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Hannah Arendt on the Concept of "Evil"

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Abstract
Hannah Arendt carried out deep thinking on the evil's problem under the rule of totalitarian terror, it reflected in two dimensions: "Radical evil" and "Banality of evil". The former core content is that totalitarianism completely changes human nature, people will become superfluous; the latter is that the evildoers are incognitant, shallow and inane. "Banality of Evil" is the product of dialectical negation to "Radical Evil", marks the completion and maturity of the system of Arendt on the concept of "evil". Arendt on the concept of "evil" deeply criticized the totalitarian reign of terror changed human nature completely from the social and individual perspectives.

Key words: Radical evil; Banality of evil; Connotation

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1. THE ORIGIN OF ARENDT ON THE CONCEPT OF "EVIL"

1.1 Augustine's Idea of "Original Sin"

First of all, as a devout Christian, St. Augustine believes that God is creator of all things. He believes that God is the embodiment of supreme, truth, goodness and beauty, and other things in the world are created by God from nothing, so the nature of things is good. So how the villainies in this world occur? In fact, what we call evil, isn't it the lack of goodness? In the body of an animal, illness and injury refer to lack of health only. Similarly, the soul of the evil is nothing more than lack of God's goodness. Augustine believes that the cause of these evils is deviation and the lack of goodness of Almighty God. Secondly, Augustine believes that God has given people the ability at the time of the creation of man, that is, people can choose to obey and not to obey. The consequences of original sin for Adam and Eve reflect the ability of disobedience to God. The core issue of "original sin" was "ethical evil". Free will be the premise of "original sin", people may depart from God's goodness and commit crimes. Free will be closely related with the "original sin", indicating that God has allowed everyone has the right to choose their own lifestyle and has the potential for good or evil in freely. Finally, an important principle of "original sin" is to "punish crime, reward good deeds." Arendt's thought deeply influenced by Augustine "original sin" theory, early in her doctoral thesis "On the Augustinian" love "concept" had emerged.

1.2 Kant's "Radical Evil"

Kant believed that human nature is evil. In his book *Religion Within the Limits of Reason*: People are born with evil, and this is nothing more than mean: People, but the average person, including the adoption of guidelines for good or adoption (contrary to natural law norms) of evil. That is to say, Kant argued that there is a general tendency for evil in our ability to choose, we are born with a tendency to hasten evil. Subsequently, Kant proposed the concept of "radical evil": This evil is essential, because it spoils the basis of all criteria, but it is not by means of a natural human tendency to eradicate. Different from traditional Western philosophers, Kant believes human nature is not good. He further asked: if the good is the essence of man, then why go to achieve for good? Human beings in the pursuit of good roads would

not be returned to the original starting point, and what is the point? Therefore, Kant believes human nature is evil, it is the most fundamental. Only the "root of evil" is off to the pursue the good people of purpose, this is the cause of human goodness. Secondly, Kant did not think people are born evil. He said: "Man is evil refers only to this point: He knows the moral law, but contrary to the law therefore accept the code of conduct" and therefore, Kant's "radical evil" refers to a common moral law knowingly (absolute command). The subjective tendency of intentionally violating this evil is not an empirical fact, only exist in this body Kant would have a "radical evil" because area is divided into three levels: First, because of human frailty, people realize but the evil I do not know how to use the moral imperative to resist it; the second is the motivation of people to produce impure selfish purpose guilt; the third is "intentional crime", since the malicious people to sin; and finally, in order to overcome the "root of evil", Kant envisaged out of an absolute, universal moral law—this is absolutely categorical imperative commands exist in the human inner being, rigorous review of all human thought and behavior, awe, people from evil.

Arendt borrowed the concept of "evil" from Kant, but her views are different from Kant; she put forward her own opinion based on the premise of criticizing Kant's "radical evil". Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pointed out: Core "fundamentally evil" is to make people redundant, it has three characteristics: not a penalty, can not forgive, unknowable. "The radical evil" that we can not use the general code of ethics or standards of justice to punish, it is beyond the limits of human understanding everything becomes unrecognizable, but also marked the collapse of the traditional Western moral system. Nazi Germany's political catastrophe of the Western civilization and its traditional moral system completely breaks and overturn, it was not surprising that philosophers meticulous logical break concept, but for political events—Nazi Germany's totalitarian terror the breaking down.

