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ARTICLE

Resistance:
An Arendtian Reading of Solidarity
and Friendship in Foucault

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ABSTRACT. Recent scholarship has firmly established the similarities between Arendt and Foucault, in particular with regard to the dangers of late-modern social processes. Yet, few have compared their accounts of resistance. This paper argues that although Foucault offers the more comprehensive account, it omits the encounter with the other as unique and unfathomable, which is central to Arendt's. This omission is particularly striking given the authors' shared belief that the danger of 'the social' and 'governmentality' lies in atomizing individuals and barring the development of a singular style of being, and their allusion to friendship and solidarity as sites of resistance.

Drawing on Arendt, I show how Foucault restricts his thematization of solidarity and friendship to a reflexive praxis of the subject on her own limits, and argue instead for the relational dimension of resistance. I start by reconstructing their converging analysis of biological racism. I then continue with a discussion of resistance in Arendt, which she develops in response to the Shoah. More specifically, she provides a concept of solidarity and friendship that I draw on to extend Foucault's analysis of the transnational solidarity among the governed in fighting for their rights vis-à-vis their governments; and of friendship in the context of his interrogation of the LGBT-movement.

Keywords: Resistance, Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), solidarity, friendship, philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

The growing literature on Arendt and Foucault has highlighted the striking similarities between the two thinkers.[1] In particular, they agree on the danger of late-modern social dynamics that lead, by violent coercion but also by non-violent forms of normalization, to uniform yet isolated individuals: totalitarianism (which expanded into the critique of the 'social') in Arendt, and biopolitics (which he quickly dismissed in favour of 'governmentality') in Foucault. An integral part of their modernity critique, their accounts of resistance — or supposed lack thereof — have been criticized for various and at times mutually excluding reasons: they have been criticized not only for providing a too totalizing account that denies agency to certain groups but also for denying the pervasiveness of power structures and hence overestimating the agency of oppressed groups, and they have been blamed for focusing too narrowly on political institutions (Arendt) or on social identity (Foucault).[2] However, of all political concepts, 'resistance' is perhaps among the most elusive — if only because, as Howard Caygill comments, it is so deeply rooted in political praxis.[3] Hence, if the danger of late-modernity lies in isolating and normalizing individuals, we might ask how resistance counteracts these dynamics by establishing new bonds and seeking out individual singularity.

For this question, it is especially interesting to offer an Arendtian reading of Foucault: although the latter has reflected more extensively and rigorously on the shapes and conditions of resistance, Arendt has put the encounter with the other at the center of political praxis and, *a fortiori*, of acts of resistance. Foucault's lack of concern with relationality, either in his ethics where he accords priority to the relationship to the self over those with others, or in his strategic concept of action, has been signalled before.[4] While I disagree with those criticizing Foucault's later work for a merely aestheticizing, individualist and a-political ethics,[5] the neglect of the other is conspicuous in his discussions of solidarity and friendship, to which he alludes — just like Arendt — when appraising concrete acts of resistance. In this paper, I will thus draw on Arendt's assessment of concrete human

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[1] Amy Allen, "Power, Subjectivity, and Agency," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 10:2 (2002), 131-149; Alexander Barder and François Debrix, "Agonal Sovereignty," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 37:7 (2011), 775-793; Frederick Dolan, "The Paradoxical Liberty of Bio-Power," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 31:3 (2005), 369-380; Kathrin Braun, "Biopolitics and Temporality in Arendt and Foucault," *Time & Society* 16:1 (2007), 5-23; Dianna Taylor, "Countering Modernity," *Telos* 2011:154 (2011), 119-140; Marcelo Hoffman, "Containments of the Unpredictable in Arendt and Foucault," *Telos* 2011:154 (2001), 141-162; Maria Tamboukou, "Truth Telling in Foucault and Arendt: Parrhesia, the Pariah and Academics in Dark Times," *Journal of Education Policy* 27:6 (2012), 849-865.

[2] Critical theorists have been particularly dismissive of the potential of their works to provide a social critique. See, for instance, Nancy Fraser, "Foucault's Body-Language," *Salmagundi* 61 (1983), 55-70; Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (2003); For a convincing rebuttal of these interpretations, see Christian Volk, "Towards a Critical Theory of the Political," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 42:6 (2016), 549-575; Amy Allen, *The End of Progress* (2016), 163-203..

[3] Howard Caygill, *On Resistance* (2013).

[4] Allen, "Power, Subjectivity, and Agency"; Johanna Oksala, *Foucault on Freedom* (2005).

[5] For an early overview of and response to these criticisms, see Jane Bennett, "How Is It, Then, That We Still Remain Barbarians?" *Political Theory* 24:4 (1996), 653-672.

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relationships to push Foucault away from debates regarding structural constraints and the possibility of (subversive) agency and instead formulate a relational account of solidarity and friendship.

This paper pursues an Arendtian reading of Foucault, by which I mean a reading that uncovers the disavowal of our relationships to others as well as our thrownness into a world furnished by political institutions. Arendt advances this critical reading practice to expose the bias inherent in the contemplative life of philosophers against politics as a collective, spontaneous and unpredictable practice. This bias marks traditional political theory and clouds the self-understanding by political agents. In particular, it substitutes an autarkic, solitary subject concerned with its own moral and intellectual integrity for an agent whose actions depend on the presence of others and are directed toward the conditions under which collective life takes place.[6] While Foucault is mindful that practices of resistance involve action-in-concert, he does not, due to his overly reflexive and theoretical notion of freedom, thematize this dimension. Juxtaposing his account of freedom with his practical involvement in political struggles, I show how he engages in acts of resistance but is unable to thematize these as actions in concert with others because his concept of freedom privileges a typically philosophical concern with the self.

I start (section 1) by reconstructing their converging analysis of the threats to freedom in late-modernity. I then continue (section 2) with a discussion of resistance in Arendt, which she develops in response to the Shoah to describe actions that both strategically aim to eliminate governmental practices of control and performatively enact the freedom endangered by governmental techniques. Furthermore, she provides a concept of solidarity and friendship that I draw on to extend Foucault's analysis of the right claimed by the governed vis-à-vis their governments (section 3) and of friendship in the context of his interrogation of the LGBT-movement (section 4).

SETTING UP A DIALOGUE BETWEEN ARENDT AND FOUCAULT

Despite their intellectual and political differences, Arendt and Foucault converge on their analysis of the risks inherent to late-modern society. Even their most historical works are motivated by the urgency to identify the biggest danger of the present moment: they underscore the volatile threats that follow from contingent dynamics that govern our societies.[7] Far from being anti-modern reactionaries, Arendt and Foucault warn us of the social and governmental practices that use the social and life sciences to exert control over the population, which happens first and foremost through the nexus of race and reproduction.

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[6] After the Eichmann trial, Arendt qualified her former rejection of the contemplative, among other reasons because the thinking-process and its concern for inner harmony (as manifest in Socrates) provides a post-metaphysical alternative for consciousness. Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations" [1971], in *Responsibility and Judgment* (2003), 159-189.

[7] Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" [1983], in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth,* ed. Paul Rabinow (1997), 256.

