

Thinking and Transcendence: Arendt's Critical Dialogue with Heidegger

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Abstract : *In the introduction to The Life of the Mind: Thinking (1977), Hannah Arendt explains that it was her observation of Adolf Eichmann's "thoughtlessness" — his inability to think — at his trial in Jerusalem that led her to reexamine the human faculty of thinking, particularly in respect to its relation to moral judgment. Yet, it is not an easy task for her readers to follow how Arendt actually constructs her arguments on this topic in this text. The purpose of this paper is to delineate Arendt's criticisms of Heidegger in order to articulate the characteristics of her own account of thinking in relation to morality. The paper first suggests the parallelism between Heidegger's "wonder" and Arendt's "love" as the beginning of philosophizing, i.e., thinking, and point out a peculiar circularity in Heidegger's account of thinking. Secondly, the paper traces Arendt's criticism of Heidegger's account of thinking in §18 of the LM 1. Thirdly, the paper discusses why Arendt thinks Heidegger's account of thinking is problematic by examining Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (1929). Finally, based on the above analyses and discussions, the paper explores the nature of Arendt's account of thinking to show how her conception of thinking provides a basis for moral judgment.*

In the introduction to *The Life of the Mind: Thinking* (1977), Hannah Arendt explains that it was her observation of Adolf Eichmann's "thoughtlessness" — his inability to think — at his trial in Jerusalem that led her to reexamine the human faculty of thinking, particularly in respect to its relation to moral judgment. Yet, it is not an easy task for her readers to follow how Arendt actually constructs her arguments on this topic in this text. The purpose of this paper is to delineate Arendt's criticisms of Heidegger in order to articulate the characteristics of her own account of thinking in relation to morality. The paper first suggests the parallelism between Heidegger's "wonder" and Arendt's "love" as the beginning of philosophizing, i.e., thinking, and point out a peculiar circularity in Heidegger's account of thinking. Secondly, the paper traces Arendt's criticism of Heidegger's

account of thinking in §18 of the *LM* 1. Thirdly, the paper discusses why Arendt thinks Heidegger’s account of thinking is problematic by examining *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929). Finally, based on the above analyses and discussions, the paper explores the nature of Arendt’s account of thinking to show how her conception of thinking provides a basis for moral judgment.

1. What makes us think: Wonder

Though Heidegger’s name is suggested sporadically through the *Life of the Mind* (hereafter abbreviated as *LM*) 1, at first glance it does not seem that Arendt is engaging in a series of critical dialogues with Heidegger in her text. With closer attention, though, a large portion of Arendt’s discussion in the text, if not most of it, is revealed to be her critical reading of Heidegger. If we read very carefully, the theme of the relation between thinking and transcendence underlies quietly yet consistently through chapters 3 and 4 of *LM* 1. The first clear indication is found in Chapter 3, §15 of *LM* 1, where Arendt proposes “love” as the beginning of *philosophizing* (i.e., thinking), contra Heidegger’s similar claim of “wonder”. It is in the contrast between the two that we uncover our first clue as to how Arendt sets the link between transcendence and thinking as the center of her inquiry into the relation between thinking and morality. In section 15, Arendt takes up the shift in the understanding of the concept of “wonder” that occurred in modern philosophy, the shift from Plato’s “admiring” wonder (*thaumaizein*) to Heidegger’s “nothingness”, mentioned with his 1929 text “What is Metaphysics?” Platonic admiring “wonder” as the beginning of thinking is to admire “something familiar and yet normally invisible”, an “invisible imperceptible whole implicitly manifest in all that appears”, viz., Being.¹ But when wonder is revived in modern times, the nature of “wonder” is fundamentally changed. Instead of admiring the whole — the harmonious relation between Being and being as Greek philosophers did — modern philosophers, especially after Kant, no longer believe that such a harmony exists. Instead, they are left with the shock that there is no way to comprehend the particular *qua* particular, i.e., existence.² In other words, Being becomes such that it is thinkable only through

¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, ed. Mary McCarthy, 1st edition (San Diego: Mariner Books, 1981), 1, 143–144, hereafter referred to as *LM* in the text.

