, 1962. – p. 474

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Arendt, H. *Understanding and politics*. In: *Essays in Understanding*. – Schocken Books: New York, 1994. – p. 315

⁵³ Arendt, H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. – Meridian Books: New York, 1962. – p. 475

from common sense, because no communication is possible among those who are lonely. Consequently, communication, thinking and experiencing are replaced by logicality.

The term solitude is more ambiguous. As stated earlier, Arendt claims that we have the capacity to hold an internal dialogue with ourselves, proof that humans are essentially plural beings. In solitude I am alone without company, but I am neither isolated, nor truly alone, because I can speak with myself. Internal dialogue of thought remains bound to the world itself. She writes, “thinking does not lose contact with the world of my fellow-men because they are represented in the self with whom I lead the dialogue of thought.”⁵⁴ She holds the same position in “Philosophy and Politics”. Here Arendt says that this internal partner is “the way in which the world opens up to him and is part and parcel of the political reality he lives in.”⁵⁵ A man needs society to define himself, and owing to this internal self, he remains bound to the world throughout the act of thinking. The following quote sums up what kind of withdrawal from the world Arendt was describing in “Philosophy and Politics”: “The political relevance of Socrates' discovery is that it asserts that solitude, which before and after Socrates was thought to be the prerogative and professional habitus of the philosopher only, and which was naturally suspected by the *polis* of being anti-political, is, on the contrary, the necessary condition for the good functioning of the *polis*, a better guarantee than rules of behavior enforced by laws and fear of punishment.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 476

⁵⁵ Arendt, H. Philosophy and Politics. In: *Social Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1, Spring 1990. – p. 80

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 100

1.4. The Role of Judgment in Early Writings of Arendt.

The interpretation offered in this paper has one weakness. It was previously stressed that in early period of Arendt's work, she does not have any idea of objectivity, which is not based on cognitive capacities and truth. There also remains the subject of judgment, however. The majority of commentators claim, that Arendt's essay "Understanding and Politics" was her first attempt at introducing the concept of judgment and its specific capacities. For example, Beiner writes, "The themes and concerns that Arendt eventually wove into the reflections on judging first emerged in her essay 'Understanding and Politics,' published in *Partisan Review* in 1953" .

There is some misunderstanding here. As the title of the essay would suggest, its main subject is the ability to understand, not judge. At the same time, understanding, as we have seen, is more closely related to thinking than to judgment. In this respect, the following quote is particularly confusing: "Is not understanding so closely related to and inter-related with judging that one must describe both as the subsumption?"

Here we should remember that Arendt specified two types of understanding: one which together with common sense was destroyed in the 19th-20th century, and the other, universal understanding that goes beyond "yardsticks by which to measure, and rules under which to subsume the particular." In the first case, the ability to judge is indeed situated close to understanding. There is nothing special about it, however. It can neither secure nor rebuild our common world. This kind of understanding cannot be counted as "thinking without the banisters." On the contrary it is reduced to the application of rules that have already been accepted as common and do not require independent thinking.

It should also be noted that Arendt uses a determinant concept of judgment, which Kant introduced in *Critic of Pure Reason*. It entails an ability to subsume the particular under the general. As mentioned above, this ability is of no great importance to Arendt. Her later interest is with reflective judgments, the ability to judge when no general rule is given. This kind of judgment did not make an appearance in "Understanding and Politics".

What she does emphasize here is that it is not the loss of common sense on its own or ability of political action are the worst part of modern times. Instead, "it is the loss of the quest for meaning and need for understanding," the only activity that can truly connect us with

others and create common sense. Without it, only logicity and a world of predetermined ideological meaning remain. A closer look at what Arendt is proposing is worthwhile.

First, as already noted, Arendt divided the capacity to understand into two categories, preliminary understanding and understanding in a true sense, which is based on the human capacity to begin something new. Preliminary understanding can be broadly defined as the subsumption or reduction of something new to something commonly known. It remains essentially bound to common sense and everyday language. Understanding totalitarianism, for example, was reduced to an understanding of the lust for power. Scientific inquiry is also an enterprise that is based on this kind of understanding insofar as scientific inferences are deduced from something which is already known. Should common sense be bankrupted, neither preliminary understanding nor the sciences are of any use. This is not to say that they are unimportant. Apart from coordinative and normalizing functions, preliminary understanding is “at the basis of true understanding” ; true understanding must remain bound to the content of it, otherwise “it can lose itself in the clouds of mere speculation.” In such a way, the quest for true meaning is attached to common sense.

Arendt’s concept of preliminary understanding leads us to a paradoxical conclusion: true understanding is possible when new experience is reducible, in principle, to experience, which is commonly known. What is essential for true understanding is a “glimpse of the always frightening light of truth” that preserves the distinctiveness of new phenomenon and does not reduce it to what is already known. This moment once again evokes Heidegger’s notion of revealing: truth in its authentic sense always reveals something. True understanding, therefore, is true only when associated with revelation. A glimpse at the truth protects it from becoming banal or tautological.

Arendt discusses this capacity for true understanding in detail at the end of “Understanding and Politics.” She states that understanding is based on the capacity to imagine, which implies two things. First, the imagination makes it possible to see things in “their proper perspective.” We should be ready to give up our prejudices and personal beliefs to see things as they are. To do so takes courage and a true motivation to understand. Without such detachment, the object of our understanding will remain too close to or too far from us, so that our expectations and subjective experience will automatically impede true understanding. This aspect resembles her later theory of judgment because of its emphasis on “impartiality” of appearance and the need to see appearance without the limitations caused by

a finite position of subject. For example, she states in no uncertain terms in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* that the faculty of the imagination can lead to enlarged thinking and make it possible to judge without subjective limitations.

This interpretation of Arendt is misleading for two reasons. First, "seeing things in their proper perspective" refers primarily to the retrospective nature of human mental capacities, a broader concept than judgment by itself. As Arendt puts it, thought (the same as her later concept of judging) "is strictly speaking an after-thought." A life of the mind begins only when worldly affairs no longer have direct influence on people. Moreover, according to Beiner's interpretation, the capacity to judge does not belong to the life of the mind in the first place. In particular, in Arendt's course, "Basic moral propositions," judging was understood as active political ability, which can help us choose the society in which we want to live. Second, it is clear from "Philosophy and Politics" that understanding as such (and imagination in particular) might be at odds with Platonic philosophy, but not to thinking. On the contrary, thinking and understanding are in close proximity to each other, so that Arendt was able to state that philosophy can be useful to the polis. In light of the above, there is no solid ground to support the claim that the ability to understand in "Understanding and Politics" can be considered her first attempt at introducing the concept of judgment. This moment becomes more evident, if we look at the second feature of true understanding.

An ability to see things in their proper perspective is, of course, crucial; however, it is more a condition for true understanding than understanding on its own. The real basis of this ability is "bridging the abysses." As Arendt stressed, true understanding should remain bound to preliminary understanding if it is to be more than mere speculation. Bridging the abysses makes it possible to link something new with something commonly known. In the event of bankruptcy of common sense and preliminary understanding (when it encounters something so radically new that it cannot reduce it to something known), true understanding is the only capacity that can reconcile us "with what unavoidably exists."

We should keep in mind that understanding remains a distinct and independent capacity. Proposed interpretation aimed at demonstration of how close it stands to the activity of thinking and did not try to reduce it to thinking. There is no doubt that understanding as it is described in "Understanding in Politics" is somehow different from the concept discussed in "Philosophy and politics". Nevertheless, these essays belong to the same problem and to the same approach, she proposed in the 1950s.

