Hannah Arendt on the Worldlessness and Crimes against Humanity

Yosef Keladu¹

University of St. Thomas, Manila, Philippines

Abstract:
This paper attempts to investigate Arendt’s idea that crimes against humanity is inseparable from the condition of modern worldlessness in the phenomena of the escape from the world and the rise of the social. Modern worldlessness renders people superfluous, uprooted and stateless. In the condition of being superfluous, people are easily turned to be violent as seen in the Nazis and particularly Eichmann in Germany and also exposed to crimes as experienced by Jewish people either in Germany or throughout Europe during the Holocaust.

Keywords: Worldlessness, crimes against humanity, anti-Semitism, imperialism, rightlessness.

Introduction
After the tragedy of the Holocaust Arendt predicts that “the problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe.”² How do we properly explain evil or human crime? Arendt is dissatisfied with metaphysical understanding of evil because the Holocaust has pushed philosophical and religious accounts of evil to their own limits.³ Consequently, she offers a new way that is neither philosophical nor religious, but rather political. It is political because Arendt conceives evil as something real as to be capable of being done again in many different ways. The evildoers, such as the Nazis, were ordinary men and so what they had done could be done by others who also have the capacity to act and think. She writes: “The reality is that ‘the Nazis are men like us. The nightmare is that they have shown, have proven beyond doubt what man is capable of.”⁴ Furthermore, the reality of evil shows the fact that evil is inseparable from the condition of worldlessness. In other words, it is in the condition of worldlessness that people are either turned to be violent as seen in Adolf Eichman and the Nazis in Germany or exposed to crimes as experienced by Jewish people during the Holocaust.

¹Phd Cand. The Graduate School, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines
³There are two metaphysical accounts of evil that are common in the history of philosophy and religion. The first account attempts to justify evil by comparing it with goodness. Since the good is related to being, then evil is the lack of being or non-being as seen in St. Augustine’s notion of evil as privatio boni and in Heidegger’s lack of being. In this context, evil is considered as an integral part of God’s or reason’s or history’s plan. The second account tries to locate evil in human motives. In this sense, evil is explained on the basis of the demonic intention of the subject. See Patrick Hayden, “The Relevance of Hannah Arendt’s Reflection on Evil: Globalization and Rightlessness,” in Human Rights Review, 2010, 253
⁴Hannah Arendt, Essays in Understanding, 134
This paper aims at exploring Arendt’s idea that modern worldlessness is closely related to crimes against humanity. Arendt describes worldlessness as the condition where people do not belong to the world that defines them as individuals. It is the condition where people are deprived of “a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective.” The world, a significant space for human appearance in action and speech, loses its power and thus human beings who live in it are deprived of their rights to belong to a political community or are alienated from the public realm. In other words, worldlessness is the condition where people have nothing in common with others, no institution to be relied upon, and the system of meaning to act and speech. In this condition, people are treated not as who that can act and speech, but as what, as thing-like.

Meanwhile regarding the crimes against humanity, what Arendt refers to is a specific kind of crime called genocide. If, the crimes against humanity are generally related to the systematic attack, such as murder, kidnapping, disappearance, against the civilian population, the crime of genocide—one kind of crimes against humanity—is characterized by the intention of agent to destroy, wholly or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. In Arendt’s view, totalitarian genocide is new and unprecedented kind of crime of genocide because it is intentionally organized to attack on plurality and diversity.

**The Phenomena of Modern Worldlessness**

Arendt observes that there are two phenomena or conditions in modernity that have generated worldlessness in which the world loses its power, namely the escape from the world and the rise of the social.

**The Escape from the World**

Along with her contemporaries Horkheimer and Adorno, Arendt criticizes modern scientific disenchantment of the world. All of them are concerned with the destructive and repressive effect of enlightenment’s project of modernity. Horkheimer and Adorno claim that there is a paradox in enlightenment’s project because despite of all its greatness, enlightenment has turned into its opposite, barbaric. Horkheimer and Adorno claims that in enlightenment, ‘humanity, instead of entering humanity into a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism.”

---

subject, Arendt laments the loss of the power of the world, brought about by modern instrumental rationality. If Horkheimer and Adorno focus on the reduction of humanity because of the expansion of instrumental reason, Arendt focuses more on the alienation of human world.

