A Theological Approach to the Holocaust: How Can We Maintain a Belief in God in Light of This Atrocious Act of Evil?

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PhD 2025

A Theological Approach to the Holocaust: How Can We Maintain a Belief in God in Light of This Atrocious Act of Evil?

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of History, Politics and Philosophy

2025

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Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to my mentors Professor Lloyd Strickland and Dr Christopher Thomas. Your mentorship, wisdom, and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping my academic and professional growth. Your dedication to excellence and passion for research have inspired me to pursue this scholarly endeavour with diligence and determination. This dissertation is a tribute to both your guidance and belief in my potential.

A special mention to my lifelong friend and biggest cheerleader, Elizabeth Bailey, for your unwavering belief in me throughout the last fifteen years, combined with your uplifting presence, painted this journey with beautiful colours and made it truly remarkable. A thank you also to Dr Shaun Stevenson for your continued support and guidance throughout the final two years of this project. Your encouragement and advice on both the thesis itself and my overall academic progression is appreciated immensely, and I will forever be grateful for the confidence you gave me.

In this moment of achievement, it is essential to express my gratitude to my parents, my sister Jess, and to all my family and friends. Your unwavering love, endless support, and sacrifices have been the cornerstone of my academic journey, and it is you who have made this lifelong academic journey so beautiful. And to my partner Sam. Your encouragement and belief in my abilities have been my guiding light through the highs and lows of this doctoral pursuit. This dissertation is dedicated to you and my family, with the deepest gratitude and love.

And lastly, this thesis is dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust. The suffering endured by the victims and their families will never be forgotten and will forever serve as a reminder as what should never be repeated.

Abstract

The thesis is centred around the problem of evil, namely the Holocaust, and how this horrendous event impacts our belief in God. Specially, one of the aims is to show how theodicy is not adequate at addressing or solving the problem of evil, and quite frankly it isn't necessary. Theodicies do not deal with the problem of evil they simply explain it away, and in doing so forget to take the victims of suffering seriously. Theodicies are thus too insensitive and too theoretical; they focus too much on how we can reconcile the existence of evil, in this case the Holocaust, with a belief in a God who is perfectly good. The aim of this thesis is that we should not focus on justifying evils that cannot be explained meaningfully but instead find practical ways of overcoming evil and maintaining a belief in God. For, is there any theodicy good enough to justify the burning of children? To put it simply, we cannot possibly find an answer to satisfy everyone and so any attempt to do so is futile. The position I wish to endorse therefore, is one of anti-theodicy and one which approaches the problem of evil practically; trying to show that the suffering endured in the Holocaust cannot and should not be justified. Moving forward, instead of focusing on the God of the Philosophers (a God who is omnibenevolent, omniscient and omnipotent, and who is inconsistent with the existence of such evil) I propose we revert back to the classical Hebrew concept of God found within scripture, who is known for being sometimes capricious and for allowing suffering, but who is still worthy of worship and acts for reasons beyond our comprehension- a God who is Almighty, but who does not have the issues that omnipotence may have. This way we can accept that there is evil and maintain a belief in a God that is more compatible with the Holocaust. For me, God of the Hebrew Bible is a more plausible option in the face of the evil for He is a God that allows for evil to exist for reasons outside of our finite knowledge, but who can still be believed in and worshipped, despite the events of the Holocaust.

Introduction

For millennia, philosophers have wrestled with the problem of evil, or innocent/ unjustified suffering. In fact, for a long-time evil was seen not as a threat to religious belief, but more of a puzzle which needed to be solved. Believing that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, and that such a being is capable of preventing or eliminating innocent suffering (or any suffering for that matter) they have sought to explain why God nevertheless allows it to occur. This has led to a number of proposed solutions, now known as theodicies, which seek to identify the reason God would have for permitting innocent suffering. However, the plausibility of such solutions has been tested to their limits by the Holocaust, a series of horrific acts, in which six million Jews were killed in a systematic programme to eliminate the Jewish race from the face of the earth. This thesis, namely titled “A Theological Approach to the Holocaust: How can we maintain a belief in God in light of this atrocious act of evil?”, aims to show how these horrendous events impacted our belief in God and how one can reconcile a belief in God with the problem of evil. Notably, the thesis takes the standpoint of Judeo- Christian perspective with reference to the Hebrew Bible and scripture.

In order to provide context to the thesis, it is important to understand why the Holocaust is considered possibly the most tragic and destructive act of mass genocide in recent history. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand why the Holocaust was chosen as the example of evil. To give some background, the Holocaust is considered a catalyst of events that began following Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in 1919 when he joined the German Worker’s Party. Fast forward to the late 1920s, Wall Street crashes, economy begins to fail, and suddenly, there was a shift in power in the Reichstag. In January 1933, Hitler is made chancellor of Germany, and with this new sense of power, he passes the Enabling Act in March 1933, making himself dictator for four years. In 1934 the true strength of the Nazi party became apparent, with all other parties disbanding, leaving the Nazis as the only organisation in Germany. With no one to stop him, Hitler merged both the roles of chancellor and president, to become the dictator or Führer of

Germany.[1] In the beginning of 1933, Hitler's plan to remove all hindrances to the superior Aryan race began, with the main focus being on the Jews. It is important to note that Hitler didn't invent anti-Semitism, he simply built on prejudices already present within Germany at the time. For instance, after Germany's defeat in the First World War (1914-1918), the German army command spread the myth that the army had not lost the war on the battlefield, but because they had been betrayed by a so called 'stab in the back'. This betrayal was that the Jews and the communists had betrayed the country and brought a left-wing government to power that had wanted to throw in the towel. By blaming the Jews for the defeat, Hitler created a stereotypical enemy.

This rise in anti-Semitism systematically led to the boycott of Jewish-owned shops and businesses, shortly followed soon after by the introduction of the Nuremberg Race Laws in September 1935, which consisted of two parts: the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour. Under these laws, Jews were not identified as someone with religious convictions but rather defined anyone with Jewish grandparents as a Jew. And therefore, many Germans who had not practiced Judaism found themselves still subject to legal persecution under these laws. Even people with Jewish grandparents who had converted to Christianity could be defined as Jews. The events of Kristallnacht (the night of broken glass) followed in November of 1938, whereby Jewish businesses and synagogues were smashed, destroyed and burned as part of an horrific act of anti-Semitic propaganda on the orders of the SS. Eventually September 1941, the exclusion of Jews in Germany began when all Jews were forced to wear the yellow Star of David on their clothing to make them identifiable amongst other German citizens. But this was only the beginning; life for the Jews of Germany and Europe was about to get a lot worse.[2]

Hitler's aim to eradicate Jews from his Aryan race took a drastic and major leap forward with the invasion and occupation of neighbouring countries. On September

[1] Gilbert, Martin, *The Holocaust: The Human Tragedy*, (New York: Rosetta Books, 1987). pp. 26-27.
[2] Gilbert, M., 1987, pp. 30-37.

29th 1938, the western allies (Italy, Great Britain, and France) and Germany signed the Munich agreement, by which Czechoslovakia must surrender its border regions and defences (the so-called Sudeten region) to Nazi Germany. This allowed Hitler to control more land he desired in order to take maximum control over the European Jews. Finally, in 1939 Germany invaded Poland which in turn triggered the allies to declare war, thus signalling the start of World War II. Not long after in early 1940, Germany invades Denmark and Norway and then shortly after attacks Western Europe. As part of Hitler's final solution in which he aimed to eradicate all the Jews of Europe, Hitler and the SS began to further the development of ghettos and concentration camps, including the opening of the Dachau concentration camp outside of Munich in 1933.[3] The Nazis also began testing a method of killing previously unused: gassing using the chemical 'Zyklon-B' (previously used as rat poison in the form of pellets). And so, on 3rd September 1941, the first test use of Zyklon-B was used at Auschwitz. Only three days later, the Vilna Ghetto was established and filled with 40,000 Jews from the area, which ultimately was a catalyst for the gathering and deportation of all German Jews in September 1941. Meanwhile, the Nazis had begun to take control of Kiev and tragically on 27th and 28th September, 23,000 Jews were murdered at Kamenets- Podolsk (Ukraine), followed by the massacre of over 33,000 Jews by the SS Einsatzgruppen at Babi Yar near Kiev on 29th and 30th September. This was one of the largest mass killings at an individual location during World War II. In the months following the massacre, German authorities killed over 100,000 thousands more Jews at Babi Yar.[4]

By 1944, Germany's control of Europe strengthens when they occupy Hungary and deport 440,000 Jews to the east. By January 1945, the Nazis knew the war was being lost and that their final solution was failing, and so in an attempt to cover up their heinous crimes, they began destroying evidence at camps, including destroying gas chambers and crematoria, and arranging death marches of nearly 60,000 prisoners from Auschwitz and nearly 50,000 prisoners from the Stutthof camp in northern

[3] Ibid, p. 30.

[44] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *The Holocaust And World War II Key Dates*, edited 2022, [last accessed May 2024], https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-holocaust-and-world-war-ii-key-dates?parent=en%2F10694

Poland. By the end of January 1945, the Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau, followed by the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp by the Americans in April. Finally, on April 30th 1945, Adolf Hitler commits suicide in his bunker in Berlin prompting Germany to surrender to the western Allies in May, signalling the end of World War II.[5] Yet, this was not the end of the problems. Following the war, and in the years to come, the Holocaust became central to many ethical and philosophical debates, specifically the problem of evil and its inconsistency with the existence of God. This thesis will therefore explore the ideas within the problem of evil and the challenges it poses to God's existence, as well as potential solutions to the problem, and challenges they also face.

The thesis will be separated in two distinct sections: the former focusing on the conflict between God's existence and evil, how philosophers can potentially solve the conflict through various solutions such as theodicy, and how such solutions, when faced with the horrors of the Holocaust, cannot legitimately argue for the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God. The latter section of the thesis will delve into the ideas of Jewish philosophy, specifically how philosophers can we reconcile the issue of evil (Holocaust) and Judaism and whether there is a better concept of God that can be found within Judaism and scripture, which is more compatible with evil. The final stages of the thesis will dwell upon examples of God in the Hebrew Bible e.g. through the Book of Job, evidence within scripture, and evil in Genesis, to show how we can have a new-old concept of God that is more compatible with evil than the God of the philosophers; a God which is similar to that of Old Testament e.g. callous, cruel, acts for reasons beyond our knowledge or realm.

The thesis begins with a focus on the problem of evil, in this case the example of the Holocaust, and how this event impacts our belief in God. Chapter one titled 'The Problem with Problem of Evil' discusses the claim that the problem of evil is an unsolvable problem, for we cannot reconcile a belief in the God of the Philosophers

[5] Ibid, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-holocaust-and-world-war-ii-key-dates?parent=en%2F10694

(omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient) with instances of evil such as the Holocaust. Many theologians and philosophers have proposed solutions, or theodicies, which seek to identify the reason God would have for permitting innocent suffering. But these are insufficient to explain the systematic murder of six million Jews. It is important to note that for this thesis, it isn't the number of victims that is important, but rather the type of people that were persecuted. The problem of evil becomes such a hot topic of debate following the Holocaust, due to the fact that a group of religious people, who followed God's commands and teachings, were the chosen group of people to be persecuted and ultimately not protected by God Himself. Of course, it is not this clear cut, and this chapter will delve into these issues further. In fact, throughout the first chapter, I will address the problem of evil by going beyond philosophical attempts at theodicy and taking the problem back to its theological roots.

