The clash of identities - discourse, politics, and morality in the exchange of letters between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem
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The Clash of Identities – Discourse, Politics, and Morality in the Exchange of Letters between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem

By

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There are simply too many people, places, and events to be fully enumerated here. One should certainly not start with the buzzing and inspirational pub-life of Loughborough (which heading, naturally, should only cover proper „old-man” pubs) but, then, one should not finish with it either.¹ I will restrict this space for people.

My supervisor, Mick Billig proved to be a person I could never possibly imagine beforehand. His contribution cannot really be expressed in words. He is virtually present in every single line of this thesis, even where he is not aware of it and where I am not aware of this either. In his absence, Charles Antaki managed to fill the void, which is no small achievement. I thank him for complementing Mick’s approach and making me realise that structuring a text contributes to its substance. Steve Reicher and John Richardson helped me with their insightful suggestions during my viva and, what is more, helped me to think about the next steps.

The Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University is such a place where intellectual freedom is taken for granted, and where this concept can fully be exercised in practical term. I consider myself extremely lucky to have been presented with the opportunity to work here on my thesis. Freedom, however, does not equal mere intellectual wanderings. The presence of the Discourse and Rhetorical Analysis Group at the department provides an environment where one’s thoughts can be nurtured and developed.

Apart from those who, in one way or another, directly influenced the outcome of my project, I must include the many friends who helped me through the not-always-rosy years. In alphabetical order (and fully aware that I will accidentally fail to mention all of them), I thank Anghel Beldarrain-Durandegui, Lisa Chen, Alex Kganetsano, Kosum Omphurnuwat, Laura and Cristian Tileaga, Ana and Alex Wade; and, most certainly, full and associated members of the Beech House (Simona, Mike, Wills,

¹ I therefore put it in a footnote. In order of significance: Swan-in-the-rushes (for its real ale, loyalty card-scheme, Monday night quiz, and friendly smoking atmosphere); Moon and Bell (for its being the “Shrine” and the presence of The Professor); The Gallery (for always showing the Arsenal game); The Three Nuns (for showing QPR games, if occasionally); The Orange Tree (for their giant yorkie). Kingston-upon-Thames’s Park Tavern, and Albert should be mentioned here too.
Mary, Geetha etc.) for their invaluable friendship. Special mention must be made here of Ivaylo Nikolov (who thinks he is writing on fiscal policies but is in fact a philosopher), as well as James Cool (who thinks he is a DJ-cum-revolutionary-cum-fast bowler while is in fact a proper all-rounder).

I left Hungary but I have not left my friends. There is simply no space to enumerate all of them but they won't ever come across this thesis in the library anyway. At the time of writing this, my football club (MTK) have chances to win the league. They will certainly mess it up so it is probably the best moment where I can express my gratitude to this club for its existence.

My parents’ and grandmother’s contribution to this dissertation is so obvious that it virtually defies words.

And finally, my “partner in life” (copyright Ivaylo Nikolov), Jutka Ferencz is by any means the person who understood to the fullest extent what it means to write a thesis. If my conceptual imagination amounts to half of her visual one – this thesis must be a rather enjoyable one. Again, sentimentality overcomes me so I'd better stop here.

Thank you.
ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the fabled public exchange of letters that occurred between political theorist Hannah Arendt and historian of Jewish religion Gershom Scholem in 1964 following the historic trial of Adolf Eichmann and Arendt's subsequent publication of her report of the event, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The thesis covers the historical issues that form the contextual background to the exchange. It involves the introduction of the two participants as defining Jewish intellectuals of the past century, the course of the trial itself and the political and ideological problems it entailed as well as the turbulent history of the reception of Arendt's book. It is down to these four factors that guaranteed the eminence of the exchange of letters analysed in the thesis. Oft-quoted as the exchange is, there has been no proper analysis of it to this date. To accomplish this task, the thesis adopts the theoretical-methodological framework of discourse analysis in general, and the version of rhetorically oriented discursive psychology, proposed mainly in the publications of Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Billig (1996), in particular. This approach allows the thesis to provide a fine-grained analysis of the various ways of textual construction. Firstly, the ways examined concern the significance, worth and value of the debate itself, as formulated by both of the participants. Secondly, they involve the construction of the attempt to establish definite versions of the content of the book. Thirdly, they cover the textual acts of accounting for that content, or the practice of misinterpretation of that content, respectively. What all these three aspects have in common is the positioning of the problems touched upon in a moral and political context, and ultimately approaching them in terms of the identities of the participants. In this sense, versions of the events and ways of accounting for it will not only aim at producing accurate descriptions of events but in the forms of an implied morality or politics an implied "action-plan" for the future as well. The construction of Arendt and Scholem is, hence, analysed in terms of its argumentative organisation in order to undermine the other's counter-version and to establish its own as the definite one. While, structurally, there are many similarities in the two letters, what distinguishes them is that they conceive of their objects (i.e. the text), subject positions, and political or moral values according to which they should be assessed in quite diametrically opposite ways. This thesis not
only registers the various rhetorical ways the participants fashion their versions as
definite ones, but also accounts for the differences in their contents.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, Gershom Scholem, Eichmann Trial, Jewish identity,
discourse analysis, discursive psychology, rhetoric
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1. Introduction

The main part of this thesis is the analysis of a text. An often quoted yet, by and large, substantially neglected text: the public exchange of letters between the American-German-Jewish (in alphabetical order) political theorist Hannah Arendt and the Israeli-Jewish (of German origin) historian of Jewish religion, Gershom Scholem in 1964.1 The exchange took place in the aftermath of the historic trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem and followed the much-debated publication of Arendt’s coverage of the event, Eichmann in Jerusalem.

In analysing the text, there will be three aspects – of both Scholem’s and Arendt’s letter – I mostly concentrate on. The first concerns the very importance and significance of the exchange, as the participants construe it. Why did this happen? Why is it important? What might be the long-term significance of conducting this exchange? Second, what is its object? What is the status of Arendt’s text, as Scholem displays his understanding in his letter; and what that of Scholem’s interpretation, as Arendt counters it? What, then, is in the book and, correspondingly, in the interpretation of the book? These questions involve, naturally, on one level a construction of the event in question, and a persuasive one at that. In line with discourse analysis it is understood that these versions constantly orientate towards other challenging alternative versions on the same topic and establish themselves as superior representations to those other (potential or concrete) possibilities. Yet, another level or layer of the problem will be confronted in the thesis: the assumptions, which underpin those constructed versions. The question, then, is

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1 The exchange originally took place in private (Scholem’s letter is dated as of 23 June, 1963 while Arendt’s 20 July, 1963. See Scholem, 1991: 95-105), though already with the explicit aim of publication. Subsequently, the exchange was first published in Mitteilungsblatt, no. 33 (16 August, 1963) and reprinted then in Neue Zürcher Zeitung (20 October, 1963) and in Encounter (January, 1964). My analysis is based on the (English) Encounter-version (see the Appendix), while consulting the German original, where deemed to be required. (For further information of the history of publication, see fn. 40).
not merely what that version presented is and how it is presented as a persuasive version, but what are the unsaid but basic and necessary assumptions that are manifested within and through them.

There is, however, a third concern to address, having analysed the first two. Who, namely, is the person that produced the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and who is the one that produced this interpretation of it? What are the moral and political qualities that underpin Arendt’s or Scholem’s textual practices and those basic assumptions recovered? This issue, which both of the letters show an inclination to address, brings into the thesis a move from the text and even from the “depth” of the text and its basic assumptions to the person that produced it as well as her/his place in the world.

Hence, what the exchange in my analysis will ultimately revolve around and what the utterances examined in this thesis will be taken to point to are the questions of identity, politics, and morality. Likewise, my ultimate concern will be to investigate the political and moral conditions that make the utterances in the exchange accountable and meaningful, and to understand it as both direct and indirect answers to the current Jewish condition.

Analysing these aspects of a text, one can take several routes and I do not believe that any one of them is intrinsically superior. My way of analysing is dependent on the purpose I had in mind while working with the exchange, namely, of tracing back the rhetorical presuppositions of the utterances and to uncover thereby the conditions that account for their existence. There is nothing unique in this enterprise: reading will always inevitably involve the question of what a text really means. In my understanding, “really” is a metaphor of the reader’s activity – patience, awareness and, let us face it, love. As the last of this three-part list is to be a central issue of the thesis, it is perhaps necessary to quote here an explication of that concept:

“So it is with the word of the Torah, which reveals herself only to those who love her. [...] he understands that to those words [of the Torah] indeed nothing may be added and nothing taken away. And then for the first time he understands the true meaning of the words of the Torah, as
they stand there, those words to which not a syllable or a letter may be added and from which none may be taken away. And therefore men should take care to pursue the Torah [that is, study it with great precision], in order to become her lovers as has been related" (Zohar, II, 99a-b, quoted in Scholem, 1965: 55-56).

“That is, study it with great precision”, as the learned commentator elucidates this tale of love and interpretation. Love here is not blind and is not at all in the eye of the beholder. It is, furthermore, not the result of some kind of sudden outburst. Love, on the contrary, countenances on every single detail and realises how and why they should exactly be that way. Revelation is not a state of being but a state of eternal procedure.

To be sure, such an attitude is an old-fashioned one. Is it, however, politically conservative as well? I do not think that it should necessarily be so. Love here is the precise opposite of being uncritical. Nothing is taken-for-granted; nothing is taken-for-natural. It is the basis of any given status quo that may be investigated and such an investigation may both precipitate the evaluation of that status quo as well as provide one with the means to get rid of it. Love and subversion are therefore taken here to be potential bedfellows, if unlikely ones. What they should convey together by the end of this thesis is, on the one hand, how those categories usually voiced with regard to this exchange (or elsewhere) are more productively understood if considered actually occasioned and constructed in the exchange; and what the basic assumptions of these constructions and categories are, on the other. The whole of Jewish history might not merely surround this exchange. It might not simply bear its mark on it. Rather, it might be found in these very letters to be analysed, as being constructed and occasioned.

In Chapter 2, I will start with the description of the historical background information that contextualises the exchange. The chapter will begin with Hannah Arendt, her life and scholarly achievement – from, as it were, a Jewish perspective. As the narration of a story, however short, involves by definition selecting certain aspects and neglecting others, there is no shame in acknowledging this perspective. Taking into

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2 This is Gershom Scholem’s insertion.
account that this dissertation concentrates on the construction of Jewish identity and one’s relation as a Jew to one’s past as well as one’s community, this choice might even look self-evident. Approaching Arendt, the person, the political theorist, the essayist, and the philosopher, primarily as a Jewish person has recently become characteristic of the ever-growing literature on her (cf. Barnouw, 1990; Bernstein, 1996; Parvikko, 1996; Ring, 1997) and I will draw upon these monographs. I follow up the sketch of Arendt’s life with a similar piece on Scholem. In his case, certainly, the problem is not to justify a narration “from a Jewish perspective”. Hardly any other would seem reasonable and, as far as I know, virtually no work written on him ignored the Jewish aspects of his life or work. The special perspective here, rather, is the parallel existence of the meticulous, objectivist scholar and the Zionist “ideologue” of Jewish history and identity. Or even, complicating things even further, the historian of mysticism and the mystic himself.

Having introduced the two participants, I will turn to the event itself that prompted the exchange to take place. This will involve the description of the trial of Adolf Eichmann along with its unique significance and Arendt’s book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* along with the huge public outcry that followed its publication. As in the cases of the biographical sketches, I will not have the time to dwell on either of these issues for too long. What will have to suffice – much in the way as I render Arendt and Scholem – is that I try to indicate certain problems and angles from which the meaning and importance of these events might be gauged.

In Chapter 3, I will present my methodological and theoretical considerations. The chapter will begin with a very brief review of the history of the reception of the exchange, where I will try to indicate the huge disparity existing between the eminence the exchange has been accorded with, the amount of work having referred to it on one hand, and the dearth of any kind of substantive analysis devoted to it on the other. I will first briefly introduce discourse analysis and then three typical subcategories of it: bottom-up conversation analysis, top-down critical discourse analysis, and discursive psychology. The theoretical-methodological approach I will endorse thereafter (“middle-of-the-road” discursive psychology) is no automatic remedy for the identified shortcomings of the reception of the exchange (there is no methodological remedy for misquotations and intellectual carelessness). Nevertheless, it will be introduced as an
approach that pays enormous attention to textual details (something commentators on the exchange never really did) yet does not shy away from a potentially big picture emerging from them (something certain strands of empirical approaches to discourse do).

In Chapter 4, I will begin the analysis of the exchange. The first (two) of four analytical chapters will be entirely on Gershom Scholem’s letter. What I will investigate in this chapter is how he establishes a definite version of the content of Arendt’s book, what this content is constructed to be and what kinds of assumptions are constructed to underpin that content. As I will try to show, Scholem is at pains to establish Arendt’s “historical judgment” as a pervasively and strikingly anti-Semitic one and deriving from an equally immoral act of judgment. That act is presented as parasitic upon (indeed, quasi-synonymous with) Arendt’s rejecting the moral authority of the “dead” — an idiosyncratic concept covering those who “were there” — in evaluating and morally judging those very conditions and acts taking place during the Holocaust. The upshot being, hence, that Arendt’s content of judgment ultimately could not but be immoral: the moment of judgment equals the moment of immorality.

However, if Arendt’s book is reconstructed to be an effectively anti-Semitic text and one that derives as such from the very act of producing it in disregarding the sole moral authority of the “dead”, the normative question arises: how could she do it? Scholem’s practice of accounting for this state of affairs will be the topic of Chapter 5. The answer is a move, as it were, beyond the text and beyond even the basic assumptions recovered in the act of producing it. That is, it involves the personality of the author as Scholem invokes two moralities in this chapter. One that accounts for his morally just approach and another that explains Arendt’s failure. My analysis will attempt to uncover the morality Scholem constructs and his efforts to position Arendt with regard to it. What stands for this morality in Scholem’s letter is the notion of Ahabath Israel, or in his translation, “the love of the Jewish people”. I will analyse how this concept and the morality it represents are constructed in the text, how they are assimilated to a different language and culture, while their uniqueness is constantly shown to be retained. The morality (that would honour the moral authority of the “dead”) Ahabath Israel expresses will be understood as a broadly (as well as vaguely) Jewish one, that requires one (once perceived as a Jew) to act in a broadly-vaguely Jewish way but shunning from any kind
of definition of what it might exactly be. Furthermore, as will be argued, Scholem’s construction does not simply involve a morality. There is the existence of many billions of morally just people that naturally do not and should not care a bit about Ahabath Israel. Hence, the rejection of this morality in the rejection of Ahabath Israel will be analysed not merely as a moral choice but one that ultimately indicates the quasi-pathology of Jewish self-hatred. That is, as a natural subject of that morality (i.e. a Jew) rejects it, this state of affairs indicates that he or she is a Jewish anti-Semite. This displays the striking conclusion and implication of Scholem’s letter: Eichmann in Jerusalem is an anti-Semitic book, originating from a self-hating author, the account (either as a cause or as a consequence) for this being Arendt’s rejection of Ahabath Israel.

In Chapter 6, I will start analysing Hannah Arendt’s answer, her textual moves mirroring those of Scholem. I will scrutinise her response to Scholem’s highly damaging construction of her own book. This, first, will result in Arendt constructing a substantially different version of his book’s content. Second, however, Arendt’s reconstruction of her book will involve an orientation towards Scholem’s letter as well, as a profoundly and astonishingly failed interpretation. Hence, the issue will implicitly be shifted from Arendt’s significant and striking moral failure to that of the intellectual insignificance of the debate and, then, to the significance of this very insignificance. Arendt will not only defend herself against accusations but will redirect those accusations to Scholem. Likewise, his construction of the content of Arendt’s book will not only turn to be incorrect in a factual sense, but immoral. Claiming though to talk in the name of “the Jews”, Scholem’s interpretation will turn out to be serving in fact only the interests of the “Jewish functionaries” at the expense of the masses, the “simple Jews”.

Again, paralleling the analysis of Scholem’s text, in Chapter 7 I will look at how Arendt moves beyond the text, beyond its morally dubious assumptions, and what she “explores” there (and makes us “see”). What is the morality or ideology that accomplishes such a striking “misunderstanding” and such a scheming innuendo? What is the source from where these untenable insinuations are leaking? The subject position that is to account for Scholem’s machinations will be that of the right-wing, religious Zionist who (ab)uses religious concepts and symbols in the public-political realm and who invokes the idea of collective unity in order to stifle dissent. An effectively
totalitarian ideology will therefore be reconstructed by Arendt, her answer amounting *not* to the opposition “cold brain” and rationality to Scholem’s invoked “love of the Jewish people”, but exposing the destructive hypocrisy covered up in and by his rhetoric. Reflexively, albeit Arendt does not explicitly depict herself as the patriot, the saviour of the “real” interests of the Jewish people, she does imply that it is her position as the dissenter without which no kind of patriotism and no kind of democratic institution is possible.

In Chapter 8, I will present my conclusion. This will involve still more questions, rather than answers, however. Namely, one must be puzzled by these two, diametrically opposed constructions, which are completely excluding each other. Which of them are we to believe? Is Arendt a Jewish anti-Semite and Scholem the representative of a legitimate and just Jewish morality, honouring the moral authority of our “dead”? Or is it that this “honouring” is nothing but the masking of certain vexed interests of groups within the Jews? And that the solemn morality that Scholem mobilises in the defence of the moral authority of the “dead” is, in fact, a right-wing, religious Zionist cover-up for choking dissenting voices, as Arendt turns out to be the real example, the real patriot? My conclusion will point out how we may attempt to answer these questions and that this attempt must start from insisting on both of our participants being reasonable and morally just people. This does not mean that we cannot choose between their versions. It only means that such a decision must not involve the construction of the other as pathological or thoroughly immoral; even if the outcome of our decision should be that s/he, indeed, is.
2. Historical Background: Two Unique Intellectuals on a Unique Historical Scene

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the historical context that forms the background to the public exchange of letters between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem. The first section will introduce the two protagonists and the second the historical scene from the capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann to Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and its tumultuous public reception.

Most certainly, there can be no pretension here to attempt to provide definite images of these issues: not only from a theoretical point of view, which would deny any story's capability of "mapping" the reality it purports to represent (see White, 1978, 1987), as the restrictions that this chapter must face seem to be more of a practical kind. Namely, four huge topics (i.e. Arendt; Scholem; the trial of Adolf Eichmann; *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and its reception) with far too many layers should be crammed into one mere chapter. This should be done, moreover, without the prospect of expounding them in depth later on in the dissertation. While the analysis of the exchange might resonate on certain points raised here, it is intended to be of independent worth and not primarily to elucidate most of the issues touched upon in this historical introduction. What, then, are we to do with such complex and far-reaching topics?

The choice I made is to acknowledge this complexity instead of trying to get round of it. While I cannot properly cover these four topics in one chapter, I will indicate aspects of them that can be perceived to have relevance to the exchange itself. Again, it is all but impossible to dwell on these aspects exhaustively. Yet, my aim will be to emphasise certain points, certain issues of interest within these vast topics.
Thus, the central perspective through which political theorist Hannah Arendt is to be introduced will be her identity as a Jew, her identification with the Jewish people and the ways her works reflect these "nodal points". These issues touch on her experience as a Jewish refugee before and during World War II.

In historian Gershom Scholem's case, the central point that governs my introduction is his identity as a scholar and that of a Zionist. This problem is apparently more enigmatic than Arendt's life and work, as Scholem's scholarly output far outweighs that of the essayist or the public intellectual. Furthermore, as far as Scholem was concerned, there was always a careful and distinct line drawn between the two. Nevertheless, many scholars (pro or contra) pondered the permeability of this boundary. In this part of the chapter, I will attempt to follow their lead and consider Scholem -- the historian and the public intellectual -- not as two isolated persons but two aspects of the same phenomenon; hence interpreting, and shedding mutual light on each other.

The second section will cover the historical event of Adolf Eichmann's capture in Argentina and trial in Jerusalem, with their significance to Israeli and American (Jewish) collective memory regarding Jewish identity and the Holocaust. In line with this, I will briefly sketch out some legal problems involved in the trial, problems whose importance appear to move far beyond the boundary of the legal and intrude into the realm of the political and ideological. It is some of these aspects and problems that were taken up in Arendt's controversial book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the book that helped to imprint the trial into the public mind more than anything else. The last part of this chapter will elaborate on the infamous reception of the book and present various accounts of this. Again, I acknowledge that I shall not be able to come closer to explain the furore in depth. However, I will finish this chapter by arguing that for such an explanation to take place, one must treat the participants of the debate as reasonable human beings and their utterances as having some reasonable sense and concerns instead of being mere lies, simple misunderstandings, or instances of immorality. It is this approach that I shall be taking during my analysis of the exchange as well.
2.2. The People

2.2.1. Hannah Arendt, political theorist

"I so explicitly stress my membership in the group of Jews expelled from Germany [...] because I wish to anticipate certain misunderstandings which can arise only too easily when one speaks of humanity. In this connection I cannot gloss over the fact that for many years I considered the only adequate reply to the question, who are you? to be: A Jew. That answer alone took into account the reality of persecution. As for the statement with which Nathan the Wise (in effect, though not in actual wording) countered the command: 'Step closer, Jew' – the statement: I am a man – I would have considered as nothing but a grotesque and dangerous evasion of reality" (Arendt, 1968, 17-18).

With these words, akin to which she uttered many times during her life (cf. Arendt, 1979: 334; Arendt, 1994b: 12; 2007: 164), German-Jewish political theorist Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) appeared to be unequivocal in her stance towards humanity and the Jewish community. She clearly seemed to question the possibility of the sort of guarantee that the ideas of Enlightenment could offer for human and citizen rights. She clearly seemed thereby to discard the (traditionally) noble notion of the enlightenment liberalism and assimilation: To the Jews “as individuals [...] everything” but “as a nation – nothing”, as Comte de Clermont-Tonnere at the French National Assembly in 1789 uttered representing the Gentile side.³ “Over and above everything else, I am a human being; it is only second to that [...] that I am a German and then a Jew" (Geiger, 1962: 71), as expressed by the great Jewish spokesperson for the enlightenment, liberalism and emancipation, Abraham Geiger.⁴

⁴ Cf. the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut’s comments on similar sentiments voiced by Moses Mendelsohn (Finkielkraut, 1994: 57-80, esp. 59-60).
In contrast to these, the utterance of Arendt quoted above is informed by her dichotomy of the *conscious* pariah and the parvenu, and the never realised program of what “the emancipation of the Jews [...] should have been – an admission of Jews as Jews to the ranks of humanity, rather than a permit to ape the gentiles [...]” (Arendt, 1978a: 68 – emphasis in the original).

Yet, as it appears, these very words have always sounded rather troubling from someone who appeared to fit rather comfortably Isaac Deutscher’s non-Jewish Jew (cf. Deutscher, 1968). One, who spoke neither Hebrew nor Yiddish, whose knowledge of the Jewish tradition was scarce, who did not usually attend the synagogue, and whose relationship with Israel was described as “anti-Zionist”5, allegedly bordering even on the phenomenon of “self-hatred”.6 Little wonder, then, that those quoted words appeared to be inconsistent with Arendt, both the person and the thinker. Thus, Judith Shklar fumed in a not quite favourable 1983 article: “By East European and even American standards Arendt was, of course, completely assimilated, a view she always found incomprehensible. That was because she clung to the bizarre notion that being Jewish was an act of personal defiance and not a matter of actively maintaining a cultural and religious tradition with its own rights and patterns of speech” (Shklar, 1983: 65).

Yet, it is also of significance that in a still considerably heated reception, which appears to be quite polarising at times with apologetics and attacks rather than analysis and commentary, Shklar’s remarks are also echoed (in substance, not in style) in writings otherwise sympathetic towards their object of study. Thus, Richard Bernstein in his altogether much more synoptic monograph poses the essentially similar rhetorical question:

“The crucial question – and Arendt’s blind spot – is the relation between Judaism and Jewishness. What does it mean to be a Jew if one insists on a sharp distinction between Judaism and Jewishness? For all Arendt’s

5 Biographical details regarding Arendt’s life are all taken from Elisabeth Young-Bruehl’s monograph, unless otherwise indicated (see Young-Bruehl, 2004).
insistence on affirming herself as a Jew, and her conviction that one can truly resist and rebel as a Jew, the question that must be asked is: What precisely is being affirmed in asserting one's identity as Jewish?" (Bernstein, 1996: 184, 186; cf. Lang, 1994: 44)

One wonders whether anyone in history has managed to answer these questions posed by Bernstein. But the harmony of these two otherwise radically divergent critics' points nevertheless to something important in Arendt's programmatic utterance. The problem is, on the one hand, what one answers to someone whose question is not hostile and threatening to one's existence. That is, the chance and form of this avowedly political attitude in constructive, creative as opposed to simply defensive contexts\textsuperscript{7}, and the question, on the other hand, of culture's, history's and tradition's place in Arendt's conception of the political and the social, the pariah and the parvenu.

Yet, even if there really is a "blind spot", a paradox, or something incomprehensive in Arendt's stance in these matters, one can assert with certainty that the flesh-and-blood Hannah Arendt surely lived by this paradox.

Born in Hannover in 1906 into an assimilated, secular middle-class Jewish family (Arendt's grandparents were reform Jews but her parents, Paul and Martha, are better characterised as committed to the then illegal Socialist party than by their Jewish affiliation), she spent her childhood in Königsberg – an East-Prussian town whose most illustrious child and philosopher was, symbolically, Immanuel Kant – and Berlin. Her higher education with a major in philosophy and minors in Greek and theology took place at the universities of Marburg, Freiburg, and finally Heidelberg. She studied, amongst others, with Martin Heidegger (with whom she had a love affair), Edmund Husserl, and Rudolph Bultmann and completed her dissertation under the tutelage of Karl Jaspers (with whom she formed a lifelong friendship) on the concept of love in the writings of St.

\textsuperscript{7} Cf. "When my parochialism is threatened, then I am wholly, radically parochial: a Serb, a Pole, a Jew (a black, a woman, a homosexual), and nothing else. But this is an artificial situation in the modern world (and perhaps in the past too)" (Walzer, 1994: 82).
Augustine. It was, thus, the typical way of the traditional German Bildung, with hardly any conspicuous Jewish traces in it.

Yet, in 1926, Arendt attended a lecture given by Kurt Blumenfeld, former secretary general of the World Zionist Organization and at the time the most influential spokesperson of Zionism in Germany. Although both Arendt and her biographer appear to be at pains to downplay the significance of the occasion with hindsight, it must be pointed out that she continued to retain an ever-intensifying eye on Zionist issues afterwards. From then on, she maintained a good relationship with not only Blumenfeld but also other notable Zionists such as Robert Weltisch (editor of the German-Zionist organ Jüdische Rundschau), Siegfried Moses (leader of the German Zionist Organization), and Salman Schocken (publisher of Schocken books) amongst others. Furthermore, she made up her mind already by 1930 to concentrate on the project of writing a book on Rahel Varnhagen (the German-Jewish epitome of the age of the Enlightenment) of which the bulk had been finished by the time she left Berlin in 1933. As can be attested by their correspondence (which lasted till 1963 when Blumenfeld passed away), Arendt found Blumenfeld’s notion of “post-assimilatory Zionism” (which acknowledged and even made virtue of the yawning gap between traditional Judaism and the current status, knowledge and aspiration of much of contemporary German Jewry) attractive. It is not by chance, then, that Blumenfeld’s two, rightly famous adages were bequeathed to posterity, incidentally, by Arendt herself: “I’m a Zionist by the grace of Goethe” and “Zionism is Germany’s gift to the Jews” (Arendt and Jaspers, 1992: 198; cf. Elon, 2002: 291).

It is certainly all but impossible to decide whether Arendt’s historical, political and “Jewish” awakening occurred steadily or, as she much later recalled, it was the burning of the Reichstag that “turned her political” (Arendt, 1994b: 4-5; cf. Power, 2004: 34). What is for sure, however, is that from 1933 the exemplary end-product of the traditional German Bildung worked exclusively with various Jewish organisations,

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8 "I was not a Zionist. Nor did the Zionists try to convert me" (Arendt, 1994b: 5).
9 "Arendt found herself in the audience [...] not from any interest in Zionism. [...] The lecture did not convert Hannah Arendt to Zionism, but it did convert her to Kurt Blumenfeld" (Young-Bruehl, 2004: 71).
addressed Jewish topics and published in Jewish periodicals and weeklies for almost the next twenty years.

In 1933, with the Nazis already in government, she was approached by Blumenfeld to collect anti-Semitic material for the Zionist Organisation for presentation on an international conference. Arendt was not a member of the organisation but it was exactly her status of being an outsider that made her suitable for this kind of work. The risk was personal and did not threaten the organisation as such. "I said, 'Of course.' I was very happy. First of all, it seemed a very intelligent idea to me, and second, it gave me the feeling that something could be done after all", as she later described her prompt acceptance of the task (Arendt, 1994b: 5). Her activity, however, was rather short-lived as she was duly arrested and spent the subsequent eight days in custody. Being free again (thanks to a "charming fellow" [Ibid: 6] just promoted from the criminal police to the political section, hence being ill-versed in the party line), she left Berlin and escaped with her mother but without papers to Paris.

"[...] belonging to Judaism had become my own problem, and my own problem was political. Purely political! I wanted to go into practical work, exclusively and only Jewish work. With this in mind I then looked for work in France" (Ibid: 12). Indeed, she did work for various Zionist organizations until she left France in 1940. First, she was a secretary of Agriculture at Artisanat and then, from 1935 to 1938 director of the Paris branch of Youth Aliyah. Both organisations prepared adolescent or even younger would-be immigrants for life in Palestine. Having seen the removal of the Youth Aliyah headquarters to London, she continued work from late 1938 with the Jewish Agency, where she assisted various sorts of Jewish refugees in Paris. Besides this "practical" work, she finished her book on Rahel Varnhagen and maintained her interest in Zionist affairs, earning a certain Gershom Scholem’s approving remark: "an excellent [ausgezeichnete] Zionist" (Scholem, 1994: 285). The outbreak of the war, however,

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10 I think the use of "political" in this utterance is rather different from the way Arendt usually uses it in her political writings. In her conception, ideally, "practical" and "political" hardly ever go together, for the former as a "specifically human achievement lies altogether outside the category of means and ends. [...] there is nothing higher to attain than this actuality itself" (Arendt, 1998: 207; cf. Arendt, 1990, 1993b; Canovan, 1992, 1994; Habermas, 1994).

11 Rahel Varnhagen - The Life of a Jewess was finally published in 1957 by the Leo Baeck Institute. Yet, the book "was neither marketed well, nor distributed widely in the United States", causing dissatisfaction to
turned her status into an “enemy alien”, which meant that she was deported to the Gurs concentration camp and was thus forced to emigrate again in 1940-41, now for the last time, to the United States.

This, however, did not mean that Arendt’s Zionist and Jewish involvements terminated. She earned her first full-time salary in America as research director of the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (of the Conference on Jewish Relations); an organisation that was established to recover any kind of books of Jewish interest surviving the war years. Then, in 1948 she became executive director of the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (retaining this position until 1952), and in 1950 senior editor of Shcken Books. It was in the United States, however, that besides practical work Arendt also got involved in different sorts of Jewish and Zionist political issues, giving form to this involvement in a series of publications. From October 1941 to April 1945, she regularly contributed to the German language Jewish weekly, *Aufbau* (see Arendt, 2007: 134-240) and also wrote occasional pieces for various other Jewish journals (i.e. *Menorah Journal, Jewish Frontier, Commentary, Jewish Social Studies*; cf. Arendt, 2007: 241-461).

It was one of her essays – *To Save the Jewish Homeland: There Is Still Time* (1948) – in *Commentary* that caught the attention of Judah Leon Magnes. Magnes was the erstwhile Chancellor (1925-1935) and then the President (1935-1948) of the Hebrew University, as well as the leader of the Palestine group *Ichud* (Unity). The group included notables such as Martin Buber, Ernst Simon and Hans Kohn amongst its members (Hazony, 2000: 157-265; Young-Bruehl, 2004: 225-227). Magnes approached Arendt to join the group and though she never became a formal member and refused to take up the proposed post of a chairperson for a political committee representing *Ichud*, Magnes and Arendt nevertheless worked closely for approximately six months in 1948, up to the death of the former. To be sure, *Ichud* was by no means a mainstream organisation as, in the age of extremity and polarisation, it based its platform on Jewish-Arab dialogue and

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Arendt, which ultimately amounted to her wanting to turn to another publisher. The book, thus, was reissued by Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich with some changes (Weissberg, 1997: 42-44). The “First Complete Edition” was published by the John Hopkins UP in 1997 (Arendt, 1997).
the idea of the "Jewish Homeland" in the form of a binational state. 12 (Later, following actual partition, in that of a federation.) Nevertheless, at a crucial point the organisation had its moment, when the chance occurred to submit its proposals to the UN mediator in Palestine, Count Folke Bernadotte, in 1948. Frantic work ensued in which Arendt took her share. However, his two suggestions having been rejected by both the Palestinians and the Israelis, Bernadotte was soon killed by Jewish extremists – members of the notorious Stern Gang – in Palestine, and Judah Magnes passed away in October. That effectively meant the end of Arendt’s actual political involvement with Zionist affairs. 13

However transitory these years turned out to be in terms of Arendt’s active and practical involvement, they were not just productive and stormy, but proved later to be also highly formative with regard to her development as a political thinker. Evidently, these years did not transform the theoretical mind into a political activist hand. Rather, they not only resulted in the theoretical crystallisation of both Arendt’s conception of emancipation and Jewishness or assimilation and Zionism, but also bore a lasting mark on her later political thought.

As noted, her first book-length work in this regard dated back to her last years in Germany and the ones in Paris. It was a monograph on the German-Jewish salonneur Rahel Varnhagen (born Levin). Her life, Berlin salon, and its visitors epitomised the emancipation of the Jews in Germany. The book constituted a straightforward critique of the enlightenmentalist notion of emancipation, including what Arendt took to be its corollary social process, assimilation (cf. Arendt, 1997: esp. 85-121). Rahel Varnhagen was depicted throughout the book as constantly trying to shrug off her Jewishness in every possible way: using her (alas, non-existent) beauty, her social status as a salonneur, and her marriage – just to realise in the now famous words on her deathbed: “The thing which all my life seemed to me the greatest shame, which was the misery and misfortune

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12 To such an extent was Ichud outside the mainstream (in a time when that mainstream proved to be almost all-embracing) that the recent right or even extreme-right wing account by Israeli author Yoram Hazony (2000) even treats it effectively as an “anti-Zionist” organisation.

13 For various accounts on Bernadotte’s activity see Morris (2001: 235-258) and Pappé (1992: 136-163). For Arendt’s appreciation of Magnes and Bernadotte see Arendt (2007a) and (2007b), respectively.
of my life—having been born a Jewess—this I should on no account now wish to have missed" (Arendt, 1997: 85).

What is already manifest in Rahel’s two ways of coping is the distinction Arendt later constantly drew between the parvenu and the pariah, between, that is, the social climbers “using [their] elbows” and the “social outcasts” who “reflect the political status of their entire people” (Arendt, 1978a: 90, 68). Not until the 1990s was it customary to cast an analytical eye on this distinction (cf. Barnouw, 1990), or to consider it a guide in understanding her works in general (Bernstein, 1996; Ring, 1997) and Eichmann in Jerusalem in particular (Parvikko, 1996, 1998, 2003). Yet, one thing is important to bear in mind and that is the way Arendt finished her programmatic essay The Jew as Pariah. Categorically denying the present relevance of the distinction between parvenu and pariah she stated in 1944 poignantly: “Today [...] the pariah Jew and the parvenu Jew are in the same boat [...] Both are branded with the same mark; both alike are outcasts”. The isolation of the pariah, then, is just as senseless and hopeless as “social climbing”. The only possible answer is, concluded Arendt, political: “[...] only within the framework of a people can a man live as a man among men, without exhausting himself. And only when a people lives and functions in consort with other peoples can it contribute to the establishment upon earth of a community conditioned and commonly controlled humanity” (Arendt, 1978a: 90). This, in 1944, inevitably meant the political position of Zionism.

Arendt’s early years in the United States witness these two themes: assimilation and the articulation of the position of the “conscious” (i.e. political) pariah with regard to Jewish history as well as reflections on current Jewish politics. In other words, they witness the analysis of the theoretical foundations of Zionism and the actual criticism of its current practices.

In her shorter pieces (published mainly in Aufbau), more of immediate relevance, Arendt is passionately and explicitly committed to constantly arguing for the

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14 Cf. Elon (1999), however, for a different version as to those words on the deathbed.
15 Cf. as late as in her The Origins of Totalitarianism, where Arendt describes Zionism as “the only political answer Jews have ever found to antisemitism and the only ideology in which they have ever taken seriously a hostility that would place them in the center of world events” (Arendt, 1991: 120).
establishment of a Jewish army as the beginning of Jewish politics and (what she perceived as) against revisionist tendencies within mainstream Zionism. Though she never actually identifies herself explicitly with Zionism, there are frequent references to a subject position signalled as “we Jews” or “we Jewish patriots” (cf. Arendt, 2007: 169, 171, etc). By contrast, her longer and more reflective pieces on assimilation and Zionism betray hardly anything about the personal position of the author, their intellectual density, intensity, and engagement notwithstanding.

What is, however, common in her pieces is the constant emphasis put on the desirability of the political orientation. This entails that the solution of the so-called Jewish question (which consists both of the response to the phenomenon of anti-Semitism and the establishment of the Jewish Homeland in Palestine) means discarding both individualist notions inherited from the Enlightenment and organic-collectivist ones from German Romanticism. The first thread is more pronounced in Arendt’s writings on pariahs and parvenus, where she argues against social assimilation (see Arendt, 1978: 55-121). The latter, however, is equally clear in her essays addressing directly the problem of Zionism (see Arendt, 1978: 125-222).

In Arendt’s words, the “lasting greatness” of Theodor Herzl can be found precisely “in his very desire to do something about the Jewish question, his desire to act and solve the problem in political terms” (Arendt, 1978d: 166). This clearly marks what Arendt finds positive in Herzl’s (and Zionism’s) approach as opposed to the individualist social assimilation of the pariahs. Though she would only present her notions about the nation-state and its relationship to minorities and human rights in a fully-fledged form in her The Origins of Totalitarianism, the insights upon which the opus magnum will be built are already there. Thus, her remark that “The terrible and bloody annihilation of individual Jews was preceded by the bloodless destruction of the Jewish people” (Arendt, 1978b: 109) makes clear what her avowal of the acknowledgment of the people-hood of the Jews stands for. Namely, it is not an ethical or a cultural (let alone a psychological) idea. What needs to be sorted out is, first and foremost, a political problem, and the capacity of the “conscious pariah” lies in his/her being able to act politically by identifying with, rather than evading from, his/her people, as well as assuming common responsibility with them.
At this point, however, Arendt and the mainstream of the Zionist movement parted company. As noted, what she perceived was an exclusive and ever increasing reliance on the organic and biological conception of Zionist nationalism – an inheritance of German romanticism (Arendt, 1978c: 156, 1978d: 172), rather than on a civic one of French nature\(^\text{16}\) –, the flight from political responsibility to the myth of eternal anti-Semitism (Arendt, 1978c: 141, 147), as well as an excessive use (and abuse) of historical and even theological argumentation contradicting the very idea of pursuing common interests with the surrounding Arab people (Arendt, 1978f: 199, 222). What Arendt perceived at the time were signs of a hidden revisionist takeover, the domination of the attitude of a secular “hastening the end” and the self-isolation into one’s own circular logic (Arendt, 1978f: 200-201) – all of these carrying either an imminently tragic or a devastating and deforming long-run effect (Arendt, 1978e: 187).\(^\text{17}\)

What is clear even in these writings is that by political Arendt did not understand something resembling Aktualpolitik. Rather, she conceived of a relatively pure, uncontaminated realm; uncontaminated, that is, by social, economical but apparently even by cultural or historical factors. Such a conception chimes well with Arendt’s conviction – implied though not explicitly theorised in these overtly “Jewish” writings – about the decline of the nation-state. That is, about the superfluous notion of national sovereignty when it came to both protecting minorities (which it inherently appeared incapable of) and guaranteeing independence in the state’s own affairs (which the inevitable imperial spheres of interests made impossible). Hence, Arendt advocated (way out of tune with the growing consensus of the contemporary Zionist mainstream) on a macro level of the political form of federation, and on the micro one “local self-government and mixed Jewish-Arab councils, on a small scale and as numerous as possible” (Arendt, 1978e: 192).

Whether these ideas were extremely under-informed and hopefully naive (cf. Laqueur, 2001) or remarkably prescient (cf. Zimmermann, 2001) is quite besides the

\(^{17}\) For a useful critique of these aspects of her approach see Avishai, 2002: 157-159.
point here\textsuperscript{18}, my concerns being with the outlay of the conceptual framework of these thoughts and the significant marks these considerations of the 1940s bore on later writings of Hannah Arendt. This is, most obvious with regard to the "final product" of the era, the publication of \textit{The Origins of Totalitarianism} (which, incidentally, coincided with Arendt's obtaining American citizenship) in 1951. Many themes featuring in the earlier, manifestly "Jewish" articles constituted the hidden backbone of this book. For example, her radically political conception of anti-Semitism, the critique of the abstract notion of human rights and the subsequent idea of the "right to have rights" (cf. Birmingham, 2006), that is, the political formation that may successfully claim the allegedly "universal" human rights to its members. As has been recently argued, it was in part the Palestine experience that formed Arendt's thinking on the decline of the nation-state (i.e. a political formation equalling nation with the state) and the inevitability of a civic polity, the only possible \textit{de facto} guarantee of human rights (cf. Bernstein, 1996: 71-100; Beiner, 2000).

The book consists of three major parts: Anti-Semitism, Imperialism, and Totalitarianism. It is not a book by a historian, as Arendt associated a certain kind of determinism with that discipline. Instead, her idea was to write a book on certain concepts that later came to be crystallised in the form of the totalitarian state of the twentieth century: Nazi Germany and Communist Soviet Union (cf. Arendt, 1994d: 403). The first part of the book delivers a political analysis of the nature of anti-Semitism, as it developed from an originally religious idea to an modern racist one at the end of the nineteenth century in line with the changing social and political position of the newly emancipated Jewish community. Arendt then moves on to analyse imperialism as it contravened the \textit{novum} of that century, the political formation of the nation-states. What constitutes imperialism is that it denies those very (actual or desired) borders nationalists consider sacrosanct and hence attempts at permanent expansion. It is from there that Arendt turns her attention to the totalitarian regimes and scrutinises their internal functioning, concluding that it is the elimination of the public sphere, that of \textit{action} that characterises and even constitutes these states, inasmuch as they render their citizens

“superfluous”. Hence, she invokes the example of the concentration camps as totalitarian micro-worlds, or, the paradigm of the totalitarian state itself.

From the *Origins* on, explicit Jewish orientation disappeared even more from Arendt’s writings. Nevertheless, as already noted above, various scholars have recently pointed out that the years between 1933 and 1951 were more than but a closed shell, something to be passed just to be able to return to the *alma mater* of philosophy. For one thing, Arendt never quite returned to philosophy (until, that is, her very last and posthumously published work, the *Life of the Mind*) and she explicitly refrained from branding herself a philosopher, preferring the term political scientist (cf. Arendt, 1994b: 1). Certainly, this was not a simple reflection on or elongation of her “awakening” from 1933. As she put it many times, the focus on the political, the active life and public discourse is a reversal of traditional philosophical priority that considered *vita contemplativa* of value over *vita activa* (Arendt, 1993a, 1998). Yet, the firm distinction in her characterisation of the active life – underpinning conceptually her major work theorising the political, *Human Condition* (1958), her treatise *On Revolution* (1963) on the differences between the American and the French revolutions and her provocative essay *Reflections on the Little Rock* (1959) against legally enforced racial integration (!) in a Southern elementary school – between the social and the political already makes its first appearance, as we have just seen, in Arendt’s early Jewish writings. This is certainly not to argue that all of these later volumes would be “Jewish” works. It is only to point out that just as Arendt’s personal experiences and reflections on statelessness, human rights, and the nation-state lead to certain central ideas in the *Origins*, so did her early thoughts concerning the political and the social canalise conceptually many of her subsequent works.

Up to the very last minute of her life, one should add. It was only in her last and posthumous work (*the Life of the Mind*) that she returned to the traditional topic of philosophy, to the analysis of the *vita contemplativa*, of willing and thinking. Instead of the action between women and men, that is, to the analysis of “action” within the person.

Yet again, the theme of the activity of thinking occurred first in Arendt’s *Rahel Varnhagen* and made its appearance in one of the examples for pariah-ness, Franz
Kafka. There was, however, a major turn in Arendt’s thinking about “thinking”. While in her early accounts “thinking” represented the option in time of political isolation, while it was the “weapon” of the “outcast” – i.e. however respectable or even heroic, the ultimate sign of political impotency –, by the end of her life Arendt began to consider “thinking” in an altogether different light.

“Could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention, regardless of results and specific content, could this activity be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually ‘condition’ them against it?”, as she explicitly poses the problem to be considered in the posthumous book (Arendt, 1978h: 5). How did this change occur? What was it that made Arendt change her approach, from the active to the contemplative realm? Arendt is straightforward about this, dating her encounter with what she calls “not stupidity but thoughtlessness” to 1961: the Jerusalem trial of Adolf Eichmann (Arendt, 1978h: 4 – emphasis in the original).

By the 1960s, Hannah Arendt was a respected (if somewhat controversial) figure of the New York intellectual life. The Origins of Totalitarianism won immediate acclaim and propelled the author not only to fame outside Jewish circles but also to various grants (such as the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1952), lecture commissions (such as [as the first woman to give] Gauss seminars at Princeton University in 1953 and the Walgren Foundation lectures at the University of Chicago in 1956), visiting professorship (visiting professor at Berkeley in 1955), and full-time professorship at Princeton in 1959.

In 1961 alone, for instance, she had been due to stay for two months at Northwestern University, to hold a Plato seminar at Columbia, a lecture at Vassar College and was awarded with a one-year grant by the Rockefeller Foundation. None of this was to take place, however, as she learned about the capture of Adolf Eichmann in Argentina on 24 May, 1960. Arendt immediately proposed herself to the editor of the The New Yorker, William Shawn, to report on the trial. Having in mind originally one single article, Arendt nevertheless summoned Kurt Blumenfeld to review and translate the

Israeli press, and Karl Jaspers to inform her on the European reactions. No wonder, instead of one article a series of them—subsequently in the form of a book—arrived, to the unimaginable furor of many in Jewish circles all over the world.20

The breach that the book caused, however, was not confined to the public realm. Old friendships and acquaintances were terminated, such as with Siegfried Moses and Robert Weltsch. Hans Jonas, the philosopher-friend way back from university years refused to speak to Arendt for an entire year and changed his mind only on the urgings of his wife. Even then, he vowed never again to touch the Eichmann issue with Arendt. Kurt Blumenfeld (Arendt’s political “mentor” from the 1930s and later close friend) considered the termination of their relationship while lying almost literally on his deathbed. Whether this would or would not have happened, we do not know. Arendt visited him once more in Jerusalem, but there is no convincing sign that they could have restored their friendship.

It was, however, her complete break with Gershom Scholem that is the most well known and documented among these post-Eichmann fall-outs. This was due to a number of reasons: its public nature (published in Neue Zürcher Zeitung and in the Encounter), its totality (they never spoke again), and, as will be the prime point of interest for this thesis, because it reflected much, much more than a mere personal altercation. It was not a banal incident as it appeared to reveal the conflict of complete worldviews.

In the following subsection, I will turn my attention to the formation and genesis of that other conflicting worldview, that of Gershom Scholem.

2.2.2. Gershom Scholem, historian of Judaic ideas

“All of us have students, some of us have even created schools, but only Gershom Scholem has created a whole academic discipline” — spoke Martin Buber to virtually

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everyone's consent (quoted by Biale [1979: 206] and Hertzberg [1985: 11]). "Nonsense is nonsense. But the history of nonsense is scholarship" – added another adage to the breviarium Professor of Talmud, Saul Liberman as he introduced a lecture of Scholem at the Jewish Theology Seminar in New York (see Ozick, 2002). Indeed, there is no divergence in opinion with regard to Scholem's basic achievement on the scholarly field. It was not more and not less than creating the entire academic discipline of Jewish mysticism, an area of Jewish thought that had hitherto received a double sort of neglect, if not contempt. One evolved from mainstream orthodoxy and ultra-orthodoxy, which defined Jewish religion according to their own interest strictly in terms of Halacha. The other emanated from reform/liberal Judaism or from the rationalistic precursor of modern Jewish scholarship, Wissenschaft des Judentums, whose idea of Judaism as an essentially spiritual and rational religion would have surely been compromised, had they accepted mystical phenomena throughout the ages in their own right as a legitimate area of Jewish religious endeavours (see Biale, 1979: 13-33; Brenner, 1999; Roemer, 1997; Scholem, 1997: 21-22, 75-79).

Gershom Scholem, thus, created a discipline. Yet he arguably did even more. It was not in isolation that he pursued his research. His overall outlook influenced heavily, perhaps more than anyone else's, the entire inchoate realm of Jewish studies, contributing "more than any other scholar to its clarification and to the establishment of Jewish studies as a true discipline within the humanities" (Dan, 1987: 26). Such an outlook was based on disinterested and objective scholarship, as opposed to apologetics that characterised both his scientific precursors (the Wissenschaft des Judentums) and, much to his chagrin, his contemporaries. "All of these ills have now assumed a national dress" (Scholem 1997: 70), as he resigned in a powerful 1944 article against the apologetic approach of the Wissenschaft (see Scholem, 1997: 51-71). Yet, Scholem's principled conviction was that it is nevertheless the framework of Zionism that allows a Jew to discard his/her apologetic tendencies, realising that there is no one around to be endeared. Such an attitude, to be sure, was the outcome of a radical choice: "Precisely because he had early chosen to be only a Jew, without hyphen or adjective, not a Western Jew or a German Jew or an American Jew, Scholem felt himself free to speak to Western culture unapologetically and very directly" (Hertzberg, 1985: 7). How did this choice come
about? Moreover, are there but academic consequences of it? Was Gershom Scholem, "the most influential Judaic scholar [...] of the century" (Aschheim, 2004: 903), simply a scholar? In other words, for all his and his students' rejection of the mere idea, did he not help to create more than the modern science of Judaism? Did he not form, rather, that very Judaism itself and that very Zionism under whose aegis the allegedly objective pursuit of Jewish scholarship became possible?

The "bacillus" (Scholem, 1983: 114) of the Kabbalah took hold in a rather unlikely place. By his own description, the Berlin family he was born into in 1897 was a typical liberal middle-class family, where "assimilation to things German, as people put it at the time, had progressed quite far" (Ibid: 9). This progress, however, was not a one-way street. For one thing, lighting up a cigarette was common on Saturdays. For another, the still-existing Friday-night candle was used to do this. For one thing, Christmas was held instead of Chanukah. For another, one of young Gerhard's (as was his name then) gifts was a picture of his hero, Theodor Herzl. For one thing, yearly fatherly preachers of the "mission of the Jews" were in place. For another, this mission did not involve such particularistic projects, which young Gerhard was typically found of, i.e. Jewish tradition and Zionism (see Ibid: Ch. 1, 2).

Nevertheless, it was perhaps precisely due to these paradoxes that the family was so representative of German Jewry, almost haggadically expressing this with the subsequent life-story of the four children of the house. The oldest, Reinhold became a fierce German nationalist and remained one even after Adolf Hitler's twelve cataclysmic years. Erich, the second oldest opted for the middle-of-the road, wishy-washy liberal Democratic Club. Werner turned to the communists, became as a deputy the youngest member of the Reichstag, left the party in 1926 and perished in Buchenwald in 1940 (Ibid: 30, 42-43, 145-146).

In this context, clearly, Scholem's embracing of Zionism and, even more importantly, of Jewish mysticism questioned in effect the very assumption upon which

liberal German-Jewish existence was based. Indeed, turning “to this wild, strange subject, Scholem was making a claim to Jewish, as opposed to German, culture” (Maccoby, 1983: 38). No wonder, Scholem’s father was more than furious with this “claim” and following a fierce argument around the dinner table – where Gerhard defended the anti-war stance he took up right at the beginning of World War I –, he was expelled from home in 1917 (Scholem, 1983: 83-84).

Not that it appears to be a shock of any sort for him, who – having completed his dissertation on the earliest existing Kabbalistic manuscript, the book Bahir, at the University of Munich – changed his first name from Gerhard to Gershom and left the country in 1923 for Palestine (Aschheim, 2004: 917). Originally, he had in mind a position as a teacher of mathematics (a subject he studied before turning to mysticism), but soon an opportunity arose through the philosopher Hugo Bergmann to become the librarian of the Hebrew section of the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem. That appointment did not last very long. In 1925 the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (whose conception had taken almost a decade) was eventually founded and Scholem took up a lecturing position he then retained to the very end of his life (Scholem, 1983: ch. 10).

At the Hebrew University, Scholem could begin in earnest his work on Jewish mysticism. Initially, it involved not only scholarly analysis of texts but also the collecting and systematising of those very scriptures. The first major international airing of his research (aside of many significant Hebrew scholarly articles in-between) was a series of lectures given in New York in 1940. It was the content of these lectures that formed his subsequent book – ever to be considered the path-breaking work in Jewish mysticism –, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.

“[…] it was the first time this literature [i.e. of mysticism] was not treated as an insignificant, late collection of incomprehensible texts with no bearing on the development of Jewish culture”, as Scholem’s student Joseph Dan summed up Scholem’s New York achievement (Dan, 1987: 21). Thus, the book, consisting of an overview of Jewish mysticism from early merkabah mysticism to 18th century Hasidism, defined the area and study of Jewish mysticism, outlined its boundaries and, in fact, “virtually
invented" it as a discipline (Aschheim, 2004: 905).\(^{22}\) (Interestingly enough Scholem prevented the book to be translated to Hebrew, for years. Claiming, allegedly, that "anyone who could read the sources had no need of a book like this" [Dan, 1999].)

As such, the book pushed its author to academic fame outside Palestine as well. From then on, Scholem was frequently invited to hold lectures, both in the United States and – for all his programmatic and outspoken denial of the (practical) impossibility of the German-Jewish dialogue (Scholem, 1976: 61-64, 65-70, 71-92) – in Germany, where he was awarded the highest possible German award, the Pour le Mérite (see Elon, 2003: 79). From a professional point of view, however, Scholem’s most productive and extended international cooperation covered the annual conferences of the Jungian Eranos group, in Ascona, Switzerland (see Dan, 1991; Wasserstrom, 1999). Ironically, Scholem never ceased to emphasise his reservations towards psychoanalysis in general and the Jungian conception of collective unconscious in particular. The latter’s methodology of seeking collective human symbols was in downright opposition to Scholem’s own orientation of interpreting the ideas of Jewish mysticism mostly from within the tradition, rather than from without through analogies or exterior impacts (cf. Dan, 1991; Scholem, 1976: 28-31).\(^{23}\) Nevertheless, the appealing context of German language, the equally appealing absence from post-war Germany proper, as well as the presence of such luminaries as Mircea Eliade and Henry Corbin proved to be ideal for Scholem.

He attended the conferences from 1949 on and his contributions are available now in two English volumes (Scholem, 1965, 1991). Together with Major Trends and his two-volume monograph of Sabbatai Tzvi, these essays undoubtedly mark one of the peak points of Scholem’s scholarly achievement. What is common in them is that they all represent an exercise or case study in the history of ideas, Scholem tracing back and forth the meaning of a concept through a variety of contexts in Jewish tradition. What the difference is between the two volumes is that while in the first one (where Scholem, so to say, initiated the Eranos circle into his research and Jewish mysticism in general) most of the essays “attempted to present some problems concerning Jewish mysticism within the

\(^{22}\) The emphasis is very much on the “practically” here, as Scholem was in principled opposition to any pre-defined essence of Judaism or Jewish mysticism (see Scholem, 1973: xi., 1974: 275, 1997: 93; cf. Dan, 1999)

\(^{23}\) On some ideological implications of Scholem’s methodology see Raz-Krakotzkin (2006).
framework of the study of religions in general\textsuperscript{24}, the second volume turned exclusively to the "elucidation of the most central and important topics in the Kabbalah, not only as viewed from without, by scholars and historians, but as viewed from within, by the Kabbalists themselves\textsuperscript{25} (Dan, 1991: 5-6).

The respect that Scholem achieved outside as well as inside Israel – where he was elected the third president of the Israeli Academy of Sciences in 1968 (Scholem, 1983: 90) – did not mean that his research was uncontroversial. Indeed, the very choice of Jewish mysticism (to which he almost exclusively devoted his entire career) appeared to be more than a mere and pure academic choice. It suggested a devotion to irrational and even destructive forces. This state of affairs was further exacerbated by the fact that Scholem sometimes appeared to serve as the intellectual representative of Israeli Jewry, especially in Germany and in the United States, where post-assimilatory Jewish intelligentsia found its way back to tradition often \textit{via} his work (cf. Howe, 1983: 57). Thus, a wide-ranging research that aimed to show "how Jewish mysticism changed from an esoteric by-path on the fringes of the Jewish community to an active communal force capable of influencing the course of Jewish history" (Maccoby, 1983: 39) was bound to be contested from many fields.

