

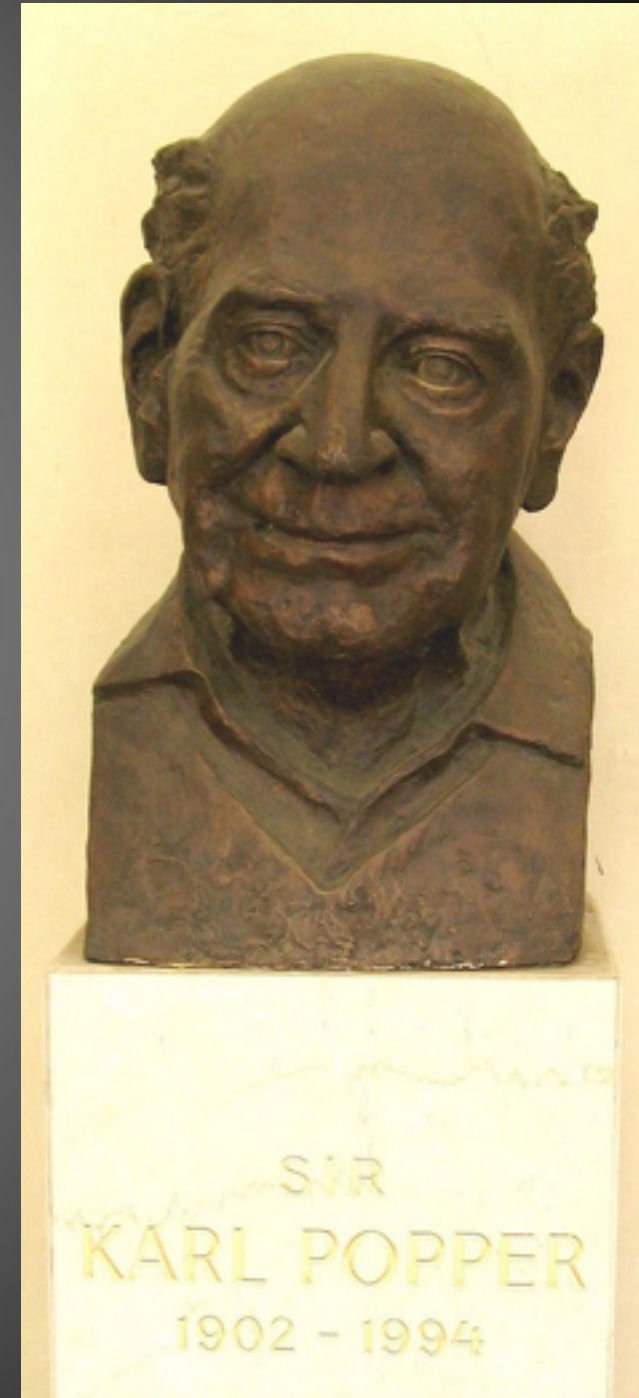
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Posthumous Interview of Karl Popper

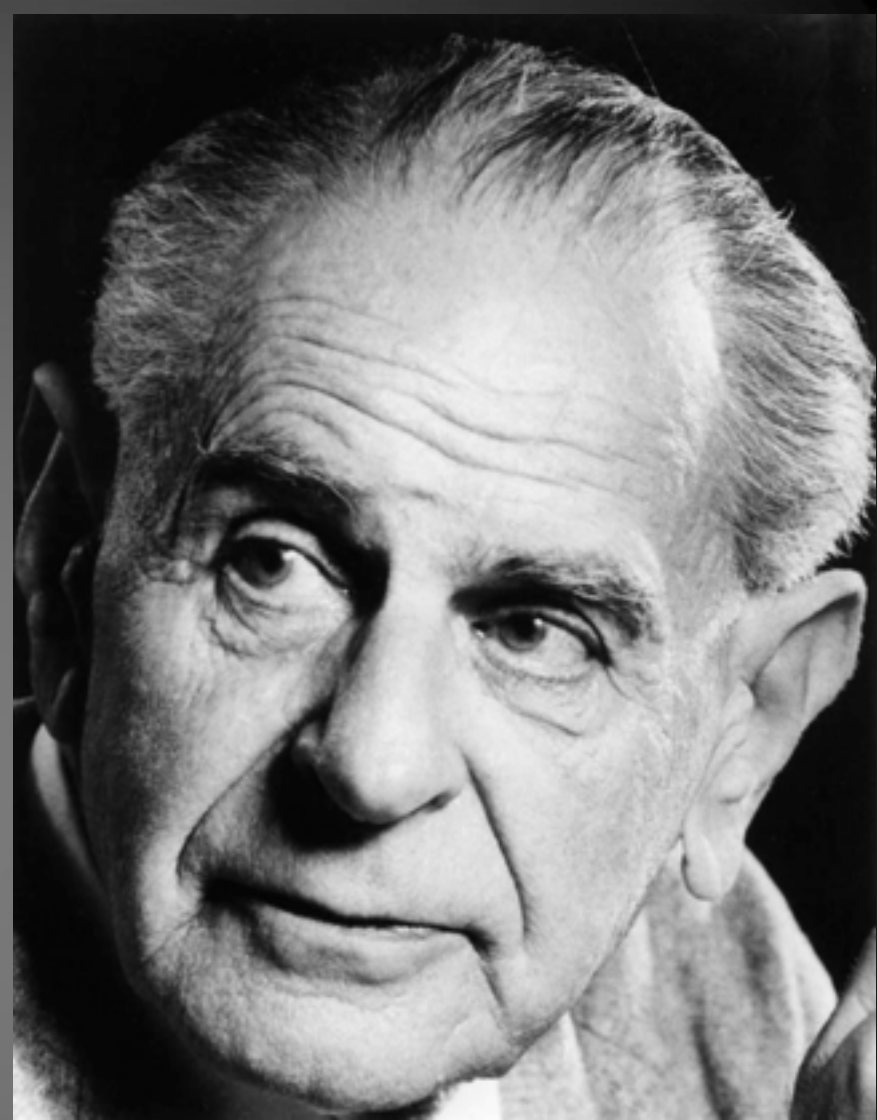
Alexey Burov

Fermilab, Sep 10, 2015



Appealing to his [Einstein's] way of expressing himself in theological terms, I said: If God had wanted to put everything into the universe from the beginning, He would have created a universe without change, without organisms and evolution, and without man and man's experience of change. But he seems to have thought that a live universe with events unexpected even by Himself would be more interesting than a dead one.

