Eidos volume 8 no. 1 (2024)

A JOURNAL FOR PHILOSOPHY OF CULTURE

DOI:10.14394/eidos.jpc.2024.0006

Matthew Sharpe
Australian Catholic University, Australia
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8165-5775
matthew.sharpe@acu.edu.au

Arendt, Heidegger, Eichmann, and Thinking after the *Black Notebooks*

Review: Emmanuel Faye,
Arendt et Heidegger: Extermination nazie et destruction de la pensée,
(Albin Michel, 2016), 560 pages.

The appearance of Martin Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* (1932–38) in 2014 has posed profound questions to philosophers and political theorists. For a long time, in ways that the *Black Notebooks* have definitively undermined, Heidegger's National Socialism was widely considered as limited to 1933–34. His larger thought, at least after a proposed turning or *kehre* in the mid-1930s, was presented as insulated from, or even critical of, Nazism and antisemitism. The work of Emmanuel Faye (led by *Martin Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*[1]), has been at the forefront of scholarship

1) Emmanuel Faye, *Martin Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*, trans. Michael B. Smith, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, [French original, 2005]).

which has taken seriously the many questions raised by the ongoing publication of Heidegger's Nazi-era materials, since the 1990s. On one hand, can great philosophy be implicated in forms of openly ethnonationalist, even exterminist political movements, or does it necessarily involve normative commitments which abhor anything like Nazism? On the other hand, how should we understand a political movement like National Socialism, including its ideological dimensions, such that it could appeal to a thinker of the magnitude of the one-time *Führer-Rektor* of Freiburg University? Finally, what does publication of Heidegger's Nazi texts and positions, culminating in the *Black Notebooks*, say about its limitations, political dimensions, and the postwar reception history of Heidegger in the liberal nations.

Faye's 2016 study, *Arendt et Heidegger: Extermination nazie et destruction de la pensée* (*Arendt and Heidegger: The Nazi Extermination and the Destruction of Thought*)[2], carries forwards this critical research. The book turns from Heidegger to questions surrounding his influence on almost all subsequent "continental philosophy" or "theory," from existentialism to post-structuralism and its legatees 12). As Faye's title suggests, this long work does not simply continue the work of critically examining the now-available records of what Heidegger himself did and said (177–267). The book is animated by the thesis that Hannah Arendt's postwar reception of Heidegger, culminating in her 1969 piece on "Heidegger at Eighty,"[3] was especially important in the thinker's "comeback" in the liberal West after 1945: not as a National Socialist, but as an apolitical thinker, or one whose ideas could be drawn upon to critique Nazism, and re-found non-Marxian forms of leftism (12–13). Its opening and closing parts, over 400 of the book's 500 pages, hence carry out an extended reading of Hannah Arendt's work, spanning her reviews, letters, different editions of her books across multiple languages, and articles from the 1940s to "Heidegger at Eighty" and *Life of the Mind* in 1969.

Largely side-lining the personal history of the two thinkers' relationship, Faye is concerned with examining firstly, Arendt's changing readings of Heidegger's

2) Emmanuel Faye, *Arendt et Heidegger: Extermination nazie et destruction de la pensée* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2016). Due to frequency of citation, page references to this text are in brackets in the text.

3) Hannah Arendt, "Heidegger at Eighty," *The New Yorker,* October 1971, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1971/10/21/martin-heidegger-at-eighty/.

philosophy after 1946: this is the principal subject of Part III. Secondly, he contends that Arendt's postwar political philosophy is much more deeply and continuously influenced by Heidegger than many Arendtian commentators have credited, up to and including her controversial claims concerning the "thoughtlessness" of Adolf Eichmann (Parts III–IV). Thirdly, however, Faye contends from the start of the book that Arendt needs to be read as also far more deeply shaped by *milieu* of wider German *kulturkritik* in which she was educated – including thinkers such as Walter Frank, Oswald Spengler, and Ernst Jünger – than much of her reception has credited: the principal contention of Part I, which is carried through the entire study. Only if we recognize Arendt's conservative revolutionary and Heideggerian influences, *Arendt et Heidegger* contends, will we be able to situate her controversial stances with regards to the Shoah. Reading Arendt against this background, often omitted in Anglo-American reception, also allows us to comprehend the continuities between her notoriously controversial thesis concerning the "banality of evil," and Arendt's seemingly divergent claims concerning the camps as involving a "radical" or "absolute" evil, in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (475–81).

