

**ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS**  
**FILM AND TELEVISION MASTER'S PROGRAM**

**THE PRESENTATION OF EVIL IN THE CINEMA OF**  
**MICHAEL HANEKE:**  
**AN ARENDT-CENTERED APPROACH**

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**ISTANBUL**  
**2021**

The Presentation of Evil in the Cinema of Michael Haneke:  
An Arendt-Centered Approach

Haneke Sinemasında Kötülüğün Sunumu: Arendt Merkezli Bir Yaklaşım

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Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 01/07/2021.....

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı: 59.....

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) Michael Haneke
- 2) Hannah Arendt
- 3) Etik
- 4) Kötülük Problemi
- 5) Film Etiği

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) Michael Haneke
- 2) Hannah Arendt
- 3) Ethics
- 4) Problem of Evil
- 5) Film Ethics

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the writing process of this text I have received a great deal of support and assistance.

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Feride iekođlu, who encouraged me to continue for a master’s degree in Film and TV when I was an undergraduate student in engineering. I learned what a movie could convey about its time from her book, *Şehrin İtirazı* (2015). Her expertise was invaluable in formulating my research questions and methodology.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Do. Dr. Zeynep Talay Turner, for her valuable guidance throughout my study. She supported me with an endless patience and she provided me the tools that I needed to choose the right direction and successfully complete my dissertation.

In addition, I would like to thank my family for being always behind me. I could not have completed this dissertation without the support of my brother, Fırat Kargıođlu, who provided stimulating discussions as well as happy distractions to rest my mind outside of my research.

Finally, I should say that I am grateful to Cihat for making me see everything better.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE PRESENTATION OF EVIL IN THE CINEMA OF MICHAEL HANEKE: AN ARENDT-CENTERED APPROACH**

**İrem KARGIOĞLU**

This study focuses on the Austrian director Michael Haneke's cinema and specifically the presentation of evil in his films by means of form and content; it also targets to link them up with the German political theorist Hannah Arendt's ideas. The aim of the research is to remark the particular interest the director grants to both 'individual and social deteriorations' and his unique way of storytelling that shows different mechanisms creating 'evil'. In accordance with this purpose, selected feature films of the director will be analyzed by utilizing Arendt's theories on malicious thoughts and acts. Ethical concerns related to the presentation of evil and violent acts will also be discussed to clarify how the director uniquely employs filmic language and deploys visual elements while conveying the subject. As the theoretical foundation of the study is nourished from both cinematic and philosophical doctrines, the thesis will come to a conclusion from both perspectives.

**Key Words:** Michael Haneke, Hannah Arendt, Ethics, Problem of Evil

## ÖZET

### MICHAEL HANEKE SİNEMASINDA KÖTÜLÜĞÜN SUNUMU:

#### ARENDT MERKEZLİ BİR YAKLAŞIM

İrem KARGIOĞLU

Bu çalışma, Avusturyalı yönetmen Michael Haneke'nin filmlerinde biçim ve içerik açısından kötülüğün sunumuna odaklanırken, yönetmenin sinemasını, Alman felsefeci Hannah Arendt'in düşünceleri ile ilişkilendirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Araştırmanın amacı, yönetmenin bireysel ve toplumsal bozulmalara duyduğu özel ilgi ile beraber, 'kötülüğü' yaratan türlü mekanizmaları göstermekte kullandığı, kendine has hikâyeleştirme tarzına dikkat çekmektir. Bu doğrultuda, Haneke filmografisinden seçilmiş filmler, Arendt'in kötücül düşünce ve davranışlara dair teorileriyle birlikte irdelenecektir. Yönetmenin film dilini ve görsel dünyasını nasıl kurduğunu, kötülüğün ve şiddetin sunumuna ilişkin etik kaygılarla birlikte tartışılacaktır. Çalışma, hem film araştırmalarından hem de felsefi öğretilerden beslendiği için, konuya iki taraftan yaklaşarak, tutarlı bir sonuca varma gayesindedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Michael Haneke, Hannah Arendt, Etik, Kötülük Problemi

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## INTRODUCTION

“Thoughts are inseparable from the images” (Deleuze, 2006, p. 210)

Looking is a ‘political’ and ‘ethical’ act and the film, as an art form, is constructed substantially by the ‘vision’. So, the cinema can be defined briefly as an ‘art of observation’, which is inevitably ‘political’ and ‘ethical’. It is an important question for a filmmaker, -or simply for ‘the director’ if we are talking about ‘auteur’ cinema- what to include and what to exclude, both in the ‘script’ and in the ‘frame’, while ‘looking’ and ‘showing’. The director struggles to capture the most suitable images to tell the story and to create a ‘form’ which will support the ‘theme’ and ‘content’. Employing the appropriate filmic language, casting the elements of style - like shot lengths, color, lighting, sound etc.- wisely and deploying the correct visuals at the right moment help to conveying of the subtext. By using the camera as a pair of eyes, directors can lead the audience to ‘look’ at things in their way and ‘manipulate’ them sneakingly. There is no doubt that the Austrian director Michael Haneke is considered as one of these ‘manipulators’ who invites his audience to look at unpleasant things and compels them to confront with the defects in their lives, just like the German-born Jewish (and later American) philosopher Hannah Arendt did in 1963, after observing the Nazi war criminal Otto Adolf Eichmann’s trial for *The New Yorker* in Jerusalem and constructing her brilliant concept of ‘banality of evil’. The word ‘manipulator’ is not used in a negative meaning here, for referring someone bending the truth, but in a positive meaning, implying someone who forces people to criticize themselves. In this regard, both Haneke and Arendt can be seen as ‘killjoys’ of their times. This text aims to remark the similarities between Haneke and Arendt’s treatment of ‘evil’ while having a closer look at four feature films selected from Haneke’s filmography: *Funny Games* (1997), *Code Unknown* (2000), *Hidden* (2005) and *The White Ribbon* (2009).



As a beginning, it is essential to clarify why Haneke's movies have been chosen as a 'sampling station' to examine the 'problem of evil', and what are the particular reasons that canalized this text to his filmography instead of other filmmakers'. To give concrete and precise answers to these questions, it would be the best to look directly at his filmography.

Starting from his very first movies, Haneke has been caring to tell stories about 'dark' sides of the human affairs and he attached a special importance to show individual and social deteriorations. Before making motion pictures, he has directed six television films and a mini-series which will constitute the recurring themes in his later movies. To exemplify, his first TV movie, *After Liverpool* (1974), which comprises of skits, focuses on the daily routines of a couple and it adverts the challenges of communication; and *Three Paths to the Lake* (1976) -which is adapted from the namesake story of the Austrian author Ingeborg Bachmann- tells the story of a war photographer, Elisabeth Matrei, who had a moral crisis about her job. Both of these themes -'difficulties of communication' and 'morality of images'- reappears years later in *Code Unknown* (2000). *Lemminge* (1979), described by Haneke as "*his first personal movie*" (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 85), is a two-part drama, which follows up the lives of a group of teenagers and proceeds around the ominous topics like 'suicide', 'abortion' and 'carelessness'. In *Variation - oder Daß es Utopien gibt, weiß ich selber!* (1983), Haneke was inspired by Goethe's love triangle themed play *Stella*, and made a loose adaptation of the story, to make an emphasize on the 'non-functionality of utopias'. (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 108-109) *Wer war Edgar Allan?* (1984) is a crime story which has been constructed on another challenging theme: The ambivalence about the distinction between reality and fiction. In *Fraulein - Ein deutsches Melodram* (1986), Haneke attempted to make an 'anti-Fassbinder' movie, which he regarded as a "*parody of German melodramas*". (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 133 & p. 144) These TV movies are all evident of that Haneke, even while producing for the 'mass consumption', has never avoided from disturbing his audience and always

compelled them to ask questions about their own lifestyles. In one of his conversations, Haneke explains the reason of why he wanted to attend boarding school, with these sentences:

In opposition to discipline and Catholic easiness native to Austria, I always had an addiction for Protestant severity. I could not resist more to the skein surrounding me. I needed someone to compare myself with. Maybe, that's the reason of why I'm still repugnant. 'Coming to an agreement with everything and everyone'; that's not for me. (Assheuer, 2013, p. 9)

Taking this statement into account, these TV movies can be considered as the first products of the director's 'disagreeable' nature.

Haneke's debut feature film, *The Seventh Continent* (1989), chronicles a middle-class family that committed suicide without any fair reason and together with *Benny's Video* (1992) and *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* (1994) the movie constitutes Haneke's famous series known as *Glaciation Trilogy*. Both *The Seventh Continent* and *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* are based on real events and they have been defined as a "classic Zivilisationskritik (civilization critique)" by Mattias Frey since they are "portraying lives deformed by media, technology, and generational disconnect." (Price & Rhodes, 2010, p.154) One of his most sensational movies, *Funny Games* (1997) centers on the groundless violence spread by two young men, who held a well-to-do family captive. Within this period, Haneke continues to make TV movies. He adapts Joseph Roth's *Die Rebellion* (1993) and Franz Kafka's *Das Schloß* (1997) for the television. *Code Unknown* (2000) pieces together different stories of a Parisienne actress, her boyfriend's brother, a homeless woman and an immigrant child; which intersect at one point reluctantly. *The Piano Teacher* (2001) is an erotic-psychological drama that develops around the sadomasochistic relationship between a piano teacher and her student. *Time of the Wolf* (2003) opens with an unexpected murder scene and follows up the story of a family in a dystopian atmosphere caused by a disaster. *Caché* (2005) revolves around some mysterious videotapes left on a family house's veranda and remind them a secret guilt dating back to the father's childhood. The movie has a totally abrasive, 'pop-up' suicide scene and

in *Michael Haneke* episode of Gero von Boehm's documental *My Life* (2001-2010) series, Juliette Binoche, who plays the character of Anne Laurent in the movie, speaks of the pleasure that Haneke has taken from the audience's reaction to this scene, with these words:

I remember a moment we shared with Hidden in the projection room at Cannes. We were watching and when Maurice Bénichou commits suicide with the splatter on the wall, the audience went "Oh!" Michael was so pleased! I turned around and said "You!" and it's true, as a filmmaker, he experiences a great sense of achievement, pleasure, surprise, joy, when he's in the middle of what he's created, the middle of this emotion. (Boehm, 2009, 00:34:55)

Binoche's sentences also coincide with Haneke's below sentences which concludes his expectations from the 'effective' scene:

Ideally the impact of the scene would be such that people can't watch. Of course, you can't maintain this throughout a movie. If you aim to get to the truth of a situation you may find it's so intense that it's unbearable. (Boehm, 2009, 00:42:41)

With this 'intensity' and 'unbearableness', he aims to keep his spectators awake and force them to question their own values.

In 2007, Haneke makes a shot-by-shot copied, USA version of *Funny Games* in style of Hollywood, just because he thought that the movie could not reach American people who had to see it 'in particular'. (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 226) *The White Ribbon* (2009), which brought a Palme d'Or to Haneke in the 62<sup>nd</sup> Cannes Film Festival, is a children's story as its subheading implies and depicts the conditions of a German village just before the World War I. Another masterpiece, *Amour* (2012) demonstrates the final days of an old woman, together with his 'tenderhearted' husband. Finally, for now, he has written and directed *Happy End* (2017), which focuses on the problems of a wealthy family. To wrap up: It is not very hard to discern repeating themes of Haneke movies. They all treat thought-provoking and sarcastic subjects like media and manipulation, collective guilt, problematic families, undulant love affairs, photographing the violence, physical and psychological assaults, image ethics, killing, self-destruction etc. These themes have a basic, 'common' ground obvious to the trained eyes: Difficulty of making the 'right' action, which will end up

with a 'good' conclusion both for one's self and society. For this reason, Haneke is sometimes criticized for 'being a moralist'. In this connection, these sentences of the director are worth to be quoted:

Yes, I know that and this is displeasing me a lot; because there is a big confusion about what is understood by being a moralist. If the moralist is a person who gives lessons, I cannot be considered as a moralist. I have a morality but I do not impose it to anyone else. In my films, I mention about unpleasing issues without answering the questions I ask. The most of them, who define me as a 'moralist', are the people who do not want to confront with such investigations. Whatever they say. There are many young people who appreciate my works. (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 113)

One must differentiate that Haneke's art is not an answer, it is a question, meaning that he does not give support to a 'certain' kind of morality, but he leads us to interrogate our own behaviors. His whole filmography can be seen as a collection of questions about ethical values.

In the second place, one should ask the same question for Hannah Arendt: What is so significant and distinctive in Arendt's approach to the philosophical problem of evil and what are the notions that may inspire someone to connect her ideas with Haneke's films? The answer to this question will also clarify what the term 'evil' represents within the scope of this text.