² Arendt wrote on this point in her 1946 essay, “What is Existential Philosophy?” the following: “[T]he unity of thought and Being presupposed the pre-established coincidence

the sheer fact that *nothing* is unthinkable.³ In that shift from Being to nothing in modern philosophy, though, Heidegger's position is closer to Plato's admiring wonder; still, that shift from Being to nothing in modern philosophy inherits the same predicament as well. It is Heidegger's peculiar way of seeking a solution in *Dasein*, in whom essence and existence coincide, that Arendt finds problems and thus challenges.⁴ That is, Heidegger's solution to see thinking as the primal, or, authentic way of the Being of *Dasein*.

In §15 of *LM* 1, after mentioning Heidegger's "wonder" Arendt suggests that "love" (*eros*) is the beginning of philosophizing found in Socrates. Arendt presents "love" (*eros*) as a "not". "Love" is a need, and it "desires what it has *not*".⁵ "Men love wisdom and therefore *begin* to philosophize because they are *not* wise, and they love beauty, and do beauty, as it were — *philokaloumen*, as Pericles called it in the Funeral Oration — because they are *not* beautiful".⁶ Instead of "wonder", Arendt proclaims that philosophical thinking, or philosophizing, *begins* with "love", for we are *not* wise and beautiful. If we turn to the latter part of §18 of the same text, we find an echoing statement showing what is at issue for Arendt when she refers to Heidegger's "wonder is his account of transcendence and its relation to his account of human existence:

This term ["boundary situations"] coined by Jaspers for the general, unchanging human condition — "that I cannot live without struggling and suffering; that I cannot avoid guilt; that I must die" — to indicate an experience of "something immanent which already points to transcendence" and which, if we respond to it, will result in our "*becoming the Existenz we potentially are.*" In Jaspers, the term gets its suggestive plausibility less from specific experiences than from the simple fact that life itself, limited by birth

of *essential* and *existential*; that is, everything thinkable also existed, and everything extant, because it was knowable, also had to be rational. Kant, who is the real, though secret, as it were, founder of modern philosophy and who has also remained its secret king until this very day, shattered that unity". (Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, 1st edition [New York: Schocken, 2005], 168, hereafter referred to as *EU* in the text.)

³ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 149.

⁴ Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*, 177.

⁵ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 178, emphasis added.

⁶ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, *ibid.*, emphasis added.

and death, is a boundary affair in that my worldly existence always forces me to take account of a past when I was not yet and a future when I shall be no more. Here the point is that whenever I transcend the limits of my own lifespan and begin to reflect on this past, judging it, and this future, forming projects of the will, thinking ceases to be a politically marginal activity. And such reflections will inevitably arise in political emergencies.⁷

We can sketch out Arendt's account of transcendence with its characteristics from the above section, though we will need to provide a more detailed discussion later in this paper. Similar to Heidegger, Arendt sees the moment of transcendence in human *finitude*. We did not create ourselves. We are born and our lives will come to end. We are not omnipotent or infinite, or fully present, i.e., we are temporal, finite being whose Being is characterized as "possible". For her, the "not" is a reminder of our finite and worldly existence, which points out that the meaning of transcendence is to "take into account" the past when the human person was not in the world and the future when s/he is no longer in the world. Putting it differently, the "not" signifies "love" of the world, which enables me to transcend my lifespan and to *think* beyond my finitude, i.e., to *think* of others who are part of this world not only now but also those who are already gone and those who have not yet arrived.⁸ Keeping this remark in mind, let us turn our attention to Heidegger's account of "wonder" and transcendence as found in his 1929 essay.