From Arendt’s perspective, the world’s alienation refers to the loss of trust or faith in the power of the world where we live in. The consequence of this loss of trust is that modern men strive to escape from the world, either to the universe or to self. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt’s concludes her prologue by saying that the modern world’s alienation can be traced in “its two flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self.” She refers the former to modern scientific progress that enables modern men to travel in space and the latter to modern philosophy that turns away men from the common world into what Simon Swift calls ‘inner exile’. In both, Arendt observes that modern men desire to escape from their condition as being-in-the-world.

With regard to the first, ‘flight from the world to the universe’, Arendt claims that in modern age we live in “a world thoroughly determined by a science and technology in which a knowledge acquired by selecting a point of reference outside the earth is applied to earthly nature and the human artifice.” For Arendt, the modern age has begun in seventeenth century in Galileo’s discovery of telescope in order to search for the secrets of the universe and brings them down into human cognition. That means, telescope puts “within the grasp of an earth-bound creature and its body-bound sense what had seemed forever beyond his reach.” The invention of telescope is accompanied by the discovery of Archimedean point, “a point outside the earth from which to unhinge the world.” These discoveries were driven by the fear that our sense-organs deceive us in the reception of reality and the doubt the certainty of human perception.

On the ground of the distrust to sensual perception, modern science has “turned toward experiment, which by directly interfering with nature assured the development whose progress has ever since appeared to be limitless.” Arendt acknowledges that these discoveries have generated the progress in modern sciences, but the problem is that modern sciences not only have the potential to destroy all earthly organic life and even the

---

9Horkheimer and Adorno are concerned more with the reduction of individuality into the automatic process of consumption and production through the expansion of instrumental reason. They write: “The individual is entirely nullified in the face of the economic powers. This powers are taking society’s domination over nature to unimagined heights.” Ibid. p. xvii


12Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 268

13Ibid., 260

14Ibid., 262

earth itself, but also considers the nature from a point of view outside the earth. It is the handling of nature from the perspective beyond human reach, outside the earth.  

Meanwhile regarding the second flight ‘from the world to the self’, Arendt points it to modern philosophy, initiated by Descartes that placed the radical doubt in a central position. Philosophy after Descartes, Arendt’s claims consist “in the articulations and ramifications of doubting.” Descartes argues that what certainly exists is the thinking part and others including the world or even our body may or may not exist. The point is that there is a doubt with regard to the reality of the world and of the human life. Since everything else seem to be doubtful, the only way out is introspection, which is, for Descartes, the source of certainty. In this way, the existence of the world depends on the process in the human mind. It is the introspection because the objective reality is dissolved into subjective mental process. This introspection is predominant in modern philosophy and result in modern attitude that what is construed in the human mind is the only thing that is certain and thus can be comprehended. Here, the human mind replaces the Archimedian point because human reason has become the point, where men can look upon the reality of the world.

For Arendt, the handling of nature from the outside of the earth’s perspective—whether in modern sciences or modern philosophy—points to the fact that cosmic process is imported into nature, which is called ‘acting into nature’ that presupposes “the godlike powers that mankind takes on in its delving into the fundamental nuclear processes and the ultimate unpredictability of such powers and interventions.” What concerns Arendt is the new emphasis placed upon the cosmic or mental process and not on things-in-themselves. This emphasis deprives things-in-themselves or the objective world. In this context, the world lost not only its power but also its meaningfulness.

**The Rise of the Social**

Arendt also finds the loss of power of the world in modern phenomenon of the mass society. Here worldlessness refers to the condition where the world between people has lost its power to gather people together, to relate and separate them. There is nothing ‘in-between’ or common that unites people and even things, the products of human works, do

---

16 Arendt beautifully writes: “For whatever we do today in physics—whether we release energy processes that ordinarily go on only in the sun, or attempt to initiate in a test tube the processes of cosmic evolution, or penetrate with the help of telescopes the cosmic space to a limit of two and even six billion light years, or build machines for the production and control of energies unknown in the household of earthly nature, or attain speeds in atomic accelerators which approach the speed of light, or produce elements not to be found in nature, or disperse radioactive particles, created by us through the use of cosmic radiation, on the earth—we always handle nature from a point in the universe outside the earth.” Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 262