Hannah Arendt, who is one of the most important political theorists<sup>1</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was born to a Europe which is on the verge of World War I and throughout her life she experienced many sad pickles like fatherlessness, war, statelessness and exile. These struggles -which have shaped Arendt's approach to humanity and her way of political thinking- will be detailed later on the second chapter of this text; but for now, in the *Introduction* part, only the 'key event' -which is the birthplace of Arendt's

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<sup>1</sup> Arendt has never wanted herself to be called as a 'philosopher' and regarding the question about "her role in the circle of philosophers" she has given this answer to Günter Gaus, in a TV interview dated October 28, 1964: "I am afraid I have to protest. I do not belong to the circle of philosophers. My profession, if one can even speak of it at all, is political theory. I neither feel like a philosopher, nor do I believe that I have been accepted in the circle of philosophers, as you so kindly suppose." (Baehr, 2000, p. 3)

controversial expression ‘banality of evil’- will be mentioned: Adolf Eichmann’s prosecution process in Jerusalem.

As is known to all, Hannah Arendt was a good observer of the social events of her time and during her career, she worked hard to make the correct interpretations of notions by looking at ‘actual’ socio-political incidents. In 1960, after being informed that Eichmann got caught by Mossad in Argentina and was taken to Jerusalem, she has requested from *The New Yorker* to be sent there to watch the trial and report her examinations. Since she had missed The Nuremberg Trials, Eichmann’s case was her “*only chance to see these people in flesh*” and in a letter to Vassar College dated 1961, she was saying that “*following this case is a responsibility to her past*”. (Young-Bruehl, 2012, p. 510)

As stated above, the trial was the birthplace of Arendt’s famous concept of ‘banality of evil’. After seeing the ‘man in the glass cabinet’, Arendt would change her attitude towards history. She was surprised that Eichmann was not a ‘monstrous’, ‘diabolic’ or ‘unfathomable’ man; contrarily he was “*nicht einmal unheimlich*” – “*not uncanny even a bit*”. (Young-Bruehl, 2012, p. 511) However, it must be particularly underlined that the long report Arendt has written for *The New Yorker*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, should not be considered as a text examining the nature of evil. It is constitutively about ‘securing the justice’ regarding the Eichmann’s case and Arendt clearly expresses her intentions in the *Postscript* part of the text:

The report of a trial can discuss only the matters which were treated in the course of the trial, or which in the interests of justice should have been treated. If the general situation of a country in which the trial takes place happens to be important to the conduct of the trial, it too must be taken into account. This book, then, does not deal with the history of the greatest disaster that ever befell the Jewish people, nor is it an account of totalitarianism, or a history of the German people in the time of the Third Reich, nor is it, finally and least of all, a theoretical treatise on the nature of evil. The focus of every trial is upon the person of the defendant, a man of flesh and blood with an individual history, with an always unique set of qualities, peculiarities, behavior patterns, and circumstances. (Arendt, 1994, p. 285)

That is to say Arendt was not trying to suggest a universal theory about the emergence of evil; but she was endeavoring to understand the situation of Eichmann as a ‘singular’, ‘unique’ case. As she will imply later in her *Responsibility and Judgment*, she was drawing attention to the ‘personality principle about guilt’ and she was inviting her readers to think about “*something by no means identical with stupidity*”: Thoughtlessness. (Arendt, 1994, p. 287-288)

Actually, the notion of ‘thoughtlessness’ was not something Arendt put on her agenda after Eichmann’s case. She had been using this word for years to define the condition of humanity in her time.

What Arendt tried to capture with her phrase “the banality of evil” was the kind of evil that results from a particular capacity to stop thinking inherent in people like Eichmann, whose thoughtlessness was fostered by the fact that everyone around him went along unquestioningly with Hitler’s extermination order and his vision of the glorious Thousand Year Reich. But her judgment had even greater resonance because she had been using this word, thoughtless, for years. When she was writing about life under modern conditions generally in her 1958 book *The Human Condition*, she had offered a definition of the term: “Thoughtlessness —the headless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of ‘truths’ which have become trivial and empty—seems to me among the outstanding characteristics of our time.” (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 4-5)

After becoming familiar with her studies, one can clearly discern that everything in Arendt’s work is ‘materialistic’ and ‘real’; there is no room for ‘mystification’ or ‘imagination’ in her writings, as well as ‘stereotype’ opinions. The importance of ‘reason’ and ‘common sense’ was indisputable for her. In this sense, it was an exclusive experience to watch Eichmann, as his situation was a flawless example to examine the terrifying consequences of lack of thinking. Speaking of the Arendt’s inferences, Patricia Altenbernd Johnson also remarks the seriousness of ‘common sense’ for her: “*Although her analysis of Eichman is about evil, this analysis is primarily concerned with the connection between thinking and action, and the political significance of thinking.*” (Johnson, 2013, p. 67)

Arendt's experiences and observations narrating the trial process will also be detailed in the second chapter of this text; but from now on, we can start to make the basic connections between Haneke and her.

The 'intellectual affinity' between Haneke and Arendt must be constructed by having a close look at their approaches regarding the notions of 'crime', 'violence', 'responsibility' and 'common sense'. Essentially, all of Haneke's movies are about 'guilt'. According to him, 'responsibility' of the guilt cannot be attributed to the whole 'society' -without a name and fame-; it must be shared by every singular person. In one of his conversations, Haneke clearly expresses this:

I'm against regarding the 'society' as the only criminal all the time. Thus, we get away from our own responsibilities towards others and ourselves. I encounter with people very often who became obsessed with society to avoid dealing with their own terrible situation. Every radicalism has such features. It saves me from facing with myself. All kinds of ideologies can be instrumentalized for that purpose. (Assheuer, 2013, p. 60)

With these words, Haneke invites his audience to stop accusing the surrounding conditions and pay "*the cost of ethical responsibility*" (Grønstad & Gustafsson, 2012, p. xii) as 'separate individuals'. Any ideology that we are bounded up cannot relieve us from interrogating our personal/singular moralities. While putting an emphasis on the relationship between 'will', 'morality', 'freedom' and 'justice', Arendt also reminds us the 'personality principle' about guilt. According to her: "*There is no such thing as collective guilt or collective innocence; guilt and innocence make sense only if applied to individuals.*" (Arendt, 2003, p. 29)

Arendt uses the term 'collective (political) guilt' in contrast to 'legal/moral (personal) guilt'. (Arendt, 2003, p. 151) One can feel 'responsible' about what she<sup>2</sup> didn't do; but she cannot be found 'guilty' legally. So it means that, Haneke and Arendt come together on the idea of judging individuals instead of the nondescript society. Arendt says that "*where all are guilty, no one is*" and underlines that the concept of

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<sup>2</sup> Since there is not a gender neutral pronoun in English, "she/her" has been used in this text when referring to a generic individual in the third person.

'collective guilt' has a subtle danger of turning into a "*highly effective whitewash of all those who had actually done something.*" (Arendt, 2003, p. 21) Haneke stimulates his audience with images, by using Brechtian effects like black-outs, sudden cuts, characters having direct look at the camera or rewinding the movie, to manipulate them, make them realize their roles and feel uncomfortable about themselves. Similarly, in 1940s, Arendt writes a series of articles and entitles her column as "*This Means You*" which also functions as a 'manipulator' for the readers. (Young-Bruehl, 2012, p. 743) Considering these proximities, one can conveniently assert that Haneke is doing the same of what Arendt did in her writings, by utilizing 'images' instead of 'words'.

This text will be composed of three main chapters, in addition to Introduction and *Conclusion* parts. In the first chapter, Michael Haneke's filmography will be reviewed by means of form and content, to identify the similarities between his movies, reveal the characteristics of the director's cinema and draw a conclusion about his artistic vision. In the second chapter, philosophical approaches regarding the 'problem of evil' will be compiled, while attaching special importance to St. Augustinus, Immanuel Kant and Hannah Arendt's treatment of evil. In the third chapter, four feature films, all originally written and directed by Michael Haneke, will be analyzed: *Funny Games* (1997), *Code Unknown*, *Hidden* and *The White Ribbon*. Main themes of the films will be negotiated with selected scenes from the movies, to show connections and clarify the cohesiveness between Haneke's comprehension, the mentioned film's working mechanism and Arendt's way of thinking. At the end, *Conclusion* part of the study will function as a summary, to reassess the ideas and clear up the arguments discussed in the previous chapters.



## CHAPTER ONE

### A PANORAMIC LOOK AT MICHAEL HANEKE'S FILMOGRAPHY

#### 1.1 Themes & Frames: 24 Lies per Second

“A great film is always new, and this makes it unforgettable. It goes without saying that cinematographic images are signed. The great auteurs in cinema have their own lighting, their own space, their own themes.” (Deleuze, 2006, p. 217-218)

“the Other faces me and puts me in question” (Levinas, 1969, p. 207)

“What interests me when I read a book or a movie are works that make me uneasy, that make me think of new problems, instead of those that reassure me. The films that I retain are those that disturb me. I often say that if my entire corpus were to be given one title, the title would be Civil War.” (Haneke, 2009)

In each movie he has directed, Michael Haneke pondered over finding the best filmic form which will support the content and he has given special importance to the reactions of his audience. In this chapter, some filmic tools that Haneke used to stimulate his audience will be investigated by referring mostly to the German playwright Bertolt Brecht's theories that construct the dialectical theater. For this purpose, four different instruments -which are used as 'defamiliarization effects'<sup>3</sup>- from four different movies have been chosen: (I) Breaking of the fourth wall in *Funny Games*, (II) fragmental narration in *Code Unknown*, (III) flashbacks and video recordings in *Hidden*, (IV) preference of black-and-white film and use of voice-over narration in *The White Ribbon*. On the other hand, it will be underlined that

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<sup>3</sup> Originally in German: *Verfremdungseffekt*. Shortly: *V-Effekt*. Brecht's famous theatrical notion of estranging the audience, which is translated into English as 'alienation', 'distanciation' or 'estrangement'. The term briefly implies the techniques that Brecht builded up to remove emotional involvement of the audience and to remind us the artificiality of the dramatic performance. With defamiliarization devices, he aims to decrease the degree of identification, keep the spectators awake and continually call up the 'reality', just as Haneke would like to do. But it must be remarked that Bertolt Brecht was a Marxist and he was using these instruments for the sake of 'social realism'; however, Haneke is an artist who is away from all ideologies (i. e., -isms) and his general philosophy of life is constructed on his own/individual moral concerns.

understanding/constructing the relationship between ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’ has always been a major issue for Haneke.

(I): In his dictionary of literary terms, J. A. Cuddon defines the term ‘fourth wall’ as “*the invisible ‘wall’ dividing a theatre audience from a performance, especially that taking place in a three-walled box set of a proscenium theatre.*” (Cuddon, 2013, p. 288) If we are talking about cinema, this wall can be considered as the ‘screen’. After giving a brief information about origins of the term ‘fourth wall’, Cuddon explains what it means to ‘break’ this ostensible wall and he also refers to the cinema:

‘Breaking the fourth wall’ relates to any practice which seeks to dispel the illusion that the audience is watching a slice of ‘real life’. The same expression is also used in relation to film and fiction to describe a text’s acknowledgement of its own artifice, which is usually achieved by a direct address to the audience. (Cuddon, 2013, p. 288)

This means that the breakage prevents the audience from abandoning itself completely to the narrative, and as such it reminds the spectator that she is in a ‘fictional’ world and thus it functions as a Brechtian alienation effect. There are many implementations of this method in the history of cinema: Woody Allen’s *Annie Hall* (1977), David Fincher’s *Fight Club* (1999) or Martin Scorsese’s *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) are the first ones that come to mind. Together with these cult masterpieces, Haneke’s *Funny Games* also introduces the best examples of the ‘direct address’ that Cuddon discusses.

There is no doubt that, *Funny Games* is one of the most besetting movies in Haneke’s filmography. Set near a lake in Austria, the film develops around a home invasion story and invites the audience to watch the die away of a ‘bourgeois’ family.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In this respect, some critics considered the movie as an example of ‘anti-Heimatfilm’. While speaking of the German cinema in the Adenauer era, Sabine Hake defines the Heimatfilm genre with these words: “Closely connected to Nazi fantasies about Volk and Heimat, the Heimatfilm has often been described as the most appropriate genre for promoting a romanticised, but completely depoliticised view of country and nation.” (2008, p. 90) In *Funny Games*, Haneke demolishes the stereotype of ‘calm’ and ‘peaceful’ countryside by telling a massacre story taking place near a lake -an eventless, non-political place-, which can be seen as an analogy of the apolitical ‘bourgeois family’.