The *loci classici* for the intersection of Foucault and Arendt are their analyses of Nazism in the conclusion of *The Will to Knowledge* and the final lecture of *Society Must Be Defended* (1976) on the one hand, and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1966 [1951]) on the other.[8] In a striking resemblance, both authors remind us that the genocides of the twentieth century should not be understood as the classical right over life and death exerted by the sovereign but as the consequence of a state that aims to maintain and foster the life processes of the social body — a development in which some are bound to 'atrophy'.[9] Nazism in particular yields "a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death."[10] It aims "not only to liberate the historical and natural forces, but to accelerate them to a speed they never would reach if left to themselves" by "execut[ing] on the spot the death sentences which Nature is supposed to have pronounced on races or individuals who are 'unfit to live.'"[11] The verdict supposedly follows from the demands of survival and optimalization of the population. It thus breaks with the older model of sovereign power that grounded it in the sovereign's right to punish those who stood up against him.[12] In that old model, the crime of the transgressor was mirrored by the punishment by the sovereign. In the new model, however, both the executed and executioner are "subjectively innocent"[13] for they intend neither to commit a crime nor to punish one.

Biological racism is crucial in drawing a distinction between those whose life is conducive to that of the population — and can stay alive — and those whose life is not — and must hence wither away. To control the life of the human species with the objective of its reinvigoration requires a break "within the biological continuum of the human race of races."[14] The very novelty of genocide does not consist in the scale or the number of victims but in its evolutionist justification. The paradox that people are left to die in the name of life can only be understood by a distinction within the human race. While race is the primal fracture within the human species, Arendt reminds us that it can and has been predicated on other naturalized differences too, such as health and age.[15] Importantly, their argument against biological racism does not proceed by showing how it is false or bad science but how it functions in the operations of a state trying to fully control its population. They refrain from an idealist position in which the idea of racial superiority culminated in the Shoah and the other atrocities committed by the Nazis; instead, they stress

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[8] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998); Dolan, "The Paradoxical Liberty of Bio-Power"; Braun, "Biopolitics and Temporality in Arendt and Foucault"; Hoffman, "Containments of the Unpredictable in Arendt and Foucault"; Barder and Debrix, "Agonal Sovereignty"; Taylor, "Countering Modernity"; Kim Su Rasmussen, "Foucault's Genealogy of Racism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 25:8 (2011), 34-51; Jacob Maze, "Towards an Analytic of Violence," *Foucault Studies* 25 (2018), 120-145.

[9] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge* [1978] (1998), 136, 137.

[10] Ibid., 138.

[11] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1966), 466.

[12] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge,* 136–37; Michel Foucault, *'Society Must Be Defended': Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-76* (2018), 241.

[13] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 466.

[14] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 255.

[15] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 433; Agamben is mindful of this in his reading, arguably at the expense of the nexus of race and sex. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 150.

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how it dovetailed with the attempt for full domination. This also means that resistance against it does not consist in refuting biological racism but in obstructing the racist management of society.

It is fair to say that Arendt meticulously details the totalitarian reorganization of society while Foucault focuses on the scientific and policing practices that provide the wider context in which Nazism could emerge. His genealogy sketches the circumstantial power relations that upheld and enabled the emergence of Nazism, while she aims in the third and final volume of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* to lay bare its inner structure.[16] From her analysis, we learn how the control of the population was largely carried out by the police, whose systematic use of arbitrary arrests was instrumental in terrorizing the population. Their grip was nearly inescapable due to, firstly, the collaboration with police forces in other countries and, secondly, the ubiquitous distrust as everyone feared their betrayal by another.[17] On a personal level, this pervasive policing induces a sense of suffocating proximity to others: "by pressing men against each other, total terror destroys the space between them",[18] a condition Arendt likens to "a band of iron."[19] As a consequence, spontaneous action together with others was nearly impossible, and this predicament applies *a fortiori* to the concentration camps, which Arendt denounces as experiments in total domination. Completely cut off from those outside the camps, those imprisoned were subject to the perfected skills of the Nazis to pitch their victims against one another and to numb them through the use of torture.

Foucault refrains from a detailed analysis of Nazism, highlighting instead its historical emergence at the intersection of two technologies of control. The first concerns disciplinary techniques that are directed at the body and that take place in clearly demarcated institutions such as the prison.[20] The second concerns the totalizing techniques that are directed at the population as a whole and which gave rise to statistics and other social sciences. Importantly, the two intersect on the issue of procreative sex: it is situated at the overlap of the optimalization of docile bodies with the general concern with birth rates and population control.[21] The point is not to simply stimulate population growth but to guarantee the population has the size corresponding to its territory and, one might add, its demographic (and racial) composition.[22] In other words, Foucault's approach has the benefit of showing how Nazi Germany executed an extensive natalist policy that restricts birth among some and stimulates it among other groups. Beyond Nazism, he is concerned with sexuality as an object of study and intervention: not just procreative sex but also —

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[16] Arendt, "A Reply to Eric Voegelin," [1953], in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (1994), 403; See also Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978* (2007), 276ff.

[17] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 419ff.

[18] Ibid., 466.

[19] Ibid., 465.

[20] *Will to Knowledge*, 1:139ff; *Society Must Be Defended*, 242; See also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* [1975] (1991).

[21] *Will to Knowledge*, 140, 144; Penelope Deutscher, *Foucault's Futures: A Critique of Reproductive Reason* (2018), 76ff.

[22] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 323ff.

and arguably more importantly to him — the "lines of attack" that proceed through psy-chiatrization and produce the figures of the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, and the sexual pervert.[23]

Coming from a completely different angle, Arendt also remarks on the totalitarian concern with birth, but her approach overlooks what Foucault calls "the socialization of procreative behavior."[24] In her existentialist approach, natality indicates the capacity to begin anew, and this human spontaneity poses a hindrance to the social processes that totalitarian governments try to foster.[25] When she thus describes totalitarianism as the attempt to eliminate spontaneity and contain the novelty contained in birth, she accuses it of suppressing the very capacity that defines humans as political creatures. These observations are further developed in *The Human Condition,* describing birth as an unambiguously positive event that, in its promise of unpredictable and spontaneous action, eludes the predictability of statistical probability.[26] Even if we might suspect the formative influence of Martin Heidegger behind her admittedly crude rejection of the social sciences, the juxtaposition with natality points towards the latter as a condition for action.[27] While the rehabilitation of political praxis is the main stake in her criticism of the social sciences, for Foucault the detrimental effect of scientific normalization is particularly manifest in the management of sexuality.

Crucially, Arendt and Foucault both engage in a historical project of deconstructing philosophical concepts to open up a space of reflecting and contesting the historically contingent conditions of the present. Written in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is marked by the shock at the Shoah and the desire to articulate a new political-theoretical vocabulary to grasp totalitarianism. Foucault, writing twenty-five years later, responds to the sexual liberation movement that fails to escape from the normalizing force of mainstream sexologist discourse — the same force that at some prior point had coalesced into Nazism. As we will see, this difference in focus also implies that Arendt situates resistance in the context of state-run persecution while Foucault focuses on the nods and operations of sexuality.

