Post-Genocidal Cultural Narratives: Understanding Evil from Kant to Arendt
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Michael Walzer and Sheldon Wolin note the importance of "shared understandings" or an interpretation of the "historical moments when collective identity is collectively established" (Walzer 1983, xiv; Wolin 1989, 140). These shared moments and their disparate interpretations constitute questions of political importance, particularly in post-genocidal context, since in these moments of interpretation, the present is interpreted in light of the past in an attempt to forge a more peaceful future. In this paper I examine the importance of collective understandings of evil in the attempt to move beyond a violent past. Specifically I argue that the transition from a Kantian to an Arendtian understanding of evil in the collective narrative of a post-genocidal state is an important safeguard against subsequent violence. Arendt draws on and transforms Heideggerian categories in an attempt to explicate both the importance of judgment and a standard for judging in a post-genocidal state.

In a post-genocidal context, the attempt to create a non-violent future necessarily requires the distribution of blame, responsibility, even guilt. Hence it requires a public confrontation with philosophical questions regarding the nature of evil. At these critical junctures philosophical questions regarding the nature of evil, have practical and enduring political importance. In this paper I examine post-genocidal cultural narratives emerging from Austrian and Polish experiences with the German genocide, since as Lebow (2006) notes, the emergence of post-conflict cultural narratives exhibit similar patterns. In the first stage, early efforts to explain genocidal violence invoke an array of similar memories and craft from them a cohesive, perhaps even hegemonic, cultural narrative. Moreover, they tend to employ a Kantian understanding of radical evil, which is to say, they view collective manifestations of evil as stemming from a conscious inversion of the moral principles on which decisions are based. In the second stage, the subsequent generation invites a multitude of memories into the fray and shifts to an Arendtian view of evil. It is Arendt's belief that evildoing rarely results from a conscious or deliberate decision but rather from a lack of thought and judgment. Among the tensions in

which the politics of memory must be examined, Lebow cites "contrasting understandings" of the event or time period (Lebow 2006, 8). This paper attempts to add to our understanding of post-conflict reconciliation by examining understandings of evil in a post-genocidal context.

In their conclusion to a collection of essays on political uses of memory in post-World War II Europe, Fogu and Kansteiner note the importance of a "generational relay". With remarkable consistency across France, Germany, Austria, Poland and Switzerland "the first postwar generation came to assert a collective challenge to the memories that were collectivized, officialized, and institutionalized by the survivors of the war" (2006, 297). Although the specific terms of this challenge varied nationally, all the authors note dramatic shifts in the dominant cultural narrative between the late 1960s and early 1980s. According to Fogu and Kansteiner this generational shift results from the "interaction and dynamic conflict between the socially dominant war-youth generation and the first post-war generation coming of age" (297- 298). Furthermore as Schuman and Scott note autobiographical memories tend to include a considerable amount of personal detail and considerably less in the way of contextual information (Schuman and Scott 1989). Thus, as a postwar generation, whose memories are not personal memories, gains control over the political use of memory, the dominant interpretation of the conflict is bound to undergo a re-examination. In what follows I examine the conflict dynamic at work in the "generational relay" in Austria and Poland and suggest that part of the resulting paradigm shift may be explained by the introduction of a myriad of collected memories into the public consciousness. Some of these memories necessarily conflict with the public narrative enshrined by the war generation. Moreover as a postwar generation comes of age, political control begins to shift from autobiographical to historical memories. The resulting challenge to control over "shared understandings" invokes a simultaneous struggle with

2

philosophical notions of evil, guilt and responsibility. Thus not only is a generational shift

occurring with respect to political control over collective memory; but a corresponding shift also

occurs over the very conceptualization of evil, as a Kantian approach gives way to an Arendtian

approach.