Throughout the movie, spectators see how two young torturer men play 'sadistic' games with this family, without any given/clear reason. In the opening scene of the movie, the spectator sees Anna (Susanne Lothar) and George (Ulrich Mühe) driving to their vacation house with their boy George Jr. and their dog Rolfi, while 'playing a game' about identifying the composer of classical music pieces coming from the radio. It is the first clue Haneke gives to the viewers with respect to the socio-economical status of the family. When they get closer to the home, they drop by their next-door neighbours, Fred and Eva, to ask for help about launching their boat and this is the first time they see Paul (Arno Frisch) and Peter (Frank Giering), as they are in the Fred's yard. Soon after they arrive their home, Paul and Fred appear in front of the garden door to help George. Fred introduces Paul as his work-fellow's son, and together with George, they go to the lake and land the boat on water. In the meantime, Peter visits Anna, reminds himself and requests eggs, -so to say- for Eva. Anna gives him what he wants but Peter drops and breaks all of the eggs just before leaving home. Here, the spectator does not know if it was 'intentional' or not; but in the end she understands that this was the moment 'funny games' begin. Peter apologizes, and asks Anna to give him another four eggs and Anna accepts unwillingly. But this time, while waiting, Peter hits the wireless telephone left on the kitchen bench, drops it to the sink. The phone breaks down and although Anna starts to be peeved at him, she continues to show patience and tolerate the situation. She intercedes Peter to take his eggs and leave. But again, she finds him again in front of the door, besides together with Paul. Synchronously, the viewer hears Rolfi's bark. Anna gets in the frame and dismisses Rolfi. Paul states that Peter is scared of dogs, so they could not leave the house. After that time, he starts a conversation about golf clubs -which can be seen as another signifier about the family's economical class since golf is an expensive sports branch- and confuses Anna. Actually, this talk opens a road for the first 'off-screen' violent act in the movie. After Paul leaves the house to try one of George's golf clubs, the viewer hears a dog groaning. Afterwards, it will be understood that Paul has killed Rolfi. George and his son realize that Rolfi has gone silent and they come home to check

around. He cannot make sense of the awkward tension in house, he tries to keep calm. Even George's politeness, Paul and Peter cause a scene and the second 'violent act' occurs at that point: Paul gets a loft from the golf bag and hits George's thighbone mercilessly. The man falls to the ground in pain, as his bone is broken. After pushing George out, Paul takes Anna to the garden, to play a 'hot and cold game'. This sequence deserves a special importance since it is the first moment Haneke breaks the fourth wall: While Anna is searching for the golf ball, Paul turns to the camera, stares directly to the objective and winks to the spectator grinning conspiratorially. Soon after, Anna finds the corpse of Rolfi in the back seat of their car and herewith, Haneke reaches his goals: Involving the audience in the 'game' while reminding them 'this is a movie', which means that, Haneke's real target was to include the spectator in the story as a 'partner in crime' and make the audience think about their contribution to the emergence of violence.

The second break of the fourth wall occurs in the scene Anna and George are stuck in their sitting room with Paul and Peter. Paul asks to Peter the time and bets if the family will be alive after twelve hours or not. He turns to the camera again, asks the audience to bet and he seems like accusing the spectators since they want the family to win. Again, the act of observation transforms from being a passive voyeurism to an 'active' participation. There are three more moments of direct addresses in the movie, which will not be mentioned diffusively in here. For a more detailed analysis, one can have a look at Alex Gerbaz's eye-opening text about *Funny Games*. In this text, Gerbaz states the importance of 'direct adress' with these words:

Adapting Levinas, I suggest that the frontal facing position onscreen 'puts me in question' in a way that other faces onscreen do not. Direct address questions the spectator's personal enjoyment of the images being presented, and asks him or her to be a more active, critical viewing participant. (McCann & Sorfa, 2011, p. 165)

Thus, direct addressing functions as an operator of the Brechtian alienation effects and helps to the emergence of 'critical view' that Gerbaz implies. The unmediated communication between the character and the spectator opens the viewer's eye -who

is always at risk of sleeping in the comfortable seats of a warm and dark movie theater- and ‘wakes up’ her mind. While talking about *Funny Games*, Haneke says that:

I’m still proud of that movie. It just functioned as I wanted, in the means of provocation and irritation. But actually, the audience should have get angry with themselves. I think that, those who have watched the movie from beginning to end, deserve this; as nobody deforced them in theater! My aim was to show the spectators what is violence in fact and how can we aid and abet torturers. (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 225)

As Bilge Ebiri says, “...*there is one group whose psychology Haneke understands even better than his characters’ — his audience’s.*” (Ebiri, 2019) While the story is coming towards the end, Haneke seems like to give a final opportunity to his ‘only protagonist left alive’. Anna finds a knife in the boat, which has been seen on the screen as a MacGuffin<sup>5</sup> element earlier, and starts to cut her fastenings. But it does not take much time to Paul to discern what she is doing. Peter takes the knife, throws it to the lake and seats Anna between Paul and him. In this scene, the viewer follows up a discussion between Paul and Peter, on ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’. They throw Anna to the water in cold blood, and continue to argue about ‘truth’.

(II) The second particular tool that Haneke used is the ‘fragmental’ narration style in *Code Unknown*. In terms of following a series of events or ‘heroic’ characters, *Code Unknown* does not center on any ‘conventional’ center. Starting with a street fight which brings together the lives of a Parisian actress, a young French boy, a Romanian immigrant and a teacher from a Malian immigrant family, it develops and continues around the ‘daily’ experiences. In the sense of ‘form’, the most distinctive aspect of *Code Unknown* is that it consists of extremely long steady takes ending with sudden/unexpected cuts to black between scenes, aiding the audience for a full experiential immersion in the diegetic world and serving the director’s desire for capturing the reality as it is. Most of the movie is composed of these 40 different ‘distanced’ long takes (i. e., *plan séquence*); instead of close-ups or over the shoulder

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<sup>5</sup> In *The American Heritage Dictionary*, the term ‘MacGuffin’ is defined as: “An object in a work of fiction, especially in film, whose only purpose is to advance the plot.” (MacGuffin, n. d.) But in *Funny Games*, the knife on the boat -which is used to implicate the upcoming bloody events- also functions as a ‘red herring’, since it leads the audience to a false conclusion and creates a ‘vain hope’.

shots. The spectator is prevented from identifying with any character and taking pleasure; but she ‘interprets’ and makes connections continually. The Bulgarian-French philosopher Julia Kristeva -whom we will turn to while discussing Arendt- touches on this issue with these words:

The art of narrative resides in the ability to condense the action into an exemplary moment, to extract it from the continuous flow of time, and reveal a who: this is Achilles, and his exploit is brief - that is what a good story tells. The brevity of a narrative itself takes on the value of revelation, for the demonstration of a who works in an oracular manner, as Heraclitus says: oracles ‘do not speak nor do they hide, but they make a sign.’ That sign is a condensed one, incomplete, fragmentary: it launches an infinite action of interpretation. (Kristeva, 2014, p. 17-18)

It would not be wrong to draw an inference that Haneke represents a great example of these ‘oracles’ that Kristeva speaks of. He shows us the emergence of the suppressive *codes* governing our daily lives and creating hostile attitudes among the people; like racism, sexism or xenophobia. In her detailed analysis of *Code Unknown* -which is included in Nilgün Tatal Cheviron editorial book *Haneke Huzursuz Seyirler Diler-*, S. Ruken Öztürk describes the ‘code’ as “*the sum of conventions*”. With the word ‘convention’, she refers to the predominant values of a society and she underlines that who are out of the circle of these codes are found guilty, repelled from the society and they are prisoned to be watched during their lifetime. (Tatal Cheviron, 2014, p. 176) By utilizing the ‘incomplete’, ‘fragmentary’ narration that Kristeva discusses, Haneke gives us the signs/clues to make us aware of these codes.

(III) The third instrument that Haneke used is from *Hidden*: Flashbacks and interwoven films in the film. Haneke’s *Hidden* corresponds to an unusual example of psychological thriller genre. It discusses ominous subjects -like The Paris Massacre of 1961 during Algerian War and French colonialism-, treating themes -like collective guilt, surveillance and evil in childhood- and it is open to various interpretations. The movie develops around an investigation story: Laurents, an affluent family who resides in Paris, are irritated by anonymous videotapes left on their doorstep at uncertain intervals. The film opens with one of these tape recordings -a two minutes and fifty-

four seconds long footage of Laurents' town house, together with opening credits- and then, the spectators hear the voice of Anne (Juliette Binoche) and Georges (Daniel Auteuil). The couple bounce the ideas of each other about the mysterious video: Georges claims that it might be a horse play made by a friend of their son Pierrot but Anne does not share this idea. Until the voice-over, the spectator thinks that she has been watching a footage captured by Michael Haneke as part of the film *Hidden*. Since the quality of the video recording is exactly the same as the 'original' movie, she cannot distinguish them from each other. But after hearing the conversations, she understands that this is a videotape being watched by Georges and Anne. At the ninth minute of the film, another video recording is shown on the screen: It again shows us the Laurents' house, at night. At the first time, the spectator probably watches this recording only together with Anne; because we see Georges at work just after this scene and when he is back home, we watch the same recording again while hearing his voice-over. And specifically, at the second time, we see a one-second image of a dark-skinned young child with blood in his mouth.

There are more of these flashbacks and video recordings till the end of the movie; which not be discussed extensively for now. The important deduction for this chapter is this: Haneke creates a complicated/niggling puzzle with these footages and flashbacks. By using the images as dialectical devices, he reminds himself to the audience continually and encourages them to ask questions. With the hope of finding the true perpetrator, we raise many questions throughout the movie; but these questions are never replied by the director.

(IV) The last device to be mentioned in this chapter is the 'voice-over narration' in Haneke's black-and-white period drama, *The White Ribbon*. Set in a village in Eastern Germany in the early twentieth century (just before WWI), the movie tells us the story of some sequenced/disquieting events. The doctor of the village has a terrible 'accident' with his horse, the little son of the baron and baroness get hammered, a woman working on the baron's sawmill dies because of the rotten floorboards, and then

her husband hangs himself and a barn at the manor burns down. Throughout the movie the spectator exerts herself to find the responsible, but she does not get any explanation in the end just like in *Hidden*.

From the first to the last minute, we follow these stories in synchronization with the narrator's voice, which belongs to the 'school teacher' character (Christian Friedel) and this works as the first Brechtian alienation tool: Every time we hear his voice, we remember the 'phoniness' of the images that we are seeing. And the second apparatus creating this artificialness is the use of black-and-white. In an interview with Roy Grundmann, Haneke clearly explains the working mechanism of this chromatic tool:

The use of black-and-white film is also in the service of alienation. On the one hand, it is meant to give spectators easier access to the time period. Any images we know about this period are black-and-white. This is one of the effects of its use in the film. But the other one is that the black-and-white always constitutes a certain stylization, which, rather than pretending to be a naturalist image of reality, emphasizes the prototypical character of the story. It is an artifact and is being presented as such. (Grundmann, 2010, p. 600)

This means that the director uses "*a series of defamiliarizing techniques that lift the diegetic action out of its immediate sociohistorical context, stripping it of its temporal and topographical coordinates*" (Blumenthal-Barby, 2014) both for reminding the 'truth' to the audience and breaking the spell of watching a period drama.

While assessing the films of Haneke, Hari Kunzru also touches upon the importance of Brechtian effects in the director's cinema:

Where Anglo-American critics detect a culpable lack of sympathy, Germans have acclaimed Haneke as an inheritor of Brecht, skilfully alienating the spectator from the material in order to provoke a critical, intellectual response. Indeed some have praised him for finding a way to continue Brecht's project into the new century. Now that postmodernism's stylistic free-for-all has inured audiences to the formal "alienation effects" used in Brechtian epic theatre, Haneke has found other ways to wrong-foot the spectator, a peculiar combination of shock and deadening that blocks off most easy ways to "consume" his bleak stories. (Kunzru, 2009)

Haneke never hides that he is dedicatedly in search of the ways that Kunzru speaks of. In one of his conversations, he forthrightly talks about the joy that he felt when he had



found the idea of ‘character rewinding himself’ while he was working on the script of *Funny Games*. (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 229)

To sum up: The ‘theme’ and the ‘frame’ are alike as two peas in a pod for Michael Haneke. With every well-thought cinematographic component, he intends to stimulate the audience’s prudence and arouse a special feeling. The problematic of the ambiguous border between ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’ does not show up just in the content, but it also hides itself in the form. But sooner or later, with a dialogue or by utilizing a cinematographic tool, he reminds us that we are just facing an ‘artifact’ while watching a movie. So, he makes an inversion of the famous expression of Jean-Luc Godard and says that “*the film is 24 lies per second at the service of truth or at the service of the attempt to find the truth...*” (Haneke, 2005)

## **1.2 To Show or Not To Show: Ethical Image and Responsibility of the Director**

Aesthetic choices have a close relationship with ethics. If we particularly think about cinema, a story can be told in many different ways by changing the filmic elements like editing, lighting, color, sound design etc. and looking out for the effects of these stylistic preferences on the audience is inevitably under the responsibility of the director. While watching a film, we simply observe other people who are similar to us -made of flesh and bones- and as vulnerable human beings, we respond to their inconvenient situations. We feel that we are girded with a sense of moral liability and we want to take an action to change the suffering character’s condition. As Levinasian ethics implied, an individual discovers his/her responsibility to the other subject as soon as encountering with the other one’s ‘face’.

