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Arendt and Foucault: Perspectives on modernity and citizenship

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ARENDR AND FOUCAULT: PERSPECTIVES ON MODERNITY AND
CITIZENSHIP

BY

MARTIN F. ROWLEY JR.
Bachelor of Arts, UNH, 2006

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

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in
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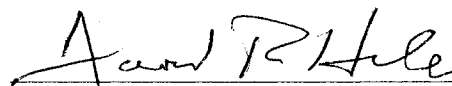
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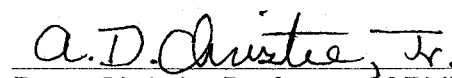
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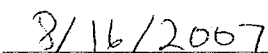
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Date

DEDICATION

To one Mark Joseph-writer, philosopher, farmer, leader, dreamer, environmentalist, inspiration, teacher, friend, and occasional Mafioso. Keep up the good work *compadre*, and always keep it heavy local.

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This project would have never gotten off the ground without the persistent help, guidance and inspiration provided by Professor David Hiley and his work. As is readily apparent to anyone who reads this thesis or has talked to me at length about philosophy David's ideas have left a deep, indelible mark on my philosophical and personal outlook. Indeed it was David who introduced me to my own "essential" philosopher Foucault in my junior year of undergraduate study. In our seminar David's encouragement, patience and lucidity made reading and understanding Foucault far less daunting without sacrificing the complexity of Foucault's ideas and works. His ability to make philosophy urgent and real yet also fun and enjoyable is a testament to his profound ability as a teacher. I cannot thank him enough for the countless hours he spent writing me letters of recommendation, reading drafts, and meeting with me throughout the course of not only this project but my career at UNH as a whole.

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I must also thank my committee for spending the time to read and review my writing and offering me useful comments and criticism throughout. Professors Nick Smith, Drew Christie, and James Tucker all helped to clarify these ideas and point out problems that would have otherwise been sorely overlooked.

Finally there are all those friends and teachers who have always offered encouragement and whose love, opinions and criticisms have made this thesis a stronger work; Brian Rowley, my brother and partner in crime; Mark Joseph, to whom this work is dedicated, Martin Morrissey, Alicia Roussel, Andy Lawson, Jeremy Sherman and Mark Santos. You are all like family to me and I am blessed to have met and loved you; Zack Bazzi, whose good-humored teasing and lively conversation made UNH an interesting place to be; Nothing Simple, the best and least appreciated rock band the North East has ever known-Chris St Lawrence, Jesse Andreasen, and Ricky Gauthier you are my brothers for life; Alissa Feller, Alicia Dunphy, Heather Noyes, Tess and Lily Finnegan-Allen, the hip ladies next door; Rob Wolff, perhaps my favorite Marxist; Ian and Katie Wilkey, Aaron and Brendan King, great philosophers, activists and soccer players; All of my professors who have helped fine-tune my thinking and writing in this and other projects such as Charlotte Witt, Bill deVries, and Paul McNamara. If I were to list everyone, this acknowledgement section would run longer than the thesis itself so if I missed your name please insert it here!

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ABSTRACT

ARENDRT AND FOUCAULT; PERSPECTIVES ON MODERNITY AND CITIZENSHIP

by

Martin F. Rowley Jr.

University of New Hampshire, September, 2007

This thesis examines the dangers posed by totalitarianism in the modern age by bringing the philosophies of Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault together in dialogue. It aims to compare and contrast their respective philosophies as a way of responding to the challenges posed by totalitarianism to democratic culture. While there are clear resonances in their analyses Arendt and Foucault are rarely brought together, much to the detriment of political theory. The thesis is based on a textual analysis of Arendt and Foucault's major works and is organized into three chapters and an introduction. Chapter one gives an overview of Arendt's critique of and response to modernity. Chapter two does the same for Foucault. Chapter three critically compares and synthesizes Arendt and Foucault, and argues for a new form of democratic citizenship by combining the rich sense of solidarity offered by Arendt and the irony offered by Foucault.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of citizenship, especially in a democratic context, is rife with tensions. While democracies generally recognize the value of individual liberty and autonomy, they simultaneously place constraints on the freedom of individuals out of necessity. In order for any society to function it is of course necessary that laws are obeyed and that norms are followed. Democratic societies also place the added obligation of political participation. In order for popular government to succeed, the populace must have a hand in decision making. Paradoxically, in order for the civil liberties which accompany democratic culture to exist, some infringement on the private lives of individuals is unavoidable. The extent to which private individuals must give themselves to the greater community is however the source of much controversy. The debate is generally split between so-called individualists and collectivists. Liberals and libertarians seek to protect individuals and individuality, arguing for personal liberty and the sanctity of privacy, and against universal value systems. Conservatives and communitarians on the other hand assert that individuals are so deeply embedded in their community that they share an interest in collective achievement. As such, civic life and a shared sense of "the good" are crucial.

While the debate has traditionally been framed in this bifurcated manner, I want to suggest that it is in some ways a false dichotomy. By thinking differently about what it means to be a citizen much of the tension between individual and public interests can be effaced. Understanding oneself as a citizen means that one identifies with a greater community of individuals who share similar qualities and interests to oneself. Citizens share political rights and participatory obligations in conjunction with a desire for civic justice or public good. This does not mean that citizenship requires total conformity or that the individual is trumped by the majority, but it does presuppose that citizens view themselves as part of a community that possesses normative standards. Therefore I see liberals as being mistaken when they view public interests as being merely the aggregate of individual interests. This view lacks the kind of rich commitment to public life I see as being a part of citizenship. I want to suggest that a more useful approach is to work towards merging private and public interests by way of democratic deliberation. By focusing on what binds individuals as oppose to separating them, solidarity becomes a real possibility.

This notwithstanding, the fear held by liberals that the majority will ineluctably overwhelm the minority is a real and valid concern. Plurality is undoubtedly the mark of a healthy democracy which has a built in respect for individuality. To protect against the dangers of majoritarianism and centralized power, it is essential that citizens cultivate and maintain an outwardly skeptical attitude. Moreover, skepticism is valuable not only in an outward sense but an inward one as well. If consensus is to be a real possibility at all it is necessary

for citizens to make concessions as a way of meeting those they might disagree with half-way. Private opinion cannot in other words be an obdurate and rigid thing, but must be open to change. This requires the citizen to be in some sense ironic about her own beliefs. While she might have strong political, theological, ideological, or other convictions, she must be willing to hold these beliefs in enough doubt that she is able to truly consider beliefs contrary to her own.

In what follows, I have tried to do three things: 1) Draw connections between the philosophy of Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault on their respective outlooks on modernity, 2) show how and why despite similarities in their analyses their conclusions differ so starkly and finally 3) argue that bringing these two different perspectives together is useful for thinking about democratic citizenship in a fresh and novel way. The major focus of the paper revolves around the last aim. In fact, if I were forced to name in one word what the binding theme of this work is it would undoubtedly be "citizenship." When it comes to citizenship, Arendt and Foucault are in many ways two sides of the same coin. They both fear totalitarianism, albeit differently, and they both see something highly problematic about modernity. However, they differ substantially in how they handle these problems. Arendt recognizes the value of political community and is a champion of public life. The proper response to the banality of modernity lies in shared political action and solidarity. Her account however lacks the irony and nuance of Foucault who is deeply suspicious of Arendt's enthusiasm for public life. Foucault appreciates the normalizing threat posed by public life to the individual and works to ensure that difference and individual

autonomy are preserved. Foucault's "politics of everyday life" temper Arendt's trust in the public and the irony of his account of the self is indispensable to democratic culture. Because of his fear of normalizing power however, Foucault unlike Arendt cannot offer solidarity. Without the shared interest which informs Arendt's view of democracy, Foucault's philosophy runs the risk of lapsing into pernicious individualism. Because they share the same object of concern but approach it in different ways bringing Arendt and Foucault together in dialogue has a great deal of potential.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter introduces Arendt and gives an overview of her philosophy drawing primarily from *The Human Condition*. I focus on the narrative she relays about the loss of public life in the modern era as a way of setting up what she sees as dangerous about modernity. I then move into the significance of citizenship to Arendt's philosophy arguing that an expanded sense of civic engagement is necessary for effective democracy and solidarity.

Chapter two is set up in a similar way to chapter one but instead focuses on Foucault. Here I discuss Foucault's concept of "normalizing power" and describe the ways in which this power produces individuals. The second half of the chapter addresses Foucault's response to normalization namely aesthetic self-creation. I argue that while the irony in Foucault's account is valuable his emphasis on the ethics of the self is problematic for political community.

Chapter three serves as a comparison of chapters one and two. Here I compare and contrast the different motivations behind Arendt and Foucault's

respective projects highlighting what I see as being valuable in both philosophies. In the case of Arendt, while I think she has the right idea about shared interests, I feel that her analysis of power is lacking and as a result her account is insufficiently ironic. With Foucault on the other hand I argue that his account lacks the possibility for solidarity because of its need for agonistic politics and its mistrust of shared interests. However because Foucault preserves a strong sense of irony, I argue that he enriches the concept of citizenship in a nuanced and crucial way. In order for citizens to truly deliberate, they must question the certainty of their own opinions. If an individual's personal opinions remain obdurate and closed to change, it will be impossible for him or her to make the kinds of concessions necessary to reach agreement on laws and social policy acceptable to all people. Firm and unwavering in their convictions, fundamentalists pose a risk to pluralist democracy because they dismiss opposing perspectives as being immoral or unreasonable out of hand. Irony in the sense in which I employ it is meant to serve as a safeguard against fundamentalism by forcing citizens to be conscious of the limitations of their own personal beliefs thereby opening them up to the consideration of competing views.

CHAPTER I

ARENDT

To understand Arendt's critique of modern society, it is necessary to be familiar with the history of public and private life offered in the *Human Condition*. According to Arendt, it was when Western culture lost the firm distinction between public and private life inherited from the ancient Greek's that the dangers of normalization and conformity, and political cynicism arose. Therefore I shall spend some time going over why this distinction existed, how it came to be blurred in the modern world, and the pernicious consequences of this blurring. Once I have set up the problem in this manner, I will detail how I see Arendt's political solution to these modern problems.

The ancient understanding of things private and public is born out of two related veins in Greek culture. The first is the Greeks aspirations of immortality and the second their hesitant relationship with nature. Because men were not divine like the gods and did not comprise part of a species which perpetuated itself through cyclical reproduction like the animals, they were "the only mortal things in existence" (Arendt, 1958, p. 18).

That the Greeks did not see themselves as divine by nature is fairly clear, but why they did not identify themselves with a species may, for the modern reader, require some explaining. Unlike animals, men possessed plurality. Each individual man had his own identity, his own personal narrative that unfolded with his history. This is what Arendt means when she writes that “men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world” (Arendt, 1958, p. 7). Unlike animals for which any member of the species is readily exchangeable for another, individual men have unique identities by which one individual can be distinguished from the next. I will return to this theme of plurality to expand upon it in greater detail as it is essential to understanding Arendt’s critique.

The Greeks sought to emulate their heroes, men of myth such as Homer’s Odysseus, who transcended their own finitude by becoming like the gods. This feat was achieved by performing great deeds and actions of heroism which brought one glory. This quest for immortality however was not simply supererogatory. Indeed, for one to be truly human, he was required to strive tirelessly for greatness since to do anything less would be to identify oneself with a lowly animal. “The distinction between man and animal runs right through the human species itself: only the best (*aristoi*), who constantly prove themselves to be the best and who ‘prefer immortal fame to mortal things,’ are really human; the others, content with whatever pleasures nature will yield them, live and die like animals” (Arendt, 1958, p. 19).

There were two ways in which men could be tied to the animal life they sought desperately to surpass. The first was their attachment to life-sustaining

activities, necessities of survival such as reproduction and the gathering and preparation of food. These attachments were essentially bonds of slavery. By being tied to the *life-process*, one's freedom to act and to participate in the public realm was hamstrung. This, as we shall see, is the reason why the Greeks so strictly separated public and private life. The second way men could be equated with animal life was through the loss of plurality, mentioned above. These connections to animal life were not just inherently detestable but as I, and I believe Arendt see it, they also posed a threat to Athenian democracy. As a way of showing how the Athenian view of nature is related to democratic culture I will address these two dangers in some detail, and will focus on the former, the attachment to necessity as slavery, first.

As much as the Athenians might have disliked the idea, they, just like every other animal, had to fulfill certain biological necessities. They needed to eat, prepare and gather food, to reproduce, and to clean themselves and their dwellings. Because these activities were of course ongoing, the Athenians were constantly engaged in what Arendt dubs the *life-process*, or the constellation of activities immediately related to necessity.

This was detestable to the Athenians in one sense simply because they thought of themselves as being superior to animals thanks to their specifically human qualities, namely their political capacity. Man was tied to the natural insofar as he possessed a social character, but it was his political character, his capacity for speech (*lexis*) and action (*praxis*) which separated him from animal life. In another more important sense for my purposes, when one was engaged

in the life-process he or she had no time to do anything else. The pressing call of life demanded all of one's time. Necessity required fulfillment through *labor*, Arendt's technical term for all life-sustaining activities. By being tied to the life process, by constantly having to fulfill necessity, one never had the requisite ability to do anything else and so was a slave to necessity.

Because necessity was viewed in such a negative light, the Athenians cordoned off all forms of labor behind the walls of the private household. Necessity was never allowed to taint the world of the public, the *agora* which was the real space of freedom in Athenian democracy. Because life-sustaining activities were so crucial to the continued existence of Athenian citizens it was necessary that the administration of domestic affairs was handled efficiently. In the male dominated culture of Athens a male patriarch dominated the household legislating duties to wife, children and slaves. This *dominus* was the sole locus of power in the home and wielded unquestioned authority which he exercised through oftentimes violent means. Beating slaves, wives and children was not out of the jurisdiction of Athenian citizens. Nonetheless, because violence was an activity of labor it like all other purely life-sustaining activities could only be exercised within the confines of the home.

