

Hannah Arendt: A Conscious Pariah and Her People

Samantha Balber

“In the Jewish tradition there is a concept, hard to define yet concrete enough, which we know as *Ahavath Yisrael*. ‘Love of the Jewish people . . .’ In you, dear Hannah, as in so many intellectuals who came from the German Left, I find little trace of this.”¹ So wrote Gershom Scholem in a letter to Hannah Arendt in reaction to her reports on the 1961 Adolf Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. When Arendt’s reports on the trial of Adolf Eichmann first appeared in *The New Yorker* she angered many by her implication that Jewish leaders “bore partial responsibility for the annihilation of their communities.”² According to Arendt, “Wherever Jews lived there were recognized Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way or another, for one reason or another, with the Nazis.”³ This was blasphemy for many, and Arendt was forever tainted by the scandal. The subsequent polemical response was the worst of her career and the most difficult for her to bear personally. Her response to Scholem, her “dear Gerhard,” appears to validate Scholem’s accusation: “I have never in my life ‘loved’ any people or collective – neither the German people, nor the French, nor the American nor the working class or anything of that sort. I indeed ‘love’ only my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons.”⁴ When contextualized, however, Arendt’s response to Scholem is hardly surprising.

Arendt was born in Hanover, Germany on October 14, 1906 and was raised in the eastern Prussian city of Königsberg.⁵ Although born into an assimilated Jewish family she was highly conscious of the anti-Semitism prevalent in all facets of her life.⁶ Many of the highly educated Jews of that time were assimilated into German culture, and even as her grandfather presided as president of the Liberal Jewish Community of Königsberg, she was still raised with a very strict, very “German” upbringing, as her family held many of the same principles, interests, and passions for German culture as did their non-Jewish neighbors.⁷ The Arendts also considered themselves to be separate and very different from the “poor Jews” and the “Ostjuden” (“Eastern Jews”).⁸ Regardless of her family’s secularism, her mother, Martha, was adamant that she should always defend herself and never deny she was Jewish.⁹ Her mother was very “brisk and matter of fact” about their Jewishness, and in Arendt’s own words: “Of course she was a Jewess! She would never have had me christened, or baptized. And she would have given me a real spanking if she ever had reason to believe that I had denied being Jewish!”¹⁰ Arendt always considered the word “Jew” to be “an identity that in some fashion ‘belonged’ to the anti-Semites, a label that was put on to assimilated Jews who did not necessarily recognise [sic] themselves in it.”¹¹ The

¹ Sraya Shapiro, “Dear Hannah,” *Jerusalem Post* (Jerusalem, Israel), Feb. 19, 1964.

² Simon Swift, *Hannah Arendt* (London: Routledge, 2009), 12.

³ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 125.

⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 392.

⁵ Swift, *Hannah Arendt*, 17.

⁶ Swift, *Hannah Arendt*, 13.

⁷ Derwent May, *Hannah Arendt*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1986), 14.

⁸ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 14-16.

⁹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 14-16.

¹⁰ Arendt, Hannah. Hannah Arendt “Zur Person Full Interview.” Filmed, 1964. You Tube Video, 1:00.25. Posted April 8, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsoImQfVsO4>

¹¹ Swift, *Hannah Arendt*, 13.

complexities of understanding her Jewishness, and the status of Jews (both assimilated and not) within European society, significantly influenced her life and her work.¹²

Arendt's worldview was primarily forged as she came of age during the ascension of the Nazi Party. Her subsequent refugee status in France led to extensive writings on the desperation that arose from "statelessness" as it applied to Jews in Europe, as well as to the Zionist imagination.¹³ There was never a time when she was not grappling with the devastation of what *was* happening and *had* happened (post-Holocaust) to Jews: whether it was in the early 1930s as she assisted the German Zionist Organization in the aiding of emigrating Jews, or in her later writings on the Eichmann trial. Arendt was always in a process of trying to understand. Her books and essays, her catalog-like collection of correspondence with friends and colleagues, all reflect this unending task.

The polemical attacks surrounding *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, as well as directly upon Arendt herself, still continues to the present day. Outrage lingers among many primarily due to her controversial characterizations. For example, her description of Eichmann as "not a monster" but as a "clown" was controversial.¹⁴ She portrayed Eichmann not as a diabolical madman, but instead as an officious bureaucrat that had alleviated himself of any moral responsibility, obeyed the law, and was simply "loyal to his oath."¹⁵ Furthermore, many claim(ed) Arendt blamed the victims. She darkly asserted that Jewish leaders were complicit in the destruction of their own people, and that "the final rounding up of Jews in Berlin, ... was done entirely by Jewish police."¹⁶ She boldly declared that Gideon Hausner, the prosecuting attorney in Eichmann's trial possessed a "ghetto mentality."¹⁷ By classifying him as "a typical Galician Jew," and "one of those people who probably don't know any language,"¹⁸ Arendt revealed a common distinction (and prejudice) about "Eastern," Yiddish-speaking Jews, somehow being inferior, and therefore weaker. This played directly into her disdain for David Ben-Gurion's judiciary process, orchestrated (in part) to send a message to the world that "the Jews are not sheep to be slaughtered, but a people who can hit back."¹⁹

Hannah Arendt's life and life's work is undoubtedly, at times, a convoluted paradox; however, I disagree with Scholem. Arendt unfailingly possesses *Ahavath Yisrael* – 'Love of the Jewish people.' One must study the complete story of Arendt and her complexities before passing their final judgment upon her, and/or her work. At times, perhaps unknowingly, she revealed herself to be a product of her time and place. Examining a subject as dark as the industrialization of death is hardly simplistic. It takes a lifetime of study to embark upon even one answer or one theory. Arendt spent her life engaged, while tackling the questions that have few, or no answers. She may not always have been right, as she may not always have been tactful, but she was *always* searching for the humanity within the roiling sea of the inhumane.

Early Life: 1906-1924

¹² Swift, *Hannah Arendt*, 13.

¹³ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 40-43.

¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 54.

¹⁵ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 54-55.

¹⁶ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 117.

¹⁷ Franklin Foer, "Days of Reckoning," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Apr. 10, 2011. Taken from correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers.

¹⁸ Foer, "Days of Reckoning."

¹⁹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 103.

