It is possible that, for the past twenty and even thirty years, one of the central though perhaps least candidly discussed problems of the Western artist, writer, intellectual, educated citizen has been how to take part, honorably and with dignity, in the public world --- without compromising the integrity of private life, without accepting for a moment the currency of received ideas, and without being drawn in either by any desire for personal power, or by the at first merely frivolous and debased but of late pernicious and even violent appetite for celebrity. In her lifetime, Hannah Arendt addressed this problem constantly, both in its more obviously private manifestation, questions of solitude, love, friendship, all the intimate concerns and motivations that can be destroyed or else made monstrous by "the light of the public," which, as Miss Arendt said, quoting Heidegger, "obscures everything," and in its apparently public, political aspect, questions of how, when, and for what reason, individuals ought from time to time to appear in public, to express their views and hear the views of others, and to confirm, by this exchange and in the very diversity of their opinions, the existence of a common world.

The two related but unprecedented catastrophes of this century, the rise of totalitarianism and the Second World War, had called the existence of just this common world so radically, and for the first time, into question that Miss Arendt, whose work, beginning with "The Origins of Totalitarianism," became by far the most important attempt to understand the century and its catastrophes, felt obliged not just to think and write about the world but to appear personally in it. Though she understood people who were inclined by temperament to separate life from work, sending their work into the public world but otherwise withdrawing from it; though in her own life she drew, by careful accommodations and refusals, clear lines between the circle of her friends, her students, her immediate neighbors, and the public world as such; though she had both an innate and a principled

aversion to publicity, to psychologizing, and to all other cheap and intrusive forms of "public light"; though she had seen, in her own time, the degree to which the public involvement of writers, intellectuals, artists, in the events of modern history had been problematic; Miss Arendt recognized as well the consequences of what, in a profound and delicate speech with which she accepted the Lessing Prize, in Hamburg, Germany, in 1959, she called the "inner emigration," that retreat from the world into an "interior realm" which can contribute to the perpetuation of an external "unendurable reality," and to the actual dissolution of the world. Even in modern free societies, which regard the freedom not to take part, "freedom from politics," in Miss Arendt's words, as "one of the basic freedoms," Miss Arendt believed that the world is incalculably diminished by every instance of its exercise. By "the world," Miss Arendt obviously meant something other than the physical world or even the people in it; as by "politics," she meant nothing so narrow as the contention of people or of factions for power in the world. She had come to believe that even the innermost self, alone, has a political dimension; and that, though a degree of solitude is necessary, particularly to every creative or thinking life, isolation from the public world ultimately threatens individuality in essence, which requires to emerge from its "internal dialogue" into some sort of dialogue with others, to participate in that exchange of views --- and not of views only, but of stories, ideas, observations, memories --- that holding of a conversation with and in the world of which, Miss Arendt came to believe, the world quite literally consists.

That dialogue, that conversation which "both links and separates men," as it establishes "those distances between men which together comprise the world," occurs ideally among friends; and Miss Arendt, who had a rare gift for friendship, found in friendship, too, "political importance" --- not in "the intimate talk in which people speak about themselves," but as a continuing "discourse" about the common world, which "makes political demands and preserves reference to the world."

What is "political" here is almost everything that is not intimate or unexpressed, everything that makes some reference to the public realm; and the "public realm," of course, includes history, poetry, laws, things, the arts, affairs of state, whatever has been thought, done, or observed by men. That neither friendship, nor the common world, nor finally the individual self can exist without this politics, this discourse --- that conversation does not merely sustain, in a sense it is the world --- is a theme that recurs in odd ways throughout Miss Arendt's work. It is what she meant when she wrote, for instance, that "the world and the people who inhabit it are not the same"; that "the world lies between people"; that the world is an "in-between," a "space between," or the "distances between men"; and that freedom "requires," while totalitarianism must "annihilate" that space. Because the "space," the "distances" in question are not, obviously, material, physical interstices, but rather those relations, among contemporaries and through recorded time, which consist primarily in writing or in talk. In "dark times," the discourse that prevails in public becomes what Miss Arendt, again quoting Heidegger, called the "mere talk," by which "the they" can reduce everything to "incomprehensible triviality." At other times, the public realm has "the power of illumination which was originally part of its very nature." But at all times, there is no world, or at least no human world at all, without "recurrent narration" of its events, "incessant and continual discourse about its affairs and the things in it," and "unless it is constantly talked about by human beings."

