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Hannah Arendt as Judge

A Conscious Pariah in Jerusalem

I did try to leave my position, to leave for the front, for honest battle. But I was held fast in those dark duties. Once again I would stress that I am guilty of having been obedient, having subordinated myself to my official duties and the obligations of war service and my oath of allegiance and my oath of office, and in addition, once the war started, there was also martial law.

This obedience was not easy. And again, anyone who has to give orders and has to obey orders knows what one can demand of people. I did not persecute Jews with avidity and passion. That is what the government did. Nor could the persecution be carried out other than by a government. But I never... I accuse the leaders of abusing my obedience. At that time obedience was demanded, just as in the future it will also be demanded of the subordinate. Obedience is commended as a virtue.

May I therefore ask that consideration be given to the fact that I obeyed, and not whom I obeyed.

Adolf Eichmann's Final Plea,

cit.<http://www.pbs.org/eichmann/ownwords.htm>

On May 11, 1960 Adolf Eichmann was captured in a suburb of Buenos Aires and smuggled to Israel by the Israeli intelligence service. His trial took place the following year in Jerusalem. The prosecution and the judges did not give much consideration to the fact that Eichmann obeyed (cf. Hausner 1966); but they did find that the accused acted out of an inner identification with the orders that he was given and out of a fierce will to achieve the criminal objective (see also *The Eichmann Trial. Proceedings*. In <http://www.pbs.org/eichmann/>).

Among the public at the trial there was Hannah Arendt, who did give consideration to Eichmann's obedience. She did not, however, consider it a mitigating circumstance as Eichmann's defense wanted but rather aggravating evidence against the accused. Whereas the prosecution built its case upon Eichmann's participation in the mass murder and fate of the victims, Arendt remained faithful to the basic principle of the Western legal system according to which the verdict must be based on the deeds of the accused.

Out of a conviction that obedience was the key trait of Eichmann's conduct as a Nazi official, she started to write her report on the trial, which first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1963 and then as an enlarged version in book form later the same year with the title *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report of the Banality of Evil* (EJ). In this book Arendt directs attention to the overall orchestration of the trial on the one hand and Eichmann's role in the deportation of the Jews on the other.

It has often been argued (see e.g. Beiner 1982) that what really directed Arendt's attention to the question of judgement was precisely Eichmann's trial. Having witnessed the trial as a reporter for *The New Yorker*, and having published a highly controversial report about it, Arendt became deeply committed not only to her own account of it but also to principles and criteria of judgement in general.

This argument holds, of course, partly true. The trial of Eichmann turned out to be a touchstone of Arendt's ideas about judgement. In its extremity it proved to be something that put her own capacity for judgement to the test. On the other hand, it gave her the impetus to reconsider the criteria for judgement, as it seemed evident to her that after the phenomenon of totalitarianism, the traditional criteria of political judgement were no longer valid.

However, it should not be ignored that Arendt had begun to approach the question of political judgement already during the war, when she decided, together with her husband Heinrich Blücher, to examine the phenomenon of totalitarianism and its constitutive elements. In other words, Arendt's interest in the question of political judgement was not awakened all at once in the Eichmann trial, it was rather one of the leading themes in her thinking from her early considerations of Jewish pariahdom until her late discussions of the life of the mind (cf. Young-Bruehl 1982, 164-211).

In fact, if one compares Arendt's war-time criticism of the actions of the Jewish leadership with her judgement of the Jewish Councils in EJ, one is struck by the similarity between them. This convergence stems from Bernard Lazare's impact on Arendt's thinking. It was from Lazare that she adopted her view of the political incapability of the Jewish leadership to act politically and lead its people in the modern world. In a profoundly Lazarean manner, she criticized the Jewish leadership for preferring to hold to traditional strategies of negotiation and concession instead of organizing the Jewish people into a fight against a common enemy. This view shaped both Arendt's war-time writings and her interpretation of the Eichmann trial (for more detail see below).¹

