ARENDT CONTRA SOCIOLOGY
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ASHGATE
For Nicola
Contents

Acknowledgements
Abbreviations

1 Introduction

PART I SOCIETY AND ITS SCIENCE

2 Society
3 Sociology

PART II RE-THINKING SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

4 Reflexivity
5 Power
6 Knowledge
7 Consumption
8 Conclusion: The Good Society and the Future of Sociology

Bibliography
Index
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Abbreviations of Arendt’s works in the text:

BPF    Between Past and Future
EU     Essays in Understanding 1930-1954
HC     The Human Condition
LM     The Life of the Mind
OR     On Revolution
OT     The Origins of Totalitarianism
OV     On Violence
PP     The Promise of Politics
RJ     Responsibility and Judgment
Chapter 1
Introduction

This book is about the German-American political theorist Hannah Arendt. However, it is not a book about political theory, and politics per se – Arendt’s declared main interest – is a relatively minor theme. It is, instead, an attempt to address a fact that would have perhaps startled Arendt: that she is today read at least as much by social as by political scientists and theorists. She would have been startled because, throughout most of her career, she expressed a strong aversion to the social sciences generally and to sociology specifically, and invested a good portion of her writing in barbed attacks on its supposed pretensions and presuppositions. Yet, as I argue, Arendt’s style of thinking has strong resonance with many fundamental sociological tenets. Epistemologically, her work is anti-essentialist and suspicious of universals. In ethics and politics – deeply affected as she was by the phenomenon of totalitarianism – she is skeptical of morality and of the power of moral reasoning. Conflict and power are key elements in her conception of human relations, and she is scornful of ‘rational action’ models in explaining human behaviour. All this makes her a difficult bedfellow for many mainstream political theorists and philosophers. It aligns her more with important strands of thinking within contemporary sociology. The themes that occupy Arendt’s interest, including the oppression of historically marginalized groups, revolutions, secularization, the future of work, the effects of modern technology and the nature of power, have also come to be seen, for good or ill, as most obviously the purview of the social sciences, and are addressed most comprehensively within the discipline of sociology.

But Arendt remained hostile to sociology and to most sociologists throughout her life, the tone of her criticisms ranging from the measured and careful to the impatient and dismissive. Sociologists therefore, when they read her work, usually avoid the criticisms and cherry-pick her insights. Nevertheless, this book argues that Arendt has an original and sophisticated critique of sociology that should be treated seriously, and which, while it was intended to be primarily negative, can serve to strengthen the epistemological and ontological integrity of the discipline. The book focuses on sociology because it is a primary target of Arendt’s criticisms, because its subject matter and methods are most similar to Arendt’s own, and because it is best positioned to benefit from her insights. However, some of the main points are applicable to the social sciences more generally.

Why Arendt Contra Sociology?

My own interest in Hannah Arendt’s work has grown as I have moved further away from my earliest scholarly interests, which were largely philosophical. I initially
encountered her, as the author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, when I was a graduate student at the University of Warwick in the 1990s. I read the book in the context of my earliest thinking about the relationship between philosophy and the ‘real world’ of human affairs. I found it invigorating, even startling, unlike almost anything else I had read, but recognizably written by a philosophically-trained mind. I encountered Arendt again two years later, in the form of *The Human Condition*, in the context of trying to understand Hegel’s contemporary influence on social theory. I found this book determinedly anti-systemic and concrete – even, notwithstanding Arendt’s somewhat meandering style, down-to-earth. But the book also brimmed with challenging and complex ideas about society which I rapidly found, when I began to delve deeper into the secondary literature, were still being explored fifty years after its first publication, but only rarely by sociologists.

About this time, I moved away from philosophy. I embraced sociology and sociological thinking, found myself teaching courses that required full immersion in empirical work and historical data. Sociology, it seemed to me, had completed the half-turn that Hegel had initiated, seeking answers to fundamental questions not in some metaphysical beyond or logical abstraction, but in the worldly here-and-now of human activity. The project of standing Hegel on his feet was not to be confined to Marxism alone; Durkheim, Weber and Simmel were all, I realized, also fully invested in this project although, of course, with different visions of what such an upending would require. Yet much contemporary sociology, I soon came to realize, had become more distant from the kinds of questions that Hegel and the early sociologists had asked. What binds human communities together? Why do human beings have the kinds of experiences we do? What are we *doing*? Many of these questions had become dispersed in a murk of empiricism, hyper-specialization, presentism and a proliferation of vocabularies.