The second chapter moves towards possible solutions to the problem of evil, particularly how many theologians and philosophers have proposed certain explanations or theodicies, which seek to identify the reason God would have for permitting innocent suffering. Throughout this chapter, the aim is to show how theodicies must demonstrate that good outweighs evil (that evil exists for a greater good and/or that these goods must directly benefit the sufferer). The second chapter will also delve into specific types of theodicies, including those which try to explain why God allows any type of evil at all; those which explain types of evil, such as moral evil or natural evil; those which explain the amount of evil; and those which explain all types of evil and why God allows it. There will also be the distinction raised between both divine and human theodicies and how they can be used differently to help overcome the problems that the Holocaust raises within philosophy, specifically how can the God of the philosophers be maintained following such instances of evil. There are certain thinkers that I will draw upon within this chapter who argue that theodicy can be adequate when explaining the problem of evil, specifically Atle Søvik who argues that despite the criticisms theodicy faces, theodicy actually allows us to ask questions about why God would allow such things to happen, and this keeps the discussion going. Furthermore, John Culp argues that theodicies can help guide beliefs and provide ways to help one understand the world as more than just a constant state of flux/chaos. For instance, he argues that if theodicies and practical actions are

both important for a suitable response to evil, then we need to find ways to relate them. However, as you will see throughout this chapter, it seems increasingly difficult to justify the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God following the horrors of Auschwitz, and therefore it seems that theodicy has failed at aims. Instead, the focus should be on practical solutions in the face of evil, for instance, finding ways to adapt our understanding of God so that it is more compatible with such evil. And thus, instead of trying to justify evil in a theoretical way, we instead accept that as human beings, we cannot fully understand God and His reasons, and so instead must trust in God and have faith that evil has a purpose beyond our understanding, even if this type of God is different to what we have come to know within philosophy.

The third chapter, and the final in the former part of the thesis, focuses on Anti-Theodicy, specially, one of the aims is to show how theodicy is not adequate at addressing or solving the problem of evil, and quite frankly it isn't necessary. This chapter draws upon the claims that theodicy demonstrates a stark moral insensitivity and does not take suffering seriously, and in doing so adopts a perspective that is too detached, thus exhibiting an irremissible moral blindness. In addition to this, the ideas within this chapter will show that theodicy treats people as means, not ends in themselves and therefore adds to the evils that already exist in the world. In other words, by endorsing the justification of evil we are just making things worse. For example, I will look at the thoughts of various thinkers within anti-theodicy, including Michael Scott, who states that theodicies allow evils to exist and therefore display ‘moral blindness’ in their refusal to support possibility of unconditional evils and in turn fail to consider each individual instance of suffering. One of the prominent thinkers I will draw upon in this chapter is Kenneth Surin who proposes that theodicies typically use abstract or depersonalised notions of evil, making them difficult to apply to real-life cases. He says we can only appeal to the idea of a suffering God (one that suffers with us) as this shows that God wasn’t inactive and passive in the face of the victims’ pain, but that He felt it too and allows God to still be loving. Overall, he believes that theodicies have nothing to offer victims, for there is no comfort found in saying that a person’s suffering will be countered by a greater good (as this is morally insensitive). Overall, the ideas of Theodicies do not deal with the problem of evil they simply explain

it away, and in doing so forget to take the victims of suffering seriously. Theodicies are thus too insensitive and too theoretical; they focus too much on how we can reconcile the existence of evil, in this case the Holocaust, with a belief in a God who is perfectly good. We should not focus on justifying evils that cannot be explained meaningfully but instead should find practical ways of overcoming evil and maintaining a belief in God. For, is there any theodicy good enough to justify the burning of children? No. To put it simply, we cannot possibly find an answer to satisfy everyone and so any attempt to do so is futile.

The second part of thesis shifts from the focus on the problem of evil and its implications within philosophy and religion, and the attempts (although mainly unsuccessful) at trying to reconcile a belief in God in the aftermath of the Holocaust, to explicitly Jewish approaches to evil and Holocaust. This second part of the thesis will specifically draw upon ideas within Jewish philosophy to combat the problem of evil, with reference to scripture, in particular the Book of Job. The second part of the thesis will also draw upon ideas of God within Judaism and the Old Testament and tackle the question of whether this type of God is more compatible with the existence of such evil as the Holocaust.

The fourth chapter of this thesis solely focuses on The Book of Job, including the discussion from Maimonides on Job and suffering and how this idea of God found within the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Job plays into God being compatible with the existence of evil. The narrative will explain how Job is devout follower of God and a good person with wealth, happiness and strong faith. Yet, in a wager with Satan, God tests Job's faith by taking all his earthly possessions, including his livestock, his crops, and his family. The story of Job within Jewish philosophy plays a major role in explaining the relationship between God, evil and man, and also giving humans an insight into God's nature. The book is also pivotal for this thesis as it sets the tone for the type of God I will argue for in the final chapters. Chapter four, therefore draws upon the meaning of the narrative and looks to understand it as situated within Jewish philosophy. As previously mentioned, the chapter will draw specifically upon the ideas of Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher and Rabbi who wrote in 12th Century.

Maimonides notices that the story of Job demonstrates that Job's suffering is not related to something evil he has done (as a form of punishment) but is rather related to his lack of understanding of God. Maimonides goes on to develop his ideas on wisdom by relating it to the idea of divine providence, for instance he believes that divine providence is not the same as our notion of providence. In fact, we do not know what divine providence is. When relating to Job, Maimonides says that God tells Job that he is too limited to understand why things are the way they are. Similarly, it is here I will mention the ideas of Oliver Leaman, who argued that even though Job suffered, he was also rewarded (which indicates that God can be both good and bad but is always just). Leaman argues that we need to question divine providence in order to gain greater knowledge about our relationship with God in the face of evil. Therefore, Job should not be blamed for calling out to God, likewise neither should humanity in the face of the Holocaust. Following from this, the discussion of the chapter then moves towards the relationship between Job and suffering found within the narrative. I will relate to the ideas of thinkers such as Kenneth Seeskin who suggests that Job never denied God's existence (and maintained his faith throughout his suffering) and without God, Job could not argue his case as there would be no one to correct his wrong or answer his questions. Therefore, it seems that God has always existed but has hidden Himself from mankind temporarily. Furthermore, I will touch upon the notions of Rabbi Nissim Gaon who states that the reason Job kept his faith was his personal contact with God, and it is this contact that helps demonstrate that God could be considered a personal, compassionate God, who can respond to people in a personal way, and who is available to everyone. In relation to this thesis as a whole, we can use these ideas of the relationship between Job and God to better comprehend how such a God could possibly allow and/or permit the existence of such evil like the Holocaust. However, this type of God may not be the God we find within philosophy, but rather the God we find within the Book of Job and scripture itself: a God who is loving, almighty, powerful and compassionate, but who also can be callous when needed, and who acts for reasons beyond our comprehension. But more will be said on this in the following chapters.

Following from this, chapter five discusses various approaches to the problem of evil found in Jewish philosophy, all of which focus on the same dilemma: if God is all-powerful and perfectly just, then why do people suffer? Within this chapter comes

thoughts around the ideas of a suffering God, a redeeming God, and the problem of free will, specifically focusing on the works of Levinas, Rubenstein, Fackenheim and Wiesel to name a few. It is made evident within this chapter that within Judaism, it is believed that God is just, but that good and evil are rarely justly distributed. However, we cannot determine justice without knowing what it actually involves, and to do so, we must answer these three questions: what makes a person righteous? What is suffering? What counts as an appropriate reward/ punishment? Firstly, we must determine what justice is, and this chapter indicates two types of justice: granting people what they have the right to; and giving people that which match their merits. The former refers to paying debts, whereas the latter refers to returning a pledge. Following from the ideas of justice and its place within Judaism and a belief in God, I will reflect upon the ideas of Richard Rubenstein, who argues that a belief in a redeeming God i.e. a God who is active in history and who will bring about fulfilling ends, is no longer credible. Rubenstein's ideas called into question the need for a traditional, transcendent God, and in fact, he focused more on the idea of God and religion in an anthropological sense. However, this is an idea I will not focus on too much as it does not help develop my idea of God that is traditionally drawn from scripture. Yet, it is important to touch upon in relation to this chapter. The chapter continues by discussing the ideas of various Jewish philosophers, in particular, Elie Wiesel, a Jewish philosopher and more notably a survivor of the Holocaust, argues that God could have prevented such an atrocity, however, since the Holocaust occurred, the very nature of God's character is questioned, especially His justice. He goes as far as putting God on trial for his crimes against humanity and creation (in his 1979 play *The Trial of God*) and in fact he relates this to the Book of Job in the sense of what we can learn about our relationship with God following evidence of evil and whether or not our image of God needs to be reimagined. I will also look at the ideas of Emil Fackenheim, who states that the Holocaust was the most radically discriminating event in all Jewish history and therefore Jews must respond to tragedy by trying to reaffirm God's presence in history. He goes on to say that God was not a saving presence at Auschwitz (as some may have originally thought). Yet, despite this, we mustn't give Hitler a posthumous victory by letting him take away God and must maintain faith after Auschwitz. He even goes as far as stating that those who abandon God are the biggest destroyer of Jews. The fifth chapter also examines other philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas, who argues that trying to justify the suffering

of the Holocaust in a religious, ethical or political way is immoral and therefore rejected all forms of theodicy and affirmed that suffering cannot be comprehended in any manner. In comparison, John Roth suggested that even though the Holocaust targeted a particular group of people (Jews) and tried to annihilate them, this tragedy has the power to raise the right questions i.e. the questions we need to ask in order to pursue a life worth living. In fact, since the Holocaust was wrong and ultimately signifies a failure in ethical, religious and political frameworks, it does show how individuals are responsible for their actions and consequences. In relation to my thesis, these ideas are particularly important, as I suggest that we should not abandon all belief in God, but instead should reimagine God and differentiate it from the God of the philosophers. For it is this God which faces the problems of omnipotence, omnibenevolence and omniscience in relation to evil.

Throughout the thesis, there have been various explanations to the problem of evil and attempts of reconciling a belief in God following the Holocaust. And even though some of the arguments such as those from theodicy may seem slightly satisfactory, it is evident that despite various attempts at explaining the problem of evil, there is no plausible way of justifying the suffering endured throughout the Holocaust. Furthermore, we cannot possibly find an answer to satisfy everyone (this may be too grand a goal) and so any attempt to do so is futile. Therefore, instead of trying to solve the problem, we should find practical way to move forward and reconcile the Holocaust with a new concept of God.

