Latvijas Universitātes
Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts

Reliģiski-filozofiski raksti

XXIX

Rīga
2021

UDK 2+17 (066) (08)
Re 515

Izdevums ir sagatavots *Latvijas Universitātes* Akadēmiskās attīstības projektā.

Izdevums rekomendēts publicēšanai ar *LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūta* Zinātniskās padomes 2021. gada 17. februāra sēdes lēmumu.

Galvenā redaktore: **Solveiga Krūmiņa-Koņkova**
Redaktore: **Laine Kristberga**
Literārā redaktore: **Arta Jāne**
Maketētāja: **Margarita Stoka**
Vāka dizaina autori: **Kārlis Koņkovs, Matīss Kūlis**

Vākam izmantots *Pexels.com* autora *Cade Prior* fotoattēls.

Zinātniskās redakcijas kolēģija

Latvijas Universitāte:
Dr. phil. **Ella Buceniece**; Dr. phil. LZA korespondētājlocekle **Solveiga Krūmiņa-Koņkova**; Dr. habil. phil. akadēmiķe, profesore **Maija Kūle**; Dr. hist. eccl. docents **Andris Priede**; Dr. habil. phil. **Māra Rubene**; Dr. hist. **Inese Runce**; Dr. phil. akadēmiķis, profesors **Igors Šuvajevs**

Ārzemju locekļi:
Ekaterina Anastasova, PhD., Associate Professor, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with the Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria; **Eileen Barker,** PhD., OBE, FBA, Professor of Sociology with Special Reference to Study of Religion, *The London School of Economics and Political Science*, U.K.; **Gloria Durka**, PhD, Professor, Director, PhD. Program in Religious Education, Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education, Fordham University, U.S.A; **Massimo Introvigne**, PhD., Director of *The Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR)*, Torino, Italia; **Tõnu Lehtsaar,** PhD, Professor of Psychology of Religion, Faculty of Theology, *University of Tartu*, Estonia; **Massimo Leone**, PhD, Dr. hist. art, Research Professor of Semiotics and Cultural Semiotics at the Department of Philosophy, *University of Torino*, Italy; **Sebastian Rimestad,** PhD, *University of Erfurt*, Germany; **Dalia Maria Stančienė**, PhD, Professor, Department of Philosophy and Culture Studies, *Klaipeda University,* Lithuania

Reliģiski-filozofiski raksti ir anonīmi recenzēts periodisks izdevums ar starptautisku zinātniskās redakcijas kolēģiju. Tā mērķis ir padziļināt lasītāju zināšanas par reliģiski filozofisko ideju vēsturi, attīstību mūsdienās un to vietu Latvijas un Eiropas kultūrā. Iznāk vismaz vienu reizi gadā latviešu un angļu valodā.

Reliģiski-filozofiski raksti pieejami arī Centrālās un Austrumeiropas Interneta bibliotēkā (Central and Eastern European Online Library, CEEOL), EBSCO un SCOPUS datubāzē.

Religious-Philosophical Articles is a double-blind peer-reviewed periodical with the international editorial board. It publishes articles aimed at deepening readers' knowledge and understanding on the history of religious-philosophical ideas, their development in nowadays and their place in the Latvian and European culture. It is published at least once a year in Latvian and English.

Editions of *Religious-Philosophical Articles* are available in Central and Eastern European Online Library, CEEOL, as well as in EBSCO and SCOPUS databases.

© Latvijas Universitātes *Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts,* 2021

https://doi.org/10.22364/rfr.29.
ISSN 1407-1908

Elvīra Šimfa

The Thinking of the Thoughtlessness of Evil: Hannah Arendt's Account on Thinking as Conditioning Against Evil-Doing 157

Kopsavilkums. Domāšana ļaunuma nedomāšanā: Hannas Ārentes domāšanas kā ļaunuma novēršanas nosacījuma izpratne 174

Aivita Putniņa, Dace Balode

(Ne-)redzamās sievietes: dzimte un kalpošana luteriskajā baznīcā 176

Summary. (In-)Visible Women: Gender and Ministry in Lutheran Church 201

Ģirts Rozners

Bībeles verbālā inspirācija, fundamentālisms un sievietes loma baznīcā 203

Summary. Verbal Inspiration of the Bible, Fundamentalism and the Role of Women in the Church 203

Personu rādītājs/Index of Persons 229

Das Denken lernen wir, indem wir auf das achten,
was es zu bedenken gibt.
/Martin Heidegger/

Elvīra Šimfa

THE THINKING OF THE THOUGHTLESSNESS OF EVIL: HANNAH ARENDT'S ACCOUNT ON THINKING AS CONDITIONING AGAINST EVIL-DOING

Hannah Arendt describes thinking as an undetermined process, i.e., as a process that is not conditioned by any event in the world since it does not follow from any specific event in the world and it is not aimed at any such event. The essential feature of thinking is that it is excluded from the world. And in relation to this property of thinking Arendt asks: "Could the activity of thinking as such [..] regardless of results and specific content, [..] be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually 'condition' them against it?" (Arendt 1978, 5).

