



## Arendt's Radical Good and the Banality of Evil Echoes of Scholem and Jaspers in Margarethe von Trotta's *Hannah Arendt*

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**Abstract:** Margarethe von Trotta's 2012 film *Hannah Arendt* suggests that for Arendt the signal problem with Adolf Eichmann had to do with a lack of thinking (the same problem Martin Heidegger diagnoses repeatedly in his book *What is Called Thinking*). For Heidegger, we are "still" not thinking. For Arendt, what is characteristic of Eichmann is that he does not think, meaning that he does not think as Aristotle defines thinking, namely as characteristic of the human qua human, here conceiving thinking as an inherently philosophical project that is more than practical but always contemplative (i.e., thinking about thinking). Is Eichmann monstrously evil, as many commentators are keen to insist – or does his all-too-typically unthinking nature attest instead, as Arendt observed, to the banality of evil? Karl Jaspers and Arendt would go beyond the lonely business of thought (as Heidegger spoke of the thinker) to argue that whatever thinking can be, it is inherently political and can only be done with other human beings in community or as both Arendt and Jaspers spoke of the formation of a world.

**Keywords:** Arendt, Hannah; von Trotta, Margarethe; Sebald, Winfried Georg; Jonas, Hans; Heidegger, Martin; *Eichmann in Jerusalem*; banality; thinking; film and philosophy.

If I had known this would happen,  
I probably would have done precisely  
what I did do.<sup>1</sup>

Hannah Arendt

### Interiors

Margarethe von Trotta's 2013 film *Hannah Arendt*, starring Barbara Sukowa, manages to raise socio-political questions (and doing this is quite something for any film) as well as (and this is even more difficult) specific philosophical questions by exploring the

still contentious context of Arendt's 1963 *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.<sup>2</sup> The film, as most reviews point to this, offers a reading of Arendt's views as articulated in the subtitle of her Eichmann book: *A Report on the Banality of Evil*. At the same time, having noted this achievement, the film also omits (in the interest of public absorbability, so one must assume) all kinds of detail while eliding the names of key individuals that should have been included as Arendt's correspondence with these same individuals served as sources for the film's dialogue,

<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, Karl Jaspers, *Correspondence 1926-1969*, eds. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, trans. Robert and Rita Kimber, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1992, p. 511. [Henceforth cited as C]

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, trans. Amos Elon, New York: Viking, 1963. Originally published serially as "Eichmann in Jerusalem-I," *The New Yorker*, February 16, 1963; "II – Eichmann in Jerusalem," February 23, 1963ff.

namely the exchange of letters between Arendt and Gershom Scholem<sup>3</sup> as well as the correspondence between Arendt and Karl Jaspers).<sup>4</sup>

In what follows I shall not concentrate on an analysis of the film's representation of Arendt's and Heidegger's friendship (which began as a love affair when the then 18 year old Arendt was Heidegger's student in Marburg) as Margarethe von Trotta depicts this in vignettes, and so by way of a series of flashbacks, including a scene with Heidegger on his knees, drawn from what Arendt tells Hans Jonas about Heidegger's approach to her and its significance for her. But the scene itself hardly does justice even to Jonas' retelling of Arendt's confidence and one can only suppose that the vignette was compressed in the interest of public consumption.

The flashbacks to Heidegger and Arendt's first encounter can also seem to have an inevitably caricaturish quality which may be attributed to the casting of Klaus Pohl to play the 35 year old "young" Heidegger, as well as the "old" Heidegger (it is common, even if inaccurate, to suppose that men do not change that much as they age). But the 60 year old Pohl needed a good deal of make-up (complete with *Death in Venice* style, shoe-black hair) and this, perhaps more than anything particular to the flashback device as such, may have lent the film's "younger" Heidegger a more than ordinarily lurid look by contrast with the in-fact "young Arendt," played by the-then 26 year old Friederike Becht. Still, and as von Trotta underlines, her film precluded anything more than fleeting representations of the two, as the director's design of her film foregrounded the contrast between Heidegger and Arendt: "They are adversaries in the film. She is the one who is thinking, he is the one who is not thinking, who falls into the trap of the Nazi Party. It's not stupidity, but thoughtlessness."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Gershom Scholem, Hannah Arendt, *Hannah Arendt/ Gershom Scholem Der Briefwechsel*, eds. Marie Luise Knott and David Heredia, Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2010. [Henceforth cited as B]

<sup>4</sup> See in English, Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Correspondence 1926-1969*, trans. Robert and Rita Kimmer, New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Margarethe von Trotta, Interview with Graham Fuller: "Q&A: Margarethe von Trotta on Filming Hannah Arendt's Public Ordeal," *Blouin Artinfo*, 30/05/13. [Henceforth cited as MTF] As von Trotta began by noting, there is an irony to this, just because the love

The socio-political has been much discussed in the reviews,<sup>6</sup> both laudatory and damning and to be sure, even those accounts predisposed to praise the film duly criticize Arendt on the matter of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, getting in a few reservations, of the "Hannah Arendt was right about x but wrong about y" variety.

The film itself is a series of tableaux or evocative

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angle—any love angle, can be expected to sell films: "If Pam and I had said, at the beginning, that we were going to make a film about the [notional] love story between Eichmann and Hannah Arendt, we would have got the financing for the film much more quickly than we did! Of course, we didn't want to make a love story about Hannah and Martin—though it would have been more affecting for many people." Of course and in addition to the account by Elzbieta Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, others too, some more theoretically minded than others, have explored this relationship, including Daniel Maier-Katin, *Stranger from Abroad: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness*, New York: Norton, 2010 [henceforth cited as SA]; see my review: Babette Babich, "Daniel Maier-Katin, *Stranger from Abroad: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness*. NY: Norton, 2010," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 29/4 (Summer 2011), 189-91. [Henceforth, cited as DMK]

<sup>6</sup> Among the many reviews, it is worth noting the review that appears in *The New Yorker*, as this might be seen as echoing the film's highlighting of the publication career of Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as a book that began as a "Reporter at Large's" serial correspondence for the iconic *New Yorker Magazine*, namely Richard Brody's faintly laudatory review, "Hannah Arendt" and the Glorification of Thinking, reviewing "Hannah Arendt (director: Margarethe von Trotta; 2013)," *The New Yorker* (May 31, 2013). Brody who encapsulates von Trotta's film as a "narrow-bore bio-pic," in the *New Yorker* section of short reviews, "The Film File." See by contrast, highlighting the question of evil as well as the elusive quality of thinking for Arendt, Roger Berkowitz's assessment: "Lonely Thinking: Hannah Arendt on Film," *The Paris Review* 30 (May 2013). See too, Mark Lilla who ostensibly raises the tone if not the stakes (Lilla leaves no doubt about the stakes as he begins by quoting Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*), in his contribution, "Arendt & Eichmann: The New Truth" in the *New York Review of Books* (November 21, 2013), in which Lilla discusses von Trotta's film along with Martin Wiebel's collection, *Hannah Arendt: Ihr Denken veränderte die Welt*, Munich: Piper, 2013, and there are many others.

interiors, beautifully theatrical. Von Trotta's film is also a film of interiority, beautifully understated. In consequence the actors do an enormous amount of work on and for the film, especially Barbara Sukowa as Arendt<sup>7</sup> but also Axel Milberg who plays her husband Heinrich Blücher as a man with ongoing affairs (we get several tableaux introducing these, *cinema verité* style, softened by the clear affection with which Millberg's Blücher treats his wife), an edgy and well cast Janet McTeer as Mary McCarthy as well as Nicholas Woodeson as William Shawn and Ulrich Noethen—who plays Hans Jonas to perfection—and Michael Degen as Kurt Blumenfeld. The actors' achievement, especially Sukowa's but also Milberg's, has been rightly noted in several reviews and along with the director's mastery, the actors' collective excellence makes this film worth watching, if what makes the film remarkable is its heretofore unique representation of the complicatedly "academic" life, as Arendt wrote, "of the mind."