Concluding remarks

It is impossible to say with certainty how satisfied Arendt was with this position, but it would appear that she was not completely satisfied. It was obvious to her that despite its connections with the world, solitude interrupts all communications with it too radically. The person having an internal dialogue does not belong to it any longer. It is for this very reason that we can ask the paradoxical question: "Where are we when we think?" In her lecture "Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought," she also expressed doubts about the political character of dialectic. She maintains that politics cannot be based on the process of communication among friends, because true communication is too close to the intimate and solitary activity of thinking. This contradiction created a tension in Arendt's early thought on thinking, which eventually led her to revise her philosophy. These changes will be investigated in section three.

Before this, another point needs to be made. There is clearly a certain continuity between the two conceptions. The most distinct one is the above-mentioned definition of thinking as a solitary dialogue with myself. Among other similarities are the view that Socrates was the embodiment of a pure thinker; a certain degree of solitude that is required for thinking to appear; and dialectic as a model of how thinking is played out. The continuity of these two conceptions will remain insufficiently clear, however, if attempts to find it are reduced to the mere observation of similarities because although Arendt gave different answers to the questions about thinking in different periods, these very questions remain valid in both conceptions. Among others, the questions mentioned in the introduction (Can thinking provide reliable insights? What role does thinking play in individual life? Should thinking be politically relevant?) which remained relevant to both Arendt's early and late conception, can serve as clear evidence of the consistency in her thought. Collectively these aspects (plus the same wording Arendt often used) make it recognizable that both early and later conception belong to the same set of problems.

I am convinced that the main reason why Arendt attempted to understand nature and role of thinking in a very different manner was the introduction of the capacity of judgment that overtook certain roles thinking had performed previously. The next section will be dedicated to an investigation of this shift. It will begin with an analysis of a speech Arendt made when she accepted the Lessing Prize in 1959. Here, for the first time, she introduces this

new capacity, which she confusingly calls “representative thinking” and which later became known as the capacity of judgment.

2.1. The concept of judgment.

According to Arendt, one feature of Lessing's greatness was his loyalty to the world and human relationships. She notes, "he never allowed supposed objectivity to cause him to lose sight of the real relationship to the world and the real status in the world of the things or men he attacked or praised."⁵⁷ As is clear from the analysis above, in her early writings the only objectivity that could have produced this result was mere logicity, which was more the consequence of the loss of reality rather than its cause. Truth, understood as the world revealed, was closely allied with common sense and other people. It was not deemed analogous to objective, logical truth purged of personal experience. Now, she makes a clear distinction between truth and its place in the world, or how truth is seen and heard by others. This "place in the world" is essentially phenomenal. It is what it appears to be. The world, "in-between" as such is created by phenomena, "phenomena in a special sense; one might say they are phenomena per se."⁵⁸ Truth as the "epistemic basis"⁵⁹ of phenomena does not belong to the world. The distinct characteristic of Lessing's thinking is that it was not aimed at such an epistemic basis: "where everyone else was contending over the 'truth'" Lessing "was chiefly defending its position in the world."⁶⁰ On the contrary, truth is now viewed as a violent force that destroys the importance of communication. Someone who possesses it does not need to persuade someone else to listen and consider his opinion since it unavoidably convinces others with a force of evidence or logical consistency. Absolute truth, therefore, makes dialogue no longer necessary. If the only requirement to be met to convince everyone else is to demonstrate that it is obvious, then there is no need for open, candid communication among friends.

Here Arendt presents a radically new kind of mental ability – an "anticipated dialogue with others"⁶¹ or representative thinking, which later will be transformed into her theory of judgment and which stands in stark contrast to her usual solitary "dialogue with myself." First, it should be mentioned that the use of such terms as "dialogue" and "thinking" to describe this new capacity is misleading. For Arendt, the term "thinking" usually has the precise definition

⁵⁷ Arendt, H. On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing. In: *Men in Dark Times*. – A Harvest book: New York, 1970. - p. 5

⁵⁸ Vollrath, E. Hanna Arendt method of political thinking. In: *Social Research*, Vol. 44, No. 1, Hannah Arendt, spring 1977. p. 164

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 165

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10

mentioned above. "Representative thinking" (which does not include a dialectical aspect and cannot be described as a succession of questions and answers united in the pursuit of wisdom) is not, strictly speaking, thinking at all. In three years, she lighted on the more appropriate term "judgment" to describe this capacity, and she stuck with this concept.

The most distinctive characteristic of such representative thinking or judgment is its respect for the *world*, "in-between" consists of different points of view, perspectives, which are irreducibly plural. To make a judgment, i.e. to represent somebody's point of view, means to attain his position and to understand why he would raise such a claim. Arendt's favorite example, the claim "the rose is beautiful," perfectly demonstrates the non-cognitive character of such an enterprise. The reason why somebody would make this claim is not an objective characteristic that can be observed, but because everyone who attains the same perspective would agree with it. Such judgment or "representative thinking" is essentially an enlarged dialogue, which entails considering different perspectives to make them more comprehensible overall. It does not require consistency. The axiom of non-contradiction, a fundamental rule of thought, can be sacrificed to preserve a plurality of points of view. The capacity of judgment does not "employ logic" as a convincing force, nor does it need any "crutches" or "authority over us,"⁶² nor does it need isolation from the world to appear. Lessing's thinking was by no means detached from the world: since the latter is now seen as comprising subjective and often non-cognitive opinions and views, such activity was the way to move freely in it.

From this follows that the activity of thinking (in a proper sense) loses its relation to common sense and the world, along with its worldly limitations, as Arendt described in "Philosophy and Politics." She uncouples the world and thinking, and the situation looks completely different. The former is now seen as something that tends to abandon the world and to "intellectualize" actors' perspectives. The difference does not affect the concept of ultimate truth. A thing such as ultimate truth cannot be achieved in a mortal world. The chief difference is that in 1954 Arendt claimed that thinking must accept worldly limitations and try to understand its own conditional character, while now she is saying (albeit indirectly) that pure thinking is not limited by the world. Truth is still unachievable, and pure thinking cannot reach its target, which is definite answers to ultimate questions, and the absence of these generates a love of wisdom and philosophy. Thinking is nevertheless free to try to create some absolute concepts and ideas, like the Kantian categorical imperative, but these are inherently doomed

⁶² Ibid., p. 8

and can never become truths in the public realm. Thinking retreats from the world and does not need to limit itself with conditions that arise when it is used in the public sphere.

From this point on, the concept of judgment will fill the gap left by thinking, which breaks with common sense and the world. To communicate with others, I do not need to transform my opinion into truthful opinion. What I need to do is see appearances from the other fellow's point of view, and in this case, there is no relation to the truth or cognition whatsoever. This change in her thinking might go unnoticed. It is crucial, however, since cognitive orientation in the world is now replaced by appearance qua appearance without any epistemic basis.

2.2. The concept of reflective judgement

It is well known that Kant influenced Arendt's thinking in many ways. His theory of reflective judgment was especially useful for her. It allowed her to develop ideas raised in her Lessing Prize speech and to base them on a capacity that is internal to the human mind. This section focuses on the role reflective judgment plays in Arendt's theory (A) and, in particular, how it makes it possible for people to reach an agreement that is non-cognitive in a strict sense (B).

A) Reflective judgment

The first mention of reflective judgment occurs in Arendt's essay "Crisis in Culture". The essay starts with an analysis of the relationship between the spectator and art. A piece of art needs to be perceived by spectators for it to attain its "own inherent validity." It needs their points of view and the public space for it to be visible and have an effect on spectators. According to Arendt, the aesthetic perception of objects and art itself are political phenomena. She interpreted Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment in the same politicizing way. She claims that radical subjectivism of tastes "offended his political and not his aesthetic sense." The most important part of Kant's aesthetic philosophy was political, because it was dealing with things in the shared world, which are common to everyone.