Johanna Arendt was born to Paul and Martha (née Cohn) Arendt,²⁰ who both came of age during a time of peace and prosperity in Germany, never experiencing the effects of war.²¹ They hailed from prominent Jewish families in Königsberg, the capital of East Prussia, where they returned with young Hannah (as she was always to be called), at the age of three. Paul and Martha were well traveled, highly educated, and significantly *more* committed to Leftist politics and *less* committed to religion than their parents were. However, they still sent young Hannah to synagogue with her grandparents and maintained a relationship (albeit political, not religious) with the rabbi.²² Nevertheless, religion was always a factor for young Hannah, who one day returned from school and asked her Mother if “it was true that her Grandfather had murdered the Lord Jesus?”²³ Although her family was highly assimilated into German culture, Arendt’s awareness that her “Jewishness” equaled ‘separateness’ was at the forefront of her daily imagination. She wrestled with the complexities of this ‘separateness’ for her entire life, both professionally and personally.

The first decade of Arendt’s life was by all accounts a happy one. However, this abruptly changed at the age of seven when her father died of complications from syphilis.²⁴ Paul Arendt had wrongly assumed that he had been cured prior to marrying Martha and his illness resulted in him having to leave the electrical engineering firm he was working for in Hanover as his symptoms both recurred and worsened.²⁵ This prompted the Arendt’s move back to Königsberg and in 1911, suffering the latter-stages of the disease, Paul was placed in a psychiatric hospital only to die two years later in 1913. Arendt was just seven years old.²⁶ She was barely permitted time to grieve her grandfather, Max Arendt, who passed away earlier that same year. She considered herself as close to him as she did her own father.²⁷ The sadness that she carried was palpable to all that knew her, especially her mother Martha. Martha had always kept a diary since Arendt’s birth entitled, *Unser Kind* (“Our Kid/Child”).²⁸ In the entries surrounding the commitment of Paul Arendt, Martha optimistically wrote that, “everything is functioning properly and she is always cheerful and alert.”²⁹ She did not make another entry until 1914:

The child saw and experienced the entire horrible transformation which her father suffered from his illness. She was kind and patient with him, played cards with him throughout the entire summer of 1911, did not permit me to say a harsh word to him, but wished at times her father were no longer here. She prayed for him mornings and nights without being taught to do so.³⁰

²⁰ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 13.

²¹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 13.

²² Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 9-10.

²³ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 11.

²⁴ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 14.

²⁵ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 14.

²⁶ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 14.

²⁷ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 14.

²⁸ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 5-41.

²⁹ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 19.

³⁰ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 19.

Martha also expressed her confusion with Hannah's behavior at the time of her grandfather's death, in March 1913:

In the following weeks she hardly speaks of her grandfather and playmate whom she loved so much, so that I am at a loss to know whether she thinks of him at all. Until she tells me one day that we should not think of sad things too much, there is no point to being saddened by them. That is typical for her great zest for life, always happy and always satisfied, pushing everything unpleasant as far away from herself as possible.³¹

In this same entry, Martha wrote of Hannah's reaction to her father's death:

In October [1913] Paul dies. She [Hannah] takes that to be something sad for me. She herself remains untouched by it. To console me she says: 'Remember Mama, that it happens to a lot of women.' ... She probably derives something like satisfaction from the attentions lavished on her by so many people. – Otherwise she is a sunny, cheerful child with a good heart.³²

It is apparent that even at such a young age Arendt possessed an ability to compartmentalize her feelings of loss and grief, while simultaneously being a supportive and calming force for her mother. The onset of World War I prompted Martha to flee with her daughter to Berlin, along with thousands of others from Königsberg who feared an impending Russian takeover. As it became clear that this would not be the case as the Russians retreated, Martha and Hannah would return home only one year after they left. Life in Königsberg, as well as for Martha and Hannah, resumed peacefully.³³

By the age of thirteen Arendt was immersing herself in her studies, and was being recognized for her academic talent and abilities. This was also the age that her mother married Martin Beerwald, a Jewish businessman, also from Königsberg. Along with a stepfather, Arendt gained two stepsisters: Clara, 20, and Eva, 19, each of whom immediately bonded with Martha, leaving Arendt feeling separated and distanced from the family.³⁴ She sought refuge from her loneliness by way of her intellectual pursuits. By sixteen her room became an academic "salon" of her own creation. She invited friends to join a "Greek Circle" where they read and discussed the classics in the style of German university students of that time.³⁵ Arendt soon began writing poetry. "Mudikeit" ("Weariness"), written in the style of German Romanticism, vividly elucidates her despondency and the dispiritedness she was experiencing at age seventeen. The final two verses are dark, yet revealing:

What I have loved
I cannot hold.
What lies around me

³¹ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 20.

³² Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 20.

³³ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 17.

³⁴ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 17-22.

³⁵ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 19.

I cannot leave

Everything declines
While darkness rises.
Nothing overcomes me –
This must be life's way.³⁶

Perhaps this is an allusion to her home life, her mother, and all that she is still too young to leave, yet desperately wishes to.

When Arendt heard news of two new philosophers, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger, teaching at German universities (Heidelberg and Marburg, respectively), she knew she had discovered her path. She was attracted to their philosophical styles, which merged politics and philosophy, setting them apart from their contemporaries. Both Jaspers and Heidegger remained in Arendt's life until her death in 1975. She considered each to be uniquely original thinkers and, in the autumn of 1924, she was packed and on her way to the University of Marburg to become a student of Heidegger.³⁷

The University Years: 1924 – 1929

When Arendt first met Heidegger, he was working on his manuscript *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time).³⁸ This work proved to be significant in the field, elevating Heidegger into the ranks of notable philosophers of the twentieth century.³⁹ Many, including Arendt, joined his classes because they “wanted to learn *how* to think.”⁴⁰ In her own words, Arendt described this as “passionate thinking, in which thinking and aliveness become one.”⁴¹ Within months passionate thinking became physical and blossomed into a full-blown, secret love affair.⁴² Heidegger was thirty-five, married, and had two sons. In a letter to Arendt he said he “needed her to breathe fully and deeply, to enjoy being alive; he needed to have her as a “stimulating force” in his life.”⁴³

Heidegger had a powerful effect over his students. His effect on Arendt was mesmerizing, yet not surprising given her youthful vulnerabilities, fatherlessness, and tendency toward melancholy.⁴⁴ She was uncertain as to her place in the world, and held many of the insecurities common among assimilated German Jews of that time: the insecurity of status and place within a region not wholly accepting of Jews. Generations of uncertainty as to whether acceptance is genuine can leave one feeling untethered. By embracing Arendt, Heidegger helped to assuage her self-doubt, heavily (and generationally) ingrained in so many Jews.⁴⁵ He chose

³⁶ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 37.