Considering the importance of Immanuel Kant's account on the mechanism of moral action for Arendt's analysis of Eichmann's type of evil, in this article the author argues that it is not the lack of thinking "regardless of results and specific content", therefore, not thinking as such, that can serve as a condition against evil-doing, but rather the ability to form a positive principle upon which to act, therefore it is the determinate rather than indeterminate thinking that can prevent evil-doing.

Keywords: *Arendt, Kant, determinate thinking, indeterminate thinking, evil.*

When Hannah Arendt describes the specific nature of evil appearing in totalitarian circumstances as essentially banal, she delivers one of the

* Raksts izstrādāts LZP FLPP projektā "Saprast teroru: fenomenoloģiski-hermeneitiskā metodoloģija terorisma pētniecībai" (lzp-2020/2-0088).

most prominent and influential accounts on evil in the history of philosophy and political thought. Considering the influence of this account and the necessity to rethink the conditions and elements of totalitarianism in the light of the latest political and social developments, it is important to understand the kind of thinking Arendt considers to be the essential preventive factor for the banality that can result in evil. The character and fault of this thinking for Arendt is famously revealed through the analysis of Adolf Eichmann's views and personality. Commenting on the case of Eichmann, Arendt introduced her thesis about evil being essentially banal and characterized by thoughtlessness. When arguing for thinking as necessary to avoid the possibility for occurrence of the banal evil, Arendt relies largely on Kant's insight into the nature of thinking and its important features – reflecting and judging. Given this and the fact that Eichmann himself refers to Kant's ethics when describing his position, Kant's ideas are crucial to fully understand the banal evil.

To Arendt's mind, thinking is an undetermined process, namely, it is not conditioned by any event in the world since it does not follow from any such an event (therefore Kant describes thinking as spontaneity (Kant, 1998)), nor is thinking aimed at any specific event in the world. The essential feature of thinking is that it is excluded from the world. And in relation to this property of thinking Arendt asks: "Could the activity of thinking as such [..] regardless of results and specific content, be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually 'condition' them against it?" (Arendt 1978, 5).

In this article the author will argue that, as revealed by the case of Eichmann, it is not the lack of thinking "regardless of results and specific content", therefore, not thinking as such, that can serve as a condition against evil-doing, but rather the ability to form a positive principle upon which to act, therefore it is the determinate rather than indeterminate thinking that can prevent evil-doing.

For Arendt, thinking (especially its ethical implications) becomes a topic of enquiry due to her experience during the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem. Later she describes this experience in the following way:

> "I was struck by a manifest shallowness in the doer that made it impossible to trace the incontestable evil of his deeds to any deeper level of roots or motives. The deeds were monstrous, but the doer [..] was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous. There was no sign in him of firm ideological convictions or of specific evil motives, and the only notable characteristic [..] was something entirely negative: it was not stupidity but *thoughtlessness*" (Arendt 1978, 4).

To understand what Arendt means, when she incriminates thoughtlessness to Eichmann, one must understand her idea of thinking – a phenomenon that, to her mind, ought to be distinguished from several other phenomena usually perceived as closely related or even included in the activity of thinking, such as willing and judging. Arendt climes that "thinking, willing and judging are the three basic mental activities; they cannot be derived from each other and thought, they have certain common characteristics, they cannot be reduced to a common denominator" (Arendt 1978, 69). Thinking is not only to be distinguished from willing and judging but, more importantly, from the common sense. Moreover, there is a conflict between thinking and the common sense, an "intramural warfare" (Arendt 1978, 80). The reason to distinguish thinking from willing and judging, and the reason for the conflict between thinking and the common sense is related to what Arendt calls the precondition of thinking:

> "For thinking [..] withdrawal from the world of appearances is the only essential precondition [..]. While thinking I am not where I actually am; I am surrounded not by sense objects but by images that are invisible to everybody else. It is as though I have withdrawn into some never-never land [..]. Thinking annihilates temporal as well as spatial distances" (Arendt 1978, 78–85).