2. "RADICAL EVIL": THE REDUNDANCY OF PEOPLE

2.1 The Connotation of the "Radical Evil"

In the 1951 book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt put forward the concept of "radical evil". Totalitarian regime inadvertently found that some crimes are neither punished nor excusable. When the impossible becomes possible, it becomes not punishment, is absolutely unforgivable sin, can no longer be understood by the self-interest can no longer, greed, desire, desire for power, cowardice, and so evil motives to interpretation; therefore, anger is not revenge it, love can not stand it, friendship can not forgive it. She said: "There is evil," the core content is to make redundant, fundamentally change human nature, which has three basic characteristics, that is, not punishment, we can not forgive, unknowable." (Arendt, 2009) Arendt is called "essential"because of the understandable from a human point of view of the scope and motivation, the "evil" simply can not be any worse, I can not describe, can not understand, can not be tolerant, even human laws and penalties are difficult punish it. Without this concept, we can not know - what really thorough nature 'evil' is. So what is the person's excess as well? The surplus of people in that it eliminated the human subjectivity, spontaneous elimination of human behavior that human beings can not predict the behavior of the free exercise, it cut off the dialogue with the people themselves, but also cut off the link between people, people become isolated, people completely lost the ethical and social nature, the abolition of people's moral consciousness and moral judgment may completely eliminate all the conditions of the people had for others. In the creed of totalitarian regime's "everything is possible", all ethical and moral boundaries that can not be broken become possible, people completely turn into the existence of natural—the beasts.

2.2 Radical Evil" Changes Human Nature and Make People Redundant

How the new concept—"radical evil" appears and how human nature was completely changed? Arendt said: "Radical evil" is associated with a system in which all people becomes redundant. Visible, Arendt said: "such a system is totalitarian; it is in such a precondition totalitarian regime, "the radical evil" to be able to be produced." (Arendt, 2009) What is totalitarianism? Totalitarian social order implies full agreement by the state power, private space is compressed to almost non-existent state, freedom is reduced to a minimum, it means that all aspects of private and public life are ruled by authoritarian governments. So totalitarianism is how to change human nature in it? In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in Arendt detailed analysis of the Nazi concentration camps, concentration camps, she noted that it is proved that could revolutionize humanity, and one of the camp is the best proof of the people into beasts. Arendt said further analysis, through three steps, totalitarian camp completely changes human nature, people become superfluous. The first step in the eradication of legal personality, which means abolition of all human rights, people are no longer protected by law. Step destroyed their moral personality, which is a decisive step, conscience was completely destroyed, and moral character is no longer stored in the heart, people no freedom of choice and moral right and wrong. The third step is the complete elimination of human individuality, difference, particularity. After no personality, the concept of moral personality of law, the only way to stop people into the living dead that human individuality and particularity. The eradication of human individuality,

uniqueness balanced by the elimination of nature, will, fate formed, which created a terror, and all people are the same beast. Elimination of the principle of individuality, difference, free and rational man, who has become a purely natural, original state of man. Such human behavior is just a simple stimulus-response animal, like a puppet to death. It is in full totalitarian rule, eliminating the people to become the human condition, completely changed the human nature, people became redundant. The only way to treat the superfluous human beings is to destroy them all. From this point of view, it is not difficult to understand why Nazi Germany brutally massacred 6 million Jews.

Arendt's "radical evil" explores the idea that how people become beasts step by step, people become superfluous and completely changed human nature in context of the totalitarianism. "Radical evil" inherited the traditional Western civilization values and moral ethics, is the "evil" must be in some kind of evil motive or purpose does not fold means yes. "The radical evil" is a "war" crimes committed by Nazi Germany in a serious, rational counter-criticism and complaints, reflecting the sharp Arendt, unique, cool thinking, Arendt marks on the "evil" officially formed system.

3. "BANALITY OF EVIL": PEOPLE WITHOUT THOUGHT

3.1 The Trial of Eichmann

Adolf Eichmann is inhuman former Nazi German officials, primarily responsible for organizing transport of millions of Jews from around the world to concentration camps and death camps. He is the main person in charge of the Holocaust "Final Solution"; he is known as the "death dealer". Nazi Germany slaughtered 6 million Jews; Eichmann had at least 2 million Jews' blood on his hands. May 11, 1960, Eichmann, in the public eye this heinous hell devil, in Buenos Aires by Israeli agents secretly arrested by the Prime Minister plane "secretly" extradition to Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion announced April 11, 1961, the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. Arendt Eichmann heard to accept a public trial in Jerusalem, and she to the editor "New Yorker" magazine's suggestion to go to their own identity correspondent reports from Jerusalem Eichmann trial. Arendt reason to go, on the one hand is that if she would not attend the trial and would not look at this walking disaster face to face, she would never forgive herself. On the other hand, Arendt herself is persecuted during "the second world war", she should be" compensated" face to face.