The majority of comments have observed, as I will also do, the sheer intensity or force of the audience reaction to the film, especially in New York City itself—where the film seems to elicit as much response today as *The New Yorker* magazine series and Eichmann book did decades ago. To this extent, the film bears important witness to the extent to which Arendt's political thinking retains its provocative power.

In all the reactions to Arendt, including as shall be noted below the strong reactions to her character,

<sup>7</sup> Anthony O. Scott foregrounds Sukowa's excellence (nothing like a comparison with Meryl Streep), "How It Looks to Think: Watch Her—'Hannah Arendt,' with Barbara Sukowa and Janet McTeer," featured as "Critic's Pick," *The New York Times*, May 28, 2013 [Hereafter cited as *HLT*]. And yet even superlatives, as in the case of Thomas Assheuer's politically correct review in *Die Zeit* can be turned around, when Assheuer concludes his review with the qualified encomium: "Yet Barbara Sukowa plays the character so convincingly, that her arguments reliably merge with the aura of her personality, which means: Arendt is always right, for if one so courageously resists the witch hunt, such a one must have the truth on her side." [Translated by the author.] Thomas Assheuer, "Ist das Böse wirklich banal? Die Filmregisseurin Margarethe von Trotta huldigt der Philosophin Hannah Arendt—und verschleiert ihre Irrtümer," *Die Zeit* (10 February 2013). And in a gentler spirit, to be sure, the son of the late Susan Sontag, David Rieff in his review "Hannah and Her Admirers," *The Nation* (November 19, 2013), highlights Sukowa's moral sensibility even above her acting.

i.e., her perceived arrogance, as to Eichmann, and even Heidegger, few responses have attended to what is for me the striking parallel that might be made between Germany and Israel in von Trotta's syncretistic historical film. Arendt herself suggests some of this when she writes to Jaspers just before Christmas Eve, 1960,<sup>8</sup> anticipating the possible directions the Eichmann process might be expected to take. Where Jaspers and Blücher (reduced to Blücher alone in von Trotta's film) express concerns about "the legal basis of the trial," Arendt herself was less pessimistic, even granting as she wrote to Jaspers, that "Eichmann was kidnapped, just plain abducted and hauled off" (C 414), a justifying case could be made for it, so Arendt argued, listing three counter-arguments.<sup>9</sup> But nonetheless she did feel uneasy; as she went on to write:

It's a pretty sure bet that there'll be an effort to show Israeli youth and (worse yet) the whole world certain things. Among others, that Jews who aren't Israelis will wind up in situations where they'll let themselves be slaughtered like sheep. Also: that the Arabs were hand in glove with the Nazis. [C 416]

Arendt's sensibility to the German background presence in Israel is also marked. Thus she writes to Jaspers from Jerusalem on 13 April 1961 to praise Moshe Landau, the "chief justice" as "superb," noting that "all three of the Judges are German Jews," and describing the "comedy of speaking Hebrew when everyone involved knows German and thinks in German" (C 434).<sup>10</sup> Here by taking this observation to a further parallel between Israel and Germany, I risk treading on dangerous ground and with all the associations that haunt Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, I am reminded of the arch tone of Arendt's letter to Karl Jaspers where she takes the opportunity to

<sup>8</sup> The letter is sent with a coda on Christmas Eve before going out for a holiday dinner.

<sup>9</sup> What Arendt finds "troublesome" however "is how the Israelis keep stressing that Eichmann 'voluntarily' agreed to go to Israel and appear before a court there. Something is obviously not right there. (Torture? Threats? God knows what they did.)" [C 416].

<sup>10</sup> Arendt sums up this impression in a cascade of identifying characterizations: "On top, the judges, the best of German Jewry. Below them, the prosecuting attorneys, Galicians, but still Europeans. Everything is organized by a police force that gives me the creeps, speaks only Hebrew, and looks Arabic. Some downright brutal types among them. They would obey any order" (C 435).

relate Blücher's acerbic comment: "If the Jews insist on becoming a nation like every other nation, why for God's sake do they insist on becoming like the Germans?" (C 118)<sup>11</sup> – only to add that "there is some truth" to Blücher's rhetorical question. A more comprehensive reading would set Blücher's remark and Arendt's reflection into the circumstantial context of the long-term debate between Arendt and Jaspers (and of course an internal debate for Arendt herself) on the question of whether German Jews were to be accounted first as Germans or, first, and foremost, as Jews, a reflection that also echoes in her letters to Scholem.<sup>12</sup>

Daniel Maier-Katkin's monograph on Hannah Arendt's relationship to Heidegger cites complicated remarks on this matter of German-ness and Jewishness along with other excerpts from Arendt's correspondence with Jaspers so as to paint a subtly differentiated picture of what can only be an extremely sensitive issue as we are so often permitted only a pro or con on any given view, even the question of one person's love for another. Reflecting on the film, von Trotta notes Arendt's complex reply to her niece who asked her at the end of her life about the paradoxical and seemingly contradictory character of her love for Heidegger, "There are things that are bigger than a human being" (MTF).

Even more elusively than love-affairs and gossip (and this matters for the Arendt who defined herself as a political thinker above all) we have little sense that in addition to Arendt herself, condemning in her letter to Jaspers the "acts of terrorism by Jewish groups" (SA 150) to which I have already referred was no isolated instance but reflected views also held by – as Maier-Katkin emphasizes and as is often forgotten – other prominent New York City area Jewish intellectuals including the philosopher Sidney Hook as well as the physicist Albert Einstein likewise held complicated

views on Zionism.

But it is not enough to bring in the Princeton genius Albert Einstein and the Columbia University Professor, Sidney Hook, because the problem in the case of Arendt went far beyond her views alone.