As is well known, the American reading public, especially American Jewish intellectuals, did not regard

her capacity for judgement very highly but severely attacked her account of the trial. In other words, Arendt's book was by no means welcomed as a valid and truthful report of the trial. A storm of criticism and debate followed immediately particularly in America but also in Europe. At the front line of the debate were American Jewish intellectuals, who accused Arendt of all kinds of distortions, from those concerning the conduct of the trial to those of twisting historical facts (see e.g. Musmanno 1963; Podhoretz 1963; Robinson 1965; Syrkin 1963). Even those who had approved Arendt's earlier accounts of totalitarianism deemed her report heartless and cruel (see e.g. Scholem 1963). She was blamed for having turned her back on her people by defending the Nazi criminal in court.

In her approach to Arendt's conception of judgement in this volume, Simona Forti argues that "[w]ithout appealing to universal criteria and moral rules, [the faculty of judgement] implies the responsibility to give or withdraw one's assent to reality, to discriminate what is right from what is wrong in everything that happens." For Arendt, judging is, indeed, always about "particulars", concrete phenomena of the human world. The events of the world do not follow any moral rules or general laws but take unforeseen paths in the face of which we are left with our capacity for critical and reflective judgement. This means that in the Arendtian framework, there cannot be any universal theory of judgement precisely because judging is always about unprecedented particulars.

In the following, I will reread Arendt's report on the Eichmann trial from two perspectives. Firstly, I lean on Simona Forti's account in this volume in which she argues that Arendt's conception of judgement neither lends itself as the basis of a systematic political theory nor draws out the presuppositions of a discourse ethics but yet maintains the claim to be at once ethical and political. Secondly, I

will read Arendt's report from the perspective of "pariah ethics"², the cornerstone of which is the idea of the inescapability of personal responsibility. I will argue that Arendt's account was badly misread because the dimension of pariah ethics was either omitted or rejected by her readers.

The attacks on Arendt never really hit the target because virtually nobody understood or wanted to understand her underlying conceptual commitments and interpretive arguments. This was partly her own fault because she did not understand how important it would have been to explicate the principles and criteria of her interpretation; rather it remained hidden, constituting an implicit frame of her judgement. She did not comprehend, in other words, how radically her conception of personal and political responsibility and political accountability at large differed from the common sense view of American intellectuals. In order to grasp this frame one has to be acquainted with Arendt's early writings on Jewish pariahdom and particularly, on the role of Bernard Lazare in them.

I will first discuss the principal arguments of Arendt which caused the debate and relate them to her pariah ethics. I will then take a glance at Arendt's critique of the arrangements of the trial. Finally, I will consider how the particular case of the Eichmann trial is located in Arendt's reflections on judgement.

A Conscious Pariah in Jerusalem

In Arendt's account of Eichmann's trial, there are two crucial arguments which caused debate. These are her interpretation of the role of the Jewish Councils in "the final solution of the Jewish question" and her thesis of the banality of evil in Eichmann's deeds.

Arendt argued that instead of organizing the Jewish people into common resistance against the Nazis, the Jewish leadership, most importantly the Jewish Councils, preferred to cooperate with the Nazis, believing that with a traditional policy of concessions and sacrificing a few they would be able to save many. In other words, the Jewish leadership did not understand that they were confronting an unprecedented phenomenon to which traditional modes of Jewish policy were not applicable: they were not able to see that this time, there was no end to the pogroms, or rather, the final solution was not simply another manifestation of the pogroms, and this is why a traditional policy of concessions could not work successfully (see EJ, Chapter VII). Unlike was frequently argued in the debate over EJ, Arendt did not claim that the Jewish leadership should have understood from the start where Nazi policy was leading. This would have been impossible because the official decision on the execution of the final solution was made only in 1942 at the so called Wannsee conference. Even though Hitler's desire and intention to destroy the Jews was clear and obvious much earlier, the rhythms and modes of the destruction developed only gradually (cf. Hilberg 1961; Goldhagen 1996).

