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The lie of the banality of evil: Hannah Arendt's fatal flaw

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Abstract:

Hannah Arendt's famous 1963 book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the story of the trial of the Nazi criminal who was in charge of deporting Jews to their death in the death in Auschwitz, bore the infamous subtitle, "*A report on the banality of evil.*" This subtitle caused a storm of indignation among intellectuals and survivors on both sides of the Atlantic, including such luminaries as Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg and the philosopher Gershom Scholem. The author revisits this historical furore with a view to illuminating the nature of radical evil, aspects of Holocaust historiography, as well as the fatal flaw of brilliant political and social philosopher Arendt, whose books and charisma were a beacon of learning for countless undergraduate and graduate students and other readers.

The renowned Jewish-German-American cultural, political and social philosopher Hannah Arendt made many outstanding contributions to political theory. A major work is her 1951 book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in which she expounded on Immanuel Kant's notion of radical evil. In 1963 she became notorious with the publication of her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem A Report on the Banality of Evil*. How could a woman who was so wise in 1951 turn out to be so wrong in 1963, when her previous reportage in the New Yorker became a bestseller (1965)?

THE IDEA OF EVIL

By a quirk, evil backwards reads live, the fundamental contrast and conflict between what preserves life and what destroys life. Evil is also destructive to life as a moral and social enterprise: it defines the difference between good and bad, virtue and vice, sinful, right and wrong, legal and criminal, and, last but not least, healthy or sick. Down the millennia mankind has endeavored to grasp the universal *essence* of evil. However the *existence* of individuals and communities, *evil is what evil does*, as expressed by

Shakespeare: “The evil that men do lives after them” and Milton: “Evils which our own misdeeds have wrought” (quoted in Webster’s 1951). Evil is also an emotional and cognitive *judgment* stemming from *conscience* and a sense of social *responsibility* of what is good or bad. Evil has been a major theme in the mythologies of primitive cultures, in China, Egypt, India, and Persia; in the Hammurabi Code, the Bible, Homer. In the book of Genesis Adam and Eve are commanded not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil which Christianity defined as original sin and the cause of the Fall of mankind, a doctrine that shaped European religious and secular philosophies. In the Hebrew and Christian religious and philosophical theodicies good is an attribute of God and evil, defined as the absence of good, is placed at mankind’s doorstep. This was also the opinion of Kant in his formulation of radical evil.

Arendt invoked Kant’s idea of *radical evil* in her 1951 (1966) discussion of the Nazi concentration camps and the Soviet force-labor camps. In the

horrors of Auschwitz and Buchenwald ...the human imagination had banished beyond the realm of human competence [what] can be manufactured right here on earth, that Hell and Purgatory, [...what] can be established by most modern methods of destruction and therapy...Hence the discomfiture of common sense which asks: What crimes must these people have committed in order to suffer so inhumanly? Hence also the absolute innocence of the victims. ... The insane mass manufacture of corpses is preceded by the historically and politically intelligible preparation of living corpses ... suddenly and unexpectedly made hundreds of thousands of human beings homeless, stateless, outlawed and unwanted, while millions of human beings were made economically superfluous and socially burdensome by unemployment... The Rights of man...lost all validity. ... The first essential step on the road to total domination is to kill the juridical person in man ... by placing the concentration camp outside the normal penal system and the normal judicial procedure in which a definite crime entails a predictable penalty... Under no circumstances must the concentration camp become a calculable punishment for definite offenses...Masses of Jews, innocent in every sense...are the most suitable for thorough experimentation in disenfranchisement

and destruction... Totalitarian terror achieved its most terrible triumph when it succeeded in cutting the moral person off from the individualist escape and in making the decisions of conscience absolutely questionable and equivocal. When a man is faced with the alternative of betraying and thus murdering his friend or of sending his wife and children, for whom he is in some sense responsible, to their death; when even suicide would mean the immediate murder of his own family—how is one to decide: The alternative is no longer between good and evil, but between murder and murder (pp. 446-452)

The Nazi creation of Hell upon earth has may have been inspired by centuries of Christian obsession with the horrors of Hell in official church doctrine, religious art depicting mountains of corpses, or Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*. Arendt's hell simile was both apt and compelling. How disappointing, then, was her subsequent abrogation of the notion of radical evil in a letter to Gershom Scholem:

You are quite right: I changed my mind and do no longer speak of "radical evil." It is indeed my opinion now that evil is never "radical," that it is only extreme and that it possessed neither depth nor any demonic dimension. It can overgrow and lay to waste the whole world *precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface*. It is "thought-defying," as I said, because thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots and the moment it concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. That is its "banality" (Arendt 2007: 470; quoted in Bernstein, 2014; italics added)

Scholem, eminent scholar of Judaism and mysticism, broke with Arendt over her 1963 book *Eichmann in Jerusalem A Report on the Banality of Evil*, first published as reportage in the New Yorker magazine. War criminal Adolf Eichmann was briefly mentioned by her in 1951 (1966), in connection with the activities of the Nazi "Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage [institute for the study of the Jewish question]" and "Himmler's special Gestapo department for the *liquidation* (not merely the study) of the Jewish question, which was headed by Eichmann" (p. 402; italics added). In Jerusalem

Eichmann was convicted and hanged his role in the liquidation of European Jewry as chief organizer of mass deportations of Jews to the killing centers in Poland. Prominent Jews like Gershom Scholem and the Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg (1999) were outraged by Arendt's catch phrase, banality of evil, for neither is evil banal, i.e., commonplace or platitudinous, or trite, nor was Eichmann himself. Others were on her side, most recently J.R. Bernstein (2014), a former colleague of Arendt's at the New School in New York, who thinks Arendt was "badly misunderstood" (p. 93). I strongly disagree: she was not misunderstood, she had made a dreadful mistake.

DANGERS OF MYTHOLOGIZING?

After the Soviets freed the inmates of Auschwitz and Majdanek, the Americans and the British liberated the remaining camps by May 8 1945, discovering additional mounds of corpses and clusters of living corpses of malnourished and sick inmates. In November of that year began the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders. In 1946 Arendt wrote this to her former teacher Karl Jaspers: "Your definition of Nazi policy as a crime ("criminal guilt") strikes me as questionable [...] that is precisely what constitutes their *monstrousness*. For these crimes no punishment is enough" (Arendt & Jaspers, 1992, p. 54; italics added). Jaspers' definition was both wrong and contradicted the legal premises of the Nuremberg court that tried and convicted Nazi murderers for crimes against humanity. In his response, Jaspers was "not altogether comfortable with [her] view" and denounced

"greatness" as inappropriate for the Nazis as all the talk about the demonic element in Hitler and so forth. It seems to me that we have to see these things in their *total banality*, in their *prosaic triviality*, because that's what truly characterizes them. *Bacteria* can cause epidemics that wipe out nations, but they remain merely bacteria. I regard any hint of myth and legend with horror" (p. 64, my italics).