Arendt's point is the same point made to a different end and with a different sensibility with regard to the constitutional point that was emphasized by my friend Jacob Taubes writing on the significance and role of Carl Schmitt for the grounding of the state of Israel in his *The Political Theology of Paul*,<sup>13</sup> with all the "I lived through this" matter-of-fact consciousness characterizing one of his most important books that also happens to be in its substance, a political theological study of political theological events. Taubes' Schmitt correspondence is translated into English,<sup>14</sup> but his *The Political Theology of Paul* is about St. Paul's even older political letter, and as some suggest offered a direct inspiration for Agamben's

<sup>13</sup> I refer here to Taubes' account of the role played by Schmitt's *Verfassungslehre* which, as Taubes tells it, was summoned into Israel for the use of Pinchas Rosen in drafting the Constitution of the then-new State of Israel. A young recipient in 1948 of the Warburg Prize, Taubes found himself in Jerusalem during the division of the city, and was directed (with a nice remark on the perfect preservation of the German Ordinarius in Israel) to read seventeenth century philosophy, thus Descartes and thereby the law. Heading to the library to check an excursus on notion of law by the Nazi and Catholic Jurist, Carl Schmitt, Taubes reports an all-too familiarly academic encounter between scholar and librarian: "Na, der guckt mich an, der Beamte, mit Genuß und Sadismus, ha, das dauer drei Monate bis so'n Zettel bearbeitet wird." Even the head librarian told the same story, before Taubes received a call only three weeks later "Kommen Sie, das Buch ist da!" See Jacob Taubes, *Die politische Theologie des Paulus: Vorträge gehalten an der Forschungsstätte der evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft in Heidelberg, 23-27 Februar 1987*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink 1995, pp. 133-35, here p. 134. In the same locus, to be sure. Taubes emphasizes that the constitution of Israel did not then yet exist, adding (a wonderful reflection on incommensurability) that there will never be such.

<sup>14</sup> Jacob Taubes, *To Carl Schmitt: Letters and Reflections*, trans. Keith Tribe, New York: Columbia, 2013. The cover of the book features a folded letter although Taubes, as I know from having some of these and from having seen some of his notes to Schmitt, was also in the habit of writing full across the back of postcards and posting these enclosed in an envelope.

<sup>11</sup> This correspondence between Arendt and Jaspers is cited in Daniel Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad*, New York: W.W. Norton 2010, pp. 149-50. See also, Annette Vowinckel, *Geschichtsbegriff und Historisches Denken bei Hannah Arendt*, Cologne: Böhlau 2001, esp. pp. 135ff [henceforth cited as *GHD*] but see too Steven E. Aschheim, "Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers: Friendship, Catastrophe and the Possibilities of German-Jewish Dialogue," in Steven E. Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe. German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and Other Crises*, New York: New York University Press, 1996. [Henceforth cited as *CC*]

<sup>12</sup> See Arendt's long and complex letter of 20 July 1963, B 444. Cf. Jaspers' assessment in C 525 and *GHD* 136.

own book on St. Paul.<sup>15</sup> Taubes was writing (or more accurately said, Taubes had as good as written) that same book when I sat in on his seminars in Berlin in the mid-eighties, seminars to which everyone, *die ganze Welt, le tout Berlin*, at least among the students, would flock (in a non-trivial fashion, one might argue that Taubes functioned as a kind of male Hannah Arendt—they certainly shared the same Gershom Scholem who, like Jaspers to be sure, does not make an appearance in von Trotta's film, although Scholem certainly haunts the quotes) and although Taubes met Arendt, they got on about as well as Arendt and Theodor Adorno, albeit for different reasons.

Like Adorno, Arendt would be vigorously denounced for arrogance, an arrogance von Trotta's film also documents (Arendt's colleagues indict her in just this language and von Trotta's film thus illustrates a common side of academic non-collegiality). It is also Arendt's arrogance that colors von Trotta's depiction (this is more of the film's signal syncretism) of the falling out between Hannah Arendt and the Hans Jonas who would go on to make what one might describe as monotonic ethics his personal calling card. In von Trotta's film, Jonas is represented as the injured party, a favoring that is unsurprising as the film drew on Jonas' *Memoirs* (and therewith his point of view).<sup>16</sup> The contrast between arrogance and the steadfast adherence to a conventionally received ethical viewpoint is key. Where arrogance is regarded as a vice, modesty is a virtue, most especially for a woman, a troublesome demand for an academic and an intellectual like Arendt. The vice of arrogance is also supposed to be emotive (though on whose side remains an open question) and perforce irrational.

Following this associative chain, in what can appear to be the rule for discussions of the Eichman

process, in particular for Richard Wolin,<sup>17</sup> it can be argued that what caused Nazism was consummate irrationality (and in this Wolin follows Georg Lukács' argument as do contemporary representatives of the Frankfurt School departing as they do, and beginning with Jürgen Habermas, from Max Horkheimer's and Adorno's more dialectical reflections).<sup>18</sup> Such logic is impeccable: Nazism has to have been caused by irrationality, because if not, what are we scholars doing here and elsewhere and how to ensure, to quote the political theorist Tracy Strong, "that it will not happen again"?<sup>19</sup> As Adorno himself explains, the "premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again...never again Auschwitz."<sup>20</sup> Making Hannah Arendt's point in his own voice regarding the banality of evil, Adorno defines "banality" as what one translator softens into bourgeois subjectivity but which can also be named capitalist subjectivity.

Above I suggested that the depiction of the generational and social politics of Israel in the 1960s in von Trotta's *Hannah Arendt* parallels the generational politics in Germany, not only in the 1960s but in the last several decades. Unrelated to von Trotta or Arendt, several authors have examined Germany's social politics, none so painfully etched as Winfried Georg

<sup>17</sup> Representative here would be Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse*, Princeton University Press, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> See Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. For a more comprehensive discussion, see János Kelemen, *The Rationalism of Georg Lukács*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Tracy B. Strong, "Introduction" in Tracy B. Strong, ed., *Nietzsche*, Surrey: Ashgate 2009, p. xxvi. Strong reprises this theme in a more general fashion in his more recent *Politics Without Vision: Thinking Without a Bannister in the 21st Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Theodor Adorno, "Education After Auschwitz," in *Can One Live After Auschwitz: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2003, p. 19. But Adorno's concern compounds cause and occasion: "One speaks of the threat of a relapse into barbarism. But it was not a threat—Auschwitz was this relapse, and barbarism continues as long as the fundamental conditions that favored this relapse continue largely unchanged. That is the whole horror." [Emphasis added]

<sup>15</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005. Randi Rashkover, *Freedom and Law: A Jewish-Christian Apologetics*, New York: Fordham University Press 2011, discusses the parallel with Taubes, see pp. 26ff, as I do in DMK 191.

<sup>16</sup> So Jonas recounts the necessity of their break. See Hans Jonas, *Memoirs*, ed. Christian Wiese, trans. Krishna Winston, Waltham: Brandeis University Press 2008, p. 182 [henceforth cited as *M*]. But the break was not a final one, as Jonas also points out, attributing this to his wife's better sensibilities, and Arendt and Jonas would reconcile. Indeed and I emphasize this elsewhere, Jonas attests to her "genius for friendship" in his eulogy for Arendt.