³⁷ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 20-22.

³⁸ Elzbieta Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt-Martin Heidegger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 3.

³⁹ Ettinger, *Arendt-Heidegger*, 3-4.

⁴⁰ Ettinger, *Arendt-Heidegger*, 3-4

⁴¹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 23.

⁴² May, *Hannah Arendt*, 23.

⁴³ Ettinger, *Arendt-Heidegger*, 3.

⁴⁴ Ettinger, *Arendt-Heidegger*, 15-16.

⁴⁵ Ettinger, *Arendt-Heidegger*, 15-16.

her. And she gave her love to him selflessly and in abundance. Whatever approval she had been seeking; whether as a Jew, an intellectual, a lover, or as a fatherless young woman, Heidegger fulfilled it all.

In 1926, Arendt knew it was time to move on. She was torn between leaving to pursue working on her dissertation at another university and remaining close to Heidegger: both to study with him and continue their relationship.⁴⁶ With hopes that perhaps he would attempt to discourage her from leaving, she wrote to him: “because of my love for you, to make nothing more difficult than it already was.” By making it all about *his* wellbeing, Arendt was utterly vulnerable when Heidegger ultimately “decided” it was time for her to leave the university. She was destroyed when he claimed she “had failed to establish herself and did not fit in,” when during their entire affair he insisted she was *essential* to him both personally and professionally.⁴⁷ Again, “fitting in” was one of her greatest insecurities being a young Jewish woman.

In 1925, after her affair with Heidegger ended, Arendt wrote a “description of herself” for him, entitled *Die Schatten* (The Shadows). She spoke of herself abstractly as she once again made herself vulnerable; detailing the pain of her childhood, her lack of “feeling” at times, and her deep longing for protection. Her love for him, their affair, his tutelage, “had released her from this spell, so that the world had become full of color and fascination and mystery for her again.”⁴⁸

In 1933 Heidegger officially joined the Nazi Party, once again breaking Arendt’s heart. His signing of the loyalty oath coincided with his appointment to rector of the University of Freiburg, where he promptly ended the careers of many whom he considered in opposition to himself and the party. This included many established intellectuals, such as: Karl Jaspers, Eduard Baumgarten, and Max Mueller. Heidegger even went as far as to personally fire his old Jewish teacher, signing the document himself.⁴⁹

After leaving Marburg, Arendt spent one semester at the University of Freiburg and then finally settled in at the University of Heidelberg.⁵⁰ Hans Jonas, who was with her at Marburg, transferred as well. He remained one of Arendt’s closest friends. Jonas once wrote of her “genius for friendship,” due to her knack of making and keeping friends for life.⁵¹ Jaspers, her philosophy professor, was no different. Like Heidegger, Jaspers was an expert in “Existenz Philosophy,” who, along with providing friendship, served as a father figure to Arendt as well. He brought her into his family home where she felt at ease with his wife, other scholars, and fellow students whom Jaspers also welcomed.⁵² Under Jaspers’ supervision Arendt completed and published her doctoral dissertation in 1929. *Die Liebesbegriff bei Augustin* (*The Concept of Love in Augustine*) was her foray into the concepts of “early Christian thought about virtue and the political life,” which served as a stepping stone toward the development of her ideas that appeared in her later work, *The Human Condition*.⁵³

⁴⁶ Ettinger, *Arendt-Heidegger*, 20.

⁴⁷ Ettinger, *Arendt-Heidegger*, 21-22.

⁴⁸ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 24.

⁴⁹ Wendy Steiner, “The Banality of Love,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), Sep. 24, 1995.

⁵⁰ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 26.

⁵¹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 26.

⁵² May, *Hannah Arendt*, 27.

⁵³ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 29.

It was in this same year that Arendt met and married Gunther Stern a “highly intelligent German Jew” from a well-known progressive family.⁵⁴ Arendt and Stern moved to Frankfurt in 1929. Stern worked on his thesis, while Arendt explored her new topic of interest: the letters of an eighteenth-century German Jewess, Rahel Varnhagen.⁵⁵ As the Nazis began to gain more power, Stern realized his prospects for obtaining a teaching job at a German university were slim. Instead, he pursued journalism, reporting on cultural matters, as well as writing fiction under the pen name Gunther Anders.⁵⁶ It was during this time that Arendt reconnected with her grandfather’s old friend Kurt Blumenfeld, the President of the German Zionist Organization.⁵⁷

With the ascension of Nazism, Arendt was faced with having to confront her place as a Jew in Germany. She was influenced by, and felt a kinship of sorts with Varnhagen, and began writing her biography. Varnhagen was a German-Jewish woman in the late 1700s, who came from wealth and prominence and who, like Arendt, enjoyed intellectual pursuits.⁵⁸ As the nobility of Germany became more anti-Semitic, Varnhagen realized her status was in jeopardy and changed her last name to “Robert” to better assimilate. At the age of forty-three Varnhagen had herself baptized and married a man who ultimately only used her for his own social, political, and intellectual benefit.⁵⁹ It was toward the end of her life when Varnhagen reconnected with her Jewishness, declaring “loyalty to her people, and identified herself with the cause of Jewish freedom and equality before the law.”⁶⁰ Varnhagen’s story was filled with allegory relatable to Arendt’s life. Acceptance, assimilation, and betrayal were all concepts with which Arendt could easily connect. The “parvenu versus pariah” conflict existed within many Jews during this time. A “parvenu” is one who comes from a group of people not readily accepted by the majority, or the ruling class, yet achieves (via active assimilation) the status afforded to both. Arendt strove to be what she deemed a “conscious pariah” within the culture of Germany and Europe.⁶¹ Losing her Jewishness by way of assimilation was never an option for Arendt. She was steadfast in preserving the bonds between herself and her people.

