

11. Cause or Intention? Justifying Crime

We are familiar with the question “Why” and the variety of possible answers: sensible reasons, justifications, arguments, excuses. Why is torture not allowed in a free, civilized society? Why do young men and women in European countries join the “Islamic State”? Why didn’t I write this text in a clearer and more understandable way?

Our answers usually address two separate areas: the area of the mind or psychology, which deals with intentions and inner motivations that agents themselves are often unaware of, and the area of logic or political theory and possibly philosophy, all of which are concerned with rational justifications for our actions, sustained by socio-political, moral and religious motives.

These two methods of explanation regard each other with scepticism: the psychological approach holds logical motivation to be a later rationalization of psychological motives, while the rational approach maintains that psychological motives are apolitical. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that both methods have their justification, that there are indeed intentions and justifications, emotional and rational motives, drives and convictions. It is not uncommon for these argument-based justifications to be ideologically framed, as in the case of totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century, or the “Islamic State”. My question is: what is the relationship between these two spheres? The search for an answer constantly leads to new questions. We will learn that the traditional dichotomy between *ratio* and *emotio* in science and politics is an unsatisfactory one that can rarely be achieved.

We begin with the distinction between motivation and justification, two phenomena assigned respectively to emotion and reason. In this context, I will refer to Alfred Schütz and a key aspect of his interpretive sociology, that is, the difference between the *in order to* of an action, which refers to its intention, and the *because* that alludes to its justification. I will then examine the relationship between intention and justification in three separate political constellations: firstly, during the final era of socialism in Czechoslovakia, when the dissident, writer, and later democratically elected president Vaclav Havel spoke of the power of “the intentions of life”. Secondly, in the course of generating ideologically based domination such as totalitarianism, where Arendt explored the interaction between intention and ideology. And thirdly, the re-occurrence of interaction between intention and ideology as practised by the

European supporters of the “Islamic State”. When we look closely at these constellations, we will not only see that reason and emotion are linked inextricably, but also that intentions and justifications are both driven by emotion

Because or in order to

The interaction between thinking and action, and between the individual and society affects three areas – knowledge, socialization and interests – all of which have long been interpreted from an essentialist and dichotomous perspective as a contrast between the autonomous individual and the group, the individual and society, freedom and necessity, emotion and reason, and finally between sociology and history. Bourdieu dissolved these distinctions plausibly with his concept of *habitus* and *fields*: *habitus* as classic individual actions, as the “incorporated social” with its permanent and transferable systems of perception, assessment and action,¹ and *fields* as habitually structured systems of objective relationships in the form of things, mechanisms and realities, which in turn structure *habitus*. Bourdieu not only set aside the false antinomy of sociology and social psychology, but also that of sociology and history.²

This theory of a relational world of *habitus* and *fields* is rooted in the definition of *because* and *in order to*. The author of this distinction is Alfred Schütz, the founder of phenomenological or interpretive sociology, whose work on the *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (1932) continues to influence interpretive sociology. Schütz sees the *because* and *in order to* motives as interrelated: “I cannot understand a social thing without reducing it to the human activity which has created it and, beyond it, without referring this human activity to the motives out of which it springs.”³ At the same time, these motives cover “two different categories which have to be well distinguished: the *in-order-to* motive and the *because* motive. The former refers to the future and is identical with the object or purpose for the realization of which the action itself is a means ... The latter refers to the past and may be called its reason or cause. ... Thus the action is determined by the project including the *in-order-to* motive.”⁴ The agent is fully aware of the *in order to* motive (Schütz’s example: the perpetrator committed the crime in order to acquire the victim’s money); the motive contains the meaning as known by the agent and recognized by the observers so as

1 Pierre Bourdieu / Loic J.D. Wacquant: *Reflexive Anthropologie*, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp 1996, p. 160.

2 Ibid.

3 Alfred Schütz: The Social World and the Theory of Social Action, in: *Social Research*, 27/2, 1960, p. 211.

4 Ibid., p. 212.

to understand the action. In contrast, the *because* motive underlies the concrete design of the action in the past and is only accessible to both agent and observer by means of reflection (the perpetrator acts in this way because he comes from a difficult background). The *because* motives correspond to the social personality, the *in order to* motives to the specific intention.

I would like to suggest here a slightly different meaning for the *because* motive and not merely define it as the object of reflection from the observer perspective, but rather as an instrument of justification with the help of arguments from the agent. We will then see how justification is also part of the agent's own construction of meaning, which, by the way, corresponds to Schütz and Bourdieu's assumption that all forms of expression related to action also belong to the construction of meaning.

Let us now turn to the relationship between intention and justification in the three different constellations, beginning with the role of the "intentions of life" in Vaclav Havel.

Intention and justification

The "Intentions of Life"

Vaclav Havel presents an incisive example in his existential-philosophical essay "The Power of the Powerless" (1978).⁵ It refers to May Day in a socialist country. As every year, a greengrocer hangs up a banner with the slogan "Workers of the world, unite". He no longer believes in the content of the sentence or the notion of May Day but hangs up the banner all the same. What can we read from this action? Essentially it demonstrates that the greengrocer is a conformist. But the full meaning in a nutshell is: "I am afraid and therefore unquestioningly obedient."⁶ With this act the greengrocer both confirms and makes the system, he is the system.