Kant emphasized that we perceive art based on reflective judgment or something he called "enlarged thinking". This means that there is a need to "think in the place of everybody else." Reflective judgment overcomes subjective limitations, which are necessarily attached to every position in the world. We need reflective judgment precisely because of the unavoidable positional character of human existence. In the mortal world, no definitive truth is possible, and every perception is necessarily limited by the actor himself. The only way to overcome this limitation is to see things from other standpoints, so that our perception of the world becomes more comprehensive. Two different points of view are compatible, because they belong to the same world and to the same thing in the world. Compatibility means that an object can be seen from an unlimited number of perspectives, and all of them can make our perception more objective. Since this is the only way to overcome the limitations on a human being's perception of reality, no standpoint can free itself from its limited character. Enlarged thinking, therefore, stays bound to people, it interact with them and their points of view. In this way, my judgment

gains validity, because it is in potential agreement with that of others, and their points of view have been taken into account.

The limited validity of reflective judgment presupposes that it cannot be forced upon everyone. This is why Arendt viewed this kind of communication as essentially political, because the aim of politics is to find agreement, which is neither necessary, nor evident. Instead, it should be based on free agreement inspired by reality. Arendt contrasted this candid dialogue with convincing by argumentation, which she called “another non-violent form of coercion, the coercion by truth.” Anyone who listens to truthful arguments must accept it. By comparison, no one is obliged to accept reflective judgment until he himself finds the courage to pass judgment.

Here we can see that Arendt’s early ideas described in section 1.2.1. have not disappeared. Indeed, Arendt’s interpretation of reflective judgment resembles what she proposed in “Philosophy and Politics.” Her main interest in “Crisis in Culture” is the limitations of human cognition, which can be overcome because of the shared character of the world. She even used the same wording to describe the problem. It is the outcome that differs. Obviously, the main difference is that these concepts no longer have any relationship with thinking. They now belong to a new human capacity of living in the world of appearances and orienting freely in it. Thinking is separated from it, and it is aimed at the meaning, which lies behind the political world. The following quote confirms this idea: “The difference between this judging insight and speculative thought lies in that the former has its roots in what we usually call common sense, which the latter constantly transcends.”

Thinking is no longer concerned with common sense, nor with a common world. It is inseparable from one’s own “self,” which is a partner in the silent dialogue of thought. This self “has hitched itself firmly to one possible perspective,” and shows no sign of willingness to look at something from another point of view.

B) The Non-Cognitive Character of Reflective Judgment

There is one specific aspect of judgment that is worthy of closer investigation. It concerns the technical feature of reflective judgment that makes it possible to reach a certain level of objectivity without transforming phenomena into cognitive notions, a feature of Arendt’s earlier concept of thinking.

The anticipated dialogue with others described in her Lessing Prize speech presupposes a certain ambiguity. It is not completely clear how the change of perspectives she spoke of is even possible without referring to the truth.

Arendt proposed an answer to this question a year later in her essay "Crisis in Culture". She adopted Kant's idea, that judgments of beauty are disinterested. When we perceive a piece of art, we have no intention of using it in any way. All we want is to look at it and admire it without any selfish interest. We therefore set aside our interested "self" and its personal intentions and judge from the point of view of everyone else. The crucial question of the observer is what another person might have thought about the subject and what other possible judgments there are. To say that a painting is beautiful is not to state some objective truth. It means finding a position from which this judgment would be acceptable. Positions that are correlative to judgment are historically conditioned. They reflect the fact that we are members of some historical community constituting a world of its own, "for judgments of taste, the world is the primary thing, not man, neither man's life nor his self."

What Arendt is presenting here is a type of universal validity that provides a foundation for communication among people who do not believe in any ultimate truth. This new form of "cognition" is non-cognitive as such, and its course is not determined in the way metaphysical thinking was. There is nothing like ultimate truth that can serve as the foundation for other truths. There are no "crutches" to help us orient ourselves in the world.

3. Isolated Concept of Thinking

3.1. Thinking and Appearance.

There was brief mention earlier of a certain tension in Arendt's early writings between the communicative nature of thinking and the need for thinking to be insulated from the world. The invention of a special way of mentally exploring the world means that this tension has been resolved in favor of the approach that treats thinking as an activity that tends to isolate itself from the world. This isolation presupposes that not only the philosopher but also the thinker weakens his connection to the common world and common sense. In fact, there is an unsolvable "intramural warfare between thought and common sense."⁶³

This section aims at analyzing this isolation in connection with thinking. It will be achieved in three steps. First, the status of objects in the world will be considered (A). Second, the position of consciousness will be investigated (B). Third, why thinking necessitates a withdrawal from the world of objects will be demonstrated (C).

A) The Being of Objects

According to Arendt, the being of things can be described by the formula *A is A*. Things are strictly identical to themselves and do not allow the slightest distance between them and their being. Strictly speaking, the being of things abolishes this "self" as such, because "self" is an element of reflexivity in the relation of *A to A*. *A is A*, and this relation exhausts the being of things. Neither difference nor negativity can slip into such being-in-itself because this being is completely positive. To claim the opposite means presupposing a distance between the thing and this very thing and, therefore, transforming a strictly analytical formula of being-in-itself into a synthesis of self with self, which contradicts our common sense experience.

On this basis, Arendt criticized the "Sophist" of Plato and Heideggerian interpretation of it. If we reject this synthesis of things with themselves and confirm their identity, we also reject the possibility that things could contain some immanent relation to something else, even though it might be a relation of difference. Revealing relations of one thing to others or defining it with the help of negations are functions of consciousness, not the immanent content of things. In this way, it appears that Arendt endorses the conclusions Sartre reached in *Being and Nothingness*, that being-in-itself is, that being-in-itself is in itself, that being-in-itself is what it is.⁶⁴

B) The Being of Consciousness

Conversely, the being of a human is fundamentally different from the being of things, because human beings are in a certain sense non-identical to themselves. Arendt cited two of Socrates's statements ("It would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I directed should be out of tune and loud with discord", and that "multitudes of men should disagree with me rather

⁶³ Arendt, H. *The Life of the mind*. – Harvest Books: New York, 1981. – p. 80

⁶⁴ Sartre, J.-P. *Being and Nothingness*. –Pocket Books, Year: 1978. – p. 62

than that I, being one, should be out of harmony with myself and contradict me."⁶⁵) to illustrate the paradox that a human is capable of being at peace with himself, or, quite the opposite, he can be in disagreement with himself. Between parts of the strict formula of identity "A (Man) is A (Man)" slips something Sartre calls "decompression"⁶⁶ of being. Owing to it, man is able to have a relation to himself, and this "self" points to the essential reflexivity of this relation. Expressions like "I am in disagreement with myself" or "I am ashamed of myself" are the best possible illustrations of such non-identity. I relate to myself because there is some distance between me and myself, and I am conscious of this distance.

Arendt also shared Husserl's fundamental idea: "Wherever there is appearing so also is there being." Seemingness, or appearance, is a measure of being. Every appearance naturally refers us to the one to whom something appears, the observer. In this way, the possibility of being perceived is an essential characteristic of every thing that exists. "Everything that is meant to be perceived by somebody."⁶⁷ The same, of course, is also true for living beings, including man. Both man and stone are equally dependent in their being on their appearance, and both can be represented as objects in the same way. Living beings are "no less 'objective' than stone and bridge."⁶⁸

Matters become complicated when we consider consciousness by itself. Arendt highlighted "a curious fact" that human consciousness, as opposed to the objects of the world we perceive, exists also for itself because it *is*, and not because it appears to somebody else. I do not appear to myself. Instead, I *am* for myself, and this fact can be easily illustrated by a fit of nausea. Arendt concedes, therefore, that consciousness is not a mere appearance. She also says, however, that such being-for-itself is not self-sufficient. It cannot guarantee its own being in the full sense. Without appearing to others, it exists in a limited sense as mere self-awareness. On this basis, Arendt criticizes Descartes's statement "I think, therefore I exist," because *res cogitas* has to learn to express itself and to appear to others who can confirm its existence. Otherwise, this existence will remain in an unmanifested state, lacking any kind of self-evidence. To open our consciousness to ourselves, and to obtain the evidence of *cogito*, we need to take a reflective attitude toward ourselves, to conceive of our existence as a kind of objectivity and become an appearance for others.