The "world of appearances" or the common world is the world where willing and judging remain related to their objects as "particulars within an established home in the appearing world" (Arendt 1978, 92), and it is the proper world of the common sense which is the "sixth sense that fits our five senses into a common world" (Arendt 1978, 81).

It is not difficult to see how thinking described in these terms can prevent evil-doing if we understand evil (as does Arendt) not necessarily as linked to evil motives. Evil that does not originate in specifically evil motives (is not diabolical as Kant would call it (Kant 1998, 61)) or any motives at all for that matter, can only result from not seeing the larger context of one's actions therefore not understanding their actual meaning. The way how to see this context is to take a certain distance from the immediate situation of action. The actual problem with functioning is precisely in its uninterruptedness, therefore, as Arendt repeatedly claims, most of the evil deeds in the 20th century are committed by functionaries. Thinking, unlike functioning, requires interrupting the action, it requires to just stop: "All thinking demands a *stop*-and-think" (Arendt 1978, 78). Distance to the world of action that is provided by thinking simply because it is the condition of thinking, is crucial to get an adequate idea of this world and the role of one's actions in it. When we consider Arendt's (and Hans Frank's) reconstruction of Eichmann's principle of action in Kantian terms, "the categorical imperative in the Third Reich" (Arendt 1963, 66), we encounter precisely this problem – it makes sense only when derived from and applied to a very narrow and specific context. The Kantian principle escapes this problem precisely because it is derived from the idea of the world in the widest possible sense – as the abstract common place of all the human beings.

Arendt's personal experience before emigrating to France in 1933 reveals the remoteness of thinking from the world of actions (the ordinary life) as ethically problematical. Arendt describes this experience in the following way:

> "I lived in an intellectual milieu, but I also knew other people. And among intellectuals *Gleichschaltung* was the rule, so to speak. But not among the others. And I never forgot that. I left Germany dominated by the idea of course somewhat exaggerated: Never again! I shall never again get involved in any kind of intellectual business. I want nothing to do with that lot. Also, I didn't believe then that Jews and German Jewish intellectuals would have acted

> any differently had their own circumstances been different. That was not my opinion. I thought that it had to do with this profession, with being an intellectual.
> [..]
> But I still think that it belongs to the essence of being an intellectual that one fabricates ideas about everything. No one ever blamed someone if he "co-ordinated" because he had to take care of his wife or child. The worst thing was that some people really believed in Nazism! For a short time, many for a very short time. But that means that they made up ideas about Hitler, in part terrifically interesting things! Completely fantastic and interesting and complicated things! Things far above the ordinary level! I found that grotesque" (Arendt 1994, 11).

The "intellectual business" she has in mind here is mostly philosophy. The ability of philosophers to "fabricate ideas about everything" is directly linked to their distance to the ordinary world or the world of common sense. For such fabrication of ideas requires fitting the plurality of the world into one certain idea about it and the precondition to this is the possibility to be so remote from this world as to see it in a certain uniformity. Developed from a perspective of someone who has left the common world, from a singular perspective these ideas are essentially autistic, therefore, not befitting the common world (political and moral world, which is constituted through a plurality of agents) at all. The common sense which "presupposes a common world into which we all fit, where we can live together" (Arendt 1994, 318) is not capable of such ideas and this might be the reason why precisely the common sense has bean considered to be the better guide in ethical and political matters than thinking as the enterprise of the philosophers and the intellectuals in general.

Even though when analysing the specific case of Eichmann, Arendt seams to stress that his problem is thoughtlessness, she links the thoughtlessness with "remoteness from reality" (Arendt 1963, 284), which, as described above, is the essential characteristics of the opposite of thoughtlessness, namely – thinking. To understand what kind of thinking can condition human beings against evil-doing, Arendt's analysis of the

Eichmann Case can be viewed in the light of Kant's moral theory. Viewed this way it reveals two interesting aspects.

First, Arendt's characterization of Eichmann in the 1963 book shows a significant shift in Arendt's understanding of the nature of evil compared to her position in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* of 1951 and this shift brings her closer to Kant even though she remains committed to the argument that the banal evil cannot be linked to self-love.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt considers the evil occurring in totalitarian circumstances as diabolic:

> "And if it is true that in the final stages of totalitarianism an absolute evil appears (absolute because it can no longer be deduced from humanly comprehensible motives), it is also true that without it, we might never have known the truly radical nature of Evil" (Arendt 1958, viii–ix).

