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Active Dissenters: Rescuers of the Persecuted

When the topic of genocide is studied, very often the question at hand is what the driving forces are behind the actors in the genocide. Many attempts have been made to explain that which seems almost unexplainable, or why groups, and the individuals within those groups, are able to dehumanize other human beings to the point of slaughtering them mercilessly. It is terrifying to look at the topic of genocide and understand the implications of what it means. One group of human beings literally attempts to wipe out another entirely from existence, and while not all actively participate, even the majority of those who do object stand idly by as the massacres take place in their own backyards. It is very difficult, when studying topics such as the Holocaust or the Rwandan genocide, to find any redeeming quality in human behavior, since the vast majority of behavior in these situations consists of one group tirelessly working toward the annihilation of another.

While instances of genocide surely stand as perhaps the greatest testament to the vast destructive power of the human condition, it is possible to look through the violence and terror, and gain a wholly different picture of human behavior. In sharp contrast to the actions of those who worked to kill their fellow humans, stands the behavior of those few people who were willing to risk their lives in order to rescue others from death at the hands of the executors of genocide. The topic of this paper will focus on these select few people, and why they were able to bravely risk their own lives and well being for the benefit of their fellow man. In situations of genocide, what are the motivating factors that allow these people to act in such a selfless way, putting personal safety aside in order to save lives? It is important to distinguish these people from those who helped facilitate the

genocides, but perhaps more important to distinguish them from those who may have objected to the slaughter of countless innocent people, but sat by and did nothing to help save the victims of genocide. In addition to attempting to understand the individual motivations for helping to save potential victims of genocide, it is also important to question whether the will to save a life is enough. Is it enough to simply be willing to risk your life, or are opportunity and luck as large factors as moral sensibilities when it comes to being able to help those who are at risk of being killed?

Religious affiliation, a certain kind of upbringing, and relationships with people who are in danger of being killed all seem to be factors in explaining why certain people are able to act heroically in situations of genocide, but they do not seem to provide a complete and satisfactory explanation for the actions of these courageous people. It seems that it was a sense of moral identity, and specifically a sense of identity in relation to all other peoples, rather than identity as being a product of membership in a certain race, or religion, that allowed certain people to act heroically during genocide.[1] It seems that these people were able to recognize themselves and the potential victims of the genocide raging around them as human above all else. What this sense of identity leading to moral values leaves unexplained, however, is why it was only a select few people that were able to succeed in turning this identity into actions that saved other people. This paper will attempt to answer the question of why these select few individuals were able to perform these acts, as well as explore the circumstances of how they were able to assess

[1] This idea of identity as being the motivating factor is suggested by Kristen Monroe in her book, The Hand of Compassion, and further supported by evidence found in other scholarship.

these risks successfully, with factors such as relationships with the killers, a general esteem and respect, and luck, standing paramount among the reasons.

At the moment, there seems to be no accepted term to describe those people who helped rescue the lives of the persecuted during times of genocide. Israel recognizes many of the courageous non-Jewish men and women who helped Jews during the Holocaust as the Righteous among the Nations (Schmalhausen, 7). They do this through the Yad Vashem, which is the main organization for remembrance of the Holocaust. The "Righteous Among the Nations" is not a term that is widely applicable to all of those who assist others during genocide, however, because it is merely an honor bestowed upon those who helped save others during the Holocaust, and does not include people involved in other genocidal situations.

In order to avoid confusion throughout the paper, I will be using the term "active dissenter," as the defining term for the people who helped to save potential victims of genocide. This term will be applied to all rescuers, no matter what genocide they were directly involved in fighting against. In this paper, the focus will be on those that saved others, but the term could certainly be used to define those that fought against the evils of the genocide in other ways, such as armed conflict. The importance of the term is to distinguish these people from the other players in situations of genocide. First, it is to distinguish them from potential victims of genocide. The term active dissenter will be applied to those people outside of the ethnic or religious group that is being persecuted. This is an important distinction because these people may be in danger of falling victim to the genocide because of the actions they commit against it, but if they were to conform to the rules of the genocide, they would likely be spared. Although similarly heroic, those

members of the persecuted group who also rallied against the genocide are not considered active dissenters. The distinction between these two groups can be noted in James Glass' review of Kristen Monroe's book, *The Hand of Compassion*, where it is argued that the motivating factors for many of the Jews who fought against the genocide were the emotions of rage and revenge, which are decidedly different than the motivating factors for the active dissenters (Glass, 358). The term will also be used to distinguish those who actively moved against the motives of the genocide from not only those who actively participated in facilitating the genocide in question, but perhaps more importantly, those who passively watched as the genocide was raging around them. It is especially important to make this distinction, because one of the focuses of this paper will be why certain people were more fit to become active dissenters, and whether opportunity and resource was just as large a factor as their moral identity in enabling them to save, which can possibly help answer the question of why more people did not act out against genocide.

