

Hannah Arendt Seminar

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The objective of this paper is to determine the elements in Hannah Arendt's method of writing philosophy in general, and specifically, the function of storytelling in this great philosopher's thought. Storytelling, in this paper, is found to be Arendt's technique for capturing the true nature of new events which do not fit into the continuum of history (such as totalitarianism). The ten ways (as listed by Ryan Matthews in *What's Your Story*) in which storytelling generally functions methodologically for many writers includes stories hoping to: 1) explain origins, 2) define individual and group identity, 3) communicate tradition and delineate taboo, 4) simplify and provide perspective and reduce complex problems to a series of easily digested principles, 5) illustrate the natural order of things, 6) concisely communicate complex history, 7) communicate moral and ethical positions and the transference and preservation of values 8) illustrate relationships to, and with, authority, 9) describe appropriate responses to life or model behaviors, 10) define reward and detail the paths to salvation and damnation. How many of these are used by Arendt, herself a master teller of tales? Storytelling, then, becomes a kind of sixth sense (Kurtz). There is more continuity in her method than discontinuity, and the telling of stories largely accounts for this despite what SUNY Binghamton Professor of Philosophy Bat Ami Bar On argued during my NEH Seminar on Arendt in July 2011 at Bard College.

On May 28, 1971, Hannah Arendt wrote her friend Mary McCarthy: "I wish you would write about what it is in people that makes them want a story." Arendt continued her reflection on what was the core of her philosophical method, noting that "One can't say how life is, how

chance or fate deals with people, except by telling the tale. Life itself is full of tales. What makes the tales disappear? The overpowering events of this century which made all ordinary events that concerned only you look too puny to be worth being told?" It is no surprise that storytelling undergirds Arendt's major works including *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *Love and Saint Augustine*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and *The Human Condition*, and that she is at her best in telling stories in her selected essays (such as "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship," and her book review of Peter Nettl's biography of Rosa Luxemburg); and is complemented by means of analytical critiques, often deductive in nature, which follow the method of the sociological phenomenologist, (indebted to both Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, and David Reisman—she had lengthy correspondence with all of these intellectuals), Arendt usually considers all of the logical possibilities of a particular fact or event, evaluates each (as in the "cog theory" explanation for *Origins of Totalitarianism* in her essay "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship" or how innocently Eichmann selected his career path at Ernst Kaltenbrunner's suggestion)--often using the appropriate philosopher to illustrate her point—(often Enlightenment thinkers such as Montesquieu, and Kant, and Conservatives like Alexis de Tocqueville, Aristotle, Plato, and Hobbes). What remains is the conclusion, the answer.

This methodological technique (storytelling) which both strengthens and secures her great works, also serves as a conduit by which she can solve the major methodological problem that she finds within the disciplines of history and political science today—an inability of the scholars in those fields of study to "make distinctions" regarding various notions (imperialism, nationalism, totalitarianism) which thus impede our understanding of world events at a time when we must have clarity on all issues for the sake of the survival of mankind (see the last two

parts of *the Human Condition*). For Arendt {as she explains in her famous reply to Eric Voeglin in “the New York Review of Books,” in the *Review of Politics* (January 1953), and reissued in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-54*, edited by Jerome Kohn (New York, 2005), pp.401-408} the faculty of imagination (defined by Kant as *einbildungskraft*) is not fictional, but rather allows Arendt to capture the special nature of totalitarianism with an examination of its elements by means of a process of turning operations (see Mary Dietz) or examining phenomena (crystals) in such a way that she is peering through the element or looking in the crystal from every essential vantage point—her inquiry into and reflections upon the element. This process, crystallization, happened in an instant. “Reflections of this kind, originally caused by the special nature of my subject” (Totalitarianism), “and the personal experience which is necessarily involved in a historical investigation that employs imagination consciously as an important tool of cognition resulted in a critical approach toward almost all interpretation of contemporary history.”