Unended Quest, 1974, 1992

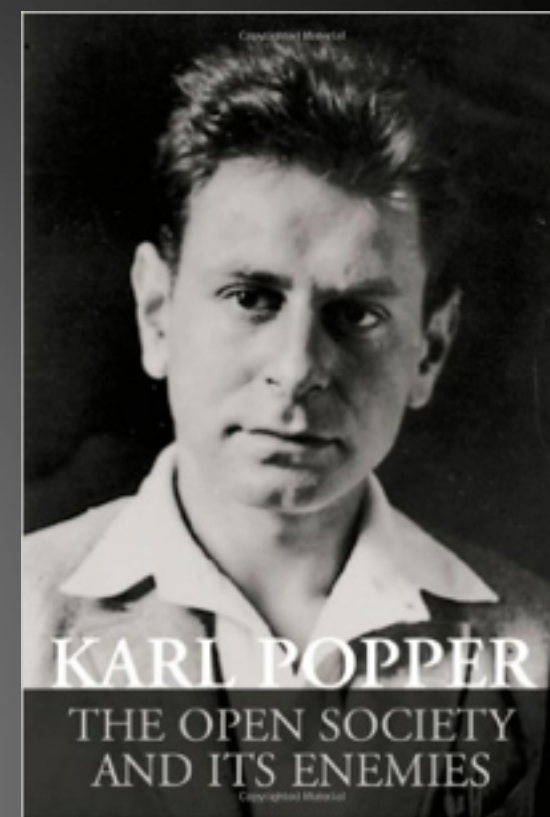


Karl Popper (1902-1994)

- The open society is one in which men have learned to be to some extent critical of taboos, and to base decisions on the authority of their own intelligence.

- The so-called paradox of freedom is the argument that freedom in the sense of absence of any constraining control must lead to very great restraint, since it makes the bully free to enslave the meek. The idea is, in a slightly different form, and with very different tendency, clearly expressed in Plato.

Less well known is the paradox of tolerance: Unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them... We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant. We should claim that any movement preaching intolerance places itself outside the law, and we should consider incitement to intolerance and persecution as criminal...



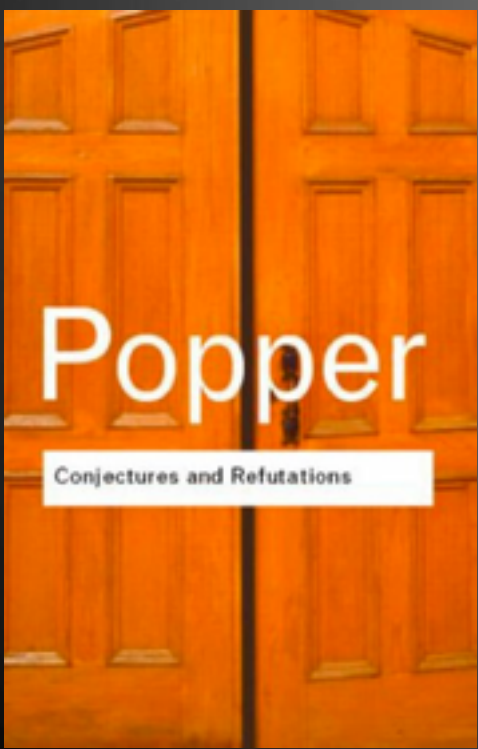
1945

... the attempt to make heaven on earth invariably produces hell. It leads to intolerance.

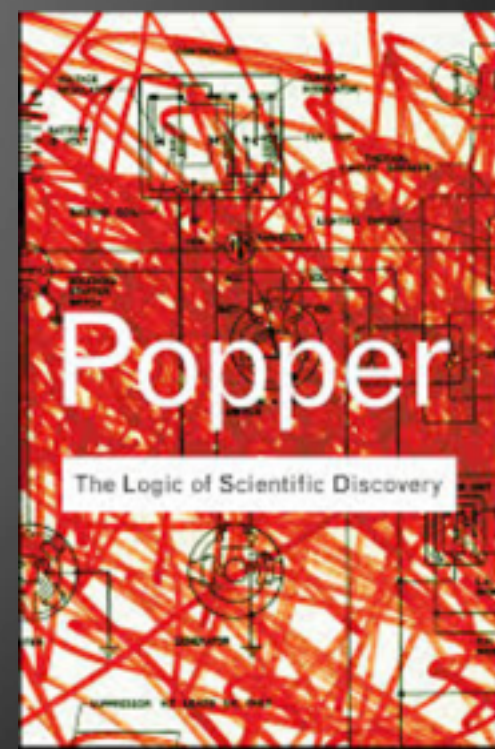
- It is often asserted that discussion is only possible between people who have a common language and accept common basic assumptions. I think that this is a mistake. All that is needed is a readiness to learn from one's partner in the discussion, which includes a genuine wish to understand what he intends to say. If this readiness is there, the discussion will be the more fruitful the more the partner's backgrounds differ.
- It seems to me certain that more people are killed out of righteous stupidity than out of wickedness.

1963

1934



The point is that, whenever we propose a solution to a problem, we ought to try as hard as we can to overthrow our solution, rather than defend it.