According to Havel there are two intentions attached to this conflict: the intention of the system to increasingly expand its power and control, and the intention of life, which "in its essence, moves toward plurality, diversity, independent self-constitution, and self-organization, in short, toward the fulfilment of its own freedom"⁷ The sphere of ideology and justification is of no importance to Havel. He sees the

5 Václav Havel, et al.: *The Power of the Powerless*. Citizens against the state in central-eastern Europe, ed. by John Keane, London, Hutchinson 1985. – The example is presented in chapter 8 of this volume as a strategy of truth-telling, see: When Telling the Truth Demands Courage.

6 Havel, *ibid.*, p. 28.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

real confrontation between the two intentions. If the greengrocer were to follow the intention of life, the system would be shaken, that is, if he refused to hang up the banner or take part in elections that “he knows are a farce”, if he were to start saying what he thinks at meetings and find “the strength in himself to express solidarity with those whom his conscience commands him to support”⁸.

In Havel’s description the justification for action plays merely a subordinate role. The greengrocer acts as he thinks best. On the other hand, justification in this context plays a major role in the actions of the dictatorial state, namely, as an all-inclusive ideology that regulates power, domination and submission in all areas of life and with this omnipresence separates people from their autonomy and their feelings.

But I was talking about opposite intentions, those of life and those of the system. What is the relationship between a justifying ideology and these intentions? In Havel’s view, what distinguishes the totalitarian system from traditional dictatorships is the inclusion of as many people as possible. “By pulling everyone into its power structure, the post-totalitarian system makes everyone an instrument of a mutual totality, the auto-totally of society. Everyone ... is in fact involved and enslaved, not only the greengrocers but also the prime ministers.”⁹ The intentions of all of them are those of conformism and diametrically opposed to the intentions of life. Now the ideology is an apparent reference to the world, which, on the one hand, leads people to believe they are personalities with “identity, ... dignity, and ... morality”¹⁰, but at the same time prevents them from being precisely that. “It is a veil behind which human beings can hide their own fallen existence, their trivialization, and their adaptation to the status quo.”¹¹ The ideology and its *because* motives justify the system.

Havel distinguishes between the intentions of life and the politics of dissent. His aim is to give as much space and depth as possible to the intention of life and its delegitimizing process. According to Havel, it is the many, often insignificant, actions like “little boats, tossed by the waves but always bobbing back as visible messengers of living within the truth”¹² that are more effective and thus of greater depth than dissident actions, that allow a society to grow, whose independent life increasingly embraces all of its sectors and creates an independent cultural sphere. This movement, based on the intentions of a free life, is stronger than the world of dissidents, who are obliged to justify their deeds with arguments and programmes and thus move in the system’s arena of ideologies and rational arguments, ultimately confining themselves to it.

8 Ibid., p. 39.

9 Ibid., p. 37.

10 Ibid., p. 28.

11 Ibid., p. 29.

12 Ibid., p. 65.

And yet, it is justification and its rationality that counts, not intention and its emotionality. The greengrocer might respond to the question “Why?” and the expectation of a *because* motive with: “I’m fed up with it, I want to get away from this forced circus, I want to say what I think is right.” The system would respond with: “That’s not a reason, that’s an expression of poisonous bourgeois liberalism” and, based on the pillar of rational justification, call the greengrocer to order.

Havel’s fictitious example is situated in a period when ideology had greatly lost its power of organization and legitimacy. Just how fragile such ideological justifications are in general is evident in the development of armed conflicts such as the Spanish Civil War, when the ideology had not yet encompassed and organized the whole of society. The republican side defended the freedom and humanity of the republic against the rebels backed by Hitler and Mussolini. But the longer the civil war lasted, the more the combatants abandoned their human values, and in terms of action the more violence became an end in itself. What the conservative writer George Bernanos observed in this context on the fascist side was witnessed by the philosopher Simone Weil on the republican side, which included Communists, Trotskyists and other ideological groups. Weil wrote in a letter to Bernanos: “The point is the attitude towards murder ... Never once ... did I hear anyone express, even in private intimacy, any repulsion or disgust or even disapproval of useless bloodshed ... As soon as men know that they can kill without fear of punishment or blame, they kill; or at least they encourage killers with approving smiles ... The very purpose of the whole struggle is soon lost in an atmosphere of this sort.”¹³ See also her remarks on the Trojan War, where she shows that bringing Helen home was merely an excuse to wage war and that warriors are empty souls who not only live in a world of abstract concepts, but also conjure up the attendant emotions. Arendt warned against a similar path in protest movements, claiming that “the danger of violence ... will always be that the means overwhelm the end. If goals are not achieved rapidly, the result will be not merely be defeat but the introduction of the practice of violence into the whole body politic.”¹⁴ Here, the exercise of violence is the *because* motive. If humanism is merely a component of the *because* motive, of a rational argument or an ideological justification, it soon becomes meaningless. Israeli historian Raanan Rein mentions Jewish volunteers, commenting that adventure played a major role in this context:

It is clear that there were also other motivations that attracted adventurous young men to leave for Spain. Most of the volunteers from Palestine were single men in their twenties who had never set foot in Spain before. But such

13 Simone Weil: To George Bernanos (1938), in: *Seventy Letters. Personal and Intellectual Windows on a Thinker*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock 1965, pp. 107/108.