Kant: On Radical Evil as an Inversion of Maxims

Some, including Arendt, have argued that Kant's concept of radical evil is neither radical,

nor useful as a tool for understanding genocide. My purpose here is not to contribute to this

debate, though I will briefly explore its contours, but rather to argue that regardless of the

academic debate surrounding Kant's notion of radical evil, post conflict societies in crafting their

own cultural narratives tend to invoke a Kantian explanation for their violent pasts in the

immediate aftermath. Moreover, the academic disagreement surrounding Kant's notion of

radical evil tends to focus on the analytical value of radical evil, rather than on the distinctions

that Kant draws between different stages or gradations of evil. Kant posits that all forms of evil

derive, not from a natural inclination to evil, but rather from human free will. More specifically,

evil can result from three conditions: human frailty, impurity of maxims or the reversal of

maxims. These three gradations of evil represent the increasing likelihood that unconscionable

acts of depravity will result. Moreover as the individual moves from the first level to the third,

the choice to deviate from a moral maxim becomes increasingly a conscious one. For Kant

maxims constitute the underlying and unobservable principles which guide our decision-making

and behavior. In order to have moral value, actions must not only be in accord with a moral

maxim, they must also derive from a sense of duty to the moral maxim, as the sole motivating

factor.

The first form of evil, human frailty, occurs when an individual subscribes to moral maxims, prioritizes moral maxims but out of human weaknesses, succumbs either consciously or unconsciously to a maxim of self-love. Secondly, evil can result from the impurity of maxims. In this case action is not based on a moral maxim "alone as its all-sufficient incentive." Rather one's action "stands in need of other incentives beyond this" (Kant 1793 [1960], 26). In other words, good action undertaken on the basis of moral responsibility albeit on the basis of moral responsibility alone constitutes a form of evil. In this case, the moral maxim and additional incentives point toward the same act. Thus, in the case of impurity the act undertaken is in keeping with one's moral duty. According to Kant,

> when incentives other than the law itself (such as ambition, self-love in general, yes, even a kindly instinct such as sympathy) are necessary to determine the will to conduct conformable to the law, it is merely accidental that that these causes coincide with the [moral maxim], for they could equally well incite its violation. The maxim, then, in terms of whose goodness all moral worth of the individual must be appraised…despite all his good deeds, is nevertheless evil (Kant 1793 [1960], 26).

In short a person may be evil, for Kant, despite good deeds if the motivation for those good deeds is ambition or self interest, rather than a sense of moral duty. Interestingly, not only does the second degree of evil, result in a good deed, but as Claudia Card (2010, 79) points out, impurity represents a greater degree of evil than frailty despite the fact that the outcome in the case of impurity is consistent with the requirements of moral duty; whereas the outcome in the case of frailty runs contrary to one's moral obligation. Despite the outcome disparity impurity represents a higher degree of evil than does frailty, because the consistent invocation of non-moral maxims creates the structural mechanism for a far greater evil: radical evil. As Kant says,

the fact that the outcome is consistent with moral duty is "merely accidental". Finally, Kant's notion of radical evil, which he characterizes as existing when "the cast of mind is corrupted at the root" refers to a prioritization of non-moral maxims over moral ones as an enduring rather than fleeting condition.

> [T]he wickedness or if you like the corruption of the human heart is the propensity of the will to maxims which reflect the incentives springing from the moral law in favor of others which are not moral. It may also be called the perversity of the human heart, for it reverses the ethical order among the incentives of a free will; and although conduct which is lawfully good may be found within it, yet the cast of mind is thereby corrupted at its root (so far as the moral disposition is concerned), and the man is hence designated as evil (Kant 1793 [1960], 25).

In other words, radical evil occurs when individuals succumb to the temptation of employing self love as a maxim. These individuals have given up on moral responsibility as the underlying principle that guides human behavior. Not all of the acts that result from this inversion of maxims will necessarily constitute grossly evil acts, but in the process of accepting self-love as a maxim which takes priority over moral duty, the deliberative context in which the most hideous acts of evil can occur has been created.

Kant's critics dispute either the (1) contention that all evil acts result from self love or self interest or (2) assertion that diabolic evil does not exist. Bernstein (2002) finds the reliance on self-love or self-interest "shallow" which is to say in his attempt to create a theory of evil which *always* holds individuals responsible for their actions and explains *all* evil acts, regardless of how insignificant, Kant crafts a notion of evil that borders on a truism and fails to explain the most egregious forms of evil in the world. Kant's "aim is to bring all cases of [evil] –whatever

