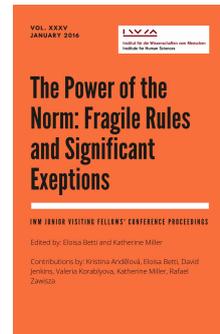


From Ordinary Exception to Exemplary Exclusion: Arendt-Jaspers Epistolary Exchange on Jewishness and Nationality

Rafał Zawisza

IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conference Proceedings, Vol.
XXXV © 2016 by the author

Readers may redistribute this article to other individuals for noncommercial use, provided that the text and this note remain intact. This article may not be reprinted or redistributed for commercial use without prior written permission from the author. If you have any questions about permissions, please contact the IWM.



Abstract: This text relates to the philosophical dissent between Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers from the 1930s, when they were bitterly discussing the question of national rootedness and human groundlessness on the basis of a nascent biography of Rahel Varnhagen (a German Jewess from Romantic epoch) that Arendt was writing at that time. When it comes to method, it is particularly important to stress that the text examines the concepts used by Jaspers and Arendt in their private correspondence: since the status of these concepts was unstable, in a process of establishing distinctions, an emphasis is put more on the context of their appearance than on their supposed meaning. In effect, concepts uncover their strategic, polemical dimension, which is in that case their only initial, unstable meaning, which usually remains invisible.

When Hannah Arendt published her doctoral thesis in 1929 about the concept of love in Augustine, she had already become involved in another research project. This time the choice of the topic was shaped partially by her newly developed ties with political Zionism, but more profoundly by her friendship with one of its leaders, Kurt Blumenfeld[2]. In the centre of her interest appeared the Jewish question, reinstated in the new, extremely dangerous guise of the racist politics propagated mainly by the Nazis. Writing her next book, a biography of Rahel Varnhagen, Arendt was hoping to explain why the emancipation of the German Jews came to naught. This seemingly successful project, which can be traced back to the Enlightenment, collapsed precisely with the Weimar Republic, that is, where the Nazi regime initiated gradual dismantlement of the right of the Jews to German citizenship. An answer to the question of why emancipation was doomed from the very beginning must be as dense as was that process[3]. One of the explanations, summarized emphatically by Artemy Magun is that

the late Modernity, which brought forward a large-scale re-politicization of society and which succeeded in creating of a legal state (*Rechtstaat*) and a nation state, problematized the status of Jews as subjects of law. In the nineteenth century, the Jewish question was generalized to problematize the relationship between religion and the liberal democratic state, and the universality of nation-states (Magun 2012, 548–549).

Arendt intended to cast more light on those questions from a quite unusual angle. *Primo*, she decided to look more closely at the epoch when the first rudiments of Jewish emancipation (alias assimilation) were prepared and discussed. *Secundo*, and more significantly, she chose a particular singularity, a German Jewess who achieved a limited freedom among the enlightened elites, to illustrate the hidden premises, betrayed hopes, and personal illusions condensed into the emancipatory enterprise. She managed to portray how Jewish upward mobility was not followed by political recognition, how someone treated up until then as an ordinary exception – ordinary, because envisioned and accepted by Christians within social *ordo*; exceptional, because accepted just on the basis of a specific separation (ghetto) – became a perfect candidate for exemplary exclusion, gradually expanded until the point of no return: physical extermination.

The aim of this text is not to deliberate on the Varnhagen book, but to draw attention to the correspondence of Hannah Arendt with her professor, Karl Jaspers, maintained during the time of preparation of this book. This task demands a perspective that differs from both the *Begriffsgeschichte* and intellectual history, because both authors underline the preliminary character of their ideas. This means that we can observe a fascinating moment when ideas are being born. More emphasis will be put on the uniqueness of voice that preceded written words.