What of a telos? History has no fixed goal for Arendt, and it is events rather than ideas that are central. ‘I proceed from facts and events instead of intellectual affinities and influence.’ It was ‘events’ rather than ideas or social forces that most attracted her. “An event for Arendt,” notes Disch, “is an ‘interruption’ in what Walter Benjamin referred to as the ‘continuum of history.’ It is an intervention, which produces unforeseen consequences, and leads in unexpected directions [...so] historical predictions are useless.” Arendt borrows from Benjamin’s “Thesis on the Philosophy of History” in which what is necessary, says Benjamin, is to “blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history.” Arendt has as the reality of history that it can hardly be captured “by a seamless narrative that implies that there is nothing more to explain.” Arendt’s reinterpretation by means of the Kantian faculty of imagination used as a tool of cognition—

storytelling--results in a clear understanding in *Love and St. Augustine* as neighborly love (caritas) with that Bishop of Hippo's struggle to reconcile his current situation with the fall of the Roman Empire along with its system of values (analogous to Arendt's own struggle with the fact of the existence of the Third Reich). The translators of Arendt's dissertation noted:

Arendt makes her intentions clear in the introduction to the dissertation (Copy A). She is interested in Augustine's struggle with the contradictions between the "tradition" of philosophy he inherited and the Pauline Christian worldview. The question that intrigues her in 1929 and continues to dominate her thought when it turns explicitly political is the "relevance of the neighbor" to a solipsistic phenomenology of self-reflection such as Christianity. Contradictions, mostly unacknowledged, seem to her to be the essence of Augustine's project and will be the focus of her reading of him. It is her own "single question" about caritas as neighborly love that serves as a "connecting link" amidst the "disjointedness of Augustine's own work" and "makes explicit what Augustine himself has merely implied." The linkage, in other words, is Arendt's and not Augustine's.

Storytelling's components "are specifically mentioned by Arendt in the second edition of her revision of her dissertation, (B: 033191) and (B: 033192), as remembrance and as memory.

Arendt says, "Through remembrance man discovers this twofold 'before' of human existence...This is the reason why the return to one's origin (redire as creatorem) can at the same time be understood as an anticipating reference to one's end." And, "It is memory and not expectation (for instance, the expectation of death as in Heidegger's approach) that gives unity and wholeness to human existence." (p.113, Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*).

Storytelling is omnipresent in her first great work, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, listed as the 15th most significant book of the twentieth century by the *National Review*. Arendt sees totalitarianism as an unprecedented and unique event in history whose appearance caught most by surprise and exploded all of our categories which had failed us in stopping it. In the third chapter of OT, “The Jew and Society,” Arendt tells the story of Benjamin Disraeli’s rise to power in a most unique way. Arendt brilliantly summarizes his rise in the Tory Party. What she zeros in on, however, are vocabulary words which permit her to link linguistically, at least, Lord Beaconsfield’s own writings and speeches to Nazi anti-Semitism later on. (Is she giving us a preview of her assertions made later in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* about the role of the Jewish Counsels in helping Eichmann organize the shipping of Jews to the camps?) Always a powerful tool for aiding us in understanding, irony becomes even more powerful because it is a classic element of contrast in the storyteller’s repertoire. To paraphrase and quote Arendt: “The political result of Disraeli’s ability to gauge Jewish possibilities by the political aspirations of a normal people was more serious” wrote Arendt, he almost automatically produced the entire set of theories about Jewish influence and organization that we usually find in the more vicious forms of anti-Semitism” (OT, The Jews and Society, 71). Arendt noted that Disraeli did think of himself as “ ‘the chosen man of the chosen race’ ”-- his rise to power was for Arendt proof because Disraeli was a “Jew without name and riches, helped only by a few Jewish bankers,” (especially the Rothchild’s) but for Disraeli “it was more difficult and more important to be won over by London’s society than to conquer the House of Commons” and win over not only society but the lasting friendship of Queen Victoria as had been achieved “through a policy of seeing only the advantages, and preaching only the privileges, of being born a Jew” (p. 71,

Ibid). He was born an “exception Jew” (OT, 73) who was, according to Arendt, “the only one who produced a full blown race doctrine out of this empty concept of a historic mission”: Arendt shrewdly selects passages from several of Disraeli’s works that have a racialist content, the novels *Endymion* and *Coningsby*, and the biography, *Lord George Bentinck*. She could just have easily cited passages from his Charles Dickens-like novel, *Sybil*, which sided with the English working class. But Arendt noted that now, Disraeli was ready to assert that the Semitic principle “represents all that is spiritual in our nature,’ that ‘the vicissitudes of history find their main solution—all is race,’ which is ‘the key to history’ regardless of ‘language and religion,’ for ‘there is only one thing which makes a race and that is blood’ and there is only one aristocracy, the ‘aristocracy of nature’ which consists of an unmixed race of a first-rate organization.” (OT, 73). Arendt’s evaluation of her story of Disraeli’s special status is summed up in typical sweeping fashion by the master tale teller herself, noting that Disraeli had inverted the racial inferiority notion and had “helped anybody feel himself an aristocrat who had been selected by birth on the strength of ‘racial’ qualification. That these new selected ones did not belong to an elite, to a selected few—which, after all, had been inherent in the pride of a nobleman—but had to share chosenness (sic) with an ever-growing mob, did no essential harm to the doctrine, for those who did not belong to the chosen race grew numerically in the same proportion” (OT, 73).