The final chapter consequently discusses how the idea of God can be better understood, to allow for a maintained belief in God following the Holocaust. I will draw upon the ideas of God within scripture as a better alternative to the God of the philosophers. Particularly, I will reflect on the viewpoint of Hans Jonas, for example, he states that the Holocaust is a major problem for Jews as it brings into question their whole faith and belief in God. He instead suggests that we should focus on a different type of God to the God of the philosophers, thus moving away from attributes such as omnipotence, omnibenevolence and omniscience, and instead begin ascribing God as a God who is suffering, becoming and caring. Following on from this, I will delve

into the ideas of Peter Geach who suggests that a better alternative to the traditional term omnipotent (to be understood as all-powerful) would be Almighty (understood as power over all things); the latter being scripturally based while the former is not. This then leads onto the ideas of Ingrid Faro who states that we need a theologically authentic notion of God from scripture e.g. the idea that God of the Hebrew Bible, although may not always prevent evil, is one who rarely acts without reason (and/or for reasons we may not understand). I will therefore conclude that a better description of God would be one that is grounded within the Old Testament, and one which moves away from the notion of the God of Philosophers. Instead, I will show that by taking the concept of God back to his scriptural roots, we can better reconcile religious belief and evil in the aftermath of Auschwitz. I will argue that this concept of God is an old-new concept, which is similar to that found within the Hebrew Bible; a God who is worthy of worship but who doesn't have the problems with omnipotence. Overall, this thesis will demonstrate the need to abandon the philosophical enterprise of theodicy and the notion of God at its heart (the notion of God as all-powerful, all-knowing and perfectly good, known as the God of the Philosophers) and move back towards a God that is rooted in scripture and religion, to allow for the reconciliation between God's existence and the problem of evil.

Chapter One: The Problem with the 'Problem of Evil'

The main question within Judaism that arises when discussing the Holocaust is why. Simply, why did this genocide happen to this select group of people? The simple answer as to why the Holocaust is so significant in history is not because of the quantity of people who perished, nor because of the type of suffering the victims endured; instead, the Holocaust differs due to five characteristics that have "no precedent in human history".[6] The first characteristic that separates the Holocaust from other genocides is that the Nazis sought to kill all Jews whether said person identified as a Jew- to the Nazis, blood was all that mattered. Secondly, this anti-Semitic ideology was universal in the sense that the Nazis wanted to murder all Jews worldwide. Thirdly, the ideology of the genocide was purely based on a fantasy. They accused Jews of trying to sabotage the War and take over the world, which ironically, was what the Nazis themselves were trying to do. They built on anti-Semitism that was already present in Europe at the time, but did so in a way that rejected Christianity, as they believed that it stemmed from Judaism (hence this projects' focus on Judeo-Christian traditions). The fourth reason is that the Nazis tried to create a society based on pure hallucinations and fantastical ideas, for the ideology they portrayed in propaganda i.e., the idea of a perfect and pure Aryan race, did not exist. The fifth and final reason as to why the Holocaust is so significant compared to other genocides is that the attack of Jews was indeed an attack on human life, for Jewish civilisation is a source of modern civilisation as it precedes Christianity and Islam. Therefore, in trying to destroy all Jews, the Nazis were attacking the very centre of human life.[7] The aim of this chapter is therefore to show that the problem of evil is an unsolvable one, for we cannot reconcile a belief in the God of the philosophers/ classical theism (omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient) with an act of evil such as the

[6] Kwiet, K. & Matthäus Jürgen, *Contemporary Responses to the Holocaust*, (Westport: Praeger, 2004), p. 3.
[7] Ibid, pp. 4-5.

Holocaust. Many theologians and philosophers have proposed solutions, or theodicies, which seek to identify the reason God would have for permitting innocent suffering. But these are insufficient to explain the systematic murder of 6 million Jews. It is important to stress that it isn't the number of victims that is significant here, instead it is the fact that a group of religious people, who followed God's commands and teachings, were the chosen group of people to be persecuted and not protected by God Himself. Throughout this chapter, and in turn the rest of the thesis, I propose to address the problem of evil by going beyond philosophical attempts at theodicy and taking the problem back to its theological roots.

Those who construct theodicies to address the problem of evil typically suppose that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. From this it is easy to see why the existence of evil is such an acute problem, as such a God would know about evil, would have the power to prevent or remove it, and presumably would have the desire to do so. Yet evil still exists. For instance, J.L. Mackie formulated the logical problem of evil, which is as follows: If God was omnipotent, He could prevent evil; If God was omnibenevolent, He would want to prevent evil; But evil exists, so therefore God cannot be both omnipotent and omnibenevolent.[8] He famously argued that God's perfect goodness is incompatible with God's failings to create the best possible world and said that:

> "if God has made men such that in their free choices, they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could He not have made men such that they always freely choose the good?... Clearly His failure to avail Himself of this possibility is inconsistent with Him being omnipotent and wholly good".[9]

And so, it is the case that any solution to the logical problem of evil must be consistent with God's perfect power and His ability to create a world that contains no evil.

[8] Mackie, J., 'Evil and Omnipotence', in *The Problem of Evil* ed. Adams & Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 26.
[9] Mackie, J., 'Evil and Omnipotent', in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2008), pp. 173-180.

Similarly, Alvin Plantinga argued that it is not possible for an omnipotent being to actualise an "instantiated essence freely performing some action".[10] To put simply, God can create an essence that has choices but cannot make a being free to choose only one option i.e. good. For, if God only gave us one choice, we wouldn't truly be free. According to Plantinga, God can weakly create a perfect world and can restrictedly create a perfect world. However, God cannot unrestrictedly create a perfect world. Plantinga calls God the perfect predictor in the sense that He perfectly predicts events or actions, but that His predictions do not cause the events or actions. Instead, what you freely do depends on what the perfect predictor predicts and what they predict depends on what you freely do. For example, if you choose the colour red that is because God predicted the colour red, not because He made it the only choice for you to pick from.[11]

Nelson Pike also proposed something similar when he said: the world contains instances of suffering, and yet there exists a God who is omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient. However, a God of this type would have no morally sufficient reason for allowing suffering.[12] There is the claim that states that if we accept that God is the perfect predictor (as Plantinga suggests) then the only argument that can be put forward against the best possible worlds theory is to say that one of the following claims may be false: either an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent being brings about the best possible world which contains no evil; or an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent being brings about a good enough world that contains no evil. Nelson Pike says that it is possible for both to be false because even the best possible world and a wholly good being would have sufficient reason for allowing evil[13] and therefore we could accept that we live in the best possible world, but not a perfect world. For, it seems impossible for God to create a perfect world as evil exists, and even with reasons for allowing evil, one can always argue that a perfect being would not allow humans to suffer, especially considering that there are some evils that are completely pointless that we don't learn from. For instance, it is fair to

[10] French, P. & Wettstein, H French, P. & Wettstein, H., 'The Concept of Evil', in Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XXXVI (Malden: Wiley Periodicals, Inc., 2012) p. 164.
[11] Ibid, pp. 167-168.
[12] Pike, N., 'Hume on Evil' in *The Problem of Evil* ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 41.
[13] Ibid, pp. 38-52.

say that the Holocaust could be seen as pointless evil as we haven't learned anything from it (because if we had learned something from it, we wouldn't repeat the same behaviours such as racism, xenophobia, genocide, etc).

While the problem is clear enough, I shall suggest that the solutions proposed thus far have fallen short, and this despite most theodicies having at least some superficial plausibility. For example, according to the soul-making theodicy[14], God permits evil because it enables humans to develop morally and spiritually. While this may explain why God allows the existence of many of the disappointments and challenges we face in life, it does not offer a plausible explanation or justification of why He allowed the Holocaust to occur, for an omnibenevolent and omnipotent God would not allow the mass murder and torture of innocent people without a valid explanation (if such an explanation can even be found). If we take the ideas of D.Z. Phillips that either God permits the evils of the world with or without a second thought: if He commits them with a second thought, God is morally insensitive and callous, as He has had time to consider the impact of evils and yet still permits them; but if God allows evils with a second thought, He still knows of the evil and allows it anyway and therefore He is still responsible. And so, Phillips argues that either way you look at it, and whichever scenario you accept, God cannot be morally perfect.[15]

The Origin of Evil and Suffering

In order to understand evil at its very core, we must first understand its origin. One thinker who discusses the origins of evil and suffering is Peter Koslowski, who addresses the problem of evil firstly by separating the term 'evil' and the term hope. He describes evil as the transformation of the world for the worse, whereas hope is the transformation of the world for the better. Koslowski then states that religions accept that the world contains something it shouldn't, and this is what evil is. In fact, evil is contingent and therefore doesn't belong to the world's essence. The question arises though, as to how evil has come into the world in the first place. For, if one

[14] John Hick's Soul-Making Theodicy famously appears in his book *Evil and the God of Love (*London: Macmillan, 2010), pp. 360-362.
[15] Phillips, D.Z., *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God,* (London: SCM Press, 2004), p. 40.

accepts that it isn't part of the world's essence so wasn't there in creation, one can say that God did not create a world with evil in it. However, evil is in the world and has since come into it. It could be suggested that God could have a morally sufficient reason for allowing evil, for instance in Islam Allah is generally thought of as being omnipotent and omnibenevolent (or at least all-merciful), yet Islam doesn't have a problem of evil. This is because the Qur'an states very explicitly that Allah deliberately included evil in the world in order to test us, to see which of us are righteous. So, there's no mystery here. Traditionally, Judaism and Christianity have put forward different explanations of evil (e.g. punishment, improvement of the righteous, original sin etc.), and these have been widely endorsed by followers. However, if God is omnipotent and omnibenevolent, it seems hard to comprehend how He would allow such destruction to occur, especially on such a grand scale like the Holocaust. For me, there is not a good enough reason for such a loving God to allow the torture and murder of so many innocent people, especially people who were so devoted to serving God and upholding His values. Thus, it appears to me that either God is not omnipotent and could not stop evil entering the world, or God is omnipotent but is not omnibenevolent, and thus chose not to prevent evil. There is no logical way to justify the murder of six million innocent people, whilst also upholding the claim that God is omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient, all at the same time. Following this dilemma, Koslowski asks whether God's perfection exists outside evil and history, or whether God's perfection is subject to history and thus evil? Is it the case that God is a becoming-absolute being, or rather an unchanging-absolute being? Moreover, is creation seen as self-realisation (God becoming Himself) or as a self-expression of God (a free production outside of God as an expression of God's word)?[16] According to Koslowski, all Abrahamic traditions reject the idea of polytheism, as it allows gods to suffer the effects of evil and contingency in the same way humans do. Therefore, this seems to indicate a sense of anthropomorphism and makes theses gods finite and false.

[16] Ibid, p. 3.

Who is God and Why Does He Allow Evil?

Once we have some understanding or explanation as to where evil comes from or why it exists, we need to understand what type of God would allow this to exist in the world He has created. David Griffin supposes that in order to fully understand the problem of evil, we need to first understand what is meant by 'God'. If we take it in the ontological sense, then God is the greatest being that can be conceived. Yet, if we could also say that God is a being who is simply worthy of worship, or in the classical sense, God is a being who is omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient. However, Griffin stresses that whichever way you interpret God, the same problems still exist in regard to evil. He argues that one could abandon some attributes of God, whilst maintaining others, which would allow evil to exist in the world, as well as allowing for the existence of God, a God in this sense that would still be worthy of worship.[17]

Griffin begins by examining God at four different levels: the 'greatest being conceived that is worthy of worship'; a 'supreme power of the universe, power that is non-derivative and ultimately most effective'; a 'generic idea of God', which encompasses the idea that God is worthy of worship, He has holy power, He created our world, and that He is perfectly good; and finally, the God of process and traditional theism.[18] The question remains then, can we actually find any credibility in any potential solution to the problem of evil that denies any one of these features of God? And does the issue of evil, in this case the Holocaust, make any belief in God incredible? Can a God with all these qualities have allowed the Holocaust to happen and if so, why? Throughout this chapter and the rest of this thesis, I will show how it seems incompatible for the God of the philosophers to exists in the face of evil. Therefore, one must aim to reconcile a belief in God (whether that be a reimagined type of God with different attributes) with the existence of evil.

