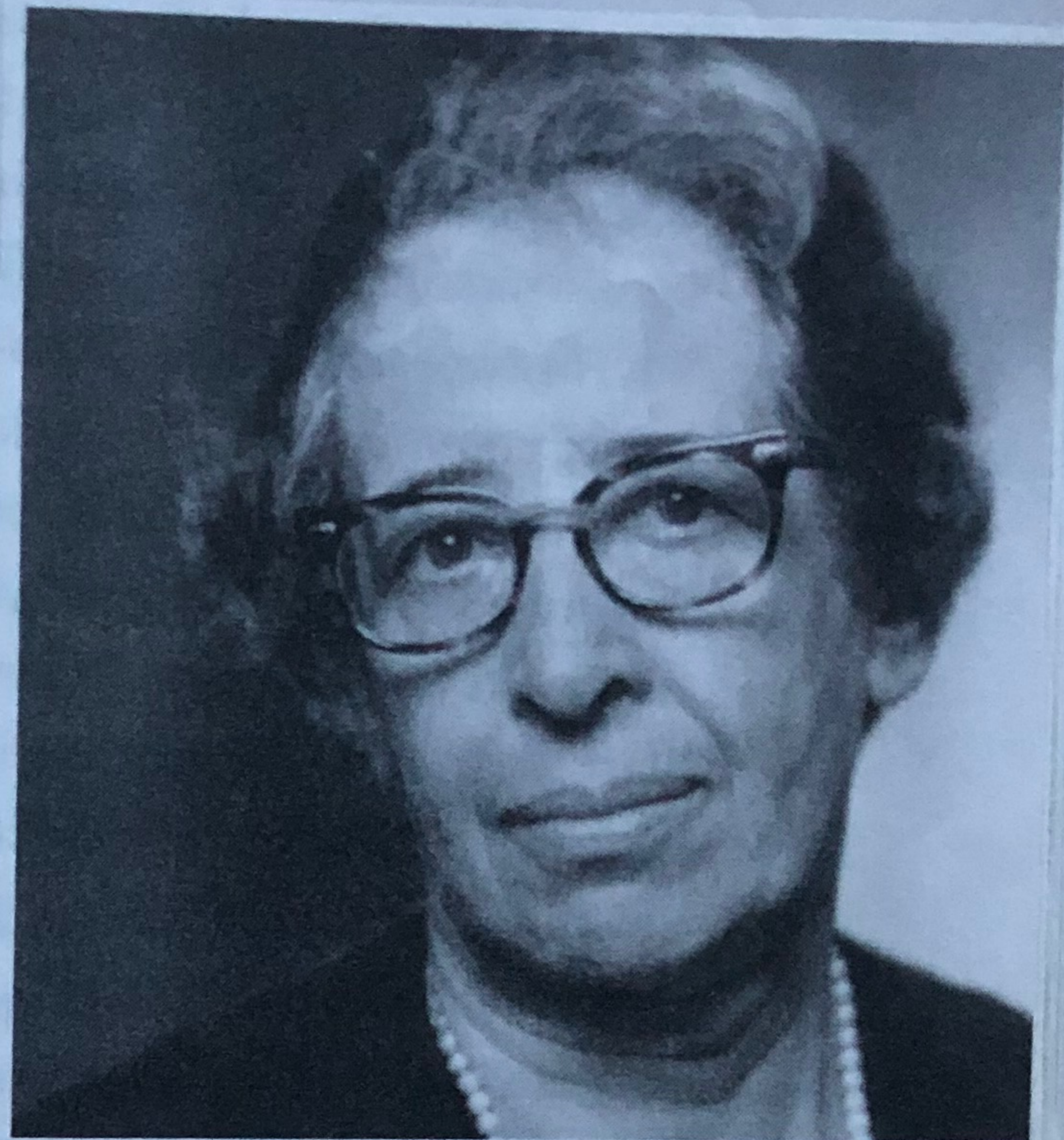


HANNAH ARENDT

Total Domination



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HANNAH ARENDT (1906–1975) was born and educated in Germany, earning her doctorate from the University of Heidelberg when she was twenty-two years old. She left Germany for Paris after Hitler came to power in 1933 and early in the development of Nazi ideology. In New York City she worked with Jewish relief groups and in 1940 married Heinrich Bluecher, a professor of philosophy. Arendt joined the faculty of the University of Chicago in 1963 and then taught as a visiting professor at a number of universities, eventually settling at the New School for Social Research in New York.