Zionism, Statelessness, and Public Life: 1933-1951

The ascension of the Nazi Party in 1931-1932 was the pivotal point in Arendt’s life. She was quick to realize that any expectations of Jewish life in Germany ever being the same were futile.⁶² On February 27, 1933, the *Reichstag* was set afire with the blame landing solely upon the communists. After the confiscation of left-wing writer Bertolt Brecht’s address book by the newly formed Gestapo, Stern immediately fled Germany for France.⁶³ Stern feared Brecht’s book would serve as a directory for “Leftist Berlin,” resulting in large sweeps, and retribution for

⁵⁴ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 29-30.

⁵⁵ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 32-36.

⁵⁶ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 32.

⁵⁷ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 32-33.

⁵⁸ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 33.

⁵⁹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 33.

⁶⁰ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 33.

⁶¹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 35.

⁶² Dana Villa, “Hannah Arendt, 1906-1975,” *The Review of Politics: Political Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* 71, no. 1 (2009): 23.

⁶³ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 102.

the *Reichstag* fire.⁶⁴ Arendt refused to leave Berlin, as she knew she “could no longer be an observer.”⁶⁵ This was the beginning of the end of Arendt and Stern’s marriage. Arendt began to involve herself more and more with the German Zionist movement and began using her apartment as a haven and way station for those seeking refuge from the Nazi regime.⁶⁶ She did not officially join the movement, yet she worked tirelessly on its behalf. Arendt remained uncertain as to the organization’s “back to Palestine” policy and wanted to assert a more international, non-sectarian view of rescue, as it was not only Jews who were in danger from the new regime.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Arendt was in agreement with the Zionist viewpoint on assimilation as “an acceptance of anti-Semitism” and believed wholeheartedly that it was time for *Jews* to stand up for Jews, regardless of background or circumstances.⁶⁸ Arendt also began to compile for the Zionist Movement evidence of German anti-Semitism via the archives of the Prussian State Library.⁶⁹ The “Jewish Question” that Arendt had been struggling with her entire life was now a matter of urgency and required a new reflective sense. Arendt insisted emigration was the only answer for Jews and was necessary for their survival. She vehemently disagreed with Jaspers, who did not understand “why you [Hannah] as a Jewess would want to separate yourself from the Germans.”⁷⁰ Jaspers referred to this phenomenon as the *Deutsche Wesen* (the German Essence). Arendt, feeling separate from this “essence” wrote to Jaspers:

For me, Germany is mother tongue, philosophy, and poetry. For all this I can and must be steadfast. Germany in its old splendor is your past, but what my past is I can hardly say in a phrase. In general, every interpretation [of Germany], whether from the Zionists or the assimilationists or the anti-Semites, only covers up the real problematic of our situation.⁷¹

The separation from her past, or better yet, her people’s past was something truly ineffable for Arendt. She restored wholeness with language and the segments of German culture she could and was permitted to participate in. The rest remained for her a permanent disconnect. This is what anti-Semitism creates: the feeling of inexplicable loss. Although Jaspers had initially hoped to “reconcile her to her Germanness,” as they corresponded, Jews began to lose civil service jobs, and university positions. Jaspers, too, now realized “German” and “Jewish” were to live in estrangement.⁷²

The compilation of anti-Semitic material Arendt compiled for the German Zionist Movement eventually led to her arrest. While on the way to lunch with her mother, she was arrested by a “charming fellow” as she later phrased it and her mother was brought in for

⁶⁴ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 102.

⁶⁵ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 102-103.

⁶⁶ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 102-103.

⁶⁷ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 34.

⁶⁸ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 34.

⁶⁹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 38.

⁷⁰ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 103.

⁷¹ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 103-104. Taken from a correspondence to Karl Jaspers from Hannah Arendt, written on January 3, 1933.

⁷² Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 104.

questioning as well.⁷³ Since Arendt was not “officially” a member of the Zionist organization, the movement was never in jeopardy. Martha Arendt was questioned as to her daughter’s activities at the Prussian State Library, which she of course had no knowledge of; however, she responded fiercely with a mother’s protective instinct: “No, I don’t know what she was doing, but whatever she was doing she was right to be doing it and I would have done the same.”⁷⁴ Arendt was held for eight days and told enough lies to not incriminate herself or the organization. She even “persuaded the policeman in charge to get cigarettes for her and improve the quality of the coffee.”⁷⁵ She and her mother (illegally) left Germany over the Czechoslovakian border, via a “friendly house” of the political Left. In an interview after the war, Arendt said, “I wanted to do practical work, exclusively and only Jewish work.”⁷⁶ She and her mother made their way to France where she continued this same work, which never ended for the rest of her life.

From 1933, when Arendt escaped Germany, until 1951, when she officially received her American citizenship, were Arendt’s most politically active years, although she retained no political rights.⁷⁷ It was during this time that Arendt lived in an ambiguous zone of “statelessness.” Arendt never wrote about her *personal* experience, yet the subject of “statelessness” appeared in her future work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and aptly depicted the despair one might feel as they resided outside “the pale of law.”⁷⁸ Arendt wrote,

Only as an offender against the law can he [the stateless person] gain protection from it. The same man who was in gaol because of his mere presence in the world, who had no rights whatever and lived under threat of deportation, or who was dispatched without sentence and without trial to some kind of internment because he had tried to work and make a living, may become almost a full-fledged citizen because of a little theft. Even if he is penniless he can now get a lawyer, complain about his gaolers, and he will be listened to respectfully. He is no longer the scum of the earth but important enough to be informed of all the details of the law under which he will be tried. He has become a respectable person.⁷⁹

Even if Arendt did feel a sense of desperation she was not one to allow it to either interfere with or prevent her work geared toward change. While in Paris she helped refugees immigrate to Palestine and supplied aid to anti-fascist resistance groups.⁸⁰ Leaving behind the apolitical intellectuality of her university days, as a stateless Jew, Arendt forged ahead with action. She knew Hitler and the Nazis were to be the demise of the Jewish people and called for the formation of a Jewish army.

⁷³ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 105-107.

⁷⁴ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 106.

⁷⁵ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 39.

⁷⁶ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 39.

⁷⁷ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 113.

⁷⁸ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 41-42.

⁷⁹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 40-41.

⁸⁰ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 113.