Miss Arendt herself took part in the world's discourse in various ways: as an immensely persuasive, even magnetic public speaker; as a beloved and inspired teacher, correspondent, friend; as a writer of biographical essays (on, for example, Isak Dinesen, Walter Benjamin, Rosa Luxemburg, Randall Jarrell) remarkable for their quality of insight into lives and persons almost unimaginably different from one another, and remarkable also for the voice, the cadences, the style of

prose and cast of mind, which were always, unmistakeably, Miss Arendt's own. The "It is precisely," the "And this is by no means," the "There can be no doubt," the "And it is in the very nature," the tone, in short, of self-evidence and absolute authority (in matters as subtle and as deep as her discovery that loneliness itself is, not only a political condition, but the underlying condition of individuals in totalitarian society); the stunning eloquence, even in intellectual asides (as when, in discussing T.E. Lawrence, haring, toward the end of his life, on a motorcycle through the English countryside, she called him "one of the tragic and Quixotic fools of imperialism," and, in the same paragraph, with lowered voice but undiminished, maybe heightened accuracy, referred to natures too grand in their ambitions to settle for "the calm good conscience of some limited achievement") were as characteristically Arendtian as the one thought, or rather, the one intellectual position, which, more than any other, seemed to dominate her work: her rejection of unanimity, of oneness, "total explanation," reduction to single propositions, claims of "a consistency that exists nowhere in the realm of reality"; and her corresponding commitment to diversity, unpredictability, the individual and spontaneous. As an eminently rational writer, opposed in every way and in every sentence to the mindless, she nonetheless welcomed "the necessary insecurity of philosophical thought," and took positive joy in the notion that things are not absolutely ordered. "Events, by definition," she once wrote, with obvious delight, "are occurrences that interrupt routine processes and procedures."

This pleasure in the multiplicity of ideas and people in the world, in its politics and conversation, led to Miss Arendt's wonderful affinity with Lessing and (perhaps more surprisingly, and in another way) with Madison and the founding fathers. It also pervaded her understanding of subjects --- totalitarianism, freedom, crime, ideology, violence, deception, bureaucracy, revolution --- which were among the central preoccupations of her life. But one of the anomalies of Miss Arendt's work, and a probable source of some of the more bewildering responses to

it, was the degree to which the tone of her prose could appear to be at variance with the substance of her thought. For the most part, the effect was of an extraordinary vitality and tension, akin to the effect, in narrative, of suspense. But the contrast (language very hard, for instance, message gentle-spirited), though it was inseparable from Miss Arendt's thinking style, posed special risks. A relatively minor instance: a phrase in which Miss Arendt referred, parenthetically and entirely in passing, to "atheists" as "fools who pretend to know what no man can know." The word "fools," of course, (which Miss Arendt used often, but usually fondly, as, above, in conjunction with "Quixotic") has its edge; the word "pretend," however, with its overtone, in English, of deceit (an overtone it would lack entirely either in French, which Miss Arendt knew well, or even in its older English sense, of "claim," as in "pretender to the throne") is so hard that Miss Arendt seems deliberately to have phrased as intolerantly and dogmatically as possible what is, upon a moment's reflection, just an article of wisdom and agnostic common sense: that atheism is a theological certitude with no more basis than any other. The style of the phrase, in other words, is at such absolute odds with its plain meaning that the writer's position (openness, anti-certainty) sounds like the reverse. And this is, of course, not a detail or an accident of style. (Miss Arendt would never, for instance, characterize a <u>believer</u> in such terms; the phrase appears in an admiring piece in memory of Pope John XIII.) A note of intellectual contempt implicit in atheism's claim to know that the beliefs of others are unfounded simply caused Miss Arendt to put her own insight, that in religious matters negative certitudes are disguised beliefs, so very sharply.

