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Abstract

A review of:

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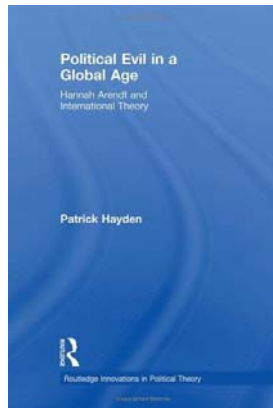
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Hannah Arendt in a Global Age: Political Evil and International Theory

By Matthew S. Weinert

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Introduction

While justifying an Allied alliance with Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin during World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill quipped publicly that “if Hitler were to invade Hell, I would at least make a favorable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons.” The logic echoes prior calculations of the “lesser of two evils” principle: *Liever Turks dan Paaps* (“better a Turk than a Papist”), the rallying cry of the Dutch during their sixteenth to seventeenth century revolt against Spanish absolutism, was an adaptation of an earlier Christian adage heard in the Balkans—“Better the turban than the mitre”—when faced with imperial Ottoman expansion.

Patrick Hayden does not take such platitudes for granted, but interrogates them and thus reveals not only hidden truths, but also tensions and fictions bound up in them. The book is in many respects a response to, or elaboration of, Hannah Arendt’s rejection of the concept of the “lesser evil,” which, in conventional thought, had been equated with “homelessness, rootlessness and the disintegration of political bodies and social classes” in contradistinction to “the greater evil” of totalitarianism (Arendt 1994: 271-72 quoted on Hayden: 7). If the lesser evils “do not directly produce totalitarianism,” she thought, they “have invariably led us to” greater evils (*Ibid.*).

Arendt offered not a systematic treatise on the matter, but “thought fragments” wrested from the past (Arendt 1968c: 205) that can be read as an outline for future study. Hayden, too, engages in a form of “pearl-diving,” a term which Arendt reserved for the brilliant insights of her dear friend, Walter Benjamin, who, having fled with other Jews into Spain but was denied transit by the Franco regime, committed suicide as he confronted inevitable detention and, ultimately, transfer to the Nazis. “Like the pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea,” she analogizes,

not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past—but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guides this thinking is the conviction that although the living is subject to the ruin of time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization...[and that] some things ‘suffer a sea-change’ and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living—as ‘thought fragments’, as something ‘rich and strange’ (Ibid.: 205f).

Patrick Hayden's form of pearl diving offers a compelling, rich, and carefully argued treatise on political evil in a global age, which he examines with respect to genocide and crimes against humanity; poverty and radical economic inequality; global refugees, displaced persons, and the stateless; and, finally, (predatory) neoliberal economic policies. His cases illustrate why in the Arendtian / Hayden framework evil cannot be graded into lesser and greater forms: precisely because evil at its base refers to making humans superfluousness, dehumanizing them, or obliterating "personhood through several perversions of power" (Hayden 2009: 3). But for Hayden, evil is not simply a description of a process or an act, but "a necessary and potent tool for both critique and change" (3). Calling something evil is not a banality—contra flippant uses of the term in contemporary political discourse—but a call to action. International political theory, in his reading, is at heart normative, genealogical, critical theory insofar as theory must not take structures, institutions, and processes as they are, but examine how they came to be and how they may be changed. Thus responding to the precarious negative solidarity that binds all humans in a fragile world, he pushes us to reflect on how we might fashion such solidarity in positive (that is, responsible) ways. And by doing so, he contributes substantively to multiple literatures: the increasingly voluminous literature on Arendt; international political theory; international justice; human rights; and global governance. He converses intimately and effectively with Arendt's impressive and wide-ranging corpus, prying loose not only the rich and the strange, but extricating in the process political theory and theorists from their occasional insularity—on this point I agree with Ben Berger's 2010 review of Hayden's book—by using the tools of political theory to illuminate pressing contemporary issues. If Arendt implored people not to think about how she fits or doesn't fit with established academic perspectives but rather to engage the world as it is around them, then Political Evil in a Global Age is Arendtian through and through.

On Arendt and International Relations

Hannah Arendt was no theorist of international relations. Yet a serious if modest literature demonstrates the promises of a sustained dialogue between the concepts Arendt situated at the forefront of her impressive corpus such as plurality, freedom, power, evil, and judgment, and various aspects of international relations including human rights, imperialism, international crimes, participatory politics, (global) political protest, poverty, refugees, the stateless, totalitarianism, violence, and war (see, for example, Lang and Williams 2005; Axtmann 2006; Birmingham 2006; Owens 2007; Burke 2008; Parekh 2008; and Weinert 2009). These authors show that, despite occasionally frustrating ambiguity, Arendt offers some rather novel ways to think about the challenges wrought by an increasingly interconnected and simultaneously fragmented world.

