Arendt, Metaphors and the EU: Why Words Matter!

Conversation Among Arendtian Scholars and Linguists

November 16, 2017

9.00-13.00 (Brussels Time UTC +01:00)


1. Context and Background

We are living unstable times politically-wise and the European Union is in the eye of the storm. The EU is at the crossroads. To strengthen its ability to make the proper choices, there is a need for an increased critical consciousness of the implicit conceptual frameworks underlying EU policy-making. As well put by Mary Midgley¹, conceptualization is not only for professional philosophers: all men and women, including policy-makers, think and act according to conceptualizations, and Georges Lakoff and Mark Johnson have shown that these conceptualizations are revealed in language through metaphorical expressions². This is particularly true when it comes to politics and policy-making: metaphors play an "indispensable role in making [the non-observables political things] manifest.[…They] disclose the meaning or reality of political things not by constituting them, however, but by manifesting their intelligible structure"³.

Because metaphors matter, their usage bears consequences. As stated by Jonathan Charteris-Black, "[m]etaphor both reflects and determines how we think and feel about the world and, therefore, understanding more about metaphor is an essential component of intellectual freedom."⁴ It is our hypothesis that the crisis of the EU can be analysed as a misuse of metaphors, revealing "an inexact correspondence between the user's

cognitive framework and the reality at hand". This is why metaphors, linguistics and philosophy connect deeply with policy-making.

As revealed by the use of the word "modernise" to mean "update", politics is still deeply anchored in modernity, despite the fact that both natural sciences and art have left modernity behind, since the beginning of the last century (for sciences) and since the end of WWII (for art). As suggested by The Onlife Initiative, it is now time for politics also to step out of modernity, and notably in view of the deployment of hyperconnectivity.

Hannah Arendt is a renowned political thinker of the XXth century, known primarily for her analysis of totalitarianism. If she is particularly important for the EU, it is because her approach to the political is “implicitly post-modern, or post-ideological”. The "Arendtian conception of politics [...] is cooperative, action- and process oriented and [...] brings together a plurality of individual and collective identities in free and deliberate acts of community-building." This "has been of fundamental importance for creating and generating the EU polity" and this is what needs to be revived today to "positively resignify the EU as a new, truly post-national project in its own right." And, as written by Patricia Owens, Arendt "argued that there is a direct relationship between the political, public realm, the necessary condition of all politics, which is plurality, and our ability to comprehend what is real."

Embracing Arendt' inspired concepts and metaphors opens a path for a subtle but radical and far-reaching shift in EU policy orientations. How do we design policies if we leave behind the assumption that agents behave as rational subjects but instead as relational selves? How do we design policies embracing interdependence instead of seeking sovereignty and control? How do we design policies if we stop taking for granted that boosting growth is an end in itself?

2. **Programme**

**Chair:** PATRICIA OWENS (University of Sussex).

This session is dedicated to a conversation among linguists and Arendtian scholars. It shall aim at formulating policy-relevant theoretical inputs arising from linguistics and Arendt's inspired political theory. It shall be webstreamed and accessible via [https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/er-workshop-reframing-the-eu-why-words-matter](https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/er-workshop-reframing-the-eu-why-words-matter)

9.00-9.30: Welcome and opening: JUTTA THIELEN-DEL POZO (Head of Unit, Scientific Development, JRC-A-5)

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8 ibidem: 160
9 ibidem: 160
10 ibidem: 142
9.30-10.00: **Scene setting the scene:** NICOLE DEWANDRE (EC) will explain what is expected from the workshop and present her analysis of how Arendt can be inspirational for EU policy-making.

10.00-13.00:

- **Language and Politics.**
  
  CHRIS HART (University of Lancaster) will start by providing experimental evidence supporting the main assumption of this workshop, i.e. that metaphors matter for public policies.

  Then, JONATHAN CHARTERIS-BLACK (University of Bristol) will dig deeper on a metaphor which is center-stage in EU policy-making: that of speed and race.

  After having examined the performative effects of metaphor and experienced it on the speed and race metaphor, JOHN JOSEPH (University of Edinburgh) will build bridges between linguistics, cognitive science and Arendt's Human Condition, ensuring the transition towards the second theme of the session, i.e. 2. "Arendt and the EU".

