"Can there be Education after Auschwitz? Adorno, Nussbaum, Levinas"
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Abstract:

In his 1966 radio interview, “Education after Auschwitz,” Theodor Adorno declares, “the premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again…. ” Responding to the atrocities of the Holocaust, Adorno claims that barbarism is not something that poses merely a threat of a relapse; Auschwitz was the relapse. His solution: create an environment that will prevent another Auschwitz by cultivating individuals who can resist authoritarian thinking. Nearly forty-five years later, Martha Nussbaum argues that the humanities are central to developing the courageous individuals who could stand strong against this authoritarian thinking. Even if Nussbaum and Adorno are correct, I argue that this resistance to authoritarian thinking will not by itself mitigate the danger that he fears. This paper turns to Levinas’s essays on Jewish education for two reasons. First, the paper demonstrates why the prescription offered by both Adorno and Nussbaum while necessary is not sufficient. Second, the paper considers why Levinas’s approach to Jewish education might provide a necessary supplement to Adorno’s proposal.

Professor Claire Katz is Professor of Philosophy and Women’s and Gender Studies at Texas A&M University. Her areas of research specialisation are 20th century European philosophy, Philosophy of Education, Feminist Philosophy and Modern Jewish Philosophy. An expert on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, her extensive publications include Levinas, Judaism, and the Feminine: The Silent Footsteps of Rebecca (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003). Levinas and the Crisis of Humanism (Indiana University Press, 2013) and An Introduction to Modern Jewish Philosophy (I.B.Tauris Press, 2014 London). She is a member of the Editorial board of the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy, and Levinas Studies: an Annual Review and has a significant record of public engagement with her work.