Scholars and practitioners capture this interconnectedness and fragmentation with the term globalization. If globalization refers to the intensification and broadening of political, legal, social, and economic activities across borders, then by implication globalization—with its global flows of arms, capital, currency, disease, drugs, goods, ideas, people, and pollution, and its proliferating networks of international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, crime syndicates, and terrorist cells that link disparate peoples in common fates—serves as a conceptual proxy for thinking about change in the midst of continuity in international relations. Indeed, a prodigious body of work

takes globalization as a starting point and reads various alterations, dissonances, contradictions, and homogenizations from it.¹

The kinds of integrative opportunities and dissonant fissures precipitant from globalization provide multiple opportunities to rethink the global human condition, and one might be inclined to read the literature on cosmopolitanism, global justice, world society, global civil society, democratic internationalism, and transnationalism through that lens. Further, if one understands globalization to affect states, societies, and peoples by subjecting them to its dislocations and making available to them its profits; to involve multiple kinds of actors; and to alter that space we call the international, then one very well can argue that people have a stake in regulating, governing, supervising, directing, curtailing, and stimulating globalization and its many manifestations. A substantial body of literature focuses on extending and developing democracy as a form of governance, a political principle, and as a normative ideal in this global age.² Approaches range from institution building and reform to encouragement of direct, citizen-based participation and social movements (see for example Held 1995; Falk 1999; Gilbert 1999; Bleiker 2000; Anderson 2002; Kuper 2006). Both the implication and the expectation underlying those approaches are that democratic procedures, institutions, and involvements will qualitatively alter the landscape of international politics and remake the world in a transnational, if not cosmopolitan, vein.

Well before the term globalization became fashionable, Hannah Arendt recognized the transformational and (dis)integrative potentials of globalizing processes. In her 1958 laudation of Karl Jaspers, her former mentor, she noted that:

[hu]mankind, which for all preceding generations was no more than a concept or ideal, has become something of an urgent reality... [Hu]mankind owes its existence not to the dreams of the humanists nor to the reasoning of the philosophers and not even, at least primarily, to political events, but almost exclusively to the technical development of the Western world... Technology, having provided the unity of the world, can just as easily destroy it[;] the means of global communication were designed side by side with means of possible global destruction... The solidarity of [hu]mankind... is entirely negative; it rests not only on a common interest in an agreement which prohibits the use of atomic weapons, but, perhaps also... on a common desire for a world that is a little less unified. This negative solidarity, based on the fear of global destruction, has its correspondence in a less articulate, but no less potent, apprehension that the solidarity of mankind can be meaningful in a positive sense only if it is coupled with political responsibility (Arendt, 1968a: 82f).

Arendt's was a rooted cosmopolitanism born out of the horrors of the twentieth century in which she herself was immersed—as a detainee in the Gurs concentration camp from which she managed to escape as a refugee, and a stateless person in the United States—and thus out of necessity. Hayden thus characterizes Arendt as a “cosmopolitan realist,” given the very clear tendencies in her work towards the tragic (evildoing) and the affirmative (“the possibility of resisting evil for the sake of human dignity” (8)). If the enormity and proportion of the crimes committed by the Nazis (and Communists) preoccupied her (e.g. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,

¹It might be worth mentioning that Hayden views this “discrepancy between the integrative and destructive dimensions of globalization” as “a characteristic of the very logic of neoliberalism, one that necessitates the destruction of all other visions of the world in order to construct its maximal or totalizing conception of world order” (103).

²By democracy as a form of governance, I refer to institutional arrangements and procedural mechanisms of government such as checks and balances, the rule of law, and rule by representation; by democracy as a political principle, I refer to inclusion of multiple actors in the political process; and by democracy as a normative ideal, I refer to a commitment to preserving individuality, freedom, and rights accorded equally to all.

and even *The Life of the Mind*, which precipitated from her observations of Adolf Eichmann), then so too did revolution and other acts of self-creation (*The Human Condition*, *On Revolution*, *Men in Dark Times*, *Rabel Varnhagen: Life of a Jewess*). Put differently, if totalitarian regimes shattered all pretense to tradition, culture, and civilization, they also made us painfully aware that “the claim to global rule” pursued in the name of humanity³ transformed humankind from “a beautiful dream of unity or a dreadful nightmare of strangeness” into “a hard inescapable reality” (Arendt 1951: 434).