The first letter from the Arendt-Jaspers exchange seems to be a harbinger of further concerns embodied in the above-mentioned biography. In it, Arendt posed questions about her teacher's lecture regarding Schellingian theory of history. She started from a statement that may sound completely uncontroversial: "I can understand history only from the perspective which I myself occupy" (Arendt to Jaspers, 15 July 1926, 3). But she very quickly complicated it. What bothered Arendt is not that the point external to history – cosmic or divine perspective – cannot be attained. Instead, she reflected upon different ways of approaching history within "the immanent frame"[4]. The first one is based on introversion:

What I am able to understand in this way I make my own; what I cannot understand I reject. [...] How is it possible, on the basis of this view of the interpretation of history, to learn something new from history? Doesn't it make history simply a *sequence of illustrations* for what I want to say and for what I already know without benefit of history? (Arendt to Jaspers, 15 July 1926, 3)

That point is obviously directed against the tradition of German idealism and the abuses of Hegel's legacy that its enemies used to detect and explain by quoting his famous reaction in answer to an accusation that his theory contradicts reality. He responded: "the worse for the facts!" Although it is too simplistic to understand Hegel's philosophy in that way[5], it isn't when we take into account how the idea of necessity of historical processes

was exploited, serving as a self-justification for authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Arendt's resistance towards Hegelianism is well known. For her, it was not only a methodological discussion: when the life of someone depends on somebody's else vision of history, then methodology can be seen as ethics.

For that reason, Arendt was ready to break the academic rules in order to say something essential. She was perfectly conscious of her "violations of scholarly rigor and objectivity" (Arendt to Jaspers, 10 October 1928, 3) already when she was preparing her doctoral dissertation and excusing herself before her supervisor. We can find the next evidence of that manner of writing in Jaspers' letter directed to her just after having received the text of her lecture about Rahel Varnhagen. He wrote: "despite the deliberate objectivity of your presentation, something else is going on here" (Jaspers to Arendt, 20 March 1930, 10).

In order to explain Jaspers' reservations and to find a name for this "something else", let me remind the reader that he had already noticed Arendt's stance when he was writing a review of her doctorate, i.e. before she initiated investigations on Rahel:

Neither historical nor philosophical interests are primary here. The impulse behind this work is ultimately something not explicitly stated: through philosophical work with ideas the author wants to justify her freedom from Christian possibilities, which also attract her (Arendt and Jaspers 1992, 690).

He didn't name this "impulse" that had predisposed the young student to resist Christian temptation, so we do not know Jaspers' exact intention: whether he had in mind Judaism or her secular convictions. However, while reading her doctorate it becomes quite clear that she stood up for Jews as neighbours of Christian fellows, and by introducing this vital distinction, she as though "provoked" Augustine, or rather his textual corpus, to make explicit to what extent his notion of neighbourly love is inclusive or exclusive. Her universalist reading of Judeochristianity was directed against Christian political theology but also, beyond this, against any discourse that has an inclination to hide its inner contradictions at the expense of persecuted individuals or marginalized groups. To the contrary, Arendt represented a clear conviction that any universalism deserving that name must reconcile within itself as many divisions and distinctions as possible. Against a theodicy of history, whether motivated religiously or philosophically – which corresponds to Christian economy of salvation and Hegelian dialectics – she held to the individual, to any particular existence as a cornerstone of universalism.

At first, Jaspers even praised Arendt's method of interpretation, saying that "she does not try to assemble the didactic pieces of the whole into a system, but focuses instead on how they do not fit together, and so gains insight into the existential origins of these ideas" (Arendt and Jaspers 1992, 690). Nevertheless, we must be aware that this comment was made with regard to Arendt's doctorate, and since Christianity wasn't a sore point for Jaspers, there was no great difficulty for him to recognise her independence. The grave constraint between German philosopher and his Jewish student arose when she started her project about Rahel Varnhagen, exposing problematic presumptions on which the failed attempt of the "German-Jewish synthesis" was built. By doing this she harmed his enlightened persuasions and simultaneous allegiance to the idea of German essence,

inherited from Max Weber, his intellectual mentor[6]. But it was not visible at the beginning, when Jaspers critically commented on the fragments of the book about Varnhagen that he received from Arendt. He responded initially as a philosopher, defending purity of his existential interpretation of existence[7]:

You objectify “Jewish existence [Existenz]” existentially – and in doing so perhaps cut existential thinking [Philosophieren der Möglichkeit] off at the roots. The concept of being-thrown-back-on-oneself can no longer be taken seriously if it is *grounded* [begründet] in terms of fate of the Jews instead of being rooted in itself [statt in sich selbst zu wurzeln]. Philosophically, the contrast between floating free [Freischweben] and being rooted [Verwurzelt-Sein] strikes me as very shaky indeed. The passages from the letters, which you have chosen so well, suggest something quite different to me: “Jewishness” is a *façon de parler* or a manifestation of a selfhood originally negative in its outlook and not comprehensible from the historical situation. It is a fate [Schicksal] that did not experience liberation from the enchanted castle (Jaspers to Arendt, 20 March 1930, 10).