The issue, moreover, in even this minor case lies deeper. Miss Arendt did not think it was the business of intelligence to impose itself, or to win arguments, or even to be "right"; and, though she could write lyrically, she did not, on the whole, think it the business of sentences to ingratiate themselves. She shared with Lessing, along with a belief in the value of what she called "polemic"

(principled dissent from some received or too widely held idea), and an intense opposition to coercion of any kind, the view that ideas and even --- perhaps even especially --- the truth itself can be coercive. If there were a single "truth," as Miss Arendt repeatedly expressed her relief that there is none, there would, of course, be no diversity, no "space" or "in-between," no "conversation," obviously --- what is there to discuss if the truth is one? --- and again, no world at all. What always elicits from Miss Arendt either a note of impatience or, more commonly, the precise language and almost paradoxically coercive sentence rhythms of her intellectual authority is any attack on the world's diversity, in this case the diversity of its religious beliefs.

But because it is usually in the nature of intelligence to simplify, to reduce, to impose some kind of order; and because most contemporary "polemical" writing is not really a dissent from received ideas but rather a heightened, less civil attempt to lay claim to them and reimpose them; one contrast between thought and mode of expression in Miss Arendt's work arises almost inevitably from this: that the more forceful her argument, whether intellectually or in feeling, the more surely the underlying issue has, in some highly original way, to do with the essential variety in things and the freedom to disagree. On all other questions,the contrast, which is of course inherently polemical, in that it upsets certain expectations of what sentences will do, could run quite the other way; Miss Arendt could phrase a difficult point in terms so informal, idiomatic, or flatly commonsensical as to seem to remove the matter altogether from intellectual debate. No more constant, radical alternative to received ideas can be imagined than to depart from them systematically, in substance; to be virtually indifferent to persuading others; and to incorporate the departure in a style. While everyone, however, is free, ideally, to express any notion that passes through his mind --- and Miss Arendt so valued disagreement in these notions that she welcomed mortality, for removing those who have acquired wisdom from the world --- not every view, of course, has equal interest or weight, or can even

be said to constitute a thought. For Miss Arendt, thinking itself was a matter of great seriousness and urgency, at all times, but particularly in "dark times," and most specifically in her own time, when it seemed probable that, with Miss Arendt's work (and, in another way, with Harold Rosenberg's) a whole tradition of writing and of thought was coming, irremediably and without possibility of renewal, to an end.

It was clear, after all, to Miss Arendt that she was writing from the far side of an abyss --- not so much of language or of culture (though she came to America in 1941, as a German refugee, and all her important work was written here) as of history itself, a radical discontinuity between the "no longer" and "not yet." She had witnessed what she regarded as the collapse of Western civilization; the sending of human populations, for unprecedented "reasons," in unprecedented numbers, and by previously unthinkable methods, to enslavement and to death; and the setting in motion of new political forces, which, having already accomplished this devastation, still, in what Miss Arendt rather chillingly called their "unfinished business," threatened what remained of the human world. Miss Arendt approached these matters neither as a historian (finding in the historian's claim of "objectivity" always an element of retroactive "justification"), nor (though her training and some of the closest, most abiding interests of her life were in philosophy) as a philosopher. She had little taste for theory and abstraction, preferring "reality" in its aspect of the particular and concrete. Miss Arendt chose, rather, subject to no special branch of scholarship, to consider the world and think about it. And the result was that, with the extraordinary quality of her education (of a range, and in a tradition, which, for various reasons, would cease, after her own generation, to exist); the originality of her intelligence; the fineness of her curiosity; and, not least, the moral energy systematically to address matters by which she was immeasurably appalled --- the result was that she was able, repeatedly and continuously, to enter the world's discourse, or rather, to

resume it across the abyss by which it had been interrupted, with the expression of an idea or a thought.

