

Imre Kertész was born in Budapest in 1929, deported to Auschwitz in 1944 and liberated at Buchenwald in 1945. He lives in Budapest. He delivered this talk, published here for the first time in English, at the Renaissance Theater in Berlin on November 5th, 2000 under the auspices of »The Lessons of Berlin.« Two of his novels have appeared in English translations: *Fateless*, 1992, and *Kaddish for a Child not Born*, 1997.

I have seen the true visage of a dreadful century and have been able to keep on living.

Every time I come to Berlin I find a new city in the same geographical location. The word Berlin, incidentally, found its way into my mental world when I was still a small child, though as an aural image of indefinite meaning. My grandfather owned a small business, a haberdashery shop as it was then known, and sold a certain type of cloth called »Berlin cloth,« or just »Berlins« for short. These were a kind of crocheted shawl worn in Budapest's Ferenc-Town, a place whose ambience resembled that of Berlin's Kreuzberg district in the old days. The shawls were worn draped over the shoulder by – for some strange reason – either young girls or old women. Somewhat later I came to associate the word Berlin with a color found in the pan of my paintbox that was called »Berlin blue,« as if to entice one to dreams. Later still I came to recognize the grating voice of the Führer on the radio, yet without making any sort of connection between all that and the Berlin novels of Erich Kästner or Alfred Döblin, which I loved above all else.

But I did not get to see the city itself for the first time until decades later, and then it was in ruins and absurdly divided. To be exact it was in the late fall of 1962, a few months after the wall was built, the Berlin Wall. Everything was a little unreal, the deserted Schönefeld airport, the East German soldiers, whose uniforms and mannerisms recalled those of the old-time Wehrmacht soldiers, then the divided, depopulated city itself, basking in the early warmth. We lived in a hotel on Friedrichstrasse, the Hotel Sofia, for which we would search in vain on today's city map. In the bar on the ground floor we

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Language in Exile

were served by a blond barmaid who wore a gold necklace pointedly bearing a Star of David. At the top of her voice she grumbled about the government, the wall, and the hand fate had dealt her. Over and over again she told her story, the details of which I no longer exactly recall, but the gist of it was that she had gotten stuck here in the eastern part of the city and her position was hopeless. »Hopeless,« she said again and again, »hopeless.« If I hadn't come from Budapest, I would have been astonished at the openness – or the bitterness? – with which she vented her anger and scorn at the government. But there I had long since learned that, in a dictatorship, bartenders can take liberties not permitted their customers. Later I returned to Berlin several times, and each visit stirred my emotions. I have already said somewhere that, from an Eastern point of view, Berlin appeared to be the most European of cities during the desperate years of the Cold War, perhaps precisely because it was Europe's most endangered city. If you walked down Leipzig Street in the eastern part of the city, the illuminated ticker tape-style texts on the Springer Press's skyscraper seemed to beam forbidden free-world messages from »over there« in West Berlin. You had the deceptive sense that it was not West Berlin that was walled in, but rather the entire vast, monolithic realm stretching from the eastern side of the wall all the way to the Arctic Ocean. Never will I forget the early summer evening when I stood lost on Unter den Linden at the end of this desolate, grey city observing the street barricades, the guard posts with their dogs, and the roofs of the tour busses from »over there« rising up curiously above the wall. The searchlights that were just then switching on seemed to illuminate rather starkly the →

disgracefulness of my utter bondage. Thirteen years later, in 1993, as a grant-recipient in West Berlin, I walked from Charlottenburg to Alexandersplatz, almost as if to let my own legs convince me that I could now really stroll unimpeded from 17th of June Street to Unter den Linden Street. This year, in the early part of 2000, I did something of similar, walking from the Birkenau gate up the former entryway to the Birkenau Crematorium, although this time I would be harder-pressed to say what I wanted to convince myself of. Maybe it is just that today I too could take this fateful, one-kilometer-long road that I didn't take back then.

So: Berlin, the blue of my childhood, and the entryway to Auschwitz-Birkenau: all these things have bonded together organically into a single association. There is only one factor missing, the leaven of these associated images, so to speak, that would bring them to life and give them meaning: language. Perhaps you are acquainted with Paul Celan's little story, *Conversation in the Mountains*. It was evening: »One evening the sun, and not just it, had set, ... the Jew walked in cloud and shadow, not just his own but another's – because the Jew, you know, what does he have that is really his own and not just borrowed?« Only Auschwitz belongs to him without a doubt; yet at the same time he got Auschwitz, this dreadful possession, he lost his language.