Others see me as some objective identity, as "one", and, indeed, when I appear to them, "I am one."⁶⁹ This being one with Others Arendt described as absorbed being: my consciousness is reduced to mere self-awareness of some appearance. This being one is not so simple, however. I might identify myself with the way I appear to others, but the very fact that I identify myself *with* the way I appear in the world only confirms that I cannot be reduced to mere appearance. There is something inside of me, this self-awareness that presupposes some distance between me and my appearance and prevents me from losing myself in the world and being transformed into the real "one," being-in-itself. Self-awareness, as has been said, is not an appearance, but being. It does not belong to the world of appearances, and it cannot be determined by it. This is the way decompression of being is manifested in the world of everyday

⁶⁵ Arendt, H. *The Life of the mind*. – Harvest Books: New York, 1981. – p. 181

⁶⁶ Sartre, J.-P. *Being and Nothingness*. – Pocket Books, Year: 1978. – p. 61

⁶⁷ Arendt, H. *The Life of the mind*. – Harvest Books: New York, 1981. – p. 19

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, - p. 183

activity. Under normal circumstances, it remains unactualized. It can be actualized, however. The distance between me and myself can be made thematic, and this split inside me can be transformed into interaction. This is how the life of the mind starts. The human mind is diverted from appearances and concentrates on itself: „the mental agent cannot be active except by acting implicitly or explicitly, back upon himself.”⁷⁰ We can say that a life of the mind can be broadly described as activity of the mind when it is turned “back upon himself.”

C) Talking with Myself.

Thinking is a distinct activity, which consists of talking with myself. We can also say that it is a primordial version of the life of the mind. Of course, Arendt says, “it would be wrong to try to establish a hierarchical order among the mind's activities.”⁷¹ They are autonomous and capable of working separately. Nevertheless, she remains convinced that there is still some order among them, and thinking plays a more fundamental role than willing and judging.

I think insofar as I talk with myself. Nothing appears to me any longer, because this “me” is busy talking with myself. I am therefore isolated from the world of appearances in two ways. First, since I am talking with myself, I have no intention of manifesting myself in the world. Thinking is an internal process because it is concentrated only on myself. It “is not only, like other faculties, invisible so long as it is latent, a mere potentiality, but remains non-manifest in full actuality.”⁷² Second, throughout the process of thinking, no appearance can be perceived. Otherwise, thinking would be disrupted and then come to a stop. The subject of thinking is, therefore, not appearances by themselves, but its transformed version kept in memory. Thinking does not perceive anything in a passive way.

Thinking transforms appearances in two steps. First, the perception of an object is replaced by an image of it, which is stored in memory and created by the power of imagination. Second, the image is “stored in memory ready to become a ‘vision in thought’ the moment the mind gets hold of it.”⁷³ To remember something consciously means to be able to reproduce an object using the imagination and therefore to understand it. Thought-objects, the subjects of thinking arise when the mind is actively working with images formed through an understanding of these images.

We can see that thinking plays a more fundamental role in the life of the mind for just this reason. Although it is “unable to move the will or provide judgment with general rules,”⁷⁴ thinking must “prepare the particulars given to the senses in such a way that the mind is able to handle them in their absence; it must, in brief, de-sense them.”⁷⁵ The life of the mind is able to free itself from the influences of the external world because thinking actualizes the unconditional character of human consciousness along with an internal split that consists in inner dialogue. “Stillness of the soul's passions”⁷⁶ (which can also be called objectivity or

⁷⁰ Ibid, – p. 74

⁷¹ Ibid, – p. 76

⁷² Ibid, – p. 72

⁷³ Ibid, - p. 77

⁷⁴ Ibid, - p. 76

⁷⁵ Ibid, – p. 77

⁷⁶ Ibid, – p. 70

impartiality resulting from a withdrawal from the world and my involvement in it, including my specific interests) is therefore a by-product of the situation when the human being is no longer directly affected by the world.⁷⁷ We can see here that withdrawal from the world arises directly from the structure of the life of the mind. Because the life of the mind and thinking are understood as fundamental and ahistorical capacities, we can conclude that this kind of withdrawal is a necessary element of thinking.

It is clear that for Arendt stepping back from appearances does not necessarily mean a complete break with the world and common sense. Indeed, the acts of judging and willing are not isolated from the world because “their objects are particulars with an established home in the appearing world.”⁷⁸ Acts of judging and willing retreat from the world only temporarily and then return to it. As Arendt puts it, they are never caught up by thought’s reflection although they are dependent on it.

The process of thinking is very different, however. Understanding, on the basis of which thought-objects are modeled, presupposes something Arendt calls quest for meaning or willingness to understand. Precisely it encourages people to think: “ ‘reason's need’ - the quest for meaning that prompts men to ask them is in no way different from men's need to tell the story of some happening they witnessed.”⁷⁹ This active positioning of the mind makes it possible to “go further”, and transcend the limited nature of images that are still connected with appearances to create concepts that not found in the world. Thinking has an internal tendency toward generalization, a desire to understand “things that are always absent.”⁸⁰ According to Arendt, it is at this point that thinking breaks away from the world: “Thought, because of its tendency to generalize, i.e., its special concern for the general as opposed to the particular, tends to withdraw from the world altogether.”⁸¹ Later she adds, “For thinking, then, though not for philosophy, technically speaking, withdrawal from the world of appearances is the only essential precondition.”⁸²

Thinking is caught up in it’s own reflections and therefore has no fixed object. We do not think something. Rather, we think *about* something. In this way, Arendt emphasizes the self-contained nature of thinking. It can neither be fixed nor shaped by its object, because dialectic is inherent in it. This literal “lack of objectivity” leads to the principal instability of thinking. If there is some clear truth about an object, we are unable to think about it. If “*sophia*” is achieved or, at the least, if it can be achieved, there is no need to love it.

⁷⁷ We can see that Arendt here resolves problem of achieving of objectivity in different, but more satisfying way than in “Crisis and Culture” or earlier writings. Objectivity of every mental activity including judgement and thinking are guaranteed by withdrawal from it in the first place; more specific conditions of validity are based on this withdrawal.

⁷⁸ Ibid, - p. 92

⁷⁹ Ibid, - p. 78

⁸⁰ Ibid, - p. 77

⁸¹ Ibid., – p. 75

⁸² Ibid., – p. 72

⁸² This claim is an exact opposite of what was proposed in “Philosophy and Politics”, where she said that philosophy, not thinking, is essentially isolated from the world.

3.2. Thinking and Truth

In this section, it will be demonstrated more fully that Arendt's later concept of thinking is further removed from truth revealing the second fundamental shift in Arendt's perspective on thinking. The abandonment of truth, and the consequences that result, will be investigated first (A). This takes us to the distinction that Arendt makes between meaning and truth, which constitutes a key claim of her later philosophy (B).

A) Negative Thinking

The first chapters of *The Life of The Mind* demonstrate that the idea of an objective truth, which can be purged of subjective effects, once again loses its place in Arendt's philosophy, but now it is different both from the concept of truth presented in the first chapters of the paper and from the revised concept of truth presented in 2.1. This insight has far-reaching consequences.