Griffin moves on to talk about the differences between traditional theism and process theism, both of which concern themselves with the relation between God and the

[17] Griffin, D. R., *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsiderations*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 14.
[18] Ibid pp. 10-11.

power of the universe, and between the types of power God has: Traditional Theism believes that the power of the universe belongs solely to God and that beings have power only if God grants it to them.[19] Traditional theists also believe that God's power is 'unilateral' meaning only God decides what will happen and when it will happen.[20] Traditional theism can be broken down into sub-categories. For example, there is the branch of traditional all-determining theism, which was endorsed by the likes of Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther, which states that God determines all human acts, even the sinful ones. This type of theism explains evil acts as a 'fall' away from God e.g. the original sin. They believe that Satan, a former angel of God's fell away from God's morality and goodness and turned towards evil. Yet, even though Satan turned away, it was God Himself who orchestrated this fall. However, this leaves us with a very real problem, namely that God could be the cause of evil. Even more so, that a so-called omnibenevolent God could have orchestrated such horrendous acts such as the Holocaust. Griffin offers a solution to this problem by stating that one could simply deny that theological propositions have to be 'logically consistent'.[21] For instance, if one believes that God is omnibenevolent and omnipotent, then surely His power implies that there is no freedom and therefore no room to sin, thus no evil. Yet, Griffin argues that instead we could still hold the notion that evil exists and that we are free beings, by denying that theology must always be rational. Therefore, it seems to me that evil can still occur whilst God keeps sole power, thus God is not the cause of evil (it can be caused by misuse of freedom).

Griffin elaborates by differentiating between Traditional Free-Will Theism and Process Theism. The former, he argues, claims that even though God essentially has all the power, He has voluntarily given some power to us. This means we are free beings and are not determined by God and we act on our own accord.[22] However, where does this leave us in relation to the Holocaust? Is it a satisfactory answer to simply say the Nazis acted on their own and there was nothing God could do about it without overriding human free will? There comes a point where enough is enough and God

[19] It is important to note here the idea of monotheism meaning one God/ one power. This traditional idea of God is a central claim in traditional theism and paved the way for how we view God.
[20] Ibid, p. 13.
[21] Ibid, p. 14.
[22] Ibid, p. 15.

takes away our freedom for the greater good. Griffin responds to questions similar to mine by arguing that God cannot take away our freedom as this removes our purpose as free beings to act without divine interference and develop our moral character. He goes on to say that God could interrupt the processes of nature, but this ending short-term pain would only hinder the "realisation of our long-term purpose, the development of moral and spiritual qualities through free decisions".[23] This implies that pain and suffering are essential for our spiritual and moral development and are essential to our character building. Yet, we immediately encounter a further problem. When talking about the Holocaust and the pain and suffering survivors endured, does this type of response actually bring comfort to survivors? Also, does this justify the suffering and premature deaths of those who perished? It is insensitive and unfair to that their suffering is only short-term and 'essential' and that the lessons they will learn, or their purpose is more important in the long run than their tremendous suffering. It is clear that the Holocaust did more damage than good. Griffin isn't blind to these criticisms, in fact he questions himself whether we actually learn from suffering, especially suffering that is pointless and which "leads to atheism rather than faith".[24] Griffin elaborates by saying that some suffering actually makes us further from God, not closer and therefore makes God seem incompetent for making us this way. He also questions the need for an afterlife to explain suffering, specifically does the afterlife offer a response to suffering in that it rewards us for our pain, and without the afterlife would one be compelled to say that all the suffering was for nothing? Finally, Griffin wonders whether God would have created a world where we are free, but free in the sense that we can only choose good. Yet, this seems logically impossible, for the issue is if a person can freely choose the right thing on one occasion, then why couldn't God just select for creation those people who freely choose the right thing on every occasion? But on the other hand, it may be suggested that in the case of the Holocaust, a world that only has this limited freedom (that would have prevented the tragic events of the Holocaust) would have been better than a world with total freedom. Griffin concludes by highlighting one of his original points, which is that in order for

[23] Ibid, p. 15.
[24] Ibid, p. 16.

God and freedom and evil to exist, we must "allow ourselves to violate the laws of non-contradiction"[25] in order to preserve the idea of a monotheistic God.

Following on from Traditional Theism, Griffin discusses the concept of Process Theism, made famous by Alfred Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, which distinguishes between God and the power of the universe called 'creativity' (creativity= "ultimate activity that all concrete actualities embody"[26]). Whitehead originally noted that creativity was a type of uncreated freedom and/or primordial power i.e. the power of an individual to create and determine itself based on the influence of others, and to be the creative influence towards others. Therefore, from this we can infer that God is the embodiment of all creativity and that "creation is the gradual bringing of order out of chaos".[27] Under process theism, power is shared and therefore God's power is not the only power and so, God cannot unilaterally determine anything. For, if God does not have sole power, then surely, He cannot be blamed for all evil and therefore evil does not contradict His power or goodness. And the reason He doesn't intervene is because it would contradict our freedom and thus the power, He has given us. God can only persuade and encourage us to act in a certain way, He cannot force us. However, if we as humans have the power to persuade and stop certain things then why can't God, considering He is the greatest being? Griffin tries to explain this by saying that controlling behaviour is virtue of a body and a consequence of our direct actions (causation) e.g. when our brain sends messages to our hands telling them to wave. Yet, since God has no body, He has no way to direct His actions: "God has no hands but our hands".[28] Griffin concludes that under process theism we all have a share of the power and therefore a share of the responsibility- evil can be caused by us and so we need to be accountable. But the question still remains- why is so much evil necessary, especially when it comes to the mass murder and torture in places such as Auschwitz. It is the type of people that were targeted that is an issue here. It's not just about the quantity of people, nor is it just about the six million people killed. Instead, it's the murder of six million of what were supposed to be God's chosen people

[25] Ibid, p. 17.
[26] Ibid, p. 22.
[27] Ibid, p. 23.
[28] Ibid, p. 26.

killed precisely because of that. So, the Holocaust threatens Judaism in the way that the first world war (for example) doesn't. But it doesn't seem to threaten any other religion in the same way. And so, it is never possible to explain the Holocaust as necessary, or to just accept that evil happens and we have to take responsibility for our actions.

The Problem with Omnipotence

One major issue within the problem of evil and which occurs throughout this thesis when trying to justify the Holocaust, is the problem with omnipotence and its so-called incompatibility with evil. Griffin does try to explain the issue of God's omnipotence via what he calls the omnipotence fallacy. He suggests that the term "omnipotence" can be taken literally: meaning to have power over all/ have all the power/ have all the power it is possible to have; or less literally: meaning to have the most power/ being the supreme power / being more powerful than anything else.[29] Griffin uses these differences in interpretation to show how the term "omnipotence" can be ambiguous, for it suggests a type of coercive power and promotes images of an "almighty, crushing, cosmic hand, wielding the thunder and lightning, determining drought and death".[30] He argues that it is incoherent to say that God has all the power (either actually or potentially) and for God to unilaterally bring about events in the world- he describes this incoherent type of omnipotence as "- omnipotence". He says that instead omnipotence should be used to describe power that is not controlling or determining; a power which is merely persuasive- this is what he calls "C-omnipotence".[31] It is actually this idea of C-omnipotence that states that to be actual is to have power i.e. it is self-determining and causing. John Knasas explained this type of omnipotence as something which cannot determine activities of all beings, simply because "it is not logically possible for one completely to determine the activity of another entity, that by definition has activity that is underived from any other being".[32]

[29] Ibid, p. 55.
[30] Ibid, p. 56.
[31] Ibid, p. 57.
[32] Knasas, J., 'Super-God: Divine Infinity and Human Self-Determination', *American Catholic Philosophical Association Proceedings*, 1981, 55(1), p. 206.

This omnipotent being therefore does not have unilateral power and so cannot guarantee the elimination or absence of evil. And so, the omnipotence fallacy concludes that: 1). God can perform any action and eliminate evil, or 2). evil exists.

As stated in the above, Griffin claims that the traditional idea of omnipotence is incoherent (I-omnipotence). However, John Knasas seems to disprove this by defending Aquinas' traditional theism and the notion of divine omnipotence. He tries to show that human self-determination is compatible with God's determination for all acts.[33] Knasas does not however claim that evil acts are not caused by God, he simply says that God permits them. Knasas also doesn't say that human freedom is compatible with all acts being determined by God, instead the freedom he discusses is what he calls 'real freedom', which is where one is "acting with real ability to do otherwise".[34] In other words, we have the freedom to select from a number of possibilities. And so, this freedom cannot be compatible with being determined by other agents. Therefore, it seems that what Knasas is trying to do is show that God determines all events but also determines human will so we can choose from a number of possibilities. However, if we can only choose from 30,000 possibilities as opposed to 1 million do, do we have ultimate freedom to actually choose anything we wish? Surely, we are restricted and limited in our choices, and could it be that because we can't see or access all options, we could have made a better choice if we had all the options. Or could it be the opposite and we could make an even worse decision and that is why God had restricted us. Knasas develops this point by saying that only God can have the power to determine because He is infinite. In fact, a caused finite being such as human beings can be determined, and causes other things only by passing the determination on to the other being (causation). However, because God is infinite and uncaused, He is indeterminate, for He contains all the essence and all the possibilities (both actual and potential), which He can put on us and determine for us, e.g. we can either pick X then Y or Y then X. Knasas quotes that the "explanation [of determination and freedom] has to be poised on the nature of the primary efficient cause, which is able to act without determination".[35] Yet, this raises the question as to

[33]Griffin, D. R, 1991, p. 71.
[34] Knasas, J, 1981, p. 189.
[35] Ibid, p. 199.

how an unlimited, infinite being can bring about an event that is both necessary and contingent, which must occur, yet at the same time may not actually occur. Knasas explains that as finite beings we cannot possibly grasp the unlimited motion that causes a will to make a free decision -- we cannot understand how God operates. However, doesn't this just make the whole concept of omnipotence unintelligible and therefore any attempts to explain it are futile? And if we cannot understand it, then surely, we cannot use it to form the basis of a theodicy in defence of God in the light of evil.