In almost any situation where a concept of morality is in question, religion is very often turned to as a potential answer. Religion can certainly be a large factor in the building of moral character, and very often is the largest moral base in a person's life. Many of the active dissenters were incredibly religious people, and cite this as a major reason for their ability to act morally in saving potential victims from acts of genocide. Seine Otten, who helped save many Jews during the Holocaust by allowing them to stay in his house until they could find a safer location, says that one of the main reasons he rescued Jews during the Holocaust was because of his belief in the bible (Rescuers of the Holocaust, 15). Similarly, Paul Rusesabagina, a Hutu in Rwanda, who helped save his fellow countrymen by allowing them entry into the hotel in which he was a manager,

cited his involvement in the church as a major factor in the shaping of his moral character (Rusesabagina, 34). Paul was initially training to become a clergyman, before deciding on the career path that led him to become the manager of the Hotel Milles Collines, and his large amount of religious education certainly helped him develop into a moral person capable of performing the actions to help save his countrymen throughout the genocide.

The actions of these men, and their justifications for the courageous measures they took to save others certainly suggest that religion can be, and often is a large motivating factor in the decision to save others from potential death at the hands of genocide. Many religions teach equality of all people under god as a major paradigm of their teachings. Certainly, religions with these types of teachings may have helped to form the kind moral identity that allowed for the heroic measures taken by active dissenters, as will be argued further in the paper, but for a number of reasons, it seems that religious belief may not be a completely satisfactory answer connecting all active dissenters.

First of all, it seems that no single form of religious belief can be used to explain why people were able to perform these courageous actions. It seems that the specific form of religious belief means very little, since active dissenters could be anything from Christian, like Paul from *An Ordinary Man*, to Muslim, like Gahiga Nsenngiyumva in *The Bishop of Rwanda*, to simply having a general faith in God, without relying on a specific religion, as seen in Margot's story in *The Hand of Compassion*. It may seem that what is being argued is somewhat counterintuitive. If active dissenters can come from any religion, it can be argued that while the type of religion may not be important, at least having religious belief certainly can be considered an important factor in having the

moral character to save others during a time of genocide. But I would argue something slightly different. If the ability to save others transcends any single form of religion, then perhaps, it transcends religious belief altogether. In fact, as will be argued further, while it may help some people justify saving others, religious belief does not seem to be a prerequisite at all to developing the sense of moral identity needed to risk one's own well being for the life of others.

As evidence of religious belief not always playing a deciding factor in the moral decision to save others in situations of genocide stands the situations of John and Irene, as described in Monroe's book. John, who describes himself as an extremely religious man, saved Jews during the Holocaust, but does not believe you have to be religious to take similar actions to what he did. He simply claimed "you had to have love in your heart" (Monroe, 191). Similarly, Irene was also a very religious person. Unlike John, however, her religion actually ended up coming into contention with her saving of Jews during the Holocaust. At one point in her rescue operations, she went to a priest to ask for advice for how to handle her hiding of the Jews, and he responded that she should turn them in to the proper authorities because it was the morally correct thing to do, which would almost certainly have ended in their deaths. Rather than following the instructions of her religious leader, she instead chose to continue protecting the lives of the Jews (Monroe, 192). Certainly, in both of these cases, it is acceptable to consider the possibility that religion was still a major factor in John and Irene's decisions to save the victims of the Holocaust. John believes that you do not have to be religious to save other people, but this does not mean religion did not play a deciding role in his personal decision to save Jews. In fact, John says that when he did not have the personal strength to continue, he

would ask God to give him the strength. Also, while Irene did not follow the instructions of the priest, the deliberate disobedience could have easily come from her religious belief. She may have believed, and it is certainly not unreasonable to assume that she believed, that the priest's orders did not portray the true view of her Christian faith, and she may have not followed his orders out of her religious belief, rather than out of a lack of faith. In fact, Irene herself stated that she believed God placed her in the situation. "I felt it so strongly that God put me there, in the right time, and the right moment, and the right place" (Monroe, 191).

While it is certainly possible to see how religion may have played a factor in the actions of the active dissenters mentioned above, and even still see it as one of the motivating factors for any potential active dissenter, it must be noted that other active dissenters had no religious belief at all, or at least no religious belief that was based in a specific organization. Margot, another dissenter mentioned in Monroe's book, did define herself as religious, but did not truly identify herself as being involved in any one religion, often preferring prayer at home (Monroe, 193). While this can certainly be construed as having a religious belief, it should be noted that Margot did not believe that her faith was a factor at all in her actions. Even more telling, however, is the case of Otto, also studied by Monroe. Otto had no formal religion whatsoever, and did not believe in the afterlife at all, and yet he was able to form a moral identity that allowed him to save Jews during the holocaust (Monroe, 94). It is perhaps most important to note his lack of belief in any sort of afterlife, because often the development of moral belief in religion is tied to the belief in reward in the next life. Otto truly is devoid of any moral character that developed in religion, so his beliefs must have foundation elsewhere.