She states that appearances constitute a universal structure of being, or that the world has a "phenomenal nature."⁸³ A few paragraphs later she adds: "Nothing and nobody exists in this world whose very being does not presuppose a spectator."⁸⁴ Being universal, appearances are the only truth that is accessible to a human being. Only through experience is it possible to convince somebody of something. The notion of truth is closely related to this convincing power of appearances. Arendt says that "truth is what we are compelled to admit by the nature either of our senses or of our brain."⁸⁵ In *The Life of the Mind*, she consistently claims that "there are no truths beyond and above factual truths."⁸⁶ The difference between what is traditionally called the truth of reasoning and the truth of fact exists only "in the degree of their force of compulsion."⁸⁷ The truth of reasoning is based simply on the structure of the human brain and is, therefore, "no less natural, no less equipped to guide us through an appearing world"⁸⁸ than other senses. Appearances are essentially connected with truth. It does not

⁸³ Ibid., p. 19

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 61

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 59

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 60

matter if someone studies some concrete and changeable appearance or is concerned instead with appearances that necessarily compel everyone who perceives them.

It is clear from previous sections that thinking cannot be based on evidence, because the very possibility of evidence disappears upon withdrawing from the world. As has been shown, the activity of thinking is chiefly characterized by the tendency to destroy the stability of appearances and their obvious character. Evidence cannot help thinking produce some definite result. From this it follows that all mental activities tend to abandon the truth as such.⁸⁹ She believes that this essential split between thinking and the world means that thinking does not have as its aim the pursuit of some irrefutable truth and that, therefore, it is unable to produce anything stable. Thinking, she says, “leaves nothing ... tangible behind.”⁹⁰

Arendt agrees with the Kantian claim that metaphysics, which tried to offer final answers with the help of thinking, is irreversibly dead. Again, she claims that no ultimate truth is possible. We can prove only something that is based on evidence, while thinking as an activity that overcomes evidence and cannot prove anything. Humanity needs to accept the fact that once someone steps outside the area of evidence, it is no longer possible for him to offer enough grounds for any claim. The products of thinking can be denied as easily as they have been invented, often by the thinker himself. The long and fruitless history of Western metaphysics offers the best possible illustrations of her thesis. We will not find some “banisters,” which are “more real, truthful and meaningful than what appears” to help us to think. In this way, the only positive result thinking can provide is negative. Arendt understands this thesis in two ways. First, she agrees with Kant in that differentiating between thinking and knowing leads to an understanding that we cannot “know” anything that surpasses the possibilities of experience. Second, thinking destroys the obvious character of every existing norm or opinion. The Socratic dialogues were always left unanswered. They start with some opinion, which, after closer inspection, proves to be inadequate. Pure thinking does not offer answers, but it can destroy *doxa* by demonstrating its inadequacy. Socrates called himself a “gadfly” because he never held an opinion of his own. Instead, he was ready to test the strength of every opinion offered (and, as we know, there was no opinion that passed his test).

⁸⁹ The crucial difference between judging and thinking remains, however: non-contradiction presupposes openness to rational discussion and arguments; thinking, therefore, preserves to some degree certain cognitive characteristics.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59

The negative role of thinking consists, therefore, in appreciating the fact that nothing can be self-evident enough to be accepted automatically. It demonstrates that virtues, which are shared by the most of a community are, in fact, just “mores,” a set of table manners, that can be changed as easily as they were accepted. Thinking not only saves the individual from following the crowd unwittingly, but also distinguishes a truly political way of communication, that is, the ability to judge, i.e., to cooperate and act when no instruction is given.

B) Meaning as an Aim of Thinking

There is a positive aspect, which thinking brings, however. The reason why it was overlooked is that thinking was traditionally misunderstood as something that should arrive at the truth. What Arendt was trying to demonstrate is that thinking is not concerned with knowledge based on evidence, but with the meaning of this knowledge. The capacity to grasp the being of objects, which is tantamount to grasping the truth, is based on the ability of the world to convince us of something. Truth is something that is given (or could be given) as a satisfactory answer to a certain specific, limited question by a person who wants to know something concrete. Meaning, by comparison overcomes the simple givenness of objects. The quest for meaning starts with the realization that concrete, answerable questions by themselves are not enough to satisfy a human being, because the only question that concerns thinking is “what it means for it to be.”⁹¹ This primarily means that appearances, given objects presuppose some wider perspective in which it must fit, and from this wider perspective, they gain their meaning, i.e. their place in a system that ensures understanding of the world. The holistic structure that unifies experience is not an experience in and of itself, and it has no foundation except the need to understand and create a meaningful picture of the world. This literal “lack of objectivity” leads to the principal instability of thinking. If there is some clear truth about an object, we are unable to think about it. Therefore, thinking is akin to speculation since it is caught up in its own reflections and has nothing stable to lean on. We do not think something. Rather, we think *about* something. For this reason, thinking is often led by the quest for meaning to the eternal and ultimate Kantian questions about God, soul and eternity. This does not mean that thinking is by any means random, however. Arendt was convinced, therefore, that mere speculation is neither an offensive nor useless concept if any ambition to find the truth is excluded from it. The aim of meaning is to understand, and it is less important

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 57

whether meaning can be proven or not. If by thinking I transform mere facts and objects into something meaningful, its main task has been accomplished.

When understood as a fundamental capacity, thinking gives priority to meaning in relation to the truth. "By posing the unanswerable questions of meaning, men establish themselves as question-asking beings,"⁹² Arendt says. She adds, "It is more than likely that men, if they were ever to lose the appetite for meaning we call thinking and cease to ask unanswerable questions, would lose not only the ability to produce those thought-things that we call work of art but also the capacity to ask all the answerable questions upon which every civilization is founded."⁹³ We can see that, according to Arendt, the capacity to ask questions comes first, and only then do the answers to the questions follow. Such uncoupling of truth from meaning connected with a certain primacy of the latter presupposes that a human being cannot be fully determined by reality, which gives mental capacities a certain freedom and irreducibility. They are no longer understood as a simple reflection of reality, but contain inherent creativity.

C) What Makes Us Think?

In the third section of *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt systematically explored the various historical answers given to the question "what makes us think."

Most of these answers she considered inadequate for the task of describing what thinking is, because the answers proposed were external to it. They were "asked from outside - whether that outside is constituted by his professional interests as a thinker or by the common sense in himself that makes him question an activity that is out of order in ordinary living." In this respect, Socrates was an exception. Arendt claimed that unlike most philosophers, he was a pure thinker, because his desire to think came from "needs of reasoning" only. She emphasized that most of the Socratic dialogues had been left unanswered. Socrates's thinking was not aimed at answers, but at the process itself. He was always ready to start again and was not discouraged by his lack of success, calling himself an "electric ray," which paralyzed both himself and anyone who came into contact with him. He prized wisdom, but he did not achieve

⁹² Ibid., p. 62

⁹³ Ibid.

it. By pursuing it, he came as close to it as a mortal being could. According to Arendt, he acknowledged that he knew nothing. (We can see how different this interpretation of Socrates's famous claim is from the one proposed in "Philosophy and Politics," where it is the necessity of recognizing the conditional character of every human truth.) Only this love of wisdom, these "needs of reasoning" motivated him to think. For this reason, answers and arriving at the truth, in general, were not priorities for him.

The quest for meaning gets its impetus from thinking itself, "from the need to search for the meaning of whatever is or occurs." The task of ordering everything into a meaningful structure recalls Novalis's famous claim that "philosophy is really nostalgia, the desire to be at home." Thinking, therefore, cannot be understood as a simple by-product of the ordering of experience. It is an internal "need of reasoning" that can be satisfied only by thinking itself. We need to understand the world we live in and the people around us, and, according to Arendt, for this we can and should sometimes sacrifice verifiability of our thoughts about the world.

The death of metaphysics has proved again that ultimate truth is unattainable, and thinking cannot find something that will finally satisfy "needs of reasoning" and make thinking unnecessary. Thinking will exist as long as humanity does, because while it tries to go beyond what is knowable, it does not require discovering any truth at all.

