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CLIL PHILOSOPHY

HANNAH ARENDT

The Banality of Evil

by

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HANNAH ARENDT

(1906-1975)



“Good can be radical; evil can never be radical, it can only be extreme, for it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension yet--and this is its horror--it can spread like a fungus over the surface of the earth and lay waste the entire world. Evil comes from a failure to think.”

— *Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*

THE BANALITY OF EVIL

The title refers to Eichmann's deportment at the trial as the man displayed neither guilt for his actions nor hatred for those trying him, claiming he bore no responsibility because he was simply "doing his job".

"The Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law of 1950, under which he was tried, provides that "a person who has committed one of these ... offenses ... is liable to the death penalty." To each count Eichmann pleaded: "Not guilty in the sense of the indictment."

In this book, Arendt suggests that this most strikingly discredits the idea that the Nazi criminals were manifestly psychopathic and different from "normal" people.

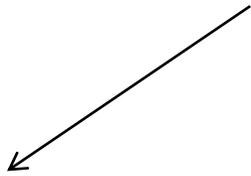
*But.. Who was
Adolf Eichmann?*

ADOLF EICHMANN

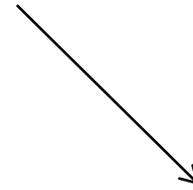
- “The Architect of the Holocaust”
- Chief of operations in deporting over 3 million Jews to concentration camps
- Ordinary man,
had a wife and 4 children



TWO FACTORS



CONSCIENCE



OBEDIENCE



HOLOCAUST

CONSCIENCE

As she watched Eichmann's trial, Hannah Arendt observed: "Eichmann said he recognized that what he had participated in was perhaps one of the greatest crimes in history, but, he insisted, if he had not done so, his conscience would have bothered him at the time. His conscience and morality were working exactly in reverse. This reversal is precisely the moral collapse that took place in Europe."

OBEDIENCE

“His guilt came from his obedience, and obedience is praised as a virtue.”

Hannah Arendt argued that Adolf Eichmann was just an ordinary guy. There was nothing strikingly evil about him. Eichmann's defense, like that of other Nazis, was that he was **"just following orders."** Furthermore, Eichmann said that he actually had no real ill will toward Jews. In any case, Arendt was ostracized by the Jewish community for the rest of her life, and Eichmann was hanged and cremated.

HOLOCAUST

From this document, many concluded that situations such as the Holocaust can make even the most ordinary of people commit horrendous crimes with the proper incentives, but Arendt adamantly disagreed with this interpretation, as Eichmann was voluntarily following the Führerprinzip. Arendt insists that moral choice remains even under totalitarianism, and that this choice has political consequences even when the chooser is politically powerless.

THE END

"After a short while, gentlemen, we shall all meet again. Such is the fate of all men. Long live Germany, long live Argentina, long live Austria. I shall not forget them." In the face of death, he had found the cliché used in funeral oratory. Under the gallows, his memory played him the last trick; he was "elated" and he forgot that this was his own funeral.

*It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us-the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying **banality of evil.**"*

The last speech

from Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil

KEY WORDS

•The *Holocaust* was a genocide in which some six million European Jews were killed by Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany, and the World War II collaborators with the Nazis.

•The *Führerprinzip* prescribed the fundamental basis of political authority in the governmental structures of the *Third Reich* (World War II). This principle can be most succinctly understood to mean that "the *Führer's* word is above all written law" and that governmental policies, decisions, and offices ought to work toward the realization of this end. In actual political usage, it refers mainly to the practice of dictatorship within the ranks of a political party itself, and as such, it has become an earmark of political Fascism.