A truth hitherto unknown to the Jewish people, which it is only just beginning to learn, is *that you can only defend yourself as that for which you are being attacked*. A man attacked as a Jew cannot defend himself as an Englishman or a Frenchman. The world can only conclude from this that he is simply not defending himself at all.⁸¹

This is not to say that Arendt believed that Palestine as a Jewish state was ideal. She envisioned Jewish nationalism as antithetical to the “proper destiny for Jews,” however she still was loyal to the *idea* of the Jewish state she was helping to create.⁸² In her mind there were not many options left for the Jews of Germany. In her words, “Hitler put an end once and for all to the German-Jewish dilemmas.”⁸³

Arendt met people in France that (true to Hannah’s nature) became lifelong friends. Among them were Bertolt Brecht, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Walter Benjamin. The latter being the most significant influence upon her life second only to her soon to be husband, Heinrich Blucher.⁸⁴ Hannah met Blucher, a Communist refugee from Berlin, in 1936. She was twenty-nine and he was thirty-seven.⁸⁵ Blucher was twice married and, unbeknownst to Arendt, was still married to his second wife at the time they first met. For a short while her life in France brightened.⁸⁶

Anti-Semitism in France was on the rise. Jewish organizations such as “The Consistoire,” the chief organization of Jews in Paris, were avidly against Jews becoming politically active for fear of inciting more attacks upon themselves.⁸⁷ Arendt viewed this as a classic example of the parvenu (assimilationist) behavior she deemed so dangerous and actively fought against it.⁸⁸ In 1938, after the annexation of Austria by Hitler, France was inundated with even more Jewish refugees. The French government now outwardly acted against them by limiting work opportunities and expelling Jews without proper documentation.⁸⁹ This led Jews to retreat into closed community/ghetto-like situations, much to Arendt’s dismay. Her reaction was to fight harder as she considered this behavior “ostrich-like” given the ever-growing influence of Nazi power.⁹⁰ In 1939, Arendt’s mother Martha left her husband and Königsberg to be with her daughter in France. She urged her daughter and Blucher to marry for practical reasons, although she did not like him as much as her daughter’s previous husband. Visas to the United States were more likely to be granted to married couples, therefore Arendt and Blucher did not have to remain separated.⁹¹ Blucher was detained in Gurs internment camp, yet released after only a couple of months. Both Arendt and Blucher’s divorces were official and they married in January

⁸¹ Hannah Arendt, “The Jewish Army: The Beginning of a Jewish Politics?” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 47.

⁸² May, *Hannah Arendt*, 42-43.

⁸³ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 46.

⁸⁴ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 46-47.

⁸⁵ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 47.

⁸⁶ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 47.

⁸⁷ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 48-49.

⁸⁸ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 48-49.

⁸⁹ May, 48-49.

⁹⁰ May, 48-49.

⁹¹ May, 49.

of 1940.⁹² In May of that same year, all German refugees in France (except the elderly and children) were sent to internment camps. Arendt was sent to Gurs along the Spanish border and knew nothing of Blucher's whereabouts.⁹³ She managed to obtain some release papers amidst the tumult of France's defeat by Germany. Taken in by friends in Montauban, one day she miraculously spotted Blucher on the streets of that very same town. Arendt, Blucher, and Martha were able to obtain visas (with the help of Gunther Stern in America) and escaped over the Spanish border in 1941, boarding a train bound for Lisbon. They were free.⁹⁴ Arendt's dear friend Walter Benjamin was not as fortunate. Unable to cross the Spanish frontier, which closed on the very day he arrived, he was sent back to France, and subsequently took his own life out of despair. If he had only been there *one* day earlier, he would have been permitted to pass.⁹⁵ Arendt later wrote, "only on that day was the catastrophe possible."⁹⁶

In May of 1941, Arendt and Blucher arrived in New York City, followed by Martha the following month.⁹⁷ Living on a stipend of seventy dollars a month from the Zionist Organization of America, they rented two rooms with a communal kitchen on the upper west side of Manhattan. All three lived there for the following ten years. Arendt spent this span of time writing *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which was published in 1951, making her famous, especially among New York's intellectual elite.⁹⁸ Arendt's continued research of anti-Semitism and focus upon the future of the Jewish people evolved as more information was revealed to the world (and to Arendt, herself) about the extent of destruction perpetuated by the Nazis. Her work now took on new meaning and new questions. With the revelation of the extermination camps, Arendt became consumed with understanding the unanswerable question: "[H]ow had history come to this?"⁹⁹ The uncertain future of the Jews was an ever-prevalent question in the United States, and the desire for a Jewish state in Palestine was ever-growing among American Jews. When the war ended in 1945, the evil of Stalin's cruel, totalitarian regime was exposed and, in 1948, the State of Israel was born.¹⁰⁰ Arendt was always uncertain about what kind of state Israel should be. She ultimately wrote numerous essays, articles, and books dedicated to the question of the prospect of a Jewish State while continually evaluating what the moral responsibilities of the Jewish people ought to be in the face of a world that wished them destroyed. Arendt, in a letter to Jaspers in 1946 wrote, "I have refused to abandon the Jewish Question as the focal point of my historical and political thinking."¹⁰¹ Arendt's *Ahavath Yisrael* had burned itself into her intellect.

The Man in the Glass Booth – 1961-1965

⁹² May, 49.

⁹³ May, 49-50.

⁹⁴ May, 50.

⁹⁵ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 50.

⁹⁶ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 50.

⁹⁷ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 164.

⁹⁸ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 52.

⁹⁹ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 53.

¹⁰⁰ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 53.

¹⁰¹ Hannah Arendt quoted in, Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996), Cover.

