liberalism that seeks to establish one type of regime throughout the world.

Appiah believes that cosmopolitan theory has a special relevance today, and he succeeds in showing that this neglected and attractive tradition of thought deserves serious attention as a habitable middle ground between liberalism and relativism. Where he fails is in not exploring the points at which cosmopolitanism and liberalism diverge. Yet these are precisely the areas where a cosmopolitan viewpoint is currently most needed. As Appiah notes, contemporary thought is beset by the notion that we can live together only if we are alike. In international relations this idea is expressed in the prevailing belief that only regimes that respect human rights or practice democracy (it's not always clear which) can be legitimate—a view that has been used by the neoconservative right to justify the calamitous attack on Iraq. If we are to avoid similar disasters in the future, we need an account of legitimacy as applied in the society of states that is not just a recent version of liberalism writ large. Cosmopolitanism could surely help frame such an account, but it would have to be more willing to challenge current pieties than the version presented by Appiah. ■

In Her Mind's Eye

JONATHAN RÉE

ESSAYS IN UNDERSTANDING, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism.
By Hannah Arendt. Edited by Jerome Kohn. Schocken. 458 pp. $16.95.

RESPONSIBILITY AND JUDGMENT.
By Hannah Arendt. Edited by Jerome Kohn. Schocken. 295 pp. $16.

THE PROMISE OF POLITICS.
By Hannah Arendt. Edited by Jerome Kohn. Schocken. 218 pp. $25.

Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* would be on anyone's list of books that changed the world. But it is a classic that is deeply marked by the period in which it was written—a period, as Arendt put it, of "both reckless optimism and reckless despair." She started work on it in 1945, when Hitler had just been defeated, and finished in 1951, when the new state of Israel was beginning to flex its military muscles in the Middle East, communist revolutionaries had taken power in China, and Berlin had been blockaded under the shadow of the atom bomb.

"Never has our future been more unpredictable," Arendt wrote; "never have we depended so much on political forces that cannot be trusted to follow the rules of common sense and self-interest." We had no hope of recovering our old-time faith in progress, but there was not much chance of returning to "the old world order" either. The best traditions of Western culture had been vandalized and laid waste by Fascism and Nazism, and we found ourselves defenseless at the prospect of World War III.

Socialism and Marxism might once have offered shelter for political optimists, but not anymore: They had by then been absorbed into Stalinist Communism, which, far from being the antithesis of Nazism, turned out to be its horrible twin—an undeclared totalitarianism of the left, exactly mimicking the self-proclaimed totalitarianisms of the right.

Arendt was not the first to describe Marxism as a form of totalitarianism, and several of her conclusions had been anticipated by Karl Popper in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* in 1945—though she seems never to have acknowledged his work, or he hers. But no one before her had presented a sustained historical argument for regarding German Nazism and Soviet Communism as "essentially identical systems." As she saw it, the essence of totalitarianism was not dictatorship or one-party rule but a kind of ideological alchemy that transmuted a few fanciful notions of historical fate into ruthless imperatives of government. To Arendt, totalitarian ideology was manifestly ludicrous: If the future is really being shaped by an iron historical destiny, it should not require assistance from an iron political will. But ludicrousness is no obstacle to influence, and totalitarian fantasies had been the inspiration of several megalomaniacal regimes—notably in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union—that tried to override the inherent unpredictability of human affairs and to treat people as superfluous to grand historical projects. "The totalitarian belief that everything is possible," Arendt said, "proved only that everything can be destroyed."

The mood of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was sober but never despondent. Totalitarianism as Arendt portrayed it was the upshot of an extraordinary concurrence of historical circumstances rather than an expression of some deep-rooted hideousness in human nature. By an unlucky accident, the collapse of rigid class structures in Europe had coincided with the decay of well-defined nation-states and the dissolution of old-style imperialisms, leaving traditional networks of solidarity in ruins. Totalitarianism had then filled the political vacuum with a new form of nationalism—a "tribal" nationalism that appealed to the self-pity of the mob while offering an attractive platform to intellectuals with delusions of omniscient grandeur. Even the persecution of the Jews was incidental rather than inevitable. Anti-Semitism had a long and repellent history, but before the rise of totalitarianism it had been little more than a hobby for boorish buffoons. When prosperous Jews lost their former function as state financiers, however, they became easy targets for inchoate mob rage, and anti-Semitism was transformed into a concerted policy of mass murder. Totalitarianism, in short, was a kind of accident, and it "became this century's curse only because it so terrifyingly took care of its problems." With the defeat of Nazism, however, the problems facing the world had changed; and if there were continuing grounds for fear, there were also fresh reasons for hope.