The second reason the Athenians resisted comparing themselves to animal life was that they refused to think of themselves as constituting part of a species. While it is common for us today to conceive of individuals as comprising part of a general category called humanity, it was entirely unacceptable for the Athenians who saw this as an assault on their plurality. As Arendt notes, men

and not Man exist in the world. In other words, the Athenians thought of themselves as possessing individual identities which were separate and distinct and unique from one another.

As a way of illustrating this, imagine a field of cows out to pasture. As the Athenians saw it, while one can individuate cows, they are not individual in the sense that one cow is distinguishable from the next. Certainly each cow might have superficial disparities such as a difference in coloration, etc. But the idea that cows have an idiosyncratic "personality" which distinguishes one from another would have been for the Athenians inconceivable. Take any particular cow and you could readily exchange it for any other without having lost anything special to either cow. This is because cows work on the level of instinct and behavior and they act only insofar as they follow a pre-determined set of stimulus responses. Because one cannot readily distinguish individual cows, it makes sense to be able to lump all cows into a generalized species. This goes for crocodiles, crows, camels and any other number of animal species.

In sum we have two rejections of nature. On the one hand the natural is equated with the necessary and consequentially with slavery, and on the other, to think of oneself as a member of a species is to lack an individual identity and to conform to a certain behavior of the species or mass. I now want to argue that the significance of these rejections rests primarily in the weight given to Athenian democratic culture which constituted the public sphere of Athens.

Because the private realm had to deal with necessity and was dominated with violence and administration, it consequently lacked freedom. By contrast, it

was in the public realm of Athenian life that the citizen could go to escape the slavery of necessity. In the public realm the citizen was one among equals. He was free to voice his opinion and to participate in the decision-making process of the raucous Athenian assembly. Indeed, this was the height of Athenian honor to participate in the popular assembly. The entire way of Athenian life depended upon participation from its citizens, and most public positions were routinely occupied by lot. It was in public that the citizen made himself known through use of his political capacities, speech and action. The private household existed only insofar as it was necessary to get the citizen to be able to participate in public politics.

If this sounds radically different from our own relationship to public life today, that's because it is. True freedom according to Arendt's narrative, was positive freedom. Positive freedom is not freedom from something which constrains individual action such as prison, slavery, or the state, but rather the idea that liberty can only exist within a certain social context. The free individual is one who does not allow him or herself to be governed by passion or desire but who instead aspires to meet a cultural standard of humanity (Berlin, 1969, chap. 3). To be human in other words is to be free from base animal instinct. In the polis humanness was equated with citizenship. This made personal freedom possible only through political action and public participation, not the abandonment of civic duty or the pursuit of private interests. In a world in which we are so concerned with the privacy and intimacy of personal life, we tend to view the political world as disingenuous and dissembling and find freedom in

escape from the public world in to the private. It is important to appreciate the significance of this as it is crucial to understanding Arendt's plea to a return to civic engagement in which the interests of the individual are consonant with those of the greater political community.

Part and parcel to this, it is also necessary for democratic politics that men possess their own particular viewpoints, that they are a plurality of individuals. If there were no differing perspectives on or conflicts regarding decisions affecting all members of the *polis* then the entire purpose of democracy would be lost. Democratic politics assumes that no one has a privileged understanding of the one right way of living life. Thus, no one should make decisions for all members of the community. Decisions must instead be made via dialogue and political debate among a plurality of citizens with differing views. However, it is important to note that this debate does not assume a forgone consensus in which all opinions necessarily converge on some common idealized understanding. This would assume that politics is ultimately predictable and predetermined, both conclusions which Arendt rejects. In other words, the aim of political activity is not utopian, nor can politics be equated with the human activity of *work*, the physical manufacture of objects after the fashion of the artisan. If it were, politics would be much more like making a pot in which the outcome is decided in advance, relegating the status of civic interaction to little more than a means to an end. Instead, political action requires a certain degree of friction and must allow for conflict of a structured, conversational, and peaceful kind. Its results must also be accepted as being ultimately unpredictable and consequentially,

uncontrollable. The unpredictability of politics is what leads Arendt to claim that political actors are ignorant of the consequences of their actions. When the citizen speaks or acts in the public realm, he is not sure what the ultimate outcome will be. The essence of politics is in other words, spontaneity and uncertainty.

This does not imply that disagreement must lapse into violence or complete chaos, though some of the latter certainly characterized the agora. It is simply to note that the purpose of action is not to achieve idealized political consensus, but rather to have a peaceful form of conflict resolution and collective decision making which includes multiple and oftentimes conflicting perspectives. This being said, it should be emphasized that even though Arendt is skeptical of ideal solutions to political problems, she isn't an enemy of consensus. Indeed, the purpose of political action is to reach consensus on issues of shared concern which are acceptable to all.

At this point we can begin to see why the Athenians maintained such a strict distinction between the private and public realms of existence. Though the private was necessary and a precondition to participation in public life, it could never enter into the public realm where it would turn political action to purely private ends. Likewise, the private realm which required administration, control, and organization was not the place for political action. The distinction between public and private life was essential for the maintenance of both.

As one reads in the *Human Condition* however, this distinction, so important to the Athenians, became blurred with the inception of modernity. A

gloss on the story Arendt tells is as follows. Athenian civilization and the democracy it fostered eventually faded away and became replaced by the Roman Empire. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe comes to be composed of a number of private interests characterized by social class including royalty, nobility, peasantry, and etcetera. Contrary to the ancient *polis*, these private interests worked solely for themselves after the fashion of large families, aggregations of individuals who lacked a strong sense of identification and cohesion with other groups or individuals. This in turn led to the emergence of a new form of associational life characterized not by civic engagement but rather economics. In this new configuration, public participation amounted to the maximization of private interest. Politics was replaced by the buying and selling of goods and services, and the agora by the market. In addition, as economic concerns came to eclipse political ones, a new way of thinking about social organization was born. Centralized powers known as nation-states came to regulate the interactions of private individuals. In the modern age the traditional roles of public and private are reversed such that life-sustaining activities administered by the state come to dominate the public realm.

The outcome of this series of events is what Arendt refers to as the "unnatural growth of the natural." She sees the radical reversal of values in modernity as the outgrowth of immediately necessary, natural, and hence, private matters into the public domain. Furthermore as the distinction becomes blurred the State comes to assume the role of the patriarch exercising increasing control over the population. Because the life-process is now central to public

decisions it is the State's responsibility to administer and govern individuals. To accomplish this effectively, it is required that the politically independent citizen be rendered utterly *superfluous*, or intellectually, ethically and actively impotent. Being the enemy of bureaucracy, plurality must be eliminated in favor of individuals who function as little more than automata, behaving mindlessly, efficiently and uniformly as cogs in the social machinery of the State. Today's job-holder, behaviorally conditioned and too tied up with work to engage in politics or action, is for Arendt the modern variant of the slavish *animal laborans* of old.

The unfortunate shape of modern associational life Arendt dubs *society*. "Society" is for Arendt a term enjoying far more specificity than its common usage in contemporary language, referring only to the modern State. One should not confuse society with the polis as they are antithetical forms of social organization.

Arendt describes the progression leading to the growth of society and the replacement of the citizen for the superfluous individual as follows. Accompanying the emergence of economic affairs into the public world are the underlying theoretical assumptions informing economics as a social science. Most important for Arendt are those assumptions which concern the description of human nature implicit or explicit in all economic theories. For instance, in the case of capitalism, the system with which Arendt is most concerned, individuals are described as "rational choice maximizers." The human being is theorized to be atomistic in that she makes decisions independently of other individuals. She moreover seeks to maximize her own material ends above others, this being the

primary motivating factor guiding her decision-making. *Homo economicus* is essentially a private creature.

Arendt is critical of this and other economic models of human behavior not only because of how they construe humanity as being inherently anti-political, but also and perhaps more importantly because of their propensity to group all of humanity and its activity under one general category. The ignominious result of asserting economic and other theories of human behavior is the leveling of possible alternative ways of being. This is particularly, perhaps only, so when economic or other totalizing social theory is given the status of irrefutable scientific truth. When accepted as true, the description of human nature offered by the social scientist comes to constitute a normative standard by which to judge an individual's "humanness." Consequentially, to stray from the accepted definition of human nature is to be aberrant and defective, somehow less than human. Acceptance from without in the greater social milieu and even from within in the form of one's relationship to oneself, depends upon conformity to the dominant model of human behavior which represents the norm. In following the norm, human behavior becomes predictable and uniform creating homogenized masses of individuals.

Arendt sees it as no coincidence that economic theory which marked the inception of the social sciences eventually blossomed into the behavioral sciences. In describing human activity as arithmetic and patterned, the social sciences pursue as their goal the very danger which the Athenians feared and fought against so vehemently, human beings reduced to animal species.

To gauge the extent of society's victory in the modern age, its early substitution of *behavior for action* and its eventual substitution of bureaucracy, the rule of nobody, for personal rulership, it may be well to recall that its initial science of economics, which substitutes patterns of behavior only in this rather limited field of human activity, was finally followed by the all-comprehensive pretension of the social sciences which, as "behavioral sciences," *aim to reduce man as a whole, in all his activities, to the level of a conditioned and behaving animal*. If economics is the science of society in its early stages, when it could impose its rules of behavior only on sections of the population and on parts of their activities, the rise of the "behavioral sciences" indicates clearly the final stage of this development, when mass society has devoured all strata of the nation and "social behavior" has become the standard for all regions of life [italics added] (Arendt, 1958, p. 45).

There is another reason that society was able to grow, a reason that can be traced back to Plato. Disdaining the spontaneity and messiness of politics, Plato sought to replace *action* with *fabrication* by designing social organization rather than allowing it to arise from the populace. Like an artisan, Plato sees the proper outcome of associational life as being his ideal utopian state described in *The Republic*. But where the potter's materials are clay and porcelain, Plato's resources are drawn from the very populace itself. The singularity of Plato's vision requires that the population be subservient to the grand aims of the state. In bringing order and justice to the unruly mob, each citizen of the Republic performs his or her function and no other. These functions are furthermore ranked and categorized according to their utility creating a rigid social hierarchy. Democratic egalitarianism is absent from utopia. Tellingly perhaps, Plato uses terms such as "bronze," "silver," and "gold" to differentiate and evaluate classes. Despite this, even the "potter's wheel" of the Republic, the ruling philosopher king, is ultimately useful only insofar as he maintains the integrity of Republic.

Reading the *Republic* is a singularly disturbing affair. In Plato's painstakingly organized society, the political action and independent thought

which characterized Athens are threats to be quelled at all costs. Moreover, the physical immediacy of the public and its activity which Arendt describes as “the world of appearances” is for Plato a dangerous illusion. Because appearances are falsehoods one must search for reality in the Idea, the form that exists behind what ostensibly and empirically seems to be real. While an exhaustive excursus on Plato’s metaphysics is not necessary for my purposes, it is important to note that Arendt sees Plato’s view on reality as having serious political and practical implications. Since one cannot reach truth via the senses, Plato elevates contemplation over and above action. To the Platonist, the vulgar world of political action and common affairs must be transcended if one wishes to gain true knowledge. As one might imagine, this reappraisal has serious consequences for democratic culture which depends on public participation to exist. Arendt charges Plato with “nihilism” precisely because he chooses to remove himself from participation in the world so as to lucidly cogitate the ideal.

If Plato’s writings had never elicited much enthusiasm beyond certain academic circles his political philosophy would likely be innocuous. The influence of Plato on Western history however is undeniable. Alfred North Whitehead has claimed that Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato. For centuries the West shared Plato’s view that the democracy created and championed in the *polis* was unstable and dangerous. Monarchical governments dominated European history right up until democracy’s late 18th century resurgence. Plato’s elite rationalism also had even darker consequences. Following the arch of history in which individuals are made superfluous to the

overall state design, we inevitably conclude with the horrors of Nazi Germany a state run by bureaucrats. As Arendt writes in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Adolph Eichmann, the engineer who made the Nazi's train system so efficient, was not an "evil" man in any familiar sense. He did not have a maniacal malicious essence which compelled him to play an integral role in the murder of millions of Jews. Rather, it was what Eichmann lacked, a capacity for imagination, that made his role possible.

Arendt's thesis that Eichmann lacked evil intent remains as controversial today as when *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was first released. Authors such as Yaacov Lozowick in *Hitler's Bureaucrats* and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* have taken issue with Arendt's portrayal of Nazi bureaucrats as mere cogs in the Nazi machinery. They argue that top bureaucrats like Eichmann possessed clear anti-Semitic sentiment guiding their actions in carrying out the Holocaust. It is not however my purpose to discuss this debate at length here or even to conclude whether or not Eichmann was the man Arendt claimed he was. Instead, I introduce *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as a means of describing what Arendt meant by a superfluous individual. According to Arendt, instead of thinking, Eichmann obeyed, and instead of acting he behaved. *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is above all else the story of a superfluous individual, of a man who was little more than a cog in the machinery of the state. Lacking the capacity to empathize with the victims of his designs and to think critically about what he was doing, Eichmann went along with the Nazi's efficiently and complacently. One is chillingly reminded of the words of the recently deceased

Maurice Papon who claimed that it was his duty as a public servant to carry out France's policies unflinchingly even when he was ordered to arrest thousands of Jews who would be sent to concentration camps.

In sum, Plato sought to bring order and efficiency to the messiness of politics. Seeing social organization as a craft, his ultimate aspiration was predictability and stability in human affairs by replacing political activity with the work of *homo faber*. Additionally, in championing the contemplative life and being openly hostile to action, Plato advocated a retreat from political affairs wholly dangerous to democratic culture.

I want to turn now to Arendt's response to the problem of modern society by focusing on how she conceived of citizenship. Following an incisive analysis offered by Arendt scholar Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves I will do this by looking at three major themes in Arendt's work, "namely, the public sphere, political agency and collective identity, and political culture" (Passerin d'Entrèves, 1994, p.165). In addressing these themes, I want to focus above all on the dialogical nature of Arendt's account. It is of the utmost importance to Arendt that individuals are political, and that they reach their opinions in a public space in conjunction with other individuals. Indeed, the notion that an individual can reach an opinion, political or otherwise, by looking inwardly alone is impossible for Arendt. In the chapters to come, I want to show how this consideration in her thought so greatly distances her from Foucault.