Heidegger explores the nature of the nothing through anxiety, which was introduced in *Being and Time*.⁹ Unlike fear, which arises "in the face of something" and thus is always experienced in a particular situation, anxiety, in contrast, occurs without a particular object.¹⁰ As a peculiar mood of *Dasein*, in "anxiety" everything — including ourselves — sinks into indifference.¹¹ In anxiety, beings as a whole are experienced as superfluous, and thus anxiety reveals the nothing, i.e., nihilation. It annihilates all the pre-established meanings of beings with which we are familiar in our everyday life. Annihilation "discloses these beings in their full but heretofore

⁷ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 192, emphases added.

⁸ For Arendt, we are not just *in*-the world but *of*-the world. See, *LM* 1, 20.

⁹ See, Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H.182, 191, 251.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings: Ten Key Essays, plus the Introduction to Being and Time*, ed. David Farrell Krell, Revised and Expanded edition (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperCollins, 1993), 100.

¹¹ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 101.

concealed strangeness as what is radically other — with respect to the nothing”.¹² For Heidegger, our being anxious is the very mark of our finitude. But in our daily life, we are busy engaging in this or that business within the already established network of meaning in factual life. In such situations, we are always already understanding something within a given context. However, in anxiety, the pre-established meanings recede into the background, and nothing but our Being as primarily understanding is revealed; we “are held out into the nothing”.¹³ As being-there, *Dasein* is transcendence. That which is *Dasein* is holding itself out into the nothing, going beyond a being toward the Being of that being. In other words, the strangeness of beings experienced in the nothing inspires us to wonder what it means to *be*: “Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?”¹⁴ Thus, wonder is the beginning of philosophizing, or metaphysics, which is the “basic occurrence of *Dasein*”.¹⁵ *Dasein* is the existence whose Being in its essence is transcendence.

We can see a parallelism between Heidegger’s “wonder” and Arendt’s “love”. Both philosophers see the moment of the beginning of thinking (*philosophizing*) as the occurrence of transcendence. Both “wonder” and “love” as transcendence that establish a relationship or unity. Yet, while Arendt pays attention to the person’s relation to others in transcendence, Heidegger’s account seems to be quite different. There is a peculiar circularity which characterizes his discussion, a circular relationship between the question of the meaning of Being and the questioner, i.e., *Dasein*. It is in the nothing that wonder arises, which leads *Dasein* to the question of Being. That question refers back to the questioner, since the very questioning itself is a mode of Being of *Dasein*. In this circular movement transcendence — going beyond beings — occurs. It is in this sense that *Dasein* is transcendence, and *thinking and Being are the same* for Heidegger. On the one hand, Heidegger’s thinking or philosophizing, which is derived from the nothing and initiated by wonder, reveals the difference between being and Being, viz., the ontological difference. Nonetheless, at the same time it unifies the two. If we turn our attention to section 18 of the *LM* 1, we can trace out why Arendt finds Heidegger’s account of thinking to be problematic with respect to seek a ground of morality with its relation to thinking.

¹² Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 103.

¹³ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 103.

¹⁴ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 110.

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 109.

2. The two-in-one: The problem of the difference

The topic of section 18 of *LM* 1 is again Socrates, but this time Arendt's focus is on the thinking dialogue one carries on with oneself, which is described as the "two-in-one". Arendt sheds light on Socrates' statement that "It would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I directed should be out of tune and loud with discord, and that multitudes of men should disagree with me rather than I, *being one* should be out of harmony with myself and contradict me".¹⁶ In thinking reflection, I split into two: the one who interrogates and the other who is interrogated. The split occurs when I am conscious of my thinking activity and so "I also am for myself".¹⁷ What causes this split is a "difference" that "is inserted into my oneness".¹⁸ The question is, then, the determination of the origin and nature of that difference and the unity of the two forms. It is here that Arendt again brings Heidegger back into her discussion.