Allow me to explain in a bit more detail what I have in mind. My childhood was marked by a strange experience from which I suffered for a long time, but which I didn't understand and could in no way conceptualize, pin down, or name. I felt as though I were participating in some sort of general lie, but that this lie was actually the truth, and it was my fault that I perceived it as a lie. I could not know that this experience had a linguistic character and was actually an unconscious protest against the society all around me, the pro- and pre-fascist society of Budapest in the '30s, which wanted me to believe that the danger stalking me was to be accepted as a normal fate. And it succeeded, since the culture in which I grew up – the noble principles I was supposed to follow, the sublime value system drummed into me in my separate Jewish class in the humanistic high school – all of it, all of it was supposed to encourage me to deny who I was. It rewarded the denial of one's own self. Years later I described it in my novel *Fiasco* this way: »They made me grow up, sometimes with affectionate words, sometimes with strict admonition, only

in order to exterminate me. I never protested; I was intended on masking the most of myself. Well-meaning and pliant, I slipped into the neurotic pattern of the powerless, but well-mannered child. Modest and industrious, though not always above reproach, I behaved in a way that made me a member of the tacit, looming conspiracy against my life.«

In the totalitarian dictatorships of the twentieth century something happens to human beings that is unexampled in the annals of history. Totalitarian language, or »newspeak« as Orwell called it, manages by virtue of a well-balanced dynamics of violence and fear to penetrate the consciousness of the individual person and eliminate him or her from it, eliminate the person from his or her own inner life. Step by step human beings learn to identify with the role intended for or forced upon them, whether this role suits their personalities or not. Furthermore, only by adopting this role or function completely does a person have any chance of surviving. Yet at the same time it is a means for annihilating his personality, so that, if he should manage to survive, it will certainly take him a long time to recover his personal language, the only credible one for telling of the tragedy that befell him. And that is assuming he can recover it at all. Let us listen to what the Jew in Celan's tale has to say about this: »That is the language in effect here, not a language for thee or me. – Well, I ask, who is it intended for, this earth? Not for thee is it intended, I say, nor for me –, a language, well and truly without I and thou; merely he, merely it and merely you, thou understandest, that is all.« Indeed, a language of the others, a language, as it were, in which the continued functioning of society establishes its mental horizon, a language in which the outcast always remains a special case, a bone of contention, an alien: he, you, or »merely he, merely it, merely you,« a language that, after Auschwitz, has made banishment to Auschwitz irrevocable.

I think that is the real problem with all those who are today still – or again – inclined to talk about the Holocaust. That is the reason why it appears to be ever more unintelligible, the more people talk about it. And that is the reason why the Holocaust recedes ever more into the distance, into history, the more memorials to it we construct. I don't want to go into matters that are already well known: that the memory of Auschwitz is becoming ritualized, instrumentalized and abstract. The survivor, a human type new to European history who

has, as Nietzsche puts it, »gazed into the Dionysian abyss,« is powerless to avoid becoming cannon fodder in the whole process. Either he adjusts to »language in effect here,« accepting the linguistic conventions that are proffered to him, words like »victim,« »the persecuted,« »survivor,« and so on, as well as the associated role and mentality, or else he gradually becomes aware of his isolation and one day just gives up the struggle.

And so we see that the unbearable burden of the Holocaust has over time given rise to forms of language that appear to talk about the Holocaust, while never even touching the reality of it. The very word Holocaust has itself become a quasi-sacred alias for the everyday, routine phenomena of mass murder and gassing, the final solution, the annihilation of human beings. Most people – and this is psychologically quite understandable – want to reconstruct what happened at Auschwitz in a pre-Auschwitz language and with pre-Auschwitz ideas, as though the humanistic world view of the nineteenth century were still relevant and had only broken down for a single historical moment under the pressure of incomprehensible barbarism. If I am not mistaken, certain historians, both German and non-German, refer to its »uniqueness,« as if it were a »slip-up« of history. But there are worse things: I am thinking of Holocaust voyeurs like the American director Steven Spielberg who integrate the Holocaust into the aeons of suffering in the history of the Jewish people, and, ignoring the mountains of corpses, the rubble heap of Europe, the breakdown of all values, celebrate the eternal story of survival to the accompaniment of triumphal music and color photography. But who is interested in the real survivors and the true problems of surviving? »The outcry of the poets, lawyers, philosophers and priests will pass us by and die away,« says Tadeusz Borowski. »And the fact that many of us did after all survive it, will one day seem like an industrial glitch,« adds Jean Améry. I am quoting the words of authors who have bequeathed to us the true experiences of the Holocaust and are already speaking a post-Auschwitz language. What sort of language is that? Borrowing a technical term from music for my own purposes, I have dubbed it atonal language. If we look at tonality, a uniform key, as a universally accepted convention, then atonality declares that this agreement or tradition is no longer valid. In literature too a tonic keynote once existed, a set of values based upon a generally