I expand upon the concept of the public sphere in greater detail as it is deeply important to Arendt's view of citizenship. The public sphere as defined by

Arendt can be understood in two seemingly contradictory senses. In one sense what is public is what is immediately present, namely the meeting of various individuals in a space common to all. This does not require however that one be in any specific institution expressly dedicated to a public purpose such as a town meeting house or senate. Public gatherings can take place in any number of settings from coffee houses to libraries to the sidewalk. What is important is that public individuals or *citizens* as opposed to private individuals meet with one another face to face in some setting accessible to all. The difference between citizens and private individuals is crucial and I will spend more time teasing out these differences below. What I want to emphasize here however is that public gatherings do not have to be strictly wrapped up in affairs of state. They do not need to be equated with the governmental and the administrative but can take place at any time and in any context in which citizens are free to congregate and discuss.

Nonetheless, while publicity is possible only when individuals meet, the importance of cultural institutions cannot be underestimated. While public gatherings do not always need to take place in an institutional setting a concrete, physical space common to all must still exist. This is the second meaning of Arendt's public, that it is a construct made by human hands which provides a setting for citizens to interact. In this sense, the public is timeless. It is the culture that came before us and the one which we will leave behind for future generations when we pass. It is the tradition or set of traditions which have molded one as an individual. In this way the public is immortal superseding the

lives of particular individuals and carrying on the traditions, history and culture shared by all. In a concrete sense it is embodied in writing, philosophy, art, architecture, and all of those things which constitute common culture. This is the public as the *world*, as that setting which dictates the shared human condition. However, while the public binds persons together by imbuing them with a common identity as citizens, it simultaneously preserves plurality. In Arendt's terms, it is the table which brings individuals together at the same time that it separates them.

These two understandings of public characterize how Arendt conceives of citizenship and its accompanying rights and responsibilities. Passerin d'Entrèves highlights three major consequences of Arendt's view of the public for her view of citizenship: 1) artificiality, 2) spatiality, and 3) public interests versus private interests.

Citizenship, like the world of the public, is a product of artificiality. It, like all politics generally, is a creation of the hands of men, a contrivance which only finds its foundation within an associational context. This in turn means that all of the rights of citizenship such as equality, civil liberties and political representation do not stem from so-called human qualities such as rationality, conscience, or any other universal standard theoretically possessed by all persons. On the contrary, an individual is only a citizen when recognized by others as being part of the citizenry.

While Arendt is inspired by much of the Athenian style of citizenship she abandons the misogyny which characterized Athens' male dominated culture.

For her reciprocity of citizenship does not depend on a shared ethnicity, dogma, or even, with qualification, value system. In democratic culture individuals are viewed as political equals regardless of differences in race, sex, religion, or other personal beliefs. However, while there is no singular, strong set of values to which all must submit, it is indeed the case that citizens must have respect for the democratic process and the rights of other citizens. Citizenship implies adherence to a certain set of norms, and it requires one to maintain an interest in advancing the public good and to participate in public affairs.

This presents proponents of democracy such as Arendt with a challenge. While democracy is supposed to maintain plurality and individuality, individuals are nonetheless obliged to submit to public interests. The question of just how much one is required to conform to the public illustrates a tension which is inherent to any form of associational life, but is much more critical to democracy. It is this tension between the individual and the collective, the one and the many, which lies at the core of this paper. As I will argue, Foucault and Arendt have very different responses to the question. Where Arendt manages to bridge the gap between these ostensibly antithetical poles, Foucault seems intent on keeping them apart. Furthermore, as I detail below, it is this aspect of Arendt's work which makes her so invaluable to the question of citizenship.

Spatiality itself plays an important role in bridging the gap between individual and community by fostering unity. By "sharing a public space and set of political institutions, and engaging in the practices and activities which are characteristic of that space and those institutions," individuals come to identify

with one another (Passerin d'Entrèves, 1994, p. 147). Space is also important in how citizens interact with one another. It is of the utmost importance for Arendt that citizens actually engage one another face to face, that they share the same physical space when discussing matters of public concern. As Passerin d'Entrèves puts it:

For politics to occur, it is not enough to have a collection of private individuals voting separately and anonymously according to their private opinions. Rather, these individuals must be able to see and talk to one another in public, to meet in a public space so that their differences as well as their commonalities can emerge and become the subject of democratic debate (1994, p. 146).

The contemporary understanding of democratic political participation in which a citizen's duty ends when she casts her ballot in the voting booth is woefully unsatisfactory for Arendt. Today's liberal democratic culture is far too impersonal and altogether too private, and it ignores the role played by democratic deliberation in the formation of one's opinions. Indeed, Arendt denies that one can even *have* "private" opinions on public matters. Rather, the formation of one's personal outlook is a group effort. When a citizen shares his or her perspective, it becomes moderated and moderates in turn "Opinions will arise wherever men communicate freely with one another and have the right to make their views public; but these views, in their endless variety, seem to stand also in need of purification and representation" (Arendt, 1962/1963, p. 227). In other words while individual citizens have the right to share their views with others when freely deliberating, in order to reach consensus the "endless variety" of private opinions must be subject to "purification and representation" or

improved by deliberation. Improvement essentially means the transformation of private opinion into that of public opinion.

The “purification and representation” Arendt speaks of then indicates that public interaction is a transformative enterprise. The analogy of politics as a form of warfare in which opposing parties battle for dominance is here inadequate. Instead, politics is better conceptualized as a form of dialogue. To be a political actor, it is not enough that one talk. One must also listen. Citizens must be willing to entertain perspectives which differ, often times radically, from their own. The success of politics depends upon a kind of mutuality between parties, an exchange of ideas in which a citizens opinions are not obdurate and decided in advance but are instead fluid and open to change. In the Arendtian model, the aim of politics is not dominance but consensus. Consensus is furthermore possible only when one is able to see the opposing side not simply as “other” or alien to oneself, but in some sense the same as oneself. Identifying common concerns through deliberation allows the political actor to see resonances between himself and his opponent, and it is these resonances which he focuses on and seeks to advance. The end result of this exchange is a literal transformation of one’s private perspective. No longer does one see the world solely through one’s own personal lens but rather that which he shares with others. Arendt would have us be skeptical of the Cartesian idea that one must look inward to gain certainty about ourselves and the world. Certainty, both of oneself and the world, is instead achieved by looking out to the world.

Not only do individuals work their opinions out in conjunction with others, it is necessary that these opinions be *world-centered* and not *person-centered* in nature (Passerin d'Entrèves, 1994, p. 148). This is a way of saying that politics is not about advancing one's own personal interests, but rather what is good for the whole. The public and all who comprise it have value in and of themselves which supersedes that of particular private interests. In an essay entitled "Public Rights and Private Interests" Arendt writes that:

Throughout his life man moves constantly in two different orders of existence: he moves within what is his *own* and he also moves in a sphere that is common to him and his fellow men. The "public good," the concerns of the citizen, is indeed the common good because it is located in the *world* which we have in common *without owning it*. Quite frequently, it will be antagonistic to whatever we may deem good to ourselves in our private existence (1977, p. 104).

Our public duties are oftentimes "antagonistic" to our private interests. This tension which exists between our public and our private interests has been hotly debated in political theory by two distinct lines of argument with individualists on one side and collectivists on the other. Liberalism in its various manifestations is an example of the former. Liberal theorists generally tend to think of political communities as working to maintain the sovereignty of the individual above all else. To the liberal, individuals should be free to pursue the types of lives they want to free from interference so long as they do not impinge on the rights of others to do the same thing. Political expression and commitment for the liberal amounts to little more than the voicing of private opinions in the public realm after the fashion of a Lockean model of the social contract. By contrast, collectivist theorists such as communitarians and republicans view the pluralism and diversity of value systems celebrated by

liberals as wholly untenable to the maintenance of a cohesive political community. They reject the idea that disparate and diametrically opposed stances on political issues can exist simultaneously in one political community. By making all values equal collectivists argue that liberal individualism makes it practically impossible to create adequate public policy. When couched in the language of individual interests, divisive social and political issues such as abortion and gay marriage cannot be decided because there is no arbitrating standard by which a definitive public policy can be made. Furthermore collectivists argue that conceptualizing associational life as an aggregate of individual interests ignores how deeply the individual is entrenched in his or her community. The liberal account is unsatisfying because it stresses individual atomism over communal ties. Therefore, rather than resorting to an aggregation of individual interests as a form of collective decision making collectivists argue that decisions affecting all citizens must be determined by appeal to tradition and communally held values. In short, a plurality of value systems is rejected in favor of a singular notion of the good shared by all citizens making individual interests ultimately ancillary to the shared interest of the community.

With this dichotomy in mind, it must be decided how to go about thinking about Arendt's promotion of public over private good. It is easy perhaps to place her in the camp of the collectivists. To do this however would be to miss the nuance in Arendt's writing and to commit oneself to the slavery of a false dichotomy. I agree with d'Entrèves in saying that Arendt transcends the categories of individualist versus collectivist, effectively stitching them together, in

a novel and useful way. To illustrate why and how I think this is so I will resort to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's description of the General Will in his classic and highly controversial work, *The Social Compact*.

Rousseau was both a forbearer and inspiration for Arendt's philosophy. Indeed, it is likely that the originality and ingenuity of Rousseau's argument concerning associational life directly influenced Arendt's as the latter seems to echo the former so strikingly. Rousseau's philosophy, like Arendt's, is full of inherent tensions which have proven difficult for later interpreters to reconcile. A champion of the individual, Rousseau argued that an individual's freedom was of the highest importance and that associational life must preserve and maintain that freedom. Indeed as is revealed in the *Discourse on Inequality* freedom is the natural condition of man which is perverted and robbed from him when he enters the state of society. In the state of nature, the individual's independence makes him rely on himself alone while in society he becomes physically and, more importantly, psychologically dependant on his fellows to develop a sense of self-worth.

Nonetheless, Rousseau acknowledges that the state of nature probably never existed, and even if it did, there is certainly no returning to it. Thus, he finds himself in the difficult position of trying to reconcile individual freedom and autonomy with the shared needs of the many. His solution is that all individual or particular wills be subjected to the *general will*. The general will is for Rousseau a technical term. It refers not to the majority or aggregate of individual interests,

the will of all, but rather to the shared public interests which bind individuals together:

...whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the entire body, which means only that *he will be forced to be free*. For this is the condition that, by giving each citizen to the homeland, guarantees him against all personal dependence...(Rousseau, 1762/1987, p. 150)

This passage from the *Social Compact* has been the source of a great deal of controversy and has led most interpreters to conclude that Rousseau's conflicting desires for individual freedom and solidarity ultimately lead to inconsistent and (worse still) totalitarian conclusions. However, as political philosopher David Hiley states, it might be more useful to place the interpretive weight of the passage on the second sentence, rather than on being "forced to be free" (2006, Chap. 5). Contrary to his critics, Rousseau is not simply claiming that the will of the many ultimately trumps the individual. He is instead describing the individual will as being a *reflection* of the general will. By participating in the decision making process, the individual puts her input into how she wants things done. Her voice is not lost, as it affects the voices of those who hear her. Likewise, she is not the sole speaker, and as such her own opinions change via the conversation. The contract is *transformative* in a way that Rousseau's critics miss. Unlike the "social knot" of various disparate individual wills commonly found in the liberal contract, Rousseau offers something more accurately described as a social bond. She is literally a different person after entering the contract.

Arendt can be thought of in much the same manner. While she places emphasis on public participation, and acknowledges that duties to public life

might conflict with private aims, the emphasis she places on plurality should not be underestimated. To be public in the Arendtian sense is to have a plurality of opinions which are all given equal weight in constituting the general opinion.

While the weight that Arendt gives to the public and the civic interaction is clear, the same cannot be said for how she views these interactions playing themselves out. There seem to be two conflicting strains in Arendt's work about whether or not she adheres more strongly to an individualist or a communicative model of action. In her earlier work such as *The Human Condition* she seems to rely on a more agonistic approach to political action in which citizens express themselves on the public stage. After this view, citizens do not seek consensus as an end to politics, but rather argue with one another for their own particular perspective. This view of Arendt as an agonistic theorist is held by interpreters such as Dana Villa who identifies Arendt with Nietzschean politics and rejects the more common view espoused by deliberative democrats that Arendt is interested in communicate action (Villa, 1999, Chap. 5). While Villa's dissent is well founded, it cannot be denied that critics such as Jurgen Habermas and Seyla Benhabib are not without their own powerful interpretation of Arendt drawing from her later work. Here Arendt appears to be more open to the communicative model of action in which citizens strive to achieve an idealized state of clear consensus through communication. In this reading the purpose of debate is not the maintenance of difference, but rather the attainment of universal assent. How one chooses to interpret Arendt on this score is fairly important, especially when comparing Arendt to Foucault. I will turn to this aspect of Arendt's thought

in greater detail there, but I simply wanted to introduce the question as a way anticipating that discussion.

Regardless however of whether Arendt is ultimately more dedicated to an expressivist, agonistic model of action or a communicative, deliberative-democratic one, the emphasis she places on the dialogical nature of public life and self-identification cannot be denied. I agree with Passerin d'Entrèves in saying that Arendt's conception of the individual's relationship to her political community is not one of mere utility but is in fact far more intimate. Her opinions and by extension, her very identity is constituted by the political community of which she is a part. This does not mean that individual identity is merely given by the community however. The relationship of individual to community is a *dialogical* one. The individual both acts from her own particular vantage point and is constituted by others in the public sphere. Furthermore the individual cannot reach her conclusions on her own through inward reflection alone. She must instead subject her vantage point to public scrutiny and through the process of deliberation, moderate her own understanding of the world.