The Origins of Totalitarianism, from which this selection is excerpted, was first published in 1951 and solidified Arendt's reputation as an important political philosopher. She began work on the book in 1945, after Nazism was defeated in Europe, and finished most of it by 1949, during the period of growing tension between the United States and the Soviet Union that began the Cold War. Much of the book analyzes the politics of ideology in fascist and communist countries. Arendt went on to write a number of other influential works, such as *The Human Condition* (1958) and *Crises of the Republic* (1972), both of which address the problems she saw connected with a decline in moral values in modern society. One of her most controversial books, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), examines Adolf Eichmann, head of the Gestapo's Jewish section, who was tried and executed in Jerusalem. She observed that the nature of Eichmann's evil was essentially banal — that his crime involved going along with orders without taking the time to assess them critically. Her last work, *The Life of the Mind*, was not completed, although two of its planned three volumes were published posthumously in 1978.

"Total Domination" is part of one of the last chapters in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The first part of the book sets forth a brief history of modern anti-Semitism because the rise of totalitarianism in Germany was based in large part on Hitler's belief that the Aryan race was biologically and morally more evolved than all other races. In this selection

Arendt shows how the totalitarian state derives its power from propagating a set of ideas, or ideology, such as the view that one race is superior to all others. Once that premise is accepted, she demonstrates, then any and all atrocities against people of other races can be permitted and promoted.

In two instances, describing the ideology of German fascism and the ideology of Soviet communism, Arendt demonstrates the ways in which the uncritical acceptance of an ideology provides the core of power for totalitarian states. In the case of Germany, racism led to the theory that if some races are inferior and debased then they must be destroyed for the good of humanity—a theory that was put into brutal practice by the Nazis. Arendt shows how this view derives from a misunderstanding of Darwin's theories of the survival of the fittest (see Darwin's "Natural Selection," p. 606). In the case of the Soviet Union, totalitarianism depended on the "scientific" theory of history put forth by Karl Marx (see Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 335) that insisted on class struggle and the need of the most "progressive class" to destroy the less progressive classes. Marx was referred to as the "Darwin of history" in part because his views reflected the same scientific logic as Darwin's theories of biology. According to Arendt, both the Nazi and communist totalitarian regimes claimed those laws of biology or history as the justification for their own brutal acts of terror.

ARENDT'S RHETORIC

Arendt is a careful rhetorician. She works in a logical fashion to analyze basic principles to see how they control the outcome of events. In this case, the outcome is the totalitarian institution of the concentration camp in which human dignity is destroyed. For the totalitarian government, the terror and torment of concentration camps demonstrate "that everything is possible" (para. 1), even though it might seem impossible to reduce a person to a thing. Total domination, as she states, is designed to reduce the diversity and complexity of humanity to a single reaction to terror and pain.

Interestingly, Arendt can find no economic virtue in maintaining huge numbers of people in concentration camps. Occasionally in the Soviet Union, inmates' labor was of value, but some 60 percent or more of the inmates died under the harsh labor conditions. In Nazi Germany the work done in the concentration camps was of such poor quality that it usually had to be done again. Further, during World War II, German resources that might have been used to fight the war were diverted to the concentration camps, which functioned as extermination centers even while Germany reeled under potential defeat. In other words, the concentration camps were self-defeating in every important way except that they demonstrated to a populace that total domination was possible.

One important rhetorical principle at work in this essay is the essential definition of total domination by the process of describing the circumstances of the concentration camps as well as the rationale for their construction. The Nazis knew, and Hitler had already trumpeted the news to the world in his book *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), that if a lie was big enough, large numbers of people would believe it even if it stood against

common sense. "The Big Lie" has become a common principle of modern political science. Likewise, if the enormity of the crime is great enough, it is not likely that people will believe it actually occurred. Therefore, it should not have been a surprise that the few people who had escaped the camps before the war were not believed. They told their stories, but even future victims of the camps refused to believe they existed. Western governments thought the accounts of the concentration camps were monstrous exaggerations.

