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Abstract

This article explores pr nnah Arendt. Thoughtlessness was more complicated for Arendt than her interpreters have acknowledged. She described it as the failure of conscience; as ideology; and as an everyday condition that sustains ideology. While the first has been widely acknowledged, the latter two have been virtually ignored. Arendt identifies the cultivation of everyday thoughtfulness as a remedy for failures of conscience, but this provides no defence against ideological and everyday thoughtlessness, which can actually reinforce failures of conscience. To address them Arendt turns to storytelling. But narratives can combat *and* reinforce thoughtlessness. To confront thoughtlessness we need to attend to narrative production and reception. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur I call for deeper engagement between political theorists, literary critics and philosophers of literature on the roles of narrative in promoting or undermining thinking in contemporary politics.

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