accepted morality and ethics, that defined the system of relationships among statements and ideas. The few who risked their existence to bear witness to the Holocaust knew that the continuity of their lives had been torn asunder, that it wasn't possible for them to go on with their lives, if I may put it this way, in the manner that society requires, and to formulate their experiences in the pre-Auschwitz language. Instead of striving to forget or to seek the warmth of a normal human life, they reconstructed their personalities, shattered in the death camps, from the elements of the experiences they underwent in those camps. They became the voices of Auschwitz. The only trouble was that they grew aware all too soon of the impossible position of the survivor. The spirit of Auschwitz that had saturated them like a poison, the studied indifference of society, the many open doors that they could not enter, that it would not pay to enter, reopened the verdict that had been branded onto them like a deep wound that could never heal. Jean Améry and Tadeusz Borowski committed suicide, as did Paul Celan, Primo Levi and many others whose names we don't even know. I had to say all that, honored listeners, and it would be dishonest not to admit that I am seized by a certain confusion and urge for justification when I think about the consistency of their fates. Meanwhile I know how accurate the analysis was that I formulated in my 1991 *Diary from a Galley*. I have been kept from suicide by the »society« that proved to me, after the experience of the concentration camp in its »Stalinist« form, that no one could even talk about freedom, liberation, or even mere catharsis, words that intellectuals, servants and philosophers in happier regions of the world continually have on the tips of their tongues and in fact obviously believe in. This society has allotted me the rest of my life in servitude, and seen to it that I could not possibly commit certain errors. That is the reason why I was never overtaken by the deluge of disappointments, that – so to speak – surged up against the fleeing legs of men who had a similar range of experiences to mine, but who lived in freer societies. Eventually they were up to their necks in the deluge, no matter how fast they tried to run away.

That's the way it was, and as I began writing, I began more or less to write about Auschwitz in the extended present. The Holocaust and the state of being in which I wrote about the Holocaust bonded indissolubly with one another. Paradoxical as it →

may sound, my freedom as a writer was not restricted in the communist dictatorship, no more or less than limits were set for those people in Auschwitz who kept secret diaries. In a situation like that there was no point in lying, or calculating or manipulating the odds of artistic impact, given that the chances for publishing and even survival were so uncertain. The situation of the writer under conditions of total censorship are simpler in a certain respect, because here freedom is generated by the repression itself, since repression denies the writer's existence day after day, and by so doing gives evidence of it day after day. No doubt about it, reflections like these readily drive men to despair, because they always lead them in the end to the conclusion that there is no way out. But amid total hopelessness there remains still the glimmer of a remote promise, if only we have eyes to see it. It is that certain Kierkegaardian hope that lies beyond all hope, which in this case lies hidden in our shared fate, or more exactly in the fact we have all in common had our destinies stolen from us. After all is said and done, one dictatorship can easily be depicted in terms of another dictatorship, and thus the momentary illusion can take hold of the writer that, by speaking of suffering, he can become the spokesman for the suffering of everyone else. This illusion is further nourished by the way those in power reject or ignore one's work, and force the author into isolation.

Your great philosopher Nietzsche was at times a veritable mentor to me on account of his radical way of thinking and clear, engaging style – particularly at those times when his works made the list of banned books in socialist Hungary. He says that whatever does not kill a person only makes him stronger. He may be right; possibly the dictatorship was after all of use to me not merely in keeping me alive, but also by helping me find the language in which I had to write. For in no other place is it more obvious that language is »not intended for thee or me« than in the totalitarian state, where I and thou do not exist, and the most popular personal pronoun is the mystical/threatening »we.« No one really knows who or what is lurking behind this pronoun. For the writer there can be only a single goal, one which is simultaneously negative and creative: to extricate himself from »the language in effect here,« a language that has already totally assimilated all previous emotions and thoughts, pressing them into the service of its own ends as

though they were forced laborers. From what remains of language, from the mutilated fragments, he has to create the character of his novel, the survivor of the Holocaust, who feels – to recall one of Cioran's phrases – as if he were outside of humanity.