In the Eichmann book Arendt states that "with the best will in the world one cannot extract any diabolical or demonic profundity from Eichmann" (Arendt 1963, 284). And because there is no diabolic dimension in those who are evil one must conclude that there is no essential difference between people like Eichmann and all the other ordinary people. This is what Arendt means when she writes that "the trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal" (Arendt 1963, 276).

With reference to this shift in Arendt's views on evil, Henry Allison argues that Arendt "came closer to the genuinely Kantian conception of radical evil", namely, Arendt came to understand that "radical evil does not refer [..] to a particularly great or deeply rooted demonic evil. It refers rather to the root of *all* moral evil, whatever its extent. In Kantian terms, it refers to the universal propensity *[Hang]* to evil, which serves as the precondition of the adoption of maxims contrary to the moral law and, therefore, of evil actions in the familiar sense" (Allison 1996, 170). What must be emphasised here, if one agrees with Allison, is that Arendt's later

understanding of evil implies that initially there is no more or radically different evil in Eichmann than in any other person. The evil is radical for Kant *because* it is rooted in human nature and therefore – characterizes everyone. Propensity to evil is an inherent trait of all human beings; it characterizes the human species (Kant 1998). What differs from one person to another are the grades of this propensity. Kant distinguishes three degrees of the propensity to evil:

> "First, it is the general weakness of the human heart in complying with the adopted maxims, or the frailty of human nature; second, the propensity to adulterate moral incentives with immoral ones [..], i.e., impurity; third, the propensity to adopt evil maxims, i.e., the depravity of human nature, or of the human heart" (Kant 1998, 53).

If it is true that by denying that there is any diabolic dimension to the evil and admitting that it is essentially banal, Arendt, as Allison argues, comes close to Kant's understanding of evil. Arendt seems to be committed to admit that the root of this evil is in every human being and its development is a matter of personal qualities and external circumstances. Arendt confirms this to some extent when she writes that Eichmann (and others like him) is "a new type of criminal" because he commits his crimes "under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong" (Arendt 1963, 276), implying that his knowing or feeling could change something.

Second, when describing Eichmann's questioning, Arendt reveals a new dimension of misinterpretation of Kant's categorical imperative:

> "The first indication of Eichmann's vague notion that there was more involved in this whole business than the question of the soldier's carrying out orders that are clearly criminal in nature and intent appeared during the police examination, when he suddenly declared with great emphasis that he had lived his whole life according to Kant's moral precepts, and especially according to a Kantian definition of duty. This was outrageous, on the face of it, and also incomprehensible, since Kant's moral philosophy is so

> closely bound up with man's faculty of judgment, which rules out blind obedience. The examining officer did not press the point, but Judge Raveh, either out of curiosity or out of indignation at Eichmann's having dared to invoke Kant's name in connection with his crimes, decided to question the accused. And, to the surprise of everybody, Eichmann came up with an approximately correct definition of the categorical imperative: 'I meant by my remark about Kant that the principle of my will must always be such that it can become the principle of general laws' (which is not the case with theft or murder, for instance, because the thief or the murderer cannot conceivably wish to live under a legal system that would give others the right to rob or murder him). Upon further questioning, he added that he had read Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*. He then proceeded to explain that from the moment he was charged with carrying out the Final Solution he had ceased to live according to Kantian principles, that he had known it, and that he had consoled himself with the thought that he no longer 'was master of his own deeds,' that he was unable 'to change anything'" (Arendt 1963, 135).

The problem with Eichmann's perception of Kant's principle of ethics is not him understanding or memorizing it incorrectly. Indeed, he understood it correctly, namely, as a formula of testing maxims or principles of actions to conclude whether they can be willed as a universal law without a contradiction. In fact, because Eichmann understood that the criteria of an ethical principle is whether it can be a principle for everyone, he recognized what Kant holds to be a cause of immoral deeds, namely, tendency to make an exception for oneself. In his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant writes:

> "Now if we attend to ourselves in every transgression of a duty, then we find that we do not actually will that our maxims should become a universal law, for that is impossible for us, but rather will that its opposite should remain a law generally; yet we take the liberty of making *an exception* for ourselves, or (even only for this once) for the advantage of our inclination" (Kant 2002, 42).