Again, for orthodox Jewry Scholem's work always appeared to be a suspicious move away from religious law, \textit{Halacha} (even though Scholem later claimed that what attracted him from the beginning was how mystical ideas helped the \textit{Halacha} to survive the ages [cf. Biale, 1979: 121 Scholem, 1976: 19; but see Scholem, 1983: 56, 1997: 94, 116]). Yet, the striking claim that the \textit{haskalah} (the Jewish enlightenment) and the ensuing emergence of secular Jewry (and reform Judaism which amongst others attempted to neutralise the national aspect of Judaism) was a dialectical result of the antinomian tendencies of the movement of the (false and apostate) "Mystical Messiah", Sabbatai Tzvi from the seventeenth century and of the notion that "the violation of the Torah is now its true fulfilment" was perhaps even harder to digest for secular Jews (Scholem, 1971: 110). For them, it was one thing that a scholar challenged religious sensitivities. But to present his and his "supporters'" supposedly secular background as

\textsuperscript{24} E.g. religious authority, myth, ritual.
\textsuperscript{25} E.g. "the mystical shape of the Godhead", "the transmigration of the souls", "the shechinah".
derivative from the history of Jewish mysticism — that was something completely extraordinary and contentious.²⁶

Nevertheless, it was precisely Scholem's next major project and undoubtedly the pinnacle of his career to narrate the history of the movement of Sabbatai Tzvi. Again, that a major and respected Israeli scholar of worldwide reputation would devote his prime energies and indeed almost one thousand pages to (traditionally) one of the most shameful episodes of Jewish history was difficult to comprehend. But all of this was even more aggravated by summaries such as the following:

"Sabbatai's followers and believers were good Jews. They believed in the holy books. Hence their first reaction, one might almost say reflex, was to search Scripture and tradition for intimations, hints, and indications of the extraordinary and bewildering events. Moreover, lo and behold the Bible, rabbinic Haggadah, and kabbalistic literature turned out to abound in allusions to Sabbatai Sevi in general and to the mystery of his apostasy in particular. The Sabbatians were second to none in the art of interpreting, hair-splitting, and twisting texts, for which the Jews forever have had such an uncontested reputation" (Scholem, 1975: 802).²⁷

As the apostate Messiah, a former object of shame and ridicule, turned out to be an authentic Jewish phenomenon in the hands of the scholar, it was perhaps inevitable that that scholar's hands came quickly under scrutiny. Was he not advocating this antinomianism and the breaking the Halacha? Did he not want to overtake Judaism by

²⁷ Scholem was programmatic in this rather polemical stance, expressed already in the preface of the book: "I do not hold to the opinion of those (and there are indeed many of them) who view the events of Jewish history from a fixed dogmatic standpoint and who know exactly whether some phenomenon or another is 'Jewish' or not. Nor am I a follower of that school which proceeds on the assumption that there is a well-defined and unvarying 'essence' of Judaism, especially not where the evaluation of historical events is concerned" (Scholem, 1975: xi.). For later examples of his attitude on this see Scholem (1997: 93-99, 114-117); cf. Roemer (1997: 29).
mystical forces? Did he not imply a connection between mystical and nationalistic ideas? Was he, thus, not a hidden proponent of messianic Zionism? 28

Much of these allegations were certainly vulgar, though no less down-to-Earth than it must have been for the lifelong politically leftist and anti-revisionist Scholem to experience that some of his students celebrated the (re-)settlement of the occupied territories with references to their teacher's work (see Elon, 2003: 79), or to witness the messianic Zionistic "extremisation" of the heritage of the revered Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook29 by his highly influential son Zvi Yehuda Kook (see Ravitzky, 1996: 79-144). Nevertheless, his stance has always been defended as that of a scholar and his method as that of objectivity. Whatever the outcome, it is the events, facts, and scriptures that must be "blamed", not the historian. The persona of the scholar and that of the public intellectual were firmly distinguished, furthermore, by pointing out that Scholem's strictly scholarly output by far outweighed that of the public intellectual (Dan, 1987: Ch. I; 1999).

Still, there have always been attempts from friendly sources as well either to account for the scholar and his work in terms of the public intellectual, or even to tie that scholar ever more closely to its sources, which, in the name of objectivity, he was supposed to distance himself from. Thus, though he did not cease to draw attention to what he called the "price of messianism" (Scholem, 1971: 35-36; cf. Taubes, 1981), and clearly did not side with the antinomians (cf. Maccoby, 1983: 41), he many times professed to be a "religious anarchist" (see Scholem, 1974: 278, 1983: 52-53, 1997: 84-86; cf. Biale, 1979: 80, 111). In fact, as his monographer David Biale states, "[...] it is hard to avoid the impression that Scholem has tried to find a precursor to his own anarchistic theology in Sabbatian antinomianism" (Biale, 1979: 174). Likewise, though what he exercised was clearly not mysticism but historiography, he appeared to have

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28 These are mainly the reconstructed charges of the Orthodox and the secular establishment (for an account of Scholem's most well-known debate with Baruch Kurzweil, see Myers [1986]). For a far more measured secular critique see Raz-Krakotzkin (2001, 2006). Religious Zionists, however, seem to be appalled by his negative portrayal of the messianic movement, as well as his thesis concerning the later "neutralization" of the Messianic concepts by Hasidism. See Hazony (2000: 290). On neutralization see Scholem (1946: 325-350; 1971: 176-202).

29 Scholem regarded Kook the "example par excellence of a great Jewish mystic" and a person "in whose original personality there were once again incorporated in our own generation the holy lights of Jewish mysticism" (Scholem, 1997: 11, 154 – emphasis in the original).
deduced such a secular activity precisely from the traditional activity of "commentary" that, in his rendering, primarily characterised the "tradition of Jewish speculative thought" that remained "alien to systematization" throughout the ages (Scholem, 1946: 205). And again, while he firmly maintained his identity of the scholar and the stance of methodological objectivity, one cannot but wonder whether his many times showcased "anti-essentialist" view of Judaism and Jewish identity was merely an outcome of disinterested, objective historical research or – for good or ill – an ideological statement as such (cf. Myers, 1986).

For all the disclaimers from the position of the disinterested, objective scholar, then, the moment Scholem uttered that for him "secularism is part of the dialectic of the development within Judaism" (Scholem, 1974: 290 – emphasis in the original), he effectively justified in principle those endeavours that wanted to find values and guidelines in his scholarly writings, instead of simply events and their disinterested description. And by the same token, when he repeatedly referred to the "dialectics concealed in the historical consciousness of the Zionists, a consciousness which I shared with all my heart and all my soul: the dialectics of continuity and revolt" (Scholem, 1983: 166; cf. Ibid: 54; 1974: 275), it certainly threw into doubt the earlier avowed conception of Zionism as a meta-historical framework for (and of) unapologetic (i.e. non-ideological) scholarly objectivity.

What, then, was Scholem’s view of Zionism? Though the early date of his aliyah lent the character of the clairvoyant to him (cf. Aschheim, 2001; Steiner, 1998: 10), he had always been unequivocal in asserting that

"[...] the reason I embraced Zionism was not the establishment of a Jewish state (which I defended in discussions) as the main goal of the movement seemed urgent and utterly convincing to me. For me as for many others, this aspect of the movement played only a secondary role or none at all, until Hitler's destruction of the Jews. Those aspects of

Zionism that dealt with politics and international law were not of prime importance to many of those who joined the movement. Of great influence, however, were tendencies that promoted the rediscovery by the Jews of their own selves and their history as well as a possible spiritual, cultural, and, above all, social rebirth. [...] One's attitude toward religious tradition also played a part here, and had a clear dialectical function. From the outset the struggle between striving for continuation and revivification of the traditional form of Judaism and a conscious rebellion against this very tradition, though within the Jewish people and not through alienation from it and abandonment of it, created an ineluctable dialectics that was central to Zionism” (Scholem, 1983: 54).31

Such an approach was a clear reflection and continuation of the thought of Asher Ginsberg (better known by his Hebrew penname Ahad Ha'Am [one of the people]), who dubbed his own approach as “spiritual Zionism”. Ahad Ha’Am placed the cultural and spiritual regeneration of the Jewish people at the heart of his program and juxtaposed it to that of Theodor Herzl's “political Zionism”, whose prime objective was the establishment of the Jewish State (Ahad Ha’Am, 1946; Zipperstein, 1993).32 “Spiritual Zionism”, nevertheless, was a political approach of course and Scholem himself immersed in the politics of the Yishuv after his arrival. He was a member of the radical pacifist group of Brith Shalom (Covenant of Peace), which advocated an essentially anti-imperialist stance: the establishment of the binational state and of a substantive Jewish-Arab dialogue (Eddon, 2003; Laqueur, 2003: 251-255). The group, founded in 1925, never attracted more than a handful of intellectuals (though by dint of their profession these opinions were rather well known) and effectively ceased to exist by 1933, due to the various disturbances between Arabs and Jews.

32 On Scholem’s nationalism see Rotenstreich (1994).
Was Scholem, then, the archetypical naïve peacenik as some scholars continue to see the entire Brith Shalom circle to this very day (see Hazony, 2000; Laqueur, 2001)? Hardly so, even if Scholem’s participation in the group appears to have earned him the everlasting scorn of the political (far) right (cf. Hazony, 2000: 290). It is of significance, however, that one of the leaders of Brith Shalom was the same Judah Leon Magnes that we encountered in the previous subsection. His new initiative of August 1942, the Ichud (as far as I can tell) functioned on the same platform as Brith Shalom. Yet, this time, without Scholem’s participation and even without his apparent sympathy.

Around as well as in the midst of the Holocaust such a shift might be all too understandable. However, as Israeli historian Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin claims, the Holocaust did not only change Scholem’s view with regard to questions such as the Jewish state versus the Jewish homeland:

“[...] it was not only that he abandoned his political activity. At the same time, he turned his academic focus of research from early and medieval Jewish mysticism [...] to questions of messianism, especially to Sabbatianism. [...] Within his research and in individual essays, Scholem also formulated his vision of Zionism as national-theological redemption. He located Zionism within the myth of redemption, defined as political and national. Nationalism here was not distinguished from religion, but modernized interpretation of the theological realm” (Raz-Krakotzkin, 2001: 174-175).

For once, the divergence between the “earlier” and the “later” Scholem might not merely be in the eye of the beholder. Such a divergence, moreover, might not simply be a temporal question either (i.e. before and during/after the catastrophe).

As noted, there are many occasions in the oeuvre where Scholem points out the “price of messianism” as well as his pride in Zionism being not a messianic movement (Scholem 1974: 269, 1976: 26, 44, 1979: 116; cf. Dan, 1994: 73). He repeatedly called
for distinguishing “between messianism and secular movements” and pronounced his opposition “to mixing up religious and political concepts” (quotes himself from 1929 in Scholem, 1976: 44). At face value, thus, there is nothing equivocal here in this position. Yet, it is in the selfsame work that Scholem states that he does not “believe in a world of total secularism in which the religious factor will not manifest itself with redoubled strength” (Ibid: 44) and spells later out his

“[...] unshakeable belief in a specific moral centre, which bestows meaning in world history on the Jewish people, transcends the sphere of pure secularization. I would not even deny that in it a remnant of theocratic hope also accompanies the re-entry into world history of the Jewish people that at the same time signifies the truly Utopian return to its own history” (Scholem, 1976: 294-95 – emphasis: mine).

Moreover, just to make sure that his comments are of prescriptive (rather than merely descriptive nature), he himself accepts elsewhere his Zionism characterised as a “religious-mystical quest for a regeneration of Judaism” (Scholem, 2003: 217).

Certainly, one does not expect an unequivocal stance from a position that prides itself in being the “dialectic of continuity and revolt” (cf. Scholem, 1974). Still, what one can state with certainty is that such a conception does definitely not coincide with a Western liberal conception of secularism. A difference and distinction, to be sure, that Scholem would not have found damaging or problematic at all. Doing so, however, one

33 The quote continues: I categorically deny that Zionism is a messianic movement and that it is entitled to use religious terminology to advance its political aims. [...] Action on the political plane of secular history is something different from action on the spiritual-religious plane”.
34 The extract continues: “[...] I am convinced that behind its profane and secular façade, Zionism involves potential religious contents, and that this potentiality is much stronger than the actual content finding its expression in the ‘religious Zionism of political parties” (Scholem, 1976: 295).
35 Cf. “Secularism is no more than a narrow transition from one religious dogma to another” (Scholem, 1997: 164); “I have always considered the transition through secularism necessary, unavoidable. But I don’t think that Zionism’s secular vision is the ultimate vision, the last word. [...] I have always considered secular Zionism a legitimate way but rejected the foolish declaration about the Jews becoming ‘a nation like all the nations’. If this should materialize, it will be the end of the Jewish people. [...] I cannot free myself from the dialectical lesson of history, according to which secularism is part of the process of our
might not have the necessary safeguard either when realising with distaste the amount of political power given to the rabbis by the Israeli Prime Minister, and its consequences in their pervasive, unavoidable and effervescent presence in many political questions (cf. Scholem, 1997: 93-99).³⁶

Without acknowledging, then, that there was something like a straightforward explicit messianic ideology in Gershom Scholem's writings, one may indeed argue with Raz-Krakotzkin that

"[...] even though he often warned against the dangers and ‘the price’ of messianism, he had a constitutive role in the shaping of the perception of messianic imagination in Jewish tradition as ‘national’, and consequently the view of Zionism as the fulfilment of Jewish expectations throughout the ages. [...] His intentions were certainly different, but his assumptions did not offer a different approach, and they even motivated right-wing national-religious tendencies" (Raz-Krakotzkin, 2001: 175).

Thus, Scholem's life (as well as his "after-life") was replete with debates and controversies. There was one amongst them, however, on which Scholem even at the age of 82 had to say that he "found [...] impossible to express [...] the bitterness of my feelings and thoughts in this matter". That "matter" was the Eichmann-controversy and entry into history; entry into history means assimilating to it. Since I do not believe in 'like all the nations', I do not see ultimate secularism as a possibility for us and it will not come to pass. I do not believe that we are going to liquidate ourselves. There is no reason for the Jews to exist like the Serbs. The Serbs have a reason to exist without theology, without an ahistorical dimension. [...] I don't believe in a world of total secularism in which the religious factor will not manifest itself with redoubled strength" (Scholem, 1976: 33-34); "I don't consider myself a secularist. My secularism fails right at the core, owing to the fact that I am a religious person, because I am sure of my belief in God. My secularism is not secular" (Scholem, 1976: 46); "I consider a complete secularization of Israel to be out of question so long as the faith in God is still a fundamental phenomenon of anything human [...] I consider a dialogue with such secularization about its validity, legitimacy, and limitations as fruitful and decisive" (Scholem, 1976: 297).

³⁶ As the quote continues, "[Ben-Gurion] should never have agreed in the first place to place a bill before the Knesset forcing rabbinical law on those Jews who do not want it, creating, in a democratic state like Israel, a condition which does not allow civil marriage or which does not acknowledge that marriages of Jews may be performed by non-Orthodox rabbis" (Scholem, 1997: 98). On Scholem's later gloom regarding the intrusion of religion and messianism into politics, see Elon (2003: 79).
the person with whom Scholem was “caused to break all and every connection [...] up to the day of her death” was Hannah Arendt (Scholem, 2002: 487).  

The relationship between Scholem and Arendt predated their correspondence on the Eichmann trial by more than thirty years. By Scholem’s account, they first met in 1932 in Berlin, through their common friend Walter Benjamin (Scholem, 2003: 241). Immediate correspondence ensued and during the war they formed a relatively close relationship (see Skinner’s comment on Scholem’s letters in Scholem, 2002: 215).  

It was never an easy friendship, however, and the differing worldviews of the two protagonists regularly surfaced, as can be assessed from their earlier letters (see especially a fierce debate on Arendt [1978c]: Scholem, 2002: 330-334) as well as certain comments Arendt made about Scholem elsewhere (Arendt and Blumenfeld, 1995: 135, 138, 176; Arendt and Jaspers, 1994: 133, 523). Nevertheless, the abrupt end that was to follow might still be regarded as wholly unexpected.  

This abrupt end was even published, as already requested in Scholem’s original letter. Arendt gave her consent to the publication but was taken then by complete surprise, when Scholem’s initiative embraced far wider circles than she originally imagined. Thus, the exchange was not only published in the Tel-Aviv based Mitteilungsblatt, but also in such prominent media as the Neue Zürcher Zeitung and the Encounter. That this irreversible and “fatal” fall-out of two Jewish intellectuals of German origin – one of them in Israel the other in the United States – reached the eyes of an effectively worldwide audience surely contributed to the fame of the exchange.

37 Letter to American sociologist, Daniel Bell.  
38 In this thesis I do not go any deeper into the relationship of either Scholem or Arendt with Benjamin. For an intellectual analysis see Eddon (2006).  
39 It is noteworthy, at the same time, that neither Arendt’s biographer, nor the monographs available on Scholem (which, to be sure, are not concentrating on personal details) pay much attention to the relationship. As if hindsight had overwritten their earlier relationship (see Biale, 1979; Dan, 1987; Young-Bruehl, 2004).  
40 See her letter to Jaspers: “[...] who [i.e. Scholem] went out to shout this whole sordid story from the rooftops in Neue Zürcher Zeitung and Encounter Which accomplished nothing else, it seems to me, than to infect those segments of the population that had not yet been stricken by the epidemic of lies. And everybody goes along. I can’t do anything about it. Scholem was determined to publish, and I assumed he would in the Tel-Aviv Mitteilungsblatt, which seemed harmless to me. And he did that first, but then used all his connections to broadcast the letters to the world” (Arendt and Jaspers, 1994: 523).
(Especially that during the entire controversy on Arendt’s book, it was one of the very few occasions that she directly answered one of her critics.)

It is certainly my aim in this thesis to move beyond mere “fame”, and analyse the meaning and internal significance of this exchange. The next step in the second half of this chapter is, however, to review the chain of events that preceded the correspondence: the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and the stormy reception it brought about.

2.3. The Scene

2.3.1. The trial of Adolf Eichmann

It was never going to be a simple trial. At 4 pm on 23 May, 1960 Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion announced to the Knesset:

“[…] a short time ago one of the greatest of Nazi criminals was found by the Israeli Security Services. Adolf Eichmann, who was responsible, together with the Nazi leaders, for what they called the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish problem’ – that is, the extermination of six million Jews of Europe. Adolf Eichmann is under arrest in Israel, and will shortly be brought to trial in Israel under the Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law of 1950” (quoted in Cesarani, 2004: 236; for slightly different translations see Segev, 2000: 326; Yablonka, 2004: 32).

Accounts vary regarding the immediate aftermath of this dramatic and ceremonial announcement. One can read about “the Knesset [being] shocked. No one moved” (Yablonka, 2004: 32), as well about an extended “breathless silence” followed by

41 For the other two occasions see Arendt (1963, 1978g).
"individual shouts of surprise" (Aharoni and Dietl, 1996: 167), or a "tangible silence" followed by "a roar of applause" (Pearlman, 1963: 60-61; cf. Harel, 1975). Eichmann’s only serious biographer to date, David Cesarani aptly relates to these sorts of divergences: "As with so much of what would follow, it was hard to reach an agreement about anything surrounding Adolf Eichmann" (Cesarani, 2004: 236).

Ben-Gurion’s announcement (along with the extraordinary capture of the man) ensured that the case gained worldwide publicity and foreshadowed a trial that would later unanimously be held a "turning point" in the history of Israel as well as the reception of the Holocaust. There was, however, one thing missing at the basement of an unrivalled consensus of significance. It was just not clear who exactly this man, Adolf Eichmann was.

Surely not suggesting a position "responsible, together with the Nazi leaders" (see Ben-Gurion above) it was the "meagre" rank of an Obersturmbannführer (lieutenant colonel) that Adolf Eichmann reached in the SS hierarchy. This does not represent a overt sign of incredible power, the position of – as Attorney General Gideon Hausner would later claim – being the "central pillar of the whole wicked system" (quoted in Cesarani, 2004: 300), or a criminal "more extreme than the evil man Hitler himself" (quoted in ibid: 304). As a result of his rank, perhaps, Eichmann was not even considered a major figure of the Nazi hierarchy for years. Little was known about him and, as many pointed out, he was neither convicted at Nuremberg in absentia (an option available for the judges as evidenced in the judgment on Martin Bohrmann), nor did his name occur frequently enough to raise his profile. Certainly not often enough to initially prompt the renowned Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal to track him down (Ibid: 1-2).

At the same time, though by no means someone to be mentioned "together with the Nazi leaders", Eichmann was not a mere and easily replaceable "cog" either. Born in Linz to a German family in 1906, he joined the Nazi party and the SS in 1932. During the years leading up to the war he acquainted himself deeper and deeper with the Jewish question, and established himself as a unique expert amongst the many units and departments devoted to this task in the various organisations of the Third Reich. In this capacity, he was the main instrument of the successful forced emigration of the Jewish
community of Vienna. It was an "achievement", which cemented his reputation and ensured his central position during the war: first at the forced evacuation of Jews and Poles and second at the logistical organisation of the genocide of the Jewish (and Gypsy) people. Eichmann did not make decisions concerning the overall Nazi policy in these areas but had certainly to make many "minor" decisions of otherwise enormous significance. To put it bluntly, he was in charge of getting the trains full and rolling smoothly. In achieving this, negotiations, deals, and occasional threats were needed with various sorts of people, i.e. from diplomats to leaders of the Jewish councils, from Nazi officials to Wehrmacht officers.

Following his last efforts in Hungary, where, exceptionally, he worked on the spot, Eichmann went hiding. He escaped from the camp in Ober-Dachstetten in January 1946 and lived as a woodman for years in the small German town Eversen. It was not until 1950 that he reached safety, however, when, assisted by a Franciscan friar in Italy, he made his way under the name Ricardo Klement via the infamous "rat line" (see Cesarani, 2004: 205-207) to Tucuman, Argentina. It was here that he started his never quite successful integration into the Nazi refugee-committee, working in several low-profile jobs, all of them lacking by far in the importance and prominence he was used to during his earlier activities. In 1952, he was joined by his wife Vera (whom he subsequently remarried) and his children Klaus, Horst, and Dieter – all of them, uncannily, carrying the name "Eichmann" (Cesarani, 2004: 215; cf. Arendt, 1994a: 236-237).

Ironically, Eichmann’s "passage into oblivion" (Cesarani, 2004: 2) was well assisted by the Israelis as well who, contrary to later claims, did not bother much to retrieve him. Those who made sure the former Obersturmbannführer never got lost completely from sight were individuals, such as the renowned Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal, the somewhat eccentric Tuvia Friedman (see Pearlman, 1963: 18-27; Wiesenthal, 1989) and last but not least the Attorney General of the German State of Hesse, Fritz Bauer, whose insistence must ultimately be credited for Eichmann’s capture in Argentina. Bauer first approached the director of the Mossad, Isser Harel in 1957, after he learned by chance about Eichmann’s whereabouts. Harel, however, contrary to his later claims seemed neither to know who Eichmann exactly was, nor to care about him at
all and, inevitably, the information was thereby followed up by a “sloppily executed and lazy mission” (Cesarani, 2004: 224; for Harel’s version, see Harel, 1975). It concluded that no Adolf Eichmann could live in such a decrepit place that was found in Argentina.

Yet Bauer’s insistence did not peter out and two years later he re-approached the Israelis with the information, this time contacting fellow-Attorney General Chaim Cohen. It was his insistence and this “second coming” that kicked off the chain of events that lead up to Eichmann being captured in Buenos Aires by the secret agents of the Mossad on 11 May, 1960 (Aharoni and Dietl, 1996: 77-87; Cesarani, 2004: 222-226).

Thus, though it would have surely appeared counter-intuitive at the time of the trial, “Eichmann wasn’t caught by the Mossad, they just collected him” (Cesarani, 2004: 14). For one thing, it surely contradicted the heroic narrative of “the untiring search lasting for fifteen years” (quoted in Aharoni and Dietl [1996: 84] with contempt directed clearly at Harel’s narrative). The lack of Israeli interest prior to the trial certainly had a lot to do with the international situation of the young state living in the perception of permanent existential danger (cf. Wiesenthal, 1989: 74-77). As we know by now, the Mossad did not have a unit dedicated to the Nazis and appeared to be rather reluctant to pursue such tracks, perceiving them as diversions from the main cause of establishing and then defending the state of Israel (Aharoni and Dietl, 1996: 79; Amit, 1996: 7). Yet, there might be internal, ideological and political reasons as well causing the Israeli Secret Service to show “remarkably little interest” (Cesarani, 2004: 14) in Eichmann, even, as we have seen, as actual information reached them about his whereabouts in Argentina.

As Israeli historian, Tom Segev notes, while

“[...] the Jews of Palestine saw themselves as part of the Jewish people, denying neither Jewish history nor religious tradition [...] were committed to Jewish solidarity and aid to the Jews of the Diaspora [...] maintained that the Zionist project in the Land of Israel was a project for

42 Such a heroic narrative both suited the subsequent image of the trial and the diplomatic argument as well in order to justify in the first case the heated focus on the event and in the second an otherwise flagrant breach on the sovereignty of Argentina at the United Nations – see below. For other instances of the heroic narrative see Pearlman (1963: 27, and Ch. 2)
all Jews”, there was nevertheless “at the same time a strong counter-
tendency to ‘negate the Exile’, an aspiration to create a new, proud
Hebrew race that could stand up and defend itself, part of a new,

The relationship between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora had been paradoxical
from the beginning of Zionism. On the one hand, there was full identification expressed
in the state’s status of being the Jewish state\(^\text{43}\) and in fundamental laws such as the 1950
Law of the Right of Return, which posited that any Jewish person of the Diaspora would
receive automatic citizenship, should he or she wish to come to Israel. On the other hand,
however, there was the phenomenon of the ongoing “negation of the Exile” and the
promotion of a new, secular and muscular identity in the place of what was perceived as
old, religious and defeatist one (cf. Almog, 2000; Dieckhoff, 2003; Elon, 1983;
Kimmerling, 2001; Ram, 2003; Zertal, 1998, for various aspects of these problems).

This “great spiritual divide” could not but regard the Holocaust as the ultimate
culmination of the Diaspora’s weakness and therefore the ultimate conclusion of the
Zionist “negation of the Exile”. The result of this ideological as well as, certainly,
psychological situation was coined the “great silence”. It was born out of arrogance,
regret and shame. “Israelis”, writes Segev, “refused to speak or even think about the
Holocaust, almost to the point of denial” (Segev, 2000: 513; cf. Friedländer, 1994; Zertal,
1998, 2005: 92). What were possible to “identificate” with were the sole heroic parts of
the ghetto fighters in general and the Warsaw uprising in particular, where those actors
were rhetorically “Zionised” in many ways in their heroism (Zertal, 2005: 26-44). The
rest, by consensus, reinforced the inevitable need of the Jewish state but was not
internalised as an integral part of Israeli(-Jewish) identity. As such, it could have hardly
motivated such a risky operation as the one to capture ex-Nazis outside Israel could have
been.\(^\text{44}\)

\(^{41}\) Cf. the State of Israel’s Proclamation of Independence (2001) in 1948.
\(^{44}\) Remarkably, the Law of 1950, under which Eichmann would be tried, was “passed to provide the Jewish
state with means to bring to justice a handful of ‘collaborators’ from amidst the Jewish survivors
themselves” (Zertal, 2005: 60; cf. 60-79). No one seems to have thought that once an actual Nazi would be
It was, however, precisely around the time of the trial that this very “Israel-ideology” came to be seen less and less viable (Elon, 1983; Kimmerling, 2001; Segev, 2000). The (Jewish) population of the state consisted more and more of people who came (after the Holocaust or after pressure being exerted on them in Arab countries) out of necessity, rather than out of principle. Coherence and cohesiveness appeared to be lacking and the recently developed Israeli culture was considered to be too thin (towards the newcomers, in any case) to create a unified (Jewish) national identity. Thus came about ageing Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion’s “last great national undertaking” (Zertal, 2005: 90).  

Immediately after the capture of Adolf Eichmann had become known, however, a diplomatic row erupted between Israel and Argentina, the latter claiming an infringement upon its sovereignty by Israel and requesting Eichmann be handed back. Israel, in the form of a letter by Ben-Gurion to Argentine President Arturo Frondizi (see Ben-Gurion, 1972: 579-580), did not deny the formal breach of international law. Yet, the Israeli Premier pointed out, first, the kidnappers were not formally associated with the state, were only “survivors” and, second, their goal transcended the “formal violation of law” and carried a “supreme moral validity” in itself. These arguments, pro and contra, did not change very much during the remainder of the diplomatic row either, only the scene did as the ensuing impasse was decided to be resolved at the United Nations. To collective tried in Israel. Likewise, the major “Holocaust trial” that preceded Eichmann’s was that of Rudolf Kastner (born Kasztner Rezso), a Hungarian Jew by origin who in 1952 became the spokesperson for the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Israel. Although starting as a simple libel trial against a certain Malchiel Gruenwald, who accused Kastner of dealing with the Nazis and benefiting “from Hitler’s theft and murder” and being the “indirect murderer of my dear brothers” (quoted in Segev, 2000: 257). The trial quickly turned to be in effect the trial of the plaintiff Kastner and, by association, of the ruling Labour Party of Ben-Gurion. In the famous verdict of Justice Benjamin Halevi (later to be completely overturned by the Supreme Court), Kastner “sold his soul to the devil” – that devil, incidentally, was called Adolf Eichmann. On the Kastner Trial see Bilsky, 2004: Ch. 1-3; Lahav, 1997: Ch. 7; Segev, 2000: 255-310; Weitz, 1996.  

To what extent this can truly be called a “project” of Ben-Gurion or largely a side effect of an assertion of sovereignty directed towards the international community is still being disputed by Israeli scholars (see Yablonka, 2004: 46-54). What cannot disputed is Ben-Gurion’s involvement. It ranged from his dramatic announcement before the Knesset (see above) to diplomatic efforts with both the Argentine President and Jewish organisations (Ben-Gurion, 1972: 586-603; Keren, 1991). He wrote articles in Hebrew and English exclusively devoted to the trial (Ben-Gurion, 1960). He intervened in the job of the Attorney General bordering on the transgressing of separation of powers, such as proofreading (and correcting) the first part of the text of the indictment (see Yablonka, 2004: 83-87, 238). Whatever his conscious, well-defined goals with the trial were and however exactly they mapped later consequences, Israel’s ageing Prime Minister, who had by then effectively lead the “country” (both in its fully-fledged and embryonic states) for thirty years implicitly and explicitly provided the framework for the trial (for an ideological overview of Ben-Gurion’s conception see Keren, 1991).
Israeli relief, the UN Security Council effectively judged that Eichmann may remain in Israel while "appropriate reparations" must be made to Argentina.  

Even before the UN decision, frantic preparations commenced in Israel. First of all, a venue had to be found for the event. Eventually, instead of the house of the District Court in Jerusalem, it was the newly built (and finished just for the sake of the trial) Beth Ha'Am (House of the People) — a cultural centre by origin, with a huge auditorium — that held the proceedings. The trial was recorded in its entirety, but broadcasted on the Israeli radio "Voice of Israel" only in parts, with additional regular programs such as the daily, peak hour "Trial Diary" and the summary of the week "The Week at the Eichmann Trial". TV-rights, much to the chagrin of local film studios, were struck with the relatively unknown American TV company Capital Cities (ahead of NBC, CBS, or ABC) as it was "the only company prepared to take upon itself all the contractual conditions dictated by the Israelis, including a prohibition on making a financial profit from the filming, an obligation to supply all filmed material to anyone who wanted it, and the commitment to use videotape" (Yablonka, 2004: 58). Subsequently, however, even if it was the first televised trial in history, it was neither broadcasted in Israel (the government's subsequent attempts at public screenings failed as well47), nor was it filmed in its entirety as Capital Cities exploited not being obliged by the contract to do either (Yablonka, 2004: 55-63). Apart from the radio, it was mainly through the written media that the Israeli and the worldwide public followed the trial. It is by the written word that the extraordinary publicity of the event was best evidenced: Journalists from all over the world travelled to Jerusalem, resulting in an outpouring of an unprecedented amount of material (newspaper articles, essays and numerous books), to the extent that the references in themselves filled a (comprehensive but by no means exhaustive) book-length bibliography (see Braham, 1969).48

47 There was no television in Israel in 1961, but the proceedings could have been shown in cinemas.
48 Amongst the accounts of the trial undoubtedly Arendt's is the most widely known. It was, however, covered by one of the most popular Israeli poet of the time, Chaim Gouri, as well as the Dutch novelist-in-waiting Harry Mulisch, for instance (Gouri, 2004; Mulisch, 2005). Interestingly enough, Mulisch's impressions were very much like Arendt's, in every significant respect.
The trial of Adolf Eichmann trial started on April 11, 1961. The three judges included District Court Judges Benjamin Halevi and Yitzhak Raveh, presided by Supreme Court Judge Moshe Landau. The process of choosing the judges reflected the overall frenzy and uncertainty surrounding the case. By Israeli law it was Halevi, president of the Jerusalem District Court, who had the right to preside over the trial. Yet, his impartiality quickly came under scrutiny and was questioned as he had already conducted the infamous Kastner trial in 1954-55, with the extraordinary verdict (“he sold his soul to the devil”) that not only “damned” Kastner but characterised the person with whom Kastner conducted his negotiations – Adolf Eichmann (see Bilsky, 2004: 88-89; cf. Ibid: 41-66). As a compromise, a special law was therefore created that enabled the president of the Supreme Court Yitzhak Olshan to pick the presiding judge out of the available Supreme Court Judges, while Halevi retained his right to choose the remaining two judges. One of his choices was himself (Cesarani, 2004: 255; Lahav, 1997: 147). As to the counsel for the defence, due to obvious reasons Israeli authorities preferred a foreign lawyer (for which they had again to amend Israeli law). It was the German lawyer Robert Servatius (with his assistant Dieter Wechtenbruch) that was chosen by the defendant (as Eichmann’s family claimed that they could not afford the salary of the lawyer, it fell on the state of Israel to meet the defence costs). The State of Israel, as already noted, was represented by its (recently) appointed Attorney General, Gideon Hausner and his team comprising of Gabriel Bach, Yaacov Bar-Or and Jacob Robinson (Cesarani, 2004: 246-251; Hausner, 1966).

In his indictment, the Attorney General charged Eichmann with fifteen counts under Sections 1 and 3 of the Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law (see fn. 44). The first count, “Crime against the Jewish people”, charged that “the accused, together with others, during the period 1939 to 1945, caused the killing of millions of Jews, in his capacity as the person responsible for the execution of the Nazi plan for the physical extermination of the Jews, known as ‘the final solution of the Jewish problem’” (quoted in Papadatos, 1964: 111). After enumerating the particulars it also contained the proviso that “all the acts mentioned in this count were committed by the accused with the intention of destroying the Jewish people” (Ibid: 114). Later counts consisted of other sorts of “Crimes against the Jewish people” (Counts 1-4); “Crimes against Humanity”
committed against the Jewish (Counts 5-7) people, Polish and Slovene “civilians” (Count 9 and 10, respectively) as well as the Gypsy people (Count 11); “War Crimes” against the Jewish people (Count 8); “Crimes against Humanity” against the children of Lidice (Count 12); and finally “membership in hostile organisation[s]” (Counts 13-15).

In line with the rather sensationalist indictment (as far as Jewish issues were concerned, at least), Hausner’s portrait of Eichmann was replete with “overblown chain of accusations”, exemplified in his insistence on Eichmann’s “command and control of every aspect of the Final Solution” (Cesarani, 2004: 304, 261). As to the personality of the defendant, likewise, Hausner echoed the understanding of the popular biographies mushrooming after the kidnapping and offering a highly digestible, mythological image of the Nazi official (e.g. Clarke, 1960; Donovan, 1960). In his account of the trial (which in parts is based verbatim on it), Hausner uses terms such as “mystery figure” (Hausner, 1966: 4), “diabolical” (Ibid: 4), “demonic personality” (Ibid: 6), “perverted” (Ibid: 7), “strongest personification of satanic principles” (quoted approvingly in Ibid: 13), “monster” (Ibid: 265), “devil”, “wild beast” (both quoted with approval in Ibid: 353, 367) amongst others to describe the defendant. As these adjectives tellingly indicate, halfway between the (all-too-human) pathological and the metaphysical, the man in the glass booth turned to be a symbol, a myth in the Attorney General’s conception.

Again, this was down partly to historical necessity, partly to ideology and politics. The Prosecution’s image of the Holocaust and Nazi bureaucracy was that of a smooth and centralised event, emanating from the strict hierarchical order of the Nazi ranks. Functionalist approaches to the Final Solution were not yet prevalent or even available (Raul Hilberg’s path-breaking book only got published in 1961, the year of the trial). In fact, not many scholarly books were available on the subject at all.

Yet, this larger-than-life picture of Eichmann was not merely due to a lack of historical knowledge or perspective. Quite simply, from a political perspective the man Adolf Eichmann was not the point of the trial.⁴⁹ Instead, it was Ben-Gurion’s aim to assert Israeli sovereignty and its right to represent the Jewish people, coupled with an

⁴⁹ Cf. “But, really, I don’t care what verdict is delivered against Eichmann. Only the fact that he will be judged in a Jewish state is important” (Ben-Gurion, 1960: 69).
explicitly expressed educational and *unifying* aspect. While the former continued the mainstream Zionist line, the latter betrayed a remarkable novelty. The first aspect of the trial concentrated on the unity of the Jewish people and conveyed the age-long history of anti-Semitism with the redemptive conclusion of this struggle, the State of Israel.\(^{50}\) It was a message that had been characterising the state and the Zionist movement from its inception and, as such, was of no surprise. However, in claiming that the trial should assist the Israeli youth to "[...] learn the full truth of what had happened, for only through knowledge could understanding and reconciliation with the past be achieved" (Hausner, 1966: 292), the State of Israel commenced the powerful and multi-layered process of integrating the Holocaust in its national life.\(^{51}\)

To achieve this latter "educational" goal of the trial and to create the project of "unity", Hausner resorted to an arguably revolutionary method. As he himself remembered,

"[...] the proceedings [of Nuremberg] failed to reach the hearts of men [...]. In criminal proceedings, the proof of guilt and the imposition of a penalty, though all important, are not the exclusive objects. Every trial also has a correctional and educational aspect. [...] It was mainly through the testimony of witnesses that the events could be reproduced in court [...]" (Hausner, 1966: 292).

\(^{50}\) Such concerns, naturally, dominated Hausner's grandiose opening speech: "As I stand before you, judges of Israel, [...] I am not standing alone. With me are six million accusers". "Eichmann, alas, was always a Jewish problem", as Judith Shklar ruefully commented in her essay *Legalism* (Shklar, 1964: 155). Still, it is striking that the Attorney General, referring to 6 million victims, clearly and discriminately designates only Eichmann's Jewish victims as those he stands for, even though it is his own indictment that charges Eichmann for crimes committed against Poles (i.e. non-Jewish Poles), Slovenes, Gypsies. On the trial as a "Jewish problem" see below the issue of "crimes against the Jewish people" as well.

\(^{51}\) As for the lack of knowledge and hence unity, Hausner's immediate explanation is indicative: "Our young generation, absorbed as it was in the building and guarding of the new state, had far too little insights into events which ought to be a pivotal point in its education [...] There was a breach between the generations, a possible source of abhorrence of the nation's yesterday. This could be removed only by factual enlightenment" (Hausner, 1966: 292).
More than a hundred witnesses were called to testify, following careful psychological as well as ideological selection (Yablonka, 2004: Ch. 7). Some of them only tangentially related to Eichmann’s deeds, or not at all. These witnesses were asked to tell their story, much in the way of later interviews or oral testimonies for historical or museological purposes (Langer, 1991; Young, 1988: 157-171). The judges tried to restrict the outpouring of emotions in the courtroom to what was considered relevant to the trial. Yet Hausner ultimately prevailed (Douglas, 2001: Ch. 5). It was the survivor that became the symbol of the trial and it was “the result of this decision [of using that many witnesses] that the Eichmann trial ‘created’ the Holocaust in the consciousness of the world” (Bilsky, 2004: 111; cf. Douglas, 2001; Felman, 2001).

Such a “creation” conveyed the Manichean picture of a monster against all-innocence, especially since Hausner (for all his claims of “factual enlightenment”) categorically and wilfully excluded the possibly troubling issue of the Jewish Councils from the testimonies (see Hausner, 1966: 295, 341). Thus, along with the grandiose picture of Eichmann, it was the witnesses “whose appearance and testimony gave the trial its powerful emotional charge. Their stories were dramatically and tragically unprecedented; they provided Israel with a catharsis that did not have to suffer the discomfort of intellectual debate” (Yablonka, 2004: 251).

After eight months, Eichmann was unanimously found guilty on all counts (though not without modifying the indictment on certain crucial points) bar the thirteenth and on 15th December, 1961 he was sentenced to death. He appealed against the decision but the Supreme Court upheld both the verdict and the sentence on 19th May, 1962. On 31st May, Eichmann applied for clemency but it was rejected by the President of Israel, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. A couple of hours later the death sentence was carried out.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{52}}\text{ Cf. with Peter Novick’s analysis of the American scene: “The Eichmann trial, along with the controversies over Arendt’s book and Hochhut’s play, effectively broke fifteen years of near silence on the Holocaust. As part of this process, there emerged in American culture a distinct thing called ‘the Holocaust’ – an event in its own right, not simply a subdivision of general Nazi barbarism” (Novick, 2000: 144).}\]
While the political, ideological, and moral significance of the entire event have never been questioned, they were rarely analysed as immanent to the legal proceedings. Likewise, legal studies were not concerned at all with these aspects of their findings and those in the area of social sciences have regularly ignored the legal aspects of the proceedings and the connections between morality, ideology, politics and the law. If, however, one is to accept what is consensually alleged by various scholars, namely, that this trial virtually “created the Holocaust” (see above), then it is crucial to have a look at how and in what way this “creation” related or resulted from the legal proceedings themselves.

There was, for instance, the intricate question of the legitimacy of Israeli jurisdiction, namely, that it contravened the received principle of territoriality. Eichmann’s misdeeds were not committed in Israel and hence Israel’s claim to try the man appeared to be of questionable legitimacy. That is, the state of Israel (the plaintiff, in short) did not even exist at the time those deeds were committed. Arguments based on received exceptions to the rule of “territoriality,” such as the acknowledgment of a “linking point” or, more specifically, the principle of “passive personality” circumvented rather than confronted the crucial dilemma. That is, the divergence between the obvious (?) of the link between Israel and the victims of the (Jewish) Holocaust; and the inevitable lack of any established formal legal link between the two. Albeit these problems are, perhaps, at face value of purely legal interest (as evidenced by the neglect of subsequent non-legal scholars), the social and ideological dimension can be quickly grasped by two distinctive positions, one strongly criticising the rationale of trial and the other enthusiastically defending it. Thus, Stanford Professor of Law, Yosal Rogat alleged that “by trying Eichmann, and thus stressing crimes against Jews [...] Israel [...] took for granted its leadership of world Jewry and its right to speak for all Jews” (Rogat, 1961: 53).

There are apparent exceptions to this, such as the Attorney General’s decision to elevate the witnesses to a hitherto unprecedented rank (see Bilsky, 2004: Ch. 4, esp. 113-114; Douglas, 2001: Ch. 4-5; Felman, 2001). But neither of this could blur that virtually no one reflecting on the trial from the realm of humanities refer to legal work done on it (and vice versa), and legal problematics on the whole has been escaped the attention of social scientists or intellectuals in general (for sort of an exception see Parvikko, 2000; and Silving, 1961). On the legitimacy of Israeli jurisdiction and the idea of the „linking point” see Papadatos (1964: 50-52). On the principle of „passive personality” see Arendt (1994a: 260), Kittrie (1964: 22-23), Rogat (1961: 28-29), Silving (1961: 333) and Stone (1961: 9-10).
In contrast, Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice, Michael Musmanno justified the legitimacy of Israeli jurisdiction by claiming that "if Eichmann had killed six million Americans in twenty different nations around the globe, could it seriously be argued that the United States would not have the right to take him into custody and try him here in the United States [...]" (Musmanno, 1961: 10; cf. Silving, 1961: 331)?

Furthermore, there was the issue of the nature of the offence. As already seen, the Law of 1950, under which Eichmann was charged referred to "crimes against the Jewish people" as well as the more traditional "crimes against humanity". Not that the latter was an unproblematic legal concept itself. The notion of "crimes against humanity" was troubled since its very inception at the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, where the Allies tried major Nazi war criminals after World War II. Yet, Nuremberg was at least a legal precedent. "Crimes against the Jewish people", however, was completely unheard of and smacked, for some, of illiberalism or ethnocentrism in that it "defined the crime in terms of the particular group injured, rather than in terms of the nature of the acts committed" (Rogat, 1961: 41; cf. Arendt, 1994a: 254-263; Osiel, 1997: 62; Taylor, 1961). These claims were countered by pointing out that this evident idiosyncrasy of the law under which Eichmann was tried made "no material difference to either the course or the outcome of the trial" (Stone, 1961: 8), or by repeating the court's view that it was merely a particularisation of the original "crimes against humanity" concept (see Lasok, 1962: 356, 370; Kittrie, 1964: 25, 27; Papadatos, 1964: 46).

Self-evidently, then, the legal community of the time took up these issues. However, it was only in strictly legal terms that they treated the problems. As social scientists, in turn, neglected the legal questions altogether, any wider (social or ideological) significance of the trial as a legal event has become lost and not been recovered since.

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55 Cf. "By the very act of holding the trial [...] Israel undertakes an aggressive defense of the last and most crucial bastion besieged by modernity – the self. It denies that personal identity can be created by individual action and freedom [...]" (Rogat, 1961: 21) For a study on the answer of three (legal) "children of liberalism" – Rogat amongst them – to the challenges of the trial see Lahav (1992).  
56 For the evolution of the concept of "crimes against humanity" see Bloxham (2001), Douglas (2001: Ch. 2), and Robertson (2006).
Nonetheless, many other (extra-legal) aspects of the trial were frantically analysed and debated by social scientists and various sorts of intellectuals, then as now. As noted above, there has always been a virtually unanimous consensus that what the trial and its reception constituted a “turning point” in the approach of Israel and the United States to the Holocaust. The trial has recently been dubbed a “group therapy” (Segev, 2000: 11, 351; cf. Elon, 1983: 215) or an entire “consciousness changing event” (Zertal, 2005: 95) in Israel. In what did this “change” manifest and what were its consequences?

To begin with, as was already pointed out the trial helped to terminate what is now termed to be the “great silence” (Segev, 2000: 185, 513; Yablonka 2004: 220; Zertal, 2005: 92), by raising the Holocaust into a discuss-able issue in Israel as well as in the United States. Likewise, influenced very much by the Attorney General’s decision to lend voice to the survivors themselves (instead of mere documents), the trial helped to grant a prominent status to Holocaust survivors they could not enjoy before (Yablonka, 2004: 5, 162). Once again, in the place of shame, anger, and blame (very much expressed in the Kastner Trial), there was identification to come (Miller, 2002; Weitz, 1996).

The trial, however, was a “turning point” in a broader sense. Either as an “undertaking” or a side-effect, it does appear to have achieved something like a united Israeli (Jewish!) national identity through the identification with the Holocaust and its victims. In Israeli historian, Hannah Yablonka’s word, “the trial turned the Holocaust into a Jewish story, a major, and at times, the only component in the Israelis’ sense of identity” (2004: 248; cf. Elon, 1997a: 267-274; Segev, 2000: 11, 361; Yablonka, 2004: 166). Such identification, however, was not without further ideological and political consequences. For one thing, as some scholars point out, “signalling the end of Israeli ideology in Jewish history” (Yablonka, 2004: 249) it was the Eichmann trial and its reception that began to push the state towards an ethno/theocratic course (Bilsky, 2004: 12, 254-55; Zertal, 2005: Ch. 3). To be sure, as noted above, the State of Israel or the majority of Zionists before the establishment of the State never completely distanced themselves from Jewish history and tradition, and looked upon themselves as members of the Jewish nation or ethnos in fact. Yet there was at the same time the counter-narrative

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of the new, secular, and politically active Israeli or "Hebrew" nation that, according to some scholars, would have perhaps better fitted a conception of Israel as a democracy (Avishai, 2002; Elon, 1983, 1997a; Kimmerling, 2001).58

For many, the process that largely began with the Eichmann trial and reached its climax in the aftermath of the 1967 War means the victory, as it were, of the thesis over the antithesis. It was a shift illustrated dramatically by Israeli historian Idith Zertal's words on "the course Israel has taken along this time frame that is from a secular, nationally mobilized and collectivist society into a messianic-like entity displaying religious and meta-historic features" (Zertal, 2005: 91). Though undoubtedly overheated, it is nevertheless crucial to consider the connection that is drawn here by Zertal between the Eichmann trial and the War of 1967. To draw this connection is almost a common place in the literature on the collective memorial aspects of the trial (see Elon, 1983: 216; Lahav, 1992: 575; Miller, 2002: 131; Segev, 2000: 387-395). Many scholars attribute the "organized collective anxiety" (Zertal, 2005: 121-124) that characterised the famous "waiting period" before the war and the enthusiastic welcoming of the "miracle" that was to come to the increasing presence of the Holocaust in Israeli public discourse.

The Eichmann trial, then, did not only turn the Holocaust into a proper and discuss-able topic in the life of the Israeli (and American Jewish) society. It did not only change the position of those societies with regard to the catastrophe. Rather, it changed those very societies in as much as it integrated the ultimate catastrophe in their identity.

Such is the trial and its public perception described in a nutshell. Yet any approach and even that of a nutshell must turn its attention to Hannah Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem. This book – quite against the wishes of those having tried to control the public perception of the event – became synonymous with the trial and one of the most crucial components of the debates around it. In the last subsection of this chapter, I will overview the "controversy" as well as the central components of the book.

58 Anyone, generally, of the so-called post-Zionists could be referred to here. For post-Zionism, see Nimni (2003), Silberstein (1999).
2.3.2. Eichmann in Jerusalem and its reception

There are virtually no accounts of the Eichmann trial that ignore *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Whether concurring or taking issue with it, this is the book that defined the trial for posterity and this is the account that is the basis of every other intellectual reflection. Partly, because this was a version that betrayed a sceptical or even hostile attitude towards those very political and ideological endeavours that motivated the discourse the Israeli authorities aimed to establish.\(^{59}\) "The controversy" (cf. Krummacher, 1964), as the event simply came to be known raged on from 1963 for three years, mobilising unseen energies and seeing well over a thousand published written pieces: articles, reviews, essays, letters and even an entire book solely devoted to refute Arendt during that time-range (Robinson, 1965).\(^{60}\) It was a "civil war", as the participating Irving Howe later metaphorised that "provoked divisions that would never be entirely healed" (Howe, 1983: 270, 273-274). Fittingly, contemporary scholars still refer to it as the “unparalleled public airing of historical issues relating to the Holocaust” (Cohen, 1993: 30) or “the bitterest public dispute among intellectuals and scholars concerning the Holocaust that has ever taken place” (Rabinbach, 2004: 97).

Prominent intellectuals from all over the world made their voice be heard, including Martin Buber, Ernst Simon, Leon Poliakov, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Gertrud Ezorsky, Israel Gutman, Marie Syrkin, Norman Podhoretz, Daniel Bell, Dwight Macdonald, Bruno Bettelheim, Walter Laqueur, to name *(really)* but a few. Even so, the intellectual level of the debate has often been questioned, historian Ylana Miller calling it bluntly an “organized and emotional attack that sought to place Arendt’s work outside the scope of acceptable discussion” (Miller 2002: 141). Indeed, insinuations, *ad hominem* arguments or even, most pivotally, the explicit “pathologisation” of Arendt by calling her

\(^{59}\) Interestingly, early after its American publication, the Israeli publishing house Amikam bought the rights from Shocken Books and even commissioned the renowned publicist Boaz Evron to translate the book. According to his version, he even completed this task and received his salary for this. It was, however, not until 2000 that the book got published. Evron referred to the “hidden hand” that may have acted (cf. Zertal, 2005: 131). It was very much in line with the reception in Israel in general, which was initially quite favourable. Arendt took notice of this situation and claimed to be “informed by reliable sources that Ben-Gurion himself had intervened to change this atmosphere” (Arendt, 1978g: 273).

\(^{60}\) For an extensive but incomplete bibliography see Braham (1969: 141-174.)

Encountering such a public rage as well as interpretations that matched both in their simplicity and intensity these sorts of accusations, Arendt decided against answering her critics as early as during spring 1963 (Young-Bruehl, 2004: 349). What we know of her opinion -- both from her private correspondence and from the few occasions she did publish her viewpoint -- is that she regarded this controversy as an "organized campaign" against a "book which was never written" (Arendt, 1994a: 282, 283; cf. Arendt, 1963, 2003: 17, 1978g: 272; Arendt and McCarthy, 1995: 146-148), or simply an "amazing amount of lies" (Arendt, 1993b: 227). This in turn evoked Walter Laqueur's stunning reaction in their exchange in the New York Review of Books: "I think I can assure her [i.e. Arendt] that the Elders of Zion are not yet out to get her" (Laqueur, 1978: 279). This statement was transformed into a near-certainty by the time Laqueur later reviewed the debate, claiming that "Miss Arendt was certainly at the time in a state of near panic [...] firmly convinced that the Elders of Zion had conspired to 'get her'" (Laqueur, 1983: 113).

It was, however, not so much the case of "reading too much anti-Semitic literature for her own good" (Laqueur, 2001: 58) -- as Laqueur with breathtaking tastelessness intimated on another occasion --, but an assessment given on perfectly concrete experiences. As Arendt wrote in her response to Laqueur, she had been sent a letter by the acquaintance from her German years, Siegfred Moses, the former state comptroller of Israel, chairman of the Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem and spokesman for the Council of Jews from Germany (in Israel). Moses simply "declared war" on the book and later

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61 For a general overview see Cohen (1993, 2001).
lived up to his promise by publishing, for instance, a full-page statement in Aufbau against the book. Meanwhile, Arendt learned about the efforts of the Anti-Defamation league of B’nai B’rith to discredit her book (Arendt, 1978g: 272-276; cf. Young-Bruehl, 2004: 347). On three occasions (11, 27 March and 28 May, 1963), brochures were compiled and then distributed to most Jewish organisations (Rabinbach, 2004: 98). Though the ADL memo generally cautioned against an “organized response and personal attacks” (Cohen, 1993: 45), it nevertheless urged the recipients to discourage other people from purchasing the book and, just in case, “crafted patterns of response to her book” (Cohen, 1993: 44) as an “information for book reviewers” (quoted in Miller, 2002: 142). One of these brochures included excerpts from what was later termed by Arendt’s biographer the “most mindless attack of the entire affair”, by a certain Leo Mindlin (Young-Bruehl, 2004: 348).

The ADL memos as well as a short to-the-point discrimination (“a propaganda pamphlet”, according to Arendt [1978g: 262]) by one of Gideon Hausner’s assistants at the trial, Jacob Robinson, reached the mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek as well and were further distributed by him. His involvement in the event (unknown to Arendt) sheds perhaps some light on the general atmosphere into which Eichmann in Jerusalem arrived. As early as one month after Eichmann’s capture Kollek informed interested parties that assistance would be given to former government personnel Moshe Pearlman in writing an account of the trial that “would present appropriately not only the adventurous aspects of the story but the special fields in which we as a State are interested” (quoted in Miller, 2002: 136). Such assistance came on the condition of Pearlman submitting his work for approval before actual publication; which he was naturally eager to do, acknowledging “the importance of public opinion” and of pre-empting possibly competitive versions (Pearlman quoted in Miller, 2002: 137). Pearlman’s book was indeed published, but came too late to “pre-empt” the damage that was feared of beforehand (see Pearlman, 1963). Consequently, Kollek later advised to advertise it as a “response” to Arendt’s account (Miller, 2002: 142). According to Ylana Miller, such preparations made sure that Arendt’s book could “readily be seen not fruitful for discussion but rather as dangerous
competition". Hence, what evolved was not an "open intellectual debate but [...] an attack" based "less on what she said than what was feared" (Ibid: 140, 141)\textsuperscript{62}

A campaign, then, it was. Yet, as many scholars do not hesitate to point out (even while acknowledging what has above been described) all of this is still not enough for an account of the intensity of the "controversy". As Richard Cohen writes in his extensive history of the reception, Arendt's work

"[...] undermined received myths and memories of the past, shaking the foundations of a post-war Weltanschauung that had begun to integrate the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel as seminal moments in the history of the Jewish people. In her direct challenge to the myths lay the source of the controversy" (Cohen, 1993: 42; Cf. Cohen, 2001: 255; Novick, 2000: 136; Rabinbach, 2004).

What were those "myths"? One could immediately refer to the ceremonial character with which the event was commemorated. Certainly, it consensually ruled out certain forums and certain ways of speaking. Thus, critics could have seen The New Yorker – a popular though intellectually shallow magazine: "witty, entertaining, frivolous, intellectually pretentious and quite unserious" (Laqueur, 1983: 110; cf. Howe, 1963; but see Allen, 1983: 121) –, as well as Arendt's noted ironical style as sacrileges in themselves.\textsuperscript{63} Yet it nevertheless seems to be a gross over-simplification of the reception of the book that Arendt was "mainly attacked not for what she said, but how she said it" (Laqueur, 1983: 116). There were "myths" regarding not only form but substance as well.

Arendt's book certainly blurred the line between the (collective) black and the white, and demolished a Manichean account of the Holocaust. There was no quasi-

\textsuperscript{62} Apart from those mentioned in the main body of my text, it should be noted that the World Jewish Congress distributed a pamphlet written by Nehemiah Robinson. It was based on the first draft of Jacob Robinson's book-length refutation of Arendt (see Robinson, 1965) that was available in a mimeograph format and was used – according to Arendt's biographer – by many of her high-profile reviewers/attackers (Young-Bruehl, 2004: 356).