Seeking a way to question the dominant orthodoxies of the discipline, I turned to another book that had influenced me as a graduate student, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, by Gillian Rose (who was my doctoral supervisor for a while at the University of Warwick), which was published in 1982 (recently reissued by Verso as part of their *Radical Thinkers* series). Rose sought to show how sociological thinking was imbued with neo-Kantian assumptions that had failed to take on board Hegel’s critique of Kant. While I did not (and do not) agree with Rose’s conclusions regarding sociology (which tended to get mixed up with her idiosyncratic but quite brilliant interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy), I was intrigued by the idea of questioning sociology’s assumptions from the outside, so to speak. This, it seemed to me, was also a primary thrust of Arendt’s work. This book is an attempt to return to the spirit of Rose’s questioning, but through the prism of another thinker, opposed to the abstruse and abstract tenor of Hegel’s thinking, but with no less a sophisticated worldview. I argue in this book that Arendt’s criticisms of sociology, suitably reinterpreted, have considerable constructive potential for sociological theory and therefore for the field of sociology generally.

**The Context of Contemporary Sociological Theory**
In order to follow the main arguments of the book, the reader must operate with a few assumptions. First, s/he must be inclined to the view that it is possible to ‘advance’ sociology as a discipline. One need not be committed to a precise view of what such advances look like to assume this. I do not myself present such an account, but I take conceptual refinement to constitute an important component of it. Most of the arguments I make in the book concerning the importance of Arendt for sociology consist in emphasizing this element, as a defence against sociological reductionism. A second assumption is that it is possible to say something useful about sociological theories by stepping outside them; that is, one does not have to inhabit a theory in order to constructively critique (and thereby advance) it. In fact, many of the arguments in this book question quite basic assumptions that sociologists make about concepts such as power, knowledge, activity, agency and thinking. This may raise hackles among those who routinely work with these concepts. Nevertheless, the intention of the questioning is intended to be constructive, and readers must be prepared to accept that it is at least occasionally useful to question the meaning of the taken-for-granted vocabulary of an intellectual discipline. Third, the reader must assume Arendt is an important thinker, and have some familiarity with her work. The book is not an introduction to Arendt’s thinking (of which there are already several), although I try throughout to explain her main ideas as well as work with them.

The book is concerned, then, primarily with why Arendt matters to sociologists. Contemporary sociology, especially in North America, is characterized perhaps most significantly by its theoretical pluralism (see Turner and Roth, 2003: 3). Sociologists routinely borrow concepts freely from the work of such theorists as Pierre Bourdieu, Margaret S. Archer and Jurgen Habermas, and adapt them to their own uses and interests. Similarly, the theories of these and other luminaries are not regarded as in inevitable conflict with each other but, happily or unhappily, co-exist. This means that the idea of a unified paradigm under which the discipline could be united seems quite antiquated. Those who are awaiting the Newton of sociology, as Anthony Giddens suggests, are not only waiting for the wrong train, but at the wrong station. No doubt this is right, but there is also something unnerving about the prospect of practitioners from radically different sociological traditions sitting down and celebrating their differences. For, if the idea of ‘advancing’ sociology means anything today, it cannot mean, surely, only the proliferation of theoretical paradigms and concepts. Too often, conflicts between sociological paradigms are not resolved, but accommodated – either by creating hybrid forms that supposedly take the best of previous approaches, or by establishing entirely new approaches that are supposedly exempt from problems of their competitors. This leaves the original paradigm unaltered and/or further fragments the discipline, while keeping its outer ramparts firmly closed to outsiders. Is this pluralism or promiscuity? And if pluralism is the order of the day, so too is differentiation, manifested in the forest of journals that has grown up, many of which use concepts and terms comprehensible only to initiates. Under these conditions it is hard to know what it would mean to ‘advance’ the discipline.

An alternative way to question sociological theory constructively is to challenge contemporary orthodoxies from without, to confront theories not with a potential cohabitant, or hybrid proposal, but with a genuine critique. This is how Arendt is useful. She exposes assumptions within the discipline that would otherwise be hard to
uncover. I do not propose that theoretical pluralism within sociology will be greater or lesser (or neither) as a result of incorporating her critique of sociology into the field. I propose only that sociological theory can learn something by confronting her criticisms head-on.