Also, it is incredibly important to understand that while religion can oftentimes be a tool to shape moral identity, having religious belief does not under any circumstances guarantee this moral identity. In one case in Ukraine, after the slaughter of a great number of Jews, a priest who was mistaken in his belief that the slain people were actually Ukrainian, lamented the fact that the biggest shame was that the German killers had stuffed Jewish passports into the pockets of the Ukrainians so they would be mistaken for Jews. It was a bigger shame to be mistaken as Jewish than it was that they were killed (Schmalhausen, 43). While he may not have participated in the killings, it is important to see that despite his religious position, this priest absolutely lacked the type of moral identity that would be necessary to save others during times of genocide, which is characterized as seeing others as human above all other distinctions, racial, religious, or otherwise. There is also the case of the priest telling Irene to turn in the Jews that she was helping to save (Monroe, 192). He certainly lacked the qualities necessary to help save others, considering the fact that he was actively attempting to have Jews turned in to the Germans, in which case they would almost certainly be killed. In the book, *The Bishop of Rwanda*, John Rucyahana, cites many cases of religious leaders actively participating in the killing of Tutsis. Perhaps the most horrifying of these cases is that of Father Athanase Seromba, a Catholic priest, ordering bulldozers to "demolish his church while two thousand Tutsis were hiding inside" (Rucyahana, 105).

None of this evidence is meant to suggest that religion does not play a role in the forming of moral character. In fact, many of the cases clearly show that religion almost certainly played a major role in the development of identity necessary to help rescue the lives of the persecuted. But what these ideas seem to suggest is that religion was merely a

certain way to help develop the moral character necessary, and that religious belief in no way guaranteed the development. It is quite possible that even those who cited religion as a major factor would have developed their moral identities from other areas as well.

If religion cannot be used to fully explain the actions of the active dissenters in saving the lives of the persecuted during situations of genocide, then other factors must almost certainly be explored as possible motivating factors for their actions. Many of the active dissenters cite their upbringing as a major factor in why they were so readily able to save others. They saw the altruistic nature of their families actions, and this was a major reason for them acting in a similar manner. Paul Rusesabagina makes a special note of the impact his father had on him during his formative years. In fact, he recalls a time when he was five years old, when his father helped house some Tutsi refugees who were fleeing during the Hutu revolution of 1959. Throughout the book, Paul notes the major role his father had in teaching him morality, often reciting old Rwandan proverbs that his father taught him (Rusesabagina, 14). The teachings of his father almost certainly were a large factor in the development of Paul's moral character. Margot actually stated that her father did even more than she did to help people who were being persecuted by the Germans, and that he also had an enormous amount of influence on her (Monroe, 219). In Monroe's book, she explains that Irene felt she was greatly influenced by the kindness of her parents, and especially her mother. "She was a saint. That may have been why I was able to do the things I did later during the war, Mama never sent anyone needy from her door" (Monroe, 201).

While the accounts above certainly seem to suggest that a certain kind of upbringing was very conducive to the development of the moral character needed to act

in the courageous way the active dissenters did, an individual's upbringing, like religion, cannot fully explain the entirety of the actions of the dissenters. In fact, while Margot does claim that her father was an influence on her, she denies that his influence was really a factor in her actions during the Holocaust. When asked whether it was important, she remarks that "No, it was not important…"(Monroe, 200). But it is certainly possible to assume that her father's influence, and especially his role as a savior to the persecuted, motivated Margot at least subconsciously.

That being said, the influence of family life on a person still cannot be said to be a sole motivating factor for saving lives during situations of genocide. It is certainly reasonable to assume that not all people who were raised in a household that influenced them with a solid moral upbringing actively participated in fighting against genocide. There were almost certainly people who had a very moral upbringing who abstained from actively fighting against genocide. It is equally unlikely that all of the people who actively participated in genocide, or even those who simply watched it happen, were raised in a household devoid of a moral foundation. While none of the studies that were reviewed in my research specifically noted an active dissenter coming from a tumultuous upbringing, it is equally absurd to assume that none did. A strong moral upbringing, and the influence of parents, while almost certainly important factors in the development of moral character for many of the active dissenters, does not seem to be able to fully explain the actions of all of the active dissenters.

It certainly seems that factors like religious belief and a specific kind of moral upbringing, while certainly playing an important role in the lives of many active dissenters, cannot be held up as absolute motivators for people who helped save the lives

of the persecuted during times of genocide. This being the case, it is necessary to look elsewhere for the factor that truly connects the active dissenters. One very compelling idea is that the dissenters had close relationships with the people that they saved, and that this almost certainly was a motivating factor in the actions that the dissenters took.