We can see that Arendt's answer to the question "what makes us to think" is fundamentally different from the one proposed by Heidegger. If Heidegger's analysis is concentrated on what specifically "calls" for thinking, Arendt is convinced that there is no such being that can call us for thinking. The phrase "needs of reasoning" was meant to highlight the fact that thinking gains impetus only from thinking itself, and that nothing in the world can "cause" thinking, but only provide occasions for it to appear.

Conclusion

Part 1 of this paper described Arendt's early concept of thinking, which can be found in several of her best known works, such as *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The analysis presented here focused on some key features of her position, namely, that 1) thinking is an activity that discloses reality, and that 2) it is inextricably connected to others, and, therefore, should be understood as political activity that can rebuild common sense. The observations made in Parts 2 and 3 are far different. Now, not only is thinking cut off from all contacts with shared reality and worldly business, but it also relinquishes the truth and the possibility of providing reliable insights. Instead, thinking was inherently characterized by the ambiguous quest for meaning, which cannot provide any answers, but can only serve as a foundation for the possibility of searching for them.

Why did she reconsider her position?

To begin with, there were certain logical vulnerabilities. From the very beginning, Arendt seemed unsure about the potential success of Socrates's political project. I have mentioned that in her lecture "Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought" from the year 1954, she expressed doubts about the political character of dialectic. She maintained that politics cannot be based on the process of communication among friends, because true communication is too close to the intimate and solitary activity of thinking. Socrates's attempt to "make friends out of Athens's citizenry"⁹⁴ was sometimes viewed, therefore, as obviously utopic. Another example mentioned was the role of solitude, which detaches individual too radically from the world around him. The claim that this state preserves both our social ties and our common sense invites criticism, which was clear to her.

I tried to develop two deeper points throughout this paper.

First, I attempted to demonstrate that the development of Arendt's thought can be described by the term "differentiation." I mentioned that both conceptions dealt with the same questions and the same set of problems. She used the same formulation and definitions when discussing them even though the outcome and context were often different sometimes causing a confusion for an interpreter. The conclusion I wish to draw is that Arendt's early conception dealt with the set of problems that were later distributed between the capacities of thinking and judgment. In such a way, her early theory of thinking should be seen not only as a

⁹⁴ Arendt, H. Philosophy and Politics. In: *Social Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1, Spring 1990. - p. 82

precursor of her later theory of thinking but also as a precursor of her theory of judgment, as well.

In this sense, the addition of concept of judging was indeed a turning point in this process of differentiation. Liberation of thinking from its worldly responsibility made it possible to create a more coherent and a more sophisticated position that did not have to address a broad subject using only one conceptual instrument. Arendt's new position is not only immune to the paradoxes and contradictions mentioned above. It is also a more comprehensive and sophisticated theory that deals with initial problems more efficiently.

The second point I tried to make is that this differentiation was drawn based on the distancing of mental capacities from the concept of truth. Both her theory of judgment and the late theory of thinking were introduced as distinct capacities as a result of her attempt to distinguish them from normal cognitive abilities, which was shown in paragraph 2 and 3.2. In this respect, the evolution of the role of thinking was especially remarkable. Early thinking, whose function was to convert subjective opinions into truthful ones, was seen as activity, which is closely related to the truth because it was attached to others and their perspectives. Analogously, an ability to grasp other points of views was attached to the truth, because converting them into truthful opinions with the help of thinking was the only way of achieving this. Once Arendt had found another way of connecting different views on a non-cognitive basis, thinking lost the main reason why it had been so strongly related to the concept of truth.

In general, it can be said that the evolution of Arendt's views on this topic presents one of the rare clear examples of how thinking of great philosophers unfolds and evolves. Her thinking did not change in its essence. It did not change its priorities or objectives, nor did it jump from one detail to another. Instead, it was stubbornly consistent in resolving the problems it postulated from the very beginning, achieving and integrating different insights in the course of this process. The conclusion and the paper in general, thereby, can be summed up by M. Heidegger's quote: "Every thinker thinks only one thought."⁹⁵

⁹⁵ M. Heidegger, *What is called thinking*. – Harper & Raw, Publishers: New York, 1987. – p. 50

4. Advantages of Isolation: A Possible Response to Habermas's Critique of Arendt

The thesis stated above, according to which the second Arendt's approach is more acceptable than the first one represents the major question that will be investigated in this part. It will be analyzed based on Habermas's criticism of Arendt included in his article "Hannah Arendt's Communicational Concept of Power." This article illustrates the problems that arise from equating of the ability to discursively reflect reality and thinking.

The first section starts with a brief summary of his criticism of Arendt (4.1). After that, theoretical character of this debate will be demonstrated (4.2). In the following section, Habermas's and Arendt's theories of meaning will be compared (4.3). After that, two disadvantages of Habermas's approach will be highlighted (4.4). In the last section, certain weakness of Arendt's theory of meaning will be highlighted as well (4.5).

4.1. Habermas's Main Points.

The point of Habermas's criticism is clear. Arendt, he believes, had was not sufficiently consistent. He writes: "In separating praxis from the unpolitical activities of working and laboring on the one side and of thinking on the other, Arendt traces back political power exclusively to praxis, to the speaking and acting together of individual" .

According to Habermas, because Arendt needlessly pared down the area of political concern, unavoidable difficulties in her political theory resulted. These include:

A. Excluding Strategic Elements from Politics.

According to Arendt, there is a strict dichotomy between force and power.

The strategic use of power and the competition for it cannot be considered components of politics, because they do not require that individuals talk and take unified action. By definition, these processes exclude communication and compromise among people. War, says Arendt, is conducted outside the polis. Habermas was convinced that this belief runs counter to historical reality, especially in contemporary societies, where opposition and the mechanisms of acquiring power play crucial roles in the functioning of political systems.

According to Habermas, Arendt was correct in saying that the processes of generating power have their beginnings in communication and that they are more fundamental than the maintenance and acquisition of power. She goes too far, however, when she denies that they belong to politics in general. Strategic action has a derivative existence, and strategic acts in politics presuppose the existence of power, which, as has been said, cannot be created strategically by itself. By claiming this, Habermas resolved the dichotomy between administrative government and politics, or at the least, he considered it less strict.

B. Employment of Power

Even more troubling is that Arendt's political philosophy is unable to grasp the employment of power. It is obvious that politically binding decisions and political institutions as such are not supported by everyone concerned, at least not most of the time. Arendt was consistent in saying that politics is essentially a non-violent activity, and that it plays a unifying role. She also admits that violence can be omitted from politics only in rare cases. She concedes that violence often coexists with politics just as, for example, slavery coexisted with the free political activity of citizens in the Greek polis without becoming entangled with it. Habermas insists that it is more consistent to presuppose that structural violence "is built into political institutions."

According to Habermas, this structural violence does not manifest itself as brutal force. Instead, it operates inconspicuously by blocking dissenting views and, therefore, creating rational but illusory opinion. By this mechanism, Habermas explains the formation of ideologies, which he defines as "illusions that are outfitted with the power of common convictions." False ideological opinions are the observe of power. The latter is created communicatively, but this does not mean that all manifestations of power must have a communicational character. For example, it is easy to imagine how the same person can be at first communicatively involved in the process of creating the power and then faced with physical danger from power that has no intention to hear what he has to say.

Habermas is convinced that these absurdities arise from mere inconsistency and the archaic character of Arendt's thought, which preserves typical for traditional philosophy strict differentiation between theory and practice. According to her, "practice rests on opinions and convictions that cannot be true or false in the strict sense." This archaic view, Habermas explained, arose because Arendt was trying to give a non-metaphysical foundation to politics and distanced herself from the traditional concept of theoretical knowledge "based on ultimate insights and certainties." He believed that a strict differentiation between non-cognitive opinions and politics on the one hand and cognitive thinking and ultimate truth on the other leads to the absurd reduction of politics to non-violent free communication between individuals, who are concerned by the common world. Arendt was trying to highlight the essence of politics by stressing her theory of judgment. The emphasis on judgment, however, led to her isolating politics from phenomena, that are obviously essential to modern politics.

