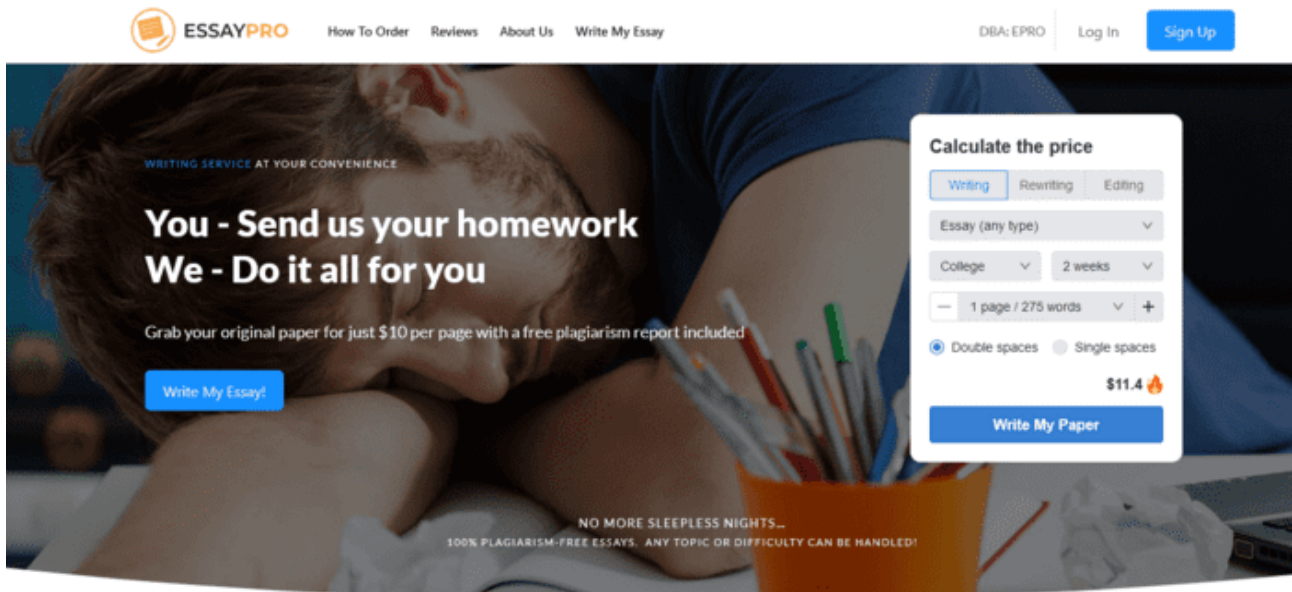


# Eichmann in Jerusalem by Hannah Arendt Essay



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In the book *Eichmann Jerusalem* by Hannah Arendt, we are shown a man that is seemingly normal and a common type of man. As the trial goes on, we begin to see deep inside the mind of this banal, monstrous man. Evil does not always have a “look”, sometimes evil is found in the most ordinary of men with a cliché lifestyle and a stamp of approval from half-a-dozen psychiatrists. Eichmann was a simple man that thought of himself as always being the law-abiding citizen. Eichmann stated in court that he had always tried to abide by Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative (Arendt, 135). Arendt argues that Eichmann had essentially taken the wrong lesson from Kant. Kant's moral philosophy is so closely bound up with man's faculty of judgment, which rules out blind obedience. Knowing this, we learn that Eichmann could not have just been going along with the Nazis without knowing anything that was going on or the consequences. Eichmann had not recognized the 'golden rule' and principle of reciprocity implicit in the categorical imperative, but had only understood the concept of one man's actions coinciding with general law. Eichmann attempted to follow the spirit of the laws he carried out, as if the legislator himself would approve. In Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative, the legislator is the moral self and all men are legislators. In other words, we are all taking on the roll of the leader. In Eichmann's formulation, the legislator was Hitler. Eichmann claimed this changed when he was charged with carrying out the Final Solution,

at which point Arendt claims "he had ceased to live according to Kantian principles, that he had known it, and that he had consoled himself with the thoughts that he no longer 'was master of ..... middle of paper .....t right, but yet,he never quit. He never said no. In saying that he had to disappear, it's as if he is stating he had to not see that consequences of his actions. He did not want to get his hands dirty.We conclude that Eichmann was incapable of articulating anything other than what he had heard all his life. He only spoke in cliches. However, he did not live the cliché lifestyle. He finally got his dream of being part of something that was bigger than himself. Arendt for the first time utilizes the term banality of evil at the end of the book stating, "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-denying banality of evil" (252)Works CitedArendt, Hannah. Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil. New York: Penguin, 2006.

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