Among the active dissenters studied for this paper, many of them had incredibly close relations with the group of people who were the targets of the genocide, which quite often helped to facilitate the rescue missions. Paul had a Tutsi mother, as well as a Tutsi wife. He really was only considered a Hutu because, in Rwanda, ethnicity only passes through the male line (Rusesabagina, 16). Paul had incredibly close relations with the Tutsis, and this certainly was a significant factor in his decision to help save them during the genocide. Similarly, Margot's first marriage was to a Jewish man, and although she held a great deal of disdain for him, both of her daughters were Jewish (Monroe, 13). Once again, it is not a great stretch to ask whether this incredible personal connection to people of Jewish descent may have influenced her actions during the Holocaust. Another instance where an active dissenter had close and emotional connections to the people being prosecuted was in the case of Otto. Otto's wife was Jewish, and she almost certainly would have been killed if he had not helped her. Otto said that one of the largest factors in his decision to help those prosecuted in the Holocaust was the love that he had for his wife. "I did it because I loved my wife, and she was Jewish" (Monroe, 89). Even Berthold Beitz, who saved Jews in Ukraine by giving them work in his factory, whether they were qualified for work or not, often went to the trains that were transporting Jews to the concentration camps looking for people that he knew, such as his secretaries, and attempted to save them (Schmalhausen, 66). Seine Otten began his rescue of the

persecuted by hiding his fellow active dissenter and best friend, Arnold Douwes, who was being sought for his wearing of the yellow Star of David as an act of defiance (Rescuers of the Holocaust, 16).

All of the above cases certainly seem to suggest that relationships with the persecuted were a large motivating factor in the actions of active dissenters during genocide. While this is almost certainly true, these relationships, much like religion and upbringing, do not provide a complete answer to the question of the motivating factor for active dissenters. Not all of the people who saved the persecuted members of society had close and personal connections with the persecuted peoples, and even in the cases where they did, the dissenters did not stop at simply saving their family members and friends, which would have been far easier, and certainly considerably safer. Instead, even the active dissenters who had connections chose to help save complete strangers. Berthold Beitz would often head down to the trains to save a few people that worked for him, and end up taking away hundreds of people to work in his factory, regardless of their working qualifications (Schmalhausen, 72). It would have brought far less attention from the authorities if Beitz had simply saved those who were already working for him, or even just those Jews who he could have reasonably passed off as being useful to his factory. Beitz did not go with the safer route, however, and instead saved all the Jews that he possibly could. Similarly, Paul could have checked his family into the room at the Hotel Milles Collines, and resisted allowing anyone else entry in order to help preserve the lives of his loved ones. Instead, he never refused a single refugee, and was able to save every person that entered his hotel seeking help. These examples could apply to any of the active dissenters who chose to save others partly because of their connections to the

persecuted. Any of them could have saved their family or friends without further risking their lives by assisting the strangers, with whom they did not have a personal connection.

It would certainly be permissible to argue, however, that even having a personal relationship with a member of the persecuted, and saving that person can start a person on the path towards saving all members of the persecuted, regardless of the relationship with them. While that is possible, there were also active dissenters who had no personal connection whatsoever with the potential victims of genocide. Margot, although she had half Jewish children, did not know any of the people she saved during the Holocaust (Monroe, 48). It is likely that her relationship with her children may have influenced her, but certainly her negative feelings toward her Jewish ex-husband would have swayed her feelings in the other direction. Margot aside, the idea of helping others despite not having personal connections to them applies especially well in the case of diplomats who helped aid others during situations of genocide (Holbrooke, 135). While diplomats were not often risking their lives for others, they were risking their personal livelihood. These diplomats were removed from the situations completely, and had no connection to the communities and people that they were helping, and yet they still were able to muster the moral character to help others. Clearly, having a connection is not a necessary condition for saving the lives of others in situations of genocide.

Along the same lines as having a personal connection with the persecuted members of society not being a necessary condition for saving them, it also seems that knowing and having relations with the persecuted is also not even a sufficient condition for preventing someone from actively participating in genocide, let alone saving others. Paul Rusesabagina describes many scenes in which neighbors turn on neighbors, but

perhaps his most striking description of this situation is when he recalls an event where a Hutu neighbor of his, a man who he admired for a number of reasons, was walking around his neighborhood with the blood of his Tutsi neighbors stained on his machete (Rusesabagina, xiv). Perhaps the most vivid account of neighbors killing their fellow community members is described by Jan T. Gross in his 2001 book *Neighbors: The The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, in which Gross describes how a group of Polish townspeople, and not Nazi soldiers, slaughtered the Jewish population of Jedwabne for a variety of reasons. Not only is having a personal connection with people of the persecuted class not enough to explain why all active dissenters acted in the courageous ways they did, but the connections are not always enough to deter people from actively participating in genocide.

After reviewing the concepts of religious belief, a certain kind of upbringing, and relationships with potential victims as possible motivating factors for the actions of active dissenters in situations of genocide, it seems that none of them can provide a sufficient factor that connects all the active dissenters. In her book, *The Hand of Compassion*, Kristin Monroe provides a possible answer to the question that seems quite convincing. She suggests that it is a sense of moral identity that the active dissenters had developed throughout their lifetime that allowed them to make the decisions that they made (Monroe, 242). A sense of right and caring was so inherent to the active dissenters' concept of the self, that when they were faced with a decision to help save others, it was not a decision at all. Their identity was so related to interactions with others that they were able to risk their own lives in order to save the lives of others.