Faye recognizes that he is pushing against a good deal of Arendtian (as well as Heideggerian) commentary. The former can adduce as evidence of Arendt's independence from her master her concepts of plurality and natality, her criticisms of philosophy as such, her post-1950 identification as a political theorist, and her seeming commitment to a republican politics celebrating public action (12–13, 351–55, 383–84, 438–50). *Arendt et Heidegger* seeks to show that the distances that would seem to separate the theorist of the horrors of totalitarianism, and the defender of the "inner truth and greatness of the [National Socialist] movement" (210; cf. 194), are less significant than often critically supposed, and the proximities much deeper than these readings credit (12–13). We need above all to comprehend the discordant reality that the author of *Origins of Totalitarianism* could by 1969 laud her old teacher on his eightieth birthday, denying any lasting significance to his never-renounced "spiritual National Socialism;" and this, despite her being aware (as Faye documents) of rumors concerning Heidegger's "rabid (*engragierten*) antisemitism" as early as 1932 (50–51), and wrestling in the immediate postwar years with disgust at his "sensational" support for National Socialism in the *Machtergriefung* (297, 297–303).

Faye's thesis in *Arendt et Heidegger* is "that Arendt's interpretation of National Socialism and the fact of exonerating Heidegger of all responsibility [for his political stance] are connected" (13). But to understand this connection, scholars need to face, without flinching, the darkest and most controversial materials in these authors, concerning Nazism and the extermination of European Jewry. As Faye's subtitle flags, we need also to question the connection of Arendt's developing stances on these subjects to her embrace, after 1948, of Heidegger's project of "destroying" the putative bases of Western philosophy to make way for a new, post-metaphysical "thinking," and what this *Denken* could mean (217–40, 317–18, 458–66).

* * *

The opening chapter of the book concerns Arendt's September 1946 review, "The Image of Hell,"[4] of two of the earliest postwar books on Nazism, the *Black Book: The Nazi Crime against the Jewish People* compiled by the Jewish World Congress, and Max Weinrich's, *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes against the Jewish People.* Arendt's respective responses to these works, Faye contends, point the way first to her developing claims concerning Nazism and the Shoah,and secondly, to her apologetics for Heidegger, from the time of reading the latter's 1948 "Letter on Humanism" (308–26).

> Arendt was farar from sympathetic to the Jewish World Congress' project of compiling a dossier of all then-available materials concerning the Shoah to assist the Nuremberg trials. She presents the *Black Book* as a contentiously "political" document (23–24).[5] She criticizes its predominantly factual, historical focus on Nazi actions, as unable to arrive at their significance, and in any case somehow unsuitable for the document's alleged "political" ends. More than this, Arendt decries not only the "monstrous

4) Hannah Arendt, "Image of Hell," *Commentary* 2, no. 3 (Sep. 1946): 291–95. Cited here from https://www.commentary.org/articles/hannah-arendt/the-black-book-the-nazi-crime-against-the-jewish-people-and-hitlers-professors-by-max-weinreich/, last accessed 2 Oct. 2023.

5) Ibid.

> equality" with which the victims were led to die in the "death factories,"[6] she also claims that "equally deformed and beyond the reach of human justice is the innocence of those who died in this equality," leaving readers to wonder how innocence could be "monstrous"[7] Indeed, Arendt extraordinarily claims that in the camps, an equivalence or reversibility presided over both victims and executioners, with the latter supposedly being equally subject to falling victim to the facilities' operations: "Once inside the death factories, everything became an accident completely beyond control of those who did the suffering and those who inflicted it. And in more than one case, those who inflicted the suffering one day became the sufferers the next."[8]

This is a position without evident factual bases concerning the SS and camp guards, which unsettlingly approximates to contemporary apologetic claims made by surviving National Socialists concerning Nazi crimes.[9] More unexpected still for many readers will be Arendt's 1948 denunciation, in her "Preface" to *Sech Essays* devoted to Karl Jaspers, of the "blind hatred" of the Jews towards the Germans, because of the "gas chambers." Arendt claims that, in contrast to the 1935 Nuremberg laws, Auschwitz was not the product of "banal hostility [sic.]" of Germans towards the Jews. It was a "deluge" like that of the biblical Noah,which could befall any people at any time – and which the Biblical analogy could suggest was a kind of just punishment. The only "hatred" to be spoken of, or that Arendt speaks of, is on the side of the victims, not the executioners.[10]

---

6) Ibid.

