
Hannah and Martin

Study Guide

Prepared by Rosanna Forrest, Dramaturg

Timeline
Theatre Company

About The Playwright

Kate has received a Jeff Citation, an After Dark Award, the Kennedy Center's Roger L. Stevens Award and a finalist position for the international Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for HANNAH AND MARTIN, which is her first play. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, where she is at work on a new play as well as on a screenplay for Killer Films.

Hannah Arendt

Hannah Arendt, was born in Hanover, Germany, in 1906, the only child of secular Jewish parents. While Arendt remained close to her mother throughout her life, her father passed away when she was only seven years of age. She entered Marburg University in 1924, where she studied philosophy with burgeoning philosopher, Martin Heidegger. Her romantic relationship with Heidegger began in 1925 during which time he was creating his greatest work, *Being and Time*. The relationship between Heidegger and Arendt ended the following year, and Arendt moved to Heidelberg to study with Karl Jaspers, the existentialist philosopher and friend of Heidegger. Under Jasper's guidance, she wrote her dissertation on the concept of love in St. Augustine's thought. Throughout the years, Arendt remained close to Jaspers, although the influence of Heidegger's phenomenology was to prove the greater in its lasting influence upon her work.

In 1929, Arendt met Gunther Stern, a young Jewish philosopher, with whom she became romantically involved, and subsequently married. After her dissertation was published, she delved into Jewish and Zionist politics, which had become a focus for her in 1926. As Hitler was appointed Chancellor in 1933, she escaped to Paris fearing Nazi persecution. In 1936, she met Heinrich Blücher, a German political refugee; she divorced an already estranged Stern in '39, and married Blücher in 1940.

After the outbreak of war, and following arrest and detention in a camp as an 'enemy alien', Arendt and Blücher fled to the USA in 1941. In 1944, she began work on what would become her first major political book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. After *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was published in 1951, she began the first in a sequence of visiting fellowships and professorial positions at American universities and ultimately attained American citizenship.

To continue her exploration of totalitarianism, Arendt turned her attention to the composition of humanity, publishing *The Human Condition* in 1958. Also in 1958, Arendt published *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* which was the philosophical biography of a Jewish merchant-turned salon hostess of the late 1700s. In 1959, she published 'Reflections on Little Rock', her controversial consideration of the emergent Black civil rights movement, stating and later refuting that the destruction of segregation should not begin with children. In 1961, she published *Between Past and Future*, and traveled to Jerusalem to cover the trial of Nazi Adolf Eichmann for the *New Yorker*. In 1963 she published her polemical reflections on the Eichmann trial, first in the *New Yorker*, and then in book form as *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*.

In 1967, having held teaching positions at Berkeley and Chicago, she took a position at the New School for Social Research in New York. Following Blücher's death in 1970, she worked on her projected three-volume work, *The Life of the Mind*. Volumes 1 and 2, on *Thinking* and *Willing*, were published posthumously. She died on December 4, 1975, having only just begun work on the third and final volume, *Judging*.

Today, Arendt remains one of the most original, challenging, and influential political thinkers of the 20th century, and her work will no doubt continue to provide inspiration for political philosophy in the centuries to come.

There are no dangerous thoughts; thinking itself is dangerous. To think and to be fully alive are the same.

-- Hannah Arendt

Sincerely Yours:
Correspondence between Hannah Arendt and
Professor Karl Jaspers

Heidelberg, October 25, 1946

(Enclosure)

Dear Hannah Arendt!

Because you are a former student of mine who earned her doctorate with me twenty years ago in Heidelberg and who has remained a loyal friend to me through all these years, I hereby give to you as the person nearest to me the translation rights to all my works for the English language in America, to the extent that I possess said rights. I do this in the hope of expressing my thanks to you in a symbol both intellectual and material. This gift is valid for your lifetime.

With warmest greetings as always,
Your, Karl Jaspers

New York, February 19, 1953

Lieber Verehrtester,

I'm picturing to myself that it's Monday and that I'm in your house, which is so dear and familiar to me, and that I have a few minutes alone with you and feel free to say to you in the spoken word what in the written one sounds stupid and pompous.

I want to thank you for the seventy years of your life, for your existence, which would be cause enough for gratitude. I want to thank you for the early years in Heidelberg when you were my teacher, the only one I have ever been able to recognize as such; and for the happiness and relief I found in seeing that one can be educated in freedom. I have never forgotten since then that the world and Germany, whatever else they may be, are the world in which you live and the country that produced you.