In "dark times," and perhaps in all times, a genuine thought, in this sense, is extremely rare in all of letters. It requires, to begin with, a large measure both of erudition and of intellectual doubt. The erudition includes an awareness whether a given subject has been addressed before, and, if so, by whom, and in what terms, and to what effect upon the matter now; and the doubt must anticipate what can be argued against one's present formulation, and allow for those argument as well. So that, in thinking a matter through, in full consciousness of what has already been said and of what can and cannot still be said, most truly original thinkers are obliged in some sense to think the world anew, and yet are reduced, initially, to the self-evident. And the self-evident, apart from the obvious drawback that it is not "new," sometimes has this in common with "mere talk" (which, whether it addresses light or heavy subjects, is often, indeed often merely "new"): that it is simply not worth saying. Almost alone among contemporary writers, Miss Arendt (and Harold Rosenberg) had the capacity to walk easily in the writings of the past, to think a problem through to its very depths, to find in the fact that it had been addressed before not a check and an inhibition but an enhancement of discourse, to pass through the self-evident, leaving it thereafter always a step behind; and then, though the subject itself, the human situation in their lifetime (for Mr. Rosenberg, mainly in its aspect of cultural crisis), was almost impenetrably "dark," not to lose heart but to rethink things, as it were, in their entirety. The style that embodies all these pressures is always, necessarily, dense; but since a style in thinking is no less personal than a style in prose, no one could mistake a sentence by Miss Arendt (or Mr. Rosenberg) for a sentence by anybody else.

Though Miss Arendt's first major work was "The Origins of Totalitarianism," published in 1951, and that book contained most of the ideas she would subsequently

develop, her understanding of modern history begins with certain related perceptions having, more fundamentally, to do with action, thinking, law, and revolution: that it is in the nature of all human "action" that its consequences cannot be foreseen; that logic itself has no positive content, but consists only of otherwise "empty" rules that prohibit internal contradiction; that positive law, in free societies, tells citizens only what not to do, not what to do; that even the best law, and the wisest, cannot achieve perfect justice, because it cannot allow for the particularity of individual cases; that only revolutions on behalf of political freedom (the freedom of that "action," in other words, whose consequences are unpredictable) can succeed; that revolutions on any other basis (for example, economic conditions) must fail, and the solution to such economic problems as poverty and hunger lies, not in politics at all, but in technology. Miss Arendt called particular attention to a difference between the American and French revolutions: the first, a revolution against political oppression, resulted in a federal, Constitutional republic of free citizens under law; the second, a revolution, essentially, of poverty and social class, resulted in purges, followed by renewed oppression. And yet, since all subsequent political theory (including, of course, Marxism, and the rhetoric of what Miss Arendt called "rampant, sterile chauvinism of the Third World") has overlooked this important point, most revolutions have followed the French pattern, and political theorists (including Americans, who have misunderstood the facts of their own history) have begun to deny that the American revolution was a revolution at all. Even in the French revolution, however, and in all subsequent Marxist revolutions, there was an early stage (Miss Arendt maintained, the only genuinely revolutionary stage) when, either in communes, or in workers collectives or other spontaneous local groups, people demonstrated that their fundamental revolutionary demand is not for bread, or relief from poverty, or change of class, but for political freedom, the freedom to create their own organizations but, even more urgently, the freedom, in some public forum, to speak their minds.

Invariably, according to Miss Arendt (who died in 1975, six years before the recent events in Poland, and who wrote this even before the Hungarian revolution of 1956), the "Party" moves to destroy the local leaders and dissolve the groups, in the name of its "ideology." During the French revolution, the ideology was "compassion" for the misery of the miserables; but, partly because it is in the nature of institutionalized compassion continuously to require an object, the process inevitably evolved, as all revolutions based upon the prototype have done, into the manufacture of internal "enemies," and their cruel extermination. In fascist or Marxist revolutions, the ideology is called a "law of history"; but history has no "laws" (clearly, if the consequences of human "action" are, by nature, unpredictable, and "events, by definition" are "occurrences that interrupt routine processes and procedures.") And the ideology is, in reality, no law at all, but only an utterly specious "total explanation." It was Miss Arendt's incomparable insight that, from the moment, in any ideology whatever, when "natural life is considered historical," and a "law of history" acquires some "higher legitimacy" or "ultimate legitimation," the term "law" itself has changed its meaning; it has ceased to mean a "framework of stability," but has become the reverse, a "law of movement," "aimless process," a "suprahuman force," which can make totalitarianism's "monstrous yet seemingly unanswerable claim" that it is necessary "to sacrifice everybody's immediate vital interest" to the "logic" of history. Since it is inherent in a law of movement to concern itself always with "becoming and perishing, never" (a surprising yet Arendtian turn of phrase) with "the miracle of being," and "to be hindered only by the new beginning and individual end which the life of man actually is," it follows that, even after a totalitarian state has liquidated any real enemies it might have had, "devoured by the process itself," it must continue to invent conspiracies and to purge them. "Certain crimes are due to be committed," Miss Arendt writes, again in the chilling mode, "which the Party, knowing the law of history, must punish." It becomes one of the insane ironies of