I end this chapter with the full quote from Arendt, part of which I have already cited above:

Opinions will rise wherever men communicate freely with one another and have the right to make their views public; but these views in their endless variety seem to stand also in need of purification and representation...Even though opinions are formed by individuals and must remain, as it were, their property, no single individual...can ever be equal to the task of sifting opinions, common sieve of intelligence which will separate the arbitrary and the merely idiosyncratic, and thus purify them into public views (Arendt, 1962/1963, p. 227).

In sum, we are not in this alone. The solution to the challenges of modernity are met by solidarity and political action and not through the idiosyncratic private projects of individuals alone.

CHAPTER II

FOUCAULT

Like Arendt, Foucault offers a particularly bleak outlook on the project of modernity. His analysis turns the Enlightenment on its head by showing the dark underside of its claims to progress and achievement. Penal reform, medical advancement, and sexual freedom are all cast in a dubious light under Foucault's penetrating lens. Time and again he shows that the notion that society is somehow freer today than in the past is illusory. While the modern person might be free from the dominating force of sovereigns and monarchs of the past, human beings are nevertheless pawns in a new game of covert, all-encompassing power which Foucault dubs *normalizing power*. Indeed, normalizing power is so insidious that it runs through to the very core of the modern individual. Being a product of power, one is never free of power. While Arendt's analysis is depressing, it is easy to leave Foucault wholly pessimistic about the prospects of modernity.

I want to start by putting Foucault's project into context. In doing this I will address Foucault's general interest in the origin of the modern subject and then consider how subjects are related to his concept of power.

In an essay entitled "The Subject and Power" Foucault lays out the guiding principle which has informed his work. He explains that his "objective...has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 1982, p. 208). "Subject" for Foucault has two meanings both of which relate to the domination of individuals. On the one hand one can be made subject to, or dominated by, another. An example might be the case of an exploited factory worker who is made subject to the factory owner. On the other hand, subject can mean subject to oneself. In this sense of the term a person effectively dominates him or herself because of a certain self-understanding. A criminal for instance might engage in criminality simply because she *believes* herself to be criminal in nature. The way in which she has come to know and recognize herself has revolved around criminality in such a way that the label of "criminal" is a key part of her self understanding. To be other than criminal in other words, would be to alienate herself from herself.

Of the two definitions, it is the latter, subject to oneself, which deserves some attention. While one may readily understand how a person can be subject to another, it might not be so clear how one could "subjectivize" oneself. This is particularly the case for someone coming from a culture such as that found in the West which has adopted the idea of individual responsibility. Speaking generally, we tend to think that individuals possess a "deep self" or core unifying subject.

This self is literally who one is, the cohesive sum of all of a person's hopes, predilections, beliefs, desires, and so fourth found at the center of one's being. In short, it is one's true, unique identity. We furthermore tend to think of autonomy as having the ability to *be* oneself freely, to live a life according to one's own personal choice. So long as one can act on one's own free from coercion in decision making, one is free.

The philosophy which considers human beings to have essences or core qualities Foucault called humanism. Humanistic thinking has long been considered as positive in the way it champions human dignity and offers universal standards of conduct. In fact, humanism was intertwined with Enlightenment rationalism in such a way that they seem almost inseparable.

Foucault however turns the idea that we have an essence and that humanism is wholly positive on its head. In fact one of his most original contributions to philosophy is the concept that the self is itself a social construction and that, far from being the source of autonomy serves to dominate the individual. The modern form of power, normalizing power, is particularly effective in creating the modern self or subject. This power

...applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects (Foucault, 1982, p. 212).

Foucault's concept of power is idiosyncratic and differs greatly from the traditional definition. Highlighting two aspects at the outset will anticipate a more thorough discussion in what follows. First power is not centralized but diffuse. It acts as kind of network which extends over and throughout the entirety of the

population. This is to say that power has no "essence." It is not a thing in itself and as such cannot be centered in any specific location or person. It is more accurate to describe power as a set of arrangements governing relations among individuals. However, as stated above, power occurs not only among individuals, but within individuals as well. The individual is invested with power.

Second, power is not only *negative* but it is also *positive*. Generally power is thought of as being prohibitive or coercive in nature. An example might be the monarch who enforces his will by use of punishment and torture. Should a subject prove insubordinate, he is not persuaded to behave by use of inducement but is instead punished. He may be reprimanded, imprisoned, or even destroyed for defying sovereign law. Regardless, something is literally taken away from the individual, hence the term "negative." In the negative sense, power ensures obsequiousness by making people fear the consequences of disobedience. This model of power Foucault calls *sovereign power*.

Foucault sees the sovereign model as antiquated and consequentially dangerous. By focusing on power as being wholly negative sovereign power masks how power truly functions, namely, *positively*. Positive power is productive and incorporates the individual into his or her own normalization. It does this through sundry means: It creates "truths" about human beings. The social sciences, psychology and economics for example, create a set of norms concerning human behavior, labeling certain behaviors "healthy" others "deviant." This framework coerces the individuals into behaving in a "salubrious" rather than a "deleterious" manner. Positive power also works through inducement. Making

a distinction between “acceptable” and “unacceptable” behavior, the former is rewarded and hence reinforced.

Most importantly, positive power *produces individuals in the modern sense*. The greatest strength of normalizing power lies in its ability to incorporate the individual into his own domination. By “attaching him to his own identity” this power literally makes one understand oneself through a kind of normalized lens. Insidiously, one cannot escape normalizing power by seeking the “truth” about oneself since this self is the root of subjectification. Imposing truth on oneself equates to imposing limitations on what is possible for one to achieve, think, or be. To continue the example used above, the criminal’s acceptance of “self as criminal” severely limits her possibilities. Having knowledge of the fact that she is a criminal and taking this as truth she has no option to be other than criminal.

Foucault’s story would seem to end pessimistically here were it not for his radical turn towards “the art of living” at the end of his life. Freedom from normalizing power, he maintains, comes with the recognition of the arbitrariness of one’s identity. By recognizing that one’s self is not necessary but comes as a result of historical contingencies, the possibility of transgressing the limits of identity is opened. Studying history and differing cultures gives one the tools required to refashion oneself, and hence, escape the iron grip of normalization. In the language of Nietzsche adopted by Foucault liberation depends upon making one’s life a work of art. Only by transgressing the limits of the normalized self can one truly be free. For Foucault, autonomy lies not in self-*discovery* but rather self-*creation*.

Just how normalizing power creates subjects is complex and is detailed exhaustively in Foucault's work, and I will return to it throughout the course of this chapter. For the moment however, it should be clear that Foucault sees something particularly dangerous about the effectiveness of modernity in subjectivizing human beings.

I should make one last note on Foucault's terminology concerning power. While I will refer to the general form assumed by power in the modern age as "normalizing power," Foucault himself uses different names to distinguish between specific subtypes of normalizing power. The name changes depending upon which specific aspect of power he wants to emphasize. When discussing prisons and other modern institutions in *Discipline and Punish* for example, the term "disciplinary" or "carceral" power is used. When highlighting the relationship between biology, reproductive issues, and management of populations with power in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault resorts instead to "bio-power." While this can sometimes be confusing to those unaccustomed with Foucault's work, for my purposes the reader need only recognize that the term used depends upon the context in which it is employed.

In this chapter I will follow the arch Foucault's work takes as a way of reaching "the care of the self," Foucault's response to the challenges of modernity. Similarly to chapter one, I will briefly review Foucault's own take on the rise of modernity and the development of normalizing power on the macro-level. I will then turn to normalizing power as it functions on the micro-level by way of works such as *Discipline and Punish* and *Madness and Civilization*. This

will serve to give context to care of the self as well as anticipate how Foucault's conclusions differ from Arendt's.

In an essay entitled "*Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of Political Reason*" Foucault neatly describes how the rise of a new form of political rationality called "reason of state" (*raison d'être*) coincides with the formation of the modern State. In reason of state the police take a central role in maintaining order. As an institution the police are much more than law enforcement serving to maintain order and the smooth functioning of the state by keeping stock of individuals. In the words of Louis Turquet de Mayerne "The police's true object is man" (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 201).

I want to spend some time with "*Omnes et Singulatim*" because it serves as a useful lens through which to view Foucault's project. Like Foucault I will divide the synopsis into two parts looking first at the inception of pastoral power and second at the reason of state.

I want to unpack the significance of Turquet's statement that the object of policing is man. Foucault spends the first part of the essay describing what he calls "pastoral power," a specifically Judeo-Christian phenomenon which is not found in any significant way in ancient Greece. The role of this power is "to constantly ensure, sustain, and improve the lives of each and every" member of the community (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 185). Pastoral power was mainly alien to the Greeks who envisioned their relationship to the gods in a significantly different way from later Christians. For the ancient Greeks, the gods made the land and its resources for mankind who was left free to reap the benefits of the

divine gift. The gods did not care for individuals in an exacting intrusive manner but rather left them free to do as they may with the resources they had been given.

The Judeo-Christian relationship to God is a very different affair. Judaism introduced the concept of the "shepherd" into the life of man in which both God and an earthly king watched over the people as shepherds over the flock of mankind. In this tradition the flock is dependant on the shepherd who sees to every minute detail affecting his charges. He knows their whereabouts, what they need, and their individual differences. This last part is particularly important as the shepherd is responsible for being intimately familiar with not only the life of the flock as a whole, but also the lives of each individual taken separately.

Christianity adopts and significantly modifies the Hebraic theme of the shepherd. The individuation becomes more specific as "the shepherd must render an account; not only of each sheep, but of all their actions, all the good or evil they are liable to do, all that happens to them" (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 186). The sheep become ever more subservient to the will of the shepherd, and the individual must, above all else, obey his guide; "Obedience is a virtue" (p. 187). Techniques in the form of "self-examination and guidance of conscience" are appropriated from the Greeks, developed and substantively changed as a way of increasing knowledge about individuals:

Christian pastorship closely associated these two practices [self-examination and guidance of conscience]. On one hand, conscience-guiding constituted a constant bind: the sheep didn't let itself be led only to come through any rough passage victoriously, it let itself be led every second. Being guided was a state, and you were fatally lost if you tried to escape it...As for self-examination, its aim was not to close self-

awareness in upon itself but, rather, to enable it to open up entirely to its director; to unveil to him the depths of the soul (p. 188-189).

In sum, Christian pastorship combines various techniques of power such as self-examination and observation to form what Foucault dubs pastoral power. This power creates “a link between total obedience, knowledge of oneself, and confession to someone else” (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 188-189). In so doing pastoral power served the ends of the Christian faith by getting individuals to work towards their own “mortification,” the abandonment of worldly concerns so that one’s soul might be saved in the afterlife. In other words, pastoral power is effective because it causes one to work on oneself. Though the sheep may have rules to follow it isn’t necessary for the shepherd to constantly enforce them. On the contrary pastoral power is effective precisely because the individual behaves in the appropriate fashion independent of outside force.

In “*Omnes et Singulatim*” Foucault writes that while his excursus on Christianity might seem remote in terms of his original aim, to articulate the rise of a new form of political reason, it actually plays a crucial role in his narrative. His purpose in including it is not to criticize or give a comprehensive history of Christianity, but rather to show that the theme of pastoral power is relevant today. Far from simply being a historical or theological artifact, Foucault suggests that a secular form of pastoral power, normalizing power, characterizes the modern age.

Before going on, Foucault’s genealogical method deserves some attention as it departs significantly from traditional modes of historical inquiry. Foucault was deeply influenced by Nietzsche’s genealogical way of describing the past. Genealogy rejects the idea that history is linear, that it follows a teleological path,

or a clear progression with a predetermined end in sight. For the genealogist, this method smacks of the metaphysician's (and the Christian's) faith in *origins*, or the idea that history begins with some necessary causal event which lays the foundation for all future events. Consequentially, the genealogist is forced to look outside of traditional history which attends to seemingly large and important historical events as a causal explanation for the present. Refusing to view the past as a unified narrative ever in the process of unfolding, the genealogist instead studies remote and ostensibly insignificant happenings going on behind the scenes of history.

For my purposes two important consequences arise from Foucault's choice of genealogy. The first deals with how the genealogist sees change as resulting from struggle. Where the historian sees reasonable continuity between events and ages the genealogist sees randomized disruptions. Moreover, the transition from one age to the next is neither smooth nor bloodless but comes as a result of struggle. Change occurs when opposing forces battle for dominance making history a series of agonistic struggles between forces.

The second aspect of genealogy I want to emphasize is the ethical role it plays in Foucault's philosophy. By undermining the necessity of history genealogy consequentially undermines the idea that the specifically modern way of understanding ourselves is necessary. It proves that one does not have to be a prisoner to the past, origins, or a master-narrative because the self is nothing other than an "exteriority of accidents." When thought of in this way genealogy becomes "effective history" and literally functions as a sort of tool of political

critique. It provides one with the insight necessary to “cut” oneself from history and choose an alternative self-understanding. Genealogy destroys the constraints placed on individuals by history: “Nothing in man—not even his body—is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding of other men” (Foucault, 1971/1977, p. 153).

I introduce these two concepts, historical change as struggle and the self as contingent, here because they set the foundation for Foucault’s approach to politics and ethics. Foucault understands not just history but all of political interaction as being a kind of struggle or in the words of Jon Simons a kind of wrestling match (1994, p. 100). In stark contrast to Arendt, Foucault understands politics as “war through other means” (Foucault, 1980, p. 90). The goal of politics is not dialogue or consensus but competition and dominance. Because consensus cannot defeat the leveling tendencies of modernity Foucault instead turns to ethics, specifically an ethic of the self. Rejecting the narrative of history freedom depends on being the author of ones own narrative. To this end genealogy is indispensable because it causes one to recognize the inherent instability of the self. I will argue however that this view is problematic as it effectively makes solidarity impossible.

