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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Responsibility in Politics, Science, and Philosophy

An old woman in a small town in postwar Austria, a shopkeeper, once broke her silence regarding her experience during and after the war. "Be careful," she cautions me, "during the war, many customers were secretly pointing fingers at others, while whispering, Jew! Jew! And then, just a short time after the war, the very same people were secretly pointing fingers at others, while whispering, Nazi! Nazi! For the most part, it was the affluent ones who behaved like this," she murmured, closing her eyes while holding my hand: "Just be careful."

Conversations regarding moral and political responsibility are frequently dominated by loud and whispering voices, practicing virtue signaling. Perfectly in tune with the demands of the hour, the marketplace of ideas is skillfully regulated and masterfully monitored. Hence, this mechanism facilitates discussion of selected past events that glorify the established order of the present. However, when internationally established orders of the present times lethally infringe upon one of the most fundamental human rights, namely, the right to be let alone, there is literally no opposition to halt this malaise. Group identity, brand loyalty, cancel culture, digital currency, speech regulation, genetic engineering (the new eugenics), food monopolies, stealth digital surveillance, and similar regulatory measures are ready to be deployed onto an unsuspecting public, and without countermeasures of any relevance by elected politicians, scientists, or career philosophers. Which one of the ancient sages or visionaries would have foreseen that, in their annual meetings in Davos, China, and the United Arab Emirates, a cabal of approximately one thousand leaders of multinational corporations and agencies allegedly claim the right to control and influence governments in an effort to determine the quality of life for approximately eight billion people on Planet Earth who are, in essence, deemed to be a commodity? Ah! I'd better heed the old woman's advice.

In his capacity as guest editor for this edition of *Existenz*, Mats Andrén assembled a collection of carefully selected essays on global responsibility. These essays focus on the new political realities that emerged after the Second World War. A detailed description of them is given in Andren's editorial.

This edition also includes an English translation of an unpublished 1949 letter from Karl Jaspers to Karl Barth. We thank the Karl Jaspers Stiftung for permission to publish it. Furthermore, an Editor's Note addresses a perceived translation issue in Ola Sigurdson's essay.

February 27, 2026

Helmut Wautischer
Editor-in-Chief

Additional presentations on this topic are posted at <https://www.youtube.com/@ExistenzJournal/videos>.

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