His first charge could be translated like this: “you dared to contaminate philosophical discourse with historical *facta bruta*, with accidental, contingent details”. Jaspers is concentrated on the concepts, taking a back seat to “fate of the Jews” – a topic which was at the heart of Arendt’s analysis. This manoeuvre was possible only on the basis of some inclusive exclusion (to use Giorgio Agamben’s term): for him Jewishness was some kind of additional, not necessary adornment – since *façon de parler* indicates a rhetorical surplus value of speech that need not be treated literally, seriously – which implies that Jaspers was still speaking from the position of enlightened German who unreservedly accepted conditions of Jewish emancipation within an ostensibly secular state. He overlooked the fact that during the XIXth century it was the fluctuating idea of national rootedness that superseded Christianity in the role of the higher legitimacy of the political unity. And that German nationalism will not be as magnanimous as Christendom, which kept at least a separate place for Jews, treating them as ordinary exceptions. But notice, that the very word “German” still did not appear in their conversation and it would not appear until Arendt provoked Jaspers personally, criticizing his book on Max Weber.

Her response confirms that Arendt was quite willing to agree with Jaspers’ last statement – namely that “it is a fate that did not experience liberation from the enchanted castle” – but precisely this point compels her to ask a question not interesting for her teacher: why? why did the Jews find themselves in such a historical aporia? Thus Arendt historicized a notion and deciding on its “exemplification”, she embodied it within a concrete horizon. That is why even if philosophically “the contrast between floating free and being rooted [seems to be – RZ] very shaky”, as Jaspers noted, historically it became harsh reality for many German Jews, especially for those who remained in a middle road to assimilation after they had left the ethnic boundaries of ghetto. What for Jaspers had lingered in invisibility, scared his Jewish student – thinking in the midst of growing anti-Semitism – namely this possible gehenna from ordinary exception to exemplary exclusion, the fact

that Jews and other persecuted groups must have been living under the conditions that were among the numerous things in heaven and earth that philosophers didn't dream about. She answered as follows:

This [...] is only a *preliminary* work meant to show that on the foundation of being Jewish [auf dem Boden des Judeseins] a certain possibility of existence can arise that I have tentatively and for the time being called fatefulness [Schicksalhaftigkeit]. This fatefulness arises from the very fact of "foundationlessness" [auf dem Grund einer Bodenlosigkeit] and can occur *only* in a separation from Judaism. I did not intend at all to provide an actual interpretation of this having-a-fate. And for such an interpretation the fact of Judaism would be of no importance anyhow. An objectification is in fact there in a certain sense, but not an objectification of Jewish existence (as a *gestalt*, for example) but of the historical conditions of a life [geschichtlichen Lebenszusammenhanges] which can, I think, mean something (though not an objective idea or anything like that). It seems as if certain people are so exposed in their own lives (and only in their lives, not as persons!) that they become, as it were, junction points and concrete objectifications of "life." Underlying my objectification of Rahel is a self-objectification that is not a reflective or retrospective one but, rather, from the very outset a mode of "experiencing," of learning, appropriate to her. What this all really adds up to – fate, being exposed, what life means – I can't really say in the abstract (and I realize that in trying to write about it here). Perhaps all I can try to do is illustrate it with examples. And that is precisely why I want to write a biography. In this case, interpretation has to take the path of repetition (Arendt to Jaspers, 24 March 1930, 11–12).

Not intending to exhaust the whole richness of Arendt's riposte in relation to her whole future theories, I will, however, try to stress some crucial points.