Griffin counters the ideas above from Knasas by stating that any defence of God that relies on free will, will work only if we combine divine self-limitation and the impossibility of knowing the future, with the creation of free beings. This implies that we cannot be truly free as we only have a few possibilities offered to us by God, yet we remain undetermined. This is the only way God, freedom and evil can be compatible and exist in unison.[36] Griffin expands his ideas by discussing the concept of theological freedom i.e. freedom in relation to God. He suggests that God gave us freedom to choose Him for ourselves. He could not have made us only free to choose good and therefore choose Him, as this would undermine our freedom entirely. Griffin states that beings which are not theologically free and in fact metaphysically impossible, for without this type of freedom we would not have access to all the higher values e.g. intelligence, wisdom, courage, etc.[37] Nevertheless, if we apply this to beings who don't have access to higher values, such as animals, people with disabilities, children, people in vegetative states, etc, are they considered less than us and/or do they have less theological freedom? In the case of the Holocaust, many children and adults, some of whom were disabled, were tortured and murdered senselessly, yet according to Griffin's claims it seems that these would not have had as much value as 'normal' human beings, and so their suffering is not as important. Griffin himself asks whether God's non-intervention can ever be justified. He states that God could occasionally take away our freedom for the sake of the greater good, and that this sacrifice of freedom is small price to pay for the prevention of evil.[38] But still, this raises the

[36] Griffin, D. R, 1991, p. 82.
[37] Ibid, pp. 84-85.
[38] Ibid, p. 87.

concern of why God didn't prevent the mass slaughter of six million Jews. The sacrifice of the Nazis' freedom would have been better for mankind than the annihilation of 90% of Europe's Jews and hundreds of generations of people. For, a loving God should consider saving His people from the grasps of the gas chambers to be the greater good in comparison to the freedom of the Nazi perpetrators. One could go further than this and argue that God could just remove the worst evils such as the Holocaust, and therefore only infringe on our freedom sometimes, in the worst-case scenarios. However, Bruce Reichenbach suggested that if God were to remove only the worst evils, then once they are gone, the next worse evils will then be the worst, and we will then want those eliminating also, and so on and so on. Yet, to eliminate all evils will require the elimination of all freedom. For us humans, we don't know where the line is drawn and where this stops, only God knows this. So only He can know what is the worst evil and whether or not He should intervene.[39] But does this reply help Holocaust survivors and victims find comfort, by saying that their suffering was not the worst God could allow to happen? Even if it isn't the worst, it was still bad enough for God to intervene. And so, here we are again. At the problem of evil- either God is not powerful, or He is not loving. This is the problem with the 'problem of evil' namely that the God of the philosophers, which centres around omnipotence, is not compatible with the existence of evil.

Instrumental Evils: Are They Really Necessary?

There may be some room for the argument that evil exists purely for a reason we cannot fathom as human beings, and that God, under this idea, can maintain His title of omnipotence in the face of evil. Under this assumption, it may be suggested that there are such instances of evil that are in fact necessary, whether that be for survival or growth, or for reasons outside of our physical capacity for such knowledge. Nelson Pike argued that Augustine showed that if God is omnipotent, then we must assume that all acts are performed with His permission (even the bad acts) and that He must have a legitimate reason for allowing evil to occur i.e. for the greater good and/or that they may be instrumental and morally justifiable: either evil is necessary to avoid

[39] Reichenbach, B., *Evil and a Good God*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), pp. 83- 84.

something equally as bad/ worse; or evil is necessary to secure a greater good. This can be understood in three formulas:

1. [R] an agent X is *morally obliged* to allow E if either: E is necessary for the avoidance of an equally bad or worse E; or E is necessary to secure a greater good.
2. [S] an agent X is *morally permitted* to allow E if either: E is necessary for the avoidance of an equally bad or worse E; or E is necessary to secure a greater good.
3. [T] an agent X is *morally permitted* to allow E *only if* either: E is necessary for the avoidance of an equally bad or worse E; or E is necessary to secure a great enough good.[40]

Now, on the face of it, Pike's argument seems to solve the problem of evil, but when applied to the atrocities of the Holocaust it seems insensitive to suggest we could say that the Holocaust happened for a greater good. In fact, it could be argued that the Holocaust shouldn't have even been a possibility presented to us. Now, where does this leave God? It seems unreasonable to suggest that He can be omnibenevolent if He even offered us such a horrific series of choices and actions that He knew could lead to the elimination and murder of six million Jews. Marilyn McCord Adams highlights how evils lacking instrumental value are often seen as pointless. Also, it seems that [R] moral obligation includes [S] moral permission, but not vice versa, and it seems that many prefer to endorse [R] and [T]. In fact, she states that many who try and solve the problem of evil aim to show how evils are necessary for securing goods and/or avoiding worse things. One of the striking comments Adams makes is that "instrumental reasons do not exonerate but dig the agent in deeper".[41] In other words, justifying evil as a means to an end does not actually help anyone, but rather makes the person who uses it as a reason for justification, less moral. In his quest for a better God in the face of evil, Phillips wants to preserve space for perfect goodness in his idea of God but accepts that God is not capable of exercising power over the world (control). This is a radical departure from biblical religion and theism, which believe that God is the creator and governor of all things. It appears that instrumental reasons always play some role in moral decision making (we use it in everyday life). The issue

[40] McCord Adams, M., 'Ignorance, Instrumentality, Compensation, and the Problem of Evil', *Sophia*, 2013, 1(52), p. 9.
[41] Ibid, p. 15.

arises when we overuse this as opposed to using other patterns of reason. For example, Adams gives the example of parents who need to move for their jobs. The new job offers stability and financial security, but the place they would move to offers poor schools, more diseases and worse living conditions. The parents make the choice to move and accept that those bad things are just the price to pay for the better job opportunity, even if it is at the expense of the children's welfare. Their decision is ultimately based on what they think is best, taking the instrumental approach of means to an end, but in the end the decision will always stick with them and they will always be responsible.[42] What Adams states here is that the issue with an instrumental view is that people think it is the 'be all and end all' and they forget to consider other moral routes. A utilitarian approach, even if it is good overall, doesn't work in every case, and maybe a situationist approach, which allows both deontological and utilitarian approaches to be considered depending on the context, would be better suited. However, for the matter of the Holocaust, which is central to this thesis, it seems that no moral route or theory would ever be able to fully justify the murder of 6 million innocent people, especially not one that treats people as a means to an end. Sometimes there isn't any way to justify such horrendous evils and therefore we shouldn't attempt to.

William Rowe thinks that God is a moral agent whose actions are decided by instrumental reasons. Thus, all examples of pointless suffering are strong evidence against God because they show that a supposedly all-loving God has allowed evils that have no purpose. He also argues that God may be compatible with necessary evils, but that He is never compatible with pointless evils. For instance: If God exists then there are no instances of pointless evils, but yet some evils are pointless. Therefore, it is likely that God does not exist.[43] Phillips concurs and states that such horrors are incompatible with an omnibenevolent God and a God who supposedly could intervene in any way to prevent evil. Phillips also focuses on horrendous evils which are defined as evils which cannot be good on the whole. When discussing this, he refers to the Holocaust and says that justifying evil using instrumental reasons, in

[42] McCord Adams, M., 2013, pp. 17-18.
[43] Rowe, W., *The Problem of Evil and Varieties of Atheism*, American Philosophical Quarterly, 1979, 1(16), pp. 335-341.

light of the Holocaust, is a mistake. He goes on to highlight that the problem with such horrors is not ignorance, but instead "what we do know about the horrors, exposes any idea that instrumental reasons could impose [R] moral obligation or confer [S] moral permission and so, wash the hands of agents who allows them".[44]

There is the idea that some instrumental reasons [R] oblige or permit [S] or are required to permit [T] an agent to do what they can to avoid evil to secure a greater good. Under these conditions, evil is considered necessary and is therefore justified. One example in literature is the story of *Sophie's Choice*:

> When Sophie and her two children get off the train from Warsaw to Auschwitz, there was an immediate selection. The SS officer gives Sophie the choice: instead of gassing both children, she is forced to choose which will live. At first, she protests: 'I can't choose.' Then in order not to lose both, she says, 'take the girl!' Sophie's choice stays with her. She is liberated in 1947, only to give up her own life, also by choice.[45]

Phillips suggests that Sophie simply did what she had to do. Moreover, Phillips believes that ordinary moral practice requires us to "distinguish third person evaluations from first person evaluations".[46] To put it simply, the third-person view allows us to understand and have compassion for Sophie and see there was no good choice. On the contrary, the first-person view states that the decision ultimately lies with Sophie- she was to blame, and she has to take full responsibility. Phillips concludes that the standards imbedded in our moral practice logically block instrumental reasons from conferring either obligation or permission when horrendous evils are involved. What Phillips states here is that we can in some justify certain evils by taking a third-person view, yet when horrendous evils are involved, there is no possible way of explaining or justifying them. For me, there is no position anyone could take that could morally justify the Holocaust for it cannot be seen as instrumental in any way. Theodicists assume that God is conceived as an agent who acts to do one

[44] Phillips, D.Z., *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*, (London: SCM Press, 2004), pp. 41-42.
[45] Ibid, pp. 41-42.
[46] McCord Adams, M., 2013, p. 12.

thing instead of another in the world. Therefore, God is conceived as a moral agent in our moral community. However, Phillips states that in light of horrendous evils, this seems absurd. The question is whether God has something to answer for, or did He simply do what He had to do to prevent an equally as bad/ worse evil? Yet, how do we approach this dilemma in face of the Holocaust? There can be no rational way of saying the Holocaust was instrumental, at least on the surface. It seems absurd to suggest that the six million innocent people who lost their lives were just means to an end and were used to achieve some greater good. However, who is to say that God didn't allow the Holocaust to happen to prevent an even worse act of evil? It could be the case that the Holocaust was the lesser of two evils. We cannot fully understand why God allowed the Holocaust, and even if He did have reasons, we probably wouldn't be able to understand them fully due to our finite nature. Therefore, maybe it is best to accept that some things happen for reasons we cannot know, and even though they may be horrendous, we need to focus less on why they happened, and more on how to overcome the aftermath of them.

Model of Divine Agency

Another issue within the problem of evil in the face of the Holocaust is the issue of divine agency. Specifically, the idea that God is an 'agent-cause' who acts in our world. Under this idea, God is not on a par with our agency, but rather He is the source of everything, including our agency. And so, unless God acts with us, no creature can exercise their causal powers. By the same token, God is not a member of our moral community because He has no obligations to anything or anyone else and so does not need moral justification. If we are to apply this to the Holocaust, it seems we are allowing God to escape the hard questions surrounding this evil. For example, if God is in fact the source of all things and we, as mere human beings, cannot act without His causal power, then the Holocaust rests solely on His shoulders. Even if one is to argue that all creatures owe their being to God and therefore owe it to God to act in accordance with what He wants from us, it can also be said that God owes His being to no one and thus has no obligation to act in a certain way. Therefore, God can act in any which way, even if that results in evil, and He owes no one, not even the victims, an explanation.

Also, under the idea of divine agency, it appears that God has no obligation to love/benefit creatures, but creatures do have an obligation to love God.[47] Marilyn McCord Adams states that if God is the patron and we are the clients, then denying that God is a moral agent still doesn't remove the problems surrounding God and evil, as God's attitudes towards creatures can be described as both kind and lenient and cruel and demanding. Therefore, when horrors such as the Holocaust occur, they give us prima facie reasons to believe that God hates us and that He is cruel. In light of this revelation from Adams, it could be suggested that there is no point in trying to justify the Holocaust at all, for if we all we are going to discover is that God doesn't actually love us, then who does this benefit? This revelation may actually cause more harm than good. Victims of the Holocaust for example, when searching for reasons why they suffered, are not going to want to hear that God doesn't love them and that he has no obligation to them. So, instead of focusing on why evil happens and why people suffer, we should focus on finding ways of overcoming evil and suffering, and helping people maintain a belief in some type of God that is most compatible with the existence of evil.