In the innocence of our daily lives, the face of the other [or the neck or the back] signifies above all a demand. The face requires you, calls you outside. And already there resounds the word from Sinai, ‘thou shalt not kill,’ which signifies ‘you shall defend the life of the other’. (...) It is the very articulation of the love of the other. You are indebted to someone from whom you have not borrowed a thing. (...) And you are responsible, the only one who could answer, the noninterchangeable, and the unique one. (...) In this relation of the unique to the unique there appears, before the purely formal community of the genus, the original sociality. (Robbins, 2001, p. 192)

The ‘demand’ that Levinas elaborated shows itself during the film experience; just after the spectator comes across with the protagonist’s face. Rather than ignoring the character’s pain, we care about it and start to look for a salvation together with him. Another emphasis on this issue can be found in the following paragraph by J. M. Bernstein:

Ethics begins with the image of another, who already matters to me, in such pain as to require my intervention, my doing something: protecting, healing, or providing solace; and thence to the recognition that the causing of pain by me in some fundamental manner would deny her, deny or suppress her intrinsic worth. Without empathic identification with others ethical life could never begin. (Grønstad & Gustafsson, 2012, p. xii)

The ‘empathy’ that spectator develops towards the character creates a ‘communion’ and paves the way for a full identification. In simple terms: If the character cries, the spectator also cries; if the character cheers up, the spectator also feels joyful. But there is a subtle aspect of the spectatorship, that is designated fundamentally by the director, which may lead the audience to the ‘connivance’ and ‘voyeurism’. One can cite many films from the history of cinema, which are famous with the inconvenience they create and the disturbance they provoke. Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975), Nagisa Oshima’s *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976) or Marco Ferreri’s *La Grande Bouffe* (1973) are some of these cult classics. Gaspar Noe’s *I Stand Alone* (1998), Srdjan Spasojevic’s *A Serbian Film* (2010) and Lars von Trier’s *Nymphomaniac* (2013) may be listed as examples from more recent times. While consuming the images from those movies -which contain extremely violent scenes and show the human bodies in pain, corpses, cruel moments in war times, sexual harassment or abuse of children- the ethical life of the voyeur is damaged. The director manipulates/invites the audience to watch the ‘evil’ acts and if the spectator shows no reaction, the spectator and the director become partners in crime. Herewith, when viewed from the director’s aspect, the main concerns of image ethics appears: (i) To show or not to show, (ii) how much to show or how much to exclude and (iii) how to show. Bernstein summarizes the importance of this inquiry with these sentences:

The worry can be stated simply: Is not the photograph of the body in pain -as the exemplary instance of an image of the body- a further exploitation of it, a repeating of the injury done to the victim which does nothing for her while providing the viewer with the pleasures of affective intensity without the cost of ethical responsibility? Is not every media mediated imaging of a body in pain an aestheticizing of it, tearing it out of the lifeworld of ethical response and into the safe precincts of disinterested aesthetic viewing? In circulating images of the body in pain do we not reduce the victim to her bodily self in a manner that doubles the cancelation of her subjectivity and agency perpetrated by the primary injury? (Grønstad & Gustafsson, 2012, p. xii)

Bernstein's apprehension about the exploitation of injured parties seems rightful since capturing the images of suffering bodies always brings a risk of violating the moral rights of subjects. This situation may occur not only while capturing the agonizing acts, but also while taking pictures of people in the crowd without their informed consent. Furthermore, 'interpreting' those images in an aestheticized form carries out a possibility of reproducing the violence in a way that the spectator will enjoy. Roughly, the first risk arises usually in the documentary films and the second concern comes up with the 'fiction'. To maintain this discussion on a more tangible level, we may continue with those questions: What is the attitude of Haneke when it comes to the demonstration of violence? What are the specific filmic methods he uses to treat the theme? In this context, we may have a brief/close look at three different scenes from Haneke's movies to interrogate the ethical approach that the director brought to image ethics.

(I) In *Funny Games*, we watch one of the two sadistic men preparing a sandwich for himself in the kitchen, while the other one is executing a 'child' by shooting in the lounge. We do not see the moments of pulling the trigger or images of the murdered child, rather we only hear the voice of shotgun, which means that the events occur in the 'off-screen'. While talking about the Haneke's usage of 'direct address' in *Funny Games*, Alex Gerbaz states that:

Being seen as a spectator of pain is ethically problematic. Although not inflicting the pain ourselves, gazing impassively at it suggests indifference to -and perhaps even enjoyment of- the suffering of others. When somebody turns to face us (either the person in pain, or a third party), catches us in the act of looking, our morality comes into question is 'face-

to-face' moment exposes our voyeurism, and provokes us in a way that is similar to an image of cruelty, asking: 'how can you look at this?' (McCann & Sorfa, 2011, p. 164)

But the director can also be questioned by spectator about the same issue, in a similar manner: "*How can you show me this?*" At this point, the off-screen comes to the director's rescue and it can be listed as one of the hallmarks of Haneke's movies. One can also remember the off-screen beating scene in *The White Ribbon* as another example. The viewer looks at a white door and hears Martin's (Leonard Proxauf) voice only while his father (Burghart Klausner) is punishing him by beating. The appliance of this method can be considered as the first proof of Haneke's awareness shown to image ethics.

(II) In this sense, *Hidden* also has a subtle approach: If we have a close look at the 'famous' shocking picture from the movie, the suicide scene in which we watch Majid (Maurice Bénichou) -who was accused by Georges Laurent for the videotape harassment- while cutting his throat in front of him; we notice that Haneke prepares this scene delicately so that the spectator cannot intuit the upcoming suicidal act. He does not use any close-up which will reveal the details of the corpse to prevent the consumption of the other's pain for fun and he avoids from sweeping gestures/theatricalism.

(III) In this chapter, *Code Unknown* also deserves a special attention since it has a direct reference to the 'image ethics'.

In a scene, we watch Georges, Anne and their friends at a dinner table while they are disputing about war photography; a woman -Francine-, asks Georges if it is necessary to take the pictures of 'dead' bodies, 'burnt' villages or 'starving' children to express what the war or poverty is and she adds that she finds this need idiotic. Georges advises her not to get angry and announces that this is only a 'theory' for Francine, but according to him, it is a 'truelife experience'. Brigitte Peucker clarifies the importance of this debate while linking it up with the movie's title:

A purely denotative meaning is possible only in the rare instances of traumatic images, those that record moments for which no connotative message is possible – moments when language is blocked, suspended. Their code remains unknown. Georges's images of the dead are traumatic images, images of the Real, of that which is insusceptible to meaning, bereft even of "analogical plenitude". As Georges admits in conversation, these photographs do not represent a "reality" even for him. (Grundmann, 2010, p. 137-138)

So, war photographs are 'uncoded images' which presume to talk about 'unutterable reality', which are shown in full-screen by the director. However, Peucker draws attention to that, Haneke represents the candid photographs of passengers in Paris metro, which are also taken by Georges, are represented in a more aestheticized way. One can find the first roots of this debate in *Three Paths to the Lake*. In the movie, the press photographer Elisabeth is questioned by her lover Trotta, about capturing the images of misery; just like Georges is interrogated by Francine in *Code Unknown*. That is an evidence of that 'the problem of presenting the trauma' is a recurring topic in Haneke's cinema; not only in the meaning of 'form' but also in the meaning of 'content'.

While thinking on the suicidal acts in the films of Michael Haneke, Lisa Coulthard remarks the distinctive features of Haneke's stylistic choices with these sentences:

Haneke's films eschew the direct representation of explicit violence in favour of more subtle, minimalist and complex depictions. Manipulating sound, offscreen space and the long take, his films explore rather than expose and thus offer an analysis of violence that interrogates its complexity: violence in Haneke has many forms, functions and incarnations... (McCann & Sorfa, 2011, p. 38)

One should highlight Coulthard's statement of "*exploring rather than exposing*". With every stylistic tool he uses, Haneke pushes the spectator to discover his own tendencies and system of values. He wants from every single spectator to ask that question to herself: What would I do -or feel, or believe in- if I were in the protagonist's situation? Accordingly, he creates various mechanisms to manipulate the spectator, but he does not impose any 'truth' to her. So, it would not be wrong to say that the 'form' always works together with the 'content' in Haneke's movies to aid the audience while they

are examining themselves. In one of his conversations, the director expounds the premium he places on the form with these sentences:

You can create a great and shocking piece of art by painting a glass of water. But you can also create a huge nonsense by writing an epic story in which you have collected the all great pains in the world. The form comes before the content. The content is the starting point. It must be the form that holds you captive; not the content. Otherwise, nothing advisable can arise. (Assheuer, 2013, p. 41)

It's possible that for this reason, the director prefers to tell 'small-scale stories' even while arguing about the major problems in history of humanity; like chauvinism, collective guilt, anti-semitism, xenophobia, discrimination, etc. Actually, all of these issues have been consumed by artists from various areas of art. But, if the 'content' is always similar and recurring, what determines the 'distinctive value' of an artwork? What are the distinguishing features that will give it a special place in the ancient history of art? Gilles Deleuze says that: "*Originality is the sole criterion of a work.*" (Deleuze, 2006, p. 217) If we combine his and Haneke's approach, we can say that this 'originality' (uniqueness) has to show up itself in the 'form' before everything else. In another interview, while debating over the duality of form and content, Haneke comes up with a similar approach once again:

Morality of the form is the only criteria that is binding for me. Quality of the thing shows itself up in the form. There are many themes. You can make many trivial things with them. But another world can also be created with something very small. Morality of the form is the principal utopia of the art. (Assheuer, 2013, p. 41)

That is to say, as in the examples from *Funny Games* and *Hidden* mentioned above, cinematographic choices like the use of the off-screen and distanced view are not only aesthetical but also ethical concerns. Finally in another one of his conversations, Haneke explains his views about 'image ethics' with a word from German this time:

We say 'Geschmack' in German; if someone has taste, he also has ethics. Taste is not only an aesthetical issue, it also contains respect. The respect for the pain of others. (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 238)

All of these citations are clear evidence of that, according to Haneke, the form of representation is a pivotal decision that has two -artistic and moral- dimensions, with regards to the director, the spectator and the subject.

While narrating the ‘ordinary’ people’s stories, Michael Haneke has never minced his words and never avoided from forcing his spectators to ask questions about their own values. Hence, some critics have accused him of comporting himself as a ‘preceptor’ rather than an ‘artist’ and being a ‘moralist’ at the end. These sentences of Haneke, which have been given as a response to this accusation, are worth to be quoted:

Yes, I know that and this is displeasing me a lot; because there is a big confusion about what is understood by being a moralist. If the moralist is a person who gives lessons, I cannot be considered as a moralist. I have a morality but I do not impose it to anyone else. In my films, I mention about unpleasing issues without answering the questions I ask. The most of them, who define me as a ‘moralist’, are the people who do not want to confront with such investigations. Whatever they say. There are many young people who appreciate my works. (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 113)

I think that the director’s explanation is clear and reasonable. Instead of giving the answers at the end of the movie, Haneke leaves his audience irritated and confused with whodunits<sup>6</sup>; but he never ‘dictates’ or ‘imposes’ a certain kind of behavioral code. As long as we accept that a work of art is essentially the output of its producers’ thoughts, emotions and world-view, we must also accept that it will inevitably represent a ‘particular’ approach. On the other hand, it would be contradictory to defend an ideological ‘ethos’ for a director like Haneke who does not belong to any ‘framed’ ideology.

The consumption of a tentpole movie, even if it contains inconvenient images, does not bother the spectator or damages his morality after he leaves the theater; because the violence is presented in a surrealistic and heroical way that directors like Haneke particularly dissociate themselves from. To draw a conclusion from these examples, we can state that the main concern of Michael Haneke is not the dilemma of ‘showing’ or ‘not showing’ but finding an appropriate form to represent the ‘reality’ in the most proper way, to avoid from the aestheticization of violence and to activate the

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<sup>6</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary* gives the definition of this term as: “*A story dealing with a crime and its solution; a detective story.*” (Whodunit, n. d.) In this paragraph, I’ve used the word to emphasize that Haneke prefers to leave the answers about movie to the audience, rather than giving answers which explain the whole story; even the mentioned movie is not an unmitigated detective story.

spectator's reasoning. By using the distinguished Brechtian alienation effects he invented for each and every movie, Haneke strives for employing the best cinematographic way to examine the tangled human stories.

As remarked at the beginning, morality begins to develop just after the realization of the 'other'. In this sense, every Haneke movie can be seen as a hard exam for the spectator if she will continue to 'look' at the pain of this 'other' subject or not, and what is she going to do with the images she saw.



## CHAPTER TWO

### APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

#### 2.1 Basics of Kantian Ethics: ‘Categorical Imperative’ and Radical Evil

Starting from the Ancient Greek, ‘the problem of evil’ has been an ontological as well as an ethical issue for many philosophers. If we look from the viewpoint of the philosophy of religion, reconciling the evil in the universe with an omnipotent God was the main question and there was a need for vindication of this creator who seems totally ‘inactive’ in front of suffering. Together with the Christian bishops such as St. Irenaeus and St. Augustine, philosophers of the Islamic world such as Ibn Sina, Ibn Arabi and Al-Ghazali searched for the answer to this question: If the God is all-knowing and all-powerful, why is there evil and pain in the world? How can an affectionate, merciful God permit this? In the upcoming traditions, responses to this problem have been discussed under the term ‘theodicy’ since it was coined by the German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Leibniz in 1710. However, the problem of evil will not be discussed with a theological approach within the scope of this study. As ‘secular’ ethics implied, we will proceed on a ‘materialistic’ basis by considering human faculties only, to stay on our course: Neither Hannah Arendt nor Michael Haneke attempted to explain human behaviors by believing in supernatural guidance. The use of logic, empathy, common sense, reasoning or moral intuitions have always been the major points of departure for them. In this sense, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant’s ‘deontological’ ethical theory will be explained with its main lines; by focusing on the notions of ‘categorical imperative’ (CI) and ‘radical evil’. But before starting, it must be remarked that even he is memorialized as one of the central thinkers of moral philosophy, the name of Kant has not been mentioned ‘casually’ in here. There are two particular reasons that we spare an exclusive chapter to him in this dissertation. (I): He

was one the philosophers who had a great influence on Hannah Arendt. (II): His name was mentioned by Otto Adolf Eichmann in his trial process, during a police interrogation.