THE MYTH OF THE FRAMEWORK

In defence of science and rationality



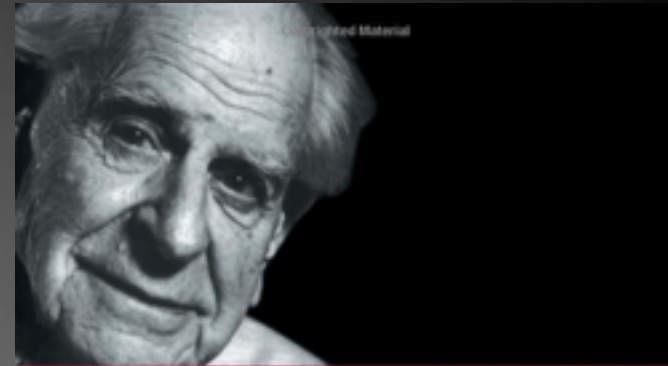
KARL R. POPPER

Edited by M.A. Notturmo



KARL POPPER

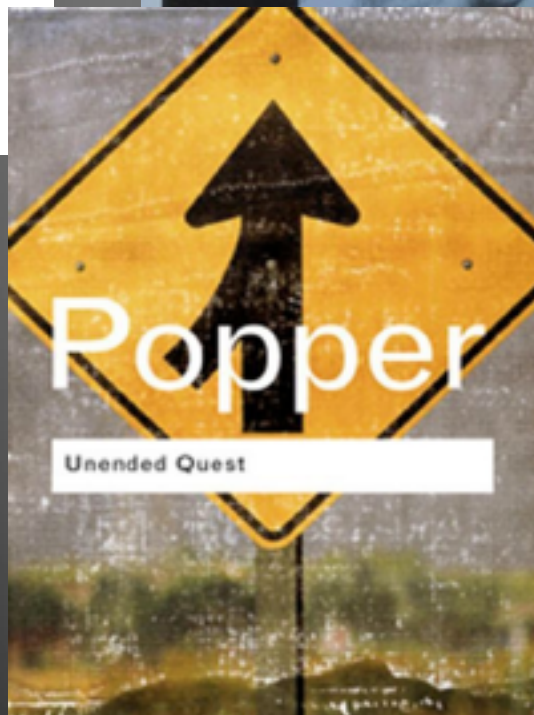
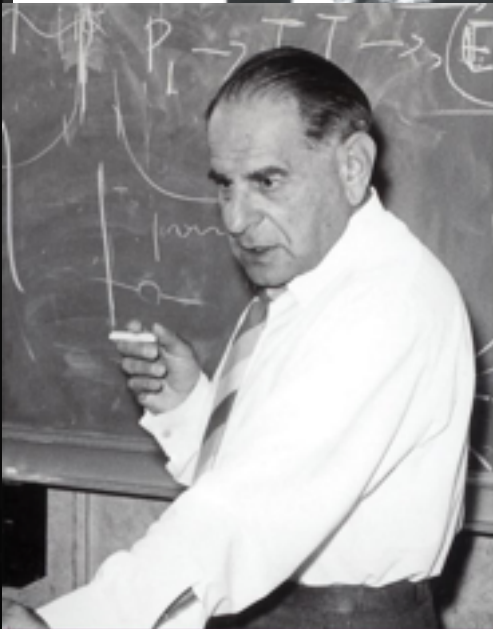
ALL LIFE IS PROBLEM SOLVING



The Self and Its Brain

An Argument for Interactionism

KARL POPPER AND JOHN C. ECCLES

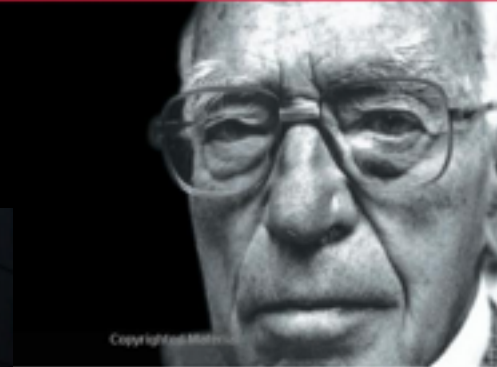


Unended Quest



Popper

After The Open Society



Popper

The Poverty of Historicism

THE TWO FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

KARL POPPER



But I shall certainly admit a system as empirical or scientific only if it is capable of being tested by experience. These considerations suggest that not the verifiability but the **falsifiability** of a system is to be taken as a criterion of demarcation. In other words: I shall not require of a scientific system that it shall be capable of being singled out, once and for all, in a positive sense; but I shall require that its logical form shall be such that it can be singled out, by means of empirical tests, in a negative sense: it must be possible for an empirical scientific system to be refuted by experience. (1959)

In my view, aiming at simplicity and lucidity is a moral duty of all intellectuals: lack of clarity is a sin, and pretentiousness is a crime.

The growth of our knowledge is the result of a process closely resembling what Darwin called 'natural selection'; that is, the natural selection of hypotheses: our knowledge consists, at every moment, of those hypotheses which have shown their (comparative) fitness by surviving so far in their struggle for existence, a competitive struggle which eliminates those hypotheses which are unfit. (Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach, 1971)

Criticism on Popper:

Martin Gardner, "A Skeptical Look at Karl Popper", *Skeptical Inquirer*, 25(4):13-14, 72 (2001)

Readers interested in exploring Popper's eccentric views will find, in addition to his books and papers, most helpful the two-volume "**Philosophy of Karl Popper**" (1970), in the Library of Living Philosophers, edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp. The book contains essays by others, along with Popper's replies and an autobiography.