Sebald's Zürich Lectures, *Luftkrieg und Literatur*<sup>21</sup> — "Air War and Literature" — featuring a Nietzschean motto that stems from a fairly unlikely voice, which may be why we might be able to hear it, the science fiction author and satirist, Stanislaw Lem: "The trick of elimination is every expert's defensive reflex."<sup>22</sup> Later when I return to von Trotta's film, we will see that Arendt herself refers to the contemporary media and its technical prowess, that is to say just the same perception of thoroughgoing persecution that her critics have in the past sought to discount as imaginary:

die Meinungsmanipulation in der modernen Welt wird bekanntlich weitgehend durch die Methoden des "image-making" bewirkt, d.h. dadurch, daß man bestimmte "Bilder" in die Welt setzt, die nicht nur nichts mit der Realität zu tun haben, sondern häufig nur dazu dienen, bestimmte unangenehme Realitäten zu verdecken.<sup>23</sup>

Sebald's lectures and addenda would be published posthumously in English as part of his *On the Natural History of Destruction*. The title isn't Sebald's own. Credit for that goes to Lord Solly Zuckerman in his description of Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris, and the *Luftkrieg* in question corresponds to Sir Harris' very British, anti-German design.

What von Trotta thus illuminates with her film, at least in my viewing, was the point with which Sebald concludes his own retrospective introduction to his study to the extent that many authors, themselves well aware of the dangers to their own future reception, dangers of the sort Arendt herself seemingly did not imagine, were apparently less concerned with giving voice to what they had experienced but were more preoccupied "with the self-image they wished to hand down" accommodated as that would have been, at one time to one regime, and then again to another. For Sebald this self-censoring "was one of the main reasons for the inability of a whole generation of German authors to describe what they had seen and to convey it to our minds" (*NHD* x).

<sup>21</sup> Winfried Georg Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, Berlin: Hanser, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> From Stanislaw Lem, *Imaginary Magnitude*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1984, p. 23, quoted as epigraph to the first lecture in W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, New York: Modern Library 2004, p. 1 [henceforth cited as *NHD*]. Lem's own point continues: "were he less ruthless, he would drown in a flood of paper."

<sup>23</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Gespräch mit Thilo Koch," in Hannah Arendt, *Ich will verstehen*, ed. Ursula Ludz, Munich: Piper 1996, p. 39.

Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is written at a time when it is not utterly clear to all that this "unutterability," as Sebald speaks of it, would be and would have to be the rule. Jaspers sought to elude it and I think he succeeded at the time, and, I think, Arendt also succeeded (at least in part) but she did not succeed in the writerly way Sebald would have wanted not because Arendt was not a writer but because what she writes is political philosophy rather than literature. For Sebald, we need a literary, not a theoretical writer's voice. If he himself offered such a writer's voice, it was only with a certain dissonance, at least in terms of the reception of his work. For Sebald, the reception (or reader response) itself called for understanding. For in addition to the odd hectoring letters Sebald received, there were many more that would testify, so he wrote, to the "sense of unparalleled national humiliation felt by millions in the last years of the war had never really found verbal expression, and that those affected by the experience neither shared it with one another nor passed it on to the next generation" (*NHD* x). Thus Sebald reflects upon Alexander Kluge's analysis of the war and of its wake or aftermath such that "it never became an experience capable of public decipherment" (*NHD* 4).

These are complicated points needing another argument; indeed, many other arguments, and rather more temporal distance. Here it will do to note that Sebald drew reviews, like von Trotta's film, both laudatory and damning. Some in direct response to the Zürich lectures as he discusses these in his own afterword. But what is significant here and to this extent it resembles the impact of von Trotta's film, especially but not only for New York audiences, some of these responses are posthumous. And for the most part such posthumous critiques dramatize a return to the status quo ante. Perhaps the experience remains incapable of public decipherment, in Kluge's words, and perhaps it cannot be otherwise.

Sebald's concern is not ordinary Germans during the war—the how-did-that, how-could-that-happen character of a concern with which we are well acquainted. Instead he quotes the Swedish journalist Stig Degerman's 1946 report of nothing so much as a landscape of destruction at which no one of the inhabitants was willing to look. As Sebald describes the journalist's report,

writing from Hamburg that on a train going at normal speed it took him a quarter of an hour to travel the lunar landscape between Hasselbrook and Landwehr, and in all that vast wilderness, perhaps the most horrifying expanse of ruins in the whole of Europe, he

did not see a single living soul. [NHD 30]

What struck him most was that he identified himself as alien, as "a foreigner himself *because* he looked out" (NHD 30).

I myself (and I've already referred to Taubes) spent time in Germany in what certainly seemed to me to be millions of years after the war: from 1984 onwards and I always return. The first few years I would observe and ask those I met for information or news or any details at all about the only thing any American—we were the victors—ever thought about. This is the von Trotta parallel for me, to me. For, like the alienation of the younger generation of Israel, to their parents, those who had escaped the holocaust in Germany and Poland and France, as von Trotta's Kurt Blumenfeld invokes this circumstance at the first café scene with Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem, in reply to the question that she carried from her second husband Heinrich Blücher (I only say second husband to mitigate the film's depiction of his affair(s) and her tolerance of the same), that apart from disinterest, the younger generation also harbored disturbing criticisms, adding charges of cowardice to generational non-comprehension. It was this wall of incomprehension, disinterest, or a concern with other issues—and Israel certainly had other issues—that reminded me of Germany. For none of my German friends, all of whom had been born in the fifties after the war (I was born in 1956), had any stories to tell to answer any of my questions. Many did not speak to their parents about the war (none of my friends' immediate relatives had been Nazis, so I would have had to believe, if I had believed it, even those who were officers during the war), and if they did speak to their parents, of those that did, there were certainly no open replies. When I spoke to people like my professors, things were no different. I even asked Taubes himself, but he had spent the war in Switzerland writing his doctoral thesis and what struck me was that he did not feel altogether sanguine about it, but mocked himself, recalling at some length Scholem's unsuccessful efforts to get him, to emigrate to Israel and to rue a brilliant colleague's death who had been as courageous as he was brilliant and who had indeed, as Taubes had not, gone to Israel. Scholem's word *Verräter*,<sup>24</sup> also included a condemnation of Taubes' generic and human (just matter of fact) cowardice.

<sup>24</sup> See for a discussion, Babette Babich, "Ad Jacob Taubes," *New Nietzsche Studies: Nietzsche and the Jews*, eds. Debra Bergoffen, Babette Babich, and David B. Allison, 7/3&4, (Fall 2007/Winter 2008), v-x.

What Sebald's Swedish correspondent Stig Degerman reported of strangers, these my friends lived through in the heart of their family, small anecdotes of survival, the pain and bodily damage suffered by escape, the long distances walked on foot to return home or to flee for better parts in the aftermath of the war, all surrounded by silence.

