

Trinity University

Digital Commons @ Trinity

History Honors Theses

History Department

5-2024

The Banality of Thinking: The Criticism of Hannah Arendt's "Eichmann in Jerusalem"

J. LYNNE NELSON
Trinity University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/hist_honors

Recommended Citation

NELSON, J. LYNNE, "The Banality of Thinking: The Criticism of Hannah Arendt's "Eichmann in Jerusalem"" (2024). *History Honors Theses*. 10.
https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/hist_honors/10

This Thesis open access is brought to you for free and open access by the History Department at Digital Commons @ Trinity. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Trinity. For more information, please contact jcostanz@trinity.edu.

THE BANALITY OF THINKING:
THE CRITICISM OF HANNAH ARENDT'S "EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM"

J. LYNNE NELSON

A DEPARTMENT HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTROY AT TRINITY UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION WITH
DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

DATE APRIL 11, 2024

Dr. Jason Johnson
THESIS ADVISOR

Dr. Nicole Marafioti
DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Jennifer Henderson, AVPAA

Student Agreement

I grant Trinity University (“Institution”), my academic department (“Department”), and the Texas Digital Library (“TDL”) the non-exclusive rights to copy, display, perform, distribute and publish the content I submit to this repository (hereafter called "Work") and to make the Work available in any format in perpetuity as part of a TDL, digital preservation program, Institution or Department repository communication or distribution effort.

I understand that once the Work is submitted, a bibliographic citation to the Work can remain visible in perpetuity, even if the Work is updated or removed.

I understand that the Work's copyright owner(s) will continue to own copyright outside these non-exclusive granted rights.

I warrant that:

- 1) I am the copyright owner of the Work, or
- 2) I am one of the copyright owners and have permission from the other owners to submit the Work, or
- 3) My Institution or Department is the copyright owner and I have permission to submit the Work, or
- 4) Another party is the copyright owner and I have permission to submit the Work.

Based on this, I further warrant to my knowledge:

- 1) The Work does not infringe any copyright, patent, or trade secrets of any third party,
- 2) The Work does not contain any libelous matter, nor invade the privacy of any person or third party, and
- 3) That no right in the Work has been sold, mortgaged, or otherwise disposed of, and is free from all claims.

I agree to hold TDL, DPN, Institution, Department, and their agents harmless for any liability arising from any breach of the above warranties or any claim of intellectual property infringement arising from the exercise of these non-exclusive granted rights.”

I choose the following option for sharing my thesis (required):

- Open Access (full-text discoverable via search engines)
 Restricted to campus viewing only (allow access only on the Trinity University campus via digitalcommons.trinity.edu)

I choose to append the following [Creative Commons license](#) (optional):

TRINITY UNIVERSITY

HISTORY HONORS THESIS

The Banality of Thinking
The Criticism of Hannah Arendt's
Eichmann in Jerusalem

Author:
J. Lynne NELSON

Supervisor:
Dr. Jason JOHNSON

*A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in History*

History Department
Supported by the Mellon Initiative

April 12, 2024

“Dear Hannah! How happy we are to have your pictures! They are truly you, instantly recognizable. The same brilliant gleam of your eyes, but also etched in your face the sufferings of which your youth had no inkling. From your letters I have known for a long time now that you have come through undiminished. That was obviously not easy, and in these pictures I can see that it wasn’t. You are a prodigal human being.”

Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, March 15, 1949

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Dr. Jason Johnson for supervising and flaming this wonderful passion of mine. You did not have to take time out of your schedule to read drafts and navigate a slew of constantly changing deadlines (and maybe you shouldn't have!). Nevertheless, you did, and I am appreciative of your guidance, patience, and trust. There are few words to articulate your mass inspiration, your work, and, most outstandingly, your character. The best! Another countless thanks to Dr. Lauren Turek for serving on the thesis committee and many other endeavors! A closing acknowledgment to committee member Dr. Nicholas Reynolds: I save more excellent words for you at a later time...

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
1 Introduction	1
2 <i>Nicht Einmal Unheimlich, Not Even Sinister</i>	9
3 Between You and I	19
4 1963	33
4.0.1 <i>Eichmann's Sickness</i>	34
4.0.2 <i>Eichmann's Force</i>	45
5 Pariah, 1963 Onward	57
Bibliography	61

*To Dakotah Brown,
Thank you for growing up with me*

Chapter 1

Introduction

On Saturday, May 16, 1964, Dr. Brigitte Granzow took the microphone on West Germany's public broadcast station, Westdeutscher Rundfunk. Granzow appropriately titled the weekend's radio show, "Eichmann in New York, London and Elsewhere."¹ Physically, Eichmann could not be *anywhere*, New York, London, West, or East; the Supreme Court of Israel sentenced Otto Adolf Eichmann to execution by hanging two years prior in 1962. The Eichmann Granzow spoke of was that crafted by Dr. Hannah Arendt, a renowned Jewish-German political philosopher and former Frankfurt School student, in her *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on The Banality of Evil*. In terms of totalitarian and post-Holocaust discourse—a subject that, for the first time, was brought to the academic spotlight—Arendt's contribution in asking unarticulated moral questions was substantial. Her *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, or the British edition's *The Burden of Our Times*, published in 1951, was one of the first attempts to explain the massive historical calamity of the twentieth century, the murder of six million European Jews. *Origins* was, as many of her works in the era, reviewed as too "abstract," "too dense, too rich," without "prose," though also as "the only work of real genius" from "the most valuable political theoretician of our times."² If anything, Arendt's public reception was full of contradictions.

¹Brigitte Granzow for Westdeutscher Rundfunk, "DIE BANALITÄT DES BÖSEN," 16 May 1964, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

²Dwight McDonald, "A New Theory of Totalitarianism," review of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt, *The New Leader*, 14 May 1951, box 87, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress; A. Alvarez, "Art and Isolation," review of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt, *The Listener*, 31 January 1957, box 87, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

Such literary fame was why editor William Shawn approved Arendt to “write a series of articles on the Eichmann trial for *The New Yorker*” at her behest, in utmost “cooperation” with her vision.³ Without deadlines or word limits to her writing, Arendt published five pieces between February and March 1963.⁴ Concurrently, Arendt prearranged a transfer of her reports’ copyright to Viking Press for book publication by March 1963.⁵ Arendt understood the contentious nature of *Eichmann*; however, she would not anticipate the hostile and ubiquitous critical reception it would bring to her work and character until her death in 1975. The *Eichmann* affair’s aftermath was sketched and interlaced in all her subsequent philosophies and theses, even laid plain as the primary motivation for writing her final book, *The Life of the Mind*.⁶

In the words of Dr. Karl Jaspers, Arendt’s dissertation advisor at Heidelberg University in Berlin and later trusted friend, Arendt was “a prodigal human being.”⁷ Arendt’s political philosophy stands as one of the most influential of the twentieth century. However, the breadth of its reception is vast, discordant, and incongruous. Like her work, she was dynamic, adaptive, and polarizing; she was crude, proud, and off-standish.

Even so, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was her most personal work, yet unexpectedly to Arendt, her most controversial. Unlike millions of Jews, Arendt’s dehumanization was not by the flesh and blood of Eichmann but by the black-and-white printed and leather-bound *Eichmann*. The critics who consumed it, or at least its reviews, were dejected for several (some very understandable) reasons. Still, much of the uproar, wrath, and condemnation centered on attributes Arendt could not control:

³William Shawn to Whom It May Concern, 6 April 1961, box 31, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

⁴*The New Yorker* published Arendt’s first piece on February 16, 1963, and the final work of the series on March 16, 1963.

⁵Arendt published an expanded edition in 1965. Hannah Arendt to William Shawn, 30 September 1962, box 31, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

⁶In *The Life of the Mind* (3), a work on thought and mental activity, Arendt wrote, “The immediate impulse came from my attending the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem.”

⁷Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, December 16, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, ed. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, trans. Robert Kimber and Rita Kimber (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1992), 134.

her Jewishness and, interestingly, her escape to New York. Despite many attempts to explain her thinking, Arendt could never absolve the opinion among some members of the public that she was a self-hating Jew.

Regrettably, minimal single works intertwine *Eichmann's* historical backdrop through primary sources, Arendt's philosophical underpinnings, critical evaluations, and a compassionate understanding of Eichmann's initial criticism. This reaction does not want to negate current extensive exploration of Arendt's legacy or the broader Eichmann tragedy. However, the predominant focus remains rectifying its misconstruction through Arendt's political philosophy.

Professor Margaret Canovan wrote two histories of philosophy on Arendt's work: *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, published in 1974, and *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, published in 1992. On the *Eichmann* affair, Canovan agreed that Arendt "had been thinking about for many years... the connection between thought and action."⁸ However, Canovan's analysis lacked substantive examination of critiques directed towards *Eichmann*; she instead integrating them alongside other objections to Arendt's oeuvre.

In 1978, after Ron H. Feldman compiled a collection of Arendt's articles on the Jewish Question in *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, academic work sought to recontextualize Arendt's opus within the framework of Jewish history.⁹ Unlike Canovan, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's 1982, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* placed Arendt's philosophy in its biographical and historical context with particular attention to Arendt's Jewishness: her early Zionism, Holocaust experience, and work as a Jewish-German woman. Young-Bruehl took *Eichmann* as her "link between her own *cura posterior* [later concern with totalitarianism]

⁸Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15.

⁹*The Jewish Writings* (2007) superseded *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*.

and her concern with judgment."¹⁰ Yet, as Canovan, Young-Bruehl interpreted *Eichmann's* criticism as misunderstanding and giving little regard to its substance.

Although not on the *Eichmann* affair in totality, as Young-Bruehl, Dagme Barnouw's *Visible Spaces: Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (1990) posed that *Eichmann's* "misunderstandings," either "psychologically motivated deliberate misreadings," were "symptomatic of the problems she addressed in her critical discussions of the many different forms of [Jewish] assimilationism."¹¹ Barnouw merits recognition for his endeavor that elucidated distinct factors contributing to the controversial reception of Arendt's text within the Jewish community; however, as many, Barnouw omitted private correspondents in favor of understanding *Eichmann* through Arendt's previous philosophy.

Thus, scholarly projects on Arendt's *Eichmann* tend to be more comprehensive; *Eichmann* is scarcely the prominent concern. In *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (2004), Seyla Benhabib, a political philosopher, contested that Arendt works with the "nature of the shared social world by representing its plurality in narrative form."¹² Benhabib's interpretation of Arendt's legacy delineated Arendt as the progenitor of a political philosophy intricately entwined with the exigencies of modern democratic and diverse societies. In a similar but more extreme attitude, Dan Diner's 1997 article, "Hannah Arendt Reconsidered," took Arendt's "radical universalism" as discordance with "Jewish self-conception"; the debate was "torn between a radical universalist, humanistic horizon on the one hand, and particularist resistances on the other."¹³ Meanwhile, in the multiauthor essay collection *Thinking in Dark Times, Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics* and Samantha Rose Hill's *Hannah Arendt* alleged that criticism arose from an unfamiliarity with Arendt's previous

¹⁰Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (1982; repr., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 377.

¹¹Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces: Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 224.

¹²Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 135.

¹³Dan Diner and Rita Bashaw, "Hannah Arendt Reconsidered: On the Banal and the Evil in Her Holocaust Narrative," *New German Critique* 71 (Spring–Summer 1997): 190.

texts. Hill suggested that Arendt's works were not "ends in themselves, but well-springs from which to begin the work of thinking."¹⁴ The texts did not provide a cogent rationale for the ubiquitous criticism of Arendt's work.

Contrastingly, historian Walter Laqueur in "The Arendt Cult: Hannah Arendt as Political Commentator" (1998) viewed Arendt's criticism as virtuous to her "limited" view of Western European ideology and identity.¹⁵ Adam Sack's 2013 article "Hannah Arendt's Eichmann Controversy as Destabilizing Transatlantic Text" added to Laqueur's view of Arendt's isolated Westernism and echoed the 1960's Jewishism criticism; *Eichmann* obstructed the narrative of the Holocaust, pitting the perpetrators of Jewish suffering as "common villains."¹⁶ Escaping the language of the immediate reaction to *Eichmann*, Anson Rabinbach's "Eichmann in New York: The New York Intellectuals and the Hannah Arendt Controversy" (2004) bridged the criticism of Jewish intellectuals with the political stakes at hand. The U.S. beckoned "newfound acceptance" for Jewish people; Arendt's work "threatened the progressive integration of Jews."¹⁷

Though lacking a comprehensive historiographical overview of criticism, Benhabib's 1996 article, "Identity, Perspective and Narrative in Hannah Arendt's 'Eichmann in Jerusalem,'" is one of the earliest labors to explicitly situate Arendt's *Eichmann* arguments within the framework of her Jewish identity. For Benhabib, *Eichmann* was "so close to who [Arendt] truly was," an endeavor for Arendt to explore the "deepest paradoxes of retaining a Jewish identity under conditions of modernity came to the fore."¹⁸ The personal nature of *Eichmann* was why Arendt struggled with "perspective"; no language could connect her "universalism," "modernist cosmopolitanism," and "belief in some form of collective Jewish self-determination" in

¹⁴Samantha Rose Hill, *Hannah Arendt* (London: Reaktion Books, 2021), 60.

¹⁵Walter Laqueur, "The Arendt Cult: Hannah Arendt as Political Commentator," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 4 (October 1998): 484.

¹⁶Adam J. Sacks, "Hannah Arendt's Eichmann Controversy as Destabilizing Transatlantic Text," *AJS Review* 37, no. 1 (April 2013): 122.

¹⁷Anson Rabinbach, "Eichmann in New York: The New York Intellectuals and the Hannah Arendt Controversy," *October* 108 (Spring 2004): 104, 109.

¹⁸Seyla Benhabib, "Identity, Perspective and Narrative in Hannah Arendt's 'Eichmann in Jerusalem,'" *History and Memory* 8, no. 2 (1996): 35.

the era of the Eichmann trial.¹⁹

Although existing scholarship has often centered "thinking" as a foundational thesis in Arendt's philosophy, this work understands that to meaningfully think about *Eichmann*, one must have a complete historical, personal, and philosophic picture. This research endeavors to enrich scholarly discourse and offer fresh insights into the enigmatic polemics of Arendt's *Eichmann* by transcending the limitations of established historiographies on its misconception. I argue that the criticism of *Eichmann* and Arendt's legacy led readers, readers-of-reviews, and listeners to discount her incredibly intentional and impassioned purpose; she, a German Jew, sought to compel the global community to a dialogue—to think—about its missteps that led to totalitarianism and mass death which was, importantly to Arendt, not an experience exclusive the Jewish people.

The misconception of Arendt's mission, embalmed in a time where there existed no words to articulate the narrative available—one of inexplicable loss, anger, and sorrow—was why when Granzow spoke to the listeners of Westdeutscher Rundfunk in 1964, although the primary translator for *Eichmann* in German, she had to address the "storm of Hannah Arendt... a masterpiece without soul."²⁰

This project proceeds as follows: Chapter 2, "*Nicht Einmal Unheimlich, Not Even Sinister,*" undertakes an atomistic analysis of *Eichmann* itself, devoid of an investigation into its reception. For Arendt, the Eichmann trial's grave oversight resided in its failure to provide adequate thought to how and why totalitarianism infiltrated Western political and social life. Arendt insisted that the entirety of the global community, including the Jews, bore a degree of responsibility for their participation in political and social structures conducive to the ascent of Nazism.