Habermas proposes a new concept of theoretical knowledge based on rational argumentation and the possibility of continual critical reevaluation of validity claims. He is convinced that if we stop treating political thinking as one-sided and isolated and instead incorporate into it communication, with its own rules of logic, we can grasp the phenomenon of politics in its entirety. What he is saying is that we should not separate political thinking from thinking in general. If we do, we end up with a concept of politics stripped of features which are inherently important to it, and from society in general. This line of thinking presupposes a claim that is of interest to the subject of this paper. Habermas did not see any fundamental difference between a critical reevaluation of validity claims and thinking aimed at meaning, and so, he has no need to separate thinking from the world and others.

4.2. Critical Response to Habermas's Article and Theoretical Character of this Debate.

As noted earlier, Habermas concludes that the rigid differentiation between judgment and thinking is a simple consequence of the "antiquated" distinction between theory and practice, which is in need of revision. This opinion invites criticism, and Canovan has done so in an article entitled, "A Case of Distorted Communication. A Note on Habermas and Arendt." For now, the subject of interest is that in light of the points raised in Part 1 of this paper, the common accusation (shared by Habermas, Bernstein and many other commentators) of simple obsolescence is inadequate. Arendt started with a concept of unified rational activity that can be applied both to questions of practice and theory like Habermas's own. It was only later that she reconsidered her position. Obsolescence, therefore, cannot satisfactorily explain Arendt's late approach. There must have been some reason for her to endorse this "antiquated" theory. Discovering this reason is crucial for an understanding of her whole approach to thinking. To do this, it will be helpful to look at the critical response to Habermas's article proposed by Canovan, to highlight some of the structural advantages that Arendt's revised conception offers.

Habermas assumed that Arendt did not share his belief about the possibility of reaching a rational consensus in politics because she did not believe that a non-metaphysical account of truth is possible. On closer inspection, however, the situation appears to be the opposite. Arendt excluded logical argumentation from the capacity to judge precisely because she did not believe in the possibility of reaching a general, rational consensus in politics. Of course, there is the possibility of making one's opinion more objective, just as it is possible to reach a limited consensus among select actors. Nevertheless, she never thought possible an agreement that would transform limited judgments into a general consensus shared by the bulk of society. Because human action occurs within a network of interwoven relationships without a common goal, its effect is unpredictable. According to Canovan, Habermas underestimated the importance of the role plurality plays in Arendt's philosophy, and failed to appreciate that this plurality cannot be replaced by unifying consensus.

For his part, Habermas starts with a theoretical presupposition of an ideal speech situation that has to be satisfied only in theory. For him, there is only one possible way of reaching validity, and all valid claims that have been achieved in concrete circumstances only

have validity derived from this ideal speech situation. Habermas has to postulate an ideal of unconstrained discourse as real opportunity and not as mere abstraction. Every concrete agreement proves the existence of an ideal speech situation, which presupposes the absence of ideological or administrative constraints. Habermas, therefore, believed that only an external influence can block or distort the rational activity of subjects, since there is nothing that can prevent it from within.

By comparison, Arendt does not believe that an ideal speech situation is practically possible or even explanatorily useful, and so she starts with praxis and stays with this level of analysis. She was convinced that people do not share common convictions learned in a candid discussion. What they do share is a common world and a set of common political institutions inherited from their ancestors. Canovan concludes that Arendt had good reason to “use what Habermas calls the ‘antiquated’ notion of ‘contract,’ or mutual agreement, to support political institutions” because commitment to the common world and its formal rules can secure public space, and not some abstract possibility of common opinion.”

Although Habermas’s arguments relate to the area of political praxis, the debate between him and Arendt is presumably theoretical, and this is the reason why his article is of a great interest to this paper. Their confrontation stems from the conflict between Habermas’s “ideal speech situation,” which bases all possible verbal communication among people and Arendt’s “life of the mind,” which is divided into independent capacities of willing, judging, and thinking. Habermas’s argument was aimed at reducing all mental activities to one that was universal, while for Arendt, reducing thinking, judging and, will to some universal rational activity would mean a step backward. Further, it will be demonstrated why it was so important for her to isolate thinking both from the world and truth using Habermas’s example of a modern version of theoretical knowledge.

4.3. Thinking, Meaning and Truth: Habermas vs Arendt

The first three sections of this paper tried to give a systematic account of the differences between the theory of thinking proposed by Arendt in the 1950s and her later understanding of the concept presented in *The Life of The Mind*. One of the key differences highlighted was the relation of thinking to the shared world and truth. At first glance, it was not clear what advantages her new approach brought and why Arendt reconsidered her position. To clarify this moment, it would be useful to compare Arendt's approach with that of Habermasian more closely. The comparison starts with a brief introduction to the latter's view.

One of the central questions of Habermas's investigation of truth and agreement is whether "questions of meaning explication [should] be divorced in the final analysis from questions arising in a reflection on validity?"

His answer is an emphatic no. The task of understanding consists of answering the question why the author of a certain claim believed that it was true, and the absence of any answer to this question is tantamount to the absence of understanding. He adds that "only to the extent that the interpreter grasps the reasons that allow the author's utterances to appear as rational does he understand what the author could have meant." Arguments, or the process of giving reasons, not only make some statement plausible, but also make it comprehensible. To understand any statement means to "know under what conditions its validity claim would have to be accepted."

The most distinctive feature of Habermas's analysis of truthful statements and meaning is his confidence that validity claims made in statements are necessarily bounded by context and reality. As soon as we have found the conditions of a statement's validity and, thereby, achieved understanding, we can either agree with this statement because of its claim to be universally valid or we can disagree with it. If we disagree, then we recognize that this statement has only limited validity, because it is based on the context in which the person who made the statement found himself. Only by investigating the subjective context that surrounds a false statement can we truly understand judgment, which appears to us to be false. We cannot understand anything from the point of view of a third person. We must take a yes/no position presupposed by understanding. By claiming this, Habermas establishes a firm link between meaning and truth. No one can understand the meaning without making it truthful and acceptable for him in one way or another. There is no place for pure empathy or Arendt's

“thinking in place of somebody else,” which makes it possible to forget about ourselves and our views and to see something in a different light. Instead, the process of understanding is depicted as a synthesis of arguments of participating sides.

This argument is a strong one. To understand what meaning is requires that it be constituted on the model of truth, that is, a claim that is acceptable to us. At first glance, it would seem that Arendt holds the opposite point of view. For example, in the introduction to *The Life of the Mind* she claimed: “The need of reason is not inspired by the quest for truth but by the quest for meaning. And truth and meaning are not the same. The basic fallacy, taking precedence over all specific metaphysical fallacies, is to interpret meaning on the model of truth.” She added to this her praise for Kant and the distinction he draws between reason and intellect, which freed thinking from the necessity to find truth. By doing this, he limited the area of possible knowledge to make space for faith. She maintains, however, that what he really did was make space for pure thinking.

On closer inspection, it becomes clear that they are not talking about the same thing, or, at least, they approach the subject in different ways. Habermas is trying to give a thorough explanation of what meaning is, while Arendt is not concerned with an explanation of meaning or truth, but with the need to distinguish one from another. While there is serious disagreement between them, it is important to know how exactly they disagree.