I have digressed a bit from “*Omnes et Singulatim*” and now return to it. In the second half of the essay, Foucault writes that Western political theory assumes three modes throughout its history, changing dramatically from ancient to modern times. The first theorizes that politics is meant to reflect natural law dictated by God or some ultimate structure in the universe. This is the stance

assumed by philosophers like Aristotle and Aquinas. Machiavelli is credited with creating the second mode of political theory. In *The Prince* Machiavelli radically departs from the natural law view of politics arguing that the true goal of politics is the expansion of the prince's power regardless cost. The last and latest form, and the one with which I am most concerned, is reason of state. Unlike the prior two models the authors of reason of state are obscure, unfamiliar figures of the 16th and 17th centuries who depart from Machiavelli in crucial ways. Reason of state abandons the Prince and argues that the state should amass power for its own sake:

...Reason of state is not an art of government according to divine, natural, or human laws. It doesn't have to respect the general order of the world. It's government in accordance with the state's strength. It's government whose aim is to increase this strength within an extensive and competitive framework (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 198).

Reason of state differs radically from other political theories in its stark instrumentality. The state serves the interest of neither the people nor the Sovereign, existing and amassing power purely for its own sake.

Because there are a plurality of states in the modern age competition is inevitable. States are rivals in the quest for power which is gauged by the strength of the State's forces, or its resources and rate of production. As resources become important so does surveillance. By possessing exhaustive knowledge of its resources the state knows both where it stands in comparison to other states and where it is weak so that it can shore up its insufficiencies. This leads to the development of sundry means of amassing information about the State and its resources. Massive amounts of data on a vast array of topics are

painstakingly collected and catalogued, including geographic, climactic, and demographic assessments. In the process of developing these complex censuses the concept of “populations” is born as an effective means of gathering information on large groups of people.

In order to ensure that its forces are strong, the state requires some means of regulating its resources. This job is handled by the police. Foucault cautions the reader not to rely on our ordinary conception of the police. The authors of the police in the 17th and 18th century he writes, had something far different in mind from the contemporary notion of the police as men in uniform who keep the peace; “What they understand by “police” is not an institution or mechanism functioning within the state but a *governmental technology peculiar to the state; domains, techniques, targets where the state intervenes*” [italics mine] (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 198). Foucault amplifies what he means by “governmental technology” by referring to Louis Turquet de Mayerne’s own design for a police state.

Written and presented to the Dutch State General in 1611 Turquet’s program is one of the first of its kind. It requires that each province of France have three boards serving to maintain law and order with two seeing to people and two seeing to things. Of the boards which saw to people, the first was to handle “the positive, active, productive aspects of life.” Foucault’s examples include education of the populace and ensuring that individuals were sufficiently employed. Those who did not apply themselves to “productive” ends were considered “the dregs of society” (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 198).

Mirroring the first board, the second board dealt with the negative aspects of life. Its primary concern was to tend to the welfare of the populace: "the poor (widows, orphans, the aged requiring help; the unemployed; those whose activities required financial aid (no interest was to be charged); public health (disease, epidemics); and accidents such as fire and flood" (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 200).

Of the two boards concerned with things, one dealt with the market, trading and production and manufacture of goods. The other "would see to the 'demesne,' that is, the territory, space: private property, legacies, donations, sales were to be controlled; manorial rights were to be reformed; roads, rivers, public buildings, and forests would also be seen to" (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 200).

Ultimately Foucault draws three compelling and, true to form, foreboding conclusions from Turquet's program. The first is that the police is not simply "an administration heading the state" as its function spreads far beyond this description. The police "branches out into all of the people's conditions, everything they do or undertake. Its field comprises justice, finance, and the army." While however the police embrace all things, it does so in a very particular way. The primary interest of the police is the way in which men relate to things: "men's coexistence on a territory; their relationships as to property; what they produce; what is exchanged on the market. It also considers how they live, the diseases and accidents that can befall them." This is Foucault's second conclusion, that "What the police sees to is a live active productive man"

(Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 200-1). This closes the circle making “the police’s true object...man.”

The third and most important conclusion Foucault draws is that the police serve a dual purpose: 1) it maintains the strength and vigor of the state and 2) it “keep[s] individuals happy.” The latter is accomplished by attending to the welfare of the citizenry. Not only do the police punish offenders of the law, they also help the unemployed find work and aid the sick and the poor. This dual pull however creates a paradox. Not only is policing concerned with the welfare of the State, but of the individual as well:

...The police...is what enables the state to increase its power and exert its strength in full. On the other hand, the police has to keep the citizens happy; happiness being understood as survival, life, and improved living...I feel...the aim of the modern art of government, or state rationality [is], namely, to develop those elements constitutive of individuals’ lives in such a way that their development also fosters the strength of the state...[this] is a positive task: it has to foster both citizens’ lives *and* the state’s strength (Foucault, 1978/2006, p. 206).

In short, the primary focus of the police is the advancement of the life of individuals. This concern for life however is purely instrumental insofar as the state tends to individuals precisely because state-power relies on the productivity and “well being” of those individuals. In the scheme of reason of state, individuals come to be equated with *resources* to be exploited by the State. Human beings have value only insofar as they can be manipulated into behavior which is productive and compliant. When Foucault describes the police as “governmental technology” which employs “domains, techniques, and targets where the state intervenes” he is referring to the idea that the police use a constellation of strategies to *create* individuals who are both useful and

subservient to the state. In this light the information-gathering function of the police becomes clearer. Not only is gathering data on populations necessary to control individuals efficiently, it also supplies a way to observe the populace keeping it under close surveillance.

It is important to appreciate the connection between the two parts of the "*Omnes et Singulatim*." Foucault introduces pastoral power in the first section as a way of drawing a parallel to a very similar power dynamic in the modernity thanks to reason of state political theory. Knowledge and surveillance play a central role in both pastoral power and reason of state. In the case of pastoral power the shepherd makes it his life's purpose to care for the flock. He does this in a very exacting manner and is knowledgeable of both the flock as a whole and each member individually. The shepherd's knowledge is an individuating and all-encompassing one in which each individual member is known intimately and exhaustively. Moreover, the exacting nature of the shepherd's knowledge can only be accomplished by vigilantly monitoring his flock. His gaze must always be upon the flock in its entirety as well as on individual members taken separately putting the sheep under constant surveillance.

Similarly, in reason of state the police gather statistics about the population to help advance the lives of individuals. They monitor the employed and unemployed, the poor, the widowed and all those in need of assistance. They ensure that the populace is free from the threat from criminals and disease locking up offenders and prostitutes. In gathering this information for the state they also perform the dual function of keeping tabs on the general population.

Indeed as Foucault elaborates in *Discipline and Punish* in many ways the penitentiary is essentially a means of surveillance and gathering information on individuals.

Pastoral power and reason of state furthermore demand total obedience from individuals. It is inappropriate however to conceive of obedience as resulting from the use of coercive force. On the contrary what makes both forms of power so effective is their capacity to cause individuals to normalize themselves. The individual becomes convinced that the prevailing mode of behavior is in his or her own best interest. In pastoral power individuals believe that by obeying the will of the church they are working towards their own salvation in the after life. The practice of "mortification" or denying oneself earthly pleasures is undertaken precisely because Christians assume this is the path to salvation. In the modern state salvation in the afterlife is replaced with the maintenance and extension of life in the here-and-now. Individuals keep themselves healthy through exercise and are productive by being employed or getting educated. In short they "improve" themselves because they are convinced that this is what is in their best interests. Unbeknownst to them however is the fact that their behavior serves not their own interests but rather those of the state.

Coercion in the Foucaultian sense is not simply a matter of manipulating individuals into believing certain things. It is not the case that people are led astray by some sort of "false consciousness" of the Marxian variety. This would assume both that a subject exists prior to power and that this subject can escape

the falsity of his or her consciousness through an appeal to truth. Foucault sees power as being far more insidious and entrenched. Individuals are not simply subject to modern forms of power. They are also made *subject* by it. Because the self is a social construction one's identity is inextricably wrapped up in modern power structures.

I have given a brief overview of how normalizing power came into existence and now want to turn to how normalizing power creates subjects. The techniques of normalizing power can be divided into two main categories; those which objectify human beings and those which subjectify them. In the former human beings are studied and treated as the objects of knowledge, their bodies broken down into parts and treated as machines. They become like Pavlov's dogs or Arendt's superfluous individuals responding to stimuli rather than acting autonomously. Power as objectifying turns human beings into what Foucault calls *docile bodies* or individuals akin to automata who do not think but function mechanically.

Power as subjectifying on the other hand gives individuals agency. Unlike in the case of the docile body, subjectifying power affords the individual the ability to make decisions which go beyond mere stimulus response. Instead of simply behaving one has the capacity to make active choices about how one interacts with oneself and the world at large. However the individual lacks real autonomy as he or she is made into an agent of his or her own subjugation. Subjectifying power imbues the individual with a subject or "deep self" through which one comes to understand oneself. It is this second kind of normalizing

power that Foucault sees as the most dangerous kind of normalization. As such I will spend more time teasing out how subjectifying power functions in what follows. First however I want to briefly discuss normalizing power as objectifying.

Foucault's analyses of the asylum in *Madness and Civilization*, the hospital in *Birth of the Clinic*, the penitentiary in *Discipline and Punish*, and of modern sexual practices in *The History of Sexuality* are all investigations of modern institutions which serve to make subjects. These works attempt to analyze modern-power working on the micro-level of the individual and describe various techniques of power. *Discipline and Punish* is perhaps the most detailed of these works painstakingly outlining the various techniques by which the penitentiary creates docile bodies.

I agree with Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow that Foucault is not so much interested in the specific institutions themselves as he is the disciplinary techniques they employ (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 153). Disciplinary technology is not applicable to any one particular institution but is instead used by all to the same effect. A detailed explanation of these specific techniques is not necessary for my purposes but a brief overview of some of the chief points will be useful.

Discipline's main object is the body which it aims to make docile as a way of "subjecting, using and transforming it" (Foucault, 1975/1979, p. 136). The body is broken down into units such as legs and arms and in the process dehumanizes it by making it an "object to be manipulated" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 153). Every minute movement made by a person is manipulated and controlled so that

it is executed in a specified and exacting manner. In addition to mechanizing the body time too becomes an indispensable disciplinary tool. Prisoners for instance have every minute of their day planned out in advance leaving no space for spontaneity or escape from routine. Space is also structured to make certain behavior coincide with certain spatial location, the class room in which the teacher's authority stems from his or her position at the head of the room being a prime example.

Organizing bodies in this way is not only highly efficient and productive but also allows for a high degree of observation of the individual. As noted in the above discussion on pastoral-power, observation, both being watched and watching, is central to the success of disciplinary power. It is the constant surveillance on the part of not only authority figures but also those under their jurisdiction which links individuals together in a disciplinary space. Surveillance serves to increase the efficiency of the work performed regardless the subject involved. It keeps students, prisoners, factory workers, from misbehaving, slouching off in work and being insubordinate. Moreover, surveillance does not require direct observation to be effective. The simple knowledge of the fact that one could at any given moment be under scrutiny and thus subject to punishment is enough to condition behavior. The *panopticism* of contemporary life is readily evidenced by the ubiquity of cameras found everywhere from department stores and supermarkets to schools and gas stations.

Discipline also works through normalizing judgment. Normalizing judgment relies on two antipodal poles of behavior, good and bad behavior. Any

and all actions available to an individual fall somewhere on the spectrum and every action has a corresponding consequence. Punishments are meted out for bad behavior while accolades are given for good behavior. The class-room again serves as an example. Students who complete assignments and behave get praise and recess while insubordinate children face detention.

Surveillance and normalizing judgment are brought together in the *examination*. The examination is an inquiry into an individual by a professional who specializes in collecting individuating information. Like all techniques of power it is prevalent in every institution. In the hospital the doctor examines patients on an individual basis, in the school the teacher counsels the individual student and subjects her to rigorous testing, and in the penitentiary the prisoner meets with his warden, psychiatrist, and parole officer. As Dreyfus and Rabinow explain the importance of these examinations lies in the total reversal of the visibility of power (1982, p. 159). In prior ages the sovereign exhibited his power in displays of omnipotence, using excessive force or shows of grandeur to mesmerize subjects. There was no mistake as to how power functioned or with whom it laid. In the modern age however power becomes invisible, cloaked in the routine and everyday. Most would never suspect that trips to the doctor's office or a psychiatric evaluation are kinds of totalizing power relationships.

Another reversal that takes place with the examination is that the "dossier" replaces the "epic." The importance of biography changes radically and becomes essential to the effective exercise of power. In the past biographies were only written about those who distinguished themselves in some way through glory or

honor. In the modern age however, it is the child, the prisoner and the mad man who are known in exacting detail. The individualizing nature of the examination collects every bit of mundane data about an individual so that he or she can be categorized, analyzed, objectified and fixed (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 159).

In sum, disciplinary techniques serve to objectify human beings so that they can be effectively managed. As troublesome as disciplinary power is however Foucault's most distressing descriptions of normalizing power are the forms which *subjectify* individuals through use of *confessional technology*.

In the *History of Sexuality* Foucault argues that the repressive-hypothesis surrounding the Freudian revolution is yet another false façade which serves to mask normalization. The story of the Freudian revolution is a familiar one and requires little review. As the prisoners of Victorian prudery English people in the early 19th century were denied the ability to discuss and enact their sexuality. The austere, draconian morality of the Victorians strictly prohibited sex and sexuality from entering into common discourse and certain sexual practices such as homosexuality, onanism, and even sex for pleasure were taboo. This however changes with the advent of Freudian psychology which describes sexuality as a natural feature of the human animal. The result of the Freudian revolution is that individuals are now free to embrace their sexual nature without fear of being ostracized or excommunicated.

Unsurprisingly, Foucault rejects the optimism of the Freudian narrative arguing instead that the repressive-hypothesis serves to mask subjugation by way of yet another aspect of normalizing power, *bio-power*. "Sexuality" far from

being a natural component of one's deep self is in actuality a social construct which serves the interest of the State. The State uses sexuality as an efficient means of regulating massive populations, doing so with grave consequences: "If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population" (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 176). Foucault here expresses a concern similar to Arendt's. By making the survival of the species the central concern of the State atrocities such as war and genocide become justifiable as a means of maintaining the health of the population.