Throughout the book from which this passage comes, Arendt insists that the essence of totalitarianism is terror and that without it the totalitarian state collapses. The concentration camps are the "laboratories" in which absolute terror dominates and that represent total domination. Individual liberty and freedom are erased by the terror of total domination, and in this sense the values that Rousseau and Jefferson argue for are irrelevant. In some states, such as the one Machiavelli imagined (p. 84), terror might be useful for controlling the opposition, but in the totalitarian state it controls everyone. As Arendt states, "a victory of the concentration-camp system would mean the same inexorable doom for human beings as the use of the hydrogen bomb would mean the doom of the human race" (para. 14).

❖ PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Hannah Arendt's "Total Domination." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is the role of terror in the totalitarian state?
2. Why is total domination necessary in a totalitarian state?
3. What happens to human beings in concentration camps?

Total Domination

The concentration and extermination camps of totalitarian regimes serve as the laboratories in which the fundamental belief of totalitarianism that everything is possible is being verified. Compared with this, all other experiments are secondary in importance—including those in the field of medicine whose horrors are recorded in detail in the trials against the physicians of the Third Reich—although it is characteristic that these laboratories were used for experiments of every kind.

Total domination, which strives to organize the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings as if all of humanity were just one individual, is

possible only if each and every person can be reduced to a never-changing identity of reactions, so that each of these bundles of reactions can be exchanged at random for any other. The problem is to fabricate something that does not exist, namely, a kind of human species resembling other animal species whose only "freedom" would consist in "preserving the species." Totalitarian domination attempts to achieve this goal both through ideological indoctrination of the elite formations¹ and through absolute terror in the camps; and the atrocities for which the elite formations are ruthlessly used become, as it were, the practical application of the ideological indoctrination—the testing ground in which the latter must prove itself—while the appalling spectacle of the camps themselves is supposed to furnish the "theoretical" verification of the ideology.

The camps are meant not only to exterminate people and degrade human beings, but also serve the ghastly experiment of eliminating, under scientifically controlled conditions, spontaneity itself as an expression of human behavior and of transforming the human personality into a mere thing, into something that even animals are not, for Pavlov's dog,² which, as we know, was trained to eat not when it was hungry but when a bell rang, was a perverted animal.

Under normal circumstances this can never be accomplished, because spontaneity can never be entirely eliminated insofar as it is connected not only with human freedom but with life itself, in the sense of simply keeping alive. It is only in the concentration camps that such an experiment is at all possible, and therefore they are not only "*la société la plus totalitaire encore réalisée*"³ (David Rousset) but the guiding social ideal of total domination in general. Just as the stability of the totalitarian regime depends on the isolation of the fictitious world of the movement from the outside world, so the experiment of total domination in the concentration camps depends on sealing off the latter against the world of all others, the world of the living in general, even against the outside world of a country under totalitarian rule. This isolation explains the peculiar unreality and lack of credibility that characterize all reports from the concentration camps and constitute one of the main difficulties for the true understanding of totalitarian domination, which stands or falls with the existence of these concentration and extermination camps; for, unlikely as it may sound, these camps are the true central institution of totalitarian organizational power.

¹ *elite formations* By this term Arendt seems to mean the SS men and camp guards.

² *Pavlov's dog* Between 1898 and 1930, the Russian psychologist Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849–1936) trained a dog to associate the sound of a ringing bell with food. Eventually the dog's reflex was to salivate at the sound of the bell even when there was no food.

³ *la société . . . réalisée* "The most totalitarian society yet achieved." David Rousset (1912–1997) survived the concentration camps and wrote *The Other Kingdom* (1947) about his experience.

There are numerous reports by survivors. The more authentic they are, the less they attempt to communicate things that evade human understanding and human experience—sufferings, that is, that transform men into "uncomprehending animals." None of these reports inspires those passions of outrage and sympathy through which men have always been mobilized for justice. On the contrary, anyone speaking or writing about concentration camps is still regarded as suspect; and if the speaker has resolutely returned to the world of the living, he himself is often assailed by doubts with regard to his own truthfulness, as though he had mistaken a nightmare for reality.