17 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 274


20 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52-53
not bring people together, but conversely disperse them. This condition is brought about the growth of the third realm called society characterized by the elevation of labor above all other human activities.\textsuperscript{21} In this way, the limits of private household is liberated and channelled into the public realm. What is supposed to be kept private in the household, becomes public in modern societies. In this way society has replaced altogether the private and public realm. Arendt writes: “Society is the form in which the fact of mutual dependence for the sake of life and nothing else assumes public significance and where the activities connected with sheer survival—previously confined to the private sphere—are permitted to appear in public.”\textsuperscript{22}

The rise of the social, in Arendt’s view, is the loss of a plurality of distinct human beings, because society requires its members to act as one huge family and to have only one opinion and interest.\textsuperscript{23} The consequence of this attempt is the destruction of the plurality of perspectives that marks the end of the common world since the social requires that the world “is permitted to present itself in only one perspective.”\textsuperscript{24} In the mass society, conformity becomes the mode of life, in the sense that instead of acting together and telling their life story to one another, people are required to conform themselves into ‘a certain type of behavior’.\textsuperscript{25}

Conformity eliminates the freedom of people to act. Since people are deprived of the opportunity to talk about their life story and the value of products of their works, then their destiny is decided not by their own free action but by an elite’s group who happen to posses either economic or political power. In this context, as Richard Gill claims, worldlessness means the “loss of the sense of reality as individuals are thrown back upon their own subjective experiences and natural drives, tending less to initiate spontaneous actions than to conform to predictable patterns of behavior.”\textsuperscript{26}

Arendt finds the concrete example of the worldlessness of the society in the blurring of the distinction between property and wealth. Property, Arendt argues, is privately located and has its own significance for the maintainance of the life process. It allows people to enter into the public realm. In having property of his own, a person becomes free or no longer governed by the necessities of life and thus is able to participate in the public life.\textsuperscript{27} For Arendt, property becomes the condition of worldliness, because it is only by owning property that one is able to be part of the world, shared with others. In this sense, property

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 46
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 39
\textsuperscript{24} Margaret Betz Hull, \emph{The Hidden Philosophy of Hannah Arendt}, London and New York: Routledge Curzon, Taylor & Francis Group, 2002, 68
\textsuperscript{25} Hannah Arendt, \emph{The Human Condition}, 40
\textsuperscript{27} Hannah Arendt, \emph{The Human Condition}, 65
has a worldly dimension because it represents “the privately owned share of a common world and therefore is the most elementary condition for man’s worldliness.”

The problem actually emerges when property is transformed into wealth that has driven the process of exploitation of peasants or laborers. In this way, laborers lose their stable place in the world and are not protected—either by their own property or family. For Arendt, wealth is worldless because it replaces the immobile, durable and worldly property and has the tendency to create a fluid or unstable commercial society. This consumer society, Arendt argues, “cannot possibly know how to take care of a world and the things which belongs exclusively to the space of worldly appearances, because its central attitude toward all objects, the attitude of consumption, spells ruin to everything it touches.”

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argues that capitalism and imperialism is related. In Arendt’s view, the driving force of imperialism is the expansion, or as she puts it: “Expansion as a permanent and supreme aim of politics is the central political idea of imperialism.” The imperial expansion was driven by the social and economic interests. Economics becomes the motive of the states to expand their political power. In so doing, the states concern more with accumulating wealth than with the well-being of citizens. This phenomenon is known as the colonialization of the political, in which the state turns away from its responsibility to the public matters and submits itself into the forces or imperatives of the social. In this context, politics becomes a part of social life. This is clear in bourgeois society as the consequence of imperialism. Arendt writes:

> Imperialism was born when the ruling class in capitalist production came up against national limitations to its economic expansion. The bourgeoisie turned to politics out of economic necessity; for if it did not want to give up the capitalist system whose inherent law is constant economic growth, it had to impose this law upon its home government and to proclaim expansion to an ultimate political goal of foreign policy.

Furthermore, when the regimes of the capitalist states concentrate on maximizing profit and accumulating capital, they disregard the role of people. Worstly, the state purposely force citizens to lose their common interest, have no goal to obtain in their life, and become indifferent to the societal matters. They are treated as the masses, which Arendt describes as the people who “either because of sheer numbers, or indifference, or a combination of both, cannot be integrated into any organization based on common interest, into political parties or municipal governments or professional organizations or trade unions.”