\textsuperscript{63} It must be noted, however, that irony nowhere covers the victims.
metaphysical Evil as there was no spotless Innocence either (as far as human collectives were concerned). Of course, this does not mean that she would have disputed the criminal responsibility of the defendant. What she did dispute was those “overblown chain of accusations” attempted by the prosecution as a pattern to convey a monstrous, demonic, satanic person. This, she suspected, was not so much deference towards victims and survivors but an ideological ploy, suiting the invisible “stage manager”, David Ben-Gurion’s interests and confronting those of the trial where “justice, and nothing else, is the end [...]” (Arendt, 1994a: 5, 264-65).

Justice required that Eichmann be treated as a human being, not as a symbol of the age-long anti-Semitism of the nations. And as for this human being, Arendt noted, “despite all the efforts of the prosecution, everybody could see that this man was not a ‘monster’, but it was difficult indeed not to suspect that he was a clown” (Arendt: 1994a: 54). Such an observation (if it was one) evidently countered any grandiose and larger-than-life opinion on the Nazis and — even though Adolf Eichmann, ultimately, received maximal contempt from Arendt — could have surely been next to impossible to digest. Even more so that Arendt expressed — and, stylistically, enhanced — this sentiment often in the form of oratio obliqua. If one realised the absurd content of some of Eichmann’s contentions in Arendt’s rendering, this rhetorical tool in which those contentions were formally attributed to the narrator (i.e. Arendt) further strengthened that absurd character.

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64 Cf. the way Arendt renders Eichmann’s farewell: “Adolf Eichmann went to the gallows with great dignity. He had asked for a bottle of red wine and had drunk half of it. He refused the help of the Protestant minister [...] who offered to read the Bible with him: he had only two more hours to live and therefore no ‘time to waste’. He walked the fifty yards from his cell to the execution chamber calm and erect, with his hands bound behind him. [...] ‘I don’t need that’, he said when the hood was offered him. He was in complete command of himself, nay, he was more: he was completely himself. Nothing could have demonstrated this more than the grotesque silliness of his last words. He began with stating emphatically that he was a Gottgläubiger, to express in common Nazi fashion that he was no Christian and did not believe in life after death. He then proceeded: ‘After a short while, gentlemen, we shall all meet again. Such is the fate of all men. Long live Germany, long live Argentina, long live Austria. I shall never forget them.’ In the face of them, he had found the cliché used in funeral oratory. Under the gallows, his memory played him the last trick; he was ‘elated’ and he forgot that it was his own funeral. It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson this long course of human wickedness had taught us — the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying banality of evil” (Arendt, 1994a: 252 — emphases in the original).
If not, however, one could for instance believe that the narrator in fact presents Eichmann as a Zionist. 65

However, it was not just the depiction of Eichmann that was presented in an unexpected way. Arendt raised the issue of Jewish complicity, and even that of institutional Jewish complicity. Again, this went against the tide as evidenced in the Attorney General’s explicit decision not to touch on the issue of the Jewish Councils. Unity was to be created and some disturbing details would have embarrassed those efforts. The Israeli youth, as Ben-Gurion stated with characteristic and telling determination “should be taught the lesson that Jews are not sheep to be slaughtered but a people who can hit back as Jews did in the War of Independence” (Ben-Gurion, 1960: 62).

It is true, then, that Arendt contravened certain “myths” as well as an ideology that was based on the conception of eternal anti-Semitism, the categorical difference between Jews and Gentiles, and a metaphysical view of the Holocaust or even Jewish history in general. Her story was certainly not one for creating national unity.

To be sure, Arendt’s own account was close to such an “anti-ideological” or “anti-mythical” account of her own activity as well as the basic dichotomy along which she perceived the trial (Arendt, 1993b). “Justice” was represented by the three judges versus “politics” and “ideology”, which were represented by Ben-Gurion’s proxy, the Attorney General. “Despite the intentions of Ben-Gurion and all the efforts of the prosecution, there remained an individual in the dock, a person of flesh and blood; and if Ben-Gurion did ‘not care what verdict is delivered against Eichmann,’ [Ben-Gurion, 1960: 62] it was undeniably the sole task of the Jerusalem court to deliver one” (Arendt, 1994a: 20). A “person of flesh and blood” as Arendt concretely expressed her own task as well as her subsequent denials to have arrived at something like a “theory”. No. She just listened and wrote down the objective truth. She might have been “cold” but was nevertheless right (cf. Canovan, 1994: 193).

65 Amongst others, it is surely this famous charge (made for example by Abel [1963], Scholem [Appendix: 1. 174-175], Robinson [1965: 48], and somehow still maintained by Wolin [1996, 2001]) that prompted Arendt to characterise Jacob Robinson’s 400-page long rebuttal of Eichmann in Jerusalem as “a truly dazzling display of sheer inability to read” (Arendt, 1978g: 265).
Yet, and quite unsurprisingly at that, her detractors certainly did not and do not argue that she was right but cold – i.e. right from a universal perspective but wrong from a particular Jewish one (see Bilsky, 2004; Cohen 1993, 2001). Instead, her detractors too spoke about facts and events. They too offered interpretations. They too had their ideology just as Arendt had hers. Thus, Eichmann’s biographer calls Arendt’s version a “myth” too and (quite apart from the question of whether David Cesarani is right in what he means by this) it raises the question of what sort of interpretative decisions Arendt (and her detractors) did and did not make about the trial, Eichmann, and the Jewish Councils (cf. Cesarani, 2004: 4, 15, 345-346). Likewise, legal scholar Leora Bilsky criticises “the prevailing view that Arendt adopted a narrow legalistic stance in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*”. Instead, she urges us to analyse her position directing our attention “to the political challenge that the trial posed to the Israeli court: whether the trial could bring Israel closer to its ideals of a democratic society or whether it would push it further in the direction of an ethnocratic society” (Bilsky, 2004: 11-12).

Notwithstanding their actual merits, shortcomings, or sophistication, it is these latter attempts that would come close to an account for what actually happened in both Arendt’s book and in the controversy. This is, certainly, not to say that Arendt was not right. It is, however, to assert that scholarship should exceed the notion of someone being simply right.

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, I do not have the time and space here to go down this road. But it was introduced because it is this road on which I shall try to analyse the exchange between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem.

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66 See, however Thomas Laqueur (2004) arguing that Cesarani’s rendering of Eichmann in fact bolsters most of Arendt’s contentions.
67 As for the “prevailing view” of considering Arendt a legal purist, see Felman (2001) and Douglas (2001: 111-113). Ironically, Arendt herself would have considered herself one.
2.4. Conclusion

This chapter consisted of four more or less independent sections, in which I have attempted to layout the historical context of the event that is to be analysed in this thesis. At this point, it has hopefully become evident that the subject of this thesis is the public exchange, fall-out and bout of two extraordinary intellectuals with partly common and partly strikingly different life-stories and interests. This certainly does not mean that those differences should necessarily enter or influence their texts and even less so that analysis should be conducted according to them. But it does mean that by dint of these factors, the exchange of letter between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem was no ordinary matter.

Just what kind of matter it was will be my task to uncover in the bulk of this thesis. Again, I hope I have managed to establish the significance of the event. Nothing, however, replaces the actual analysis of the text. Before entering the realm of analysis though, I will briefly review the reception of the exchange, and position as well as defend my methodological approach with regard to this reception. If it was of such significance, many interpretations of it can be expected, after all. Why do we need yet another one? Furthermore, where would, methodologically, the originality of that “another one” lie? This is the topic of the next chapter.
3. Methodological and Theoretical Framework: Discourse Analysis on Balance

3.1. Introduction

As the task of this thesis involves the reading of a text, no fixed set of procedures can be expected as methodological principles. To introduce the kind of reading I envisage in producing an analysis of the exchange, I will therefore briefly introduce earlier forays into this region. I will start with the reception of the exchange and describe what sorts of readings, what sorts of analyses have been produced on it so far. It is the (rather major, in my understanding) shortcomings of these attempts to which I will contrast my take on the text.

From then on, I will turn my attention to the three theoretical and methodological frameworks in the realm of social sciences that produce distinctive conceptions about the nature of texts and the analysis’s task. After outlining the more or less common assumptions that discourse analysts work with, I will first introduce the radically bottom-up approaches of conversation analysis and ethnomethodology where analysts’ assumptions are claimed to be subordinated to the concerns of the participants. After pondering the worth and drawbacks of this orientation, I will consider the once self-fashioned middle-of-the-road candidate, discursive psychology and recent developments in this area. I will contrast early conceptualisations of this strand of discourse analysis – where an attention to local, situated construction coexisted with an interest in broader emerging topics as well – with later achievements that appear to point distinctively towards the direction of conversation analysis, blurring virtually any difference between the two approaches. Having briefly considered debates that derive from this state of affairs, I will shift to the top-down approach of critical discourse analysis and elucidate...
some of the assumptions that this approach displays in the programmatic assertions of its leading scholars.

In conclusion, I will argue for the original, middle-of-the-road discursive psychology as an orientation fit for investigating more abstract, culturally embedded topics of political, ideological, and broadly moral nature while not losing from sight that these topics should nevertheless be the outcome of any empirical research, rather than the input of it.

3.2. Quoting the Recondite Text: The Brief History of Reception of the Exchange between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem

There can be no surprise that one of the only moments when Hannah Arendt, the protagonist of “the bitterest public dispute” (Rabinbach, 2004: 97) of the century on the Holocaust, was actively engaged in the controversy has been preserved by the “collective memory” as the peak point of that dispute. Moreover, as documented in the previous chapter, the moment came in the form of a correspondence between two extremely highly regarded and distinctive intellectuals. This could surely be assumed to add further to its subsequent impact.

Hence, the history of the reception of the debate frequently refers to the event of the exchange between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem as the “famous exchange of letters” (Bilsy, 2004: 146; cf. Bernstein, 1996: 15, 1997: 128; Laqueur, 2001: 57; Kristeva, 2001: 103), the “famous letter” (Marrus, 2001: 205), the “fabled exchange” (Wolin, 1996: 10) or the “well-known tempestuous clash” (Elon, 2003: 76) that was “deeply imprinted in the public mind” (Eddon, 2003: 55; cf. Eddon, 2006). Accounting for the fame (apart from the noted facts of the personality of the correspondents and of the letter being Arendt’s sole significant contribution to the debate), it has been singled out that Scholem’s were “the most authoritative words” (Howe, 1983: 273) and they “captured this collective bitterness” (Benhabib, 2000: 65; cf. Barnouw, 1990: 238;
Bemstein, 1996: 160, 1997: 128; Canovan, 1994: 193). We might conclude, then, that consensus not only takes the “fame” of this exchange for granted but allocates its significance as well. It has been considered representative of the entire debate. What Scholem stood for was, thus, nothing less than the entire offended community.

“Famous and oft-quoted” (Laqueur, 2001: 59) as the exchange has since been, it is nevertheless worthwhile to have a brief look at how its meaning and actual importance have been reconstructed, partly by the very same reviewers that posit and sustain its prominence. What even a cursory glance encounters is the phenomenon that Antaki et al. (2003) singled out as “under-analysis through over- or isolated quotations” in their review of deficiencies in discourse analysis. Though the criteria for this example of “non-analysis” may in many cases be contested, there can simply be no doubt that in most of the essays and reviews where the exchange has been quoted, there is indeed an extremely “low ratio of the analyst’s comments to data extracts” (Ibid). Thus, that the exchange is “oft-quoted” does not mean that these quotations form the basis of analysis, commentary, or interpretation in any valuable sense.68

But perhaps they should not either. Perhaps the value and significance of this exchange lies in the very fact that it “speaks for itself”. Hence, in-depth analysis is not required at all. Perhaps this is where the genuine significance of the event lies. It just crystallises what in other cases remained obscure; it just enlightens the shade; and we merely have to “see” and not read (analyse, interpret or comment).

Let us see whether this is indeed so, whether there is a consensus about what the exchange means, what social action it accomplishes, and how the verdicts of those that briefly comment on the exchange or paraphrase it are established.

The reputation of the exchange is often concentrated on one utterance, where Scholem alleges that,
"In the Jewish tradition there is a concept, hard to define and yet concrete enough, which we know as Ahabath Israel: "Love of the Jewish people..." In you, dear Hannah, as in so many intellectuals who came from the German Left, I find little trace of it" (lines 58-61).

The fame of this utterance almost equals that of the whole exchange. It appears sometimes that the phrase Ahabath Israel synecdochically stands for the toto. Hence, in what follows we shall take a fresh look at just how this "well-known charge" (Wolin, 1996: 10) or "old issue" (Laqueur, 2001: 59) features in later commentaries.

Strikingly, Scholem is sometimes reported to "accuse" Arendt of lacking "love of Israel" (Zertal, 2005: 7), to "discredit Arendt" by turning "her formulations into expressions of a misguided individual, one who lacked [...] 'the love of Israel' (Ahavat Israel)" (Cohen, 1993: 43), again, to accuse her "of the lack of love for the people of Israel" (Shapira, 2005: 27), or to charge Arendt "with the lack of Ahavat Israel, that is, love of Jewishness", explicating that "in so doing he wished to express that she did not feel obligated to the Jewish ethnos [...]" (Diner, 1997: 182 – emphasis in the original). "Jewish people", or "Israel", or "Jewishness", or "Jewish ethnus": it does not appear to matter. I have to make my point clearly here. It is not my main concern that certain of the reviewers cannot simply quote Scholem properly. Neither is it that they sometimes appear to paraphrase his words in any way they wish. Rather, my point is that these paraphrases are in none of the cases argued. While the "Jewish people", "Israel", "Jewishness", and "Jewish ethnus" are literally different, they certainly can be functionally equivalent in any given piece of discourse. And they might as well be equivalent in Scholem's. Yet, this is an assumption in all of these cases which, even if true, does not bring us closer to understand that phrase or that letter. It does not only reify its meanings, but displays a stunning paucity of interest in what it actually reifies.

69 All "line-numbers" in the forthcoming refer to the text of the exchange in the Appendix of this thesis.
70 See Reicher's argument on the conservativism (meant politically) that the social sciences display in taking the categories in terms of which they conduct their research for granted and hence effectively reifying the status quo (Reicher, 1997; cf. Reicher, 1996, 2004; Reicher and Hopkins, 2001b). Again, what is astonishing in many of the texts that deal with the exchange is that they not only conserve, they have no apparent interest in what they actually conserve.
My contention is that this is a pervasive characteristic of the reception of the exchange. While its significance and high reputation is asserted, no one has paid closer attention to that very significance up until now. While the comments and various sorts of paraphrases posit meanings found in there, they do it without even the slightest effort to argue for that meaning and for the validity of the paraphrases.

By the same token, as there are no qualms about paraphrasing/translating Jewish people/Israel in apparently any sorts of unargued-for ways, there is an even wider variety of the same act with regard to the whole phrase, “love of the Jewish people”. Sometimes it is “loyalty” to “her people” as it highlights “the contrast between the detached and the connected critic (a loving member of the community)” (Bilsky, 2004: 158, 146). Sometimes “total, albeit highly sophisticated, commitment” (Aschheim, 2001: 60). Sometimes mere “sympathy” (Young-Bruehl, 2004: 337). Or a special sort of “sympathy for the Jewish people” (Mommsen, 1991: 260). Or “solidarity with her people of origin” (Wolin, 1996: 10). Or, to the contrary, “unquestioned Jewish solidarity”, “unquestioned and unquestionable belonging to the group” (Barnouw, 1990: 233, 237). Alternatively, again, it was “more patriotism, more emotional involvement” (Elon, 1997b: 29) that Scholem requested, instead of the “nationalistic fervour” (Suchoff, 1997: 64-65) Arendt took this request to be. Lastly, to cite a unique voice:

“[...] in retrospect, one can only say that, sadly, Arendt missed the point. Scholem was far from advocating an unthinking Jewish nationalism (he was, along with Buber and Judah Magnes, affiliated with the Ichud a small group of Palestinian Jews who sought to promote Arab-Jewish understanding). Nor was it his position [...] that by criticizing one another Jews only provided aid and comfort to the ‘enemy’ [...] Instead, Scholem’s criticism concerned the unsympathetic and captious tone of Arendt’s remarks as much as their content. [...] Scholem was not summoning her to love all the Jews” (Wolin, 1996: 10 – emphases in the original).
Apparently, then, "love of the Jewish people" does not mean "to love all the Jews". Why not? Or why yes? Sadly, these questions are generously overlooked in this treatment.

What all of this tells us has, certainly, not much to do with Ahabath Israel or Scholem's letter as such. Again, this is not to say that the phrase or the letter do not amount to a request for sympathy or solidarity or patriotism or unthinking nationalistic fervour or emotional involvement or unquestionable belonging or whatever. Or, incidentally, that they do. What it tells us is that all of these utterances mean virtually nothing until they are argued, defended, and analysed. Likewise, finding some apparently participant-independent phrase or dichotomy with which to elucidate what was going on (i.e. group vs. individual loyalties; particularism vs. universalism. Cf. Aschheim, 2001; Bilsky, 2004; Zertal, 2005) do not help and in an important sense do not mean anything at all as long as they are not embedded into the context of the text. They might or might not be right, just as "love of the Jewish people" might or might not effectively equal unquestioned belonging to the group or patriotism.71

We must get rid of the notion of the simple transparency that in effect appears to have been dominating the reception of the exchange. Instead of assuming that one sees through it and then attributing to it any sorts of meanings one pleases, we must take it at face value: as a text. To understand rather than posit the meanings constructed, we must pay attention to it and analyse it. Only then will there cease to be an astonishing contradiction between the reputation and the high importance attributed to this exchange and the lack of valuable analysis or commentary of it. "Seen but unnoticed", as Harold Garfinkel would call everyday meaning-making (Garfinkel, 1967; cf. Drew, 1992: 484). The divergence will only disappear once we, instead of positing them confront the issues

71 Just as it does not matter, whether it is Israel or Jewishness that Scholem's charge concerns, it is even less important whether it was her tone that was accused by "heartlessness" (Cesarani) or whether Scholem accused, upbraided or simply spoke for many, summed up, delivered a message, touched on major concerns; whether his letter was cruel (Benhabib), cryptic (Diner), authoritative (Howe), bitter (Barnouw) or acrid (Zertal). In many cases, certainly, it does not bear any significance either. Yet they illustrate well the altogether much more important examples in the main body of my text of utter linguistic carelessness with which the exchange has been treated. To put it rather bluntly, all of these versions come without a minimal trace of attention (which they in some case deserve) and with a maximal practical devotion to the idea that what actually was (and is) written does not matter the slightest bit.
of meaning and significance as they are still buried within the letters that actually constitute it.

3.3. Principles of Discourse Analysis

The theoretical and methodological approach that is taken up in this thesis is that of discourse analysis (see Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002; van Dijk, 1997a, 1997b; Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001a, 2001b). Though many and diverging orientations took it up as a way to conceive of and conduct social research, certain common assumptions may nevertheless be detected in the various sorts of endeavours coveting the umbrella term of discourse analysis for their own research activities. In outlining the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this thesis, I shall start with these largely consensual issues. Yet, to reiterate, discourse analysis became such a wide term covering so many approaches that certain broad and distinctive types of understanding of notions such as “discourse” and “analysis” must be differentiated and subsequently addressed. In this sense, although the overarching feature of these orientations may still be considered discourse analysis, the difference between them appears to be as much (if not more) significant as the umbrella under which they allocated themselves.

For a start, it must be pointed out that doing discourse analysis (DA) means having a certain conception of the object of analysis. As discursive psychologists Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter put it, DA starts with a threefold assumption about discourse; be it written text or talk. It assumes that it is action-oriented, situated, and constructed/constructive (Edwards and Potter, 2001; cf. Potter and Edwards 2001; Edwards and Potter, 2005; Hepburn and Wiggins, 2007).

The first assumption echoes the insights of the philosopher John Austin (Austin, 1962; cf. Potter, 2001). Austin broke with the age-old assumption of the humanities that the site where sentences are assessed should be that of the truth-falsity dichotomy. He started with introducing another, rarely acknowledged cluster of sentences which he
called performative (as opposed to constative) and which, instead of a possible case of evaluation along the true-false dichotomy, appeared to carry out acts in the world.\textsuperscript{72} Performatives are, in short, neither true nor false but accomplish things in the world, Austin argued. His legacy, however, has not been to concentrate on a hitherto underestimated type of utterances in the world or to restore it to the prominent role in the hierarchy. Rather, his main point was to get rid of thinking about constatives as a rule and performatives as the exception (or vice versa) and acknowledge that utterances are both (to an extent) constative and performative in their use. They both make statements about the world and carry out acts in or of it (cf. Potter, 2001; Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 16).

While it cannot be said that Austin would have directly influenced discourse analysis in the social sciences, his break with viewing language and sentences solely in terms of truth and falsity – and hence solely as window to or a transmitter of a reality that precedes it and is independent of it – clearly chimes with the break discursively oriented social sciences carried out within their own disciplines.\textsuperscript{73} Thereafter, utterances were taken as much to be doing the reality as they had earlier been taken to express it in social psychology, sociology (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984), political science (Edelman, 1977) or cultural anthropology (Geertz, 1973; Lutz, 1988; Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990). Language-in-use was considered constitutive of the problem, not merely transmitting it.

\textit{Philosophically}, then, discourse analysis in the social sciences might be indebted to Austin. Edwards and Potter’s notion of the \textit{situatedness} of discourse (elsewhere: indexicality\textsuperscript{74}), however, indicates the point where it parts company with him, or perhaps with philosophy in general (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984: 5; Potter, 2001; Schegloff, 1984). In search of the “felicity conditions” in terms of which a performative is or is not “successful”, Austin acknowledged the role of the context in which that utterance featured. However, his theoretical, made-up, and abstract examples prevented him from considering this context as constitutive of the utterance and the utterance as constitutive

\textsuperscript{72} E.g. “I hereby name this ship Elisabeth”.

\textsuperscript{73} Billig (1996: 1-30) and Edwards (2004: 259) both point out that their respective positions were not so much responses for intellectual developments in the humanities. Rather, they evolved quite independently from reflecting on philosophical sources that could underpin its practice theoretically only later, in retrospect.

of the context (Potter, 2001; Hester and Eglin, 1997c; Hester and Housley, 2002b; for philosophical accounts on this see Derrida, 1991; Fish, 1999: Ch. 2, 3, 6). Discourse analytic studies, helped by their empirical orientation soon explored that utterances cannot be statically characterised in terms of the actions they do and the relationship they display must be examined with regard to the here-and-now in which they feature and which they accomplish. That "with regard" might mean the simple orientation of an utterance to previous ones or the challenge it poses to them or even the challenge it might pose to ones that would possible undermine it. Overall, for discourse analysis, what an utterance does not depend on a pre-established set of abstract features philosophers ascertain but on a dynamic interplay between that utterance and various other relevant utterances featuring in the context the research is examining.

This dynamic interplay brings us to the third and related assumption of discourse that is singled out by Edwards and Potter. The constructed/constructive dimension of discourse entails that any utterance is constructed by a participant and the researcher must investigate these acts of construction rather than assume some sort of mysterious preceding force (i.e. correspondence to reality; memory distortion etc.) that caused the utterance to be exactly that way. Yet, investigating how an utterance is constructed to appear to be exactly as it is tells only half of the story. As the emphasis is on doing instead of transmitting, an equal concern is what that "doing" will achieve, what its consequences will be. The utterance therefore is not only constructed but also constructive as it alters the context and the course of the entire discourse it features here and now in.

As noted, these assumptions radically changed the practice of the sciences in which they were deployed. Invariably, the interest does not any more lie in something that is putatively beyond language but in language-in-use itself. This is well expressed in Edwards's programmatic book, Discourse and Cognition, where the author differentiates between three types of approaches towards language (Edwards, 1997: 24, 271-272; cf. Edwards, 2006: 42). Type one considers it a route to "reality": to a non-/pre-discursive "reality", that is. It takes descriptions to render information to us about what is "out

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there". The medium of description, in this conception, plays the role of an (optimally) neutral transmitter. If it is neutral, we indeed gain access to reality. Should it be tarnished, however, by whatever factor, it will distort that picture of reality and block our access to it.

Type two acknowledges that such an attempt to gain uncompromised access to reality is illusory, but still maintains that language-in-use is the royal course towards those (collectively or individually originated) mental phenomena that mediate and hence construct or distort that reality. Even though "reality" is not something one can arrive at via discourse, cognition nevertheless is. There is, then, the idea remaining of investigating discourse for something that is beyond itself.

Not so in type three - in discourse analysis - however. Discourse analysis, says Edwards, takes language-in-use as its topic in itself, not as a route to anything beyond. In this conception, "reality" and "mind" do remain topics, yet do not supersede the realm of discourse. Rather, they themselves become discursive problems and are to be analysed insofar as they are taken up in the actual utterance that is analysed as well as in terms of the ways in which they are taken up there (cf. Edwards, 1997: 68; Edwards and Potter, 1992a: 10; Potter, 1996: 205; Wooffitt, 2005a: 72).

It is clear that, in the broadest possible terms, such an approach seems to be satisfactory for tackling the problem I briefly outlined in the previous section. The gross neglect, that is, of the language used in the exchange between Arendt and Scholem, and the ensuing phenomenon that apparent acts of interpretation or commentary tended to collapse into projections and assumptions already held/known before actually entering into the realm of the correspondence itself. In theory, discourse analysis's tenets treat problems primarily in terms of the language those problems are constructed of and provide one with an important safeguard against such banal outcomes of alleged interpretations as expressed in Antaki et al.'s (2003) caveat:

"Whatever kind of discourse analysis is being done, it has to amount to much more than treating talk and text as the expression of views,
thoughts and opinions as standard survey, ethnographic, or interview research often does”.

At a very basic level, this “much more” arguably encompasses the three features (action-orientation, situatedness, constructed/constructive) spelled out above and entails that what the analyst is primarily concerned with is not his/her own (however inescapable) preconceptions but what is actually said there by the participants. The prioritising of “participants’” over the “analyst’s concerns” is an empirically useful consequence of many trends within the discursive orientation and allows one to withstand what Emmanuel Schegloff calls the tendency “[...] for the formulated social-structural context to ‘absorb’ or ‘naturalize’ various details of the talk” and for features of talk being “thereby made unavailable, in practice if not in principle, for notice and analysis as accountable details of the talk” (Schegloff, 1991: 58).76

While no claim can (should) be made about an analysis deriving from a tabula rasa (which is putatively the analyst’s mind), attention may indeed be paid to the text and to the relevance constructed just there. It may be fruitful to forget who we know the participants to be and what equivalences we assume between certain categories in the world. If we are to learn anything from a text, we have to consider categories and identities flexible, negotiable, and bound to the context there and just there constructed in our text. One must not assume and thus reify those categories and identities achieving hence nothing but the maintenance of the status quo be it that of our preconception or that of the political order (see fn. 70).

The lesson of discourse analysis, thus, is the importance of the emphasis put on language-in-use. Yet, as the focus of this dissertation is not language itself but a particular historical manifestation of it, it may be apt to attempt to answer the question: what do they know of discourse who only discourse (claim to) know? In other words, how do we proceed if our priority is discourse, language-in-use but our interest is, say,

mind ("views, thoughts and opinions"), reality, or the correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem?

In what follows, I will consider certain threads of discourse analysis, contrast them, and ponder their worth in pursuing the empirical work that constitutes the main body of this dissertation. I will introduce the radically bottom-up versions of conversation analysis (CA) and ethnomethodology (EM), the middle-of-the-road candidate discursive psychology (DP), and the top-down oriented critical discourse analysis (CDA).

3.4. Ways of Analysing Discourse

3.4.1. Bottom-Up: Conversation Analysis and Ethnomethodology

A methodological overview is to get started with the reductio ad absurdum of the three-part discursive principles expounded previously. For all their differences, both ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967, 2002; Button, 1991) and conversation analysis (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; Psathas, 1995; ten Have, 1999; Wooffitt, 2005a) embody what might be called a "radical" empiricist orientation (Hepburn and Wiggins, 2007: 4; Wooffitt, 2005a: 72).

Both persuasions aim at "the description and explication of the competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, social organized interactions" (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984: 1), or, in other words, the "procedural infrastructure of situated action" (ten Have, 1999: 37, cf. 198). What makes them distinctive is their avowed and by intention exclusively "emic" approach. That is, their

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77 It is true that these approaches often do not count themselves under the umbrella of discourse analysis (see Wooffitt, 2005a). As I am working with a liberal concept of discourse analysis, which covers ways to analyse texts in the social sciences, their place is undisputable here, however.

78 The account given here will be based mainly on conversation analytic writings. Some ethnomethodologists or those subscribing to the approach of member-categorisation analysis would certainly contest this choice (see Housley and Fitzgerald, 2002; Hester and Eglin, 1997a; Lynch and Bogen, 1994, 1996: 262-287; Silverman, 1998: Ch. 5, 7; Watson, 1997; Widmer, 2002). They would not, however, argue the basic and fundamental distinction between analysts and participants' concerns that is governing this chapter and thus characterises all of these orientations as bottom-up approaches.
empirical claims are without exception warranted in terms that are claimed to be internal to the phenomenon they are analysing in the here-and-now. It is not the analyst's but the participants' understandings that are taken to be relevant; not the interest the analyst might have but those relevant for the participants.

Of course, one could immediately counter that approaches addressing conversation and aim to give a structural account of the “machinery” or “mechanism” (cf. Zimmerman and Boden, 1991: 12; Psathas, 1995: 27; Sacks, 1984: 26-27; ten Have, 1999: 41; Wilson, 1991: 22, 24) that underlie conversation as well as to uncover this “machinery” in “formal, logical, atopically contentless [...] terms” (Psathas, 1995: 3; cf. Lee, 1987; ten Have, 1999: 42) are simply not fit for the purposes of this thesis. It is not structure and process but content and meaning that are my obvious goals. Hence, conversation analysis is obviously not viable as an analytical method here.

While there is an apparent truth in this contention, one has to recognise that, in fact, conversation analysis’s goals are wider than these explicit proposals might betray. Its approach poses a challenge even to those whose interest, admittedly, lies not only in processes displayed in conversation or talk-in-interaction but also in contents showcased in any kind of text.

As the doyen of CA, Emmanuel Schegloff repeatedly points out in some of his programmatic papers; any kind of utterance may be subjected to infinite kinds of factually correct descriptions. “On what ground”, Schegloff asks, “should some characterization of any of these aspects of a sociocultural event be preferred to another” (Schegloff, 1997: 166; cf. Schegloff, 1991, 1992a, 1992b)? In other words, the participant of the event may be a male, a cancer-patient, a QPR-supporter, a Catholic, and so on. Which, if any, of these categories should inform the analytical description of the situation? Schegloff here turns to prioritise those actually taking part in the interaction and replace the interests that preoccupies the analyst with what is displayed by the participants (Schegloff, 1997: 167). According to him, then, a category – in order to be not merely an accurate description of the scene but an adequate description of it – should be both “demonstrably relevant” to the participants themselves and “procedurally consequential” to their subsequent conduct (Schegloff, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1997). There
is a distinction, then, drawn between the analyst’s and the participants’ interests, concerns, and categories: “Discourse is too often made subservient to contexts not of its participants’ making but of its analyst’s insistence” (Schegloff, 1997: 183).

The advantages of such a program are obvious, taking especially into regard from where we started. The major shortcoming of the history of the reception of the exchange appeared to be the very gross neglect of the language, categories, and interests of the participants that this radically bottom-up approach insists on thwarting. Instead of premature theorising and of “analytical rush” (Widdicombe, 1995: 108) to assume the relevance of certain contexts, categories, and identities, an approach working with the displayed perspectives of the participants can be expected to substantiate its claims more thoroughly.

Appealing as it is for empirical research vying to avoid the pitfalls that were depicted to characterise the reception of the Arendt-Scholem exchange, there are conspicuous problems with this radically “emic” approach, even at first sight. No conversation analyst or ethnomethodologist to date seems to have been able to explain what “demonstrably” or “unmotivated” looking (Psathas, 1995: 45; Sacks, 1984: 27) might exactly mean according to which “relevance” itself is posited to be assessed. While this principle tries to pin down an analytical claim in the participants’ conduct, it certainly cannot mean something like the “intention” or any kind of corresponding mental state of the participants. All of these, according to a bottom-up stance, would be matters internal to the talk/text-in interaction (see Heritage and Atkinson, 1984: 7; Edwards, 2006: 43-46) and, hence, an object of the same sort of warranting has just been promoted to be part. Those who “demonstrate” and “observe” (and to whom they display both) will certainly be members of the scientific community. For all the pretence, then, it is ultimately the conversation analyst or the ethnomethodologist scientific community that is the arbiter and not the orientation or the “displayed perspective” (Hepburn and Wiggins, 2007: 1) of the participants (cf. Feyerabend, 1975; Rorty, 1991a: 46-62, 35-45).

Likewise, “procedural consequentiality” is, in fact, a criterion that only the scientific community can validate. Is it the next millisecond where the consequence must be displayed? Or the next sentence? The next utterance? Alternatively, are we dealing with political ideological consequences that may be observable weeks, months, even years later? All this undoubtedly depends not merely on what the participants themselves display but on what the researcher is after and what the consensus is in his/her scientific community.

Correspondingly, laudable as the empirical orientation that these studies stand for is, there is at least a partial kind of dissatisfaction evolved with regard to conversation analysis’s and ethnomethodology’s microscopic angle and concerns (see Wetherell, 1998, challenging Schegloff). Morally, why, one might ask, should the appreciation of the participants result in the self-effacement of the analyst? Philosophically, how would that ever be possible? And ideologically, what does that allegedly microscopic concern actually cover and why should not what is currently absent inform our political evaluations?

One common (non-CA) answer is that these approaches are only at one extreme within discourse analytical studies but certainly not the only kind of them. Phillips and Jorgensen in their overview distinguish three types of discourse analysis: interactionist, post-structuralist, and synthetic (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002: 91). Likewise, Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell categorise present research in the area as bottom-up and top-down while they argue for an orientation, which would “draw more eclectically on both styles of work and which study the ways in which people are simultaneously the master, and the slave [Barthes], of discourse” (Edley and Wetherell, 1997: 206). By the same token, scholars invoke distinctions between research interest in the “how” and the “what” (Willig, 2001: 91); “process” and “content” (Taylor, 2001 15); “organisation” and “content” (Sani and Reicher, 2000: 107); or whether the inquiry in question treats language as a “topic” in itself or a “resource” for investigating stricto sensu non-

80 For philosophical criticism of assumptions that underpin Schegloff’s and CA’s position see Feyerabend (1975), Rorty (1991a). For a moral one see Geertz (1973, 2001). For a direct ideological criticism, see Billig’s exchange with Schegloff (Billig, 1999b, 1999c; Schegloff, 1999a, 1999b). For a more indirect challenge in the form of spelling out the connection between discourse analysis and ideological-critique, see Billig (1997, 1999a, 2006).
linguistic phenomena (Taylor, 2001: 15; cf. Wooffitt, 2005a). In what follows, I turn to an approach that has been considered somewhat “middle-of-the-road” in these terms. As Charles Antaki alluded to, without actually naming it, this approach

“[…] is certainly aware that meaningful work is achieved in the local organization of talk, but reaches up to bring in culturally charged content: themes, repertoires, concepts and other chunks of talk, not necessarily all in the same spot in the transcript, and not all necessarily spoken by the same person. So the ‘action’ that this talk does is almost automatically (and certainly by preference) ‘action’ of a rather metaphorical kind: the use of themes, repertoires and so on to do some work on the setting up or knocking down of social realities – to promote this version of sexuality, to exercise that power of authority, to institute such-and-such a change in the law” (Antaki, 1994: 120).

The next subsection is to discuss a representative of this approach: discursive psychology.

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81 Perhaps the best way to characterise these various research traditions is Edwards’s distinction between social constructionism in the “epistemological” and in the “ontological” sense, i.e. the distinction between “the constructive nature of descriptions” and the “entities that (according to descriptions) exist beyond them” (Edwards, 1997: 48). According to this categorisation, much of social constructionist research could be seen as “ontological”. Namely, cultural psychology (Much, 1995; Wertsch, 2002), dialogic psychology (Shutter, 1993, 1995), narrative psychology (Bruner, 1990; 1991), some strands of discursive psychology (Harré, 1995; Harré and Gillett, 1994) and even the main framework behind constructionist research as spelled out by Kenneth Gergen (1994, 1999), “Epistemological social constructionism”, on the other hand, will cover discursive psychology in the tradition of the “Loughborough school”, as well as conversation analytic and ethnomethodological research. The next sub-section is partly about this latter convergence.
3.4.2. Middle-of-the-road: discursive psychology

The tag “discursive psychology” did not emerge widely until Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter’s 1992 book that bore this title (Edwards and Potter, 1992a). Nevertheless, the principles of discourse analysis had already been programmatically applied to psychological topics by that time from the middle of the 1980s onwards (e.g. Billig, 1985; Edwards and Middleton, 1987; Middleton and Edwards, 1990; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). It is from the earliest developments of discursive psychology that I will begin my overview: developments, whose relation to later orientations is by no means unequivocal.

Virtually all reviews attribute the “birth” of discursive psychology to the 1987 publication of Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell’s book, Discourse and Social Psychology in which they sketched out a systematic program of reformulating traditional questions of social psychology in terms of the study of language in use (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Categories, selves, representations, and attitudes – phenomena of long-standing interest for social psychologies – were to be taken out of the head of the individual and considered features of the discourse where they are attended to and made relevant. Consequently, they were to be evaluated precisely in these terms and not in either their truth-value or their inherent mental characteristics. Instead of being embarrassed by it, Potter and Wetherell confronted the variability these allegedly mental phenomena displayed in talk or text and instead of seeking to explain away variability, they promoted it to the rank of the object of research. As they defined their project, discourse analysis was “interested in the ways in which texts are organized, and the consequences of using some organizations rather than others” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 46). This dual concern has remained with discursive psychology since then; yet, as we shall later in this subsection see, one can maintain that its interpretation has become somewhat tendentious over the years.

“Ways in which texts are organized” – or as Potter later called it, the “epistemological orientation” (Potter, 1996) of descriptions – emerged from the broadly post-structuralist insight that no description can map or mirror reality better than any
other; even though this is exactly what they all want us to believe.\textsuperscript{82} The "ever-present possibility of alternative descriptions" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 3; cf. Edwards, 1997: 8) entailed discursive psychology's interest in the rhetorical fashioning of texts (be they pieces of naturally occurring talks, newspaper articles, or interviews), as they without exception orient towards those possible alternatives and either argue with them explicitly or attempt at undermining them implicitly.

At about the same time Potter and Wetherell published their book, the argumentative side of human nature was likewise pushed to the fore of social psychological inquiries by Michael Billig (see Billig, 1985, 1991; 1996; Billig et al., 1988). Billig expounded the rhetorical reconceptualisation of traditional social psychological problems. He based his proposal on the far-reaching claim that cognitive social psychology had largely reduced thinking beings to "cognitive misers" and "bureaucrats", who, unable to cope with the infinite complexity of reality, strip this reality of many of its features and through categorisation and schematisation effectively impoverish it. Billig's claim was not that there is no such thing as mental operations the way cognitive psychologists demonstrate them by experiments, but that it is only one side of human beings and it is by ignoring the essentially argumentative character of human thought that psychologists achieve the construction of these human beings as colourless automatons. Billig's rhetorical approach, in turn, started with the assumption that meaning is best located in argumentative contexts, rather than in an abstract space removed from them, and that it is only by restoring argumentative contexts and the moves utterances accomplish in them that we do justice to that other side of the human condition. Categorisation, then, would turn out to be a rhetorical option instead of a perceptual necessity; just as particularisation would cease to be an overlooked "impossibility" and become another rhetorical move to be considered (Billig, 1985; 1996: Ch. 6). Although Billig's project made claims about the nature of human thinking while

Potter and Wetherell has remained silently sceptical about it (e.g. Wetherell and Potter, 1988: 181), the significant overlaps of the two projects are obvious.\textsuperscript{83}

The rhetorical side of human thinking or human discourse, however, was not the full story for either of these forays. It is the "consequences of using some organization rather than others" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 46 – see above) to which we have to return now. What this might have meant for the just emerging discipline can be gauged from two rather different kinds of acknowledgements made throughout Potter and Wetherell's book. That is, to ethnomethodology and conversation analysis on the one hand and to post-structuralism (Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault in particular) on the other.

As argued in the previous subsection, the former two entails a strictly ongoing-interaction-inherent understanding of "consequences" and the \textit{in situ} empirical reformulation of the speech act theory of Austin. This involves the analysis of the ongoing process of mitigation, blaming, justification, and other "actions" as they are manifested in talk-in-interaction, where these "actions" are carried out by speech events with a nominal relationship to psychology: attitudes, attributions, or expressions of identity. Yet, there was another understanding of "consequences" clearly displayed in the book as well as in Billig's work. They were "interpretative repertoires" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: Ch. 8; cf. Wetherell and Potter, 1988; Wetherell and Potter, 1992), "ideological dilemmas" (Billig et al., 1988) or "ideologies" (Billig, 1991) emerging from the text.\textsuperscript{84}

Like many of Potter and Wetherell's main concepts, "interpretative repertoires"\textsuperscript{85} was taken as the reformulation of the mentalist concept of "representation" in cognitive

\textsuperscript{83} Discursive psychology's by now rather confrontational attitude towards cognitive psychology has evolved with the years. It was not only Billig, but Edwards as well in some of his earlier publications that took a conciliatory position and a framework that did not preclude the possibility of cognitive psychology (e.g. Edwards, 1991: 525; Middleton and Edwards, 1990: 37; and even at many points in Edwards, 1997). Jonathan Potter, by contrast, appears to have been more confrontational in this aspect, a feature since then overtaking what may be called "mainstream" discursive psychology (see Potter, 1998, 1999, 2000).

\textsuperscript{84} For a comparison of the notions of "interpretative repertoires" and "ideological dilemmas" see Condor (2000: 196-198).

\textsuperscript{85} The concept itself was taken from Gilbert and Mulkay (1984).
Elsewhere, they defined it as “building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena” or “patterns of recurring organizations” (Wetherell and Potter, 1988: 172, 177). These definitions (despite being rather vague attempts to delineate with precision the object in question) signalled nonetheless that a level of abstraction may be introduced into the analysis. Not, to be sure, the analysis of something non-discursive and categorically beyond the discourse, but something that, for one thing, aims at a higher level of cultural abstraction within the analysis of the text, and, for another, puts the text into a context of a long chain of other texts and beyond the strict here-and-now of the ongoing interaction. Clearly, through interpretative repertoires, discourse analysis could retain the primacy of discourse while addressing broader political and ideological concerns. Broader, that is again, indicating not phenomena beyond the boundaries of discourse but always possibly beyond the boundaries of this piece of discourse.

In a similar vein, Billig’s work can be seen as the reconceptualisation of the traditional notion of ideology, its function seen not necessarily “to suppress argumentation and thinking but provide the elements with which people can think and argue about everyday life” (Billig, 1991: 143). Or, to move a step further in line with this thought, elements, which people can re- and re-constitute by arguing and thinking in everyday life.

How do later developments in discursive psychology map onto these ambitious starting points? As Derek Edwards noted recently, “one of discursive psychology’s key concerns has been the ways in which talk manages subject-object relations, or mind-world relations” (Edwards, 2007: 31). “Object side” meaning “how, in producing versions of things and events, speakers (or writers of text) build the factual status or objectivity of what they are saying”, and “subject side” referring to the ways accounts “reflect a speaker’s ‘stake and interest’ in the topic” (Ibid: 31). Indeed, as early as in 1992 Edwards, Potter, and Middleton defined discourse analysis as “the study of how everyday versions of events (including persons, things, and states of affairs) are constructed and

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86 This also covered the theory of social representation, which itself claimed to be a reaction to traditional cognitive psychology (see Flick, 1995; Moscovici, 2001; for criticism see Billig, 1988; Potter and Wetherell, 1987: Ch. 7; Potter and Edwards, 1999)

The side from where a specific psychological attention comes to this wide project has recently been described as threefold. The programme of discursive psychology consists of the re-specification of traditional topics of psychology; the investigation of the psychological thesaurus and how psychological categories are in use; and finally, the analysis of how psychological business (i.e. agency, intention, emotional investment) is handled in naturally occurring interactions (Edwards, 2004; Edwards and Potter, 2005).

In line with its theoretical insights, discursive psychology does not wish therefore to move beyond language while investigating phenomena traditionally interesting for psychologists. Rather, it takes discourse at face value and analyses how those concerns are actually managed in talk or text by those participating in the interactions. Thus, questions of memory become issues in actual socially oriented remembering (Edwards and Potter, 1992a, 1992b; Edwards, Potter and Middleton, 1992; Middleton, 2002; Middleton and Brown, 2005; Middleton and Edwards, 1990); emotions are considered emotion discourse (e.g. Edwards, 1997: Ch. 7; 1999; 2005; Locke and Edwards, 2003); and attributions are taken out of individual heads and treated as ways of talking (Antaki, 1988; Antaki, 1994; Edwards and Potter, 1992a; MacMillan and Edwards, 1999; Sneijder and Molder, 2005). Since its inception, discursive psychology has similarly re-specified traditional cognitive notions – i.e. category (e.g. Billig, 1985, 1996: Ch. 6; Edwards, 1991; Edwards, 1997: Ch. 8, 9), script (Edwards, 1995; Edwards, 1997: Ch. 6), identity (Antaki, Condor and Levine, 1996; Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998a; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Edwards, 1998), attitudes (Billig, 1996: Ch. 7; Wiggins and Potter, 2003), as well as the very idea of knowledge, cognition and the mind (Antaki, 2004; 2006; Edwards, 2004; Potter, 1998) – in terms of the function they accomplish as a piece of discourse.

Furthermore, discursive psychology is interested in how the psychological thesaurus is used in actual interactions. In other words, the everyday and situated use of psychological categories, the psychological “common sense” is investigated. As Edwards points out, “Rather than starting from the principle that folk psychology is an inaccurate and inconsistent theory of mind that needs to be replaced by the superior technical
vocabulary of experimental psychology or cognitive science, we investigate how it works in discourse” (Edwards, 2004: 263). In discursive psychology’s understanding, thus, these categories (“I think”, “I believe”, “I don’t know” etc.) are not there for the analyst’s correction. But they do not merely reflect some inner state of mind or represent cognition either. Rather, they are to be investigated as pieces of discourse, in terms of what they achieve in a particular piece of argumentative discourse.87

Along these lines, the third concern of discursive psychology is the way people manage “psychological business”. This concerns the various ways “how psychological themes (i.e. agency, intention, and emotional investment) are managed in talk without actually labelled as such (Edwards, 2004: 267; e.g. Edwards, 1997; Wiggins and Hepburn, 2007).

What is interesting in all of these phenomena, once having severed their contact with the mental life of the individual, with the representations in his/her head and with (possibly) various biological substrates? The answer is that they become interesting in their own right, as ways of talking and ways of acting in the world. How are they constructed, how does their use construct a credible version of reality and what are the consequences of this reality in the interaction (Edwards, 1997)?

It is this state of the discipline that Jonathan Potter aptly summed up in asserting that discursive psychology is “an approach that treats psychology as an object in and for interaction” (Potter, 2005: 739; cf. Potter and Molder, 2005: 2). For one thing, such an emphasis on interaction as the ultimate site of interest brings discursive psychology ever closer to conversation analysis. It is a claim that has increasingly been made by both discursive psychological and conversation analytic scholars recently (Edwards, 2004: 258, 271, 2007: 31; Hepburn and Wiggins, 2007: 8; Kitzinger, 2006: 67; Potter, 2006: 132; Wooffitt, 2005a: 90) and has empirically been bolstered by the fact that many conversation analytic or ethnomethodological studies could just as well feature as discursive psychological ones (e.g. Beach and Metzger, 1997; Drew, 1989; Goodwin and Goodwin, 1996; Lynch, 2006; Lynch and Bogen, 1996, 1997, 2005; Wooffitt, 2005b).

87 E.g. on “I don’t know” or “I dunno” see Beach and Metzger (1997), Edwards (2004: 268), Wooffitt (2005a: 117-121), Wetherell (2001a).
While the advantages of such a convergence of disciplines appear to be taken for granted, questions must be asked about the rationale and consequences of this process, however. To begin with, the notion of "interpretative repertoires" or "ideologies" or any sort of political consideration per se appears to have vanished from discursive psychology. Considering the recent developments as well as the prevailing concerns sketched out above there is no real surprise at that. The question, namely, that discursive psychologists have increasingly been depicted to be concerned with was how versions of events are constructed to achieve various effects and not what those events constructed actually were. "Consequences" or "action-orientation" are, thus, in recent developments in discursive psychology taken to be a local, narrowly situational concern rather than broader, further reaching. 88

There is something disconcerting about this schism as the focus on the content of an utterance should not be, at face value, excluded whilst analysing the process that had been fashioned to establish and legitimate that very content. Surely, looking at language as a topic in itself should not entail not looking at it as a resource as well.

It was precisely such a unification of approaches, top-down and bottom-up; content- and process-oriented; language-as-source; language-as-topic that was attempted by Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell in the late 1990s, as if to counter the increasingly prevailing conversation analytic tendencies in discursive psychology (Edley, 2001; Edley and Wetherell, 1997, 1999; Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell, 2001b). At first sight, again, there is a touch of common sense in claims such as "[...] what counts as relevant context [...] in analysing discourse depends on what we are studying – conversational activities versus modes of representations" (Wetherell, 2001b: 390), or such as that an interest in "broad cultural changes" should not (in fact, must not) exclude to maintain an "empirical focus on discourse" (Edley and Wetherell, 1997: 204), or such as that "in analysing our always partial piece of argumentative texture we [should] look also to the broader forms of intelligibility running through the text more generally" (Wetherell, 1998: 403). Indeed, in line with the notion of the "action orientation" of discourse, why could we not or even

88 To be sure, there are exceptions (e.g. Tileaga, 2005, 2006). Yet, the point is that these exceptions are swimming against the tide and their orientations are theoretically not integrated into the programmatic papers published about the current state of discursive psychology.
should we not investigate the “social and political consequences of discursive patterning” (Ibid: 405)? Why could we not use the empirical research of language as a means towards such ends, rather than, apparently, an end onto itself?

The short answer is and has always been that we certainly can (even if we should not choose to do so). “There is a sense”, Edwards characterises critics,

“that language, or talk-in-interaction, is to be found only at the surface of things, and that inferences of a different kind need to be made, in order to get at what is going on below the surface. Nobody is claiming that discourse is all there is. However, the rush toward theorising about context and subjectivity is being done without close attention to what is available on the surface” (Edwards, 2007: 47).

License is given, then, to investigate what appears to point beyond the here-and-now, even though (surprisingly) a researcher with post-structural inclinations would actually concede that “discourse is all there is”. Who would contend that a “rush toward theorising” is counter-productive? (In effect, who would not recommend reading before producing our analysis?) But then comes the “sting in the tail”: 89

“To the extent that subjectivity is part of social life, and relevant to language and social interaction (the practices of inter-subjectivity), it has to be made available in mutually understandable ways. [...] Increasingly, the study of talk-in-interaction reveals the richly detailed and orderly ‘surface’ workings of social interaction [...]. It is here that we find contextual relevance and (inter-)subjectivity under active management in the course of social practices in ways that are essentially,

89 “Sting in the tail” is meant here in the technical sense Antaki and Wetherell (1999) propose it in their analysis of ostensible concessions in talk-in-interaction.
and necessarily, publicly performed, and by dint of that, and in terms of that, recordable and analysable” (Ibid: 48 – emphasis in the original).

In terms of “workings of social interaction” and in the “course of social practices”? Such an orientation would surely not only advise against a “rush toward theorising” but also in many cases positively paralyse the analyst in looking at the political and ideological factors relevant to the text. Now “workings of social interaction” replace their product, now language-as-resource is completely rejected in favour of language-as-topic, now discourse cannot be about something, which is not in the first place its “workings”. Something, that is again, not pre-discursive and “deep” but emerging from discourse, whose boundaries though cannot be maintained to be infinite, they cannot be defined a priori either.

Compare this with conversation analyst Robin Wooffitt's elaborate reaction to Edley and Wetherell's position. On the one hand, Wooffitt asserts that “many other discourse researchers have objected to conversation analysis's argument that it is necessary to ground analytical claims by reference to close description of the participants' conduct” (Wooffitt, 2005a: 170). A position to which, I think, no serious “discursive researcher” can object, and certainly no one that Wooffitt is arguing with ever did. His argument, however, takes a radically different course when claiming on the other hand that “to identify conversation analysis as a tool for the analysis of micro-interaction obscures its primary focus on generic properties of intelligibility, structure, and order, and constitutes a serious misunderstanding of its objectives” (Ibid: 166). Why would it be a misunderstanding? And what are those “generic properties” of intelligibility?

Wooffitt criticises researchers using the notion of “interpretative repertoires” for their “interactional vacuum” (Ibid: 171-179) and “impoverished view of human conduct” (Ibid: 174). What this charge semantically points to is conversation analysis’s exclusive attention to language-as-topic, process, performativity, and action as opposed to language-as-resource, content, and constativity. The meaning that is produced in an interaction should not simply be abstracted from that particular interaction, assuming that interaction is a simple window towards non-interactive issues. Yet again, however,
consider Wooffitt’s following claims that “analytically, [...] in this post-structuralist account, much rests on the analyst’s assumption that ‘out on the pull’ has a certain meaning [...] largely independent of the context of its use, because of its embeddedness in wider cultural understandings [...]” (Ibid: 174), that this kind of analysis is “restricted to the level of meaning” (Ibid: 184), and that it does not attend “to the detail of social interaction” (Ibid: 199). The point is, then, simply that “out on the pull” should be considered with regard to its sequential place in the interaction, with regard to previous utterances, rather than simply assumed to have some meaning.

Certainly, Wooffitt’s is a valid case to defend. Until, that is, one realises that with such a methodological principle one would simply never arrive at anything but local “workings” of interaction. Not because one is empirically strongly focused but because one is theoretically predisposed to attribute anything and everything exclusively to local interactional workings. Indeed, there will always be one or more sequentially prior utterances, enabling the researcher to point just to them, as the observable, demonstrable cause of the next utterance. But that does not mean to be cautious and circumspect (instead of a “theoretical rush”), but to renounce the idea and aspiration of learning something about the world.

Yet again, not about a pre-discursive world: as I noted, in an important sense it is discourse all there is. But it is precisely this state of affairs entailing that what precedes a piece of discourse and happens not to be on our tape is not something pre-discursive or deep or genuine but just another piece of discourse (cf. Wetherell, 2001b: 388-389; Fitch, 1998). Ironically, the “assumption” that something “has a certain meaning [...] largely independent of the context of its use” and is restricted to the “level of meaning” is patently not an analytical shortcoming but the very condition of understanding anything at all. Theoretically, then, this extreme reduction of content to process, language-as-resource to language-as-topic, the “what” to the “how” and meaning to interactional workings is, in fact, not reduction but fiction. Hence, if there is an “impoverished view” here on display, it is the fiction that the action that language performs must reveal itself within the range of couple of utterances and that the whole interaction is exclusively grounded in the “observable” (i.e. taped for research purposes) sequentially prior
utterances, rather than in any of the prior, theoretically unspecified and permanently ongoing (inter)actions.

So far, I have claimed that it is the empirical approach of discourse analysis that is needed to recover the meaning and social significance of the exchange of letters between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem. Instead of assuming the operations of certain meanings and identities, we should investigate how meanings in the text are constructed and what they are constructed to be. Yet, what is required is not an approach that considers this exchange happening in a vacuum and thus artificially reduces it to certain quasi-formal processes going on in it. Not because it is an illusion (which it is) but because it might lead to address problems where those “broader forms of intelligibility” will practically be excluded from consideration. This will occur by dint of either the sampling and collecting process of the data (i.e. no political, literary, philosophical etc. text to be analysed) or providing analysis in distinctively dissimilar terms from the reason one actually was drawn to the data.90

The approach I am trying to reconstruct and adopt would pay attention to the participants' concerns but would not absolutise them. It would treat the discourse's action-orientation both locally and “metaphorically” (see Antaki [1994] above); in terms of both this particular text and this particular world that we live in. Beyond this interrelatedness, however, it would acknowledge its moral and political interest being rather in this world than in this text i.e. the meaning of this text. Correspondingly, it

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90 One of the most conspicuous incommensurability of these terms is still Edwards and Potter's re-examination of cognitive psychologist Ulric Neisser's work on the Watergate-hearing and John Dean's testimony (cf. Edwards and Potter, 1992a, 1992b; Neisser, 1981). Leaving aside the shortcomings or merits of Neisser's work, it is clear that his declared purpose was to find out whether Dean had lied or he tried to convey the truth. This seems to me a perfectly valid question, even more so that Neisser had the tape-recorded version of the events Dean tried to remember. While not claiming that it is an easy exercise to distinguish truth from lies (and especially the effort of telling the truth from that of telling lies), it cannot be brushed aside as something of a non-scientific activity. Regardless of the merits or shortcomings of Edward and Potter's re-examination: it is this very question that they did not attempt to answer. They, too, were in possession of the transcript of the tape-recorded events as well as Dean's recollections of the hearings, yet they only consulted the latter. In a debate on their paper and to Neisser's explicit question, Edwards, Middleton and Potter state quite correctly that "[...] we make no claim that Dean way lying, any more than that he was telling the truth" (1992: 455; cf. Neisser, 1992). That, however, is precisely the problem: for the re-examination, then, simply poses different questions from the original paper and, as such, loses thereby all its relevance, as far as Neisser's paper is concerned.
would fully agree with the orientation of Reicher and Hopkins's claim, made in line with Edley and Wetherell's priorities, that

"[...] it becomes necessary to elevate the process by which people negotiate and debate their identities [...] to a central concern which has an independent and determining role in shaping of collective action. We must consider how versions of identity relate to the prophecies that they are designed to fulfil, how different versions of identity seek to fulfil different prophecies and how the different prophets seek to establish their words as the truth about identity and the words of others as false" (2001a: 43; cf. Reicher, Hopkins, and Condor, 1997: 101).