As Arendt told us, while defending himself, Eichmann was referring to Kant to explain his corrupted moral values and this was shocking for everyone. It was ridiculous for someone completely lack of reasoning like Eichmann to refer to Kant. He stated that he has read the philosopher's *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and he made a perfect definition of his CI: "*I meant by my remark about Kant that the principle of my will must always be such that it can become the principle of general laws.*" (Arendt, 1994, p. 136) It is, however, clear that he completely misunderstood him; because -like Arendt stated- "*Kant's moral philosophy is so closely bound up with man's faculty of judgment, which rules out blind obedience.*" (Arendt, 1994, p. 136) According to Kant, every individual is a 'legislator' who introduces the laws governing her life in the light of her practical reasoning. However, as the questioning progressed, it was revealed that Eichmann has distorted this basic principle of Kantian ethics, by replacing the 'reasoning' with 'Führer's will'. On the other hand:

...it is true that Eichmann's unconscious distortion agrees with what he himself called the version of Kant "for the household use of the little man." In this household use, all that is left of Kant's spirit is the demand that a man do more than obey the law, that he go beyond the mere call of obedience and identify his own will with the principle behind the law -the source from, which the law sprang. In Kant's philosophy, that source was practical reason; in Eichmann's household use of him, it was the will of the Führer. (Arendt, 1994, p. 136-137)

Eichmann's case serves as a great example of that misinterpretation/distortion of philosophical teachings which may lead to fatal/disappointing consequences. If it is not framed entirely with certain borders, a 'theory' maybe abused/manipulated while being put into 'practice'; just like Adolf Hitler 'used' Nietzsche's *Übermensch* as a National Socialist notion to spread idea of a biologically superior race. In this context, Michel Foucault's statements referring to 1789 and Soviet Union may also be recalled: "*Rousseau, a lover of freedom, was used in the French Revolution to build up a model*

*of social oppression. Marx would be horrified by Stalinism and Leninism.*” (Foucault et al., 1988, p. 10) Here lies the importance of ‘(mis)interpretation’.

Kant explains how is a ‘categorical imperative’ -that Eichmann refers to- possible, briefly like this in his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785):

As a mere member of the world of understanding, all my actions would be perfectly in accord with the principle of the autonomy of the pure will; as a mere piece of the sensible world, they would have to be taken as entirely in accord with the natural law of desires and inclinations, hence with the heteronomy of nature. (The former would rest on the supreme principle of morality, the second on that of happiness.) But because the world of understanding contains the ground of the world of sense, hence also of its laws, hence is immediately legislative in regard to my will (which belongs wholly to the world of understanding), and hence must also be thought of wholly as such, therefore as intelligence I will cognize myself, though on the other side as a being belonging to the world of sense, as nevertheless subject to the laws of the first, i.e., to reason, which in the idea of freedom contains the law of the understanding’s world, and thus to autonomy of the will; consequently I must regard the laws of the world of understanding for myself as imperatives and the actions that accord with this principle as duties. (Kant, 2002, p. 70)

The philosopher states that the ‘categorical’ imperatives are “*possible through the fact that the idea of freedom makes me into a member of an intelligible world*” (Kant, 2002, p. 70) and they determine the ‘free will’. However, if the determination of the ‘will’ is in conformity with the moral law but only through a ‘feeling’, that is, not for the sake of the law, then the action will be ‘lawful’ but not ‘moral’. What is important in the CI’s determination of ‘will’ is that the will is determined freely; not only free from the influence of sensual inclinations, but also by ‘reversing these inclinations’ and ‘preventing any inclination’ if it is against the law. But there is an oxymoron here: How can we talk about thinking and acting ‘freely’ while all of our behaviors are pre-controlled/pre-determined by an ‘absolute’ law?

One can also have a look at the definition of CI in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, for further assistance to understand this concept:

Kant characterized the CI as an objective, rationally necessary and unconditional principle that we must always follow despite any natural desires or inclinations we may have to the contrary. All specific moral requirements, according to Kant, are justified by this principle, which means that all immoral actions are irrational because they violate the CI. (Kant’s Moral Philosophy, n. d.)

There is a large number of criticisms -by philosophers like G. W. F. Hegel, A. Schopenhauer, J. S. Mill and F. W. Nietzsche- dealing with Kant's CI and giving a detailed account of Kant's ethical theory in general and the principle of categorical imperative in particular as well as all the interpretations and criticisms around them would exceed the scope of this study, however it is worth drawing our attention to the following expressions used in the definition above: 'Objective', 'unconditional', 'always', 'despite any natural desires or inclinations we may have'. These notions refer to a unified, conscious entity, that is a rational agent, who knows his/her intentions before he/she acts and who acts as both sovereign and subject if he/she obeys the law that he/she promulgates to himself/herself. And ideally this moral law, for Kant, would coincide with the law of the ruler or the state who also would rule with a rational principle.

That is to say, Kant tries to establish a moral philosophy with a principle (CI) which would apply to all people in all times and cultures. However, there is no such a 'uniqueness' in people around the world and it is not possible to isolate a person from his/her motives, desires, instincts which were regarded as alien or external causes for Kant. Nietzsche himself criticized Kant precisely for this reason by underlining the unproven law of the working mechanism behind moral decisions:

Your judgement, 'that is right' has a prehistory in your drives, inclinations, aversions, experiences, and what you have failed to experience; you have to ask, '*how* did it emerge there?' and then also, '*what* is really impelling me to listen to it?' You can listen to its commands like a good soldier who heeds the command of his officer. Or like a woman who loves the one who commands. Or like a flatterer and coward who fears the commander. Or like a fool who obeys because he can think of no objection. In short, there are a hundred ways to listen to your conscience. But *that* you hear this or that judgement as the words of conscience, i.e. *that* you feel something to be right may have its cause in your never having thought much about yourself and in your blindly having accepted what has been labelled *right* since your childhood; or in the fact that fulfilling your duties has so far brought you bread and honours - and you consider it right because it appears to you as *your own* 'condition of existence' (and that you have a right to existence seems irrefutable to you). (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 187-188)

Kant attempts to build a 'universal', 'invariable' system of values by depending only on a self-governing, pure 'reason'; but Nietzsche scrutinizes that he misses out the area

of 'experiences' that determine the human behaviours. Following Nietzsche, we can ask: Can someone ignore her weaknesses, habits and past experiences when deciding what is 'morally right' for herself and those around her? Nietzsche's answer is 'no'. We can never be 'that' rational in our decisions; since our passions, desires and habits can never be eliminated or bracketed in our decision-making process. In the continuation of the above paragraph, Nietzsche explicitly refers to Kant's CI and censures his way of judging:

What? You admire the categorical imperative within you? This 'firmness' of your so-called moral judgement? This absoluteness of the feeling, 'here everyone must judge as I do'? Rather admire your selfishness here! And the blindness, pettiness, and simplicity of your selfishness! For it is selfish to consider one's own judgement a universal law, and this selfishness is blind, petty, and simple because it shows that you haven't yet discovered yourself or created for yourself an ideal of your very own - for this could never be someone else's, let alone everyone's, everyone's! (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 188-189)

On the other hand, Kant's ideal moral self, that is the 'rational agent', presumes an ideal rational state which is ruled with rational decisions and laws which would bring in equality and justice in a society. In his famous essay titled *Answering the Question: What Is Enlightenment?* (1784), he speaks of this state and its citizens as follows:

...in some affairs which affect the interests of the commonwealth, we require a certain mechanism whereby some members of the commonwealth must behave purely passively, so that they may, by an artificial common agreement, be employed by the government for public ends (or at least deterred from vitiating them). It is, of course, impermissible to argue in such cases; obedience is imperative. But in so far as this or that individual who acts as part of the machine also considers himself as a member of a complete commonwealth or even of cosmopolitan society, and thence as a man of learning who may through his writings address a public in the truest sense of the word, he may 'indeed argue without harming the affairs in which he is employed for some of the time in a passive capacity. Thus it would be very harmful if an officer receiving an order from his superiors were to quibble openly, while on duty, about the appropriateness or usefulness of the order in question. He must simply obey. But he cannot reasonably be banned from making observations as a man of learning on the errors in the military service, and from submitting these to his public for judgement. (Kant, 1784)

Perhaps it would not be wrong or an exaggeration to call the 'order' under the *Führer's* rule a 'rational' and a systematic order, however, obviously this is not what Kant meant by 'rationality'. What Eichmann does, however, is a misinterpretation and/or misuse

of Kant's CI to justify the so-called accomplicity between the ruler and the citizen under the *Führer* rule. The citizen, here, however, is identified with the White Aryan people. All the others, who are identified as the destructors of the pure and rational order, or as alien and external causes, would be excluded from the 'order' or even exterminated. Kant's phrases like "*obedience is imperative*" or "*one must simply obey*" have been turned into the mass ideology of militarism and weapons of mass destruction on the hands of people like Eichmann. As Bernstein writes: "*We certainly cannot blame Kant, the great champion of human dignity, for this perverse appropriation of the categorical imperative.*" (Bernstein, 2002, p. 36) However, this perversity and the "*household use*" that Arendt speaks about creates a series of distortions that may lead to a calamity like Auschwitz.

Another concept which is important for this text is 'radical evil' which is used firstly by Immanuel Kant originally as 'radikal Böse' in his *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft - Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (1793). Simply, the term implies a different/new kind of evil which goes beyond of our 'conventional', 'ongoing' understanding; but it is impressive for Kant's readers - including Hannah Arendt- that he had such an 'intuition' of this kind of evil well before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Bernstein, 2002, p. 12) In his long probe of philosophical problem of evil, Richard Bernstein explains the meaning of this term for Kant, he examines how it is related to his moral philosophy and he comes up with this result:

Radical evil is not, in any way, to be identified with our phenomenal sensuous nature. The body, with its needs and desires, is not the source of evil. Nor is radical evil to be identified with any *intrinsic* defect or corruption of human reason. It is related solely to the corruption of the will. (Bernstein, 2002, p. 27)

In other words, the radical evil does not emerge in the human nature by itself, it rises only when there is a deterioration in what Kant calls 'Willkür' -shortly 'the power of choice'-; because this 'Willkür' prioritizes all of our behaviours. Bernstein also clarifies the difference between Arendt and Kant's approaches to the 'radicality' in evil:

“Radical evil” [for Kant] then, is not the name of some special type of evil (as Arendt maintains). And it certainly is not a form of evil that “we cannot conceive.” On the contrary, we can clearly conceive it, and what it names is the propensity (*Hang*) not to do what duty requires, not to follow the moral law. Indeed, Kant’s purpose in using the adjective *radikal* to qualify *Böse* is to indicate that this propensity is rooted in human nature, specifically in the corruption of the will (*Willkür*); he is appealing to the original, etymological meaning of *radikal*. There is no evidence that Kant means anything more than this. (Bernstein, 2002, p. 28)

But I think that, its ‘superficiality’ is the underlying reason of the ‘easiness’ in Kant’s conceiving. First of all, we cannot talk about a rigid/unchanging ‘human nature’ as stated above. In the second place, it is disputable that ‘radikal Böse’ has its roots in somewhere deep inside the nature human beings. Etymologically, the word ‘radical’ has been derived from the Latin words ‘radix’ or ‘radic-’ which means ‘root’ and it has a meaning of ‘forming the root’. As everybody knows, a root is something digs down to the ‘deep’ and so, one must have a ‘depth’ to be ‘radical’. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl also touches on this issue in the following paragraph:

For Kant, the abstract noun evil does sometimes need an adjective: radical. Radical evil is that type of evil, in Kant’s view, which is rooted in (has its radix in) an evil motivation, an intention to do evil, a person’s evil heart. Kant held radical evil to be rare and quite different from evil that is done out of ignorance or an intention to do good that has gone away. In her early writings, Arendt had adopted this phrase of Kant’s as she tried to think about the Nazi concentration camps, “factories of death” as she called them. Such an invention, she felt then, could have come only from an intention to do evil, to achieve some end outside of commonsense reasoning. A factory designed for systematically stripping human beings of their humanity and then reducing them to ash could not serve any rational war effort or economic plan. (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 2)

It is true that Arendt has adopted the term ‘radical evil’ from Kant, who had a considerable influence in her studies. However, after observing the Eichmann’s case, she had realized that Eichmann was completely lack of ‘profoundness’ and contrarily to what the word ‘radical’ implies, he was standing out with his ‘shallowness’.