Arendt read into these horrors, to which she appended the threat of nuclear holocaust, a negative solidarity, which very well might apply to or stem from contemporary analogues such as terrorism, environmental catastrophe, and, in some parts of the world, extreme poverty and the persistence of disease—and Patrick Hayden’s elegantly composed and brilliantly explicated book delves deeply into some of them. Fear of endangerment, mass destruction, or mass superfluity might engender a sense of commonality—of a common world, a common humanity, a common fate—and with it an accompanying sense of responsibility, or what Arendt calls positive solidarity. Yet there is nothing inevitable about the translation of a sense of commonality into forms of responsibility in part because, as Arendt mused, responsibility might prove to be an “intolerable situation” (1968a: 83).⁴ Where, one might ask, do my responsibilities to myself end and my responsibilities to others begin? How far do my responsibilities to these others extend (on these questions see Booth et al. 2001)? Arendt’s response was constrained, if prescient, and generally followed Jaspers’ thoughts on the matter: construct a global communication system to enable “mutual understanding and progressing self-clarification” and permit humankind to “acquire a past of its own” (1968a: 84 and 89). Presumably, broader, deeper, and more frequent connections will in turn generate thicker conceptions of commonality and responsibility across borders.

This kind of deliberative project, one notably advanced by Jürgen Habermas, squarely placed the emphasis on citizen participation in political and social life, without which discussion would be relegated to the finalizing of contracts and perhaps, provocatively stated, the terms of our service to others. Yet Arendt thought deliberation too limited; she therefore endeavored to extricate her conception of positive solidarity from the confines of philosophy and explore political and institutional manifestations of and vehicles for it.

But she did not do this systematically. Fragments litter her corpus: in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963a), she advocates construction of an international criminal tribunal; in *On Revolution* (1963b), her thoughts turn to revolutionary movements and the council system—a form of direct, citizen-based leadership and governance; and in *Crises in the Republic* (1972), she attempts to link these elements in, tantalizingly, a new theory of state predicated on the council system, which has appeared on the historical stage multiple times:

spontaneous organization of council systems occurred in all revolutions, in the French Revolution, with Jefferson in the American Revolution, in the Parisian commune, in the Russian revolutions, in the wake of

³Arendt writes, “the crimes against human rights, which have become a specialty of totalitarian regimes, can always be justified by the pretext that right is equivalent to being good or useful for the whole in distinction to its parts” (1973: 298f). The claim as I read begs appeal to minimal universal ethical and moral standards while permitting some negotiation and dialogue to guide their application. Linklater (2001: 274) proposes the concept of harm as one such standard as it “is present in all moral codes [and]... is universal without being foundational (the keystone of all moralities) or exhaustive (encompassing the full range of moral duties and responsibilities).”

⁴Andrew Linklater (2001 and 2009) develops the logic by focusing on cosmopolitan harm conventions.

the revolutions in Germany and Austria at the end of World War I, finally in the Hungarian Revolution. What is more, they never came into being as a result of a conscious revolutionary tradition or theory, but entirely spontaneously, each time as though there had never been anything of the sort before. Hence the council system seems to correspond to and to spring from the very experience of political action (Arendt 1972: 230-32).

For both Arendt and Hayden, political action stems not only from the wellspring of human creativity and ingenuity, but also is a response to the very plague that threatens to destroy such creativity and ingenuity in the first place: evildoing.

Evildoing

Political Evil in a Global Age moves us beyond thinking of evil in narrow confines—either as theological construct or, more viscerally, in terms of violence enacted upon the human body (33). Following Arendt, Hayden urges us to consider other forms of political violence: systemic poverty, statelessness, and neoliberal globalization. The justification for this move lies in the assertion that if we assess certain phenomena that might be taken for granted or viewed as inexorable, then theoretical thinking—here done through the Arendtian lens of political evil—very well might help liberate us from a nonchalance that is destructive of the human world and therefore instigate us to “do something” in ways that produce forms of positive solidarity.