In Jerusalem, the question of the role of the Jewish Councils in the final solution was not, of course, raised by Arendt but it did emerge in the course of the trial. It followed faithfully the wide-spread postwar debate over why the Jews did not resist or fight back. Unlike the prosecution, Arendt was not satisfied with the typical explanation of the impossibility of resistance under totalitarian rule (cf. Hausner 1966). She considered it necessary to have a second glance at what the Jews, or more precisely the Jewish leaders, actually did when faced with deportations. She argued that at a certain point, when the mass deportations started, the Jewish leadership should have seen that all the routes led to the gas chamber:

whatever the motives of the Jewish leadership might have been, they ended up supporting Nazi rule by cooperating with the Nazi authorities, and thus facilitating the deportations of Jews (cf. Arendt 1963b).

As to the argument of the banality of evil, Arendt's claim is that Eichmann was neither the main architect of the plan of destruction of the Jews (Eichmann was principally concerned with the execution of the deportations) nor a particularly evil or perverse person. In his case, Arendt argues, the horror lies in the fact that he was too normal. In other words, he was basically an average and decent man who wanted to do his job well and follow orders without asking questions. The evil lies precisely in this unquestionable desire to follow orders because it connotes an incapacity to think, to personally consider what one exactly is carrying out when following orders (EJ, 276, 287).

This kind of evil is banal because there is nothing inhuman, monstrous or Faustian in it. It is simply banal, average, and mediocre. It is neither a mark of hopeless stupidity nor over-intelligent monstrosity but rather the result of ethical and political thoughtlessness.

Despite what most of her critics suggested, Arendt's purpose with these arguments was not to make the Jews guilty of their own destruction but to raise the question of responsibility, both from the viewpoint of the perpetrator and the victim. It is indeed my argument that in Arendt, the underlying conceptual commitment, which binds the Jewish Councils and Eichmann's banal evil together, is her conception of responsibility. More precisely, what is common to both the Jewish Councils and Eichmann is the omission of responsibility. It did not occur to them that with their unquestioning obedience they might be contributing to something they did not desire. They simply believed they were doing what they had to do under the circumstances without assuming responsibility for their own acts and deeds.

Arendt's conception of responsibility was strongly shaped by her acquaintance with the writings of Bernard Lazare, a French Jew of the era of the Dreyfus Affair. In Lazare's view, pariahdom does not offer any excuse for irresponsibility and passive yielding to fate. Rather it is the duty of every human being to resist oppression. In other words, social or political exclusion does not offer any excuse for withdrawing from the duty of resisting the plight of injustice and political voicelessness.

From this basic conviction, it follows that every human being is responsible for his/her own acts and decisions concerning his/her political situation. Human agents are not radically divided into cruel evil-doers and innocent victims. Every human being contributes to his/her own political future by his/her own acts and deeds through which s/he becomes committed to the common world. In other words, pariahs also have their own share of responsibility for their fate.

In the case of European Jews, this means that they were not merely innocent victims of evil Gentile forces around them. Although their social and political oppression is an undeniable fact, this fact does not relieve them from a share of responsibility for their political vicissitudes. From this Arendt concludes that the political past of the Jewish people should not only be read as a miserable Diaspora history of historical sufferers but also in terms of their role as makers of their own history. (cf. Arendt 1948)

It was precisely Arendt's conception of the responsibility of the pariah that was omitted by her critics. This omission is due to the reception of her works in post-war America and Europe. Even though those acquainted with Arendt's early writings knew that the dimension of pariahdom played an important role in them, virtually anyone had personally consulted Bernard Lazare's texts.³ This is why it was practically impossible for the reading

public of the 1960s to grasp an entirely Lazarean tone in Arendt's report. Her binding and personally challenging pariah ethics were understood as cruelty and heartlessness if not direct sympathy for Eichmann.