Many readers were shocked by *The Origins of Totalitarianism*—not so much by its relentless account of murderous cruelties as by its occasional flashes of good cheer. At a time of deepening disillusionment about the public world, when many of Arendt's contemporaries were turning toward the pleasures of cookery, religion, scholarship, children, art or psychoanalysis, Arendt insisted that however badly things were going, politics could always save us. She drew inspiration from the Nuremberg trials and their concept of "crimes against humanity," and from the foundation of the United Nations she looked forward with extraordinary confidence to some sort of global political renaissance.

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Arendt had a distinctly high-minded conception of politics, seeing it not as the bureaucratic administration of collective concerns or a burdensome public duty, still less as a self-interested continuation of warfare by other means. Politics for her was a precious cultural achievement rather than a regrettable social necessity, and it involved the careful maintenance of institutions that enable people to converse freely and respectfully about the world as they see it and as they would like it to be. It was essentially concerned with problems of a kind that will never have perfect solutions, and that therefore require improvisation, invention and endless critical discussion. Politics required us to set aside all sentiments of pride, indignation, shame or resentment, as well as any pretensions to superior expertise, in order to become responsive, intelligent citizens willing to negotiate all our differences on a basis of complete equality. Politics, in short, was the opposite of totalitarianism, and it depended on an open-hearted love for "human plurality"—for people not in the mass or in the abstract but in the distinctness and idiosyncrasy of their lives and the infinite variety of their perceptions. It was more like a serene philosophical seminar than a self-interested struggle for power, and it was not so much a means to human happiness as the pith and substance of it.

There was a deep backstory to Arendt's depiction of politics in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. In the beginning, she thought, there was the ancient Greek polis, or city-state, where genuine politics—also known as democracy—enjoyed a brief flowering before being stamped upon by Plato and his philosophical disciples in the fourth century BCE. The philosophers, with their single-minded dedication to excellence and truth, were bound to abhor the implicit pluralism and egalitarianism of an authentic political world. Politics did not recover from their scorn until the eighteenth century, when "the tremendous equalizing of differences which comes from being citizens of some commonwealth" was glimpsed once again by the republican revolutionaries of America and France. Unfortunately the revolutionaries built their case on a metaphysical notion of "natural rights" that had no purchase outside the classical nation-state. When that structure collapsed, a space was opened up for totalitarian tribalism, with its lethal fantasies about historical destiny and its contempt for human plurality. But totalitarianism was collapsing in its turn, creating the possibility of a "new form of universal solidarity." The new solidarity would be built on a system of "global rule" designed around a single fundamental human right—the "right to the human condition," as Arendt called it, or the right to politics, or more concretely the "right to citizenship." Politics could then come into its own as the field where freedom flourishes, and we would be swept up in an unprecedented global event: "not the end of history," Arendt wrote, "but its first consciously planned beginning."

Arendt was not the kind of author to dwell on doubts or hesitations. She wrote in order to give expression to views already fully formed, claiming that the only limit to her productivity was her typing speed. And when *The Origins of Totalitarianism* started landing on people's desks in 1951, its bulky self-assurance caused annoyance as well as admiration. Arendt was little known at the time, and though her name conveyed the interesting information that she was a woman, the book gave no indication of the equally interesting facts that she was also a middle-aged Jew who had received a philosophical education in Germany before fleeing to Paris in her 20s to do social work with Jewish orphans; nor did it recount how she had escaped to the United States in 1941 and embarked on a

career in New York as a writer and editor, apparently unfazed by the challenge of working in an unfamiliar language. It would no doubt have offended her sense of the dignity of politics to suppose that her personal life story gave any special authority to her opinions, but her intellectual manner was so strikingly alien that readers were intensely curious about who she was and where she was from.

The anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* recognized *Origins* as "a profound and important book" but complained about its eccentric way with English words and the "apocalyptic portentousness" of its style, surmising that English might not be Arendt's native tongue, and that she was in all probability a German. The intellectual historian H. Stuart Hughes, writing in *The Nation*, noted that Arendt was "impatient with easy explanations and verbal fluency"—which was a very tactful way of putting it—and praised her for delivering a "salutary mental shock." He was also able to draw on private knowledge and commend her work as testimony to "the high intellectual level of the German emigration of the 1930s, which has done American thinking an inestimable service by setting a standard that the native-born have rarely been able to match."