Von Trotta could thus, perhaps, I do not know this, draw upon her own memories and the memories of her parents and her grandparents in order to see the exactly national tension and difference made by such a generational distinction. Add to this what is also relevant in is Israel and which also runs throughout Arendt's correspondence with Jaspers, namely the different origins and contexts, the precise political definition of an Israeli as we note that this continues to be the contested subject of an interior conflict that is the legacy of Zionism as it endures today and that has already reached any number of calamitous peaks, most brutally now in Gaza after the summer of 2014 and without any seeming resolution.<sup>25</sup>

### The Ghost of Jaspers

Karl Jaspers is one of the most important existential phenomenologists even as today and given the ascendancy of analytic phenomenology and speculative philosophy in the now vanishing tradition of what had been Continental Philosophy, Jaspers is increasingly less read as either an existentialist or a phenomenologist. Technically it would be better to invoke an *Existenz-Phänomenologie*, following Jaspers' own usage and the current author is perhaps more alive to this dimension of Jaspers' thought than many philosophers today as she reads him from the perspective of continental philosophy of science, especially from the perspective of Friedrich Nietzsche, especially as read from Heidegger's concern with modern science and modern technology

<sup>25</sup> There are a number of new voices raised here. See for one collection, among many other contributions, Gianni Vattimo and Michael Marder, eds., *Deconstructing Zionism: A Critique of Political Metaphysics*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, see with particular reference to Arendt, Judith Butler's chapter three here: "Is Judaism Zionism? Or, Arendt and the Critique of the Nation-State," included as chapter four in her own, with a follow up chapter on Arendt and the "Quandaries of the Plural" in *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*, New York: Columbia University Press 2013, pp. 114-50 and 151-80.

too, perspectives often neglected by even Jaspers' best followers. In a certain sense, like any one of such multifarious virtuosity, Jaspers suffered from this virtuosity, like Heidegger with respect to technology and science, and like Arendt with respect to politics, especially what Jaspers called world politics, which today has come to be flattened, in a fulfillment of Guy Debord's spectacular schematism,<sup>26</sup> as a world with less and less space or time, in the monotone schema we call globalization.

Jaspers also, not unlike Heidegger in his own postwar writings, reflected that the postwar environment seemed to extinguish "all self-being" and he went on to argue, and this could not but have been influential for Arendt, "resistance will still be offered by any felicitous meeting of individuals who band together in fact without oath or pathos. 'Truth begins with two,' said Nietzsche."<sup>27</sup> Again, Jaspers repeats the Nietzsche citation when he writes in *The Future of Mankind* of the enduring and still possibility of human community "in reason, love, and truth...Nietzsche's word 'Truth begins when there are two,' is borne out by every community of individuals."<sup>28</sup>

Thus we read Jaspers on the world, as we like to take that world to be objective. This is the world of science, the world of facts. Trained as a scientist, a physician, as he was, Jaspers could not pretend to the layman's misapprehension of the objective as if this were part of the facts, the factual world, part of the facts that Nietzsche will tell us that there are not.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> "The capitalist production system has unified space, breaking down the boundaries between one society and the next." Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Detroit: Black & Red 2000 [1967], p. 165.

<sup>27</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, trans. E. B. Ashton, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1969, p. 36. [Henceforth cited as *P1*]

<sup>28</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Future of Mankind*, trans. E. B. Ashton, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1961, p. 223. [Henceforth cited as *FM*]

<sup>29</sup> As Nietzsche writes: "Nein gerade Tatsachen gibt es nicht, nur Interpretationen. Wir können kein Faktum 'an sich' feststellen: vielleicht ist es ein Unsinn, so etwas zu wollen. 'Es ist alles subjektiv' sagt ihr: aber schon das ist Auslegung, das 'Subjekt' ist nichts Gegebenes, sondern etwas Hinzu-Erdichtetes, Dahinter-Gestecktes." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzini Montinari, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980, Vol. 12, 7, p.60. See on this my own discussion in Babette Babich, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science: Reflecting Science on the Ground of Art and Life*,

For Jaspers likewise: the "objective world" is "never given solely" or "as such" (*P1* 113). Much rather, and this is the hermeneutic heart of Jasper's constitutive phenomenology, encountering the world as "I find it I have to gain access to it by my activity. No experience can be made without some course of conduct" (*P1* 113). At the same time, Jaspers also emphasizes that this interpretive, interventive precondition does not reduce the world to a fiction: "The objective world is never solely made either" (*P1* 113). The point is counter-intuitive (and we do well to remember that science-war blowback to similar claims induced both Ian Hacking and Bruno Latour to tone down their claims, in some cases, all the way back to objectivist retraction).<sup>30</sup>

The world, the entire world as Jaspers speaks of it, here invoking a concept more conventionally associated with either Ludwig Wittgenstein or indeed Heidegger, is for Jaspers, "a boundary concept" (*P1* 171). For Jaspers, however, this is not solely an existential notion of world. Much rather for Jaspers, who remained a Kantian throughout his life, the world is a question. The problem is what science leaves out, in order, indeed to be science. The first point cannot be recused in this epistemic and moral context as it follows no one but Kant (and Nietzsche after him—as we seem to need Jaspers to remind us that and "Still, Nietzsche came after Kant.")<sup>31</sup> Nietzsche had argued, infamously enough, that the world is interpretation according to a human schema that we cannot throw off. The ineliminability of such a constitution is twofold for Jaspers. Thus and

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Albany: State University of New York Press 1994 (in German: Oxford, 2010), especially chapter three.

<sup>30</sup> See for references and discussion, Babette Babich "Towards a Critical Philosophy of Science: Continental Beginnings and Bugbears, Whigs and Waterbears," *International Journal of the Philosophy of Science*, 24/4 (December 2010), 343-91, in particular, p. 346. Jaspers goes on to explain using the example of the lived life of the laboratory, as Norwood Russell Hanson but also as Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger might equally have spoken of it, that "In scientific world orientation we see empirical reality in both the given world and the one that remains to be made. But there is no cut-off point. What has been made will henceforth be given and what is given has the unpredictable modifiability of new productive material" (*P1* 113).

<sup>31</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of his Philosophical Activity*, trans. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1965, p. 287.



to begin with, "the world in its entirety cannot become an object. We are in the world and can never face it as a whole."<sup>32</sup> But beyond this, it is also the case that we think, that we are human, that we are conscious – and here Jaspers might have gone beyond Kant to Fichte and Hegel but he adds his own gloss by speaking almost as Schelling might have done, of "our awareness of our freedom," arguing that thereby "we transcend the incomplete world we can know" (*PW* 130).

The word freedom itself however is importantly Kantian in this context, as Jaspers' own powerful and insightful reading of Kant's "Perpetual Peace" demonstrates (see *PW* 88-124). I argue that Jaspers is unique in attending to Kant's situation and hence to the significance of attending to his style and above all including Kant's irony as well as with reference to Nietzsche, his humor (*PW* 97ff, 120ff, 257ff).<sup>33</sup>

I have observed that it is Jaspers, arguably even more than Scholem himself, who may be argued to have been one of the missing keys or critical ghosts in Margarethe von Trotta's *Hannah Arendt*, even where the spirit of the film, as one might put it was drawn as already noted above from Hans Jonas' *Memoirs*. In life, Jaspers was the replacement philosopher-father to whom Arendt's teacher Martin Heidegger, who was also at the time more rather than less inclined to regard Jaspers as his own paternal influence, kinder than Husserl (at least to begin with, and seemingly sharing many of his own intellectual passions well), and to whom Heidegger recommended (or transferred) Hannah Arendt. Under Jaspers' direction, Arendt would write a thesis written on, seemingly as if to illuminate the point of transfer, *Love and St. Augustine*.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Karl Jaspers, "The Creation of the World," in *Philosophy and the World: Selected Essays and Lectures*, Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway 1989, p. 129 [henceforth cited as *PW*].

