

Panzerkampfwagen

Tracce della fase regionale delle olimpiadi di filosofia 2018

Language: English

Quote 1: Politics:

“It is not possible to speak of political government without speaking of freedom; nor is it possible to talk about freedom without talking about political government”

-Hannah Arendt, *Between past and future*

Ah yes, freedom: The primal longing of mankind's heart. That which is so often talked about, yet so scarcely understood. It is part of every constitution of every democracy on this planet, the idea of freedom follows us through our lives, infests our minds like no other. But what exactly is this “freedom”? For Kant it was a “regulative idea”, something beyond our powers of realisation, something we will never truly understand or know. But I'm afraid that doesn't quite cut it, we'll need to be a little more specific and truly dissect the term “freedom” so that we may analyse this quote to the fullest.

Constitutions are filled with phrases like “freedom of speech”, “religious freedom” and so on, so we can assume that freedom can be related to our actions. But, since no one can control our thoughts, “Religious freedom” should be interpreted as “freedom to practise whatever religion you want as long as it doesn't violate laws”. We know that laws can only regulate our actions, our inner thoughts remain unregulated. And since we know that, we can safely split the term “freedom” in two parts: inner freedom and outer freedom. Governments, which is what Arendt talks about, can only regulate our outer freedom, so she can also only be talking about outer freedom. Now we can completely leave inner freedom aside and focus on outer freedom.

First it is imperative that we differentiate between absolute freedom and limited freedom or liberties. As long as there is government or any social institution for that fact, absolute outer freedom does not exist. Even in a world of anarchy, it is almost impossible: Humans tend to band together, they are societal creatures, but as soon as two people decide to do that, absolute freedom cannot be upheld any longer. If two humans form a relationship there are always unspoken rules what not to do: You don't stab each other in the back f. e.. These rules always exist, because these rules are the exact reason as to why we form relationships in the first place. Two people who equally benefit from each other will form a partnership with such unspoken rules because they give security, security means less things to worry about, less things to worry about means more time to focus on more important stuff, more time to focus on important stuff means better chances of survival and survival is the primary objective of every

mentally sound human. Therefore forming relationships with other humans is in itself a primary objective of man.

Freedom for security: Government is this social contract taken to the extreme. It is an agreement between thousands, millions or even billions of people, only that its rules are clearly spoken out. A government takes our absolute freedom away, even if it is said to be “free”, that refers to the aforementioned liberties, and not to freedom in itself. These liberties is what Arendt meant in the first part of her quote, it is not possible to talk about government without talking about what liberties it grants. That's the first thing that has to be made clear about a government, not its form, not its way of governing, not its handle on the military, but its liberties and prohibitions, as those are what will determine the life of its citizens, without which the government would not exist, which in turn means that its liberties determine the existence of the government. If too many liberties are given, the government loses its meaning and falls apart, if too few are granted... It remains stable. That's the trick: A government can work without liberties. Think about it: The constitution explicitly states one's liberties, the government gives you your liberties but that could only be true, if before this, the core fundamental of the government, it's true goal are its prohibitions, because how can it give out liberties, if it hasn't taken them away from us beforehand? A government at its core is a limitation of outer freedom and it *can* grant liberties, but it just as well might not. It has been proven countless times in the past that a government can grant close to no liberties and still function perfectly. Nazi Germany is the by far best example for this: There were almost no liberties, everything that could be regulated, was regulated and yet it was one of the most stable governments in history. Even as the allies were suffocating Germany in an inferno of hellfire and even as the Soviets were marching on Berlin, the government remained stable, no one stormed the Reichstag, Hitler was still revered as a hero, the Nazi government was unshakable, if Hitler were immortal and the war was won, it very well could've lasted a thousand years. And they are not an exception, Franco's Spain really did last until his death. The stability of a government can only decrease by granting liberties, as it seizes to be of importance, but if done right a government can grant almost no liberties and still be the pinnacle of stability. For those who think that such things are impossible today, just think of how Google tried to manipulate the voters in the American elections of 2016 and now remember that confronted with a dictatorship, Google would almost certainly fall under government control. A government is prohibition, a government is oppression, only through many hardships and sacrifices have we created governments that give us this much freedom, it is not a guarantee, but a privilege.

Arendt's quote is spot on: It is not possible to talk about freedom without talking about government, as government is the manifestation of oppression nor is it possible to talk about freedom (outer freedom that is) without talking about government, it's regulations and its

existence are imperative to how free you are. As I eluded to before, we want relationships with other humans and a government is in a way a superrelationship. In a relationship we form a social contract between us and our partner, just like the government forms a social contract with its citizens. In this contract we give the government our entire freedom and accept its oppression, it may grant us a few liberties, but what we truly gain from this trade is security. And security doesn't just mean protection, but also the security of knowing that someone will tell you what to do, as I said before: security brings the mind to ease.

We accept oppression to gain security. This has been true for all of human history. We humans will always choose security over liberty when the time comes. What was the Patriot Act but mass oppression, yet at the time it was praised by almost everyone. It is just as Machiavelli said: The government wants to remain and further its power but the only way people are going to accept oppression is if they gain something worthwhile in return: And that is not freedom, but security. That is what we truly want, what everyone truly seeks. It might seem odd because as I said in the beginning, freedom seems to be a huge topic, but we only want oppression gone if we do not see the benefit in it. Without knowing it, we will accept any oppression if it gives us worthwhile security, be that safety from terrorists or security that we will ascend to paradise upon death. Liberties are also just securities in disguise: The security to be safe while speaking your mind exists as well, it is for us to decide if we value that security more than the security that people whose opinions threaten the stability of our country are dealt with.

As much as we might like to think otherwise, we do not actually want freedom, we just won't accept oppression with no gain. We want security and we will accept extreme amounts of oppression if we truly long for it. Just like the people of the Weimar Republic. They wanted the security of leaving the reconstruction of Germany to Hitler, they wanted job-security, they wanted security in their future, and for that they accepted unprecedented oppression and waved goodbye to all the liberties the Weimar Republic gave them. This is the best example: The people of Germany literally chose security over liberties. And if worse comes to worst, every human will do the same, because what we all want is to survive, chances of survival are increased by security and security is only granted by social contracts, the biggest of which are between a government and its people.