their degree – under a single concept, a single maxim of evil, a maxim that applies in the same way to minor evils as it does to the worst evils" (Wood 2010, 156). It does not account for acts of evil that Claudia Card characterizes as ***gratuitous suffering*** (2002, 76). Consideration of this criticism, first, requires an examination of what is meant by self-love. Second, are the most egregious forms of evil or suffering accounted for in Kant's tri-part schema? Do even the most horrific evil acts have self-love or self-interest as their motivation? In Kantian terms, is the will to conduct behind, even the most disturbing of evil acts, determined by self-love or self-interest? Is there possibly, in Card's terms, *gratuitous suffering* without ***gratuitous evil***? Kant, like Arendt, "rejects the claim that serious evils require a distinctly diabolical motivation" (Anderson-Gold 2010, 200). In short, Bernstein and Card take issue not only with Kant's reliance on self-love but also question his premise that diabolical acts do not require diabolical motivation.

In other words, our propensity to evil has its roots in the ability of human beings, given free will, to prioritize self-interest over moral duty, though according to Sharon Anderson-Gold, diabolically evil acts require the conscious acceptance of self-interest over moral duty as a maxim in a collective context. The frequency of exercising free will in this manner increases under competitive conditions prevalent in organized society. As Anderson-Gold observed unsociable sociability is another name for radical evil, in so far as unsociable sociability represents the collective manifestation of the prioritization of self-love over moral duty as a determinant of the will to conduct. Thus, the most egregious forms of evil may arise from the collective manifestation of the individual inversion of maxims. Thus, the radical nature of Kant's third stage of individual evil is fully realized only in its collective manifestation. Though both Kantian and Arendtian approaches to evil disavow the notion of some kind of diabolical

evildoer and place evildoing within the realm of the ordinary, their approaches also diverge on a critical point. Kant's inversion of maxims suggests a conscious choice; whereas Arendt's thoughtlessness offers an indictment of decisions without judgment. In other words, for Arendt both the most profound forms of both evil and heroism have a mundane quality, in the sense that sources of both are found in the everyday decisions of common folk.

Arendt: On The Banality of Evil-doers[1]

Bernstein notes that the first to uses the term banality in reference to Nazi atrocities was Karl Jaspers (Bernstein 2002, 215), though it seems to have been Heinrich Blücher who suggested the phrase "banality of evil" as a subtitle for the Eichmann book (Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, December 13, 1963). While Arendt is certainly best known for the phrase "banality of evil," she also at various points, characterizes evil as *radical*, *absolute* and, finally, *extreme*.[2] While Arendt refers to Kant in her use of the term, radical evil, she does not appear to have ever used the term radical evil, in a Kantian sense.[3] Card argues that Arendt used the Kantian term "not to mark deep culpability…but to mark the radical harm of being turned into a 'living corpse'" (Card 2010, 75). In other words, her use of the term, *radical evil*, characterized the result, rather than the perpetrator. Arendt uses the term, first, in conjunction with the death camps. Only later does she use it to describe the socio-political phenomena: superfluousness. Thus as Bernstein argues, Arendt uses the term radical evil differently than Kant did. Arendt uses radical evil to refer to the purposeful transformation that occurs to human beings under conditions of totalitarianism. She refers to the destruction of the "plurality, spontaneity, natality and individuality" that are necessary to live a human life (Bernstein 1996, 135). Dana Villa argues that this transformation is complete only when the victims of totalitarianism, both

executioners and prisoners alike "have internalized their own superfluousness," since that is when both submit "mutely to power" (Villa 1999, 20). In other words, Arendt uses the term radical evil to refer to the existential harm of viewing oneself as superfluous. Her use of the term *absolute evil* is closer to the Kantian at least in so far as absolute evil concerns itself with the perpetrator's motives. As she says in *Origins*, "in the first stages of totalitarianism an absolute evil appears (absolute because it can no longer be deduced from humanly comprehensible motives)" (Arendt 1958a, viii-ix).

Though Arendt is best known for characterizing evil as banal, a more apt subtitle might have been: the banality of evil doers. As she explained to Mary McCarthy, although the book certainly contained philosophical insights and interpretations, it was primarily a trial report. As such, it "is a report and therefore leaves all questions of why things happened as they happened out of account". The real issue, she asserts, is "what kind of man was the accused and to what extent can our legal system take care of these new criminals who are not ordinary criminals" (Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, October 3, 1963). In other words, she intended the subtitle to serve as a description of the character of Adolph Eichmann, not as a statement about either the nature of evil perpetrated by the Nazis, nor as a statement about the nature of harm suffered by the Jewish people. As a description of Eichmann, himself a perpetrator of evil, the subtitle still raises questions about the nature of evil; questions, however, which this particular text does not answer and does not purport to answer. As Jaspers remarked, "[t]he point is that *this* evil, not evil per se, is banal" (Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, December 13, 1963).