Arendt wrote back:

I realize completely that ... I come dangerously close to that "satanic greatness" that I, like you, totally reject. But still, there is difference between a man who sets

out to murder his old aunt and people who ...built factories to produce corpses. One thing is certain: We have to combat all impulses to mythologize the horrible... (p. 69; all quoted in Bernstein, 2014).

Why were they quibbling about Nazi guilt? And why is there a need to combat using mythological and poetic imaginings and metaphors (Hell, Satan, Evil) to convey the horror of the Holocaust? Jaspers was doubly wrong: Nazi crimes were neither banal or trivial nor bacterial epidemics: they were hellish, horrendous, heinous, hate-filled and evil crimes against humanity: genocide of the Jewish people and other ethnic groups or socially persecuted minorities, such as homosexuals and political opponents, and a destruction of the Jewish cultural heritage on an unprecedented industrial scale. On a personal level, how could Jaspers, in good faith, prate about banality when he and his Jewish wife lived under the Nazis thus facing the threat of being deported to a concentration camp? On a factual level, how could he, this otherwise esteemed philosopher, compare premeditated genocide, an act of mankind, with nations wiped out by bacterial epidemics, an act of nature? Equally deplorable was Arendt's converting the bacterial into a fungus simile in the aforementioned letter to Scholem.

Ironically, similar analogies were drawn by Hitler (1925) in his infamous *Mein Kampf*. Moving from Linz to Vienna, Hitler

was repelled by the conglomeration of races which the capital showed me, repelled by this whole mixture of Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Serbs, and Croats, and everywhere, the eternal mushroom of humanity-Jews and more Jews. To me the giant city seemed the embodiment of racial desecration. [...]
The Jew was always a parasite in the body of other peoples. ... His spreading is a typical phenomenon for all parasites; he always seeks a new feeding ground for his race.

I do not know if Jaspers or Arendt read *Mein Kampf* nor am suggesting that in their remarks Jaspers and Arendt were as anti-Semitic as Hitler, but I do reject the biological simile with utmost indignation, and, not the least, because as a survivor of World War II,

Hitler has been for me the most demonic, evil leader that ever lived, more sinister—if there is room for comparison—than Stalin, who master-minded the Gulag, executions, and genocide of Russian and Ukrainian peoples. To characterize these two dictators as satanic is not mythologizing but a way of conveying the evil they committed, and it has the advantage of avoiding an even greater sin, namely, that of pathologizing, i.e., explaining evil as a mental disorder rather than comprehending their ideologies, policies, and criminal acts.

THE MAN WHO DID NOT KNOW WHAT HE WAS DOING

The fallacious Arendt/Jaspers exchange spawned a bigger falsehood in 1963 (revised edition, Arendt, 1965) when Arendt plagiarized Jaspers' 'banality' and inserted it into the subtitle of her book, which should have truly been more on Eichmann's actions as a Nazi war criminal and less a report about his appearance and behavior in the Jerusalem court, as perceived by Arendt. With this subjective approach to Eichmann Arendt retreated from upholding Kant's concept of radical, or man-made evil, that moral corruption of character is radical, i.e., the root, or radical, cause of evil deeds. Armed with her new reasons, Arendt (1965) argued as follows:

When I speak of the banality of evil, I do so on the strictly factual level, pointing to a phenomenon which stared one in the face at the trial. Eichmann was no Iago and no Macbeth, and nothing would have been further from his mind than to determine with Richard III "to prove a villain." Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all...He merely, to put the matter colloquially, *never realized what he was doing* (pp. 196, 287; italics added).

Arendt confused objective historical facts with subjective literary fancies. It was jejune to compare the real Eichmann with *fictional* Shakespeare characters like Iago, a jealous husband, or Macbeth, a regicidal aristocrat, both tragic, not evil heroes, or even the villainous Richard III – what does this have to do with Eichmann and his role in the Holocaust? This amounted to a defense of Eichmann: he should have hired her, had he read this, to be his lawyer during the trial. For Arendt, who only spent a few weeks at the

trial, the allegedly “strictly factual level” was the nebbish who did not know how to think, not the actual SS officer Eichmann in a uniform with SS insignia, the subordinate of exterminators Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich, who deported Jews to their death in Auschwitz, among them about 400,000 Hungarian and Czech Jews during the last year of the war. More to the point, it was preposterous of Arendt to conclude that Eichmann “never realized what he was doing” – gimme a break! The historical fact is that Obersturmbannführer (= military rank in the SS equivalent to lieutenant colonel) Eichmann, as representative of the SS, participated in the 1942 Wannsee Conference that finalized the orders for the Final Solution, the extermination of the Jews in Europe. During the trial chief prosecutor Gideon Hausner asked Eichmann: “Hausner asked him [Eichmann], “Were you an Obersturmbannführer or an office girl?” (Noam Ordan citing Wikipedia, personal communication). According to WW II historian and Nazi hunter Professor Wolfgang Eckart, Director of the Institute of the History of Medicine at Heidelberg University and my sponsor during my guest professorship there, “Eichmann knew about everything in detail from the beginning. He wrote down the minutes of the Wannsee-Conference. And he did not just sit a desk: he traveled to the death camps and saw the extermination installations with his own eyes. Eichmann had the odor of gas in his nose and the taste of the poison on his tongue as he kept signing the deportation orders piled up on his desk” (email of May 29, 2013).

The website Hannah Arendt Center of Bard College shows an undated statement by Arendt:

In response to the my essay on “Misreading ‘Eichmann in Jerusalem,’” I have been asked repeatedly how to access the Sassen papers, the more than 1,300 pages of memoir and interview transcripts that Eichmann produced while he was in Argentina. The first answer is simple: Read the two issues of *Life* magazine from November 28 and December 5, 1960 in which a large chunk of these interviews are excerpted.

Sassen was a Dutch Nazi who interviewed Eichmann in Argentina in 1955. Sassen is mentioned repeatedly in her book (1965) without any quotes from the interviews. The first excerpt is Eichmann’s reaction to witnessing the murder of Jews by the Einsatzgruppen firing squads:

I watched the last group of Jews undress, down to their shirts. They walked the last 100 to 200 yards—they were not driven—then they jumped into the pit. It was impressive to see them all jumping into the pit without offering any resistance whatsoever. Then the men of the squad banged away into the pit with their rifles and machine pistols. Why did that scene linger so long in my memory? Perhaps because I had children myself. And there were children in that pit. I saw a woman hold a child of a year or two into the air, pleading. At that moment all I wanted to say was, “Don’t shoot, hand over the child....” Then the child was hit. I was so close that later I found bits of brains splattered on my long leather coat. My driver helped me remove them. Then we returned to Berlin. ...

Life Magazine excerpts ends with a transcription and translation of Eichmann’s final outburst when, fed up with Sassen’s attempt to deny the Holocaust or to diminish it, he bursts out in a fit of self-justification:

But to sum it all up, I must say that I regret nothing. Adolf Hitler may have been wrong all down the line, but one thing is beyond dispute: the man was able to work his way up from lance corporal in the German army to *Führer* of a people of almost 80 million. I never met him personally, but his success alone proves to me that I should subordinate myself to this man. He was somehow so supremely capable that the people recognized him. And so with that justification I recognized him joyfully, and I still defend him.