Similarly, her profoundly Lazarean stance towards Jewishness itself remained unnoticed. Her ironical remarks on the internal hierarchies of Jews were read as signs of a bias against eastern Jews in her own thinking. Had the American intellectuals been acquainted with Lazare's monumental *L'antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes* (1894), they might have been able to grasp a connection between Arendt's irony and Lazare's relativization of Jewishness as an eternal and primarily religious identity of an entire people. He argued forcefully against inner hierarchies in Jewish communities and spoke for the possibility of a political existence for the Jews on European soil.⁴

Arendt as Judge

Those who accused Arendt of distorting the conduct of the trial did not simply argue that she warped the facts or told lies about what happened in Jerusalem but rather they claimed that she gave a false picture of the motives for organizing the trial because of her lack of empathy towards the Jews and their historical fate (see e.g. Robinson 1965).

Keeping in mind Arendt's above-mentioned Lazarean conceptual and interpretive commitments, I will now shift attention to the characteristics of the setting of the trial and Arendt's judgement on it. This is because in order to understand what she said in EJ one needs to be acquainted with what she did in Jerusalem.

In her book, Arendt did not restrict herself to reporting faithfully the stages of the trial. Rather, she presented herself as a self-authorized judge, who assumed the right to pronounce her own verdict not only on Eichmann but

also on the entire orchestration of the trial. However, by this gesture she did not attempt to replace or exceed the sentence of the “real” judges or to compete with them in professional qualifications. As a self-authorized judge Arendt was not concerned with giving a moral or juridical judgement, however she did attempt to make a political judgement both on the trial and its subject because according to her pariah ethics it was the duty of every human being not only to resist oppression and fight for justice but also to judge politically the deeds of one’s peers.

In her “verdict” Arendt approaches the question of why the trial was organized and discusses both the roles and motives and the factual acts and deeds of the prosecution, defense, and judges as well as those of the Israeli government.

As I have already pointed out, Adolf Eichmann was not sentenced *in absentia* at Nuremberg immediately after the war, but was traced for years by the Israeli intelligence service and finally caught in Argentina in 1960. The Israeli government did not want to have him tried before an international court but claimed that a Jewish court in Israel was the only proper place for the trial.

Already, the first pages of the Eichmann book reveal that Arendt considered the motives of the Israeli government to organize the trial highly questionable. She points out that “justice demands that the accused be prosecuted, defended, and judged, and that all the other questions of seemingly greater import...be left in abeyance” (EJ, 5). For Arendt, Eichmann’s deeds should have been on trial, not the sufferings of the Jews, not the German people or mankind, not even antisemitism and racism (EJ, 5). This is because Arendt sincerely believed that it was not possible to put on trial general concepts or collective groups of people but only individuals and their deeds. She admits that this was exactly what the highly qualified judges of

the trial were trying to do. However, she identifies four basic factors which impeded their sincere efforts to do justice.

Firstly, for David Ben-Gurion, the Israeli Prime Minister, and his government what were on trial were by no means Eichmann's deeds but all the above mentioned questions, which should have been held in abeyance. In other words, Ben-Gurion was organizing a show trial, the purpose of which was to reveal to the entire world the immensity of the sufferings of the Jews, the guilt of the German people and other Gentiles for the destruction of European Jewry, and the eternal character of antisemitism and racism. Moreover, the underlying motive and desire behind these aims was to prove to the whole world that the only possible resolution of Nazi crimes would be to guarantee the existence of the Jewish state in Palestine. In other words, in Arendt's interpretation the Eichmann trial provided the Israeli government with a smoke-screen behind which to justify the establishment of an all-Jewish state in Palestine (cf. EJ, 9-10).