Again in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt tells stories through which “the banality of evil” is illuminated for understanding—just how ordinary and commonplace were the circumstances which permitted Eichmann to enter the S.S. and murder millions of innocents, especially Jews. Several examples stand out which promote Arendt to an almost Herodotus like level as a story teller. The first story concerns exactly how Eichmann joined the S.S. To

paraphrase her account found in EIJ, “the Accused”, from his birth March 19, 1906 in the Rhineland (Solingen, known for “its knives, scissors, and surgical instruments” (27)—notice how pointing this curious fact out with regard to Eichmann’s birthplace adds a possible butcher-like dimension to an otherwise inauspicious event), his mother died when he was ten, his father soon after remarried, and resumed his career as a businessman-accountant with the Tramways and Electricity Company in Solingen, then, after 1913 in Linz. One of five children (all of whom finished high school except for Adolf), he was in his youth a member of the YMCA for a time, then the German Youth Movement called the *Wandervogel*, then a vocational school student who did not graduate. His father hired him for his own business (a mining company that he had bought), then through family connections, Adolf was hired as a salesman by the Vacuum Oil Company of Vienna. When he was fired in 1932, he again had failed in life until he joined the S.S. in 1933 at the suggestion of a lawyer from Linz named Ernst Kaltenbrunner (whose father was a friend of Eichmann’s father); then married Vera Liebl in March 1935 to avoid having a stigma of bachelor that had played a role in being fired from his sales position—a situation he did not want repeated with the new S.S. position, as bachelors there were viewed suspiciously. Kaltenbrunner, later to become chief of the Head Office for Reich Security, recruited Eichmann, who had been dropped from membership in the Freemason’s Lodge Schlaraffia for offering a glass of wine to its members. Noted Arendt, “he did not enter the Party out of conviction, nor was he ever convinced by it...he did not know the Party program, he never read *Mein Kampf*. Kaltenbrunner had said to him: Why not join the S.S.? And he had replied, Why not? That was how it had happened, and that was about all there was to it” (EIJ, 33). Then Arendt the analytical critic of sociological phenomenon “unpacks” this casual account of how Eichmann joined the

S.S. What he had failed to tell the judge under cross-examination was that his life was “a humdrum life without significance and consequence the wind had blown him into History...into a Movement that always kept moving and in which somebody like him—already a failure in the eyes of his social class, or his family, and hence in his own eyes as well—could start from scratch and make a career” (EIJ, 34). Switching from Austrian to German S.S. units from August 1933 until September 1934, he was, according to Arendt, “bored to distraction, he heard that the Security Service of the Reichsführer S.S. had jobs open, and applied immediately” (EIJ, 35).

A second story stands out in EIJ in which Arendt again captures our attention and is at her best as a teller of tales. Throughout the book, originally published in the *New Yorker* by then courtroom reporter Hannah Arendt, an obvious theme is intertwined among the fifteen chapter headings (The House of Justice, The Accused, An Expert on the Jewish Question, the First Solution, The Second Solution, the Final Solution, the Wannsee Conference, Duties of a Law-abiding Citizen, Deportations from the Reich, Western Europe, the Balkans, Central Europe, the Killing Centers in the East, Evidence and Witnesses, Judgment, Appeal, Execution)—and it is this: whatever happened to the consciences of those involved in the final solution, especially Eichmann’s? Stated Arendt, “Would any one of them have suffered from a guilty conscience if they had won?” (EIJ 277). The other themes (did the court have jurisdiction, was the trial fair, how was it possible to even have a trial, yet alone a trial in Jerusalem, how was it possible to have a fair trial of a man kidnapped from Argentina, wasn’t he just following orders, etc.?)—while far from insignificant, all have a fundamental relationship to the notion of conscience. Arendt even goes as far as to state that (EIJ, 225) “the bulk of the witnesses, fifty-three, came from Poland and Lithuania, where Eichmann’s competence and authority had been almost

nil” (EIJ 225). She has set the stage for a denouement, and for addressing “the larger issues at stake in the Eichmann trial” which she understands to be “the assumption current in all modern legal systems that intent to do wrong is necessary for the commission of a crime.” She continued:

Where this intent is absent, where, for whatever reasons, even reasons of moral insanity, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong is impaired, we feel no crime has been committed. We refuse, and consider as barbaric, the propositions (Then, Arendt quotes Yosel Rogat, the Stanford University legal scholar and author of a famous essay on the Eichmann trial written immediately after the trial, ‘that a great crime offends nature, so that the very earth cries out for vengeance; that evil violates a natural harmony which only retribution can restore; that a wronged collectivity owes a duty to the moral order to punish the criminal. (EIJ 277)

Was justice done in the trial of Eichmann? Arendt noted (in perhaps her best storytelling effort) that all of the judges in the trial should have

dared to address their defendant in something like the following terms: You admitted that the crime committed against the Jewish people during the war was the greatest crime in recorded history, and you admitted your role in it. But you said you had never acted from base motives, that you had never had any inclination to kill anybody, that you had never hated Jews, and still that you could not have acted otherwise and that you did not feel guilty. (EIJ, 277-8)

Noting that she found this hard to believe, she continues:

You said your role in the Final Solution was an accident and that almost anybody could have taken your place... What you meant to say was that where all... are guilty, nobody is. This is an indeed quite common conclusion, but one we are not willing to grant you... We are concerned here only with what you did, and not with the possible noncriminal nature of your inner life and of your motives or with the criminal potentialities of those around you... Let us assume... that it was nothing more than misfortune that made you a willing instrument in the organization of mass murder. (EIJ, 278-279).

Then, Arendt leaves us with memory, remembrance, justice:

For politics is not like the nursery; in politics obedience and support are the same. And just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations—as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world—we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you. This is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang. (279)

In the *Human Condition* can we keep from perishing altogether? Arendt offered the reality, the hope, and the prospect of natality, the original aspect of her political philosophy. Storytelling, then, could save mankind. In the last paragraph in Chapter 5, “Action,” Arendt spelled out the meaning of natality: The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, ‘natural’ ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope, those two essential characteristics of human existence

which Greek antiquity ignored altogether, discounting the keeping of faith as a very uncommon and not too important virtue and counting hope among the evils of illusion in Pandora's box. It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their 'glad tidings': 'A child has been born unto us.'" (the Human Condition, 247).

In this article "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship" by Hannah Arendt in *Responsibility and Judgment*, edited by Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books (2003) 17-48, sparked by the hostile reception that *Eichmann in Jerusalem* received, Arendt used her method of analysis that is perhaps best labeled as "differentiation" or "distinctionness," to dissect the responsibility of individuals under a dictatorship. How, exactly, could Hitler have happened? Or Stalin? In trying to answer these questions, she takes up several of the oft mentioned reasons, examines them from a variety of perspectives, and clarifies exactly what remains as a causal element in the phenomenon of totalitarian dictatorship. Partly because of how EIJ was so harshly received, and partly because Arendt wanted to explain how Totalitarian National Socialism (and Communism) happened in an essay more focused on individual judgment, she presents her thesis: lack of individual responsibility (in the sense of correctly evaluating--and presumably stopping the Nazi's) was a major reason that Hitler (and Stalin by implication) happened. In this format of the short philosophical essay, Hannah Arendt is at her very best as a storyteller who uses deductive reasoning when appropriate to make distinctions and to eliminate all too easy reasons for explaining the event of the Nazi seizure of power, and all of the horrors associated with it. She presents about half a dozen reasons often given, analyzes each, distinguishing and differentiating as she goes, and finally brings us back to the truth--the

individual was responsible for incorrectly judging the monster and the regime. Arendt mentions (24-25) how most went along with the Nazis because they did not want "to miss the train of History"; "the moral issue arose only with the phenomenon of "coordination" and "not with fear-inspired hypocrisy." Many, if not most, Germans boarded that train of History which caused the end to many life-long friendships. "What disturbed us was the behavior not of our enemies but of our friends, who had done nothing to bring this situation about." Continued Arendt:

They were not responsible for the Nazis, they were only impressed by the Nazi success and unable to pit their own judgment against the verdict of History, as they read it.