One of the major commonalities that appears over and over in the stories of the dissenters is that their action was not a moral choice, but more of an impulsive action to save. “The suffering of the Jews was felt as something relevant for the rescuers. It established a moral imperative that necessitated action,” (Monroe, 236) says Monroe. There was absolutely no choice for the dissenters; they simply had to help the people that were suffering. What is very interesting about this moral impulse is that it seems to go against what many people deem to be a fundamental tenet of human nature, which is that the will to survive is one of the most instinctive parts of the human psyche. It is quite extraordinary, and almost counterintuitive, that people would feel an almost instinctual obligation to help people, when the common natural instinct would seem to be finding a way towards self-preservation. It would not have been surprising to find that dissenters made a moral choice to help others, despite their natural impulse to self-preservation, but to find that their instinctual action was to save others in lieu of a moral choice is very surprising.

Also, almost all of the dissenters seemed to be very set in their belief that they were not doing anything special. They did not believe that they were going above and beyond what was morally required of them, or what was morally required of anyone. They were not doing anything that they would consider morally commendable. In fact, it seems that they all believed that not taking the actions they did would have been morally reprehensible. Barbara Makuch, a Polish woman who was sent to a concentration camp for helping save Jews, when asked for an interview to discuss her actions, responded in surprise, because “I really didn’t do so much (Tomaszewski and Werbowski, 107).” One of the more interesting things about Paul’s autobiography is that he repeatedly refers to

himself as having simply been doing his job as the manager of the Hotel Milles Collines in allowing people to stay there. It was his duty to keep the hotel open, and that was what he was doing (Rusesabagina, 131). It is very interesting to note that while most people would likely say that what the active dissenters accomplished went beyond what is normally expected, they seemed to believe that their actions were really nothing more than what was morally required of them.

One thing that Monroe does not focus on, that I believe to be important is the recognition of the frailty and complexity of human life. It may be possible to call this idea empathy, but I believe it goes beyond this. Beitz was present for many of the atrocities that occurred around him, and was especially touched by the cries of children being taken away from their homes (Schmalhausen, 64). He recognized the humanity in the cries, and although he could not save the children, it was certainly very important in his understanding of the frailty of human life, and a factor in why he later decided to save all of the Jews that he did. Paul especially seemed to have a very delicate understanding of the frailty of human life, and it is not unreasonable to believe that this recognition of the effects of killing a fellow human played a role in his actions during the genocide. The description of Gahiga Nsenngiyumva, a Muslim in Rwanda, shows this attitude as well. He claimed that his religious education taught him "If you save one life, it is like saving the whole world" (Rucyahana, 108).

Another factor that seemed to play a large role in the development of this identity was the active dissenters' ability to distinguish between nationality and humanity. During situations of genocide, a large factor in the killing is the dehumanization of the persecuted class. It is this dehumanization that allows the executors of the genocide to

kill their fellow human beings and feel little to no remorse. The killers do not believe that they are killing a fellow human, but instead, they are killing something subhuman. The word "cockroach" was used in Rwanda to describe the Tutsis and their supporters, and it became a moral obligation to squash these "cockroaches" (Rusesabagina, 61). Monroe notes a similar level of dehumanization in Europe during the Holocaust, which Otto, especially describes as making it easier for the Nazis to kill the Jews (Monroe, 232). A large part of this dehumanization was a national or ethnic pride. The killers believed themselves to be a superior people, and the persecuted class was not considered to be full human beings. It seems that the active dissenters as a whole were able to recognize the humanity of all people above the ethnic and national distinctions. In fact, the dissenters themselves were often very disconnected from their own nationalities and ethnicities, recognizing themselves as humans above all else.

Monroe describes this idea of viewing others as humans above all else as a person having a sense of "moral salience" (Monroe, 230). This means that it was of no more moral worth to the rescuers to rescue a person of any one ethnicity over another. A person was worthy of being saved not because they were Jewish, Tutsi, or any other type of classification. A person had to be saved simply because they were human. When Monroe asked Margot, "Was there anything in common about the people you helped?" Margot answered, "No, They were just people" (Monroe, 235). In a way, Margot's answer does show that the people she saved had something in common; they were all human. Margot, and the other active dissenters, were unaffected by the propaganda and societal pressures to consider the targets of genocide as sub-human, and were able to act in a way that recognized them as being worthy of life. Perhaps the most extreme case of

this is the case of the anti-Semite Polish author Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, who helped organize the Council to Aid Jews, or Zegota. He was able to help facilitate the saving of Jews, despite his anti-Semitic feelings (Hellman, 11). He may have hated the Jews, and may not even have seen them as equals to other people, but when it came to life or death, he was able to recognize their humanity, and despite his anti-Semitic leanings, help facilitate their rescue.