<sup>33</sup> It goes without saying that most enthusiasts of the Königsbergian king of thought, even those who attend to his style, tend to exclude his irony. On Kant's style (duly omitting irony), see Willi Goetschel, *Constituting Critique: Kant's Writing as Critical Praxis*, trans. Eric Schwab, Durham: Duke University Press, 1994. I emphasize the relevance of this irony and this reading does depend upon my foregrounding of the question of writerly style in Babich, "On Nietzsche's Judgment of Style and Hume's Quixotic Taste: On the Science of Aesthetics and 'Playing' the Satyr," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43/2 (2012), 240-59.

<sup>34</sup> See, in addition to my remarks here and elsewhere the insightful contextual reading by Ludger Lutkehaus,

Thus what is striking for me is the connection that Arendt forged with Jaspers, for it was indeed Jaspers and not Blumenfeld, as depicted in the film, who would serve throughout his life as Arendt's "intellectual" and in German that is to say "spiritual" father (though the back turned on her at the film's end would have been, once more in a match-game of syncretistic substitution, not unlike the moves tracked in another film by another director, the late Alain Resnais' *L'année dernière à Marienbad*, would not be that of the dying Blumenfeld but rather Scholem, verbally or metaphorically speaking, the very Scholem Arendt always called by the name she knew from her youth – Gerhard).

Maybe the film can do little more than show traces of these ghosts, this vanished spirit. Perhaps that is the heart of film, even such a one of theatrically composed Riverside Drive interiors and locations, in addition to the New School, upstate New York, Bard College, Jerusalem, Marburg, but also Heidegger's Black Forest Freiburg.

But, just to return once more to the theme at the outset, can one in fact make a film on the life of the academic mind? Can one illustrate Heidegger's teaching, as Arendt will write of him, that "perhaps it is possible to learn to think," as von Trotta's film makes college level German language (arts and culture) instruction, indeed even teaching German as well as political philosophy, even including German Departmental politics, central throughout her film, offering a rare dramatization of the life of the professor as a professor and that is to say among other professors? And if the challenges of filming academic loci from the ecstatic encounters between student and professor at Marburg to the all-American classroom dynamics at Bard College or the New School are well-met in the achievements of von Trotta's film, the filming of thinking remains elusive.

## Thinking

Can a film illustrate thinking?<sup>35</sup> How can a film show the minds of thinkers like Arendt, or Heidegger, or Jaspers? Arendt might appear straightforward enough concerned as she is with the world, the same 'love of the world' that

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"Hannah Arendt–Martin Heidegger: eine Liebe in Deutschland," *Text+Kritik* 166/167 (2005), originally published in opsculum format: *Hannah Arendt–Martin Heidegger: Eine Liebe in Deutschland*, Marburg: Basiliken-Press, 1999.

<sup>35</sup> See *HLT* and see Roger Berkowitz's review, "Lonely Thinking: Hannah Arendt on Film," *The Paris Review* 30 (May 2013).

other scholars have celebrated in books of their own, concerned as Arendt is with the "Human Condition" but also as politically focused as she was. And yet this does not quite prove to be so and we are still left with the need to read and to think for ourselves. And Jaspers although he does not appear, haunts the film's presentation of Arendt's conflicts with Heidegger, in her own memory as the film uses flashbacks to the past, distant and recent, to illustrate these conflicts for the viewer, as he is also present in her engagement with Hans Jonas who, as I have noted, had his own issues with his own memories.

Both Arendt and Jaspers were conflicted, in very different ways, by the same appeal that drew them to Heidegger.<sup>36</sup> Hence unlike the friendship between Arendt and Jaspers (and I believe and I have elsewhere argued that the friendship survived between them solely or at least largely because of her efforts, as so many relationships between men and women survive not because of what the men do, but because of what the women are able to shoulder alone, and following the star of love, of loyalty, and affection) Heidegger's and Jaspers' friendship did not survive and if Jaspers placed the blame for this failure on Heidegger, he did not ascribe it to Heidegger's anti-Semitism (whether indeed of the world-historical or the more personal kind) but and much rather to Heidegger's self-focused character. Heidegger's failure was as a human being.

To say this does not entail that Jaspers' friendship with Heidegger was not genuine. But even a genuine friendship can be routed in the fashion that a changing world in addition to the fortunes of intellectual life, along with the stakes of academic contest, are liable to rout a friendship in any era. Both Heidegger and Jaspers were philosophers with a claim (especially on Jaspers' part) to what Jaspers named "world philosophy" and (especially on Heidegger's part) not less to a philosophy recasting the terms of the same (toward the political for Jaspers, toward the inception of another beginning for Heidegger): the consequences of this conflict would rout any friendship, with or without war. To the extent that their friendship could survive at all it would have to do (not unlike Arendt's own patient initiative) with Jaspers' own extraordinary intellectual openness, his scientific, that is to say: his philosophical probity.

<sup>36</sup> Karl Jaspers, "Martin Heidegger," Note 239 (1961/1964), in Karl Jaspers, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Leonard H. Ehrlich, Columbus: Ohio University Press 1986, p. 510.

Where Jaspers' friendship with Heidegger frayed in the face of Heidegger's all-too-trivially human limitations, there was also Jaspers' own eventual disappointment of his own hopes for his philosophy. Elsewhere, I have argued that it was Arendt's gift for friendship (as Jonas also endorsed her "genius" for the same [M 182]) that made the difference in the case of her friendship with Heidegger as it also made the difference in the case of her friendship with Jaspers. And here it can be worth emphasizing that when Hannah Arendt says that she does not "love" peoples (or nations) but *only friends*: as she wrote to Scholem (this is not mentioned, it is too complicated, I suppose, in the context of the film), *ich liebe immer nur meine Freunde*.

But here and again, the meaning of one's love for one's friends precisely for a thinker like Arendt, this reader of Augustine who was, arguably above all, a student of Aristotle (as a student of Heidegger would have had to be) but also an attentive reader of Nietzsche—this gift for friendship and that is always, once again Aristotle, turns out to be all about loyalty, all that is to say and this must be understood in a lived context, about time. Aristotle remarks that friendships that come to an end are not good friendships, as Aristotle emphasizes in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (VIII, 3). Or to be more exact, Aristotle observes that a friendship that lasts a lifetime corresponds to or is the excellence of the friendship of the good, and for Arendt that friendship in fact included both Heidegger and Jaspers.

But Aristotle and his perfected habits or practical acquisition to virtue does not help us today. For us, after the Shoah, after the Holocaust, after the monstrous is a deed done we need, perhaps even more than Arendt herself, her first husband, Günther Stern, the son, as Hans Jonas reminds us, of the psychologist William Stern (whose legacy to us is the IQ test to this day) and who would become Günther Anders. More even than we need Heidegger, we need Anders' reflections on *having* precisely as opposed to *being*: that is as the "having done" what has now and forever been done, more for its tenuousness and its patient attention to this sheer thatness of things done, more even than we need Adorno, who was such a loyal and so perfect friend to Anders' cousin, Walter Benjamin.