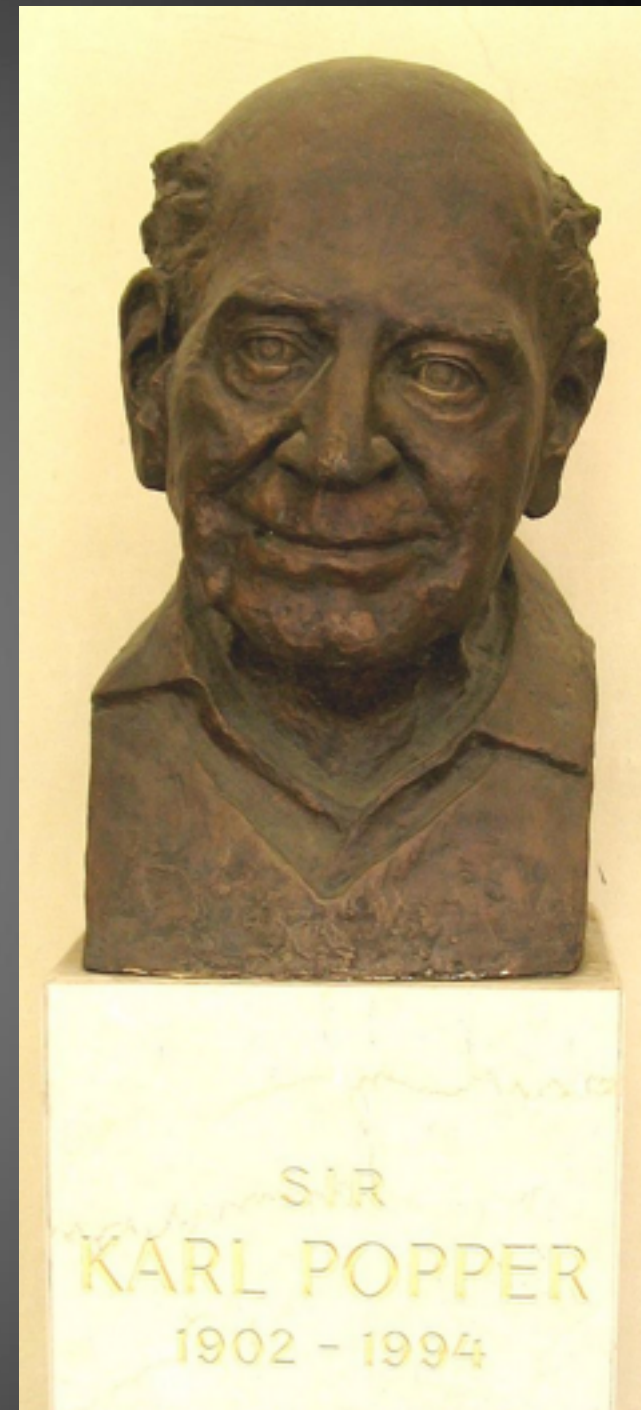
For vigorous criticism of Popper, see David Stove's "**Popper and After: Four Modern Irrationalists**" (the other three are Imre Lakatos, Thomas Kuhn, and Paul Feyerabend), and Stove's chapter on Popper in his posthumous "**Against the Idols of the Age**" (1999) edited by Roger Kimball.

See Also Carnap's reply to Popper in "**The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap**" (1963), another volume in The Library of Living Philosophers.

Of many books by Popperians, one of the best is "**Critical Rationalism**" (1994), a skillful defense of Popper by his top acolyte.

Posthumous Interview

Sir Karl passed away on September 17, 1994 at the age of 92. Throughout his long life, he thoroughly avoided discourse on questions which the highly esteemed by him Immanuel Kant proclaimed as main philosophical problems: the questions of God and immortality. Why did the philosopher persistently kept away from these seemingly obligatory for philosophy subjects? Four years past his death, "Skeptic" published his interview, given back in 1969 to a young rabbi Edward Zerlin under condition of non-disclosure during the philosopher's life. This text is shedding light on the question and appears to be indispensable for understanding of philosophy and personality of Karl Popper.



Sceptic, Vol 6, No 2, 1998

also in "After the Open Society"



KARL POPPER ON GOD

The Lost Interview

By Edward Zerin

KARL RAIMUND POPPER, one of the 20th century's seminal philosophers, left the world a bold and original intellectual reflection on what has become known as the "demarcation problem" in distinguishing science from pseudoscience in general, and science from physics in particular. He held that the line between science and pseudoscience is neither as precise nor as impenetrable as the regnant positivists claimed. Popper had contended that empirical verification could be made meaningful and not mere discourse. Popper's falsifiability, not verification, was the proper criterion for a theory. Popper's deductive Method transformed the world a new form of scientific endeavor



Karl Popper

88b, 276): "Science is not a system of certain, or well-attained statements. Science is not knowledge (epistémé)... It is a process of attaining truth, or even of attaining

phy department, chaired by the late Dr. Mary Hesse, I met him warmly, and with the aid of Dr. Joseph Agassi, I

raising a family later Popper decided that a overwhelming C imposed the c as little offense become assim worked" (Popper) Popper was a man in the form word. He maintained a connection with the Jewish world, an observant Lutheran was he who brought deeper understanding of Judaism and openness to me for an ethnicity as a Jew. In 1968, as a member of the Hillel Foundation, I was involved in the continuing education of rabbis, I was invited to the Research Association for the Philosophy of Science at the University, with classes at Harvard and the University of Toronto. He was a member of the Philosophy department, chaired by the late Dr. Mary Hesse, I met him warmly, and with the aid of Dr. Joseph Agassi, I