7) Ibid.

8) Ibid.

9) See Daniel Morat, "No Inner Remigration: Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger, and the Early Federal Republic of Germany," *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 3 (2012): 661–79; Jeffrey K. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat, 1943–1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 297–320; Marcus M. Payk, "A Post-Liberal Order? Hans Zehrer and Conservative Consensus Building in 1950s West Germany," *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 3 (2012): 681–98.

10) Hannah Arendt, "Hommage à Karl Jaspers," *La philosophie de l'existence et autres essais* (Paris: Payot, 2000), 151–55; cf. Emmanuel Faye, "Arendt, Heidegger et le 'déluge' d'Auschwitz," *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* 207, no. 2 (2017): 97–114.

Faced with these and other comments Faye cites, it becomes difficult not to concede the accuracy of critics of Arendt who have accused her of having internalized the endemic antisemitism of the German intelligentsia of the Weimar era (54, 56, 64–68). Faye's account of Arendt's thought in *Arendt et Heidegger* is however historically nuanced. The book is especially attentive to the changes in Arendt's opinions on Nazism, antisemitism, philosophy, and Heidegger. Faye thus draws attention to Arendt's early work on German romanticism, in figures such as Friedrich von Gentz, Adam Müller, and Rahel Varnhagen (53–64). In her 1930 article on "Antisemitism," the prominence of German antisemitism is tied to the continuing political influence of the aristocratic Jünker class and its scorn for the middle classes, as well as to the romantic intelligentsia's rebellion against modernization: "the romantic theory of the State furnished the nourishing soil of all antisemitic ideology" (70). This romanticism, Arendt observed – in ways which might have, as Faye identifies, led her to be highly critical of her master's Nazism – was limited to reproducing variations on a small number of static oppositions, such as that between peoples who are "rooted" in tradition, heritage, place, or spirit and those (led by the Jews), who are "rootless," and attracted to "abstract" rational modes of life and conduct, etc. (72–73).

Between the end of the 1930s and 1951, the appearance of the first English-language edition of *Origins*, Faye charts a deep "reversal in the Arendtian conception of antisemitism" (71). Arendt now finds mistaken all claims that "accuse political romanticism of having invented racial thought," as she had herself done (72). Her genealogy of the antisemitism informing Nazi exterminism includes almost no German authors. It focuses instead on figures such as Gobineau, the French Dreyfus affair, and European imperialism in non-European territories (90–109). As in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, she critiques the view that Nazi policies against Jews were the continuation of "eternal antisemitism," which would obviate "all specific responsibility on the part of Jews" (81, 111). With recourse to Carl Schmitt's thought, including the 1933 edition of *Der Begriff des Politischen* (78–79), she points instead to the "unpolitical" status of the exilic Jewish communities of the *Galut*, without a nation-State. Arendt also concedes "a partial truth" to antisemitic denunciations of the "pride," "dangerously close to its racial perversion," of the biblical idea of Jewish election as God's people (111–12).

Far from being any longer associated, as in 1930, with romantic longings for a homogenized people rooted in a homeland, *völkisch* racism is slated in *Origins* to "the

metaphysical refusal of all roots." (111)And this, all in an account, as Faye notes, which refers neither to *völkisch* authors themselves, nor to available critical works on Nazi thinking like Aurel Kolnai's monumental *War against the West* of 1938, which documents Nazi ideology with encyclopedic scope (135–38). The rise of National Socialist totalitarianism in Germany – now more closely identified with Stalinist Russia than in 1946 (47) – is instead associated with the advent of urbanized populations in many modern societies. It is a matter of "the emergence of the masses at the very heart of capitalist organisation" whose discernment Arendt credits to the "historical pessimism" of Burkhardt and Spengler (93). These premises form the bases for Arendt's famous claims concerning the "total domination" in the camps, rendering human beings "superfluous," in effective "laboratories" for "transforming human nature" (151). By what Faye shows is selective reference to David Rossuet – screening out the former's documentation of resistance within Buchenwald (149–51) – Arendt suppresses the manifold differences between the Soviet gulags, Nazi concentration camps, and the *Vernichtungslager*: the latter of which were of course dedicated not to "transforming human nature," but "liquidating millions of Jews" on arrival (154). Facilities such as Sobibor, Chełmno, Belzec, or Treblinka did not, per Arendt and Heidegger, "manufacture corpses" (34, 199, 513). They gassed victims, then systematically eliminated their corpses by fire, to leave no trace (199). Strikingly, we see Arendt also repeating in the postscript to the 1951 edition of *Origins* (although not, we note, in later editions) the extraordinary 1946 claim that in the camps "the oppressors of today could become the victims of tomorrow," united in "a monstrous equality without humanity or fraternity"[11] (156 and 154).