14 Hannah Arendt: On Violence, in: *Crises of the Republic*, Harcourt, Brace & Company 1972, p. 177.

youthful, adventurous motivations, boredom or personal problems at home, are usually not mentioned in interviews with veterans of the International Brigades. Armed with retrospective information on all that took place during the Spanish Civil War, WWII, and under the Francoist dictatorship, these people prefer to emphasize only the ideological motivation of fighting Fascism.¹⁵

But can we speak here of an intention of life as defined positively by Havel or is it on the contrary of a purely negative nature? It seems that different intentions are being evoked here, depending on the concrete circumstances. The manipulation of reality introduced and controlled by the state conjures up the longing for a life in truth, while the violence of war, the threat to life and the loss of comrades arouse a desire for revenge and the annihilation of all enemies.

But are rational arguments and ideologies free of emotion?

I will attempt to find an answer in the second historical constellation

The intentions of ideology

Unlike the final stage of total domination as described by Havel, Arendt deals with the emergence of this form of rule. She examines the phenomena of intention, justification and ideology. In the third part of her book on the origins of totalitarianism, she explores the complex relationship between totalitarian leadership and the masses, the function of ideology as a novel type of worldview, and the expectations of the masses. This ideology differs from the manifold worldviews of the nineteenth century, since it no longer operates on the basis of worldview perspectives and, therefore, of prejudice. Instead, it frees itself of all connections to the world and moves self-referentially in a purely logical frame devoid of contradiction. The core of this logic is 'in for a penny, in for a pound'. Consequently, the logic of cleansing and the Stalinist show trials can be interpreted as follows: given that Marxist-Leninist ideology sees the continued existence of bourgeois elements during the dictatorship of the proletariat, it seems logical that these also prevail within the Communist Party.

In the same way that the worldview detached itself from the world, state violence in its totalitarian form detached itself from its reference to the world. Worldviews were replaced by ideology and violence by terror. "Terror ... is only in the last instance of its development a mere form of government. In order to establish a totalitarian regime, terror must be presented as an instrument for carrying out a specific ideology; and that ideology must have won the adherence of many, and even a majority, before terror can be stabilized."¹⁶

15 Raanan Rein: A Belated Inclusion: Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War and Their Place in the Israeli National Narrative, in: *Israel Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2012, p. 28.

16 Hannah Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Chicago: Meridian 1958, p. 6.

Prior to the seizure of power, it is the task of propaganda to establish a world of lies where people rediscover themselves, in this case the uprooting of the masses and their disorientation following the decline of the class society. The fact that the masses are ready for anything is beneficial to propaganda. “The masses’ escape from reality is a verdict against the world in which they are forced to live and in which they cannot exist, ...”¹⁷ Arendt speaks of a revolt against the meaning of reality as a result of their atomization. Since the masses no longer believe in the reality of the visible world and refuse to rely on their own controllable experiences, that is, have no confidence in their five senses, they depend entirely on their imagination, with the help of which they “are spared the never-ending shocks which real life and real experiences deal to human beings and their expectations.”¹⁸ Far more than explanations of what the propagandists pretend to do are their own expectations “that they have discovered the hidden forces that will bring them good fortune in the chain of fatality”¹⁹. “Infallibility” takes precedence over content, not because of superior intelligence but of “the striking success of posing as a mere interpreting agent of predictable forces”²⁰. Advantageous to mass expectations is the fact that totalitarian propaganda, as Siegfried Kracauer explains in a posthumous manuscript on the topic, leaves no room for anything else. The aim of totalitarian propaganda is “total occupation of the zone of spontaneity, the zone where opinions are formed ... In order to block the source of opinion making, propaganda must make the question disappear”²¹ (Kracauer, 2013: 50f.) Questions merely create confusion, clarity creates security. The greater the *sense* of personal abandonment and hopelessness, the stronger the trust in these natural forces and the more effective the strategy of counteracting the alleged Jewish world conspiracy with a similar aim: world domination. The propaganda of action replaces the sense of utter helplessness with that of unlimited power.

So, before the totalitarian movement seizes power, the hearts and minds of the masses are won over in the following order: first emotions and intentions, and then the rational level with its corresponding propagandistic justifications.

In 1955, four years after publication of her book on totalitarianism, Arendt added a chapter with a systematic analysis of “Ideology and Terror: a novel form of government”, linking it to Montesquieu’s government theory. Here, Arendt underlines what she sees as the major, constitutive significance of the interaction between ideology and terror with reference to the emergence of totalitarianism as a concrete form of government.