Horrors are not uncommon, for as we know evil does exist, but it seems that God has accepted these horrors as a price for some goal. Adams states that maybe the reason for this is that God loves variety and so populates the world with different people who interfere with one another e.g. like in the food chain, and who ultimately act differently. Or perhaps God loves material creation and wants it to become more Godlike and so He personifies it. Or maybe it is that God wants us to act on our own accord without interference e.g. free will. Adams highlights that the question isn't whether or not God has goals at the end of these horrors, it is what reasons God has to justify them.[48] It can be asked whether this paints a picture of God working with us or against us. In other words, can God be good to us in a world that contains evil (evil which He has allowed to remain). Adams believes the only way to justify a person's horror is via weaving the experience into the individual, and to show that it helps form a relationship

[47] McCord Adams, M., 2013, p. 16.
[48] Ibid, p. 18.

with God. This is not to say evil is necessary for our relationship with God, it merely strengthens it.[49]

Adams draws upon horrors[50], which she states destroys any possibility of a positive meaning in the person's life. However, Biblical religion says that actually horrors are meant to help us overcome struggles and challenges, for God is giving us the opportunity to create positivity out of horror. Therefore, all horrors are necessary in some way or another. It might be said that God would not create a world with unnecessary evil in it- He always has a divine plan that includes some form of compensation for suffering (whether that is in this life or the next). But is this enough? Is there any amount of compensation that can redeem the horrors of the Holocaust? It seems absurd to suggest that the pain and suffering of such a horrific event can simply be forgiven on the promise of some good later in life. It also seems hard to understand that there could be some divine reason for allowing such evil, considering God is supposed to be omnibenevolent, but then again, we humans do not have the capacity to fully understand God's metaphysical nature and thus His reasons/ plan.

Phillips proposes a new idea of God who is not the traditional concept God found in philosophy (God of the philosophers- who is omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient and thought of as pure consciousness), but is instead a God who is identified with love. According to Phillips, God is outside our world and love alone does not simply guarantee Him the power to act within the world and to guarantee certain outcomes.[51] This seems to paint the picture of a stoic life, a life where we are not the centre of the universe and where no one has the right to life/ well-being. In this life, good only comes to those who are good and apologise for the bad. Phillips argues that we have to accept life as a gift and sacrifice life back to God as an act of love. Under this idea, it could be interpreted that the Holocaust is our way of sacrificing

[49] Ibid, p. 19.

[50] W.D. Ross famously proposed the term *prima facie* duties and described them as "obligations which do not state our actual obligation or duty proper (the thing we ultimately ought to do in a particular situation)" (W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930, p. 20). Instead, each duty rests on a separate and distinct ground and specifies a consideration counting in favour of or against an act or what to set ourselves to do (notes on *prima facie* duties taken from: Skelton, A., 'William David Ross', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/william-david-ross

[51] Ibid, p. 220.

ourselves to God in an act of love and faith. Yet, would this seem extreme? For is the death of six million people a really large price to pay for God's love? And if God really did love us, He should prevent our suffering. Also, if good only comes to those who are good, is that to say that the victims of the Holocaust weren't good and so in some ways deserved what happened to them? Again, this seems extreme. I agree with Phillips that the traditional philosophical notion of God does not fit well with horrendous evils, but focusing God towards the idea of love still has some issues. It places the responsibility of evil solely on our shoulders (on the shoulders of the innocent) and this is not always right.

Happy Endings: Real or Fantasy?

D.Z. Phillips states that those seeking compensation for suffering or a 'happy ending' are just trying to 'balance the books'.[52] He also argues that the idea of stoic life (mentioned above) does not hold out for happy endings but instead focuses on dignity. He does allow that this idea isn't universal, as not everyone can overcome their lack of trust in a world that caused them so much pain.[53] Adams also highlights how many people die without a belief in God and feel defeated. Phillips does highlight however that God never forgets our suffering, and so even if our memory fades, God's does not. Likewise, Julian of Norwich assured us that God will always compensate us for our sins and thank us for our suffering[54]: "God will not cover up our sins. We will wear them eternally as honourable battle scars".[55] God is therefore not callous or cruel but internally involved; He weighs the price of divine choices and answers for our suffering via compensation. Bearing this in mind, it might be fair to suggest that there is the possibility that we only truly become at peace and recover from suffering in the afterlife, as this is the only place where we have the fullest capacity to understand God's divine reasons. But it seems unfair to expect people to wait until death to have their suffering explained or justified. The morally right thing for God to do should be to actually prevent evil in the first instance, as opposed to waiting until the afterlife for some form

[52] Ibid, p. 247.
[53] Ibid, pp. 207-214.
[54] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 118-123.
[55] McCord Adams, M., 2013, p. 22.

of redemption. To put it simply, saying sorry doesn't make it ok. God needs to do more to show us compassion in this life, rather than waiting until the next life.

Adams argues that God has "the capital to compensate humans"[56] for their suffering due to the metaphysical excellence He possesses. However, because many have suffered and died without compensation, such redemption has to be post-mortem. John Bishop contests this idea on ethical grounds. He says that whether or not someone believes that a personal omni-God is compatible with evil depends on what we mean by the term 'perfect goodness'. For instance, Nelson Pike argues that perfect goodness is something that is compatible with the non-prevention and/or elimination of evils, if there is a morally sufficient reason. In comparison, consequentialists suggest that perfect goodness can be upheld if there are instrumental reasons to overcome evil and suffering. John Bishop and Ken Perszyk, however, argue for a 'perfectly loving relationship'. However, it seems that relations between us and an omni-God could not instantiate such a relationship. Bishop and Perszyk state that the gap between human and divine capacities would make God too dominant and manipulative. They also say that a God who compensates is a God who causes evil in the first place, and so He cannot be perfectly good. Therefore, a perfectly good omni-God does not exist.[57]

The Character of the Problem of Evil as Intellectual

Many philosophers see the problem of evil as, in Felderhof's words, an "intellectual conundrum"[58], which tries to reconcile the God of the philosophers i.e. a God that is omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient, with the existence of evil. However, ordinary people see the problem of evil slightly differently; they see it as something to overcome and something which allows us to learn how to continue with our lives in the face of such suffering. Felderhof states that there seems to be no reconciliation of God, with his traditional attributes, and the nature of a world that contains evil. This of course forces theists to choose between three options: firstly, they could deny evil

[56] Ibid, p. 22.
[57] Ibid, p. 23.
[58] Felderhof, M., 'Evil: theodicy or resistance?', *Scottish Journal of Theology,* 2004, 57(4), p. 398.

completely, however, this doesn't seem plausible because there is so much evidence for it and so we cannot just ignore the problem; secondly, they could modify one attribute of God, which seems a more obvious step to take, as it allows God to better fit into a world with evil. However, changing God can sometimes make Him less worthy of worship and so we need to find the right balance; and thirdly, they could embrace the contradictions within the problem of evil and embrace the irrational. For example, they could accept that there are things which we cannot explain because they are beyond our human understanding and rationale, and so we just have to accept that God has reasons for our suffering.[59] However, Felderhof highlights how all three of these approaches have problems: the first seems to lead to a self-deception about the reality of evil; the second seems to lead to an apostasy from faith and thus from worshipping; and the final one leads to not knowing what to do due to irrationalities in theistic understanding. Therefore, evil appears to be an "unconquerable surd"[60] that one must accept and learn to live with.

The Character of the Problem of Evil as an Ethico-Religious Issue

Theologians are aware of the problem with theodicies and the way they address the problem of evil. David Ford stated that "there are no unproblematic solutions to evil- it is even questionable whether it is right to see it in terms of a problem with some intellectual solution… surely it is above all a practical problem which calls for a practical response".[61] Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that if discussions about evil are questionable then we shouldn't bother at all. Maybe it would be better if we didn't focus on finding a theoretical answer but instead focused on finding a practical way of dealing with the consequences of evil. I will get to this in later chapters. For now, Ford stresses that we need to show how we can deal with both the practical and the ethico-religious task of dealing with evil. He goes on to speak of a double mystery- the mystery of evil and the mystery of goodness. This mystery seems to imply that we cannot understand God and His purposes, so then the question again is why should we bother? If the problem of evil is a mystery, then we are never going to be able to

[59] Ibid, pp. 399-400.
[60] Ibid, pp. 400-401.
[61] Ford, D., *Theology: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 73.

solve it and so theodicies which attempt to do so are futile.[62] However, Felderhof argues that instead of abandoning the problem altogether, we could instead turn evil into something we can address and tackle. In other words, we could categorise evil and make it easier to understand. For example, we could split evil into categories such as moral evil and natural evil.[63]

Another issue surrounding the idea of mystery is that it allows evil to hide and allows people to deflect responsibility by simply saying that we cannot understand evil and why it happens. Systematic types of evil can be caused by very different groups of people. Take the Holocaust for example, this evil was caused by both people who deliberately set out to cause harm to others, such as Nazi superiors, guards, SS men, etc. and also seemingly ordinary people, including German citizens and simple administrators in the camps. It was these ordinary people who were able to contribute to the evil events of the Holocaust, whilst at the same time deflecting the blame and responsibility on to those in charge, by simply saying they were doing what they were told, or they acted out of fear. This in turn frees them of any responsibility to make good what they did wrong.[64] It appears that failing to recognise evil is actually an evil in itself, for failing to take responsibility and make amends actually does more harm than good. Also, simply calling evil a mystery merely sweeps evil under the carpet and allows people to avoid facing the problem head on. This fails to give the victims any comfort or legitimate answers and treats their suffering as meaningless.

Simone Weil produces a more practical way of dealing with the problem of evil. She separates the problem and its challenges into three parts. The first states that there is a sphere where one can change nothing (past, present and future) and we just have to accept and love all things. The second suggests there is a sphere which is placed under the rule of will and indicates that we have to fulfil our duty. And the final option proposes that there is a sphere where we experience pleasure of God by thinking of God with love, thus the more we think about God the more we are compelled to act well enough to meet God's standards.[65] Overall, Weil believes that "theologically,

[62] Ibid, p. 82.
[63] Felderhof, 2004, p. 408.
[64] Ibid, pp. 408-409.
[65] Weil, S., *Waiting on God,* (London: Fontana Books, 1959), p. 13.

resistance to evil and belief in God must be logically related and a sufficient ground for rejecting the theodicies that reconcile God and evil".[66] Therefore, we must find practical ways of fighting evil, in order to find possible solutions, as opposed to "abstract logical speculations".[67] And so, religious belief becomes more of a *Weltentwurf* (world design- something we can use in everyday life) and not a *Weltbild* (world view- a way of looking at the world). Simone Weil ultimately sets up a life beginning with love and ending in submission to the will of God. she states that we cannot begin to understand evil or how to overcome it before we have submitted to God. The first step of recognition is to realise there are evils in the world that conflict with a perfect God, and so when theodicists claim that God is compatible with evil, they are obstructing the process and fail to find an adequate solution to the problem of evil.