- **Arendt and the EU**
  
  LARS RENSMANN (University of Groningen) will highlight how Arendt's conceptual approach to the political can sustain a (post-national) political solidarity in the EU, and how it can steer a change in European policy narrative. He will explore what types of political solidarity, actions, metaphors, and policy directions can work across national boundaries against the technocratic image of growth and the nativist populist image of "the people"?

  DANA VILLA (University of Notre Dame, USA) will revisit his 1992 essay on "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere", and address the following question: "is the public sphere, as a shared space of appearance or reality, still possible?"

  RICHARD KING (University of Nottingham) will then discuss some of the conceptual and political issues involved in the two origins/foundings of the EU, i.e. in the late 1940s and in 1989. He will do so by mobilising a comparative approach with some basic comments on the US's several foundings--1776-83; 1787; and 1865-1877, in order to emphasize the need in both cases – EU and US- to pay attention to and preserve the way these origins/foundings are preserved in the memory, via a narrative (history/story).

  ARI-ELMERI HYVÖNEN (University of Jyväskylä) will explore another perspective from which Arendt brings new light to the EU, that of better aligning economic policy with democratic concerns.

- **Bodies, Personhood and the Political**
  
  ANDREAS MUSOLFF (University of Freiburg) will discuss the body metaphor for political agents. What does it entail? How does it play at EU level?

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12 See all abstracts in Annex 1.
The thematic inputs mentioned above will leave ample time for reactions from the group, and shall be enriched by spontaneous reactions from ANDREA CORNWALL (University of Sussex), PIERRE DEFRAGNE (Madariaga Foundation, College of Europe), KIMBERLY HUTCHINGS (Queen Mary University London), GO OKUI (UNESCO and Kyoto University), VICTORIA MARTIN DE LA TORRE (European Parliament), and CHRISTIAN VOLK (FU Berlin).

Colleagues from the Commission services attending the session on a listening mode will be invited to write their reactions and ideas arising from this expert's conversation. For those attending remotely, comments are welcome at nicole.dewandre@ec.europa.eu. This material will be exploited in the follow-up of the workshop.
Abstracts

CHRIS HART: This workshop relies on “the assumption that our language use shapes the way we think about and act in the world”. While this remains an assumption, and one that is actually widely contested, there is now growing empirical evidence to support it. Metaphor in particular is held as an important framing device in public discourse capable of achieving framing effects in public decisions and actions. This paper presents some of the growing experimental evidence that metaphors really do matter. It will do so with reference to metaphors for the nation, immigration and social relations which are important within the EU framework. (15 minutes)

JONATHAN CHARTERIS-BLACK: I shall demonstrate how metaphors used in the British parliament show evidence of varying attitudes towards the underlying conceptual metaphors NATION STATES ARE COMPETITORS and LIFE IS A RACE. More generally it shows the ideological motivation that underlies much political language by identifying the concepts that underlie metaphor choices; this serves to reveal their rhetorical role in the creation of power. The Competitive Race metaphor is one that is ideologically contested between supporters and opponents of unregulated capitalism and the ‘free’ market. (30 minutes)

JOHN JOSEPH: The vision put forward in Dewandre’s paper “Beyond Jobs, Growth and Crisis: rethinking EU Policy-Making with Hannah Arendt” builds upon Arendt’s tripartite model of labour, work and action, and on her related conception of a ‘relational self’ to stand alongside – or replace – the ‘rational self’ that has dominated philosophical and political thought since Descartes. Some useful perspectives may be brought to bear on this vision from recent work on distributed cognition and language, which has given support to venerable ideas from early in the history of modern linguistics, as opposed to later ones based on the individual mind/brain. In addition, the study of languages has given us insight into a sphere of labour/work/action where change is driven from the bottom up (a metaphor that decidedly needs revisiting!), so that top-down interventions can be counted on to have no effect unless they are responding to bottom-up trends that are already in motion. How does this articulate with Dewandre’s vectorial space reformulation of Arendt’s tripartite model? (15 minutes)