However, the problem with Eichmann was not that he would have made an exception for himself and misunderstood or misinterpreted what Kant meant by his formula of the universal law. The problem was, as Arendt suggests, that he was not thinking. Eichmann "was not stupid. It was sheer thoughtlessness – something by no means identical with stupidity – that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period" (Arendt 1963, 284). Arendt stresses that "such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together" (Arendt 1963, 284). Thoughtlessness in the case of Eichmann can be interpreted as a moral psychology feature responsible for self-deception, which goes as "a moral prerequisite for survival" (Arendt 1963, 52).

Arendt's explanation of evil in terms of thoughtlessness and self-deception has, as Allison puts it, "deep Kantian roots". Those roots are Kant's account on judgment. Arendt interprets the capacity to judge "as essential not simply to aesthetics, but to moral and political life" (Allison 1996, 172–173).

In the lecture course on Kant's political philosophy (held from 1964 till 1970) Arendt argues that the faculty of judgment is closely bound up with the common sense which sets the boundaries of our moral and political action according to the intersubjective realm. Arendt writes:

> "Kant, quite in the same vein, remarks in his *Anthropology* that insanity consists in having lost this common sense that enables us to judge as spectators; and the opposite of it is a *sensus privatus,* a private sense, which he also calls 'logical *Eigensinn,*' implying that our logical faculty, the faculty that enables us to draw conclusions from premises, could indeed function without communication – except that then, namely, if insanity has caused the loss of common sense, it would lead to insane results precisely because it has separated itself from the experience that can be valid and validated only in the presence of others" (Arendt 1992, 64).

Similarly, the loss of the common sense and failure in the faculty of judgment can result in evil. However, this does not mean that insanity and

being evil can be equated, for in the case of later self-deception is self-imposed and Arendt holds that one is responsible for it.

According to the previous considerations, the problem with Eichmann's understanding of Kant's ethical principle, if we agree with Arendt, was that he followed it mechanically, while Kant requires the agent to judge and to reflect as a member of the realm of all the other agents.

Arendt is right when she accentuates the significance of judging and reflecting in the moral life, but her account on Eichmann's perception of Kant's ethical principle does not reveal that the actual problem is in understanding this principle merely as a negative one (not to do what cannot be willed as a universal law) while it should be understood as a positive principle. A positive principle must determine an action and therefore it requires an end. For it to be an objective principle, it must set an end recognized by everybody capable of determining their will by principles. Kant argues that such an end can only be of rational nature, which "exists as an end in itself" (Kant 2002, 46). This end cannot be used as a means to attain some other end. According to this end, Kant formulates a principle that determines actions intended to promote it: "Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means" (Kant 2002, 46–47). This principle – the principle of humanity – provides a framework for the positive programme of acting Kant outlines in his works. When following this programme, one must, first, rather act than refrain from acting and, second, recognize the idea of the dignity of human beings as the main reference point and restricting force of one's actions.

Let us turn to the first point. By stressing the necessity to act, Kant refuses the well-known ethical principle, namely, the golden rule – what you do not want to be done to yourself, do not do to another. Explicitly Kant denies this principle for not providing a principle for active virtuous action towards oneself and others:

> "It cannot be a universal law, for it does not contain the ground of duties toward oneself, nor that of the duties of love towards others (for many would gladly acquiesce that others should not be

> beneficent to him if only he might be relieved from showing beneficence to them), or finally to owed duties to one another [..]" (Kant 2002, 48).

But when considering the positive formulation of the golden rule – do to another what you want to be done to yourself or, as in the Bible: "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that man should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31), one can see that Kant's criticism is addressed not only to the fact that this rule does not require an action and does not provide a principle for an action, but rather to the fact that its main reference point is the self.

Precisely this is what Kant has in mind when he points out that if one would guide his moral life by this principle, one could pragmatically decide to refuse something to oneself and therefore also to others to accomplish one's more important needs or interests and still, according to this principle, be moral. This brings us back to the main moral problem – the "dear self, which is always thrusting itself forward" (Kant 2002, 23). The "dear self" cannot be the main reference point if the action is to be moral.

One way of limiting the influence of the self is making the principles of actions public rather than keeping them private. Making principles public means to adopt a way of thinking of oneself as a world citizen. To establish this way of thinking, Kant points out the moral egoism:

> "The moral egoist limits all end to himself, sees no use in anything except that which is useful to himself [..]. The opposite of egoism can only be pluralism, that is, the way of thinking in which one is not concerned with oneself, as the whole world, but rather regards and conducts himself as the mere citizen of the world" (Kant 2006, 18).