By using the term "fatefulness" she probably created – at least to some extent – a "neutral" basis for the political considerations. Why? Because she did not apply "judgement" (so important for her political thought), but described "the historical conditions of a life". Jewish exclusion is first and foremost presented as a historical coincidence, which is nevertheless not coincidental from the perspective of life itself, "always ready to resign from an individual" (as Arthur Schopenhauer stated in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*) – or even from a group if it is not determined enough to survive. Anyhow, a word "guilt" did not appear, so this would be a suggestion that Arendt wanted to expose the *status quo* rather than going too rapidly to conclusions. What is certain is that she, intentionally or not, prevented the possibility of blaming the Jews for their poor political condition.

But maybe I am wrong and Arendt is bitingly sarcastic in this fragment? In which way? Comparing and almost identifying the indifference of nature towards suffering with a philosophical tendency to produce abstract thinking; asking why the philosopher keeps silent when a particular singularity is wiped out and crushed, sometimes even massacred. Just like Arendt was likely to ask: "are you as indifferent as nature itself?", "why should I not demystify philosophical, or any other, neutrality, as cruelty?" – for sure, she couldn't address that question directly to Jaspers.

The above-mentioned quotation shows that Arendt did not essentialise Jewish existence, contrary to what Jaspers suggested. Instead, she followed a strategy through which individual life's passivity exposes itself to such an extent that it provokes and – by doing this – demystifies the core structure of reality that absorbs nature and history altogether. Jewishness served “only” as an example, because of its particular fate, which consisted of not being fully connected to any geopolitically grounded sovereign power[8].

The discussion got stuck at that frontier for some time. Meanwhile Arendt was working on the book on Rahel and was becoming more and more close to the Zionist movement. Those two factors permitted her a return to the topic of the groundlessness of identity, this time expressed in a new type of discourse, namely personal, spoken from the depths of one's own experience. It loomed in the air from the beginning, but neither Jaspers nor his Jewish student felt compelled to engage in *argumentum ad personam*. As a general rule, it is appropriate and just not to do that, but in critical circumstances it could be the opposite: negligence of someone's peculiarity – even if motivated by universalism and tolerance – could be even more harmful and exclusivist[9].

Since for Jaspers alluding to Arendt's provenance was difficult, she gave him a chance to raise the subject. In 1932 Jaspers published a book entitled *Max Weber: Deutsches Wesen im politischen Denken*. Arendt's first reaction was precisely an attack against the title, especially against the term “German essence”. It seems as if she reversed Jaspers's previous critique aimed at the “objectification” of Jewish existence and directed it against her teacher:

You will understand that I as a Jew can say neither yes nor no and that my agreement on this would be as inappropriate as an argument against it. I do not have to keep my distance as long as you are talking about the “meaning of the German world power” and its mission for the “culture of the future.” I can identify with this German mission, though I do not feel myself unquestioningly identical with it. For me, Germany means my mother tongue[10], philosophy, and literature. I can and must stand by all that. But I am obliged to keep my distance, I can neither be for nor against when I read Max Weber's wonderful sentence where he says that to put Germany back on her feet he would form an alliance with the devil himself. And it is this sentence which seems to me to reveal the critical point here (Arendt to Jaspers, 1 January 1933, 16).

Jaspers replied starting from a paternalist remark “I find it odd that you as a Jew want to set yourself apart from what is German” (Jaspers to Arendt, 3 January 1933, 17)[11]. Then he overtly admitted what aim had guided him to use the notion of “German essence”. He had decided to publish the book about Weber with a nationalistic publishing house to provide the youth with a concrete “ethical content”, namely he conflated Germanness with rationality and freedom. By doing this he had intended – even if “hopelessly”, as he acknowledged – to oblige and bind German history to the vision of united Europe (Jaspers to Arendt, 3 January 1933, 17–18). What is more, Jaspers persuaded Arendt that this task couldn't be accomplished without her affiliation. He expected the Jews to play the role of the Nietzschean “good Europeans”, the first ones who by affirming their double identity could save the notion of nation from biological limitation – but by means of that notion (that is why Jaspers mentioned the devilish aspect of that enterprise, because he

knew the risk implicit in his strategy). It is not certain what Jews were expected to implement into the German nation and how to discover reason as a universal dimension of humankind. What is certain, is that history took a direction contradictory to Jaspers' expectations.