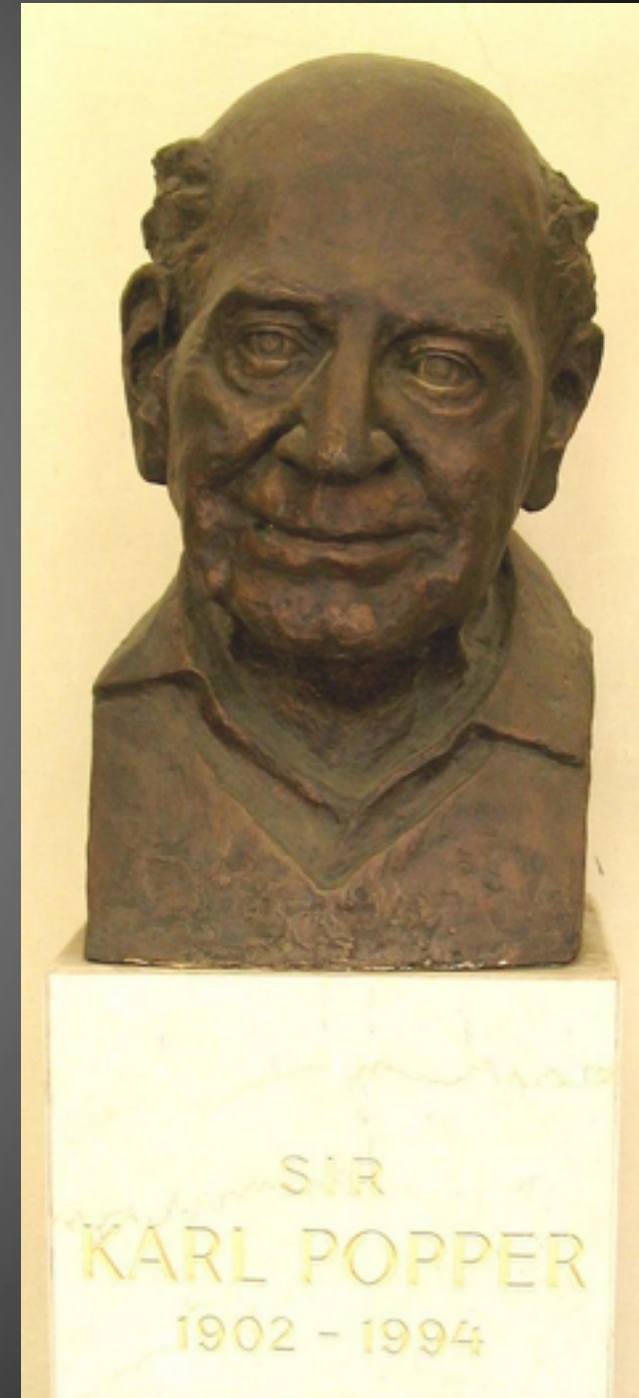
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A Puzzling Error of Karl Popper

Alexey Burov

Fermilab, Oct 8, 2015



also in “After the Open Society”

POPPER: There is the possibility not only of evil but also of ‘radical evil’, a term introduced by Kant.¹⁷ Radical evil is doing to a man that which even the bravest and the best man cannot stand without breaking down in spirit. I don’t think Kant had any idea of what he was talking about. I had no idea before Hitler of what radical evil would mean.

ZERIN: How do you account for the existence of evil?

POPPER: I can’t account for it. It is evil which turns me against God and makes me doubtful whether a God or anything like that exists, and which makes me even more certain that one should not talk about God.

ZERIN: How do you believe that a person should cope with ‘radical evil’?

POPPER: Cope? That’s a dare word. I don’t know. All that we can do is try as far as we can to make people realize by rational means, and by not entirely rational means such as subtle appeals to their feelings, that violence and cruelty should be avoided at any price.

KARL POPPER ON GOD

The Lost Interview

By Edward Zerlin



Karl Popper

Something is wrong in this reference to Kant...

Radical evil is a phrase coined by Kant in

Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone (1793):

“The **depravity of human nature**, then, is not so much to be called badness, if this word is taken in its strict sense, namely, as a disposition (subjective principle of maxims) to adopt the bad, as bad, into one’s maxims as a spring (for that is devilish); but rather perversity of heart, which, on account of the result, is also called a bad heart. This may co-exist with a will good in general, and arises from the frailty of human nature, which is not strong enough to follow its adopted principles, combined with its impurity in not distinguishing the springs (even of well-intentioned actions) from one another by moral rule.”

The human being in whom radical evil dwells is one who “has incorporated into his maxim the (occasional) deviation from” the moral law (Religion, 6: 32):

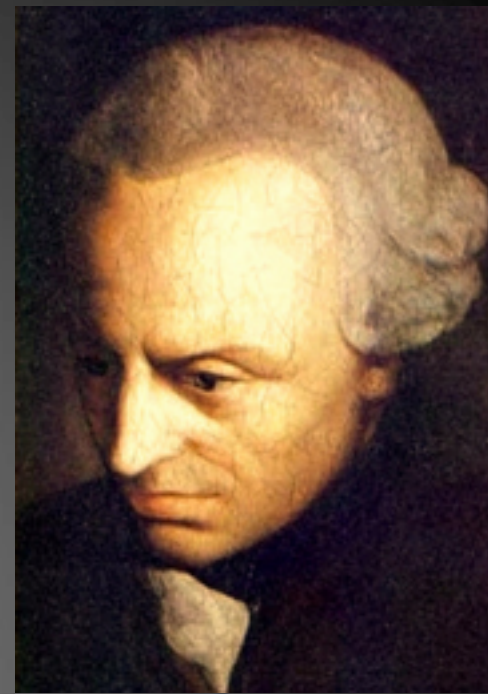
“...we can call this ground a **natural propensity to evil**, and, since it must nevertheless always come about through one’s own fault, we can further even call it a **radical innate evil** in human nature (not any the less brought upon us by ourselves).”



Immanuel Kant
1724-1804

Note: Kant’s radical evil is different from what Popper said to Zerin.... How was it possible?

