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Week 8 Questions

1. In *Survival in Auschwitz*, the people in the camps are treated like cattle. They keep them on a strict schedule of work and feeding. They control where they go and when they go to bed. The Nazis treated the people as if they were animals being prepared for slaughter. It also describes that their names aren’t used. Each prisoner is known by the number tattooed on their arm. In the speech to the SS officers, Heinrich Himmler says that the Jews were trying to destroy German culture. The Jews were then viewed as enemies of Germany. The Jews were also separated onto their own areas called the ghetto. This dehumanized them because it showed the Germans believed they didn’t deserve to be a part of their society.

1. He uses the term “geometrical madness” to describe Auschwitz. He describes that it is madness because they “annihilate us first as men in order to kill us more slowly afterwards.” The Nazis destroyed the men’s spirit, so they could have them work longer. He describes it as geometrical because of the organization of the camp. Everyday has the same schedule and eating times. Everyone is just going through the same motions to survive another day. He describes that even the men’s footsteps go along with the beat of the drum.
2. Levi talks about physical survival and mental survival in the book. In terms of physical survival, he mostly wrote about what necessary to keep yourself alive. He talks about how to get enough food and how to survive through the selection days. He also writes a lot about mental survival and what parts of the human mind perish from being in Auschwitz. Levi describes that the human instinct of surviving at all costs becomes the main portion of everyone’s mind. The part of the human mind that is used in everyday society perishes. People in Auschwitz no longer look to the future. He describes that the word tomorrow doesn’t mean anything anymore. Surviving in the present is the only thing that matters. Also, people begin to care less about those around them and concentrate on keeping themselves alive. The part of the mind that separates humans from animals dies when the men enter Auschwitz.

1. Himmler believed that women should have children outside of marriage to increase the population and allow for more soldiers in the army. Christians are very against this idea because they believe in a strong marriage between a man and a woman. Since Christians and the Catholic Church made up most of the population in Germany, his ideas weren’t made public to prevent outcry among the people.

1. Many Jews believed that there was no hope for them and the only way to spread information about what the Germans were doing to them. In the Moeller documents, Kaplan describes that it is his “historical mission” to keep a diary so other people will know what happened. The dehumanization of the Jews was a large cause of this. Since the Jews were dehumanized by the Nazis, they felt completely hopeless about surviving. Many believed the only thing they could do to fight back against the Germans was to write.

1. The “anecdotal” provides a much more personal experience of the events. It describes the emotions felt and what it was like being involved in this situation. They describe human experiences that would never be seen in state documents or scholarly sources. These sources leave out facts about the overall situation. They don’t have information about how many people were killed or how the German government ran the death camps. They don’t include this because this information wasn’t available to them. This can be seen in the Moeller documents when Jewish writers describe that no one knows where the people that are taken from the ghettos are brought to. This information is only available in secondary sources that describe the facts of the situation. Anecdotal history is more about the human experience of these events.