The banality of evildoers, of which Arendt offers Eichmann as a prime example, rests with the inability to think, which in turn leads to a lack of understanding and judgment. He personifies deductive reasoning at its most troubling because he does not experience the two-in-

one dialogue. For Arendt, thinking is a dialectical and critical process, an ongoing, soundless

dialogue with oneself, a "habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract

attention," that reveals the inherent duality in human nature (Arendt 1978, 5-6). Thinking

reveals the disconnect or disharmony between our appearance, or what we reveal of who we are

in the public realm, and our consciousness, our true selves, which we may or may not reveal in

the public realm. Thinking requires solitary time and space. "To be in solitude means to be with

one's self, and thinking, therefore, though it may be the most solitary of all activities, is never

altogether without a partner and without company" (Arendt 1958b, 76). Thinking is an activity

that can only be engaged in by oneself and with oneself as the only partner, the process of going

home to face the "partner who comes to life when you are alert and alone" (Arendt 1978, 188).

Without the inner dialogue to force him to reconcile his actions with his inner critic, the lonely

individual is vulnerable to what Arendt refers to as deductive reasoning or logical thinking: the

cornerstone of ideology.

> The tyranny of logicality begins with the mind's submission to logic as a never-ending
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> process, on which man relies in order to engender his thoughts. By this submission, he
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> surrenders his inner freedom as he surrenders his freedom of movement when he bows
>
> down to an outward tyranny (Arendt 1953a, 320).

Moreover, logical thinking occurs when [t]he idea [of class or race] becomes a premise in the

logical sense from which a process is being deduced…[According to this approach, thinking

involves] conclusions instead of judgment, [and becomes subsumed] under certain rules" (Arendt

1953b, 8).

Herein lies the key to the appeal of totalitarianism, and the relationship between

existential loneliness and a totalitarian form of government. Without the opportunity for self

reflection, lonely individuals find "comfort and consolation" in rules, logical and deductive

reasoning (Isaac 1992). In short, Adolph Eichmann illustrates existential loneliness. He lacked

the ability to divide into the two-in-one, to engage in self-reflective thinking and instead sought

validation in the rules, logic, clichés, euphemisms and hierarchical structure offered by National

Socialism (Isaac 1992, 56). As Arendt noted, "[t]he longer one listened to him, the more obvious

it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely to

think from the standpoint of somebody else" (Arendt 1963, 49). Thus Eichmann serves as a

prototypical case of the banality of evildoers. Their inability to connect to their own inner critics

and engage in a self-reflective form of thinking leads them to seek acceptance and connectedness

in whatever social movement may come their way. They seek solace in the feeling of belonging

afforded by the social movement, any social movement.

> [A] thinking being, rooted in his thoughts and remembrances, and hence knowing that he
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> has to live with himself, there will be limits to what he can permit himself to do, and
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> these limits will not be imposed on him from the outside, but will be self-set. These
>
> limits can change considerably…but limitless, extreme evil is possible only where these
>
> self-grown roots, which automatically limit the possibilities are absent. They are absent
>
> where men skid only over the surface of events, where they permit themselves to be
>
> carried away without ever penetrating into whatever depth they may be capable of
>
> (Arendt 1965, 101).

This lack of depth or rootedness may not create an obvious problem *until* in a context of multiple

losses, uncertainty and fear become politicized (Midlarsky 2005). In other words, complicity in

genocide does not require a malicious intent or a malevolent character; a simple failure to think,

"namely, to think from the standpoint of someone else" and "remember what they did" will suffice (Arendt 1963, 49; Arendt 1965, 112).

