

Sessional:

Friendship and Motherhood meet: A reading of Hannah Arendt and Julia Kristeva.

Both Hannah Arendt's (1906-1975) and Julia Kristeva's (1941-) thoughts have been used to opposite ends by various theorists. They are read as either extreme left or right.

For a Stateless Jew, ever displaced from her home, it was Arendt's enduring friendships and the practice of empathy underlying the philosophy of friendship, that worked as a defensive bulwark against the possibilities of totalitarianism. In a report on the role of Jewish Councils in deportation of Jews she had referred to the Eichmann as 'banality of evil', to refer to banality as ironic and limit the appeal of the evil. This was misread as un-empathetic and Arendt was accused of suggesting that Jewish leadership was complicit in Holocaust.

Julia Kristeva's theory on maternal passion and motherhood have been argued on one hand to be politically leftist and useful for feminist strategies (Moi) and on the other to be politically right-wing and dangerous for feminist strategies (Spivak). Kristeva's thought is reduced very quickly to a set of bipolar opposites by her critics, from ultraanarchistic to ultraconservative.

In this sessional, students are expected to read Hannah Arendt's philosophy of friendship and Julia Kristeva's theory on motherhood in order to be able to understand how the left and the right can at times curiously converge by way of an argument that focusses, for instance, on losing homes to find homes (Arendt) and losing the self to be one with the self (Kristeva). Friendship and Motherhood can be considered prototypes of the development of relationships with another person. The readings will possibly be an understanding of relations unfolding in life with oneself and others, of situations unfolding to meet the general and the particular. How does one attach through detaching and how does one remember by forgetting, the sessional asks as it tries to understand the two theorists, each of whom is read by her critics in bipolar opposites.

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