Categories though undoubtedly help some sequentially posterior utterances into being, though they undoubtedly can be characterised in terms of the local action they achieve, they can nevertheless be analysed in terms of broader contexts as well. Surely, this is simply and naturally preposterous in certain cases. Yet in others it is helpful, and again in others almost inevitable or even a moral obligation. There is no reason in denying the unity of the "what" and the "how", the constative and the performative, the "nature of arguments" and "the means by which arguments are warranted" (Sani and Reicher, 2000: 107).

3.4.3. Top-down: critical discourse analysis

Having withstood the "lure" of the radically bottom(-up) approach and avowed the potential of broader concerns it is, however, vital to briefly review and investigate another strand of discursive social research. Even at a brisk glance, it is clear that critical discourse analysis is far more liberal in its use of notions such as "ideology" or "politics" and makes invariably those "broader forms of intelligibility" (that are effectively
repudiated by conversation analytic research) its flagship. As prime proponent Ruth Wodak describes, CDA’s main goal is “analysing [...] structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse)” (Wodak, 2001: 2). Though CDA in practice is even more varied than discursive psychology (let alone conversation analysis), such a delineation of interests is well in line with what is perhaps “mainstream” CDA’s most stunning contention: “CDA is biased – and proud of it” (van Dijk, 1999: 96; cf. 2001: 307; Wodak, 2001: 9).91

Seemingly, there is a kind of post-structuralist awareness in van Dijk’s claim. There is no pretension for objectivity, the neutrality of the researcher, the non-partisan nature of his/her findings. Nonetheless, there are couple of intertwined questions to be asked here. What if someone’s interest is, strictly speaking, not “inequality”? And what if someone sees inequality less of a straightforward issue? Is it viable to make a direct inference from an epistemological statement (“there is no such thing as non-discursive, non-political, non-moral truth”) to a political-moral imperative (“CDA must be biased”)? What, furthermore, are the potential empirical consequences of such an inference?

It is CDA’s approach to language and ideology that these questions pin down as there is a rather crude, top-down conception of ideology (and discourse) that appears to inform its programmatic statements (see Fairclough, 2001: 230; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258; Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002: 60-95; van Dijk, 2001: 300; Wodak, 2001: 10). It provides a view that is perhaps not altogether untenable, yet highly contentious nevertheless in the wake of the ideas of the French historian Michel Foucault’s work (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1978, 1984). Power, in Foucault’s conception, does not in the first place legitimate inequality or help to sustain patterns of domination but establishes the very conditions of knowledge and meaning. It is horizontal, rather than vertical, not so much oppressing certain forms of lives and identities as creating them. Instead of “false consciousness”, thus, it becomes the very basis of any kind of consciousness (cf. Hall, 2001).

91 For the various kinds of research done under the tag of CDA, see Fairclough and Wodak (1997). For the various kinds of research and thought that influenced CDA, see Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999).
Foucault’s work is not without its critics, in part exactly by dint of his conception of power being so pervasive and ever-present that it practically undermines chances for social or ideological criticism and change in society (cf. Rorty, 1991: 193-198; Walzer, 2002: Ch. 11). Yet, it is one thing to spell out criticism of Foucault and quite another to evade the challenges he posed to theorists of the political and the ideological. CDA’s answer in many cases, however, seems simply to address problems, which are apparently straightforward: anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, chauvinism (Fairclough, 2001: 237). For one thing, it is of course not difficult to take sides in these issues. For another, however, it is precisely this taking sides that might preclude the researcher from providing genuine answers/analysis to/of the problems and texts in question; as well as from being surprised (Antaki et al. 2003; Wetherell, 2001b: 385). While conversation analysis attempts to reduce meaning to workings of isolated local interactions, many examples of critical discourse analysis relegates language to a role of merely illustrating analytical claims about a wider state of affairs (see this criticism made by Widdowson, 2004). While CA gives a reductionist interpretation of the three-part list on the nature of discourse (situated, action-oriented, constructive/constructed), CDA at times seems to treat discourse merely as masking or conveying some underlying non-discursive reality.

Let us consider, for instance, Reisigl and Wodak’s conceptualisation of the problem of racism. As they state,

“Today, it is undeniable fact for geneticists and biologists that the concept of ‘race’, with reference to human beings, has nothing to do with biological reality. From a social functional point of view, ‘race’ is a social construction” (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 2).

The term “social construction” acquires here a rather pejorative sense, being depicted as hiding some immoral, condemnable (un)truths. Racists should simply read geneticists and biologists, as we all do. They would then know what we do. Meanwhile, the task of the analyst is to remove the mask, to destroy the “social construct”.
But things are clearly not that straightforward, not even in the seemingly black-and-white case of racism. For one thing, racists would claim that those geneticists and biologists are ours and not theirs. For another, neither geneticists nor biologists help us to characterise a piece of discourse as racist. If racism is a social construction then so are our interpretative methods to describe, categorise, and condemn it. In turn, we describe, condemn, and praise our own non-racism, which consequentially turns out to be less of the unmediated product of “biologists” and “geneticists” but that of our social construction and moral sense (Rorty, 1991a: 46-62).

While rejecting above the assumption of radically bottom-up discourse analytical research that effectively prevented the pondering of broader political issues, I nevertheless started this theoretical-methodological overview with observing that what is required in analysing the exchange of Arendt and Scholem is an emphatically empirical approach, rather than one that is influenced by its assumptions from the outset. From this starting point, it is doubtful whether the approach that is to be preferred is one that operates with the idea of a constructed (i.e. racists’ untrue) and an unconstructed (i.e. biologists’ true) language. Likewise, it is doubtful whether the gross dichotomies implied in “dominance, discrimination, and control” are to be adopted as principles. There surely must be a way between Scylla’s dissolving language-as-source in language-as-topic and Charybdis’s doing effectively just the other way round. Bias (unless meaning something banally broad) should be the outcome, not the input of analysis.

To further contrast the assumptions of CDA to that of conversation analysis; let us finally review the characteristics of the discourse-historical approach advocated by Ruth Wodak and the Viennese school in a series of publications on Austrian anti-Semitism, racism and the construction of nationalism. “The distinctive feature”, as Fairclough and Wodak put it, “of this approach is its attempt to integrate systematically all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of written or spoken text” (1997: 266). Alternatively, to integrate “historical background and the original sources in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded” (Wodak, 1999: 188; cf. de Cillia et al., 1999; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: Ch. 2).
As can be seen, such an approach is the diametrical opposite to the bottom-up one characterising conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and increasingly the dominant strands of discursive psychology. Whereas in those cases no consideration was taken of any context, source, and information external to the ones participants themselves "demonstrably" display as relevant, the discourse-historical approach would integrate "all" of them in interpreting our piece of discourse.

Again, I have repeatedly renounced conversation analysis’s theoretical pretensions about pure empiricism. Yet, for a start, even from the liberal perspective I adopted here, to aspire to integrate "systematically all available background information" in the analysis is, at best, a fiction. It would be a metaphysical, rather than an empirical endeavour and, as such, it certainly never happens in social research. We always have to stop somewhere in assembling background information. As fellow critical discourse analyst Teun van Dijk rightly pointed out, any research "must provide a practical limit to the infinite regress of boundless socio-political contextualism, by making explicit what is relevant of such contexts" (van Dijk, 2006: 162 – emphasis in the original). The emergence of the problem of "relevance", rightly posed and wrongly answered in conversation analysis, means the very real possibility that the reading of the text will be replaced by "background information"; a state of affairs further exacerbated by CDA’s ultimate priority somehow being located beyond the texts themselves.92

Clearly, neither the attempt to effectively eliminate context as such, nor the hidden removal of the question of its relevance will be satisfying answers. For one thing, both are fictional. For another, the first attempt might easily slip into the practice of ignoring all sorts of texts where cultural, political, and ideological aspects are clearly possible to enrich our understanding, and the second might easily entail our piece of text being simply assimilated to a pre-established context.

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92 See, however, Fairclough constant use of inter-textuality (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2001).
3.5. Conclusion: Reclaiming the Middle-of-the-Road

What, then, is the solution? The solution, I think, is that there is no real problem of a *theoretical* kind. In this sense, Schegloff is right in claiming that "[...] 'rethinking context' [an allusion to the title of the edited volume his paper was published in] is not a task for single convention sessions or special volumes alone. If context is *in* the conduct itself, then rethinking context is the omnipresent job of analysis" (Schegloff, 1992a: 215). Where he is wrong is his aim to restrict this praxis to a fiction — i.e. "demonstrable relevance" and "observable procedural consequentiality" —, instead of "restricting" it simply to the community of researchers (cf. Rorty, 1991a: 35-45). They will make the choices of what constitutes a data, a proper analysis, a valid context. There is simply no *a priori* commitment we can make. There is simply no use in insisting that our consensual ways of tackling our problems should be adopted by other research communities as well, regardless of their particular problems.93

Nevertheless, I certainly have to make clear my position with regard to my particular project. As I indicated, I do not have qualms about invoking any sorts of contexts and it would surely make sense to "embed" the text I am to analyse. These are two intellectuals at hand: why not use their other works to elucidate this piece? Alternatively, why not embed the correspondence into Jewish intellectual history of the twentieth century? Or post-Enlightenment? Or postanything?

Hermeneutical studies in the humanities would approach the problem in this way (Gadamer, 1975), as it is what a moderate discourse-historical orientation would recommend as well. To be sure, any such readings could be studious, enjoyable, and enlightening. The fact that I will relatively rarely consult explicitly those contexts does not mean that I have any theoretical reason for it. It does not mean, furthermore, that my analysis cannot be corrected by or integrated into studies of a broader reach.

93 *This*, ironically, is the "theoretical imperialism" that Schegloff attributes to critical approaches (1997: 167).
In terms of the orientations within discourse analysis I have introduced above, my way of looking at the text is the closest to that of what might be dubbed as content-oriented discursive psychology.\footnote{Some of this research actually does not characterise itself as "discursive psychology" or "discourse analysis" (cf. Reicher and Hopkins, 2001a, 2001b: 396-397; Reicher, Hopkins and Condor, 1997: 99-100). Yet what they do is analysing texts and expounding their consequences. For the present purposes, nothing more is required.}

What it means is, firstly, to retain a strong empirical focus and, metaphorically speaking, to remain close to the text. As I admitted above, this thesis should primarily do justice to the correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem as a text. I shall read, rather than assume; explore the dynamics of argumentative discourse rather than reify categories apparently available: not many stones should remain unturned.

Yet, secondly, the acceptance of the concerns, perspectives, and interests of the participants need not happen simply for its own sake. It is for our sake as well. To enfranchise our participants is achieved in order to talk and argue with them and not merely to listen passively. Hence, my approach will prioritise the "nature of arguments" over "the means by which arguments are warranted" while acknowledging their inescapable interrelatedness. Such a premise can be contrasted with ethnomethodological studies claiming, "[... ] it is not the accomplishment of national identity that is at issue here but rather, and first and foremost, what activities are accomplished with the particular methodological resource of national identity" (Hester and Eglin, 1997b: 8). The choice that is to be made is not whether we want to analyse discourse in its own right or as a reflection of something: these aspects are ultimately intertwined. That "something" that the discourse allegedly reflects or is "about" is not different in kind; it is discourse itself as well. The real choice is where our interests lie. Do they in wider political consequences or local interactional workings? Or even in patterns of firing of certain types of brain cells? To do empirical research does not necessitate reducing our data to serve our empirical purposes. Certainly, we can always do this, just as we can always use a hammer as well, yet often decide not to (see Rorty, 1991b).

Thirdly, thus, I will conceptualise the "action-orientation" of discourse, the consequences of utterances or even performativity as such in a broad, iterative sense
(Butler, 1993, 1997; Derrida, 1991). To quote Reicher and Hopkins, “The real significance of these arguments lies in their action-orientation. It is practical politics, the organization of collective action through the grounding of strategically organized identity constructions, which shapes these speakers forays into the past” (2001a: 151). The kind of specificity this politics acquires is an open question. Yet, though Reicher and Hopkins mainly focus on professional politicians in their work, there is no restriction in adopting their rationale in the broadest possible sense. The “real sense” of performativity lies in the insight that it is the construction of meanings that govern our world and inform our actions.

This, fourthly and lastly, brings us to the problem of ideology and critique, objectivity and partisanship. Both the radically top-down and the bottom-up approaches have adopted clear positions on this and they were diametrically opposed to each other. Conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, and the kind of social research influenced by them practically disposed of these issues altogether. They claimed (ethno)methodological indifference/relativism with regard to the validity of the categories in use and left issues of evaluation to the participants themselves (cf. Edwards, 1997: 60-63; Edwards and Potter, 1992a 57; Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970; Potter, 1996: 5). Critical discourse analysis, on the other hand, boasted of its political engagement and “bias”. In other words, whereas the former approaches contested the legitimacy of the notion of “ideology” in the dearth of any definitive, “neutral”, “non-partisan”, “objective” version to which any particular statement could be compared to and found true or false, the latter pinpointed the unmasking of ideology as its prime goal.

For all their difference, however, it is clear that there is a common denominator behind these approaches. Both of them aspire to treat “ideology” as an issue of truth and falsity of a non-discursive kind. By any means, it has then to be renounced by the strictly and locally action-oriented conversation analysis/ethnomethodology and affirmed by critical discourse analysis that often displays a practical neglect toward the constructive side of discourse. Hence, conversation analysis will choose topics displayed in what might be called an apparent ideological vacuum (see Billig, 1999b, 1999c) and critical discourse analysis will often choose topics where issues of truth and falsity appear unambiguous. How shall I, however, treat these problems in a context that might be
connected to issues of domination, inequality and the likes but not obviously so; and that can be analysed all the way through without evaluating and considering the longer term effects and the meaning of the discourse constructed but obviously should not be.

There is no easy solution but I would simply recommend the reappraisal of the common denominator, and the idea that ideology primarily concerns the true-false dichotomy, where the ultimate arbiter is non-ideological: not the Almighty (any more) but Objective Reality.

"Ideologies are ways of thinking and behaving within a given society which make the ways of that society seem ‘natural’ or unquestioned to its members. [...] ideology is the common sense of the society”, claims Michael Billig (2001: 217; cf. Jayyusi, 1991: 244-45). The novelty of this view of the problem is that it snubs a naïve true-false dichotomy but retains the capacity of evaluation. Ideologies become “forms of life”, a re-conceptualisation not alien to the theory of ideology or discourse if we think of the likes of Foucault, Althusser and many others amongst the post-structuralists (Althusser, 1971; Fish, 1989, 1999; Geertz, 1973: 188-233; Rorty, 1989; for an overview see Eagleton, 1991). Consequentially, decisions made about utterances will involve decisions about values according to which one makes one’s decisions. They will be true and they will be false; but those judgments will be as much of a moral as of an epistemological character. In fact, they will bear witness to the essential unity of traditional dichotomies, such as epistemology-morality, truth-rhetoric, opinion-fact, and discourse-reality (Rorty, 1999: xvi-xxxii, 23-90, 131-147). “We will choose, but not on the basis of the falsity or irrationality of the one or the other”, as one of the prime proponents of this worldview, the philosopher Chaim Perelman stated (Perelman, 1979: 113).

As introduced above, it is the original, middle-of-the-ground position of social psychological discourse analysis that embodies the perspective from which this thesis aims to understand the “oft-quoted” yet substantially neglected public correspondence of 1964. Not that insights from just about any discipline dealing with texts could not contribute to this project. The possibility is ever-present that people reading texts help to understand different peoples with reading different texts.
This entails, however, that in the centre of this thesis is a text. Not interactional "workings", not "discourse in its own right", not a psychological phenomenon in need of re-specification. A text, thick or rich it may be in itself (cf. Edwards, 2006), but definitely requiring the richness or the thickness of description (Geertz, 1973: 3-30; Walzer, 1994). In this sense, the toolkit I am carrying with myself is painfully impoverished, neglecting vast areas of human experience in encountering texts. Yet, just as one should not use a hammer, it is perhaps advisable not to aim at too high either. The balance I struck, here and now, will hopefully be satisfying.
4. Thou Shall Not Judge: Gershom Scholem on a Historical Judgment and the Act of Historical Judgment

4.1. Introduction

With this chapter, I begin the analysis of the public exchange of letters between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem. The object of investigation in the coming two chapters will be Scholem’s letter that initiated the exchange. What kind of construction is this and how does Scholem achieve that construction to be argumentatively convincing?

In the following section, I will introduce the two basic questions that need to be analysed in addressing this text. First, the question of what actually the book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is about; what is its significance and what are the basic assumptions underlying its meaning? Scholem’s treatment of these questions will form the content of this chapter. Such a treatment will involve Scholem’s efforts to appear convincing and to establish rhetorically those meanings recovered to appear to flow naturally from the book itself. To analyse this activity, I will draw on notions and concepts developed in discursive psychology, conversation analysis, and pragmatics. Nevertheless, another aspect of Scholem’s utterances is not merely how Scholem fashions his construction to appear convincing but what those utterances actually are and what their possible political, cultural, or moral consequences might be. As I will show, Scholem’s acts of interpretation convey the image of a *manifestly immoral*, anti-Semitic text—not merely in its outcomes but in its very assumptions. Yet, such a formulation of the book’s content leads us, as it leads Scholem, to a second problem to be introduced in the following section and analysed in detail in the following chapter.
Why, namely, did this what happen? How could it happen? These questions, occasioned explicitly and implicitly in Scholem’s letter, raise the problem of an account to be offered for the content of the book and the act of producing it. That account will inescapably touch on matters of personal and moral import, as the failure of the test will ultimately be explained as a personal and moral failure.

Let us, however, turn first of all to the investigation of the general framework of Scholem’s letter. Why is he writing? What is it that he deems to be relevant by producing this letter?

4.2. Aspects of a Non-Factual Criticism: the What and the Why

In analysing Scholem’s letter, I will first investigate how he starts the entire correspondence. How does he characterise his contribution as well as build up reflexively his own “face” or subject position and that of Arendt? These matters are addressed in the very first paragraph of the exchange.

Extract 4.1.

7 [...] I have not, let me say,
8 gone into the question of the factual and historical authenticity of the
9 various statements you make. To judge by your treatment of those
10 aspects of the problem with which I happen to be familiar, however, I
11 fear that your book is not free of error and distortion. Still, I have no
12 doubt that the question of the book’s factual authenticity will be taken
13 up by other critics – of whom there will be many – and it is not in any
14 case central to the critique I wish to offer here.
15 [...]
As we see, Scholem immediately dubs his concerns and the genre of his letter as a "critique". Yet, there are plenty of forms a criticism can display (e.g. scathing, full-scale, partial, benevolent, constructive etc.\(^95\)) and he does not stop short highlighting certain aspects of his criticism, aspects that his endeavour will focus on while other aspects that, by and large, are not promised to be dwelt upon in his letter. For one thing, however, there is a complex rhetoric going on during this sequence. Scholem makes his main point that his criticism is not factual on two occasions. He begins this sequence asserting this and then concludes with it, framing thus this entire introductory utterance. Doing so, however, he also makes his way to an easy and gross factual criticism; indeed, *precisely* by asserting that his critique is not a factual one does he construct a context where even blunt factual criticism is not in need of thorough justification. He does not have to prove his claims about the lack of factual authenticity in the book and can still maintain the claim of factual problems. Putting it as an aside, as something not central to his thesis, it requires no further attention, justification, and argumentation.

In a similar vein, the letter works up in this sequence the criticising person as a *partial insider*. Scholem, as he writes, "happen[s] to be familiar" with certain "aspects of the problem" (l. 10) and such a stance, yet again, does not entail a detailed and thorough description of the distortion and error he attributes to the book. The latter procedure is left to "other critics" ("of whom there will be many"). Presumably, they will not be merely partially insiders, suggesting thereby that where he (who "happen[s] to be familiar") finds problems resulting in his conviction, experts will find many, many more.

Having said all that, however, let us note that factual criticism that is pronounced nonetheless here is certainly damaging enough to this book that describes itself as a "report"\(^96\) — regardless of the lack of detailed focus given to these "aspects". Though Scholem refrains from putting too much explicit significance on them, the reader will arguably do so. Yet, it is exactly by dint of this state of matters that even without enumerating factual errors, a claim to their existence must be made credible to the reader of the correspondence. What is gained by the rhetoric of the aside (cf. Edwards, 2004:

\(^{95}\) For various kinds of categorisations, see Barthes (2004), Young (1990), Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 32-35), Walzer (1987), etc.

\(^{96}\) See the subtitle of the book; lines 338-349 of this exchange in the Appendix; and Arendt (1993b: 227).
explicated in the previous paragraphs, might be lost as perceived arrogance. If Scholem’s concern is admittedly not factuality, if he is admittedly not an expert on these “aspects”, how dare he assert such sweeping and lethal generalisations?

“Consensus-building” (cf. Edwards and Potter, 1992a; Middleton and Edwards, 1990: 30-33; Potter 1996), with reference to “other critics […] of whom there will be many”, is an admittedly imaginary exercise in this sequence. Scholem does not refer to any existing body of work that would have already refuted the book’s factual assertions but projects them to materialise in the future. This surely conveys the intensity of his conviction, but does not unveil or legitimate the conviction as such. Inevitably, lack of argumentation entails that it is the speaker’s credibility and authority that must make the statement credible and authoritative.

This brings us to the question of speaker positions or “counter-dispositionals” (Edwards, 2007), which are introduced in this sequence. The problem, namely, of who is giving as well as prompting the “critique” will be taken up here as Scholem’s account of his activity and his motivations for doing the “critiquing” reflexively builds up his own position, making thus this very act of “critiquing” a respectable activity instead of one emerging out of lust and joy.

With this in mind, let us observe the tiny verb “fear” in the sequence presented above: “I fear that your book is not free of error and distortion” (l. 11). At face value, it is puzzling that Scholem should qualify this statement as a subjective state of his. In a strictly logical sense, surely it does not bolster the credibility of his claims as to “error and distortion” in the book. To the contrary, it might even seem to undermine his rhetorical efforts to establish the existence of that “error and distortion”. Is he perhaps not certain? Yet, if so, why would he claim in a proximate line later that he has “no doubt that the question of the book’s factual authenticity will be taken up by other critics – of whom there will be many […]” (l. 11-13)? Is he, then, simply inconsistent within just a few lines?

The answer may be gained from treating “I fear” not as an expression of some inner state of mind of uncertainty and apprehension as to the object in question (which would clearly contradict what pre- and succeeds this utterance), but as an emotion-
concept in rhetorical use (cf. Edwards, 1997, 1999). Thus, it might not be directly concerned with the (certainty or otherwise of the) claim itself but builds up reflexively the identity and “counter-disposition” of the claimer and counters implicitly attributions – of arrogance, prejudgement, ill intent, etc. –, that might arise as to his identity as a speaker and hence threaten to illegitimate his activity.

From a pragmatic aspect, this strategy can justifiably be called “politeness”. As theorists of politeness express, in public intercourse it is understood that “it is in general in every participants’ best interest to maintain each other’s face” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61). 97 Yet, while there seems to be no reason not to categorise this instance of “I fear” as an act of politeness, one might still object to the projected image of (intended) smooth operation in the realm of discourse. This is expressed in Brown and Levinson’s summary:

“In general, people cooperate (and assume each other’s cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. That is, normally everyone’s face depends on everyone else’s is being maintained” (Ibid: 61).

Instead of treating “polite” utterances as explanatory forces in themselves, discursive research will concentrate on the occasioned and rhetorical use of these utterances (cf. Antaki and Horowitz, 2000: 165). Thus, the utterance at our hands does not seem to mitigate the potential “face-threatening act” and is not likely to evoke the reciprocation of the maintenance of any “face”. If there is a “face” which is of concern here, then it is that of the speaker and “I fear” does not mitigate the potentially damaging and confrontational aspect of the sequence quoted above. Rather, it aims at building up Scholem’s credentials (Potter, 1996). That is, a respectable and credible identity of the speaker (and foreclosing any opposite impressions). An identity that would make those damaging and confrontational aspects (and many more to come) legitimate and credible,

97 Following Erving Goffman, “face” is here “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself [...]” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61).
inasmuch as they are constructed originating not from personal lust or bad intention but from a respectable position of reluctance and obligation. It is not that Scholem relishes in saying these things. It is that he has to.98 Politeness, from this rhetorical perspective, does not leave "faces" intact, does not "respect" them, but constructs them as respectable.

Or even to the contrary. Treating acts of politeness rhetorically also entails them ceasing to be disengaged utterances and their interpretation becoming context-bound.99 Thus, it is of importance that while Scholem is working up his credentials and constructs his own "face" as a reluctant but obliged critique, what he "fears" is that the book is not "free of error and distortion" (l. 11). Let us note that both words are used here in the singular, suggesting not so much (or not merely) that a catalogue of errors can be found in the book but that the book as such, as a whole is of an erroneous and distorted nature. Furthermore, as a concept, "error" might convey the notion of a (however flawed) scholarly work, something we certainly expect from the author to have written. "Distortion", however, brings us to an altogether different realm. Not that it makes any inference as to the quantity of failures: any erroneous book may showcase just as many factual failures as a distorted one. The latter concept, however, involves at its origin not simply the lapse of awareness, scholarly quality etc., but that of the will and motivation. It is, in short, intended.

Discursively speaking, it is the "empiricist" and "contingent" repertoires that are implicitly mobilised here by Scholem as ways of accounting for his and for Arendt’s activity. As Gilbert and Mulkay observe in their seminal discussion and introduction of these concepts, the empiricist repertoire "portrays scientists' actions and beliefs as following unproblematically and inescapably from the empirical characteristics of an impersonal [...] world" (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984: 56). The use of the empiricist repertoire, therefore, provides Scholem with the device to suggest a neutral and, consequently, object-centred investigation on his part. This means that the driving force

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98 It is important to note that while the practice of disclaiming (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975) and building up "counter-dispositionals" (Edwards, 2007) is certainly one aspect of Scholem’s rhetoric of here, the subject position built up here is not that of the person that is merely "noticing" as opposed to "motivated scrutiny" (Edwards, 1993: 335; cf. Woofitt, 2005b). Scholem is constructing himself to be motivated and engaged, both in the direction of her addressee and the topic.

99 For a discursive and rhetorical orientation within the realm of "politeness" see Locher and Watts (2005), Terkourafi (2005).
behind his interpretation and assessments is the object of the investigation: Arendt’s book and the historical events themselves. It is these objects that guide the treatise regardless (or sometimes even against) his own dispositions. To account in turn for Arendt’s position, however, Scholem appears to deploy a contingent repertoire, which is available “to depict professional actions and beliefs as being significantly influenced by variable factors outside the realm of empirical [...] phenomena”. What is implicitly attributed to Arendt, then, is a subject-centred activity where it is her “personal inclinations and particular social positions” that influences and thereby distorts her interpretation, rather than the events themselves and to account for her failure to represent those events properly (Ibid: 57).

Overall, what we have learnt from Scholem’s opening paragraph is, then, twofold. First, it told us that Scholem would present certain concerns of his with the book as well as that those concerns will not be of a factual nature. What that would exactly mean (that is to say, the sort of non-factual problems he has in mind) is left for later parts of his letter, just as the possible connection between a non-factual criticism he entertains and a factual one that he assumes to be more dominant in the field of reception.

Yet he told us – or, rather, hinted at – more. His implied mobilisation of the empiricist and the contingent repertoires entailed that there would be concerns more of a personal type: concerns, that is, with the author. His implicit mobilisation of an empiricist vs. contingent repertoire, however, not only acquainted the reader implicitly with the dramatis personae but accounted for the possible connection between a non-factual criticism and the apparent errors in the book, factual or otherwise. It made it sensible that announcing a non-factual criticism yet appropriating sweeping accusations as to factual “error” might not (well, not simply) be rhetorical trickery in this context. It is, rather, a matter of conceiving and constructing the realm of the text as such derivative of another realm, where a list of factual inaccuracies certainly would not answer why they had happened (Wetherell, 1998). That those inaccuracies will be exposed by “many” scholars or reviewers does not only tell us that they are transparent and relatively easy to spot on. Rather, it suggests that the main and singular task to do is to explain their genesis and to account thereby for “error and distortion”.

103
It is, then, Scholem’s acts of interpretation of the book that we shall first focus on and understand what it might mean that he is not concerned with facts. This is going to be the task of this chapter. There will be, however, another possible focus of attention afterwards, which will be addressed in the following chapter. It is, namely, how those factual as well as non-factual problems can be explained with regard to their origin: to Hannah Arendt as a particular human being.

4.3. The What: Presenting a Historical Judgment

4.3.1. Setting up the scene: the description of a book for criticism

In what follows the utterance analysed in the previous subsection, we witness Scholem’s first concrete engagement with the book. There, he is expected to present the book as well as perhaps his non-factual criticism with it. These two activities, however, might turn out to be more easily expected than actually observed and analysed.

*Extract 4.2.*

14 [...] 

15 Your book moves between two poles: the Jews and their bearing in the days of catastrophe, and the responsibility of Adolf Eichmann. I have devoted, as you know, a good part of my time to a consideration of the case of the Jews, and I have studied a not insignificant volume of material on the subject. I am well aware, in common with every other spectator of the events, how complex and serious, how little reducible or transparent, the whole problem is. I am aware that there are aspects of Jewish history (and for more than forty years I have concerned myself with little else) which are beyond our comprehension; on the one hand, a devotion to the things of this world that is near-demonic; on the other,
25 a fundamental uncertainty of orientation in this world – an uncertainty
26 which must be contrasted with that certainty of the believer concerning
27 which, alas, your book has so little to report. There has been weakness,
28 too, though weakness so entwined with heroism that it is not easily
29 unravelled; wretchedness and power-lust are also to be found there. But
30 these things have always existed, and it would be remarkable indeed if,
31 in the days of catastrophe, they were not to make their appearance once
32 again. Thus it was in the year of 1391, at the beginning of that
33 generation of catastrophe; and so it has been in our own time. The
34 discussion of these matters is, I believe, both legitimate and unavoidable
35 – although I do not believe that our generation is in a position to pass
36 any kind of historical judgment. We lack the necessary perspective,
37 which alone makes some sort of objectivity possible – and we cannot
38 but lack it.

Where can in this paragraph “critique” of a non-factual kind or even any critique
as such be found? And where is here a simple description and presentation of the book on
which Scholem pronounces his criticism? What is it that is in the book? What is it that
can only be found in Scholem’s critical perspective?

Apparently, there is nothing conspicuously or overtly critical in his first sentence.
It seems simply to divulge information, to describe the book as he states that the “book
moves between two poles” (l. 15). While it is certainly impossible to differentiate
between the book’s actual content and Scholem’s critical perspective here, it does not
seem to be necessary either. They appear to be the same. It is just the rough description of
the book’s content, devoid of any sort of “non-factual” criticism that is still to come.

Yet, even such a basic statement as to the topic of Arendt’s book implies certain
things that raise the topic of description-versus-criticism just put aside here. Scholem’s
formulation suggests that the two poles are different, perhaps radically or qualitatively
different issues. Eichmann’s, the Nazi colonel’s activity is described with the phrase
“responsibility”, which carries moral or/and legal connotations: his actions must be
accounted for in moral or and legal terms. "The Jews", on the other hand, are fashioned with a more neutral term. The concept of "bearing" (I. 15) does not perhaps completely exclude moral considerations, but it surely evokes more like a procedure of neutral, matter-of-fact description than of moral judgment. The "two poles" thus are not simply "two poles" of content, they are not simply two topics. Rather, they are two moral poles with the obvious connotation of perpetrator and victim. Hence, Scholem does not so much describe the two issues that Arendt’s book addresses perhaps, but already pre-formulates a moral-epistemological field according to which these issues must be addressed.

What is even more, while there seems to be nothing contentious in pointing to "Eichmann", a solitary individual, as one of the book’s poles, to allocate the other pole to "the Jews" might be less self-evident. A simple comparison of the phrase with the possible alternatives of "Jews" or "some Jews" tells us that while in the latter two cases there is a certain amount of Jews that is talked about, in the former case ("the Jews") this quantity is absolute. Nevertheless, scholars of pragmatics do not enlist the definite article amongst the markers of "scalar implicature", that is, of quantitative difference (see Horn, 2004; Levinson, 1983). The reason being, presumably, that it is not so much its role to imply quantity but a qualitative kind of difference (see Abott, 2004). The use of the definite article ignores any division within the category and endows that category with the sense of unity, of "deep-rooted disposition" as opposed to apparent differences on the surface or on a personal level (Edwards, 1995: 329).

It is therefore not only the implication of this apparently descriptive, neutral and "innocent" utterance of "two poles" that moral or legal responsibility goes with one pole and not with the other, but that neither of the poles are divided, perhaps divisible as such. Both of them are treated as wholes.

Treated by whom? By Scholem, strictly speaking, although this does not tell us whether he merely re-presents Arendt’s points or infuses them already with his own critical perspective, presenting hence not so much the book itself but the golden standard according to which he will pronounce his criticism. In any case, what appeared to be a simple act of uninterested, neutral presentation turned out to be something considerably
more ambiguous and complicated in that it appeared less and less a case of simple, neutral, straightforward description and more and more that of setting up an epistemological-moral scene. The scene, as it were, of Scholem's own critical perspective.

Things, however, get even vaguer as Scholem's text progresses. In the first sentence, there was at least no initial uncertainty in anchoring references such as "Adolf Eichmann" and "the Jews" in the "days of catastrophe". As we shall see shortly, even this apparently straightforward anchoring of the subject becomes less and less well-defined as the text progresses.

In what immediately follows, Scholem at first refers to "the case of the Jews" (l. 18), which appears to reinforce the context established in the beginning. (Or, in any case, does not challenge it.) This is succeeded, however, by a reference to "aspects of Jewish history (and for more than forty years I have concerned myself with little else)" (l. 21-23) which inevitably broadens the context. What appeared to be unproblematic in alluding to the "days of the catastrophe" (l. 16) or the "subject" (l. 19) are less straightforward now. In short, while the former references involved by common sense clearly the Holocaust, the utterance just quoted (l. 21-23) extends the locus that would connect the "two poles". Clearly, it is not simply the "days of the catastrophe" alluding to the Holocaust that are spoken about here any more. Scholem cannot be said to have been concerned with "little else" and it is "Jewish history" that he is explicitly talking about; a vastly larger category than the Holocaust and one which can be said to have concerned him throughout his entire life and career.

This tendency of broadening the "subject" and the "event" (l. 20) is prevalent in a later instance of the paragraph as well: "But these things [i.e. weakness and heroism] have always existed, and it would be remarkable indeed if, in the days of catastrophe, they were not to make their appearance again. Thus it was in the year 1391, at the beginning of that generation of catastrophe; and so it has been in our own time"101 (l. 29-
Again, the subject of the book ("the Jews") is not any more treated with a clear reference to the Holocaust ("the days of catastrophe") but within the next to infinite realm of the "always" of Jewish history, as the expulsion of the Spanish Jews is described with the same noun ("catastrophe") as the hardships of "our own" generation, the Holocaust. "The Jews", then, as the subject of Arendt's book are not a simple united entity but one without clear temporal limitation.¹⁰²

Is, then, the apparent pinpointing of the book's topic, "the Jews and their bearing in the days of catastrophe" (I. 15-16), really an act of description? Or is it the all-too familiar act of interpretation where this act is always-already value-laden (cf. Fish, 1980, 1989, 1999), where what will be rendered as criticism already depends on the rendering of its criticised object? In short, is Arendt really talking about the "two poles" in the clear-cut and moral sense Scholem conveys? Is she really talking about the Jews, rather than some spatial, temporal, or institutional sub-categories of them? In addition, what are these "Jews" and the "days of the catastrophe" as their anchoring became less and less well-defined? It is next to impossible to answer these questions at this point.

Ambiguity, however, is not constrained to the presentation or description of the book. As Scholem implicitly broadened the context by referring to "aspects of Jewish history" (I. 21-22), it is by no means clear what rhetorical function this might display. Having mentioned the two "poles", he immediately elaborated a context to this investigation. He established "complexity" with addressing differing tendencies or "aspects" in "Jewish history": the "near-demonic", the "fundamental uncertainty", the "certainty of the believer" as well as "weakness" and "heroism" (I. 24-28). Yet again, are these "aspects" or "complexity" a description of Arendt's book? Or is it Scholem's own critical perspective? In fact, even when there appears to be some straight element of criticism in Scholem's pinpointing the missing "aspect" from Arendt's book ("the

the date is 1291 (see Scholem, 1994: 96; 2002: 395), again without apparent referent as to the "beginning of that generation of catastrophe". 1391 (which is known as the year when the first wave of pogroms occurred in many Iberian cities [Seville, Cordoba, Valencia, Barcelona] and widely seen as the first moment leading up to the eventual expulsion of the entire Spanish Jewish community from Spain in 1492) appears in the version of the correspondence that is published in the English translation of several of Scholem's essays (Scholem, 1976: 301). It is the only version that was definitely proofread by Scholem himself as noted by the editor in his preface (Scholem, 1976: xi-xiii). It is for these reasons that I use this version as the authoritative one here.

certainty of the believer") it does not tell us why this would be relevant. Granted, there are many more “aspects” of Jewish history or, for that matter, “world history” or “whatever” that is missing from Arendt’s book. A simple enumeration of these missing “aspects” would be an infinite and surely futile exercise. Thus, the simple fact that Scholem’s utterance appears to be a “criticism” fails to explain to us why it is relevant as a criticism.

To sum up, in Scholem’s addressing of the book what prima facie could have been taken as a straightforward and neutral presentation of the book’s topic turned out hard to distinguish from Scholem’s own historical-critical perspective. However, even where this critical perspective undoubtedly emerged, it was similarly unclear what its relevance was and in what sense it was a “non-factual” criticism. Said simply, it is still not clear what the problem with the book is. Where is the “error and distortion”, the palpable failure? What, furthermore, is it here that would explain the mobilisation of the empiricist-contingent repertoire hinted at in the previous paragraph?

This apparent ambiguity, incidentally, applies to Scholem’s crucial remark, with which he concludes this paragraph; to that of “historical judgment” (l. 36). Scholem seems to construct here a fact. Inasmuch as “historical judgment” and its impossibility is grounded in the factor of “time” as the notion of “generation” and “perspective” appear to imply, it is not up for contention. Time is not subjective. Its lack is, quite simply, there. Still, while the implied thrust of Scholem’s conclusion appears to be that Arendt in fact exercises this act of “historical judgment” in her text, it is not at all clear what is meant by “historical judgment” and what its possible content might be. Presumably, it is not a sort of a priori no-poems-after-the-Holocaust. “Historical judgment” should apply to some sort of specific activity of writing and evaluating, not merely producing a certain version of the events. It might be argued that “historical judgment” contains the disambiguation of “weakness” from “heroism” (l. 28), or the address of both the “certainty of the believer” and the “fundamental uncertainty” (l. 25-26). That is, either the disambiguation of “complexity” or the account for it as such. In any case, however, “historical judgment’s” meaning, significance, and relevance are just as enigmatic as Scholem’s previous manoeuvres of interpretation and criticism. It is merely the categorical denial of its possibility with respect to time what is readily available here.
What we may state with certainty regarding this utterance is that Scholem’s acts of ambiguity concerned the book’s basic orientation (i.e. “the two poles”) and that this basic orientation, in turn, was constructed to touch upon the very age-long existence of the Jewish people. If we are to learn more about the ways “historical judgment” relates to these matters of all-importance, if we are to unveil the enigma that is its meaning, significance, and relevance, it is then inevitable to analyse further utterances of Scholem so that they might shed light on the rhetorical as well as possibly ideological subtleties we have encountered so far.

4.3.2. Instances of “historical judgment”: on the “weakness” of the book

In what immediately follows the paragraph just analysed, Scholem builds upon the previous paragraph expressed in the anaphora, “these questions” (l. 40). What “these questions” are is once again not clear at all. Yet, what is to come clearly conveys Scholem’s assessment of Arendt’s treatise of one of the “poles”, “the Jews, and their bearing”:

*Extract 4.3.*

39  [...]  
40  Nevertheless, we cannot put these questions aside. There is the question  
41  thrown at us by the new youth of Israel: why did they allow themselves  
42  to be slaughtered? As a question, it seems to me to have a profound  
43  justification; and I see no readily formulated answer to it. At each  
44  decisive juncture, however, your book speaks only of the weakness of  
45  the Jewish stance in the world. I am ready enough to admit this  
46  weakness; but you put such emphasis upon it that, in my view, your  
47  account ceases to be objective and acquires overtones of malice. [...]
Indeed, with this sequence an arguable instance of “historical judgment” and its criticism have ultimately arrived. It is the overwhelming tendency (i.e. “at each decisive juncture”) to emphasise “weakness of the Jewish stance” (l. 44-45) that is Scholem’s bone of contention and the book is evaluated subsequently as ceasing to be “objective” and acquiring overtones of “malice” (l. 47).

Interestingly, however, while Scholem maintains that it is due to its emphasis on “weakness” that the book “ceases to be objective”, he nevertheless remains true to his earlier renouncing of “questions of factual [...] authenticity” (l. 8). Even though “objectivity” is explicitly alluded to, there is no factual dispute going on here in the strict sense of the word. 103 Though this construction is by no means necessarily self-defeating, it is certainly more than merely claiming lack of objectivity that is needed in order to establish a credible criticism. How does this occur? How is the book’s lack of objectivity not simply claimed, but convincingly shown? 104

It is here that some of Scholem’s earlier remarks acquire their relevance in that the single-handed judgment of “weakness” (l. 44) flies clearly in the face of “complexity” and the entwining of “weakness” with “heroism” (l. 28). Arendt is constructed here to transgress precisely the order previously established by Scholem: she reduces the abundance of Jewish life to but one trait, to that of “weakness”. 105 This abundance or “complexity”, however, was not simply claimed but grounded firmly by Scholem. When constructing “complexity”, he did not simply present his credentials, his competence, and knowledge in order to legitimate this interpretative decision. It was not only his knowledge (“I have studied a not insignificant volume of material on the subject [...] I am aware that there are aspects of Jewish history (and for more than forty years I have concerned myself with little else)[...]) that was evoked but an extreme-case formulation as well (Pomerantz, 1986): “in common with every other spectator of the events” (l. 19-20). Gershom Scholem’s, the scholar’s undoubted knowledge and authority notwithstanding, reference to these “spectators” shifted the whole issue of contention to a

103 I.e. Scholem does admit that “weakness”, that is, he does not doubt the evaluation or description of certain events as “weaknesses”.

104 On the difference between the “claimed” and the “shown” see Schegloff (1984: 38-39).

105 To “reduce” the abundance of Jewish life to one’s own particular interest had been one of Scholem’s main message as a historian throughout his entire career.
different level. It was a consensus, an extremely united consensus that was mobilised here, just as the direct, unmediated, "mere" glance (spectator) of the everyman instead of the knowledge, learning, and intellectual devotion of the scholar. This construction rhetorically foreclosed two options. For one thing, it excluded that it is intelligence and knowledge that could spot some sorts of single underlying characteristics (i.e. weakness) beyond the apparent complexity. For another, it also suggested that there is no special intelligence or scholarly devotion required to notice complexity. Thus, not just the event’s complexity was grounded but this complexity’s visibility, transparency, and self-evident nature. In retrospect, it was this construction that makes Scholem’s assessment of non-objectivity convincing.

All of this, certainly, points to the question of what Arendt sees that is different from that of everyone else’s experience and why Arendt could possibly not see what everyone else did. Such questions chime with the overall thrust of Scholem’s argument, even if fall short of actually accounting for it.

Namely, Scholem’s concluding evaluation was not satisfied with the charge of lack of objectivity but pointed explicitly to a moral direction. It is not just that the book “ceases to be objective” (cf. “error”) but that it “acquires overtones of malice” (cf. “distortion”), where this latter expression exhibits finally the sort of non-factual problem with the book that was foreshadowed in the letter’s first paragraph. Yet, what accounted for lack of objectivity does not by itself account for the text’s attributed immorality. Neither the transgression of the order of “complexity”, nor the contradiction to both the scholar and the everyman explain a moral failure. That means that we have to investigate, where a moral dimension possibly resides in both “weakness” as an instance of “historical judgment” as well as in the choice of “weakness”. To answer these questions, we certainly have to have a further look at the way Arendt’s book and its emphasis on “weakness” are rendered in Scholem’s text.

While at this point it is not explicitly expounded further, what is taken to be “weakness”, there is an analogous orientation to Arendt’s that Scholem works up: the question thrown at us by the new youth of Israel” (I. 40-41). The question of the “new youth” is one (“why did they allow themselves to be slaughtered?”) that by its
grammatical formulation highlights the passivity of the Jews, betraying thus a similar orientation to that of Arendt’s “weakness”. Hence, the figure of analogy (cf. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 371-410) allows the reader to infer that, without any textual information to the contrary, characteristics of the “new youth” question apply to Arendt’s book as well.106

It is not enough, however, to note a certain similarity between the question of the “new youth” and Arendt’s text. The issue is whether by this analogy Scholem attaches other aspects to his topic, which might shed further light on Arendt’s position and an interpretation of this “weakness”. In this respect, let us note first that the “question” of the “new youth” is not simply concerned with passivity. The subtlety is that “they” (l. 41) is grammatically in the active subject position, but the rhetorical meaning of the sentence is simply passive: they were slaughtered. With this divergence between grammatical units and rhetorical meaning, a normative horizon has been opened that raises the possibility of action (i.e. “they...” is in the active subject position) but concludes that no constructive action of any kind was done (i.e. “...allowed themselves to be slaughtered”). Activity, thus, is present but only in the form of a kind of self-destructive passivity.

This formulation renders “passivity”, “weakness”, or even “slaughter” (actions one the “poles”, that is) not as facts but as accomplishments; not as conditions but as acts by the grammatical “they” (as well as, presumably, by those who actually and directly carried out the slaughter). Furthermore, inasmuch as Arendt’s account addresses accomplishments and implies the possibility of alternative accomplishments and acts in the world, it becomes not merely the inconsistent, disorderly, or incorrect rendering of facts but an instance of moral criticism.

And an unwarranted moral criticism, as it is. For, yet again, this construction lends significance retrospectively to the way Scholem started the problem with the (then) apparently descriptive notion of the book moving between “two poles: the Jews and their bearing in the days of catastrophe, and the responsibility of Adolf Eichmann” (l. 15-16). There, it was taken for granted that “responsibility” – moral or legal – goes with the one

106 Incidentally, it is the way Arendt herself understands this utterance, as we will see in a later chapter (see page 177-180).
pole (Eichmann), but not with the other ("the Jews"). "The Jews" are only available for neutral, non-evaluative description as implied in the concept of "bearing". Clearly, it is Eichmann and the Nazis who "slaughter", and "the Jews" that "were slaughtered". Moral responsibility, without doubt, should go hand in hand with these acts, respectively.

What was suspected can now be confirmed. At this point, Scholem's earlier remarks are more to be taken as description of his own critical perspective, than that of the book. Instead of the order of the book they were the appropriation of an (epistemological-)moral order. And it was this epistemological-moral universe that was transgressed by Arendt's text in its over-concentration on "weakness". It re-allocated this moral-legal issue in that it was this "they" (presumably "the Jews") that was both the grammatical subject and object in this action. Thus, it was "the Jews", in her version, that too become instrumental via their passivity in their own being killed and thus morally accountable. 107

Scholem's treatment of "weakness" shed some light on his notion of "historical judgment" as well as on his own non-factual criticism. "Historical judgment" was constructed to be a moral judgment, or, rather, an immoral judgment as it transgressed the consensual epistemological-moral order depicted earlier by Scholem. Ultimately, it is this that accounted for the description of Arendt's book of "ceasing to be objective" and "acquiring overtones of malice".

These issues are further elaborated in Scholem's letter as the motive of "historical judgment" as effectively moral judgment makes its appearance at a later point. I turn my attention towards this issue.

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107 The difference between the "new youth" and Arendt must certainly not be overlooked. I will return to this issue later (see page 132).
extreme circumstances – to which neither of us was exposed – I detect,
often enough, in place of balanced judgment, a kind of demagogic will-
to-overstatement. Which of us can say today what decisions the elders
of the Jews – or whatever we choose to call them – ought to have
arrived at in the circumstances? I have not read less than you have about
these matters, and I am still not certain; but your analysis does not give
me confidence that your certainty is better founded than my uncertainty.
There were the Judenräte, for example; some among them were swine,
others were saints. I have read a great deal about both varieties. There
were among them also many people in no way different from ourselves,
who were compelled to make terrible decisions in circumstances that we
cannot even begin to reproduce or reconstruct. I do not know whether
they were right or wrong. Nor do I presume to judge. I was not there.

Nevertheless, your thesis that these machinations of the Nazis served in
some way to blur the distinction between torturer and victim – a thesis
which you employ to belabor the prosecution in the Eichmann trial –
seems to me wholly false and tendentious. In the camps, human beings
were systematically degraded; they were, as you say, compelled to
participate in their own extermination, and to assist in the execution of
fellow-prisoners. Is the distinction between torturer and victim thereby
blurred? What perversity! We are asked, it appears, to confess that the
Jews, too, had their “share” in the acts of genocide. That is a typical
quaternio terminorum.

As can be seen, in this sequence Scholem once again accuses Arendt of
transgressing the moral order set up by him in his utterance on the “two poles”. As we
have seen in the case of “weakness”, yet again, the point here attributed to the book is
that of an (im)moral if not legal accusation levelled against “the Jews”.

115
However, with the progress of Scholem’s text, Arendt’s claim as reconstructed in this utterance differs in significant respects from that of “weakness” analysed earlier in the form of “they allowed themselves to be slaughtered” (l. 41-42). It is not “mere” passivity (however lethal or self-destructive) that “the Jews” are charged with here and it is not merely that they too are available for moral accountability, blurring thus the two distinct poles and approaching both of them in terms of moral and legal responsibility. Rather, Arendt’s book is claimed to have charged “the Jews” with the ultimate moral accusation (“torturer”, “share’ in the acts of genocide”) and to have turned consequently the entire moral order upside-down. In this reconstructed claim Arendt enlists “the Jews” among the perpetrators and in an unspecified sense equals them with the Nazis: the line is erased between them: those, who straightforwardly kill and those, who are straightforwardly killed. Hence Scholem’s exclamation, “What perversity!” (l. 129), which does not of course imply a factual “error” or even “distortion” (l. 11) but that of an inexplicable yet manifestly immoral transgression. It is not merely false but unnatural and repugnant in the sense that natural is what we normally and morally (should) do and feel (cf. Fish, 1989).

Arendt is thus made to appear to have manifestly transgressed the consensual (epistemological-)moral assumptions Scholem alluded to and established in the beginning. With the exception, that is, of one amongst these. While unacknowledged, the book is constructed to live up to one expectation. It is about “the Jews”. To use the category with the definite article (which Scholem does throughout his text) does not imply that there are no sub-categories existing within this group. It does imply, however, that these sub-categories are simply of no relevance from this particular topic’s viewpoint and by consequence, it is always a statement about the entire category that any statement of a sub-category results.

How does Scholem construct the unity and overwhelming relevance of the super-category (“the Jews”) in interpreting Arendt’s book? The consistent use of the definitive article is a “banal” means of this but certainly not the only one (cf. Billig, 1995: esp. Ch. 5). His strategy is discernible in the beginning of the sequence quoted above, especially that it must overcome a possible challenge to its logic. That is, the existence of a sub-category, the Jewish Councils.

116
Though Scholem starts this sequence with the already noted pattern as it establishes that Arendt’s problem was “how the Jews reacted” (I. 100, cf. “the Jews and their bearing”), what comes after is potentially disconfirming the unity of this category. It is the issue about a sub-category and Arendt’s handling of the problem that is taken up and criticised. Tellingly, however, Scholem appropriates the term “elders of the Jews” (I. 103-104); that is, not (at first) the “Jewish Councils”. This description itself neutralises any possible connotations to the role or institutional/power difference of this group from the rest of those concerned as opposed to the other conventionally available version. Scholem’s initial categorisation does not directly imply “power” or the capacity to make significant decisions as predicates bound to the category. As such, it does not imply any decisive or qualitatively significant division within the category of “the Jews”. The difference between the “Jewish Elders” and the rest of the Jews is but in age.\(^\text{108}\)

Moreover, rhetorical unification and thus the accomplishment of the concept “the Jews” is similarly advanced in constructing the context of the object of Arendt’s judgment. Before naming the concrete object (“the elders”), Scholem alludes to “extreme circumstances [...] to which neither of us was exposed” (I. 101). Discursively speaking, the important point here is that by the use of the extreme case-formulation, the “elders” become uniform with other Jews suffering in other contexts of the Holocaust: with ghetto Jews, with Jews in the working camps and with those in the extermination camps or in the gas chambers. This interpretation – i.e. rhetorical “uniformisation” of the category by the means of “extreme circumstances” – is supported by the way Scholem’s text further progresses. In the following paragraph (while the later occasioning of the “torturer”-“victim” distinction might invoke the circumstances of the ghettos as well – I. 128) Scholem immediately sets up the scene in the “camps” (I. 125), the arch-example of “extreme circumstances” (I. 101). This not only implies an essential identity between the scene of the ghettos (where the Jewish Councils functioned) and the potentially very different scene of the camps, but also extrapolates the entire issue allegedly addressed by

\(^{108}\) It might be countered that the notion of the “Elders of the Jews” is not a neutral category at all, as it chimes with the well-known anti-Semitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. In the original German version, however, Scholem used the word “ältesten” and the German translation of the Protocols is *Protokolls der Weisen den Zion* (Scholem, 1994: 98). I therefore do not attribute any significance of this feature of the English version.
Arendt so as to cover the entire Holocaust (and “the Jews” as they are consensually tied to it) instead of particular parts of it. Thus, from a limited investigation into the activities of the Jewish Councils, the object of Arendt's judgment is shifted into a judgment about the camps. This implies that Arendt's concern was not with that specific spatial-institutional instance of “Jewish” acts in the ghettos, but with Jewish behaviour as such during the entire Holocaust.

As a result, she is not only constructed here to exercise a(n) (im)moral judgment, but one on the Jewish population of the Holocaust in its entirety. Just as foreshadowed at the beginning, it is dealing with a whole as Arendt's topic is permanently taken to be the apparently homogeneous category of “the Jews”. The only difference being that now she is not simply constructed to deal with this whole category, to describe its “bearing” but to pronounce a manifestly immoral judgment on it. What Arendt is charged with and claimed to have alleged in her book is not “simply” that she blurs the distinction between those who kill and those who die and turns the moral universe upside-down. It is still more to this, as she is reconstructed to accuse “the Jews” as such with killing, indirectly or otherwise. Clearly, any immoral act committed against a sub-category of a group or even an individual (such as accusing them/him/her of a “share” in their/his/her own destruction) will not necessarily be exempt from the charge that it was in fact committed against the whole group (Robertson, 2006; Wodak, 1997). However, it is by definition the case if the act is constructed to have been committed against the group as such. It is not any more an act of possible, but one of actual overtones of an immoral act against the entire category. Or, in fact, not even with “over”-tones as the claim “the Jews, too, had their 'share' in the acts of genocide” (l. 129-130) is an extreme and almost impossible version of the well-known anti-Semitic argument of “blaming the victims”.

At this point, concepts that were used by Scholem previously appear to be less ambiguous. As already noted above, inasmuch as Arendt’s verdict of “weakness” or the judgment as to the role of the “elders of the Jews” and “the 'share'” of the Jews in the “acts of genocide” are to be taken as instances of “historical judgment”, it is clear now

109 Scholem thus remains true to his characterisation of the “question of the new youth” and by implication of Arendt’s “weakness”. It is not “they” (i.e. the Judenräte) who “let them be slaughtered” (i.e. not primarily themselves but other Jews). Subject and object are co-terminous.
that “historical judgment” is to be taken as a moral judgment. It contravened Scholem’s appeal of “two poles”, where “the Jews” are not available for moral responsibility. It was a manifestly and thoroughly immoral judgment. Indeed, it was an instance of gross anti-Semitism.

Not much more can be said, not much more serious accusation can be formed in the post-Holocaust world than the contention that what someone claims is an anti-Semitic claim. Especially so that this anti-Semitic claim is made with regard precisely to the Holocaust, to the very historical event that would illegitimate anti-Semitic accusations once and for all.

From an analytical point of view, however, we cannot stop here, even if the two versions (i.e. his and Arendt’s) that Scholem acquainted us with were presented to be simply and essentially incompatible. However transparent this issue has been rendered by Scholem and however straightforward Arendt’s transgression as a moral transgression might be, we have to investigate what, according to his text, informs these versions. What are their basic assumptions and what is it that would constitute a morally just judgment? It is the analysis of these issues that will inform the reader where Arendt’s book ultimately and profoundly failed.

4.4. Assessment of the Act of Historical Judgment

To start with, Scholem leaves little doubt about what it is that would constitute a morally just judgment in the case in question. This position is both conveyed in his version of the “two poles” (which appears to foreclose implicitly the chance for Jewish “responsibility”) and in his conviction expressed on the possibility of “historical judgment”:

Extract 4.5.

119
I do not believe that our generation is in a position to pass any kind of historical judgment. We lack the necessary perspective, which alone makes some sort of objectivity possible – and we cannot but lack it.