Both signal the devastating effect of late-modern processes on the relational fabric. This is particularly clear in Arendt's description of Nazism as "organized loneliness"[28] that breaks up even the most personal bonds of affection. More generally, loneliness prevails in mass society due to the erasure of the spaces for meaningful relationships.[29] This applies not only to the public sphere, where people convene for political action, but also `to the private realm and the bonds with family and friends.'[30] That diagnosis fits in with her

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[23] *Will to Knowledge*, 153.

[24] Ibid., 154.

[25] *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 465.

[26] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [1958] (1998), 178; Ibid., 42ff.

[27] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (1991), 21–23; Arendt, "Philosophy and Sociology" [1930], in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (1994), 28-43.

[28] *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 478.

[29] *Human Condition*, 59.

[30] Ibid..

denouncement of what she calls 'the rise of the social.'[31] While this is not the place to discuss at length this hotly contested notion, it suffices to state here that it refers to the elevation of biological needs to the prime political concern in both theory (i.e., Marxism) and institutions (liberal democracy). It also involves a collective self-understanding as 'animal laborans', that is, a biological creature whose behaviour is dictated by their needs and oriented towards survival. Importantly, this mode of existence precludes an engagement with others except as a means to meet one's needs: it undermines the capacity to relate to others as political agents and also as a friend or lover. In both sets of relationships, the other displays a unicity that exceeds their utility. In this sense, the rise of the social also entails an impoverishment of social relationships as we relate to others merely in terms of usefulness.

Similarly, Foucault decries the uniformity of our modes of relating to others, albeit in a more circumferential way. It can be discerned in his description of the individualization of biopolitics, which includes the disciplinary techniques or "dividing practices"[32] that physically separates those subjected to these techniques, such as inmates and factory workers, and thus undermines any relationships between them. In his later work, individualization is linked to pastoral power, of which the paradigmatic relationship is that of confession. Even if confession, strictly speaking, is situated in a collective such as a monastic order or the parish, Foucault stresses that it establishes a binary relationship of obedience between pastor and confessant that forecloses other, more communal modes of existence.[33] In very general terms, individualization implies a range of techniques that hamper relationships with those placed in a similar position vis-à-vis those techniques.[34] This point is driven home when he comments

> We live in a relational world that institutions have considerably impoverished. Society and the institutions which frame it have limited the possibility of relationships because a rich relational world would be very complex to manage. We should fight against the impoverishment of the relational fabric.[35]

Late-modern governmentality sanctions a very small range of relationship due to the difficulty of controlling relational complexity. In a 1981 interview with a gay magazine, he suggests that the impoverishment impacts members of the gay community particularly hard, and the struggle against it can and should be part of the gay movement.[36] In a similar vein, he approvingly comments in 1982 on contemporary social struggles (such as the gay movement and the women's liberation movement) as attacks on "everything that

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[31] Ibid., chaps. 6, 43–45.

[32] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" [1982], in *Power* (2000), 326.

[33] *Security, Territory, Population*, 210.

[34] I am glossing over the extensive debate on the transition by the later Foucault from biopolitics to governmentality, assuming that the latter widens the historical scope of the former and pays greater attention to the non-violent modes in which a population is controlled and its subjects atomized. Consequently, 'governmentality' grants more consideration as to how subjects conduct themselves in a given institutional setup.

[35] Michel Foucault, "The Social Triumph of the Sexual Will" [1982], in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (1997), 158.

[36] Ibid., 159.

separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way."[37] While the secondary literature has focused extensively on the critique of identity, the comment on community has been largely ignored. Indeed, Foucault himself seems to have intimated but not thematized the establishment of new modes of coexistence. Why?

One answer can be found in his conception of freedom that he develops towards the end of his life and which attributes little importance to relationality. The similarities and differences with Arendt are instructive. They both develop a concept of freedom that starts from the unpredictable interaction with others, out of which a new field of possible actions emerge. Freedom consists in the bringing about of different conditions under which one lives, in a way that could not have been anticipated or even imagined beforehand, rather than a choice between given options. In these freedom practices, subjects also have a chance to develop their individuality, as their unique way of being in the world. Arendt articulates this individuality as the self-disclosure of one's unicity to others, realizing a potential for uniqueness that is indicated in the fact of natality, namely, that each one of us is born in a distinct body and capable of new, unpredictable actions. This self-disclosure requires the presence of others who ask, in a welcoming and curious gesture, "'who are you?'."[38] Importantly, freedom refers to a political experience of collectively determining the conditions of one's co-existence, of which revolutions are the typically modern manifestations.[39] While Arendt's oeuvre can convincingly be read as a long meditation on the modern conditions for freedom and its institutionalization, the concept is limited to Foucault's later work on ethics as a practice of self-constitution. Tellingly, and in clear contrast to Arendt, freedom primarily designates a relationship to the self. Freedom consists, negatively understood, in a reflection on the contingent, historical conditions of our subjectivity, which liberates us from the identities and habits that have been imposed on us.[40] This typically modern, critical attitude allows us to rethink who we are.[41] Importantly, the critical attitude has a reflexive dimension, which also pertains to the Greco-Roman care for the self. [42] This care, which is oriented towards moral perfection and which Foucault understands (following Pierre Hadot) as philosophy as a way of life, can, but does not have to, involve interaction with others; if it does, it is mostly strategic insofar as the other appears either as a guide or as someone to be guided. From an Arendtian point of view, he fails to account for the alterity of the other as well as the priority of the relationships with others over that with oneself.[43] Philosophy, even if understood

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[37] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 330.

[38] Human Condition, 178.

[39] Hannah Arendt, "Totalitarian Imperialism: Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution," *The Journal of Politics* 20:1 (1958), 5–43; Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* [1963] (1984).

[40] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure* [1984] (1992), 8.

[41] Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" [1984], in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (1997), 303–19; Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 8–9.

[42] Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom" [1984], in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (1997), 284.

[43] For a convincing critique, Oksala, *Foucault on Freedom*, 204ff; Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), 23.

as a spiritual practice rather than a mode of contemplation, might still display the neglect of plurality that Arendt accused it of.[44]

ARENDT'S PRINCIPLE OF RESISTANCE

Arendt's recuperation of praxis revolves on the relational dimension of human existence. Not surprisingly, this dimension takes on a normative role in her description of acts of resistance. While her discussion of resistance is fragmented in comparison to Foucault and restricted to the Second World War, it consistently shows how acts of resistance establish bonds that actively counteract the divisional practices of late-modern regimes.

As we have seen, Arendt's attack on Nazism does not envisage biological racism, because it does not require its accessories to believe in the racist ideology in order to function. The totalitarian society is organized along the racist categories of Nazi ideology in such an all-pervading manner that, regardless if one subscribes to the pseudo-scientific laws of racial degeneration, one's collaboration in reproducing the gap separating the non-Jewish from the Jewish population only requires participation in mundane social activities. In this sense, the state practices of persecution take priority over their theoretical 'justifications'.

The reversal of state practice and rationale implies that the activities of the state produce the very subjects that they posit in their ideology: treating some groups inhumanely, these groups are made into subhumans. Objections to the mistreatment should, as a consequence, not be restricted to a logical refutation of Nazi ideology by stating, for instance, that we are all humans, but in activities that actively counteract the production of oppressed groups.