Chapter 3, "*Between You and I,*" foregrounds Arendt's unfiltered introspection over the backdrop of her critical reception. Through her private correspondences,

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Brigitte Granzow for Westdeutscher Rundfunk, "DIE BANALITÄT DES BÖSEN," 16 May 1964, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress,

Arendt's reflections illuminate her arguments in "Eichmann in Jerusalem" and offer intimate glimpses into her identity and character. Arendt's approach to friendships—cherished as profoundly as her scholarly pursuits—mirrored her work: didactic, conversational, and inquisitive.

The fourth chapter, "1963," expands the investigation to encompass critiques and praises from Jewish and non-Jewish communities. I divide Chapter 4 into two sections: Section 3.1, "Eichmann's Sickness," explores the initial reactions stirred by Arendt's articles in *The New Yorker*, while Section 3.2, "Eichmann's Force," delves into critiques following the publication of her book. Unfavorable (predominantly Jewish) reviewers pinned Arendt as a cosmopolitan, secularist, and self-hating Jew. Arendt was never against contradictory opinions nor saw her truth as ultimate; her dissatisfaction with *Eichmann's* criticism arose from its tendency to target her personhood, blatantly misinterpret her arguments, or neglect that *Eichmann* demanded meaningful dialogue. Thus, criticism eschewed Arendt's worry: the world would not think or act on the shared experience and responsibility for the Second World War. Totalitarianism was the West's horrific error.

The concluding chapter, "Pariah, 1963 Onward," dissects the modifications undertaken by Arendt in her later projects. Throughout her late oeuvre, she refined her language rather than altering her core thesis. Arendt contended that despite vast acknowledgment of the Holocaust, the genocide of six million Jews, and the rise of Nazism, the West remained docile. Her critics mistook her text—one that did not utter collective terms of innocence or guilt—as a denial of her Jewishness. *Eichmann* was a project concerned with thinking and active discourse with attention to plurality.

Chapter 2

Nicht Einmal Unheimlich, Not Even

Sinister

In this brief chapter, I explain that Adolf Eichmann and his trial were—in a figurative sense—inadequate questions. To Arendt, the trial’s most glaring oversight lay in its failure to adequately consider how and why totalitarianism infiltrated Western political and social life. It was, without a doubt, a personal endeavor for Arendt to arrive in Jerusalem in 1961 and, equally, to publish her reflections to an international audience. Arendt wrote to the Rockefeller Foundation, “You will understand, I think, why I should cover this trial; I missed the Nuremberg Trials... and this is probably my only chance,” declining a one-year grant to see “these people in the flesh.”¹

Until the first day of the trial on April 15, 1961, although having written extensively on National Socialism, Arendt had never *seen* an orchestrator of the Final Solution. In a similar vein, Arendt had never met Jewish self-determination; Israel was the “Zionist” solution to the “Jewish Question,” the problem of Jewish existence that plagued the decades (and history) prior. Arendt reported, “to attend this trial is somehow, I feel, an obligation I owe my past” was not only because of her Jewish identity but a testament to being under Nazism persecuted and stateless. In *Origins*, she wrote:

¹Hannah Arendt to Thompson, Rockefeller Foundation, December 20, 1960, Library of Congress. Cited in Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 329.

After the war it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only insoluble one, was indeed solved—namely, by means of a colonized and then conquered territory—but this solved neither the problem of the minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of our century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of the stateless and rightless. . . . The clearer the proof of their inability to treat stateless people as legal persons and the greater the extension of arbitrary rule by police decree, the more difficult it is for states to resist the temptation to deprive all citizens of legal status and rule them with an omnipotent police.²

Arendt's concern with the new State of Israel and Eichmann—head of the Reich's *Judenreferat* or Jewish Department within the Reich Main Security Office—is paradoxical and, importantly, inextricably linked with her work as a Jewish academic. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on Banality of Evil* was an attempt to, first, decipher the true character of Nazi perpetrators and the "ordinary German citizen" and, second, resolve her Jewish identity with the construction of Israel. Her central conclusion, although one among many, is laid plain in its title:

[Eichmann] then proceeded: "After a short while, gentlemen, we shall all meet again. Such is the fate of all men. Long live Germany, long live Argentina, long live Austria. I shall not forget them." In the face of death, he had found the cliché used in funeral oratory. . . . It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us—the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*.³

During Arendt's time in Jerusalem, Eichmann, "medium-sized, slender, middle-aged, with receding hair, ill-fitting teeth, [with] nearsighted eyes," was merely "the man in the glass booth built for his protection."⁴ He maintained "self-control despite the nervous tic" although, somehow, the Jew's "justice [insisted] on [his] importance."⁵ To Arendt, it was Eichmann's banality, his ordinariness, that was in active conflict with the "theatre" and "stage" of the State of Israel built to communicate

²Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New Edition (1951; repr., New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994), 290.

³Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963; repr., New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 252.

⁴Ibid, 5.

⁵Ibid.

“what the Jews had suffered, not on what Eichmann had done.”⁶ It was the fact that the Jewish people charged Eichmann not with crimes against humanity but crimes against Jews where Arendt saw moral and jurisprudential failings. In the fifteen counts encoded in Israel’s 1950 Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law—which, prior to Nuremberg, no similar written law existed—“acts against non-Jews,” the Poles, Romani, and Slovenes, “were lumped together... to which were added, once again, all his later crimes against Jews.”⁷

The flaw in this historical moment, when the Nazi crimes were unprecedented and where the District Court of Israel tried Eichmann, in all his ordinariness, bore, to Arendt, a performative deliverance of justice to both the defendant and the victim. A criminal tribunal, adorned with theatrics, could not provide the universal jurisdiction and cooperation demanded by the Final Solution; the Jewish people’s justice, which demanded an accused to be prosecuted, defended, and judged, was absent of all the other questions of greater importance: how and why could the Holocaust happen, and why the Jews?

Hannah Arendt’s problem in *Eichmann*, although riddled with others regarding legal concepts, procedures, and international law, was one concerning *thinking*.⁸ Half a dozen psychiatrists confirmed Eichmann was “normal” without moral or legal status for an insanity plea (despite Attorney General Gideon Hausner telling the *Saturday Evening Post*, after the trial, that Eichmann “had been alleged by the psychiatrists to be “a man obsessed with a dangerous and insatiable urge to kill... a perverted, sadistic personality”).⁹ Worse, to Arendt’s dismay, was that Eichmann

⁶Ibid, 6.

⁷Hans W. Baade, “The Eichmann Trial: Some Legal Aspects,” *Duke Law Journal* 1961, no. 3 (August 1961): 245; Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 245.

⁸As put by Benhabib (173) in “Hannah Arendt and the Redemptive Power of Narrative,” “Arendt’s work defies categorization while violating a lot of rules. It is too systematically ambitious and overinterpreted to be strictly a historical account; it is too anecdotal, narrative, and ideographic to be considered social science.” In *Between Past and Future* (202), Arendt maintained a special relationship between history, “the objective status of the culture world” with “tangible things... gives testimony to, the entire recorded past of countries, nations, and ultimately mankind.” Our historical understanding (*Verstehen*) is connected to Kant’s *Einbildungskraft* (“the power of creating, producing images”). What is at stake—if one does not think—in the relationship between history and representation is the ability “to take the standpoint of the other.”

⁹Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 26.

appeared to have no insane hatred of the Jews; he had “private reasons” to not hate the Jewish people.¹⁰ Although many of his closest acquaintances and inner circle were antisemites, Eichmann “‘personally’ never had anything whatever against” them.¹¹

Willem Sassen, a Dutch-German and former *SS-Kriegsberichterstatter* or Nazi war reporter (propaganda department), interviewed Eichmann from 1956 to 1957 in Argentina, where Sassen worked as an editor of the German language newspaper *Der Weg* (“The Way”). Eichmann fervently disapproved of Sassen’s final draft. He touted, “Only a madman could believe I [said] that.”¹² Regardless of Eichmann’s discontent, Sassen’s interviews eventually reached the trial’s discovery:

[Jews in Minsk, Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic] had to undress down to their shirts and then they walked the last 100 or 200 meters—they were not driven—by people from the Waffen SS and then they jumped into the pit. So, now I was standing there. It was impressive how the people jumped into the pit without any resistance. Then the guards standing around banged away with their 0890 rifles and sub-machine guns. And why did that scene remain so persistent in my memory? I had children myself in those days. I saw a Jewish woman hold a small child of maybe one or two years old, and at the same moment when I was about to say, “Don’t shoot, give the child to me”; at the same moment, the child was shot. I was standing so close that afterward, I found bits of brains splattered on my long leather coat. My driver then helped me remove them. Then we drove back to Berlin... I spoke maybe ten or twenty words. After all the unpleasantness, no, I thought about life in general. I told [Heinrich] Müller after all I had seen; the Solution is clear. [My role] was supposed to be a political one. But if the *Führer* has ordered a physical solution, it must be a physical solution, of course... Of necessity, our men will be educated to become sadists. We can’t possibly put a bullet in the brain of a defenseless woman with a child that she is holding out to us. That’s not how we solve the Jewish Question... No, I had no reason to. I didn’t just hate the Jews. In those days, I hated everything that was against the German people.¹³

¹⁰Ibid, 30

¹¹Ibid.

¹²“Meine Flucht - Adolf Eichmann,” undated, box 14, Adolf Eichmann Name File, The National Security Archive, College Park, Maryland.

¹³Adolf Eichmann, interview by Willem Sassen, “Texts of the tapes of the interview held by Willem Sassen with Eichmann in Argentina, Part One, 1956–1957,” 1956–1957, Record Group 0.65, File 85, 10622517, Collection of Jacob Robinson, Jurist and Diplomat, Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem, Israel, 32–33, 6.

All in the courtroom—Hausner, Judges Moshe Landau, Benjamin Halevy, and Yitzhak Raveh, witnesses, and spectators in Jerusalem’s Beth Ha’am, the House of the People—had a job *not* to believe him. Their business, to “sit in judgment on their enemies,” depended on the shared belief that, as Adolf Hitler, Eichmann was a “madman,” a “demon,” and “the incarnation of all evil.”¹⁴ Arendt reported nothing of the sort:

He merely, to put the matter colloquially, never realized what he was doing. . . . It was sheer thoughtlessness—something by no means identical to stupidity—that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period. And if this is “banal” and even funny, if with the best will in the world one cannot extract any diabolical or demonic profundity from Eichmann. . . . That such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in man—that was, in fact, the lesson one could learn in Jerusalem.¹⁵

Perhaps this idea of thoughtlessness, coupled with the State of Israel’s theatrics flaunting heroism, as Arendt declared, was why she pointed out an insincerity in the Jew’s actions from the 1960s versus the 1930s. In Arendt’s observations, there lived a stark “contrast between Israeli heroism and the submissive meekness with which Jews went to their death.”¹⁶ It was a critique on the nature of the Eichmann trial—one of truth and judgment, a common theme in Arendt’s current and future works—to which Arendt labels, one of many, “truths”; “if the Jewish people had really been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people.”¹⁷

¹⁴Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 99.

¹⁵Ibid, 287.

¹⁶Accounting Arendt in *The Life of the Mind*, it was (for Arendt) “a simple fact that no action ever attains its intended goal and that Progress—or any other fixed meaningfulness in the historical process—arises out of a senseless ‘mixture of error and violence’” (154). Because the Holocaust was senseless, the Jews could not claim heroism or progress; only “action, in which a We is always engaged in [can change] our common world” through “the solitary business of thought” (200); Ibid, 11.

¹⁷Ibid, 125

It was a conviction of Arendt's that the Jewish *Sonderkommando*, the "special command unit" of Jewish male prisoners in Nazi killing centers selected to gas and dispose of Jewish bodies ultimately to (unsuccessfully) prevent their own deaths, cooperated in actual killing "in order to save themselves."¹⁸ Likewise, the *Judenräte* (Jewish councils charged by the Nazis to run the ghettos) cooperated to, possibly, avert "more serious" consequences or spare the Jews' knowledge of their fates.¹⁹ In the original *The New Yorker* publication, though removed by Viking Press' publication, Arendt went to the extent of naming the honorary head of the Jewish council in Theresienstadt, Rabbi Leo Baeck, the "'Jewish Führer'" for not disclosing where, once Jewish people boarded German trains, they would truly be relocated.²⁰ Arendt heard Eichmann's testimony—that Eichmann himself "could have backed out" but opted to "avoid unnecessary hardships as much as possible"—as confirmation: "the postwar notion of open disobedience," for the Germans and Jews, "was a fairy tale."²¹

Along with the character of the criminal tribunal, among the many truths Arendt came to suppose in *Eichmann* through her own *thinking* was the disposition of Adolf Eichmann's arrest. Arendt's concerns were not a matter of whether Eichmann should or should not be penalized at some point for his crimes (she agreed with the outcome of the trial) but rather the breach of international law and the injurious potentiality of statelessness Eichmann's arrest in Argentina implied. Because the prosecution knew a pillar of Eichmann's defense would be of international concern—Argentinean authorities did not give permission to extradite Eichmann (or were aware of the Israeli Security Services presence in the country)—the prosecution provided proof that Eichmann willingly traveled to Israel. Eichmann, in even more elaborate and verbose language than asked by Israeli authorities, stated in writing that he held no

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid, 91

²⁰Arendt acquired the title from Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of European Jews* (292): "The Jewish 'Führer' in Berlin, as one of Eichmann's people called Rabbi Leo Baeck." Hilberg's historiography informed many of Arendt's opinion of "fact."

²¹Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 92.

objection: "I, the undersigned, Adolf Eichmann, hereby declare out of my own free will that since now my true identity has been revealed, I see clearly that it is useless to try and escape judgment any longer."²²

However, what "enabled the Jerusalem court to sit in judgment on him" was not of his own will but of "Eichmann's de facto statelessness."²³ According to Arendt, the truth was that Eichmann's legal disposition, living under the false identity of Ricardo Klement, born May 23, 1913, in South Tyrol, Austria, would be different if he were, truly, an Argentinean citizen or, at the very least as other Nazi perpetrators had, registered for asylum. Despite pages and paragraphs of legal argument, Arendt styled Eichmann's extradition from Argentina to Israel as a kidnapping. She alleged that Eichmann would know from his personal experience that "one could do as one pleased only with stateless people; the Jews had had to lose their nationality before they could be exterminated."²⁴ It was in statelessness that Eichmann had come voluntarily (a "fiction") to stand trial.²⁵

Arendt understood the moral and international failing with Eichmann—and the Israeli Jews assuming governance over the Arab people—amounted to the State of Israel participating in the same possibilities of statelessness enjoyed by National Socialism. Arendt figured this, accompanied by her other grievances, would not be voiced in Israeli court. If anything, *Eichmann* was a testament to Arendt's worry that no one asked the correct questions and, because her vision of truth escaped public discourse, the international community, especially the Jewish people, would not learn from (or potentially perpetuate) the atrocities and evil that surfaced from everyday ordinariness, as Eichmann was, awfully, ordinary. The Israeli state was *thoughtless* in how they judged and theatricalized Eichmann (and their justice).

To foreground the main points thus far: Arendt's contempt towards the trial's affairs is concerned with her perception of the general collapse in apt legal judgment

²²Ibid, 241.

