

Somehow, I managed to work my way all the way through, “Eichmann in Jerusalem,” and seemed to have missed the point. Arendt rambles on with various facts about Eichmann’s life, but I’m not sure what they all mean.

Arendt does bring up several interesting points in the essay though. The question of Nazism is one that has fascinated us ever since its demise. And of course, it is a phenomenon we are not yet rid of.

I recently saw a movie that tried to address this question. Why would anyone become a Nazi? The film, “American History X”, dealt with Neo-Nazi’s in America, but many of the same questions apply to Germany. The film suggested several things: influence of one’s upbringing, friends, and experiences with minority groups. It is always a scary question when I ask myself, “If the circumstances had been right, would I have been a Nazi?”

Arendt tries to show what went on in the minds of the Nazis. Eichmann was facing a boring life as a nobody, and so became a Nazi for a life of excitement. Arendt said he never regretted it.

More interesting is the claims of Nazis, including Eichmann, recorded by Arendt, that cite that they were in their position in an attempt to be a moderating influence. They didn’t want the “real” Nazis to be in those positions, so they sought to act like Nazis to try and slow the damage. Arendt points out that they often acted worse than the real Nazis did.

At times I thought Arendt was implying that these “moderating Nazis” were just straight out lying in hopes of being treated favorably. However, if they are not lying, then

this really gives insight into the human condition (or just confuses us more maybe).

What an interesting psychological question this is. While they thought they were moderating the damage, they were actually more zealous than the real Nazis.

Or maybe Arendt is trying to say there are no actually “real Nazis”. Maybe this is an example of how totalitarianism takes on a life of its own. No one truly believes in the Nazi cause, but everyone is acting out the part because they believe everyone else is a believer. Either way it is an interesting question.