Adolf Eichmann designed and orchestrated the system of ghettoization, deportation, and industrialization of death for the Jews of Europe (as well as others) during the Nazi regime. He was a “master bureaucrat” who herded his victims to labor and death camps with officious pride and with all of the moral superiority of the superlative citizen abiding and upholding the laws of his land. At the end of World War II, Eichmann vanished. His name arose at the Nuremberg Trials in 1945-1946, yet Eichmann was nowhere to be found.¹⁰² On May 24, 1960, while living under the assumed name Ricardo Klement, Israeli agents captured Eichmann in Argentina.¹⁰³ Contention between Israel and Argentina followed over Israel’s right to extradite Eichmann and even the United Nations got involved, debating whether or not Eichmann should be tried in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁴

As the controversy played out for the world, Arendt, Blucher, and many of their friends and colleagues contemplated the complex and intricate legal issues surrounding Eichmann’s capture and soon to be trial. However, it was Arendt who was vociferously contemptuous as well as highly suspicious of Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion’s motives. She felt Ben-Gurion was using the trial both for an opportunity to illustrate the historical suffering of the Jews as well as for his own personal megaphone to the world, where he could announce in the most demonstrative fashion, that the Holocaust will never happen again.¹⁰⁵ When the issue of extradition was settled and Eichmann was officially to be tried in Jerusalem for crimes against the Jewish people, Arendt contacted William Shawn, editor of *The New Yorker*, offering herself as trial reporter. Shawn was thrilled and immediately accepted her offer. Arendt cancelled all her future engagements, claiming an obligation to her past. She wrote, “You will understand, I think, why I should cover this trial; I missed the Nuremberg Trials, I never saw these people in the flesh, and this is probably my only chance.”¹⁰⁶ One of the obligations Arendt cancelled was her visit to Jaspers and his wife, Gertrud. She apologized by explaining how she left Germany at the advent of the Nazi regime and had not experienced the horror like so many others. She went on to say that she could never forgive herself if she “didn’t go and look at this walking disaster face-to-face in all his bizarre vacuity, without the mediation of the written word.”¹⁰⁷ Jaspers understood and was in complete agreement with Arendt’s misgivings about the trial. He worried for her personally, as well as fearing the trial would be detrimental to Israel; the legitimacy of claiming Eichmann as *their* criminal was, in Jaspers’ opinion, unfounded since Eichmann’s crimes occurred prior to Israel’s statehood.¹⁰⁸ Arendt responded to Jaspers by pointing out that “no other jurisdiction showed any interest in undertaking such a trial and that Israel had the right to speak for the victims because a large majority of survivors were living there as citizens. For the sake of these victims . . . Palestine had become Israel.”¹⁰⁹ The prospect of Israel appearing vengeful, as well as Eichmann becoming somewhat of a “martyr for anti-Semites worldwide,” concerned Jaspers deeply. He was also highly aware of Arendt’s “long-standing antipathy”

¹⁰² Daniel Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010), 246.

¹⁰³ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 328.

¹⁰⁴ Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 328.

¹⁰⁵ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 103.

¹⁰⁶ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 247.

¹⁰⁷ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 248.

¹⁰⁸ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 248.

¹⁰⁹ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 248.

toward the Jewish leadership and her uncertain relationship with Zionism and its effects, not only for the Jews, but the rippling effect worldwide.¹¹⁰

Arendt arrived in Israel on April 9, 1961. She immediately took a disliking to Jerusalem, characterizing it as “loud and horrible, filled with the oriental mob typical of the Middle East,” and complained that the ultra-orthodox Jews “made life impossible for all reasonable people here.”¹¹¹ During the span of time that Arendt was in Jerusalem covering the trial, she corresponded with her husband, Blumenfeld (also in Jerusalem), and Jaspers--sharing with each her thoughts, reactions, and commentary. Once the trial began, Arendt’s observations re-focused in a way she herself could never have predicted. When she first encountered Eichmann in the courtroom, “the man in the glass booth,” her initial reaction was that he was “not even sinister, not inhuman or beyond comprehension.” So jarring to Arendt was this unexpected revelation that her attitude toward and her comprehension of her own past began to shift and change.¹¹²

On April 11, 1961, the trial of Eichmann began at *Beth Hamishpath* (The House of Justice). The courtroom consisted of three presiding judges, translators both for the accused and the audience, the prosecuting attorney, accompanied by his four assistants, and the defense attorney, accompanied by one.¹¹³ Arendt remarked on the indisputable honesty and good nature of the judges as “none of them yields to the greatest temptation to playact in this setting,” and although all are German-born, they politely wait for the translation to be completed from Hebrew to German.”¹¹⁴ Moshe Landau, the lead presiding judge, attempted to set a low-key tone in order to contrast the prosecutor, Hausner, who according to Arendt had “a love for showmanship.”¹¹⁵ Again, Arendt had issues with Eichmann’s trial from the very start. She referred to Israel’s Prime Minister, Ben-Gurion, as the “architect of the state” who orchestrated a “show trial” for the world replete with actors, an audience, and all the drama of a righteous kidnapping.¹¹⁶ She believed the trial was constructed to orate the devastation of the Holocaust and how the Jews suffered at the hands of the Nazis, rather than what Eichmann actually did to cause that suffering. She struggled with the legalities versus moralities, because she unequivocally wanted Eichmann brought to justice and for Israel to at all times maintain its dignity while doing so. Arendt wrote the following about what justice, in this case, ought to look like:

Justice demands that the accused be prosecuted, defended, and judged, and that all other questions of seemingly greater import – of ‘How could this happen?’ and ‘Why did it happen?’ of ‘Why the Jews?’ and ‘Why the Germans?’ of ‘What was the role of other nations?’ and ‘What was the extent of co-responsibility on the side of the Allies?’ of ‘How could the Jews through their own leaders cooperate in their own destruction?’ and ‘Why did they go to their death like lambs to the slaughter?’ — be left in abeyance.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 249.

¹¹¹ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 250.

¹¹² Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 329.

¹¹³ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 3.

¹¹⁴ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 5.

¹¹⁷ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 5.