I will not humble myself or repent in any way. I could do it too cheaply in today’s climate of opinion. It would be too easy to pretend that I had turned suddenly from a Saul to a Paul. No, I must say truthfully that if we had killed all the 10 million Jews that Himmler’s statisticians originally listed in 1933, I would say, “Good, we have destroyed an enemy.” But here I do not mean wiping them out entirely. That would not be proper—and we carried on a proper war.

Eichmann was not the lowly paper pusher who did not know what he was doing. As a faithful Nazi, Eichmann would have studied Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* to become both a careerist and an ardent follower of that ideology. Eichmann was banal, not the ideology

he served with great zeal. In 1999 Hilberg gave an interview to the German newspaper Die Welt in which he stated:

Eichmann was not banal. It was no banal person but a member of the SS. Arendt misled half the world with her so-called “banality of evil.” Neither the actions nor the man Eichmann were banal. Hegel had already warned us not to observe world historical figures from the perspective of their servants. That is what philosopher Hannah Arendt has overlooked in Eichmann. Neither was he a case of blind obedience. He did not follow every order, as he had argued. He was still so zealous in 1944 that he continued to deport Jews when he no longer had to. At the trial he represented the entire Nazi bureaucracy’s work of destruction which included countless collaborators (my translation).

On Arendt’s own showing, the Nazis ruled a state that was “totalitarian and criminal” (Arendt, 1965, p. 68), with a new constitution of 1937 in which the disenfranchisement of the Jews was written into law, a state whose economy was based on slave labor, expropriation and plunder, with an army that conquered and subjugated most of Europe, causing uprooting, starvation, torture and massacres of civilians, suffering and misery to millions of men, women, and children, including the Germans themselves as the army was being defeated on both fronts. The nazified Wehrmacht (army) and the SS warlords and their collaborators, the civil servants, the scientists, were not devoid of the ability to think, plan, organize and execute Hitler’s ambition of world domination and extermination of Jews, gypsies, Jehovah witnesses and regime opponents: they knew what they were doing.

The Holocaust historian who understood it best was Raul Hilberg (1961) who had complained Arendt plagiarized his work and his major thesis that Hitler did not do it alone, as he stated in 1988:

Speer was once asked, “How did you know when Hitler made a decision?” ...At first there were the laws. Then there were decrees implementing laws. Then a law was made there should be now laws. Then there were orders and directives

written down but still published in ministerial gazettes. The there was government by announcement: orders appeared in the newspapers. Then there were only the hidden orders—the instructions that were not published, that were given within the bureaucracy, that were oral. And finally there were no orders at all. Everybody knew what he had to do (Woodruff & Wilmer, 1988, p. 103).

Arendt's bollixed up her own argument, "he never realized what he was doing," by a detailed account of Eichmann's activities in chapter IX of her book and by quoting the books of Hilberg (1961) and Léon Poliakov (1951), citing the latter's book in 1966 (p. 505) and its German translation in 1965 (p. 302). In Poliakov (1951) we read: "on 30 July 1941 Heydrich was ordered "to take all the preparatory measures required for the final solution of the Jewish question in the European territories under German control...In fact, the power to carry this out was given to Adolf Eichmann...Heydrich authorizes Eichmann to put into operation the first deportation trains: it is no longer a matter of evacuation but of imminent extermination" (pp. 130-131, my translation). Thus, the final solution was put into operation already prior to the 1942 Wannsee Conference, during which, as interpreted by Arendt, Eichmann "sensed a kind of Pontius Pilate feeling, for I felt free of all guilt." According to Arendt, again—who was he "to have his own thoughts in the matter?" (Arendt, 1965, p. 114). However, according to Poliakov, under Heydrich as chief of R.S.H.A. (Head Office for Reich Security), "Eichmann as chief of Office IV-B-4 [a subsection R.S.H.A], is the true architect of the "final solution," at least as far as the first part of the process is concerned, the numbers of the Jews to be arrested and transported to extermination sites... Eichmann was informed about everything and played an active role in exterminations wherever they took place. As chief of bureau IV-B he was specifically in charge of organization and negotiations that this involved in all the [Nazi-occupied] European countries, with the exception of Germany and Poland, that were the direct responsibility of Himmler and Heydrich" (pp. 161-162, my translation), so also noted by Arendt (1965, p. 84)

THE GUILT OF THE INNOCENT

On the one hand, Arendt stated in the aforementioned Chapter IX, “Duties of a Law-Abiding Citizen,” that

feeling like Pontius Pilate, [Eichmann believed] this was the way things were...based on the Führer’s order; whatever he did he did, as far as he could see, as a law-abiding citizen. He did his *duty*, ... he not only obeyed orders, he obeyed the *law*.... [And] he declared with great emphasis that he had lived his whole life according to Kant’s moral precepts, and especially according to the Kantian definition of duty. This was outrageous, on the face of it, and also incomprehensible, since Kant’s moral philosophy is so closely bound up with man’s faculty of judgment, which rules out blind obedience (pp. 135-136; italics Arendt’s).

More confusion in Arendt’s thinking: while appearing to offer excuses to Eichmann, she also had it right this time and, by exposing Eichmann’s duplicitous stratagem and, in my opinion, nullifying the banality defense.

On the other hand, in stark contrast to the aforementioned statements about the absolute innocence of the victims of 1966, Arendt (1965) was critical of the cooperation of the Jewish Councils with Eichmann and of the actions of the Jewish leader of the Łódź (anglicized spelling: Lodz) Ghetto Chaim Rumkowski. The latter and his men “informed Eichmann [them] how many Jews were needed to fill each train, and they made out the list of deportees” (p. 115). Were they collaborators and traitors, like the Norwegian Quisling? According to Margrit Wreschner, survivor of Theresienstadt, rabbi Benjamin Murelstein, who worked with Eichmann in Vienna and was later the head of the Jewish Council in Theresienstadt, was a traitor (personal communication). It was a great tragedy of the Jews everywhere. Should their members have committed suicide en masse, like the ancient defenders of Massada?

As told by Arendt:

The Jewish Councils of Elders were informed by Eichmann or his men of how many Jews were needed to fill each train, and they made out the list of deportees.

The Jews registered, filled out innumerable forms, answered pages and pages of questionnaires regarding their property so that it could be seized more easily. They then assembled at the collection points and boarded the trains. The few who tried to hide or to escape were rounded up by a special Jewish police force. As far as Eichmann could see, no one protested, no one refused to cooperate (p. 115). We know how the Jewish officials felt when they became the instruments of murder—like captains “whose ships were about to sink and succeeded by bringing them safe to port by casting overboard a great part of their precious cargo; like saviors, who “with a hundred victims save a thousand people, with a thousand ten thousand.” The truth was even more gruesome. Dr. [Rudolf Israel] Kastner in Hungary, for instance, saved exactly 1,684 people with approximately 476,000 victims”(p. 118).