One might object that these acts of resistance only refer liberation, which she, like Foucault, distinguishes from freedom: whereas the former consists in ending domination which may or may not involve the use of violence, the latter consists in a non-violent practice.[45] Given Arendt's strict division between poiesis and praxis, and violence and power (where the first term in both pairs corresponds to liberation), resistance would not illustrate the collective dimension of freedom which I hope to expound on here. Yet, I believe that Arendt would agree with Foucault when he positively answers the question of whether, in some situations, liberation can be "a mode or form of practice of the freedom".[46] Moreover, the suggestion that resistance merely resides in violent, goal-oriented activities presupposes that it is up against a force of domination which is primarily violent itself: while Nazism is undeniably a violent regime, its operation is irreducible to violence

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[44] Pierre Hadot, "Spiritual Exercises" [1987] and "Reflections on the Idea of the 'Cultivation of the Self'" [1987], both in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (1995). The discovery of "the mystery and splendor of existence" (p. 212), which Arendt ascribes as the wonder at the origin of philosophy, is exactly what she considers no longer possible for it is displaced by the horror over human co-existence; Hannah Arendt, "Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought" [1954], in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (1994), 445.

[45] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 29; Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," 282.

[46] Ibid., 284.

insofar as it relied on the support of the wider population. Refuting the common impression that power (the collective determination of the conditions under which we life) is normatively positive for Arendt,[47] Christian Volk rightly argues that "[w]herever power materialises in a way that burdens political action and therefore perpetuates political domination and oppression [such as totalitarianism], this power is always productive as well" in that "it generates political resistance."[48]

This coincidence of liberation and freedom is particularly clear in the defiance of one key strategy by the Nazis that Arendt describes at length: the deprivation of citizenship. Stateless refugees had to seek shelter elsewhere, only to realize that national membership is crucial to be able to settle down in an era when the whole surface of the earth is covered by nation-states. This step was preparatory in the sense that the dispersal of the stateless across European borders was followed by the Nazi's claiming back the stateless from the occupied countries to send them to concentration camps. The famous 'paradox of the Rights of Man' points us to the inability for philosophical concepts to grasp the political significance of the production of large groups of stateless people. This critique, which exposes the tense mutual implication of national sovereignty and universal rights, also informs Arendt's principle of resistance against the Nazi regime: "If one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew. Not as a German, not as a world-citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man."[49] Instead of invoking an abstract, innate right to be included (or one's cultural and national belonging to the very social body from which one is expelled), the exclusion has to be fought in terms of the identity on the basis of which one is excluded. In other words, one has to fight the governmental control of the population, and this struggle should not be waged in the name of idealized universals but of the particular identities that are the product of the political reality one wants to change. [50]

What matters for the present discussion is not that the struggle against subjection reclaims the terms of that subjection, but that it relies on a joint effort. This is particularly clear in her discussion of the Danish defiance of the Nazis: they refused the deportation of the stateless refugees on their territory. As they no longer have citizenship rights, the Danish argument ran, Germany also cannot reclaim them. This is a story, she suggests, that should be "required reading in political science for all students who wish to learn something about the enormous power potential in non-violent action and in resistance to an opponent possessing vastly superior means of violence."[51] In spite of the German attempts to tear up the relational fabric of the societies subjugated to their rule, the Danish act in concert. Even more so, because they collectively uphold the rights of refugees, they

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[47] The normatively positive definition of power is often cited as a difference between Arendt and Foucault, for instance by Allen, "Power, Subjectivity, and Agency," 142.

[48] Volk, "Towards a Critical Theory of the Political," 564.

[49] Hannah Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains.': A Conversation with Günter Gaus" [1964], in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (1994), 12.

[50] Lisa Disch, "On Friendship in 'Dark Times,'" in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. Bonnie Honig (1995), 286.

[51] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* [1961] (2006), 171.

also retain the legal framework that was built up over centuries to make the modern world hospitable to human uniqueness, and that the Nazis were intent on destroying.

For Arendt, these concerns spring forth from a fundamental political-existential task, namely our collective responsibility: How are we responsible for the common world that conditions the existence of each of us? This responsibility requires some degree of power, for "responsibility for the world, which is primarily political, (…) always presupposes at least a minimum of political power."[52] Furthermore, it is mediated in the sense that it is not limited to the ethical encounter with the other but involves the historically contingent situation that can be changed by a common effort. In this act of solidarity, to put the issue more precisely, the bond between people arises from their common investment (which she calls 'interest') in changing the world: "it is out of solidarity that they establish deliberately and, as it were, dispassionately a community of interest with the oppressed and exploited." People unite for different reasons behind a shared project. But even if some are motivated by self-serving considerations, the concerted action that follows from these diverse motivations and the effect of these actions benefits all those with whom they share the world.

Moreover, solidarity as a shared responsibility towards the world transcends the narrow limits of the nation-state due to the historical-geographical condition we find ourselves in. Humanity, Arendt argues in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), became a concrete experience not because it formed a regulative ideal, but under colonial imperialism. "The trouble is that our period has so strangely intertwined the good with the bad," she writes, "that without the imperialists' 'expansion for expansion's sake,' the world might never have become one."[53] Belying the lofty sentiments expressed in Enlightenment ideals of the united family of mankind, the idea of a human race has historically coincided with imperial subjugation of colonized peoples. While we have to acknowledge Arendt's anti-primitivist comments with regard to sub-Sahara Africa,[54] we can read her as arguing that positing a universal mankind radically excludes those who have their humanity denied; when mankind is conceived biologically as the human race, this exclusion takes the form of racialized dehumanization. Humanity in this sense of the word (we will turn to another meaning in a bit) is the result of and so-called justification for contingent historical processes that drove global imperialism. Furthermore, the spread of techniques of total domination does not depend on the totalitarian aspiration to infinitely extend one's territory but can also follow from their use by non-totalitarian states. The realization of the horrors to which man is capable, Arendt writes as early as 1945, are experienced on a personal level as an "elemental shame [of being human]", and politically as a "sense of

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[52] Hannah Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship" [1964], in *Responsibility and Judgment* (2003), 45.

[53] *Origins of Totalitarianism*, viii.

[54] On the debate with regard to Arendt's problematic comments on African colonisation, see Norton, "Heart of Darkness: Africa and African Americans in the Writings of Hannah Arendt," in *Feminist interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. Bonnie Honig (1995), 247-261; Jimmy Klausen, "Hannah Arendt's Antiprimitivism," *Political Theory* 38:3 (2010), 394-423.

international solidarity."[55] If we are to resist the attempts at domination, we have to take stock of their global nature: if not as a consequence of totalitarian occupation, then by the adaptation of these techniques by other countries. Resistance, in other words, is an action in solidarity that at once enacts and aims for a desired state of co-existence, and that acknowledges the shared, global predicament of being subjected to governmental techniques of domination.