the totalitarian state that people who were never, in any sense, its enemies, as a result and in proof of not having been its enemies, must confess to fictitious crimes in order not to have committed them. With "the consistent elimination of conviction as a motive for action" (and, since "total explanation" cannot permit the unpredictable, the elimination of "action," and, of course, of politics, or discourse, as well), "total and arbitrary terror," and "unorganized loneliness" become the essence of the system.

Though "all ideologies contain totalitarian elements," not all ideologies, and, obviously, not all revolutions, have totalitarian outcomes. In setting out, however, to explore in depth, with her characteristic respect for "the facts of the case" and "the evidence of our five senses" what led to this "unprecedented" phenomenon, which "seems to have exploded the very alternatives on which all definitions of the essence of government have been based," Miss Arendt, in precisely the polemical mode she ascribed to Lessing, began to reexamine specific, almost universally held received ideas, and to discover dangerous misunderstandings in them. She began with the problem of anti-Semitism and, with the most perfect clarity and diligence, disposed of certain assumptions: for example, that there is about Jews some quality of destiny, apartness, inevitability, chosenness, fate, historical circumstance, which accounts for what happened to them. Miss Arendt found the received ideas of anti-Semites and of many Jewish theoreticians, in this instance, to be not only false but complementary and sometimes identical. The German Jews were not, for example, at the time of the rise of Naziism, ascendant, powerful, bankers, or representatives of great financial interests. The German Jewish community, statistically and by any other measure, was declining --- religiously, economically, demographically, with a weakening interest in finance, a fall in the birth rate, and, most notably, assimilation through intermarriage. In all likelihood, the German Jewish community, without any Final Solution, was coming to an end. But anti-Semitism was, nonetheless --- in fact, Miss Arendt argued, all the

more --- the catalyst for Naziism. She went on, from any number of directions, to demonstrate what this means and meant, and why it might be so.

To begin at one place: Darwinism, the doctrine of the survival of the fittest. It takes just one turn, one travesty, one terrible set of historical confluences, to arrive at an ideology of racism: that it is nature's law for the fittest among races to survive; that the fittest of all are, in fact, a master race. And from that mindless, racist "law," it is but a step to conclude that some races are "unfit to live" and to go about the monstrous business of exterminating them. To begin at another time and place, Marxism, in the doctrine of class war. It takes just one step beyond the ideology: that it is history's law for the most progressive classes to survive, that the rest are, in fact, a "dying class," to "legitimate" the killing of whole classes. Finally,

> If it is the law of nature to eliminate everything that is harmful and unfit to live, it would mean the end of nature itself if new categories of the unfit to live could not be found; if it is a law of history that certain classes wither away, it would mean the end of history if new classes did not form so that they in turn could wither away under the hands of totalitarian rulers. In other words, the law of killing by which totalitarian governments seize and exercise their power would remain a law of movement even if they succeeded in making all of humanity subject to their rule.

For Miss Arendt, in other words, totalitarianism, as, inescapably, a "law of killing," posed, in political terms, a literal, radical threat to the survival of mankind, a threat undiminished by the fact that totalitarian government often "rests on mass support," and people will often vote themselves totalitarian. The political threat, of course, has its technological counterpart in the modern arsenal of destruction; and Miss Arendt, who drew vital distinctions between "power" and "violence" (violence is both invited by weakness and an expression of the weak; since acts of violence, like all action, have unpredictable results, it has never been a reliable instrument of revolution, and was not conceived as such by Marx), was aware that the terrible "unity" implied by either the political or the technological

threat might someday pose a terrible choice, between "the old power of the army" in "a plurality of sovereign states" and a unitary, stateless "ominipotence of the police."