The technique underlying bio-power is the confession. Foucault distinguishes between two ways that cultures have approached sex and sexual practice; *ars erotica* or the art of sex, and *scientia sexualis*, the science of sex. The former belongs generally to every major civilization aside from our own in the West, and is concerned primarily with sex as pleasure. In the *ars erotica* what is of interest are the ways in which pleasures can be maximized.

By contrast, the West's approach to sex has been one of maximizing understanding. In the *scientia sexualis* a discourse is created around sex in which every minute pleasure and experience is exhaustively catalogued and examined. The science of sex seeks to conceptualize and analyze every aspect of sex so as to discover the "key to individual mental and physical well-being." As Dreyfus and Rabinow state, "The end of this analytic knowledge is either utility, morality, or truth" (1982, p. 176).

The method by which knowledge is collected about sex is the confession in which the individual speaks to a professional about his or her own personal sexual experiences. In conjunction with the science of sex, the confessional represents an interesting yet troublesome new way in which people see themselves in relation to sexuality. In the search for the truth about sex one is asked to dig deeply into oneself to discover one's sexual predilections and desires. These desires come to represent truth for the individual, and self-understanding is won through the process of a deep and thorough self-examination. Sexuality comes to define who and what one is.

The relationship between truth and self becomes more thoroughly entangled with sexuality in secondary way. Scientific truths become conflated with ethical and political truths. As Jon Simons writes:

Normalization causes us to be constituted as subjects of scientific knowledge. For example, the norms of sexuality by which we define ourselves, are quasi-scientific, being derived from biology and physiology, sciences close to the constructed notion of 'sex.' The modern mode of subjection conflates moral standards with scientific norms, so that our ethics are defined by scientific truth...Our present political ethics are irreparably scientific, establishing fast bonds between power, truth and ethics, the three axes of Foucault's genealogy. If there is no available scope for an alternative ethics, there is none for an alternative subjectivity. The axes of our subjectivity are so tightly entangled that the possibilities we are limited to are not enabling boundaries, but constraining confinements (1994, p. 46).

Being norms, the standards of science are general and applicable to all individuals making bio-power work on the level of populations as well as individuals. Bio-power then has two poles; 1) the individual and 2) the population as a species-body. By focusing on the human body "as a machine" and inculcating sexual truth into individual bodies bio-power works on the micro-level

of the individual. Foucault calls this aspect of bio-power “an anatomo-politics of the human body”. The second pole “focuse[s] on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary.” The “supervision” of the populations was “effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls [what Foucault calls] a bio-politics of the population” (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 139).

Having reviewed the bulk of Foucault’s work I am now in the position to discuss Foucault’s answer to the danger of normalizing power. Foucault’s style, rejection of traditional humanist values, indeed, of any normative standards at all makes it difficult to discern what escaping normalization might look like assuming that it is even possible. Critics like Nancy Fraser, Charles Taylor and Richard Bernstein criticize Foucault for lacking an “ethical-political horizon” to use Bernstein’s term (1992/1994, p. 225). The general thrust of the argument is that Foucault’s refusal to adopt any normative stance by defending a notion of “good” undermines his ability to critique modern-power. Habermas too levels this critique at Foucault but is more ambitious than those who simply make his analyses out to be inconsistent. Calling Foucault a “young conservative” Habermas claims that Foucault’s break with the Enlightenment and his putative disavowal of truth makes his political commitments thin soup. In this view Foucault’s “relativism” gives him no critical axis upon which to differentiate dominating power/knowledge regimes from free ones and so is forced to accept

the status quo. Michael Walzer, Marxists and other leftists such as Jeffery Reiman also see problems with Foucault's characterization of power. Foucault's decentralization of power and denial of class interests in understanding the mechanisms power is seen as a form of conservatism. Given his assertion that power is omnipresent and that we are products of power what chance does Foucault's philosophy have of breaking through the iron cage of domination?

The first place to look for an answer to this question is Foucault's late essay "What is Enlightenment?" As the story goes, in November of the year 1784 Immanuel Kant responded to the question *Was ist Aufklärung?* (What is Enlightenment?) posed in the German periodical *Berlinische Monatschrift*. Though commonly considered a "minor text" Foucault recognizes that the piece exhibits a seminal new way of approaching Enlightenment philosophy. He sees Kant as being the first philosopher to concern himself with the *present* and to approach the present with the right attitude. Foucault calls this attitude a "critical ethos" and ironically adopts it himself.

Foucault reads Kant as understanding modernity in a very different way than it is traditionally conceived. Far from being a particular epoch in history the phenomenon of modernity has occurred many times in the past and is bound to happen again. Quoting Dreyfus and Rabinow:

Modernity is not a specific historical event, but a historical conjuncture which has happened several times in our history, albeit with different form and content: for example, the breakdown of the traditional virtues in Athens at the time of Socrates and Aristophanes, the decline of the Hellenistic world, the end of metaphysics at the time of Kant. This breakdown results in a specific attitude toward reality which, to differentiate it from a subjective state, Foucault calls an *ethos*. In a modernity-crisis, a taken-for-granted understanding of reality ceases to function as a shared background in terms of which people can orient and

justify their activity and the modernist response is heroically and lucidly to face up to the collapse of the old order. Such was the attitude of Thucydides and the Sophists in Greece, the Gnostics and Stoics in Alexandria and, of course, Kant (1986, p. 117).

We can understand modernity then as that unstable point in history in which a dramatic shift in tradition is poised to take place. Like tectonic plates in the earth's crust a new epoch begins to slide and shift over and above its predecessor to replace it. In his earlier archeological studies such as *The Order of Things*, Foucault's terminology for these epochs is an *episteme*. Following Foucault's genealogical method, these epistemic shifts don't follow any telic pattern but are rather like gestalt switches in which one episteme gives way to another. In one dramatic shift all of the traditional values, rituals and even possibilities for knowledge effectively "break down" to make way for new ones.

As one might imagine this break down has the potential to be particularly traumatic. The very basis for all of one's beliefs and convictions suddenly collapses leaving one in a state of doubt and, if one is not careful, nihilism. In order to remain intact in the face of this tumult, one must adopt the right "attitude towards reality" or ethos. This ethos is fundamentally *ironic* in nature in that one recognizes the contingency and instability of one's beliefs while nonetheless remaining hopeful and recognizing the value of the present.

Thucydides had faced the collapse of Athenian democracy, without denying his Athenian loyalty and without accepting the superiority of Spartan discipline. While not embracing any normative account of what would constitute an ideal society, he preserved a critical stance towards the present. While realizing that forms of the Athenian disaster would be endlessly repeated, he did not give up hope, and even noticed hints in the practices of the Athenians that their new constitutional democracy would preserve some of the best features of the Athenian and Spartan societies (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986, p. 118).

Drawing on Kant, Foucault describes this ironic stance towards the present as maturity. Immaturity is by contrast that “certain state of our will which makes us accept someone else’s authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for. Kant gives three examples: we are in a state of ‘immaturity’ when a book takes the place of our understanding, when a spiritual director takes the place of our conscience, when a doctor decides for us what our diet should be” (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 305). To be mature then is to use one’s own reason and this Foucault argues is the true goal of Enlightenment.

In using our own reason however it is not the case that we inevitably reach universal maxims for truth, morality, or any other kind of foundationalist enterprise. Foucault breaks with Kant when he valorizes the aestheticism of Baudelaire in the figure of the “dandy.” For Baudelaire, one must adopt the critical attitude exhibited by Thucydides at the collapse of Athens insofar as one makes an ironic “heroization” of the present. Irony however does not end with one’s “attitude towards reality” alone; “...modernity for Baudelaire is not simply a form of relationship to the present; *it is also a mode of relationship that must be established with oneself [italics added]*” (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 311). The true modern man, what Baudelaire calls the “dandy,” is the man who makes his life into a work of art. He is the man who fashions for himself *a new identity*, abiding only by his own standards made on his own terms. Like Nietzsche’s poet, Baudelaire’s dandy is not content to accept that he is to be “subject to his own conscience.” “Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to

invent himself. This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being'; it compels him to face the task of producing himself" (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 312).

The project of the Enlightenment is not about finding foundations, universal maxims, or any kind of human essence. This is an endeavor for humanism which, as I have stated above, Foucault explicitly indicts as being the number one cause behind the dangerousness of modern-power. The often recognized strangeness of Foucault's sudden embrace of the Enlightenment becomes much clearer when one considers that Foucault's main target of criticism is not reason or truth per se but rather the kind of reason which accompanies humanistic enterprises. While humanism is undeniably entangled with the Enlightenment project to increase human dignity and freedom it is crucial to note that this is not the only kind of humanism that has existed. Such despicable ideologies as Nazism and Stalinism have also come as the result of humanistic thinking which "serves to color and to justify the conceptions of man" (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 314). The search for a universal "human" quality shared by all subjects is a dangerous and constraining exercise to be rejected at all costs. But if obedience to authority and totalizing humanistic thinking is what a critical ethos rejects, what is it that it requires? What in other words, are the techniques that must be employed to effectively critique "what we are saying, thinking, and doing" (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 315)?

Critique depends upon cultivating what Foucault calls a *limit-attitude*. "Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits." In conducting a "historical ontology of ourselves" we must recognize that all of the limits of what

we “do and know” can be *transgressed*. It is to realize that the purported limitations of what is possible comes as the result of the “contingency that has made us what we are” and that true freedom lies in going beyond those limitations (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 315). The fight to open up possibilities is moreover a fight with metaphysics. Freedom lies not in the discovery and acceptance of transcendental truths but in the smashing of all claims to transcendentalism.

This also implies that we must “turn away from all projects that claim to be global or radical. Attempts to completely destroy the current system and replace it with a new one must be resisted. Revolution, even or especially the kind perpetrated in the name of justice, is not only ineffective but downright dangerous. “In fact, we know from experience that the claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, of another way of thinking, another culture, another vision of the world, has led only to the return of the most dangerous traditions” (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 316). The violence of the French Revolution, the fall of communism in the former Soviet Union, and the disaster that is current day Iraq are just three testaments to Foucault’s insight.

Change must be exercised through specific *reforms* rather than total revolution. “I prefer the very specific transformations that have proved to be possible in the last twenty years in a certain number of areas which concern our ways of being and thinking, relations to authority, relations between the sexes, the way in which we perceive insanity or illness; I prefer even these partial

transformations, which have been made in the correlation of historical analysis and the practical attitude, to the programs for a new man that the worst political systems have repeated throughout the twentieth century” (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 316). It is through local, particular struggles that dominating power/knowledge structures are to be transformed and not through radical methods such as certain kinds of revolutionary Marxism.

Just because struggle is partial and local however does not mean that we are bound to be determined by the more general power structures which underlie the targets of critique. Nor does it imply that it must be disorderly and chaotic. On the contrary, fighting normalizing power has “its generality, its systematicity, its homogeneity, and its stakes.” The aim of the critical ethos is to increase the ability for individuals to create themselves, to increase their *capabilities*, while at the same time disconnecting these capabilities from dominating power relationships. “What is at stake, then, is this: how can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relationships” (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 317)? To do this it is necessary to study “practical systems.” These are the power/knowledge regimes which structure one’s relationship with herself and with those around her. The actions, thoughts, and behaviors of individuals cannot be separated from the context which conditions them, hence their “homogeneity.”

Here we are taking as a homogenous domain of reference not the representations that men give of themselves, not the conditions that determine them without their knowledge, but rather what they do and the way they do it. That is, the forms of rationality that organize their ways of doing things and the freedom with which they act within these practical systems, reacting to what others do, modifying the rules of the game, up to a certain point. The homogeneity of these historic-critical analyses is

thus ensured by this realm of practices, with their technological and their strategic side (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 317).

Furthermore it is the case that these practical systems:

...stem from three broad areas: relations of control over things, relations of action upon others, relations with oneself...we have three axes whose specificity and whose interconnections have to be analyzed: the axis of knowledge, the axis of power, the axis of ethics. In other words, the historical ontology of ourselves must answer an open series of questions; it must make an indefinite number of inquiries which may be multiplied and specified as much as we like, but which will all address the questions systematized as follows: How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations? How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 318)?

This constitutes the "systematicity" of the critical ethos. Finally, we must recognize that while these systems occur in a specific "epoch, a body of determined practices and discourses" they are nonetheless "general" insofar as the problems accompanying these systems reoccur throughout the course of Western history and through various Western societies (Foucault, 1978/1997, p. 318).

"What is Enlightenment" offers us blueprint to Foucault's later work on ancient Greek and Roman sexual practices. Freedom is the work of the dandy, the artist who is able to divorce himself from the limiting axes of truth and knowledge. It is in the re-construction of the subject which has been constituted by power that we are able to free ourselves from the clutches of domination. We must recognize ourselves as historically constituted selves and, using the materials of culture, reconstitute ourselves.

At this juncture two questions arise. The first concerns Foucault's view of the self; how can Foucault suddenly adopt a view of the self when he has for so long denied any attachment to a concept of a "deep subject?" The idea that the

answer to power which dominates us by making us subject is found in the subject itself seems at first glance highly problematic. The second question concerns the strength of modern power. If, as Foucault writes, power is everywhere and in all of our relations then how are we to create ourselves? The pervasiveness of modern power would seem to deny one the possibility of critique and transgression.

I think that Alexander Nehamas has it right however when he argues that Foucault never actually abandons the self but simply the metaphysical version found in humanism. Additionally, because power is positive as well as negative, being a product of power does not limit the individual from self-creation but is actually the necessary condition for aestheticizing the self:

The self may not be the final reality underlying history, but it is not exactly a fiction, either; and though it is not ultimately (or "metaphysically") free, it is not exactly a puppet. Moreover, every form of power, in Foucault's new view, constrains the potential of its own undoing, since every prohibition, he came to realize, creates the possibility of a new transgression. Since power is productive, the subjects it produces, being themselves forms of power, can be productive in their own right.