---

28Ibid., 253
29Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 211
30Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 125
31Ibid., 126
32Ibid., 311
In the totalitarian states, Arendt observes, there is a state-organized effort to deprive citizens from their active participation in the social and economic life. In striving for the capital accumulation, the state is turned into 'a highly atomized society' because it is structured on the basis of competitiveness.\textsuperscript{33} The impact of this process is that those citizens who fulfill these criteria are allowed to participate in the states and those who do not are automatically eliminated. The fact shows that only few citizens can attain it and the majority of people are not. As a result, the majority of citizens are “either live in desperate lonely separation or are pressed together into a mass.”\textsuperscript{34} What concerns Arendt with the masses is not the brutality it may create or the unprogresiveness of people, but the isolation of people as a group and the destruction of human relationship. There is nothing in common for people to talk about and there is no space to act together. In other words, the objective world or things-in-between that provide the space for people to appear before one another and to act and tell their life stories, has been destroyed by the emergence of mass society in modern capitalist society. Arendt beautifully illustrates the situation of loneliness as follows:

\begin{quote}
The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic s\'eance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

Here we find the connection between the destructive effect of the mass society generated by the rise of the social in capitalist society as discussed at length in \textit{the Human Condition} and the phenomenon of superfluousness brought about by the totalitarian regimes as discussed in detail in \textit{the Origins of Totalitarianism}. In this regard, Elizabeth Young-Bruehl argues, in favor of a single party, totalitarian regimes abolished all other parties in order to establish the absolute power and in doing so all social and class formations were broken down in order to create a mass society. In order to attain this purpose, totalitarian regimes employed total terror, including secret police and establish concentration camps. In this way, totalitarianism became a new form of government that destroys politics because it methodically eliminates speaking and acting human beings and attacks the very humanity of people. It makes people superfluous as human beings.\textsuperscript{36}

\section*{Modern Worldlessness and Crimes against Humanity}

Modern worldlessness as described above is the condition out of which totalitarianism emerges. It has driven European states to become authoritarian during the first half of the twentieth century. The totalitarian ideology has generated 'organized loneliness', which is the common ground for terror and the essence of totalitarian regimes.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., 310
\textsuperscript{34}Hannah Arendt, \textit{Between Past and Future}, 89-90
\textsuperscript{35}Hannah Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}, 53
\textsuperscript{37} There are only two ideologies that claim themselves to be comprehensive and predictive explanations of human conduct and become state policy, namely, Communism of Stalin in Russia and National Socialism in Germany,
ideology serves as a theoretical framework for totalitarian regimes in their total domination to destroy the world and everything in it, including the other human beings. This domination is mainly intended to make superfluous. Arendt writes: “Totalitarianism strives not toward despotic rule over men, but toward a system in which men are superfluous.” By making people superfluous, totalitarian regimes believe that people are easily turned to be violent or exposed to violence. This is exactly what Arendt means by the inseparability between worldlessness and crimes against humanity.

**Worldlessness and Violent Action**

According to Arendt, the condition of worldlessness has generated violent attitude of modern men or made them radically evil. This is clearly seen in Eichmann and other Nazis in Germany. She explores this point in her report on the trial of Eichmann, a series of articles in the New Yorker, then published in a book called *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. In this book, Arendt attempts to relate the individual moral character—good or bad—to community in totalitarianism, through her description of evil as banal because evil comes to exist in the condition where people are being abandoned or superfluous.

In order to understand the banality of Eichmann's evil, let us look at the condition that has made him such as a monstrous person. Eichmann, in Arendt's view, is a 'victim' of totalitarian ideology, called Nazism because he is treated as agent of totalitarianism or the instrument of an evil's political system. Hitler’s ideology changes not only how people act or behave to one another but also the human nature itself. Arendt claims, the aim of totalitarian ideology is to transform human nature by inducing them to become ideological creature. What Arendt stresses here is the fact that it is only when people have been possessed by ideas or more accurately, by a system of ideas (ideology) that they turned to be vicious people.