I want to thank you for your friendship; you know what it means to me. It is such a great gift precisely because the mere fact of your existence would have been enough.

I feel funny sending wishes, because everything I wish you I also wish for my own sake. I hope you'll remain healthy and live to be very old (I promise to come for your eightieth birthday!) and in full possession of your powers, so that you can complete everything you mean to do without haste and live your life fully to its end. And I hope, too, that the world will honor you as much as I would like to honor you, because it seems to me that everyone would do well to put ceremony aside and examine his life in the light of yours. The part of the world that does honor you will then partake of the light that comes into a room when you enter it.

I don't want to respond to your last letter today, but I think I can promise you that I will never cease to be a German in your sense of the word; that is, that I will not deny anything, not your Germany and Heinrich's, not the tradition I grew up in or the language in which I think and in which the poems I love best were written. I won't lay false claims to either a Jewish or an American past...

Give my warmest regards to your wife. This is a great and wonderful day for her, and I wish I could be there to help with the dishes or whatever.

In respect and gratitude and friendship I am.

Your,
Hannah

From Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969, ed. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner; trans. Robert and Rita Kimber; Harcourt Brace & Company 1992; pp. 63-4, 206-7.

Promises are the uniquely human way of ordering the future, making it predictable and reliable to the extent that this is humanly possible.

-- Hannah Arendt

Martin Heidegger

Heidegger was born on September 26, 1889 in Messkirch in south-west Germany to a Catholic family. In his early youth Heidegger was being prepared for the priesthood, subsequently entering Freiburg University to study theology. After a break with his priesthood training in 1911, he took up studies in philosophy, mathematics, and natural sciences.

In 1915 Heidegger became an unsalaried lecturer at Freiburg University, and in 1917 he married Thea Elfride Petri, a Protestant student who had attended his courses. In 1918, he secured a position as Professor Edmund Husserl's assistant, and began lecturing in a groundbreaking way. His lectures on phenomenology and his creative interpretations of Aristotle would soon earn him wide acclaim.

In 1923 Heidegger moved to Marburg University where he obtained a position of associate professor. His students testified to the originality of his insight and the intensity of his philosophical questioning. In February 1927, partly because of an administrative pressure, his fundamental, but also unfinished treatise, *Being and Time*, appeared. Within a few years, this book was recognized as a truly epoch-making work of 20th century philosophy. It earned Heidegger, in the fall of 1927, the full professorship at Marburg, and one year later, the chair of philosophy at Freiburg University.

Heidegger's life entered in a new, controversial stage with Hitler's rise to power. Heidegger, who before was virtually apolitical, in early 1930s became politically involved. In 1933 he was elected rector of Freiburg University by the faculty, and accepted this politically charged post. In 1933 he joined the NSDAP party, and soon after delivered his inaugural rector's address; the ambiguous text is frequently interpreted as an expression of his support of Hitler's regime. There is a little doubt that during his tenure as rector, Heidegger became instrumental to Nazi policies and, willingly or not, helped to transform the university into National-Socialist mold. And yet, one year later Heidegger resigned the rectorate and took no further part in politics. In his lectures of the late 1930s and the early 1940s, he expressed covert criticism of Nazi ideology, and was placed under Gestapo surveillance. He was finally humiliated in 1944 when he was declared the most "expendable" member of the faculty and sent to the Rhine to dig trenches. Because of the ambiguity of Heidegger's attitude toward Nazism, the relationship between his philosophy and political involvement still provoke a heated debate. Following Germany's defeat in the Second World War, Heidegger was first forbidden to teach, and then dismissed from his chair of philosophy because of alleged Nazi sympathies. The ban was lifted in 1949.

The 1930s are not only marked by Heidegger's controversial involvement in politics, but also by a change in his thinking which is known as "the turn." In his lectures and writings that followed "the turn," he became less systematic and often more obscure than in his fundamental work, *Being and Time*.

During the last three decades of his life, Heidegger wrote and published much. In his insightful essays and lectures he strove to clarify his way of thinking after "the turn." In 1966, Heidegger attempted to justify his political involvement during the Nazi regime in an interview with *Der Spiegel* entitled "Only a God Can Save Us." It was published only ten years later, after his death. Heidegger died on May 26, 1976; to the very end he worked on various projects, including the extensive *Gesamtausgabe*, the complete edition of his works.