Developing an alternative conception of humanity that counteracts the effects of global imperialism and totalitarian governmental techniques, Arendt turns to antiquity, and provides an account of friendship that presents a model of both political action and resistance. In this alternative conception, someone's humanity is not a universal brotherhood based on an innate capacity, either reason or empathy: instead, it is the frail, hard-won effect of engaging in concrete relationships with others. Friendship, rather than fraternity, exemplifies humanity, and basing herself on Aristotle she asserts that *philia* is not a private relationship in which one shares confidences but a public one that establishes equality between the friends. It does so through an ongoing dialogue between the friends of a world shared in common: given her phenomenology of plurality, it is only insofar as we can communicate our experiences with others that the objects of these experiences become real and meaningful.[56] To return to her analysis of totalitarian oppression: Nazism undermines personal relationships and organizes society in such a way that, regardless of individuals' stance on its racist propaganda, non-Jewish people dissociate from Jewish people out of prudential reasons. Hence, the rare cases in which friendship (or love, for that matter[57]) between a Jewish and a non-Jewish person persists, it is forced into seclusion, and there develops a subversive, albeit limited, potential:

> in the case of friendship between a German and a Jew under the conditions of the Third Reich it would scarcely have been a sign of humanness for the friends to have said: Are we not both human beings? It would have been mere evasion of reality and of the world common to both at that time; they would not have been resisting the world as it was. A law that prohibited the intercourse of Jews and Germans could be evaded but not defied by people who denied the reality of the distinction. In keeping with a humanness that had not lost the solid ground of the reality of persecution, they would have had to say to each other: A German and a Jew, and friends.[58]

The friends act out of loyalty towards one another and out of truthfulness towards the world in which they live and which treats them differently; and although they do not necessarily intend to defy the Nazi regime, their friendship enacts in the intimacy of the private sphere the equality that is denied to them in the public world. This conception of the private sphere is a romanticized one: it provides a frail bulwark against the

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[55] Hannah Arendt, "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility" [1945], in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (1994), 131.

[56] Hannah Arendt, "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing" [1959], in *Men in Dark Times* (1968), 25.

[57] Hannah Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio" [1958], in *Men in Dark Times* (1968), 71-80.

[58] Arendt, "On Humanity in Dark Times," 23.

normalizing and dividing practices of fascist society. This is "[where] we choose those with whom we wish to spend our lives, personal friends and those we love," and because this "choice is guided not by likeness or qualities shared by a group of people (…) but strikes, inexplicably and unerringly, at one person in his uniqueness, his unlikeliness to all other people we know," it defies the social dynamics of discrimination.[59] Arendt, whose marriage to a non-Jewish man in 1939 was illegal under the Nuremberg Laws then in force, would be careful in welcoming these personal relations as deliberate acts of resistance. Furthermore, her main concern is with the institutionalization of different modes of human existence: in the case of friendship and love, this refers to the constitutional protection of the private sphere. In contradistinction from Foucault, who stresses the restrictive dimension of civil law,[60] Arendt emphasizes its enabling dimension. The right to a private sphere safeguards our bonds with friends and loved ones: the near-total domination by totalitarianism violated this basic right, and in her otherwise problematic comments on Jim Crow laws, she fiercely objects to the criminalization of interracial marriage in the southern US for its denial of a private sphere.[61]

To summarize, Arendt provides us with two forms of resistance that give central stage to the (possibility for the) encounter with the other— the encounter, that is, with the unique yet equal other who exceeds the identity that is imposed on them. Even if it is true that Arendt's principle of resistance stresses the affirmation of a subjugated identity, it does so in a way that does not reify that identity. Instead, as Lisa Disch observes, this principle can be very useful to political struggles, as it shows "how to acknowledge an identity as a 'political fact' and, at the same time, to refute it." In this sense, stating one's identity in the terms used by the oppressor can be read as a preliminary to restructuring the field of possible actions: resistance always takes place within and against the rules as laid down by one's antagonist. The centrality of the other in renegotiating, defying, and subverting these rules can be usefully implemented in Foucault's concept of resistance to which I turn next.

FOUCAULT ON SOLIDARITY

'Biopolitics' was discarded by Foucault shortly after coining it.[62] If we are to find a concept of resistance, we have to look for it in the projects that spurred his initial interest in biopolitics and that he develops afterwards, namely the genealogical studies of governmentality and of the subject of desire. Whereas the first is the object of his courses of 1977-1978 and 1978-1979 on political reason, the second is published as the second, third and fourth volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. They are also closely tied to the political struggles

[59] Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," [1959], in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (2003), 208.

[60] Foucault, "Social Triumph of the Sexual Will," 158; Wendy Brown, "Suffering Rights as Paradoxes," *Constellations* 7:2 (2000), 208-229; Ben Golder, *Foucault and the Politics of Rights* (2015).

[61] Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," 202–203.

[62] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979* (2010), 21–22; Stuart Elden, *Foucault's Last Decade* (2017), 93.

Foucault engages in,[63] and the question thus arises if and how his 'conceptual toolkit' enables him to reflect on these struggles and more specifically on their collective, world-oriented dimension.

Before we look at governmentality (this section) and the history of sexuality (next section), two points are important. Firstly, and in clear distinction from Arendt, he systematizes the link between resistance, power and contemporary struggles, such as these were waged by the anti-psychiatry movement, feminist groups, and the gay movement. Approvingly citing these struggles, he argues that their main objective "is to attack not so much such-or-such institution of power, or group, or elite, or class but, rather, a technique, a form of power."[64] They challenge, in other words, the governmental techniques and dividing practices that individualize the subject. Just as governmental techniques try to steer the conduct of individuals by isolating the individual and tying her to herself, contemporary struggles are predominantly directed "against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way."[65] These fights share some characteristics, like their transversal, international character; their assertion of the right to be different as well as to form alternative communities; and the concern with the question of who we are, as well as the refusal of an answer that ignores individuality or that relies on "scientific or administrative inquisition."[66] Analytically, they differ from other struggles such as those against exploitation, while historically they are the main (but not exclusive) conflict of our time. Furthermore, Foucault understands resistance as a minimum requirement for power relations. Power relations do not indicate a limit to free action but the attempt to structure the field of possible behaviour; "resistance is a part of this strategic relationship of which power consists. Resistance really always relies upon the situation against which it struggles."[67] The mutual implication of resistance and power distinguishes these relationships from those of coercion, in which the control of one agent by another is so absolute (for instance through the use of violence) that no possibility is left to negotiate or subvert that control. These programmatic comments on resistance underscore the political stakes in Foucault's later work, and it also refers to a form of power that is crucial to his study of governmentality and of the subject of desire: pastoral power.[68]

This brings me to my second point, the contestation of pastoral power. This form of power revolves on issues of wellbeing, which is initially understood as the salvation of the soul, on the basis of which the pastor claims complete obedience by the members of

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[63] Marcelo Hoffman, *Foucault and Power: The Influence of Political Engagement on Theories of Power* (2013); Patton, "From Resistance to Government. Foucault's Lectures 1976–1979," in *A Companion to Foucault*, ed. Christopher Falzon, Timothy O'Leary and Jana Sawicki (2013), 173–74.

[64] "The Subject and Power," 331; The comment also reads as a criticism on the war-model that he advanced in *Society Must Be Defended* and that underlies the Marxist analysis of class struggle.

[65] Ibid., 331.

[66] Ibid., 329–31.

[67] Michel Foucault, "Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity" [1982], in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (1997), 168.