The transformation of human nature was carried out through the establishment of concentration camps. She describes concentration camps as the fabrication of hell on earth. Arendt divides three types of death camps that correspond to the concept of life after death; hades, purgatory, and hell. Among the three types, Arendt argues: “Hell is in the most literal sense was embodied by those types of camp perfected by the Nazis, in which the whole of life was thoroughly and systematically organized with a view to the greatest possible torment.” The image of hell in the form of concentration camps is meant to construct the fantasy that human beings can be omnipotent. Arendt writes: "The totalitarian hell proves only that the power of man is greater than they ever dare to think, while others ideologies or better doctrines are partial. Crick calls those two ideologies as economic determinism and racial determinism. See Bernard Crick, “Hannah Arendt and the Burden of Our Times,” in *The Political Quarterly*, 1997, p. 80

38Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 457
39Ibid., 432
41Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 445
and that man can realize hellish fantasies without making the sky fall or the earth open.”

The desire for omnipotence is called ‘the madness for the superlative,’ “a madness that brings God down to earth in the figure of a particular omnipotent individual.” Through this desire, Nazi’s regime wanted to totally dominate the world, achieved through eliminating plurality in favor of ‘being one’ or the only one. Hitler as Führer desired the absolute power, a godlike power on earth.

In the concentration camps, the desire for the absolute power was transferred into the mind of ordinary Germans and the Nazis. In favor of being omnipotent, they were driven to carry out the order of transporting, organizing, and then murdering the inmates. Because of the fantasy of omnipotence, the Nazis were reluctant to give in to their vices and resisted the temptation to do the good. Arendt claims: “Evil in the Third Reich had lost the quality which most people recognize it—it the quality of temptation. Many Germans and many Nazis must have been tempted not to murder...but God knows, they had learned how to resist temptation.”

This resistance occurs through the Nazi’s imperative of obedience and self-sacrifice.

The perfect example for this is Adolf Eichmann. The imperative of Nazi’s regime has stimulated Eichmann’s own consciousness and thus Eichmann’s conscience was carried away and caught up in the voice of others. Eichmann’ voice had been the voice of Himmler. In this way, Hitler’ desire and fantasy, voiced by Himmler, became Eichmann own desire and fantasies.

Arendt argues that the sacrifice of Eichmann’s desire through the elated voice of conscience is accomplished by turning the basic instinct of pity back to oneself. “The trick used by Himmler consisted in turning these instincts around, as it were, in directing them toward the self.” That means, the sacrifice of desire for duty displays Eichmann’ fantasy of being omnipotent as well. In other words, the fantasy of Hitler as Führer was transferred into the mind of Eichmann.

This fantasy has driven Eichmann to be an agent of the state's criminal policies. Consequently, his crime represents a new form of evil, which Arendt calls as the banality of evil that means “the condition of a humanity that has been forsaken, banished.” Evil is banal because the person acts out of ideals which he or she had taken over from others without understanding them. In other words, the person does not think what he is doing and thus fails to recognize the negative impacts of his action to others. Or as Berel Lang puts it: “The evildoer was a 'hollow man', emptied of whatever it is that distinguishes human beings as human—then the result of this would be the banality, the sheer mechanical thoughtlessness, of the evil-doer.” In the case of Eichmann, he was superfluous as a human being, deprived of his individuality as a free and thinking person.

---

42Ibid., 446
44Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem, 150
45Peg Birmingham, Hannah Arendt & the Human Rights: the Predicament of Common Responsibility, 109
46Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem, 106
47Birmingham, Hannah Arendt & the Human Rights: the Predicament of Common Responsibility, 112
Although he appeared as a normal person, whether during the Holocaust or the trial in Jerusalem, but in fact he lacked of the capacity for freedom and thinking or understanding. Eichmann was an ordinary man, but his lack of thinking, generated by Hitler’s ideology (Nazism) has made him a monstrous person. He is the perfect example of how worldlessness in the form of superfluousness is the driving force of the violent action. In this context, Eichmann represents the terrorists and fundamentalists in our time that have been driven to violent actions because of ideals induced by certain ideologies or religions. They are the victims of the politic of brainwashing where people are deprived of their own ideals or desires and replace them with other ideals coming from the outside.