Arendt quotes from Heidegger's *Identity and Difference* where Heidegger analyses Plato's *Sophist*:

The stranger in the dialogue states that of two things — for instance, rest and motion — 'each one is different [from the other], but itself *for itself* the same' (*hekaston heautô tauton*). In interpreting the sentence, Heidegger puts the emphasis on the dative, *heautô*, for Plato does not say, as we would expect, *hekaston auto tauton*, 'each one itself [taken out of context] is the same', in the sense of the tautological A is A, where difference arises out of the plurality of things. According to Heidegger, this dative means that 'each thing itself is returned to itself, each itself is the same for itself [because it is] with itself.... Sameness implies the relation of 'with', that is, a mediation, a connection, a synthesis: the unification into a unity.'¹⁹

Arendt criticizes both Heidegger's interpretation of Plato and Plato's implications in the quoted lines. Her point is that to claim that a thing's identification with itself by

¹⁶ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 181.

¹⁷ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 183.

¹⁸ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 183–184.

taking that thing out of its context with other things reveals no difference and no otherness, and in “its relation to something it is *not*” it loses reality.²⁰ Arendt thinks that such an understanding of the relation between difference and identity is erroneous, at least as Heidegger proposed.²¹ She points out that “nothing can be itself and at the same time for itself”.²² The “for” of the “for itself” suggest the reflective nature of thinking activity, which takes the form of a dialogue between me and myself. However, it does not “constitute the unity”, as Heidegger formulates.²³ Quite to the contrary, the duality is unified into one again when I stop thinking and appear to the other.²⁴

To counter Heidegger, Arendt posits that the dialogue between me and myself in the thinking dialogue is the specifically human actualization of consciousness.²⁵ She continues to say that consciousness and thinking are not the same; the former is “intentional” and thus a “*cognitive act*”, whereas the thinking ego “does not think something but *about* something”, which is “dialectical”.²⁶ The difference inserted in the thinking dialogue between me and myself has its origin not in thinking activity but in the world of appearances that consists of human plurality. What is actualized in consciousness is “difference and otherness” derived from the world of appearances.²⁷ It is in these utterances that we find the clue for grasping Arendt’s criticism of Heidegger’s circularity. For that purpose, we must pay attention to Arendt’s account of appearance, action, and freedom.

For Arendt, appearance means primarily action.²⁸ I appear to others through my words and deeds, viz., action with the mode of “it-seems-to-me” (*dokei moi*). My appearance reflects how I see things and how I want to be seen by others. Every appearance carries the mode of seeming, because there is not a person but

²⁰ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 184.

²¹ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, *Ibid.*

²² Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 185.

²³ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 183.

²⁴ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, *Ibid.*

²⁵ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 187.

²⁶ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, *Ibid.*

²⁷ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, *Ibid.*

²⁸ Arendt distinguishes between “self-display” and “self-presentation”. While “self-presentation” involves in choosing how I appear to others, “self-display” just show whatever properties a living being possesses. Thus, when I appear, it is a “self-presentation”. See, Arendt, *The life of the Mind*, 1, 36.

persons who exist in this world. In other words, the human sense of reality entirely depends on the plurality of standpoints.²⁹ Thus, for Arendt, perception is intersubjective. This is especially important and relevant when it comes to human affairs, since the matter of human affairs, i.e., events, cannot be explained by sheer causality. By its nature, human affairs are a matter of that which “could be otherwise”, which has its root in human freedom. In other words, because we are free, we can bring something new to the world of appearances that can be inexplicable by the law of causality. Thus, the objectivity of human events is not measurable quantitatively but solely depends on a shared understanding derived from intersubjective perception. Moreover, since human events result from human action, our sense of reality about history rests on human plurality. Putting it another way, human plurality is the condition of human freedom; as such, the self, the identity of who I am, also has its basis in human plurality. In short, for Arendt, the hallmark of human existence is plurality. That is the reason why she proclaims that we are not merely in but *of* the world, and thus “*Being and Appearing coincide*”.³⁰

All these considerations suggest that, when she points out that “thinking and consciousness are not the same” in section 18 of *LM* 1, what she is alluding to is twofold. One is Heidegger’s identification of Being and thinking as the authentic mode of the Being of *Dasein*. The other is his account of the self. Since, if in fact it is in this mode of the Being of *Dasein* that the ontological difference between Being and being is revealed and unified, as Heidegger claims, then the identity of *Dasein*, the who of *Dasein*, i.e., the self is what Arendt puts into question. Taken together, Arendt’s respective criticisms go to the heart of the circularity found in Heidegger’s own thought.