Arendt was indeed indebted to her German education. In 1924, at the age of 18, she left her home in Königsberg to study philosophy at Marburg, where she was taught by the as yet obscure Martin Heidegger, and briefly became his lover. Two years later she moved to Heidelberg and worked with Karl Jaspers, creator of the idea of *Existenzphilosophie*. She was 22 when she earned her doctorate with a dissertation on Augustine, and by that time she could be described as part of an existentialist movement, believing with Jaspers and Heidegger that truth can be perceived only in particular historical perspectives, and that each of us is responsible for our ways of seeing the world and the ideals by which we choose to live.

Equally important, her teachers gave her a vivid sense of the essential shape of history. Jaspers and Heidegger took it for granted that the development of humanity could be read off from the canonical works of the philosophers: from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to Descartes, Kant and Hegel. But they regarded the great tradition as a vast and elaborate error rather than a treasury of timeless truths: The art of agile, multifaceted thinking had been all but smothered by Plato's boring, otherworldly objectivism, until Kierkegaard and Nietzsche came to the rescue in the nineteenth century.

It was an attractive story, and a convenient one too, since it implied that world history was bounded by Socrates at one end and Nietzsche at the other, and that its entire span could be comprehended in a single philosophical survey. The young Arendt had a flair for this kind of sweeping panopticism, and in the early 1930s she wrote several articles for German newspapers in which, having paid tribute to Jaspers and Heidegger, she leapt from one great historic thinker to another, assigning them roles in a familiar old drama in which ancient worldliness is replaced by Christian interiority, which is then challenged by the Enlightenment, which is rebuked in its turn by a "Romantic impulse," until the whole sad story is brought to an end by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. If the articles are impressive in their range of reference, however, they are also dispiriting in their eagerness to slot each of the great philosophers into a prefabricated historical scheme. Their youthful author was on the way to being a formidable scholar, but she was in danger of becoming an inflexible dogmatist too.

The historian H. Stuart Hughes described Arendt as 'impatient with easy explanations and verbal fluency,' a very tactful way of putting it.

Arendt's early articles are translated in Jerome Kohn's indispensable anthology *Essays in Understanding*, which fills in the background of *Origins* and explains much of its apparent eccentricity. The astonishing confidence with which Arendt moved between philosophy and history while denouncing the entire philosophical canon was not the whim of a lonely maverick but a commonplace of the German tradition in which she had been trained. Her fundamental idea of "human plurality" was not so much a recapitulation of classical individualism as a reworking of the existentialist doctrine that the self is no more than a collection of points of view, and that any unity we attribute to it is a matter not of experiential fact but of wild and impossible yearning. Her conviction that the "whole structure of Western culture" had been called into question by totalitarianism was a deliberate and disturbing echo of the transvaluation of values Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were supposed to have accomplished a century before: The philosophers, you might say, had imagined a world beyond good and evil, but the Nazis—by practicing a "wickedness beyond vice," which condemned their victims to "innocence beyond virtue"—had actually created one. Arendt's theory that the politics of citizenship was the repressed underside of the entire philosophical tradition was simply an imaginative reapplication of the negative approach to the history of philosophy pioneered by Nietzsche, Jaspers and Heidegger. Indeed, her refreshingly elevated notion of politics was not so much an account of actual political phenomena as a reinterpretation of what the existentialists meant by the open-ended prephilosophical activity of thinking.

The other thing that shines out from *Essays in Understanding* is Arendt's passion for the country where she had chosen to live. European intellectuals had always despised the United States as a mass society in thrall to public relations, and in the early 1950s Arendt was alarmed to see their languorous snobbishness turning into virulent anti-Americanism—an ideology that, according to her, threatened to become "the content of a European movement" while offering cheap and painless ways to "prove oneself a liberal." But Europe's poor had always known better: They realized that the citizens of the United States were members of a mature political community unparalleled in the rest of the world, and they yearned to move to America because they could see that its egalitarianism contained "a promise of freedom" rather than "a threat to culture."

Arendt counted herself lucky to have made a home in America, and even luckier to have been granted membership in a political community subject to the "government of law and not of men." The American Republic was "utterly unlike the European nation-states with their homogeneous populations, their organic sense of history," she said, and it was the only place where someone like her could enjoy "the freedom of becoming a citizen without having to pay the price of assimilation." As far as she was concerned, the United States was the sole inheritor of the revolutionary principles of eighteenth-century Europe, and in spite of the Vietnam War, which she condemned as a disastrous miscalculation, she was never prepared to participate in popular protests or do anything else that might be construed as anti-American.