That the subject is a construct of history implies that there is no such thing as a true self, remaining always the same underneath the changes of appearance. Foucault never abandoned his belief that such a "true self" is a chimera. Instead, that belief became the unexpected foundation for his most important idea. He returned again to Nietzsche, who had written that "we want to be the poets of our lives" and began to think of life and art together: "From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art....Couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life" (Nehamas, 1998, p. 117)?

In sum, the self not only exists as a "construct of history" but is moreover the very sight of resistance to normalizing power. As introduced in "What is Enlightenment" constant resistance will be the source of liberty for Foucault.

Furthermore, the self, being imbued with power, has the ability to exert power despite the fact that it has power exerted on it.

The possibility of self creation depends upon the "loosening of the connections between the three axes of subjectification: power, truth and ethics" (Simons, 1994, p. 72). Self creation in other words requires a form of self-understanding which is not dependent upon common conceptions of what is right and wrong, true and false, and acceptable and unacceptable. It is precisely this kind of self-understanding that Foucault sees in the ancient Greeks and Romans.

As Jon Simons writes:

The possibility of freedom lies in the loosening of the tight stranglehold of the triadic relation within which we are subjected. Foucault insists that 'we have to get rid of this idea of an analytical or necessary link between ethics and other social or economic or political structures' which was linked to a fear 'that we couldn't change anything, for instance, in our sex life or our family life, without ruining our economy, our democracy.' We must detach our ethical relations with ourselves from the government of others, while also understanding that 'it's not at all necessary to relate ethical problems to scientific knowledge. Aesthetics of existence also corresponds to an 'absence of morality', in the sense of obedience to a universal code of rules. The Greeks and Hellenists indicate alternative forms of individualization focused on the aesthetic construction rather than on a scientific and moral discovery of the self (1994, p. 72).

In the ancient Greek and Hellenistic world self-mastery and not self-knowledge was the virtue to be attained. One sought to order personal desires in such a way as to ensure that passions were kept under control and did not govern oneself. The ancient mode says Simons, "is an aesthetic relation to one's life, to oneself, involving 'intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves'." Because of this "Greek ethics were neither universal nor did they require

knowledge of the truth about oneself" (Simons, 1994, p. 73). This ancient ethic Foucault calls "the care of the self."

Care of the self was exercised through a variety of techniques:

There was testing procedures to check what one was capable of and what privations could be borne. There was self-evaluation, an inspection of one's day in which one considered how errors could be corrected. A more constant exercise was needed to screen attachment to what was not under one's control (Simons, 1994, p. 73).

It was also an ethic which was wholly self-reflexive. To care for the self did not require that one concern oneself with other individuals. It is wrong however to think of care of the self as divorced from socio-political concerns. Foucault is adamant about the fact that in ordering one's desires one also learned how best to interact with other individuals. In gaining control over oneself, one moderated relationships with others to ensure that excessive power was not exerted over others. In this sense care of the self is not the abdication of politics but is necessary for it.

This notwithstanding it is important to appreciate the consequences of the self-reflexivity of the care of the self ethic for political interaction. By focusing primarily and, arguably, exclusively on one's relationship to oneself, one overlooks the ways in which our interactions shape the types of individuals we are. In caring for the self we distance ourselves from the normative standards of science and morality as a way of possessing freedom, but we also distance ourselves from communicative action with other individuals. Notice how starkly this contrasts with Arendt's illustration of the public sphere. In Arendt's formulation elaborated in chapter one, the public sphere is a place in which private opinions are tested and reshaped through dialogue. While it is certainly

the case that I come to the table with my own set of ideas and convictions about the world, and that having this viewpoint is important, it is equally important that these personal concerns are open to change. Because I share the world and common concerns with other individuals it is incumbent upon me to be open to changing my particular stance so as to be inclusive of other individuals. We are in other words constituted by our public commitments as well as our private ones. I bring this up here because I want to anticipate a line of criticism which I will level against Foucault's politics in chapter three, namely that the care of the self denies the transformative aspect of our social interactions. As important as it may be to realize oneself, to do this independently of anyone else will not further the cause of reaching consensus on matters of common concern.

It is important to emphasize the aesthetic dimension of caring for the self. To be truly free it is not enough that one simply self-master. One must also articulate a unique identity for oneself, an identity which goes against the norms governing society. If normalizing power depends on conformity and obeisance resistance of discipline requires that one engages in activity that is outside the parameters of what is accepted. The limit-attitude described in "What is Enlightenment" is one in which recognition of limits is necessary so that the artist can push the boundaries of what is possible. Evading modern power depends on the *transgression* of limits.

We can envision what transgressive politics might look like in practice by studying Foucault's own life. Having avoided taking a definitive stand on social and political issues for much of his career, Foucault ultimately begins to articulate

the importance of his ideas for the marginalized and voiceless segments of society such as the insane, children, and the delinquent. In particular, he becomes concerned with advancing the cause of homosexuals since he himself was homosexual. As Simons points out however, Foucault rejected the notion that he was "homosexual" in the sense that he possessed some nature of homosexuality that defined who he was. Foucault rejected identity-politics in which individuals banded together for some political cause because of a shared identity. Refusing to describe himself as a homosexual he tactically referred to himself as "gay." Foucault's gayness was not a result of some deep self or nature but was rather a conscious choice he made for himself. To view oneself as homosexual by nature was for Foucault to play into the hands of modern power structures which sought to foist a deep subjectivity onto the individual.

Foucault's gayness was not the only form of resistance he employed. Living on the limits for him also included the use of illicit drugs and most importantly sadomasochistic sexual practices. S/M was for Foucault a way of playing with power in which the roles of dominant and submissive could be reversed at any time, a game in which subjects "wrestled" with one another for dominance. Writes Simons:

Foucault believes that S/M is a transgressive limit experience because of its 'eroticization of power, the eroticization of strategic relations...*the use of a strategic relationship as a source of pleasure.*' S/M is a practice of liberty that plays with power, involving theatrical, ritualistic scenes in which one or more participants take on the dominant role and the partner or partners the submissive role. However, in S/M this is literally a game, and the relation supposedly 'is always fluid; because the 'roles can be reversed.' While non-practitioners tend to focus on the issue of pain, the central theme for practitioners is generally power. The eroticized relationship is combative, like the struggles of agonal subjects (1994, p. 100).

Beyond the power-play of S/M, the very fact that it goes against what is normally considered to be acceptable is what makes it a transgressive practice. To transgress limits then is to engage in those activities which fall outside traditionally accepted categories.

The work of transgression is never finished and critique is a constant struggle without end. There will always be power/knowledge regimes which enforce norms and there will always be the need to articulate new possibilities for being. Freedom for Foucault is found in this constant rebellion, the constant transgression of limits. Following this line of thinking, the primary element which defines Foucaultian politics is agonism. As I have tried to acknowledge throughout this chapter, oppositional thinking is a major theme running through Foucault's project. This kind of thinking is apparent in his genealogical method right on through to care of the self. Reversing Von Clausewitz's famous saying, Foucault has described politics as "war through other means." To acquiesce, to accept some state of "peace" is for Foucault naïve utopian thinking. It is also altogether undesirable. Struggle is not necessarily a negative aspect of life as it also has positive elements. Without struggle against normalizing power, we wouldn't be able to create ourselves into the kinds of individuals we want to be.

I am unconvinced however that the nature of politics rests solely on the concept of agonism. Is it necessarily the case that we must envision our political engagements primarily on the grounds of competing interests? As Arendt has shown there are often cases in which political interaction is not solely a matter of competing individual interests. Politics can also deal with issues of shared

importance such as in the example of the environment. It is obviously the case that the state of the planet is an issue which concerns everyone who lives on it. While it is possible that individuals might have differing and contradictory interests on the conservation question, industrialists might have different aims from environmentalists for instance, the language of agonism is not particularly helpful in resolving the dispute. Regardless one's own personal situation we all breathe the same air and share the same atmosphere making environmental concerns a matter of public concern. In chapter three I will argue that while Foucault's concept of resistance is useful, as a political theory it is ultimately lacking. Following Arendt, I want to suggest that politics as an activity is about more than struggle between opposing sides. It is also about reaching consensus on matters of public concern.

While we must always be vigilant in the face of conformity and complacency and question the categories of what is accepted, we must also be careful not to become so individualistic as to ignore our connections with others. Political interaction is about dialogue such that our own personal interests and preferences must ultimately be formed dialogically.

CHAPTER III

CITIZENSHIP

In comparing Arendt and Foucault, it is essential to address their respective motivations driving their projects. This will clarify their differences and help to shed some light on what should be recovered or abandoned in each analysis.

Among the many interesting similarities between these two philosophers is that their work is so very reflective of their lives. For both Arendt and Foucault, there is much at stake in the writing for the authors themselves. Arendt was directly affected by arguably the most tragic atrocity and conflict in the last century, the Holocaust and World War II. A Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany her life was spent in exile from her home country, living a brief time in France and the rest in the United States. Arendt's political commitments were practiced as well as preached as she supported Jewish resistance movements fighting against Hitler's regime. The "homelessness" which she speaks of in her work is directly reflective of her own dispossession. In seeking to emphasize the importance of citizenship Arendt was intimately and painfully aware of the necessity of shared commitments in constituting individual identity.

She recognized that the tragedy of the Holocaust could repeat itself in any nation in which citizens abdicated the responsibility to commune with one another face to face. The evil of the death camps through which millions of Jews were murdered with horrific efficiency was not only the result of some conspiratorial, malignant genius. In addition, it was, in Arendt's analysis, banal because so many people refused or lacked the ability to question their own role in reinforcing the Nazi machinery. Perhaps, thought Arendt, if the Germans were forced to see who they were executing and to engage themselves and one another in real politics the Holocaust would never have come to pass.

Foucault's early years were marked by inner torment and unrest. Struggling with his homosexuality as a young student Foucault felt unable to speak about his life and to share his frustrations. Racked by self-doubt and a profound sense of alienation, his work came to revolve around aiding the marginalized members of society with whom he identified. In his later years Foucault explicitly took on the role of giving a voice to the exclusion felt by homosexuals in a normalized, heterosexual society. His focus on the transgression of limits is indicative of his discomfort with his identity and his desire to step out of his own skin. Refusing to accept subjugation, Foucault championed aesthetic self-creation as a way of escaping from the coercive power he found himself surrounded by. His suspicion of group identification finds its root in his own experience as a gay man who felt forced to conform to heterosexual standards. In his desire to help others free themselves from the grip of normalization Foucault developed a very different kind of politics, a politics

of everyday life. Unlike Arendt, Foucault is unwilling to judge one set of values as being superior (in the case of Arendt these are public values) to another even on the basis of shared interests. Each individual is irreducible in a way that makes it impossible, or at least undesirable, to lump all people together under the heading of "the common will." What and who one chooses to value and be ultimately trump and are divorced from the kinds of normative standards required by Arendt's style of citizenship.

Both thinkers are in their own way concerned with totalitarianism. Arendt sees totalitarianism in a much more traditional light as she focuses on regimes which would commonly be accepted and called totalitarian, though her analysis of totalitarianism is untraditional. Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia are clear examples of historical totalitarianism in which those with power manipulate and normalize the populace through use of media, propaganda and coercion. Arendt's understanding of totalitarianism is not however limited to specific regimes or practices as it refers to a particular kind of political ideology which creates superfluous individuals.

Foucault's understanding of totalitarianism is far more idiosyncratic and breaks with the traditional notion of what is properly considered totalitarian. His analysis of power leads him to reject an Arendtian take on totalitarianism by significantly broadening the scope of power. In Foucault totalitarian regimes do not have to rely on a central authority and in fact authority members are just as wrapped up in power as everyone else. Totalizing normalization is an ever

present threat which cannot be defused by political interaction or solidarity since both lead to the very danger they are meant to eliminate.

At the risk of sounding insensitive, I would suggest that one think critically about which story, Arendt's or Foucault's, is more compelling. The struggle of the former was one shared with an entire race of people who became the tragic victims of a horrifyingly rational genocide. In Arendt's experience the danger is real and present, the results unequivocally fatal. Foucault's own alienation while certainly real seems to pale by comparison. There is no doubt in my mind that Foucault suffered and was to some degree victimized, but to think that the threat of normalization is comparable to genocide strikes me as dubious stretch bordering on insulting. Consequently I find this fact useful in determining which proposed solution to the problem of modernity should be taken more seriously. Without diminishing Foucault's relevance or valuable contributions, I see more urgency in Arendt's concerns.

This being said, the distance separating Foucault and Arendt allows us to look at each thinker from a different perspective. This is particularly useful due to the fact that both theories enjoy certain strengths and suffer certain weaknesses. As I have stated at the outset, I want to argue that adhering myopically to either Foucault or Arendt while completely dismissing the other misses the richness that is possible by bringing both together in dialogue.

Arendt's strength lies in her elevation of politics and public life over purely private pursuits. Her championing of the political hinges on an appreciation of the importance of solidarity and shared interests for political community,

specifically those of a democratic temperament. Indeed, the type of communicative interaction, plurality, and solidarity espoused by Arendt can only exist in a strong democratic culture.

The Arendtian version of democracy might strike contemporary democrats as strange, maybe even radical. In an age in which people are heavily pressed for time due to professional concerns and constraints, and in which populations are so vast, the kind of active participation Arendt demands of citizens might strike us as being practically untenable. Her description of public life might also seem problematic. The notion of an expanded civic life and the emphasis Arendt places on a shared sense of good will appear naively quaint at best and perniciously collectivist at worst to a modern American perspective.