Our question to ask next is on what account Arendt’s criticism is related to the moral question. In the following section, we will look into another text of

²⁹ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 21. “[O]ur certainty that what we perceive has an existence independent of the act of perceiving, depends entirely on the object’s also appearing as such to others and being acknowledged by them. Without this tacit acknowledgement by others we would not even be able to put faith in the way we appear to ourselves”. *Ibid*, 46

³⁰ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 19.

Heidegger's from 1929, *The Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (abbreviated as *KPM* hereafter).³¹

3. Transcendence as the horizon: The Self in Heidegger

There are two reasons for us taking up *KPM* for our discussion. The first is to clarify the relation between thinking (Being) and the self in Heidegger's account. The second is to shed light on the relation between productive imagination and freedom in the same text. As we shall later show, it is against these two sets of relations that Arendt develops her account of morality and its relation to thinking. In order to articulate Arendt's criticism of Heidegger in general, first let us look into her 1946 essay, "What is Existential Philosophy?"³²

In the essay, Arendt analyzes Heidegger's Self in "absolute isolation", which is the "total opposite of man".³³ Because of human finitude, the human person is "thrown" into the world from which "he attempts to escape by means of a 'projection' in anticipation of death as his utmost possibility".³⁴ What is revealed in there is "nothingness" as the negative ground of human existence, which marks *Dasein* as "guilty". All that the human person could do existentially is to "Willing-to-have-conscience commits itself to this being-guilty".³⁵ Arendt's point of criticism of Heidegger's Self is its absoluteness brought by facing its own death, which allows the human person to remove himself from the "They" who constantly prevent him from his being-a-Self.³⁶ Since Kant, humanity is considered to be represented in every human being, and since the declaration of human rights during the French revolution, the concept of the human person states that all of humanity could be debased or exalted in every individual. Thus, Arendt says that Heidegger's concept of Self is "a concept of man that leaves the individual existing independent

³¹ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, trans. Richard Taft, 5th edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 1.

³² Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*.

³³ Arendt, *Essay in Understanding, 1930–1954*, 181.

³⁴ Arendt, *Essay in Understanding, 1930–1954*, 180.

³⁵ Arendt, *Essay in Understanding, 1930–1954*, 181.

³⁶ Arendt, *Essay in Understanding, 1930–1954*, *Ibid.*

of humanity and representative of no one but himself”.³⁷ With Arendt’s critique of Heidegger’s Self in mind, we now examine *KPM*.

Heidegger’s ontological interpretation of Kant is set forth in human finitude and is characterized by taking the transcendental imagination as the common root of both intuition and concept, which enables him to delineate the synthetic *a priori* judgment as the time-horizon. Kant finds the objective validity of human knowledge in the agreement of two sets of conditions: “The conditions for the possibility of experience in general are *at the same time* conditions for the possibility of the objects of experience”.³⁸ Heidegger, in his ontological interpretation on Kant, pays attention to the same set of conditions but specifically focuses on the “at the same time”.³⁹ He suggests that, in order for us as finite beings to know something, the object must appear to us, or *be* for us. What makes the act of experiencing possible is what *at the same time* makes the object able to be encountered by us possible, viz., it makes the object “experienceable”.⁴⁰

Based on the first edition of *CPR*, Heidegger interprets concept and intuition as the two different modes of synthesis of transcendental imagination. “Apprehension”, as the synthesis of productive imagination, and time as pure intuition, is understood as that which “produces — the immediate look of the *now* as such”.⁴¹ It forms the “immediate look of the now as such” spontaneously out of itself.⁴² It spontaneously forms an immediate view in which it is given, i.e., the “field of manifestness which every ontic view can enter and become manifest”.⁴³

³⁷ Arendt, *Essay in Understanding, 1930–1954*, Ibid.