By the time of her death in 1975, at the age of 69, Arendt had become a celebrated American author, with dozens of scholarly articles to her name, reams of journalism and a sequence of extraordinary

books, including *The Human Condition*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (originally a series of reports in *The New Yorker*), *On Revolution* and *Men in Dark Times*. However, her pro-Americanism, together with her coolness toward Israel and "the Jews" (she often complained about their "insufferable tone of self-righteousness"), had won her many enemies. It did not help that she was a woman, and a childless woman at that, and one who took no particular interest in feminism. For a while it seemed that the public had had enough of her.

But the decline of the classical left in the 1980s and '90s created a surge of sympathy for her doctrine of republican citizenship, and the appearance of several volumes of her correspondence—with Heidegger and Jaspers as well as with her husband, Heinrich Blücher, and her friend Mary McCarthy—rekindled curiosity about her life and personality. Attention has now turned to her large legacy of unpublished and uncollected writings, which Kohn, an excellent scholar, has started preparing for publication. It is an ambitious undertaking, and in due course we can expect, among other things, an anthology of Arendt's reflections on Jewish questions, a new collection of letters and selections from her "thought-journals." Most of the doubts that might be entertained about the value of delving into Arendt's archives should be dispelled by the first two volumes in the series.

Responsibility and Judgment consists mainly of lectures on practical philosophy delivered in the 1960s, concentrating on the relationship between the world of public politics and that of personal morality. Arendt argued that the two worlds had a lot in common, in that neither political issues nor moral ones could ever be settled definitively, or by the mechanical application of ready-made categories: The truths of morality and politics were to be brought into being by a process of deliberation rather than discovered by acts of reasoning or observation. Moral and political dilemmas were like artistic ones; they both called for what Kant called "judgment," or the kind of infinite thoughtfulness that is willing to expose its own standards of assessment to the challenge of the issues it encounters. On the other hand, there was also a fundamental difference in that moral judgments are concerned with the self, or the kind of person one wishes to be, whereas political judgments are concerned with the world, and the kind of society one wants to live in. Having established an analytical distinction between public and private life, Arendt went on to warn of the dangers of blurring it in social action. Most of the evils of our time, she thought, arise from misguided attempts to moralize politics or politicize morality. She was on a mission to keep politics pure.

Arendt had an exceptional talent for making enemies, and in her 1959 essay "Reflections on Little Rock" she alienated progressive opinion irreparably by laying into the civil rights movement. Referring to a photo of a black girl leaving school surrounded by jeering young whites, she argued that it was grotesque to force children to suffer such humiliation and expect them to rise heroically above it. She regarded slavery and its racist legacy as the most terrible blot on American history, and she wanted all discriminatory legislation to be struck down. But in her view, that was as far as politics could legitimately go, and the federal government's attempt to force the children of Arkansas to attend racially integrated schools was both an unwarranted intrusion into private life and a terrible breach of political propriety—a fateful step, she implied, toward totalitarianism.

Arendt's critique of school desegregation as a fateful step toward totalitarianism was a fine example of her extraordinary stubbornness.

Arendt had a point about the cruelty of expecting the children of Little Rock to sort out problems their parents could not handle (it would seem that she never forgot what she learned as a social worker helping young refugees in Paris in the 1930s). But she was also offering a wider and more systematic argument about the need to maintain a distance between the political sphere, where the principle of equality is absolutely indispensable, and the social and private spheres, where it is completely inappropriate. If Jews wanted to spend their vacations with other Jews, she claimed, or non-Jews with non-Jews, they should be able to do so without hindrance, because their discriminatory actions were social rather than political, and therefore nobody's business but their own. After all, if the Supreme Court eventually got around to striking down the iniquitous antimiscegenation laws, no one would expect the government to take measures to "encourage, let alone enforce, mixed marriages." But if people were entitled to be free from political coercion in their choice of holiday resorts or marriage partners, Arendt argued, they should be allowed exactly the same choice about the company their children keep in school.

The argument is a fine example of Arendt's extraordinary stubbornness. On occasion she acknowledged that politics of the kind she revered was impossible in a context of severe social injustice, and she ought at least to have wondered whether inequality in access to education might put citizenship in danger in a way that inequality in access to holiday hotels or marriage beds does not. If her pure-minded axioms really made it illegitimate for politics to defend itself by getting mixed up in social, moral or economic affairs, she should surely have considered revising them in the light of experience rather than insisting on them whatever the cost. It would seem that she never grew out of her early dogmatism, and that she was better at preaching the self-critical art of judgment than putting it into practice.