Scholem’s answer, plainly and simply, is that the morally just judgment is the act of non-judgment, of refraining from judgment. The “pole” in question simply suspends our capacity for judgment. Not that this capacity as such should be forgotten, only that its application is not possible to evaluate these events with regard to the activities of “the Jews”. What Scholem constructs here of the “case of the Jews” is, to use Giorgio Agamben’s phrase, the “state of exception” (Agamben, 2005). Although Agamben talks about law and juridical norms, his logic appears to me likewise applicable to our case where these laws and norms are of moral nature. Thus, he claims,

“in the form [...] of the state of exception [...] the status necessitatis appears as an ambiguous and uncertain zone in which de facto proceedings, which are in themselves extra- or antijuridical, pass over into law, and juridical norms blur with mere fact – that is, a threshold where fact and law become undecidable. If it has been effectively said that in the state of exception fact is converted into law [...], the opposite is also true, that is, that an inverse movement also acts in the state of exception, by which law is suspended and obliterated in fact. The essential point, in any case, is that the threshold of undecidability is produced at which factum and ius fade into each other” (Ibid: 29 – emphases in the original).

There is one thing of importance here to note, however. As Agamben constantly reminds us, this “state of exception” is always a decision of and is always proclaimed
upon a state of affairs by someone(s). However natural a "state of exception" appears to be, then, the questions immediately arise: who is the sovereign in question that decides that the object of Arendt’s judgment is in fact exempt of the normal course of judgment and whose decision is it that Arendt arbitrarily overrules? In other words, Scholem’s non-judgment is a judgment of course, and our task here is to understand on what assumption and on what ground it is pronounced.

As can be observed in the utterance I quoted above from Scholem in Extract 4.5., it is not just the idea of “historical judgment” that acquires its first explicit invocation, but the first person plural pronoun as well. It is “we” (l. 36, 37) or “our generation” (l. 35) that cannot and do not “judge”. In Scholem’s commencing paragraph it was the “I” and the “You” that were used and both could be described as anaphoras in that they referred to “objects that have already been introduced into a discourse” (Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990: 9): the “dear Hannah” addressed in line 3, and the “Gershom Scholem” who signs the text in line 192. They were pinpointed as individuals. While their personal involvement in the matters under discussion was indeed highlighted, not much could be said about their subject positions with relation to any community “listening”, however. In short, we were acquainted with the “ratified audience” (Goffman, 1981), but not with what Chaim Perelman called the “universal” or “ideal audience” (Perelman, 1979; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971).

By a “universal audience” neither the potential over-hearers (such as the later readers of the exchange) nor Disengaged Reason Him/Herself should be understood here. Rather, it is the relevant community of subjects that is envisaged by the participants as their audience and, consequently, whose community they imagine themselves to be part of. Thus, the significance of this “ideal audience” is not simply that it literally overhears the debate but that by virtue of its contextual presence virtually defines it. For, as Perelman notes,

“A rhetorical philosophy takes note not only of the existence of differing conceptions of the universal audience but also of the fact that each reasonable person is a member of a plurality of particular audiences, to
whose theses he adheres with variable intensity. [...] It is always important to know with which of these particular audiences any concrete individual is going to identify himself in case of conflict" (Perelman, 1979: 49).

Who are “we” and why the use of this ambiguous term (and some other definitive noun) to designate this group? 

It has been noted many times that the first person plural pronoun is a major source of potential for creating ambiguity in public utterances (Billig, 1995: 87-93, 2003: 237-240; Bull and Fetzer, 2006; Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990: 177-78, 200; Wilson, 1990: 56). It is certainly not for ambiguity’s own stake but for various rhetorical functions: to forge “communalities”, “consubstantiality” (see Billig, 2003; Burke, 1969; de Fina, 1995; Perelman, 1979; Perelman and Olberchts-Tyteca, 1971; Reicher and Hopkins, 1996), or to invoke simultaneously a particular “we” along a universal one (Billig, 1995: 90-91), and the likes. Thus, our analysis cannot stop the moment we acknowledge this ambiguity. Rather, the question is what the rhetorical function of this ambiguity might accomplish. Lack of clear meaning is surely not to be taken as a logical problem. It might be a rhetorical virtue.

110 This interpretation of Perelman’s concept is admittedly particularist. For a more universalist exposition, see Golden (1986).

111 To understand Scholem’s position as well as his account for Arendt’s it is of vital importance to analyse his construction of this group. The plausible answer is, certainly and without hesitation that this is the group of the Jews. Every later commentator of the exchange made use of this assumption, but none of them ever acknowledged it as an assumption. It was considered a fact. My argument will not be in the followings that “we” does not stand for the Jews. Rather, I am arguing that for my purposes such a simple substitution is without any analytical merit and use. First, it does not tell us in what sense are the Jews understood here. Second, it does not account for but neglects the fact that Scholem himself does not make this substitution explicitly anywhere throughout his text, and constructs a highly undefined and ambiguous category as a subject position that seems to encompass him, possibly Arendt – and a bunch of other people. Even if we have a probable intuition that “our generation” somehow stands for that generation of Jews that experienced in one way or another Holocaust, it is of significance that Scholem does not make this inference, even though he could easily have. As he wrote before that point, “Your book moves between two poles: the Jews and their bearing in the days of the catastrophe, and the responsibility of Adolf Eichmann. I have devoted, as you know, a good part of my time to a consideration of the case of the Jews [...]” (emphasis mine). There is no indication given in either of these cases as to the connection between “you”, “we” (or even: “I”) and “the Jews”. The latter is even used with the definitive article. For whatever reason, Scholem does not connect these two concepts and this state of matters must analytically be treated of significance (see Drew, 2005; Schegloff, 1984).
In our case, the lack of clear referent might contribute to an atmosphere of familiarity and casualness. We do not have to specify that vague part. We, after all, know who we are talking about, don’t we? This vagueness might be taken to be an appropriation of the genre of a private letter to a friend, where it is apparently not required to make everything understandable to anyone, and conveys thereby familiarity and intimacy. It is this appropriation of “privacy” that enables Scholem to “make strong claim to know the addressee and be known by him” (Drew, 1984: 103); that is, to make a strong claim both about Arendt’s knowledge and familiarity with the group and her belonging to it.

Hence, it constructs a discursive situation where it is an implicit requirement directed towards Arendt to know what that category would mean, to be familiar with it, and to belong naturally to it. Not that such belonging seems to need any commitment or knowledge. Apparently, “our generation” neutrally and naturally designates a bunch of people (e.g. Jews) in their 50s or 60s with Scholem and Arendt undoubtedly amongst them.

Yet, having created this innocent discursive situation, Scholem formulates a predicate to this category – the predicate of the impossibility of “historical judgment” that Arendt would throughout be constructed to transgress! As the question has been posed earlier in this section, the crucial thing here and now is on what grounds this conviction of non-judgment is pronounced. What is the sovereign authority that declares the “state of exception”?

One possible answer already mentioned above (see page 109) is that non-judgment is an objective description of the condition of “us”. As I also noted previously, given the reference to a “generation” (l. 35) it seems fair to assume that the lack of “perspective” that disables “us” to judge is a temporal perspective or a temporal distance. There is then no apparent hint that the disabling condition would be a special relation between the object of judgment and the subject. Inasmuch as the condition that disables “us” to judge is implied to be “time”, the reason that underlines a no-judgment stance is a natural matter. Hence, the predicate of non-judgment is more of objective, natural, and categorical, than of contingent, subjective nature. Just as “our generation” (l. 35) seemed
to be a descriptive category with no conspicuous subjective or moral connotations, so does the judgment appear to be more a transgression of a natural order rather than a moral one, even if its consequence might then turn out to be moral as they indeed did. According to this seemingly plausible interpretation, Arendt is constructed to transgress nature, instead of any given community. “We” cannot fly and cannot judge. Should we try either, it might result in disastrous consequences but neither of them has any (necessarily) conspicuous moral bearing.

Consequently, whatever our intuition as to what this “we” might be, “our generation” appears here to acquire the connotation of “any reasonable people” rather than just a particular community (see Billig, 1995: 90-91). It sounds improbable that Scholem’s formulation would imply a “them” who do not lack the “perspective” and who can therefore form a “historic judgment”. Rather, the inference is of coming generations with more distance and with more retrospective wisdom in chasing objectivity.

That is, however, only one third of the story. Curiously, on the one hand, Scholem appears to qualify this state of matters as he makes relevant his own activity (“I believe” l. 34) and therefore the subjective nature of his conclusion. “I believe” is not a “presupposition-trigger” (Levinson 1983: 179-182), which is to say it does not necessitate the objective validity of its predicate (namely, the requirement of non-judgment). This is somewhat counter-intuitive if we take the disabling factor to be temporal “perspective”. Furthermore, on the other hand, this “qualified” conclusion is drawn from an extreme-case formulation, which once again suggests the suspension of any personal or subjective stance (Pomerantz, 1986) and confers the inevitability of objectivity: we cannot but lack it (l. 37-38). Thus, though “I believe” does not suggest necessity, the extreme-case formulation appears to do so.

Rhetorically, of course, there is nothing paradoxical in combining a subjective conviction with an objective precondition. Such a construction emphasises the categorical and universal reasonableness of that personal conviction. As Billig observes, there is a duality in such kinds of expressions that “imply that the stance is subjective but at the

112 To support this interpretation, let me point out that “every spectator” should not necessarily mean who were literally were there: just as Scholem was not there either.
same time they will be conveying that the reasons for the stance are universally valid and not merely subjective” (Billig, 2003: 238).

Seen this way, “I believe” does not mitigate the subsequent predicate just as the pronouns “we” (twice) in the following sentence do not imply a possible present “them” to whom the extreme-case formulation would not apply and who would therefore immediately be fully equipped to judge. Rather, the selection of the pronouns and the representative verb (“believe”, see Levinson [1983: 240] on this type of verbs) confer the “existential involvement” (Wilson, 1990: 76-79) of “our generation”.

It is therefore important to point out that Scholem not only cited instances of universal or natural import against a certain kind of act. He not only used an extreme-case formulation but by the constant use of various pronouns also transformed it to a human matter. The consequence of this was that his conclusion was not simply that one is not able to arrive at a “historical judgment” but that we should not aim at it either. In this sense, for all the descriptive characteristics of the category “our generation” and the natural disabling condition of lack of temporal “perspective”, refraining from judgment became a normative or moral matter as well.

Yet, there is surely still more involved here than this. No hermeneutical excellence is needed to realise that the “state of exception” and hence the impossibility of “historical judgment” cannot rely merely on the factor of temporal perspective. Namely, Scholem’s considerations are not universal or theoretical. Judgment here refers to a specific object. Should any other object be in question, he would hardly philosophise on the temporal perspective that is required to be lapsed in order to us be able to judge.

The object here was “the case of the Jews” (l. 17-18). That, however, still does not make clear why we could not judge them. In order to arrive at an answer, we have to revisit a paragraph already analysed in certain aspects:

Extract 4.6.

103 [...] Which of us can say today what decisions the elders
104 of the Jews – or whatever we choose to call them – ought to have
arrived at in the circumstances? I have not read less than you have about these matters, and I am still not certain; but your analysis does not give me confidence that your certainty is better founded than my uncertainty.

... [...]

I do not know whether they were right or wrong. Nor do I presume to judge. I was not there.

Here, similar to my first example, the category of “us” is constructed being unable to judge. Furthermore, making relevant the time of writing (“today” – l. 103) at the beginning of the utterance Scholem seems to formulate the plea for non-judgment yet again conditioned on the criterion of time (hence, inevitability and reasonableness). He thus leaves open whether coming generations of “tomorrow” might be more acquainted with the possibility of historical judgment and why anyone of “us” would now desire to do so.

The way he concludes the paragraph, however, suggests something more categorical as well as less “natural”. There, Scholem arrives at a striking and definite conclusion as far as the prerequisites of judgment are concerned: “Nor do I presume to judge. I was not there” (l. 113). The sovereign authority which proclaims the state of necessity and assumes exclusively the act of judgment, is, then those who “were there”.

Where? What is it that is categorically impossible to judge? What are, really, the “state of exception” and the object of Arendt’s judgment? As analysed in the previous section, although Scholem ostensibly touched upon the matter of the Jewish Councils, his formulation of the issue pointed well beyond them. As was analysed in the previous section, however, what is of prime importance here is that by invoking the “extreme circumstances” and immediately afterwards the “camps” Scholem did not simply create a uniform image of “the Jews”. It was this extremity, as context, that made “the Jews” – the object of the judgment – uniform.

In a later part of this section (cf. fn. 116), I will certainly try to account for this almost absurd requirement. What shall suffice for now is that Scholem thereby constructs the attitude of non-judgement as definitive and thereby normative of the group.
It is important to understand that here this state of extremity inevitably means or invokes the gas chambers and the dead. There is, quite simply, nothing more extreme than these two with regard to the Holocaust (and Scholem himself occasions the “camps” as well – l. 132). If the entire context is constructed to be of extreme nature, then the gas chambers bear their deadly mark on every single instance of this entire context. It is them that there is nothing beyond. Such a construction, then, conveys the implicit message that the event as such was not built up of more or less normal, more or less unnormal, and totally and extremely abnormal parts, but was and must be treated, on the contrary, extreme to the literal core. In this context the situation of the “elders” will be essentially the same (“extreme”) as that of any other Jew involved in the event. And the situation of “any other Jew involved in the event” will be essentially that of the dead. The moral status of the dead is thereby accorded to those who perished as well as to those who did not. To those who had some sort of institutional power as well as to those who did not have any at all. Thus formulated, the “extremity” not only infuses “the Jews” with a uniform identity but also with the moral authority of the dead. In retrospect, they all are “dead” and they were all “there” – even if they did not actually die.

As Scholem characterises these people, in the camps “human beings were systematically degraded; they were, as you say, compelled to participate in their own extermination, and to assist in the execution of fellow-prisoners” (l. 125-128). This formulation is by definition the characterisation of the status necessitatis, with reference to which the “state of exception” may be proclaimed. It is a situation where external factors that rule upon human subjects “compel” them to oblige to whatever ends: even to the event of their own destruction. What Scholem implicitly draws upon is that “our” normal capacities attuned to normality and everyday life must necessarily fall short of the possibility of arriving at a balanced judgment when facing a situation that is essentially and qualitatively different from mundane situations.

114 This is not an absurd (or immoral) notion at all. They, too, were meant to be dead.
115 This description is in line with other observations about the camps and the act of remembering the camps; not the least with that of Arendt in her The Origins of Totalitarianism. For problems of representation in the face of this experience of the camps, see Friedländer (1992), Lang (1988), Langer, 1991), Young (1988).
Certainly, this constructed uniform "extremity" of the context (along with its implicit invocation of the camps and the gas chambers) overhauls comprehensively the earlier appeal to the factor of time. Or, rather, it endows that "perspective" with moral qualities. Due to the essential qualitative difference of the situation, the object and the subject of judgment becomes co-terminous and the moral authority of judgment is thereby exclusively rendered to the "dead" (which, as noted, includes the Elders, regardless whether they were actually at the camps and actually died). Consequentially, it renders it a moral imperative for us to accept their authority and not to judge. Ever.116

As a clear and striking divergence from the preceding, then, this plea for non-judgment and the category "us" attached to it is solely grounded in the object of judgment and in the moral authority of those who "died", expressed in the idea of "being there". The amount of time lapsed between the event and our judgment simply does not matter at all. Thus, while in the earlier example there has been a balance between the descriptive and prescriptive, this later formulation approaches the act of judgment in this situation not as impossible or un-reasonable but immoral. Hence, the category of "we/us" as such becomes much less (if at all) of a descriptive than a prescriptive, moral kind, grounded nowhere else but in the relationship between "us" and those who "died". "Lack of perspective" would not be a temporal but an existential matter: it is our and not someone else's generation as we can never distance ourselves from them. Otherwise, we would cease to be "us", in the moral sense of the group.

To sum up, the authority that has thus been invoked to proclaim the "state of exception", to invalidate "historical judgment" and to delegitimate Arendt's choice of exercising "historical judgment" (or, alternatively, to account for her illegitimate choice) is the moral authority of the "dead" of the Shoah. Consequently, what has been undermined by Arendt's act of judgment is precisely this moral authority. Literally, of

116 Taken literally, this position places the Shoah outside the realm of history, as in this discipline "historical judgment" is mostly arrived at on the proviso that the writer was actually not at the scene when it happened. If, however, we do not take this assertion and requirement literally (see Edwards [2000] on the non-literal uses of ECFs), it still retains the firm element of non-judgment - with regard to them, and us - as an obligation. (If we take it to be literal, then all Scholem's previous notions about knowledge [or indeed all of Scholem's previous notions] would be redundant.)
course, it is not the "dead" that speaks here. In a moral sense, however, it showcases precisely the fundamental difference between Scholem and Arendt. Whereas the former either confers the sovereign moral authority to the "dead" or accepts their claim with regard to this – the latter rejects both.

There is, then, one ultimate question beyond the ultimate assumption. Why and on what grounds does Scholem confer (or accept) and does Arendt reject the moral authority of the "dead"? To answer this question entails the analysis Scholem's account for Arendt's moral failure in producing a manifestly immoral text.

4.5. Conclusion: Towards the Why

This chapter narrated a complex story but not, hopefully, one without direction. With all his subtle and often ambiguous rhetoric, I tried to decipher Scholem's text as establishing an ever-damaging textual criticism and the implicit (im)moral assumption this text was constructed to be based on.

At first, Scholem established the text as manifestly immoral in its central claims. This construction was accomplished through juxtaposing Arendt's version with an apparently consensual moral frame and with the only possible responsible and moral understanding of the events, which this and only this moral frame could produce. Thus, Arendt was constructed to turn this moral universe "upside-down" and implicate the victims in a position in the genocide that is usually, naturally and, surely, morally maintained for the Nazis. Furthermore, as analysed, this moral failure was enhanced by attributing to Arendt this judgment made about the Jews, that is, not simply about some sub-category of co-operators or even collaborators but about the category in toto. In Scholem's construction it was those who were killed (the Jews) who were charged in the book and such a state of matters certainly meant that Arendt did not simply exercise moral judgment but a palpably immoral one. In short, what was reconstructed was a thoroughly anti-Semitic text.
However consensual Scholem’s moral framework was presented to be, I nevertheless undertook to produce an account for it. That is, to scrutinise the basis of this framework and the basis that, consequently, Arendt has throughout been constructed to effectively transgress. This moral basis and assumption conferred the authority of moral judgment to that of the “dead” of the Holocaust. It thus proclaimed in their name the Holocaust a “state of exception”, where everyday moral judgments are not applicable. However, it had to be pointed out that Scholem’s authoritative version of the “two poles” derived its legitimacy from the authority of the “dead”, where this “dead”, curiously, was constructed to comprise of the actual dead as well as the actual not-dead. The actual “absolutely” powerless as well as the relatively powerful. They were the ones retaining the capacity of judgment, exclusively.

Arendt did judge, however, and the act of judgment was constructed to be connected with the content of this judgment itself. The failure at the former entailed the failure of the latter: it was the rejection of the moral authority of the “dead” that transgressed the moral order of the “two poles”. Yet, inasmuch as both of these factors – the choice and the outcome – appeared to be manifestly immoral, the question might inevitably arise in the reader: why? What is it that accounts for such choice and such outcome? Is it deliberate? Is it by chance? Or is it, perhaps, by some sort of necessity?

To be sure, this is not just a question that arises in the reader, out of inevitable curiosity. Echoes can be heard here of the foreshadowed “error and distortion” in that Scholem’s conclusion as to Arendt’s exercise of “historical judgment” (apart from “perversity” – l. 129) was “wholly false and tendentious” (l. 125) and having arised out of a “demagogic will-to-overstatement” (l. 102-103). “Wholly false” (cf. “error”) itself is enough to destroy rhetorically the epistemological or moral basis of the book and is in line with attributing a manifestly immoral judgment underlining Arendt’s text. “Tendentious”, however, implies arguably even more than this, in a way not unlike “distortion”. It implies, namely, that such a manifestly immoral claim cannot be appreciated as a merely innocent misreading of the events and it cannot be corrected by pointing out some of the factual inaccuracies undoubtedly involved in its construction. It is “willed”.

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Consequently, it is even more of the critique's task than to point to the whole book in its assumptions and in its outcome as a moral failure instead of some or even plenty of errors in it. Rather, it is a motivation, an intention, a tendency instrumental to its existence that must be addressed. By the same token, the exercise of the immoral, the act of "historical judgement" resulting in a manifestly immoral claim cannot be due to bad luck or even to the lack of circumspection. There must be a reason for it. As was foreshadowed in the beginning, Scholem directs our attention not only to a manifestly immoral book but also to the reason that could underlie its existence and likewise a reason underlying the moral choice of Scholem, that of the acceptance of the moral authority of the "dead".

In the next chapter it is these aspects of Scholem's letter that will be discussed.
5. Beyond a Boundary:  
The Genealogy of an Anti-Semitic Book

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyse Scholem’s construction of an account for the manifestly immoral act and content of Arendt’s historical judgment. What are, namely, the pre-conditions and enabling factors underlying the actual judgment as Scholem's project is more to produce a “diagnosis” than a “description” (for this distinction see Hester, 1998)? What do we learn about the dancer from the dance? And what do we learn if that dancer is Scholem? The unmasking of the source from which Arendt’s manifestly immoral choice and the subsequent book evolved must go hand in hand with an exposition of the nature of the morality to which Scholem allies himself.

5.2. From the Text to a Person

Indeed, we can learn about the dancer. The act and the responsibility for the act may eventually go hand in hand as moral questions may ultimately touch human beings and not simply their products (Walzer, 2000: 287-89), be they whole books or shorter utterances. Not that there would be a “non-discursive human core” existing somewhere beyond the bunch of utterances but that it is a human being that is capable of arguing, producing further utterances, and an be an active participant in discourse; in the terrain of morality (cf. Billig, 1991: Ch. 9, 1996: 238; Jayyusi, 1991).
The point, however, is that it is not simply moral theory but Gershom Scholem himself who differentiates between “dancers” and hence occasions the difference between the book, the utterance on the one hand and the person, the actor on the other. Thus, in the case of the “new youth of Israel” (I. 41), its orientation was used as an illuminating analogy to Arendt’s approach. It was the very locus of the origin of that utterance that accounted for it in a way that was dissimilar to that of Arendt. What was implied there was that the question of the “new youth” might hurt, their act of uttering this question might be aggressive (“the question thrown at us”), but they are a bunch of inexperienced people in terms of both their overall life experience and having not lived in the age of the “catastrophe”. These factors certainly influence and alleviate the evaluation of their otherwise serious and painful utterances. It is, then, one thing when the “new youth” says something and quite another when Hannah Arendt—who self-evidently must be assessed as well as should conduct herself according to different standards—does.∗

Even more importantly, as already noted (page 111), her book’s failings were constructed to contradict the view of the historian (“for more than forty years I have concerned myself with little else”—I. 22-23) and that of the everyman too (“I am well aware, in common with every other spectator of the events”—I. 19-20). The “events”, then, were constructed to be “complex” both at face value and after a lifelong scrutiny. As it was hinted by me this construction not only worked at legitimising the event-understood-this-way, however; it did not only strive to be far more convincing than Arendt’s later presented “version” and accomplish its ultimate non-objectivity. Rather, it too established that it is not only that no more persuasive alternative is available, but that no reasonable alternative as such is available at all. This way of presenting the issue did not even allow for the question of whether Arendt’s alternative “version” is more convincing, but focused implicitly on how she could arrive at a (radically) alternative “version” at all. Quite simply, the implied question was how Arendt could contradict

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117 It can be argued, and with justice, that such a state of matters will result in the collapse of the distinction I have been using here between the content and the origin of that content. Thus, attributing this content to the “new youth” arguably does not leave its (immoral) content intact while withdrawing moral responsibility from the speaker (i.e. the “youth”). This way of accounting bears its mark on the interpretation of the utterance as well. Yet, it is just what possibly happens in the case of any contextual information occasioned by the speaker (i.e. Scholem, here). This is, thus, not to argue against the content-genesis distinction as a heuristic analytical tool, even more so if it follows the practical reasoning of Scholem here, and that is what I will try to show.
someone who researched the subject for forty years; and, more poignantly, how she could possibly not see what "every other spectator" did. From this point on, the basic question suggested was not simply what Arendt's manifestly immoral text consists of but how we can explain that with regard to the origin, from which it evolved.

There was, hence, a "discursive void" constructed here with a lack of account for Arendt's approach and an implied thrust to fill this. In line with this, at other points in Scholem's text we have already encountered utterances that implied the ultimate reckoning being concerned with this accounting in terms of Arendt's motives. The notions of "distortion" (l. 11) as well as "wholly [...] tendentious" (l. 125) pointed towards the existence of a motive somewhere beyond the text and as such responsible for its moral failings. As I analysed it, Scholem appeared consistently to hint at some contingent factors as an explanation for the book's failings.

The notion, however, that there is something behind the text yet within the sphere of accountability for it is not confined to the implicit register of Scholem's text. It is put simply and explicitly in the following utterance:

Extract 5.1.

50 [...] How is it that your version of the 51 events so often seems to come between us and the events - events which 52 you rightly urge upon our attention? Insofar as I have an answer, it is 53 one which, precisely out of my deep respect for you, I dare not suppress; 54 and it is an answer that goes to the root of our disagreement. [...] 

This utterance moves beyond establishing a text in its content: it is its origin that is addressed. "How is it...?" indicates that the state of matters perceived in Arendt's book should not have happened, that it could have happened otherwise and that, having happened, it must be accounted for. Having established the scholarly as well as morally dubious nature of the book Scholem now explicitly signals a move to go beyond the text. This move concludes the process of the non-factual criticism foreshadowed in the
beginning. What he is now after are not problems with the surface or with the text and its underlying assumptions (however "perverse", "malicious" they may be), but with the "root" (l. 54). It is from this "root" that failures of the surface are presumably to be understood.\footnote{Let us note at the same time that accounting for his own position, Scholem once again seems to adopt the empiricist repertoire. His comments are not rooted in personal lust or any sort of bad will towards Arendt; to the contrary, they emerge from a "deep respect", suggesting not merely Scholem's neutrality but more a downright disinclination to address the matters as he does (Edwards, 1995, 2007). That his reluctance is eventually overcome must again be attributed to the sense of obligation. However, just as in the case of "fear", where his accounting for his own activity was coupled with the suggestion of firmly opposite motives from Arendt's side ("distortion"), here, too, the followings hint at a striking contrast manifest in Arendt's attitudes to that of Scholem's so as possibly to explain the "root of our disagreement".\footnote{See Cesurani (2004: 349), for instance, making this fallacy.}}

*Extract 5.2.*

\begin{verbatim}
54 [...] It is
55 that heartless, frequently almost sneering and malicious tone with which
56 these matters, touching the very quick of our life, are treated in your
57 book to which I take exception.
58 [...] 
\end{verbatim}

On the face of it, this sentence offers an explanation of their "disagreement" – which in fact is not a disagreement as Scholem constructed throughout Arendt's as a morally inferior, rather than but an epistemologically different position. He used the contingent repertoire and any reader could or would attribute the concepts enumerated here (heartless, sneering, malicious) to the person, rather than merely to the text as it is explicitly put there.\footnote{Let us note at the same time that accounting for his own position, Scholem once again seems to adopt the empiricist repertoire. His comments are not rooted in personal lust or any sort of bad will towards Arendt; to the contrary, they emerge from a "deep respect", suggesting not merely Scholem's neutrality but more a downright disinclination to address the matters as he does (Edwards, 1995, 2007). That his reluctance is eventually overcome must again be attributed to the sense of obligation. However, just as in the case of "fear", where his accounting for his own activity was coupled with the suggestion of firmly opposite motives from Arendt's side ("distortion"), here, too, the followings hint at a striking contrast manifest in Arendt's attitudes to that of Scholem's so as possibly to explain the "root of our disagreement".\footnote{See Cesurani (2004: 349), for instance, making this fallacy.}} A "malicious" and "heartless" motive appears to be behind a "malicious" book, in contrast to the attitudes of a respectful reader. Is this, however, only discursive hair-splitting to concentrate on what precisely is said? Would the only reason why Scholem explicitly ties "malice", "heartlessness", "sneering" to "tones" and not directly to Arendt be not to appear overtly offensive? Indeed, would his message be that simple that it is the existence of certain de-contextualised motives (as is put in a later instance: "demagogic will-to-overstatement" – l. 102-103) that are accountable? Could
they be the explanation themselves: malice for malice's sake?

The proper answer to these questions may be arrived at by having a closer look at the precise way "tones" are used by Scholem. Doing this, let us first note that he does not only enumerate undesirable "tones". The "tones" in themselves do not constitute the "root" of the problem, another condition is mentioned: the "matters, touching the very quick of our life" (l. 56). Thus, Scholem connects the tones to a "matter" and this "matter" immediately to a community, to "us". The tones therefore do not stand in themselves and, thus, they do not constitute the "root" of the problem. They are constructed to stand intertwined with the "matter" and "us", where it is arguably the three together and their mutual relationship that constitutes the moral issue. In this context, it might be reasonable to assume that heartlessness, sneering, and malice are not really the explanations in themselves. It is a relation to a community that makes them emerge. Looking at other instances in Scholem's text seems to warrant this interpretation. Let us observe three other occasions where Scholem uses the concept of the "matter":

"A discussion such as is attempted in your book would require – you will forgive my mode of expression – the most circumspect, the most exacting treatment possible – precisely because of the feelings aroused by this matter, the matter of the destruction of one-third of our people [...]" (l. 61-66).

"To the matter of which you speak it [i.e. the "flippant tone"] is unimaginably inappropriate" (l. 69-71).

"To speak of all this [matter], however, in so wholly inappropriate a tone [...] this is not the way to approach the scene of that tragedy" (l. 94-98 – all the emphases mine).

120 In fact, it was the case in point even in Scholem's rhetorical question, where Arendt's text was charged with alienating a community, "us", from the "events".
As we see, talking about or hinting at "tones" Scholem invariably raises the spectre of a "matter" and a "community". The "discussion" and the "tones" cannot help but being in a relationship with an event and with a community. This implies that the "matter" or "the scene of that tragedy", therefore, is not interpretable in any kind of way. A community already "sees" (i.e. "every spectator"), "feels" (i.e. the "feelings aroused by this matter"), "interprets" (i.e. "scene of that tragedy") it somehow. It "always-already" lends meaning to them and any further reflection or interpretation "must" orient itself to it and must be in a participating dialogue with it.121

There are good reasons, then, not to treat malice, heartlessness, and sneer as explanations in themselves. Neither are they de-contextualised mental or emotional entities residing somewhere in Hannah Arendt's bosom. Rather, they are characteristics of her interpretative orientation or "approach" (I. 97). As much as they are the problem, they constitute the "root" of the problem only insofar as they emerge from a (troubled) relationship between the speaker and a community, "us", with regard to the "matter". What they exhibited was that Arendt's approach ignored or even wilfully neglected a shared overall attitude and it is this neglect and its nature that constitutes both the moral and the epistemological problem. To put it simply, the problem is, therefore, not malice as such but an orientation to a community, of which malice is merely the outcome.

All of this does not necessarily contradict yet the possibility of an empiricist repertoire accounting for Scholem's stance and a contingent one for that of Arendt. Even though there is a community here with regard to which Arendt's (and Scholem's) approach is assessed, this community still might be of universal import. Accepting the moral authority of the "dead" and proclaiming subsequently the "state of exception" on the object of our judgment could (or even should) indeed evolve from a universal morality.

121 The obvious anachronism aside, there is a sense in which these notions of Scholem are not unlike to that of literary theorist Stanley Fish regarding "interpretative communities" as the ultimate and only authorities in questions of constructing meaning to any kind of stimulus from the world (Fish, 1980; cf. Rorty, 1999: 131-147). Cf. Scholem's essay Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism in this respect as well (Scholem, 1971: 282-303).
Yet, the following might support our intuition that the problem here actually is not with contingent repertoires as such, but with this sort of contingent repertoire that Arendt displays. Scholem, then, might not in the first place be the neutral observer of humanity, even if his conclusion and the perceived anti-Semitism of the book might coincide with an assessment made from a humanist position. This means that both Arendt’s and Scholem’s position may exhibit, as well as be determined by the sort of attachment they display to a particular community and morality. Hence, Arendt’s immoral and a distorted text does not originate in transgressing the rules of a Universally Valid Rationality but betrays the wrong sort of attachment (i.e. neglect? ignorance?) to this particular community and morality.

It is the exhibition of these “repertoires” that is my task here as they appear to form the ultimate account for the book’s deep moral failures, as well as Scholem’s morally just position: what is this community? What is this morality?

5.3. “Us” and “You”: The Unbearable Lightness of “Being”

5.3.1. The right sort of morality

The paragraph to be analysed here follows immediately Scholem’s exposure of the “heartless, frequently sneering, and malicious tones” (l. 55) in his previous utterance. As such, we might expect to be provided with an answer to Scholem’s question as to the “root of our disagreement” as well as to the problematic relationship between Arendt’s subject position and that of “us” with regard to the moral authority of the “dead”.

Extract 5.3.
58 In the Jewish tradition there is a concept, hard to define and yet concrete
59 enough, which we know as Ahabath Israel: “Love of the Jewish
60 people....” In you, dear Hannah, as in so many intellectuals who came
from the German Left, I find little trace of it. A discussion such as is attempted in your book would seem to me to require — you will forgive my mode of expression — the most old-fashioned, the most circumspect, the most exacting treatment possible — precisely because of the feelings aroused by this matter, this matter of the destruction of one-third of our people — and I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people, and in no other way. [...]

There is no possible “deeper” account than referring to the origin of a text. At this instance, Scholem is no longer concerned with presenting or scrutinising the “versions”; either his or Arendt’s. Here, he is solely concerned with the locus where they come from and what is to account for their “disagreement”: one version with and another partly or even wholly without Ahabath Israel. It is this notion and what it stands for that will account for the subject position of Arendt and Scholem. It is the ultimate authority that stands behind the moral or immoral choices and assessments made by them.

My first task here will be to analyse the authority that Ahabath Israel stands for, turning then to Arendt’s relationship to this authority.

The central phrase — “Ahabath Israel: love of the Jewish people”, which “we know” and which there is “little trace” in Arendt of — is extremely vague and Scholem does not at all expound it further. What it does imply, nevertheless, is the existence of a homogenous community and some sort of orientation that is required towards it. One would be inclined to say that it is an “emotion”. It is important to note, however, that Ahabath Israel is preceded by its categorisation and Scholem does not refer there to an “emotion” or appeal to Arendt’s subjective feelings; on the contrary, Ahabath Israel is a “concept” that “we know”.

Yet, his formulation does not imply either that the only thing required would have been Arendt looking up this “concept” in the Encyclopaedia Judaica122 and acquainting herself with it so as to produce a factually and morally acceptable book. This “concept” is

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122 Where, in fact, one finds “little trace of it” as well. See Encyclopaedia Judaica (2006).
“hard to define”, where the problematic nature of possible definition indicates that it cannot be captured by mere cognition. Mere “knowledge” and pure “definition”, hence, are neither required nor in fact perhaps possible.

What is it, however, that is neither an emotion but nor mere knowledge? What is it that is “known” but cannot (easily) be defined? How do we “know” it if we cannot quite tell what it is?

Such a formulation appears to present an entity that is not of semantic but of practical knowledge: a way of life, a practice instead of pure theory, disembodied reflection, or “Reason”.123 It is, then, this way of life or practice, which is the nature of the morality of the position from which Scholem speaks. However, it is such (and, perhaps, the only such) an authority that permits one to arrive at what would otherwise be considered reflective or intellectual qualities: “the most circumspect [sachlichen], the most exacting [gründlichen] treatment possible” (I. 63-64). As such, it exposes the contingent repertoire needed in order to arrive at the right choices, both factually and morally. Instead of acquiring the Encyclopaedia, it is the adoption of a way of life Ahabath Israel stands for that is the road towards a morally just and factually authentic book.

Yet, to conclude that the authority that informs Scholem’s choices and verdicts is a way of life is at best one-third of the story. What is still required is, on the one hand, an understanding of what sort of way of life, what sort of authority it is and, on the other, what Arendt’s subject position is with regard to this way of life.

In analysing the nature of this authority, it is of importance that as the origin of this “concept” Scholem introduces the “Jewish tradition” or, in the German version, “Jüdische Sprache”. Interestingly, he thereby not only points to the objectification of an interpretive practice but also neutralises and “modernises” this practice. That is, he does not expose its arguably foremost character, namely, that it had been a religious practice throughout the centuries. “Jewish tradition” does not expose this state of matters (“Jüdische Sprache” even less so) and Scholem so brings this interpretative practice to

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123 Cf. Scholem’s description of the interest that preoccupied him in his youth and presumably afterwards: “Was Judaism still alive as a heritage or an experience, even as something constantly evolving, or did it exist only as an object of cognition?” (Scholem, 2003: 165)
the position of authority without indicating or confronting its *prima facie* non-secular nature. What it indicates, however, might not be mere rhetorical trickery in order to erase those possible and otherwise existing distinctions but an ideology that simply does not acknowledge this existence. In this reading, it either discards the secular-religious dichotomy altogether or, in any case, subscribes to an apparently unproblematic continuity between the two.\textsuperscript{124}

Nevertheless, let us analyse how Scholem introduces this authority, this way of life through *Ahabath Israel*. This he does beginning with the Hebrew version, indicating not only the "foreignness" and the originality of the concept, but along with this also that a translation is a necessarily pale substitute. Were the concept completely commensurable with an English term, Scholem would hardly need the original in the first place. His using the Hebrew term, thus, suggests rhetorically a gap between *Ahabath Israel* and "love of the Jewish people"; one loses something removing *Ahabath Israel* from the context or culture (i.e. the "Jewish tradition") it naturally features in. That is, it is something impossible to be perceived if one does not live this certain way of life (German?, English?, Kantian?, liberal? etc). *Ahabath Israel* is, thus, a concept that is difficult to capture. First, because it resists definition and "yet [is] concrete enough" in general. Second, because one cannot even properly translate it into another language.

The authority, then, that is conferred to the coming expression of "love of the Jewish people" derives from a source that is ancient, yet without any qualitative difference that would disable its use in modernity. It is distinctive and singular, yet it is

\textsuperscript{124} It can be claimed that even by raising the possibility of the secular-religious divide; I am bringing something into the evaluation of Scholem's text that is simply unwarranted from the text's point of view. That is, that I am using a concept of my repertoire and not one from that of Scholem. To counter this claim, I would like to point out, that, for one thing, the secular-religious distinction is one which cannot but inform a Western discussion which Scholem here (if reluctantly) takes part in. For another, however, he himself makes use of this distinction as well at an earlier point. Cf. "I am well aware that there are aspects of Jewish history (and for more than forty years I have concerned myself with little else) which are beyond our comprehension; on the one hand, a devotion to the things of this world that is near-demonic; on the other, a fundamental uncertainty of orientation in this world – an uncertainty which must be contrasted with that certainty of the believer concerning which, alas, your book has so little to report" (l. 19-27 – emphases mine).
this singularity that deprives one from properly translating it to understand its authority.125

It is all the more intriguing, then, that Scholem already “half-(mis)translates” this concept when introducing it in Hebrew. For all the showing its implicit foreignness, its originality, any Western reader could make sense of at least one-half of it. Namely, it displays the concept Israel, something that is readily available in the reader’s vocabulary. It refers to a state, founded in 1948. Certainly, this Israel here does not and cannot refer (exclusively) to the state. Even less so that it is implied to be something foreign, unintelligible in a Western vocabulary. Yet, it is there and it does refer. The element of something familiar, something ready at hand is therefore introduced. In line with his apparent rhetoric, Scholem could have used Yisrael instead of Israel to foreclose or at least mitigate any possible hint to the state of Israel. He did not do it, blurring hence quite conspicuously the distinction not only between a spiritual and a secular-national collective, but also between the state, the Jewish people, and the traditional concept of (Y)Israel by a mistranslation of a Hebrew/English/German word to English/German! Or, again, not merely “blurring” existing lines, but theoretically discarding the possible separation of those collectives altogether.126

125 Enhanced by the sheer fact that, for the reader of the Encounter magazine, Ahabath Israel as such is an alien word. What operates in the mind of the reader is, therefore, its non-cognitive, “form of life” qualities leading the “attention” thus to the non-theoretical, practical side of life. As Middleton and Brown write analysing a somewhat similar instance where a foreign word was introduced in an English account, the out-of-place utterance accomplishes a “visceral force” and “[...] utterances like Kyouskeh have an affective force that compels recipients to engage with some aspect of the past that is instantaneously made actual in the present” (Middleton and Brown, 2005: 135).

126 Cf. Israeli historian Tom Segev quoting and commenting former Education Minister Ben·Zion Dinur: “The goal of the Nazis, Dinur said, was ‘to obliterate the name of Israel.’ Dinur’s use of the term Israel to indicate the Jewish people was intentional; it not only reflected the common tendency to fall into a traditional, literary style whenever the Holocaust was the subject but reinforced the thesis that the murder of the Jews was a crime against the State of Israel” (Segev, 2000: 434 – emphasis in the original). Meanwhile, in Aviezer Ravitzky’s treatise on Jewish religious radicalism, the theological aspect of the Hebrew concept of Israel: “Although not drawn directly from ancient sources, so that one might believe it to be free of historical and eschatological hopes, it [i.e. the State of Israel or Medinat Yisrael] too is encumbered by the freight of the past and the accompanying tensions between part and whole, the political and the theological. Indeed, this particular example [...] hovers between the sacred and the profane. [...] ‘The State of the Jews thus refers to concrete people in concrete distress, to their individual and collective lot and to the question of their concrete political freedom. ‘Israel,’ on the other hand, is a term laden with metahistorical, theological associations’” (Ravitzky, 1996: 4 – emphases in the original). On further aspects of Jewish religion and secular politics, see Hazony (2000), Kimmerling (2001), Leibowitz (1992). On the relationship between Jewish history and Jewish historiography see Yerushalmi (1982).
Similarly, though the authority of Ahabath Israel is presented not only as applicable but also as alien, something next to impossible to be captured, defined, or even understood fully, it is exactly this context of ambiguity that enables Scholem to translate it. That is, to define it, capture, and make it understood — while treating at the same time any possible translation as such imperfect by necessity. Its translation and definition comes on condition of its untranslatability and undefinability. It is on the condition of being “different” that Scholem is entitled to translate the concept. Yet, doing so, he creates a context where one can always recur to this substantively “different” original, stating its different originality. The act of translation, then, is parasitic on its untranslatability and this very condition enables the agent to resort to the untranslatable original, whenever this is required. Be that as it may, however, let us now see eventually the “unequal-equivalent” Scholem constructs to his original Ahabath Israel.\textsuperscript{127}

Strangely enough, one of the prime proponents of twentieth century Hebrew scholarship uses — strictly speaking — a mistranslation. What would equal the “Jewish people” or “Juden” semantically is the Hebrew (am) Jehudim; the standard translation of the word Israel or Yisrael is “Israel”. His (mis)translation — “the Jewish people” — can be understood to highlight selectively only one feature of this traditional collective ([Y]Israel). What is largely left out of or, in any case, downplayed in the expression “the Jewish people” is religious or spiritual connotations of the traditional term of (Y)Israel. Whereas the translation “Israel” would clearly indicate spiritual connotations, the “Jewish people” is readily understandable according to secular and political categories. What is highlighted, thus, is an aspect, which differs significantly from the traditional concept: the latter containing spiritual connotations that cannot be overlooked and that the secular-political concept of people or nation does not appear to have. Though Scholem was at pains to indicate the originality, incommensurability, and authenticity of this authority, in translation he readily “assimilates” it to an arguably secular-political context. Its authenticity, then, does not compromise its smooth applicability as an authority in the present context. “The Jewish people” (as opposed to “Israel” in English [and on the

\textsuperscript{127} I have deliberately used the word “constructs” instead of “finds”, to suggest that the act of translation is by no means automatic, and it is no one but Scholem who chooses a particular version. In short, this is a rhetorical act disguised as translation (cf. Niranjana, 1992: 47-87; Simon, 1996: 134-168)
condition it does not denote the state!\textsuperscript{128}) makes perfect sense as a secular concept and inasmuch as it is still read as a component of a religious concept, yet again, its use erases any possible discontinuity between the sacred and the secular.\textsuperscript{129}

Scholem, thus, hides but presents a traditional-spiritual and a secular-national concept of Israel\textsuperscript{130} the Jewish people. Given the context and the language of the debate, though it is the former use that infuses his rhetoric with authority, it is the latter that he is inevitably working with on the conscious and cognitive level of meaning. Thus, Scholem does not confront and does not clarify whether or where the people in a secular-political sense and people in the traditional-religious sense might possibly merge or in fact part company. Rather, it is the unproblematic continuity, the essential unity of these two realms that is constructed along with the similarly implicit assumption that there is no essential problem in translating a “religious past” to a “secular present” and evaluating this present with the means of that past.

To sum up, then, accounting for the authority that informs his moral stance as well as accounting for the failure of Arendt’s text, Scholem rhetorically accomplishes a move from the realm of the “ancient”, the origin, the sacred and the spiritual to the realm of the actual debate, to that of the apparently secular and political while retaining the authority of that original and sacred. This move is not made explicit and is accordingly not problematised either: the distinctive line between these two realms is either not exposed or not existing at all. Scholem’s construction of Ahabath Israel, then, implicitly builds continuity or even unity between the sacred and the secular, while retaining the authority of the ancient and the original.

\textsuperscript{128} See next footnote.
\textsuperscript{129} It might be argued that it is for obvious reasons that Scholem refrains from translating Israel as Israel. For, in the English, it would clearly suggest something, which Scholem apparently does not want to draw upon. Namely, the state of Israel, the political nation that came to formal existence in 1948. A “traditional concept”, as Ahabath Israel is, originates by definition much earlier than the birth of the state and denotes an altogether different collective. Consequently, as the argument would go, it is to evade a possible inference that Scholem recurs to the “Jewish people” instead of “Israel”. Yet, first, it is that rhetorically the act of mistranslation in this exchange accomplishes a shift or an overlap in any case from a spiritual community to a secular-national one. And second, that, as I have already pointed out in the main body of my text, contrary (?) to the appearance, Israel as such does feature in Scholem’s formulation: not in the English/German translation, but already in the original, Hebrew term.
\textsuperscript{130} By the same token, he withdraws and exposes (the state of and the spiritual-national community of) Israel at the same time.
_Ahabath Israel_ signified some sort of "Jewish" way of life and morality yet it was all but impossible to be sure, in what sense precisely it was a Jewish way of life. But that might precisely be the point. It was not a call for an orthodox or any other sort of "religious" Jewish way of life. _Ahabath Israel_ was not constructed to be a concept that would allow for the secular-religious division and as such created a uniform "we" (presumably the "Jews" that "know" it) in quite an inclusive fashion.

The question, now, is where this leaves Hannah Arendt. Where is her place and where should that be with regard to this way of life and to "us", the Jews? Furthermore, why _should_ it leave her anywhere, anyway? Why is it important at all to position her anywhere _vis à vis_ this "we"?

It is these questions, which I will try to provide an answer to in the remainder of this chapter.

5.3.2. The eternal procedure: un- and re-making a Jew

5.3.2.1. A description that is not really one

One of the reasons this utterance can be considered pivotal is that here, for the first time Scholem not only makes a direct attribution to Arendt's subject position ("in you, dear Hannah") but opposes Arendt _in a way_ explicitly to that of the relevant community and the morality to which it subscribes. However, as the questions at the end of the previous section pointed out, it is far from clear in what way and to what extent Arendt is opposed to the relevant community through her displaying "little trace of" _Ahabath Israel_. Is this just a mitigated expression for "no trace at all", hence the complete exclusion from "we", the Jews? Is, then, _Ahabath Israel_ the definitive category, the _sine qua non_ of "we"? Alternatively, is Arendt still one of "us" even if she completely lacks in _Ahabath Israel_? As noted, neither the _Encyclopaedia Judaica_ nor the Sulchan _Aruch_ is of help here. What _is_ of help, perhaps, is to have a look at further aspects of this utterance.
Extract 5.4.

A discussion such as is attempted in your book would seem to me to require - you will forgive my mode of expression – the most old-fashioned, the most circumspect, the most exacting treatment possible – precisely because of the feelings aroused by this matter, this matter of the destruction of one-third of our people – and I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people, and in no other way.¹³¹ [...]

This is a curious utterance. In what immediately preceded this utterance it appeared that Arendt was constructed to be simply not amongst “us” that “know” Ahabath Israel and that by consequence lead that morally just way of life, or, in any case, distanced from this group. In this second part of the paragraph, however, there is nothing at face value that would raise any such kind of problem. Nothing seems to overtly indicate an exclusive-we with regard to the position of Arendt. She is simply of “our people”, as asserted on two occasions (l. 65-66 and l. 66).

Yet, what would in this case be the function and the sense of that latter clause: “I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people” (l. 66)? In Gricean terms it would be a “flouting”, a conspicuous transgression of the maxims of conversation (Levinson, 1983: 109-113), namely, that of the maxim of relevance and quantity (Grice, 1991). Having “shown” that Arendt was a member of “us”, Scholem simply seems to repeat this state of matters as his “claim”. The sole difference between the first, matter-of-fact assertion (l.

¹³¹ Scholem’s expression “daughter of our people” seems to be of obvious significance. There is no trace at all, however, of the family-gender metaphor in the original German text of his letter: “[...] ich betrachte Sie durchaus als Angehörige dieses Volkes und als nichts anderes” (Scholem, 1994: 97; cf. in Krummacher: 208). As I was not able to get hold of Scholem’s proofreading for the English publication in Encounter, I will not pay attention to the connotations of the metaphor. (For the document of Arendt’s proofreading. See The Hannah Arendt Papers At the Library of Congress; Series: Adolf Eichmann File, 1938-1968; Correspondence, Scholem, Gershom: 1963-64. The relevant correspondence is available on the internet: http://memory.loc.gov/coll/bin/ampage?collId=mharendt_pub&fileName=03/030170/030170page.db&recNum=32&itemLink=%2Fammem%2Farendt/html%2FmharendtFolderP03.htm &linkText=7

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65-66) and the concluding formulation (l. 66-67) appears to be that the latter points out the speaker's commitment to the former fact.

However, if the former is unproblematic and taken-for-granted (as presented here), why should Scholem stress his own commitment to this? Is this just another instance of enhanced "existential involvement" through a selection of pronouns (Wilson, 1990: 76)? If so, why exactly there? In short, what is the relevance, here and now, of that concluding utterance? Due to all these considerations, the interpretation of this utterance requires an investigation as to the illocutionary (i.e. rhetorical) function it accomplishes:

"While propositions describe [...] states of affairs and may thus be plausibly characterized in terms of the conditions under which they would be true, illocutionary forces indicate how these descriptions are to be taken or what the addressee is meant to do with a particular proposition that is expressed e.g. for an assertion the addressee may be meant to believe the proposition expressed" (Levinson, 1983: 246 – emphasis in the original).132

That "sole" difference of "I regard" (i.e. indicating Scholem's subject position and involvement) is in fact a crucial difference between the two utterances as the latter makes the personal perspective of the speaker relevant in producing the statement.133 This focus on the actor as the origin of an utterance implies that this matter-of-fact might not be a matter-of-fact from the point of view of different subjects (Riggins, 1997). Hence, it does not so much describe the world than it contrasts implicitly a description having been provided here with that of others; namely, perhaps with that of the ratified hearer (Arendt), or with those "overhearing it (the readers) or with that of the "ideal audience" (or even with a possible assumption about that of Scholem as well). As such, in the form

132 It is important to note that I am not saying that it is just a special class of utterances, which have illocutionary or rhetorical force. What I am saying is that although in theory this force is ubiquitous, this in itself does not warrant that we should practically treat every utterance along these lines. The "I regard" utterance, on the other hand, due to its formulation reflexively highlights its rhetorical orientation.

133 To repeat, the two utterances in question are: "the destruction of one-third of our people" (l. 65-66) and "I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people" (l. 66-67)
of a "representative" (Levinson 1983: 240) it is fashioned to elicit agreement: as the speaker displays his own commitment to the validity of the subsequent assertion, so is the hearer (any hearer including Arendt) expected to do. Arendt, then, is a matter-of-fact-Jew, contrary to what others (Arendt, overhearers, ideal audience, presumed "Scholem") might believe.

However, there is still considerably more to be said here. Even if the relevant part in Scholem's concluding utterance is the "I regard you..." part as a personal commitment and we take the two uses of "our people" (l. 65-66 and line 66) simply and purely as descriptive ones, the paragraph (i.e. Extract 5.3.) as a whole is still ambiguous.

It must be reiterated that the previous use of the first person plural pronoun in this paragraph ("which we know as Ahabath Israel" – l. 59) appeared rather to exclude or distance at least Arendt from "us", as it was one that "knows" Ahabath Israel whereas Arendt was found lacking in it. If we take the both present uses of "our people" (l. 65-66 and l. 66) inclusive then it indicates an interesting paradox. It would either entail that the first use of the first person plural pronoun excludes Arendt and the second use includes her or that one can indeed lead a morally just, Jewish way of life even with "little traces" (complete lack perhaps) of Ahabath Israel.

Yet, having a closer look at the apparently descriptive and inclusive uses of "our generation" (l. 65-66 and 66) might require some revision of what I have just concluded. Namely, there is reason to suppose that these uses of "our people" might not be entirely descriptive and inclusive. As such, it might be supposed that a measure of ambiguity has already been introduced into this apparently innocent part of the paragraph. That is to say, the ambiguity may not simply reside within different uses of the first person plural pronoun, but within single uses, such as those ones at line 65-66 and 66.

Arendt is here yet again described to perform disregard or neglect of the predicates of this matter-of-fact-Jewishness. It is not just that her way of writing is implied to be "non-circumspect" and "non-exacting" but that it disregarded the "feelings aroused by this matter [...] of the destruction of one-third of our people" (l. 65-66). Coupled with the description of "our people" this construction not only suggests, again, that Arendt flew in the face of the community but that she, in a way, even disregarded her
own feelings which are established as a consequence of her matter-of-fact, descriptive belonging. In sum, even though the first use of “our people” (l. 65-66) here seemed to formulate Arendt’s inclusion and her embracing of that people as something beyond question, we have to conclude that a measure of ambiguity has indeed already been introduced and concerns her performance with respect to her belonging to her identity. It is, then, not only with respect to the whole paragraph that ambiguity can be perceived. It too holds for this “micro”-context just surrounding “the matter of the destruction of one-third of our people”.

Putting the “I regard you...” utterance in this context provides us with a different reading, the utterance reflecting upon this already ambiguous situation where, at the very least, Arendt is a Jew but does definitely not act accordingly. In short, this utterance reflects upon a normative dimension where reference is made to activities, which should be bound to a certain category. Thus, what Scholem does when asserting that he regards Arendt a “daughter of our people” suggests not only, or not in the first place, that she might not regard herself as such and she should, but that being a Jew puts one in the requirement of a Jewish way of life. What is therefore made relevant here by the apparent repetition is the gap between social identity as a fact and social identity as a performance. In the former sense, there is no possible evidence that could disprove Arendt’s Jewishness. Whatever she does wherever, she remains a Jew. No Ahabath Israel, no connection with the tradition, no way-of-life is required. In the latter sense, however, that is, if identity is seen as a performance or as a moral category, Arendt’s activities are not parasitic on belonging to a community but constitutive of it. Transgressing those activities (i.e. implicating “the Jews”, abandoning the “one-third”, lacking in Ahabath Israel) might mean the effective rejection of the whole of “our people”-in-the-moral sense.

Of course, the point is, most emphatically, that there are no two Arendts here reconstructed by Scholem: one that is a Jew and one that does not act accordingly. Scholem does not use the descriptive-“us” in its pure form: hence the ambiguity of the very category (“us”) and of the interpretation of the “I regard you” utterance. “I regard you...” is not an affirmation of a fact, a simple description but the construction of a “fact”-that-always-already-prescribes. The descriptive and the prescriptive senses, thus,
go hand in hand and it is their tension that creates the basis of Scholem’s rhetoric with regard to Arendt’s subject position. Scholem’s central suggestion – *being a Jew one has to leave a Jewish life* – entails that there is no pure descriptive sense in the use of “us”. There is no matter-of-fact belonging to a category, as this matter-of-”fact” always-already requires and prescribes a way of life.

But if this being-Jewish even in the descriptive sense always-already entails or obliges one to act according to a certain morality and if even the descriptive use turns out to be in effect a prescriptive one: why does not Scholem simply discard the “descriptive” aspect of the category altogether? Why is it important to maintain ambiguity and tension? Why does he say, for all that “I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people” and does not conclude instead that he indeed does not? Why is it important and what does it therefore mean that while Scholem is at pains to suggest to the reader that Arendt is not with *us-in-the-moral sense* and that the matter-of-”fact”-us is always-already an *us-in-the-moral sense*, she is still stressed to belong to “our people”. Why do we need a “fact” if its predicates are presented to contradict the very “fact” itself? That is, why do we need a “fact” if it is always-already a moral obligation (hence, it is actually not a fact) and where this moral obligation has already and constantly been presented to be transgressed? Why is ambiguity and tension needed there?

One possible answer is that because it is the demonstration of the very concept of *Ahabath Israel* and the “knowledge” of it. That even though Arendt does her best not to be regarded as one of the Jewish people, Scholem, harbouring *Ahabath Israel*, still does not sever her from this community.\(^{134}\) Such an answer might be persuasive, yet it leaves one puzzled as it still provides no answer as to the place of this “regard” in the ideology Scholem constructs. The ultimate question, therefore, is not whether “I regard you...” demonstrates such an ideology or not, but what this utterance’s place is in constructing that very ideology in accounting for Arendt’s moral failure in *Eichmann in Jerusalem.*

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\(^{134}\) To support this interpretation, let me point out that in the German version “Love of the Jewish people” and “dear Hannah” sound “Liebe zu den Juden” and “Liebe Hannah”, the alliteration implying that in his orientation towards Arendt Scholem in fact demonstrates the morality he found Arendt wanting (see Scholem, 1994: 97 and in Krummacher, 1964: 208).
To reiterate my second question that precipitated this subsection (see page 145): why should Arendt be positioned *vis a vis* this community at all?