The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil.

-- Hannah Arendt

Heidegger the Fox

From Hannah Arendt's *Denktagebuch* of 1953 – notebooks in which she recorded her thoughts, as well as quotations from other writers for future reference. English translation by Robert and Rita Kimber.

Heidegger says, with great pride: “People say that Heidegger is a fox.” This is the true story of Heidegger the fox: Once upon a time there was a fox who was so lacking in slyness that he not only kept getting caught in traps but couldn't even tell the difference between a trap and a non-trap. This fox suffered from another failing as well. There was something wrong with his fur, so that he was completely without natural protection against the hardships of a fox's life. After he had spent his entire youth prowling around the traps of people, and now that not one intact piece of fur, so to speak, was left on him, this fox decided to withdraw from the fox world altogether and to set about making himself a burrow. In his shocking ignorance of the difference between traps, he hit on an idea completely new and unheard of among foxes: He built a trap as his burrow. He set himself inside it, passed it off as a normal burrow—not out of cunning, but because he had always thought others' traps were their burrows—and then decided to become sly in his own way and outfit for others the trap he had built himself and that suited only him. This again demonstrated great ignorance about traps: No one would go into his trap, because he was sitting inside it himself. This annoyed him. After all, everyone knows that, despite their slyness, all foxes occasionally get caught in traps. Why should a fox trap—especially one built by a fox with more experience of traps than any other—not be a match for the traps of human beings and hunters? Obviously because this trap did not reveal itself clearly enough as the trap it was! And so it occurred to our fox to decorate his trap beautifully and to hang up equivocal signs everywhere on it that quite clearly said: “Come here, everyone; this is a trap, the most beautiful trap in the world.” From this point on it was clear that no fox could stray into this trap by mistake. Nevertheless, many came. For this trap was our fox's burrow, and if you wanted to visit him where he was at home, you had to step into his trap. Everyone except our fox could, of course, step out of it again. It was cut, literally, to his own measurement. But the fox who lived in the trap said proudly: “So many are visiting me in my trap that I have become the best of all foxes.” And there is some truth in that, too: Nobody knows the nature of traps better than one who sits in a trap his whole life long.

The Banal Ones

Hitler Youth Movement:

Shortly after Hitler's rise to power in 1933, all German youth groups were merged into a single, regimented organization called Hitlerjugend, the Hitler Youth. Following the dictator's view that the youth of Germany would preserve the thousand year Reich, all children were heavily immersed in Nazi dogma from the age of 10. In 1933, Hitler hand-picked **Baldur von Schirach**, previously the head of the National Socialist Students' Union, to lead the Hitler Youth Movement. Von Schirach wrote prayers that praised Hitler and had to be read by members of the various Nazi youth organizations before they had their meals. He also wrote a book explaining his views on the Hitler youth movement entitled *Revolution in Education* (1938). Von Schirach was captured by Allied troops at the end of the Second World War. At the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials von Schirach said that he did not know about the extermination camps. The tribunal found him guilty of war crimes and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

To us Germans everything is religion. What we do we do not merely with our hands and brains, but with our hearts and souls. This has often become a tragic fate for us. — Baldur von Schirach

Adolf Eichmann

While living in Argentina in 1960, Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann was kidnapped and smuggled to Israel where he was put on trial for crimes against humanity. The *New Yorker* magazine sent Hannah Arendt to cover the trial. While covering the technical aspects of the trial, Arendt also explored the wider themes inherent in the trial, such as the nature of justice, the behavior of the Jewish leadership during the Nazi Régime, and, most controversially, the nature of Evil itself.

Excerpt from Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Books, 1977. page 276.

"The [Prosecution] knew, of course, that it would have been very comforting, indeed to believe that Eichmann was a monster, even though if he had been Israel's case against him would have collapsed or, at the very least, lost all interest. Surely, one can hardly call upon the whole world and gather correspondents from the four corners of the earth in order to display Bluebeard in the dock. The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgement, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together, for it implied—as had been said at Nuremberg over and over again by the defendants and their counsels—that this new type of criminal, who is in actual fact *hostis generis humani*, commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong".

What makes it so plausible to assume that hypocrisy is the vice of vices is that integrity can indeed exist under the cover of all other vices except this one.

-- Hannah Arendt

A Poet, A Playwright, And An Opera Composer

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)

At the time of his death, Rilke's work was intensely admired by many leading European artists, but was almost unknown to the general reading public. His reputation has grown steadily since his death, and he has come to be universally regarded as a master of verse.