The importance of this differentiation between Arendt and Kant’s apprehension is that it gives us the first indications of ‘banality of evil’. Both philosophers use the term ‘radical evil’ to designate a ‘limit’; however, there are diversities in their approaches to the question of where this malevolent instinct comes from. Although it is not entirely clear what Kant means by using this term, he puts an emphasis on the

‘corruption of the will’ to explain the phenomenon. Arendt, on the other hand, claims that we do not always face with such an evil impetus. As she has observed in Jerusalem in 1961, Eichmann did not take any of his terrible actions with an appear intention of ‘killing’; he was just ‘obeying the orders’.

## **2.2 Hannah Arendt: Evil on a Daily Basis and Urgency of Reasoning**

“...because thought seeks something that has depth.” (Bernstein, 2002, p. 218)

“The sleep of reason produces monsters” (Francisco Goya)

Up until this section, we have partially touched on Hannah Arendt's philosophical thoughts. But in this chapter, we will have a closer at her life and so we will have a chance to understand the development process of her theories.

As briefly mentioned in the *Introduction* part, Hannah Arendt lived a difficult life. She was born in Germany in 1906 and she lost her father when she was just seven years old. That is to say, she had to learn how to survive in the compelling circumstances starting from her childhood. She was raised in a secular, politically progressive family and after completing her secondary education she preferred to study philosophy. During her university education years (1924-1928) in Marburg, Heidelberg and Freiberg, she had a chance to study with great philosophers like Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl and Karl Jaspers. But then, Jaspers became more than an instructor for her and they had a close friendship until Jaspers' death in 1969. When it was 1941, Arendt had experienced a marriage and divorce, she witnessed The Reichstag fire in Berlin, was arrested and questioned for over a week with her mother. Those were the years of chaos in Europe and a rapid increase in anti-Jewish discrimination. Arendt was stripped of her German citizenship and she had to flee to Paris. However, this time she has been alienated by French people in there. But even during these hard times, she had never give up writing and publishing essays in magazines and newspapers.



In 1941, Arendt finally escaped to United States as a ‘stateless person’ and she began a new life in New York. For ten years, she worked as lecturer, editor, staff writer and she remained stateless during this time. In 1951, she published the first one of her major works: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. In her book, Arendt describes and analyses the Nazi and Stalin regimes as totalitarian regimes and examines the issues like ‘human rights’, ‘radical evil’, ‘dehumanization’ simultaneously. After then, she published *The Human Condition* in 1958, which is considered as the second one of her two masterpieces. These works were followed by: *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* (1958), *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (1961), *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1961), *Men in Dark Times* (1968) and *On Violence* (1969). After Arendt’s death because of a heart attack in 1975, *The Life of the Mind* (1978) based on her Gifford Lectures of 1973-1974 was published in two volumes as *Thinking and Willing*. Had she lived longer, the third chapter would also be published as *Judging*. Essentially, these are the three fundamental faculties of the ‘contemplative life’ that Arendt calls *vita contemplativa* and they should be considered in contrast with the *vita activa* (active life) which consists of ‘labor’, ‘work’ and ‘action’.

In each one of these works, Arendt has granted a special importance on making the correct interpretations of the notions. She worked like a ‘political anthropologist’ to genealogize the supposedly ‘well-known’ social facts and she examined every notion elaborately by considering its discrete/individual historical development process. It was a passion for her to look for the truth beneath the surface. As it was mentioned in the *Introduction* part, she has also revolutionized our understanding of ‘evil’ with her 1961 book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Hereafter, we will continue to clear up Arendt’s ideas on the ‘evil’ by referring mostly to this report and in the following chapter we will link her assessments with Haneke’s approach.

There is no doubt that, one of the most distinctive aspects of Arendt’s definition of ‘evil’ was her use of the word ‘banal’ as an adjective for it. In *Merriam-Webster*

dictionary, the word 'banal' is defined as: "*Lacking originality, freshness, or novelty*" (Banal, n. d.) Then, what does Arendt imply by using the word 'banal' to characterize the 'unprecedented evil' of the Nazi regime in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? The first indication of this approach is hidden in a very early correspondence between Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt. In a letter dated October 19, 1946 Jaspers writes to Arendt:

You say that what the Nazis did cannot be comprehended as "crime" - I'm not altogether comfortable with your view, because a guilt that goes beyond all criminal guilt inevitably takes on a streak of "greatness" -of satanic greatness- which is, for me, as inappropriate for the Nazis as all the talk about the "demonic" element in Hitler and so forth. It seems to me that we have to see these things in their total banality, in their prosaic triviality, because that's what truly characterizes them. Bacteria can cause epidemics that wipe out nations, but they remain merely bacteria. I regard any hint of myth and legend with horror, and everything unspecific is just such a hint. My more sober outlook is hardly widespread in Germany. Many people make a great thing of it that Göring managed to escape the gallows, when nothing but the sheer incompetence of the prison staff was responsible. Your view is appealing -especially as contrasted with what I see as the false inhuman innocence of the victims. But all this would have to be expressed differently (how, I don't know yet). The way you do express it, you've almost taken the path of poetry. And a Shakespeare would never be able to give adequate form to this material -his instinctive aesthetic sense would lead to falsification of it- and that's why he couldn't attempt it. There is no idea and no essence here. Nazi crime is properly a subject for psychology and sociology, for psychopathology and jurisprudence only. (Arendt & Jaspers, 1993, p. 62)

That is a clear evidence of that years before the trial process of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, Jaspers had warned Arendt about the jeopardy of defining Nazi crimes as 'incomprehensible'. Jaspers underlines that it would create a risk of mythologizing/making an idol of these regular/flat criminals and he offers a new way of thinking to his disciple: "*See these things in their total banality*" In her reply to Jaspers, Arendt says that *she found him half convincing* (Arendt & Jaspers, 1993, p. 69) and she adds:

One thing is certain: We have to combat all impulses to mythologize the horrible, and to the extent that I can't avoid such formulations, I haven't understood what actually went on. Perhaps what is behind it all is only that individual human beings did not kill other individual human beings for human reasons, but that an organized attempt was made to eradicate the concept of the human being. (Arendt & Jaspers, 1993, p. 69)

Again in this answer, we come across with another definition: "*Eradicating the concept of the human being.*" With this phrase, Arendt implies something that damages feeling oneself 'human'. What happened in the Hitler's Germany was the rise of a certain

‘individual’ (Führer) -as a totalitarian figure-, elimination of the pluralism and finally dehumanization of the Jewish people. Five years later from this correspondence, Arendt touches on this issue again, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*:

The camps are meant not only to exterminate people and degrade human beings, but also serve the ghastly experiment of eliminating, under scientifically controlled conditions, spontaneity itself as an expression of human behavior and of transforming the human personality into a mere thing, into something that even animals are not... (Arendt, 1973, p. 438)

Arendt was struggling to discover the suppression methods of the totalitarian regimes by looking at Nazi and Bolshevik examples. ‘Spontaneity’, ‘unpredictability’ and bringing the ‘legal entities’ into the forefront were big threats for these totalitarian regimes because “*people could be fully dominated only when they become a specimen of the animal-species man.*” (Arendt, 1973, p. 457)

Although there was nothing ‘sophisticated’ or ‘incomprehensible’ in Nazi implementations, there was still a need to define this new kind of ‘evil’. Norwegian philosopher Lars Svendsen makes a distinction between two major types of evil (‘instrumental’ and ‘idealistic’) by demonstrating the motivations behind them:

The instrumental evil agent knows what evil is, and intentionally does evil because he wishes to achieve some good for himself, whether that be economic gain or the satisfaction of some desire. (...) In contrast, the idealistic evil actor believes that he represents the good, and that his victims are evil. However, there are still some agents that do not fit the definitions of instrumental or idealistic evil. (Svendsen, 2010, p. 137)

We can say that, Adolf Eichmann was one of those ‘baddies’ who do not fit into any definition. His malevolence was neither ‘totally-instrumental’ nor ‘idealistic’. Although he had some intentions like rising up in the ongoing Nazi hierarchy; he was unaware of the evil he had done. That is to say, Arendt’s primary struggle was to clarify “*the motives of those desk murderers*” (Bernstein, 2002, p. 217) and characterize this ‘evil’. In this respect, she had to answer this delicate question: How can someone be a part of a criminal enterprise and remain unaware of the goings-on? In her reply, Arendt makes a perfect diagnosis and describes the situation of people like Eichmann with

only one word: ‘Gedankenlosigkeit’ – ‘Thoughtlessness’.<sup>7</sup> In the following paragraph, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl also touches on this issue while narrating Arendt’s experiences of the trial process:

After she attended his 1961 trial in Jerusalem, and saw Eichmann in the flesh, speaking his strange bureaucrat’s German, Arendt concluded that he was a superficial person, thoroughly conformist to his thoroughly banal society, with no independent sense of responsibility, motivated only by a wish to move up in the Nazi hierarchy. Crucially, he was “thoughtless,” by which she meant not careless but without common sense or the ability to think. He could recite moral rules; he could even, when asked, recite Kant’s famous categorical imperative, which stipulates that one should not follow a rule that one would be unwilling to have as a rule for everyone. But Eichmann could neither ask himself nor think through the question that Arendt considered essential to moral experience, one that she (very provocatively) held was not at all a matter of following rules: “Could I live with myself if I did this deed?” (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 2-3)

In the second chapter of her 2019 book *Hannah Arendt’s Ethics*, Deirdre Lauren Mahony also underlines that there is a moral relevance of ‘thinking’ in Arendt’s ethics; and the notion of ‘thoughtlessness’ is of special importance as it establishes the link between ‘lacking of common sense’ and ‘wrongdoing’. On the other hand, she states that both the ‘thinking process’ itself and the relationship between ‘thinking’ and ‘acting morally’ were Arendt’s discussion points. As it was stated in the *Introduction* part, Arendt had already portrayed the cruciality of ‘thinking’ for her, in her earlier works like *The Human Condition*; but these studies did not have explicit connotations for ‘morality’. However, after following the Eichmann’s case, she started to treat ‘thinking’ as a *prophylactic against evil*. (Mahony, 2019) Ten years after the publication of the Eichmann report, in 1973, in the first series of her Gifford Lectures at the University of Aberdeen, she said the following on ‘thinking’:

I was struck by a manifest shallowness in the doer that made it impossible to trace the uncontestable evil of his deeds to any deeper level of roots or motives. The deeds were monstrous, but the doer -at least the very effective one now on trial- was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous. There was no sign in him of firm ideological convictions or of specific evil motives, and the only notable characteristic one could detect in his past behavior as well as in his behavior during the trial and throughout

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<sup>7</sup> This description has a particular importance for us; because it will be referred in the following chapter a lot, while speaking of Michael Haneke’s characters.

the pre-trial police examination was something entirely negative: it was not stupidity but *thoughtlessness*. (Arendt, 1981, p. 4)

This means that there was a ‘subtle’ aspect in Eichmann’s ‘thoughtlessness’ that prevents us from equalizing it with ‘foolishness’. Both concepts are related to the lack of prudence, but ‘thoughtlessness’ is something that is much more ‘implicit’ and its danger lies in this ‘covert’ness’ of it. Arendt’s following words in the *Epilogue* part of her Eichmann report may be considered as a ‘warning’ in this sense:

The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, 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. (Arendt, 1994, p. 276)

As it will be noticed, Arendt also makes the ‘needed’ definition of this ‘new kind of crime’ in here, as: ‘Hostis generis humani’ – ‘Crime against humanity’. With this Latin phrase, she alludes to a crime which targets to all mankind and which is incompatible with human dignity.

Finally, if we are talking about Arendt and her world of thought, there is another subject we cannot pass by: Her devotion to the ‘truth’ and the relationship between ‘pursuing the truth’ and ‘evil’. During her life, Arendt has never been behind any grand narratives defining the ultimate ‘truth’ and instructing her what to think in which condition; however, she has always been in the pursuit of truth by conducting an endless “*inward dialogue of thinking*” in Socratic manner. (Arendt, 1981, p. 186) In her *Between Past and Future*, she clearly expresses the importance she has granted to the ‘truth’ with these sentences: “*Conceptually, we may call truth what we cannot change; metaphorically, it is the ground on which we stand and the sky that stretches above us.*” (Arendt, 1969, p. 264) She had always believed in the virtue of truth and its slow but ultimate victory against ‘power’ and ‘violence’. Although ‘lying’ and

'politics' have gone hand in hand from the very beginning of history, the truth will certainly reveal itself.

Truth, though powerless and always defeated in a head-on clash with the powers that be, possesses a strength of its own: whatever those in power may contrive, they are unable to discover or invent a viable substitute for it. Persuasion and violence can destroy truth, but they cannot replace it. (Arendt, 1969, p. 259)

In the same text, Arendt tells us a medieval anecdote that will remind us of Hitler's Germany and Eichmann, and mentions that one cannot deceive others without lying to oneself:

It is a story about what happened one night in a town on whose watchtower a sentry was on duty day and night to warn the people of the approach of the enemy. The sentry was a man given to practical jokes, and that night he sounded the alarm just in order to give the townsfolk a little scare. His success was overwhelming: everybody rushed to the walls and the last to rush was the sentry himself. The tale suggests to what extent our apprehension of reality is dependent upon our sharing the world with our fellow-men, and what strength of character is required to stick to anything, truth or lie, that is unshared. In other words, the more successful a liar is, the more likely it is that he will fall prey to his own fabrications. (Arendt, 1969, p. 254)

With this story, she implies that to pretend something is true is only possible by deceiving oneself. Starting from this point of view, it can be said that Eichmann and other Nazi supporters in his situation started to work by deceiving themselves and this 'dissemble of truth' paved the way to 'evil'.