5.3.2.2. A prescription that is not really one

In pursuing an answer to this question, it is worthwhile to analyse yet another part of this paragraph, which in its implication might appear to contradict my thesis of constant ambiguity and tension. Let us notice that Arendt does not in herself stand in some sort of opposition to the (prescriptive) “*us*”-in-the-moral sense in her (partial or total) lack in *Ahabath Israel*, but as a member of the “German Left” (1. 61). It is perhaps indicative that Scholem, for instance, did not say *German-Jewish Left*. Especially so that even if “German-Jewish Left” had been used, there would have only been a “descriptive”, superficial similarity with “*us*”-in-the-moral sense. Even the expression “German-Jewish Left” would have certainly gone along with associations of atheism, secularism, and the subsequent ignorance or downright contempt towards elements or the totality of the Jewish tradition. Yet, Scholem does not even allow for this. Why is this? For a start, certainly, it might indicate the *total* incompatibility between Arendt’s German leftist stance and “*us*”-in-the-moral sense. The prescriptive, then, might simply erase the descriptive. The “German Left” is simply not with “*us*”, regardless of which sense we mean “*us*”. This being so, however, does it not contradict my thesis of tension and ambiguity? Does it not contradict my interpretation of “I regard you...”? Does it not indicate that those on the German Left and Arendt amongst them, simply ceased to be *Jews* in any sense?

I do not think so, as the implication that the “German Left” is markedly not with “*us*”-in-the-moral sense appears to come on the condition *and only on the condition that*, indeed, *it is with “*us*” in the descriptive yet always-already prescriptive sense*. That it is, really, the German-Jewish Left (“Jewish” here as an indication of the “fact”, the origin of the group’s members) and not the German Left in general about which Scholem is
talking. Such a contention is true if (and only if) we agree that he would presumably not ask Gentiles to “know” Ahabath Israel.\footnote{Cf. fn. 137.}

This is in line with Scholem’s text, where Gentiles, apparently are not upbraided for the lack in Ahabath Israel and rightly so. There certainly are other sources of morality for writing on the Holocaust in a morally just way. That is, while it is not entirely clear why such a Jewish morality would necessarily lead to the moral assumptions (i.e. the moral authority of the dead and hence the adherence to “two poles”), underlying Scholem’s critique of Arendt’s text, it is indeed entirely clear that there are other sorts of moralities that are perfectly capable of honouring those basic moral standards.

But if this is so, why could Arendt not choose one of these other sources in Scholem’s logic? Why could she not choose Catholicism, Kant, liberalism or anything else? Why must Scholem’s account be in terms of a morality to which Arendt and the German(-Jewish) left do not subscribe? Why not in terms of something different if, that “something different” can possibly be just as morally righteous. These questions are troubling enough if we want to understand Scholem’s text. And this text, I believe, provides us with only one possible answer.

Because she is a matter-of-“fact”-Jew. Because Scholem, as a bearer of Ahabath Israel, “regards” her as one of “our people”: “I regard you” is not any more a simple hug demonstrating the benevolent and inclusive way of life of Ahabath Israel (towards Jews, that is) but the utterance that creates the very problem and the tension. In the absence of this descriptive-that-always-already-prescribes Jewishness, it would hardly be necessary or even possible to use the prescriptive one. For if Scholem’s claim of Ahabath Israel is not of universal validity\footnote{Cf. fn. 137.}, it is not just that the descriptive use of the category (that always-already entails the prescriptive one) turns in this respect to be a prescriptive, but that the prescriptive requirement itself comes on the condition and only on the condition of this “descriptive”. There is, then, not only no pure descriptive sense of being Jewish but neither is there a pure prescriptive sense. It is always-already-dependent on the

\footnote{Cf. fn. 137.}
Being Jewish one has to lead a Jewish way of life, then, does not in this text entail in order to be Jewish, but given that one is Jewish.

But if once a Jew always a Jew, then it might imply something that is actually explicated in the hitherto unaddressed last and quite enigmatic phrase in the paragraph. Scholem, that is, does not simply say, "I regard you as a daughter of our people" but that "I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people", adding immediately: "and in no other way" (l. 66-67; – emphasis mine). What would that "wholly" as well as "and in no other way" mean?

What they do mean cannot be but that it is Arendt's being Jewish that is the always-available-relevant aspect of her identity for Scholem. Hence, it is not only that she is a Jew (in the descriptive-prescribing sense), not only that she is always a Jew but that she is nothing but a Jew. It is the all-embracing, all-relevant aspect of her identity and as soon as it becomes relevant, any other aspect is reduced to this.

The moment "I regard you..." is uttered, then, it does not just give here birth to the tension between the "descriptive" that is always-already prescriptive and the "prescriptive" that always-already depends on the descriptive. It is not only the creation of a tension and a problem but also the creation here of an eternal and an exclusive problem, an eternal and exclusive tension. It implies what "and in no other way" explicates: once this "descriptive" (i.e. the descriptive-always-already-prescribing) is kicked off, then even the absence of the "prescriptive" is accounted ultimately for in terms and only in terms of this "descriptive".

That one never ceases to be a Jew, that there is no way out, and that there are no alternative ways. This, consequently, means that it will not only be the matter of case that a Jew is always available for an account in Jewish terms but that it is those terms exclusively that he or she is accountable to, whenever those terms might possibly be deemed to be relevant.

The picture is hopefully clearer now. One nagging question, however, remains that I have not addressed yet. Namely, if there are alternative sources of just moralities
that are, in theory, perfectly capable of producing a morally just account of the Holocaust, what is it, then, that warrants the applicability of the very morality in this question.\footnote{This is the assumption on which the rest of the analysis is entirely based. That is, that Scholem does not\textit{a priori} exclude alternative cultures from giving a morally just evaluation of the Holocaust. While I do not think that such an argument would be in contradiction to what Scholem actually writes, there is no evidence either that he would occasion this argument here and now in his text.} Why must Arendt’s possible embracing of Catholicism, Hinduism, Kant, liberalism etc. be accounted for in\textit{ no other way} but Jewish?\footnote{Which is not to say that there is a necessary incompatibility between any of these plus the \textit{et ceteras} on one hand, and the practical knowledge, the way of life represented by \textit{Ahabath Israel}. It is only to say that the latter and only the latter will always be the standard and not, say, the worth of those religions, ethics, philosophies, or ideologies in themselves.} Why must the descriptive and prescriptive aspects of Jewishness (i.e. being and way of life) be all but intertwined in both ways? Why must the former exclusively entail the latter? And why must even the lack of the latter be accounted for in terms of the former? Why does one not have the right to be not with “us”-in-the-moral sense?

The answer I have given to it — that Arendt is a Jew — is valid but only once we have accepted that morality of \textit{Ahabath Israel}. Yet what is it that warrants this morality as such and its “in no other way” approach? Why would, then, Scholem’s utterance “I regard you a wholly as a daughter of our people and in no other way” be more convincing than Arendt’s quite conceivable answer: “But I do not regard myself so in the sense you do (i.e. ‘wholly’) and I do also regard other aspects of my existence just as relevant and hence irreducible to this one”.

If we acknowledge that there do indeed exist other sorts of just moralities (with regard to the Holocaust), then it means, for one thing, that Scholem must answer these questions in order to warrant the morality he adopts to this case; and for another, that this answer, contrary to what I have been claiming so far, cannot come from the moral authority of \textit{Ahabath Israel}, otherwise it is simply self-circulating. “Little trace” of \textit{Ahabath Israel}, then, cannot be the answer, but only the indication of it.

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5.4. Warranting for a Moral Position: The Genealogy of a Pathology

Thus, the last and ultimate problem that this chapter has to answer is what warrants here the applicability of this authority. What is, so to say, the authority of the authority? It is presented without hesitation and argumentation that the Jewish tradition and its concept as such are of an authoritative nature. As an authority, it was indicated to be untranslatable and incomprehensible both within and from without its own terms. On the one hand, then, it was precisely this lack of speech that created the authority, the ancient, the original, the singular, while on the other, its authority too derived from its overwhelming presence and thus its acknowledgment of no barriers, not, most notably, that of the secular-religious or the past-present distinction.

The authority, then, is speechless, yet obliges one to talk in certain ways. It cannot be translated yet it was. It cannot be. Yet it was.

Therefore, to understand the applicability – i.e. the authority of the authority – one cannot simply analyse its content. Scholem created a context that ensured that even the erasure of this content must be accounted for in terms of that moral authority. However, the problem I am addressing here is precisely this: why is the Jewish way of life, and more pointedly its lack, relevant here? The content Scholem reconstructed to Eichmann in Jerusalem was, surely, manifestly immoral but not only from a Jewish perspective. It was not "Jewishly immoral", but immoral, full stop. Likewise, the moral authority of the "dead" is not something one leading any sort of way of life would discard or reject. In short, anti-Semitism is not a Jewish concept even if its objects are certainly the Jews.

To answer the question, then, where the authority of the moral authority of Ahabat Israel comes from; that is, to answer why we should accept that Arendt be regarded "a daughter of our people and in no other way", we have to scrutinise further Scholem's text.

With this in mind, let us have a look at a later part of the letter:
The heroism of the Jews was not always the heroism of the warrior; nor have we always been ashamed of that fact. I cannot refute those who say that the Jews deserved their fate, because they did not take earlier steps to defend themselves, because they were cowardly, etc. I came across this argument only recently in a book by that honest Jewish anti-semite, Kurt Tucholsky. I cannot express myself, of course, with Kurt Tucholsky's eloquence, but I cannot deny that he was right: if all the Jews had run away—in particular, to Palestine—more Jews would have remained alive. Whether, in view of the special circumstances of Jewish history and Jewish life, that would have been possible, and whether it implies a historical share of guilt in Hitler's crime, is another question.

Before analysing this paragraph, it is useful to observe its sequential position. It comes immediately after the utterance quoted in Extract 4.4., where Scholem establishes the ultimate immoral content of Arendt's text, consisting of turning the moral order “upside-down”. The closure of that paragraph read:

Is the distinction between torturer and victim thereby blurred? What perversity! We are asked, it appears, to confess that the Jews, too, had their "share" in the acts of genocide. That is a typical quaternio terminorum.

What is discernible here is that Scholem further opposes Arendt's acts from the category's viewpoint: we are asked. Certainly, as has been the case in the earlier
examples, mere moral difference does not by itself entail exclusion from the category. Yet, here Scholem’s (“our”) opposition is not simply a moral one as in previous occasions but one in the moral extreme, the powerful indignation enhanced by the exclamation mark: “What perversity!” What is of prime importance here, however, is not so much the displayed “intensity” of his reaction but that he does not even argue against this (reconstructed) claim (something he did do on previous occasions), and thereby his opposition is not displayed in the form of argumentation but in that of demonstration (Perelman 1979: 9-15; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 1-14). Similarly, his subsequent proposition (“We are asked [...] to confess [...]”) is not argued against either, while the lack of explicit verbal contention certainly does not suggest that Scholem would be ready for this “confession” and the acceptance of the proposition it would entail. What it does suggest with the rhetoric of demonstration is the absurdity of Arendt’s claim in an epistemological sense and its shocking immorality in a moral one. The issue is thus not only depicted black-and-white to the extent that any argument would just mitigate its essential absurdity and immorality but exposes an ever more fundamental rift between Arendt and “us”. As Perelman noted, “[...] argumentation, unlike demonstration, presupposes a meeting of minds: the will on the part of the orator to persuade and not to compel or command, and a disposition on the part of the audience to listen. Such mutual goodwill must not only be general but must also apply to the particular question at issue [...]” (Perelman 1979: 11 – my emphasis). “Mere” moral divergence within members of the group as well as a temporal position that one adopts in a debate outside the group does not necessarily entail that one’s membership in the group is rejected from either side. Yet, the moral claim attributed here to Arendt is by any means thoroughly and outrageously immoral and Scholem’s rhetorical use of demonstration appears indeed to place Arendt, if temporarily, beyond discussion or argumentation with the category “us”.

140 That “we” is suffused with a moral position is an argument that it is not a simple instance of the well-known plurals maiestatis.

141 “The outsider, Henry Zukier writes, “typically is not a total stranger, but a familiar, yet deviant figure, and it is precisely this familiarity which threatens to upset the social order and the group’s sense of inner cohesion and integrity. [...] The outsider undermines respect for the group’s fundamental values, blurs the moral distinction between in-group and out-group, and subverts the group’s ‘collective consciousness.’ In this dynamic, the familiar outsider is more threatening, for he is in many respects similar to the dominant
It is, then, after this significant build-up that the paragraph I quoted comes. At face value, Scholem there expounds a personal reading of his about a certain Kurt Tucholsky's book.\(^{142}\) While it is inevitable to assume that this reading will be in some sort of relationship with Arendt's book, clearly more than mere assumption is needed from an analytical perspective. Even more so, that what we are interested in is not whether Tucholsky's book is in some sort of relationship with that of Arendt, but what sort of connection is there.

Scholem invokes his readings on several occasions (e.g. l. 85-90, 132-137), but those readings are juxtaposed with what Arendt wrote and are therefore used contrastively to be enlisted in a consensus against Arendt's text (on consensus building see Edwards and Potter [1992a, 1992b]; Potter [1996]).\(^{143}\) This is clearly not the case here with Tucholsky. No distance is given between the two books and while this state of affairs surely does not suggest that the two wrote identical books, it might be fruitful to suppose that there is some sort of important similarity. This similarity comes to sight when Scholem assesses Tucholsky's overall argument and considers his supposed value-judgement instead of the facts he presents: "[...] whether it implies a historical share of guilt in Hitler's crime, is another question" (l. 152-153). Relevantly enough, Scholem concluded the previous paragraph with the same notion of rejecting the allegation of the

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142 Kurt Tucholsky (1890-1935): German-Jewish journalist, satirist, and writer. One of the most important journalist during the Weimar Republic. A left-wing democrat and pacifist, who lost his citizenship and saw his book burnt with the Nazis coming to power in 1933. (Why he would have deserved Scholem's epithet "honest anti-Semite" as well as what work Scholem refers to in the exchange is not at all clear to me. Cf. Elon, 2002: 365-367.)

143 The instances are:

"I too have read Adler's book about Theresienstadt. It is a book about which a great many things could be said. But it was not my impression that the author - who speaks of some people, of whom I have heard quite different accounts, with considerable harshness it was not my impression that Adler ever spoke of Baeck in this fashion [i.e. as Arendt did] either directly or indirectly" (l. 85-90).

"Recently, I have been reading about a book, written during the days of catastrophe in full consciousness of what lay ahead, by Rabbi Moses Chaim Lau of Piotrkov. This rabbi attempted to define as precisely as possible what was the duty of the Jew in such extremities. Much that I read on this moving and terrible book - and it does not stand alone - is congruent with your general thesis (though not with your tone)" (l. 132-137).
Jewish "share" in the crime of the Holocaust: "We are asked, it appears, to confess that the Jews, too, had their 'share' in these acts of genocide" (l. 129-130). In that case, however, this idea of the "share" of guilt and its refusal was made as a comment on Arendt's book. There is, thus, an implied similarity constructed between Arendt and Tucholsky as to their respective arguments.

As we are seeking to account for Scholem's construction of Arendt as a person here, it is of significance that Kurt Tucholsky's description was, "that honest Jewish anti-semite" (l. 146-147). This tells us, first, that being "naturally" a Jew while being morally or politically against the Jews as such is not a contradiction in terms for Scholem. Even if anti-Semitism might be taken as the anti-thesis of the entire Jewish condition, to be a Jew does not disqualify one to be an anti-Semite at the same time. The possible outcome of Scholem's construction of a tension between a "natural" belonging and a "moral" attitude or act does not fall short of denying in one sense or even totally that "natural" aspect of one's own existence.144

Of course, Scholem tells us much more here than this as he characterises Tucholsky's argument in a way pointing to the similarity (the historical "share" of guilt) to that of Arendt and calls the author an anti-Semite. Following Harvey Sacks's "consistency rule", this in itself would raise the question of whether that tag "anti-semite" might be able to be applied on Arendt as well.145 Yet, let us point out the use of the adjective "honest" in connection with the "anti-semite" Tucholsky. Why is the adjective used here? Its use certainly entails that there are in fact anti-Semites, even Jewish anti-Semites, who are not honest. Professing anti-Semitism – either to the reader or even perhaps to oneself – is, thus, not the sine qua non of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism or Jewish self-hatred is simply there, ready to be observed and attributed. But Scholem does not merely make a theoretical argument here concerning the nature of anti-Semitism. The use of the adjective "honest" here and now cannot but imply that there is another,

144 The origin of the concept of Jewish self-hatred is found in Lewin (1948). For recent expositions, analyses, and uses of self-hatred and Jewish anti-Zionism see Finkelkraut (1994: 57-80), Gilman (1990), Laqueur (2006: 165-166). For a criticism of Lewin's article and the rhetorical use of the concept, see Finlay (2005). For further rhetorical and political criticism, see Butler (2004), Cockburn and St. Clair (2003).

145 "[...] if some population of persons is being categorized, and if a category from some device's collection has been used to categorize a first member of the population, then that category [...] may be used to categorize further members of the population" (Sacks, 1974: 219).
dishonest or, in any case, un-confessed or un-confirmed anti-Semite in the room. Someone not widely known as an anti-Semite, perhaps not even to herself. Yet, she is one. Sapienti sat...

For one thing, at the risk of repeating myself, it is hardly possible to overstate the severity of this implication and accusation (see page 93). For a Jew in particular (as well as for any morally just human being in general) the accusation of being a post-Auschwitz anti-Semite is damaging for the person’s moral existence.

For another, the reader might say, there is surely no surprise in this conclusion of Scholem’s rhetoric, however. Should we have expected something different, after all? The case was not constructed that there are elements, sentences, phrases in Arendt’s book that are anti-Semitic. It was not the case that there might have been lapses of consciousness or even of moral sense. It was what underlay the entire book’s logic that was constructed to be anti-Semitic and it would be hardly ingenuous to pretend that the claim that this through-and-through anti-Semitic material originated from an anti-Semitic source, from an anti-Semitic author is worthwhile to be wondered about, let alone analysed to the extent I have been doing here. To claim this, one should pretend that the distinction between utterances and the moral responsibility of the person is an absolute one and even after saying, for instance, that someone’s every single utterance in his/her life was immoral, it would still be a huge step and surprise to shift this immorality from the utterance to the person.

In a similar vein, it is far from clear why Ahabath Israel would be interesting in this respect and in what way the conclusion that Arendt is an anti-Semite would establish its authority. As already noted, while there is presumably no dilemma about whether an anti-Semite will or will not embrace Ahabath Israel, there can be equally no question about whether one “knowing”, caring, feeling nothing at all about Ahabath Israel would automatically turn to be an anti-Semite. Certainly not. If there is an important, ultimate point that is to be made here, it then must be something entirely different from simply claiming that it was not only the content of the book but its author as well that is anti-Semitic. Yet it was not the main problem I

146 See fn. 137, however, for a caveat, as well for a challenge to this interpretation.
addressed in this section either. That question was why *Ahabath Israel* with its establishment of Arendt as a "natural" Jew is needed in Scholem's text. Why was *Ahabath Israel* presented with singular authority and relevance in this whole issue?

As this was the question, let us observe that what Scholem implied was not simply that Arendt is an anti-Semite but that she is a *Jewish* anti-Semite. The relevant part is the phrase as a whole, not simply anti-Semitism. This brings us back to my analysis and the authority of the moral authority Scholem constructed previously.

Why is Scholem not content with saying "anti-Semite"? Why is it relevant to say *Jewish* anti-Semite? Surely, the content is the same. The "Jewish anti-Semite" is not more and not less anti-Semitic than the Jewish one. Likewise, as already noted, the rejection of the moral authority of *Ahabath Israel* cannot be the cause of anti-Semitism. Simply, neither of this explains why the "Jewish" is needed here, neither of this explains why the moral authority of *Ahabath Israel* is relevant here while it is precisely this moral authority that is relied upon in proclaiming Arendt to be a Jew, in the already analysed descriptive-yet-always-already-prescribing sense.

There is only one explanation, I think. It is that the relation to *Ahabath Israel* in certain cases proves to be a successful tool in detecting or predicting anti-Semitism. These certain cases, certainly, consist of the population that the ideology of *Ahabath Israel* regards as a "daughter/son" of our people. It does not tell us that those who are anti-Semitic will reject *Ahabath Israel*. Not because they will not do (surely, they will) but because there are plenty of others who similarly do but are no anti-Semites at all.147 What it does tell us is that there is a fair chance that those whom *Ahabath Israel* proclaims to be a Jew, but who do not "know" *Ahabath Israel* will turn to be anti-Semites.

Thus, the point of Scholem's using *Ahabath Israel* and establishing Arendt as a Jewish anti-Semite is that he provides us with the genealogy of a certain type of anti-Semitism. *Once a Jew: always a Jew*. The only possible choice that can be made here is not that of the non-Jew (Catholic, Kantian etc.) in a moral sense but that of the Jewish

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147 Again, see fn. 137, however.
anti-Semite. This is the only possible orientation for an Ahabath-Jew with regard to Jewishness.

This provides us with an account for and understanding of Eichmann in Jerusalem. It is not anti-Semitic because its author is anti-Semitic per se. Rather, because its author turned its back to the Jewish way of life, “hard to define yet concrete enough” (I. 58-59). This ultimate moral choice was, has been, and is being made. Inasmuch as the end product of this choice is the (Jewish) anti-Semite, however, this choice is not primarily a moral choice at all. Rather, it is a choice indicating pathology (see Finlay, 2005).

Whether the anti-Semite is the inevitable end-product of this choice or a mere probabilistic one, we cannot know for sure. Yet, Scholem’s lack of search for any other factor, proclaimed in his clause “and in no other way”, might point towards quite a deterministic direction. That is, if in this case nothing more was needed to be said, if “little trace” (I. 61) of Ahabath Israel was enough to account for Jewish anti-Semitism, then we might conclude that this end product, indeed, might be inevitable. Talking about “Jewish” cases, we do not know whether “little trace” of Ahabath Israel is the sine qua non of (Jewish) anti-Semitism. What we might suspect, however, is that it is the differentia specifica of it. In any case, we would better watch out whenever we suspect “little traces” of Ahabath Israel.\(^{148}\)

\(^{148}\) There is at least one possible counter-claim, shattering my argument, however. Was Ahabath Israel that much to be asked for? Surely, not much is required. A little bit of solidarity with the Jews, that is all. And, yes, if that little bit is non-existent, then one turns to be an anti-Semite. However, if that was simply the case, if it was the least common denominator only pinpointed by Scholem in anyone that is not an anti-Semite: why the use of Jewish tradition in some unspecified sense where it (in Scholem’s formulation) clearly does not apply to Arendt? Again, this “little bit of solidarity” is not something specific Jewish, it can surely be expected from any member of the Earth. Such a restricted use would therefore not warrant the application of Ahabath Israel—especially not in a case where it does not apply. Moreover, Scholem could have made a clear minimal claim, which he did not. It was a claim mobilising the “Jewish tradition” and discarding with the secular-religious divide. Neither of these is a feature of a minimalist claim, even if it was implicitly depicted to cover the Jewish people in quite an inclusive fashion. What it tells us, then, is not that it was a minimalist claim but one whose applicability is flexible, if not arbitrary. Had Scholem said “keeping of the Shabbat” instead of Ahabath Israel, it would have been a clear call, even if not one which could possibly be maintained in this discussion. The point of Ahabath Israel, nowhere expounded here, is not that it is minimalist claim but that it is depicted to be broad and (almost) all-encompassing. What it means is not that its force of prediction as to Jewish anti-Semitism is good or perfect, but that it can be used quite flexibly to account for the perceived Jewish anti-Semitism or even to establish it, pro- or retrospectively. Here, this last claim does not simply mean the “little trace” of Ahabath
5.5. Prospective Conclusion

We have arrived at the end of this journey. Meanwhile, we have encountered an anti-Semitic book, an anti-Semitic author, and "little traces" in her of Ahabath Israel that ultimately accounted for both of the former. We have encountered what ultimately proved to be pathological (Jewish self-hatred) and the genealogy of this pathology. So far, I have mainly been synoptic with Scholem's argument. At this point some distance must be indicated.

The task of the analysis, as was in this sense quite correctly demonstrated by Scholem, cannot remain at the surface. It requires a critical eye, which is an account and an evaluation of the textual practices produced here. In this respect, questions arise. What if Scholem's is a misreading? Would that mean that Arendt, after all, has some more traces of Ahabath Israel in her bosom? Or would that mean that, after all, Ahabath Israel is not needed at all to write a morally just book about the "catastrophe"?

The problem here is that we are presented with Scholem's choice (that the book is anti-Semitic to the core) but not with the validity of this choice on which the rest of his analysis relies. What is it that accounts for his choices? His summary of the book, his construction of Arendt's transgressing the authority of the "dead" and his attribution and account for Arendt's identity as a Jewish anti-Semite? The question that a critical reading should therefore pose is whether we should conceive of Ahabath Israel as an account for Arendt's book and personality, something that is suggested by Scholem. Or, alternatively,

Israel but an account for Scholem's interpretation of the book, something which in itself pointed towards anti-Semitism, Jewish or non-Jewish. This is to be covered in the conclusion of this chapter.

This is a moral choice of mine. Nothing is there that necessitates this choice, except from my (far from idiosyncratical) choice that here something gravely morally is at stake i.e. when X claims that Y is greedy and Y counter-claims that X is mean then it would be hardly necessary to come up with a consensual verdict. Firstly, it would be time-consuming and secondly, because the analyst does not give a damn about it, because it is just so banal. (although not for X and Y, certainly.) Here, however, I chose to confer gravity and dignity to my participants and think that it does matter, indeed, it is the only thing that matters, whether someone is an anti-Semite or not, why she is named as one, if she is not and why would we say that she is not one. Etc.
it is not an account in the proper sense of the concept. That is, it is perhaps not something that exists outside the realm of Scholem’s reading (of both the book and the author as anti-Semitic/anti-Semite); once the reading established then explaining its origin. Rather, it might account for Scholem’s reading and interpretative practices as such. It might be the case that once the yardstick of Ahabath Israel was adopted, Arendt’s book (and herself) was always going to be “anti-Semitic”.

It is harder than hard to come clear with these issues, to account for Scholem’s interpretative choices, at least for two reasons. First, the meaning of Ahabath Israel was not made clear by Scholem. It was not like a clear-cut call for (say, “keeping the Shabbat”), but a consensual, flexible and (as a consequence) all-encompassing standard: “hard to define yet concrete enough”. Yet, it was precisely because it was consensual, flexible, and all-encompassing that its meaning remained vague in the extreme. Indeed, whatever vague meaning could have been accessible through the translation, it was immediately withdrawn as the primacy of the original, “hard to define yet concrete enough”, ruled.

The second reason is that, by dint of an almost complete lack of his acts of interpretation in his text any connection between Eichmann in Jerusalem, the Holocaust and Ahabath Israel remained unable to be confirmed. Scholem though inevitably presented an interpretation, it was nevertheless constructed to be more like a (convincing) assertion about the book’s content. We have hardly met any quotations from Arendt. This, by necessity, meant that we were unable to assess the way Scholem arrived at his interpretation. Certainly, this was part of his rhetoric: there is no point in lingering on specific points if the book is “wholly false and tendentious” (l. 125-126). In line with this, Scholem’s summaries of Arendt’s book were certainly anti-Semitic but, then, they were Scholem’s summaries. Hardly any possible checks and balances were introduced. What was the eye of the beholder like? We cannot know for sure. What we only can is what the beholder already saw was repugnant. But, again, we cannot know whether we would see the same, standing in his place.

So is it an anti-Semitic book? Or is it just that Scholem claims (i.e. distorts) it to be? Is it that from Ahabath Israel’s point of view it really is but not from that of any
other? Theoretically, an affirmative answer to the first two questions would be clear and simple. To the third, however, would require us to make a choice. Here, Scholem is perfectly right: that choice will be one of a morality, a way of life.

With these prospective problems, it is time now to turn to Hannah Arendt's counter-version.
6. Ecce Textus: Hannah Arendt and
The Reformulation of the Debate

6.1. Introduction

With this chapter, I now turn to the analysis of Hannah Arendt’s response. The structure of the analysis will follow a similar pattern to those of the previous two chapters on Scholem. My first question will be what content, meaning and significance Arendt constructs to her own book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Inevitably, Arendt’s rendering will not stand on its own but comes as a response. Whatever she has to say about the book, it will at the same time be read as an assertion on Scholem and as reflexively orienting to and working up Scholem’s interpretative practice.

This means, firstly, that Arendt will have to convince the reader that it is her version that is the real one. Scholem’s is a misreading, either in parts or as a whole. Secondly, however, this practice of working up Scholem’s acts of misreading *while* presenting the book’s real content might lead to another, related problem, paralleling again Scholem’s practice. What, namely, is the account for that flawed textual practice? *Why* did this happen? Indeed, how could it happen?

Metaphorically speaking, these sorts of problems point again beyond the text, and beyond the practice of interpretation as they deal with a broader belief system or morality (or the lack of them) the person in question subscribes to. Just as Scholem provided us with a version not only of a book but of the source from where that book originated, Arendt, likewise, not only presents her book as contrasted to Scholem’s interpretation of it, but makes relevant the *locus* of that failed interpretation: the person of Gershom Scholem.
6.2. Reformulating Significance, Reformulating Fundamentals

As a first step, I will investigate the way Hannah Arendt frames the debate. We already saw how Scholem worked up the issue along with the practice of accounting for his and Arendt’s subject positions. Namely, Scholem’s reflections on the debate presented the controversy as something grave and serious, touching a realm beyond that of facts. Scholem’s position, correspondingly, was formulated as that of the reluctant yet obliged critique. That of Arendt, however, was not simply of a person behind a failed book but the aura of suspicion later to be explicates cast its shadow on her textual activity. In any case, the way Scholem presented the debate and the role of his contribution was highly indicative and indeed constitutive as to his acts in it.

Having a look at Arendt’s related textual practice and to her construction of the debate, we find something entirely different. This is how she first engages herself with the substance of Scholem’s letter: “There are certain statements in your letter which are not open to controversy, because they are simply false. Let me deal with them first so that we can proceed to matters which merit discussion” (l. 203-206). Straightforward as it is, concluding the argument at the end of her letter, Arendt is even more confrontational:

*Extract 6.1.*

391 In conclusion, let me come to the only matter where you have not
392 misunderstood me, and where indeed I am glad that you have raised the
393 point. You are quite right: I changed my mind and do no longer speak of
394 “radical evil.” [...]
397 It is indeed

150 As noted in the historical background chapter, this has been a usual rhetorical strategy of Arendt in the debate (see section 2.3.2).
my opinion now that evil is never “radical,” that it is only extreme, and that is possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension. [...] 

This utterance is even more categorical than the one with which Arendt started her engagement with Scholem’s critique, by dint of accomplishing the extreme-case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), “the only matter where you have not misunderstood me” (l. 391-392). The extreme case-formulation (ECF) certainly emphasises Arendt’s claim as for a huge failure in Scholem’s text. Yet, it is important to understand what exactly is said here. Is there not anything qualitatively more said than in the first and initiating utterance?

But can this concluding assertion actually be taken literally at all? And what would the word “matter” (l. 391) refer to? These are the two aspects of this utterance that we have to challenge in order to understand it. Arendt certainly does not mean by this every single grammatical unit, sentence, or even paragraph (save the one about the non-radicality of evil) that Scholem would have misunderstood. But, then, that would not be a powerful claim either, only a clearly absurd one.

At the same time, it has been suggested that “the sheer extremity [...] of ECF’s makes them available for a range of ‘as if,’ ‘essentially so,’ nonliteral or metaphoric uses and uptakes” (Edwards, 2000: 365). Arendt’s use indeed seems to involve this “essentially so” aspect. That, however, does not make her claim any less forceful, for what would then be referred to would not be a change in the scope of these misunderstandings (i.e. less than everything) but a change in their quality. It would not mean a simple step back from the ultimately untenable contention of misunderstanding every single utterance but the step forward towards the altogether more tenable one of misunderstanding every single significant utterance: to make the regular and pervasive act of misunderstanding indicative of a dispositional tendency (Edwards, 2003; cf. Edwards, 1995). Non-literal use, then, does not emasculate the rhetorical power of the ECF, precisely because it retains the capacity of literalness in an unspecified sense implying significant utterances. What is actually changed, then, is not the force but the focus of the claim. It will not any more simply maximise the amount of particular
misunderstandings but unite them - regardless of their quantity - in one, overall, essential, and total misunderstanding.

Framing the discussion as Arendt does certainly carries a more general thrust as to the nature and worth of the whole correspondence, which, then, could hardly be posited any more radically different from Scholem's. If the "only matter" where Arendt was not understood comes in the very last paragraph (of both Scholem and Arendt), then one might end up thinking that by dint of the abundance of misunderstanding no real discussion or debate is going on before. Where Scholem saw the "quick of our lives" (l. 54) and the "root of our disagreement" (l. 56), Arendt only sees misunderstandings.

Or does she? There is an utterance in Arendt's response that reflects on the debate while invoking the notion "our most fundamental differences" (l. 375-376). Does this perhaps emulate the debate to a level closer to the one envisaged by Scholem? Does this fashion it with some worth and gravity?

*Extract 6.2.*

373 I regret that you did not argue your case against the carrying out of the death sentence. For I believe that in discussing this question we might have made some progress in finding out where our most fundamental differences are located. […]

Hardly – to answer the questions just posed.\(^{151}\) It is not an enthusiastic call for engagement; rather, an elegiastic final conclusion of its impossibility.

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\(^{151}\) One could hardly miss the irony either that here it is an allegedly "pro-Eichmann", "anti-Ahabath" stance that is arguing for execution or, as it were, eradication of the "evil" and an "anti-Eichmann", "pro-Ahabath" one that argues to the contrary. Arendt further stresses the ironic paradox when taking up "in conclusion" the issue of "banal" versus "radical" evil. Namely, that it is Scholem, thinking that evil is radical, who does not endorse the execution of the death sentence. Arendt, who thinks that evil is never radical, does endorse the execution. It is obvious that this chiasmic structure carries certain tension. And this tension is not intended to be alleviated, since Arendt refrains from commenting on the consequences of her notion of the "banality of evil", and accepts to move on a philosophical ground, leaving the readers in embarrassment about the actual meaning of this "banality" or "radicality". Especially when, as in this instance, "radicality" (and an allegedly pro-Jewish, anti-Eichmann stance) entails the argument against the execution, whereas "banality" (an allegedly anti-Jewish, pro-Eichmann stance) leads to the argument for it.
The projected "some progress" as to these "fundamental differences" does not concern the future as Arendt in her formulation of "might have made" (l. 374-375) uses the present perfect tense to indicate a state of affairs that has been accomplished, made irreversible, and hardly possible to improve on. She could have used future tense but did not. The emphasis, then, is put on the finality of the miss, rather than on the real prospective possibility of it.

Arendt, however, not only presents this chance for "some progress" as one already and irreversibly missed but accounts implicitly for these attributes as well in this utterance. Her expressed "regret" effectively serves as a disclaimer (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975) to foreclose any attribution as to her personal motives in this question. The reason, then, must come from some other direction. It is noteworthy in this respect that the very notion of "some progress might have been made" invokes the present and already analysed dire reality, replete with misunderstandings. The first is a (conclusively missed) potential, the second, however, is the reality. Again, this reality should not necessarily have been invoked here. The overall thrust of Arendt's argument, devaluing the niveau of the debate, would have cast a heavy shadow on the prospects of future progress, anyway. Yet, she was not content with this and included that devaluation in this very utterance. As such, even the ostensible future hope is presented along the direness of the immediate present. This, to be sure, explains her elegiastic giving up the hope of even "some progress".

Furthermore, this present state of affairs is once again characterised with an implied extreme case-formulation. The allocated adjective ("some") of the wished/desired (but missed) progress hints implicitly again at its counter-part as for the reality of progress. The relationship between desire and reality is not that "some"
progress has been made but "more" (let alone "even more") c/should have been made, had Scholem argued for the suspension of the death sentence. Using the adjective "some" Arendt suggests that no progress at all has been made. Again, this implicit extreme case-formulation by any means explains, as well as bolsters the claim of why that "progress" could not be made and why it cannot even possibly be hoped for.

The utterance, therefore, that addresses the "most fundamental differences" and the possibility of "progress" towards the understanding of it; the utterance, that is, that could have formed a basis of a significant debate is fashioned so as to deny the debatability of these "fundamental differences" and the possibility of a significant debate. The "question" and the opportunity are described finally, entirely, and perhaps even necessarily as features of the past. They are but missed opportunities, whose function here is exclusively rhetorical in the sense that they are used to construct and reinforce the debate's intellectual level as a very low one.

Nevertheless, Arendt goes on to present where their "most fundamental differences" might (have) be(en) located:

*Extract 6.3.*

376  
377 You say that it was "historically false," and I feel very uncomfortable  
378 seeing the spectre of History raised in this context. In my opinion, it was  
379 politically and juridically (and the last is actually all that mattered) not  
380 only correct – it would have been utterly impossible not to have carried  
381 out the sentence. The only way of avoiding it would have been to accept  
382 Karl Jaspers' suggestion and to hand Eichmann over to the United  
383 Nations. Nobody wanted that, and it was probably not feasible; hence  
384 there was no alternative left but to hang him. Mercy was out of question,  
385 not on juridical grounds – pardon is anyhow not a prerogative of the  
386 juridical system – but because mercy is applicable to the person rather

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152 I.e. the death sentence
than to the deed; the act of mercy does not forgive murder but pardons the murderer insofar as he, as a person, may be more than anything he ever did. This was not true of Eichmann. And to spare his life without pardoning him was impossible on juridical grounds. [...] What is discernible here is a conspicuous lack of real debate and argumentation. Arendt renders Scholem’s alleged point in a rather concise manner and then flatly (that is, non-argumentatively) contradicts it. She does not argue for it but simply states her point that “History” has no place in problems such as this. "Politics” and “jurisprudence” are given as factors that do have to do with the death sentence and their absolute distinction from “History” is implied. Why? This we cannot decipher. The only thing which we know of Arendt’s opinion is that she finds the emergence of “History” in a question like this “uncomfortable”. But this, to be sure, is not an argument, only the consequence perhaps of an un-presented argument. Arendt is, thus, just as authoritative here as she regrets Scholem to have been. She says that it is a pity that Scholem does not argue for his opinion. Her reply, in turn, is just as assertive, however.

In a similar vein, when Arendt immediately afterwards seems to argue for the death sentence, she de facto argues from a position that has already and “un-argumentatively” taken – from the position that history has no card given in these questions. The ground of disagreement (the in- or exclusion of historical considerations as far as a death sentence is concerned) is visibly evaded. Thus, in these quoted utterances Arendt’s argument is, strictly speaking, not with Scholem: she has already taken the very perspective or starting point that Scholem is said to contend. As a consequence, their allegedly differing views on the “death sentence” – an issue which could have lead to “some progress” in their debate had Scholem argued for it – is, yet again, not argued for in any substance by Arendt either.

The issue of the “death sentence”, then again, seems only to be interesting insofar as its discussion was – and, perhaps, must have been – missed. Rhetorically, it might appear subordinate here to Arendt’s aim to present the whole debate as one that is not worth pursuing. This was true, first, of the way Arendt fashioned this presentation of the
(already missed) possibility of progress, and, second, the way she, then, (non-)expounded this location of the “fundamental differences”. The utterance (referring to “some progress” and “our most fundamental differences”) is, then, not fashioned to contradict those alluding to series of “misunderstandings” or to one total and comprehensive misunderstanding. Rather, it reinforces that “progress” could not but be missed.

Nevertheless, let us revisit the part of Scholem’s letter in contention. What did he actually state there and in what connection is that with Arendt’s assessment?

Extract 6.4.

155 [...] I have read both the
text of the judgement delivered by the Court, and the version you
substituted for it in your book. I find that of the Court rather more
convincing. Your judgment appears to me to be based on a prodigious
non sequitur. Your argument would apply equally to those hundreds of
thousands, perhaps millions of human beings, to whom your final
sentence is relevant. It is the final sentence that contains the reason why
Eichmann ought to be hanged, for in the remainder of your text you
argue in detail your view – which I do not share – that the prosecution
did not succeed in proving what it had set out to prove. As far as that
goes, I may mention that, in addition to putting my name to a letter to
the President of Israel pleading for the execution not to be carried out, I
set out a Hebrew essay why I held the execution of the sentence – which
Eichmann had in every sense, including that of the prosecution,
deserved – to be historically wrong, precisely because of our historical
relationship with the German people. I shall not argue the case again
here. [...] 

There is no surprise now why Scholem actually “did not argue” his “case against the carrying out of the death sentence” (l. 373-374). He did not quite have a “case”. As can be seen here, Scholem primarily concentrates in this extract not on the question if
Eichmann should have been hung, but on the opposing views of Arendt and that of the Court as to why. It is clear that he is in favour of the Court’s decision (which in outcome if not in reasoning is similar to Arendt’s) as it is equally clear that his proposal for the death sentence not to be carried out marks, according to his logic, no fundamental opposition of any kind to the Court or to Arendt. What is obvious from Scholem’s text is that he does not at all oppose the verdict on juridical ground; he only thinks that it should have been overwritten by insights from an *a posteriori*, historical perspective. His arguments relate to an altogether different level of the trial. These considerations come only after the final (that is, the verdict of the death sentence) and are not constitutive of it. That is why he uses the phrase “I may mention” (I. 165), which implies hesitation, pondering if the following is relevant to the topic at all. It is put more like an aside, even if it does the rhetorical job of working up the credentials of “Scholem”, the reasonable speaker. It is used as a prolepsis or disclaimer (Billig, 1996: 269, 271; Hewitt and Stokes, 1975), warding off any potential criticism of over-concentrating on the Jewish issue, of neglecting other people – of nationalism, in short. A “Scholem” is built up, then, that is not at all vengeful or, for that matter, chauvinistic. He is not solely concerned with the “Jewish” aspects of the trial, he does care about the relationship with the German people and, last but first perhaps, he dismisses any possible theory of collective guilt.

To repeat, Arendt reconstructs the argument leaving out the analysis of her and the Court’s sentence – that is, the parts that form the emphatic and contrastive side of Scholem’s argument – and presents the one that has originally been formulated by Scholem as an aside. In brief, she constructs the category of the “might-be missing route towards the fundamental point” by concentrating on a particular and rather “insignificant” part in Scholem’s text and assigning to it a central characteristic which by no means was attained in Scholem’s text.\(^{153}\)

But the conclusion that should be drawn here is not at all that Arendt, in a way, distorts Scholem’s text in order to render it blameworthy for the lack of argumentation and hence for the total lack of “progress”. Rather, it highlights another tendency in Arendt’s text, largely unaddressed in my analysis thus far. Namely, Arendt’s point here

\(^{153}\) Cf. Billig (1985, 1996: Ch. 6) on categorisation and particularisation as rhetorical activities.
might not so much be that the debate as *such* is of no importance but that it is *on the terms Scholem deems of importance* that there is no significance in it whatsoever.\(^{154}\) What might be of significance, however, is what Scholem does not think so, what he does not investigate yet uses, and what he is apparently unaware of.

Arendt’s emphasis on the insignificance of the debate being conducted on a pre-intellectual level might, then, be precisely the *point of significance*. The point, therefore, might not be that Arendt’s formulation displays a *total lack of engagement* by dint of the intellectual niveau of the debate, but a fundamental lack of engagement *with Scholem* and the terms along which *he* constructed the debate. That those terms amounted to the utter intellectual insignificance could be the issue in itself. But such an issue has subsequently to be unveiled and explained solely by Arendt. In this sense, what might be offered by Arendt is another sort of *diagnosis* where the “niveau-less”, pre-intellectual, complete misunderstanding that Scholem produces is not only to be presented but to be accounted for (see Hester, 1998). Scholem and his text *are*, then, important, but contrary to the reasons he deems so. Why they are important in their failure; it must be exposed by Arendt.

Such an orientation would clearly not contradict but complement the one that has been offered until now in that it would confront and eventually account for the perceived conspicuous and ever-present misunderstanding. That Arendt was analysed *not* to do it when referring to “our most fundamental differences” does not mean that she will not do it elsewhere. In fact, the more it is devaluation that prevails, the more it creates the requirement for explanation. Especially so, if, as analysed earlier, the point does not even appear to be the *quantity* of misunderstanding but the *quality*, the *essentiality* of it. If Scholem is presented to misunderstand Arendt completely, then the reader might reasonably think that it is indeed relevant what this dubious text of his is and who it is, after all, that could produce such an essential and complete misunderstanding.

\(^{154}\) Cf. “You [i.e. *The New York Times*] asked for a statement on Judge Musmanno’s review of my book ‘Eichmann in Jerusalem.’ I find it hard to comply for two reasons: One is that the interesting point of this matter is your choice of a reviewer rather than the review itself. And the other reason is that the predictable result of your choice produced a ‘criticism’ of a book which, to my knowledge, was never either written or published” (Arendt, 1963).
Although it should be clear by now that Arendt has an important point here and one that is beyond the assertion of the debate’s insignificance, it is equally clear that this point is self-evidently not that Scholem or his text are simply dumb. Surely not, just as Scholem’s point was not that Arendt had simply been malicious and cold in heart. Whatever his text is and whoever he himself is, there is something more to suspect here than a simple low-level debate of no real concern for Arendt.

Understanding Arendt’s general reflections on the debate this way, we can focus on two broad topics in what follows. One is how Arendt answers Scholem’s charges. Powerful as her dismissive remarks could have been, they are nothing but bubbles unless she connects them to specific points of Scholem’s critique. It is not enough to claim that Scholem constantly misunderstood her. Such a state of matters must be demonstrated. Reluctant as Arendt presents herself to be, this requires an engagement with Scholem’s text (partly) on its own terms. In the present chapter, I will be concerned with these acts of Arendt.

Such a textual practice, however, can be expected to go hand in hand with the process of accounting for what appeared to be Scholem’s essential misunderstanding. As Scholem was not content with sketching out a highly unfortunate, undesirable and unnatural state of affairs but accounted for it, so will Arendt. Her text, then, seems to be a mirror-image of Scholem’s construction. As Scholem did, so will Arendt first point out a problem. And as Scholem, so will Arendt then analyse its “root” or “fundament”. This latter practice will be the topic of my next chapter.

6.3. On One Statement, that is “Simply False”: the Naturalisation of Jewish Identity

Let us, then, have a look at the way Arendt reconstructs and answers “certain statements in your letter which are not open to controversy, because they are simply false” (l. 203-204). The first example of this is Scholem’s rendering her being “one of the
intellectuals who come from the German Left" (I. 60-61 and 207), to which Arendt single-handedly opposes: "I am not one of the 'intellectuals who come from the German Left'. You could not have known this, since we did not know each other when we were young. [...] If I can be said to 'have come from anywhere,' it is from the tradition of German philosophy" (I. 207-214). There is, thus, a statement and its straightforward denial, as foreshadowed in the introduction of "simply false" statements. At the same time, an account is given for Scholem's (incorrect) proposition: the lack of his experience in these matters. Scholem, thus, makes an inference which is wrong. Had he known Arendt in their youth, however, he would not have made that false inference.

So far, this response has not been substantially confrontational. What is pointed out may be a major mistake, but it is hard at this moment to see what major significances it could have in the exchange. All the more so that Arendt does not expound this significance either as she moves quickly to "another statement of yours". Things get more complicated, however, with the reconstruction of this other "statement" that is, again, "simply false":

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Extract 6.5.

215 As to another statement of yours, I am unfortunately not able to say that
216 you could not have known the facts. I found it puzzling that you should
217 write "I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people, and in no other
218 way." The truth is I have never pretended to be anything else or to be in
219 any way other that I am, and I have never even felt tempted in that
220 direction. It would have been like saying that I was a man and not a
221 woman – that is to say, kind of insane. I know, of course, that there is a
222 "Jewish problem" even on this level, but it has never been my problem
223 – not even in my childhood. I have always regarded my Jewishness as
224 one of the indisputable factual data of my life, and I have never had the
225 wish to change or disclaim facts of this kind. There is such a thing as a
226 basic gratitude for everything that is as it is; for what has been given and
227 was not, could not be, made; for things that are physei and not nomo. To
be sure, such an attitude is pre-political, but in exceptional circumstances – such as the circumstances of Jewish politics – it is bound to have also political consequences though, as it were, in a negative way. This attitude makes certain types of behavior impossible – indeed precisely those which you chose to read into my considerations.

My stand in these matters must surely have been known to you and it is incomprehensible to me why you should wish to stick a label on me which never fitted in the past and does not fit now.

Let us first have a look at how Arendt's "puzzlement" is constructed and what it entails. She first identifies a statement which is false and then makes clear that she cannot account for it in the way she did in the previous example. To find something "puzzling" (l. 216) only indicates a state of mind whereby Arendt constructs herself as someone who does not understand this statement. Not semantically, certainly, as it is branded to be "simply false". Rather, as it were, "ontologically": how could such a false statement be made at all? Whereas regarding her as having come from the German Left might have been evolved from Scholem's natural "experience-deficiency", this statement could not have. To find it "puzzling" indicates that no natural account, no immediate explanation can simply be given here and now. That the explanation Arendt would be "naturally" inclined to offer is the one deployed earlier (that is, simple lack of knowledge/experience in the matter) is stressed by using the contrastive "as to another statement of yours" (l. 215). It relates the first statement to the second and her displayed displeasure upon arrival at her subsequent findings, expressed by the modal term "unfortunately" (l. 215). The latter does not only present Arendt in a favourable light, someone who wants to have a straight and rather innocuous explanation, however. It also characterises implicitly the hitherto unexpressed account as something more serious than a simple lack of acquaintance in the early years of age. Some other – unspecified but "unfortunate",
perhaps – motive must lurk behind. As to this motive, though, we do not receive any further guideline as yet.

What this state of being “puzzled” presupposes is, paradoxically, that the issue of the statement of contention must be clear-cut. No place for ambiguity as such can remain left. The ensuing “statement” is implied to be uncontroversial and little of a matter for debate. For all the mist of being puzzled, one thing is sure, then: there is a definite, non-arguable reason for being puzzled. What is to come is disarmingly simple and simply false.

But what is puzzling as well (for the reader in this case), is that the “statement” of Scholem is literally the same that Arendt is about to make. He said that he “regards” Arendt as a “daughter of our people” and Arendt answers that she, too, regards herself as Jewish. Semantically, therefore, she displays an agreement with Scholem’s statement while characterising that statement as “simply false” and displaying her reaction as “puzzled”, indicating whereby not merely that it is false, but false beyond any account.

Yet, as I analysed in the previous chapter, Scholem’s statement is by no means an innocuous one whose illocutionary or rhetorical meaning would smoothly collude with the literal one. As proposed in that chapter, a possible interpretation is available that would take the “I regard” part of the utterance of relevance. That is, it is Scholem that regards Arendt Jewish, implying (or even insinuating) that she herself might not. Arendt appears to interpret the utterance this way and that is why her consent to this statement is, in reality, perceived as a confrontation. First, she states clearly that she regards herself as a Jew and has always done so. Second, by constructing such a straightforward claim, she exposes an innuendo in Scholem’s statement. The point taken up is not Scholem’s suggestion that Arendt might not regard herself as a Jew, but (this suggestion being presented as utterly unwarranted) the very act of making such a suggestion.

As noted previously, the family metaphor (“daughter”) is not present in the original, German version of the correspondence. As I could not hold onto Scholem’s proofread of the English translation, I prefer not to pay attention to the phrase.

Importantly enough, however, she does neither pay attention to Scholem’s “wholly” neither to his “and in no other way” (I. 66-67).

Cf. page 146-147. To remember, it was not the interpretation though that I finally accepted in itself.
Certainly, such a construction necessitates that accounting for her Jewishness, Arendt's attitude must be as unequivocal as it can get. Otherwise (i.e. in the case where doubt might reasonably be cast on this attitude), Scholem's "statement" acquires significance in its own terms and not merely in Arendt's. Rather than an innuendo, Scholem's utterance would become a claim of intrinsic interest. As can be observed, Arendt attempts to evade such an ambiguity by putting her own attitude and her being Jewish as a matter of fact.

A matter of (natural) fact. Arendt makes repeated references to facts of life in this short sequence. First, she likens the problem in question to that of being a man or a woman - to a natural fact, physis, as it is later characterised - where the subject's position is either accepting (regarding) or denying (disregarding/contradicting) a fact.

Let us admit at this point, however, that from an analytical point of view these matters are far from that unequivocal: neither Arendt's regard, nor the faultiness of Scholem's statement. What Arendt is doing is not merely answering and refuting Scholem's implications (to a degree where the very genesis of those implications is the one to inquire about) but discarding implicitly the assumptions that informed those implications. Whether or not Scholem's statement was "simply false", the framework Arendt constructs in her answer appears to differ quite significantly from that of Scholem.

Namely, as I analysed in the previous chapter, Scholem's framework was based on the very interdependence of the descriptive and prescriptive, of "given" and "made", of "physis" and "nomos". No pure "given" and no pure "made" existed there. But this entailed that the rhetorical meaning of the "I regard you" utterance began to shift from the one Arendt attributes to it, where "our people" and "Jewish" are taken to be descriptive categories, givens. As we remember, Scholem's suggestion was not simply that one has to accept his/her Jewishness, but that given that one is Jewish one must act in the world accordingly. It was, in short, a moral and political conception.

Arendt's refutation, however, does not appear to be based on the acceptance of this interdependence and, hence, of the formulation of the problem as a moral and political issue. In her framework, what is left for human beings in this case is merely the
affirmation or the denial of a pre-existing fact. The issue is whether one accepts this fact or denies it. She, certainly, accepts it. There is no self-denial of the Jewish kind on her part. Full stop. Arendt thus not only constructs her attitude as being simple and categorical ("always" [I. 223], "never even had tempted" [I. 219]), but constructs the very problem of the "Jewish question" as being simple and categorical as well. As it is about a "given" and its acceptance by the subject, it forecloses a political and moral understanding of the problem and relegates/promotes it to that of the personal and the psychological. This is explicitly displayed in Arendt's immediate assertion: "such an attitude is pre-political" (I. 228). Rather than contradicting a specific implied proposition of Scholem, then, Arendt answers and constructs a problem of her own.

That said, one should not infer quickly that Arendt would have misunderstood Scholem, who is, now, proved to be right in his statement. On the contrary, what is exposed is that their "disagreement" is "fundamental" indeed, and cannot simply be settled by pointing out who is right and who is wrong. There are no objective standards shared by both of them, readily available at this point to assess their respective statements and arguments: what Arendt implicitly contested was precisely those standards used by Scholem.

On the other hand, however, one should not be impatient and prematurely preach about incommensurability either. If things cannot be settled easily, it does not mean that they cannot be settled at all or to any extent. That we cannot compare these statements directly and immediately does not mean that we cannot have a look at the broader framework they occasion. Indeed, we have to pay close attention to the way these ideologies look at the world, the way they construct events, the standards they deploy. Right and wrong will not be, in this case, questions merely of factual nature, but of moral and political one as well.

In addition, one could though claim that it appears quite questionable to make a political-moral inquiry into a framework that is avowedly moral and political and one that is avowedly non-moral and non-political, this is surely not a problem here, not even in the terms of the participants. First, because we can recall that for Scholem even the lack of Ahabath Israel was accountable in terms of Ahabath Israel; even the lack of a
prescriptive characteristic was understood with regard to the "descriptive"\textsuperscript{158}: there was no escape from moral accountability. But it is not only Scholem's framework that is ready to contest the attitudes occasioned here by Arendt. As Arendt herself claims (admittedly contradicting her own stance): "To be sure, such an attitude is pre-political, but in exceptional circumstances – such as the circumstances of Jewish politics – it is bound to have also political consequences though, as it were, in a negative way. This attitude makes certain types of behavior impossible – indeed precisely those which you chose to read into my considerations" (I. 227-234).

There is, then, a common ground of political orientations. What we have to do in the rest of this chapter is to expose the basic difference with regard to this common ground. That is, to confront the manifestation of the "attitude" of "political consequences [...] in a negative way" (l. 230-231) with "certain types of behaviour [...] which you chose to read into my considerations" (l. 232-234).

It is in line with this objective that in the remainder of this chapter I will analyse and compare Arendt's interpretation of her book with that of Scholem.

6.4. On "Misunderstanding" and "Misrepresentation": Arendt's judgment

6.4.1. What she said and what she did not say

With this in mind, we shall address the reconstruction of other "misunderstandings" of Scholem, in this case with regard to his rendering of Arendt's book. Again, the question is how Arendt formulates statements and her counter-statements as evidences of "misunderstandings":

\textit{Extract 6.6.}

\begin{quote}
298 \hfill [...] I
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{158} As this "descriptive", to remember, is always-already-prescribing.
never asked why the Jews “let themselves to be killed.” On the contrary, I accused Hausner of having posed this question to witness after witness. There was no people and no group in Europe which reacted differently under the immediate pressure of terror. The question I raised was that of the cooperation of Jewish functionaries during the “Final Solution,” and this question is so very uncomfortable because one cannot claim that they were traitors. (There were traitors too, but that is irrelevant.) In other words, until 1939 and even until 1941, whatever Jewish functionaries did or did not do is understandable and excusable.