Hayden approaches evil on two Arendtian premises. The first concerns her insight that evildoing “has to do with...making human beings as human beings superfluous” (Arendt quoted on Hayden: 13). By superfluousness, they mean “the distinctively political problem of dehumanization associated with the deliberate infliction of large-scale degradation, exclusion and, ultimately, dispensability or disposability from political life of increasingly larger numbers of people” (3). In the “systematic attempt to eliminate human spontaneity, individuality and plurality,” instances of political evil—which Arendt (1973) prominently identified with the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany, Stalin’s Soviet Union, and, less so since she did not study it, Mao’s China—do not simply liquidate individuals, “but rather the very idea of humanity itself” (6). Actions are evil, Hayden maintains, “insofar as they produce the systematic destruction of people’s human status by means of rendering their particularity, that is, *who* they are as unique human beings, superfluous. The logic of superfluity...is not merely to kill people, but completely to dehumanize them, to strip them of all dignity and to treat them as nothing more than manipulable and expendable matter” (13f).

Second, Hayden’s position on applying the term evil to acts not directly involving brute physical violence stems from Arendt’s own broader reading (6). She insisted that limiting the term evil to describing the horrors of the Nazi and Soviet regimes, and demoting all other instances of evil as “lesser” was “meaningless, because [superfluity/dehumanization] may be true of all evils in our entire history” (Arendt quoted on Hayden: 6-7). She continues:

Yet all historical and political evidence clearly points to the more-than-intimate connection between the lesser and the greater evil. If homelessness, rootlessness, and the disintegration of political bodies and social classes do not directly produce totalitarianism, they at least produce almost all of the elements that eventually go into its formation...The natural conclusion from the true insight into a century so fraught with danger of the greatest evil should be a radical negation of the whole concept of the lesser evil in politics, because far from protecting us against the greater ones, the lesser evils have invariably led us to them (Arendt 1994: 271-72 quoted on Hayden: 7).

Some may reject Arendt's ruminations as empirically weak generalizations, in part because poverty, statelessness, and homelessness have not produced dictatorships wherever we find them. Skeptical readers must, however, keep two points in mind.

First, Arendt wrote in response to a specific set of historical circumstances, and drew connections between these phenomena and the rise of the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, even if the causality was not immediate and direct. True, this point may prove fodder for the skeptic; therefore, one additional point must be considered.

In January 2011, mass protests by Tunisian citizens forced the resignation of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who ruled (dictatorially) for twenty-three years. Weeks later, protests rocked Egypt. After eighteen days of mass demonstrations, Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's leader for thirty years, resigned. Soon, the proverbial dominoes began to line up and the Arab Spring heated up. King Abdullah of Jordan sacked the government and indicated new reform measures would be enacted. Algeria's president decreed the end (albeit "in the near future") of a nineteen-year-old state of emergency (Jerome 2011). A UN Security Council authorized air campaign (assumed by NATO) eventually helped the opposition force Libya's Muammar Gaddafi from power, and by November 2011, Yemen's President Saleh declared that he would not run for reelection in response to growing political dissent and the threat of international community sanctions against him, his family, and his government.

One might make sense of the Arab Spring from the standpoint of a United Nations Human Development Report that identified, across the Arab region, endemic "unemployment, social inequality, repression, and corruption" (cited in *Ibid.*) as warranting serious concern.⁵ Indeed, those factors were repeatedly cited by protestors, and compelled U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to call their coalescence "the perfect storm" (2011). Occasional ruminations vocalized in the press, and Israel and the West's cautious response to the Egyptian protests (see, for example, Karon 2011) regarding the possibility that a radical Islamist regime might take over, underscore Arendt's broader point that masses of frustrated, systemically repressed, and superfluous people sometimes unite to exert their agency and their relevance, if not her specific point about the political irrelevance of the "lesser evil" concept. Sometimes the political vacuums created are filled with totalitarian demagogues in sheep's clothing. My point is not that the collapse of the Mubarak regime will lead to a fundamentalist, totalitarian-like replacement, but to stress connections to Arendt's historically-based analysis and to emphasize that policy makers, too, are attuned to such linkages. Contingencies, though, invariably affect the course of events.

These "lesser evils" (I use the term despite Arendt's admonition) should not be thought of as inexorable stepping stones to "greater evils," but, as Hayden implores us, as forms of evil in and of themselves. The reader may be perplexed. When we think of evil, we may conjure images of the Holocaust or the Rwandan genocide, not poverty, homelessness, or statelessness, which we may understand as inefficient and unfortunate outcomes of systems or, in some cases, bad (personal, governmental) decisions. But each of these fulfills the condition that Arendt set for construal of something as evil: "making human beings as human beings superfluous" (Arendt quoted on Hayden: 13).