Arendt was in the courtroom every day for the first month of the trial, which consisted primarily of witness testimony. She condemned the trial's tone. Self-pity coupled with a sense of justifiable defiance, to Arendt, was "undignified and inappropriate attitudes for Jews" and she felt the trial was rife with both.¹¹⁸ On June 20, Eichmann took the stand. On the first day of the trial, the lengthy indictment read against him ran fifteen counts, including but not limited to the following: "Crimes against the Jewish people, and against humanity," between the years 1938 and 1945, Eichmann's role in the dissemination of the *Kristallnacht* pogroms, and the "forced transportation and extermination of the majority of Jews then living in Germany, the Axis countries, and the nations occupied by the German army during the war years."¹¹⁹ Also on the indictment was the "concentration and death camps to which Eichmann 'and others' knowingly sent Jews for the purpose of mass murder, the approximate number of Jews sent to the camps, and the dates during which the camps operated."¹²⁰ When Eichmann was asked if he understood the charges he replied, "Yes, certainly." When asked how he pleaded to the charges he replied, "Not guilty in the sense of the indictment."¹²¹

Arendt observed Eichmann in his bulletproof glass cage and wondered to herself what did he think he was guilty of? Interestingly, none of the judges or attorneys ever asked him this question. Eichmann's attorney, Robert Servatius, answered the question for him during an interview with the press: "Eichmann feels guilty before God, but not before the law."¹²² Eichmann felt the indictment for murder was baseless. He stated: "With the killing of Jews I had nothing to do. I never killed a Jew, or a non-Jew, for that matter – I never killed any human being. I never gave an order to kill either a Jew or a non-Jew; I just did not do it." He later qualified this statement by saying that "he could only be accused of 'aiding and abetting' the annihilation of the Jews, which he declared while in Jerusalem to have been "one of the greatest crimes in the history of humanity."¹²³

The controversies surrounding Arendt's characterizations of Eichmann haunted her until her death. The man responsible for carrying out the Final Solution is described by Arendt as a "leaf in the whirlwind of time."¹²⁴ She was asserting that Eichmann was not much of anything and that the "job" of destruction of European Jewry somehow, and luckily for him, fell into his lap. Arendt described Eichmann with an ironic tone, depicting his mediocrity as something almost laughable.

Despite all the efforts of the prosecution, everybody could see that this man was not a "monster," but it was difficult indeed not to suspect he was a clown. And since this suspicion would have been fatal to the whole enterprise, and was also rather hard to sustain in view of the sufferings he and his like had caused to millions of people, his worst clowneries were hardly noticed and almost never reported.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 103.

¹¹⁹ Anne C. Heller, *Hannah Arendt: A Life in Dark Times*, (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2005), 3.

¹²⁰ Heller, *Hannah Arendt*, 3.

¹²¹ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 21.

¹²² Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 21.

¹²³ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 22.

¹²⁴ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 32.

¹²⁵ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 54.

The “enterprise” she was referring to was the nature of the trial as a whole. Arendt went to Jerusalem prepared to see a demonic force inhabiting human form; instead, she witnessed a man, an average and impish one at that. The phrase “banality of evil” that Arendt coined in response to the Eichmann trial embodies her theory that the people who do evil are somehow ordinary. This concept was very difficult for a great deal of people to accept, especially in light of the nature of the particularly singular evil Eichmann represented.

As Arendt’s reports continued to be published in *The New Yorker*, the controversy flourished and the personal backlash she received left her stunned. The most tendentious portion of her report not only implied, but outright declared, that Jews were complicit in their own demise; specifically blaming the *Judenrate* (Jewish Councils):

To a Jew this role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story. ... In the matter of cooperation, there was no distinction between the highly assimilated Jewish communities of Central and Western Europe and the Yiddish-speaking masses of the East. ... Jewish officials could be trusted to compile the lists of persons and their property, to secure money from the deportees to defray the expenses of their deportation and extermination, to keep track of vacated apartments, to supply police forces to help seize Jews and get them on trains, until, as a last gesture, they handed over the assets of the Jewish community in good order for final confiscation.¹²⁶

Jews worldwide were outraged. They could not accept how Hannah could issue such an extensive condemnation without even an attempt at contextualization of the council’s actions, as she simultaneously reduced Eichmann to a mere clown-like, officious bureaucrat. It felt to numerous Jews that this represented an uneven handling of the facts. Yes, the *facts*. Arendt did not write anything untrue. Many of the councils were complicit; however, what Arendt failed to include in her reports was that many on the Jewish councils were forced into what ought to be deemed choice-less choices. Jews policing Jews perhaps felt to some on the councils to be a softer approach in contrast to the madness the Nazis were perpetrating. Arendt earned veritable hatred when she wrote, “[F]or it was not only among Germans that Eichmann could witness no resistance: it was also among the Jews, the victims themselves that he met acquiescence and acceptance.”¹²⁷ As journalist and author Anne C. Heller remarks: it was the “oddest thing she had done in a lifetime of conscious rebellion.”¹²⁸ Arendt had taken it too far for reasons unclear for so many. As if she were speaking for Eichmann, Arendt professed that the Jews “accepted” their fate in a fashion comparable to the Germans’ acts of apathetic acceptance. What resistance should the Jews have asserted against Eichmann’s industrial plan? By equating the Jewish and the German reactions within the context of an *unequal* scenario, Arendt appeared to have characterized the Jews as cowardly, and far worse, willing participants in their own destruction. She failed to contextualize the experience for the public.

Eichmann was found guilty on all counts in which he was charged, including crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, and membership in three (out of the four)

¹²⁶ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 117-118.

¹²⁷ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 106.

¹²⁸ Heller, *Hannah Arendt*, 21.

organizations the Nuremberg Trials had classified as “criminal.”¹²⁹ All counts came with a death sentence. Arendt expressed “relief” that the prosecution had not proven Eichmann’s claim that he merely “aided and abetted.” She felt this was no ordinary crime and Eichmann was “no common criminal.” She even went one step further by saying, “it was usually the inmates and the victims who had actually wielded the fatal instrument with their own hands.”¹³⁰ Again, her accusatory tone sans deeper explanation was, at best, an unequal assessment of the facts: judged by some to be unnecessarily cruel. Referring to Eichmann as Germany’s “scapegoat” (a poor choice of words, bordering on the obscene within this context), Arendt took issue with Israel carrying out his death sentence. She believed, as Jaspers did, that an international tribunal should impose the sentence due to the magnitude and incomprehensibility of the crimes.¹³¹ Nevertheless, and even as she remarked upon Eichmann’s “dignity” the day of his execution, her response to him *actually* being killed was far more palatable for many. She wrote as if speaking directly to Eichmann:

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.¹³²

Conclusion

When *The New Yorker* articles (and subsequent book) first appeared, Arendt expected criticism. However, she did not expect friends and others among her intellectual circle to castigate her in such a brutal fashion, nor did she predict the global firestorm of condemnation from Jews and Jewish organizations.¹³³ Siegfried Moses, on behalf of the Council of Israeli Jews from Germany “declared war” upon not only Arendt’s book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, but upon Arendt personally. Moses insisted that she cease publication immediately. She refused and turned it around by saying her Jewish critics will embarrass themselves far worse than her book ever could.¹³⁴ Soon after, the Anti-Defamation League issued a statement to its members warning them of “Arendt’s defamatory conception of Jewish participation in the Nazi Holocaust.”¹³⁵ Arendt’s dear friend, novelist Mary McCarthy, characterized the onslaught as “violent” with the “proportions of a pogrom.”¹³⁶ Later, in a personal letter to McCarthy, Arendt tells her “I am convinced I should not answer individual

¹²⁹ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 244-246.