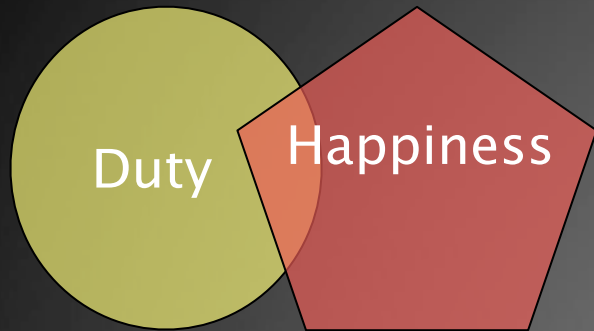
“A member of the English Parliament exclaimed in the heat of debate: “Every man has his price, for which he sells himself.” If this is true (and everyone can decide by himself), if nowhere is a virtue which no level of temptation can overthrow, if whether the good or evil spirit wins us over only depends on which bids the most and affords the promptest pay-off, then, what the Apostle says might indeed hold true of human beings universally, “There is no distinction here, they are all under sin – there is none righteous (in the spirit of the law), no, not one.” ” (Religion...)



Immanuel Kant

1724-1804

?



Categorical Imperative:

Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.



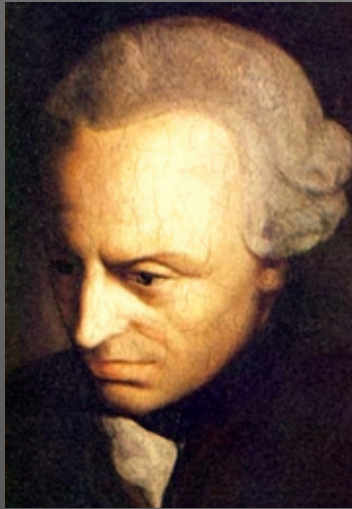
When duty is easy, normal people do not need a special reason to follow its voice. The problem appears when it is hard to follow.

Put yourself, for instance, in a position of a judge under all possible pressures from criminal groups and corrupted authority. On the one side there is justice and the worst threats, on the other—a crooked sentence and good money.

Why should you pay for duty that much? What is the reason to pay the price of life (your own, your family) ??? Do you really owe that much? Owe whom? People? Are you sure you owe people that much?

Beziehungspunkt

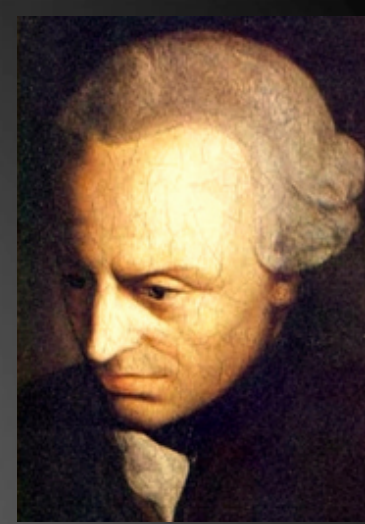
Highest Good



Duty

Temptation

Highest Good requires God (the Creator and Heavenly Father) and immortality. Thus, to justify potentially unlimited demands of duty, the trust to God is required. This is Kant's proof of God existence, based on the practical reason.



That which alone can make a world the object of divine decree and the end of creation is Humanity (rational being in general as pertaining to the world) in its full moral perfection, from which happiness follows in the will of the Highest Being directly as from its supreme condition. – This human being, alone pleasing to God, “is in him from all eternity”; the idea of him proceeds from God’s being; he is not, therefore, a created thing but God’s only-begotten Son, “the Word” (the Fiat!) through which all other things are, and without whom nothing that is made would exist (since for him, that is, for a rational being in the world, as can be thought according to its moral determination, everything was made). – “He is the reflection of his glory.” – “In him God loved the world,” and only in him and through the adoption of his dispositions can we hope “to become children of God”.

Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, pp. 94. Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition.



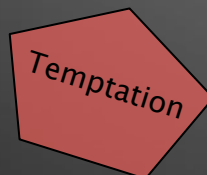
Establishing of the holy will results from a mysterious spiritual revolution. The acquisition of the holy disposition through such a revolution requires that we take up the disposition of the human personification of the holy will, present to us in our reason as the archetype of moral perfection, the Son of God. To elevate ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection constitutes our universal human duty.