²³Ibid, 240.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

in Europe, but more critically, a separate, yet intertwined, “massive problem.”²⁶ The Eichmann trial—and how it was solved—would serve as a “model or antimodel, as a precedent for a way of thinking and comprehending.”²⁷ Eichmann was a problem of *memory*.²⁸ Eichmann critiqued what Arendt saw as complete fabrication, not of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust nor the atrocities of Eichmann himself but of the past, one that could be looked at didactically.²⁹ *Menschheit* (mankind) was almost, if not wholly, absent from the “hysterical atmosphere,” the judge’s bench, and the reason for slamming the gavel.³⁰

Arendt understood that the Eichmann case, one “reduced to an Israeli issue,” concerned humankind, in no way “limited to the Jews or the Jewish question.”³¹ Its seriousness was misplaced from sight because the “political aspect of it was not taken into consideration,” i.e., genocide; Eichmann violated the fundamental human right for every human to inhabit the Earth, something inherently political in nature.³² The trial should have answered how the world, the Jews, and Israel’s children should remember the Holocaust and how sound political judgment may amend tragic loss. Yet, the thoughtlessness of how precedent—memory—functions

²⁶Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, December 16, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 413.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸In her essay “The Redemptive Power of Narrative,” Benhabib (181) adeptly articulates Hannah Arendt’s conception of memory: “The very structure of traditional historical narration, couched as it is in chronological sequence and the logic of precedence and succession, serves to preserve what was happened by making it seem inevitable, necessary, plausible, and in short justifiable. Nothing seemed more abhorrent to Arendt than the dictum that *die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht* (world history is the court of the world).” Arendt wanted to “break the chains of narrative continuity” and preserve the past without enslavement to it.

²⁹In *The Life of the Mind* (40), Arendt wrote, “According to Hegel, the mind, by sheer force of reflection, can assimilate to itself—suck into itself, as it were—not, to be sure, all the appearances but whatever has been meaningful in them, leaving aside everything not assimilable as irrelevant accident, without consequence for either the course of History or the train or discursive thought.” Because “human time... unthinkingly experiences” a “sheer motion,” the past is “mentally endangered by the minds anticipation of a second future” (43). “Anticipated remembrance,” our restlessness in the present, obstructs an imagining of the past as an “object of reflection” (44, 43). Being (in the present) is thinking (*dass das Sein Denken ist*).

³⁰Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, March 27, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 430.

³¹Ibid; Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, February 14, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 424; Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, February 5, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 421.

³²Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, January 5, 1962, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 464.

and how one should learn from experience would have “consequences not only for Israel but for the world.”³³ In private, ahead of and preceding *Eichmann*, Arendt worried about how the world would comprehend and reflect upon the past, “something dogmatic,” meaning always “left hanging around somewhere.”³⁴ To her, such an orientation was “what you get when Jews start writing history.”³⁵ Rather, it was what you got when Arendt wrote history.

For Arendt, one who, according to her mentor, had ultimate “insight into the way things work,” the Eichmann trial—a chance to reflect on totalitarianism—reduced to an intercontinental debate that defined the experience of the victims and referred to the crime against the Jewish people independently from the memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust.³⁶ They were thoughtless because, as Eichmann, they did not comprehend the gravity of their actions. In the words of Arendt, Eichmann was *nicht einmal unheimlich*, not even sinister. What struck Arendt as sinister was the narrative brought forth by the trial, which, to her dismay, seemed intent on forgetting their actions throughout Nazism. The legal results of Eichmann’s case would determine, to an imperative degree, the content of the world’s collective thought.

³³Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, December 16, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 413.

³⁴Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, June 25, 1950, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 150.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, December 10, 1965, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 617.

Chapter 3

Between You and I

The fact is that I love only my friends and am quite incapable of any other sort of love. – *Hannah Arendt to Gerhard Scholem, July 20, 1963*

Arendt's ideas did not emerge solely from individual judgment. She had a vast network of support in her personal affairs and, throughout *Eichmann*, a wide array of personalities dating back to before the Second World War. It would be a long ordeal to detail the beginnings of her correspondences. For her, academic dialogue was constant; apartments, bars, and letters were places to *think*. In this chapter, I aim to first characterize Arendt through her interactions with her three most prominent friendships: Karl Jaspers, Arendt's academic mentor; Heinrich Blücher, her husband; and Mary McCarthy, her closest friend. Arendt was not only a didactic thinker but a didactic person; everything, from her friends to her work to the past, was a lesson (and something worthy of judgment). After *Eichmann's* publication, friends bolstered (or hindered) Arendt's public persona.

In these intimate correspondences, I delve into her thoughts throughout the *Eichmann* trial. Arendt would have never imagined these years-long letters to be public: her prose was unsympathetic, and her thoughts were unfiltered. She is, horribly, ironic and macabre. How Arendt privately viewed her Jewishness is paramount, particularly in conversation with the utterly German Jaspers. Ultimately, she approached *Eichmann* much as she fashioned her interpersonal connections: a dialogue for continued contemplation.

In 1946, Arendt wrote to Jaspers that she “[had not] become respectable in any way” and was under the assumption that academics knew she was “not about to turn [her] convictions or ‘talents’ into a career.”¹ In the same letter to Jaspers, six years before *Origins*, she was “more than ever of the opinion that a decent human existence is possible today only on the fringes of society, where one then runs the risk of starving or being stoned to death.”² To Arendt, “a sense of humor [was] a great help” under the “circumstances” of her “infinitely complex red-tape existence” as a “stateless person.”³

Arendt’s humor was, indeed, dark yet, crucially, ironic. Irony as a tool and the difficulty or inability to understand or accept it—especially in unprecedentedly somber times—falters towards a tendency to simplify irony to literalness and, with Arendt’s tone, crudeness. Jaspers, a self-proclaimed “North German block of ice,” shared Arendt’s enthusiasm for satirical wit, and perhaps Jaspers was Arendt’s original influence.⁴ At twenty years old, Arendt studied under Jaspers at Heidelberg University in 1926, where, at the time, he was one of the two topmost German philosophers of existentialism, the other being Martin Heidegger. From its onset, Arendt and Jaspers’ relationship had been one of inquiry and argument, and particularly, Jaspers was subject to immense vacillation, naturally because of Arendt. In their first recorded exchange on July 15, 1926, she questioned Jaspers’ points in their previous seminar meeting: “How is it possible, on the basis of this view of the interpretation of history, *to learn something new from history?*”⁵ Whatever Jaspers said in their seminar meeting, Arendt responded, rather snappishly:

Because I am afraid I left you with the impression yesterday afternoon that I am not fully conscious of my violations of scholarly rigor and objectivity, please allow me to assure you once again that I will, of course, check

¹Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, January 29, 1946, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 28.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, August 9, 1959, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 337.

⁵Emphasis added. Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, July 15, 1926, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 3.

through my work as carefully as I possibly can, no matter how long it may take me.⁶

Arendt's views of history and problems with her current intellectual canon, even in her early years, were didactic concerns; there must, somehow, be a moral lesson. Mere surface phenomena—such as history or human action—must reflect deeper, subterranean streams of meaning. Arendt laced such approach in works preceding and following her *Eichmann*.

Over the post-war years, the few exchanges between Arendt and Jaspers revealed a cold irony in their relationship; Arendt, soon a Jewish refugee in New York, experienced a history in diametric opposition to Jaspers, who wrote about his illustrious “German essence,” an identity in “rationality and humanity, originating in passion,” a decent period through the post-war years.⁷ In 1933, Jaspers found it odd that Arendt “as a Jew” wanted to set herself apart “from what is German.”⁸ In the fall of 1945, the war's conclusion sparked a rekindling of Jaspers and Arendt's exchanges. The same year, Jaspers questioned his Germanness: “I think constantly now, with my heart, about what my being a German means.”⁹ Along with Germany's utter moral failing, the mass exodus of Jews to their death, and Arendt's forced exile, his marriage to the Jewish Gertrud Mayer left him at risk of persecution by the Nazis. He purported to possess a *jüdische Versippung* (Nazi jargon meaning Jewish taint). Until US troops occupied Heidelberg in March 1945, Jaspers and his wife were under relentless threat of removal to a concentration camp. Jaspers continued, “until 1933 [being German] was never problematic for me... The whole world shrieks at one, so to speak.”¹⁰

⁶Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, October 10, 1928, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 3.

⁷Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, January 1, 1933, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 15.

⁸Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, January 3, 1933, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 17.

⁹Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, July 20, 1947, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 92.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

Unlike Jaspers, Arendt never faltered in her identity: “I just noticed your question again about whether I’m a German or a Jew. To be perfectly honest, it doesn’t matter to me in the least on a personal and individual level.”¹¹ Neither spontaneously or at her own insistence, she never sensed herself to “be a German”; what remained after the war was “the language,” only necessary insofar when one “speaks and writes other languages.”¹² Arendt was German only to the extent of her original tongue. She questioned Jaspers, “Isn’t that enough?”¹³ The larger constructions brought about by ethnicity or nationality were obsolete, but politically, Arendt was Jewish; she would “always speak only in the name of the Jews whenever circumstances force [her] to give [a] nationality.”¹⁴ That is, Arendt’s identity was (necessarily) Jewish in the realm of political activity, as with Nazism and Israel. Decisively, she was “completely independent of Judaism” yet “still Jew nonetheless.”¹⁵ As such, she would “return only” to Germany if the Jews were “welcomed as Jews.”¹⁶ Being Jewish was wrapped in the historical plight against the Jews, one Arendt eventually wanted Jews to take responsibility for and rectify in its newfound contemporary identity under statehood.

Jaspers wrote, and Arendt agreed, that “the Nazi division between German superhumans and Jewish less-than-humans made inhuman monsters out of both.”¹⁷ As their correspondence continued, for Jaspers, Arendt embodied “shared memories of a lost past” with an insight “so pessimistic” yet “full of courage.”¹⁸ Arendt was an

¹¹Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, July 20, 1947, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 94.

¹²Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, December 17, 1946, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 70.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, September 4, 1947, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 96.

¹⁶Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, January 29, 1946, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 32.

¹⁷Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, August 17, 1946, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 53.

¹⁸Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, July 15, 1955, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 262; Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, December 10, 1965, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 617; Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, January 30, 1948, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 101.

embodiment of Jaspers' wistful optimism that "all is not lost with humankind."¹⁹ Their intellectual tutor and pupil relationship turned to one exceedingly heartwarming yet, as always, argumentative. It left room for Arendt to express in 1960, "I want to go to Israel for the Eichmann trial," and for Jaspers to respond, "I'm afraid it will not go well—I fear your criticism."²⁰

This time, it was Arendt who fell victim to vacillation, and Jaspers' task, among many others, was to come to understand why she changed her understanding of evil from *Origins* to *Eichmann*. Arendt has always believed that the organization of Jews in the Diaspora was "politically and socially impossible."²¹ Her concern—once again, wholly opposed to Jaspers—was rooted in her pessimism that Israel was now another nation among nations, not for Jewish people nor Western democracy, and would not act on something greater than its self-interest. For Jaspers, the construction and sanctity of religion via state sovereignty meant everything to the Jewish identity: "the destruction of Israel would mean the end of humankind."²² For Arendt, (all) religion meant "nothing whatsoever."²³

Arendt supposed in *Origins* that European imperialism forged such ideas of "race [identity] as a principle of the body politic" and that bureaucratic power mechanized foreign domination, which now, Arendt theorized, was Israel's portrait.²⁴ In December 1960, she wrote: "Israel is the only political entity we have. I don't particularly like it, but there's not much I can do about that. . . . Eichmann was responsible for Jews and Jews only, regardless of their nationality. In other words, other issues

¹⁹Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, July 7, 1956, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 188.

²⁰Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, October 4, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 402; Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, October 14, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 403.

²¹Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, October 6, 1954, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 248.

²²Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, February 24, 1957, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 311

²³Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, March 4, 1951, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 166.

²⁴Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 185.

and jurisdictions don't come into play here at all."²⁵ Arendt's expedition proved to be an assessment of who was right; Arendt concluded Jaspers was, unsurprisingly to her, not.

Before leaving in 1960, Arendt wrote to her close friend, Mary McCarthy, whom she had met at Murray Hill Bar in Manhattan in 1944. McCarthy, an American novelist and literary critic, possessed a certain insouciance that reminded Arendt of her husband Heinrich Blücher, who, ostensibly, reveled in refugee gags. Their relationship paused for three years in 1945 after McCarthy made a Hitler joke, to which Arendt responded, "How can you say such a thing in front of me—a victim of Hitler, a person who has been in a concentration camp!"²⁶ According to McCarthy, after running into Arendt on a subway platform, she apologized for the Hitler comment, and Arendt admitted that it was merely an internment camp.²⁷ Their affiliation in wit and literature was rivaled only by their love of ordinary gossip, McCarthy poking light fun at her dying friend, art historian Bernard Berenson, who still "lived only on gossip. What a rich feast I could give him, if I would, but I won't. Not even as a sort of blood transfusion."²⁸ Arendt expressed to McCarthy in 1960 that Eichmann "used to be one of the most intelligent of the lot. It could be interesting—apart from being horrible."²⁹ McCarthy teased, "well, first I think it's a wonderful and strange idea for you to go to the Eichmann trial for the *New Yorker*; I can't help grinning... I like to think of you and the *New Yorker* grammar and checking department."³⁰

When Arendt arrived in Jerusalem in April 1961, she arranged a triangle of exchange between Jaspers, who followed the European press in Basel, Switzerland,

²⁵Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, December 23, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 415.

²⁶Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt, For Love of the World*, 197.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Mary McCarthy to Hannah Arendt, May 21, 1957, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949–1975*, ed. Carol Brightman (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995), 47.

²⁹Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, June 20, 1960, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949–1975*, 81–82.

³⁰Mary McCarthy to Hannah Arendt, October 26, 1960, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949–1975*, 99.

Blücher, who reported on US news coverage from New York, and Kurt Blumenfeld, an old friend and former secretary general of the World Zionist Organization who translated Hebrew reports and socialized Arendt with Jerusalem politicians and academics (more on Blumenfeld in Chapter 4). Arendt related her reactions and conclusions, which, at first, were very little. The trial was “boringly normal,” “immeasurably boring,” and “worthless,” rendered with incessant talks of “non-existent precedents” that eclipsed the “unprecedentedness of the case.”³¹

Arendt’s apathy was only revived by her unconditional embarrassment and frustration at Gideon Hausner, who she described to Blücher as “a diligent schoolboy” with “ghetto mentality,” a European Jew “who wants to show off everything he knows.”³² To Jaspers, Arendt painted Hausner as a man with “artificial” arguments so “overly legalistic and with gross errors, interrupted by spells of emotion.”³³ For Arendt, the entire affair emitted an aroma of “unpleasant overeagerness”; favorable witness statements or striking legal proeses had the parties “finding absolutely everything wonderful.”³⁴ Its stench was “enough to make you throw up.”³⁵

Blücher—who neither published work nor had a high school degree yet lectured philosophy at Bard College—picked out much of the same theatricals Arendt perceived:

The Jews want to pour out their sorrow to the world and forget that they are there to relate facts. Of course, they have suffered more than Eichmann has. This is the real problem in the attempt to turn the trial into a kind of historical stock-taking. And furthermore: as repulsive as the horrors are, they are not exactly unprecedented; and many people, not only me, have the uneasy feeling that the true essentials are being plowed under in a welter of horror and atrocities... the public prosecutor isn’t charging Eichmann, but the whole world. The defense is defending God

³¹Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, April 13, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 434.

