

October 27, 2004

Reading was Jean Améry's *At the Mind's Limits* and excerpts from Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Both readings deal with the Holocaust.

1942 – Allies (Britain, US, and Soviet Union) state intention to prosecute war criminals

October 1945-October 1946 – International Military Tribunal tries 22 major war criminals

Nuremberg Trials – adjudicated subsequent to International Military Tribunal by American military tribunal (majority tried were high ranking officials – crimes included medical experimentation, deportations, forced labor, etc.)

Questions of justice:

- What does it mean for the enforcer? for the victim?
- What is the obligation of the victim to give testimony or forgive/reconcile?

Moral circumstances that normally are aberrant were simply abiding by the morality available at the time.

Statute of limitations – limit to when war crimes could be prosecuted (limit was extended and eventually abolished altogether)

- Améry had a bitterness and anger towards the freedom of the perpetrators
- Fanon reference: act out to rectify feelings of alienation

What brings about healing? How does one move forward to find peace and justice?

major war criminals – actions were not directly/geographically located

- was there a direct causal link between authority and the perpetrator?
- personal inclinations of power were incorporated into bureaucratic positions
- thousands of individuals were tried, but most were lower-level officers who had no resources to flee and were thus easier to find

August 19, 1945 – Allies occupy Germany with the goal of “denazification”

- quartered the country – western Germany under US control and eastern Germany under the Soviets
- which will conquer – democracy or socialism?
- US Marshall Plan (1948-1952) was aimed at rebuilding Europe spreading democracy and capitalism
- the Deutschmark was introduced by the US in order to promote capitalism

1949 – there was a definitive split in Germany (Eastern Soviets and Western US-controlled)

- East Germany was effectively part of the Soviet Bloc and had institutions of socialism
- but by 1955 it was more of a Soviet ally rather than satellite

\*The concept of human rights was being formalized during these times

Social consciousness was fading only after 20 years, but it was necessary to keep pointing out the evils of history (e.g. Holocaust) not as an aberration but as something that was still able to arise in civilized nations.

Nietzsche critical of resentment and the deplorable state of the victim. He said that the prisoner is so

victimized that the action is solely internalized and engenders a slave mentality and asks: Why is there not a more creative action by the prisoner?

Améry said the broader structure of the Nazi regime prevented any action, that resistance was futile.

- the overwhelming reality was that it was the *entire* nation, either by action or by complicity
- the entire collective needed to be indicted (but not to the extent of Arendt – who felt that a systemic shift in morality makes judging individual agents of crime more difficult)
- people *choose* to allow this to happen (they *do* have a sense of right and wrong)

Neurosis is outside *in society* and not inside *within him*. But he acknowledges his fixation on the issue. “Resentment blocks the exit to the future.”

Trauma syndrome (result of a specific historical event that disorders the psyche) affixes the problem with victims instead of with the perpetrators. Améry says the victims have a higher morality and that others are not qualified to judge (but *who* is though? - questions of justice).

Améry says that we are all evil and brings up dignity (the capacity to act/resist/revolt)

- physical violence is not the only means of restoring disjointed dignity...need a justice system
- given the totality of the regime radicalism, how were they supposed to fight back?

Some other authors address similar issues:

Durkheim – what happens when you the social order can't be re-established/

Arendt – Eichmann as a scapegoat

\*What is the relation of society to the crimes of individuals? How do we deliver justice?

Améry asks what should the German youth (who have no direct relationship to the violence) do, what is their responsibility in this?

Reparations movement – many groups demanding restitution

↻ e.g. Haitian president demanded help but the international community looked aside while the military overthrew him

Arendt said each cog plays a role in the system, that power is diffuse (granted, with some more powerful individuals than others). Responsibility lies within those that give orders and power is located spatially within a network.

Genocide had become new crime of rational bureaucracy and violence.