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason: Unified Edition*, ed. James W. Ellington, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), B197, emphasis added, hereafter referred to as *CPR* in the text.

³⁹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 84, emphasis added.

⁴⁰ “[W]hat makes an experiencing possible at the same time makes possible the experienceable, or rather experiencing [an experienceable] as such. This means: transcendence makes the being in itself accessible to a finite creature”. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged, Ibid.*

⁴¹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 126, emphasis added.

⁴² Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged, Ibid.*

⁴³ Jacques Taminiaux, *Dialectic and Difference: Finitude in Modern Thought*, trans. James Decker and Robert Crease (Humanities Press, 1985), 58.

Heidegger posits that intuition “spontaneous receptivity”.⁴⁴ He offers similar explanation on the concept. As the “recognition”, the synthesis of transcendental imagination is understood as that which explores the horizon *in advance* by representing sameness, for the “concept is indeed the representing of unity which as selfsame ‘applies to many’”.⁴⁵ He understands that the “I think” as holding “before us in advance the represented unities which give direction to every possible unification that is represented”.⁴⁶ For its projective nature, “recognition” as the synthesis of transcendental imagination is identified with the future. Again, it carries a formative character, but because the concept cannot comprehend anything without the manifold given in intuition, Heidegger posits the “concept” as a “receptive spontaneity”.⁴⁷ By taking intuition and concept as different modes of the synthesis of transcendental imagination, Heidegger enables to the synthetic *a priori* judgment as forming a time-horizon. In other words, since Kant’s synthesis of intuition and concept “rests on the unity of apperception”. Heidegger understands that knowing activity is a way to form self-consciousness as the horizon of experience, and as such he proposes viewing self-consciousness as Being of the self”.⁴⁸

It is particularly important for our purposes that Heidegger assigns the synthesis in the concept as exploring the horizon *in advance* by representing the sameness.⁴⁹ The key here is that Heidegger says that rule-giving is “*from out of itself*”, and as such it is understood as “self-orienting toward. . .”.⁵⁰ He writes,

In such an orienting-toward. . . , or rather in the “self” which was “thrown out” with it, *the “I” of this “self” is necessarily apparent*. In this way, the “I propose” “accompanies” all representing. — The “I” “goes with” in the pure self-orienting. To the extent that it is itself only what it is in this “I think,” the essence of pure thinking as well as that of the I lies in “pure

⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 137.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 130.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 105.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 137.

⁴⁸ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 83.

⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 130.

⁵⁰ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 106, emphasis added.

self-consciousness.” This “consciousness” of the self, however, can only be elucidated based on the Being of the self (.)⁵¹

Yet, “self”-consciousness’ relation to the rule is not passive, since the rule is given within itself or “*from out of itself*”. What he suggests is that the “I” and the “I think” form an *identity*, and it is in that identity that “self”-consciousness is formed. Thus, when he claims that the “self” as pure thinking activity *per se* is to be understood as forming the identity out of the relation between the “I” and the “I think”. In other words, Heidegger’s account of the “self” is established in the relation of the self *with* itself.

At this point we should recall two things: Arendt proposes “love” as a beginning of philosophizing in §15 of *LM 1*, and, two, in §18 of the same text, she comments on Heidegger’s reading of Plato’s *Sophist*, claiming that thinking activity does not constitute unity. Whereas Heidegger posited that the beginning of philosophizing occurs in nothingness, as noted in his 1929 essay, Arendt, on the other hand, grants “love” to be the origin, disagreeing with Heidegger in this regard. In §25 of *KPM*, Heidegger discusses “Nothing”. It is in reading this section that we can see more clearly how Arendt’s discussions in §15 and §18 of *LM 1* are in fact preparation for her own account of thinking and its relation to morality.