In writing "The Origins of Totalitarianism," Miss Arendt was explicitly preoccupied with what she called "the truly radical nature of evil." By 1963, when she published "Eichmann in Jerusalem," she had concluded that the bureaucratic perpetrator, or agent, of even radical evil was, in fact, banal. The subtitle of her work, "A Study in the Banality of Evil," not only ran counter to a whole tradition in letters, whereby personifications of evil, from Lucifer through Dracula, have an element of romantic fascination and even of beauty; it reflected, in the choice of the word "banality" (which stems, after all, from the vocabulary of aesthetic or even social dismissal), another aspect of the contrast, or tension, between Miss Arendt's language and her thought. A whole vocabulary in her work, "parvenu," for instance, and "pariah," had always been drawn from this improbable social realm and given intellectual weight. "Eichmann in Jerusalem," however, was by far the least understood and most highly controversial of Miss Arendt's books. Though it was entirely continuous with, in fact it overlapped and elaborated, what she had written earlier, about the absolute disorientation, isolation and helplessness of all victims of that "law of killing," --- and though it was intended, as an attempt to understand an unprecedented and immeasurable catastrophe, to help avert a recurrence; and also, perhaps, in view of Miss Arendt's concept of "action," to deny that the extent of the disaster was inevitable, and thereby somehow to free its victims retroactively --- the book so violently upset received ideas that it met an almost violent incomprehension. Miss Arendt had argued, in part, that anything but absolute, even if futile, resistance to the Nazis served their purposes; and that those Jewish victims, in particular those among their leaders, who cooperated with the Nazis, to whatever extent, for whatever reason, in any way at all (even in the misguided hope of saving others), inadvertently contributed to

the catastrophe. An innately polemic, unapologetic refusal to put this in an ingratiating way, which in intellectual matters can be a form of courage and of honor, temporarily put Miss Arendt at almost extreme odds with a "they" with whom she had the most obvious, profound and natural sympathy.

Throughout her life, however, Miss Arendt took it as a moral obligation to pursue thoughts were they led; and she liked to quote, as "the most profound thing that has been said about the relationship between truth and humanity," Lessing's "Let everyone say what he deems truth and let the Truth itself be commended unto God." Miss Arendt constantly "deemed truth" some surprising new idea, or some elaboration of the implications of an old idea, which seemed so clearly "right," and so effectively to supersede all accepted ideas, as to become self-evident at the very moment of its newness. There was, for instance, her insight that the central problem of the Pentagon Papers was overclassification: when such an immense, boring mass of material is classified, nobody can wade through it, or has time to; as a result, the vital part, the short part, the part that perhaps ought to be classified, is concealed, not from an enemy, but from those people, namely the policy makers, who absolutely need to read it, but for whom it is buried in a mass too dreary to consult. Or her view, uncongenial equally to liberal "reformers" and to advocates of "law and order," that a rise in the crime rate is "nothing more" than "the inevitable consequence of a disastrous erosion of police competence and power"; that efforts, in psychology or the social sciences, to "understand" what "causes" crime are futile; and that studies of "the criminal mind" are only "techniques of evasion," which conceal (again, the startling change of gears, in diction) the "failure to catch his body." Characteristic, too, is her insight about lying: that lying springs from the same sources as freedom and even action: a liar has both a free man's perception that things might be different and a confidence in the possibility that action, in his case the act of lying, can change things as they are. Deception, however, requires a precise

memory of the fact to be concealed. And the loss of this underlying certainty, of the underlying facts to be either hidden or disclosed, preoccupied Miss Arendt in many forms: whether as the "self-coercion" of a totalitarian logic "emancipated from reality"; or the "self-delusion," which perpetually amazed her in her essays about Vietnam. She came to believe that the American calamity there was a matter not of imperialism, or even of self-interest, but simply and terribly about wanting to be believed, and lying and killing and deluding oneself, in the name of "credibility," as each administration lost track of the key element that any liar must bear in mind: what are the facts. By the time of Watergate, of course, this loss, this process, this pathology of the liar's losing track had reached its height.