The second factor is related to the first: in Arendt's interpretation Ben-Gurion remains the invisible stage manager of the proceedings, dictating that which the prosecution was doing: "in the courtroom he speaks with the voice of Gideon Hausner, the Attorney General, who, representing the government, does his best, his very best, to obey his master" (EJ, 5).⁵ In other words, the manuscript of the trial was not written by the representatives of justice but was dictated by the leaders of the state of Israel. It consisted in bringing to court a huge number of witnesses who testified about their own stories and experiences under Nazi rule. More often than not these testimonies had no direct connection with Eichmann's deeds, as in the case of Polish Jews who were not deported anywhere by Eichmann but killed on the spot by *Einsatzgruppen* (cf. EJ, 206-207).

The third factor concerns the proper way to organize the trial. In the opinion of the Israeli government and Gideon Hausner, an international court would not have been a proper place to judge Eichmann because they believed that only a Jewish court could render justice to Jews, and that it was the business of Jews to sit in judgment on their enemies (cf. EJ, 6-7). In other words, according to the prosecution, Eichmann's crimes were crimes against the Jews and for this reason he ought to be judged in a Jewish court. Arendt disagreed. In her view, the overall setting of the trial was improper and Eichmann was sentenced on an incorrect basis. As a Nazi official who acted as part of the entire Nazi machinery, his crime was not only against the Jews but also against the whole of humanity. This is why he should have been condemned in an international court as *hostis generis humani*, and not as *hostis Judaeorum*.

The fourth factor concerns the absurdity of the task of the trial. In principle, the task of the trial is to find a proper punishment for a crime. By suffering a punishment sentenced by the court the criminal is supposed to reconcile his/her crime and gain the chance for a new beginning in the common world among her peers. In the case of Nazi crimes this general principle of the Western conception of justice is not valid because they were simply too immense to be reconciled.

In Arendt's view this holds true in Eichmann's case, too and from this viewpoint, the Jerusalem trial was an absurdity. However, Arendt does not suggest that Eichmann should not have been punished at all because his crime was too immense to be reconciled. Instead, she suggests two alternative ways of dealing with the situation. Either Eichmann should have been judged in an international court in order to remind humankind of the fact that what was at stake in Nazi totalitarianism was the incapacity of European political culture to deal with the problems

produced by itself, or Eichmann should have been executed without any trial whatsoever. From the latter perspective a trial was unnecessary because Eichmann's crime was evident and well-known and his fate was foreseen.

Invitation to Judge Politically

To act and to judge are not the same, but in politics they are inseparable. More precisely, political action presupposes political judgement and *vice versa*. Otherwise responsible political action and commitment to the human world are impossible. The difference between acting and judging lies in the fact that they cannot always take place at the very same moment. Political judgement, by its nature, is retroactive (cf. Forti in this volume) whereas political action often leans on *ad hoc* considerations. It is precisely because of this peculiar nature of political action as contingent and unprecedented that it requires retrospect judgement. Without retrospective judgement, which weaves political acts into the web of history and remembrance and gives them significance⁶, single political acts might remain a chain of scattered and random, and, as such, insignificant events and happenings.

The inseparability of acting and judging concerns, above all, judgements on future events. Political actors need to try to foresee future events in their contingency in order to be able to decide what kind of strategy would best promote the realization of a preferable course of events. In this they have to judge still potential events without an overall view of them which retrospective judgement can enjoy.

It turns out that in the Arendtian perspective, retrospective judgement of past events and antecedent judgement of future events require each other. Retrospective judgement improves our capacity to judge and

helps us to grasp the profoundly contingent character of the human world and its events. It may help us understand that we will never be able to master and foresee the future. On the other hand, antecedent judgement is necessary in the attempt to prevent something like totalitarianism, which should not have happened, to reoccur on earth. Without any guarantees of success all we can do is to consider and judge as carefully as possible what we are doing and what we are going to do.