Only later does it become highly problematical. This issue came up during the trial and it was of course my duty to report it. This constitutes our part of the so-called “unmastered past,” and although you may be right that it is too early for a “balanced judgment” (though I doubt this), I do believe that we shall only come to terms with this past if we begin to judge and to be frank about it.

I have made my own position plain, and yet it is obvious that you did not understand it. I said that there was no possibility of resistance, but there existed the possibility of doing nothing. And in order to do nothing, one did not need to be a saint, one needed only to say: “I am just a simple Jew, and I have no desire to play any other role.” Whether these people or some of them, as you indicate, deserved to be hanged is an altogether different question. What needs to be discussed are not the people so much as the arguments with which they justified themselves in their own eyes and in those of others. Concerning these arguments we are entitled to pass judgment. Moreover, we should not forget that we are dealing here with conditions which were terrible and desperate enough, but which were not the conditions of concentration camps. These decisions were made in an atmosphere of terror but not under the immediate pressure and impact of terror. These are important differences in degree, which every student of totalitarianism must know and take into account. These people had still a certain, limited freedom
of decision and of action. Just as the SS murderers also possessed, as we
now know, a limited choice of alternatives. They could say: “I wish to
be relieved of my murderous duties,” and nothing happened to them.
Since we are dealing in politics with men, and not with heroes or saints,
it is this possibility of “nonparticipation” (Kirchheimer) that is decisive if
we begin to judge, not the system, but the individual, his choices and his
arguments.

... [...] 

... [...] 

That the distinction between victims and persecutors was blurred in the
concentration camps, deliberately and with calculation, is well known,
and I as well as others have insisted on this aspect of totalitarian
methods. But to repeat: this is not what I mean by a Jewish share in the
guilt, or by the totality of the collapse of all standards. This was part of
the system and had indeed nothing to do with Jews.

As we can see, it is Arendt’s argument concerning the substance of her book that
is presented in this extract. The way she starts as well as concludes her “text”-
presentation indicates a confrontational stance from her side. There is no evasiveness, no
mitigation, just clear and plain opposition to what Scholem claimed.

Thus, she begins with saying “I have never asked why the Jews ‘let themselves to
be killed.’ On the contrary, I accused Hausner of having posed this question to witness
after witness” (l. 298-301). Both assertions are here of significance. Arendt starts with a
straightforward disclaimer. That is, she does not allow for any possibility that she might
have said something that could be interpreted in this way. The issue appears through her
simple and uncompromising denial as plain and clear-cut. She just did not say this.

Categorical as it can get, this is not the end of the story of this utterance, though.
The “question” is indeed attributed to someone and that “someone” is Attorney General
Gideon Hausner, one of the protagonists (or, rather, antagonists) in Arendt’s book. That
it was not only not her but her main rhetorical opponent in Eichmann in Jerusalem that
actually uttered (and uttered even frequently) this "question" is a rhetorical move advancing the aims of the straightforward disclaimer. Thus, it not only charges Scholem with attributing something to her but with attributing something that is in fact not simply "attributable" but the self-avowed and literal position of someone opposite the author. This construction thereby not only showcases a misinterpretation of the author by Scholem ("I never asked") but shows a striking misreading ("I accused Hausner of having posed...").

But Arendt accomplishes even more here. Namely, she not only points to the Attorney General but presents her own stance towards him, who literally posed this question, as an "accusation" (l. 300). Thereby she not only disclaims this question, not only points to the person who actually asked it and distances herself from the meaning of this question altogether. Rather, if attributing this question to someone is an "accusation", a very serious charge, then Scholem’s activity is as dubious as the one with which he charges Arendt. Scholem’s activity is thus characterised reflexively as an "accusation" and inasmuch as it is depicted to be groundless, the moral transgression is not any more concerned with Arendt’s conduct but with that of Scholem.

Rebutting another central assertion of Scholem appears likewise in the paragraph (l. 350-355), with which Arendt concludes this sequence. In contrast to the beginning, however, the conclusion there consists not only of a disclaimer but of a positive claim as well. That is, we do not only learn what Arendt had not said in the book but also the gist of what she had: "That the distinction between victims and persecutors was blurred in the camps, deliberately and with calculation, is well known, and I as well as others have insisted on this aspect of totalitarian methods. But to repeat: this is not what I mean by a Jewish share in the guilt, or by the totality of the collapse of all standards" (l. 350-355). The point of this utterance is, then, twofold. First, Arendt dismisses Scholem’s outrage at the "blurring" of the distinction between "torturer" and "victim" (l. 123). At this point, this is not made because it is claimed not to have happened. The implication of this utterance is that as in the camps it was absolutely and exclusively abnormality that was the order of the day, whatever Jews did or did not do was of the Nazi’s own making and, consequently, responsibility. This is a rebuttal of Scholem, but is not the main argument here. The latter comes not in supporting but confronting this thesis. Arendt’s concluding
claim is that, outside the camps, there was indeed “a Jewish share” in the guilt and, there, the “totality of the collapse of all standards” was not entirely the Nazis’ responsibility (even if they certainly bear the sole responsibility for triggering this collapse).

This is something highly confrontational, for, contrary to the starting disclaimer, Arendt here not only charges Scholem with alleging something about the book, which is simply not there but provides a powerful summary of her thesis. No, “the Jews” did not have a “share in the acts of genocide” (l. 130). But yes, there was “a Jewish share” (l. 353) in it.

The analytical intricacy is that – Arendt’s powerful rhetoric of disclaiming aside – the moment she utters something positive, the question might immediately arise whether it is not essentially what Scholem claimed her having said. Thus, Arendt indicated her repulsion towards the Attorney General’s question as well as, reflexively that it was a repulsive accusation directed to her. Yet, there is still no definitive argument presented against the viewpoint that what she actually said could have been essentially taken to have the thrust of this question. That it could have, perhaps, implied it. Such a state of affairs, however, means that what Arendt has to refute is not so much whether she literally asked such a question (which she did not but which Scholem did not claim either) but whether she effectively did it. By the same token, though the share of “the Jews” and “a Jewish share” appear literally different, the ultimate question is whether and in what sense they are essentially different.

Thus, Arendt has to make clear whom and in what way she actually judged and whether these choices are categorically different from the reconstructed question of Scholem and his presentation of what was a manifestly immoral book. Disclaiming is not enough. Rhetorically speaking, positive assertion and elaboration is required.

159 As we can remember, neither did Scholem straightforwardly say that Arendt would have made a claim “why did they allow themselves to be slaughtered?” (l. 41-42) The direct attribution was that it was the “new youth” whose orientation can be captured in this query. Certainly, Arendt does not misread Scholem here. Indeed, his point was that it was effectively that Arendt asked this question, not verbatim.
6.4.2. “The Jewish functionaries”: Constructing an Object for Judgment

It is for the reasons just spelled out that Arendt immediately launches into the reiteration and elaboration of her real points after disclaiming the “why did they let themselves to be murdered?” question: “The question I raised was that of the cooperation of the Jewish functionaries during the ‘Final solution,’ and this is so very uncomfortable because one cannot claim that they were traitors” (I. 299 and 302-305).

There are two main contentions occasioned here opposing Scholem’s version. First, the object of her judgment, “the cooperation of the Jewish functionaries” and, hence, the possible subject of “a Jewish share” of the guilt. Second, a different sort of inquiry from what Scholem presented her having done. At face value, the “Jewish functionaries” (I. 303) simply do not equal “the Jews” (I.15, 18, 100, 104, 129-130) and a “question raised” (I. 302-303) surely does not appear to be a categorical verdict (even if it was indeed a question where both Scholem and Arendt detected a judgmental implication). 160 To understand that in what way Arendt claims to have exercised a different sort of ‘judgment’ than the one attributed by Scholem, we have to analyse these two aspects of her reconstruction of the related points of Eichmann in Jerusalem. What is the object of judgment and what is the actual judgment pronounced on it?

To analyse the way Arendt constructs her object of judgment — “a Jewish share in the guilt” — *as available* for such a judgment, let us first note that it is a time-span and an activity that is demarcated: “[...] the cooperation of Jewish functionaries during the ‘Final Solution’, and this question is so very uncomfortable because one cannot claim that they were traitors. (There were traitors too, but that is irrelevant.) In other words, until 1939 and even until 1941, whatever Jewish functionaries did or did not do is understandable and excusable. Only later does it become highly problematical” (I. 303-308). Such a demarcation in time means that the problem of concern is not an essential but a relational activity. What is indicated here is that the acts that form the object of

160 The latter, incidentally, is both supported in Arendt’s conclusion of the first and the second paragraph just quoted: “[...] I do believe that we shall only come to terms with this past if we begin to judge and to be frank about it”, and “Since we are dealing in politics with men, and not with heroes or saints, it is this possibility of ‘nonparticipation’ (Kirchheimer) that is decisive if we *begin to judge*, not the system, but the individual, his choices and his arguments” (I. 33-36 – the second of the emphases is mine).
judgment are non-objects for judgment outside this time-span. Had there not been “unusual” circumstances (i.e. the “Final Solution”), there would not have been any sort of malfunction either.

Yet, this is not by dint of their total absence in the pre-Final Solution era. As Arendt opts for the term “cooperation” (l. 303) instead of collaboration and single-handedly dismisses the problem of “traitors” (l. 305), it is clear that the activities she is making relevant are not surfacing during the “Final Solution”. What both the concepts collaboration and treason would imply is some sort of sui generis immoral and condemnable activity; in contrast to Arendt’s stance that what are at the moral stake here are activities that otherwise would have been normal, “understandable”, morally more or less acceptable as they did not originate from evil intentions. Evidently, this does not apply for either collaboration or treason.

Arendt, thus, refrains in her formulation from both essentialising and intentionalising the problem. Neither essentially wrong activities, nor intentionally committed wrongdoings are to be discussed here. These actions immorality emerges from the relation and as a consequence with the context of the “Final Solution”.

What is, however, in this context that makes the selfsame activities not “understandable” and not “excusable” (l. 307)? What is it that the “functionaries” did and they should, in their capacities, not have done? Intriguingly, there is no answer at all to these apparently fundamental questions in Arendt’s response. We do not learn which aspect of “cooperation” should have been avoided and which pursued. What we learn about the available and morally just counter-option is the following: “I said that there was no possibility of resistance, but there existed the possibility of doing nothing. And in order to do nothing, one did not need to be a saint, one needed only to say: ‘I am just a simple Jew, and I have no desire to play any other role.’ [...] Since we are dealing in politics with men, and not with heroes or saints, it is the possibility of “nonparticipation” (Kirchheimer) that is decisive if we begin to judge, not the system, but the individual, his choices and his arguments”161 (l. 317-318 and 333-336).

161 Otto Kirchheimer (1905-1965): German-Jewish legal scholar, who – having been forced to leave Germany before World War II – moved to the United States and taught at several universities. Gained
The alternative choice, the alternative decision and course of action, which, according to Arendt, realistically existed and upon which we are able to "begin to judge" (I. 312-313) is stated indeed clearly. It seems that the morality of "cooperation" (a distinction between just and unjust kind) is not deployed because it is "cooperation" as such that is highly problematic. The alternative option, that of "doing nothing"/"nonparticipation", is not one kind of "cooperation" but noncooperation. By implication, it is not a form of a Judenrat, but the complete dismantling of the entire institution.

However, the possibility of distinguishing life from morality and "cooperation" from "doing nothing" comes on the condition that there is a need to distinguish. That for some reason it is better to "do nothing" than do something. This is an important proviso as "cooperation" is, again, not collaboration. It is not by definition a suspicious activity and might have involved the alleviation of pain, the attempt to reduce the casualties and so on even during the "Final Solution". Yet, what appears to be the only just choice in Arendt's categorical construction does not allow for this. It requires complete passivity and therefore the relinquishing of having any chance to influence the events. The rationale of her choice must, then, be explicated.

Likewise, the possibility to compare an actual unjust choice to an imagined just one comes on the condition that one is provided with the capacity of the freedom of choice. In this case, as the existence of the "Jewish functionaries" dates here back before the "Final Solution", the moral question is not so much of "simple Jews" becoming ones with "roles" but "functionaries" (failing) to opt for being "simple Jews" (I. 318). Yet, it is precisely the constitutive existence of an abnormal context, the "Final Solution" that raises the question of whether anything but this "cooperation" could have been achievable or could in retrospect be expected.

To sum up, then, having categorically distinguished "cooperation" from "doing nothing", there are two central questions remains to be answered by Arendt's moral judgment. What is, namely, the "possibility" that existed for opting for non-cooperation?

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widespread reputation for his workPolitical Justice: The Use of Legal Procedures for Political Ends (1961), which remains a classic in the field of the intersections between politics and the law.
And what is it about “cooperation” (and not “collaboration”) as such that is so problematical? Let us concentrate on these problems in analysing the following extract:

**Extract 6.7.**

323 [...] we should not forget that we
324 are dealing here with conditions which were terrible and desperate
325 enough, but which were not the conditions of concentration camps.
326 These decisions were made in an atmosphere of terror but not under the
327 immediate pressure and impact of terror. These are important
328 differences in degree, which every student of totalitarianism must know
329 and take into account. These people had still a certain, limited freedom
330 of decision and of action. [...] 

There is a distinction drawn here between the “concentration camps” and the ghettos. As we have already seen Arendt’s conclusion to reiterate it (l. 350-355), no moral inquiry is possible in the former case, however terrible things happened there; and that, for the lack of choice. But the main point is certainly not this, but the assertive claim for the legitimacy of a *post festa* moral inquiry into the ghettos’ life; and this, for the existence of free choice, if a “limited” one.

It is clear, on the one hand, what “limited” does not mean here. As Arendt said earlier, “there was no possibility of resistance” (l. 315). Yet, what does “limited” involve, on the other hand, in opting for “doing nothing”? What sort of choice would *that* have been? To what extent was that choice, in the ghettos, “limited”? This is self-evidently a crucial question as the less “limited” the freedom to make the choice for “nonparticipation”, the less clear-cut a moral assessment might be. The answer comes from the analogy Arendt deploys immediately after the quoted instance:

**Extract 6.8.**

329 [...] These people had still a certain, limited freedom
of decision and of action. Just as the SS murderers also possessed, as we now know, a limited choice of alternatives. They could say: "I wish to be relieved of my murderous duties," and nothing happened to them.\textsuperscript{162}

This example tells us what the "limits" were of opting for "doing nothing". \textit{There were no limits}: "nothing happened to them" (I. 332). That "nothing" is of course not a literal expression. "SS murderers", relinquishing their "duty", could not expect to be awarded with the Iron Cross or a raise in salary, could, however, expect to be exposed to any sort of hardships in life. But the point is that \textit{essentially} nothing happened to them: they were not executed. There were, then, self-evidently plenty of threats in relinquishing one's duty but \textit{existential threat} was not amongst them. And by analogy, not amongst the threats faced by the "Jewish functionaries".

Conceptually, this means that "terror" in the ghettos stopped at the threshold of passive resistance, of "doing nothing". "Limited" choice does not mean that there was a very, very "limited" possibility to revolt and a less "limited" possibility to "do nothing". Rather, it means that there was no realistic possibility of revolting \textit{at all}, but a more or less \textit{complete} freedom to choose "doing nothing". To come back to the first question spelled out earlier, the "possibility" of choosing "doing nothing" was complete and uncompromised. Hence, a moral inquiry into the failure of having made the wrong choice is also uncompromised by other factors. To make that choice had, in Arendt's words, "nothing to do with the system" (I. 355). It was entirely up to the individual.

It is telling, however, why I was ready to interpret (and the reader, hopefully, to accept it) "nothing happened to them" as meaning something like "lots of uncomfortable things but not execution", on the one hand, \textit{yet} dubbing it as \textit{complete freedom of choice}, on the other. Is it not a contradiction? Are "lots of uncomfortable things" themselves not a severe limit onto the freedom of choice? But there is no contradiction in fact and (I hope) I was perfectly warranted here to paraphrase what effectively amounted to "lots of

\textsuperscript{162} At this point, I would just like to register that I am certainly wholly aware that this analogy is breathtakingly striking. But it is not the right time for me to be concerned with this aspect.
uncomfortable things but not execution” as total freedom. For this was based on the assumption that in the context of killing people there is nothing else required than not to be executed, and that in choosing not to kill one does not/should not require any other guarantee but not to die.

This being so, however, brings us back to the other question yet unexplicated by Arendt: what was the problem with “cooperation” as such? Why is it constructed as a homogeneous activity when opposed to “doing nothing”?

Basing ourselves on the analogy Arendt presents, the answer is clearly that because it was essentially nothing but killing; indirectly sending people to death. And could not be otherwise as it was the sine qua non of the institution. That is, other and surely beneficial activities of the “functionaries” existed and could only exist parasitically on this duty. They had to “cooperate” in packing the trains, in maintaining order and morale precisely to accomplish smoothly this activity. Certainly, this was the Nazi’s foremost and essential concern. And if “cooperation” (in any of its manifestations) effectively equalled killing, it is the relinquishing of “cooperation” and only the total relinquishing of “cooperation” that is morally acceptable in retrospect.

Thus, what we can recover from Arendt’s analogy here are three characteristics of the “Jewish functionaries”. First, it reinforced and rationalised what has previously been implied, namely, that the “Jewish functionaries” as “functionaries” did not do anything but acts essentially of destructive, lethal, and murderous consequences towards their own community. Second, that this state of matters was available for them to grasp, hence they should have realised this state of matters. And third, that they had absolute freedom to relinquish their role, their duty, to become “simple Jews” and “do nothing”. Absolute freedom meaning here, simply but significantly: the lack of basic existential threat along their choice of non-choice. That is, they would not have been executed. 163

To put it bluntly: they killed; they knew that they killed; and they could have chosen not to kill.

163 These assumptions that were uncovered to underlie Arendt’s constructions certainly cry out for further analysis. This simply cannot be done here. There is neither space enough here, nor the historical knowledge present that would clearly be required.
Yet, if this is so – that is, if we accept these propositions of Arendt –, could we, then, not regard any such Jew as a collaborator? As a traitor? Or, as Scholem put it in vulgo, as a swine (l. 108). On the other hand, however, if we are here with Arendt then are we not against Arendt as well, as she categorically excluded these possibilities of her considerations (l. 302-313)? But murdering innocent people in whatever way is not a normal activity in “peace-time” or just before the “Final Solution” either. One might say that there is a contradiction exposed here in that it is precisely those considerations that Arendt has previously discarded that she later implicitly justifies her claim to judge and her actual judgment. That Arendt presents her problem as being not concerned with inferior motives and intentions and yet she effectively attributes those intentions to the “functionaries”.

There might not be a contradiction here, though. Rather, what is surfacing here is the very concept unsaid in the letter until the last paragraphs but ubiquitous in the book: the “banality of evil”.

The “totality of the collapse of all standards” had not meant that people became inhuman or immoral in the camps. In Arendt’s conception it is of no real interest, for, morally speaking, this did not even happen. Sure, the acts were there. But the freedom to do anything substantially different on any other basis than one being a “saint” did not exist. Yet the “collapse” is, again, not even that people outside the camps became immoral and inhuman. That certainly happened as it is expected to happen in any such situation. Traitors and collaborators there were there, but such has been the case for ages. What Arendt is concerned with and what is denoted by the “totality of the collapse of all standards” is an inquiry into immoral acts committed without immoral intentions. There is a deed – killing people – which is of evil nature. And there are actors who do not intend (that is, they do not intend to do anything they deem to be wrong) yet systematically accomplish it. This is what Arendt introduced as the “banality of evil”, where banal is not the deed but the person and his/her intentions. Morally (not un)just

164 “Ubiquitous” meaning here not that the concept of “the banality of evil” is literally used very often in the book. In fact, its only appearances are in the subtitle and on page 252 (Arendt, 1994a). Yet, it is nevertheless this concept that is expounded throughout the entire book.
people in the everyday sense started to become murderers while remaining morally (not un)just throughout.

Strikingly, then, it is Arendt’s words on Eichmann that become relevant here with regard to the “functionaries”: “he [...] never realized what he was doing” (Arendt, 1994a: 287 – emphases in the original). That is, s/he did know it. But did not realise.

6.5. Conclusion

As reconstructed, Arendt’s is an extremely serious and extremely painful allegation. And not simply because in this conception he, who “kills” is the persecuted him/herself. Rather, it was a judgment on a collective as “cooperation” (i.e. indirect, unintentional but systematic murder) was taken synonymous with “the Jewish functionaries” by definition. Though, theoretically, passive resistance can in fact be of institutional nature, what Arendt’s dichotomy between a “role” (l. 318) and “doing nothing” (l. 316) implied was that here it did not happen. The collective in her formulation thereby became the anti-thesis of the only possible moral behaviour realistically available for Jews during the Final Solution. That is, in-built in Arendt’s requirement was the demand from the “functionaries” to renounce their role, to disband their institution, as it was the institution qua institution that effectively collaborated and effectively killed. “Cooperation” or “doing nothing” – that was the question. Choosing to remain a “functionary” or choosing to be a “simple Jew”. Tertium non datur. What is therefore condemned here is not “merely” some Jewish individuals, but a Jewish institution.

Still, it was not “the Jews” that were condemned, as Scholem claimed. In Arendt’s construction a considerable amount of them (in the camps) were not even available for judgment and another considerable amount of them (“simple Jews” in the ghettos) were simply morally just. It is, then, a “misunderstanding” of Scholem.
Surely it is not. What must be clear by now is that even though Arendt claims Scholem’s acts of interpretation to be “misunderstandings”, they are not quite presented as such. And rightly so as Scholem was precisely aware as to what constituted Arendt’s object of judgment in the first place. He too addressed the problem of the “elders of the Jews”. Yet he concluded that this – i.e. judging a Jewish institution – was in effect a manifestly immoral, collective judgment on the Jews as it transgressed the moral imperative of the authority of the “dead”. What Arendt does here, however, is not accepting this assumption and then proving Scholem to have concluded falsely – that is, that he “misunderstood” something – but confronting, undermining, and dismantling that very assumption.

Scholem’s direct inference and subsequent shift from the “elders” to “the Jews” was informed by his assumption that the former was not different from the latter in any relevant sense. What created this unity was the supra-liminal, extreme situation. Whatever institutional distinctions were there, the basic unity erased those distinctions. The “elders […] or whatever we choose to call them” (l. 103-104), too, lived in the twilight “state of exception”, where facts and laws are indistinguishable and where, hence, later moral assessment must step back and give way to honouring the authority of those people, (in their being) the “dead”. With her judgment, as the argument went, it was this moral obligation that Arendt has transgressed. However refined, however elaborated an outcome of such a transgression might be, it is a profoundly and inherently immoral account.

It was precisely this moral framework, which has just been destroyed by Arendt, however, by reference precisely to historical and sociological considerations. Namely, by pointing out that the situation in the ghettos and in the camps was fundamentally different (i.e. fundamentally, from a moral point of view). Whereas in the case of the latter, true, any sort of judgment smacks of immorality, there was indeed freedom enough to validate the act of moral judgment in that of the former. Supposing that Arendt’s evaluation is more or less correct, her distinction is more or less valid – it is the powerful refutation of Scholem’s framework.165

165 Cf. fn. 163.
This, however, would still be an example of some sort of misunderstanding, if of a more general nature. Arendt’s implied point is, however, not “merely” that Scholem’s assumptions are historically invalid. Rather, what is suggested by her is that such assumptions are informed by hypocrisy, ingenuity, and grave immorality of the first order.

For one thing, Arendt’s distinction involves that it is exactly with regard to the “simple Jews” that the “functionaries” must be accounted for. These immoral or even criminal acts were committed against no other but morally just Jewish subjects, who – along with Arendt’s only standard – did “not desire to play any other role” than their “simple” Jewishness. It is not just that there was, thus, “a Jewish share in the guilt” but that that “share” had been committed against the Jews. Yet, on the other hand, Scholem now claims the authority of the morally just, the “simple Jew”, the homo sacer to be transferred to the “functionaries”. It is their enforced as well as self-avowed passivity, haplessness (whether in Arendt’s moral or in a plain descriptive sense), their moral victim-hood that is used to defend the “functionaries” – who were not passive but active and who did choose to play “any other role”. In short, the authority that Scholem fashions the “elders/functionaries” with is precisely the authority that they squandered and against whom they committed their acts. It is the moral authority of the victim that serves to hide the sins of those who had a “share in the guilt”.

“What perversity!”, as the learned elder of the Jews could have said. It is surely not a “misunderstanding” but a basically immoral position that is disguised in Scholem’s argument. That putative moral high ground is reconstructed to be demanded on a thoroughly immoral basis and the accusation has been turned back on the accuser.

Scholem’s basic assumption and orientation with regard to the Holocaust was contextualised by Ahabath Israel and our forthcoming task will be to render the look Arendt has at this “concept”. This look, however, quite contrary to Scholem’s rhetoric, will not be that of admiration but of scrutiny and, possibly, political, and moral criticism.

166 The allusion to the “homo sacer” here is meant in the way Giorgio Agamben uses the concept in order to elucidate the “inclusion of bare life in the political realm” (Agamben, 1998: 6) and the case of a person who is “simply set outside of human jurisdiction without being brought into the realm of divine law” (Ibid: 82, cf. 166-180).
7. *Ecce Homo: The Treason and Loyalty of the Intellectual*

7.1. Introduction

As has been witnessed thus far, Arendt did not appear to be satisfied at all with the way her correspondent phrased and framed the debate and, correspondingly, her own book. Such a discontent was observable in her construction that suggested a challenge to those very ideas, rather than accommodation and adaptation to them. What it entails is that Arendt does not simply excuse herself and her work. This is evidently part of the process but is most emphatically not the ultimate aim of it. Rather, in representing her original notions, Arendt reformulates Scholem’s construction, evaluation, and criticism as well, producing hence a virtual mirror image of what Scholem had done in his letter.

Arendt not only counters Scholem’s judgment as to her manifestly immoral text and the dubious assumptions that gave birth to this text but focuses on the unreasonableness of that judgment of Scholem. As noted, her presentation is scattered through with remarks about the “misunderstandings” of Scholem, amounting to the extreme-case formulation as Arendt invokes the (non-discussed) “question we might have made some progress in finding out where our most fundamental differences are located” (l. 374-376). Such an intellectual devaluation of Scholem would prompt a serious investigation in itself. How is it, namely, that someone—being nominally an intellectual—arrives at such amount of misunderstandings or, rather, at such a single, comprehensive and complete misunderstanding? This question that Arendt’s construction implies indicates that just as Scholem’s construction did not stop short of giving an account, an explanation to the textual characteristics, so will Arendt work on a version that makes Scholem’s apparently unreasonable construction “understand-able”.

197
However, there might even be more to come. As analysed in the concluding section of the previous chapter, in reconstructing Scholem’s underlying assumptions Arendt appeared to shed different light on his textual activities than those implied in the notion of “misunderstanding”. Namely, it was not merely some sort of epistemological failure committed by Scholem that resulted in the “misunderstanding” and the subsequent false accusations. Rather, it was made to appear a moral failure, where the alleged honouring the “dead” solely masked the exploitation of the moral authority of the literally hapless, the morally just beings, the “simple Jews” in the service of the “Jewish functionaries”. From what appeared to be a noble utterance and standard, we did not simply arrive at the affirmation that Arendt’s text was exempt from those charges. Rather, we were presented with a version where it was those very noble- and morally-just-sounding standards that were the crux of the matter and the ultimate instances of immorality.

What is to be our task in this chapter, then, is, first, the analysis of the account Arendt gives for Scholem’s “misunderstanding”. It remains to be seen whether this account will be given in a “merely” epistemological or in a moral sense. However, it is surely only one side of the coin, as (mirroring again Scholem’s activity) the account of Scholem’s acts and the reconstruction of his subject position constructs reflexively the position of Arendt and the account of her texts, here or in the book. It is, then, Arendt’s recovering of the “roots” of the positions identified in the previous chapter and the assumptions underlying that we will analyse in this chapter.

7.2. Ideology versus Independence: the *Beginning* of an Account

Part of an account for Scholem’s “misunderstanding” in fact already precedes the actual treatise of his notions on the case of the “elders of the Jews”/“Jewish councils” and the callous question of “why they let themselves to be slaughtered?” (l. 298-313). As earlier I was engaged in deciphering Arendt’s reconstruction of Scholem’s interpretation
with regard to her original text, I did not venture into an analysis of her practices of accounting for that interpretation. What would have been untimely then is high time to consider now.

Extract 7.1.

287 It is a pity that you did not read the book before the present campaign of 288 misrepresentation against it got under way from the side of the Jewish 289 "establishment" in Israel and America. There are, unfortunately, very few 290 people who are able to withstand the influence of such campaigns. It 291 seems to me highly unlikely that without being influenced you could 292 possibly have misunderstood certain statements. Public opinion, 293 especially when it has been carefully manipulated, as in this case, is a 294 very powerful thing. [...]  

The account given in this passage seems to be a relatively straightforward one. Scholem was, simply, "manipulated" and "influenced" by the external forces of a group. Had it not been for these, he would have understood the book and those "statements". Rhetorically speaking, it is the appearance-reality device (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 415-42) that Arendt is basing her argument and account of Scholem's position on. The appearance being that it is Scholem that "misunderstands", "misrepresents", and "puzzlingly" misreads, whereas the reality shows that it is not Scholem that does all of this but the "'establishment'" (l. 289).

On one hand, such a construction surely seems to "save Scholem's face", his credentials and allocate the blame to this vague "'establishment'". Scholem qua "dear Gerhard" (see l. 192), as Arendt addressed her beginning her answer, receives absolution as the construction implies the essential problem lying not with him but with the "'establishment'". It is "just" that he was carried away. Yet, on the other hand, such is far from a whimsical and lightweight accusation in itself. For one thing, while Scholem's act of "misunderstanding" (l. 292) is rather innocuous in moral terms here, the same cannot be said about the "campaign of misrepresentation" (l. 287-288), or the carefully
"manipulated" "public opinion" (l. 292-293) conducted by this ominous "Jewish establishment" (l. 288-289). Even though, admittedly, there is lack of definitive textual evidence, this "campaign" is made to be seen rather dubious in origin and vulgar or populist in execution. It is this alleged divergence in kind between the "campaign", the "establishment", and the "dear Gerhard" that prompts the question of how the latter could not have been able to "withstand" in the face of this campaign of pre-intellectual origin and, as it will later turn out, ideology-driven nature. What else is expectable of anyone who has the capacity for being reasonable and is worthy of the name intellectual?

Namely, while the presence of that "campaign" surely accounts descriptively for many, many "misunderstandings" arising in many people reading Eichmann in Jerusalem, it certainly does not account for why "dear Gerhard" was not able to withstand this campaign; why someone with the implied capacity could not do so; and why he could not do so when a "few" (l. 290) people were indeed able to do so. As Arendt makes it relevant that there were "few" that were able to withstand, she suggests that "withstanding" is an existing practical option and thereby the explanation for whether one "withstands" or lets him/herself get carried away can be found in those people, who were exposed to that influence, and not simply in the power of the "campaign" and "manipulation".

Seen from this perspective, the question of why Scholem was not able to withstand certainly implies an answer that we should not discard. Namely, that it is the very presumption that Scholem would have been able to understand the book, had there not been the "campaign" that is thrown into doubt by him giving in and letting himself be carried away. More abstractly, it is that the appearance does not cover essential reality but questions and implicitly implicates it. Were we to accept this interpretation, it would mean that this "appearance-reality" device here is not merely a loophole designed to save the correspondent's face but to imply the possibility that that face might not even exist in fact. That would suggest that the "reality" opposing the "appearance" is but a fiction, that "dear Gerhard" is not a hijacked essence but a "mere" idea, the authentic norm, and that the reason the real Scholem did not withstand the manipulation of the "establishment" is, simply, that he is part of it.

200
The point is, however, that Arendt is not unequivocal. Scholem’s responsibility is not clear here and neither is, therefore, his subject position constructed in Arendt’s text. We do not know for sure, whether we can count on a “dear Gerhard” who would have understood the book, had there been no campaign or Scholem had already been of the “establishment”. In any case, how are we to explain those “few” that did not get carried away? Why was the “few” capable of something the many and Scholem were not? And why was Scholem incapable of something that “dear Gerhard” was expected to be capable? I do not see any way to solve these ambiguities here as yet. It is to be imagined, however, that Arendt’s course of accounting for both Scholem’s and her textual acts will follow questions such as these. It is these aspects that I am to analyse in the following utterance. The utterance comes around the end of Arendt’s response.

Extract 7.2.

356 How you could believe that my book was “a mockery of Zionism” 167 would be a complete mystery to me, if I did not know that many people in Zionist circles have become incapable of listening to opinions or arguments which are off the beaten track and not consonant with their ideology. There are exceptions, and a Zionist friend of mine remarked in all innocence that the book, the last chapter in particular (recognition of the competence of the court, the justification of the kidnapping), was very pro-Israel – as indeed it is. What confuses you is that my arguments and my approach are different from what you are used to; in other words, the trouble is that I am independent. By this I mean, on the one hand, that I do not belong to any organization and always speak only for myself, and on the other hand, that I have great confidence in Lessing’s selbstdenken for which, I think, no ideology, no public opinion and no “convictions” can ever be a substitute. Whatever objections you

167 Arendt is referring here to Scholem’s famous allegation: “[…] your description of Eichmann as a ‘convert to Zionism’ could only come from somebody who had a profound dislike of everything to do with Zionism. These passages in your book I find quite impossible to take seriously. They amount to a mockery of Zionism; and I am forced to the conclusion that this was, indeed, your intention. Let us not pursue the point” (I. 171-176).
may have to the results, you won't understand them unless you realize
that they are really my own and nobody else's.

Yet again, Arendt might at face value seem to be unequivocal in this utterance. As to Scholem's position, there is not any kind of respect-talk or even the possible loophole for a misled but reasonable "dear Gerhard" under the influence of the "campaign of misrepresentation" here. There is no "dear Gerhard" distinguishable from those following the "beaten track". There is no potential member of "us" here. No realistic chance to see "dear Gerhard" coming forward, only temporarily and apparently influenced by "them". Neither is, therefore, Scholem a virtual puppet any more, whose "only" sin would be that all-too-understandable inability to withstand. Appearance simply matches reality. Scholem is an active representative of the category of "them"; "their" agent, evidently one of the "many people in Zionist circles" who is "incapable of listening to opinions or arguments which are off the beaten track" (l. 358-359), whose letter is but one instance in that "campaign of misrepresentation". There is, then, no such thing as an essential authentic dear Gerhard apart from the idea, the norm that is though actualised by the "few" as well as presumably by Arendt - is not only not actualised by positively jeopardised by Scholem.

Meanwhile, the direct account of "misreading" and "misunderstanding" appears to be constructed as a diametrical opposite to Arendt's own stance by occasioning a dichotomy here between "ideology" (l. 368), observing the "beaten track" (l. 359), "public opinion" (l. 368) versus "independence" (l. 365), and "selbstdenken" (l. 368). Rather than a neutral account, then, Arendt's practice is the advancing of her counter-critique of Scholem's letter. The terms in which the account is given for his "misunderstanding" as well as Arendt's book, respectively, are constructed to be discernibly normative and value-laden. Not much dispute can be reckoned to go on here as to who the bad and who the good guy is.

As I indicated in section 3.2. above, for most commentaries on the exchange this is indeed the end of story. Yet, to be satisfied with knowing who the good and who the bad person is and learning that it was "ideology" that distorted Scholem's thinking
whereas Arendt’s *selbstdenken* made her immune to it is still a rather romantic (as opposed, here, to analytical) approach to the correspondence. Upon closer inspection, while certain broad aspects of that preliminary understanding of Arendt’s account might remain unchanged, others will appear to be far less crude in fact. In short, Arendt’s account is far more undefined and far less unequivocal as any “analytical” shortcut would be able to expose.

Let us note, first, that Scholem’s relation to that “‘establishment’” is still constructed as a considerably ambiguous matter. As pointed out, his belonging to that “many people in Zionists circles” (I. 357-358) was constructed beyond doubt, and that category (“Zionist circles”) did in fact betray certain similarities with the “‘establishment’” (e.g. they both were implied to be the out-group; they both were described to carry out activities opposite to reason and rationality; they both were Jewish). Yet, whatever the connection between the two of them might be, they were not presented to be the same. Furthermore, nor were those “many people in Zionist circles” and their totalising “ideology” simply uncovered in their 
being. Rather, it was again that they “have become” (I. 358) prone to produce “puzzling” (I. 216) statements and “mysterious” (I. 357) misunderstandings. As much as they were implied to be the active “campaigners”, they too were depicted as passive bearers. It is by no means clear, whether it is that “ideology” itself that makes Scholem and those “many people in Zionist circles” the member of the “‘establishment’”, whether there is an inherent predilection in that “ideology” to exclude anything but the “beaten track”, or it is that very “establishment” that distorts their thoughts and induces that blind ideological faith in them. Thus, just as it has been buried, a closer inspection reveals that Arendt still sustains the appearance-reality device. There still is the possibility constructed that the real Scholem might exist, that he might prevail. There still is a chance that the real Scholem, the “dear Gerhard” is not merely an idea but exists in fact, somewhere, somehow. To repeat, that it was “just” carried away.

Yet, as far as ambiguities are concerned, this is just the beginning of the story. “Ideology”, “conviction”, “public opinion”, and the attitude that considers only its “beaten track” tolerable belongs to either the realm of appearance or reality; that is, either essentially to Scholem or to the “‘establishment’”. Yet – whatever might be the case –
while it is presented as the only direct account for “misunderstanding” (l. 292), “misrepresentation” (l. 283), “statement [that is] puzzling” (l. 215-216), and the “complete mystery” (l. 357) that Scholem’s stance means to Arendt, there is simply no clear guidance as to what that “ideology” might precisely be. And what, for that matter, the opposite values of “independence” and “selbstdenken”. Self-evident as they might have sounded, one cannot but equally wonder what the positive side of that distinction might exactly mean.

What is, namely, the sense in which Arendt takes “independence”? Is it a philosophical position and a modernist credo in the power of reason and the lack of other, distortive motives? Is, subsequently, Arendt disengaged from “peoples” and the ideologies and convictions directing their lives, watching them disinterestedly from under the sun, the light of truth? Is Arendt, in short, “an outsider, a spectator, a ‘total stranger’” (Walzer, 1987: 38)? Defending Reason against irrationality and Humanity against some sort of particularistic movement: has she taken the critical “path of discovery” (Ibid: 3-32)? Or, has she taken the word “independence” to be a political term where it would not mean disengagement from the people but from organisations and institutions? Is she, then, Michael Walzer’s “connected critique” (Ibid: 38; cf. Rorty, 1991c, 1991d), defending her people, her community against some vested interests arising from within? Against groups that claim to represent the whole group while effectively destroying it? Either way, what is the warrant for adopting these stances? Apart, that is, from Arendt “confidence” (l. 367).

There is no conclusive answer to this and I think that an honest analysis must admit its own confusion at this point.168 While any preliminary thought as to Arendt’s hostility to Scholem’s position, any perception that it is better to be “independent” than an “ideologue” – let alone to play a role in the “campaign of misrepresentation” and the “manipulations” of the “Jewish ‘establishment’” – is certainly valid, it must be clear by now that such shortcuts are just as hollow as unshakeable. We do not know what

168 There are indications to both directions. Expounding her position of “independence” she both refers to a political sense (“I do not belong to any organization” and “Whatever objections you may have to the results [i.e. of Arendt’s thinking], you won’t understand them unless you realize that they are really my own and nobody else’s) and to an epistemological one (“for which […] no ideology, no public opinion and no ‘convictions’ can ever be a substitute”). The notion of selbstdenken can be found at several points of Arendt’s oeuvre, see Arendt (1968: 8-11, 1997: 89-91).
"ideology" is in our hands, and we do not know what sort of "independence" is opposed to that. In short, we do not know who Arendt and Scholem are, apart from the former being the good person, the latter the bad. However, the author being called Hannah Arendt, it is hardly a surprise.

Yet, some things are clear and it is important now to enumerate them. We might not at this point know who Arendt takes them exactly to be, but there are indications as to who they definitely are not. That is, while it is certainly disturbing logically that Arendt uses unspecified and under-defined words, it is from a rhetorical aspect that we approach her text. From this aspect, it is of interest rather than a matter of dismissal as to what is left in the shade and what is made crystal-clear. Thus, whether or not Scholem is part of the "'establishment'", it is rendered transparent that Arendt's argumentative bout – neither in particular nor in general – is not with the Jews. Arendt does not characterise Scholem's position or that ideology as arising merely from the particular, the parochial as such, as opposed to a transcending, universal point of view. What she is arguing against is not the Jews but "the Jewish 'establishment'", whomever they might claim to speak in the name of.

Likewise, though it is not clear what that "ideology" might be and how the "'establishment'") relates to it, what is indeed perfectly clear again is that this "ideology" we are after does not equal Zionism. The case is not that these "many people" are simply Zionists who, for some external or internal reason, became incapable of listening. To support this, Arendt is careful enough to include the experience of a "Zionist friend" of hers, who "remarked in all innocence that the book, the last chapter in particular (recognition of the competence of the court, the justification of the kidnapping), was very pro-Israel – as indeed it is" (I. 360-363). Such a sequence makes it all but clear that the debate is not between a Zionist position and Arendt's own. Indeed, the "innocent" Zionist perceives "the book" as "very pro-Israel" (my emphases), indicating that (though Arendt is not claiming that she is a Zionist or that her book is a Zionist book) there is even more than mere compatibility between Eichmann in Jerusalem and a Zionist position. Hence, whether or not Arendt conceives Zionism of an "ideology", the problem does not lie with that, as the only distinctive adverb attached to that "Zionist friend of mine" is that her remark was made "in all innocence" (I. 360-361). What "contaminates", what makes
people mysteriously "misunderstand" and "misrepresent" is, thereby, not Zionism but an "ideology": nominally within its ranks but by no means identical with it.

These delineations are of obvious significance. Whatever the "Jewish 'establishment'" was, whoever the "many people in Zionist circles" were and whatever their "ideology" meant, none of this was constructed to stand for the particularity as such. It is not the Jewish position and it is not the Zionist position. That is, Scholem is not speaking in the name of either the Jewish people or Zionism and Arendt's argument is not merely with particularism or parochialism in the name of Universal Reason. Just as Arendt opposed the "simple Jews" (I. 318) to the "functionaries" (I. 303), so does the notion of "Jewish 'establishment'" (I. 288-289) and the "many people in Zionist circles" (I. 357-358) leave the rest of the Jewish people or Zionists intact.

Thus, while Arendt is not using the first person plural pronoun very often (hence expressing no explicit identification with any group in any sense, be they the "Zionists" or merely "the Jews"), she is very much aware to imply that she is not inimical or neglectful towards them at all. While her lack of positive rhetoric of the first person plural pronoun suggest a position that might transcend particularities as such, it does not necessarily indicate a lack of de facto political or moral identification with the Jews or even "innocent" Zionists. This, however, is a question for further investigation, rather than the conclusion of this section.

As far as that conclusion is concerned, let us note that Arendt's practice of accounting has again mirrored that of Scholem. Rather than being a "mere" account, it turned out to foreshadow an exercise in political and moral criticism. The reason for Scholem's misreading — the inability to leave the "beaten track" of "ideology" — was single-handedly opposed by "independence" and "selbstdenken". Ironically, however, what is clear at this point is what this opposition is not as well as who Scholem and Arendt is not. We know, namely, that the debate according to Arendt is not between the Jew and the non-Jew, the particular and the universal. Neither is it between the Zionist and the anti-Zionist.

Between whom it is remains to be seen in the coming sections. My aim there is to find out more about what exactly that "ideology" is that Scholem seems to express in his
letter and of what Arendt’s avowed counter-position of “independence” consists. In pursuit of these matters, it is now time to turn to the paragraphs where Arendt takes up the issue that constituted the core of Scholem’s admonition. As was the case with Scholem, it is at *Ahabath Israel* that they are constructed to rise or fall.

7.3. The Dark Form of Zionism

7.3.1. “To come to the point”: building up a confrontation

The utterance that is to be analysed in the following two subsections comes in-between the two concrete instances of “misunderstandings” that were taken up in the previous chapter: Arendt’s reflections on Scholem’s statement that he regards her as “the daughter of our people” and the attribution of the question “why did they let themselves to be murdered?” to her book. Such a position seems to indicate the central location of the following and Scholem’s main concept in understanding what is going on in the debate. Let us now have a look at how Arendt re-presents Scholem’s idea.

*Extract 7.3.*

To come to the point: let me begin, going on from what I have just stated, with what you call “love of the Jewish people” or *Ahabath Israel.* (Incidentally, I would be very grateful if you could tell me since when this concept has played a role in Judaism, when it was first used in Hebrew language and literature, etc.) You are quite right — I am not moved by any “love” of this sort, and for two reasons: I have never in my life “loved” any people or collective — neither the German people, nor the French, nor the American, nor the working class or anything of that sort. I indeed love “only” my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons. [...]
Indeed, the acceptance of the centrality of Scholem’s concept is seemingly further bolstered by Arendt’s starting her reflection with the phrase “to come to the point” (l. 242). She thereby appears to address the problem as the origin of all the other problems, pre- and succeeding it. The positioning as well as the introduction of the concept is, then, in line with Scholem’s understanding of the issue where he introduced it referring to the “root of our disagreement” (l. 54).

Yet, as suggested by Arendt’s acts of construction in the previous chapter, such an agreement as to what constitutes the centre of the debate might not be taken to indicate consent as to the meaning, relevance, and actual significance of it. As we may remember, it was the very intellectual insignificance of Scholem’s remarks, which were of significance, in Arendt’s construction.

Such an interpretation of Arendt’s former rhetorical acts is in no way inimical to her uptake and apparent avowal of the centrality of Ahabath Israel here either. For it is noteworthy that before naming Scholem’s main concept – “the point” – the self-avowed gist of his charge, Arendt deploys the tiny cautionary utterance, “what you call” (l. 243). For one thing, with this qualification Arendt constructs a distinction between what is and what “you” call. For another, she thereby also distances the object of that “call” from herself.

Stressing that something is said (“called”) rather than simply be might not suggest by logic its untrue nature, but does undermine its taken-for-grantedness and makes relevant the activity of Scholem in the first place. The “rhetorical stake” (Edwards and Potter, 1992) has therefore clearly been opened as what you call this way implies that someone else might call it otherwise. If not “someone else” in general, then me (i.e. Arendt) definitely, suggesting that this centre might be conceived entirely differently in its substance and significance by the two participants, their apparent agreement in its centrality notwithstanding.

In a similar vein, suspicion may be perceived to be cast on another related term used by Scholem: “love” in “love of the Jewish people” (l. 243). As we can see, there are two ways which Arendt makes “love” visible. One is presented with (l. 247, 248), and the
other without quotation marks (l. 250). It is constantly the former deployed whenever Arendt is talking about the “love”-s Scholem is perceived to have requested from her. On the one hand, certainly, they are the “loves” supposedly quoted from Scholem. Yet, as they are opposed to those love-s presented without quotation marks that Arendt actually claims to harbour, it can be suggested that quotation marks might not merely display the neutral function of signalling a quotation. Rather, just as “what you call” implied the rhetorical meaning of caution, suspicion, and a warning that we should not accept those terms and standards as taken for granted, the graphical “suspension” of these “loves”, likewise, might be taken to indicate not simply that they were requested by Scholem but that they are, from where Arendt stands, suspicious “loves” and suspicious requests.

Certainly, we do not know at this point what this divergence as to the meaning of the “point” and the indicated suspicion as to Scholem’s acts might consist of. We do not know why Arendt would hesitate using these phrases and appropriating them as her own. It is, however, clear that in some sort of, yet unspecified, aspect there is no agreement on the use of “the love of the Jewish people or Ahabath Israef”. This suggests that instead of being the golden standard, the starting point according to which the debate is lead, the very ground of Ahabath Israel might subsequently become a matter of contest instead of taken for granted. What is to be expected is, then, “the point” being taken in a wholly different way from what Scholem would aspire.169

Even more so that, as can be noticed, amongst these signs of caution and suspicion Arendt unashamedly displays within brackets her own lack of knowledge as far as Ahabath Israel is concerned. In fact, the closing “etc” (l. 246) within the brackets accomplishes an extreme case-formulation, suggesting that any information about the concept is welcome and, by implication, that Arendt does not know anything about it. Clearly, no mitigation of any sort is going on here, no pretension, just the display of the complete lack of knowledge. As such, instead of “defensive detailing” (Drew, 1998), it seems to be more like offensive detailing. The uncompromising indication (the ECF) of the complete lack of knowledge suggests that there is no problem with it and that what is lacking is, in one way or another, not central to the debate going on here. Scholem’s main

169 Cf. Billig’s analysis of Protagoras’ “if you like” in his dialogue with Socrates and later on his comments on Noam Chomsky’s role in the Faurisson-affair (1996: 54-55, 251).
and normative charge is reformulated thereby as something not at all essential in constructive terms to the current debate.

Moreover, professing her complete lack of knowledge Arendt not only challenges the importance of the concept but also affirms actually the observation of Scholem that there is "little trace" of Ahabath Israel in her. "You are quite right", as Arendt says; that is, she literally and pointedly agrees on this important point which was carefully and emphatically fashioned as a moral breach and as the cause for the book's immorality in Scholem's account. Surely, in the rhetorical context of the debate this "agreement" is actually the sign that they disagree just about everything (cf. Lynch and Bogen, 1996: 171).

Scholem's remark about the lack of Ahabath Israel, as analysed at length in the chapter 5, was not a simple descriptive statement, carrying in it some truth-value. It was a recognisable rhetorical act, that is, action done by words. And as an action it was certainly an implicit reprehension and a call for its opposite: the request or even the imperative to display Ahabath Israel. Consequently, Arendt's agreement rhetorically does not in the first place affirm the descriptive-constative statement. Its upshot is the opposite, since while it "agrees" with the explicit content, its "literal" recapitulating of Scholem's stance indicates a straightforward and full-scale opposition to his implicit message and to the rhetorical-prescriptive side of the original utterance. This firm disagreement with the implicit, rhetorical meaning, and the prescriptive aspect of Scholem's utterance is further enhanced by the words "indeed" (I. 250) and, earlier, "quite" (I. 246) in Arendt's answer. Hers is the right and, in fact, the only appropriate orientation. Hence, what was fashioned from one side as a moral charge is countered from the other as a credo.170

To sum up, Arendt's rhetoric has thus far indicated that instead of conformation, confrontation is to come; instead of adopting Scholem's discourse and adapting to it, she will take up and challenge it as a whole. She has no argument to appease him, no

170 Cf. "The rejection of the two attitudes - pleading innocent or pleading guilty - amounts to a rejection of the moral accusation device, since they are the two possible programmes often accused in that device [...] The suspicion of the denunciator not only prepares the rejection of the accusation, it opens the space for a redefinition of who the denunciator 'really' is" (Widmer, 2002: 124). See also Lynch and Bogen (1996:110-111) for the strategy of recontextualising a potentially damaging attribution as praise.
rhetorical move to soften her position in retrospect. No "mitigation" (Brown and Levinson, 1987), no "defensive detailing" (Drew, 1998), no "preference for agreement" (Pomerantz, 1984) is going on. Not even tricky "concessions" (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999) are on offer.

The "what you call" phrase, the quotation marks with which Scholem's "loves" were presented, the displayed complete lack of knowledge, and the enthusiastic affirmation of what had been constructed by Scholem as a moral breach are all rhetorical tools in reconstructing the participants' disagreement being not about a simple statement. The disagreement is about what this statement means and entails; about the discursive context that would give meaning and value to this statement. That Scholem's "point" is the centre of the debate is solely by dint of their evaluations differing fundamentally as to this "point"; that is, by being capable of exposing their fundamentally different standpoints. Thus, it is "spirit of contradiction" (Billig, 1996) that prevails.

Having analysed all these indications of a confrontation, let us, then, have a look in the following on the ensuing clash itself. How is *Ahabath Israel* reconstructed by Arendt in substance? And what is it that she finds so problematic in it that would warrant a counter-critique and the confrontation of values? How is, briefly, a shift accomplished from Arendt's activity and self-justification to that of Scholem — and his moral implication?

7.3.2. From *Ahabath* to Love: the reconstruction of a call for chauvinism

It is Arendt's engagement with *Ahabath Israel* that is to be analysed here in this subsection. It is an engagement, to be sure, that might turn out to be the cornerstone of a final and ultimate disengagement, just as Arendt indicated throughout her virtually complete dissatisfaction with Scholem's standards. How are, however, those standards reconstructed here and what is it that Arendt takes to be *Ahabath Israel*? The reconstruction already starts with Arendt's, formally, private inquiry.
As already noted, Arendt appears to profess her complete lack of knowledge of the concept in this utterance. She was taken thereby to imply the irrelevance of the concept in constructive terms to the debate. There is, however, surely more to this. At the very least, this utterance is a request to learn more about the concept and an inquiry into it. Thus, it is of importance that displaying her lack of knowledge in the most scientific and historical kind of inquiry, Arendt not only constitutes a context where this lack of knowledge is treated as a matter of course, but also highlights implicitly the relevance and significance of the concept in question in the realm of knowledge and cognition. It is, in brief, not (or should not be) a concept of practical importance in the first place but an object of cognition. Something that should be studied and inspected rather than (or before) actually lived. From Arendt’s standpoint, which is marked by a scientific and historic curiosity (that is, by an intellectual orientation), the proper place of Ahabath Israel is therefore not so much in the realm of a way of life, of practice but primarily in the realm of criticism, of theory, at least as far as its present relevance is concerned.

Arendt, thus, advocates the inherently discontinuous position of the “critic” to scrutinise, rather than automatically adopt concepts of practical relevance of calls to lead our lives in certain ways. Calls, however, that Scholem performed, objects that he did not scrutinise. Had it been otherwise, there would be no necessity for Arendt here to perform her inquiry whereby hinting at the utterance that Scholem should have made, the approach he should have adopted with regard to Ahabath Israel.

This reconstruction of their respective approaches and the implied divergence between them is but the first step on the road. Being wary of concepts from the past and of adopting a way of life might be an advisable position. What is, however, the warrant for its relevance in this particular case? The critical attitude that Arendt seems to be
adopting will surely not in itself do in illegitimating the concept and its embrace. Similarly, it does not entail the actual primacy of a reflective and critical stance towards it against a practical adoption of it as a way of life. What is the danger? What is the reason for the confrontation Arendt suggested earlier? Arendt has to spell out her actual problems with the concept and Scholem’s call for it. They come immediately after the brackets.

_Arendt explicitly spells out her “reasons” for adopting the stance with which Scholem charges her here. Formally, her statements merely seem to be simple personal ones about un-discussable and incomparable private features. It is her introducing affirmation (“You are quite right”) that explicitly puts her subsequent ideas into confrontation with Scholem’s reconstructed charge, however. As already noted above, to come up after a complaint or accusation with the firm affirmation of the reprehended position does not primarily orient to the original complaint in a factual manner to display personal consent. Rather, in emphasising and reflexively affirming Arendt’s own stance these “private” statements are to construct the normative and thereby public counter-ground, which should be attained by anyone. Thus, though Arendt literally tells us what she does not love and whom she does, what she rhetorically does is instructing us what_
ought not to be loved and who ought to be.\textsuperscript{171} These statements are, thus, not private matters but public examples. It is not despite of but through them that we have to decipher what Arendt finds enormously problematic in Scholem’s \textit{Ahabath Israel}.

Let us first observe, however, that Arendt’s construction not only re- or counter-evaluates Scholem’s utterances, not only reflects on something that is merely already given but again and again re-constructs those very claims. In her examples, Arendt completely ignores \textit{Ahabath Israel}, the idiom, and uses exclusively the “love of the Jewish people” version, the syntagm. There is no attention at all paid to the original Hebrew concept, embedded in “the Jewish tradition” and, likewise, there is no surrogate translation here either. \textit{Ahabath Israel} can be without any problem transferred from one culture to another and mean nonetheless the same. Or, more precisely, it can perhaps be transferred from “the Jewish tradition” to the German/English language to assess what it really means. Here, we arrive at two distinctly Western categories from the Hebrew idiom: the secular public-political entity (Jewish people) from \textit{Israel} and a Western private-emotional concept (Love) from \textit{Ahabath}. It is this formulation that makes it possible both to evaluate the connection between the object (people) and the predicament (I love) and to compare this particular syntagm with different ones with the same structure. Hence, to treat “love of the Jewish people” as a surface actualisation of the root-phrase, “I love you”.\textsuperscript{172}

As far as this “root-phrase” is concerned, Arendt broadly refers to two possibilities. It is the noted two sorts of “loves” that we encounter, a legitimate and desirable sort that Arendt affirms and which she presents without quotation marks, and the illegitimate and suspicious sort, suspended by the quotation marks. As to the former, we learn that the only objects Arendt loves are friends whereby she constructs the proper place of love only in private, intimate, face-to-face relationships. By consequence, of the objects – “peoples” – that Arendt does not love and no one presumably should, it is their

\textsuperscript{171} Cf. “Personal feelings and impressions are often expressed as widely shared value judgments” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 179).

\textsuperscript{172} Before we cry orientalist, however, let us not forget that it was \textit{Scholem} and not Arendt first, who translated the concept. His rhetoric to the contrary, he had no problem with the translation; no problem with mistranslating the \textit{Israel} part to “the Jewish people”; no problem to use \textit{Israel} instead of the available \textit{Yisrael} in the idiom; and no problem to use words such as “heartless” and “Herzenstakt” to effectively suggest \textit{continuity} instead of discontinuity. See my argumentation in chapter 5.