¹³⁰ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 246.

¹³¹ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 251.

¹³² Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 279.

¹³³ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 268.

¹³⁴ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 268.

¹³⁵ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 269.

¹³⁶ Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949-1975*, ed. Carol Brightman (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1995), 151

critics. I probably shall finally make, not an answer, but a kind of evaluation of this whole strange business.”¹³⁷ Her friendship with her dear friend since her university days, Hans Jonas, was broken almost irreparably.¹³⁸ Yet, the hardest loss for Arendt to bear was that of Kurt Blumenfeld, who died in such state of rage toward her that on his deathbed he wrote to her detailing his anger. Although convinced he was swayed by the opinions of others, specifically Moses, she never was able to make it right, and was forever inconsolable about her loss of Blumenfeld.¹³⁹

Arendt spent her entire life confronting the myriad of unanswered questions that comprise humankind’s fatal flaws. Her life’s work is predicated upon the notion of examining how to make all that is unjust, just. At times she may appear less than tactful, overly ironic, and even brutally cold in her analyses; however, Arendt is unequivocally wedded to the truth: at the very least, to the search for it. She epitomized all that a public intellectual is and should aspire toward: one who seeks answers, speaks the truth selflessly, and fights for those with quieter voices. Scholem accused Arendt of having no *Ahavath Yisrael*. She has been accused of being a self-loathing Jew, who only ever wished to separate herself from her people. Nothing could be further from the truth. Her entire life was devoted to her *Ahavath Yisrael*. I believe one way she expressed this was by holding her people to a higher standard, which in her mind, they did not live up to. Unfair? Perhaps. Is Arendt at times a moral absolutist? Unquestionably. However, moral absolutism was what fueled her lifelong need for answers, and her obligation to the truth. Arendt cobbled together her experiences and with great care sifted through them as she attempted to comprehend the incomprehensible: her perceived flaws lending themselves toward her unique perspective. Arendt was fearless, yet vulnerable: fiercely humane and catastrophically human. As a thinker, an activist, and a public intellectual, Hannah Arendt undoubtedly stands alone.

Samantha Balber is an undergraduate student seeking a double major in History and Religious Studies at the University of Arizona.

¹³⁷ Arendt and McCarthy, *Between Friends*, 151.

¹³⁸ May, *Hannah Arendt*, 110.

¹³⁹ Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, 270.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking Press, 1963.

———. *The Portable Hannah Arendt*. Edited by Peter Baehr. New York: Penguin Books, 2000.

———. *Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1951.

Arendt, Hannah, and Heinrich Blucher. *Within Four Walls: The Correspondence Between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blucher, 1936-1968*. Translated by Peter Constantine. Edited by Lotte Kohler. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1996.

Arendt, Hannah, and Karl Jaspers. *Correspondence: 1926-1969*. Translated by Robert and Rita Kimber. Edited by Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, Inc., 1992.

Arendt, Hannah, and Mary McCarthy. *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949-1975*. Edited by Carol Brightman. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1995.

Hannah Arendt. Hannah Arendt “Zur Person Full Interview.” Filmed, 1964. YouTube Video, 1:00:25. Posted April 8, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsoImQfVsO4>

Hannah Arendt. *The Last Interview and Other Conversations*. New York: Melville House, 2013.

Secondary Sources

Ascheim, Steven E., et.al. *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Avineri, Shlomo. “The Evil of Banality.” *Jerusalem Post* (Jerusalem, Israel), May 22, 2002.

Barnouw, Dagmar. *Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.

Ben-David, Calev. “The Pariah Intellectual.” *Jerusalem Post* (Jerusalem, Israel), April 27, 2007.

Bernstein, Richard J. *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996.

Bloch, Felicity. “Between Pariah and Parvenue.” *Jerusalem Post* (Jerusalem, Israel), Mar. 27, 1998.

- Epstein, E.J. "Unlovely Qualities." *Jerusalem Post* (Jerusalem, Israel), Oct. 1. 1982.
- Ettinger, Elzbieta. *Hannah Arendt-Martin Heidegger*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Michael Ezra, "The Eichmann Polemics: Hannah Arendt and Her Critics," in *Dissent Magazine*.
https://www.dissentmagazine.org/wpcontent/files_mf/1390334198d9Ezra.pdf
- Joroff, David. "Dark and Perverse." *Jerusalem Post* (Jerusalem, Israel), Feb. 24, 1989.
- Kohn, Moshe. "The Arendt Affair – A Study in Disenchantment." *Jerusalem Post* (Jerusalem, Israel), Dec. 20, 1963.
- Maier-Katkin, Daniel. *Stranger from Abroad: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness*. New York: W.W Norton and Company, 2010.
- May, Derwent. *Hannah Arendt*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1986.
- Nenadic, Natalie. "Heidegger, Arendt, and Eichmann in Jerusalem." *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 5, No. 1 (2013): 36-48.
- Shapiro, Sraya. "Dear Hannah." *Jerusalem Post* (Jerusalem, Israel), Feb. 19, 1964.
- Sharpe, Barry. *Modesty and Arrogance in Judgment: Hannah Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999.
- Steinberg, Jules. *Hannah Arendt on the Holocaust: A Study of the Suppression of Truth*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellin Press, 2000.
- Steiner, Wendy. "The Banality of Love." *New York Times* (New York, NY), Sep. 24. 1995.
- Swift, Simon. *Hannah Arendt*. London: Routledge, 2009.
- Van Hattem, Cornelius. *Superfluous People: A Reflection on Hannah Arendt and Evil*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2005.
- Villa, Dana. "Hannah Arendt, 1906-1975." *The Review of Politics: Political Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* 71, No. 1 (2009): 20-36.
- Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth. *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.