The question remains whether Arendt's position as a self-authorized judge of the setting of the Eichmann trial can be justified. It is my argument that she ventured to take this position because it was her deep and sincere conviction that it was the duty of every human being not only to act but also to judge politically. In matters that concern the common world between people, anyone is justified if not even obliged to judge politically. In other words, Hannah Arendt's right to judge the Eichmann trial is based on a general human right – and duty – to judge events in the human world. Making judgements does not mean elevating oneself morally above one's fellow human beings but rather exercising one's basic human right and capacity. Hannah Arendt's judgement was not meant to be the last word on the Eichmann case but rather an invitation to exercise the capacity for judgement whenever something significant happens.

In extreme situations, such as totalitarian rule, where open participation in public matters is impossible, political judgement may provide the only available alternative for political activity. As Simona Forti points out in this volume, judgement gives expression to thinking and becomes a place of resistance with respect to the existent. This judgement, in times of political emergency, can become immediate action.

However, in my view, there is a paradox inscribed in the totalitarian situation. The impossibility to act (in the

Arendtian sense) tends to lead to unwillingness to think, to critically consider what is going on. It is as if totalitarian rule tended to destroy the capacity to judge critically by destroying possibilities to act politically, as if it were enough to forbid acting to make judging, too, disappear. This paradox is related to the fate of thinking under totalitarian circumstances. As Eichmann's case clearly shows, thinking is easily replaced by obedience and obedience, alas, shifts responsibility onto the shoulders of others. The threat here, in the Arendtian perspective, is that the link between thinking and judging is cut off. It is as if the purging component of thinking which liberates the faculty of judgement has been replaced by an obsession to obey and push doubt – which always invites one to think – as far away as possible.

As Arendt forcefully shows, this is precisely what happened to Eichmann. Instead of considering critically what he and his superiors were really doing, he preferred to faithfully follow orders, to obey the commands of his superiors without taking personal responsibility for his own acts and deeds. Thus, one of the greatest crimes of Eichmann was thoughtlessness, which led to unwillingness to assume his share of responsibility.

The horror in Eichmann's case lies in the fact that his kind of behaviour is far from exceptional. On the contrary, escaping from responsibility behind the commands of others is an ordinary vice of everyman. Still, it is not inevitable. As Simona Forti pointed out in the discussions of the seminar lying behind of this volume, we should not restrict ourselves to staring at those, like Eichmann, who behaved in an average way. Instead of regretting the unhappy consequences of obeying the rules, we should shift our attention to those who did not yield and obey, who did not lose their capacity for judgement but followed the Lazarean maxim of resisting oppression under any circumstances. Instead of becoming paralysed when

confronted with the banality of evil in Eichmann, we should ask what those rare persons really did who did not give up and acquiesce to the circumstances.

Hannah Arendt's Verdict

In the postscript of the 1965 edition of *EJ*, Arendt complains how troubled men of our time are by the question of judgement. She regrets that the argument according to which we cannot judge if we were not present and involved ourselves seems to convince everyone everywhere, although it seems obvious that if it were true, neither the administration of justice nor the writing of history would ever be possible (*EJ*, 295).

She continues by observing that although justice, and not mercy, is a matter of judgement, public opinion everywhere is in agreement that no one has the right to judge somebody else. What public opinion permits us to judge and even condemn are trends, or whole groups of people. For Arendt, this is something so general that distinctions can no longer be made, actors can no longer be named (*EJ*, 296).

These arguments of Arendt clearly show that what Arendt was pursuing in *EJ* was a rethinking and rehabilitation of the political judgement on the concrete deeds of living individuals. For her, judging the deeds and acts of an individual was the only way to distinguish right from wrong and establish the relations of responsibility. The problem and the task was to establish new criteria for political judgement as the old criteria of the nineteenth century were no longer valid after the emergence of totalitarian rule.