Relative to documented understandings of the operations of these camps, Faye has reason to see here "a loss of historical reality to the benefit of a hallucinatory vision" (158). Arendt's claim is now that all species of totalitarianism involve the "attempt to render human beings superfluous"[12] (157), rather than in the Nazi's case, to eliminate "racial enemies" in pursuit of a rooted ethnonational *Gemeinschaft*. The force of this claim is to resituate Nazism, not as an avowed, militant revolt against the "ideas of 1789" – including that of "human dignity," which Arendt will herself in

11) Hannah Arendt, *Les origines du totalitarisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 862.

12) Ibid.

1951 dismiss as “the most arrogant [myth] that we have invented in all of history”[13] (163 and 283) – but as a revelatory culmination of the putative alienating logics of mass societies. The experience of those in the camps allegedly would “correspond most exactly to the experiences which the modern masses have of their own superfluity in an overpopulated world and of the absence of meaning in this same world”[14] (158 and 341). These claims have not only shaped Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* series, and other “postmodern” thinking (367–68 and 371–72). Before that, as Faye shows, they echo Heidegger’s infamous conception of the Shoah as akin to “mechanised agriculture” in his 1949 Bremen lecture (199), and the claims that the victims of the camps did not die in a fully human manner, but rather “perished” as animals might (200–201).[15]

* * *

Arendt’s claim that totalitarian regimes were born of an unlikely alliance between elements amongst elites and the mob[16] might seem to position her especially well to push against assessments of National Socialism as solely a vulgar demagoguery without appeal to intellectuals. Faye shows that, in her 1946 comments on Weinreich’s *Hitler’s Professors*, the genesis of what will become the apology for Heidegger as “the secret king . . . in the realm of thinking” can be seen (16, 444–48, 481). Arendt conditionally praises Weinrich’s book, for showing the disturbing extent of academic buy-in to the development of exterminist Nazi antisemitism. She then however develops a distinction absent from Weinrich, between intellectuals of real significance – Heidegger is named – and the “charlatans” who, alone, would have been implicated in the regime’s criminal developments (41–42).[17]

As Faye examines at length in Part III of *Arendt et Heidegger*, Arendt at the same time as “Image of Hell” was writing critically on her teacher in “What is Existenz

13) Ibid., 863.

14) Faye cites here from the German text of *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*.

15) Martin Heidegger, *Bremen und Freiburger Vorträge*, 79, ed. Paetra Jaegar (Francfort-am-Main, 1994), 27 and 56.

16) Arendt, *Origines*, 637–56.

17) Arendt, “Image of Hell.”

Philosophy."[18] Drawing on theological sources, the Arendt of 1946 saw *Sein und Zeit*'s seeming stress on the isolated individual, contrasted to the impersonal "One" or "They" of the "public," as elevating a deracinated "I" to the place formerly occupied by God, in a way whose flipside could only be nihilistic "destruction" (287–91). Heidegger's attempts, as she styles them, to reground this rootless *Selbstischkeit* (291–92) in "earth" or "*Volk*" – she does not specify which texts she is responding to – are on the other hand dismissed as trucking in "mythologising non-concepts" (294).