⁵Compare Charles T. Call's edited volume, *Constructing Justice and Security after War* (2007); several of the cases illustrate unequivocally clear connections between corruption, poverty, and unemployment and persistent insecurities and violence in transitional states.

Hayden explores that condition in part by elaborating on what I understand to be two themes running through the book. The first theme identifies permissive structural conditions for contemporary evildoing; sovereignty and neoliberalism figure prominently. The second is psychological or psycho-social in orientation and concerns thoughtlessness.

On the first theme, Hayden argues that genocide and crimes against humanity, poverty, statelessness, and neoliberal globalization are illustrative of sovereign prerogative: sovereigns may directly commission such evils; remain indifferent to them; or acquiesce in their perpetuation since evils may be structural by-products (of, as Hayden notes, neoliberal globalization⁶). For instance, in one particularly poignant passage in the chapter on statelessness, Hayden maintains that:

sovereignty responds to the contingency of political action by asserting the absolute dominance of the sovereign will over the realm of human affairs and thus over the freedom of movement of the plurality of individuals and groups inhabiting the earth. Consequently, sovereign power requires a condition of inequality for its very functioning: it must place limits upon freedom of movement and resort to mechanisms of exclusion if it is to assert its supremacy over people and territory. The sovereignty of the modern nation-state is thus placed on a politically disastrous collision course with freedom of movement and the right to have rights (88).

This collision course disquieted Arendt too. Human rights, she cautioned, were imprisoned in a factual conundrum. Presumably, according to multiple legal documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants, human beings, by virtue of their status as human beings, were entitled to sets of rights. Yet the reality she observed (and experienced as a Jew) belied such assertions. If States are unwilling to protect human rights, as happened with minorities during the interwar period and, as Hayden shows, the contemporary stateless, then human rights were reduced, in her estimation, to mere verbiage. Historical facts and experiences thus formed the basis of Arendt's (in)famous claim that the most important right was the right to have rights, or the right to belong to a political community that recognizes and protects such rights (Arendt 1951: 293). Otherwise, sovereign prerogative trumps human rights, even if they have since her initial observations in 1951 increasingly served as a useful tool wielded against state prerogative.

The same kind of logic is manifest in Hayden's treatment of neoliberalism. Structurally, neoliberalism as a totalizing ideology fundamentally alters the contours of public space. On this point, his argument closely follows Arendt's indictment of ideological thinking: "neoliberal globalization must aim to depoliticize the public realm in order to emancipate not human beings, but the metahistorical 'laws' of free market capitalism, from the hindrance of diverse and potentially oppositional political opinions and action" (115). In the neoliberal world, public space, or the space of politics, is usurped "by powerfully organized private interests" (111)—which is precisely why Arendt remained skeptical of the inclusion of social issues in political life. She was not callous and indifferent to the suffering of the poor; rather, given the "modern definition of politics as the functional struggle for economic power," she aimed to "defend the notion of political freedom" against such usurpation (*Ibid.*). Two U.S. Supreme Court rulings demonstrate her point.

In *Garvetti v. Ceballos* (2005), the Court ruled 5-4 that the speech of public officials is not protected by the First Amendment when such speech is attributable to employees' public duties—which no doubt raises distinct kinds of questions about academic freedom for academics employed

⁶Justin Rosenberg's *The Empire of Civil Society* (1994) provides a similar kind of argument with regard to neoliberal globalization: political power and sovereignty serve the cause of the expansion of capital precisely by acting to protect it from challenges, both internal and external.

by public universities. When measured against *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), it appears that corporations and unions have more free speech rights than do public employees and, on one interpretation, non-tenured faculty. Sovereignty and ideological thinking may very well predetermine outcomes that make Hayden's second major theme take the form of an imperative: thinking deeply and systematically about evil "can demonstrate how blinded we have become to the occurrence of political evil in our world" (8) and perhaps, hopefully, instigate action to halt or ameliorate these "other" forms of evil.

Blindedness or, put in an Arendtian idiom, thoughtlessness, may exacerbate the moral impoverishments of global market and security structures. Thoughtlessness, or "an uncritical reliance on conventional attitudes as a shield against reality" (4), was at the root of Arendt's at one time notorious conception of the "banality of evil," by which she did not mean the commonplace occurrence of evil but the lack of depth or demonic dimension to evildoing.