The question is: for whom is this language intended? For the Jews? And, if so, for which Jews? The orthodox Jews, with their belief in Jehovah, will certainly not claim it as their own. It is indeed true, as Manès Sperber showed in his outstanding book *Churban*, that the Jews were persecuted on account of their race rather than their faith for the first time in history. Still, the Jewish true believer will look for the explanation of his suffering in the Bible, not in the absurdity of history. Likewise, the Israeli patriot, the (otherwise quite justifiably) proud founder of the state of Israel, will hardly identify with the assimilated, emancipated bourgeois and petty bourgeois Jew, who was the typical victim of the Holocaust, particularly since the latter was religiously lax and could in any case speak neither Hebrew nor Yiddish. This sort of person will compose his tale of suffering in one of the European languages in the scarcely justified hope that the culture whose language he is borrowing, a language »not for him,« will generously accept him as an intellectual exile and tolerate him in its cultural marketplace for a while.

That is the way things have to be, since no other solution seems available. A few years ago one of the big Jewish organizations – I no longer remember which one – held a conference and afterwards a magnificent dinner in Budapest, to which I was also invited, though heaven only knows why. I sat between my wife and a very elegant American gentleman who suddenly turned to me, saying he had heard I was a writer whose work dealt with Holocaust issues. With a friendly smile, he asked what I thought of the trend that was detaching the experiences of the Holocaust from the Jews and, one might say, transforming them into the intellectual property of all humankind. I indicated to him that he had better stop, since he was sitting next to someone who, in his writing, was trying hard to advance that very process.

In my view the tragedy of the Jewish people is neither vitiated nor reduced in scope, if we now consider the Holocaust, more than five decades after the fact, as a global experience and European trauma. After all, Auschwitz did not take place in

a vacuum; it occurred in the context of Western culture, Western civilization. And this civilization is just as much an Auschwitz – survivor as the few tens or hundreds of thousands of men and women living scattered all over the earth's surface, who saw the flames of the crematorium and inhaled the odor of charred human flesh. Those flames destroyed everything that we had, up until that point, treasured as European values. At this ethical point zero, in this moral and intellectual darkness, there turned out to be only one possible point of departure, that which had ushered the darkness in the first place: the Holocaust itself.

In that brief but hopeful time when the Berlin Wall fell and Eastern and Western Europe met and embraced in a spell of euphoria, I dared to write that the Holocaust was of value in intellectual and moral – and thus cultural – terms, because the limitless suffering it caused had led to limitless knowledge, suggesting what limitless moral reserves it concealed. Two years ago I wrote much the same thing in my collection of essays: »What came to light in the Final Solution and the ›Concentration Universe‹ is unmistakable; the only possible way to survive and retain one's creativity is to see clearly what this moral point zero means. Why shouldn't this perspicacity be productive? In the depths of great insight, even when it is founded on unendurable tragedy, there is an aspect of freedom, something extra that manages to enrich our lives and make us aware of the true reality of our existence and of our responsibility for it.« So when I think about the traumatic effect of Auschwitz, then I am thinking, paradoxically, more about the future than about the past.

Don't misunderstand me; I will not take back anything I said. At most I might say it more softly or whisper it in a small group, or to a few friends or maybe just to myself. Possibly the Hungarian critic was right who claimed the whole thing was nothing but an illusion of mine, because otherwise I would have no way to justify my own existence and my work. Those are malicious words, yet sometimes keen insight lurks behind malicious words. In Hungary they don't see the Holocaust as a trauma of civilization; it is not even present in the historical and moral awareness of the country, or, if it is, then as a negative concept, i.e. as antisemitism. There are social and historical reasons for all this, but we do not need to go into them here. Anyway I write my books in the language of my hosts, so naturally they

can be dismissed or tolerated on the margin of its field of awareness. I say »naturally« because this country has formed a national identity in the course of its centuries-long struggles for survival, that has put its stamp even on literature in the form of a tacit consensus. This dominant national »self« monopolizes every kind of public, social-political discourse, and even in the case of such peripheral phenomena as the representatives of the living experience of the Holocaust, it reserves the right to set the terms of cultural self-expression once and for all, conceding only Celan's »he,« »it,« and, at best, the »you.«