What Kant requires here, is that one adopts this way of thinking and only then acts. Arendt stresses the necessity to act on a public maxim in the following way: "Morality here is the coincidence of the private and the public. To insist on the privacy of the maxim is to be evil. To be evil therefore is characterized by withdrawal from the public realm" (Arendt 1996, 49).

Being a subject of a public maxim, i.e., being a "world citizen" means to participate in the common world. Participation is opposed to passivity of two kinds – indifference and self-interest. The principle of participation is the following: "I am a man; whatever befalls man concerns me too" (Kant 1991, 253).

By discussing what Kant means by participation, it is possible to pass over to the second point that characterizes Kant's positive programme of action, namely, the idea of the dignity of a human being as the main reference point and restricting feature of one's action. For Kant, acting in a way that honours human dignity is one of the imperfect duties, which he distinguishes from the perfect duties. The distinction between the perfect and the imperfect duties corresponds to the distinction between the duties of love and the duties of respect towards others.

The perfect duties require moral self-preservation and as such constitute the necessarily minimum of being virtuous. They have a form of prohibition therefore can be called the negative duties. The imperfect duties require actions but "the law prescribes only *the maxim of the action* [..] not the *action itself*" (Kant 1991, 196). Therefore, one must decide on the action himself.

The imperfect duties towards others are the duties of love. Kant admits that one cannot love when commanded to do so, therefore he distinguishes between practical and pathological love. The former is not based on feelings or inclinations while the latter is. Practical love is based on the reason and can be required by the duty. Kant writes:

> "For love as inclination cannot be commanded; but beneficence solely from duty, even when no inclination at all drives us to it, or even when natural and invincible disinclination resists, is *practical* and not *pathological* love, which lies in the will and not in the propensity of feeling, in the principles of action and not in melting sympathy; but the former alone can be commanded" (Kant 2002, 399).

Elsewhere Kant calls the practical love philanthropy. He claims that it is essentially related to a moral action: "Practical love, not the love that is

delight in man, it must be taken as active benevolence, and so as having to do with maxim of actions" (Kant 1991, 244-245). Practical love or benevolence "results in beneficence" (Kant 1991, 244). Kant emphasises that beneficence is *not only wishing* good for others *but acting* to promote it:

> "But it is quite obvious that what is meant here is not merely benevolence in *wishes,* which is, strictly speaking, only taking delight in the well-being of every other and does not require me to contribute to it (every man for himself, God for us all); what is meant is, rather, active, practical benevolence (beneficence), making the well-being and happiness of others my *end*" (Kant 1991, 246).

Since love and beneficence implies a certain danger of coming too close to the other and invade the space that the other needs to maintain his dignity, love must be accompanied with respect. The duty of respect is "strictly speaking, only a negative one (of not exalting oneself above others)" (Kant 1991, 244). To accentuate the necessity for the balance between love and respect in an action Kant formulates their relationship in terms of Newtonian physics:

> "The principle of **mutual love** admonishes men constantly to come *closer* to one another; that of the **respect** they owe one another, to keep themselves *at a distance* from one another; and should one of these great moral forces fail, 'then nothingness (immorality), with gaping throat, would drink up the whole kingdom of (moral) beings like a drop of water' (if I may use Haller's words, but in a different connection)" (Kant 1991, 244).

Kant's conception of the imperfect duties and his account of the relationship between love and respect helps to interpret some widely accepted moral praxis. A good example for such praxis is beneficence, which Kant calls a duty of love. However, Kant states that one should be careful when being beneficent, because there are at least two important problems linked to it. The first problem is that a case of genuine beneficence (based on philanthropy and accompanied by moral feelings) is rare. Mostly beneficence is entirely based on inclinations and serves to accomplish one's

self-love. When one looks at the intentions of the agent, or – as Kant says, at his heart – one can only find the desire to be honoured for his good deeds and this means that it has no true moral worth as the famous case of the philanthropist from Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* demonstrates (Kant 2002).