While Monroe does address the way that the active dissenters viewed others in terms of their humanity, and seeing the distinctions between them as morally salient, I feel she does not fully address how the personal ethnic and religious identities of the dissenters influenced them to view others in the way they did. It seems that many of the dissenters not only saw others as being beyond national or ethnic classifications, but also were not willing to blindly fall victim to these classifications themselves. Berthold Beitz expressed great outrage at being a German citizen in a time when his people were doing such terrible things (Schmalhausen, 110). It did not matter that he was acting against the interests of his country, because he was not proud of what his country was doing. Beitz recognized that human bonds transcended his national identity, and thus was able to act against his nation's interests. Paul had a very full view of humanity, and also had a very vast amount of knowledge about the artificial creation of the ethnic groups in Rwanda. Paul was a Hutu in ethnicity only, and his lack of identification with the class of people conducting the murders was certainly a factor in his willingness to act against them (Rusesabagina, 23). Margot is a very interesting case, because she did not really have a national identity. She was born in Germany, but only spoke French, and lost her German citizenship when she left Germany (Monroe, 10). She did not truly identify with any

nationality, and thus recognized herself as a human first. Otto, perhaps subscribes to this idea of being human above all else more than any of the other dissenters. When asked by Monroe whether he considered himself to be a member of any groups growing up, he responded that he loved the internationality he had around him. She then asked whether this meant he considered himself a member of mankind, rather than any one nationality, and he responded "definitely" (Monroe, 293). It seems that all of the dissenters were able to perform their actions based on their identity that made saving others a moral imperative, but if they had felt that they were a part of the group that believed their nationality or ethnicity to be superior to that of the persecuted class, than this moral imperative to save the others may not have been as present.

While it seems that the presence of a moral identity that makes it a compulsion to help others was what motivated the active dissenters to perform the actions that they did, it is important to ask why only a select few people had this sense of identity, and perhaps even more important to ask how they developed this sense of identity. When Monroe asked Margot if all people were born with the moral sense and ability to help others, she answered that she did not believe that everyone was born with the ability to do so (Monroe, 194). On this account, I would generally agree. I do not believe that everyone is born with the potential to cultivate a moral ability to aid others in extreme circumstances. That being said, it is absolutely not enough to simply be born with that sense either. It must also be cultivated through a number of factors, which may very well include things like religion or upbringing. It may be in some people's nature to help other people, but this natural inclination must be further supported throughout life. One of the most interesting things that seemed to recur throughout the narratives of the dissenters was that

helping others was not something that only applied in the genocidal situation that they found themselves in; it was a recurring process throughout their lives. Paul recalled that as a child, his classmates would play a game of secrets that could potentially cause embarrassment and hurt for them, and he would always rush to the aid of the hurt classmate (Rusesabagina, 6). Arnold Douwes was deported from the United States in the 1930's for protesting that a black man he was eating lunch with was being refused service. He claimed that he was fighting injustice his entire life (Rescuers of the Holocaust, 15).

The people who performed these actions are often considered to be extraordinary moral beings, and the evidence seems to suggest that people with their kind of moral character are few and far between. Out of all the people who had the opportunity to aid potential victims of genocide, only a small number became active dissenters, and even the impact of the actions of the active dissenters, while very important, does not begin to compare to the terror and violence of the genocide itself. Paul estimates that for all the people that he saved, he was only able to save about four hours worth of genocidal violence from occurring in a hundred day period, which he considers a very little amount (Rusesabagina, xi) It is quite possible to argue that the rate of people born with the potential to develop the moral identity necessary is very small, and that it is not fair to expect normal people to have that type of moral system. I disagree with this notion. I would tend to believe that a large number of people are able to develop the moral identity, but that they either simply do not develop it based on a number of factors, or more commonly that they are not able to put their beliefs into action. Identifying the underlying moral identity that characterizes active dissenters answers the question of why

they felt morally obligated to help save others, but does not answer the question of how the people with the developed moral identity were able to implement their beliefs and save the persecuted.

Consider the following situation. A person is walking by an alleyway, when they see that a young child is being mugged behind a dumpster by a large man. The man is unarmed, but is much physically stronger than the boy. Almost certainly, if the person walking by the alleyway were a person who has developed the type of moral identity it takes to save other people, they would consider it a moral imperative to help the young child. It would seem that to not help the child would be allowing another to come to harm, and would not be acceptable for a person who possessed the type of moral identity described above. Imagine however, that the passerby is an eighty five year old man, who certainly could not stop the mugging even if he tried. Every part of the old man's person is telling him to save the child, but he knows that he is utterly incapable of doing so. Now imagine that the passerby is a young man in the prime of his athletic life, who knows that he would be able to fight off unarmed mugger. If the young man has the moral identity described above, then he would not only feel obligated to save the child, but he would also have the physical tools to do so, unlike the old man described earlier. The question that naturally comes from this situation is whether the young man is any more morally upstanding than the old man? Almost certainly, the answer would be no. Moral identity, it seems, is not nearly enough to constitute an action; something else is needed as well.