3.2 The Concept of "Banality of Evil" Has Been Put Forward

A special court in Jerusalem, Arendt was watching Eichmann who was kept in a glass box, "the man with glasses was medium height and thin, kind of bow-backed, the hair had fallen out on top. High forehead, crooked teeth, myopia, throughout the trial regarded his withered neck in the direction toward the judgment seat, and make every effort to remain calm." (Arendt, 2003) Through careful observation patient, neither Eichmann Arendt noted insidious, but not what evil Great Satan, in addition to climb positions very enthusiastic than I am afraid there is no other can arouse his hard work things. This is widely believed that before the evil, murderous Eichmann is completely different, he could be funny like a clown, a mouthful of some endless cliches, to the absence of any testimony hated Jews. Eichmann even an annual Valentine's Day will send a bouquet of roses for his wife a good husband, I saw his body will be vomiting. From Eichmann who does not see any evil motive, as he himself stated: He does not hate Jews. Eichmann simply and sincerely doing their own work, as he is a pinion Nazi terror machine on the same chain. However, this is such an ordinary person, why would commit the massacre of 200 million live heinous crimes it? It is Arendt's Eichmann trial sparked deep thought, inspired her new understanding the "evil" thought. Arendt had published five consecutive reports on the Eichmann trial in the *New Yorker* magazine, entitled "A detailed report: Eichmann in Jerusalem". Subsequently, in 1963 published *Eichmann in Jerusalem—About Banality of Evil Reports*, a book, Arendt formally proposed the concept of "banality of evil". Arendt believes that the crimes committed by Eichmann were "banality of evil." So what is "banality of evil", what kind of responsibility Eichmann must to bear?

3.3 The Connotation of "Banality of Evil"

The concept of "banality of evil" was first proposed by Arendt's husband Heinrich Blucher, he used a similar ironical argument to understand the evil, and he thought that evil was a funny phenomenon. In "*Eichmann in Jerusalem—About Banality of Evil Reports*," a book, Arendt borrowed this concept to describe such people like Eichmann, referring to the mental state and psychological motivations of perpetrators extremely shallow hole. Arendt on Eichmann who saw only the devil could destroy the world, like Eichmann such mediocrity can also destroy the world. "Mediocre" literally means ordinary, bland. "Mediocre" why can associate with "evil"? That is how to be a necessary condition for evil? Specifically, I think it should be understood from three aspects: First, the motives of malefactor were superficial and vacuous. Arendt found that "Eichmann neither Iago, Macbeth is not, in his heart, nor did Charles III assumed a wicked appearance, he was promoted in addition to his very enthusiastic, there is virtually No other motive." (Arendt, 2007) Second, no thought evil person, not its own unique thinking. Arendt believed Eichmann is very ordinary, there is no unique person, he is neither a devil nor beast, but a man nothing exciting. Arendt believed Eichmann reason for committing such a crime, because of its non-thinking, lack of awareness of independent

thinking. Arendt said that Eichmann was not stupid surprising, in fact, he is not stupid, but he did not go real serious thought, no thought consequences of this, only there is no strong-minded to obey. Third, the "evil" there is no depth. Evil is by no means essential, it is only extreme, it has neither the depth nor has any demonic dimension; it is negative thinking, which is its banality. Thus, Arendt's "banality of evil" refers to the evildoers' motivations are extremely superficial; they are lack of independent thinking and just obey orders stiffly and thoughtlessly.