ARI-ELMERI HYYÖNEN: The presentation shall examine how language is central for both creative responses to events and the lack thereof. Process-thinking is so dominant in politics that we barely notice that it is indeed a metaphoric frame. As a result of applying this frame, policies are pervaded by false necessities, automatism, and unable to react to new events. It further contributes to the functional view of individuals, as their needs and sense of purpose are subsumed to the overall process. Building on Arendt who highlights the centrality of interruptions and events in politics, I shall provide reflections on what it would mean to think EU policies - economic policy in particular - as a common democratic concern on the basis of dynamic responses to events, instead of as a process to be managed. (15 minutes)

ANDREAS MUSOLFF: The conceptualization of political entities as bodies and or persons is a classic topos of political theory and public discourse. Its prototypical target referent has been the nation state, viewed as an organismic entity that can be healthy or fall ill and die, or as a bearer of personal characteristics/identity and an agent that can be held responsible for his/her actions. There have also been mappings of these source concepts onto regional and even global multitudes of nations, including that of Europe as a geographical-cultural whole and of the European Union as an economic and/or political whole. However, whilst the nation-specific metaphor applications are often accepted as ‘natural’ and are fully entrenched in popular symbolism, multi-nation applications seem to be far more vulnerable to criticism and publicist deconstruction (see some present-day denunciations of the EU as a dying/rotting body or as faceless bureaucracy).

The paper asks, on the basis of contemporary public discourse data, whether the EU’s conceptualization as a body/person constitutes an opportunity or an obstacle for “Reframing the EU” in an Arendtian perspective. Furthermore: what are the discursive and conceptual alternatives of its conceptualization as body/person, and how (if they exist) can they be implemented in the European public sphere and in political decision-taking? (15 minutes)
Bios of the experts

ANDREA CORNWALL is Professor of Anthropology and Development in the School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex. Her work engages with questions of gender and power in organisations, including through activist bureaucratic practice as a Head of School and Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor for Equalities and Diversity, and includes the recent book Masculinities under Neoliberalism (Cornwall, Karioris and Lindisfarne eds., Zed Books, 2016).

CHRISTOPHER HART is Professor of Linguistics at Lancaster University. He is author of Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science: New Perspectives on Immigration Discourse (Palgrave, 2010) and Discourse, Grammar and Ideology: Functional and Cognitive Perspectives (Bloomsbury, 2014).

KIMBERLY HUTCHINGS is Professor of Politics and International Relations at Queen Mary University of London. She has previously held posts at the University of Edinburgh and the London School of Economics. Her research interests are in ethical and political philosophy, international and feminist theory, the work of Kant, Hegel, Arendt and Foucault. She is the author of Kant, Critique and Politics (1996); International Political Theory: re-thinking ethics in a global era (1999); Hegel and Feminist Philosophy (2003); Time and World Politics: thinking the present (2008); Global Ethics: an introduction (2010; 2nd edition forthcoming 2018). Her recent work includes a series of articles exploring the conceptual relation between politics and violence in canonic and anti-colonial political theory (co-authored with Elizabeth Frazer); and an ongoing project on feminist and decolonial approaches to the ethics of war, pacifism and political violence.

ARI-ELMERI HYVÖNEN is a political scientist focusing on the thought of Arendt in the context of contemporary world politics. He has published several articles in journals such as Political Theory, European Journal of Social Theory, and Resilience. He recently defended his dissertation on the concept of experience in Arendt, and is now pursuing post-doc projects on “post-truth politics” and process-thinking.


RICHARD H KING is emeritus professor in American Intellectual History (American and Canadian Studies Department) at the University of Nottingham, UK where he from 1983-2008. He is the author most recently of Arendt and America (2015). Overall he has written about American and European Intellectual History, ideas of race and the political theory of the US Civil Rights Movement, and the literature and history of the American South.

VICTORIA MARTIN DE LA TORRE (Madrid,1973) is a Spanish journalist working as a press officer for the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament since 2008. She has two MS degree (Columbia University School of Journalism in 1999 and European Studies at the College of Europe in 2003). She is the author of two books: Viaje a Belén. Cuna del amor, semilla de intifada (A trip to Bethlehem, cradle of love, seed of intifada) published in 2007 and Europe, a Leap into the Unknown, a book about the EU founding fathers that was published in 2014. She is also the chair of the Abraham Forum for Inter-Religious and Intercultural Dialogue in Madrid (since 2009) and a fellow of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (since 2011). Victoria is currently a PhD candidate at Sophia University Institute, researching on the role of intercultural dialogue for a human-centred European Union.