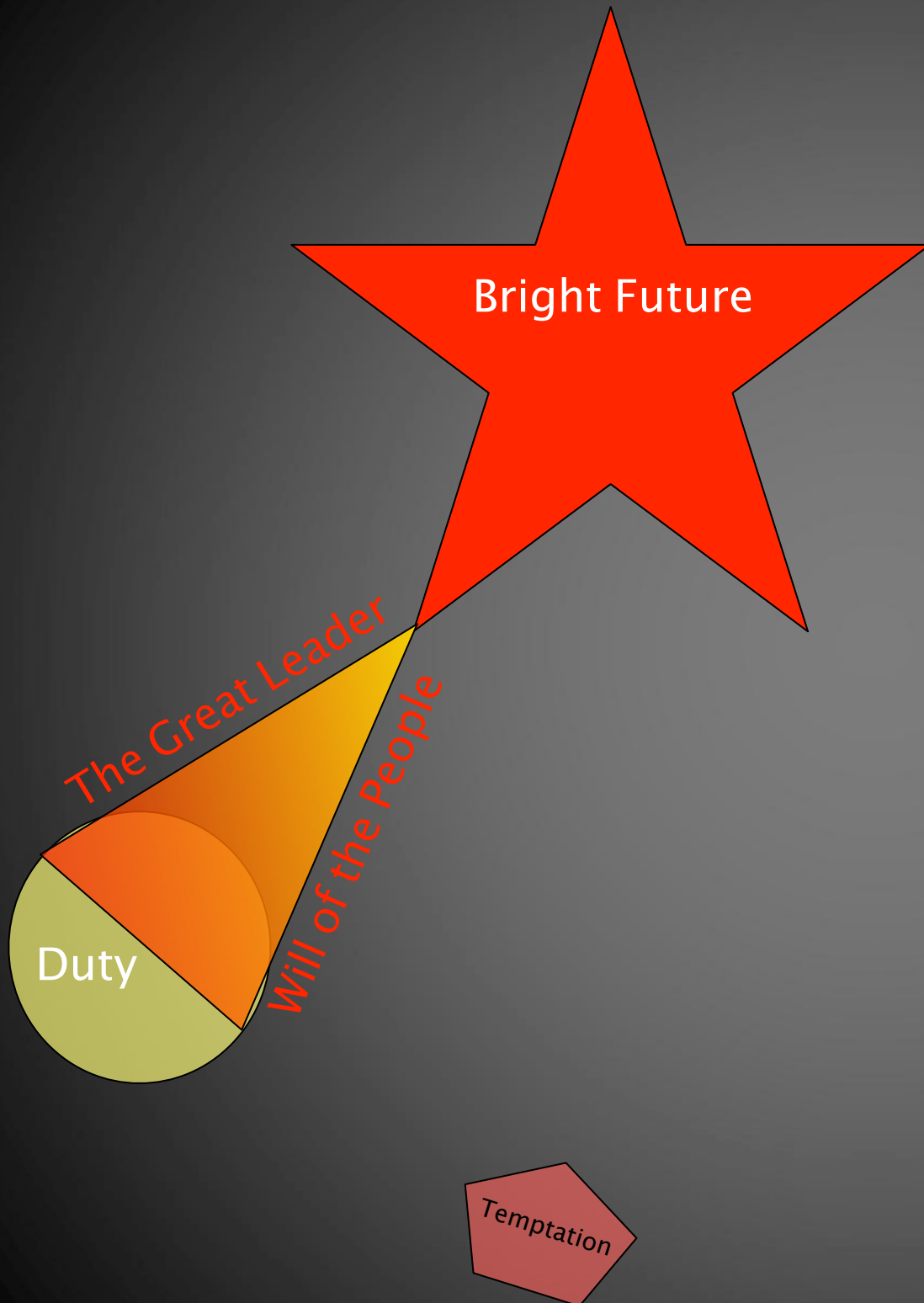
Immanuel Kant: Radical Evil,
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/rad-evil/>



Neither Kant nor anybody else from thinkers of XVIII-XIX centuries foresaw a possibility of tragic utopian transmutations, having apparently the same structure...

Important parts of Kantian moral philosophy were lost though.





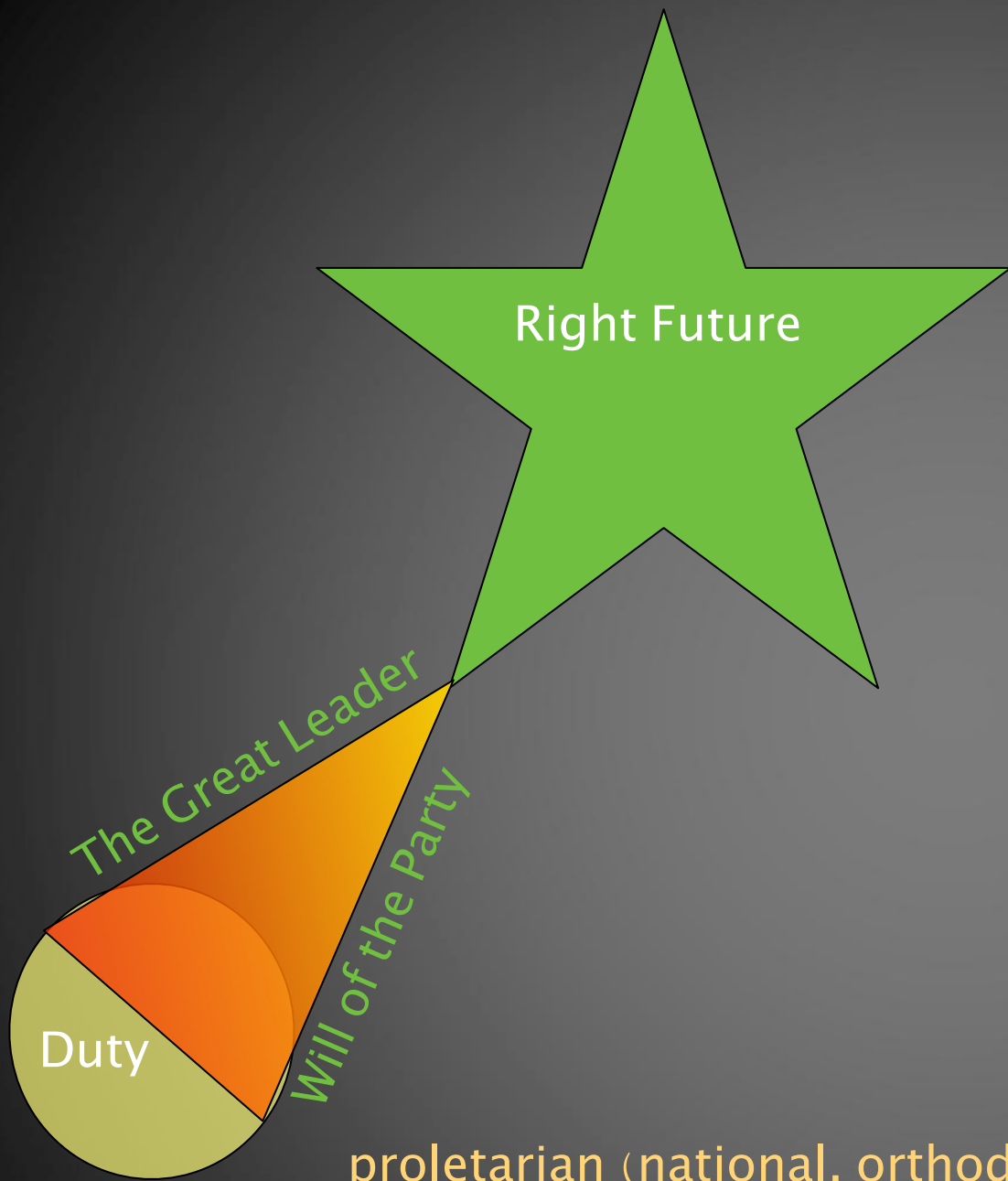
Important parts of Kantian moral philosophy were lost:

the freedom of thought as necessary condition of the moral act;

equality of humans as free moral beings. Masses and enemies are objects to be arranged by the leaders.