All of the active dissenters seemed to share the sense of identity that made it a moral obligation to help others, but they also all shared another characteristic, which is perhaps more important when it comes to helping others; all of the active dissenters had

the means to save the victims of genocide. Compassion and recognition of wrong are very admirable, but in the end, it means very little without the ability to do anything about it. Whether it is a fair or unfair way of passing judgment, people are usually viewed positively or negatively based on their actions, not their intentions. A person may have the moral identity that tells them that they should help another person, but their situation does not dictate that helping is a possibility. In such a case, that person would not be considered an active dissenter, because they were unable to do anything to oppose the genocide that was going on around them. It is just as important to ask why people had the means to achieve their goals, as it is to ask what their personal reasons were for pursuing them.

One of the major factors that played a role in many of the active dissenters abilities to put their moral views into action was their relationship with the executors of the genocide. Many of the active dissenters had well-established relationships with high-ranking members of those implementing the genocide. Berthold Beitz was the manager of a major petroleum factory, and thus was considered very important to the German war machine, allowing him to cultivate relationships with German officials. His position and relationships with the German officials made him less likely to be under suspicion, and made his saving of Jews far easier (Schmalhausen, 74). Paul's working at Hotel Milles Collines, which was called the "shadow capital" of Rwanda, allowed him to build a pool of favors with the leaders of the Genocide that he used later in order to save the people he housed within the hotel (Rusesabagina, 33). He was able to learn the likes and dislikes of the future killers, and was able to manipulate them based on what he had learned earlier when it came time to stop them from killing the people in his care. Irene carried on an

affair with a major in order to keep the fact that she was hiding Jews a secret (Monroe, 152). She hid twelve Jews in the attic of his villa, but she was discovered one day by the major. In exchange for his keeping the secret, she agreed to become his mistress (Monroe, 154). The savvy of the active dissenters in cultivating and maintaining these relationships is in many ways as admirable as their ability to act in a righteous manner. The ability to maintain relationships with the people that you are actively working against requires a special person as well. Not all people who have the moral will to save others have the technical savvy to balance their saving others with the ability to keep safe. If these people were not able to cultivate their relationships, then they would not have been successful active dissenters.

In addition to their relationships with the elites of the killers, many of the active dissenters were able to exude a certain air and esteem that was a large factor in their being able to continue to save the persecuted. Beitz was described as an imposing and esteemed figure, who garnered much respect from the Germans. The esteem and respect that surrounded him afforded him a lot of leniency when it came to his rescuing of the Jews (Schmalhausen, 75). Paul, throughout his time as manager of the Hotel Milles Collines, was able to gain the respect and the ear of many distinguished people among the Hutu leaders during the genocide. The general level of respect that many of the active dissenters commanded was almost certainly a factor in their continued success in saving potential victims of genocide.

Even more important than respect, however, was the fortunate and distinguished place in society that many of the dissenters had. Many of the active dissenters were well schooled, and very well off. If they had not been the beneficiaries of these special

privileges, they would have been unable to perform these actions. If Berthold Beitz never held his position in the petroleum factory, he would not have had the opportunity to save Jews by employing them in the factory. He almost certainly would have had the same moral identity as he did with the factory under his management, but he would not have had the means to save those who needed his help. Perhaps the greatest example of privileges enabling heroic action is in the case of Paul. Not only was Paul afforded the opportunity to mingle with the high ranking members of Rwandan society via his position at the Milles Collines, which would later enable him to cultivate a collection of favors that would be of extreme importance to his success in saving lives, but he had access to all the resources that came with his position. In one situation, Paul was attempting to bring his family and friends to safety at the hotel Diplomates. He was apprehended by a group of Hutus, who attempted to force Paul to kill his family and friends. At first, Paul attempted to appeal to morality by saying that the people with him were not the enemies that the Hutus sought, but he quickly realized this was not going to work. He then attempted to bribe them, and since he had access to the money reserves at the hotel, he was able to successfully do so (Rusesabagina, 91). If Paul were just a random Rwandan citizen who was trying to save his family, he would have been killed, as his appeals to morality would have fallen on deaf ears. Instead, he was able to bribe the Hutus by virtue of his access to money that normal Rwandans would not have had. His moral identity did not affect his ability to save his family and friends in this situation. Instead, it was merely his high status in society.