This doubt of people concerning themselves and the reality of their own experience only reveals what the Nazis have always known: that men determined to commit crimes will find it expedient to organize them on the vastest, most improbable scale. Not only because this renders all punishments provided by the legal system inadequate and absurd; but because the very immensity of the crimes guarantees that the murderers who proclaim their innocence with all manner of lies will be more readily believed than the victims who tell the truth. The Nazis did not even consider it necessary to keep this discovery to themselves. Hitler circulated millions of copies of his book in which he stated that to be successful, a lie must be enormous—which did not prevent people from believing him as, similarly, the Nazis' proclamations, repeated *ad nauseam*,⁴ that the Jews would be exterminated like bedbugs (i.e., with poison gas), prevented anybody from not believing them.

There is a great temptation to explain away the intrinsically incredible by means of liberal rationalizations. In each one of us, there lurks such a liberal, wheeling us with the voice of common sense. The road to totalitarian domination leads through many intermediate stages for which we can find numerous analogies and precedents. The extraordinarily bloody terror during the initial stage of totalitarian rule serves indeed the exclusive purpose of defeating the opponent and rendering all further opposition impossible; but total terror is launched only after this initial stage has been overcome and the regime no longer has anything to fear from the opposition. In this context it has been frequently remarked that in such a case the means have become the end, but this is after all only an admission, in paradoxical disguise, that the category "the end justifies the means" no longer applies, that terror has lost its "purpose," that it is no longer the means to frighten people. Nor does the explanation suffice that the revolution, as in the case of the French Revolution, was devouring its own children, for the terror continues even after everybody who might be described as a child of the revolution in one capacity or another—the Russian factions, the power centers of party, the army, the bureaucracy—has long since been devoured. Many things that nowadays

⁴ *ad nauseam* To the point of sickness.

have become the specialty of totalitarian government are only too well known from the study of history. There have almost always been wars of aggression; the massacre of hostile populations after a victory went unchecked until the Romans mitigated it by introducing the *parcere subjectis*;⁵ through centuries the extermination of native peoples went hand in hand with the colonization of the Americas, Australia, and Africa; slavery is one of the oldest institutions of mankind and all empires of antiquity were based on the labor of state-owned slaves who erected their public buildings. Not even concentration camps are an invention of totalitarian movements. They emerge for the first time during the Boer War;⁶ at the beginning of the century, and continued to be used in South Africa as well as India for "undesirable elements"; here, too, we first find the term "protective custody" which was later adopted by the Third Reich. These camps correspond in many respects to the concentration camps at the beginning of totalitarian rule; they were used for "suspects" whose offenses could not be proved and who could not be sentenced by ordinary process of law. All this clearly points to totalitarian methods of domination; all these are elements they utilize, develop, and crystallize on the basis of the nihilistic principle that "everything is permitted," which they inherited and already take for granted. But wherever these new forms of domination assume their authentically totalitarian structure they transcend this principle, which is still tied to the utilitarian motives and self-interest of the rulers, and try their hand in a realm that up to now has been completely unknown to us: the realm where "everything is possible." And, characteristically enough, this is precisely the realm that cannot be limited by either utilitarian motives or self-interest, regardless of the latter's content.

What runs counter to common sense is not the nihilistic principle that "everything is permitted," which was already contained in the nineteenth-century utilitarian conception⁷ of common sense. What common sense and "normal people" refuse to believe is that everything is possible. We attempt to understand elements in present or recollected experience that simply surpass our powers of understanding. We attempt to classify as criminal a thing which, as we all feel, no such category was ever intended to cover. What meaning has the concept of murder when we are confronted with the mass production of corpses? We attempt to understand the behavior of concentration-camp inmates and SS-men

⁵ *parcere subjectis* A Roman policy of lenience and mercy toward those they defeated.

⁶ *Boer War (1899-1902)* The British established concentration camps in which some forty thousand people died during their war against the Transvaal and the Orange Free State—which were then controlled by the Boers, who were descended from earlier Dutch settlers—in what is now South Africa.

⁷ *utilitarian conception* Utilitarianism, often known for its doctrine of the greatest good for the greatest number, was a nineteenth-century philosophy rooted in what people felt was essentially common sense.

psychologically, when the very thing that must be realized is that the psyche *can* be destroyed even without the destruction of the physical man; that, indeed, psyche, character, and individuality seen under certain circumstances to express themselves only through the rapidity or slowness with which they disintegrate. The end result in any case is inanimate men, i.e., men who can no longer be psychologically understood, whose return to the psychologically or otherwise intelligibly human world closely resembles the resurrection of Lazarus.⁸ All statements of common sense, whether of a psychological or sociological nature, serve only to encourage those who think it "superficial" to "dwell on horrors."