What is the relationship between thought and "evil"? First, what is thought? Arendt appreciated Martin Heidegger's definition of "thought": Thought will not bring knowledge of natural science; thought will not produce useful practical wisdom; thought can not solve the mysteries of the universe; thought cannot provide the power for our actions directly, but why should we think just because we are alive. For Heidegger this will reflect on human life and elevated to the same height, Arendt was strongly influenced and sympathy, she devoted her life to think rationally. Arendt believes that thinking is a lonely journey, thinker own silent dialogue is all theory outside view, understanding the code of conduct reflection and criticism. Second, the relationship between thought and evil, whether it is people do not evil conditions? The answer to this question, I think it should be the following three aspects: First, conscience is a by-product idea. What is conscience? In the "basic ethical proposition," a text, the conscience Arendt defined as: something itself on the self evaluation; itself a voice; judgment: the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Visible, that the so-called conscience Arendt thought just a by-product, is subordinate to the ideological activities. No thinking means no source of conscience, as the conscience of effective or not depends on the ability that thought. Second, the idea is to determine the prerequisite. Arendt thought that the judging of the wind, and judgment is to distinguish between right and wrong, beauty and ugliness capacity. Although the thought and judgment is not uniform, but thought the judge provided a negative preparation, it makes the distinction between right and wrong, the ability of beauty and ugliness possible. Third, the idea is not a necessary condition for evil. Thought itself does not have a real effect, it does not tell people what to do or should not do anything, and it does not create value, but also will not find out what is good. "However, a negative thought as a self-function, it will collapse in the value of some of the established standards and rules. Destructive ideas embodied in the person's ability to judge digestion, make it difficult to distinguish between right and wrong, beauty and ugliness." (Arendt, 2006) Arendt believes that thought would undermine and weaken the moral principles of all human good and evil, values and standards, it is a necessary condition for thinkers not to do evil. No thinking - unthinking recklessness, hopeless confusion - in my opinion, it is one of the salient features of our time. It is the unthinking phenomenon that leads to Eichmann committed such horrendous crimes.

CONCLUSION

a) The right way to understand of Arendt on the concept of "evil"

It is difficult to understand a thinker especially like such a creative thinker—Arendt. Great ideas generated from the context, but analyzing the pure concepts in isolation can only lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation, which are why Arendt's thoughts were misinterpreted. In my opinion, it is necessary to start from the following points to understand Arendt's thoughts better: First, macro-cultural context. Arendt lived through two world wars - political catastrophe of the twentieth century, especially Nazi Germany totalitarians' reign of terror, all of these provided excellent historical background for Arendt's thoughts about "evil". Second, the reflection and criticism of totalitarianism. German nation—"Philosophy of nation" represented the Western tradition of rational and speculative. Why would launch two world wars? Arendt believes that totalitarians' reign of terror make people redundant and make people without their own thoughts, and then turn people into a beast. The third is a rebellion against the Western philosophical tradition. Western philosophical tradition believes, do evil must have an evil motive or purpose of unscrupulous self-interest, "evil" is the essence of humanity, is the evil devil. By reporting the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, Arendt refused to demonize "evil"; she thought that evil is by no means considered fundamental thing, evil has no depth without dimension. Arendt's "banality of evil" embodies a rebellion and shock of the Western philosophical tradition. Fourth, a deep understanding of Arendt's so-called "thoughts". She thought that "thought" is a silent self-talk; is the origin of emerging conscience; is a prerequisite for judging. Thus, "non-thought" means you can not generate conscience or judgment and can not distinguish between right and wrong, goodness and ugly, you just obey orders stiff and mechanically. From this point of view, it is not difficult to understand "how mediocre" the offense committed by Eichmann even the totalitarian governments are.

b) The mature of Arendt's "evil" system

There is an inevitable evolution of logical thought from the "radical evil" to "banality of evil," it is the symbol of maturity of Arendt's "evil" system. "The radical evil" is the logical starting point of the "evil" system, is the political evil of the over inflated totalitarian government. Under the totalitarian rule of the government, "radical evil" is to inspect the change of

human nature and the radical change in human nature; people are made redundant, people exist naturally just like beasts. "banality of evil" is the dialectical negation of "radical evil": Develop the use and discard the useless and refinement. Later, Arendt thought that "evil" is not fundamental without any depth or dimension, demonstrating subluxation view of "radical evil". "Banality of evil" examines the psychological state and mental condition of individual executives' under the rule of a totalitarian government. Arendt noted that executives of the Nazi government were in a non-thought state under this extreme rule; they were guilty of "banality of evil". Therefore, the transition between "radical evil" and "banality of evil" is the "non-thought", "non-thought" is the precipitating factor of "banality of evil". Therefore, the "banality of evil" marks the extraordinary maturity and completion of Arendt's "evil" system.

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