Arendt was right about Kastner: in exchange for money, gold and diamonds he got a deal from Eichmann to save his chosen privileged Jews while sacrificing the rest by failing warn them that their so-called “resettlement” was a deportation to the gas chambers. At his trial in Jerusalem in 1955 he was convicted for “having sold his soul to the devil.” In 1957 Kastner was fatally wounded by a Jewish right-wing group member. Whether all members of the Jewish Councils should have been judged as harshly as Kastner has been a subject of bitter debates.

Arendt also branded Rumkowski:

We know the physiognomies of the Jewish leaders during the Nazi period very well; they ranged from Chaim Rumkowski, Eldest of the Jews in Łódź [sic], called Chaim I, who issued currency notes bearing his signature and postage stamps engraved with his portrait, and who drove around in a broken-down horse-drawn carriage; through Leo Baeck, scholarly, mild-mannered, highly educated, who believed Jewish policemen would be more “more gentle and helpful” and would “make the ordeal easier”; to finally a few who committed suicide—like dam Czerniakow, chairman of the Warsaw Jewish Council... who must have still

have remembered the rabbinical saying: “Let them kill you, but don’t cross the line” (p. 119).

And here is what the eminent scholar of the Holocaust, Martin Gilbert (1985) had to say about Rumkowski: “Chaim Rumkowski was convinced that he could keep the ghetto in productive work and thus preserve life, and that he could find work for all the surviving 100,000 inhabitants”(p. 348). In fact, since the industrial site he organized and maintained provided a vital service to the Nazi war effort, the Jews were not deported at first. In 1942

Rumkowski had been ordered to deport ‘some twenty thousand Jews’, he told a meeting of Jews in the ghetto. The Germans told him that if he refused, ‘we shall do it ourselves’. Rumkowski added: ‘I have to perform this bloody operation myself; I simply must cut off the limbs to save the body. I have to take away children, because others will also be taken.’ The days of those who were sick were also numbered. ‘Deliver me the sick ones,’ Rumkowski asked, ‘and it may be possible to save the healthy ones instead. An eye-witness, Oscar Singer, recalled the sequel: ‘Horror seizes the crowd. “Why do the Nazis want our children?” Pandemonium broke out in the ghetto. But Rumkowski knew he had to deliver, “I love children as much as you do,” he cried hysterically; “still I fear we must surrender the children as a sacrificial offering in order to save the collective, because should the Germans take matters into their own hands...”’ Rumkowski spoke ‘with a broken heart’, Singer added, ‘he who was a “Father” to thousands of orphans’ (p. 448).

The Łódź ghetto lasted two years longer than the Warsaw ghetto but eventually its inhabitants were deported to the gas chambers of Auschwitz:

By the end of August 1944, sixty seven thousand Jews had been deported from the Lodz ghetto to Birkenau. Among them, Chaim Rumkowski, ‘King of the Jews’ of the Lodz ghetto, their protector and their mentor, was deported with his family, and perished in the gas chamber together with more that sixty thousand

other Jews from the ghetto over which he exercised so much control, and, as he believed, protection (p. 722).

On January 19, 1945, 877 survivors, 12 of whom were children, of the more than 204,000 former ghetto inmates, were liberated by the Soviet Army. All told, 10,000 of the Jews who were detained in the Łódź Ghetto survived the war (entry Łódź Ghetto, Wikipedia). Many felt they lived thanks to Rumkowski. Judge not that ye be not judged.

SIGMUND FREUD ON EVIL

In 1921 Freud shifted from an intrapersonal psychology to an interpersonal psychology: “in the individual mental life someone else is invariably involved, as model, an object, as a helper or an opponent; and so from the very first individual psychology ... is at the same time social psychology as well” (p. 69) and reaffirmed it in 1933: “Sociology, dealing as it does with the behavior of people in society, cannot by anything but applied psychology. Strictly speaking there are only two sciences: psychology, pure and applied, and natural science” (p. 179). Sociologist Gustave Le Bon, Freud’s main inspiration for the new focus on mass psychology, was quoted by Freud as follows:

‘the individual forming part of a crowd acquires, solely from numerical considerations, a sentiment of invincible power which allows him to yield to instincts, which, had he been alone, he would perforce kept under restraint ... a crowd being anonymous [so that] the sentiment of responsibility disappears entirely. The second cause [is] *contagion* ... classed among phenomena of a hypnotic order ... A third cause is ... suggestibility. ... Isolated, a person may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd he is a barbarian -- that is, a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings’ (Le Bon, 1897, pp. 9-12; Freud, 1921, pp. 74, 77; emphasis added).

Instincts in Le Bon refer not to Freud’s instinctual, i.e., libidinal, impulses but life’s emotions, or passions: the person’s craving for love and suffering as a result of frustration of love, resulting in anger and hate; the hunger for influence and power over

others; the ability of emotions to overpower reason and responsibility (Lothane 2014a-in press). Such emotions were stirred up by the bond of attachment, love and obedience between the led and the leader and can be exploited by leader both democratic and demagogic to propel masses to war (Lothane, 2006), as happened both in 1914 and 1939.

The so-called Spirit of 1914, the mass war euphoria in Germany, whipped up by Emperor Wilhelm and the German political parties, was an overwhelming mass phenomenon. This was mirrored by the euphoria among the French as well. Similarly, in 1939, Hitler's dream of world conquest began as a romance between the Führer and the masses in an ecstatic, orgiastic love embrace, the illusion of being loved by the Führer, the common bonds of identification among adherents old and young, men and women, the young abandoning parental values to follow the Führer, who used all the modern paraphernalia, torch lit military parades and impassioned theatrical speeches, to produce visceral excitement and enthusiasm among the masses. Moreover, hundreds of university professors and thousands of students enthusiastically took the oath of allegiance to the *Führer* in these mass meetings. Le Bon's and Freud's observations and insights provide understanding the phenomenon of emotional contagion, of a *transfer* of feelings and emotions, of the hypnotic, trance-like state of consciousness created by mass enthusiasm, from a group of two to masses of thousand, from a *folie à deux* to a *folie à millions* (Lothane 2014a-in press).