Kant and Arendt both view the personification of diabolical evil as philosophically indefensible and politically problematic. Moreover, they both locate the essence of diabolically evil acts in the core of our humanity. For Kant, our propensity to evildoing derives from free will, perhaps its collective manifestation. Whereas for Arendt, the tendency toward evil acts may originate in our failure to engage in the self-reflective thought that necessarily precedes judgment. In both cases, perpetrators are responsible for all acts in which they participated. As such the political implications of Kantian, as well as Arendtian, approaches to evil share much common ground. In their respective approaches to evil, Kant and Arendt diverge on two questions. First, does all evil operate in the same way? Kant argues that it does; whereas Arendt believes it may take different forms. Second, is evil doing a conscious act? Again for Kant the answer is – yes. The gradual slide from the first to the third phase of evil includes a corresponding shift from an unconscious to a conscious diminution of moral duty as the controlling maxim. For Arendt, on the other hand, the answer is – no. The very lack of thought presupposes that the decision to do evil is lacking in deliberation and therefore, unconscious.

<u>Austria</u>

At the conclusion of World War II, the dominant cultural narrative in Austria was one of victimization. According to this narrative, the Austrian nation, coercively annexed in 1938, constituted the first victim of Nazi Germany. So complete was their surrender to the Germans that the nation of Austria ceased to exist in 1938, reappearing as an independent state only in 1945. This narrative served a dual purpose. It allowed Austrians not only to avoid the

existential question that plagued Germany for decades: are fascism and anti-semitism somehow

part and parcel of the German character? Moreover as a legal matter, Austria escaped

reparations. Culturally speaking, Austrians who served in the Third Reich were portrayed as

having been deceived and manipulated into service; thus constituting a peculiar type of victim.

The victimization narrative ultimately shattered following the trial of Adolph Eichmann and the

Taras Borodajkewycz scandal. These two high profile Austrian Nazis introduced into the public

consciousness fragmentary evidence which deviated from the dominant cultural narrative and

challenged the prevailing victim thesis. They problematized the interpretation of complicit

Austrians as victims of Nazi deception albeit in different ways. Moreover, these fragmentary

revelations open the door for deviant, collected memories to claim a share of public

consciousness and to challenge the prevailing view of Austrian compliance as resulting from

deception. Hence these fragments shattered the prevailing cultural narrative by introducing two

other varieties of complicity and ultimately led to a "co-responsibility thesis" (Uhl 2006).

Among the events that led to a re-examination of the notion of complicity, Adolph

Eichmann was kidnapped in Argentina and brought to Jerusalem for trial in 1961. Uhl (2006)

notes that though there was little in the way of response to the Eichmann trial in Austria, the

subsequent broadcast of the play, *Der Herr Karl*, generated considerable protest. With a striking

similarity to Eichmann, *Der Herr Karl*, "an obsequious conformist, established an archetype that

is to this day synonymous with the average, opportunistic Austrian" and touched a nerve with

Austrian viewers (Uhl 2006, 54-55). Seemingly honest, pleasant and politically active, Der Herr

Karl's political convictions prove easily amenable to changes in the national political landscape;

hence he shows himself to be devoid of any convictions at all. Moreover in retrospect, Der Herr

Karl, like Eichmann, has no misgivings whatsoever. Thus, Der Herr Karl personifies the

Arendtian notion of thoughtlessness, just as *Der Herr Karl* fractured the veneer of a collective narrative, the investigation of Taras Borodajkewycz, dealt the final blow which shattered the dominance of the victimization myth.

Taras Borodajkewycz was a professor of history widely known for statements that were anti-semitic and pro-German nationhood. Student complaints generated little in the way of repercussions until Borodajkewycz published an article lamenting the loss of the German nation and a former student agreed to testify. During the televised investigation, Borodajkewycz proudly claimed, in sharp contrast to the myth of victimization, to have joined the Nazi party voluntarily. Moreover, his students cheered him on and yelled "Hurrah for Auschwitz". Finally during the demonstrations that surrounded the Borodajkewycz inquiry, a concentration camp survivor and resistance fighter, Ernst Kirchweger, was attacked and killed (Uhl 2006, 55-56). The Eichmann trial, in conjunction with the Borodajkewycz inquiry complicated notions of complicity in several ways. One of the oft-noted facts about the Eichmann trial was that Eichmann demonstrated a far greater ability to recall food, beverages or entertainment than policy decisions or historical events. Moreover, he frequently spoke in clichés and euphemisms. Hannah Arendt interpreted these two characteristics as evidence of thoughtlessness. Eichmann did not strike her as engaging in the type of self-reflective thought in which she places so much hope. Thus, Eichmann personified one type of complicity. He represented a mindless, though purposeful and proud perpetrator. Borodajkewycz represented the deliberate, conscious and arrogant perpetrator. Finally, the students, clearly influenced by Borodajkewycz, emphatically announced their own anti-semitism in support of a revered professor. Clearly, compliance could assume many forms; deception appeared to be a non-factor. Neither Eichmann, Borodajkewycz nor the students appeared to have been deceived. The victim myth reflects Kant's notion of