That Arendt seems so alien and threatening to contemporary sensibility is not surprising. Being the heirs of political liberalism we, as U.S. citizens, have come to cultivate an intense culture of individualism. To be a member of a democratic society today is to be the possessor of rights and liberties not public responsibilities and commitments. Indeed the idea that one might be obliged to participate in civic life sounds not like democracy as we understand it but an interference with one's inalienable right to choose political apathy. We have come to value private life to such a high degree that politics seems bothersome, an intrusion on our individual freedom and lives. Public life is viewed cynically and with mistrust, a phenomenon noted by various authors such as John Dewey, Christopher Lasch, Robert Bellah, David Hiley, and Robert Putnam.

The specters of individualism and privatization are made manifest in various ways. Critical as some may be of many aspects of Arendt's history, the story she tells about the replacement of economics for politics is a compelling one. As is made clear by the omnipresence of advertising, holidays promoting consumerism, and the equation of value with the almighty dollar, economic concerns, once private and hidden, have come to dominate public life. The focus on economic success and individual achievement is apparent in the instrumental stance taken towards education. Ironically the "public" aspect of public education is becoming increasingly eclipsed by the private concerns of pecuniary success. Emphasized are not the ways in which individuals can work together to create solidarity but rather the utility of having a degree in terms of financial gain. Despite the educational system's drive to offer all individuals the same opportunities for success in society it simultaneously and paradoxically helps to stabilize the social and economic inequalities threatening equality. From an early age students are taught that the right education is the key to individual and not collective achievement. In short, ours is a culture increasingly private and individualistic without much room for shared concerns or civic life.

The incongruence of our own political realities with the kind of world Arendt describes is indicative of how far democratic institutions have deviated from their original participatory forms. Participation is today equated with a vote. The only thing demanded of today's citizen is that she or he "voice" an opinion by dropping a ballot in a box. This opinion is moreover one reflective of individual and not shared interest. Similarly to the student's stance towards education, the

citizen's stance towards political life is one of instrumentality. One's connections to others in the greater community serve to advance individual interests such as security or financial productivity. The ties between individuals form what Rousseau would call a social *knot* as oppose to a social *bond*. Individuals abide by reigning laws and mores not because they advance everyone in the community but rather because they advance themselves alone. This way of conceiving of political community has been around at least as long as Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Speculating about the nature of humanity, Hobbes theorized a state prior to the existence of modern civilization which he dubbed the state of nature. In Hobbes' view, society exists for the purpose of maintaining individual security. Selfish individuals choose to give up some of their natural freedom and consent to the social contract and the rule of law because they determine that the increased safety was worth the exchange. Being atomistic or separate and distinct from one another these individuals have no indebtedness or connection to others outside the bounds of the contract. Associational life in other words serves private purposes.

As I have described in Chapter I the Hobbesian model is not the only way to think about associational life. Arendt gives a powerful argument for a form of community which demands that private individuals share a stake in the affairs of the public realm. Like Rousseau, her vision of associational life is one in which particular private interests are constituted by shared public interests. Truly democratic citizens in the Arendtian sense are those who are *bonded* to others in irreducible ways. Citizenship depends upon the citizen identifying herself as

constituting part of a group of individuals such that she is not simply, at least not entirely, an "I" but rather a "we." A citizen's very identity is in other words tied up in a wider network of relationships with other citizens with whom she identifies. Far from being a pawn within the wider milieu of the collective however the citizen also actively participates with others from her own particular standpoint. To borrow the term from Charles Taylor, citizenship is *dialogical* in that a citizen's identity is both constituted by and constitutive of, others (1992).

Arendt's insights are important not only for democracy but also for solidarity in general. In the increasingly globalizing world we live in the language of individualism is far too impoverished to be able to handle the challenges which face not just democratic citizens, but all peoples. As Peter Singer notes in *One World*, our economic, agricultural, political, and environmental concerns are wrapped up with those of other countries and peoples across the planet. The age of isolationism in which nations pursued their own interests independently from others has long since past. Buying an "American" car really means buying a machine whose parts have been assembled in nations like Japan and Korea. The CO2 emissions which serve to heat up the atmosphere and accompany the burning of fossil fuels in California does not affect solely the state or even the nation but all countries across the world. As the recent rise in Jihadist fundamentalist terrorism and U.S. foreign policy in Iraq can attest to security interests are not intra-national but international. Suffice it to say that the actions of one individual or nation have consequence for all people across the world. To think that countries can work independently from one another without taking

others into consideration is no longer possible. As this is the case, success in current and future challenges depends upon a shared notion of public good (Singer, 2002).

The kind of solidarity espoused by Arendt is absent, held suspect by, and even rejected by Foucault. His fear of normalization causes him to disallow the kind of group identification that strong democracy depends upon. By resorting to a Nietzschean style of ethics which champions individual originality, Foucault undercuts the importance of commonality for political community. Furthermore, by seeing politics as purely agonistic Foucault loses sight of how conflicts between individuals might be resolved through discourse as opposed to power struggles. Nonetheless, the challenge he poses to Arendt is just as important to democratic citizenship as the solidarity she offers. Foucault's merited mistrust of the public tempers the potential naiveté of Arendt's politics. Hampered by traditional categories of power Arendt seems suited to handle only the kind of sovereign power Foucault poignantly warns against. In many ways Foucault offers a much more realistic understanding of the functioning of power in the modern age. The arrangement of relations between people and things *does* affect how we act and subjects *are* produced by and wrapped up in truth and power.

David Hiley offers an interesting interpretation of Foucault and post-modern philosophy generally as exhibiting a form of modern skepticism akin to the ancient Pyrrhonists. In *Philosophy in Question* Hiley explains that Foucault's anti-foundationalism and rejection of totalizing philosophy tie him back to the

Pyrrhonists who thought in a similar manner. In Hiley's view, the Pyrrhonist managed to avoid the dangers of dogmatic thinking by appealing to common life in making decisions instead of seeing ultimate justification in philosophical grounding. The skeptic lived according to custom and habit, and recognized that his beliefs and views about the world were simply one set amongst many. Cognizant of his own contingency the skeptic was aware that he lived in a specific cultural context which conditioned his thinking. This awareness did not however imply that the skeptic was a nihilist or cynical about his actions as he still acted with conviction despite lacking certainty (Hiley, 1998, Chap. 4).

Hiley's take on skepticism resonates clearly with Foucault's on historicity. As is exemplified in "What is Enlightenment" a historical ontology of self depends upon the kind of self-reflexive awareness and criticism which characterizes skeptical thinking. Moreover I want to argue with Hiley that skepticism is an essential aspect of democratic citizenship.

Democracy depends upon a plurality of viewpoints, something appreciated by Arendt. While there are shared problems which affect all citizens the manner in which these problems are handled can be approached by a variety of differing perspectives. There is in other words no one predetermined solution or truth to matters of political disputes. If there were then political association might be better handled by something more like Plato's *Republic* than democracy. In Plato's ideal state philosopher kings make decisions for all individuals because of they know the truth. Because they purportedly know the best way to organize a

society, their decisions go unquestioned and unchallenged and individuals are little more than pawns of the State.

This vision of society in which one perspective dominates all others is frightening and justifiably so. While some of the excesses of liberalism such as extreme individualism have recently become problematic one of its primary virtues is its respect for a plurality of individuals. In the pluralistic society in which we exist, no other form of associational life is conceivable or appropriate. We live in a country in which people of differing ethnic, religious, sexual, and cultural backgrounds are able to coexist simultaneously and peacefully. While oftentimes these differences might come into tension respect for difference is a desirable aspect of liberal thinking which must be retained. Sharing a common sense of citizenship in a political community does not imply that we must all share the same beliefs and ideas about the good life, so long as those ideas do not interfere with democratic institutions.

On the individual level the ability to maintain a healthy dose of skepticism is essential to the democratic citizen. First and perhaps most obviously, skepticism is a check on the power of the elite. Without the ability to think critically about politicians, elected officials, and ideologies solidarity would lapse into conformity and complacency. Hiley emphasizes that skepticism can not be equated with cynicism, the latter of which posing a threat to democracy (2006, Chap. 1). The cynic is the individual who has given up on the idea of democracy altogether. He is the person that, feeling that his participation in political affairs is ultimately ineffectual and useless, throws his hands in the air and decides to do

nothing at all. Cynical thinking lacks the hope and optimism inherent in citizenship that the political process and one's participation in it matter.

Skepticism on the other hand does not require or necessitate that one abandon the democratic project. On the contrary, by thinking critically about public affairs skepticism actually enacts democracy. As stated above, in one sense this is because remaining skeptical about the powerful helps to maintain the balance of power necessary for the existence of democratic culture. In another however it is because skepticism allows us the ability to gain access to those different from ourselves. The skeptic leaves himself open to the possibility of engaging other viewpoints different from his own with an open and empathic mind (Hiley, 2006, Chap. 1).

At first glance the idea that being skeptical could actually aid in communication might seem bizarre. If skeptics are critics it would seem to follow that they wouldn't accept new opinions easily and hence consensus would be a difficult achievement. As Foucault exhibits in "What is Enlightenment" being outwardly skeptical implies using one's own reason in deciding matters as oppose to accepting what one receives on authority. True skepticism however is just as *inwardly* directed as it is *outwardly*. Like Foucault's modern man the skeptic's self-understanding is ironic in that she has the ability to live a life of seeming contradiction. While she recognizes that her self-understanding is essentially incomplete, she nevertheless maintains strong convictions. Though she accepts that the person she is and the values she has are the products of arbitrary historical circumstance, she still retains the ability to live according to

those values. This ironic stance is made possible by cultivating a certain kind of attitude towards the present, what Foucault calls a “critical ethos.”

While cultivating a critical ethos is important for self creation, I want to suggest that it is just as important for achieving collective consensus. If as Arendt openly accepts democracy is truly enriched by plurality, there must be some way to handle the inevitable conflict arising from competing opinions. As Arendt states, opinions are changed by public interaction. But this is only possible when private citizens are ironic about their opinions. If the opinions of citizens were ossified and rigid, there would be no chance for a mutual exchange of ideas. The private citizen would be like the fundamentalist whose decided world view commits him to narrow-mindedness. To be ironic and hence skeptical in the Foucaultian sense is to refuse to submit to dogmatic thinking from within as well as without. By recognizing one’s own contingency, the skeptic is able to suspend his own vantage point when listening to others.

To illustrate what I mean I will use the contentious contemporary example of abortion. There is perhaps no other social issue which is as divisive and polarizing as that of abortion. On the one hand there are those who are convinced that the unborn fetus is just as deserving of life as anyone else. In the eyes of the “pro-lifers” abortion is tantamount to murder. On the other side of the debate are those who see the illegalization of abortion as being an infringement on the rights and bodies of women. They consider abortion to be an individual woman’s decision as she is claimant to her own body and thus the “pro-choicers” argue for the right to abort.

There is not only incredible conviction in both of the positions, but rationality as well. Both pro-lifers and pro-choicers have ample justifiable reason for believing what they believe. Taking this into consideration finding the "true" or "right" answer to abortion seems not only arbitrary but altogether impossible. Even assuming that a correct answer to the problem exists, the possibility that both parties could be satisfied with an outcome either for or against abortion is remote in the extreme. This leaves the possibility for solidarity in a precarious position since ultimately a decision must be rendered. To adjudicate the dispute by appeal to scientific, theological or other forms of "truth" will leave the issue sorely unresolved.

As Arendt suggests, the only democratic solution to the problem is for both parties to engage one another in dialogue. This dialogue however would be impossible if both sides refuse to listen empathically if not sympathetically to others. Dialogue requires that participants come to the table lacking not a stance, but simply an obdurate one. The issue of abortion for instance might be better handled by framing the question in a different way. Perhaps, for instance, both sides might through the deliberative process find the common ground that abortion is a tragic scenario for all those involved regardless one's perspective. This agreement might lead to cooperation which works towards decreasing the necessity of abortions altogether through the expansion and proliferation of education, access to prophylactics, adoption agencies, and other institutions. In order for this consensus to be achieved however it is incumbent upon participants from both sides to communicate. This in turn requires that

individuals are able to suspend their own positions long enough to entertain new possibilities.

The concept of the skeptical citizen is akin to Richard Rorty's liberal ironist who while maintaining beliefs and convictions about the world nonetheless is able to suspend those beliefs while coming into dialogue with others. (Rorty, 1989) Similarly to my own synthesis of Arendt and Foucault, Rorty attempts to bring the two seemingly opposed sides of Habermas and Foucault together because of the strengths he sees in both. While Habermas with his interest in egalitarianism, decreased cruelty and suffering, and solidarity, is liberal enough, his account lacks the irony of Foucault. On the opposite end, where Foucault is sufficiently ironist, he refuses to see modernity as having any positives to it at all. While Rorty would agree with Foucault that we do face increased normalization in modernity he finds this a small price to pay for the advancements that have been made in Western culture when taken as a whole. Rorty's liberal ironist then is an attempt at combining both parts of what makes a good citizen, namely irony and a sense of the public. However, I see his account as coming up short of meeting the rich sense of citizenship that I have been trying to articulate. Rorty's strict division between public and private life creates a citizen which suffers from a kind of "schizophrenia" as it were. Divided between individualism and collectivism, the liberal ironist seems to have two personalities. In public he follows the obligations of participatory democracy while in private he lives the life of the poet pursuing self-creation. In my account I have tried to erase this

division which exists in Rorty's ironist by in some sense fusing public and private interests together.

Throughout the course of this thesis I have tried to argue that both Arendt and Foucault offer important ways of handling the problems of modernity. By comparing and contrasting their analysis my aim was to bridge the ostensible gap which seems to exist between them. I have argued that the key to bridging this gap can be found in the rich context of democratic culture. Ultimately, both Foucault and Arendt offer ways of thinking about citizenship which are fundamental to robust democratic life. The tensions existing between their analyses are reflective of the tensions which exist in democracy generally. On the one hand democracy demands that we share a common identity with others in our political community. Without this shared identity solidarity would be impossible. Simultaneously, democratic citizens must remain ever vigilant that they do not adopt a herd mentality which will ultimately cause democracy to self-destruct. They must remain critical not only of their government and the elite members of society, but also of themselves. Irony and solidarity, far from being mortal enemies, are actually the perfect pair.

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