The exchange of letters that I related here began from an abstract level. However, we can name it "abstract" only provisionally. Both Jaspers and Arendt were inwardly conscious about their intentions laying inside a conceptual costume. In the course of their correspondence from the 1930s philosophical and purely theoretical distinctions had elicited more "flesh", they became "fleshed out"[12] thanks to exemplification, identification, embodiment and incarnation, as well as their reversals, i.e. various forms of withdrawal from belongingness. This tendency toward concretisation is visible in the last letter from that intense exchange in January 1933. Then Jaspers wrote only one short letter in April, and the next is from Arendt who sent it from Paris in 1936. The results of this seemingly abstract debate are visibly incarnated in those letters, literally: the absence of communications seems eloquent. It marks Hannah Arendt's forced exile from Nazi Germany during the summer 1933.

This last letter of Jaspers before the fall of the Weimar Republic was written on 10th January, where the philosopher resigned from a philosophical mode of discourse in favour of *tête-à-tête* conversation and encouraged Hannah Arendt to treat life more seriously. He wrote:

We cannot live solely from negations, problems, and ambiguities. All these things need to be informed by something positive. How that is to be accomplished in the totality of human society without the devil is the question I would ask you, or with what other devil would you prefer to make your pact (Jaspers to Arendt, 10 January 1933, 19).

In tune with a new style of the discussion between them Jaspers ended his letter alluding to Arendt's description from 1st January of an apartment to which she had moved with her husband: "I would like very much to see your totally unstudentlike apartment. That you are 'proud' of it could be a subtle sign of that positive attitude I am looking for" (Jaspers to Arendt, 10 January 1933, p. 20). I think that in this small comment we can see Jaspers' helplessness towards Arendt's dilemmas. He began from prompting to the access of German nation as "historical totality", however, he confessed that what he had expected from Arendt was only a modest affirmation. He misused categories. But above all, Jaspers did not notice and appreciate Arendt's dually negative dialectics. We could grasp how it works, reading her last pre-exilic letter to Jaspers, a kind of *memento*:

Perhaps I have not understood what you meant by an emerging historical totality. I took it to mean that this character manifests itself from time to time in history. It would remain, then, despite its basic indeterminateness, something absolute, something untouched by history and German's destiny. I cannot identify with that, because I do not have in myself, so to speak, an attestation of "German character." Despite that, I am of course a German in the sense that I wrote of before. But I can't simply add a German historical and political

destiny to that. I know only too well how late and how fragmentary the Jews' participation in that destiny has been, how much by chance they entered into what was then a foreign history (Arendt to Jaspers, 6 January 1933, 18–19).

Then Arendt put forward what was for Jaspers the most acute argument, bringing his attention to “the immigrant stream from the east”, namely *Ostjuden*[13]. Even if assimilated Jews, who lived on German soil for ages, would be potentially accepted as fully recognized citizens – a wasted hope in those times – nonetheless, the status of newcomers disturbed the assimilationist model elaborated on the idea of *Bildung*, since *Ostjuden* had no cultural competences to be counted among Germans on the basis of “essence” or “character”. Arendt rejected Jaspers' presuppositions, because she was aware that her exceptional status as an assimilated Jewess could serve as a mean to exclude other Jews living in Germany, and that not all of them were Zionists inclinable toward emigration to Palestine. Furthermore, she had good reasons as well to worry about the legal status of German citizens of Jewish descent. Jaspers, on the contrary, tried to believe that nationalists would not be successful and that he would moderate their views. For that reason, she ended the letter to her teacher saying that “Germany in its old glory is your past. What my Germany is can hardly be expressed in one phrase, for any oversimplification – whether it is that of the Zionists, the assimilationists, or the anti-Semites – only serves to obscure the true problem of the situation” (Arendt to Jaspers, 6 January 1933, 19).