17 Ibid., p. 352.

18 Ibid., p. 353.

19 Ibid., p. 345.

20 Ibid., p. 349.

21 Siegfried Kracauer *Totalitäre Propaganda*, Berlin Suhrkamp, 2013, p. 50/51. (translated by WH)

Remarkable in this context is Arendt's perception that the further we penetrate into the interior of the organization, the less meaningful is the ideological *content*. There are no more refutations by an external reality, there is no longer a need to fight in the interests of fiction. The elite formations understand that the statement "all Jews are inferior, means, all Jews should be killed."²² The way into this interior landscape is through the gates of the front organizations. They "surround the movements' membership with a protective wall. ... the front organizations not only isolate the members but offer them a semblance of outside normalcy which wards off the impact of true reality more effectively than mere indoctrination."²³

Six years later, Arendt witnessed Eichmann in Jerusalem. In her book about the trial, ideology plays a very minor role. Arendt explained that she only dealt with topics beyond those associated with the trial, such as the history of the Jewish people in the diaspora or the behaviour of the German or other peoples or the "ideologies of the time"²⁴ if they were relevant to the trial itself. But even when Arendt speaks of ideology, it is of no real importance. In one case, she mentions Himmler's speech to police and SS officers of high rank. According to Arendt, Himmler primed them for mass murder with the help of a psychological trick rather than with ideology. He called upon the greatness of the deeds and spoke of battles that future generations would not have to fight. He appealed to their morality and spoke of the value of remaining decent. Finally, with psychological skill he nipped compassion in the bud before it could arise: not "what horrible things I did to people!" but "what horrible things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties, how heavily the task weighed upon my shoulders!"²⁵

In her essay on "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility" written in 1945, Arendt had observed in this context that the "good *paterfamilias* who does not betray his wife and anxiously seeks to secure a decent future for his children ... has consciously built up his newest terror organization."²⁶

In another context, Arendt deals with the role of ideology in relation to Eichmann himself. In an interview with Joachim Fest she explained her theory on Eichmann's thoughtlessness. He was neither a criminal nor a sadist, nor was he mentally disturbed. We therefore have to "look for his defect" in his indifference, his thoughtlessness. Thoughtlessness in this case does not imply that Eichmann was unable to think or was not an excellent organizer. But he did not think critically or humanely.

22 Hannah Arendt: *Origins*, op. cit., p. 385.

23 Ibid., p. 366.

24 Hannah Arendt *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Viking, revised and enlarged version 1965, p. 286.

25 Ibid., p. 106.

26 Hannah Arendt: *Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility*, in: *Essays in Understanding*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company 1994, p. 128.

His way of thinking was instrumental. Once he departed from this level, he could no longer cope in the world and grasped at clichés and inappropriate images, all of which proved that his capacity to judge was seriously impaired.

Conspicuous in her analyses of the totalitarian ideology and Eichmann's way of thinking is Arendt's lack of interest in content, such as race theories or the distinction between Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism. Instead, she focused on their function. She responds to the question of why propaganda and ideology succeed with a reference to the masses, their world of experience and their resultant intention: to escape from despair and disorientation. When the totalitarian movement collapsed with the end of the war, propaganda, too, collapsed. The reason for this lies in the utter fictitiousness and erosion of its ideological arguments for justification. "Totalitarian politics – far from being simply anti-semitic or racist or imperialist or communist – use and abuse their own ideological and political elements until the real basis of factual reality, from which the ideologies originally derived their strength and their propaganda value has almost vanished – the reality of the class struggle, for instance, or the interest conflicts between Jews and their neighbors – have all but disappeared."²⁷ This explains the ease with which Nazis and their supporters became liberal democrats following the demise of totalitarianism.

So, propaganda was successful because it spoke of the intention to maintain freedom and security in a new world. Ideology as a rational way of thinking gave this intention a direction. Reasonable explanations, justifications and arguments are effective, not because they are rational, but because they move in the world of emotions, transport emotions and respond to emotions.

Examining Arendt's analysis of anti-semitism in her book on totalitarianism and the assimilation attempts of Rahel Varnhagen with regard to the role of intentions and justifications would go beyond the scope of this essay.²⁸ Suffice it to say that the book's description of various Jewish, aristocratic and anti-semitic milieus is based on the analysis of intentions and constellations, and that her biography of Rahel Varnhagen, written prior to her study on anti-semitism, presents a series of failed attempts by Varnhagen to find herself: the renunciation of worldliness and the use of reflection and conformism as flight. Finally, Varnhagen recognised that discovering her own identity was a prerequisite to finding her place in society. It would be interesting to interpret judgments made in this context as the realization of intentions rather than justifications.

The study of other events in politics strongly based on ideology and with the same importance attached to intention and justification, such as Mao's reasons for

27 Hannah Arendt: *Origins*, op. cit., p. xv.

28 Hannah Arendt: *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewess*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 2000.

launching the Cultural Revolution in order to remain in power, could be a stimulating exercise.²⁹

In order to and because – motives in radical Salafism

The third possible ideological justification presented here can be found in the reasons why young European men join the ranks of the “Islamic State”. The ideology involved is fundamentalist Salafism, one that demands adherence to the rules of a form of Islam claimed to be primal and authentic. This in turn is based on irreconcilable confrontation with unbelievers or infidels and the erection of a worldwide Caliphate.