Just so, in "Image in Hell," Arendt asserts that Heidegger's "enthusiasm for the Third Reich was equaled only by his stupefying ignorance of what he was talking about," a claim which she will echo in 1969 (39). Unlike in the later text, Arendt in "Image of Hell" still acknowledges the role played by Heidegger's political activism in "rendering Nazism respectable" during the *Machtergriefung* (39). However, she contrasts this passing role with that of "scholars" whose docile responsiveness to the changing demands of the leaders she rightly deplores. Then there are figures such as the "charlatan" Alfred Baeumler who "received all of the honors" (39)[19] – even though Heidegger himself continued to correspond with Baeumler through the Third Reich on terms of respect (41) and Arendt would herself cite him as an authority on Kant as late as *The Life of the Mind* (42). Indeed, in ways which clearly point forwards to the Eichmann book (and again defy Weinreich's analyses), Arendt already asserts that "the techniques and ideas which lead to the death factories" did not come from intellectuals: "the ideas came from politicians who took power-politics seriously, and the techniques came from modem mob-men who were not afraid of consistency" (47).[20]

When then, and why, would this still-qualified apology for Heidegger pass over into a more unqualified exoneration of her teacher? Faye's meticulous examination of Arendt's writings and correspondence between 1946–58 allows him to pinpoint the decisive turning point. This came not in the reunion of the former lovers in early 1950, but between "Image of Hell" and Arendt's refusal of Dolf Sternberger's invitation to write a critical review of Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" in mid-1949 (313–18).

18) Hannah Arendt, "What is Existenz Philosophy?" *Partisan Review* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1946): 34–56.

19) Ibid.

20) Ibid.

Probably due to her 1946 critique of her former teacher, Sternberger anticipated that Arendt would sympathize with his assessment of Heidegger's project of "destroying" metaphysics leading back to Plato and Aristotle, as ushering in a new "chiliasm": an "explosion of all determinations . . . as well as of human existence itself" (315, 311–12). Arendt responded however by clarifying that she "no longer" was "frightened" by Heidegger's project of overcoming "occidental thought," which has "become a prison which Heidegger violently escapes" in a way which she confesses "[has not] failed to impress me" (317). Whilst she remained angry at Heidegger, she told Sternberger, this was not for philosophical reasons, nor for his support of Nazism, but because of his conduct towards the philosopher, Edmund Husserl (319).

It is this same sponsorship of Heidegger's later deconstruction of metaphysics in the "history of Being" that Arendt will appeal to at the end of the volume of *Life of the Mind* on "Thinking," nearly contemporary with "Heidegger at Eighty." Herein, she places herself in the ranks of "those who, for some years already, have attempted to dismantle metaphysics and philosophy, with all of its categories, such as we know them, since their beginnings in Greece" (458).[21] After the reconciliation in February 1950, Arendt would resume correspondence with Heidegger, and the exchanging of texts (334–40). Faye shows how her interest in "thinking," recorded in her notebooks from as early as June 1950, is contemporary with her again reading (and on some occasions, auditing) Heidegger's seminars. These notably included "What is called 'thinking'?" of 1952 (451–53, 455–56), four axiomatic propositions of which she includes as her epigraph to the "Introduction" of *Life of the Mind* (451).[22] Underscoring the link between this concern for thinking, shaped by Heidegger, and her 1963 book on Eichmann, it is in the same "Introduction" that Arendt reports that her interest in thinking was connected to her attendance at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in early 1961.[23]

Relative to Arendt's criticism of Heidegger in 1946, Faye contends that Arendt's position undergoes certain decisive shifts by 1951, as per figure 1.

---

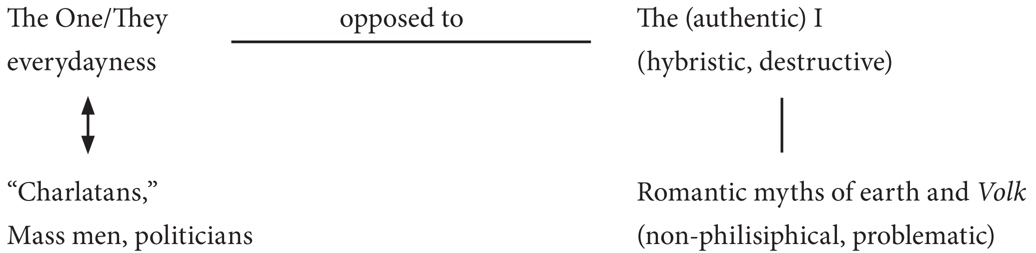
21) Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969), 212.

22) Ibid., 1.