Thanks to dually negative dialectics Arendt detected the possible exclusion of Jewish masses that Jaspers overlooked. There is no doubt that she did not reject neither her teachers' good intentions, nor his enlightened universalism. She, who was blamed by Jaspers of being negativist and another time of reifying (Jewish) nationality, was in the end more vigilant, and she knew that only the insistence on the “basic indeterminateness” as a foundation of any identity could prepare a ground – paradoxically build on *Bodenlosigkeit* – for affirmation. Not until the last peculiar singularity would be welcomed as an indispensable part of the plurality of mankind would this process be accomplished. Moreover, too rapid solutions would disintegrate this process, since it demands both adamant courage and infinite patience[14].

Following those rules, I wouldn't like to conclude by pretending that the overcoming of “the true problem of the situation” depends on simple application of intellectual device put into the Real. But, to be sure, without this device we are lost. What arises on the Arendtian horizon as a dawn of hope is her reflection on natality. For her it was not certain at all why our common, but in each case singular, exceptionality given by birth must be sacrificed to unifying and dividing structure (of the nationality, gender, religion, etc.), since human existence gains its specificity from a primary indeterminacy. The natural unnaturalness of the human condition prompts us to think about some hidden unity which, rather than repetition, desires “gay and complex oddities”[15]. But it “can hardly be expressed in one phrase”.

Works Cited:

Adorno, Theodor W., *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholzen; with an introduction by Shierry Weber Nicholzen and Jeremy J. Shapiro, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass., 1993.

Arendt, Hannah, *Antisemitism*, in eadem, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, Schocken Books, New York, 2007.

Arendt, Hannah, and Kurt Blumenfeld, “...in keinem Besitz verwurzelt”: *Die Korrespondenz*, ed. by Ingeborg Nordmann and Iris Pilling, Rotbuch Verlag, Hamburg, 1995.

Arendt, Hannah, and Karl Jaspers, *Correspondence, 1926–1969*, ed. by Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, trans. by Robert and Rita Kimber, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1992.

Baehr, Peter, *The Grammar of Prudence: Arendt, Jaspers, and the Appraisal of Max Weber*, in Aschheim, Steven (ed.), *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001.

Barnouw, Dagmar, *Visible Spaces: Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1990.

Esposito, Roberto, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. and with an introduction by Timothy Campbell, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008.

Magun, Artemy, *Karl Marx and Hannah Arendt on the Jewish Question: Political Theology as a Critique*, “Continental Philosophy Review” 45, 4, 2012.

Petrovsky-Shtern, Yohanan, *Lenin’s Jewish Question*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010.

Santner, Eric L., *The Royal Remains: The People’s Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011.

Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2007.

Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth, *Hannah Arendt*, trans. by Manuel Lloris Valdés, Edicions Alfons el Magnànim – IVEI, València, 1993.

Notes:

[1] I would like to thank the editors of this paper, Eloisa Betti, Kate Miller, for their insightful comments. Additional thanks go to Paweł Marczewski. The text is a part of the project entitled “Wczesna twórczość Hanny Arendt w kontekście debat okresu republiki weimarskiej [Hannah Arendt’s early thought in the context of the debates in the Weimar Republic]” realised thanks to the subvention for the doctoral students’ research projects

at the Faculty of Artes Liberales (University of Warsaw), financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland (decision no. 216119/E-343/M/2015).

[2] For further details see their correspondence: Arendt and Blumenfeld 1995. Blumenfeld's influence should not be overestimated. Arendt remained also in touch with the circles of scholars which were occupied by German romanticism, among them Benno von Wiese, a student of Friedrich Gundolf, who himself formed part of the *George-Kreis*, see Young-Bruehl 1993, 104.

[3] Arendt provided such an answer, writing in the 1930s, simultaneously with the book about Rahel, the essay entitled *Antisemitismus*, which is different in comparison with the first part of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, see Arendt 2007, 46–121.

[4] I refer here to the self-description and spiritual condition of modernity presented by Charles Taylor. It would be very fruitful to follow his studies on subjectivity to examine the problem posed by Arendt in *Rahel Varnhagen*. Not having place here to elaborate this issue, I limit myself to point at intellectual project that seems to be in tune with secular sensitivity of Arendt. See Taylor 2007, especially chapter 15.

[5] See Adorno's explanation of this phrase: Adorno 1993, 31.

