

Modern Age, Thoughtlessness and Nazi Germany Propaganda, in Hannah Arendt's work

Mariana Henriques Martins

MSc, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Abstract.

The mechanism of propaganda allied to the dominance of modern science played a major role in limiting the masses' scope of thinking during Nazi Germany. Using a detailed analysis of Hannah Arendt's works on the human condition and totalitarian regimes, and supporting them by Edward Bernays' studies on propaganda, the present paper focuses on two essential points. One of them is the connection between the modern age and the human ability to think. According to Arendt, the rise of modern science revolutionized western tradition and prepared the ground for the prevalence of thoughtlessness, the inability to think. The second point is correlated with the mechanism of Nazi propaganda and the way its scientificity helped dismantling society's inherent plurality by manipulating people's minds, creating new necessities, indoctrinating masses for an intended purpose, and therefore encouraging the inability to perform a meaningful inner dialogue. Hannah Arendt's philosophy is timeless for its urgent importance. It raises fundamental questions that promote meaningful debate about the way we think and act, which can lead Humanity to prevent atrocities like those of the past and motivate a growing awareness for the future.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, Modern Age, Nazi Germany, Propaganda, Thoughtlessness.