Goals of the Book

Almost all contemporary secondary literature on Hannah Arendt’s work comes from either philosophers or political theorists, and in recent years it has expanded rapidly, reflecting the widespread recognition of the depth and originality of her thinking. This coincided with political phenomena that were unexpected and/or alarming, and which seemed to demand a new perspective. These included, in Europe in the 1990s, the seeds of a possible federation of national states, but also the reappearance of concentration camps in the wake of the Balkan Wars; in America, in the 2000s, the growth of the security state in response to 9/11 and of mass surveillance on a scale that has only recently become evident; during the same period, the worldwide resurgence of radical ideologies of faith; and, in the last decade, wars and revolutions that have engulfed much of the Middle East. Political theorists trying to understand these events have found, in Arendt, challenging ideas that were almost uncannily prescient. The emergence of a film by Margarethe Von Trotta, released to mainstream audiences in 2013, exploring Arendt’s unique perspective confirmed her status as both a profound intellectual and an inspired political observer.

But, while Arendt’s work is clearly political at its core, she offers many important reflections on activities and questions that are not obviously political: education, art, work/labour, consumption, science, thinking and moral action all loom large as key themes in her writing. Of course her, and our, thinking about these themes may have political implications, but these are, essentially, activities that occur in non-political spaces. It is nevertheless, one of the characteristics of the modern world, that many non-political activities are thoroughly public. So the distribution of labour and work – the key ‘social question’ – as well as the purpose of education, the trajectory of scientific knowledge, the place of art in social life and the texture of intimate life, have all become ‘opened up’ to public contestation, to the effects of public speech and action, as well as to the effects of the marketplace. To understand ‘what we are doing’ in our work spaces, schools, families and friendships, has been – and continues to be – the preserve of the social sciences, and sociology in particular. Thus, sociology in particular has been charged with resisting reductionism, with examining these phenomena in their terms. But in this it has had, at best, mixed success; it has too often lost sight of the meaning that activities do possess in their own terms, however these are understood.

The principal argument of this book is that Arendt should be read as an antidote to reductionism. This is a central concern of her overtly political interventions – and has been subjected to much secondary commentary – but it is as true of her reflections on the other themes identified above. The chapters in Part II are intended to explore some of the ways in which reductionism has entered sociology, and how Arendt’s work enables us to identify this, and potentially correct it. But the arguments in these
chapters presume an account of *human activity in general*. Part I of the book is intended to show how Arendt – primarily in *HC* – provides this, and how this affects her critique of sociology. In Chapter 2, in particular, I explain how this interpretation affects the meaning of some of the key concepts from *HC*, and the book as a whole emphasizes the meaning of the triad of activities that are presented in this work. Notwithstanding the detailed analysis I undertake in the first part of the book, the meaning of the ‘triad of activities’ needs some initial leavening.

**The Triad of Activities**

The overall picture of Arendt’s distinction between labour and work can be summed up as follows: The world of labour denotes those activities that are undertaken by ‘the body’, and whose function is oriented solely to biological needs (*HC*: 80–81). Labour is not a ‘project’; it has no end beyond the maintenance and reproduction of life itself. It involves production for the purpose of consumption, and is contrasted with the planned, controlled and organized activities that characterize the capacity to work (or to fabricate, as she renders it consistently in her later works), that is, to transform objects in the world into the things that fulfil human purposes. The capacity to fabricate denotes a wholly distinct mode of being-in, and relating to, the world, that involves, above all, the category of instrumentality. ‘The implements and tools, from which the most fundamental experience of instrumentality arises, determine all work or fabrication. Here it is indeed true that the end justifies the means; it does more, it produces and organizes them’ (153). Human beings as toolmakers, *homo faber*, have to be understood as constituting a fundamental (ontological) category, opposed to that of the *animal laborans*. But, as I argue in Chapter 2, activities cannot be simply ordered into one or other of these categories; the triad of activities is not a territorial division (Markell, 2011: 17–18). Rather, *homo faber* and *animal laborans* are lifeworlds, which operate as models, or archetypes, which activities may approximate to more or less. In any given society, these activities are given their meaning, their ‘proper place’, via institutions.