The problem remains the scandal of Arendt's claim that rather than being the very incarnation of evil as such, Eichmann, a functionary (still worse, a German functionary—*Beamter*), was simply one who pursued with all-too-typical punctilious blindness, a functionary who as such plainly failed to think, as Arendt said (and

as Heidegger likewise contended that modern science, for another notorious example, does not think).<sup>37</sup> Eichmann did not think. And so we are left fumbling with the same frustration that worked on so many of the film's audiences in New York.

Not thinking? What on earth could that mean with respect to Eichmann?

To explain the claim commentators in the *New York Times* and in magazines like *The New Yorker* (which gets as much billing in the film as Mary McCarthy or Hans Jonas or any other player), would either denounce the formula and so have done with it, or else simply refer to Heidegger in order to have done with it. As if referring to Heidegger and to the garish professor-student encounter as von Trotta depicted this in her film (this flashback was mentioned at the outset), does not complicate matters: wanting to learn to think, as the youthful Arendt conveys this wish in the office of the dissonantly young Professor Heidegger, she only hears in reply what is and can only be an enormously seductive provocation: *Denken ist ein einsames Geschäft* (thinking is a lonely business).

The assertion echoes Nietzsche's reflections on the republic of thinkers in his essay "Schopenhauer as Educator."<sup>38</sup> Here, the paradoxical implication is that thinking cannot be taught, not one to another and it cannot be practiced: one with another. With Nietzsche echoing in Heidegger's words here, we are returned to Aristotelian friendship—now in a suspiciously late eighteenth century (Schopenhauer) and late nineteenth century (Nietzsche) articulation. Thinking thus reflects less Aristotle's converse of the soul with itself than it becomes an event, an advent, echoing across mountaintops, as it were: this is Schopenhauer's spirit-converse as it strikes Nietzsche. (Nor was I surprised to find the same textual, contextual allusion echoing in the first volume of the recently published *Schwarze Hefte*, dating from 1931-1938).<sup>39</sup> Here we are returned from

Arendt on love to Heidegger, all by way of Nietzsche on the friend to Aristotle once again. Only one who is related to one in spirit can be a friend because a friend shares the same spirit in another bodily frame.

Aristotle defines thinking as it characterizes the human being qua political, qua thinking animal. Thus what fails Eichmann is nothing less than his own human nature. It is the human condition, as Arendt would say, that fails Eichmann in his managing, his administering, his obsessive, mindless pursuit of his task. It is in this consummate or essential sense that he does not think. Not as Aristotle defines practical thinking as this is always about more than a practical project or end, but ultimately, consummately, qua thinking about thinking.

I end here with a parallel to recollect my initial question regarding the possibility of any resistance that can count as such, needed because our own era is no less in need of such a reflection than any other. Thus I have elsewhere noted that Arendt concludes her introduction to Jaspers' *The Future of Germany* by reflecting on the problem of political vindication, noting that and in fact, many of Jaspers' warnings and predictions were realized following his predictions of what became Germany's darkest years. In question then is less speaking truth to power than the impotence of so doing.

Politically I could be speaking about United States aggression as we have seen this played out in war after war, ongoing to this day, and even on our own soil, and even against our own people. If the issue of public surveillance is relevant, there is also the extraordinary violence used to shut down every Occupy Wall Street in every town, beginning with New York's Wall Street. And then there is the July and August bombing of Gaza (and Arendt's 16 September 1958 letter on the practice of massacre as a technique to encourage the "mass exodus of Arabs" [C 358] as a practice of standing dating back even then to a full decade to the 9 April 1948 massacre at Deir Yassin is unsettlingly familiar) and as there is no end to such things, most recently we have seen the conflicts between militarized police presence and civilians in Ferguson, Missouri. Above all we note that such images and reports of violence are quickly transmitted to consciousness on television and via Twitter as they were also unreported, desultory, inasmuch as and like television the internet turns out to be the medium not of news, but as consummately as

<sup>37</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, trans. J. Glenn Gray, New York: Harper 1968, p. 8. [Translation modified]

<sup>38</sup> I discuss this Nietzschean reflection on thinking as the construction and desecrating of the classical memory palace at greater length in Babich, "Who do you think you are? On Nietzsche's Schopenhauer, Illich's Hugh of St. Victor, and Kleist's Kant," *Journal for the Philosophical Study of Education* 2 (March 2014), 1-23.

<sup>39</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe. IV Abteilung: Hinweise und Aufzeichnungen, Bd. 94. Überlegungen II-*

*VI, Schwarze Hefte*, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann 2014, §1, p. 6.

Guy Debord had argued (along with Jean Baudrillard and also Friedrich Kittler of a very well- or thoroughly-mediated non-consciousness as Edward S. Hermann analyses what he and Chomsky call the 'propaganda model' that silences both network news *and* alternative analyses),<sup>40</sup> and yet we rely more and more on such a source of memory (already Edward Bernays warns against this danger in his *The Crystallization of Public Opinion*).<sup>41</sup> Such a conception of the working transforms of media and memory explains what has since vanished from public memory of Occupy movements in New York but also in Berkeley, Oakland, Boston, etc., if we may hope that this consciousness lasts longer for towns like Ferguson – as for Gaza, and indeed for the Ukraine. For there is what we do in the works that we do, in what Arendt said had to be taken into account. This is the lasting influence of action for Arendt.

More than surveillance and suppression, more than the images of war as Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio focus on these, there are other images we also refuse to see. If Arendt herself did not indeed refer to animals and what we do to them, where, instructively, perhaps, Adorno did, any context that has to do with non-representable imagery and with comparisons we cannot countenance, requires us to talk about Jews and animals.<sup>42</sup> To see the relevance here, Adorno emphasized our rejection of the gaze. For Adorno, the

social schematization of perception in anti-Semites is such that they do not see the Jews as human beings at all. The constantly encountered assertion that savages, blacks, Japanese are like animals, monkeys for example, is the key to the pogrom. The possibility of pogroms is decided in the moment when the gaze of a fatally-wounded animal falls on a human being. The defiance with which he repels this gaze – 'after all, it's only an animal' – reappears irresistibly in cruelties done to human beings, the perpetrators having again and again to reassure

themselves that it is 'only an animal,' because they could never fully believe this even of animals.<sup>43</sup>

Failing as Adorno's comparison does to recognize the singularity of the Shoah and as it is simply beyond imaging (we "repel the gaze," we turn away when it comes to factory farming and mechanized slaughter: and new legislation, i.e. so-called ag-gag laws restricting film and photography, promises to make turning away even easier), the parallel is refused on both sides.<sup>44</sup> The animals we eat on a scale that empties everything that has ever been said about, for or against, Heidegger's "manufacture of corpses" phrase in his Bremen lectures,<sup>45</sup> is because the animal husbandry industry exemplifies Heideggerian standing reserve like nothing else. This manufactured standing reserve corresponds to the farming industry, the fishing industry, the leather and fur industry, the glue industry, even the university level industry of animal research and vivisection (which is what the future of biotech, cloning, nanotech and stem cell research are all about), even the dairy industry, think of the brutally orphaned and sometimes thoughtlessly murdered calves, and thus of "the things themselves," about nothing more literally literal, once again, than Heidegger's "manufacture of corpses."<sup>46</sup> These points,

<sup>43</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections From Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, London: Verso, 1974 (1951). §68, p. 105. [Henceforth cited as *MM*]

<sup>44</sup> I engage our reticence even to countenance any such parallel in Babette Babich, "'The Answer is False': Archaeologies of Genocide," in *Adorno and the Concept of Genocide*, eds. Ryan Crawford and Erik M. Vogt, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> For references and further discussion, see Babette Babich, "Constellating Technology: Heidegger's *Die Gefahr/The Danger*" in *The Multidimensionality of Hermeneutic Phenomenology*, eds. Babette Babich and Dimitür Ginev, Frankfurt am Main: Springer 2014, pp. 153-82.