A belief in "the facts of the case," and "the evidence of our five senses," and yet in "the miracle of being"; a commitment to the diversity of the world; a view that "events" and the results of human "action" are, inescapably and even desirably unpredictable, and that it is law, "the consensus juris, which constitutes a people," that must provide a "framework of stability"; a perception that "facts," and even the world are less radically threatened by lies than by "total explanation"; a conviction that only revolutions against political oppression can succeed; an understanding of "politics," and the "common world" as "discourse," in which each man should speak "what he deems truth"; even the insight that man's first demand of revolution is the freedom, in some public forum, to speak his mind --- all these, quite apart from the essays in which she directly addressed the American revolution, account for Miss Arendt's instinct, as sure as Tocqueville's, for the genius of the American system. The central importance for this country, alone among all the republics of the world, of a stable Constitution, a federation of states, and a balance of federal powers; the fear of divisive "faction," and yet the assurance, in a Bill of Rights, that the majority cannot deprive the minority, or the world's discourse, of the min-

ority's "quality of opinion"; a body of ordinary law to protect citizens from one another, but a Constitution that protects them, exclusively and uniquely, from the government itself --- these are understandings as fundamental to Miss Arendt's thought as to the Founding Fathers. So, for that matter, is the belief in conversation. Miss Arendt pointed out that, of the "inalienable rights" enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, "the pursuit of happiness" was, at the time, universally understood to mean (and ordinarily phrased to say) "the pursuit of public happiness"; and that Jefferson had in mind the pursuit, not of some unattainable, chimerical private bliss, but of public pleasure, of free expression, of participation, precisely, in politics. That a man should want to appear in public and speak his mind, that it should in fact be a pleasure for him to do so (and in spite of the fact that Americans ever since, having misunderstood the phrase, have felt sadly cheated of some private "right"), was an assumption of the Athenian polis, of the Founding Fathers, of Miss Arendt, and of free citizens in all the intervals between "dark times." In "dark times," however, when "mere talk" prevails, the conversation of what each "deems truth" fades so completely that the pleasure is corrupted or even forgotten. The question of the private self and the public persona is raised again, and becomes, for every person of intelligence and sensitivity, a matter of ambivalence.

With the recent publication of "Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World" (Yale University Press), a biography of Miss Arendt, by Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, a young professor of philosophy at Wesleyan (who earned her doctorate at the New School, under Miss Arendt's supervision) it becomes clear that Miss Arendt, who had often considered what should be private and what public in biography, left the question in her own case unresolved --- or, rather, open, and subject to the discretion, insight and memory of others. Since the world of her youth, and the world of her kind, had not so much vanished in the usual temporal way as been obliterated, surpringly less of the texture of her life, and thought, and personality emerges

from this intelligent, conscientious work, based on Miss Arendt's own letters and interviews with many of her friends, than from Miss Arendt's biographical essays and appreciations of the lives of others. The book contains pictures, a valuable bibliography, some of Miss Arendt's on the whole sad and moving (but not wonderfully translated) poems, and the "personal" information that she was, first a beloved and cheerful only child, then a brilliant, passionate and rebellious young woman; that her father died of syphillis; that her circle of friends was always diverse and wide, and that many of these friendships, and her second marriage, were extraordinarily close; that she had, or rather, her letters seem strongly to imply that she had, an affair (when she was eighteen and he in his thirties) with Martin Heidegger, which he claimed, when they met again after the war, had been the inspiration of his life; that her friendship with Karl Jaspers, who had also been her teacher (but who, unlike Heidegger, had never cooperated with Naziism), was, in its depth and variety, one of the few relations that both spanned and survived the historical abyss. What is wrong, what makes one uneasy with this is nothing so simple as a failure of reticence, or an intrusion on a private space. In fact, Miss Arendt herself --- who wrote, in an essay on Jaspers, "We are all modern people who move awkwardly and mistrustfully in public" about Bertolt Brecht, that he "was more reticent" about "his personal life ... than any other twentieth-century author (And this reticence ... was one of his virtues)"; about Rosa Luxemburg, that though "the definitive biography" has become "the classic genre for the lives of ... statesmen, it has remained rather unsuitable for the lives of artists, writers, and, generally, men or women ... whose significance lies chiefly in their works"; and even, in connection with Isak Dinesen, that "our eagerness to see recorded displayed, and discussed in public what once were strictly private affairs and nobody's business is probably less legitimate than our curiosity is ready to admit" --- would have considered, perhaps more carefully than any other modern