The second problem with the beneficence is that even if the beneficent person does not have any intentions to contribute to his honour in the eyes of the society, he would have difficulties to admit that the act of beneficence is not a proof of him being kind-hearted but an act of justice. This problem emerges in the context of inequality in the society. Kant claims that inequality initially is a problem of injustice therefore helping a needy person is not a kind but a just act. Kant claims that we participate in the general injustice even if we do not do any injustice according to the law, therefore when we show beneficence to a person in need, we do not give him anything gratuitously, but only give him some of that, which we have previously helped to take from him through the general injustice (Kant 1996). The mentioned problems with the beneficence indicate that its value depends on whether it is performed with respect which is "recognition of a *dignity* (*dignitas*) in other men, that is, of a worth that has no price" (Kant 1991, 254).

When Kant ascribes dignity to all rational beings it is not merely a poetical admiration of rational nature as such. He claims that since dignity is based on the unconditioned worth of the rational nature, rational beings are fundamentally equal, namely, as far as they share the rational nature, they have the same highest possible worth. Every moral act, act that recognizes this dignity, must be based on a maxim that can be accepted by every rational being (to make a maxim public, as Arendt wrote, is to offer it to the evaluation of the participants of the public sphere). Therefore, if one wants to act morally, one must accept the premise of equality and this is done by respecting the person we do good to.

Kant's conception of the imperfect duties reveals the importance of judgment in moral actions. As noted before, in the case of the imperfect duties, law only prescribes the maxim of actions and not the actions them-

selves and "this is a sign that it leaves a latitude (*latitudo*) for free choice in following (complying with) the law, that is, that the law cannot specify precisely in what way one is to act and how much one is to do by the action for an end that is also a duty" (Kant 1991, 194). What Kant means with the latitude of the duty (*Spielraum*) is that law only determines one to adopt a particular end and guide one's actions by a maxim that prescribes to further this end, but how *exactly* does this furthering happen is not prescribed by the law. It is a matter of free choice and the circumstances of the actor. Therefore, determining the imperfect duties and acting on them requires the active participation of the faculty of judgment. Kant admits that ethics is generally more about judging than following strict rules:

> "But ethics, because of the latitude it allows in its imperfect duties, inevitably leads to questions that call upon judgment to decide how a maxim is to be applied in particular cases, and indeed in such a way that judgment provides another (subordinate) maxim (and one can always ask for yet another principle for applying this maxim to cases that may arise)" (Kant 1991, 211).

It is therefore possible to say that action in Kant's ethics depends much more on judging and constantly reflecting on the situation than following strictly determined rules. Allan Wood comments this aspect of Kant's ethics as follows:

> "We ought to have expected that an ethics of autonomy would leave a lot of discretion to individuals in determining the shape of their lives, including the content of their moral duties. Kantian ethics fulfils this expectation. [..] I think it is true that Kantian ethics, as compared with many fashionable theories, is far more permissive and leaves a lot more to the free volition of individuals in determining what their own duties are" (Wood 2008, 169–170).

Turning back to the phenomenon of thoughtlessness demonstrated by Eichmann, the following view of Allison can be taken into consideration:

> "As we have seen, the enigmatic feature of Eichmann's character was not a total lack of moral reflection, but the truncated, grossly distorted form which that reflection took. If Arendt's portrait is accurate (and for purposes of this discussion I am assuming that it is), it would seem that the usual moral considerations regarding appropriate means were in place, but combined with a complete failure to question the nature of the end for which these means were intended. How else can one understand the fact that, while unconcerned about the morality of exterminating millions of Jews, Eichmann was apparently insistent about avoiding causing any unnecessary suffering?" (Allison 1996, 172).

If Allison is right, thinking (as opposed to thoughtlessness) that was missing in the case of Eichmann, is not the kind of thinking that requires him to rationally question the nature of Kant's principal of ethics he claims to have adopted. It is not the thinking that requires not to contradict yourself, even if this sense of thinking is certainly present in Kant's moral theory. Arendt writes in this regard:

> "Ethics in Kant is also based on a thought process: Act so that the maxim of your action can be willed by you to become a general law, that is, a law to which you yourself would be subject. It is, again, the same general rule—Do not contradict yourself (not yourself but your thinking ego)—that determines both thinking and acting" (Arendt 1992, 37).

Eichmann understood the requirement of the categorical imperative not to contradict yourself. Yet, he failed at another aspect of the thinking, i.e., thinking towards a reasonably justifiable end. Since a positive ethical principle would require reflecting on the end one adjusts all one's actions to, it is unlikely that such a principle (at least in terms of Kantian ethics) could be so grotesquely misinterpreted as was demonstrated by Eichmann. This leads us to a preliminary conclusion that when considering thinking as a possible condition to prevent evil-doing, it can only function as such when being drawn closer to the world of action through its relation with judging, while the thinking as withdrawal from the world not only cannot serve as such a condition but rather bares a danger to moral action of its own kind.