Eichmann was not Iago and not Macbeth, and nothing would have been farther from his mind than to determine with Richard III 'to prove a villain'. Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all...He merely, to put the matter colloquially, never realized what he was doing (Arendt quoted on Hayden: 37).⁷

Particularly with regard to mass instances of political evil, the absence of motivations other than, perhaps, personal advancement, must figure into explanations and understandings of evildoing. James Waller's inimitable work, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (2002), illustrates the degree to which Arendt's thesis, once vilified, has become an accepted part of the study of evil.

Hayden adopts Arendt's position on thoughtlessness, and for the most part is successful in demonstrating that it indeed plays a distinct role in the (unwitting) perpetuation of contemporary forms of political evil such as genocide and crimes against humanity, poverty, statelessness, and neoliberal globalization. Yet a few questions emerge from his analysis. For instance, in the chapter on "the evil of global poverty," he writes:

...Arendt's point is that Eichmann's normality 'was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together. For it implied that this new type of criminal...commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong'. Even in the absence of monstrous motives, political evil can arise when individuals 'thoughtlessly' adapt themselves to a system that makes human beings superfluous. While the fact that thoughtlessness and its apparent normality can lead to more destructive consequences than diabolical wickedness is a dismal conclusion, it plainly conveys the normative ambivalence captured by the phrase 'banality of evil' (37).

To be fair, Hayden writes in the language of contingency: "even in the absence of monstrous motives, political evil *can* arise." But his point is clear: thoughtless adaptation to market-based capitalism permits the continued reproduction of a system that engenders pervasive and systemic poverty, the effects of which render segments of humanity superfluous. The reader, though, needs more. Could something other than thoughtlessness be at work here? How do we prove the claim? Might thinking people decide after sustained analysis that nothing or very little can be done, or that poverty is the fault of personal failure, laziness, or misfortune, and therefore is emphatically not a

⁷For more on Eichmann, see my review of Harry Mulisch's *Criminal Case 40/61, the Trial of Adolf Eichmann* in the 2006 edition of this journal at <http://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/volumes/2006/weinert-2006.pdf>.

socio-political concern? (I have had students in the past proffer this view). We may adapt ourselves to a system that produces superfluous beings, but thoughtlessness may not be a primary or even an underlying force. Perhaps the indictment must rest on other grounds.

The same line of critique may be levied against Hayden's treatment of neoliberalism as a form of political evil. True, he makes a compelling case for treating neoliberalism as an ideology that engenders the "banalization of political action and the superfluousness of that worldly space between individuals" (117). Neoliberalism, he maintains, "exerts such a baleful influence on the world because it promotes a widespread attitude of worldlessness, of being without a sense of shared place or reality" (*Ibid.*). In its "drive to globalize the socioeconomic order as a space of uniformity and conformity," neoliberalism

effectively denies the plurality and spontaneity that defines a properly human world, thereby still leaving individuals fundamentally isolated from one another in the age of the global village. Neoliberal globalization drives human agency from the world, pushing us towards a worldlessness that is inimical to an authentic, meaningful and dignified human existence (Ibid.).

The portrait is rather damning. Yet various agents broadly subsumed under the rubric "global civil society" challenge this "reductive neoliberal vision" by creating "alliances on the basis of diverse experiences and issues," opening up "a pluralist discussion about change and the shape that the world might take," and promoting "participatory forms of democratic dialogue and debate beyond the confines of formal governmental institutions" (119). Here, human rights matter in a way that might prove to be an antidote to Arendt's skepticism of a human rights argument then in its infancy. While neoliberal policies have denigrated the daily existence of over a billion people, the rights discourse (combined with an ethical impulse) has instigated movements (e.g. microcredit financing, the Millennium Development Goals, the GAVI Alliance, and the like) to ameliorate the evil byproducts of capitalism. While neoliberalism enabled enormous wealth production and concentration, some of the more egregiously wealthy, like Bill Gates, have founded philanthropic organizations to help tackle some of the world's egregious problems (though some may criticize the fact that the "provision of basic needs is now often at the mercy of philanthro-capitalists like Gates"⁸). While neoliberalism emphasizes private ownership and intellectual property rights over socio-economic rights of the downtrodden, handsomely paid researchers for pharmaceutical industries may develop drugs to enable those with HIV or cancer to live long, productive, healthy lives.