Without taking into account the almost universal breakdown, not of personal responsibility, but of personal *judgment* in the early stages of the Nazi regime, it is impossible to understand what actually happened...I think this early moral disintegration in German society, hardly perceptible to the outsider, was like a kind of dress rehearsal for its total breakdown, which was to occur during the war years. (25)

Nazism was new as it appeared in its totalitarian context. Therefore, noted Arendt, "We had to learn everything from scratch, in the raw, as it were--that is, without the help of categories and general rules under which to subsume our experiences" (25). She then considers the notion of legal punishment, and considers the customary understanding of what it means to punish, and finds these inadequate for the Nazi era (punishment is justified along the lines of 1) the need of society to be protected against crime, 2) the improvement of the criminal, 3) the deterring force of the warning example for potential criminals, and, finally, 4) retributive justice (24). Each of these is analyzed and dismissed as being inadequate in the case of the monster Nazi

Even the notion of retribution, the only non-utilitarian reason given for legal punishment and hence somehow out of tune with current legal thought, is hardly applicable in view of the magnitude of the crime...and find it intolerable to let go those who murdered thousands and hundreds of thousands and millions go scot-free. If this were nothing but a desire for revenge, it would be ridiculous, quite apart from the fact that the law and the punishment it metes out appeared on earth in order to break the unending vicious circle of vengeance. (26)

And in a typically Arendtian way, she captures the principle of non-contradiction showing the challenge of what it means to arrive at the truth: "Thus, here we are, demanding and meting out punishment in accordance with our sense of justice, while, on the other hand, this same sense of justice informs us that all our previous notions about punishment and its justifications have failed us" then she states in the next paragraph, "To return to my personal reflections on who should be qualified to discuss such matters" (26). When pitted against the Nazi crimes, Arendt concludes that "only if we assume that there exists a human faculty which enables us to judge rationally without being carried away by either emotion or self-interest, and which at the same time functions spontaneously, that is to say, is not bound by standards and rules under which particular cases are simply subsumed, but on the contrary, produces its own principles by virtue of the judging activity itself; only under this assumption can we risk ourselves on this very slippery moral ground with some hope of finding a firm footing" (27). Arendt has concluded what Kant did in that she is implying a duty based ethics, not the outcome but the motive behind the action is what determines good from evil. As M. McCormick noted in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "Kant responded to his predecessors by arguing

against the Empiricists that the mind is not a blank slate that is written upon by the empirical world, and by rejecting the Rationalists' notion" of knowledge gained through deduction of a mind-independent world was possible. "Reason itself is structured with forms of experience and categories that give a phenomenal and logical structure to any possible object of empirical experience. These categories cannot be circumvented to get at a mind-independent world, but they are necessary for experience of spatio-temporal objects with their causal behavior and logical properties." Moreover, these two theses constitute Kant's famous transcendental idealism and empirical realism. Kant's contributions have been just as substantial to ethics, if not more so, than his work in metaphysics and epistemology. He is the most important proponent in philosophical history of deontological, or duty based, ethics. In Kant's view, the sole feature that gives an action moral worth is not the outcome that is achieved by the action, but the motive that is behind the action. And the only motive that can endow an act with moral value, he argues, is one that arises from universal principles discovered by reason. The categorical imperative is Kant's famous statement of this duty: 'Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.'" (McCormick 2005).

But individual responsibility is or should be embedded in political responsibility for Kant and for Arendt. Each notion of whom to blame for the Nazis is taken up and found lacking in this essential Kantian-Arendtian formulation (collective guilt--where all are guilty no one is; the cog theory which Arendt believes to be used by political scientists when describing how a political system works, with large bureaucracies, the interconnections of branches civil, military, political, "it is inevitable that we speak of all persons used by the system in terms of cogs and wheels that keep the administration running" (29). So, "if I had not done it, somebody else could

and would have" (29) Accepting the lesser evil is another notion that Arendt dismisses, by mentioning the acceptance by many Germans of gradual "anti-Jewish measures, each of which was accepted with the argument that refusal to cooperate would make things worse--until a stage was reached where nothing worse could possibly have happened" (37). Again, there is presented the excuse of just following orders, or else I would be executed; or, *raison d'etat*, simple Machiavellianism. Where Arendt finally offers hope of avoiding a possible Fourth Reich, is for individuals to think what they are doing, to have a healthy skepticism, and do not consent with totalitarian dictators. "Hence the question addressed to those who participated and obeyed orders should never be, 'Why did you obey?' but "Why did you *support*?" said Arendt, who reminds us that we are "thinking animals" (48) who should eliminate the word 'obedience' from our vocabulary of moral and political thought. If we think these matters through, we might regain some measure of self-confidence and even pride, that is, regain what former times called the dignity or the honor of man: not perhaps of mankind but of the status of being human" (48).