These are unpleasant truths for a writer who loves the language he writes in. Yet all this is probably not of any great significance. The stranger a language is to me, the more I perceive that I myself and what I have said are authentic. I like to write in Hungarian, because then I feel more keenly the impossibility of writing per se. This, by the way, is an expression from Kafka, who in a letter to Max Brod analyzing the situation of the Jewish writer, speaks of three impossibilities: »the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, and the impossibility of writing in another way.« And then he says: »One could almost add a fourth impossibility, the impossibility of writing.« Today he would perhaps add: »the impossibility of writing about the Holocaust.«

But these paradoxes of impossibility could easily be continued ad infinitum. We could mention the impossibility of not writing about the Holocaust, the impossibility of writing in German about the Holocaust, and the impossibility of writing about the Holocaust in another way. The Holocaust writer is a spiritual asylum-seeker everywhere and in all languages, who is always asking for spiritual asylum in a foreign language. If it is true that there is only one philosophical problem, that of suicide, then the Holocaust writer who has resolved to go on living knows only one real problem, that of emigration. Yet it is better if he says exile rather than emigration. Exile from the one true home, that never was. If there really were a true home, then there would not be this impossibility of writing about the Holocaust, for then the Holocaust would have a language and the Holocaust writer could find a place in an existing culture.

But there is none. I already mentioned earlier in connection with my mother tongue, Hungarian, that the right of cultural self-expression and of →

the collective subject of the nation combine to affirm the existing order by virtue of a sort of »metabolism of consciousness« that succeeds in filtering or blocking out uncomfortable facts, phenomena, and problems. This right of cultural self-expression, which we might simply call the right of perspective, is in a certain sense a decision defined by power. Every language, every nation, every civilization has a dominant collective self, that takes note of, controls and reflects the world. This permanent, active, collective self is the societal »subject,« with which a great community – nation, people, or culture – can generally identify, though in each case with a greater or lesser degree of success. But where can the consciousness of the Holocaust find a home; which language could claim to be the universal »subject,« dominant self or language of the Holocaust? By posing this question we can omit another one: namely, whether a language that belongs exclusively and properly to the Holocaust is even conceivable. And if it is, then wouldn't this language have to be so grim and somber that it would end up destroying those who speak it?

So perhaps it is a good thing, if the Holocaust exile comes to terms with his own exiled state, about which he only occasionally gives hints. »Anyone who takes the raw material of the concentration camps and then emerges victorious in a literary sense – i.e., as a »success« – is a liar and a cheat, that's a dead certainty. So go ahead and write your novel!« That is a note I jotted down for myself in 1970, the year I began work on my novel, *Fateless*. Today, thirty years later, quite a few people consider this book almost as a German »classic.« Certainly the German culture, German philosophy, and German music that I absorbed in my youth all had some share in it. Maybe you could say that, in some sense, I used the means German culture gave me in order to give form to the horror that Germany brought into the world and return it to the Germans fifty years later as art. And in this context I also have to say: from no place else have I received so many grateful letters from readers as the Germans have sent me, and nowhere have I met with such appreciation and esteem as in Germany.

In a certain sense, then, I became a writer in Germany. And by that I am not referring to renown and so-called »literary fame.« Rather, I am talking about the way that the German language enabled me to escape from a very narrow and lonely existence and enter the public sphere of Europe. Yet

this gratifying transition was by no means as simple or easy a matter as popular success stories pretend it is. My »career« contains an element of the disturbing and absurd that one cannot think through without starting to believe in something like a supernatural order, providence or metaphysical justice. Or, as the case may be, one is led in the opposite direction, toward self-deception and thus failure and depravity through loss of the profound and agonizing bond to those millions of others who were annihilated and never knew mercy. It is not easy being an exception. And should fate decide to make an exception of us, then we have to find a way of reconciling ourselves to its arbitrary, absurd order, one that puts our lives in the hands of inhuman powers and dreadful dictatorships as capriciously as a firing squad.