**Worldlessness and the Loss of Right to Have Rights**

Besides driving people to be violent actors, worldlessness also renders people vulnerable, in the sense they are easily exposed to crimes as experienced by Jewish people during the Holocaust. For Arendt, the Holocaust is not necessarily a unique event due to the large number of victims and suffering in the history, but a unique horror that negated modernity’s universalism, absolutism, and ideology. It is the mark of the failure of modernity because instead of bringing about a healthy human condition, where human beings can freely and meaningful act and speak as equals, modernity has created a worldless or inhuman condition. It generates worldlessness, which Arendt considers as the precondition of crimes against humanity. In the condition of worldlessness, people lost their rights to have rights. They become the rightless people.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt relates the loss of right to have rights to the failure of nation-states that has begun in the late nineteenth century in anti-Semitism and imperialism and reached its climax in the mid of twentieth century in the form of totalitarianism. The idea of the nation-states emerges as a response to the growth of ethnic groups within the state that demanded for the recognition of their rights. William Batkay claims that the nation-states are based on the premise that the state should be the political embodiment of a racial or ethnic nation. This is the replacement of the state that is based on individual or citizen’s right. The nation-state is reflected in Westphalian system, “the nation-state survived as an organized political community in which citizens were granted rights and a meaningful space among equals.”

However, the problem with the nation-state is that it is contradictory because from the beginning, the nation-state is formed on the principle of ‘nationality’. In other words, the principle of nationality is the founding element of nation-state. But, the fact shows that this

---

49 Ibid., 272
50 Bernard Crick, “Hannah Arendt and the Burden of our Times,” 78
principle is also the driving force of the expulsion of citizens and minorities in some of European nation-states, in the beginning of twentieth century's. It is on the principle of nationality that the nation-states expel their own citizens, particularly minorities and render them superfluous. Consequently, minorities are not protected in their own nation-state and at the same time cannot find any protection from international authority or even from other countries.  

This is what Arendt calls as the decline or crisis of the nation-state because they were unable to cope with the emergence of large ethnic minorities within the existing states and the obsession with national or ethnic rights that have generated both the domination of one ethnic over the others (discrimination against minorities) and the war between ethnic's nations. This is exactly what Arendt sees in anti-Semitic and imperial politics. For Arendt, nationalism was easily turned to racialism and anti-Semitism that provides the impetus for the hate against minority. The first victim of the change from individual or citizen-based state to ethnic-based state is the Jews. Arendt writes: “The fact is that modern anti-Semitism grew in proportion as traditional nationalism declined, and reached its climax at the exact moment when the European system of nation-states and its precarious balance of power crashed.”

What concerns Arendt in anti-Semitism is the politicization of this social discrimination, in the sense that the hate or discriminating attitude is formalized by the political leaders in order to maintain their power and carry out their hidden agenda. In Arendt’s view, At the driving force of the hate towards Jewish people is political. One good example of the politicization of such social phenomenon was Hitler’s nationalism. When he came into power in 1933, Hitler declared: ‘Germany for the ethnic Germans’ or ‘Germany is not an immigrant state’. Of course this pronouncement brought about the prejudices and the hate against minorities groups, particularly the Jews firstly in Germany and then widespread to all other European states.

The decline of the nation-states can also be seen in imperialism, which is driven by what Steve Buckler calls it ‘depoliticizing mentality’. Imperialism has marginalized people because they lost their right to belong to a political community and worstly deprived of their active participation in the political life. This is found in bureaucracy, where the state is ruled by the few or the elites who have either political or economic power. In this way, the large numbers of ordinary citizens are disempowered and the states become “the precious cement for binding together a centralized state and an atomized society.”

---

53Ibid., 132-133  
55Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, 4  
56Ibid., 87  
58Ibid., 64  
60Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, 231
observes that national sovereignty has deprived the majority of people from their right to have rights. In fact, she discovers that in modern worldlessness human rights are at stake. Or as Rensman claims: "The loss of your polity includes the more fundamental loss of human dignity, ‘the essential quality as man’ which is dependent of a place in the world—a worldly context in which human life can have meaning and in which human recognize one another as free and equals."\textsuperscript{61}

The decline of nation-states as described above has brought about the loss of right to have right. There are three indications of this phenomenon: first, it is “the loss of their homes.”\textsuperscript{62} Home is a special entity and significant space because in home we find security and even meaning of our lives. When homes are destroyed then human world that defines human existence and meaning is also destroyed. However, Arendt is not only concerned with the loss of the homes, but the difficulty of finding new home or new place for human shelters. Describing the condition of migrants, Arendt writes:

\begin{quote}
What is unprecedented is not the loss of a home but the impossibility of finding a new one. Suddenly, there is no place on earth where migrants could go without the severest restrictions, no country where they would be assimilated, no territory where they could found a new community of their own.\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