How and why did that happen?

We already discussed one of the answers: scientism, the absolutization of reason (Hayek).



Similar transmutations happened, when a power of church overshadowed the free personal connection with God. As a result, a totalitarian theocracy is established: God is eclipsed by the church, freedom is negated, and history is stopped:

Byzantine Empire,
Inquisition

Similar utopian structures can appear on a basis of religious, atheistic, neopagan, or neutral (as eco-fascist) teachings.

proletarian (national, orthodox, human) duty=to follow
ultimate good of the Right Future justifies everything

General features of the totalitarian teachings:

Values are fully collective, individual life is a means, not the end.

Personal contact with God either does not exist or reduced to a pure and clear obedience under a guidance of the supervisors.

Freedom to think becomes an anti-value. Rationalism and even common sense are suppressed.

Humanity is seen as consisting of three principally different groups: leaders (to inspire and direct), masses (to follow) and enemies (to be eliminated).

What drives humanity into these black holes of history?

Hannah Arendt on Radical Evil:

It is inherent in our entire philosophical tradition that we cannot conceive of a “radical evil,” and this is true both for Christian theology, which conceded even to the Devil himself a celestial origin, as well as for Kant, the only philosopher who, in the word he coined for it, at least must have suspected the existence of this evil even though he immediately rationalized it in the concept of a “perverted ill will” that could be explained by comprehensible motives. Therefore, we actually have nothing to fall back on in order to understand a phenomenon that nevertheless confronts us with its overpowering reality and breaks down all standards we know. There is only one thing that seems to be discernible: we may say that radical evil has emerged in connection with a system in which all men have become equally superfluous. The manipulators of this system believe in their own superfluosity as much as in that of all others, and the totalitarian murderers are all the more dangerous because they do not care if they themselves are alive or dead, if they ever lived or never were born. The danger of the corpse factories and holes of oblivion is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms. (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1951)



Hannah Arendt
1906-1975

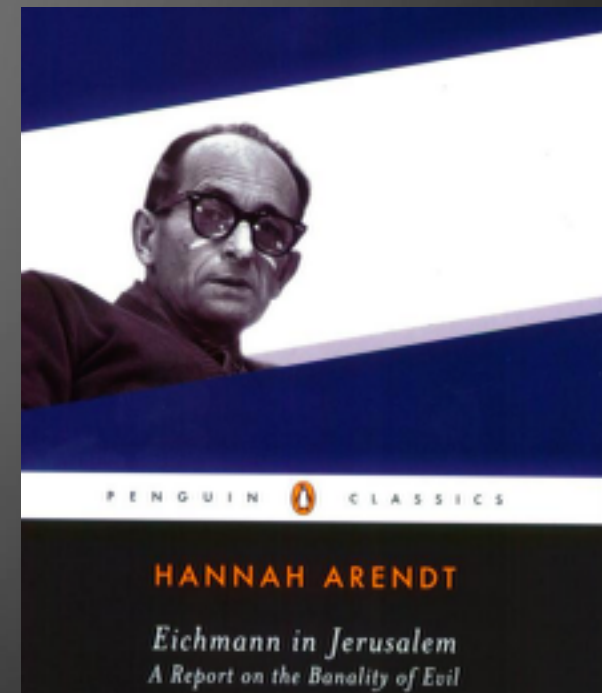
Hannah Arendt on the Banality of Evil:

“He was in complete command of himself, nay, he was more: he was completely himself. Nothing could have demonstrated this more convincingly than the grotesque silliness of his last words. He began by stating emphatically that he was a Gottgläubiger, to express in common Nazi fashion that he was no Christian and did not believe in life after death. He then proceeded: “After a short while, gentlemen, we shall all meet again. Such is the fate of all men. Long live Germany, long live Argentina, long live Austria. I shall not forget them.” In the face of death, he had found the cliché used in funeral oratory. Under the gallows, his memory played him the last trick; he was “elated” and he forgot that this was his own funeral. It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us— the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying banality of evil.”

In his 1988 book *Justice, Not Vengeance*, **Wiesenthal** said: “The world now understands the concept of ‘desk murderer’. We know that one doesn’t need to be fanatical, sadistic, or mentally ill to murder millions; that it is enough to be a loyal follower eager to do one’s duty.”



1963



Summing up...

Both H. Arendt (1951) and K. Popper (1968) significantly distorted Kantian concept of radical evil: “root of evil” was substituted by “ultimate evil”. I do not understand why they did that; this substitution appears to me unjustified.

We considered several ways how evil comes into the world:

Kantian propensity to choose happiness (or to avoid suffering) against duty, his “radical evil” (example: judge under pressure);

Totalitarian romanticism and the fear of freedom (Fromm);

Banality of evil, convenient thoughtlessness.

Is it possible to “endure till the end”?

Popper: No.

Kant: Power of reason and moral revolution are the ways to do that.

Who was right?

Summing up...

If you believe that Popper was right, than what is the reason resisting evil at all, since you know that you will lose anyway? If the hight cannot be defended, it would be reasonable to retreat with minimal losses and possibly with some bonuses...

Thus, Popper's moral philosophy turns to be a means of radical evil, both in his own and Kantian meanings of this term...