If it is true that the concentration camps are the most consequential institution of totalitarian rule, "dwelling on horrors" would seem to be indispensable for the understanding of totalitarianism. But recollection can no more do this than can the uncommunicative eyewitness report. In both these genres there is an inherent tendency to run away from the experience; instinctively or rationally, both types of writer are so much aware of the terrible abyss that separates the world of the living from that of the living dead, that they cannot supply anything more than a series of remembered occurrences that must seem just as incredible to those who relate them as to their audience. Only the fearful imagination of those who have been aroused by such reports but have not actually been smitten in their own flesh, of those who are consequently free from the bestial, desperate terror which, when confronted by real, present horror, inexorably paralyzes everything that is not mere reaction, can afford to keep thinking about horrors. Such thoughts are useful only for the perception of political contexts and the mobilization of political passions. A change of personality of any sort whatever can no more be induced by thinking about horrors than by the real experience of horror. The reduction of a man to a bundle of reactions separates him as radically as mental disease from everything within him that is personality or character. When, like Lazarus, he rises from the dead, he finds his personality or character unchanged, just as he had left it.

Just as the horror, or the dwelling on it, cannot affect a change of character in him, cannot make men better or worse, thus it cannot become the basis of a political community or party in a narrower sense. The attempts to build up a European elite with a program of intra-European understanding based on the common European experience of the concentration camps have foundered in much the same manner as the attempts following the First World War to draw political conclusions from the international experience of the front generation.⁹ In both cases it turned out that the experiences themselves can communicate

⁸ *Lazarus* From the Bible (John 11:18-48). Jesus, urged by Martha, resurrected Lazarus, who had been dead for four days.

⁹ *the front generation* The generation that fought or experienced the fighting in World War I (1914-1918).

no more than nihilistic banalities. Political consequences such as postwar pacifism, for example, derived from the general fear of war, not from the experiences in war. Instead of producing a pacifism devoid of reality, the insight into the structure of modern wars, guided and mobilized by fear, might have led to the realization that the only standard for a necessary war is the fight against conditions under which people no longer wish to live—and our experiences with the tormenting hell of the totalitarian camps have enlightened us only too well about the possibility of such conditions. Thus the fear of concentration camps and the resulting insight into the nature of total domination might serve to invalidate all obsolete political differentiations from right to left and to introduce beside and above them the politically most important yardstick for judging events in our time, namely: whether they serve totalitarian domination or not.

In any event, the fearful imagination has the great advantage to dissolve the sophistic-dialectical¹⁰ interpretations of politics which are all based on the superstition that something good might result from evil. Such dialectical acrobatics had at least a semblance of justification so long as the worst that man could inflict upon man was murder. But, as we know today, murder is only a limited evil. The murderer who kills a man—a man who has to die anyway—still moves within the realm of life and death familiar to us; both have indeed a necessary connection on which the dialectic is founded, even if it is not always conscious of it. The murderer leaves a corpse behind and does not pretend that his victim has never existed; if he wipes out any traces, they are those of his own identity, and not the memory and grief of the persons who loved his victim; he destroys a life, but he does not destroy the fact of existence itself.

The Nazis, with the precision peculiar to them, used to register their operations in the concentration camps under the heading “under cover of the night (*Nacht und Nebel*).” The radicalism of measures to treat people as if they had never existed and to make them disappear in the literal sense of the word is frequently not apparent at first glance, because both the German and the Russian system are not uniform but consist of a series of categories in which people are treated very differently. In the case of Germany, these different categories used to exist in the same camp, but without coming into contact with each other; frequently, the isolation between the categories was even stricter than the isolation from the outside world. Thus, out of racial considerations, Scandinavian nationals during the war were quite differently treated by the Germans than the members of other peoples, although the former were outspoken enemies of the Nazis. The latter in turn were divided into those whose “extermination” was immediately on the agenda, as in the case of the Jews, or could be expected

in the predictable future, as in the case of the Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians, and into those who were not yet covered by instructions about such an overall “final solution,” as in the case of the French and Belgians. In Russia, on the other hand, we must distinguish three more or less independent systems. First, there are the authentic forced-labor groups that live in relative freedom and are sentenced for limited periods. Secondly, there are the concentration camps in which the human material is ruthlessly exploited and the mortality rate is extremely high, but which are essentially organized for labor purposes. And, thirdly, there are the annihilation camps in which the inmates are systematically wiped out through starvation and neglect.