³²Hannah Arendt to Heinrich Blücher, mid-April, 1961, in *Within Four Walls: The Correspondences between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher, 1936–1968*, ed. Lotte Kohler, trans. Peter Constantine (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2000), 353–354.

³³Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, March 25, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 391.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

knows what hidden interests, but not Eichmann. As it is, every one knows the verdict.³⁶

Out of Jaspers and Blumenfeld, Blücher was the first to understand Arendt's ascription of Eichmann as banal, a pitiful example of diabolism, perched so sheepish behind his modest glass booth. These ascriptions grew to reject her original thesis in *Origins*, in which she fixed totalitarian evil as radical, "unpunishable, unforgivable absolute evil," one humanity "cannot conceive... like the Christian Devil."³⁷ The Western tradition for understanding totalitarian evil in religious allegory could not explain Arendt's new understanding: there was nothing special.

Defiantly, as always, Jaspers preferred Arendt's prior construction, as "such a functionality of bureaucratic murder cannot, after all, be without personally inhuman qualities."³⁸ Until *Eichmann* appeared in print and reviewed her work, Jaspers only concluded that the trial concerned "all of humanity" should be judged in the international arena, not only "by the victors" who have, historically, judged in "political actions."³⁹ Arendt partially objected to this, omitting the political nature of Nazi crimes and observing counterclaims, saying prior to departure that Israel had "the right to speak for the victims," as a "large majority of them (300,000) are living in Israel now as citizens."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, analogous ascriptions to Eichmann's reputed devilish demeanor—coupled with the "idealist" Shakespearean-esque drama that unfolded—led Arendt to write, privately to Jaspers, "how rotten this state [Israel] is."⁴¹

According to Arendt, the entire ordeal had been "artificially whetted," condemning the devilish Eichmann, merely "a ghost," as the "martyr" for "World anti-Semitism,"

³⁶Hannah Arendt to Heinrich Blücher, May 8, 1961, in *Within Four Walls: The Correspondences between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher, 1936–1968*, 366–367.

³⁷Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 459.

³⁸Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, June 8, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 439.

³⁹Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, December 16, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 413.

⁴⁰Arendt ultimately concurred with Jaspers. Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, December 23, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 415.

⁴¹Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, February 5, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 423.

who “minute by minute fades in substance” within his glass cage.⁴² Outside parades echoed the trial chambers, an “oriental mob” of “peies and caftan” Jews orbited the courthouse.⁴³ It was “comedy” that the three German judges—the “best of German Jewry”—spoke in Hebrew “when everyone involved knows and thinks in German.”⁴⁴ Arendt snickered that Prosecutor Hausner probably did not know any language.⁴⁵ Perhaps his lack in language was why Eichmann’s name, for days, was not mentioned:

It [the trial’s theatrics] is having an effect, not only on the Israeli spectators, who for weeks now have been filling the otherwise empty courtroom, but also on the journalists, it seems. The basic mistake—if one can say such a thing—is not only that Eichmann has been completely forgotten, his name often not mentioned for days on end (really typical, e.g.: after the prosecution put 29 volumes[!] concerning Hans Frank on the table, Servatius rose [the defense council] and asked: “Does the name Eichmann appear in any of these volumes?” The answer: “No”).⁴⁶

For a moment, Arendt confided in her husband that she may not stay for Eichmann’s defense, fearing that Robert Wechtenbruch, Judge Servatius’s assistant, would call her as a witness. What the real purpose was, Arendt could not decipher: “I don’t know,” she wrote to Jaspers at a loss, “I doubt that anyone here knows.”⁴⁷ Maybe the children who sat on their parent’s lap in the gallery, ages three to ten, knew the purpose. The “real youth” voiced that the trial was “their parents’ business,” and it did not concern them.⁴⁸ Arendt found the youth’s indifference rather testing, an “unexpressed” air of having “more important things to do.”⁴⁹

⁴²Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, April 13, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 435.

⁴³In Arendt’s time, “oriental” was not, as today, a so-called prejudiced word (e.g., Edward Said’s *Orientalism*). Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid, 434; Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, April 25, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 437; Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, April 13, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 434.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Hannah Arendt to Heinrich Blücher, May 6, 1961, in *Within Four Walls: The Correspondences between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher, 1936–1968*, 363–364.

⁴⁷Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, April 13, 1961, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 435.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

Arendt's most condemned argument was the involvement of Jewish Holocaust authorities in abetting the mass murder of Jews. Arendt's belief was neither original nor independent of her available literature. Bernard Lazare, a non-religious French Jew, wrote on Jewish responsibility for their political fate prior to the Second World War; similar points circulated in the immediate post-Holocaust discourse.⁵⁰ In 1952, Arendt reviewed Léon Poliakov's *Breviary of Hate: The Third Reich and the Jews*, an "excellent book," fixed in the (available) primary source material that mended many "misunderstandings and misjudgments," e.g., "generally exaggerated" power of Nazi Alfred Rosenberg and the role of Austrians in exterminating the Jews.⁵¹ Her review commended Poliakov's tenacity to discuss the less esteemed facets of Jewish Holocaust behavior:

Nowhere does Mr. Poliakov's integrity and objectivity show to better advantage than in his account of the ghettos and the role of their *Judenräte*, or Jewish councils. He neither accuses nor excuses, but reports fully and faithfully what the sources tell him—the growing apathy of the victims as well as their occasional heroism, the terrible dilemma of the *Judenräte*, their despair as well as their confusion, their complicity and their sometimes pathetically ludicrous ambitions. In the famous and very influential *Reichsvertretung* of German Jews, which functioned smoothly until the last German Jew had been deported, he sees the forerunner of the *Judenräte* of the Polish ghettos; he makes it clear that the German Jews, in this respect too, served the Nazis as guinea pigs in their investigation of the problem of how to get people to help carry out their own death sentences, the last turn of the screw in the totalitarian scheme of total domination. . . . Only if the reader continues, after everything about the exterminations has been made tangible and plausible, to feel his first reaction of outraged disbelief, only then will he be in the position to begin to understand that totalitarianism, unlike all other known modes of tyranny and oppression, has brought into the world a radical evil characterized by its divorce from all humanly comprehensible motives of wickedness.⁵²

⁵⁰See Bernard Lazare, *Antisemitism: Its History and Causes* (1890; repr., University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

⁵¹Hannah Arendt, "The History of the Great Crime: A Review of Breviaire de La Haine: Le IIIe Reich et Les Juifs (*Breviary of Hate: The Third Reich and the Jews*) by Leon Poliakov," *Commentary*, March 1952.

⁵²*Ibid.*

Arendt, on no account, claimed—in her *Commentary* review or *Eichmann*—that the *Judenräte* acted without unprecedented conditions; the Jewish Councils were in a position no person could comprehend without being shackled in totalitarianism.

Regardless of Poliakov's history, however, the conclusions drawn in this era on the Holocaust and the *Judenräte* could not adequately examine the entire intricacy and nuances of Jewish leaders in ghettos or elsewhere; it was purely too premature. The 1961 three-volume *The Destruction of the European Jews* by Raul Hilberg, a Jewish Austrian-born American social scientist and historian, was the first accredited and seminal effort with wide acclimation. Hilberg's work ignited a wave of subsequent scholarly inquiry into the Holocaust. Hilberg claimed—with fiery criticism after publication—that the Jewish Councils “became increasingly impotent in their efforts to cope with the welfare portion of their task [in the Jewish ghettos], but they made themselves felt all the more in their implementation of Nazi decrees” until “many Jewish leaders felt an almost irresistible urge to look like their German masters.”⁵³ Utilizing late 1940's reports, Hilberg wrote that the “Jewish oligarchy” resided in “luxury,” wore military boots; in the extreme case of Chaim Rumkowski, head of the Council in Łódź, Poland, he printed postage stamps in his likeness and branded those beneath him as “my Jews.”⁵⁴ From the inside of Jewish ghettos, it “seemed already quite clear that the Jewish leaders had become rulers, reigning and disposing.”⁵⁵

Hausner jabbed Hilberg in *The New York Times*: “There are now some historians,” he warned reporters, “fortunately few in number, who for one reason or another cruelly and falsely blame the Jews and their leaders for letting themselves be slaughtered.”⁵⁶ Accounts of Jewish cooperation were, according to Hausner, “twisted and distorted by some who want to rewrite history.”⁵⁷ While Hausner argued that the

⁵³Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. 1 (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1985), 218.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Irving Spiegel, “Hausner Criticizes Book on Eichmann,” *The New York Times*, May 20, 1963.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Eichmann trial unveiled “the bare facts,” omission of the *Judenräte*’s involvement and transgressions affirmed Arendt’s convictions. Israel’s 1950 Law of Punishment of the Nazis and Their Collaborators—used to try Eichmann in Jerusalem—included articles to exonerate Jewish Holocaust survivors.

Arendt wrote to Jaspers that the trial should have revealed “what a huge degree the Jews helped organize their own destruction”; lamentably, “Mr. Eichmann personally never harmed a hair on a single Jew’s head, indeed, that neither he nor his accomplices even took part in selecting.”⁵⁸ Jewish aid in the Holocaust was Arendt’s “naked truth” but had potential to “stir up more anti-Semitism than ten kidnappings.”⁵⁹ She, notably, never used the word “collaboration” (opted for “cooperation”) in *Eichmann*, nor did she indulge herself in blanket terms of collective guilt or innocence or good and evil. Arendt adored prescriptions of paradox and, of course, comedy; for Israel to hold a trial fashioning holistic views of who was moral and not was, undeniably to Arendt, ironic.

The trial had a “macabre humor,” Arendt penned to McCarthy, “half-way recovered from the Eichmann-torture.”⁶⁰ Imperious in tone and a heavy hand of irony met with an Israeli trial for Jewish justice gave *Eichmann* a dubious read. Categorically, it lent itself to misconstructions, though notwithstanding a myriad of minor factual inaccuracies and insensitive conjectures. Arendt described—in private correspondence—Eichmann as “profoundly, egregiously stupid” or ordinary; this would not receive immediate acclaim by a mass who had or had not experienced Nazism firsthand (even her closest friends leered at “banal”).⁶¹ Arendt viewed the first drafts of her manuscript as “the handling of facts and concrete things,” which she “somehow” expressed enjoyment for, while others received it as flagrant lies. To McCarthy, Arendt, frazzled by the onslaught of criticism, stressed that “the point of

⁵⁸Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, December 23, 1960, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 417.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, May 31, 1961, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949–1975*, 119.

⁶¹Mary McCarthy to Hannah Arendt, June 9, 1971, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949–1975*, 296.

the whole business was that we were supposed to look upon a human being (not upon the 'Eichmann in us,' God forbid)."⁶²

Arendt published her first installment of *Eichmann* in *The New Yorker* on February 14, 1963. She found herself thrust into the intense glare of public scrutiny, a challenge for which she was wholly unprepared and never willed for herself. It was, as McCarthy described the new Germany, "thanks to Hitler," a *terra incognita*, "making one feel like an explorer."⁶³ However, and this is putting the matter lightly, Arendt inserted herself into the memory and experience of a story—an intensely Jewish one—that numerous individuals sought to control for a variety of distinct purposes or, less radical, merely wished to mourn without some philosophical lesson. Some *wanted* Eichmann to be radically evil, not an echo of ordinariness or a didactic model of paradox between Israeli statecraft and totalitarian imperialism. Unprecedented in many ways, but most outstandingly, how unprecedented was that the Jewish past—viewed exclusively as a crippling disability—held the potential to be reclaimed and empowered. The Eichmann trial presented the opportunity to transform the old Jewish identity into a contemporary re-imagining: a collective story and authority over their suffering and martyrs.

Arendt's approach was ill-fit from the beginning. Part of the problem was how she said it: most of *Eichmann's* critique centered on Arendt's presentation of human catastrophe and Jewish cooperation through distasteful-to-most ironic prose. For Arendt, Jewish organizations, academics, and every individual who lived through the era of Western totalitarianism failed; they were *thoughtless* in how they engaged with their immediate, worrying past. Hitler was a consequence borne of the world's shared actions and oversights; he was not exclusively a Jewish narrative. Blücher, a rare individual within Arendt's inner circle who consistently embraced and echoed her ideas, succinctly expressed their shared concern to Jaspers, held long before the

⁶²Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, February 2, 1964, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*, 160.

⁶³Mary McCarthy to Hannah Arendt, March 19, 1969, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*, 234.

Eichmann trial unfolded:

The random undercurrents of human events is a maelstrom, driven by interests, that sucks us clowns into its depths. For an interest is not the cunning of reason but the obstruction of reason. This societal maelstrom has smashed into European history and flooded it. The deluge rises higher and higher, and it becomes less and less possible to draw off from this headlong rush a fruitful stream of the historical... Instead, this boiling mass society is ghostlike, isolated individuals suffer from the delusion that history is being made directly here. They want to move directly from the past to the future by leaping over the present, as if a future could ever open up for human beings who have lost sight of eternity.⁶⁴

To borrow from Edgar Allen Poe's literature, "A Descent into the Maelstrom," a maelstrom is "the most terrible hurricane that ever came out of the heavens."⁶⁵ Even before the five articles appeared in *The New Yorker*, Jewish organizations set forth upon Arendt's *Eichmann*. Arendt journeyed to the Eichmann trial to judge the Jews; it was now the Jews' turn to judge Arendt.

⁶⁴Heinrich Blücher to Karl Jaspers, February 14, 1956, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 278.

⁶⁵Edgar Allan Poe, *A Descent into the Maelstrom*, (United Kingdom: Read Books Ltd., 2012), 19.

Chapter 4

1963

Arendt's criticisms entered during an incredibly tumultuous period of her life. Not only was Arendt dealing with personal health problems, but her husband suffered an aneurysm, and Blumenfeld lay on his deathbed. Before publishing *Eichmann* through the Viking Press in 1963, outside relationships dwindled. *Eichmann* was—what I want to call—a sickness. Arendt's arguments sickened many connections between familiars, academic partners, and Jewish organizations of which she was formerly a member. Her confidantes, alongside the frailty of her own body, faltered. Chapter 4.1 delves into the immediate response to Arendt's articles in *The New Yorker*, set against Arendt's health. This chapter exposes the erosion of significant, decades-long relationships, notably exemplified by Blumenfeld, abruptly severed due to Arendt's publication. I interject to clarify why Jewish organizations and intellectuals responded with haste and tenacity. In no way do I aim to villainize Arendt's critics; Arendt's perspective on why she faced reproach (to a significant extent) failed to come to a meaningful conclusion.

In Chapter 4.2, following the print of *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* in the United States, I work through notoriously unfavorable reviews of Arendt and refutations fastened by Arendt or, more commonly, colleagues of her "side." Unfavorable reviewers and readers—public and private—pinned Arendt as

a cosmopolitan (ironically, a claim with antisemitic undertones), secularist, and self-hating Jew.¹ I end with McCarthy's disapproval of Arendt's actions: Arendt found herself adept at sidestepping any criticism of *Eichmann* that veered too close to the heart of her discomfort.