In this part, we have tried to dwell briefly on the three major issues that occupied Hannah Arendt's mind: (1) The nuance between 'banal' and 'radical' evil. (2) The notion of 'thoughtlessness' as a 'moral' concern. (3) The relationship between 'pursuing the truth' and 'evil'. There are many in-depth analyses in Arendt scholarship on these issues. However, since our task here is to concentrate both on Arendt's theories and Haneke's images, it is intentionally avoided to go into detail about Arendt's arguments and it is thought that the given/basic points regarding her ideas will be enough for this text.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MANIFESTATION OF EVIL IN THE CINEMA OF MICHAEL HANEKE

#### 3.1 *Funny Games* (1997): Hidden Evil of the Bourgeoisie

As it is propounded in all ‘Introduction to Sociology’ courses, ‘family’ represents the smallest unit of the ‘society’. The relationships in this ‘modern’ institution represents a ‘model’ for us to make inferences about the people creating a community and starting from his very first movies, Michael Haneke made use of this problematic institution to reflect his criticisms about the society. Basically, all of the nuclear families in Haneke’s films are alike. They belong to the same upper-middle class, their lives have been shaped around the similar goals, they interiorize the same ‘bourgeois morality’. And this ‘uniformity’ in values, prejudices, life styles and consumption habits is at the forefront of Haneke’s concerns. I think that the director comprehends this ‘sameness’ as something that defects the ‘process of thinking’ (and altruism) and so he attacks it. There is a kind of ‘hidden evil’ that emerges in this petit-bourgeois family and propagates through the society on the sly. While assaulting the ‘family’, Haneke actually takes aim at this Arendtian ‘subtle’ evil and *Funny Games* is considered as his most ‘effective’/‘accomplished’ movie in this sense.

As it was mentioned in *Chapter One*, throughout the movie we see how two young torturer sociopaths play deadly games with a ‘bourgeois’ family. In fact, it is surprising how Paul and Peter -who were named after the two Christian apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 230)- ‘easily’ take this family captive. However, finding the reason behind this ‘ease’ is not so hard: Paul and Peter look just like this family's members. (Tutal Cheviron, 2014, p. 145) They are well-dressed, presentable, nice guys who look like the ‘clean’ members of the upper-middle class that the family belongs to. If Haneke would have written these two characters as they

look like ‘vagabonds’, ‘funny games’ would not even have started. Because we know that neither Anna (the mother) nor Georg (the father) would accept them into the house. So, I claim that if Paul and Peter are the “*symbols of the incarnation of evil with pleasure and enthusiasm*” (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 235), the ‘bourgeois family’ in *Funny Games* is the ‘symbol of hidden/quotidian evil’.

While talking about the ‘indoctrination’ practices in Hitler era, D. L. Mahony states that:

One must be careful not to overestimate the levels of indoctrination achieved within Nazi society. The Nazis were in power in Germany for not much longer than a decade and even if we count the period of time prior to that during which they were gaining influence, their period of domination did not exceed fifteen years. Even a perpetrator such as Adolf Eichmann did not himself grow up under the influence of a pervasive Nazism, but rather in a *typical bourgeois Austrian environment*. The point here is that it is important not to overstate the influence of indoctrination since fifteen years is hardly long enough to impart a deep, universal commitment to a world view to a whole population. (Mahony, 2019, Thinking, reality and the other, para. 5)

I find it remarkable that Mahony defines the environment that Eichmann grew up as a “*typical bourgeois Austrian environment*”. But, what are the characteristics of this ‘bourgeois environment’ that contribute to its ‘evil’? The answer of this question corresponds to the basic linkage that is tried to be established in this chapter: One can observe these features of the ‘bourgeois environment’ by looking at Haneke’s *Funny Games*: Working as business owners or shareholders, having exclusive private properties (like a summer house, car, boat etc.), living in a sheltered/remote environment that will make one forget the outside world, keeping company only with the people of bourgeois classes. All of these instruments create a distance between the people of ‘real world’ and the ‘bourgeois’; and here lies the danger of it: It covers up from the ‘unpleasant’ realities of the world and creates an illusion which prevents one from seeing the truth. Supposedly by protecting us from the rest of the world, it represses the ‘common sense’ and practices of ‘moral thinking’; as seen in the supporters of Nazism. To sum up: The intrinsic characteristics of the ‘bourgeoisie’ always has a potential of turning into the evil because of its ‘aloofness with the reality’.



As Arendt implied in her Eichmann report, “*such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together.*” (Arendt, 1994, p. 288)

By occupying Anna and Georg’s summer house -which is guarded/surrounded by iron bars- Haneke demolishes this safeguarded world in *Funny Games*. He shows us the vulnerability of this hollow structure by exterminating the comfort zone of the family irreversibly and in the end, he demonstrates to the audience that this ‘bourgeois environment’ is just a fragile ‘bubble’.

### **3.2 *Code Unknown* (2000): Fear of the ‘Other’**

Michael Haneke’s fifth feature film *Code Unknown* has its original title in French as *Code inconnu: Récit incomplet de divers voyages*. The subtitle of the movie is translated into English as *The Incomplete Tales of Several Journeys* and it refers to the movie’s fragmentary narration style. These ‘journeys’ show us scenes from French everyday life and Haneke states that *Code Unknown* can be considered as a ‘remake of *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance*’ in this sense. (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 255) Both movies have been shot using plan sequences and avoiding from editing to capture the ‘realities’ in these ‘journeys’ as they are. On the other hand, the master title of the movie implicates the digital security codes that we dial before entering our apartments and it is used by the director as a metaphor of the ‘lack of communication’ in today’s world. I think that, this ‘miscommunication’ problem stems from the fear that we feel against the ‘Other’ who looks different from us.

If we do not count the hearing impaired little girl’s pantomime sequence, the movie begins with a morning scene in Paris. Anne Laurent, who is a French actress leaves her home and she runs up against Jean -the brother of her boyfriend Georges- while walking to the metro station. Jean says that he has left his father’s home and he does not want to go back there. Anne buys Jean a muffin, gives him the keys of her

apartment but she also states that there is no room for a third person in her place. After they break up, we watch Jean while he is walking Anne's home and the first incident of 'hatred of the Other' in the film erupts during this walk: Jean throws the paper bag of his muffin he ate into the lap of Maria, the Romanian beggar sitting in front of the bakery. Maria is surprised but she cannot react. However, Amadou -who is a young black musician- comes after Jean and he interrogates his behaviour harshly. A scuffle begins between Amadou and Jean and eventually the police arrive on the scene. Maria and Amadou are detained and later in the movie, we see that Maria is sent back to the Romania and then she comes back to Paris again. In her analysis of *Code Unknown*, Paula E. Geyh defines this scene as "*a series of failures of hospitality*":

Jean's failure to offer hospitality to Marie (which is then made 'official' by the police), but also Anne's failure to offer hospitality to Jean (which might be part of what triggers Jean's subsequent mistreatment of Marie) and, finally, the failure of Amadou's attempt to correct the situation with Marie by forcing Jean to apologise and acknowledge her right to be treated with dignity, and thus to reinstate hospitality. (McCann & Sorfa, 2011, p. 107)

In her essay, Geyh makes a distinction between 'ethical' and 'political' hospitality by referring to Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995). Briefly: "*In the ethical realm, the self is morally obligated to welcome the stranger into the private space of the home; in the political realm, the self is politically compelled to welcome the alien into the public space of the homeland.*" (Kunwar & Khanal, 2018, p. 11) And Geyh argues:

Most of the failures of hospitality in *Code Unknown* may well be failures of ethical rather than political hospitality, but if we are to make our heterogeneous, globalised cities work, if we are to make them hospitable, we will need both, and a balance of both. The practice of ethical-political hospitality is difficult, nearly impossible, but it is also absolutely necessary. If we could speak in terms of codes here, the codes of this hospitality are unknown, which may be the ultimate meaning of Haneke's title. It appears, however, that in order to improve the inhospitable world of the new cosmopolis, we must work with unknown codes or even with codes that may never become known. (McCann & Sorfa, 2011, p. 113)

This means that, by using the cosmopolitan city of Paris as a 'sampling station' Haneke's *Code Unknown* seeks the answer to the question of 'how we can live together' especially on an 'individual basis'. Although there are governmental laws and regulations on issues such as human rights, citizenship, immigration etc. treatment of

strangers must also be considered as our own 'ethical' matter as individuals. Throughout the film, we witness many events reflecting the outcomes of 'multiculturalism' in the city and sometimes we get desperate about the possibility of these people living together in peace. Within this context, the sequence in which we watch Anne travelling in the metro also deserves a special attention. In the scene, Anne gets assaulted by an immigrant teenager and she is protected/defended by a Moorish man. Everyone except him appears completely 'unmoved'. Anne cries and she thanks to him; but actually this 'regardlessness' also shows itself in her character, too. Sometimes, when she is at home, she hears the sounds of her neighbor's mistreatment of her children, but she does nothing about it. She is the embodiment of 'self-centeredness' and 'selfishness' which is nourished by the 'lack of communication' in society.

Michael Haneke's *Code Unknown* forces its audience to ask questions of "...what do we owe to others? To our relatives and friends and neighbours? To passersby and foreigners in our midst? To our former colonial subjects? To those who seek refuge among us?" (McCann & Sorfa, 2011, p. 106) Here, we may remind that, after being exiled from the Nazi Germany Hannah Arendt lived as one of those 'refugees' and she remained as a 'stateless person' for eighteen years. So, the answers to the questions we listed above were very important to her as well. According to her:

To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time. (Arendt, 1998, *The Public Realm: The Common*, para. 6)

I think that, Haneke's struggle is to make his audience think about the 'unknown codes' of this 'table' that Arendt mentions.

### **3.3 *Hidden* (2005): Collective Guilt and the Paris Massacre of 1961**

"The Algerian in France is the nigger in America." (Baldwin, 1970)

Just like *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* and *Code Unknown*, Haneke's *Hidden*, "feature the portraits of citydwellers whose seemingly disparate lives intersect and collide amid a steady background beat of news reports of civil wars and genocides." (McCann & Sorfa, 2011, p. 106) As it is mentioned in *Chapter One*, in the movie, we follow the family of Laurents residing in Paris and the movie develops around the mystery of anonymous videotapes left on their doorstep at uncertain intervals. Laurents may look familiar to a spectator who has seen Haneke's previous movies like *The Seventh Continent*, *Benny's Video* or *Funny Games* as they reflect the characteristic features of a 'Hanekeian family': They are well-educated, prosperous and good-looking; and they live in a 'bubble' of their own. But again, this 'fragile' structure fell apart in Haneke's hands: The videotapes reveal a secret about Georges' past and if we talk about the 'evil deed' in *Hidden*, we should refer to the relationship between Georges and his 'guilt' before anything else in the movie.

Georges' guilt is that when he was six he has caused Majid -who is an Algerian boy lost his parents during the Paris Massacre of 1961 and would be adopted by Georges' parents- sent back from home because of the vicious lies that Georges told about him. With the arrival of videotapes and drawings, he starts to have dreams about Majid and his hidden fears come to light. By following the last tape's clues, he finds Majid in the apartment he lives. Although Majid denies that he is the responsible of tapes and drawings, Georges does not believe him and threatens him. After a while, tapes of this encounter are also sent to Anne and Georges' workplace. Finally, he has to confesses his guilts to Anne and he thoroughly believes that Majid is the responsible of video tapes. In the meantime, Laurents' son Pierrot disappears. Laurents go to the police immediately and gives Majid's name as the suspected person. Majid and his son get arrested but they get released back after Pierrot's return. This is the series of events that drags Majid to suicide.