The real horror of the concentration and extermination camps lies in the fact that the inmates, even if they happen to keep alive, are more effectively cut off from the world of the living than if they had died, because terror enforces oblivion. Here, murder is as impersonal as the squashing of a gnat. Someone may die as the result of systematic torture or starvation, or because the camp is overcrowded and superfluous human material must be liquidated. Conversely, it may happen that due to a shortage of new human shipments the danger arises that the camps become depopulated and that the order is now given to reduce the death rate at any price. David Rousset called his report on the period in a German concentration camp “*Les Jours de Notre Mort*,”¹¹ and it is indeed as if there were a possibility to give permanence to the process of dying itself and to enforce a condition in which both death and life are obstructed equally effectively.

It is the appearance of some radical evil, previously unknown to us, that puts an end to the notion of developments and transformations of qualities. Here, there are neither political nor historical nor simply moral standards but, at the most, the realization that something seems to be involved in modern politics that actually should never be involved in politics as we used to understand it, namely all or nothing—all, and that is an undetermined infinity of forms of human living-together, or nothing, for a victory of the concentration-camp system would mean the same inexorable doom for human beings as the use of the hydrogen bomb would mean the doom of the human race.

There are no parallels to the life in the concentration camps. Its horror can never be fully embraced by the imagination for the very reason that it stands outside of life and death. It can never be fully reported for the very reason that the survivor returns to the world of the living, which makes it impossible for him to believe fully in his own past experiences. It is as though he had a story to tell of another planet, for the status of the inmates in the world of the living, where nobody is supposed to know if they are alive or dead, is such that it is as though they had never been born. Therefore all parallels create confusion and

¹⁰ *sophistic-dialectical* Arendt seems to be referring to Marxist communist views that pit two mighty historical forces—like good and evil—against one another. Her point is that such a dialectic is artificial and dangerous.

¹¹ *Les Jours . . . Mort* Literally, the days of our death.

distract attention from what is essential. Forced labor in prisons and penal colonies, banishment, slavery, all seem for a moment to offer helpful comparisons, but on closer examination lead nowhere.

Forced labor as a punishment is limited as to time and intensity. The convict retains his rights over his body; he is not absolutely tortured and he is not absolutely dominated. Banishment banishes only from one part of the world to another part of the world, also inhabited by human beings; it does not exclude from the human world altogether. Throughout history slavery has been an institution within a social order; slaves were not, like concentration-camp inmates, withdrawn from the sight and hence the protection of their fellow men; as instruments of labor they had a definite price and as property a definite value. The concentration-camp inmate has no price, because he can always be replaced; nobody knows to whom he belongs, because he is never seen. From the point of view of normal society he is absolutely superfluous, although in times of acute labor shortage, as in Russia and in Germany during the war, he is used for work.

The concentration camp as an institution was not established for the sake of any possible labor yield; the only permanent economic function of the camps has been the financing of their own supervisory apparatus; thus from the economic point of view the concentration camps exist mostly for their own sake. Any work that has been performed could have been done much better and more cheaply under different conditions. Especially Russia, whose concentration camps are mostly described as forced-labor camps because Soviet bureaucracy has chosen to dignify them with this name, reveals most clearly that forced labor is not the primary issue; forced labor is the normal condition of all Russian workers, who have no freedom of movement and can be arbitrarily drafted for work to any place at any time. The incredibility of the horrors is closely bound up with their economic uselessness. The Nazis carried this uselessness to the point of open anti-utility when in the midst of the war, despite the shortage of building material and rolling stock, they set up enormous, costly extermination factories and transported millions of people back and forth. In the eyes of a strictly utilitarian world the obvious contradiction between these acts and military expediency gave the whole enterprise an air of mad unreality.