For the entirety of "1963," I argue that Arendt and Jewish academics and organizations were at inextricable odds, in part over technicalities of whose "truth" was *the truth*, but more importantly, because they worried about different matters. The Jewish community worried that *Eichmann* would cast the Jews into another experience of pariahdom, historical outcasts; Arendt worried that the world could not think or remember with attention to plurality. In other words, Arendt understood that an event's memory implicates *all* thought of it for years onward. I preserved the bulk of that argument for the subsequent chapter. Even so, a modern rise of totalitarianism implicated and affected all. For Arendt, such an event could not evade reflection: "No non-Jewish group or people behaved differently."²

4.0.1 *Eichmann's Sickness*

On the brisk morning of March 19, 1962, Central Park awoke to a scene painted with a delicate palette of early spring hues. Arendt, bundled in an overcoat, signaled for a passing yellow taxi. Irrespective of Arendt's original destination, the city had scripted an alternative plan; the taxi now sat totaled at an intersection. With a sense of relief that her limbs moved, she instinctively tried her memory, in Arendtian fashion, working decade-by-decade through Greek, German, and English poetry. In the ambulance bound for Roosevelt Hospital—Blücher followed swiftly

¹In Anton Lourié's "The Jew as a Psychological Type," aimed to comprehend why Jews are the "classical scapegoat of time," he lists a series of antisemitic claims: The "vision of the dangerous Jews" is one that "monopolize money or political power, who engage in international conspiracies for their own sinister purposes, who stir up wars between the nations, pollute their racial purity, enslave them economically, etc." (154). Antisemitic stereotypes necessitate cosmopolitan. On the matter of Arendt's "self-hatred," Susan A. Glenn in "The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred in Post-World War II America" argued that "Jewish 'self-hatred,' and willful 'betrayal' of the Jewish people" in the 1950s and 1960s centered on one's level of commitment to the "Zionist project" (96, 122). Why many Jews post-Holocaust pinned others as self-hating remains vibrant in academic debate.

²Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 31.

behind—fifty-five-year-old Arendt remained conscious but bore visible signs of the collision that would last several months: nine broken ribs (“a bit uncomfortable”), bruising around both eyes, a cracked wrist, a lost tooth, and lacerations.³ A concussion commanded closer examinations and required shaving a section of her hair, an unwelcome souvenir that led Arendt to start a collection of head scarves.

She returned to her apartment from Roosevelt on March 30, and Jaspers elatedly welcomed her homecoming (in ink): “The reality of this serious accident was present to us, the borderline of life so close that it seemed for a moment as if darkness were descending on the world. But Hannah is still alive! She raises her head from the abyss and declares, although injured everywhere, that the whole business has been much exaggerated.”⁴

Work took a backseat; Arendt’s humanity stole the forefront. Days following her discharge, she wrote to McCarthy, “I had the feeling that it was up to me to decide whether I wanted to live or to die. And though I did not think that death was terrible, I also thought that life was quite beautiful and that I rather take it.”⁵ Nevertheless, no coming-to-life moment could shed Arendt’s typical demeanor, her organizing a slew of optometrists because of a “great lack of confidence in the whole profession,” the hospital food “incredibly and outrageously bad,” and adding her two-cents on McCarthy’s travel partner: “I hardly know Rebecca West but did not like her.”⁶ As far as lasting damage was concerned, Arendt was “of course, primarily concerned about [her] appearance,” a “Picasso that turned out wrong.”⁷ She was certainly poking fun at the whole grim event, but still, alive, she approached it with

³Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, April 4, 1962, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*, 126; Extent of Arendt’s injuries are detailed in Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, March 31, 1962, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 473.

⁴ Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, March 27, 1962, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 473.

⁵Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, April 4, 1962, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*, 127.

⁶Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, May 20, 1962, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*, 132; Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, April 4, 1962, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*, 127.

⁷Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, March 31, 1962, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 474.

softness: “Dying seemed quite natural to me, by no means a tragedy, or something to get worked up about. But at the same time, I said to myself, if I can manage it decently, I’d really very much like to stay in this world.”⁸

Arendt responded to Jaspers’ heartfelt letter, “I keep thinking about your one sentence . . . ‘as if darkness were descending on the world,’ and I thank you and can’t forget it.”⁹ Absolutely, there was a heavy air of despair—“Mary, I am a bit worried about depression”—but it was not in isolation. While Arendt lectured Machiavelli at Wesleyan University in the fall of the year prior, Blücher suffered a brain aneurysm; McCarthy filled her role in the interim. Her post-*Eichmann* project, *On Revolution*, was postponed to care for her husband in New York and, later, by a severe reaction to antibiotics in January (plus the taxi accident). Amid physical sickness was the intellectual, that of *Eichmann*.

On March 7, 1963, Siegfried Moses—a close friend of Blumenfeld’s, the former state comptroller of Israel, and speaker for the Council of Jews from Germany—“declared war” against Arendt and her *Eichmann*.¹⁰ Signed with the council’s weighty authority, Moses further vowed battle against Hilberg’s *The Destruction of the European Jews* and Bruno Bettelheim’s “Freedom from Ghetto Thinking.” Arendt responded and warned that Hilberg’s audience was limited to scholarly readers; Bettelheim’s was a mess of Freudian psychoanalysis, i.e., something that would not lend itself to a high intellectual level. To avoid confusion in their war on many fronts, the council should attack her book and hers alone.¹¹ Moses was the first of many longstanding

⁸Echoing Young-Bruehl’s biography, Arendt possessed a “love of the world.” Nevertheless, Arendt’s understanding of death had a deep connection to her theses on history and thought in *Between Past and Future*: “[In contemporary] Man lives in this in-between, and what he calls the present is a life-long fight against the dead weight of the past, driving him forward with hope, and the fear of a future (whose only certainty is death), driving him backward toward ‘the quiet of the past’ with nostalgia for and remembrance of the only reality he can be sure of” (205). A continuum of living in-between “depends on the continuity of our everyday life, and the business of everyday life, in contrast to the activity of the thinking” (205). In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt (43), quoting Hegel, wrote “only the mind that that ‘does not ignore death’ enables man to ‘dominate death,’ to ‘endure it’ and to maintain itself within it.” Ibid.

⁹Ibid, 475.

¹⁰Siegfried Moses to Hannah Arendt, March 7, 1963, box 44, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

¹¹Hannah Arendt to Siegfried Moses, March 12, 1963, box 44, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

connections to acquire *Eichmann's* cold.

Moses and Arendt first met in Berlin at the behest of Blumenfeld in the late 1920s. As colleagues, in 1959, Moses urged Arendt, then lecturing a semester at Princeton University, to attend a conference at the Leo Baeck Institute in London. Not only would Moses "be happy about it" but other German-speaking Jews: Gershom Scholem, Simon Grünwald, Solomon Adler-Rudel, and Rabbi Hans Tramer from the Institute's Jerusalem branch and Max Kreutzberger from New York's. Arendt planned to travel to Europe for personal affairs but would not arrive in time for the conference. In December 1961, Arendt was extended an invitation and contributed to a commemorative publication scheduled for Moses' 75th birthday on May 3, 1962.

Although Moses had a rich understanding of Arendt's philosophy and character, the Council of Jews from Germany issued a public statement "Jewish Dignity and Self-Respect" in *Aufbau*, a New York City newspaper catering to German-Jewish immigrants. *Aufbau* held particular significance for Arendt, who contributed extensively to its pages during her initial years in New York from 1941 to 1942. Nevertheless, *Aufbau's* March 29 spread bore "About the Sensational Series of Articles in *The New Yorker*: The Storm of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann*." *Aufbau* levied critique against Arendt on two fronts: Arendt's likening of Leo Baeck to Hitler as a "Jewish 'Führer'" and her claim that Jewish leadership lacked organization, consequently contributing to more deaths than otherwise during the Final Solution. The council wrote that Arendt "considers herself entitled to state that Jewish leaders had a part in the annihilation of their own people and that this collaboration was of decisive importance to the National Socialists in the carrying out their plans. She misinterprets the attitude of men of whose integrity and self-sacrifice there can be no possible doubt."¹² Noting her shift from radical evil to banal evil, they continued:

For some of her assertions there are absolutely no recognizable sources; in some cases her own wording shows that there cannot be any proofs for the accusations; and to a small degree those accusations rest on inadmissible

¹²The Council of Jews from Germany, "Jewish Dignity and Self-Respect," *Aufbau*, March 29, 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

generalization of individual cases. But entirely irresponsible is the conclusion which the writer draws from unfounded assertions, namely that if the Jews had had no leaders, the total number of Jewish victims would have scarcely reached 5 to 8 millions.¹³

Moses angrily penned to Arendt, characterizing this final segment—the lack of Jewish lead and death toll—a “demonstrable assertion.”¹⁴ However, Arendt’s assertions were purposeful, her intentions clear; she was convicted to expose what laid veiled within the courtroom’s stories. Her critique was not an indictment of Jewish figures out of malice, but rather in (her) truth.

Nonetheless, claims of Jewish “collaboration,” a word she never used, were a fragment of Eichmann’s broader narrative. For the Jews in Israel, Eichmann’s actions were “satanic,” and Arendt’s words were “absurd to any sensible persons.”¹⁵ The same *Aufbau* spread chastised Arendt’s portrayal of the German Jews involved in the hearing. For they, the many witnesses and Attorney General Gideon Hausner, “approached the ‘Eichmann’ case... not only with their heads, but with aching souls.”^[3] It was “precisely an aching, bleeding soul that Hannah Arendt” lacked.¹⁶

Moses, alongside the Council of Jews from Germany, crafted extensive initiatives spanning months to avow the unwavering integrity and dignity of the Jewish community and its leadership amidst the most “trying circumstances.”¹⁷ Undoubtedly, it was a lamentable foul on Arendt’s part to cast an indiscriminate picture upon Jewish leaders throughout the Second World War. Furthermore, *Eichmann’s* lack of clarity exasperated her error: her critique of the *Judenräte* pertained to their actions prior to the deportation phase of the Final Solution.¹⁸ While this clarification

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Siegfried Moses to Hannah Arendt, March 7, 1963, box 44, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁵ Frederick R. Lachman, “Ein Meisterwerk ohne Seele,” *Aufbau*, March 29, 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷The Council of Jews from Germany, “Jewish Dignity and Self-Respect,” *Aufbau*, March 29, 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

¹⁸*Eichmann in Jerusalem* diverged from the actions observed in concentration camps, which was the subject of discussion in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. In *Eichmann*, she delineated the various phases of the Nazi’s genocidal scheme: 1) Nazis targeted Jews through legislation and distinctive markings such as the yellow star (155, 188), 2) then herding them into ghettos (203) followed by deportation or “resettlement” (204), and 4) ultimately dispatching them to death camps (89, 192). Arendt directed

might not have fully assuaged her critics or those who viewed her unfavorably, she did offer this explanation privately to a reader of *Eichmann*, “there is one significant mitigating factor: the collaboration unfolded gradually, making it exceedingly challenging to discern precisely when the threshold of unacceptable compromise was breached.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, despite Blücher’s characterization of Arendt as a *Mädchen aus der Fremde*, a “fair stranger,” she (seemingly) made sweeping generalizations that inevitably invited plentiful criticism. To quote Mary Sykrin, one of Arendt’s most outspoken critics, “Miss Arendt accuses the Jewish people in totality.”²⁰

Arendt’s “totality” is likely why the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) took a proactive stance, arguably preceding the Council. As early as March 19, 1963—a few days over a month after the first installment of *Eichmann* appeared in *The New Yorker* on February 13—Arendt’s acquaintance and ADL director of publications, Henry Schwarzchild, laid it plain: “The Jewish community is up in arms.”²¹

Schwarzchild cautioned that the impending onslaught against Arendt and her book was beyond his sphere of influence. Eight days prior, on March 11, the ADL’s Arnold Forster circled a memorandum to all regional offices with purpose to provide “a small assist in handling some aspects of the problem that may confront you.”²² The memorandum accredited *Eichmann* for disseminating that “the Jews not only passively permitted themselves to be destroyed, but actually supervised the administrative details of the Final Solution.”²³ Surely, Arendt likely never even imagined this, but regardless, the advent of *The New Yorker* articles evoked a stirring

criticisms of the *Judenräte* to their conduct preceding the deportation phase, prior to the full onset of the Nazi terror—moments when, in certain instances, resistance or non-cooperation could potentially have mitigated the death toll. However, she refrained from advocating resistance or non-cooperation in situations where they were impractical.

¹⁹Hannah Arendt to Philippe de Freudiger, September 8, 1963, box 43, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁰“More on Eichmann,” *Partisan Review* 31, no. 1 (April 1964): 254.

²¹Henry Schwarzchild to Hannah Arendt, 19 March 1963, box 22, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

²²Memorandum by Arnold Forster, “For Your Information Memorandum to ADL Regional Offices From Anti-Defamation League,” 11 March 1963, box 22, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

²³*Ibid.*

within the hearts and minds of many Jewish organizations. Certainty, the Anti-Defamation League sought to preempt any ill discourse.

The Anti-Defamation League and the Council of Jews from Germany stood as stalwart critics amidst a choir of unfavorable voices. *The Reconstructionist*, a biweekly periodical “dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization,” lauded Arendt as “a highly competent scholar” with work “authoritatively documented” but nonetheless “tasteless” for dwelling on “Jewish submission.”²⁴ Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, who along with her husband had co-founded the School of the Jewish Woman in New York City in 1933, titled an article in her quarterly magazine *The Jewish Spectator*, “Self-Hating Jewess Writes Pro-Eichmann Series for New York Magazine.”²⁵ In the subsection “Self-Hatred,” Weiss-Rosmarin wrote: “Miss Arendt is a highly gifted and intelligent thinker. In fairness to herself, she should disqualify herself from writing on Jewish themes to which she brings the pathology and confusion of the Jew who does not want to be a Jew and suffers because ‘the others’ will not let him forget that he is a Jew.”²⁶ The latter half of Weiss-Rosmarin’s article offered counterexamples to Arendt’s “absurd” claims backed by “no documentary evidence,” other than—as *The Reconstructionist* also points out—Hilberg’s *The Destruction of European Jewery*.²⁷

Addressed to their congregation, the Chicago synagogue pamphlet *K.A.M. News* recounted Arendt’s “fearsome indictment” as antithetical to new political and social security: “But we are not too close to determine which of these Jews are eager to separate themselves from us and to declare Jewish survival a colossal blunder and which are eager to be part of us and make Jewish survival the most heroic, if often tragic, grandeur history has ever known.”²⁸

²⁴Judah Cahn, “The *New Yorker* Series on Eichmann,” *The Reconstructionist*, vol. XXIX, no. 3, 22 March 1963, p. 22, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

²⁵Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, “Self-Hating Jewess Writes Pro-Eichmann Series for New York Magazine,” *Jewish Spectator*, 18 April 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Jacob Weinstein, “Dear Congregant,” *K.A.M. News*, April 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

Rabbis, editors, and Jewish academics hastily took to the pages of newspapers, bulletins, and magazines. Many began their paragraphs with rebuttals such as “Contrary to the author’s claim” or “Yet despite the author’s insistence.”²⁹ A distinguished international lawyer of Russian-Jewish heritage and the prosecution’s consultant during the Eichmann trial, Dr. Jacob Robinson’s critique of *Eichmann* was widely reproduced across numerous Jewish magazines and newspapers. He attributed Arendt’s book as “a mine of misinformation, generalities, distortions, half-truths, suppression of evidence running against her thesis, and flatly contradictory statements on numerous points discussed.”³⁰ In (not-so-much) irony, he touted “to counter all the hundreds of errors in fact and judgment a book would be necessary.”³¹ Unbeknownst to Arendt, he would publish this book, *And the Crooked Shall Be Made Straight: The Eichmann Trial, the Jewish Catastrophe, and Hannah Arendt’s Narrative*, in 1966.