In 1915, overwhelmed by WW I, Freud compared its "immediate evils" with "the evils of other times":

In the confusion of wartime in which we are caught up...we cannot but feel that no event has ever destroyed so much that is precious in the common possession of humanity. ... the mental distress felt by the non-combatants... is the disillusionment which this war evoked, and the altered attitude towards death which this—like every other war—has forced upon us... [we] condemn war both in its means and ends and long for the cessation of all wars... We had expected that the great world-dominating nations of white race upon whom the leadership of the human species has fallen... would succeed in discovering another way of settling misunderstandings and conflicts of interest (p. 275-276). The war in which we had refused to believe broke out and it brought disillusionment...more

bloody and more destructive because of the enormously increased perfection of weapons of attack and defense...it disregards all the restrictions known as International law...the distinction between civil and military sections of the population...tramples in blind fury on all that comes in its way. It cuts all the common bonds between the contending peoples, and threatens to leave a legacy of embitterment that will make the renewal of those bonds for a long time to come....Indeed, one of the great civilized nations is so universally unpopular [as to] exclude it from the civilized community as ‘barbaric’, although it has long proved its fitness by the magnificent contributions which it has made. ...A belligerent state permits itself every such misdeed, every act of violence, as would disgrace the individual. It makes use against the enemy not only of the accepted *ruses de guerre* [French in the original: hoaxes of war], but of deliberate *lying* and deception as well (pp. 278-279; second italics added).

The great nations Hitler was referring to was Germany. Freud wrote about *das Böse*, evil in the singular, apparently unafraid of mythological or philosophical ideas. Aware of the illusion that befalls “pious souls who would like to believe that our nature is remote from any contact with what is evil and base” (p. 295), Freud intended to show

instead that the deepest *essence* of human nature consists of impulses which are of an elementary nature, which are similar in all men and which aim at the satisfaction of certain primal needs. These impulses in themselves are neither good nor bad. We classify them and their expressions in that way, according to the needs and demands of the human community. It must be granted that all the impulses which society condemns as *evil*—let us take as representative the selfish and cruel ones—are of this primitive kind (p. 281; emphasis added).

And he added in 1916:

The war broke out and robbed the world of...our admiration for many philosophers and artists and our hopes of a final triumph over the differences

between nations and races. It tarnished the lofty impartiality of our science, it revealed our instincts in all their nakedness and let loose the *evil spirits* within us which we thought had been tamed for ever by centuries of continuous education by the noblest minds. ... It robbed us of the very much that we had loved, and showed us how ephemeral were many things that we had regarded as changeless (p. 307; emphasis added).

The 1915-1916 passages beg a serious question: how can Freud explain the *existence* of the evil misdeeds of war by theorizing about the *essence* of elementary impulses of selfishness and cruelty and without connecting them to deeds of aggression and anger? How can one square the quasi-Nitzschian idea of the impulses being beyond good and evil but at the same time claim that they are also barbaric and a colossal violation of ethics and law? More importantly: can individual psychology of instincts, be it as defined by Le Bon or by Freud, explain the social psychology of a state? In the individual such impulses may be “inhibited, directed towards other aims and fields, alter their objects,... [utilize] reaction formation...as though egoism had changed into altruism or pity, ... facilitated by...’ambivalence of feeling, ...[such that] intense love and intense hatred are so often found in the same person” (1915, p. 281). Clearly, psychoanalytic theory as applied to the person is powerless to regulate politics of and policies performed with the powers of the state, its economy, its laws and institutions of enforcement, e.g., the police and the military. In short, powerful interests and innate instincts are the real wellsprings of state power and action and the state, unlike the individual, has no innate impulses and no defenses, no conscience and no guilt: the state practices Realpolitik, i.e., power politics of deception, coercion, and war, it is not beyond, as Freud said about impulses, but above good and evil: it overrides morality and truthfulness to prosecute war and other interests. Freud must be supplemented by reading the 1513 book *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli 1651 book *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* by Thomas Hobbes.

The impact of WW I continued to affect Freud’s ideas after 1916 (Lothane, 2011):

Five years later, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1920) put forward the newly discovered theory of the death instinct, for which Freud found inspiration in the 1912 paper by Sabina Spielrein. Contrasted with life instincts, represented by Eros, the new instinct was popularized by gracing it with the names of another Greek divinity, Thanatos (death), although the word *Thanatos* was never used by Freud himself. As he admitted, his theory was a “speculation, often far-fetched speculation, which the reader will consider or dismiss according to his individual predilections” (p. 24), “as a basis for our metapsychological speculations” (p. 30). He speculated further: “We started out from the great opposition between the life and death instincts. Now object-love itself presents us with a second example of a similar polarity—that between love (or affection) and hate (or *aggressiveness*): if only we could succeed in relating these two polarities to each other and in deriving one from the other! (Freud, 1920, p. 53) If such an assumption as this is permissible, then we have met the demand that we should produce an example of a death instinct—though, it is true, a displaced one. But this way of looking at things is very far from being easy to grasp and creates a positively mystical impression. It looks suspiciously as though we were trying to find a way out of a highly embarrassing situation at any price” (p. 54). It does look suspicious: The suggested bridge between cosmology and psychology and cosmology and sociology is a tenuous one, and cosmic forces are not the same as dramas of love and aggression that take place between people in love or among peoples at war (condensed, emphasis added; pp. 274-276).

Moreover, the most important speculation that begged the question was Freud’s confusing senescence, a biological fact, with a mythological death instinct. However, in spite of all these confused speculations, Freud’s recognition of *aggressiveness*, unmentioned in 1915-1916, was an important advance for psychology and sociology, further elaborated in chapters IV and V of *The Ego and the Id* (1923).

The last word about evil comes in the 1933 *Why War?*, an exchange between two pacifists: Freud and Albert Einstein. Einstein writes about the current “menace of war”

(p. 199), the problem of “law and might” (p. 200), and his concern “about psychoses of hate and destructiveness” (p. 201). In response, Freud lectures about power and violence in the individual and the collective and refers to wars of conquest, “some such as [were] waged by the Mongols and the Turks, have brought nothing but evil” (p. 207). Neither say a word about Hitler or the growing influence of his political party. In conclusion, Freud counsels Einstein how to overcome the evil of war:

Our mythological theory of instincts makes it easy for us to find a formula for indirect methods of combating war. If willingness to engage in war is an effect of the destructive instinct, the most obvious plan will be to bring Eros, its antagonist, into play against it. Anything that encourages the growth of emotional ties between men must operate against war. These ties may be of two kinds. In the first place they may be relations resembling those towards a love object, though without having a sexual aim. There is no need for psycho-analysis to be ashamed to speak of love in this connection, for religion itself uses the same words: ‘Thou shalt love the neighbor as thyself’. This, however, is more easily said than done. The second kind of emotional tie is by means of identification. Whatever leads men to share important interests produces this community of feeling, these identifications. And the structure of human society is to a large extent based on them. (p. 212)

Remembering the evil of the Mongols and the Turks, both genocidal, is either just history or a veiled warning about the gathering storm in Germany. With the memory of “barbaric” Germany’s evil of 1915 and his prediction of “a legacy of embitterment that will make the renewal of those bonds for a long time to come,” it is surprising that Freud did not overtly connect the dots nor publish any follow-up to this exchange between Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933 and his leaving Vienna in 1938, especially in view of what he and his daughter Anna’s personally experienced with the Nazis there (Lothane, 2001). Dying three weeks after WW II began on September 1, 1939, Freud was spared the horrors of the Holocaust; which brings us back to radical evil.