In §25 of *KPM*, Heidegger identifies “Nothing” with Kant’s transcendental object = X. The “Nothing” here is equal to Self-consciousness, or the time-horizon, which is the very essence of transcendence. For Heidegger, this is ontological knowledge. The horizon is nothing, since it is not a being. But it is because of that horizon that it is possible for a being to be experienced. Nothing is *correlatum*, pure horizon.⁵² It is ontological knowledge because “it holds open this horizon”.⁵³ In other words, since that horizon is the Being of the Self, and since ontological knowledge is designated to be the forming activity *per se*, Being is thinking. Furthermore, in Heidegger’s understanding of pure thinking in *KPM*, freedom is experienced in thinking precisely because its spontaneous nature is derived from the productive imagination, which forms the identity between the I and the I think. Indeed, in §30 of the same text, Heidegger discusses moral feeling (practical reason)

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 105, emphasis added.

⁵² Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 86.

⁵³ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 87.

as “free, self-affecting of the law, — is pure spontaneity”.⁵⁴ This thinking is initiated by gazing at its own activity. Thus, for Heidegger, philosophizing occurs in nothingness (transcendence) in which ontological difference is revealed. In that sense, Heidegger’s thinking takes the form of self-knowledge. In other words, Heidegger’s ontological interpretation of Kant aims to unveil the difference between the condition of making *Dasein* possible to be experienced and the condition of making beings experienceable, the ontological difference between Being and being, viz., transcendence.⁵⁵ In turn, the structure of his exposition of transcendence travels a full circle between the question of Being and the question of the Being of *Dasein*, respectively. At the center of this exposition is Heidegger’s interpretation of transcendental imagination as productive imagination, for it is its formative (spontaneous) nature that allows for self-consciousness as the time-horizon, the finitude of *Dasein* as the negative ground of raising the question on Being.

But through the eyes of Arendt, such a self appears as “a concept of man that leaves the individual existing independent of humanity and representative of no one but himself” — this for two reasons: freedom and morality.⁵⁶ Arendt’s pointed questioning of Heidegger’s account of thinking is to ask if it can truly offer a moral foundation for humanity. In short, she believes the answer is negative. When Arendt proclaims that Being is Appearing in the world of appearances, she seeks a different account of thinking than Heidegger’s. The key is her account of imagination as being reproductive.

4. Arendt on the relation between thinking and morality: Her account of transcendence

Arendt mentions reproductive imagination in two places: one in *LM* 1 on page 86, and pages 79 and 80 in *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*.⁵⁷ In both places, Arendt’s claims are the same. That is, productive imagination is not entirely productive but actually depends on reproductive imagination. If we refrain from limiting ourselves from specifying either productive imagination or reproductive

⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 112.

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*, 84.

⁵⁶ Arendt, *Essay in Understanding, 1930–1954*, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner, 1st edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

imagination in both texts, again, we find Arendt giving strongly consistent statements about imagination's characteristics. She sees imagination as the power to make things present that are absent; as such, it becomes the condition for *memory*.⁵⁸ Yet, we must not hastily think that when Arendt considers imagination as the condition for memory, she means only the *past*. Rather, she takes memory to be something that encompasses both *no more* (past) and *not yet* (future).

In order for us to illuminate Arendt's reproductive imagination, let us make use of her essay, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy".⁵⁹ Here, Arendt suggests that moral conduct "seems to depend primarily upon the intercourse of man with himself", for it is in that silent dialogue that I have with myself that I return to my deed, which I have done.⁶⁰ Thus, memory is the condition of such thinking. Arendt suggests that "[t]hinking and remembering — is the human way of striking roots, of taking one's place in the world".⁶¹ Needless to say, if memory is the condition of thinking, then the condition of memory is imagination. Arendt further claims that the capacity to have a dialogue with myself is "creativity", by which she means that it is through such a dialogue that the self constitutes the person.⁶² To be sure, by saying so, Arendt does not mean that thinking creates my-self out of raw material, in the way that a sculptor creates a statue out of stone. Rather, thinking prepares "self-presentation". I reflect on myself and choose how I want to appear and so be seen by others. My-self is formed over the course of the repetitive practice of this capacity to choose, trying to be consistent, so that I appear in the same way over the course of time.⁶³ That is why, for Arendt, "[t]hinking and remembering" takes one's place in the world.