While negative headlines about Arendt’s *The New Yorker* articles plagued both Jewish and non-Jewish newspapers in the United States, Moses flew from Israel in mid-March to meet with Arendt in Switzerland. He hoped to persuade Arendt to prevent Eichmann from being immortalized in print. Having already challenged Moses with no sight of backing down—or reflecting on *how* she was saying her piece—Arendt scoffed: “Her Jewish critics were going to make the book into a cause célèbre and thus do more damage to the Jewish community than anything she had said could possibly do.”³²

Why would Arendt reason that the Eichmann trial would damage the Jewish community? In Chapter 2, I briefly touched on how the collective memory of the Eichmann trial would have vast consequences for both the Jewish community and Western politics. As Arendt favored absolute didacticism in her writings and was

²⁹Marie Syrkin, “Miss Arendt Surveys the Holocaust,” *Jewish Frontier*, May 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

³⁰Jacob Robinson, “Miss Arendt’s Eichmann,” *Hadassah Magazine*, June 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

³¹Ibid.

³²Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 349.

concerned with truth throughout Eichmann, the problem is twofold. On the one hand, the Eichmann trial and Jewish ascriptions of evil served to—in Arendt’s view—misrepresent Eichmann’s character. On the other, she understood the trial as a dishonest attempt to portray the entirety of the Jewish collective as innocent; the *Jewish leaders* were not guiltless. For Arendt, the truth was that the *Judenräte* and disorganized Jewish leadership—again, prior to the deportation stage—facilitated greater mass murder than might have otherwise occurred. Never did Arendt assign any blame to the ordinary Jewish citizen: she attempted, although unsuccessfully, to set a distinction. In a private letter from 1963 to McCarthy, Arendt accentuated this point: “The matter is that the absolute terror of which I spoke in the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, was present for the Jews in the camps, and, generally speaking, for the Jewish people. But this was by no means true for the ‘leaders.’”³³ As for ordinary Jewish resistance, outside or inside the camps was “well-nigh impossible.”³⁴ Her truth was not that the Jewish leaders should have resisted but that the Jewish leaders should not have participated at all, i.e., practice “non-participation.”³⁵

This is not to imply that Arendt opposed plurality of thought or sought to impose *her own* truth; Arendt never aimed to “indoctrinate” (more on this in Chapter 5).³⁶ National Socialism shattered any notion of history following a linear path of progress. The overwhelming worry surrounding Arendt’s thesis—and its potential (if misrepresented) to intensify antisemitism—acted as the catalyst for the deluge of public discourse regarding the appropriate memory. In confronting the perceived threat posed by Arendt, her critics found themselves compelled to shape a collective understanding of the Holocaust, primarily through their critical engagement with—and subsequent rebuttal of—her work.³⁷ This, of course, came at the expense

³³Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, September 20, 1963, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949-1975*, 147.

³⁴Ibid, 148.

³⁵Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, September 16, 1963, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*, 146.

³⁶Hannah Arendt and Melvyn A. Hill, eds., *Hannah Arendt, the Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 336.

³⁷Arendt rejected isolated “collective” remembrance. In *The Life of the Mind*, she wrote, “Nothing that is, insofar as it appears, exists in the singular; everything that is is meant to be perceived by

of her character. After *Origins* entered the public sphere, Arendt was (if not “the”) credible authority on totalitarianism.

Naturally, numerous individuals lauded Arendt’s articles in *The New Yorker*. After all, *Eichmann* was an international affair. In April 1963, one review praised, “Again and again, Miss Arendt probes and ponders this question of conscience, not with relish but with pain and a sickness in her heart.”³⁸ Others commended her “baffling” questions and her eradication of Eichmann’s “bogus mystique.”³⁹ Nevertheless, favorable reviews too mistook Arendt’s thesis: “Miss Arendt’s charges that European Jewish leaders were fatefully collaborative in the destruction of their own communities.”⁴⁰ (Again, Arendt never used the term “collaborative”). If favorable reviews of *The New Yorker* articles got anything correct, it was acknowledging that Arendt aimed to provoke “baffling” questions. Arendt wanted the world to think.

While her arguments were not without momentary praise, Arendt decided against answering her critics in the month leading up to the Viking Press’s printed publication of her articles in May 1963. She and Blücher used their settlement from the taxi incident to tour Europe. From Athens, Greece, Arendt wrote to McCarthy on April 21, “This here is perfect.”⁴¹ If Arendt addressed any sort of *Eichmann* business in the months leading up to her professorship at the University of Chicago on the Committee of Social Thought, they were private letters between favorable readers and attempts to mend sickening friendships, including art critic Harold Rosenberg and Robert Weltsch who, after a long series of exchanges, simply wanted the matter to end.⁴²

somebody. Not Man but men inhabit this planet. Plurality is the law of the earth” (19). Thus, Arendt advocated for a plurality of remembrance over (Jewish) collective memory.

³⁸Donald McDonald, “The Final Solution—A New Look,” *Pittsburg Catholic*, 11 April 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

³⁹Thomas S. Sherman, “Eichmann’s Motives Seen in Historical Relief,” *Reading and Writing*, May 5, 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

⁴⁰Jessie Kitching, “Capsules,” *Publishers’ Weekly*, 12 May 1963, box 46, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

⁴¹Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, April 21, 1966, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949-1975*, 143.

⁴²Robert Weltsch, “Granen zur Statistik,” *Aufbau*, 7 February 1964, box 45, Hannah Arendt Papers, The Library of Congress.

Arendt could never sway Blumenfeld's opinion. Their relationship, enduring until the very days of his death, enjoyed a profound depth. Not a trained academic but a sound mind, Blumenfeld was the chief spokesman for the Zionist Organization of Germany in 1929. Arendt stumbled into being Blumenfeld's aid during a lecture in Berlin. Although Arendt was not immediately swayed by Zionism, throughout the 1930s, Blumenfeld and Arendt walked "arm in arm, sang songs, recited poetry, and laughed uproariously."⁴³

Yet, with each passing day in Weimar Germany, Arendt's sense of alarm intensified, and alongside it, her commitment to (political) Zionism. After the Reichstag was set fire on February 27, 1933, Arendt could "no longer be an observer"; she stayed in Berlin to aid a system of underground railroads for, primarily, communists.⁴⁴ Mid-1933, Blumenfeld asked her to (illegally) gather evidence of anti-semitic action in private circles and the business economy from the Prussian State Library. Arendt's documents were revealed at the 18th Zionist Congress, serving as a poignant cautionary message to German Jews: "Never in the history of Zionism has the complete accuracy of the Zionist analysis of the general Jewish question been manifested in such a tragic and convincing manner. . . all attempts to deny the solidarity and common destiny of the Jewish people."⁴⁵ In Berlin, her resistance was that of a Jew: "I arrived at the conclusion which I always, at the time, expressed to myself in one sentence, a sentence which clarified it to me: 'When one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself *as a Jew*.' Not as a German, not as a world-citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man."⁴⁶

Arendt's Weimar experience is a minor picture of Arendt's work as a revolutionary Jew and (unofficial) Zionist. Regardless, Blumenfeld and Arendt were united, not only as intellectual compatriots grappling with the "Jewish Question" but also as persecuted, stateless Jews. It is a sad irony that in 1953, Arendt asked Blumenfeld

⁴³Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 71.

⁴⁴Gaus Interview. Cited in Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 102.

⁴⁵Central Office of the Zionist Organization, *Resolutions of the 18th Zionist Congress*, 1934. Cited in Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 105.

⁴⁶Gaus Interview. Cited in Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 42.

if he remembered “how in 1933 we said farewell to each other in Mampe’s *Weinstube*, reciting Greek verses,” that she now traveled from Greece to Israel for his passing.⁴⁷

For Arendt, Blumenfeld was “much more of a person than he has ever been able to get down on paper.”⁴⁸ Although helping Arendt during the Eichmann trial in Israel, Blumenfeld never read her *The New Yorker* articles. Nevertheless, Arendt—holding onto her belief that Moses misrepresented her work—could not convince him of her thesis. A year after Blumenfeld fell to his sickness on May 21, 1963, Arendt wrote to his friend, Rosen, who planned his obituary. Arendt asked for her and Blumenfeld’s correspondences to remain private:

It was extremely painful for me to find my last visit with Kurt, which was of a truly private and personal nature, discussed publicly. For the purpose of your obituary, this was entirely superfluous, and I would have thought you would know that it was a trespass. I don’t hold it against you. But this is because I know that my feelings about the distinction between private and public are not the same as yours and others.⁴⁹

Rosen responded: “It is a pity that you do not love the Jewish people, but only your friends.”⁵⁰ Even within the intimate circles of Arendt’s innermost confidants, united in persecution, defiance, and mourning, she found herself unable to evade the accusation that she held no love for the Jews. Arendt’s understanding of her Jewish identity was unconventional—that is, to practicing or Israeli Jews—but her history with Blumenfeld (contrived into believing a false framing of her arguments or not) could not survive *Eichmann*.

4.0.2 *Eichmann’s Force*

As leather-bound *Eichmann* flew to the shelves in New York in May 1963, so did Gideon Hausner, the Israeli prosecutor for the Eichmann trial, to speak on behalf of

⁴⁷Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 71

⁴⁸Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, September 7, 1952, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 201.

⁴⁹Hannah Arendt to Rosen, 30 August 1964, box 15, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

⁵⁰Rosen to Arendt, undated, ca. July 1964, box 15, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

the Bergen-Belsen Survivors Association and meet with the World Zionist Organization president, Nahum Goldman. Simultaneously, on May 20, 1963, Judge Michael A. Musmanno—the American judge throughout the Nuremberg Trials and expert witness for the Eichmann trial—published his review of *Eichmann* in *The New York Times Book Review*. Among citing many “quibbling” facts and Arendt’s “sympathizing with Eichmann,”⁵¹ Musmanno scorned:

The utterance Miss Arendt would put into the mouths of the venerable, distinguished, wise judges who tried Eichmann would make of the eight-month trial an act of sheer vengeance—instead of the meticulously fair and legally accurate proceeding which it has been recognized to be in all responsible circles, where there is a true understanding of the sanctity of law and the conscientious calm of even-handed justice.⁵²

Another “unfortunate feature” of *Eichmann* was that Arendt, “an eminent scholar,” revealed “evidence of purely private prejudices”; for Musmanno, the State of Israel, “its laws and institutions,” were “wholly unrelated to the Eichmann case.”⁵³ Unsurprisingly, this was not Arendt’s conviction. Musmanno concluded: “The disparity between what Miss Arendt states, and what the ascertained facts are, occurs with such disturbing frequency in her book that it can hardly be accepted as an authoritative historical work.”⁵⁴

Norman Podhoretz’s review of *Eichmann*—truly being “all cleverness and no eloquence”—revealed the general pattern of criticism in the public sphere quite plainly:

Thus, in place of the monstrous Nazi, she gives us the “banal” Nazi; in place of the Jew as virtuous martyr, she gives us the Jew as accomplice in evil; and in place of the confrontation between guilt and innocence, she

⁵¹For Arendt, to think was to adopt Kant’s *Selbstdenken* (to think for oneself). In “sympathizing” with Eichmann, she was judging “prejudices for the prejudices proper to [her] own station” (*The Life of the Mind*, 256). Arendt continued, “[The] larger the realm in which the enlightened individual is able to move, from standpoint to standpoint, the more ‘general’ will be his thinking.”

⁵²Michael A. Musmanno, “MAN with an UNSPOTTED CONSCIENCE; Adolf Eichmann’s Role in the Nazi Mania Is Weighed in Hannah Arendt’s New Book,” *The New York Times Book Review*, May 15, 1963, 160.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

gives us the “collaboration” of criminal and victim. The story as she tells it is complex, unsentimental, riddled with paradox and ambiguity.⁵⁵

For Musmanno, Eichmann was “bloodthirsty”; for Arendt, he was “ordinary.”⁵⁶

In one of few responses Arendt graced the public with, Arendt responded to Musmanno from Rome, still on her and Blücher’s vacation. She attacked *The New York Times Book Review* for their “bizarre” choice of reviewer and alleged that the newspaper’s editor never read *Eichmann*.⁵⁷ Musmanno defended that he “qualified” to review her *The New Yorker* articles as “a judge at three of the war crimes trials in Nuremberg,” “a judge for 32 years,” and “for 18 years” had “studied the documentation on war crimes and crimes against humanity.”⁵⁸

Irrespective, Arendt’s main criticism was that Musmanno “misrepresented” her arguments, hence the claim that the editor never read *Eichmann*: “If the editorial offices of *The New York Times Book Review* had taken the trouble to check such obvious fantasies [they would have noticed] its reviewer’s curious habit of lifting whole sentences out of the book, of rephrasing them. . . and of thus saying with great emphasis against the author what in actual fact was said.”⁵⁹ Additionally, if *The New York Times* knew “the biographical sketch of the author,” then, in Arendt’s mind, it was “inconceivable” that she “‘sympathized’ with Eichmann and had written in his defense.[4] At the end of her letter to the editor, she reiterated that “the point of the matter is not the review, but the fact that a paper like *The New York Times* published it.”⁶⁰

Arendt’s conviction was resolute: Her extensive work on totalitarianism and Jewish affairs, both past and present, made it evident that any suggestion she defended a Nazi figure like Eichmann was a misinterpretation deemed unworthy of

⁵⁵Norman Podhoretz, “Hannah Arendt on Eichmann: A Study in the Perversity of Brilliance,” *Commentary*, September 1963.

⁵⁶Musmanno, “MAN WITH AN UNSPOTTED CONSCIENCE,” 160.