The rare biographical analyses available give insights into intentions and justifications in the manner of Alfred Schütz. In his book *I was a Salafist. My time in the Islamic parallel world*³⁰. Dominic Musa Schmitz, a German, recounts that he, a lazy, selfish and unstable young man without direction, was an outsider at school, in search of his own identity and a drug abuser. When he came into contact with the Salafists, he felt he was being taken seriously for the first time in his life. He joined the group and found that the world had a simple structure: the good and the bad, a single binding truth based on peaceful, harmonious ideas – he later became more radical – the prerogative of the religious leader’s interpretation, the competition between these followers during their studies of the Quran and its “correct” interpretation, and the responsible task of proselytizing among other interested young men. Schmitz felt that he had finally found his place in the world. The acceptance he experienced, however, had an ulterior motive. It demanded in return that he distance himself more and more from the non-Salafist environment. As the group came closer to the “Islamic State”, Musa felt more uncomfortable with the growing importance of violence and, after a considerable inner struggle, left the group.

Islamic scholar Lamyā Kaddor, who lives in Germany, reports similar experiences. She observed vast emotional deficits, the search for identity, the desire to abandon the old way of life – an aspect that not only refers to Salafists, but equally applies to young people belonging to the extreme right or left – and the strong significance of being accepted and of belonging to a group. The ideological treatment of new members in the group has the aim of complete separation from the non-Salafist environment. This occurs by means of black and white thinking, clothes and language, and the narrative of suffering fellow believers that paves the way for alleged resistance and violence. The commitment to joining the war in the Middle East is

29 Frank Dikötter: *The Cultural Revolution. A People's History 1962–1976*, London e.a.l.: Bloomsbury 2016.

30 Dominic Musa Schmitz *Ich war ein Salafist. Meine Zeit in der islamistischen Parallelwelt*, Berlin Econ 2016.

the result of group pressure and the emotional power of the leaders rather than the individual's own decision.³¹

The emotional deficits in their lives drive these young people to look for alternatives. The contents of the ideology clearly plays a less important role in this mission than the sense of acceptance and of belonging. The journalist Scott Anderson met many people in Arab countries over a long period, among them almost two dozen DAESH fighters. Only one of them declared to have joined for religious reasons. The others had done so for more superficial reasons such as money, glory or friends. Anderson found similar reasons among unhappy youngsters belonging to gangs in the United States, and members of drug gangs in Mexico.³²

In his comprehensive study *The Age of Anger*, Pankaj Mishra comes to a far more disturbing conclusion in terms of the global political situation.³³ He focuses our attention on global changes, with deregulation, uprooting and migration, on the one hand, and the delegitimization of the grand narratives of Nationalism, Marxism and Liberalism, on the other. These are replaced by new narratives with various forms of self-description as victims, with feelings of resentment and acts of terrorism that in Mishra's view resemble the anarchic terrorism that prevailed prior to 1914, both in its form and its justifications. He not only describes parallels between the anarchy of the nineteenth century and the terrorism of the twenty-first century that followed the respective upheavals and modernization, but also new radical tendencies that command majorities. Politicians like Modi in India revise history and combine nationalism with a revolutionary futurism. Modi "understands that resonant sentiments, images and symbols rather than rational arguments or accurate history galvanize isolated individuals."³⁴ Counteracting the seduction of young people in Germany by Islamist groups via their weapon of acceptance seems easy in comparison to the seductive power of resentment, machismo and new emotional narratives in other regions of the world.

Mishra refers in this context to an appeal Arendt made in her tribute to Karl Jaspers: "If the solidarity of mankind is to be based on something more solid than the justified fear of man's demonic capacities, if the new universal neighborship of all countries is to result in something more promising than a tremendous increase in mutual hatred and a somewhat universal irritability of everybody against everybody else, then a process of mutual understanding and progressing self-clarification on a

31 Lamy Kaddor *Zum Töten bereit. Warum deutsche Jugendliche in den Dschihad ziehen*, Munich/Berlin Piper 2015.

32 Scott Anderson: *Fractured Lands: How the Arab World Came Apart*, New York: Anchor Books 2017.

33 Pankaj Mishra: *Age of Anger. A History of the Present*, London: Allen Lane 2017.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 269.

gigantic scale must take place.”³⁵ This requires the renunciation “of sovereignty for the sake of a world-wide federated political structure” and as a prerequisite for this the renunciation, “not of one’s own tradition and national past, but of the binding authority and universal validity which tradition and past have always claimed”³⁶

When we now ask about the life intentions of these young people, we see their priority over rational arguments. According to the results of recent forensic investigations, the perpetrators frequently show personality disorders and feel the need to overcome their insecurity with spectacular acts.³⁷

It can be identified in all three examples that ideological justifications and orientations are effective only when they are based on emotional intentions, thereby limiting their refutation at the level of argument. It is therefore vital to liberate the intentions of life from their alienation, from a life lived in fear and lies.