[68] "The Subject and Power," 333.

his flock.[69] The assertion of this power in the late middle-ages, by making confession obligatory for the laity, elicits a strong response. Spiritual movements such as the Flemish mystics engage in what Foucault calls 'contre-conduite': refusing to have their conduct governed, they engage in practices of self-transformation that enable them to receive revealed truth, which short-circuits the pastor and his claim to a privileged, mediating role in the process of salvation.[70] This form of resistance deploys a counter-discourse but also alternative ethical practices (to use the term in a sense that Foucault develops later): the mystics develop an alternative lifestyle that subverts, exploits, and defies the rules for conduct imposed by the Church. Their struggle is an attempt to be governed differently.[71] This form of resistance contests the way in which one is conducted by others, and also demarcates "an area in which each individual can conduct himself, the domain of one's own conduct or behavior."[72] This latter dimension – the government of the self by the self – is subsequently developed in Foucault's writings on ethics, both regarding ancient practices of care of the self and the critical attitude that he discerns in Kant.

Although Foucault's later work scarcely deploys the notion of counter-conduct, he invites us to look for instances directed against political institutions:

> I think that inasmuch as many pastoral functions were taken up in the exercise of governmentality, and inasmuch as government also begins to want to take responsibility for people's conduct (…), then we see revolts of conduct arising less from the religious institution and much more from political institutions.[73]

To take up this invitation, we need to grasp more precisely how Foucault understands political institutions. When he embarks on the 'history of governmentality', he understands the latter as "the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technique."[74] Very generally, he argues that the art of government was central to the seventeenth century literature on the *raison d'état* (in which the strength of the state relied on the population), while the question of how to conduct the population was problematized from the eighteenth century onwards in liberal theory. Jumping to the end of his lecture series *Security, Territory, Population*, we read that, in the nineteenth century, good government was taken to find its limit and its justification in enabling the undisrupted economic processes of exchange and trade, using the police as the security apparatus while managing the population.[75] The theoretical doctrine that emerges out of this governmental practice is of course liberalism, and its British, utilitarian

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[69] Michel Foucault, "'Omnes et Singulatim': Toward a Critique of Political Reason" [1979], in *Power* (2000), 302; *Security, Territory, Population*, 208.

[70] *Security, Territory, Population*, 196ff.

[71] Daniele Lorenzini, "From Counter-Conduct to Critical Attitude: Michel Foucault and the Art of Not Being Governed Quite So Much," *Foucault Studies* 21 (2016), 7–21.

[72] Arnold I. Davidson, "In Praise of Counter-Conduct," *History of the Human Sciences* 24:4 (2011), 27.

[73] *Security, Territory, Population*, 197–98.

[74] Ibid., 108.

[75] Ibid., 353ff.

strand is central to the first lectures of Foucault's next course, *The Birth of Biopolitics.* "Utilitarianism," he argues, "is a technology of government," and insofar it contains references to rights and laws, these juridical elements should not lead us to mistake it for a form of juridical power aiming to delimit sovereign force but rather as the result of a critical interrogation of the utility of governmental practices.[76] Writing during the raising prominence of human rights advocacy groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Foucault suggests that the invocation of human rights at times raises the juridical claim of the rights of man — originating in the revolutionary proclamation of the man and the citizen in public law — but at other times the "claim of the independence of the governed vis-à-vis governmentality."[77]

If we should look for a form of counter-conduct to neoliberal governmentality, we might thus look at the claims that utilize, re-orient, and subvert the vocabulary of governmentality that the governed struggle against, as well as the assemblage of organizations that oppose and operate in reaction to the apparatuses of the late-modern state. 'The right of the governed,' implied in the above quotation and first used in Foucault's intervention on behalf of Klaus Croissant (1977), offers one such creative subversion. This right is not grounded on an innate human capacity but is "plus précis, plus historiquement déterminé que les droits de l'homme" insofar as it is grounded in the opposition to a state that dangerously tends to tighten its management of our daily lives.[78] The 'right of the governed' sporadically recurs throughout the last seven years of his life, especially in response to contemporary events such as the repression of the Polish Solidarity movement and the violence levelled by the newly established, theocratic regime of Iran.[79] More specifically, his engagement in a 'counter-conduct of rights' (to use the felicitous phrase by Ben Golder[80]) consists in a tactical invocation of rights-discourse to claim the freedom to be governed differently. Furthermore, this form of resistance has a collective dimension that is hinted at by a short statement that Foucault delivered in 1984, 'Face aux gouvernements, les droits de l'homme' (1984). In this short statement that was drafted only shortly before delivering it on the occasion of a committee against piracy,[81] he invokes a specific right on the contingent condition of our shared exposure to governing techniques and appeals to an alternative collective that opposes these techniques:

> There exists an international citizenship that has its rights and its duties, and that obliges one to speak out against every abuse of power, whoever its author, whoever its victims.

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[76] Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 41.

[77] Ibid., 42.

[78] Michel Foucault, "Va-t-on extrader Klaus Croissant?" [1977] , in *Dits et Ecrits* 2: 1976-1988, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (1977)

[79] Michel Foucault, "Open Letter to Mehdi Bazargan" [1979], in *Power* (2000), 439-442; Michel Foucault, "The Moral and Social Experience of the Poles Can No Longer Be Obliterated," [1982], in *Power* (2000), 465-473; Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Foucault in Iran* (2016); Hoffman, *Foucault and Power*.

[80] Golder, *Foucault and the Politics of Rights*.

[81] Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (1991).

> After all, we are all members of the community of the governed, and thereby obliged to show mutual solidarity.[82]

Notice how Foucault refrains from a universal concept of mankind and instead invokes a 'we' that emerges from a shared contemporary condition. It is through the governing techniques that one is constituted as a subject in the first place; and it is this always-already fabricated subject that claims a right vis-à-vis the state apparatuses that form her. In a move that is at once reflexive and tactical, Foucault uses the very terminology with which he describes utilitarian thought to critically interrogate governmental techniques on a non-utilitarian ground. Moreover, even though these techniques play out differently for various groups in society, they form a danger to all individuals, and this shared risk forms the historically contingent ground for acts of solidarity.

Foucault's call for solidarity among the governed is interesting because it posits a political, collective agent that emerges out of a shared condition. His invocation of a 'we' puts into perspective Amy Allen's claim that Foucault is unable to develop an account of political alliances due to his strategic concept of action, which leads her to conclude that Foucauldian politics should be supplemented with an Arendtian, associative praxis.[83] As we saw above, Arendt defines solidarity as action in concert, where participants convene to change the 'world', that is, the social and political conditions under which they live. While they might do so for a variety of reasons, they share, in Arendt's reading, a presence of mind regarding the historical moment that they find themselves in. When Foucault invokes the solidarity among the governed, he has in mind something similar to Arendt's acknowledgement of the present; yet, while he might perform and participate in acts of solidarity, he fails to thematize them.

It is worth reminding that the collective agent – the 'we' invoked in his op-ed – does not originate in a pre-existing social critique (e.g., Marxism) but in a genealogical interrogation of the present. Relating methodological to political concerns, he states in a 1984 interview:

> the problem is (…) to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a 'we' in order to assert the principles one recognizes and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a 'we' possible by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that the 'we' must not be previous to the question; it can only be the result – and the necessarily temporary result – of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which one formulates it.[84]

The 'we' that Foucault alludes to emerges out of a process of interrogating the present by highlighting how it could have been different – and how we, as subjects shaped in this present, could have been different too. The historical study of problematizations thus opens up a space for "work on our limits" and requires a critical attitude that Foucault, in

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[82] Michel Foucault, "Confronting Governments: Human Rights" [1984], in *Power* (2000), 474.

