



Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (Penguin Classics)

By Hannah Arendt

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The controversial journalistic analysis of the mentality that fostered the Holocaust, from the author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

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Editorial Review

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While living in Argentina in 1960, Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann was kidnapped and smuggled to Israel where he was put on trial for crimes against humanity. The *New Yorker* magazine sent Hannah Arendt to cover the trial. While covering the technical aspects of the trial, Arendt also explored the wider themes inherent in the trial, such as the nature of justice, the behavior of the Jewish leadership during the Nazi Régime, and, most controversially, the nature of Evil itself.

Far from being evil incarnate, as the prosecution painted Eichmann, Arendt maintains that he was an average man, a petty bureaucrat interested only in furthering his career, and the evil he did came from the seductive power of the totalitarian state and an unthinking adherence to the Nazi cause. Indeed, Eichmann's only defense during the trial was "I was just following orders."

Arendt's analysis of the seductive nature of evil is a disturbing one. We would like to think that anyone who would perpetrate such horror on the world is different from us, and that such atrocities are rarities in our world. But the history of groups such as the Jews, Kurds, Bosnians, and Native Americans, to name but a few, seems to suggest that such evil is all too commonplace. In revealing Eichmann as the pedestrian little man that he was, Arendt shows us that the veneer of civilization is a thin one indeed.

Review

"Brilliant and disturbing." —**Stephen Spender**, *The New York Review of Books*

"Profound . . . This book is bound to stir our minds and trouble our consciences." —*Chicago Tribune*

"Deals with the greatest problem of our time . . . the problem of the human being within a modern totalitarian system." —**Bruno Bettelheim**, *The New Republic*

About the Author

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) was University Professor of political philosophy in the graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research, a visiting professor at several universities including California, Princeton, Columbia, and Chicago, a research director of the Conference on Jewish Relations, the chief editor of Schocken Books, and the executive director of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction in New York City. She was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1952, and an Arts and Letters Grant of the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1954. She is also the author of *On Revolution* and *Between Past and Future*, which are available from Penguin Classics along with *The Portable Hannah Arendt*.

Amos Elon (1926–2009) was born in Vienna, Austria, and spent most of his adult life in Jerusalem. A frequent essayist, lecture, and critic who was well known for his articles in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books*, he is the author of such bestselling works as *The Israelis*, *Flight into Egypt*, *Founder, Herzl*, and *The Pity of It All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch*.

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