Pathologies in modernity

Arendt rightly indicated that the elements and origins of totalitarianism lie in the non-totalitarian world and will not simply disappear when totalitarianism has ceased to be. The old lack of orientation accompanies people like a faithful shadow when they enter a liberal, democratic market society, a society that has its own way of shaping the prevailing emotions and reasons. In *The Pathology of Normalcy* published in 1953, social psychologist Erich Fromm analysed three levels of “alienation”: the alienation of people from themselves, from each other as relational beings, and from the environment. This alienation is accompanied by a tendency towards narcissism, destruction and lack of empathy. It manifests itself in a process of abstraction and removal from things, in the perception of fellow human beings in a language stripped of emotion, and in the reduction of the intersubjective world of emotion to a selfish sentimentality and widespread boredom. It is also expressed in alienation from all things political through anonymity, isolation and the sense of vulnerability in a faceless society and, finally, in alienation from thinking and the sciences.

Of particular interest for our topic here is the fact that

Psychoanalysis can show that ideologies are the products of certain desires, innate tendencies, interests and needs, which – for the most part not consciously –

35 Hannah Arendt: Karl Jaspers. Citizen of the World, in: *Men in Dark Times*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1970, p. 84. – See also chapter 17 in this volume: Elements of Cosmopolitanism – and its Handicaps.

36 Arendt: *Men in Dark Time*, op. cit.: p. 93.

37 Jerome Endrass et al. Der Weg zum (terroristischen) Attentäter Gewalt legitimieren, um Gewalt auszuüben” in *Kriminalistik*, 5, 2015, pp. 328–334.

appear as 'rationalizations' in the form of ideology. ... It can show that the impact of an 'idea' is essentially based on its unconscious content that appeals to certain impulses, in other words, it is the type and strength of the libidinal sounding board of a society or class that determines the social impact of ideologies.³⁸

In an empirical study of workers and employees in the Weimar Republic in 1929, the results of which were first published in 1980, Fromm found that revolutionary confessions did not coincide with revolutionary aspirations: only fifteen per cent of more than six hundred members of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties interviewed indicated that their revolutionary thinking had in fact a libidinal structure. Twenty-five per cent were reliable but not ardent supporters. Fromm later recognized, thanks to his investigation, why no significant resistance from left-wing workers and employees against Hitler's seizure of power could have been expected. On the contrary, sympathies prevailed and numerous party members switched to the NSDAP.³⁹

In *The Betrayal of the Self*, Swiss psychologist Arno Gruen speaks of a paradox that sees how "the inner struggle to maintain one's own autonomy" – a primary value in liberal society – "can express itself in desperate conformism, submission and self-destructive behaviour"⁴⁰. The vulnerability and self-contempt inherent in this paradox paves the way for hostility, malice and sadism.⁴¹ And attempts at liberation from this subservience and helplessness can lead to a new form of submission and frequently to the milieu of terrorism.⁴² According to Gruen, abstract ideas not only prevent the access to emotions, but also serve to deny the destructive that is designed to serve a superior reality, such as progress or maintaining peace. Abstraction and depersonalization go hand in hand in this process.⁴³ In Arendt's view, abstract thinking can be closely compared to the inhumanity of abstract emotions⁴⁴ and an understanding is only possible if we judge independently with an enlarged thought,

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- 38 Erich Fromm *Über Methode und Aufgabe einer Analytischen Sozialpsychologie. Bemerkungen über Psychoanalyse und historischen Materialismus* (1932), in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1 (Analytische Sozialpsychologie), Stuttgart Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1980, p. 51f. (translated by WH)
- 39 Erich Fromm *Arbeiter und Angestellte am Vorabend des Dritten Reiches. Eine sozialpsychologische Untersuchung*, edited by Wolfgang Bonß, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 3 (Empirische Untersuchungen zum Gesellschafts-Charakter), Stuttgart Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1981, p. 190.
- 40 Arno Gruen *Der Verrat am Selbst. Die Angst vor Autonomie bei Mann und Frau*, Munich dtv 1986, p.28. (translated by WH)
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 49f.
- 44 Hannah Arendt: Foreword in: J. Glenn Gray: *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*. New York: Harcourt 1959.

which, according to Arendt, is in the biblical language of King Solomon “the understanding heart”, something that is as “far removed from sentimentality as it is from paperwork”⁴⁵.

Finally, Fromm sees fanaticism as a phenomenon of alienation characterized by the fact that the totalitarian fanatic deadens all humanity within himself and feels nothing. He projects any sense of humanity onto the party as its epitome. The party is an idol that demands total compliance and “allows him to experience a strange burning passion, which could perhaps more accurately be called cold passion”, or conversely “burning ice”⁴⁶.