Dorothee Soelle talks about addressing the problem of evil as a move from "mute to moaning".[68] Specifically, by finally allowing one to find a voice and talk about acts that are hard to talk about and/or distressing, one approaches the problem of evil proactively. Likewise, by the acceptance of universal guilt and by making human beings responsible for their actions. this gives everyone the chance of redemption and offers hope that things can be made right.[69] Kierkegaard highlights how as humans we have the ability to overcome evil and stresses the importance of redemption and hope: "if a man before God is always guilty, then it follows that there is always a task and always a hope".[70] However, who are we to know that there will be any consolation for our suffering or that our sins will be redeemed? People act good every day by doing good deeds, following God's word and being virtuous, and yet bad things still happen to them. Likewise, bad people still go unpunished. How can we have hope in a world like that or in a God that allows the world to be like that? It is not enough to say that God will make amends in the next life, God should make amends now. Theodicies' shirk of mystery and/or an eschatological explanation of evil seems to suggest that we cannot know why good things or bad things happen, but that we should just trust in

[66] Felderhof, 2004, p. 410.
[67] Ibid, p. 410.
[68] Soelle, D., *Suffering*, (London: Longman & Todd, 1975), p. 73.
[69] Felderhof, 2004, p. 411.
[70] Kierkegaard, S., *The Gospel of Suffering*, (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1965), p. 77.

God and have faith in His ways. Therefore, it may be reasonable to accept that we don't need theodicy to explain something that is unexplainable. Instead, we should focus on dealing with the problem of evil practically, that is stop focusing on why things happen and focus on dealing with the aftermath.

The Unsolvable Problem of Evil

Nevertheless, no matter which way one looks at the problem of evil and its supposed solutions, the argument remains, for what possible reason God could have for allowing horrendous evils. How can one justify the extermination of innocent people in the Warsaw Ghetto, or the gassing of innocent children in Auschwitz? It seems unjust and callous to suggest that these acts of evil can be rationalised as instrumental. Yet, is this enough of a reason to abandon all faith in God? Surely, there is a way to understand evil and believe in God. Some may say that God is a mystery, and we should just accept and trust that He has reasons for allowing such evil (reasons beyond our finite comprehension). Or that the world we live in is the best possible world God could have created, and so the murder of six million Jews, may be the better alternative to what could have happened in another world i.e. the murder of twelve million Jews. However, when faced with the Holocaust these reasons seem ridiculous.

Throughout the next chapter and first half of this thesis, I will address the attempts theodicy makes at reconciling the events of the Holocaust with a belief in God that Is worthy of worship. I will demonstrate how the different types of theodicy aim to show that good outweighs the bad and that evil that does exist, in this case the Holocaust, happens for a reason and/or has some benefit to the sufferer. Ultimately, however, I will highlight how theodicy fails at achieving its aims and in the end, is futile attempt at solving the issues surrounding a belief in God in light of the Holocaust.

Chapter Two- Can Theodicy Achieve its Aims?

As defined by Alvin Plantinga, theodicy is the "answer to the question of why God permits evil".[71] In other words, theodicy is the “theological construct that attempts to vindicate God in response to the evidential problem of evil that seems inconsistent with the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent deity”.[72] The word theodicy is derived from the Greek words *Θεός Theos and δίκη dike*; *theos* meaning ‘God’ and *dikē* meaning either ‘trial’ or ‘judgement’[73]. Nick Trakakis famously stated that theodicy is a way to “justify the ways of God to men”[74] i.e. theodicy tries to make evil plausible in the face of God. Trakakis elaborates by saying that there are certain types of theodicies: theodicies which try to explain why God allows any type of evil at all can include why there is any evil at all or why there is a particular type of evil; theodicies that explain types of evil, such as moral evil or natural evil; theodicies that explain the amount of evil; and theodicies that explain all types of evil and why God allows it. Whichever approach theologians take, Trakakis remind us that all theodicies have to present an actual reason for God allowing evil to exist. They must show that the good outweighs the evil (that evil exists for a greater good) and that these goods must directly benefit the sufferer (what he calls ‘patient-centred goods’). He also states that the goods must have logical necessity i.e. logically, they have to exist.[75]Throughout this chapter, I will be examining theodicies and their aims and showing how theodicy is outdated and cannot and should never be used as a way to explain the Holocaust as something which can be compatible with the God of the philosophers (omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient).

[71] Plantinga, A., *God, Freedom and Evil,* (London : Allen & Unwin, 1974), p. 10.
[72] Tambasco, A.J., *The Bible on Suffering*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), p. 1.
[73] Definition and Greek translation of theodicy found here: https://www.britannica.com/topic/theodicy-theology
[74] Milton, J., *Paradise Lost*, (London : Penguin Publishers, 2000), V.26.
[75] Trakakis, N., ‘Theodicy: The Solution to the Problem of Evil, or Part of the Problem?’, *Sophia ,* 2008, 47(1), p. 163.

Types of Theodicies

In order for theodicies to mount a respectable attempt at explaining why the Holocaust happened, they must show that the good outweighs the evil (and /or that evil exists for a greater good) and that these goods must directly benefit the sufferer. There are many different ways in which theodicy can try and explain evil, for example there are theodicies which try to explain why God allows any type of evil at all; there are theodicies that explain types of evil, such as moral evil or natural evil; theodicies that explain the amount of evil; and theodicies that explain all types of evil and why God allows it. These theodicies can be divided into two groups- divine and human theodicies. Both of these types of theodicies can be used differently to help overcome the problem of evil. For instance, they may show how the problem of evil becomes man's problem i.e. it confronts man in his everyday life, or they may show how problem of evil is an existential problem and therefore we must find ways to overcome it. Charles Cameron discusses the different types of theodicies, specifically divine and human theodicies, and he shows how they can be used differently to help overcome the problem of evil. By emphasising divine theodicy as the opposite of human theodicy, Cameron is able to show how justification of God by man can be found in justification of man by God. In scripture, the justification is characterised as "justification by faith".[76] In other words, it is clear that we need faith in order to achieve salvation.

Theodicy can also be approached from a Biblical perspective, and when discussing the Holocaust, it is necessary to look at theodicy from a religious angle, to show how it may be used to help Jews overcome their conflict with God and faith, even if those theodicies are not specifically developed by Jews, nor are developed using ideas with Judaism. Examining theodicy from a religious perspective, which shows the need for both authority from scripture and the need for contemporary relevance. Under this type of theodicy, we, as human beings, cannot fully understand God and His reasons, and so instead must focus on using obedient reason (reason in obedience to revelation) to trust in God and have faith that evil has a purpose beyond our understanding.

[76] Ibid, p. 26.

Cameron famously speaks about religious theodicy and approaches it from two angles: authority from scripture and the need for contemporary relevance. He also stresses that these two approaches must be held together. He states that a theodicy which is purely theoretical does not help anyone- the real test of a theodicy is whether it has practical benefits. And in the case of this thesis, there needs to be a way in which one can practically deal with the aftermath of the Holocaust and attempt to reconcile the evil with a belief in God. Also, he argues that one cannot talk about the problem of evil objectively because there is always a part of it that becomes personal and therefore no longer belongs in the theoretical space. Instead, the problem of evil becomes a human problem i.e. it confronts man in his everyday life. This makes the problem of evil an existential one, which in turn makes it much more serious than if it was merely a theoretical debate. Therefore, what Cameron is saying is that we cannot escape the problem of evil, nor can we deal with it in an abstract way; we must face the problem head on and confront our sins.[77]Cameron goes on to express how one must go further than simply explaining evil and instead must find ways to overcome it. One way of doing this is to accept responsibility for our sins. He states that God is not the author of our sins, we are, and so we have to redeem them ourselves. In fact, the Biblical approach to evil both affirms "the goodness of God and sinfulness of man".[78] Yet, we must be careful when using the term 'theodicy' in Biblical approaches to evil, as it can be easy to overestimate man's ability to fully justify the ways of God.

As human beings, we cannot fully understand God and His reasons, and so instead must focus on using obedient reason (reason in obedience to revelation) to trust in God and have faith that evil has a purpose beyond our understanding. This is obedience of our lives, not just of our minds. Cameron claims that if we accept the God of natural theology, we in turn remove God to the "periphery of human existence"[79], and thus treat God as a "puzzle in an intellectual game".[80] However, obedient reason doesn't want to accept God as this and it does not want to reduce God to a meaningless concept that cannot be understood. Therefore, we must

[77] Cameron, C., 'A Biblical Approach to Theodicy', *Evangel*, 1992, 10(2), p. 25.
[78] Ibid, p. 25.
[79] Ibid, p. 26.
[80] Ibid, p. 26.

distinguish arguments that state “there must be something somewhere” from arguments from scripture. And so, obedient reason must “destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God” [Corinthians 10:5]. Cameron concludes that first we need to be able to fully understand who God is before we even begin to question whether or not He exists.

It appears that our interpretation of God is important here, for example if we understand God to be God of the philosophers, there arises many problems surrounding omnipotence and the problem of evil. These problems are often addressed via theoretical theodicies, which attempt to find ways of mediating God’s power with the existence of evil. Yet, they never seem to approach the problem practically in the sense of trying to deal with evil in everyday life. Instead, they focus too much on how we can explain evil in the face of an omnipotent God, yet they often fail to do so in a fully convincing way. However, if one was to take the concept of God back to its historical roots, to the God of the Bible, one would see that God is not always perfectly good, nor does He always act kindly. The God of the Bible is actually often capricious and is known to cause suffering first hand. Yet, this God never acts without reason (reasons we may not fully understand). And so, here I would agree with Cameron- in order to fully get a hold on theodicy and its place in the problem of evil, we need to find a concept of God that works best. We will return to this point later in the thesis, for now, this point simply lays the groundwork for the ultimate answer which appears at a later stage.

Reconciliation and Theodicy

Following on from this, we can begin to look at the idea of theodicy and reconciliation as a way to show how theodicy may be important to overcome the problems of evil, namely the Holocaust, and how reconciliation can be a way of moving on from the pain caused. Cameron asserts how the basic picture of a man is someone who sins and who aims to reconcile with God. He also discusses how natural theodicy is often so focused on justifying is often so focused on justifying God’s ways that it forgets who God is and says nothing about God’s love for man. When in actual fact, it is shown in scripture how God is involved in our salvation, and He is compassionate and delights

in our love. It is here that Cameron stresses how when we think biblically about theodicy, we often tend to focus on Jesus Christ, and by doing so we see that divine redemption is the foundation of all biblical theodicy. With Jesus, we see that theodicy is reverse, for instance we find that the "justification of God by man is found in the justification of men by God".[81] And so, we are able to affirm God is good through His dealings with men who sin. Therefore, it seems that we don't affirm our faith on the basis of theoretical arguments, but on the physical events of the cross. In this way it appears that theoretical approaches to the problem of evil serve no purpose to Jews, as the idea of redemption as explained through Jesus Christ has no place within Judaism and thus, will in no way help to reconcile a belief in God for Jews in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Therefore, it seems much better to focus on practicality and find ways of overcoming the stress suffering puts on our relationship with God.