Conversely, Arendt, as pointed out in Part 3.3, makes a clear distinction between being of object and “what it means for it to be.” The capacity to grasp being of objects, which is tantamount to grasping the truth is based on the ability of the world to convince us of something. The appearances we perceive in one way or another make our reasoning truthful and even apodictic. In the latter case, a priori valid appearances are simply rooted in the biological structure of the brain, and this structure is meant to ensure our existence in the world. As for meaning, Arendt is less clear. She stresses that thinking cannot be satisfied by the givenness of appearances and tends to go beyond it to grasp not only being but “what it means for it to be”. The meaning of appearances is concerned with some wider perspective in which it must fit, and from this wider perspective, appearances gain their meaning. For this reason, thinking is often led by the quest for meaning to the eternal and ultimate Kantian questions about God, soul and eternity. As a result, truth is overcome every time the quest for meaning starts, because truth is something that is given (or could be given) as a satisfactory answer to a certain specific, limited question by a person who wants to know something concrete. By

contrast, the quest for meaning starts with the realization that truth by itself is not enough to satisfy a human being. He needs to find a more general, coherent worldview, which can no longer be confirmed by appearances.

The problem raised by Habermasian concept of meaning remains unresolved, however, and Arendt is compelled to admit, for example, that true statements also have meaning, because otherwise they would not be comprehensible. This matter is of little interest to her, however. What does interest her is that meaning cannot be reduced to the conditions of validity, or, to put in simpler terms, truth. She is trying to prove that the quest for meaning outranks the quest for truth, while simultaneously serving as a precondition of it. The real disagreement between Arendt and Habermas then does not concern the theory of understanding. The question is whether meaning should be bound by context or, to put it differently, do reality and truth have priority over meaning, or is it the exact opposite.

Some serious objections could be raised against the approach Arendt took to resolve the tension in favor of meaning. It is evident that her position is not unassailable and is far from being logically perfect. (For example, it can be said that the laws of logical argumentation, which make a statement acceptable and truthful, work the exact same way when they concern questions of meaning.) The important thing, however, is that despite some logical difficulties noted by Habermas and others, this approach is well suited for understanding some distinctive features of human life. By comparison, the communicative theory of thinking cannot do this as well even though it might be more logically consistent, and elegance of Arendt's approach consists in the fact that this alone should be counted as a sufficient reason of why it should be pursued.

4.4. Problems with A Communicative Approach to Thinking. The Lack of Creativity

Canovan highlights one major problem associated with a non-isolative, context-bound account of thinking.

She points out that Habermas's reading of Arendt is extremely intellectualistic. He substitutes "talking for acting, consensus for disagreement, and unity for plurality in politics." Habermas misread Arendt and imputed his own ideas to her texts. As a result, discrepancies were made to look like inconsistencies on Arendt's part. In general, Canovan is convinced that there is nothing unique about creative misreading, which distorts the original ideas of an author. It is a common practice in philosophy used to expound one's own ideas. In this instance, however, it is important to understand that distortion of Arendt's philosophy does not result from a source that is external to Habermas's reading. It was caused by neither ideology, nor power, nor self-deception. It arises directly from Habermas's own way of thinking. Canovan finds it incredible that anybody would wish to exclude creativity from human thought even though it is a distortion of communication. Canovan concludes that not all distortions are necessarily as bad as Habermas claims.

The problem is more complex than simply stating that there are some useful distortions, however. It is clear from the definition of the word "creativity" that it takes place on the side of the acting and thinking subject, not on the side of objects. We call someone creative when he is capable of solving a problem that no one has been able to solve before, using more or less the same resources. Creativity concerns the way we interact with things, not the things themselves. This subjective aspect of creativity can be best appreciated when considered in Arendt's terms, since according to her, thinking and meaning have no need to reflect reality and truth, and they are therefore free to choose an attitude to reality and the way of understanding it. For this reason, we can be creative in the full sense of the word.

By contrast, the problem with Habermas's approach is that creativity as such is barely comprehensible. As mentioned earlier, for Habermas, there is no such thing as internal distortion of thought. The only thing that can block communication is external influence. If distortions can sometimes be internal to thinking itself, however, as Habermas has shown by his own example, there must be an essential difference between critical debate aimed at reaching a valid conclusion and creative thinking. He did not aim at reaching an understanding of Arendt, since he paid no attention to important parts of her writings. He therefore

demonstrated that thinking is often not interested in responding to every possible objection, but rather in pushing forward, using everything around it as a foothold. Recognizing this, we must admit that thinking is a larger undertaking than Habermas thought. It cannot be a simple side effect of the capacity to respond to critical arguments. Its distinguishing feature is that it is concerned primarily with its own integrity and dynamics, which is why it is so easy to find many cases of misunderstanding in philosophical debates. Thinking is not internally motivated to prove everyone wrong, but only to move forward.

We can now see that Arendt had good reason to stress that thinking is a fundamental component of the life of the mind, and that it is completely detached from reality. Such a solipsistic positioning of thinking can explain its indifference to reality and to questions of validity and truth. Since it is concerned only with itself and its own movement toward meaning, closing the self off from the world and becoming a partner in the silent dialogue of thought, is necessary. Otherwise, it would be bound to existing contexts, and it would lack creativity.

The law of non-contradiction, which Arendt considered as a fundamental law of thinking, is a private law. It is concerned with the integrity of one's own thought and pays little or no attention to the possible objections of others. First and foremost, it treats them as the means for achieving the desired meaning. We can conclude therefore that this kind of activity is dialectical, and not discursive. If it were discursive, then thinking would be relegated to the world of appearances, because it would have returned to plurality, a condition of true knowledge and reality. The act of thinking would then be maximally attentive to their objections and claims, which runs counter to reality, where cases of full understanding between two philosophers is more often the exception. The close connection between thinking and the world, or between meaning and context, presupposes that thinking is more trustworthy but less creative than it has proven. (This conclusion sounds even more absurd if we, along with Arendt, agree that the arts are created by thinking in the same way philosophy is.)

4.5. Weaknesses of Arendt's Approach

Despite its advantages, Arendt's thinking also involves serious problems that have been mentioned above. They can be summarized in two objections.

First, meaning plays a more fundamental role than establishing a hierarchy of perceived data, since there is a close connection between understanding of meaning and the very possibility to grasp objects, which was highlighted by Heidegger. For example, it is easy to rely on ordinary intuition when someone claims that he does not understand the meaning of an object simply because he does not grasp what it is or how to use it. This approach creates hardly sustainable absolute distinction between questions of truth and questions of meaning. (In a certain sense, this is a typical problem in Arendt's philosophy, which tends to overemphasize its subject in order to demonstrate its irreducibility and analyze it more clearly).

Second, every kind of thinking, including the one Arendt practices employs logical argumentation to show the intention to be valid at least to a degree. Despite Arendt's claiming that thinking is not aimed at truth, she used argumentation and described how things are instead of "what it means for it to be" to outline her theory of thinking. It appears, therefore, that she is not completely free from the charge of performative self-contradiction. At best, her theory of thinking requires further elaboration, which would propose an alternative criterion of thinking that justifies the use of argumentation.

In fairness, Arendt's distinction between the search for understanding and the search for truth leaves this possibility open. There is a clear intuitive distinction between some approaches and arguments that support these approaches. A researcher usually chooses the approach he finds the most promising and only then tries to improve it logically. Theories, ideas, and approaches find their first followers precisely because they present an opportunity to grasp various topics. Consistent logic and the ability to respond to criticism usually emanate from further elaboration. Seen from this angle, the crucial question is not whether these ideas and theories can be defended when subjected to criticism, but rather is it worth defending them. One great advantage of Arendt's approach is that she provides a possibility to see this difference and not reduce it to the universal structure of rationality and the game of giving and asking for reason, though it does not clarify what exactly the difference is. The whole point of Arendt's thinking about thinking, however, is that this possibility to understand by itself can

serve as a reason to consider this approach worthwhile exploring without being an argument in a strict sense.

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