[6] For further elaboration of cumbersome role played by the figure of Max Weber in Arendt-Jaspers relations throughout the years, see Peter Baehr 2001, 306–324. Baehr's paper kept up with incomparable subtlety with help of which Hannah Arendt, respecting difficult laws of friendship, was trying to express her critique of Weber, sometimes falling back on voluble silence when other rhetoric methods failed.

[7] To be honest, one must highlight two things. Firstly, that Jaspers strongly supported Arendt's study. Secondly, that following remarks of Jaspers and Arendt's response were regarded by both of them to be only a preliminary impressions. For that reason, it shouldn't be treated as crystallised and ultimate words, but rather as a part of a longer conversation following the process of writing the book. However, even those impressions can say something or, maybe, even more than would say a well-prepared disquisition. See, for instance: Jaspers to Arendt, 16 November 1931, p. 14, where he additionally said that he gave a personal conversation precedence over "doctrinaire-sounding written reply".

[8] By the way, this double suspicion makes Arendt wiser than those thinkers who analyse biopolitics and who exclude from their intellectual horizon the most obvious exclusive force – nature with its deadly mechanisms; it seems as if some philosophers, boringly tired with civilisation and its discontents, have forgotten about the world that exists outside the bubble in which we still live. An example, but one that can be multiplied infinitely in many authors: even if Roberto Esposito – one of the thinkers representing affirmative biopolitics – states that his reflection on immunology proceeds alongside the division between biology and politics (see Esposito 2008, 45), he ultimately remains liege to what Michel Foucault had thought him: "It is history that designs these complexes [the

genetic variations from which the various populations arise] before erasing them; there is no need to search for brute and definitive biological facts that from the depths of ‘nature’ would impose themselves on history” (Foucault’s words quoted in: *ibidem*, 31).

[9] It was not only a question of the enlightened Germans’ kind-hearted “blindness”. Assimilated Jews, too, often did not mention their ethnic origin. Hannah Arendt confessed in the interview with Günter Gaus, that she realised that she is Jewish as a girl, only because of insults heard on the street. The same could be said about another representative of Eastern-European intelligentsia – Lenin: “To speak of someone’s ethnic origin in the Ulianovs’ milieu was the height of bad taste. Deeply rooted in the values of the enlightenment, the family abhorred any ethnic labelling. For the Blanks and the Ulianovs, identifying somebody as a Jew was tantamount to conjuring antisemitic stereotypes”, see Petrovsky-Shtern 2010, 66.

[10] The same she repeated in the interview with Gaus: *Was bleibt? Es bleibt die Muttersprache*.

[11] It is highly ironic and at the same time significant – when it comes to the “neither-nor” tactics of Arendt which I call here “dually negative dialectics” – that as a result of the report written during Eichmann trial, she was once again objurgated by another authoritative, paternal figure, namely by Gershom Scholem, who blamed Arendt of not having enough love for Jewish people.

[12] I follow in this text intuitions borrowed from Eric Santner who created “a theory of ‘the flesh’ as the sublime substance that the various rituals, legal and theological doctrines, and literary and social fantasies surrounding the monarch’s singular physiology (the arcana that fill the pages of Kantorowicz’s non-canonical study) originally attempted to shape and manage”, see Santner 2011, ix–x.

[13] It is estimated that in the 1930s a fifth or even a quarter of Jews living in Germany were born abroad, see Barnouw 1990, 26.

[14] For example, overestimation only of “patience” resulted in that the “[...] assimilation in Germany has meant an ongoing process in the sense of ‘unfinished’ or ‘incomplete’ rather than ‘open’” (Barnouw 1990, 37). In effect, a legal recognition of Jews as German citizens would have been postponed endlessly by multiplying new constraints and barriers, like the demand of *Bildung*, while at the same time illiterate German peasants were regarded as citizens only on the ethnic premises.

[15] These are Philip K. Dick’s words from *Deus Irae*. I would like to thank Agata Bielik-Robson for paying my attention to them.

Preferred citation: Zawisza, Rafael. 2016. From Ordinary Exception to Exemplary Exclusion: Arendt-Jaspers Epistolary Exchange on Jewishness and Nationality. In: *The Power of the Norm: Fragile Rules and Significant Exeptions*, ed. E. Betti, K. Miller, Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows’ Conferences, Vol. 35.