radical evil in so far as it posits that evildoers chose to engage in evil acts out of self-serving motives and draws a sharp line of demarcation between evil doing and victimization, a distinction which is tougher to sustain after the appearance of Eichmann and Borodajkewycz.

Poland

The post war years in Poland witnessed an exceedingly brief articulation of complex memories which rendered assignment of blame difficult. The initial postwar, Polish narrative depicted the Polish as repeatedly victimized, by the Nazis and the Allies, despite their unceasing attempts at resistance. The film, *Zakazane piosenki*, depicted the complexity of Polish roles in the war. It included collaborators, resisters, and a Polish Jew in a litany of recounted war stories. The film was released in January 1947 and removed from theatres shortly thereafter (Orla-Bukowska 2006, 183-184). The public inclusion of a complex array of collected memories ended nearly as abruptly. A Soviet controlled post-war narrative emerged in its place which portrayed the Germans as villains, albeit without a significant role for Jewish victims. The number of Russians killed at Auschwitz was inflated and the Jewishness of many victims obscured in order to emphasize both victimization of Russians and the heroic role Soviet liberators (Weinbaum 2001). Auschwitz became the symbol of German atrocities in large part because it was the camp liberated by Soviet forces. Moreover, the earliest museum at Auschwitz depicted the victims as Polish and Russian, rather than Jewish (Orla-Bukowska 2006).

It was not until the 1980s that the Soviet Union's stranglehold on the Polish, cultural narrative abated in conjunction with the intrusion of a diverse array of collected memories into the public consciousness. As in Austria, the myriad of stories led to a bifurcation of the dominant narrative, ultimately complicating the notion of complicity. The 1980s witnessed a dramatic transformation of the Polish cultural narrative. The Kielce pogrom entered public

consciousness in 1981 (Orla-Bukowska 2004, 189). Jadiellonian University opened the Research Center on the History and Culture of Jews in Poland, Hanna Krall's *Shielding the Flame*, as well as subsequent Holocaust stories, introduced a wide variety of stories to the public. Additionally, Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was published in Polish and Claude Lanzmann's *The Shoah* was televised. Finally, the gradual revelations of the role of local Poles in the Jebwabne massacre "forced Poles to reflect on themselves not only as victims, heroes or bystanders, but also as perpetrators" (Orla-Bukowska 2004, 189). From these multiple viewpoints, dueling Polish narratives emerged, diverging according to Laurence Weinbaum (2001), on the question of Polish complicity with the murder of Polish Jews. Weinbaum describes two incompatible narratives "a descent into brutishness" in which Poles viewed the elimination of the local Jewish population as a benevolent by-product of German occupation and "a country without Quislings" in which Poland constitutes the only country under German occupation in which locals did not administer the final solution on behalf of the Germans.

The official, Soviet controlled narrative assigned the role of perpetrator to imperialist, pro-Western, Nazi-forces. Thus, the initial view of the evil that emerges is in keeping with a Kantian view of evil, as self-interest in the form of western capitalism and western imperialism is literally the force behind not only fascism but the horrors of the camps, as well. Kant's notion of evil requires a conscious deviation from a moral maxim, which is to say an awareness of the moral maxim; whereas Arendt's approach to evil focuses on the unconscious, the thoughtless act. Kant's approach presupposes conscious (deliberate) decision-making on the part of evildoers and the subsequent responsibility or guilt relies on that intentionality. Arendt opens the door for non-deliberate evildoing and the subsequent responsibility or guilt relies not on the question of intent or motivation but on the resulting action. For this reason, Jerome Kohn reports that "Arendt

wrote *Eichmann* in a state of 'euphoria,' not because rootlessness could be thought but because it could be overcome by thinking" (Kohn 2003, xx). The subsequent scattershot memories that emerge to challenge the dominant narrative reveal that complicity can assume a variety of forms, opening the door to more nuanced varieties of evildoing. The transition to an Arendtian understanding of evil, thus, offers the possibility of overcoming a genocidal past.