[83] "Power, Subjectivity, and Agency," 143.

[84] Michel Foucault, "Polemics, Politics and Problematizations: An Interview with Michel Foucault" [1984], in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (1997), 114–15.

his reading of Kant's *What is Enlightenment?*, considers the modern practice of freedom.[85] Yet, there are some problems with this constitution of the 'we'. Firstly, compared to Arendt, Foucault's invocation of solidarity might be overly self-centred: it consists primarily in the appeal to engage in a similar ethical subjectification of a critical attitude (which is, of course, not the same as demanding that everyone forms themselves into a similar ethical subject) and only secondarily in a call for identifying with others. This sense of solidarity is restrictive in the sense that it is based in acts of self-transformation: the 'we' follows from the work on one's limits. Indeed, Foucault at times prioritizes this transformative, reflexive labour over participation in action. With Arendt, we could argue that solidarity should not be primarily defined by the *subjects* who join a struggle but by the *collective action* that constitutes the struggle. To think, as Arendt does, of acts of solidarity as those that bridge differences in interest and pay no heed to the character of its participants is not only more intuitive and less restrictive than Foucault's suggestion: it also prioritizes the relationships with others – namely those with whom we act in concert — over those to ourselves. In Arendt's view, when we act in solidary with others, we transcend the limitations that have been imposed on us on the basis of 'what' we are and that are used to govern, or even forcibly control, our conduct. The space of appearance that emerges out of collective acts such as struggles of solidarity forms a site of self-disclosure where we can become a unique person who is different from what society destined each of us to be because of our race, class or gender. In other words, while Foucault suggests (without ever stating it explicitly) that the work on ourselves precedes a collective awareness that can spur us into action, Arendt would stress that our participation in collective action enables us to interrogate and reconfigure the limits of ourselves.

The political implications of their respective notions of solidarity are particularly relevant for the 'right of the governed'. For Arendt, collective struggles are directed at changing the objective, institutional conditions under which people enter into and maintain relationships. As such, they are distinct from moral considerations that "hinge on interest in the self."[86] Reflecting primarily on moral conscience, she contends that it is a side-product of the thinking-process. This "soundless dialogue between me and myself" requires that I am friends with myself and hence that I refrain from doing anything which might keep me from liking myself. Thinking has a negative role: it interrupts our activity, which is clear in philosophy and ethics (in the Arendtian sense of the voice of conscience), and it resembles the effect that Foucault ascribes to his genealogical studies.[87] To use Arendt's vocabulary, his study of ethical-critical practices remains within the limits of the late-modern tradition that centers on questions of self-alienation (which he, in contradistinction from Marx, celebrates through his appraisal of 'limit-experiences'), and he foregoes the pressing problem of world-alienation, a term that Arendt critically uses for the lack of attention for enduring, stable institutions that facilitate human initiative and plurality.

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[85] Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?"

[86] Hannah Arendt, "Civil Disobedience," in *Crises of the Republic* (1972), 64.

[87] Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," 164–65; Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault" [1978], in *Power* (2000), 245.

Solidarity, in other words, should not just be understood as an act of interrogating and redesigning who we are at this very moment but primarily as a shared attempt to change the institutions that we will bequeath to the next generations: not, in other words, an inward directed care for the self but an outward oriented care for the world.

FOUCAULT ON FRIENDSHIP

The above discussion shows how Foucault's later writings on ethics and politics "highlight the strategic role played by the relationship of oneself to oneself within the framework of the government of human beings as well as, *a fortiori*, in the possibility to resist it."[88] The emphasis on practices of self-transformation also delimits another site of resistance: friendship.[89] Very generally, Foucault studies male bonds in antiquity as part of his genealogy of the subject of desire — a project that includes but is not restricted to sexuality. In a more explicitly contemporaneous and political approach, he also discusses the theme towards the end of his life in a number of interviews with gay magazines.[90] Without suggesting a transhistorical equivalence of these male bonds, Foucault underscores in each of these cases the ethical work on oneself. The Arendtian challenge to his account concerns the status of the friend, and more specifically the encounter with the other in their unfathomable difference.

How does his discussion of friendship relate to his critique of pastoral power? The latter operates through the injunction to speak the truth of one's desire. Like Arendt, who articulates a similar point to criticize the accusations of hypocrisy in politics,[91] Foucault is critical of the normalizing effect of confessional practices: desires and intentions do not consist in a subjectivity that precede their articulation but are constituted in confessions and subsequently used to categorize and exclude individuals. A problem with the gay movement is that it reproduces this form of power when it strives for sexual liberation. Liberation wrongly suggests that once we defy sexual prohibitions, we are free to be who we are, that is, follow freely our desires that had hitherto been repressed. Arguing against this idea, Foucault first argues in *The Will to Knowledge* that it is not just theoretically flawed in its assessment of power relations but also historically-politically problematic: it suggests a rupture between a Victorian, sexually repressive era and a 'liberated', post-68 era, whereas in fact both consist in an incitement to talk the truth about sexuality.

Already in this early critique of "the grandiloquence of a discourse purporting to speak the truth about sex,"[92] we can discern the intertwining of truth and power that Foucault develops over the subsequent years in a historically more comprehensive study of the

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[88] Lorenzini, "From Counter-Conduct to Critical Attitude," 9.

[89] On friendship in Foucault, see Steve Garlick, "The Beauty of Friendship: Foucault, masculinity and the work of art," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 28:5 (2002), 558-577; Margaret McLaren, "From Practices of the Self to Politics: Foucault and Friendship," *Philosophy Today* 50 (2006), 195-201.

[90] Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life" [1981], in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (1997), 135-140; "Social Triumph of the Sexual Will"; Foucault, "Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity".

[91] *On Revolution*, 79.

[92] *The Will to Knowledge,* 8.

'hermeneutics of the subject'. Central to the medical and psychiatric constitution of 'the homosexual' in the nineteenth century were practices in which subjects at once confessed their desires to a person claiming medical authority while having their confession interpreted as ciphers about the subject's deepest desires, which were taken as their innermost essence. These 19th century practices can be traced to early Christian monastic regimes and the medieval obligation of confession: their many differences notwithstanding, Foucault understands them as modifications of pastoral power, which is defined by "knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it."[93] Now, sexual liberation goes awry when reduced to talking freely about desires: in that case, the normalizing demand to 'tell the truth about oneself' that defined 19th century medicine and psychiatry — the spheres where the subject of desire is constituted — is mistaken for an act of liberation. In other words, sexual liberation, if it is limited to uncensored acts of speaking of one's inner desires, presupposes and hence reproduces the very notion of a subject of desire, which is problematic because it was first constituted in pastoral power. This means that Foucault fosters a deep "distrust [of] the tendency to relate the question of homosexuality to the problem of 'Who am I' and 'What is the secret of my desire?'"[94] In other words, the claim of a group identity on the basis of one's desires relies on a problematic hermeneutics of the subject that is complicit in the normalization of sexuality.