Second, it is “the loss of government protection.”\textsuperscript{64} Here, Arendt points to people who are looking for political asylum. These people, she argues, are not politically and legally protected in their own country and are uncertain to be protected in other countries. What is unprecedented in this context is that people do not belong to any community. Since there is no country in the world claims them, they then remain superfluous. This is exactly what the Nazis’ regime did to Jewish people. “The Nazis started their extermination of Jews by first depriving them of all legal status (the states of second-class citizens) and cutting them off from the world of living by herding them into gettos and concentration camps.”\textsuperscript{65} Arendt shows that this phenomenon does not end in concentration camps, but still going on in those who were treated as refugees. Therefore, in her article ‘We Refugees’, she claims that the loss of refugees is absolute. "We lost our home ... We lost our occupation ... We lost our language .... We left our relatives ... and our best friends have been killed in concentration camps."\textsuperscript{66}

Third, it is the loss of humanity where human capacity of action and speech are destroyed: “They are deprived not of the right to freedom, but of the right to action; not of the right to think whatever they please, but of the right to opinion.”\textsuperscript{67} The complete destruction of

\textsuperscript{61}\textsuperscript{}Lars Rensman, “Grounding Cosmopolitics: Rethinking Crimes against Humanity and Global Political Theory with Arendt and Adorno,” 133
\textsuperscript{62}\textsuperscript{}Hannah Arendt, \textit{The Origins of Totalitarianism}, 290
\textsuperscript{63}\textsuperscript{}Ibid., 291
\textsuperscript{64}\textsuperscript{}Ibid., 291
\textsuperscript{65}\textsuperscript{}Ibid., 293
\textsuperscript{66}\textsuperscript{}Hannah Arendt, \textit{The Jewish Writings}, New York: Schocken Books, 2007, 264-265
\textsuperscript{67}\textsuperscript{}Hannah Arendt, \textit{The Origins of Totalitarianism}, 294
humanity is seen in Nazi’s concentration camps where people were not only deprived of their right to action and opinion, but also were treated as thing-like that can be predicted and calculated. Their spontaneity and conditioned being were denied. In concentration camps, Arendt claims, Jewish people were not treated: first, as judicial beings because they were arbitrarily arrested and put into camps; second, as moral beings because they were completely cut off from the world; and third, as distinct individual beings because they were permanently and institutionally tortured.68

It becomes clear that for Arendt, the loss of ‘the rights to have right’ particularly the right to be a member of political community is the preconditions for the annihilation of Jewish people in the concentration camps. Before taking action of killing, they were made superfluous, uprooted, and stateless. They were stripped of their citizenship. For Arendt, the loss of citizenship is similar to the loss of worldliness or the condition of human existence. In fact, Arendt’s thinking on crimes against humanity is informed by her awareness of dehumanization brought about by racism, imperialism, colonialism, militarism, and bureaucratic domination in modern society and politics. That means, as Hayden argues, crimes against humanity are closely related to modern structure and condition of superfluousness, created and maintained by “political, economic, and social structures, attitudes and beliefs that normalize and legitimize extreme deprivation and exclusion.”69

Arendt’s description of the inseparability of worldlessness and crimes against humanity does not mean that she defends the criminals. Arendt does not treat Eichmann as an innocent person. Arendt’s main point is to consider a crime in the broader context in order to get a whole picture of why a cruelty could happened. In this way, I think, Arendt challenges the judicial systems throughout the world that focus only on the criminals in the trials and thus let the actor’s intellectuals behinds the crimes—those who have power either political or economic—go away unpunished. Furthermore, Arendt’s idea helps governments to fight against and eradicate crimes. That means, in understanding the inseparability between crimes and the condition of worldlessness, the governments are able to design a fundamental and comprehensive strategy to prevent a crime to occur again in the future.***

Conclusion

Arendt’s idea that crimes against humanity are related to the condition of worldlessness is still seen in our times. In the recent years, many forms of worldlessness have generated crimes, such as the deprivation of people’s right to act and speak in the public realm, the discrimination against minorities group, and the social and economic injustices. For Arendt, in order to eradicate the crimes, it is necessary for the states to create a human

69Patrick Hayden, The Relevance of Hannah Arendt’s Reflection on Evil: Globalization and Rightlessness,” 458
condition where people have the freedom to act and speak, to easily find the government’s protection and the room for developing their own lives in unforced situation.

References:


In http://hannaharendt.net/research/perronelII.html. 2006