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aspect of collectives that is implied to be relevant. The hint, then, is that what Scholem requests here is a collectiv
e emotion.

Whether or not that is a shattering verdict in itself, we shall move on to investigate the actual candidates for this sort of suspicious “love”. The German, French and American peoples are, first, the ones amongst which Arendt spent her life. The message, therefore, appears to be that one should not generalise from his/her own life experience on the public-political platform. Secondly, however, the inclusion of the “working class” (l. 249) explicitly lends a further aspect to these collectives. Since the notion “love of the working class” arguably invokes the political position of the extreme left, of communism, it inevitably “politicises” those “loves” of the American, German, French (and, by analogy, Jewish) peoples as well. They will be read as particular examples of right wing politics. What is suggested here, therefore, is not merely that Scholem expects her to display emotions towards collectivities, but to let her private feelings into the public-political to inform her political allegiances.

All of this may be true, but would hardly sound convincing, however. That is, Arendt would perhaps be right on a theoretical level but could still be far removed from reality, where any sort of politician could spell out his/her love towards anything and without much further dangerous consequences. Arendt would in fact sound quite theoretical, quite abstract, and quite didactical. Had she, that is, not introduced the “German people” (l. 248). The self-love of the German people brings her arguments as down to Earth as they can get. What in the American and the French cases were scenarios that one cannot easily pin down historically or politically, in that of the Germans is one all-powerful reminder on the quasi-egoistic, racist self-love and the collective irrationalism of Nazi Germany.

Although Arendt certainly does not claim that the “love of German people” would equal Nazism and even less so that the “love” of the Jewish/French etc. people would, she does indeed imply that what Scholem requested in his letter was essentially a political path that had once already concluded in the gas chambers. It is, therefore, not merely that what was constructed a “concept” and an instance or metonym of practical “knowledge” was reconstructed – or, rather, unmasked – as an object of cognition, of theoretical and
critical knowledge. Rather, that it was but an instance of quasi-racism and collective irrationalism. While Scholem, at appearance, presented a solemn call or loving duty, Arendt represents it as being on the path of political extremism. Hardly any more serious counter-charge is imaginable.

In these passages, then, Arendt justified her previously implied stance that Scholem's "concept" should be approached with a cautious, critical eye. The "concept" itself and the orientation it informed were reconstructed as manifesting tendencies of collective irrationalism and egoistic, racist self-love. This practice can certainly be taken once again as the mirror image of Scholem's rhetorical acts, coupling the process of accounting with an implicit but extremely serious allegation and thereby not so much accounting for the position of her correspondent as illegitimating it.

From the address "dear Gerhard", we have arrived to the uncovering of a quasi-racist, quasi-chauvinistic call of collective irrationalism. Reprehensible as such a call was reconstructed to be, it is still left for us to recover the roots of such a call, however. What, namely, is the "ideology" that manifested itself in such a call? What is it that those "many people in Zionist circles", misguided or otherwise, became adherent to, and — to paraphrase the classic again — "how is it" (I. 50) that "dear Gerhard" adopted what was implied to be a quasi-racist position? These will be the topics of the next subsection.

7.3.3. The leap of chauvinism: the ideology of religious Zionism

This subsection, then, is to deal with the origin of Scholem's request of Ahabath Israel. As, in Arendt's text at least, such a call betrayed or masked a quasi-racist attitude, it is of the utmost importance where Arendt might locate it. What is that "ideology" that speaks this language and whose language Gershom Scholem speaks?

Such a task is especially daunting that Scholem himself, as analysed in chapter 5, did not offer a clue as to where such logic would come from, apart from implying the call being "Jewish". Hence, without explicitly identifying Ahabath Israel with the Jewish
people, without explicitly claiming that opposing this concept one would oppose the people as such, the implied thrust of the "un-specification" of the concept accomplished nevertheless precisely that. Such a construction implied, furthermore, that the moment Arendt disengages from or criticises Ahabath Israel, she disengages from and criticises in effect the Jewish people in toto.

Thus, as long as Ahabath Israel is something integral to the Jewish tradition and remains undistinguishable from the Jewish people, its criticism is on dangerous and possibly self-defeating grounds. No surprise, then, that Arendt quickly counters such rhetoric and its diffuse localisation. If we recall for a last time her notions presented within brackets "(Incidentally [...]" - I. 244-246), a contrastive rhetoric can be observed. While Scholem spoke about "the Jewish tradition" as the background of the concept suggesting an ever-present consideration and hence both the virtual unity of past and present, and "the Jewish people" represented by Ahabath Israel, Arendt inquires as to the "first" occurrence and introduction of this concept to "Judaism" (I. 245). Thus, she rhetorically severs the concept from the Jewish tradition or Judaism as such. Inquiring about the "first" occurrence, this invocation of temporality questions implicitly the role and relevance of the concept as it removes Scholem's implied "eternal" bond between Ahabath Israel and the Jewish tradition or Judaism. They are not the same. There is Jewish tradition without Ahabath Israel then and, theoretically, now. One does not need Ahabath Israel in order to be Jewish. Rather, specific interests, specific purposes in specific circumstances make one reach for it.

To remember, such an act of distancing and isolating has been a consistent rhetorical effort in Arendt's text at other points as well. Thus, Arendt did imply that what she is confronting is not the Jewish people and, consequently, not some sort of Jewish stance as such, but the "Jewish 'establishment'"; that is, a mere subgroup and its "sub-thought" within those. Though there is an obvious connection between the Jews and the "Jewish 'establishment'" they are not merely different, but the quotation marks indicate that there is even something illegitimate, suspicious, well, not kosher about that.

173 Reicher and Hopkins (1996, 2001a) make the point that politicians, even of allegedly non-nationalistic orientation, typically construct the largest possible ingroup as their natural allies. In the sphere of traditional party politics, it is inevitably that of the nation. On the rhetoric of inclusion see, furthermore, Reicher et al. (2006)
"establishment". Thus, it is not just that the "establishment" obviously does not equal the Jews; it does not personify the category and is not to be taken to speak in its name either – whatever the "establishment's" claims might be to the contrary. Likewise, being practised in "Zionist circles", though the "ideology" that Scholem's "mysterious" interpretative practice finally came down clearly had something to do with Zionism, it did not equal it.

However, if Ahabath Israel is but one concept in the ocean of Judaism, if it is by no means "the Jewish people" but the "Jewish 'establishment'”, and if it is not Zionism as such but an "ideological" degeneration within it; there are certain questions to be asked, then. What, namely, are that group (the "'establishment'") and what is the "ideology", which present themselves as the sole legitimate representatives of "the Jewish people? What is behind the "mask" of the intellectual, the loving critique? Who is using or, rather, abusing Ahabath Israel?

As to this problem, let us consider the utterance with which Arendt immediately follows up her two "reasons":

Extract 7.6.

242 [...] let me tell you of a
243 conversation I had in Israel with a prominent political personality who
244 was defending the – in my opinion disastrous – non-separation of
245 religion and state in Israel. What he said – I am not sure of the exact
246 words any more – ran something like this: "You will understand that, as
247 a Socialist, I, of course, do not believe in God; I believe in the Jewish
248 people." I found this a shocking statement and, being too shocked, I did
249 not reply at the time. But I could have answered: the greatness of this
250 people was once that it believed in God, and believed in Him in such a
251 way that its trust and love towards Him was greater than its fear. And
252 now this people believes only in itself? What good can come out of
253 that? – Well, in this sense I do not "love" the Jews, nor do I "believe" in

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them; I merely belong to them as a matter of course, beyond dispute or
argument.

This personal “conversation” is with obvious significance for the exchange itself and as to Scholem’s opinion. The way Arendt finishes her story equals the Jewish people’s “belief” in “itself” (which was the politician’s point or request) with the Jewish people’s “love” in themselves, which was Scholem’s point and request. In this way, the position and the argument against that Israeli politician might vicariously be read as the position and argument against Scholem, especially that Arendt makes it relevant that she did not come upon an answer then. That is, she virtually carries on the conversation and finding it relevant to answer it here and now to Scholem, she places him implicitly in the respective position of the former participant. As such, even if the actual conversation’s first part took place historically with the politician, it is Gershom Scholem that is constructed rhetorically as the actual or virtual participant in that conversation.

Even more so that Arendt’s rhetoric is to play down the importance and thereby the historic singularity of that actual past conversation. Let us note first, that Arendt did not even bother herself to name the actual-historical participant. This suggests yet again that the identity of that historical conversationalist is not important beyond the fact that she or he was a politician, that is, someone whose point of view is important as far as the policies of the state are concerned. What is of importance is the point of view, not the scene as an exact historical one. Moreover, Arendt further blurs the distinction between that once-happened past, the “historical conversation”, and the present by putting the exact wording into irrelevance. The point is certainly not whether she is being honest or dishonest when claiming to be unable to “recall”, but that thereby she rhetorically makes his otherwise unverifiable “exact words” of no significance. Thus, Arendt’s construction

174 Moreover, this politician was (contrary to what the personal pronoun indicates) Golda Meir. See Young-Bruehl (2004: 332-333). Cf. “Yesterday, I was invited to meet Golda Meir, snf we quarrelled until one in the morning — but without falling out, since she’s American — it was almost amicable. The issues — basically the question of constitution, the separation of church and state, the banning of mixed marriages along the lines of the existing Nuremberg Laws, in part quite outrageous” (Arendt and Blücher, 1996: 361). (Israel, to this day, does not have a written constitution. Cf. Avishai, 2002)
suggests that it is not the actual historical conversation that matters. Neither is it the exact wording. It is not that situation that matters. This one is "that". Her dispute is with Scholem as the politician's position is implied to be that of Scholem.

It is in this regard that the topic of the "conversation" is of highest importance. It is assigned to "the — in my opinion disastrous — non-separation of religion and state" (l. 244-245), where the other participant of the conversation wishes to defend this view. Separation of religion and state, the sacred and the public-political is a "matter-of-fact bedrock" of any post-Enlightenment, secular democracy. Indeed, as Arendt states elsewhere, the secular achievement.\(^{175}\) What she highlights in the line of defence of that "disastrous" "non-separation" is that certain concepts, feelings, and attitudes that once had been directed ultimately to the highest Being and thereby constituted absolute, non-disputable values — i.e. "to believe" and "to love" (l. 253) — are now redirected to a supposedly non-sacred and non-absolute entity. That is, to the state and the people. Concepts that were used in the language game of the Absolute are transferred to a language game of a secular-relative kind, yet retain their absolute claims. In her view, such a move is certainly illegitimate. Secular politics means first and foremost to discard the absolute entity and it is only through this that the process of rational (whatever that might be) deliberation can obtain its place in the practice of liberal democracies. It is one thing to believe in God (even that, we have to note, is described with the past tense in her formulation) and quite another to believe in a people and thereby endow it with sacred, un-criticisable qualities. What Arendt's ultimate concern is, thus, is a concept's path from one vocabulary or language game to quite another: from an absolute and sacred to a relative and secular; from absolute love towards the Highest Being to racist and egoistic self-love of a people.

If my interpretation as to the rhetorical meaning of this recalled "conversation" to the whole exchange is acceptable, it helps us then to reconstruct Arendt's way of conceptualising the whole dispute with Scholem. It tells us what that group is that lets

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\(^{175}\) "(...) secularization as a tangible historical event means no more than separation of Church and State, of religion and politics, and this, from a religious viewpoint, implies a return to the early Christian attitude of 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's' rather than a loss of faith and transcendence or a new and emphatic interest in the things of this world" (Arendt, 1998: 253). Cf. Arendt, 1994c; Rorty, 1999.
Ahabath Israel into the political realm and unwittingly degenerate to simple racism, and it tells us what that group is whose "ideology" accounts for the "mysterious" and "puzzling" interpretations of Scholem. It is an essentially religious Zionist political stance. Neither the politician, nor Scholem realise that the moment Ahabath Israel enters that realm of secular politics, it is not Ahabath Israel anymore but a quasi-racist call of "love of the Jewish people".

As is clear now, there is indeed agreement between the participants that Ahabath Israel constitutes the centre of the debate. However, what was a normative call for authentic representation in Scholem's text is a manifestation of a religious Zionist masquerading of a quasi-racist ideology in Arendt's.

As I maintained throughout, Arendt produced a mirror image of Scholem's construction. It was not merely that she reconstructed a misreading and the background assumptions of that misreading, not merely that the misreading turned thus out to be (im)morally motivated. On the top of all this, Arendt traced all these phenomena back to a basic mindset: accounting for Scholem's text hence meant uncovering the basis of Scholem's political and moral position.

In one respect, however, that image in the mirror is still incomplete. What Scholem's critique came eventually down to was a subject position with regard to the Jewish people. Such an aspect of the problem prompts, on one hand, the question of where the "independent" thinker, the critique stands and who s/he stands for. And for whom, one asks on the other hand, the religious Zionist. Who does the former feel threatened by the impending disaster? How is it that the latter did not realise it?

7.4. Being Used by or Abusing Ahabath Israel: From Ideology to Rhetoric and Back

What is to be analysed now is Arendt's conclusion to the topic of Ahabath Israel. In the paragraph that immediately succeeds the previous one Arendt explicitly proposes
to discuss the issue in “political terms”, promising whereby the expounding of “the love of the Jewish people” as well as her counter to it as political positions.

 Extract 7.7.
 269 We could discuss the same issue in political terms; and we should then
 270 be driven to a consideration of patriotism. That there can be no
 271 patriotism without permanent opposition and criticism is no doubt
 272 common ground between us. But I can admit to you something beyond
 273 that, namely, that wrong done by my own people naturally grieves me
 274 more than wrong done by other peoples. This grief, however, in my
 275 opinion is not for display, even if it should be the innermost motive for
 276 certain actions or attitudes. Generally speaking, the role of the “heart” in
 277 politics seems to me altogether questionable. You know as well as I how
 278 often those who merely report certain unpleasant facts are accused of
 279 lack of soul, lack of heart, or lack of what you call Herzenstakt. We both
 280 know, in other words, how often these emotions are used in order to
 281 conceal factual truth. I cannot discuss here what happens when emotions
 282 are displayed in public and become a factor in political affairs; but it is
 283 an important subject, and I have attempted to describe the disastrous
 284 results in my book On Revolution in discussing the role of compassion
 285 in the formation of the revolutionary character.
 286 […]

Again, we have to face that this paragraph is ambiguous in many respects. For one thing, Arendt appears to start here with the appropriation of the venerable position one can adopt with regard to its people or nation: patriotism. As has been remarked by many scholars of the topic, patriotism is often invoked, explicitly or implicitly, to advocate a positive affiliation to the people or the nation, yet one that is in contrast to the likes of
nationalism and chauvinism. The implied difference is patriotism's alleged "positive attachment" towards one's nation (or people), in contrast to negative feelings and hostility against out-groups that, in addition, characterise nationalism and chauvinism. Hence, regardless of the actual scientific validity of this distinction, it would be reasonable to suppose that Arendt invokes here "patriotism" precisely to oppose it to its vicious and outwardly destructive dialogical counter-parts (nationalism or chauvinism or tribalism), so as to contrast her own position with that of Scholem.

Things are not, however, that simple. To start with, we do not learn much here about this "patriotism". It might stand for the positive and opposing value to Ahabath Israel but, in any case, it is not made explicit by Arendt. Nor is the connection between her subject position and "patriotism" clear at all and there is no explicit ground in this utterance to prove that she constructs herself here as a "patriot". Moreover, her construction of Jewishness as a given rather than a made, her tagging this construction "pre-political" as well as her remark just before the utterance dealt with here "I merely belong to them [i.e.. to the Jewish people] as a matter of course, beyond dispute or argument" (I. 266-267), appear even to exclude any political stance with regard to the "Jewish people".

Yet, again, the way Arendt continues betrays both a certain connection to "patriotism" as well as to its value. Namely, the personal "confession" that "wrong done by my own people naturally grieves me more" (I. 273) echoes the notion of "permanent opposition and criticism" (I. 271), which was constructed to be the literal sine qua non of "patriotism". Arendt does not specify the nature of that "opposition" and it is left in ambiguity whether it is inside or just outside of that political position. But the point of importance is not this either. On one hand, it is this unspecified and vague "opposition" that guarantees the very existence of that political stance of "patriotism". On the other, one can suppose that the lack of "patriotism" would not mean the immediate and neutral

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177 As noted in chapter 2, Arendt was more outspoken about her belonging in a political sense in her earlier writings and did even call herself a "patriot". Cf. Arendt, 2007: 169, 171, etc.
178 Again, in some of her essays in the 1940s, Arendt was explicit as to where this opposition belongs and to what it contributes to. Cf. "Every believer of democratic government knows the importance of loyal opposition" (Arendt, 1978e: 184).
vanishing of that political position. Rather, its immediate degeneration and relapse into something like an atavistic and chauvinistic political position. Why is there the need for that “permanent opposition and criticism” and why the normative stance of permanent “grief” otherwise? 179 Therefore, though we are acquainted neither with a clear sense of this “patriotism”, nor with that of Arendt’s position with regard to that, the threat of its absence or degeneration can nevertheless be assessed. There is no patriotism without dissent, and there is a “disastrous” remainder one can imagine without patriotism.

Where does this, however, leave Scholem? Is his approach of Ahabath Israel an instance of “patriotism” or not? This question is only partly disingenuous and fake-naïve. Albeit Arendt’s downright opposition to the call for a “love of the Jewish people” and her likening it to the egoistic racist self-love of “the German people” make him hardly a convincing candidate, interestingly enough, Arendt’s statement as to the indispensability of “permanent opposition” for “patriotism” is bolstered by what is constructed to be Scholem’s explicit involvement. Arendt characterises her position as being “no doubt common ground between us” (l. 271-272). Furthermore, the same agreement is imagined to Arendt’s assertion of the second half of the paragraph, describing the danger in certain acts as “you know as well” (l. 277) and “we both know” (l. 279-280).

Constructing this consensus, Arendt certainly once again presents her own position as a reasonable one. We do not know what “patriotism” here might be conceived of, but it can nevertheless be presumed to be a reasonable, constructive thing. We do not know, what and where “permanent opposition” might be, but we do know that Arendt’s stance is indispensable for it. As she does not expound either of these concepts, rhetorically speaking it is the construction of consensus that does the job.

Yet, to achieve consensus and reasonability, it would not have been necessary to single out Scholem’s affirmation. The universal “we” would have certainly been enough. The constant and explicit inclusion of Scholem in making these statements shifts therefore the emphasis from these positions being reasonable positions to them being

179 Again, I take the utterance “wrong done by my own people naturally grieves me more than wrong done by other peoples” normative, rather than just private and personal because of the use of “naturally”. The necessity this adverb communicates cannot conceivably be biological. Just as with Arendt’s “personal” examples of whom she loves and whom she does not, therefore, this statement reveals what every relevant person in question ought to do.

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Scholem's positions. It is, thus, not merely that Arendt makes reasonable statements. It is, emphatically, that they are Scholem's (or "dear Gerhard's") convictions as well.

All the more it is striking, then, that it is this very position and this very conviction that Scholem in practice is constructed to have transgressed in the selfsame moment/line:

 Extract 7.8.

277 [...] You know as well as I how often those who merely report certain
278 unpleasant facts are accused of lack of soul, lack of heart, or lack of
279 what you call Herzenstakt. We both know, in other words, how often
280 these emotions are used in order to conceal factual truth. [...] 

Even though Arendt uses the general subject to describe the acts of those who "accuse" and aspire to "conceal factual truth" (l. 280), the acts performed by this general and implied "them" are clearly the ones that were performed by Scholem. "Lack of heart" (l. 278) is an inevitable hint to "heartlessness" (l. 55) and "Herzenstakt" (l. 73 and 279) is the exact word Scholem used. Even if he "knows" (l. 277), then, his acts transgress and contradict that "knowledge". It is the appearance-reality device that has surfaced here again as the reasonable Scholem, that is, the one that is on the "common ground between with us" – who knows "as well as I" and whom "we both now" with – is immediately contrasted here by an unreasonable one, who appears to contravene the very content of that "knowledge" and "common ground".

Nevertheless, what has happened here is more than a simple reminder of Scholem's call of Ahabath Israel and the implied quasi-racist tendencies in it. While Ahabath Israel has already been introduced by Arendt, actions such as "accusation" (l. 278) and "concealing" (l. 280) have not. This state of affairs signals a conceptual change. Until this point, Ahabath Israel has been treated, at worst, as an "emotion" or an "ideology" that "has become" intolerant to any diversion from its "beaten track" and hence caused Scholem's "misunderstanding". As is demonstrated in Arendt's comments

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on her own “grief”, however, she does not conceive of “emotions” as private entities of interest. “Grief” (as well as “love”, one supposes) can be an “innermost motive” but it must not be displayed in public (I. 274-276). To quote from the relevant passages of *On Revolution*: “To bring the ‘irrationality’ of desires and emotions under the control of rationality was, of course, a thought dear to the Enlightenment, and as such was quickly found wanting in many respects, especially in its facile and superficial equation of thought with reason and of reason with rationality” (Arendt, 1990: 95). The concern, therefore, is not with “emotions” (“ideologies”, interests, motives etc.) per se, and not any more (or not primarily) why Scholem was overcome by “emotions”, “ideologies”, however “dark” or racist they may be. Rather, why and for what purpose he uses them.

Such a re-conceptualisation of the main concern leads to two subsequent entailments. First, as damaging as Arendt’s analogy of the “love” of the “German people” was, it only depicted a situation that exposed the political-moral position of someone that was for some unknown reason – by chance, necessity or somehow by deliberation: we could not know – overcome by collective emotions, ideology, convictions. Explicitly, it is some “larger-than-life” forces that were on display, not the persons. However, by locating the field of contest in the public (discourse), instead of the private (thought), by continuing in the letter “[…] when emotions are displayed in public […]” (I. 281-282), it is an explicit agent and an action that have been constructed by Arendt. One is not merely overcome by emotions; one “uses” them. Thereby, it is one’s political and moral responsibility that becomes the heart of the matter. The emphasis therefore is not on Scholem having been “influenced” (whereby the political-moral responsibility would mostly be shifted to the “establishment”) but that it is him that “accuses”, him that “conceals”, him that “manipulates” rather than being influenced by manipulation, and him that causes “misunderstanding” rather than being the victim of a “campaign”.

Yet, it is not him. He, after all, “knows” as well as Arendt (I. 277). It is those “who accuse with lack of Herzenstakt” (I. 277)

However, we must not neglect the second aspect of the shift from “emotions” as private qualities to “emotions” as rhetorical tools either. What are the likes of *Ahabath Israel* aimed at? What are they “used” for? To return to our question posed in the
beginning of this chapter: what does that “independence” and what that “ideology” stand for? However vicious and reprehensible that quasi-racist “ideology” of religious Zionism was implied to be, what it did not question was the positive attitude Scholem’s call for Ahabath Israel expressed towards the in-group, towards the Jewish people, that is. Little wonder. How on Earth could “love” not be benevolent to its object? True, it might neglect the out-group. It might be downright hostile to them but its main concern is, nevertheless, the in-group. It is here that we encounter the main conundrum.

For regardless whether Arendt or Scholem are themselves in fact patriots, the main point here is that Arendt’s projected approach was depicted as the sine qua non of “patriotism”, while Scholem’s circle uses of “emotions” is about to destroy it. Those who “accuse of lack of soul, lack of heart or lack of […] Herzenstakt” others that “merely report certain unpleasant facts”, those who use “these emotions […] in order to conceal factual truth” (I. 277-281) will clearly not tolerate any sort of “opposition”, let alone a “permanent” one (I. 271). Those who use these emotional concepts as rhetorical tools will not simply be hostile to the “out-group” but will aim at stifling internal dissent and thereby destroying patriotism.

The fundamental conflict is therefore not being conceptualised here by Arendt as primarily a conflict between “human” and “Jewish” interests. While she contests Scholem’s standard and does not hesitate to reject the authority of Ahabath Israel, she does accept the field of interest (that of the Jewish people) and does not claim to serve other, let alone higher ones. Thus, the political position expressed by the call for Ahabath Israel is not so much treated here as an inwardly comforting, outwardly aggressive ideology, but one whose main attempt is to silence dissent and to achieve uniformity within the ranks. What this “ideology” of religious Zionism does is not the retention of the authenticity, the recovery of the spirit and protection the soul of Judaism. It simply exploits what once used to be a religion, to advance and make un-criticisable its own political ends. Instead of solemnity, the use of such concepts merely masks not only an essentially racist enterprise but also a downright totalitarian one that – far from embracing “the Jewish people” in effect – is the enemy of “patriotism” and, one should concede, of that very Jewish people itself.
“Dear Gerhard”, then, appears to be all but gone. Though no conclusive answer can be given as to Scholem’s subject position, Arendt’s is a rather desperate picture. He might just have been overcome, “influenced” (l. 290) and “manipulated” (l. 293). But there is simply not a single positive action in Arendt’s letter that would distinguish him from the ““establishment””. An ““establishment”” that, to be sure, speaks not for the Jews but against them. Who will speak for the Jews? That must be the “independent” thinker. That s/he does not claim to do so should not embarrass our judgment. After all, the ““establishment”” derived its authority from its “love” of the community. Yet, that authority was used in order to choke that community. The “independent” thinker surely cannot be expected to outbid the ““establishment”” in its rhetoric and to answer, “No, we love the Jewish people!”180 The invocation and the rhetorical endearment of the collective, s/he would feel immediately corrupting. Nevertheless, that independence of hers/his is less of the philosopher than, say, that of “the reporters, the historians, and finally the poets” (Arendt, 1978g: 276). Not that it is without thinking-qualities, of course. But it primarily characterises a person who is amidst the cave, within its people, rather than under the sun and separated from them.

His/her concerns are with that of the cave and her people dwelling in it. *Fiat veritas, et pereat mundus,* s/he does not say.181

### 7.6. Conclusion

The mirror image has thus been accomplished. Intriguingly, the concerns of our participants were the same, while pointing to diametrically opposite directions. Thus, though Arendt claimed not to “love” the Jewish people and unmasked such a call as a

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180 Legend has it that “on one occasion [...] when Ahad Ha-Am met [Max] Nordau in this life, Nordau asked: ‘Are you a Zionist, or not?’ and Ahad Ha-Am replied: ‘I am a Zionist’, with the emphasis on the first personal pronoun” (Translator’s introduction to Ahad Ha’Am [1970]).

181 Latin proverb: Let justice be done though the world may perish.
demand for lack of criticism/dissent, her “naturally” felt “grief” could have just as well branded as love. Indeed, having categorically rejected love, she finishes the paragraph: “Well, in this sense I do not ‘love’ the Jews, nor do I ‘believe’ in them; I merely belong to them as a matter of course, beyond dispute or argument” (I. 265-267). In this sense, she does not. In what sense does she?

That “grief”, moreover, constituted the political position of “patriotism”, which, again, Arendt did not claim to be her own. “Opposition”, “independence”, differing “opinions” were never explicitly tied to the interest of the Jewish people or to Zionism. Yet, just as without explicitly claiming to do so Arendt turned out to speak for the “simple Jews”, her rhetoric – regardless of its actual veridicality – ended up attacking the religious Zionist ideology of the “‘establishment’” for the position of the patriot.

The intellectual, then, did not betray Rationality, Reason, Humanity, or the likes. The secular revolution means discarding God in questions of politics, not merely replacing him. What was betrayed was his/her community. Yet again, not that it is the proper kind of love that is needed. That, presumably, s/he would feel immediately corrupting. Loyalty is shown, rather than claimed. Just as in the parabola on Kurt Blumenfeld:

*Extract 7.9.*

225 [...] There is such a thing as a basic  
226 gratitude for everything that is as it is; for what has been *given* and was  
227 not, could not be, *made*; for things that are *physei* and not *nomo*. To be  
228 sure, such an attitude is pre-political, but in exceptional circumstances –  
229 such as the circumstances of Jewish politics – it is bound to have also  
230 political consequences though, as it were, in a negative way. This  
231 attitude makes certain types of behavior impossible – indeed precisely  
232 those which you chose to read into my considerations. (To give another  
234 example: In his obituary of Kurt Blumenfeld, Ben-Gurion expressed his  
235 regret that Blumenfeld had not seen fit to change his name when he  
236 came to live in Israel. Isn’t it obvious that Blumenfeld did not do so for
237 exactly the same reasons that had led him in his youth to become a
238 Zionist?) [...] This is the parabola of independence and, surprisingly perhaps, of Zionism. The
“authentic” (Ben-Gurion’s position) is presented here as a mere facade, a mere appearance and the reality (Blumenfeld’s position) as something counter-intuitive and non-conformist. Whether such could possibly be, a “reason” to become Zionist might seem rather incredible. Whether one can be a Jewish patriot or just, in certain circumstances, a “simple Jew” on that basis might make one lament. In any case, “dear Gerhard” changed his name: Gershom, by the way, originally meaning “I have been a stranger in a foreign land” (Exodus, 2:22). We are at home, then, somewhere.
8. Conclusion

We are certainly not home, as yet.

Up to now I have attempted to present the arguments of the participants and resisted from evaluating them. As far as discourse analysis goes, this is to approach texts with the celebrated notion of ethnomethodological indifference, where those evaluative aspects (i.e. beauty and truth) are completely left to the participants themselves. Local constructions of something being true, false, beautiful etc. are to be analysed, rather than these judgments “imposed” on participants, according to the scientific or moral standards of the analyst. To be sure, as related to in the methodological chapter, that indifference in this sense is neither wholly possible, nor necessarily desirable. Hence, I would ascertain that to evade explicit acts of evaluation here was done merely out of convenience. I did not want to interrupt the flow of arguments.

At this point, however, I do not think that pretending the absolute worth of ethnomethodological indifference is useful. What is, namely, an analysis that presents us with powerful alternatives in significant questions, and yet does not aim at answering who is actually right or, better, what it entails if one of the alternatives is right?

Is Arendt’s an essentially anti-Semitic book? And is lack of Ahabath Israel (kind of a normative, Jewish way of life) an indication or even a cause of the Jewish author being in the state of quasi-pathological, Jewish self-hatred?

Or, alternatively, is Eichmann in Jerusalem a perfectly moral book? And is Scholem’s interpretation itself the “exploitation of those who really suffered the most, in the interest of the “Jewish functionaries”? Is his Ahabath Israel, instead of the solemn call of an interpretative community, a rhetorical tool to mask religious Zionist ideology and the attempt to choke public dissent and criticism?

182 For exceptions see footnotes 114, 162, 163, 165 for example.
Two things must be perfectly clear. For one thing, one cannot shy away from these questions. In a way, they are the crux of the matter and without even raising and measuring them the analysis is, at best, incomplete. For another, however, they are not easy questions either. What discourse analysis in this thesis did was not helping us with easy answers as to who is right but, on the contrary, to appreciate how complex exactly the answer to these sorts of questions is. It was pointedly not the case that our participants accepted each others’ standards upon which we, now, could allocate truth and falsity. It was that they contested those very standards and this, as the analysis hopefully brought it out, was done not merely in the name of truth and falsity, but in that of morality and politics.

Thus, it is vital to note that for all her efforts to establish it to the contrary, it was not the case that Arendt simply unmasked Scholem’s acts of interpretations and showed that his version – while invoking the idea of the category “the Jews” – was but a cover-up for the interests of the “functionaries” at the detriment of the “simple Jews”. It is not that Arendt’s superior knowledge of the concentration camps and the ghettos pointed out some epistemological deficiencies in Scholem’s construction. Arendt’s representation of the dividing lines within the Jewish community is no more accurate as to the real situation than Scholem’s unified description of it. It is no more accurate to claim the Shoah being extreme in cases and extreme as such.

Rather, while Arendt concentrates on, say, sociological and historical variables, Scholem concentrates on the fact that, yes, all Jews were essentially meant to be dead. Faced with such a choice, it must be acknowledged that it is neither an absurdly inaccurate representation of the event, nor a merely immoral one that masks the interests of the “functionaries”. Taken metaphorically, it is neither absurd, nor immoral to talk about every single Jew (functionary or not) as dead and conceive of his/her actions within the framework of death. There is no more accuracy in analysing their freedom of choice in terms of their sociological status than in conferring extremity (and, hence, the irrelevance of freedom of choice) to their existential status as Jews-to-die. To evaluate these two constructions, then, the first choice that must be made is whether we wish to see those subjects of genocide as Jews or as general subjects to certain instances of Nazi policy, and whether it is the
Jewish tragedy that we would like to emphasise or that “totality of the collapse in moral standards”. The latter is not to argue that it is an unimportant aspect of the genocide that its victims of this were the Jews. Rather, it is to understand them as not being constitutive of the nature of this crime.

This choice is not easy to arrive at all, especially that it is not made unequivocally by the participants either. In one sense or another, Arendt considers these subjects’ Jewish identity as taken-for-granted in both her book and in the correspondence. She nowhere questions that this “identity” was meant to be exterminated. Likewise, Scholem’s “I was not there” – which is the ultimate conclusion of his conceptualisation of the moral status of the subjects as essentially dead – should theoretically thwart judging those “saints” and “swines” (l. 208-209) that he does judge nonetheless.

Yet, to concentrate on them being Jews as mostly relevant/constitutive or irrelevant of the nature of the matter does result in certain political consequences. This can be seen somewhat more clearly in considering the issue of Ahabath Israel.

To repeat the questions: is Ahabath Israel a legitimate call for a way of life and for a Jewish politics? And is the Jew that is not paying honour to it probable to fail from a moral point of view? Or is “love of the Jewish people” but a call for chauvinism and a mere rhetorical ploy to stifle internal dissent? And is Ahabath Israel simply a rhetorical mask on this state of affairs, to abuse the past in order to gain advances in the present?

Again, these questions come down to the ultimately cultural, moral, and political question of who we conceive the subject of these utterances to be. While both participants make gestures as to this subject being a Jew and even a Zionist, there are considerable rifts here on display. As I noted in the conclusion of chapter 7, commendable as Kurt Blumenfeld’s (Arendt’s ideal Zionist’s) independence was, it is hard to see why anyone would become a Zionist just because of independence. How would and could anyone conduct Jewish

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183 Not that such choice would make either of the versions spotless. In Arendt’s case, the very analogy between the “Jewish functionaries” and the “SS-murderers” is begging for account and justification. In Scholem’s case, what must be accounted for is a bit more intricate. It is his own use of Jew relying and mobilising Jewish history and tradition while appropriating the Nazis definition as to who should count as a Jew, hence, who should die. Jewish tradition had not much say in it. Moreover, even that Nazi definition and verdict was not unequivocal. In practice, who is a Jew, a half-Jew, a quarter-Jew and who of these should die (i.e. who is “dead” in Scholem’s construction) varied almost from situation to situation and presented Nazi policymakers with considerable problems.
politics without the use of concepts specific to the adjective (i.e. Jewish) in the construction? By the same token, though Scholem undoubtedly concentrated on the adjective (Jewish), and at times seemed to present it as entirely immanent and exempt from standards not contained already within itself, he himself clearly contradicted this very construction. While using Ahabath Israel, there did not seem to be any problem in translating it to English/German and using this translation's connotations; and likewise, there was no apparent problem with using the German word Herzenstakt elucidating aspects of this criticism – an emphatically Jewish criticism.

And so it should be. One could, after all, claim that for all the efforts to establish extremes – the self-contained Jewish politics and the non-Jewish Jewish politics –, neither of them can in itself work, not, in any case, without contradicting its own definition. This brings us to a problem (the problem more precisely) underlying this exchange and spelling out its political consequences. On one hand, it concerns the question of where the emphasis should be in Israel being a Jewish democracy, if there should be an emphasis at all. On the other, it raises the painful question of the Diaspora Jew’s relationship to that country (which announces him/her to be her automatic/potential citizen) and to the group of the Jews in general (to which the ideology of Nazi Germany and/or Jewish tradition allocate him/her so single-handedly).

Again, there are clear-cut answers: one deriving from the complete separation of the citizenship/state and religion/ethnos and another from the complete or at least un-reflected unity of them. Though neither of these principles will do the job in itself, let me for once put the emphasis on the importance of choosing one of them. Even if they are abstractions or ideals, it does matter which ideal one wishes to pursue.

In relation to this, let me tell of a scene I once thought being the most idealistic at the time I encountered. A friend of mine – having survived the Holocaust in the ghetto of Budapest as a baby, he immigrated to Israel in the 1970s and opted subsequently then to live in the Netherlands – told me of an imagined Israeli Jew wandering somewhere abroad. Presented with an option, he naturally chooses the
companionship of a country-mate of his (an Arab, of course), instead of a stranger from a country he never heard of and with whom no language, no religion and no history (!) binds him together. (A Jew, certainly.)

The lesson seemed to be (meant to be) clear and idealistic, as it surely is. It would envisage a country that belongs to its citizens, rather than to just one ethnic group within (or beyond!) its boundaries. It would prevent cultural or religious problems intruding into the realms of politics and the law. Leaving everything else aside, however, more and more I found myself thinking about the very simple question of what, according to this cheerful scenario, would happen to the third person. Who is s/he supposed to talk? Who would listen to his/her dysfunctional, catastrophic memories? No one, of course. This is just as well to say that politics is better off without anachronistic identities and catastrophic memories.

That third person will hopefully understand this and somehow dissipate from the scene smoothly.\textsuperscript{184} In the cheerful march of progress, there is no place for even a streak of elegia.

\textsuperscript{184} If they let him/her, that is.
Appendix

"Eichmann in Jerusalem" -- An Exchange of Letters between
Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt

Jerusalem, June 23, 1963

DEAR HANNAH,

Six weeks have passed since I received your book on the Eichmann trial; and, if I write belatedly, it is because only now do I have the leisure to devote myself to a proper study of it. I have not, let me say, gone into the question of the factual and historical authenticity of the various statements you make. To judge by your treatment of those aspects of the problem with which I happen to be familiar, however, I fear that your book is not free of error and distortion. Still, I have no doubt that the question of the book's factual authenticity will be taken up by other critics - of whom there will be many - and it is not in any case central to the critique I wish to offer here.

Your book moves between two poles: the Jews and their bearing in the days of catastrophe, and the responsibility of Adolf Eichmann. I have devoted, as you know, a good part of my time to a consideration of the case of the Jews, and I have studied a not insignificant volume of

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185 The exchange was originally published in the *Encounter* magazine (January, 1964) and reprinted in Arendt (1978: 240-251). The present version is the line-by-line transcription of the latter except for the date "1391" (instead of 1931, see Arendt (1978: 241) in line 32. The reasons for this see in fn. 101.
material on the subject. I am well aware, in common with every other spectator of the events, how complex and serious, how little reducible or transparent, the whole problem is. I am aware that there are aspects of Jewish history (and for more than forty years I have concerned myself with little else) which are beyond our comprehension; on the one hand, a devotion to the things of this world that is near-demonic; on the other, a fundamental uncertainty of orientation in this world – an uncertainty which must be contrasted with that certainty of the believer concerning which, alas, your book has so little to report. There has been weakness, too, though weakness so entwined with heroism that it is not easily unravelled; wretchedness and power-lust are also to be found there. But these things have always existed, and it would be remarkable indeed if, in the days of catastrophe, they were not to make their appearance once again. Thus it was in the year of 1391, at the beginning of that generation of catastrophe; and so it has been in our own time. The discussion of these matters is, I believe, both legitimate and unavoidable – although I do not believe that our generation is in a position to pass any kind of historical judgment. We lack the necessary perspective, which alone makes some sort of objectivity possible – and we cannot but lack it.

Nevertheless, we cannot put these questions aside. There is the question thrown at us by the new youth of Israel: why did they allow themselves to be slaughtered? As a question, it seems to me to have a profound justification; and I see no readily formulated answer to it. At each decisive juncture, however, your book speaks only of the weakness of the Jewish stance in the world. I am ready enough to admit this weakness; but you put such emphasis upon it that, in my view, your account ceases to be objective and acquires overtones of malice. The problem, I have admitted, is real enough. Why, then, should your book leave one with so strong a sensation of bitterness and shame – not for
the compilation, but for the compiler? How is it that your version of the
events so often seems to come between us and the events – events which
you rightly urge upon our attention? Insofar as I have an answer, it is
one which, precisely out of my deep respect for you, I dare not suppress;
and it is an answer that goes to the root of our disagreement. It is that
heartless, frequently almost sneering and malicious tone with which
these matters, touching the very quick of our life, are treated in your
book to which I take exception.

In the Jewish tradition there is a concept, hard to define and yet concrete
enough, which we know as Ahabath Israel: “Love of the Jewish
people....” In you, dear Hannah, as in so many intellectuals who came
from the German Left, I find little trace of it. A discussion such as is
attempted in your book would seem to me to require – you will forgive
my mode of expression – the most old-fashioned, the most circumspect,
the most exacting treatment possible – precisely because of the feelings
aroused by this matter, this matter of the destruction of one-third of our
people – and I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people, and in no
other way. Thus I have little sympathy with that tone – well expressed
by the English word “flippancy” – which you employ so often in the
course of your book. To the matter of which you speak it is
unimaginable inappropriate. In circumstance such as these, would there
not have been a place for what I can only describe with that modest
German word – “Herzenstakt”? You may laugh at the word although I
hope you do not for I mean it seriously. Of the many examples I came
upon in your book – and came upon not without pain – non expresses
better what I mean than your quotation (taken over without comment
from a Nazi source!) about the traffic with the armbands with the Star of
David in the Warsaw Ghetto, or the sentence about Leo Baeck “who in
the eyes of both Jews and Gentiles was the ‘Jewish Führer’....” The use
of the Nazi term in this context is sufficiently revealing. You do not
speak, say, of the “Jewish leader,” which would have been both apt and
free of the German word's horrific connotation — you say precisely the
thing that is most false and most insulting. For nobody of whom I have
heard or read was Leo Baeck — whom we both knew — ever a "Führer"
in the sense which you here insinuate to the reader. I too have read
Adler's book about Theresienstadt. It is a book about which a great
many things could be said. But it was not my impression that the author
— who speaks of some people of whom I have heard quite different
accounts, with considerable harshness — it was not my impression that
Adler ever spoke of Baeck in this fashion, either directly or indirectly.
Certainly, the record of our people's suffering is burdened with a
number of questionable figures who deserve, or have received, their just
punishment: how could it have been otherwise in a tragedy on so
terrible a scale? To speak of all this, however, in so wholly
inappropriate a tone — to the benefit of those Germans in condemning
whom your book rises to greater eloquence than in mourning the fate of
your own people — this is not the way to approach the scene of that
tragedy.

In your treatment of the problem of how the Jews reacted to these
extreme circumstances — to which neither of us was exposed — I detect,
often enough, in place of balanced judgment, a kind of demagogic will-
to-overstatement. Which of us can say today what decisions the elders
of the Jews — or whatever we choose to call them — ought to have
arrived at in the circumstances? I have not read less than you have about
these matters, and I am still not certain; but your analysis does not give
me confidence that your certainty is better founded than my uncertainty.
There were the Judenräte, for example; some among them were swine,
others were saints. I have read a great deal about both varieties. There
were among them also many people in no way different from ourselves,
who were compelled to make terrible decisions in circumstances that we
cannot even begin to reproduce or reconstruct. I do not know whether
they were right or wrong. Nor do I presume to judge. I was not there.

Certainly, there were people in Theresienstadt – as every former inmate can confirm – whose conduct is deserving of the severest judgment. But in case after case we find that the individual verdict varies. Why was Paul Epstein, one of these “questionable figures,” shot by the Nazis for example? You give no reason. Yet the reason is clear enough: he had done precisely that which according to you he could afford to do without serious danger – he told people in Theresienstadt what awaited them at Auschwitz. Yet he was shot twenty-four hours later.

Nevertheless, your thesis that these machinations of the Nazis served in some way to blur the distinction between torturer and victim – a thesis which you employ to belabor the prosecution in the Eichmann trial – seems to me wholly false and tendentious. In the camps, human beings were systematically degraded; they were, as you say, compelled to participate in their own extermination, and to assist in the execution of fellow-prisoners. Is the distinction between torturer and victim thereby blurred? What perversity! We are asked, it appears, to confess that the Jews, too, had their “share” in the acts of genocide. That is a typical quaternio terminorum.

Recently, I have been reading about a book, written during the days of catastrophe in full consciousness of what lay ahead, by Rabbi Moses Chaim Lau of Piotrkov. This rabbi attempted to define as precisely as possible what was the duty of the Jew in such extremities. Much that I read on this moving and terrible book – and it does not stand alone – is congruent with your general thesis (though not with your tone). But nowhere in your book do you make plain how many Jews there were who acted as they did in full consciousness of what awaited them. The Rabbi in question went with his flock to Treblinka – although he had previously called on them to run away, and his flock has called on him to do likewise. The heroism of the Jews was not always the heroism of the warrior; nor have we always been ashamed of that fact. I cannot
refute those who say that the Jews deserved their fate, because they did
not take earlier steps to defend themselves, because they were cowardly,
etc. I came across this argument only recently in a book by that honest
Jewish anti-semite, Kurt Tucholsky. I cannot express myself, of course,
with Kurt Tucholsky’s eloquence, but I cannot deny that he was right: if
all the Jews had run away – in particular, to Palestine – more Jews
would have remained alive. Whether, in view of the special
circumstances of Jewish history and Jewish life, that would have been
possible, and whether it implies a historical share of guilt in Hitler’s
crime, is another question.

I shall say nothing concerning that other central question of your book:
the guilt, or the degree of guilt, of Adolf Eichmann. I have read both the
text of the judgement delivered by the Court, and the version you
substituted for it in your book. I find that of the Court rather more
convincing. Your judgment appears to me to be based on a prodigious
non sequitur. Your argument would apply equally to those hundreds of
thousands, perhaps millions of human beings, to whom your final
sentence is relevant. It is the final sentence that contains the reason why
Eichmann ought to be hanged, for in the remainder of your text you
argue in detail your view – which I do not share – that the prosecution
did not succeed in proving what it had set out to prove. As far as that
goes, I may mention that, in addition to putting my name to a letter to
the President of Israel pleading for the execution not to be carried out, I
set out a Hebrew essay why I held the execution of the sentence – which
Eichmann had in every sense, including that of the prosecution,
deserved – to be historically wrong, precisely because of our historical
relationship with the German people. I shall not argue the case again
here. I wish to say only that your description of Eichmann as a “convert
to Zionism” could only come from somebody who had a profound
dislike of everything to do with Zionism. These passages in your book I
find quite impossible to take seriously. They amount to a mockery of
Zionism; and I am forced to the conclusion that this was, indeed, your intention. Let us not pursue the point.

After reading your book I remain unconvinced by your thesis concerning the “banality of evil” — a thesis which, if your sub-title is to be believed, underlies your entire argument. This new thesis strikes me as a catchword: it does not impress me, certainly, as the product of profound analysis — an analysis such as you gave us so convincingly, in the service of a quite different, indeed contradictory thesis in your book on totalitarianism. At that time you had not yet made your discovery, apparently, that evil is banal. Of that “radical evil,” to which your then analysis bore such eloquent and erudite witness, nothing remains but this slogan — to be more than that it would have to be investigated, at a serious level, as a relevant concept in moral philosophy or political ethics. I am sorry — and I say this I think, in a candor and in no spirit of enmity — that I am unable to take the thesis of your book more seriously. I had expected, with your earlier book in mind, something different.

GERSHOM SCHOLEM

New York City, July 24, 1963

DEAR GERHARD,

I found your letter when I got back home a week ago. You know what it’s like when one has been away for five months. I’m writing now in the first quiet moment I have; hence, my reply may not be as elaborate as perhaps it should be.

There are certain statements in your letter which are not open to controversy, because they are simply false. Let me deal with them first so that we can proceed to matters which merit discussion.
I am not one of the “intellectuals who come from the German Left.”

You could not have known this, since we did not know each other when we were young. It is a fact of which I am in no way particularly proud and which I am somewhat reluctant to emphasize—especially since the McCarthy era in this country. I came late to an understanding of Marx’s importance because I was interested neither in history nor in politics when I was young. If I can be said to “have come from anywhere,” it is from the tradition of German philosophy.

As to another statement of yours, I am unfortunately not able to say that you could not have known the facts. I found it puzzling that you should write “I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people, and in no other way.” The truth is I have never pretended to be anything else or to be in any way other that I am, and I have never even felt tempted in that direction. It would have been like saying that I was a man and not a woman—that is to say, kind of insane. I know, of course, that there is a “Jewish problem” even on this level, but it has never been my problem—not even in my childhood. I have always regarded my Jewishness as one of the indisputable factual data of my life, and I have never had the wish to change or disclaim facts of this kind. There is such a thing as a basic gratitude for everything that is as it is; for what has been given and was not, could not be, made; for things that are physis and not nomos. To be sure, such an attitude is pre-political, but in exceptional circumstances—such as the circumstances of Jewish politics—it is bound to have also political consequences though, as it were, in a negative way. This attitude makes certain types of behavior impossible—indeed precisely those which you chose to read into my considerations. (To give another example: In his obituary of Kurt Blumenfeld, Ben-Gurion expressed his regret that Blumenfeld had not seen fit to change his name when he came to live in Israel. Isn’t it obvious that Blumenfeld did not do so for exactly the same reasons that had led him in his youth to become a Zionist?) My stand in these
matters must surely have been known to you and it is incomprehensible to me why you should wish to stick a label on me which never fitted in the past and does not fit now.

To come to the point: let me begin, going on from what I have just stated, with what you call “love of the Jewish people” or Ahabath Israel. (Incidentally, I would be very grateful if you could tell me since when this concept has played a role in Judaism, when it was first used in Hebrew language and literature, etc.) You are quite right – I am not moved by any “love” of this sort, and for two reasons: I have never in my life “loved” any people or collective – neither the German people, nor the French, nor the American, nor the working class or anything of that sort. I indeed love “only” my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons. Secondly, this “love of the Jews” would appear to me, since I am myself Jewish, as something rather suspect. I cannot love myself or anything which I know is part and parcel of my own person. To clarify this, let me tell you of a conversation I had in Israel with a prominent political personality who was defending the – in my opinion disastrous – non-separation of religion and state in Israel. What he said – I am not sure of the exact words any more – ran something like this: “You will understand that, as a Socialist, I, of course, do not believe in God; I believe in the Jewish people.” I found this a shocking statement and, being too shocked, I did not reply at the time. But I could have answered: the greatness of this people was once that it believed in God, and believed in Him in such a way that its trust and love towards Him was greater than its fear. And now this people believes only in itself? What good can come out of that? – Well, in this sense I do not “love” the Jews, nor do I “believe” in them; I merely belong to them as a matter of course, beyond dispute or argument.
We could discuss the same issue in political terms; and we should then be driven to a consideration of patriotism. That there can be no patriotism without permanent opposition and criticism is no doubt common ground between us. But I can admit to you something beyond that, namely, that wrong done by my own people naturally grieves me more than wrong done by other peoples. This grief, however, in my opinion is not for display, even if it should be the innermost motive for certain actions or attitudes. Generally speaking, the role of the “heart” in politics seems to me altogether questionable. You know as well as I how often those who merely report certain unpleasant facts are accused of lack of soul, lack of heart, or lack of what you call *Herzenstakt*. We both know, in other words, how often these emotions are used in order to conceal factual truth. I cannot discuss here what happens when emotions are displayed in public and become a factor in political affairs; but it is an important subject, and I have attempted to describe the disastrous results in my book *On Revolution* in discussing the role of compassion in the formation of the revolutionary character.

It is a pity that you did not read the book before the present campaign of misrepresentation against it got under way from the side of the Jewish “establishment” in Israel and America. There are, unfortunately, very few people who are able to withstand the influence of such campaigns. It seems to me highly unlikely that without being influenced you could possibly have misunderstood certain statements. Public opinion, especially when it has been carefully manipulated, as in this case, is a very powerful thing. Thus, I never made Eichmann out to be a “Zionist.” If you missed the irony of the sentence – which was plainly in *oratio obliqua*, reporting Eichmann’s own words – I really can’t help it. I can assure you that none of dozens of readers who read the book before publication head ever any doubt about the matter. Further, I
never asked why the Jews “let themselves to be killed.” On the contrary, I accused Hausner of having posed this question to witness after witness. There was no people and no group in Europe which reacted differently under the immediate pressure of terror. The question I raised was that of the cooperation of Jewish functionaries during the “Final Solution,” and this question is so very uncomfortable because one cannot claim that they were traitors. (There were traitors too, but that is irrelevant.) In other words, until 1939 and even until 1941, whatever Jewish functionaries did or did not do is understandable and excusable. Only later does it become highly problematical. This issue came up during the trial and it was of course my duty to report it. This constitutes our part of the so-called “unmastered past,” and although you may be right that it is too early for a “balanced judgment” (though I doubt this), I do believe that we shall only come to terms with this past if we begin to judge and to be frank about it.

I have made my own position plain, and yet it is obvious that you did not understand it. I said that there was no possibility of resistance, but there existed the possibility of doing nothing. And in order to do nothing, one did not need to be a saint, one needed only to say: “I am just a simple Jew, and I have no desire to play any other role.” Whether these people or some of them, as you indicate, deserved to be hanged is an altogether different question. What needs to be discussed are not the people so much as the arguments with which they justified themselves in their own eyes and in those of others. Concerning these arguments we are entitled to pass judgment. Moreover, we should not forget that we are dealing here with conditions which were terrible and desperate enough, but which were not the conditions of concentration camps. These decisions were made in an atmosphere of terror but not under the immediate pressure and impact of terror. These are important differences in degree, which every student of totalitarianism must know and take into account. These people had still a certain, limited freedom
of decision and of action. Just as the SS murderers also possessed, as we
now know, a limited choice of alternatives. They could say: "I wish to
be relieved of my murderous duties," and nothing happened to them.
Since we are dealing in politics with men, and not with heroes or saints,
it is this possibility of "nonparticipation" (Kirchheimer) that is decisive if
we begin to judge, not the system, but the individual, his choices and his
arguments.

And the Eichmann trial was concerned with an individual. In my report
I have only spoken of things which came up during the trial itself. It is
for this reason that I could not mention the "saints" about whom you
speak. Instead I had to limit myself to the resistance fighters whose
behaviour, as I said, was the more admirable because it occurred under
circumstances in which resistance had really ceased to be possible.
There were no saints among the witnesses for the prosecution but there
was one utterly pure human being, old Grynszpan, whose testimony I
therefore reported at some length. On the German side, after all, one
could also have mentioned more than the single case of sergeant
Schmidt. But since his was the also case mentioned in the trial, I had to
restrict myself to it.

That the distinction between victims and persecutors was blurred in the
concentration camps, deliberately and with calculation, is well known,
and I as well as others have insisted on this aspect of totalitarian
methods. But to repeat: this is not what I mean by a Jewish share in the
guilt, or by the totality of the collapse of all standards. This was part of
the system and had indeed nothing to do with Jews.
How you could believe that my book was "a mockery of Zionism"
would be a complete mystery to me, if I did not know that many people
in Zionist circles have become incapable of listening to opinions or
arguments which are off the beaten track and not consonant with their
ideology. There are exceptions, and a Zionist friend of mine remarked in
all innocence that the book, the last chapter in particular (recognition of
the competence of the court, the justification of the kidnapping), was
very pro-Israel — as indeed it is. What confuses you is that my
arguments and my approach are different from what you are used to; in
other words, the trouble is that I am independent. By this I mean, on the
one hand, that I do not belong to any organization and always speak
only for myself, and on the other hand, that I have great confidence in
Lessing's *selbstdenken* for which, I think, no ideology, no public opinion
and no “convictions” can ever be a substitute. Whatever objections you
may have to the results, you won’t understand them unless you realize
that they are really my own and nobody else’s.

I regret that you did not argue your case against the carrying out of the
death sentence. For I believe that in discussing this question we might
have made some progress in finding out where our most fundamental
differences are located.

You say that it was “historically false,” and I feel very uncomfortable
seeing the spectre of History raised in this context. In my opinion, it was
politically and juridically (and the last is actually all that mattered) not
only correct — it would have been utterly impossible not to have carried
out the sentence. The only way of avoiding it would have been to accept
Karl Jaspers’ suggestion and to hand Eichmann over to the United
Nations. Nobody wanted that, and it was probably not feasible; hence
there was no alternative left but to hang him. Mercy was out of question,
not on juridical grounds — pardon is anyhow not a prerogative of the
juridical system — but because mercy is applicable to the person rather
than to the deed; the act of mercy does not forgive murder but pardons
the murderer insofar as he, as a person, may be more than anything he
ever did. This was not true of Eichmann. And to spare his life without
pardoning him was impossible on juridical grounds.

In conclusion, let me come to the only matter where you have not
392 misunderstood me, and where indeed I am glad that you have raised the
393 point. You are quite right: I changed my mind and do no longer speak of
394 "radical evil." It is a long time since we last met, or we would perhaps
395 have spoken about the subject before. (Incidentally, I don’t see why you
396 call my term “banality of evil” a catchword or slogan. As far as I know
397 no one has used the term before me; but it is unimportant.) It is indeed
398 my opinion now that evil is never “radical,” that it is only extreme, and
399 that is possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension. It can
400 overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads
401 like a fungus on the surface. It is “thought-defying,” as I said, because
402 thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it
403 concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. That is
404 its “banality.” Only the good has depth and can be radical. But this is
405 not the place to go into these matters seriously; I intend to elaborate
406 them further in a different context. Eichmann may very well remain the
407 concrete model of what I have to say.
408 You propose to publish your letter and you ask if I have any objection.
409 My advice would be not to recast the letter in the third person. The
410 value of this controversy consists in its epistolary character, namely in
411 the fact that it is informed by personal friendship. Hence, if you are
412 prepared to publish my answer simultaneously with your letter, I have
413 of course no objection.
414
415 HANNAH ARENDT
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