What then of action, the central category of concern in Arendt’s *oeuvre*? Action means, (deceptively) simply, ‘acting in concert’. That is, action ‘happens’ in the ‘in-between space of human plurality’. Action seems to entail politics, and ‘the meaning of politics is freedom’ (*PP*: 108). I disentangle these cryptic statements in Chapters 2 and 3, but it is worth noting here that action and speech are to be distinguished from work insofar as they are pursued primarily for their own sake, and not for some further end. That is, the meaning of work is inherently tied to its outcome, while labour is bound to the biological conditions of human life. Action and speech, are consequences of human sociability, but they are not in the service of communication. They appear within institutions that are oriented to channelling and binding the consequences of action, since it always escapes the intentions of its authors.

The triad of activities entail two further correlate terms in Arendt’s work that need some initial clarification. The first is the distinction between ‘nature’ and ‘world’. When Arendt speaks of ‘world-building’ she is referring to the erection of the human environment as a realm distinct from that of ‘nature’. The ‘world’ does not consist
exclusively of tangible objects. The institutional and symbolic restraints that surround the human environment are ‘built’ via the capacities of *homo faber*. ‘Nature’ or ‘the natural’ encompasses all that is ephemeral and temporal, fated to appear and to reappear in cyclical form.

A second correlate is the distinction between the public and the private, which refers to institutional spheres. The division is by no means a cultural universal, but is a defining feature of most state societies, notwithstanding despotic or totalitarian attempts to destroy it. Arendt often uses the terms ‘the private sphere’ and ‘the household’ interchangeably. The public sphere, in contrast, is always institutionally differentiated, and includes the state or parliament, schools and universities, places of worship and communing and, also, the marketplace, or *agora*. But the Ancient and Medieval agora was a space where ‘the display of goods was accompanied by a display of their production’ (*HC*: 160). In this respect, it was a public sphere devoted to the activities only of *homo faber*, while the ‘household’ was the private institutional space of labour, and the *polis* the public space for action. The institutional differentiation of the modern world impacts the division between the public and the private sphere in complex ways, which are discussed in Chapter 2.

**An Overview of the Book**

The triad of human activities is therefore a central tenet of Arendt’s thinking, which I explore extensively in Part I of this book. In Chapter 2, I show how it implies a theory of society, which can be extracted from a careful reading of *HC*. This allows for intersections between Arendt and sociology that have typically eluded previous interpreters of her work. Understanding *HC* in this way has the advantage of clarifying other themes from *HC*, including the idea of the ‘rise of the social’, and the distinctive features of action. In Chapter 3, I discuss Arendt’s (often bitter) objections to sociology. I discuss her relationship with and critique of the work of Karl Mannheim and Karl Marx, before turning to her more general objections to sociology, which center on the tendency of sociology to reduce action to fabrication or to labour.

In Part II of the book, I apply Arendt’s insights to some specific themes within contemporary sociological theory. In Chapter 4, I focus on the concept of reflexivity, which has become a dominant site of debate within contemporary sociological theory. I show how Arendt’s account, in *LM*, of the reflexive capacities of the human mind, can add clarity to the issues currently defined by this concept. I am concerned in particular to augment Margaret S. Archer’s influential account of the meaning of reflexivity and its cognate concepts. In Chapter 5, I focus on the career of the concept of power within sociology. In particular, I explore the intersections and differences between Arendt’s and Habermas’s conceptions of power, and show how Arendt’s account of authority can be integrated into Steven Lukes’s more recent account of power. In this chapter, I also explore Arendt’s elusive theory of morality, and its implications for both the sociology of morality and for some of Arendt’s own political commitments. In Chapter 6, I explore the implications of Arendt’s insights into the changing character of scientific knowledge in the modern world for contemporary sociology of knowledge. Here, I compare Arendt’s reflections with those of her friend
Daniel Bell, and with the ‘knowledge society theory’ of the German-Canadian sociologist Nico Stehr. In the final chapter, I explore Arendt’s perspective on the meaning of consumption and consumerism, and how this informs recent theories that emphasize this feature of contemporary societies. I offer Arendt-inspired critiques of both Zygmunt Bauman’s and Pierre Bourdieu’s perspectives before turning to the work of Arendt’s contemporary Herbert Marcuse, for some comparative insights.

**Divisions and Controversies**

Several themes continue to be divisive among Arendt’s commentators. These include Arendt’s analysis of totalitarianism, her relationship with Heidegger and its implications, and, inevitably, the Eichmann affair (which was also the main theme of the film). Arendt’s reputation is, to some extent, dogged by persistent questioning about her judgment in each of these entanglements. In this book, I mostly relegate these to secondary concern. This does not necessarily reflect my view of their importance, but only that they have already been so heavily commented upon that the gain that further interventions can provide may be limited. Nevertheless, since they do dominate so much of the discourse on Arendt, it would be well to make my clear my positions on them.