⁵⁷Michael A. Musmanno, Hannah Arendt, et al., “Letters to the Editor: ‘Eichmann in Jerusalem,’” *The New York Times Book Review*, June 23, 1963, 212

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

her attention. Hundreds of letters flooded the editor's mailbox, most in defense of Arendt. One letter parroted, "Rarely can a reviewer have missed the point of a book as widely as Judge Musmanno"; another, "Justice Musmanno's review is a new low in reviewing."⁶¹ A Mr. Davidson touted, "Justice is blind—a least some justices are. Judge Musmanno's misguided [piece] shows him to be blind to her gift of irony."⁶² Nevertheless, some letters sustained Arendt's alleged Nazi sympathy: "Miss Arendt's book should give comfort to Eichmann's family and his numerous accomplices and be well received in Germany" (*Eichmann* was not).⁶³

Arendt's retorts were repeatedly supplemented not by direct rebuttals, but rather by the supportive interventions of her colleagues, among whom was McCarthy. For Arendt, friendship was forever valuable, but perhaps more so in the days of *Eichmann*; publicly endorsing for *Eichmann* invited their taste of scrutiny and censure. The *Partisan Review* debacle was no exception. In the summer of 1963, Lionel Abel, eminent literary critic and Jewish-American playwright, objected piece-by-piece to Arendt's factual claims in *Eichmann* and ended his nineteen-page exposé with the following:

Miss Arendt of course cannot today propose a recipe for living through the hell of Nazi Europe to these European Jews who are already dead; but she does suggest that the manner in which they died was not very beautiful. As for Eichmann's moral ugliness, this is not something we now have to be concerned with; in fact, Eichmann is aesthetically palatable, while his victims are aesthetically repulsive. In all this, I hear beneath the hate-paeon to totalitarianism Miss Arendt's praise of her own theory about it, a theory which I believe is now invalidated.⁶⁴

In the subsequent issue, Daniel Bell, a Professor of Sociology at Harvard and Arendt's long-time colleague, replied to Abel, "How can one write objectively about such things? All we can do is to respond and, in the way in which we respond, to identify ourselves, our qualities, and our commitments. . . . To be didactic is often to lose

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Lionel Able, "The Aesthetics of Evil: Hannah Arendt on Eichmann and the Jews," *Partisan Review* 30, no. 2 (August 1963): 254.

the excitement of a debate. . . because of the gravity of the issues, one can keep one's bearings only in this way."⁶⁵

Bettleheim, frequently criticized for his views on the Holocaust, added his opinion that Nazism was "not the last chapter in anti-Semitism but rather one of the first chapters in modern totalitarianism."⁶⁶ McCarthy thought *Eichmann* to be "splendid" and "extraordinary," while Lionel Abel a "propagandist."⁶⁷ She believed all of "all Miss Arendt's hostile reviews. . . have come from Jews, and those favorable to her from Gentiles."⁶⁸ In a similar vein, Dwight MacDonald, editor for *Partisan* for six years, philosopher, critic and close colleague of Arendt's, added "both reproach her because she lacks a special feeling in favor of her fellow Jews."⁶⁹

It was one of Arendt's forthright critics, Marie Syrkin, polemicist for the State of Israel and Jewish-American writer, who made the division between the Jews and Arendt obvious—even though she probably did not intend to—when she wrote an ironic response to McCarthy's *Partisan* article, "a pair of Jewish spectacles."⁷⁰ The binary between Arendtian supporters and those who opposed her "would appear to be between the adequately informed, among whom Jews naturally predominate, and the uninformed, neither intellectually nor emotionally involved in the questions under debate."⁷¹ By situating the Holocaust narrative beyond the historical context of antisemitism and Jewish victimhood, Arendt threatened the Jewish community's

⁶⁵Daniel Bell, "The Alphabet of Justice: Reflections on 'Eichmann in Jerusalem,'" *Partisan Review* 30 no. 3 (Fall 1963): 420.

⁶⁶Bruno Bettelheim, "Eichmann; the System; the Victims," *The New Republic* 148, no. 24, (June 1963): 27.

⁶⁷Mary McCarthy, "The Hue and Cry," *Partisan Review* 31, no. 1 (Winter 1964): 82.

⁶⁸*Ibid*, 84.

⁶⁹"Eichmann and the Jews," *Partisan Review* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1964): 253-83. Comments by Marie Syrkin, Harold Weisberg, Irving Howe, Robert Lowell, Dwight Macdonald, Lionel Abel, Mary McCarthy and William Phillips.

⁷⁰Mary McCarthy, "The Hue and Cry," 85.

⁷¹*Ibid*, 91.

viewed authority on collective remembrance.⁷² When McCarthy wrote, “The division between Jew and Gentile is even more pronounced in private conversation, where a Gentile, once the topic is raised in Jewish company (and it always is), feels like a child with a reading defect in a class of normal readers,” she could not be more sardonic or correct; the Holocaust, during this period, was understood as Jewish history. Despite Arendt’s intentions, her work and authority as a Jew and in totalitarian studies—if misrepresented or circulating “errors in fact”—held a potential implication that the Jews perpetuated their own suffering or could continue such suffering.

The prospect of further pariahdom, the oppressed state ultimate wordlessness, was a reason Gershom Scholem published private correspondences between him and Arendt in the German newspaper *Mitteilungsblatt* in 1963 and *Encounter* in 1964:

[Scholem from Jerusalem] There has been weakness, too, though weakness so entwined with heroism that it is not easily unraveled. . . in the year 1939 at the beginning of that generation of catastrophe; and so it has been in our own time. The discussion of these matters is, I believe, both legitimate and unavoidable—although I do not believe that our generation is in a position to pass any kind of historical judgment. We lack the necessary perspective, which alone makes some sort of objectivity possible—and we cannot but lack it. . . in mourning the fate of your own people—this is not the way to approach the scene of that tragedy.⁷³

Scholem, then a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, met Arendt in Berlin in the early 1930s and again in Palestine in 1935, where Arendt accompanied a group of teenagers fleeing Europe. In Paris in 1935, thanks to their (close) mutual friend Walter Benjamin, they became close enough to start a trail of lengthy correspondences. After Benjamin took his own life—which Arendt and Scholem grieved together—Benjamin entrusted Arendt and Scholem with his unpublished works.

⁷²Arendt perceived the inclination towards collectivism and the erosion of individuality as integral features of totalitarianism. The “mob” is a “new historical actor”; a mob is “the universalization of the condition of worldlessness” (Benhabib, “Narrative,” 176). The collective remembrance and action of the Jews towards Arendt and *Eichmann* was, in her view, due to worldlessness. Not in the sense of pariahdom, but “worldless in the sense that they have lost a stable space of reference, identity, and expectation which they share with others” (177).

⁷³Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt, “Eichmann in Jerusalem: An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt,” *Encounter* (January 1964): 51-52.

Their letters were “like minutely thin, strong threads,” with the dim faith that their friendship would “hold together what remains of our world” against totalitarian loneliness as Arendt would describe it later.⁷⁴

Arendt and Scholem agreed to publish their letters on “foundation of friendship,” which would not last through 1964. Additionally, Arendt agreed to publicize their exchange—only in *Mitteilungsblatt*, although Scholem gave copies to many outlets—at the behest of dialogue or “activity of thought.”⁷⁵ As Arendt wrote to McCarthy, she thought *Eichmann* would settle through “discussion, pursued in a thoughtful way” in the atmosphere created by reviews like Lionel’s in *Partisan*. Arendt, unlike “burlesque philosophers” and because of her deep affinity for Socrates, “dared to risk [herself].”⁷⁶ She even described *Eichmann’s* “mob” as “Socrates’ *Apolo-*gy,” a trial wherein Socrates was sentenced to death for corrupting Athens’ youth through his teachings.⁷⁷

Even so, Scholem, who objected to *Eichmann* in a similar fashion as other Jewish critics, declared Arendt lacked *Ahabath Israel*, “love of the Jewish people”; her “heartless,” “malicious tone” dealt with a topic that “so profoundly concerns the center of [their] life.”⁷⁸ Arendt replied, “I have always regarded my Jewishness as one of the indisputable factual data of my life, and I have never had the wish to change or disclaim facts of this kind.”⁷⁹

⁷⁴Hannah Arendt to Gershom Scholem, April 25, 1942, in *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, ed. Marie Luise Knott, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 12.

⁷⁵Hannah Arendt to Gershom Scholem, July 20, 1963, in *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, 210.

⁷⁶Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, September 24, 1963, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*, 149; Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, August 20, 1954, in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*, 22.

⁷⁷Arendt held deep affinity for Socrates and, in some ways, imagined herself to be like him: both pariahs. In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt (174) touted that “throughout his life and up to his very death Socrates did nothing other than plaeo himself in this draft, this current [of thinking], and maintain himself in it. This is why he is the purest of the West This is why he wrote nothing. For anyone who begins, out of thinking, to write must inevitably be like those people who run for shelter from a wind too strong for them . . . all thinkers after Socrates, their greatness notwithstanding, were such refugees.”; Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt, “Eichmann in Jerusalem: An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt,” 51.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid, 52

Their exchange did not add anything novel to the *Eichmann* calamity yet exacerbated already existing flaws in clarity on Arendt's part. For one, Jaspers was "dissatisfied" by Arendt's phrasing of the "banality of evil"; the exchange made it appear that Eichmann served as a prototype for banal evil rather than Arendt coming to a new understanding through reflection.⁸⁰ Another fault, revealed in one of Scholem and Arendt's last few exchanges, was one Arendt signaled. Her reservation was that their correspondence revolved "around this Jewish angle"; it would only "reinforce this approach" to *Eichmann*.⁸¹ As she espoused to Scholem, Arendt did not deal in collectives; she was not "moved by any 'love'" for "any people or collective, neither the German people, nor the French, nor the American, nor the working class or anything of that sort."⁸² She challenged public adoration, yet *Eichmann* encouraged collective allegiance. *Eichmann* was not "a book by a Jew about the Jews," it was, to put in the words of Jaspers, an element to "the tragedy of humankind."⁸³ To borrow more of Jasper's words, *Eichmann* was conversational, an attempt to "set this discussion in motion."⁸⁴ *Eichmann*, like most all her works, was on totalitarianism and demanded conversation from all: how could humanity let Nazism happen?

Some more presumptuous critiques of Arendt were done so in private, as in the Blumenfeld and (until published) Scholem affair. However, more errantly, by strangers. A healthy majority of private correspondences to Arendt were positive, or if neutral, asking for clarification or expressing a point of contention. Arendt even noticed that those who are for her wrote in "private."⁸⁵ Among the myriad,

⁸⁰Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, December 13, 1963, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 540.

⁸¹Hannah Arendt to Gershom Scholem, undated, in *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, 219.

⁸²Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem: An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt," 52.

⁸³Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, May 16, 1963, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 505.

⁸⁴Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, January 8, 1965, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 580.

⁸⁵Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, October 20, 1963, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 523.

Arendt graciously acknowledged a select few invitations to diverse gatherings, predominantly events hosted by universities or Jewish temples. A minority—at least in German and English languages—were viciously passionate, sometimes veering into hostility or sheer hatred. Writing to Jaspers, Arendt signed off a lot of her hate as people “just waiting for a bandwagon to jump on.”⁸⁶ It cannot be known whether Arendt’s writers read *Eichmann* or any other work in her oeuvre, but that point is obsolete; reviewers, in public and in private, evaluated Arendt’s identity irrespective of her personal convictions or (complicated) self-perception.

In October, a woman from Amsterdam questioned Arendt, “as a Jew and a mother... how can you write on something you have not suffered yourself?”⁸⁷ She continued, “if you had a Jewish look, people didn’t dare cover up for you as they were afraid to be caught themselves... to go underground was not easy.”⁸⁸ J. Baron, initially “shocked and grieved” by Musmanno’s review, was ultimately moved to reach out to Arendt after catching sight of her portrait in *The New York Times*: “the picture is of a face as hard as rock and cold as ice in the North Pole. Contempt hover on thy lips and an iron brutality is seen in the eyes. I felt that the page of which your picture is on contaminated the whole ‘Review.’”⁸⁹ J. Baron elaborated, recounting their need to don gloves or be tainted by illness. In their concluding remarks, J. Baron lamented that Arendt had “desecrated” the memory of six million martyrs, prophesying that their souls would swarm her “day and night,” denying her any rest.⁹⁰ Her writer took special care to note they did not carry “hatred in [their] heart or take delight in vengeance.”⁹¹ An anonymous subscriber to *The New Yorker* was sure Arendt’s work “pleased Eichmann,” along with other “intelligentsia

⁸⁶Ibid, 522.

⁸⁷Unnamed woman to Hannah Arendt, October 1963, box 43, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹J. Baron to Hannah Arendt, May 25, 1963, box 43, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

delighted by [her] so-called ‘authenticity.’⁹² The subscriber hoped a sermon would “re-enlighten a more optimistic spark” in her “scientific soul.”⁹³

In July 1963 Arendt received a letter from Philippe de Freudiger, a Holocaust survivor and witness for the Eichmann trial, who could not let some of Arendt’s statements go “unchallenged.”⁹⁴ He objected to her use of the term “cooperation” concerning the *Judenräte*. Arendt responded, “I thank you for your letter, and since I am not a newspaper woman I shall not have and I shall not want to have the last word.”⁹⁵ She continued: “Your objection to my usage of the word ‘cooperation’ is, I feel, not entirely fair. I use it in order to avoid the word ‘collaborate’ which indeed did not apply to Jews. The word ‘cooperate,’ believe me, is currently used in the whole literature on the subject.”⁹⁶ After addressing other disagreements, Arendt ended her response with “I do not doubt that others would have acted exactly as you did. [I hope] you do not regret to have written to me.”⁹⁷ As she emphasized to de Freudiger, it was her conviction that in an unparalleled circumstance, no individual, Jewish or otherwise, would have behaved differently.

Despite characterizations that Arendt—to use others’ terms, a metropolitan, secular academic, and self-hating Jew—remained untouched by the horrors of the Holocaust or harbored animosity towards the Jewish people or held German sympathy, she engaged in sincere debate. In the following chapter, I make this point clearer. However, in whole, she chose not to engage with individual critics who published overly critical opinions. Arendt adhered to her decision of non-participation, but not because she rejected the criticism towards *Eichmann* or because she claimed to know the absolute truth. Rather, she deduced the entire affair to a political agenda.⁹⁸

⁹²From a subscriber to Hannah Arendt, April 17, 1963, box 43, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Philippe de Freudiger to Hannah Arendt, July, 21, 1963, box 43, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹⁵Hannah Arendt to Philippe de Freudiger, September 8, 1963, box 43, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Arendt wrote to McCarthy (151) “I am convinced that I should not answer individual critics. I probably shall finally make, not an answer, but a kind of evaluation of this whole strange business.

Jaspers echoed Arendt's perspective, attributing the entire ordeal to the unjust labels, which he deemed "utterly inappropriate and abhorrent" to "manipulate public opinion."⁹⁹ In private correspondence with Jaspers, Arendt went so far (echoing antisemitic assertions) to blame the "Jewish 'establishment'"—with "their massive financial and organizational resources"—for igniting a "campaign" to destroy her reputation.¹⁰⁰ Instead of coming to a more meaningful conclusion, she insisted Jewish organizations' "extraordinary organized efforts" was because of "much more dirty laundry to hide than anyone had ever guessed."¹⁰¹ As Arendt claimed the Jews foully represented *Eichmann*, Arendt abhorrently understood their criticism. Both orientations sacrificed more meaningful dialogue.

In a 1985 interview between McCarthy and Carol Brightman, author of McCarthy's biography *Writing Dangerously: Mary McCarthy and Her World*, McCarthy remarked that Arendt perceived herself as one who "paid absolutely no attention to criticism."¹⁰² This was a fallacy; Arendt undoubtedly cared. In the early days of the *Eichmann* controversy in 1963 and beyond, McCarthy often derided Arendt's silence as "foolish." She told Brightman, "I think it was her duty to answer. Her duty to herself, to her material. But it was her stubbornness and hurt feelings, and pride, that kept her from answering." Self-knowledge was not Arendt's strong point.

Amid the ailments of 1962, marked by Blücher's aneurysm and Arendt's accident, the following year introduced a wave of criticism from which Arendt sought

This, I think, should be done after the furor has run its course and I think that next spring will be a good time. I also intend to write an essay about "Truth and Politics," which would be an implicit answer. If you were here you would understand that this whole business, with few exceptions, has absolutely nothing to do with criticism or polemics in the normal sense of the word. It is a *political campaign*, led and guided in all particulars by interest groups and governmental agencies. It would be foolish for me, but not for others, to overlook this fact. The criticism is directed at an "image" and this image has been substituted for the book I wrote."

⁹⁹Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, July 25, 1963, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 512.