Here, we reach a point where it is difficult to find a comprehensible explanation for the intentions of fanatics. We are dealing with people who are paranoid. In his study on Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and the poetics of National Socialism⁴⁷, literary scholar Albrecht Koschorke describes how pathologizing the world is set in motion, how social tension or a collective state of excitement is combined with a reservoir of cultural concepts and images to create an explosive mixture. The principal actors are “trigger personalities”, revolutionary leaders and modern dictators in the history of nationalism in the twentieth century, who “mainly come from a conspiratorial milieu, where bohemia, criminality and ideological radicalism combine to an amalgam that is difficult to penetrate”⁴⁸. Koschorke sees them as “liminal”. They exceed thresholds and “are mentally driven beyond the confines of normalcy, advance into zones where for the most part the boundary between visionary farsightedness and madness is blurred”⁴⁹. These figures appear time and again. They belong to the partly academic precarity, and we meet them in the French Revolution as Jacobins and also in the National Socialist movement.

What the population impressed most, apart from “the flush of words”, was the fact that propagandists did not stop at words but accompanied these with deeds, with organized violence. “The we-group ... includes all those who find it uplifting to mock their opponents beaten to a pulp and thus to eliminate once and for all any form of protest.” This terror also served “to conceal from their followers and victims alike the hidden idiocy of self-appointed leaders, who attempt to compensate their lack of legitimate authority with megalomania.”⁵⁰ Indeed, exposing this idiocy was

45 Hannah Arendt: *Essays in Understanding*, op. cit., p. 322

46 Erich Fromm *Das Unbewusste und die psychoanalytische Praxis* (1959), in *Gesellschaft und Seele*, Weinheim Beltz Verlag 1992, p. 128/29

47 Albrecht Koschorke *Adolf Hitlers Mein Kampf. Zur Poetik des Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin Matthes & Seitz 2016.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 63f.

an element of works by Brecht, Arendt and Tabori.⁵¹ Every society has these trigger characters; “many channels lead from the liminal to the ordinary world; the border between the two is permeable and unstable”. “We must be aware of the fragile nature of this normalcy, not because of the vague similarity between the abnormal and the insane but because of – terrible though it may sound – their appearance in moments of extreme social tension.”⁵²

In his book on paranoia, Italian psychoanalyst Luigi Zoja outlines its classic features – feelings of inferiority, megalomania and envy, conspiracy theories and self-deception. According to Zoja, “paranoia is, so to speak, the most anti-psychological of all mental illnesses, since it is the only way of thinking that completely obliterates self-criticism in its activity. Paranoid thinking is both logical and impossible, coherent and contradictory, humane and inhumane. It is a tragic mask that does not, however, conceal the face of a hero but a radically insecure being who also deceives himself.”⁵³ As history has shown time and again, the paranoid individual effectively destabilizes and mobilizes the population with a dangerous cocktail of emotionally and rationally based threat scenarios. It goes without saying that emotions also play a major role in confronting intentions, for example those implied in conspiracy theories.⁵⁴

It is conspicuous that Havel, Arendt, Fromm and Gruen are not only theorists but also socio-political practitioners who pursue life’s non-alienated intentions in their relationship with fellow human beings.

To add one more example: Arendt saw the writing of her book on the origins of totalitarianism as a form of understanding that cannot occur *sine ira et studio* and thus as contradicting conventional scientific rules, especially those of historians. Criticised for this by her colleague Eric Voegelin, Arendt responded with a reference to the wretchedness of British miners at the beginning of the industrial revolution and the necessary unity of reason and emotion: “If I describe these conditions without permitting my indignation to interfere, I have lifted this particular phenomenon out of its context in human society and have thereby robbed it of part of its nature, deprived it of one of its important inherent qualities. ... This has nothing to do with sentimentality or moralizing ... To describe the concentration camps *sine ira* is not to be ‘objective’, but to condone them.”⁵⁵ In a new foreword to *The Origins of Total-*

51 Wolfgang Heuer: Horror and Laughter. At the Limits of Political Science, in: Zoran Kurelic (ed.): *Violence, Art and Politics*, Zagreb: Politicka Misao 2015. – See also chapter 10 in this volume: Horror and Laughter – Arendt, Tabori, Borowski.

52 Albrecht Koschorke *Adolf Hitlers Mein Kampf*, op. cit., p. 29.

53 Luigi Zoja: *Paranoia*. La locura que hace la historia, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica 2013, p. 37. (Translated by WH)

54 Michael Butter “*Nichts ist wie es scheint*”. *Über Verschwörungstheorien*, Berlin: Suhrkamp 2018.

55 Hannah Arendt: Reply to Eric Voegelin, in: *Essays in Understanding*. op. cit., p. 404f. – See the role of emotions also in chapter 12 of this volume: Facing the War: Arendt and Habermas.

itarianism, Arendt explained that shortly after World War Two it was impossible to write *sine ira et studio* due to the “mood of those years”⁵⁶.