The same applies to her view of history and her self-appointed task of rescuing politics from the enormous condescension of philosophy. Any impartial sampling would indicate that she had gotten the problem the wrong way round: Philosophers who have reflected on political processes have on the whole been rather starry-eyed about them and not at all contemptuous. Even Plato, whom Arendt regarded as the supreme example of philosophy's disdain for politics, ranked politicians well above poets and artists, not to mention merchants, cobblers, slaves and practically everyone else except philosophers. Karl Marx was surely nearer the truth when he suggested that politics was not much more than a sideshow—part of the "ideological superstructure" alongside law, art, religion and indeed philosophy—and that the Western philosophical tradition had always made a fetish of it.

Arendt barely touched on Marx in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, but in the 1950s she tried to remedy the omission in a couple of manuscripts that have now been compiled by Kohn in *The Promise of Politics*. It is easy to see why she never published them herself, as they do not show her at her best. She was always quite hostile to Marx (she thought he was simply "not interested in freedom or in justice"), and in an act of interpretive violence that is unusual even for her, she assimilated his skepticism about political action into her own preconceived scheme: He was yet another antipolitical prophet of totalitarianism—a philosophical snob in "the tradition that began with Plato," and "the last political philosopher in the West." These claims may be sufficiently

vague to be saved from being false. But if Marx can be dismissed as just another Platonist, then it is hard to see who could ever escape the charge.

It never seems to have occurred to Arendt that if she sniffed Platonic condescension toward politics wherever she looked, it might be because it emanated from her. If she was as keen on the purity of politics as Plato was on the purity of philosophy, it was perhaps because politics as she conceived it was little more than philosophy by another name: a gracious art of respectful, self-critical listening that must always be allowed to take its time. But politics is also about emergencies, catastrophes and deadlines, and if it embodies a set of high republican principles of the kind that Arendt championed, it also contains much else: on the one hand a mass of more or less efficient administrative routines, and on the other elements of compulsion, folly and delusion, or—as Marx would put it—of tragedy and farce. She may have been right to defend the "promise of politics" against our reckless hopes and fears; but she should also have remembered that promises are often broken. ■

FILMS

Cruel and Unusual Punishment

STUART KLAWANS

CACHÉ (HIDDEN)

I begin with the straight razor, the razor blade, the keen metal stud, the hacksaw—all the tools that have sliced into human flesh in Michael Haneke's films, advancing his plots while they mirror his style. His images are cold, gleaming and precise; his view of characters, dispassionately cutting. Think of Haneke as a clinician, dedicated to treating society's ills, and his movies will seem like scalpels. Think of him as a less benevolent type, and the films become Austrian chain saws.

It seems that most viewers have seen the scalpel in his widely admired new picture, which for the American market has been helpfully subtitled right in its name, as *Caché (Hidden)*. Like virtually all of Haneke's films, this one scrapes away at the surface of polite European affluence to lay bare the moral rot beneath. Daniel Auteuil stars as Georges, the host of a popular French television show about recently published books; Juliette Binoche plays Anne, his appropriately elegant wife; Lester Makedonsky is their teenage son, Pierrot, whose ways are (of course) impenetrable; and Maurice Bénichou appears in the crucial role of Majid, the figure from a dark past.

The slightly melodramatic note in my summary is intended, as it is in *Caché* itself. Beginning with the first image—a stationary long shot of a residential street in Paris, held and held until the ordinary, day-lit scene fills with dread—Haneke practices his version of Hitchcockian suspense, and even offers the ploy of a thriller plot. As you soon learn, that opening view of the street is part of a surveillance video of Georges and Anne's home. What snoop made the cassette and then dropped it at their door? Why are they being watched? As the couple, already bickering in their first scene, start to imagine threats and cast about for clues, you are drawn into their sleuthing, even as you realize you're somehow searching for yourself. Georges and Anne are unnerved because they've been seen—and there you sit, hypocrite voyeur, observing them and wondering who has exposed their discord.

A sophisticated gambit, expertly played. Even if you dislike *Caché*—and I do—it's impossible to deny the formidable intelligence at work in the film. There's a reason Haneke was named best director at Cannes, why *Caché* got a prominent slot in the most recent New York Film Festival, why at the end of 2005 various critics' groups and the European Film Awards cited *Caché* as the year's best picture. There's also a reason to resist *Caché*—but to propose it, I'll need to conduct a quick review of Haneke's career.

He began his work in feature films in 1989 with *Der Siebente Kontinent* (*The Seventh Continent*), an exquisitely, immaculately depressing examination of a middle-class Austrian family that no longer found life worth living. Was the movie a case study, an allegory, a diatribe, a warning? The power