Today we are experiencing a globalization, an inflation of the Holocaust. The Holocaust survivor, who knows Auschwitz through the experience of suffering, observes it all from the perspective assigned to him. He keeps silent or gives interviews to the Spielberg foundation, he accepts the compensation payments promised him after a fifty-year delay, or, if he is prominent, he makes a speech in the Renaissance Theater. And he asks the question: what is he bequeathing, what is his spiritual legacy? Has he enriched human knowledge with his tale of suffering? Or has he only born witness to the unimaginable degradation of the human being, in which there is no lesson, and which ought to be forgotten as quickly as possible? I do not see it that way. I have not changed my opinion that the Holocaust is a trauma of European civilization. And it is becoming a life-and-death matter, whether this trauma lives on as culture or neurosis, in a constructive or destructive form in European societies.

However, all that will be a decision of the future, which I can scarcely hope to influence any longer. I have endeavored – perhaps this is not sheer self-deception – to perform the existential labor, that being an Auschwitz survivor has thrust upon me as a kind of obligation. I realize what a privilege has been bestowed on me. I have seen the true visage of this dreadful century, I have gazed into the eye of the Gorgon, and have been able to keep on living. Yet I knew I would never be able to free myself from the sight; I knew this visage would always hold me captive. In my *Diary from a Galley* I noted: »Over the decades and one by one I rejected the misleading slogans of a misleading freedom such as, »an

inexplicable historical error,« cannot be rationalized,« and other tautologies of that kind. They are the gestures of one who wishes to stand above the fray. I have never succumbed to the temptation of self-pity, nor, it may be, to that of true sublimity and divine perspicacity, but I have known from the beginning that my disgrace was not merely a humiliation; it also concealed redemption, if only my heart could be courageous enough to accept this

redemption, this peculiarly cruel form of grace, and even to recognize grace at all in such a cruel form.» And if you now ask me what still keeps me here on this earth, what keeps me alive, then I would answer without any hesitation: love. ←

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European Humanism and the Jewish Catastrophe:

Hannah Arendt's Answers to Questions Discussed in a *Maariv* Round Table

In a letter of June 9, 1964, Geula Cohen, the editor of the Round Table Department at the Israeli evening paper *Maariv*, published in Tel Aviv, invited Hannah Arendt to write a contribution for a »Round Table« devoted to »the causes of the Jewish catastrophe under Hitler« to be printed on July 17, 1964. According to *Maariv*, which identified Arendt as a »Jewish-American historian,« a Hebrew edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was due to be published »soon.« (Note: As it happened, the Hebrew edition did not appear until the summer 2000, in a translation by Arieh Uriel. At that time, the original translator, Boas Evron, stated in *Ha'aretz* that it may have been Prime Minister David Ben Gurion himself who intervened to stop the book's planned publication in 1964.)

Hannah Arendt responded to the request; a copy of the English typescript she sent to Tel-Aviv that summer is preserved with her papers at the Library of Congress in Washington (Container 34). The following September, this English original was printed without significant changes by *The Jewish World: An Independent Illustrated Monthly Review* (published by the American Jewish Community, Inc.), with a reference to the publication in *Maariv*. The *Jewish World* version is reprinted below. The Hebrew version published in *Maariv* is largely a literal translation of the original; its few minor changes do not distort the meaning of Arendt's

statements. For instance, the editors cut out the sentence »the Nazis, alas, were no »barbarians,« which has no bearing on Arendt's argument, provocative as it is in itself. It is all the more surprising, indeed, that the sentence was not eliminated by the editors of *The Jewish World*. (We thank Dr. Edna Brocke, director of the Alte Synagoge Essen, Germany, for her help in providing the Hebrew version and comparing it with the English.)

Besides Hannah Arendt, eleven well-known figures contributed to the Round Table, among them Nahum Goldmann, President of the World Zionist Organization, the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee, the Italian poet Salvatore Quasimodo and the French writer André Maurois. (Only a selection of the pieces from the *Maariv* symposium were published in *The Jewish World*.)

The *Newsletter* reprints Arendt's statements primarily for two reasons: (1) The document itself has remained almost unknown, as *The Jewish World* was little read among academics and intellectuals. It provides a short and clear statement of an opinion of Arendt's on a topic that occupied her intellectually for her entire life, and which forms the background for her often-quoted words, »This ought not to have happened.« Some of her comments here bear directly on *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and the controversy it provoked. (2) The document gives proof of a fact which, if known at all, deserves →