This leads him to assert that the main challenge posed by gay culture is "the homosexual mode of life, much more than the sexual act itself."[95] Whereas the latter refers to the transgression of sexual norms, the former points at the more interesting question of the development of a gay culture, where culture (as Foucault defines the term in another context) consists in the "hierarchical organization of values [that] calls on the individual to engage in regular, costly, and sacrificial conduct that orientates his whole life" and does so "through regular and reflected techniques."[96] This culture is a collective endeavour, and the cultivation of a gay lifestyle cannot be bracketed from the practices, sexual and otherwise, that are regularised sites of interaction.[97]

Hence, the potential of the gay movement lies not in claiming an identity and liberating one's desire from social repression but in developing lifestyles that experiment with pleasure. Pleasure, in contradistinction from desire, is a limit experience that allows subject to transgress their own boundaries, and one that is, furthermore, not delimited by the object towards which it is directed (as in the case of desire) but open-ended because of the manifold bodily sensations of which we are capable. Foucault suggests that the experiment with these pleasures can also be the nucleus of a practice in which we develop new forms of coexistence:[98] new, affective bonds that are irreducible to the heteronormative conceptions of romantic (straight) relationships and platonic (same-sex) friendship. For these novel relationships, Foucault deploys the term friendship. Through sexual practices and

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[93] "The Subject and Power," 333.
[94] Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," 135.
[95] Ibid., 136; Michel Foucault, "Sexual Choice, Sexual Act" [1982], in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (1997), 153.
[96] Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981—1982* (2005), 179.
[97] David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (1997), 93ff.
[98] "Social Triumph of the Sexual Will," 160.

the pleasures and affection these engender, one can engage in relations that have not been institutionalized. What is more, these relationships can bring about bonds between individuals who otherwise belong to different social strata. "Homosexuality," he writes,

> "is a historic occasion to reopen affective and relational virtualities, not so much through the intrinsic qualities of the homosexual but because the 'slantwise' position of the latter, as it were, the diagonal lines he can lay out in the social fabric allow these virtualities to come to light."[99]

Starting from the body as a site of pleasure, friendship cuts across the social stratification of age, class and ethnicity, bringing about new, 'diagonal' communities. Like Arendt (her omission of bodily pleasure notwithstanding), Foucault discerns in affective relationships the potential to counteract the isolating and individualizing dynamics of late-modern society. The multiplication of relationships traversing society defies the differentiation and segregation of social groups brought about by governmental techniques of control. However, this account of friendship falls short in thematizing the encounter with the other. This deficit is brought up by Johanna Oksala in her otherwise approving reading of Foucault. Drawing on Levinas, she argues, "[the] other makes ethical subjectivity possible, but also breaks the totality of constituted experience by introducing a plurality in being that resists all efforts of totalization and normalization."[100] This rupture introduced by the other is precluded in Foucault's ethics as he asserts (in an enigmatically brief comment) that "The care of the self is ethically prior in that the relationship with oneself is ontologically prior."[101] Oksala makes her point by comparing Foucault to Levinas, but a comparison with Arendt would have likewise brought out this limitation. After all, like Levinas, Arendt suggests that the relation to the other precedes that with the self, and more importantly, the presence of others, with whom one acts in concert, is the condition for bringing about truly new modes of being that are irreducible to the objectives of ethical perfection by any one of the agents.[102] Thus, the question arises as to what extent friendship, as Foucault understands it, really opens up a space of self-formation by the unexpected encounter with the unfathomable other.

This impression is confirmed when we shift to his historical inquiry into pederasty.[103] This fairly institutionalized practice does not provide a blueprint for contemporary erotic friendships. Rather, he is interested in the way that the pederastic relationship poses an ethical problematic for those engaging in it, in that the attitude of *erastes* and *eromenos* was the object of intense scrutiny and concern. Foucault's interest in this practice has to do, firstly, with dislodging our contemporary conception of desire, which is marked (and thus marks the subject) by the gender and acts of what is desired. In the ancient Greek conception, one is not defined by whom or what one desires but the attitude one cultivates towards pleasures; of which, secondly, those connected to sexual acts form just one sphere

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[99] "Friendship as a Way of Life," 138.
[100] *Foucault on Freedom*, 207.
[101] "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," 287.
[102] Anya Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and A Political of Relationality* (2015).
[103] Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, pt. 4.

of sensations among others (and by no means a privileged one). These observations are particularly helpful in forging a gay culture that tries to break away from the identity that is imposed on them and that is reproduced in the call for liberation. Furthermore, they are helpful for envisioning a lifestyle in which sexual acts are important but not the exclusive ethical substance.[104] The historical study of the subject of desire is instrumental, he believes, to the gay community's objective to open up the field of possible ways of being: it requires "[digging] deeply to show things have been historically contingent, for such and such a reason intelligible but not necessary"[105] – a specific instance, in other words, of the critical attitude of Enlightenment that revolves on "work on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty."[106]

To argue, as I did above, that friendship should be thematized to account for the encounter with the other is not to argue that all friendships should conform to that exclusive, Aristotelean ideal that Arendt proposes. Foucault should be praised for validating these 'friendships of pleasure,' which have been dismissed historically, and integrating them into a modern-day, aestheticized and highly singular notion of a good life. A future synthesis of his unfinished account of friendship with that of Arendt's would, for instance, stress the unexpected pleasures that are both bodily as well as, in a more platonic sense, emerge from 'the pleasure of their company'[107] – pleasures, that is, that defy any logic of self-mastery while allowing for the invention of one's unique mode of living.[108] Such a yet-to-be-written account would have the additional benefit of relieving his ethics from the confines of a reflexive praxis of self-government.

CONCLUSION

Arendt and Foucault are the vigilant observers of late-modernity, spurring us into action to change the present that is the product of historically contingent processes. What role does philosophy play in these acts of resistance? Arendt's response would be more dismissive than Foucault's, and that is no doubt due to her restrictive conception of philosophy. She would be mindful of the philosopher's bias in favour of the solitary, reflexive experience of thinking at the expense of the collective freedom to determine the conditions under which we life. This is not to say that philosophy and ethics — fields that are closely related for both Arendt and Foucault — do not have any political relevance, but rather that they are driven by and restricted to a concern for the self. Although Foucault attends to the collective dimension of resistance, he privileges the work on one's limits, which bars an acknowledgement of the irreducibly singular and unique other in such works of

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[104] Ibid., 26.

[105] "Friendship as a Way of Life," 140.

[106] "What Is Enlightenment?" 319.

[107] I am paraphrasing the title of Peg Birmingham, "The Pleasure of Your Company," *Research in Phenomenology* 33:1 (2003), 53-74.

[108] For reasons of length, I pass over Foucault's discussion of the parrhesiastic relationship, which might also provide a useful model for such friendships. See, for instance, Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-1984* (2011); Tamboukou, "Truth Telling in Foucault and Arendt".

self-transformation. Yet, resistance, as both authors are well aware, provides an exhilarating moment of relating to others, thus defying the very individualizing effects of late-modern governmentality. The promise of this encounter and of the contestation of the status quo matches their fears for the many dangers awaiting us.

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