In her *Denktagebuch* she noted: “Only when poverty is made ‘objective’, i.e. de-humanized, i.e. dissociated from public life, i.e. ripped from its context of human solidarity, i.e. denaturalized (bared of its, of poverty’s peculiar nature) can you arrive at the insane claim of ethical neutrality.”⁵⁷ “Absence of emotions neither causes nor promotes rationality. ... In order to respond reasonably one must first of all be ‘moved’, and the opposite of emotional is not ‘rational’, whatever that may mean, but either the inability to be moved – usually a pathological phenomenon, or sentimentality, which is a perversion of feeling.”⁵⁸ And after everything we have seen up to now, the rationality of emotional coldness, “objectivity”, is by no means free of emotional intention.

The end of the dichotomy

Looking back at the sketchy description of the constellation of reason and emotion, it now seems that not only are intentions guided by emotion and enjoy priority over rational justifications, but that reason itself serves emotion. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio supports this contention. His experimental findings seriously question the modern separation of reason and emotion. His conclusion goes against Descartes but with Spinoza and thus against modern schools of thought, such as utilitarianism, Marxism and liberalism from Kant to Habermas and Rawls, which separate reason from emotion. Damasio found that the body perceives emotions almost unconsciously. These are transformed into feelings by the brain and only then, although not always, are they examined by reason. According to Damasio, emotions in the body and feelings in the brain serve as the basis for homeostasis, a functional balance within the organism’s economy. Allowing our actions to be guided solely by reason would take much longer and, even if feelings are excluded, would prove to be impossible. “Because the brain is the body’s captive audience, feelings are winners among equals. And since what comes first constitutes a frame of reference for what comes after, feelings have a say on how the rest of the brain and cognition go about their business. Their influence is immense.”⁵⁹

Against this background, a shift in political sciences towards the ties between reason and emotion would be desirable. Because, in Damasio’s words, “we wouldn’t

56 Hannah Arendt: *Origins*, op. cit., p. xxiii.

57 Hannah Arendt *Denktagebuch 1950–1973*, Munich Piper 2002, 8 Mai 1951, p. 89.

58 Hannah Arendt: *On Violence*, op. cit, p. 161.

59 Antonio R. Damasio: *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, New York: Penguin Books 1994, p. 159f.

have music, art, religion, science, technology, economics, politics, justice, or moral philosophy without the impelling force of feelings.”⁶⁰ Thinking in all its forms, rhetoric, metaphors and rational decisions are only possible with the indispensable share of feelings. We are thus reverting to pre-modern insights, such as those of the so-called moralists like La Rochefoucauld, who observed: “Self-interest speaks all manner of tongues and plays all manner of parts, even that of disinterestedness.”⁶¹ Or Montaigne, whose observation can be applied to the fighters of the ‘Islamic State’: “If anyone should sift out of the army, even the average loyalist army, those who march in it from the pure zeal of affection for religion ... he could not make up one complete company of men-at-arms out of them.”⁶² And similarly, philosopher David Hume wrote: “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.”⁶³ And: “And as reasoning is not the source, whence either disputant derives his tenets; it is in vain to expect that any logic, which speaks not to the affections, will ever engage him to embrace sounder principles.”⁶⁴

In other words, reason is only accessible when emotions have been touched.

This necessary dissolution of the dichotomy of body and mind, of emotion and reason poses a huge challenge for the political and historical sciences and their methods.

Given the limited scope of this essay, suffice it to say that Havel and Arendt’s cognitive methods are also primarily shaped by their emotions. Although influenced by existentialism and phenomenology, Havel declared that he thoroughly enjoyed reading “the essays of these authors, despite my somewhat superficial knowledge of this field. I was more impressed by the atmosphere of this thinking than by specific theories, concepts, conclusions, etc. ... So, for a long time my attitude was similar to the attitude we have to art.”⁶⁵ Writing from prison, Havel explained that he was reading about Kafka, and that he had

always harboured a feeling ... that I somehow understand Kafka better than others, not because I can claim a deeper intellectual insight into his work, but because of an intensely personal and existential understanding of experience that borders on spiritual kinship. (I have never much held with theoretical ‘interpretations’ of Kafka; immensely more important for me was the quite trivial ‘pre-

60 Antonio R. Damasio: *Interview in MIT Review*, 17 June 2014.

61 La Rochefoucauld: *The Moral Maxims and Reflections*, 1665, 39.

62 Michel de Montaigne: Apology for Raymond Sebond, in: *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, ed. Donald M. Frame, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1965, p. 323.

63 David Hume: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, part III, 1738.

64 David Hume: *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, section I, 1751.

65 Václav Havel: *Briefe an Olga*, Reinbek: Rowohlt 1984, p. 74 (translated by WH).

theoretical' certainty, as it were, that he was 'right' and that what he writes is 'exactly how it is').⁶⁶

This necessary dissolution of the dichotomy of body and mind, *emotio* and *ratio* poses a great challenge to the methods of political science and history, which must seek answers to the questions of what we oppose to the "pathology of normality of contemporary man", the temptations of paranoia, the feelings of envy, resentment and indifference inherent in democracy, and what the 'history of ideas' tells us about them.

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66 Václav Havel: *Letters to Olga*, Henry Holt & Co, New York 1989, p. 126.