BUBER ON THE RADICAL EVIL OF THE LIE

Martin Buber dealt with the problem of the lie and lying in 1952:

The lie is the specific evil which man has introduced into nature...the lie is our very own invention, different in kind from every deceit that animals can produce. A lie was possible only after a creature, man, was capable of conceiving the being of truth. It was possible only as directed against the conceived truth. In a lie the spirit practices treason against itself (p. 7).

So as fully to understand this passage it is necessary to keep in mind Buber's definition of evil:

It is usual to think of good and evil as two poles, two opposite direction, two arms of a signpost pointing to right and left...we must begin by doing away with this convention and recognizing the fundamental dissimilarity between the two in nature, structure and dynamics within human reality... Evil, though concretely presented to extraspective vision also, in its actions and effects, its attitudes and behavior, is presented in its essential state to our introspection only; and only our self-knowledge—[and] our knowledge of others—is capable of stating what happens when we do evil. ... It follows from the foregoing that [the person] must now be aware of the *existent actuality* of evil as evil (p. 121-122), [of] “the biographically decisive beginnings of evil and good (p. 124), [of] a ‘radical evil’ ...because what man finds in himself is willed (p. 140; emphasis added).

These ideas had also been expressed by the Stoics and the Evangelists: “But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (Matthew 5:37); “The truth will set you free” (John 8:32); “If any man is able to convince me that I do not think or act right, I will gladly change; for I seek the truth, by which no man was ever injured. But he is injured who abides in error and ignorance” (Marcus Aurelius). Lying is a willed, chosen evil truth-destroying action and Hitler and Goebbels and the other Nazis, were past masters at it.

The arch fiendish liar was Hitler himself who said this about the Jews in *Mein Kampf*:

The Jew is and remains a parasite, a sponger who, like a pernicious bacillus, spreads over wider and wider area. Wherever he establishes himself the people who grant him hospitality are bound to be bled to death sooner or later. To mask his tactics and fool his victims, he talks of the equality of all men; but in reality his aim is to enslave and thereby annihilate the non-Jewish races. The black-haired Jewish youth lies in wait for hours on end, satanically glaring at and spying on the unsuspecting girl who he plans to seduce, adulterating her blood and removing her from the bosom of her own people. The Aryan is the Prometheus of mankind, a conqueror [who] subjugated inferior races. He not only remained master but he also advanced civilization: should he be forced to disappear, human culture will vanish and the world will become a desert (condensed, quoted in Poliakov, 1971, pp. 1-2).

Hitler lied as follows on January 30th 1939 speech to the Reichstag after he seized power and became dictator of Nazi Germany:

“Today I want to prophecy once again. Should the international finance-Jewry in Europe and elsewhere succeed in plunging the nations once again into a world war, then the result will not be the bolshevization of the globe and the victory of the Jewry but the extermination of the Jewish race in Europe.”

This was no prophecy: it was a declaration of his planned extermination of the Jews. According to Poliakov (1951), his chief helper in realizing this plan was Hitler’s virulently anti-Semitic and lying propaganda minister Josef Goebbels.

Goebbels wrote in his diary:

With regard to the Jewish Question, the *Führer* is determined to make a clean sweep of it. He prophesied that, if they brought about another world war, they would experience their annihilation. That was no empty talk. The annihilation of Jewry must be the necessary consequence. The question is to be viewed without any sentimentality. We're not there to have sympathy with the Jews, but only sympathy with our own German people. If the German people has again now

sacrificed around 160,000 dead in the eastern campaign, the originators of this bloody conflict will have to pay for it with their lives (Browning, 2004).

In 1965 Arendt noted that

During the war, the lie most effective with the whole of the German people was the slogan of “the battle of *destiny* for the German people,” coined by Hitler or by Goebbels, which made self-deception easier on three counts: it suggested, first, that the war was no war; second, that it was started by destiny and not by Germany; and, third, that it was a matter of life and death for the Germans, who must annihilate their enemies or be annihilated (p. 52; emphasis added).

Wrong again: “battle of destiny” were the words of Walther von Brauchitsch, the general who conquered Poland and France, ordering his commanders to suppress all criticism of Nazi racial policies (Browning, 2004, p. 76). Besides, even if Hitler ever said this, the words would count as a euphemism, since Hitler accused the Jews, his sworn enemies, not destiny of starting WW II. Eichmann lied, too. And so did Arendt, or deceived herself, in characterizing Eichmann as banal.

Buber’s book published in 1947 contains two essays: the first, “The question to the single one,” Buber says in his 1945 “Foreword,” “appeared in Germany in 1936—astonishingly, since it attacks the life-basis of totalitarianism” (p. vii). The second, “What is man?” was published in Palestine in 1938. Both essays dealt with problem of lie and truth in the life of the individual and the collective. It is wrong, Buber held in 1936, to view

the State in place of historical State. This government cannot ward off the “evil as an impersonal State but can do it only on the basis of its own personal responsibility, and is itself for the rest exposed to the dynamic between good and evil. ...In the human crisis which we are experiencing today these two have become questionable—the person and the truth” (p. 79). ... The person has become questionable through being collectivized. ...Primacy is ascribed to a collectivity. ... The collectivity becomes what really exists, the person become derivatory. ... Thereby the immeasurable value which constitutes man is

imperiled... The truth has become questionable through being politicized” (pp. 80, 81).

Buber expanded this argument in 1938 in his lectures at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Here Buber was critical of Nietzsche’s vision of man as “merely the herd animal,” (p. 154), as a philosopher “who undertook with passionate earnestness to explain man in terms of the animal world; the specific problem of man does not thereby fade out, but has become more visible than ever” (p. 155). He was also critical of Heidegger’s central misunderstanding, that “man can become whole in virtue of a relation to himself [rather than] in virtue of a relation to another self. ... Heidegger’s “existence” is monological [not dialogical in character]. And monologue may certainly disguise itself ingeniously for a while as dialogue—Heidegger’s man can no longer say Thou...who knows a real life only in communication with himself. In mere solicitude man remains essentially with himself, even if he is moved with extreme pity; in action and help he inclines towards the other, but...he does not expect any real mutuality, ... he “is concerned with the other”, but he is not anxious for the other to be concerned with him” (p. 168-170). Buber’s message is: “The fundamental human existence is man with man. ... Language is only a sign and a means for it... It is rooted in one being turning to another as another, as this particular other being, in order to communicate with it... in the sphere of “between, ... by no longer localizing the relation between human beings, as is customary, either within individual souls or in a general world which embraces and determines them but in the actual fact *between* them” (p. 203; Buber’s italics).

To lie means to know the truth and willfully to distort it. Freud rarely wrote about lying as a conscious interpersonal action: lying as action melted away in various defenses, mostly unconscious, of repression, denial, disavowal. Therein lies an important lesson for the practice of psychoanalytic psychotherapy offered by dramatology. Whenever we are confronted by a patient who distorts, dissembles, pretends, is insincere, or plain lies, we need to confront him/her with the enactment of a lie. Both patient and therapist will grow from such a confrontation (Lothane, 2014ain press).