In *Hearing Haneke: The Sound Tracks of a Radical Auteur*, Elsie Walker gives a transcription of Georges' sentences of confessing his guilts to Anne and she defines his speech as "*the verbal pivot point of the film*":

His [Majid's] parents worked for us. Dad liked them. I guess they were good workers. In October '61, the FLN called all Algerians to a demonstration in Paris. October 17, 1961. Enough said. Papon. The police massacre. They drowned about 200 Arabs in the Seine. Including Majid's parents most likely. They never came back. Dad went to Paris to look for them. They said he should be glad to be rid of a couple of jigaboos. [59:37–1:00:12] (Walker, 2017, p. 142)

In one of his conversations, Haneke states that *each of us hides some of the hard-to-confess things we do and try to forget them as quickly as possible*. (Cieutat & Rouyer, 2014, p. 322) And in the movie, he constructs a parallelism between the 'personal' and 'collective' guilt by referring explicitly to the Paris Massacre of 1961. It is a known fact that this massacre had not been discussed publicly for four decades. Although Papon -the head of the Parisian police- was found guilty in 1999, French people were still unaware of the massacre in 2000s and it remained as a 'suppressed'/'hidden' historical truth for a long time. (Walker, 2017, p. 126) By using Georges' childhood traumas as an 'instrument', Haneke tries to stimulate the audience to reconsider this embarrassing case. On the other hand, if Georges would go to Majid and apologize for what happened in the past, the spectator could show him some understanding. However, he accuses Majid directly with a hostile approach and he shows an explicit 'white' prejudice against him. One can give the scene in which Anne and Georges encounter with a black guy in the street as another example to this hatred: In the scene, we watch Georges and Anne while they are leaving the police station. As soon as Georges steps into the street, a black man passes by Georges on his bike and almost hits him. Although he is not injured, Georges shows an overreaction to the black guy and he insults him. This means, a historical event does not just disappear in time, it may show itself as 'hidden' in different forms and conditions.

As it was mentioned in the *Introduction* part, Arendt makes a differentiation between the 'personal guilt' which is an 'ethical' issue and the 'collective

responsibility' which is a political concern. If we talk about *Hidden* by considering this distinction, we can say that Georges -or his family- cannot be found 'guilty' because of the Paris Massacre of 1961; but they have a 'responsibility' on the political level as being members of the 'society'. As a matter of fact, one cannot even charge Georges 'legally' because of Majid's death; but we know that he had worked as a 'hidden agent' in Majid's psychological damage process that has driven him suicide. Arendt explains the distinction between 'responsibility' and 'guilt' as follows:

Guilt, unlike responsibility, always singles out; it is strictly personal. It refers to an act, not to intentions or potentialities. It is only in a metaphorical sense that we can say we feel guilty for the sins of our fathers or our people or mankind, in short, for deeds we have not done, although the course of events may well make us pay for them. And since sentiments of guilt, *mens rea* or bad conscience, the awareness of wrong doing, play such an important role in our legal and moral judgment, it may be wise to refrain from such metaphorical statements which, when taken literally, can only lead into a phony sentimentality in which all real issues are obscured. (Arendt, 2003, p. 147-148)

As it can be seen in the last sentence, Arendt is in the pursuit of 'truth' as always. Although we blame Georges for his evil/dismissive deeds against Majid, we cannot find him legally 'guilty'.

In my opinion, Georges fundamentally suffers from what Arendt calls 'living-with-oneself'. The theoretician explains this concept as a process of 'thinking' and 'judging', during which someone speaks with herself, reaching beyond the self-consciousness. This 'dialogue' can be maintained only with a certain kind of 'solitude' which is "*different from, other modes of being alone, particularly and most importantly loneliness and isolation.*" And in these moments of 'solitude' Georges cannot pay the costs of his wrong-doings in the past.

Morality concerns the individual in his singularity. The criterion of right and wrong, the answer to the question, what ought I to do? depends in the last analysis neither on habits and customs, which I share with those around me, nor on a command of either divine or human origin, but on what I decide with regard to myself. In other words, I cannot do certain things, because having done them I shall no longer be able to live with myself. (Arendt, 2003, p. 97)

In these senses, Haneke's protagonist Georges can be seen as another representative of the Arendtian 'subtle' evil. He refuses to think about not only what

he did in his childhood but also what his nation did in the past. By doing so, he sets as a great example showing the gradual emergence of evil arising from ‘nonthinking’.

### 3.4 *The White Ribbon* (2009): Genealogy of Evil and ‘Daily Fascism’

“The problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe” (Arendt, 2005, p. 134)

“There are countless films that deal with the Nazi period, but not the pre-period and pre-conditions, which is why I wanted to make this film. It is always the private questions that are most important.” (Haneke, 2009)

*The White Ribbon* is the only movie of Haneke that is explicitly defined by him as a movie ‘about the roots of evil’. Set in Germany prior to World War I, the movie tells the story of some peasant children and mysterious crimes evolving around them. If we pay attention to the historical period that the movie’s story takes place in, we realize that these children will become adults in the Nazi regime, and this means that we may be watching the childhood days of little Eichmanns. But Haneke underlines that he does not “*want people to just see the film as a film about a German problem. It is about the roots of evil. Whether it’s religious or political terrorism, it’s the same thing.*” (Haneke, 2009) The director’s emphasis on the ‘religion’ stems from the theological codes of the children in the movie; they are determined by Protestantism. But one can take out Protestantism and replace it with another ‘grand narrative’ without damaging the movie’s statement. In *The Lyotard Dictionary*, the term ‘grand narrative’/‘metanarrative’ is defined as following:

One of the fundamental attacks postmodernism subjects modernism to is on the latter’s belief in a ‘grand narrative’. It is a rejection of the idea that the ultimate truth associated with a grand narrative is possible and that the world as experienced is as a result of hidden structures. A grand narrative or metanarrative can also be understood as an ideology or paradigm; a system of thought and belief. Such a belief exerts a strong influence on what is considered true and just. Furthermore, such a truth is seen to have an existence independent to that of the individual or society and also to act as a measurement against which other truths are to be judged. (Sim, 2011, p. 86)

Considering the correspondences between postmodern teachings and Haneke’s approach, I claim that the Haneke’s *The White Ribbon* can be considered as a movie

which adopted a ‘postmodern’/‘skeptical’ attitude. The director clearly expresses his motivation about making *The White Ribbon* as: “*I wanted to present a group of children on whom absolute values are being imposed. What I was trying to say was that if someone adopts an absolute principle, when it becomes absolute then it becomes inhuman.*” (Haneke, 2009) This means that Haneke’s purpose is to show the potential fascism in people who are obsessed with a certain idea, an absolute vision of religion or an undoubtable ideology; whether it is Islamism, Marxism or Nazism. Ironically, in one of his conversations, Haneke expresses his hatred towards ‘postmodernity’ (is it that strong? I mean: does he use the word ‘hatred’?). He states that he considers “*the postmodern proposition that ‘we have left all existential and moral problems behind us’ as dangerous nonsense.*” (Assheuer, 2013, p. 113) But I think that he misunderstands the basics of postmodern teachings and they are cut out for him in the sense of *arguing for multiplicity and endless variety*. (Sim, 2011, p. 87) While talking about ‘grand narratives’ Lyotard also asserts that “*society is not held together by such a perceived truth represented by a particular structure, but by a multiplicity of beliefs and discursive practices.*” (Sim, 2011, p. 87). I think that this approach is also embraced by Haneke. While talking about the title of *The White Ribbon*, he states that:

Once I thought about another title for the film, which was GOD’S RIGHT HAND, which means that these children take themselves for God’s right hand because they know the difference between good and evil and they have the right to judge others. This is always the beginning of terrorism. (Haneke, 2009)

This ‘terrorism’ that Haneke refers to can never arise from a ‘postmodern skepticism’. On the contrary: “*History is fraught with mass murders committed in the name of the one and only truth*” (Bauman, 1997, p. 200) and modern narratives claim that there is such a permanent/unconditional ‘truth’. All the –isms -by which we order the world- offer such ‘predetermined’ conceptions of the world; postmodernity does not totally exclude the achievements of those ideologies but it approaches them with suspicion. In an interview, Haneke also states that: “*The transformation of an idea into an ideology creates irreconcilable contradictions, antagonisms, and relationships*



*between people quickly dehumanize.*” These words of the director seem to have been uttered by a philosopher who is a defender of postmodernism.

Another thing is that, Haneke’s *The White Ribbon* does not only represent a certain period in history. It also has references to today’s world.

There is nonstop fascism in France, Austria, Germany, everywhere you look, in how people treat each other. The verbal violence they use. They don't treat the person as a person but as someone to be manipulated: this is daily fascism. (Haneke, 2009)

It is remarkable that Haneke uses the phrase ‘daily fascism’ in here; as it is something implies a ‘subtle’/‘covert’ evil. Although we no longer speak of any concentration camps today, ‘discrimination’ and ‘xenophobia’ continue to gain strength in many parts of the world. This evil has its origins in the eradication of ‘pluralism’ and lack of ‘altruism’. “*Thinking involves a moral recognition of the other and indeed of the views, needs and desires of the other.*” (Mahony, 2019, Thinking, reality and the other, para. 7) However, ‘daily fascism’ ignores the existence of ‘Other’ and prevents us from thinking by the standpoint of somebody else.

## CONCLUSION

“To act, see, remember, complete memory through narrative: that seems to be the royal road to the revelation of the who that constitutes, in Arendt, a truly political narration.” (Kristeva, 2014, p. 19)

“To function, art has to rub salt in the wounds.” (Haneke, 2009)

From the beginning of this text, we have tried to establish a mental kinship, an intellectual affinity between Michael Haneke and Hannah Arendt, constitutively by looking at their ‘ethical’ and ‘political’ approaches. Now, we can list many partnerships that make these two names ‘identics’: Paying attention to the subtleties of human relations, interrogating the ready-made notions and facts, rethinking supposedly well-known phenomena, not internalizing any –isms and finally being called as the ‘wet blankets’ of their own times. Discrimination, xenophobia, human rights, massacres, crimes against humanity, collective guilts, ethical values and social deteriorations were the topics that occupied both their agendas. However, if I had to describe Haneke's way of filmmaking and Arendt's philosophizing practices in the same word, I would choose: ‘Thought-provoking’. While Arendt opened her audience’s eyes with her pen which was mightier than the sword, Haneke did it with his eagle eyes. Both sought to get their readers and viewers to ask questions about themselves. Sometimes, they have been misunderstood or blamed for this cause but they have never minced their words from their listeners. They have shared same concerns while living at the different times in history and the ‘humanely treatment of people’ was at the forefront of these concerns.

In *The Life of the Mind*, Hannah Arendt states that:

...men, if they were ever to lose the appetite for meaning we call thinking and cease to ask unanswerable questions, would lose not only the ability to produce those thought-things that we call works of art but also the capacity to ask all the answerable questions upon which every civilization is founded. (Arendt, 1981, p. 62)

These sentences of the theoretician is so critical for us as it indicates both the weight she gives to the activity of ‘thinking’ and the relationship she constructs between ‘art’

and ‘thought’. I think that, Michael Haneke would also adopt Arendt’s definition of artworks as ‘thought-things’. Essentially, all of his movies are about the moral and political dangers of ‘thoughtlessness’ and the ‘evil’ which is reflected in Haneke’s cinema is a ‘subtle’/Arendtian evil which is nourished from the lack of reasoning. On the other hand, the cinematographic presentation style of this ‘evil’ should also function in a ‘thought-provoking’ way. For this purpose, Haneke receives aid from Brechtian alienation effects and elliptic narration. He struggles to ‘maintain the dialogue’ between the artwork and its recipient while opening a new window in the mind of the spectator.

While provoking his audience’s thoughts, Haneke has had both ‘aesthetic’ and ‘ethical’ apprehensions. According to him, the main question was not “*How do I show the violence?*”; it was “*How do I show her position to the spectator herself against the violence and its representation?*” (Assheuer, 2013, p. 185) In an interview, he answered the question why did he avoid showing the children’s activities in *The White Ribbon* with these sentences: “*Because you wouldn’t have the suspicion if I disclosed all of that. It wouldn’t work. The viewer’s suspicion must remain heightened.*” (Haneke, 2009) That is to say, Haneke is so concerned with the perception of his audience that sometimes his film’s relationship with the audience overrides the film itself. Such that, while talking about *Hidden*, like Catherine Wheatley argues that:

Socio-political readings of the film need not be dwelled upon; as we have seen, Haneke’s films are always at heart concerned with revealing something not about society, but about the spectator’s relationship to the screen. (Wheatley, 2009, p. 156)

While I do not completely agree with Wheatley’s approach, I agree with her comment on Haneke’s ‘attention to his audience’. I think that, Haneke has always had ‘something to say’ -especially about the human relations and moral values- beginning with his very first TV movies and socio-political profundity of his cinema cannot be disregarded. But he is an ‘artist’ before a ‘sociologist’; which means that, the cinematographic/aesthetic concerns are also equally important for him. His following words may be taken into consideration in this regard:

Of course, my concerns are different when writing or shooting. When writing the script, I am concerned with sociological and philosophical issues. On the set, you are asking if this actor is wearing the right tie, if the sound is ok. The details are important. This is where the film director steps in: otherwise sociologists would be making film. (Haneke, 2009)

As such, it would be unfair to say that ‘there is no need to seek socio-political depth’ in a Haneke film. All of the four movies that we have analyzed in this dissertation contain many political/ethical observations that reflect the problems of Western societies like corruptness in bourgeoisie, increasing xenophobia in cosmopolitan cities, lack of altruism in city-dwellers and ideological bigotry.

To sum up: Evaluating the ‘evil’ in Michael Haneke’s cinema with an Arendt-centered approach necessitates an exhaustive examination of the ‘ethical’ attitudes they have maintained in their artistic/philosophic lives. If we zoom in Haneke’s movies and Arendt’s writings, we conclude that they have shared the same consideration regarding the importance of the ‘life of the mind’.

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