The Panther

His eyes became from passing bars
so weary, that they hold no sight.
He feels there were a thousand bars,
behind the thousand bars no light.

The soft gait of the lithe strong pace
in cramped circles on a narrow spot
is like a dance of force around a place
in which a dazed great will does moan its lot.

At times, the curtain of his vision
Silently slides aside -. An image enters then,
goes through the members' quiet tension,
ceasing existence deep in his heart's den.

This translation is by Guntram Deichsel:

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)

Born in Augsburg, Germany, this German poet, playwright, and theatrical reformer believed theatre to be a crucial tool for social and ideological examination.

The essence of his dramatic theory could be expressed in that a truly Marxist drama must avoid the Aristotelian notion of staged reality. Brecht argued that the theatre should not seek to make its audience believe in the presence of nor identify with the characters on the stage. What theatre should do, however, is follow the method of the epic poet's art, which is to make the audience realize that what it sees on the stage is merely an account of past events. The audience should watch with critical detachment. Hence, the "epic" theatre is based on detachment through the *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect). The spectator is periodically reminded that he is being presented with a demonstration of human behavior rather than with an illusion of reality—in short, that the theatre is only a theatre and not the world itself.

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Wagner is acknowledged as the master of German opera, and one of the most progressive composers in history. As a youth Wagner was fascinated by literature, particularly the plays of William Shakespeare.

The foundation of Wagner's philosophy of musical drama is the concept of "Gesamtkunstwerk," or "universal artwork." He held that music in a dramatic setting was best used to reinforce dramatic content and expression. His characters addressed the philosophical issues that Wagner considered vital to society: the tension between good and evil, between the physical and spiritual, and between selfishness and redemptive love.

Wagner has been classified politically as an anarchist and socialist, and simultaneously, a fascist, nationalist, and anti-semitic. His name has been connected to almost all the major trends in German history of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Love, by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but anti-political, perhaps the most powerful of all anti-political human forces.

-- Hannah Arendt

The Means to an End

Reasons for the Rise of Fascism in Germany

- The economic collapse of Germany after 1929
- The lack of democratic roots in Germany
- Under the Weimar republic
- It was impossible to secure a majority in parliament (this depicted democracy as a weak Gov. system)
- The president had the authority to declare a state of emergency (Hitler used Hindenburg's ability to do this in order to establish his dictatorship)
- The fear of communism (Hindenburg appointed Hitler as chancellor as a result of such fears)
- The Nazis exploited the weakness of the Weimar system and often used violence against their opponents
- The Nazis made use of propaganda to shape public opinion
- The Nazis used resentment against the Versailles Settlement to their ends.

Characteristics of National Socialist Rule

- Germany became a one party state
- Hitler was supreme within the party and he was taken as the personification of National Socialism.
- Totalitarianism was introduced
- Education was controlled
- Strict censorship of the media
- All non-Nazi youth movements were banned and replaced (ie: by movements such as Hitler Youth)
- The churches were brought under Nazi control
- Trade Unions & strikes were banned
- The use of terror was made to crush all resistance
- The army was brought under Nazi control
 - Officers swore loyalty to Hitler
 - The non-Nazi commander and war minister were removed in scandals engineered by the Nazis
 - The S.S. was expanded
- The Nazis made great use of propaganda
- Racism: The Aryan Germans were declared to be the 'Master Race'
- Expansionism: Hitler claimed to reunite all Germans and Nazi interests centered on obtaining land in Europe
- There was a close identity between party and state
- Centralization of power.

Under conditions of tyranny it is far easier to act than to think.

- Hannah Arendt

Related Source Material

Websites:

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<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/arendhtml/arendthome.html>

The Jewish Virtual Library: Hannah Arendt
<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/biography/arendt.html>

Martin Heidegger Resources Web Page
<http://www.lib.cmich.edu/bibliographers/danielferrer/HeideggerResources.htm>

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<http://www.thehistorychannel.co.uk/classroom/gcse/facis.htm>

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<http://militaryhistory.about.com/library/blhitleryouth.htm>

Eichmann in Jerusalem:
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<http://www.penguinputnam.com/static/rguides/us/eichmann.html>

Books:

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Between Friends: the correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949-1975 / edited and with an introduction by Carol Brightman.

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Ettinger, Elzbieta.
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