Much of the discussion of Arendt’s relationship with Heidegger has played out in the wake of Elzbieta Ettinger’s book (1995), which charged Arendt with being an apologist for her former lover’s unreconstructed Nazi past, and fed a baleful tributary of scholarship that accused her of complicity in Nazi ideology. Properly-informed, knowledgeable defences of Arendt’s insights into Heidegger’s true character have been advanced by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (2006: 21–3, 2004: xiv–xvi) and Dana Villa (1996: 61–86). These people’s opinions, grounded in deep scholarly knowledge of Arendt’s *oeuvre*, seem to me unanswerable, and I concur with the consensus that can be carved from their work: that Heidegger was a rather manipulative and vain man, whose lack of ability to judge misled him into thinking he could play ‘philosopher king’ in Hitler’s court. Arendt was (or became) thoroughly alive to these failings, but understandably sought to retain her connection with the person who had filled her with the wonder of philosophy in her youth – a gift that few have been capable of bestowing, and which highlights Heidegger’s undisputable talents as a thinker. His ideas certainly influenced Arendt’s own thinking, although her criticisms of his philosophy are sharp and not at all flattering (see *EU*: 361–2; Villa, 1996: 84).

Second, the Eichmann affair has attracted so much commentary that it is simply impossible to say anything about it that will not lead to further proliferation of disagreement. The disagreements congregate around three themes: first, Arendt’s description of Eichmann’s evil as ‘banal’; second, her failure to examine the full record of Eichmann’s anti-Semitism; third, the ‘lack of love’ for the Jewish people (*Ahabath Israel*) instantiated in her supposed accusations of Jewish elders as collaborators. On all three of these points, charge and countercharge have continued to swirl, but produced no resolution. The ‘banality of evil’ claim still divides scholars whose knowledge of Arendt’s work is universally recognized, such as Susan Neiman (2010) (who defends it) and Peter Baehr (2010) (who derides it). Arendt’s lack of
familiarity with the background to the Eichmann case was supposedly demonstrated unequivocally by the publication of David Cesarani’s *Becoming Eichmann* (2010), but this did not prevent an exchange of letters between Mark Lilla and Roger Berkowitz in the 19 December 2013 issue of *The New York Review of Books* arguing the question of when and if Arendt availed herself sufficiently of the thousands of pages of documents from Eichmann’s Argentina years that subsequently came to light (most extensively explored by Bettina Stangneth’s *Eichmann vor Jerusalem* (2013)). On the question of Arendt’s supposed accusation that the actions of Jewish Elders could be construed as collaboration (Arendt noted specifically Leo Baeck, who she referred to in an early addition of the book – subsequently altered – as the Jewish *Fuhrer*), so much has been written, with so much vehemence, as to freight any further intervention with controversy. On each of these questions, also, there is the danger that they are too close to the shadow of the Holocaust to allow an appropriate perspective. Nevertheless, I do address one issue (in Chapter 5) that involves the Eichmann question; this is the relationship between thinking and morality. Whatever one thinks of Arendt’s perspective on Eichmann, the questions she poses in this connection can be fully detached from the Eichmann controversy, without losing their force and importance.

Third, Arendt’s analysis of totalitarianism still encounters resistance. At the time of the publication of *OT*, it should be recalled, the dominant ways of thinking about totalitarianism were divided between those who saw it as an atavistic reversion to pre-modern ‘emotive’ elements (such as Talcott Parsons), and those who emphasized the ‘over-reaching rationality’ of totalitarian states (a view pioneered by Karl Popper). This binary was challenged by *OT*, but the book did not persuade most political or social scientists. *OT* is still a powerful work, but I do not discuss it much in this book partly because – as is the case with the Heidegger and Eichmann controversies – so much has been written on it.

