

‘The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again.’

### **Mistaken ‘Common Sense’ Responses**

#### Prohibition

- ‘To normal common sense it is plausible to appeal to bonds that check the sadistic, destructive, and ruinous impulse with an emphatic “You must not.” One senses very quickly the untruth of bonds that are required only so that they produce a result—even if it be good—without the bonds being experienced by people as something substantial in themselves.’
- Emphasizing prohibitions leads to ‘heteronomy, a dependence on rules, on norms that cannot be justified by the individual’s own reason.’
- ‘The very willingness to connive with power and to submit outwardly to what is stronger under the guise of a norm’ leads to a ‘permanent compulsion to obey orders.’

#### Imperative

- ‘I do not believe it would help much to appeal to eternal values, at which the very people who are prone to commit such atrocities would merely shrug their shoulders. I also do not believe that enlightenment about the positive qualities possessed by persecuted minorities would be of much use.’
- ‘The exhortation to love—even in its imperative form, that one *should* do it—is itself’ part of an ‘ideology of coldness’ prevalent in our society. ‘It bears the compulsive, oppressive quality that counteracts the ability to love.’

#### Collectivism

- ‘People who blindly slot themselves into the collective already make themselves into something like inert material, extinguish themselves as self-determined beings. With this comes the willingness to treat others as an amorphous mass. I call those who behave in this way the “manipulative character.”’
- Such characters are often, in hierarchical structures, ‘obsessed by the desire of *doing things*, indifferent to the content of such action. [They] make a cult of action, of so called *efficiency*.’

#### Being Hard

- ‘The idea that virility consists in the maximum degree of endurance long ago became a screen-image for masochism that, as psychology has demonstrated, aligns itself all too easily with sadism.’
- ‘Whoever is hard with himself earns the right to be hard with others and avenges himself for the pain he had to repress.’ In short, ‘being hard, the vaunted quality education inculcates, means absolute indifference toward pain as such.’

### **Alternative Approaches**

#### Autonomy

‘To confront the danger of a recurrence is to work against the brute predominance of [...] collectivization.’ Indeed, ‘the single genuine power standing against the principle of Auschwitz is autonomy, if I might use the Kantian expression: the power of reflection, of self-determination, of not cooperating.’

#### Self-reflection

‘The only education that has any sense at all is an education toward critical self-reflection.’

#### Vulnerability

‘An education must be promoted that no longer sets a premium on pain and the ability to endure pain. In other words: education must take seriously an idea [not] unfamiliar to philosophy: that anxiety must not be repressed. When anxiety is not repressed, when one permits oneself to have, in fact, all the anxiety that this reality warrants, then precisely by doing that, much of the destructive effect of unconscious and displaced anxiety will probably disappear.’