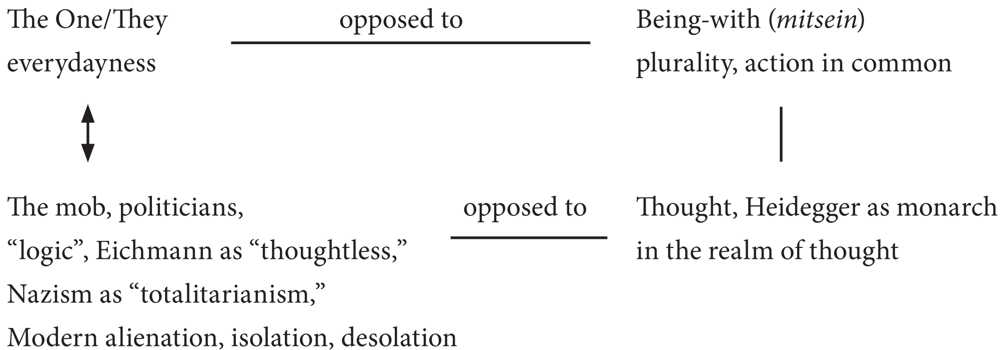
23) Ibid., 2–3.

Figure 1: shifts between the Arendt of 1946 and after 1951

Arendt's Heidegger of 1946, relative to Nazism



Arendt's Heidegger after 1951, relative to Nazism



In the 1946 configuration, the earlier Heidegger's alleged teaching of individual authenticity – which Faye notably contests, with reference to *Sein und Zeit* §74 (293–97) – is coded negatively. By the time of Arendt's September 1954 presentation to the American Political Science Association ("Recent Developments in Foreign Political Thought"), Heidegger's conception of "being-with," largely absent from her earlier account, has become positively valorized (349–55). Heidegger is now praised for assigning "a significance to the structures of everyday life which are totally incomprehensible if man is not at base understood as a 'being-together' with others" (355). All critical reference to his romanticization of earth and *Volk*, as well as to his National Socialism, has meanwhile disappeared.

Arendt also assigns a specific significance to Heidegger's later propensity to speak no longer of *dasein*, in the singular, but of "mortals," in the plural (355). On this basis, Faye contests those commentators such as Dana Villa and Jeffrey A. Barash who

see in Arendt's valorization in *The Human Condition* of a pluralized realm of public action as evidence of her break with her master, and of a democratic terminus for her thinking. For Faye, the latter text espouses a kind of heroic aristocratism based on the slave-owning *poleis* of the ancient Greeks (395–408, 511–12). Arendt's "plurality" is restricted to those who can afford to scorn all economic considerations in their pursuit of political renown (391–94): economic considerations which Arendt moreover positions, in the defining categories of the work, as bound to the realm of labor, the reproduction of life, and biological necessity (387–92, 396–98, 512–13). For Faye, Arendt's conceptions of action and of natality (the latter, avowedly indebted to another thinker who was a National Socialist, Arnold Gehlen (3, 74–77)), remain shaped by the same anti-modernist coordinates informing her mentor's political stance – although, and this should be stressed, he *in no way* equates her politics with the exterminist, ethnocentric positions expressed by Heidegger (536, 241–62, 402–403).

* * *

Faye's account of Arendt's reading of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in the final part of *Arendt et Heidegger* is indebted to historians led by David Cesarini and Bethina Stagneth (475–92). As such, it is informed by today's knowledge of Eichmann's statements in Argentina, to the Dutch Nazi journalist Willem Sassen, as against his self-presentation at Jerusalem on trial in the State of Israel (477–78). The Argentine materials attest that Arendt's would-be "mindless," even motive-less bureaucrat considered himself a National Socialist "fanatic" struggling for "the freedom of my blood" (478) to eliminate the *Volk's* racial enemies, who would have been happier if all 10.3 million European Jews had been murdered (477–78). Faye's examination of Eichmann's performance at the trial, and the events surrounding Eichmann's career, is exacting, and its documentation formidable (475–92, 530–32).