**A Note on the Texts**

Arendt composed three major books for publication in her lifetime: *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), *The Human Condition* (1958) and *The Life of the Mind* (1971) (which was unfinished at the time of her death in 1975). I discuss *HC* extensively throughout this book, while the argument in Chapter 4 focuses on *LM*. The other writings that Arendt published may be taken as offshoots from the main trunk of her thought presented in these works. The essays collected in *Between Past and Future* (1961) mostly develop themes first introduced in *HC*. Arendt’s most famous book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963a), constitutes a bridge from her earlier concerns to *LM*. During the 1960s, she wrote mostly essays or short monographs on contemporary events. This period includes *On Revolution* (1963b), a case study of political themes presented in *The Human Condition*, *On Violence* (1970), *Crises of the Republic* (1969) and *Men in Dark Times* (1968). With the exception of *On Violence*, which I discuss in Chapter 5, these writings play only a minor role in this book. Arendt also wrote two early book-length monographs in German, the biography, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewish Woman* ([1957] 1974), and her doctoral dissertation, translated and
published as *Love and St Augustine* (1996). The ‘rediscovery’ of these important texts has had an important impact on the secondary literature surrounding *The Human Condition*, but are less important for the interpretation pursued here. Arendt also wrote many essays, articles and reviews, a selection of which appear in *Essays in Understanding* (1994). Some of these are important for the argument in this book, but especially the early (1930) essay on Mannheim entitled ‘Philosophy and Sociology’.

The full extent of Arendt’s writings was not realized until after her death, and a selection of her unpublished work has appeared in five volumes of collected essays published by Schocken books since 2003. Many of these draw out details of arguments that appear only in general terms in her main works. Two collections in particular, *The Promise of Politics* (2005) and *Responsibility and Judgment* (2003), are of particular interest in this book. The first contains the essay ‘Introduction into Politics’, and several other pieces that were composed for Arendt’s planned sequel to *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which was provisionally entitled ‘Totalitarian Elements in Marxism’. This collection therefore contains many of Arendt’s most important reflections on Marx, and the legacy of his thinking, which I discuss in several places, but especially in Chapter 3. The second, *Responsibility and Judgment*, contains Arendt’s most extensive reflections on morality, and on the aporias of bureaucratic criminality, which I discuss in Chapter 5.

Volumes of Arendt’s correspondence with Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Mary McCarthy and Heinrich Blucher have also appeared in print. Other letters and documents are available at the Hannah Arendt Archive at the New School of Social Research in New York City. These sources are important for contextual interpretation and I reference these in several places. I also draw on a cross section of the recent secondary literature on Arendt, focusing primarily on the most influential book-length interpretations of her work. These include Seyla Benhabib’s *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (2003) and her edited collection of essays, *Politics in Dark Times* (2011), Hanna Pitkin’s *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt’s Conception of the Social* (2000), Jacques Taminiaux’s *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker* (1998), Margaret Canovan’s *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* (1994), Peter Baehr’s *Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism and the Social Sciences* (2010), Dana Villa’s edited collection, *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (2000), and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl’s *Why Arendt Matters* (2006), together with her marvellous (1982) biography of Arendt, *For Love of the World*, which is also a major interpretive work. I also draw on an array of other articles and essays that have appeared, mostly in the last fifteen years.
The most overt (and outrageous) of these was Bernard Wasserstein’s (2009) article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, in which he unleashed a litany of spurious claims about Arendt’s character and work. For a blow-by-blow riposte, see Horowitz (2012).

This charge was made by Gershom Scholem, a friend of Arendt’s, in a letter to her in 1964.

This is also Mark Lilla’s verdict on Von Trotta’s film, in which, he argues, ‘the problem is that von Trotta has chosen an episode in Arendt’s life where the stakes were so high, intellectually and morally, that they cannot in good taste be treated as the backdrop of a human interest story’ (2013).

For example, one of the most widely hailed intervention into understanding Nazi totalitarianism in the US in recent years, Adam Tooze’s book, *The Wages of Destruction* (2006), does not even cite Arendt’s study, even though remarkably many of his insights either support or augment hers. This is particularly true of his discussion of the perceived ‘anti-utility’ of the concentration camps. For Arendt, this was perhaps their most puzzling feature, that the Nazis ‘were convinced that that it was of greater importance to run extermination factories than to win the war’ (*EU*: 233). As Tooze points out, the ‘utility’ of the camps varied throughout the war, but he notes several striking ‘anti-utilitarian’ features (2007: 668).

*Men in Dark Times* consists of a series of biographical portraits of important literary and intellectual figures of the twentieth century. In many ways it is unlike anything else Arendt wrote, but I include it with these other writings because it is really a collection of essays.