However, Arendt's desire to find new criteria for political judgement does not mean that a theory of judgement was to be found in her later writings. On the

contrary, she was convinced that after the appearance of totalitarianism as an unprecedented and unforeseen phenomenon, the establishment of a theory of judgement based on a firm fundament of permanent concepts and conceptions was not possible. We cannot establish permanent laws of judgement because the criteria for judgement are always related to the situation. All we can find in Arendt are the criteria of *how* to judge. More precisely, our judgements ought to be based on the recognition of the post-totalitarian situation in which we are left without eternal truths and a firm basis for thinking. We ought to strive for situated knowledge and judgements which are committed to contingent plurality and the worldliness of human existence.

I have argued that in Jerusalem, Arendt presented herself as a self-authorized judge of the trial. In the *Epilogue* of EJ she, indeed, explicitly gives her own verdict on Eichmann, offering it as an alternative to the view of the judges of the court. I have also argued that its purpose was not to replace or exceed the sentence of the real judges but rather to reveal the basic nature of Eichmann's crimes which was related to his thoughtless and uncritical obedience to the rules and commands of his superiors. This obedience is, however, only a part of Eichmann's guilt. The other part was his unwillingness to share the earth with the Jewish people. This unwillingness went against the principle of the contingent plurality of human existence. This is why Eichmann's crime was not so much moral or juridical in its nature but rather political:

We are concerned here only with what you did, and not with the possible noncriminal nature of your inner life and your motives or with the criminal potentialities of those around you. You told your story in terms of a hard-luck story, and, knowing the circumstances, we are, up to a point, willing to grant you that under more favorable circum-

stances it is highly unlikely that you would ever have come before us or before any other criminal court. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that it was nothing more than misfortune that made you a willing instrument in the organization of mass murder; there still remains the fact that you have carried out, and therefore actively supported, a policy of mass murder. (EJ, 278-279)

In other words, the fact that Eichmann was not an incarnation of the devil on earth does not relieve him from responsibility for the deeds he committed. The point is rather that in court we should not condemn a person on the basis of *what* s/he is but rather what s/he does, i.e. *who* s/he is on the basis of his/her deeds.

For politics is not like the nursery; in politics obedience and support are the same. And just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations – as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world – we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you. This is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang. (EJ, 278-279)

In sum, unlike almost everybody else, Arendt took seriously what Eichmann said. This is not the same as to credulously justify his deeds. It means rather that Arendt built her interpretation and “verdict” on Eichmann’s own words, without making any distinction between the innocent or misleading surface and evil essence in him. She was convinced that what was aggravating the evidence in Eichmann’s case was inscribed in his own account of what he did. More precisely, for Arendt, the greatest crimes of Eichmann were visible in his appearance in front of the court and in his deeds as a Nazi official. Eichmann’s

final plea was, indeed, based on an argument, which in Arendt's view was, in addition to his unwillingness to share the world with the Jews, the most aggravating evidence of his guilt. This was the zeal to obey the orders of his superiors without ever considering what he was actually doing.

Notes

- ¹ In order to fully identify Lazare's impact on Arendt's conception of political judgement and her judgements of Jewish politics one ought to compare his writings with Arendt's war-time writings in the German immigrants' magazine, *Aufbau*, and her other war-time considerations of Jewish politics.
- ² Here, the term pariah ethics does not refer to any systematic ethical discipline. Rather I use it to refer to Arendt's conception of the accountability of the pariah position. According to her view, adopted from Lazare, social and political pariahdom did not allow political passivity but rather demanded active self-defense and rebellion against oppressors.
- ³ The omission of Lazare's texts holds true even today. This is partly due to the fact that they are not very easily accessible and have mostly remained untranslated in English. See e.g. Bernstein's (1996) otherwise sharp interpretation of the theme of pariahdom in Arendt's texts.
- ⁴ For more detailed discussion of Lazare's impact on Arendt and a bibliography of his most important writings see Parvikko 1996.
- ⁵ Gideon Hausner did not, of course, accept this interpretation but explicitly argued against it. See Hausner 1966.
- ⁶ For an excellent account of Arendt's conception of storytelling see Disch 1994.

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