¹⁰⁰Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, October 20, 1963, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 523.

¹⁰¹Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, December 19, 1962, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 494; Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, October 20, 1963, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 524.

¹⁰²Interview between Carol Brightman and McCarthy, Cited in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy*, xxvi.

refuge. Moses and Blumenfeld joined the onslaught of denunciation from Jewish organizations, academics, and editors. Within the fray over whose “facts” held sway and whose “truth” reigned, Arendt’s arguments in unfavorable discourse amounted to cooperation (or “collaboration,” depending on who published) of the *Judenräte*, disagreement over banal evil, and the attribution of guilt or innocence to collectives. Because Arendt found comfort in silence, Arendt’s portrayal of *Eichmann* remained far from resolved or her mission made clear.

Nonetheless, one letter asked—what Arendt would classify as—the “right question.” Jacob Neusner, a research associate in Jewish History at the Institute of Advanced Judaic Studies at Brandeis, typed to Arendt with no documented response:

Perhaps the rather widespread Jewish hatred of Germany (which, in my opinion, is not different from other kind of race-hatred, though it may be more easily understood) obscures the real questions that the European disaster poses to us. . . . May I add that in all the writings on the Eichmann trial, and on the destruction itself, yours have been, in my opinion, the most original and incisive? That is why I address my question to you.¹⁰³

I envision Arendt—unfond of the limelight, yet quietly relishing admiration—gracing a subtle smile at his reason: *Because you asked it for us all.*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Jacob Neusner to Hannah Arendt, undated, box 43, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

Chapter 5

Pariah, 1963 Onward

Arendt's book detailed the Jews and their trial, but it was never *Eichmann's* essence. One of her critics said it best: *Eichmann* was about totalitarianism, something that infected everyone in the Second World War. It was what Arendt meant by banal evil; totalitarianism can "overgrow and lay waste" because it "spreads like a fungus on the surface."¹ "Thought," *thinking*, "tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing."² Only the good has depth.

In this final chapter, I continue my argument from Chapter 4: Arendt worried that the world could not think, or remember, with attention to plurality. Throughout this time, unfavorable criticism still flourished: Jacob Robinson and Gideon Hausner published their books on Arendt's *Eichmann*, *And the Crooked Shall Be Made Straight* and *Justice in Jerusalem*, respectively. *Eichmann* was translated into German and Hebrew, among many other languages. I find no necessity in delving further into repetitive discourse or criticism. (However, it is noteworthy that the German perspective offered a distinctive angle, often centering on Arendt's purported "blaming" the German people). Instead, I work through Arendt's lecture notes, and some later works post-*Eichmann*. I pay specific note to Arendt's historical processes as a Jew, but importantly, a pariah, to use her term. *Eichmann* sought to catalyze a discourse on the errors that paved the way for the spread of totalitarianism.

¹Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem: An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt," *Encounter* (January 1964): 53.

²*Ibid.*

For Arendt, as with *Origins of Totalitarianism*, her first problem was how to “write historically about something—totalitarianism—which I did not want to conserve but on the contrary felt engaged to destroy.”³ As Arendt argued in *Origins* (1951) dating back to a book based on her Ph.D. dissertation (interrupted, by the Second World War), *Rahel Varnhagen* (1957), freedom is a consequence of sustained political activity and demands political action, and language perpetuates action.⁴ As Arendt wrote in one of her lecture notes preceding the *Eichmann* criticism, “Hitler slaughtered and the world kept silent.”⁵ After knowledge of the Holocaust became public, “the world did not keep silent; but apart from not keeping silent, the world did nothing.”⁶ To her critics, trial members, and international authority, she noticed there to be continued “disparity between word and deed,” between language and political action.⁷

How should one make sense of tragedy, both as writer and as a Jew? For Arendt, it was to assume the label “pariah.” While the Jews during the Holocaust were challenged by their “absolute meaninglessness” to the Nazis, Arendt turned vulnerability into a form of alterity; her distance from Judaism and Israel allowed her (in her belief) to view events from the outside.⁸ In *Eichmann*, she wrote, “people among peoples, a nation among nations, a state among states, depending now on a plurality which no longer permits the age-old and, unfortunately, religiously anchored dichotomy of Jews and Gentiles.”⁹ She spoke on the same bifurcation surrendered by McCarthy in her *Partisan* review and affirmed by critic Marie Syrkin. Arendt did

³Hannah Arendt, “Reply to Eric Voegelin’s Review of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,” *Review of Politics* 15 (January 1953): 79.

⁴Arendt, *Origins*, 150.

⁵Hannah Arendt, Lecture Notes for the Jewish Students at Columbia, box 73, July 23, 1963, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Hannah Arendt, “The Destruction of Six Million: A Jewish World Symposium,” *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 492.

⁸See the introduction to *The Jewish Writings* (lxxi) by Ron H. Feldman: “Arendt’s solution to her own ‘Jewish problem’ was not to repudiate her Jewishness nor blindly affirm it, but to adopt the stance of a conscious pariah, an outsider among non-Jews, and a rebel among her own people. It was because of this marginal position that she was able to gain critical insights into both the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds.”

⁹Arendt, *Eichmann*, 11.

not adopt “a pair of Jewish spectacles,” in the collective sense but in that of a pariah, “homeless in the world.”¹⁰

In 1977, two years after her death, *The New Yorker* published “Reflections: Thinking,” from Arendt’s unfinished work, *The Life of the Mind* and other selections. *The New Yorker* quoted Martin Heidegger, a mentor of Arendt’s, until their parting of ways due to his endorsement of National Socialism: “Thinking does not bring knowledge as do the sciences. Thinking does not produce usable practical wisdom. Thinking does not solve the riddles of the universe. Thinking does not endow us directly with the power to act.”¹¹ In her reflection, she admitted that she never claimed to be a philosopher, or in the words of Immanuel Kant, a *Denker von Gewerbe* or “professional thinker.”¹² Nevertheless, she capitulated that “thinking activity” arises from the fact of “withdrawal,” and thinking “removes itself from what is present and close at hand.”¹³ That is, a philosopher “is to an extent alienated from the city of men, which can only look with suspicion on everything that concerns man in the singular.”¹⁴ Her critics mistook her irony and distance—to not speak in collective terms—as denial of her Jewishness. Her adherence to pluralism—or to “worldliness,” as some critics pinned her—was a facet of her pariahdom but more critical to her view of mental activity. In the introductory speech to the Jewish students at the University of Chicago in October 1963, she composed a set of expectations:

The great advantage: Every single one is forced to make up his own mind and then exchange this opinion with others. . . This advantage of the academic world precludes a certain kind of publicity if it is to remain intact. The academic world has, and always has had, its own kind of being open

¹⁰Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, January 26, 1949, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 129. Also, see Hannah Arendt’s “The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition” (287) in *The Jewish Writings*: “Standing outside the pale, suspected by all the world, the pariah. . . could not fail to arouse the sympathy of the common people, who recognized in him the image of what society had done to them.” The entire work documents Arendt’s understanding of historical and contemporary pariahdom. In 392, “From the ‘disgrace’ of being a Jew there is but one escape—to fight for the honor of the Jewish people as a whole.”

¹¹Hannah Arendt, “Reflections: Thinking,” *The New Yorker*, box 94, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, ed. Mary McCarthy (New York: Harcourt, 1981), 199.

¹⁴Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 35.

and public, but it is not the same as the publicity that is necessarily part of the world around it. . . . We have too few rather than too many opportunities to speak to each other in an atmosphere of openness and frankness. The very spontaneity which is one of the great privileges of academic life is in jeopardy when the world around us is permitted to report to a so much larger audience than the words were originally meant to address, although they of course be very welcome to listen to it.¹⁵

Discourse, with plurality, was what *Eichmann* should have fostered. In 1959, Jaspers, writing about German philosopher Wilhelm Humboldt, said that Humboldt, “wanted a plurality of forces and obviously trusted the university as a whole not to succumb to the absolutist impulses of one philosopher.”¹⁶ Arendt never wanted the sort of praise either: “I do not want anybody to accept what I may think.”¹⁷ In *Origins*, Arendt wrote that totalitarianism fosters “isolation in the political sphere” where one cannot act; that is, “to act together in the pursuit of common concern is destroyed.”¹⁸ Tyrannies “could not exist without destroying the public realm of life.”¹⁹ As for *Eichmann*, for Arendt it was the Nazis crimes against *humanity*, “against the fact that mankind on principle is split up,” that was so egregious. It was not the murder of the Jews, it was killing “one people,” humanity: “killing of any part hurts the principle of plurality.”²⁰ Totalitarianism rendered the world thoughtless; *Eichmann* expected us to think.

¹⁵Hannah Arendt, Lecture Notes at University of Chicago, October 1963, box 59, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁶Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, August 23, 1952, in *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, 199.

¹⁷Hannah Arendt and Melvyn A. Hill, eds., *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 306.

¹⁸Arendt, *Origins*, 474–475.

¹⁹*Ibid*, 472.

²⁰Hannah Arendt, Lecture Notes for the Jewish Students at Columbia, box 73, July 23, 1963, The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress.

Bibliography

- Able, Lionel. "The Aesthetics of Evil: Hannah Arendt on Eichmann and the Jews."
Partisan Review 30, no. 2 (August 1963): 221–30.
<https://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/books/PR1963V30N2/HTML/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#159>.
- Adolf Eichmann Name File. The National Security Archive. College Park, MD.
- Arendt, Hannah. *Between Past and Future*. 1962. Reprint, London: Penguin Classics, 2004.
- . *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. 1963. Reprint, New York: Penguin Group, 2006.
- . "The History of the Great Crime: A Review of Breviaire de La Haine: Le IIIe Reich et Les Juifs (Breviary of Hate: The Third Reich and the Jews) by Leon Poliakov." *Commentary*, March 1952.
<https://www.commentary.org/articles/hannah-arendt/breviaire-de-la-haine-le-iii-reich-et-les-juifs-by-leon-poliakov/>.
- . *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*. Edited by Ron H. Feldman. New York: Grove Press, 1978.
- . *The Jewish Writings*. Edited by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman. New York: Schocken Books, 2013.
- . *The Life of the Mind*. Edited by Mary McCarthy. Vol. I and II. 1977. Reprint, Boston, MA: Mariner Books Classics, 1981.
- . *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New Edition. 1951. Reprint, New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994.
- . "The Origins of Totalitarianism; a Reply." *The Review of Politics* 15, no. 1 (January 1953): 76–84. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1404748>.

- . *The Promise of Politics*. Edited by Jerome Kohn. New York: Schocken Books, 2007.
- Arendt, Hannah, and Melvyn A. Hill. *The Recovery of the Public World*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979.
- Arendt, Hannah, and Karl Jaspers. *Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*. Edited by Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner. Translated by Robert Kimber and Rita Kimber. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1992.
- Baade, Hans W. "The Eichmann Trial: Some Legal Aspects." *Duke Law Journal* 1961, no. 3 (August 1961): 400–420. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1371281>.
- Barnouw, Dagmar. *Visible Spaces: Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Bell, Daniel. "The Alphabet of Justice: Reflections on 'Eichmann in Jerusalem.'" *Partisan Review* 30, no. 3 (September 1963): 417–29. <https://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/books/PR1963V30N3/HTML/files/assets/basic-html/page5.html>.
- Benhabib, Seyla. "Hannah Arendt and the Redemptive Power of Narrative." *Social Research* 57, no. 1 (April 1990): 167–96. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40970582>.
- . "Identity, Perspective and Narrative in Hannah Arendt's 'Eichmann in Jerusalem.'" *History and Memory* 8, no. 2 (1996): 35–59. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25618705>.
- . *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.
- Bettelheim, Bruno. "Eichmann; the System; the Victims." *The New Republic* 148, no. 24 (June 1963).

- Brightman, Carol , ed. *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949- 1975*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995.
- Canovan, Margaret. *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Collection of Jacob Robinson. Yad Vashem Archives. Jerusalem, Israel.
- Diner, Dan, and Rita Bashaw. "Hannah Arendt Reconsidered: On the Banal and the Evil in Her Holocaust Narrative." *New German Critique* 71 (June 1997): 177–90.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/488563>.
- Glenn, Susan A. "The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred in Post-World War II America." *Jewish Social Studies* 12, no. 3 (2006): 95–136.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jss.2006.0025>.
- The Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress, Washington DC.
- Hilberg, Raul. *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Vol. 1. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1985.
- Hill, Samantha Rose. *Hannah Arendt*. London: Reaktion Books, 2021.
- Knott, Marie Luise, ed. *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*. Translated by Anthony David. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Kohler, Lottie, ed. *Within Four Walls: The Correspondences between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher, 1936–1968*. Translated by Peter Constantine. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2000.
- Laqueur, Walter. "The Arendt Cult: Hannah Arendt as Political Commentator." *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 4 (October 1998): 483–96.
- Lazare, Bernard. *Antisemitism: Its History and Causes*. 1890. Reprint, University of Nebraska Press, 1995.

- Lourié, Anton. "The Jew as a Psychological Type." *American Imago* 6, no. 2 (June 1949): 119–55. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26301220>.
- McCarthy, Mary. "Hue and Cry." *Partisan Review* 31, no. 1 (December 1964): 82–94. <https://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/books/PR1964V31N1/HTML/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#I>.
- "More on Eichmann." *Partisan Review* 31, no. 1 (April 1964): 253–83. <https://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/books/PR1964V31N2/HTML/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#159>.
- Musmanno, Michael A. "MAN with an UNSPOTTED CONSCIENCE; Adolf Eichmann's Role in the Nazi Mania Is Weighed in Hannah Arendt's New Book." *The New York Times Book Review*, May 15, 1993. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1963/05/19/86709120.html?pageNumber=160>.
- Musmanno, Michael A., and Hannah Arendt. "Letters to the Editor: 'Eichmann in Jerusalem.'" *The New York Times Book Review*, June 23, 1963. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1963/06/23/89935369.html>.
- Parvikko, Tuija. *Arendt, Eichmann and the Politics of the Past*. 2008. Reprint, Helsinki University Press, 2021.
- Podhoretz, Norman. "Hannah Arendt on Eichmann: A Study in the Perversity of Brilliance." *Commentary*, September 1963. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/norman-podhoretz/hannah-arendt-on-eichmann-a-study-in-the-perversity-of-brilliance/>.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. *A Descent into the Maelstrom*. United Kingdom: Read Books Ltd., 2009.

- Rabinbach, Anson. "Eichmann in New York: The New York Intellectuals and the Hannah Arendt Controversy." *October* 108 (April 1, 2004): 97–111.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3397616>.
- Reitter, Paul. "Karl Kraus and the Jewish Self-Hatred Question." *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, and Society* 10, no. 1 (October 2003): 78–116.
<https://doi.org/10.2979/jss.2003.10.1.78>.
- Sacks, Adam J. "Hannah Arendt's Eichmann Controversy as Destabilizing Transatlantic Text." *AJS Review* 37, no. 1 (April 2013): 115–34.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24273627>.
- Scholem, Gershom, and Hannah Arendt. "Eichmann in Jerusalem: An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt." *Encounter* 22, no. 1 (January 1964): 51–54.
- Spiegel, Irving. "Hausner Criticizes Book on Eichmann." *The New York Times*, May 20, 1963.
<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1963/05/20/90548269.html>.
- Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth. *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*. 1982. Reprint, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.