writer, what traces of her personal life to leave, and why. Moreover, though the relation between public and private self is addressed profoundly in all her work, Miss Arendt rejected any simple notion that there should be a secret, subjective inner personality, kept hidden from the public realm, which sees only some outer citizen-self. On the contrary, she wrote, "harking back to an older and more proper sense of the public realm," "it is precisely the human person in all his subjectivity who needs to appear in public in order to achieve full reality." (Because "personality," the "subjective" or "inner" self, as Miss Arendt pointed out, is "anything but private": it is the one aspect of the self which the person, being himself, cannot, except as reflected in the eyes of others, see.) What is wrong, then, with this really quite worthy book is not a failure of reticence, or intellect, or diligence; it has only do with an absence. From these pages Miss Arendt is somehow altogether gone.

Perhaps a biographer has, in some not altogether metaphorical sense to <u>be</u> his or her subject, and it is in the nature of the crisis of Miss Arendt's lifetime that not only the irreplaceable individual but, except of course in her work and in the memories of those who knew her, her line is no more. And yet, with the beauty of sympathy of the essays collected in "Men in Dark Times," there, after all, is Hannah Arendt. In Walter Benjamin, her friend and fellow refugee from Nazi Germany; the critic, "who knew that the break in tradition and the loss of authority which occurred in his lifetime were irreparable," who "concluded that he had to discover new ways of dealing with the past," who, as Miss Arendt incomparably put it, had "the gift of <u>thinking poetically</u>," and whose "main work" consisted of collecting "rare and precious" quotations, preserving fragments of the civilization that collapsed. Miss Arendt, with her own gift for quotation, and now her poetry as well. In Bertolt Brecht, another poet, "who must say the unsayable, who must not remain silent on occasions when all are silent." In Lessing, the polemicist on behalf of tolerance, "who found in thinking

another mode of moving in the world in freedom." In Rosa Luxemburg, of whom Miss Arendt wrote, not only that "in marriage it is not always possible to tell partners' thoughts apart" but also "she was far more afraid of a deformed revolution than a successful one," and "her ideas belong wherever the history political ideas is seriously taught." In Hermann Broch, who inspired her reflection that philosophy had come very late to the question of death and that, in our century, it was perhaps time for philosophy to address as well the question of pain. In John XXIII, who seemed to share Miss Arendt's virtual love of the notions of natality and mortality, when, in the words quoted from his deathbed, he said "Every day is a good day to be born. Every day is a good day to die." In Isak Dinesen, whose husband (like Miss Arendt's father) had syphillis, who believed (as did Balzac, and Miss Arendt) that great loves are as rare as masterpieces. And finally, in her three immensely different friends: Karl Jaspers, who, in his fifties, "when intellectuals in particular have become so hardened in their opinions that in all real events they can see only corroboration," "reacted to the decisive events," "neither by retreating into his own philosophy, nor by negating the world, nor by falling into melancholy"; in Randall Jarrell, whose "marvelous wit, by which I mean the precision of his laughter," aversion to "vulgarity," and "absolute instinct for quality," did not save him from melancholy; and in Waldemar Gurian, "this specifically human quality of greatness, the very level, intensity, depth, passionateness of existence itself, was known to him to an extraordinary degree. Because he had it himself, he was an expert in detecting it in others ... It means to be friends with people who at first, and even second, sight have nothing in common, to discover constantly persons whom only bad luck or some queer trick of talent has prevented from coming fully into their own. ... He had achieved what we all must: he had established his home in this world and he had made himself at home on the earth through friendship. " Of course, this last was just a tribute, a lament and a tribute. But it would perhaps be asking too much of a biographer, even with

the works and letters Miss Arendt left in the public realm, to add much to our understanding of this person, who could speak in these voices, all of which were her own.