BACK TO RADICAL EVIL: WAR AS BREAKDOWN OF POLITICS:

The theme of this section is a condensation of Kant and Robin George Collingwood's 1942 *The New Leviathan*. Oxford philosophy professor Collingwood (born 1889) is for me the most original and profound thinker and reader of Freud. He began writing this book "immediately after the outbreak of the present war [WW II]; when first it became evident that we did not know what we were fighting for, and that our leaders were unable or unwilling to tell us" and completed it "in great part not (as Hegel boasted) during the cannonade of Jena, but during the bombardment of London" (pp.iv-v), dying a year later.

Preparatory to making the case against war, Collingwood defined two ways of handling an argument: eristically or dialectically: "What Plato calls an eristic discussion is one in which each party tries to prove that he was right and the other wrong.... The essence of dialectical discussion is to discuss in the hope that both parties to the discussion, and that this discovery put an end to the debate" (pp.182-182). With this distinction in mind Collingwood noted:

The earliest human communities of which we know seem not to have waged war... But cases of non-agreement in external politics must have begun to be handled eristically; a tradition we still inherit... War has been called a *continuation of policy* [p. 240, the dictum of Prussian general von Clausewitz, "War is the continuation of *Politik* [also meaning policy] by other means"]... There is always an element of force even in the life of a society. Since policy in social life and policy in internal politics agree in being dialectical, an extension of policy in the external sphere would be dialectical, too. It would aim at the thing which in external politics is parallel to law and order in internal politics and to harmony in social life. This is called *peace*. Where policy has hitherto been dialectical, war is a continuation of policy only in the sense in which death is a continuation of life, or a breakdown of a machine is a continuation of its smooth running. *War is a breakdown of policy*. Why does such a breakdown occur? (pp. 233-234).

He went on to enumerate three reasons:

The first reason is: because men charged with the conduct of external politics are confronted with a problem they cannot solve.... Not because the problem is

insoluble in itself; no problem is; but because they have approached it in the wrong way. ... (the second reason) *because the internal condition of the body politic is unsound*; a frequent cause of war... Ill governed bodies politic tend to be warlike... If you can't keep your subjects quiet, says the Tyrant's Handbook, make war. ... So we come to the third: *because the rulers are at loggerheads... The ultimate cause of war is disharmony among rulers*. ... Herr Hitler's rise to power in 1933 was at once followed by German rearmament. On 12 November 1936 the Prime Minister Mr. Baldwin defended himself in the House of Commons for not having long ago informed the House of this fact, explained the threat that it involved, and called for counter-rearmament (pp. 235-236).

We know the rest of this horrendous history: the ignominy of the 1938 Munich agreement signed by Britain, France, and Italy to let Hitler annex parts of Czechoslovakia, a prelude to annexation of Austria and invasion of Poland in 1939, the start of WW II, a repetition of similar disharmony among the ruling nations of Europe in the years that led to the outbreak of WW I, of which we are celebrating the centenary.

While unaware of Freud anonymously calling Germany 'barbaric', Collingwood addressed the nature of barbarism:

By barbarism I mean hostility to civilization, ... abstract substantives in '-ism', denoting an act of imitation, ... concrete substantives in '-ist' denoting an imitator.... [e.g.] the word 'scapegoatism' [the] 'tendency to treat people like, or make them into, scapegoats', as Nazis treat Jews or as Russians treat kulaks (pp. 242-343).

Collingwood went on to make this distinction:

A civilized man... can work unconsciously at promoting civilization. ... Barbarism can never be in this sense unconscious. The barbarist... cannot afford to forget what it is he is trying to bring about... not anything positive, but something negative, the destruction of civilization; and he must remember, if not what civilization is, at least what the destruction of civilization is. ... A community

fighting against civilization must work very hard not only at fighting but at thinking what they are fighting against. ... But it is a very dangerous position...the belligerent is...cutting his own throat. ... He scores at the beginning of his career... He has one advantage over his victims, and only one: their unpreparedness....the barbarist plays a losing game... any victory makes his *defeat in the long run* more probable... the criticism of war as *waged by the barbarist* (pp. 346-349).

Collingwood then focused on “German barbarism as it is happening now”:

The barbarism of a German does not seem to be innate [but] a reaction to a peculiar situation at a certain time. It is as if something had happened corporately to the German...endowing them with a peculiar kind of bumptiousness. It is arguable that Germans have always been what may be called bad neighbors...It exhibited itself in the age of Bismarck in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, ... at first despite the opposition of a great deal that was civilized in the country, at last sweeping away the opposition in a flood (pp. 375-376).

Likewise during the Weimar Republic:

And what is there between these two times? ... Oblivion; unconsciousness; an interval in which your head is lost. This the Nazi theory, expounded by Nazi psychologists. What the Nazis call thinking with your blood,... as if it were a new and revolutionary idea, which it could be for a generation slavishly taught, in sheer defiance of Locke to think exclusively with their brains... Therein lies the whole difference between thinking like a sane man and thinking like a Nazi (pp. 376-377).

Insanity has long served as a favorite metaphor to express horror at the brutality and the ideology that feeds it (Lothane, 1997). Collingwood’s, however, was a sociological analysis in which insanity served as a symbol for the “the good old German religion of herd-worship...an immemorial condition of the German people [due to] insufficient civilization,... a defect where more civilization was needed,... that incivility...exaggerated to the point of a mania” (pp. 384-385) and “the German hatred of

freedom” (p. 275), “the self-adoration of the ‘blond beast’, the *te Deum* of the ‘will to power’, both in Nietzsche and in Karl Max (276-277). He referred to the “Yahoo herd” and quoted “Dr. Trotter’s Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War [and] Tarde’s *Les Lois de l’imitation*” (p. 240) (also cited in Lothane, 2006).

The first German barbarism manifested itself during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 when during the siege of Paris the Prussian Army bombarded the civilian population and scientific institutions or engaged in acts of violent retribution against civilians “that learned to call them ‘les sales Boches’” (p. 384). This was the first instance of modern war as total war, relevant to the aforementioned remarks of Freud about WW I and what was to come in WW II. Strangely, Collingwood remained silent about his own experiences in WW I, even though he was the sole survivor of his unit, or that war’s barbarist aspects. He did not live to learn about the evils of WW II and the Holocaust (Lothane, 2014, in press). .

ETERNAL PEACE

In 1795 Kant defined eternal, or perpetual, peace:

objectively, in theory, there is no quarrel between morals and politics. But subjectively, in the self-seeking tendencies of men, a disagreement in principle exists and may always survive, the evil principle in our own nature, far more dangerous, *mendacious (lügenhaft)*, *treacherous and yet sophisticated*, which puts forward the weakness in human nature as a justification for every transgression. [But] as both are equally wrongly disposed to one another, they are thus destroyed in war. This mutual destruction stops short at the point of extermination, so that there are always enough of the race left to keep this game going on through all the ages, and a far-off posterity may take warning by them. Politics in the real sense cannot take a step forward without first paying homage to the principles of morals. And, although politics, *per se*, is a difficult art, in its union with morals no art is required. Right must be held sacred by man, however great the cost and sacrifice to the ruling power. Here is no half-and-half course. We cannot devise a happy medium between right and expediency, a right pragmatically conditioned. But all politics must bend the knee to the principle of right, and may, in that way,

hope to reach, although slowly perhaps, a level whence it may shine upon men for all time (condensed, pp. 180-183; first italics added).