ANDREAS MUSOLFF is Professor of Intercultural Communication at the University of East Anglia in Norwich (UK). His research interests include Pragmatics of Intercultural and Multicultural Communication, Metaphor Studies and Public Discourse. His publications include numerous articles and book chapters and edited publications as well as the monographs Political Metaphor Analysis: Discourse and Scenarios (2016); Metaphor, Nation and the Holocaust (2010), Metaphor and Political Discourse (2004). He is currently Chairman of the International Association Researching and Applying Metaphor (RaAM) and Senior Fellow (2017-2018) and Marie Curie Fellow of the European Union at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS), University of Freiburg (Germany).
GO OKUI currently works as a trainee within the secretariat of the MOST programme in UNESCO, especially focused on philosophy and the humanities, providing intellectual and technical input to programme planning, as a part of the credited PhD course work at Graduate School of Advanced Integrated Studies of Human Survivability of Kyoto University. He is a 2nd year PhD student specialized in political philosophy of Hannah Arendt. His master thesis was on “The Theory and Practice of Public Philosophy: The Implication of Hannah Arendt’s Sensus Communis,” examining the troubling relationship between philosophy and politics in the modern time while focusing on Hannah Arendt’s concept of Sensus Communis elucidated through her critical readings of Kant as their mediating factor. The part of the dissertation was reported as a peer reviewed paper presentation at the Conference of Hannah Arendt Research Society of Japan (HARSJ) in 2016, and the summary of which was published in its yearly report, *Arendt Platz* No.2 (2016 Winter). He serves as a committee member of HARSJ in charge of International Relations since 2016.

PATRICIA OWENS is Professor and Chair of the Department of International Relations at the University of Sussex. Her first book was *Between War and Politics: International Relations and the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Oxford University Press, 2007). Her most recent book is *Economy of Force: Counterinsurgency and the Historical Rise of the Social* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), which won British International Studies Association Susan Strange Prize for best book and the International Studies Association’s Theory Section Best Book Award. In 2018, she will be Visiting Kathleen Fitzpatrick Professor in the Department of History at Sydney University. She is a former fellow of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard.

LARS RENSMANN is Professor and Chair of European Politics and Society at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, the Netherlands, where he also serves as the Chair of the Department of European Languages and Cultures. Rensmann received his PhD from the Free University of Berlin, Germany in 2002. Prior to joining the University of Groningen, he served as Associate Professor and as the Chair of the Department of Political Science and International Affairs at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy (2012-2016) and as Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, USA (2006-2011). Professor Rensmann has held many other appointments at universities around the globe, including Yale University, the University of California at Berkeley, Haifa University, the University of Vienna, Humboldt University, the University of Potsdam, and the University of Munich. He also serves on several editorial boards of international journals and boards of research foundations. He has published many books and journal articles on European political thought, including work on Hannah Arendt and the Frankfurt School, and on European and global politics, especially on populist and radical right parties, antisemitism, and racism in Europe; politics and sports; as well as cleavages between cosmopolitan and nativist Europe. Publications include *The Politics of Delusion: Rethinking Populism* (forthcoming); *The Politics of Unreason: The Frankfurt School and Antisemitism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017); *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, co-edited with Samir Gandesha, 2012); *Politics and Resentment: Antisemitism and Counter-Cosmopolitanism in the European Union* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, co-edited with Julius H. Schoeps, 2011); *Gaming the World: How Sports are Reshaping Global Politics and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, co-authored with Andrei S. Markovits, 2010).

DANA VILLA is the Packey Dee Professor of Political Theory at the University of Notre Dame (US). He is the author, most recently, of "Teachers of the People: Political Education in Rousseau, Hegel, Tocqueville and Mill" (Chicago). Other books include: "Arendt and Heidegger: the Fate of the Political" (Princeton, 1996); "Politics, Philosophy, Terror" (Princeton, 1999); "Socratic Citizenship" (Princeton, 2001); and "Public Freedom" (Princeton, 2007). He is also the editor of "The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt" (Cambridge, 2000).