⁵⁸ For instance, see, Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 76 & 85; Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 80.

⁵⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, Reprint edition (New York: Schocken, 2005). For how those lectures notes from 1965 and 1966 are incorporated into "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy", see Kohn's note on the Text, xxxiii.

⁶⁰ Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 67.

⁶¹ Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 100.

⁶² Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 101.

⁶³ Arendt writes, "Only self-presentation is open to hypocrisy and pretense, properly speaking, and the only way to tell pretense and make-believe from reality and truth is the former's failure to endure and remain consistent. — All virtue begins with a compliment paid to it, by which I express my being pleased with it. The compliment implies a promise to the world, to those to whom I appear, to act in accordance with my pleasure, and it is the

Similarly to Heidegger, the thinking reflexivity forms the unity between me and myself in the silent dialogue in Arendt's account. Yet, the reason behind this unity points here to the opposite pole. It reflects the fact that I was born in this world, welcomed as a newcomer, and will be remembered after I depart from the world. In other words, my life story can be told only after my life is completed. Thus, though I am the actor of my life story, I cannot be the storyteller of it. The task of storytelling is left to others, and as such my life story will be added to human history.⁶⁴ Her claim of imagination as being primarily "reproductive" imagination has its basis in my relation with others in the world of appearances. The relation between thinking and remembering suggests that the essential mode of Being of human existence is appearance, which is fundamentally enmeshed in human plurality.

breaking of implied promise that characterizes the hypocrite". Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1, 36. As Jacques Taminiaux's in depth analyses suggests, Arendt's account of action has its root in Aristotelian *praxis*. As Aristotelian *phronêsis* is character virtue for both Aristotle and Arendt, personality is something being shaped through acting in certain ways consistently. Arendt's adaption of *praxis* to her account of action is nonetheless developed with the aim of criticizing Heidegger's reading of *phronêsis* in his fundamental ontology. See the introduction to Jacques Taminiaux's *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker* (Jacques Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker: Arendt and Heidegger*, trans. Michael Gendre. [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997]).

⁶⁴ Arendt discusses the relation between the actor and the story-teller in *the Human Condition* and *Between Past and Future* by adopting the understanding of Aristotelian tragedy from the *Poetics*. Tragedy is *mimêsis* of human action, and the plot is meant to put actions into a life story as one action. Aristotle emphasizes the importance of the beginning of it, which must be spontaneous. [Aristotle, 50b27] Arendt's adoption of tragedy to explain the characteristics of human action in her philosophy comes from her understanding of peculiar *energeia* in performing art. Unlike fine art, *energeia* of performing art lasts while it is performed. The end of performance is in the performance itself. In other words, actuality of action and life are in activity itself. However, real life story is not created but lived, and the role of a story-teller is to articulate the beginning of action, which Arendt identifies with the eyes of the historian. See, *the Human Condition*, 187 for her discussion on tragedy and its mimetic nature & 206 for the *energeia* of performance.

Hence, for Arendt, the reproductive imagination is the condition of thinking and remembering.⁶⁵ It provides the theoretical basis as to why thinking has its root in the world of appearances where we live with others. It asks me to transcend myself to think *beyond* my lifespan. The *not*, which leads to this transcendence in thinking, thus points to the basis of morality in human plurality. I transcend my limitation for the “love” of the world of appearances.

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⁶⁵ There is an excellent discussion on Arendt’s notion of “natality” and the role of reproductive imagination by Ichiro Mori: Ichiro Mori, *Shi to Tanjyo [Death and Birth]* Heidegger, *Syuzo Kuki, Arendt*. (Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 2008).

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