This atmosphere of madness and unreality, created by an apparent lack of purpose, is the real iron curtain which hides all forms of concentration camps from the eyes of the world. Seen from outside, they and the things that happen in them can be described only in images drawn from a life after death, that is, a life removed from earthly purposes. Concentration camps can very aptly be divided into three types corresponding to three basic Western conceptions of a life after death: Hades, Purgatory, and Hell. To Hades correspond those relatively mild forms, once popular even in nontotalitarian countries, for getting

undesirable elements of all sorts — refugees, stateless persons, the asocial, and the unemployed — out of the way; as DP camps,¹² which are nothing other than camps for persons who have become superfluous and bothersome, they have survived the war. Purgatory is represented by the Soviet Union's labor camps, where neglect is combined with chaotic forced labor. Hell in the most literal sense was embodied by those types of camp perfected by the Nazis, in which the whole of life was thoroughly and systematically organized with a view to the greatest possible torment.

All three types have one thing in common: the human masses sealed off in them are treated as if they no longer existed, as if what happened to them were no longer of any interest to anybody, as if they were already dead and some evil spirit gone mad were amusing himself by stopping them for a while between life and death before admitting them to eternal peace.

¹² DP camps Displaced Persons camps. These camps were common in Europe after World War II.

❏ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Why are concentration camps described as "laboratories" for the totalitarian regime?
2. What is the importance of the concentration camps' goal of removing human spontaneity?
3. In what sense are the concentration camps "the true central institution of totalitarian organizational power" (para. 4)?
4. Arendt implies that the experience of the concentration camp has the effect of "a mental disease." Why would that be so?
5. How is murder different from the mass death that characterizes the concentration camps?
6. Why is the concentration camp "useful" to the totalitarian government?

❏ SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Examine the economic issues Arendt raises that are involved in the establishment and operation of concentration camps in a totalitarian state. Decide whether a totalitarian state, whose goal is to achieve total domination, would be able to derive economic advantage from concentration camps. Why would this be an important issue? If there were a considerable economic advantage to maintaining concentration camps, would that fact make them any less terrifying?

2. Arendt reflected the fears of her own time in this essay. For her the most terrifying and immediate totalitarian governments were those of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. What evidence do you see in our contemporary world that might suggest totalitarianism is not completely "dead"? Do you perceive any threatening totalitarian governments anywhere in the world today? How do they seem to function and to interact with other nations?
3. Should you establish that a government is functioning as a totalitarian state today, do you feel it is a moral imperative that you do everything possible to overthrow that state? Would it be ethical and moral to go to war against such a state even if it did not immediately threaten you? Would it be ethical and moral for you to turn your back on a totalitarian state and ignore its operation so that it could achieve the kind of total domination Arendt describes?
4. **CONNECTIONS** How would Machiavelli (p. 84) interpret Arendt's discussion of ends and means in paragraph 8? Would Machiavelli have recommended concentration camps to his prince as a means of maintaining power? If a prince believed that concentration camps would be the means by which a state could achieve stability and power, would he be right in assuming that the stability and power thus achieved were worthwhile ends? Do you think Machiavelli would have accepted a totalitarian prince?
5. Hannah Arendt reminds us that Hitler practiced "The Big Lie," which was predicated on the belief that for a lie to work, it had to be enormous — so big that huge numbers of people would believe it, even if it went against common sense (para. 6). Arendt also notes that spreading vast lies has become a common principle of modern political science. Research current events and write a brief essay that demonstrates the truth of what Arendt says about the big lie. How many instances can you find in recent political statements, either in the United States or abroad? Why do big lies seem to be accepted as true by so many people?
6. Considering Arendt's position regarding the use of violence, would she have applauded the recent revolutions in Syria and Libya, or would she have ridiculed them as being naive and insufficient? A number of governments have been overthrown in recent years and others continue to be threatened in the Middle East because of people's perception that they are oppressive and totalitarian. Choose one of the following recently overthrown leaders and research his career in order to decide how closely it satisfies Arendt's conditions of total domination: Muammar Gaddafi (Libya), Hosni Mubarak (Egypt), or Saddam Hussein (Iraq). You might also consider Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian leader whose fight to maintain rule during the Syrian Civil War has caused hundreds of thousands of refugees to flee abroad beginning in 2015.