Kant is realistic about the evil of war but is he idealistic and naïve regarding morals in politics? In 1813, in his anti-Napoleonic manifesto, the Swiss-French political philosopher Benjamin Constant argued the case for pacifism: “A government that would nowadays push a European nation into war would be committing a gross and disastrous anachronism... an arid glory. Instead of such glory one should prefer pleasure over triumph, plunder”(p.61; all translations mine). Like war, covetous “usurpation is force neither modified nor mitigated by nothing. It is of necessity stamped by the individuality of the usurper, by an opposition to all preceding interests, must be in a perpetual state of defiance and hostility” (p. 106), more “deplorable than the most absolute despotism” (p. 115), which “cannot be tolerated in our civilized times” (118). To remedy for usurpation is the enjoyment of liberty, assured by a body politic that upholds the rights of the person, it is a fight against tyranny. The remedy is promoting an international spirit of community, of liberal commerce, of collaboration instead of conflict, war, and pillage. Constant’s analysis of totalitarianism was not mentioned by Arendt and Poliakov, but is pertinent to the latter’s 1987 analysis of Stalinism, Hitlerism, Maoism, not to mention Pol Pot, Rwanda, or Srebrenica.

Stalin, Hitler and Mao are gone, but we still live in a world of perpetual warfare as predicted in George Orwell’s dystopia *1984*, a globalized world in which the superpowers live in peace and prosperity while fomenting local wars in the periphery of their empires. In addition to the greed to usurp oil, gas, and other nature’s bounties and hold needy nations hostage, let alone the still ever-present danger of a thermonuclear war, the current wars are also fed by religious fanaticism: “Of 1,723 armed conflicts documented in the three-volume “Encyclopedia of Wars,” only less than 7 per cent involved a religious cause” (NY Times, July 19, Timothy Egan, “Faith-based Fanatics”, July 19, 2014, p.A19). Only less than seven per cent? Egan mentioned Boko Haram, but can we discount Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan, Africa and, last but not least Saudi Arabia? The news are filled daily with stories of murder and mayhem, and misery but can we abandon faith and give up hope in humanity achieving peace and happiness?

CODA: IS THERE A JUST WAR

Whereas patriots, politicians, and war-mongers have imbued war with the attributes of glory and honor, pacifists Kant, Freud, Einstein and Collingwood saw it as barbarity and evil, a theory of just war was promulgated by Harvard moral philosopher John Rawls (1921-2002) and discussed by British political philosopher Howard Williams (2012). Rawls' 1971 *A Theory of Justice*, "hailed as 'the most important work in moral philosophy since the end of WW II and as 'one of the primary texts in political philosophy dubbed Rawlsianism with the argument that 'the most reasonable principles of justice are those everyone would accept and agree from a fair position'" (Wikipedia). I only read Williams and will quote him to react to these ideas.

From the perspective of justice, few will deny that Imperial Germany conducted an unjust and barbarous war in neutral Belgium in 1914 and that Nazi Germany did the same in the other countries it conquered in WW II, let alone the criminal war of destruction on defenseless Jews, or that the Soviet Union and the Allies led a just defensive war of destroying the Nazi invaders, while the Nazis, not surprisingly, believed that their war was just and pleaded not guilty when tried for their war crimes in Nuremberg in 1945. That same year the United Nations were established to fulfill the dream of the prophet Isaiah: "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (2:4). Not only did we over the years witness the many injustices of the Cold War but were also confronted with questions how just was the war in Viet Nam, or the Russian interventions in Eastern Europe and in Afghanistan, and, and last but not least, the two American wars in Iraq, whose nefarious unintended consequences are playing out now. While the evil of war and racism in former Yugoslavia were overcome with help from President Clinton (who also conferred the National Medal of the Humanities on Rawls) and the Czechs and the Slovaks were able to separate peacefully, we now have the war in Ukraine and war in the toughest war zone in the world barring none, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Williams did not discuss the two World Wars or the Holocaust and while citing the great German jurist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) misunderstanding the irony of Kant's

idea of a “just enemy,” he failed to mention that Schmitt collaborated with Hitler’s regime as an architect of the 1937 Nazi Constitution. Williams opined that “since Rawls strongly emphasizes that... his political philosophy begins from certain facts of political life in contemporary North America and Europe [he] treads a fine line between Kantianism and Hegelianism [and] with his just war theory steps over more into the Hegelian than the Kantian realm” (p. 165), elaborating further in an interview on line. Williams noted that Hegel “prioritizes the nation state as the focus of political loyalty of individuals” (p.8) and that his “presumption that the outbreak of war is not always something evil, and good can come out of it, is also implicit in the work of contemporary just war theorists” (p. 143). The apotheosis of the Nazi State was inspired by Hegel: “The self-conscious moral substance is the State; it is the rational, divine will that has so organized itself. Its Constitution is the heart of justice. The State realizes the idea of the highest freedom on earth, it is God on earth, and therefore it has the highest right against the individual for whom it is the highest duty to be a member of the State and totally to sacrifice himself to it” (Entry “Hegel, G.W.F.”, Schmidt, 1934). What was good for the Kaiser turned out to be just as good for Hitler and Stalin, or any other dictatorship.

I side with Kant’s pacifism and pleading for eternal peace to be achieved by dialogue and negotiations (Lothane, 2006), as acutely exemplified by the futility of the current war in Gaza.

Erich Kahler (1885-1970), Jewish professor of German and Comparative literature who taught at Cornell and Princeton, wrote his original essay on Jews among the nations while still in Europe and published it in 1936 in neutral Switzerland, when the Nazi persecution of German Jews was in full swing. It is probably forgotten today: a different book with the same title was published in 1967. While aware that “In Germany today Jews are subjected to the wildest attacks” (1936, p. 11; all translations HZL), he identified with the humanism of Goethe and cited Goethe’s “dictum: ‘Germany is nothing, but the Germans are much, they should be dispersed all over the globe, like the Jews’ to bring out the good in them” (Kahler, 1967, p. 112). He nevertheless pleaded that for Jews and Germans alike “*peace* is vitally important—for both, even though at present the Germans do not want to hear of it. ... Moreover, both essentially share the task of

achieving peace” (1936, p. 132), “in such a feeling of a *missionary job*, in the final purpose of this mission, there is an accord between Germans and Jews” (p. 140, emphasis in the original). Kahler’s wish was realized in the Germany that arose from the ashes after 1945, today a strong ally of Israel. It should be an inspiration to all warring nations today.

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