Perhaps the single most important factor in many of the active dissenters' successes in their ability to continue saving potential victims of genocide was pure and

simple luck. Many of the active dissenters came incredibly close to being caught, and many were caught, but they were able to survive and continue to save others because of luck. If Irene had been hiding Jews in the attic of a German major who was not willing to keep a secret in exchange for her place as his mistress, she may have ended up dead, along with the people she was attempting to save. Beitz was almost caught as well. The SS was investigating him for his views against their actions, and a letter was sent back to Germany, which would have resulted in a further investigation into his actions. Fortunately, the letter ended up in the hands of a friend of his, and he was not investigated (Schmalhausen, 120). If he had been investigated, he could have been caught and implicated. It was only by sheer luck that the letter passed through the hands of a friend, and he was not found out. Similarly, Paul survived many situations in which he was lucky to survive. It turned out that all of the other hotel managers had been killed, but by some fortunate stroke, Paul did not end up on the list of people who were to be killed in the genocide (Rusesabagina, 88). This was just one case of many in which Paul was lucky to have survived. In fact, Paul points to luck as perhaps the largest factor in his success in saving the lives of his countrymen. Almost all of the active dissenters had situations in which they were nearly caught, or even situations in which they actually were caught but were not killed. For example, Otto was caught and sent to a concentration camp, but was very fortunate to survive (Monroe, 90). One of the more heartwarming lucky breaks I encountered in my research was a situation in which two German officers caught a woman named Leokadia Jaromirska, who was hiding a Jewish child. They took her outside to kill her and the child, and she asked to be killed first, so she would not have to see the child die. Upon hearing this, one of the officers decided

that the child must have been Leokadia's, and they let her and the child live (Hellman, 359). These lucky breaks played as large a role in their successes as the moral identity that compelled them to their actions.

After looking at the factors other than their moral identities that allowed the active dissenters to successfully save the lives of the persecuted during genocide, it is possible to conclude that circumstance was just as large an influence in their abilities as their moral identity. This is important to note, because without the specific circumstances that existed in their individual situations, they would likely not have been successful. It is very possible, and I believe, reasonable to assume that there were many people just as opposed to genocide on moral grounds as the active dissenters, but they were not as fit to do anything about it because they were not afforded the same opportunities as the eventual dissenters. A sense of morality seems to be necessary, but by itself, it is not sufficient to acting courageously, and successfully, against genocide.

All that being said, however, this concept must be further discussed to avoid a major confusion. It may seem that what is being argued is that if a person does not believe they have the ability to save others, but have the moral sense that the actions are wrong, then they are to be excused for their lack of action. This could not be further from the argument being presented. Consider once again the case of the mugger. If the young man capable of saving the victim of the mugging convinces himself that there is nothing he can do to help, and thus does not help, he should not be excused. There is a large difference between possessing the ability to help save others, but not taking on the risk, and legitimately not being able to save others. In Monroe's book, she cites the case of Beatrix, a woman who had built a hiding spot for her husband in case he was drafted into

the army. She knew about the concentration camps, and knew that the Jews were being gassed, but did not do anything to help stop it. She claimed that there was nothing she could do (Monroe, 247). Obviously this woman had the capability to save other people, since she had built a hiding place in her home for her husband, and she was also knowledgeable about the acts of genocide taking place, but she neglected to help on the basis that she was incapable of doing anything to help. Under the framework I have presented, this type of behavior is not excusable. A similar situation is that of SS-First Lieutenant Kurt Gerstein, who upon watching Jews go to their death in the gas chambers, claimed that he wished he could go with them out of his guilt, but felt he had to stay alive to tell the tale of what he saw (Schmalhausen, 80). This is clearly a person who understood that what was going on around him was wrong, and yet he was unwilling to attempt to stop what he knew to be wrong. Not only did he have relationships with authority members of the actors in the genocide, like many of the active dissenters, he actually was a member of the authority. He almost certainly could have done at least a small thing to help save Jews, if it only meant failing to do his job well. And yet, he simply wrote of the horrors he was experiencing, rather than doing anything to prevent them. This type of person perhaps had a sense of moral right and wrong, and had the ability to help, but lacked the moral identity that made it imperative for him to assist the Jews.

That which defines an active dissenter seems to be two-fold. First, they must have the moral reasoning to decide to fight against genocide. Religion, upbringing and relationships with the persecuted, while possible factors in the actions of some dissenters, cannot fully explain the motivations of the active dissenters as a whole. Instead, it

appears that the common thread between them all is a sense of identity that makes it a moral imperative to help other human beings. But it is apparent that it is not enough to merely have a developed sense of identity. It is also necessary to have the means to put their moral identity into action. Only those people who have both a developed moral identity and the necessary circumstances seem to be capable of acting in a heroic way in saving others during times of genocide. This may look like a very somber conclusion, but it does offer some form of hope as well. If the assumption were that only those who helped others during times of genocide could be considered morally upright, then a very small number of people could be deserving of moral praise. But the conclusion offered above suggests that there were people in situations of genocide who may have felt they were morally obligated to help, but were unable to because of their circumstances, or at least that there were other people who had the ability to gain the moral identity necessary to perform courageous actions like those of the active dissenters. In fact, considering one of the common statements of many of the dissenters was that they did not believe they were doing anything special, or that they were especially moral human beings, this is reasonable to assume. While the actions of the dissenters were certainly extraordinary, they were in fact very much ordinary people, who were able to develop a certain sense of moral identity, and had the opportunity and ability to promote their morality through action.

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