As is shown in her review of Peter Nettel's biography of Rosa Luxemburg (originally published in the *New York Review of Books* 7/5 (October 6, 1966 as "A Heroine of the Revolution"), it is in the essay format that Arendt is at her best as a story teller, as was suggested in the essay on "personal responsibility." One might reasonably expect the review of Nettel's book to focus on the aspects of the political theory of Luxemburg at the expense of a focus on Rosa's personal life. That is not the case. Arendt tells a story from which a humanized Marxism emerges, so different from that practiced by Stalin. Rosa and Karl Liebknecht were heroes of the socialist movement as well as its victims. As the story of their murder by the Freikorps unfolds, we are, as readers, present at and in the event itself—able to feel its horror because of Arendt's

method of storytelling (which was summed up in the first paragraph of this essay) and accurately depicted as “intersubjectivity” by the great Danish anthropologist at Harvard, Michael Jackson (in *The Politics of Storytelling*). Her narrative is one of shock and surprise—a narrative of extreme events. It was a socialist government in Bonn which was culpable in the murder of these two great philosophers of Socialism. The Freikorps members involved received a slap on the wrist sentence for the murders. The soldier Runge and the officer in charge (Lieutenant Vogel) received sentences of two years, two weeks for the former, and four months for the later. Vogel was “the officer in charge when she was shot in the head inside a car and thrown into the Landwehr Canal.” His sentence was for “failing to report a corpse and illegally disposing of it” (420 in “Hannah Arendt, Rosa Luxemburg” from *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, edited by Peter Baehr). The political significance of the murders of Rosa and Karl was that a split developed in left wing politics present decades later—Socialists and Communists. Arendt noted regarding more murders: “The assassins of the extreme Right started by liquidating prominent leaders of the extreme Left. Thus Rosa Luxemburg’s death became the watershed between two eras in Germany. All those who had drifted to the Communists out of bitter disappointment with the Socialist Party were even more disappointed with the swift moral decline and political disintegration of the Communist Party, and yet they felt that to return to the ranks of the Socialists would mean to condone the murder of Rosa. Such personal reactions, which are seldom publicly admitted, are among the small, mosaic-like pieces that fall into place in the large riddle of history” (421), and here one sees the influence of Walter Benjamin on Arendt’s narrative.

Arendt concludes her review of Nettl's book ingeniously. She noted that Rosa was not an Orthodox Marxist, yet Luxemburg did make a significant contribution to socialist theory with her 1913 work on *The Accumulation of Capital*. Rosa sought and found an external source for the continued existence of capitalism since it had not collapsed under its own weight as Marx had suggested. Instead, "She found it in the so-called third-man theory, that is, in the fact that the process of growth was not merely the consequence of innate laws ruling capitalist production but of the continued existence of pre-capitalist sectors in the country" (Arendt in Baehr, 423). So "Capitalism was not a closed system that generated its own contradictions but fed on outside factors" and its collapse was not inevitable (423). Nettl's greatest achievement for Arendt was in his "recovery of the Polish-Jewish peer group and her lifelong attachment to the Polish party which sprang from it" (424). Rosa's philosophy sprang from her excellent relations with her Jewish family with its emphasis on equality—"the experience of a childhood world in which mutual respect and unconditional trust, a universal humanity and a genuine, almost naïve contempt for social and ethnic distinctions were taken for granted" (425). Arendt included Nettl's account of Rosa's great and only love affair--that with radical leftist Leo Jogiches—but with great critical insight. Arendt noted that Nettl's account was that of a male chauvinist who had not grasped that Rosa was a feminist, yet a woman who (according to Arendt) loved only one man in her life and who years later forgave him for his affair with another woman. "This generation still believed firmly that love strikes only once" (428). He was "arrested two months after the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg and shot in the back in the police station...Such were the mores of the Weimar Republic. Reading and remembering these old stories, one becomes painfully aware of the difference between the German comrades and the members of

the peer group. During the Russian revolution of 1905 Rosa Luxemburg was arrested in Warsaw, and her friends collected the money for bail” (430). Political theory, revolution, and humanity at its best are the elements in the story which include the reader in the event and which make its impact truthful. Fiction and fact become the truth when a good story is told.

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