Arendtian Thought as Safeguard: *Besorgen* and *Fürsorge*

Scholars may long debate whether Kant's notion of radical evil sufficiently captures the motivations behind diabolically evil acts or gratuitous harm as a descriptive matter. However, his attempt to develop an understanding of evil clearly fails, as a prescriptive matter, to offer us a way forward in a post-genocidal state. Whereas Arendt's central task is to proffer a way forward post-genocide. In order to understand how she does this, we must first turn our attention to a Heideggerian concept on which she draws and builds. For Heidegger the mode of being-in-world, the manner of being-with, of interacting with others is one of care or concern. He uses two different words to describe this mode of being: *besorgen* and *fürsorge*. *Besorgen* usually refers to tasks which can be resolved or completed, errands. *Fürsorge*, on the other hand, refers to matters of concern related to human issues or human interaction (Stambaugh 1992). The second relevant point to make about Heidegger's concepts is that for Heidegger, existentials are non-normative, which is to say they can take on a form that is positive, negative or indifferent. In other words, my manner of being-with others can be one of deficient care or concern in which I exhibit carelessness or fail to tend to them with concern. It may be indifferent; alternatively I may exhibit care and concern toward others. As a descriptive matter, Heidegger is doubtless correct in his assertion that individuals can act toward others either with great care or with

extreme carelessness. Arendt is ill at ease, however, with the non-normative or the purely

descriptive since from the perspective of the political, whether care takes a form that is negative

or positive is a matter of considerable interest.

While Arendt more or less agrees with Heidegger that traditional moral and ethical

standards have broken down under conditions of modernity, her criticism of Heidegger is that

having offered his fundamental ontology as a descriptive matter, he leaves us with utterly no

standards by which to judge, which becomes particularly problematic when the brilliant

philosopher decides to enter the public realm. In the absence of any standards of judgment,

Heidegger lends his support to Hitler, since "action and authenticity were what mattered" (Wolin

1995, 36). Arendt more or less concurs that both action and authenticity belong in public life

though along with them she would reserve a crucial place for self-reflective thought and

judgment. In other words, he took what purported to be a purely descriptive and non-normative

framework and used it as both a basis from which to enter the political realm with disastrous

consequences. Part of Arendt's task is to reveal the conditions under which a being will relate to

others in a mode of concern or *fürsorge*. In order to complete certain tasks, I must necessarily

cease to either relate to other beings. I cannot prepare a lecture while simultaneously listening to

a student's dilemma. I can elect, however, to set aside my lecture when a matter of some

urgency arises, requiring me to switch from a mode of *besorgen* to *fürsorge*. I divide into the

two-in-one, engage myself in dialogue and decide to set aside my lecture notes and act out of

concern for the student. Arendt's term for this process is thought. A being will relate to other

beings in a mode of *fürsorge* if he or she engaged in an Arendtian form of thinking which

requires rootedness, "in his thoughts and remembrances" (Arendt 1965, 101). Arendtian thought

requires one to remember what one has done and to engage in a self-reflective form of thinking, which is to say to think "from the standpoint of someone else" (Arendt 1963, 49).

Thus, in *Eichmann*, Arendt illustrates the political implications of both *fürsorge* and *besorgen* as she relays the stories of the Danish shipbuilders, an example of being-with others in a mode of *fürsorge*, and Eichmann's interaction with Bertold Storfer, an illustration of being-with others in a mode of *besorgen* (Arendt 1963, 172-173). When instructed to repair German ships, Danish dockworkers refused and subsequently went on strike. She also illustrates relating to others in a mode of *besorgen* through the case of Mr. Storfer. Bertold Storfer was a Jewish functionary in Vienna and as such was immune from deportation. Apparently Storfer either tried to flee or went into hiding and as a result was deported to Auschwitz. Since he had worked closely with Eichmann, it was Eichmann that he requested to see. Eichmann reported telling Storfer that he could not do anything to get him out of Auschwitz, though he could alter his work duty. He explained to the trial court that it was a matter of great satisfaction to him that he was able to help Mr. Storfer, who was shot six weeks later, by seeing to it that his work duty was sweeping a gravel path, a job in which he was occasionally able to sit on a bench (Arendt 1963, 51). Despite the appearance of Bertold Storfer and a matter of human concern, Eichmann's focus on tasks remained unaltered. Clearly Eichmann related to other beings in a mode of *fürsorge* which was deficient, remaining in a mode of *besorgen*, focused entirely on a set of tasks.