Given his wider subject in the work, Faye however joins this account of Arendt's "banalized" Eichmann with a critique of her 1969 eulogy for "Heidegger at Eighty," and her connected positioning of Heidegger in *Life of the Mind* (436–57). The former National Socialist would come by the late 1960s for Arendt to figure as nothing less than the "thoughtful" counter to a Nazism now represented by Eichmann, peopled by ordinary, more or less "thoughtless" men and women,[24] and operationalizing

24) Ibid.

not an irrationalist, chiliastic ideology enthusiastically supported by much of the German intelligentsia, but the mindless "consistency" or "logic" allegedly characterizing modern, world-alienated rationality (333–46). For the last Arendt, picking up motifs already suggested in "Image in Hell," Heidegger's enthusiastic, but passing embrace of Nazism was testimony only to the great thinker's unworldly distance from political things (436–50). This was an episode comparable to Plato's failed attempts to edify Dionysius, the dictator of Syracuse (447), or even more, to Thales being so preoccupied with his contemplative pursuits as to fall involuntarily down a well, amusing a Thracian maid (445–46).

* * *

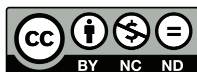
Heidegger's own positions concerning his "spiritual National Socialism," the Jews, and the Shoah in the *Black Notebooks* are the subject of the central part of Faye's *Arendt et Heidegger* (177–216, 241–66). Faye's juxtaposition of this dark material, with his analyses of Arendt's post-1946 interpretations alike of her teacher, and of Nazism through the "thoughtless" Eichmann, show the fundamental inaccuracy of Arendt's positions on these subjects (535–36). Nevertheless, the influence of her work in Anglophone political science, and continental philosophy, has been far-reaching. The lineage between her apologetic diminishing of Heidegger's Nazism, after her reading of "Letter on Humanism," and later post-structuralist positions on this subject are also clear[25]: the positions that Heidegger's passing Nazism could be associated, if anything, only with his earlier thinking, that Nazism was still to "humanistic," and that Heidegger's later thinking was unpolitical, or capable of providing a deep basis for opposition to fascism – and in any case, something as refined as Heidegger's thinking could have no association with a vulgar phenomenon like Hitlerism (535–36).

In his conclusion, Faye assigns especial importance to Arendt's seemingly Kantian notion of "radical evil," which she introduces in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, in explaining why commentators have tended to minimize the extent of her proximities to Heidegger (511). However, Faye points out, Arendt's use of this term "radical evil" is fundamentally different from Kant's. In Arendt, it names the operations "of a system where all men, in the same way, become superfluous" (168). In fact, the expe-

25) See Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *Heidegger and Modernity*, trans. Franklin Philip (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

rience which Arendt seemingly assigns both to victims and executioners in the camps, and which she argues “breaks all norms known to us,” rather than being undergirded by Kant’s commitment to a universalizable moral law (168). As we have seen, Faye’s contention is that this notion of a radical or “absolute evil” (161) in Arendt is more indebted to conservative revolutionary sources, led by Heidegger’s critique of the “rootlessness” of modern humanity (511). This interpretation, notably, removes the seeming inconsistency between Arendt’s 1950s idea and her account of Eichmann’s “banality”: it was for Arendt the banality of modern life, embodied in this supposedly motive-less clerk, which worked to make masses profoundly superfluous, able to kill and be killed “like cattle,” in the “radical evil” which the Shoah epitomized (472–86).

To the extent that Faye’s analyses have cogency – and of course, many Arendtian commentators will dispute his positions – *Arendt et Heidegger* poses many questions about how texts by Heidegger and Arendt have been received, outside of the milieu in which they were shaped. Faye’s concern here is how, in contrast to the openly bellicose sayings in Heidegger, Arendt’s work has transmitted to readers “positions which in part borrow their concepts and their pretended revolutionary potential from authors of the German extreme right of the 1930s, from Heidegger to Gehlen and Schmitt” (517). To the extent that this is so, the democratic potentials of these readers’ theorizing – now turned away from the labor-centerd ideas of the Marxian tradition, as well as from liberal ideas of scientific progress and universalizable human rights – is deeply attenuated. Indeed, the history of Heidegger’s invocation as a source of forms of Leftism, so brutally contravened by the *Black Notebooks*, would seemingly attest to an inability in some quarters to distinguish the ideas of the radical Left from those of the radical Right. What Faye’s book hence would call for is what it itself embodies: a newly critical return to thinkers influenced by Heidegger; awake to the historical traditions, contexts, and debates, that shaped their philosophical commitments (12–13, 517–19), as well as to the unsettling history of intellectuals’ complicity in Nazism and other forms of totalitarianism.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.