Bibliography

1. Allison, H. E. 1996, *Idealism and Freedom. Essays on Kant's Theoretical and Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
2. Arendt, H. 1963, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A report on the Banality of Evil,* The Vicking Press, New York.
3. Arendt, H. 1994, *Essays in Understanding. 1930 – 1954. Formation, Exile and Totalitarianism*. Edited by Jerome Kohn, Shocken books, New York.
4. Arendt, H. 1992, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Edited by R. Beiner. The University in Chicago Press, Chicago.
5. Arendt, H. 1978, *The Life of Mind*, A Harvest Book, San Diego, New York, London.
6. Arendt, H. 1958, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, The World Publishing Company, Cleveland.
7. Kant, I. 2006, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Edited by R. B. Louden and M. Kuehn. Cambridge University press, New York.
8. Kant, I. 1998, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated and edited by P. Guyer and A. W. Wood. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
9. Kant, I. 2002, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Edited and translated by A. Wood. Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
10. Kant, I. 1996, *Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
11. Kant, I. 1998, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*. Translated and edited by A. Wood and G. di Giovanni. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
12. Kant, I. 1991, *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by M. Gregor. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
13. Wood, A. W. 2008, *Kantian Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Elvīra Šimfa

Domāšana ļaunuma nedomāšanā: Hannas Ārentes domāšanas kā ļaunuma novēršanas nosacījuma izpratne

Kopsavilkums

Domāšana, kā to raksturo Hanna Ārente, ir atvērts process, jo tā neizriet no kādas dotības, savā sākotnē tā uzskatāma par patstāvīgu, tādā nozīmē Kants norāda, ka domāšanas pirmais sākums ir prāts (Kants 2011), kā arī domāšana nav vērsta uz kādu konkrētu mērķi. Domāšanas būtiskā saikne ar brīvību ir iemesls, kāpēc Ārente, citstarp atsaucoties arī uz Imanuelu Kantu, domāšanu uzskata par ļaunuma novēršanas nosacījumu. Viņa raksta: "[..] vai tikai paradums domāt – neatkarīgi no rezultātiem un konkrētā satura analizēt itin visu, kas nonāk redzeslokā [..], – nav viens no faktoriem, kas cilvēkus attur no ļauna darīšanas vai pat bruņo ar "nosacījuma refleksiem" pret to? [..] sākotnēji manu interesi šim tematam pievērsa Eihmaņa prāva." (Ārente 2000, 13). Saskaņā ar Ārentes komentāriem par Eihmaņa atsauci uz Kantu savas rīcības izskaidrojumam, Eihmaņa ļaunuma iespējamības nosacījums ir tieši nesekošana Kanta ētikā ietvertajam aicinājumam spriest, kas izslēdz aklu paklausību (Arendt 1963), t. i., spriest brīvi.

Rakstā pamatota tēze, ka Ārentes, Eihmaņa piemērā balstoties, raksturotais ļaunums ir iespējams nevis tādēļ, ka Kanta ētikas galvenais princips – kategoriskais imperatīvs – tiek saprasts nepareizi, bet tādēļ, ka šis princips tiek saprasts tikai negatīvi, t. i., kā prasība neveikt rīcību, kuru

nevar gribēt kā vispārēju likumu. Rakstā skaidrots, ka ētiski atzīstamas rīcības nosacījums ir šīs rīcības pamatā esošais pozitīvais princips, t. i., princips, kas nosaka rīcību noteiktam mērķim. Šādā nozīmē var problematizēt Ārentes ideju par tikai domāšanu "neatkarīgi no rezultātiem un konkrētā satura" kā ļaunuma novēršanas iespējamības nosacījumu vai pat ētiskas rīcības iespējamības nosacījumu un kā šādu nosacījumu, balstoties Kanta morālas rīcības mehānisma analīzē, piedāvāt domāšanu saskaņā ar noteiktu principu.

Atslēgas vārdi: Ārente, Kants, noteikta domāšana, nenoteikta domāšana, ļaunums.

Izdevējs **LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts**
Kalpaka bulvāris 4, Rīga, LV-1940
Tālr. 67034861, e-pasts *fsi@lza.lv*
www.fsi.lv

Iespiests **Europrint**, SIA
Reģ. nr. 40003954874
Artilērijas iela 40/10, Rīga, LV-1009