The point is not to pit one inelegant grocery list against Hayden's elegantly explicated argument, as if this is a game one can win (he would win, I suspect). Rather, the point is to reveal that neoliberal globalization has stimulated and encouraged some socially beneficial forms of entrepreneurialism and activism in ways that very much exemplify Arendt's core concepts of plurality, agency, freedom, natality, and, critically, *amor mundi*, or love of the world. Hayden appreciates this and devotes several pages to the argument (118-121). One might say that human rights become on this reading a tool or weapon in pushing back against the evil excesses of structures and thoughtless. However, Hayden cautions the reader in the end "not to romanticize global civil society, [but] to recognize its contradictory nature" (121), since we must acknowledge that it "is particularly vulnerable to being undermined by the geopolitical expansion of neoliberalism" (*Ibid.*). Despite or even in spite of the cautionary assessment, the extent to which Hayden admits the possibility of, in varying degrees, mitigating if not resolving some of

⁸ I owe this critique to an anonymous reviewer.

neoliberalism's ills, compels me to question parts of the argument. We are not all duped; a narrative predicated on the nastiness or evilness of neoliberalism too often undercuts or underestimates the capacity of ordinary individuals to push back and make advances, no matter how systemically insignificant that may appear to others.

Finally, we may interrogate the idea of neoliberalism as a form of evil. Let us accept, for the sake of argument, that certain agents (who might they may be? The IMF, World Bank, multinational corporations, and Wall Street executives?) intend to create masses of impoverished peoples not simply in the periphery, to use Wallerstein's language, but also in the semi-periphery and core for the sake of elevating the socio-politico-economic status of particular groups of people. Do those agents particularly and neoliberalism generally deserve the same kind of response as, say, the Nazis, who sought to rid the world of those it deemed superfluous? (Hayden, to be fair, does not argue they do, only that we need to be aware of the dehumanizing aspects of both and generate appropriate responses.) Is the intended evil of poverty equable with the intended annihilation of peoples? Are we to accept that superfluous peoples in a neoliberal economic system have no say in their fate, no opportunity to attempt to self-advance? Does not neoliberalism violate its own expansionary logics by permitting egregious impoverishment—what we might call geographies of destitution—to exist unabated, and to fester into unimaginable forms of misery? Hence might growing awareness of such lost opportunities, profit, and capital mobilization (let us continue to use the instrumental language of efficiency and market economy to describe the condition) reignite the engine of neoliberal expansionism through investment and industrialization in ways that ameliorate the ills experienced by the many,⁹ even if at the considerable profit of the few?

Such a line of questioning and the view that underpins it no doubt invites attack. I do not argue with the fact that neoliberal markets have produced inefficient outcomes and evils such as poverty; I simply think that one needs to make distinctions between intended versus unintended consequences—they are qualitatively different and do matter. If we could simply identify particular agents who intend to generate the evil byproducts of an evil system, then we might do well to stage a revolution and eliminate them (might this be its own form of evil?). Yet the difficulty with eradicating the evils associated with or produced by neoliberalism rests with the embeddedness of the system on the one hand, and, on the other, the difficulty in identifying precisely the agents who intend to produce superfluous human beings, perhaps because intention implies control. In that regard, I am hard pressed, despite the attraction of *The X Files*-type conspiracy, to think that a handful of people control *everything*. Incremental change might be possible where systemic change is not, and here is where human rights in the contemporary period are critical in a way they might not have been for Arendt, a stateless Jew, in the wake of World War II. Yet incremental change induces charges of co-option and insufficiency because it often is not enough; in this regard, refer back to the comment connected with footnote 8 above made by one anonymous reviewer of this essay. Because of the difficulty of remedying the ills and evils that compel such an indictment in the first place, Hayden may be right: neoliberalism as an ideology, that is, a controlling device by which we organize certain activities, processes, and structures, may indeed be an evil ideology, producing as it were the evils of poverty and the superfluity of masses of people. And we, consequently, are complicit—metaphysically guilty, as Arendt's mentor, Karl Jaspers, might have said—precisely because we become immune to it and hence do nothing; the omnipresence of poverty dulls the senses.

⁹ For a similar argument, see Bhagwati (2004).