In short, for Arendt, thinking exists as a viable opportunity for the masses, as it does not require formal education, familiarity with German philosophy nor hours spent in contemplation of big questions. Arendt's authentic political actor, contra Heidegger, must squarely face his or her own Self, reflect on his or her experiences, render judgment and then speak and act in

accordance with that judgment in the public sphere. Arendt's authentic political actor bears a striking resemblance to the burgomaster from Giti. In his cross-sectional examination of regional violence, Scott Straus identifies one commune in which no genocide occurred: Giti. In some sense Giti was an anomaly. Despite statistical evidence suggesting that onset of violence correlates with support for the MRND and the fact that Giti was an MRND stronghold, there was no armed *Interahamwe* in Giti. Straus attributes the absence of genocide in Giti to two primary factors: a burgomaster, who actively resisted violence and the arrival of the RPF in a neighboring region. When the cattle belonging to a Tutsi family were killed, the burgomaster had the young men arrested and jailed because he was concerned that an escalation of violence would follow. When asked about his decision to stand against the violence, the burgomaster simply replied, "One cannot fight for one's country by killing people" (Strauss 2006, 86). In the case of Giti, attempts to mobilize the mob were thwarted by the local political elite who were able to hold out long enough for re-enforcements to arrive in a bordering region. Hence the burgomaster from Giti exemplifies Arendt's hope for preventing violence. Confronted with an approaching RPF, an irate mob and instructions to kill, he engaged in a self-reflective form of thinking, rendered judgment and elected not to support the policy of extermination.

Implications for Rwanda

Rwanda's cultural narrative is obviously still controlled by the war generation which, like Austria and Poland, has imposed a hegemonic narrative and is certainly engaged in an active effort to control which collected memories appear in the public sphere. If previous post-genocidal states offer any guidance, they suggest that the war generation's control over collected memories will abate as the post-war generation increasingly gains political control and

reconstitutes the cultural narrative since all public "narrative is designed to privilege a certain past in order to legitimate a particular present" (Wolin 1989, 3). Thus, according to the generational relay thesis, Rwandans should anticipate a transformation of its cultural narrative between 2018 and 2025, following an extensive phase in which a myriad of collected memories are revealed, problematizing the dominant narrative. The emergence of these collected memories may well take a variety of different forms: scholarly research, literature, theatre, as well as revelations of various forms of complicity. Moreover, these revelations may well originate outside Rwanda and take hold internally only when political control has been wrested from the war generation and the post-war generation finds it politically expedient to give voice to a wider array of experiences. Alternatively, the articulation of collected memories contrary to the dominant narrative in the public realm may serve as an early indicator of forthcoming political change.

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[1] I am indebted to Zora McBride for this interpretation of Arendt's famous and troublesome phrase.

[2] Arendt uses the term, *radical* evil, in *Origins of Totalitarianism*. See especially Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958), 459. The term, *absolute* evil, appears in the preface to *Totalitarianism* (Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, viii-ix). Arendt notes in a letter to Mary McCarthy that the Eichmann case did cause her to change her mind about the nature of evil and she uses the term, extreme evil. Moreover, in "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," reminiscent of Jaspers' bacteria analogy, she describes *extreme evil* as a rootlessness "where men skid only over the surface of events…without ever penetrating into whatever depths they may be capable of". Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, October 3, 1963. In C. Brightman (Ed). *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949-1975*. (152) New York: Harcourt & Brace.

[3] Though both Kant and Arendt dispute the existence of diabolical motives, Arendt also dismisses Kant's contention that self-love is the source of all evil. Rather she argues that extreme forms of evil may arise from humanly incomprehensible motives (Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, viii-ix.).