<sup>46</sup> It is important to note, as I now conclude, that this is the unpleasant part, the part we are not interested in hearing about. For it cuts too close to home, animals constitute the very patentnly "standing reserve" that is the supermarket array, this is about dinner, and about what we eat. Thus we remain, and now we will want to rise in protest at this invidious comparison, each one of us complicit in the billions of animals "used" in science and more stupidly still used in pharmaceutical trials, because nothing stops drugs with horrifying side-effects from being released to the public: the last and best stage of such trials being the patients themselves.

<sup>40</sup> I have cited Debord above, and these other names point to themes and notions that exceed this paper. For a useful summary, see Edward S. Herman, "The Propaganda Model: A Retrospective," *Propaganda, Politics Power* 1 (December 2003), 1-14. For a beginning of a discussion, see the first chapters of Babette Babich, *The Hallelujah Effect*, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> Edward Bernays, *The Crystallization of Public Opinion*, New York: Liverwright, 1923.

<sup>42</sup> I discuss some of these themes in "Adorno on Science and Nihilism, Animals, and Jews," *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy/Revue canadienne de philosophie continentale* 14/1 (2011), 110-45.

incarnadine as they are, cannot pale but pale they do. We regard nature as standing reserve for energy and other resources just as we regard animals as ours to dispose of for whatever purpose from mass consumption to research exploitation to entertainment/distracted. As Adorno concludes his damaged aphoristic reflection: "What was not seen as human and yet is human, is made a thing, so that its stirrings can no longer refute the manic gaze" (MM 105).

The point here concerns animals as it is about our destruction of the world as if we believed it to be in our rightful dominion to exploit (or to save). The point has to do with Heidegger's questioning challenge to us: do we yet have to do with thinking? If Jaspers was right to look at *The Future of Humanity* in the broadest possible way, and if Arendt follows him as the scope of her work suggests she did, it may turn out that we will need more than the lonely business of thought as Heidegger spoke of the thinker in the singular, to think about thinking. As the ancients knew and as Arendt learned from Jaspers, thinking can only be done in a community of other human beings who together form a community, a world.

Here, to conclude, I return to Margarethe von Trotta's extraordinary film, as it can indeed seem as if the entire work of the film was needed to frame the final scene and Barbara Sukowa's final voice over, as Hannah Arendt, author of the *Banality of Evil*, muses upon evil as she sent her most soul-rending letter to Gershom Scholem, pronouncing upon as Arendt, student of Jaspers and Augustine would have to do, the essential superficiality of evil:

Evil is always only extreme but never radical, it has no depth, and also no demonicism. It can lay the whole world to waste, precisely because it constantly spreads like a fungus on the surface. Deep however and radical is ever only good.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> My translation (B 444) of: *Das Böse immer nur extrem ist, aber niemals radikal, es hat keine Tiefe, auch keine Dämonie. Es kann die ganze Welt verwüsten, gerade weil es wie ein Pilz an der Oberfläche weiterwuchert. Tief aber und radikal ist immer nur das Gute.* Arendt's following sentence continues with a comparison Kant on radical evil, and Arendt's exchange with Jaspers regarding this letter turns on this later comparison which should always be set in the context of the same Goethe that remained a constant point of reference for both Arendt and Jaspers.

## Coda

Goethe's legacy to poetic theodicy is that he sets his argument into the mouth of Mephisto, "I am part of that power which eternally wills evil and eternally creates good" (or, as there is no way to better Goethe's own words: *Ich bin ein Teil von jener Kraft, die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.* And, as he goes on: *Etwas, das in böser Absicht geschieht, kann in etwas Gutes umschlagen.*) The problem, as Jaspers explains, turns upon esoteric and that is to say subtle or complicated philosophy—and here we are speaking of the same isolated peaks we noted in Nietzsche's reference to Schopenhauer. Thus as Jaspers writes to Arendt, "You have reached a point where many people no longer understand you" (C 525), adding a cautionary insight into the circumstances of Arendt's encounter with the world spirit:

Now you have delivered the crucial word against "radical evil," against gnosis! You are with Kant, who said: Man cannot be a devil, and I am with you. But it's a pity that the term "radical evil," in a very different sense that was not understood even by Goethe and Schiller, comes from Kant. [C 525]<sup>48</sup>

Emphasizing all the accomplishments of Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Jaspers also underlines her naiveté: "the act of putting a book like this into the world is an act of aggression against 'life-sustaining lies'" (C 531). However righteous, however on the side of right, such a challenge cannot but provoke and the resulting response to this provocation is dismayingly predictable: wherever "those lies are exposed and the names of the people who live those lies are named, the meaning of those people's existence itself is at stake. They react by becoming deadly enemies" (C 531).

Today, we are about to witness a renewed spate of spite against Heidegger following the recent publication of the *Black Notebooks*. There is far less in these notebooks than the incensed critics make out (and there is yet another parallel with Arendt)<sup>49</sup> not that that will hinder the series of angry conferences or stem the flood of

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of radical evil in Kant see Allen Wood, "The Evil in Human Nature," pp. 31-57, and Ingolf Dalberg, "Radical Evil and Human Freedom," pp. 58-78, both in *Kant's Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: A Critical Guide*, ed. Gordon Michalson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

<sup>49</sup> See for the reference not to Heidegger but Arendt, Seyla Benhabib, "Who's On Trial, Eichmann or Arendt?" *New York Times Opinionator* (September 21, 2014).

published book denunciations promised for the future. Writing to Arendt, as Jaspers does, that there is no future for what he called "esoteric philosophy," the only philosophy that can remain will be that practiced on the vulgar level by the academics themselves. Some of this vulgarity, this pettiness, this resentment of supposed arrogance, indignation rather than hermeneutic generosity, is on display in the film and to this extent it matters that von Trotta's film for all its popular appeal, and it remains a popular accomplishment, is also a film about the academy itself, and this is rare. Hence it features university teaching (even qua Sixties style), academic debates, the challenges of writing and not

less of dealing with response (or, more commonly, non-response), and trials of esoteric subtlety and exoteric force. Illuminating the dangers of political and public backlash to the complexities inherent in philosophic thinking, Von Trotta's *Hannah Arendt* most beautiful achievement is perhaps what it shows of the profundity, as Jaspers would say, that is the beauty of "the deep and radical good" that it is to speak truth despite those who fear themselves mortally injured thereby.

What will become of Arendt in the future, is what of course becomes of any thinker, which in turn, as Arendt memorializes Jaspers, "depends on the course the world takes" (C 685-6).