This leaves us with the grand question: what are we to do? In response to some of the more vexingly complex evils that confront us, I intuit that Hayden might stray from Arendt's cosmopolitan realism and inch towards a more idealistic cosmopolitanism that he impugns at the start of the book (9-11). I find this bit of blurring worrisome. For instance, in his treatment of statelessness, he writes,

Recent policies and practices towards the displaced strategically (re)define refugees and stateless persons solely through an exclusionary process which places them outside the community of 'privileged' rights-holders yet within the exceptional realm of sovereign power, constituting them as superfluous human beings in a state of permanent limbo—despite the fact that each of the countries mentioned [earlier in his text] are signatories to all the major international human rights treaties proclaiming the 'inherent dignity' and 'inalienable rights' of all persons (85-6).

The claim is not as problematic as the implied solution: that states open their borders to stateless peoples. Might this prove worse in some societies, precisely because it may place undue burdens on states and communities where resources may already be scarce (especially given that a vast number of refugees flee not to the developed world but to neighboring developing and often equally impoverished, burdened countries)? Might increased pressures on such resources instigate competition, and potentially violence? What might appear as thoughtlessness might actually be a preferred outcome—precisely because other possible solutions raise the specter of violence, public backlash, strains on already limited resources, and the like?

To be fair, Hayden doesn't advocate the solution of open borders, even if he approaches it by noting that states should focus "on granting asylum to refugees and stateless persons, [and] integrating them legally into communities that will enable them to assert their rights" (82). Difficult as the solutions may be, the point is precisely to think about and entertain them, not evade them as many European countries have done (see 83-85).

For some problems, cosmopolitan realist solutions may be easier to fashion. To remind, cosmopolitan realism hinges on Arendt's "simultaneous acceptance of the tragic side of human affairs and affirmation of the possibility of resisting evil for the sake of human dignity" (8). Put in prosaic terms, a cosmopolitan realist position is one that strikes a balance between the tragic and the affirmative, which itself is rooted in a sober assessment of what is politically possible. In response to crimes against humanity and genocide, an International Criminal Court (ICC) was founded. Hayden argues that "[w]hile some backers of the ICC might regard its creation as evidence of the progressive 'enlightenment' of humankind," a cosmopolitan realist reading disposes "of historical and moral idealism" and emphasizes instead the court's emergence more from "the terrifying experience of political evil than [from] the triumph of enlightened moral consciousness, that is, [from] the horror that humanity inspires" (9). For other problems, solutions may be practically more unattainable, though Hayden moves us into deep thinking that may in the end reveal the rich and the strange, and perhaps even the efficacious, previously disregarded solution.

Two (albeit mutually implicative approaches) come to mind: action and awareness. I do not mean this disparagingly, but Hayden's is a work of political theory and hence does not so much focus on action, even if he nods in that direction (in the guise of cosmopolitan realism and the ICC for instance). Rather, this alluring, edifying book—the product of a first-rate mind—is very much oriented towards heightening our awareness of evildoing. We must, he impugns, not define evil narrowly as brute violence enacted upon the body (33). Rather, we must broaden our perspective by understanding that evil itself is fundamentally about rending human beings superfluous. If we accept

that notion, then we will come to understand evil as a rights-negating act. Quoting Thomas Pogge, Hayden maintains that socioeconomic rights are now the most frequently violated rights (49f). By drawing attention to *how* particular structures (e.g. the state-based system founded on sovereignty) or ideologies (e.g. neoliberalism) or sheer thoughtlessness render human beings superfluous in diverse ways, Hayden underscores their rights-subverting nature. Armed with such awareness, we might be better positioned to oppugn instances of evildoing in our shared world.

If this is true, then Hayden may be onto something important that extricates us from Arendt's pessimism about human rights: that left to the mercy of the State, human rights may be tragically lost. Consequently, Arendt came squarely down on the side of action, innovation, creativity, and spontaneity, not so much on appeal to rights, and thus constructed a political philosophy around what she would call natality. If a tagline could be attached to Arendt's thought, it might be that action in politics, in public, guarantees freedom. Hayden extends this insight. If Arendt focused on action, then Hayden takes up the other side of the ledger: awareness. In his account, awareness of human rights and their unfortunate violation in ways that dehumanize and render us superfluous and therefore expendable, buttresses civic action; as an antidote to thoughtlessness, it may, too, serve as an antidote to evildoing.

And therein lays the punch of this brilliant book: Hayden eschews timidity and urges, nay, forces, us to think deeply, continuously, and systematically, back and forth, with and against oneself. Nothing could be more Arendtian or gratifying.

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