Cameron concludes his thoughts with a note on salvation. He believes that we must emphasise the importance of salvation in experimental knowledge. In other words, the teachings of God come from something outside of our experience and we have to incorporate it and learn how to interpret it.[82] The main concern in theodicy is 'does God care?' and it is only via real theodicy that we can help affirm the goodness of God. Cameron argues that the use of religion and scripture within theodicy helps us understand evil through keeping faith in a God we know can cause pain, but who does so for good reasons. It is important to note here that Cameron is not implying that evil be explained utilitarianly, as he does not think that evil can simply be justified on the promise of future good. Instead, he simply believes that there is more good than evil and so it appears that God is good because of His offer of salvation and redemption (God offers us a way of dealing with evil, as opposed to simply trying to make amends by offering us some good later). Finally, Cameron concludes that as we get involved with debates surrounding hard questions, our faith will be brought into question and may be challenged. Therefore, we must turn to the words of Jesus to help explain things that other means can't explain. In a way it seems that what Cameron is trying to establish is a practical way of dealing with the problem of evil, that incorporates scripture and takes the problem back to its theological, historical roots. However, for

[81] Ibid, p. 26.
[82] Ibid, p. 28.

me, trying to find a solution to the problem of evil that is merely theoretical is futile because it makes the problem too abstract and doesn't consider real life issues. Also, relying on the ideas of reconciliation from the perspective of Jesus Christ does not apply to victims of the Holocaust, namely the Jews. Therefore, we must find ways to use scripture and teachings to help discover the true meaning of God, and perhaps a new definition of what attributes God has, to help us build the relationship between God and humans, in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Ultimately, this will further help us come to terms and deal with the consequences of the suffering endured.

A Truce Between Intellectual and Practical Theodicy

Despite her Christian background, the ideas of Bethany Sollereder may be considered as a solid attempt at using theodicy as a way of reconciling belief in God with the Holocaust. Sollereder discusses how theodicy, when approached from both an intellectual and practical viewpoint, can actually be beneficial and overcome the problem of evil. Classic Theodicists famously "defend the pursuit of finding plausible reasons for existence of evil in the world created by a God of love and power".[83] Traditionally there are two types of classic theodicists: instrumentalists state that evil in a person's life can be redeemed by participating in greater good; on the contrary, individualists argue that each person must find their own redemption to their suffering. In contrast to classic theodicists, anti-theodicists suggest that theodicy is immoral, specifically Tilley states that "theodicy is a dalliance by leisured philosophers who write just- so stories that serve to do little except to silence the voices of those who suffer".[84] In other words, theodicy is not practical and does not apply to those who suffer, instead it becomes objectified and depersonalised. According to Sollereder, practical theodicists aim to show how evil can be resisted.[85]

In a way, the ideas of Sollereder show that when theodicy is approached from both an intellectual and practical viewpoint, it can be beneficial and overcome the problem of

[83] Sollereder, B., 'Compassionate Theodicy: A Suggested Truce Between Intellectual and Practical Theodicy', *Modern Theology*, 2021, 37(2), p. 1.
[84] Tilley, T., The Evils of Theodicy. Eugene (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2000), p. 205.
[85] Sollereder, 2021, p. 4.

evil. Specifically, it can help both explain the Holocaust and help victims overcome the aftermath of their suffering. One example of a theodicy of this sort, which combines intellect and practicality, is compassionate theodicy, which does not make sense of stories of suffering but helps help people tell their stories of their own suffering and find meaning in it. The central question surrounding compassionate theodicy is why does God allow suffering, and could this question be a part of the potential response to evil? Compassionate theodicy traditionally combines aspects of classical theodicy and practical theodicy, as well as trying to engage the sufferer. Simply put, it is made for those who suffer and focuses on the intellectual question, whilst simultaneously offering people a way to develop theodicies that grant "more resilience in the face of suffering".[86] If we apply this concept to the Holocaust, we could use compassionate theodicy as a way of coming to terms with pain and reconciling relationships with God and we could find a different type of God that allows us to accept suffering for reasons beyond our control. However, by accepting compassionate theodicy, we do not have to abandon classical theodicy altogether. In fact, we must keep some aspects of it in order to know what evil is and how we can avoid it. Also, it reframes people's experiences of suffering. For example, Sollereder shows how medical studies can show how talking through one's own suffering can change how we suffer and/or how we view suffering. Taking the example of phobias, studies show how talking about a phobia and facing it head on can reduce the suffering caused by said phobia. Sollereder goes on to say that the aim of compassionate theodicy is to "draw on models of therapeutic reappraisal to shift the aim of theodicy away from constructing elaborate solutions, towards helping sufferers investigate their beliefs about God, the world and the problem of evil".[87]

Sollereder argues that it is best to avoid using suffering as a statistic or to illustrate a point. Instead, one should draw on one's own experiences of suffering, but never on other people's examples. Also, we should avoid graphic illustrations when discussing evil as they risk retraumatising the reader. For me, it seems that theodicy is abstract but wants to use examples to make it personal, however we cannot have both. According to Sollereder, compassionate theodicy is not to make sense of stories of

[86] Sollereder, 2021, p. 5.
[87] Ibid, p. 6.

suffering but to help people tell their stories of their own suffering and find meaning in it. Specifically, she says that we should “ground theodicy in reality by not giving concrete examples”.[88] The theory additionally states that one should avoid using jargon when discussing evil and suffering, as the language needs to be accessible to all people. For example, I would suggest that instead of speaking as of an omnibenevolent God one could speak of a God who is ‘all-powerful’. Or in contrast, one could speak of God in scriptural terms and take Him back to His roots, by speaking about God as ‘Almighty’. Again, we will come back to this in greater detail towards the latter stages of the thesis.

Sollereder makes it clear that compassionate theodicy does not pretend to have all the answers, nor does it pretend to understand a person’s suffering better than them. Instead, suffering “must be articulated from the standpoint of the victims themselves”. [89]Referring to I the Holocaust, I propose that one cannot talk about suffering in the concentration camps as we weren’t there when the suffering occurs. In fact, it would be rude and insensitive to explain God and His actions in these circumstances as the pain wasn’t caused to us. It is important to remember that suffering must remain personal and situational. Therefore, it isn’t necessary to understand the person’s suffering, it is only important that they themselves understand it. For people’s perspectives of suffering are subjective and so everyone may view suffering differently. In other words, each person chooses their own path and decides how to approach and overcome suffering. Sollereder states that compassionate theodicy should go alongside resisting evil as well as being interested in how people’s representation of God affects their experience of suffering.[90] Thus, for me, the meaning of suffering lies with the sufferer, for who are we to trivialise their pain and rationalise it? One cannot trivialise events such as the Holocaust and make it abstract as this would be impersonal and disrespectful to the sufferers.

[88] Ibid, p. 8.
[89] Ibid, p. 10.
[90] Ibid, p. 11.

When we say ‘God is love’ we mean that God wants what’s best for us. But when we see instance of evil in the world, we can argue this may not actually be the case. Sollereder states that there are multiple options to interpret this phrase. The first option is that God is omnipotent and omniscient, but that He uses evil for good or for purposes we don’t understand. She believes that all evil is part of God’s plan and so He is able to remain knowledgeable and powerful. The second option is that God gives us freedom to choose, but in having this freedom we don’t always make the best choices, thus allowing evil to flourish. The third option is that God’s power is limited for whatever reason (reasons beyond our comprehension). For instance, God may have limited power or may have an opposing power e.g. Satan, or it may be that God’s nature does not allow Him to coerce and control us, instead His power allows us to control our outcomes. The fourth and final option is that God doesn’t know the future and is not considered an “eternal vantage point”.[91] As an alternative, God chooses to experience time with us. Therefore, things aren’t part of God’s plan initially, but that he incorporates events that happen into His ever-changing plan going forward. This makes the relationship between God and humans more personal and not forced or manipulated. Overall, compassionate theodicy allows for each person the time and space to make their own choices. In fact, it is an “attempt to help the distressed discover grace”.[92]

Theodicy Requires a Modification of Omnipotence

In order for theodicy to have any attempt at reconciling a belief in God with the Holocaust, it requires us to review God’s attributes, specifically omnipotence. Traditional religious theodicies often respond to evil by referring to goodness and power. The problem of evil has caused conflict with God’s divine attributes and when presented with this, theodicists have often said that God’s power did not include the power to perform self-contradictory or logically impossible actions; instead, God can only do what is logically possible and meaningful.[93] Therefore, what the divine action may set out to accomplish may be beyond human understanding. And so, the

[91] Ibid, p. 12.
[92] Ibid, p. 13.
[93] Culp, J., Overcoming the Limits of Theodicy: an interactive reciprocal response to evil, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2015, 78(1), p. 270.

impossibility of a good God causing some evil or allowing evil does not limit God's power but rather shows how we can understand good and evil at the same time. However, there could potentially be an issue between holding humans responsible for their actions and divine power limited by logical considerations. The question is for me though could God still not intervene to prevent even the evils we cause? Even if this would mean having a temporary suspension of our God-given freedom. Simply put, I cannot fathom how a temporary suspension of freedom for a short period of time is not better than the mass extermination of six million innocent people. Yet, it could be said that the Holocaust was the lesser of two evils, for God could have presented mankind with two options: murder six million people, or murder ten million people. And so, we come back to the idea that we don't know God's plan and reasons for allowing such things to happen. Maybe we should resign ourselves to the fact that we don't know what the alternative was and should trust that God and goodness will prevail.

John Culp is one thinker who argues that theodicies can help guide beliefs and provide ways to help one understand the world as more than just a constant state of flux/chaos. He suggests that if theodicies and practical actions are both important for a suitable response to evil, then we need to find ways to relate them. He begins by drawing upon the ideas of different spheres of thought to discuss human freedom and God in regard to evil and suffering. Firstly, he starts with combatalism, which tries to affirm both divine omnipotence and human freedom by showing that human freedom is the "expression of internal motivation" and by "primary and secondary causation".[94] He also refers to libertarians whose understanding of human freedom caused further conflict between divine power and human actions, for they assumed the causes of all actions were solely due to human decisions. This therefore absolved God of any responsibility for causing moral evil and placed all the blame on humans. Under this libertarian idea, human beings have a responsibility to stop and prevent evil and learn to overcome the consequences. The scientific concept of evolution made us further question the idea of divine power and placed a focus on contingent physical causes in the world. The mechanistic world view neither negated nor reduced the importance of divine action. In other words, it seemed that we didn't need divine action for evolution, in fact

[94] Ibid, p. 271.

development seemed to come from either natural causes or the role of divine action (but without the needs for control of determination). Thus, this caused divine action to be understood in a "non-interventionalist manner".[95] And so, under this idea, divine action occurs via processes that are not changed by God's omnipotence; God does not intervene but rather suffers with us. This in turn causes us to reflect and act better, in order to prevent suffering and help others. However, Jews may not be sympathetic to this justification as the idea of a suffering God comes across as quintessentially Christian idea. Also, it could be asked whether we would not love and appreciate God more if He ended the suffering endured during the Holocaust. Surely, if God prevented the Holocaust, it would bring us closer to Him and make us appreciate His compassion. Also, it is fair to say that we didn't learn anything of major value from the Holocaust, or in other words, anything we did learn did not justify or outweigh the lives lost. Furthermore, in the years following we have repeated the same atrocious actions, for example, since the end of the Holocaust we have had the genocide in Rwanda (800,000 people killed in three months, the most rapid case of genocide ever recorded), many more examples of wars, persecutions, torture etc. Therefore, if human beings have learned anything from the Holocaust, it's not immediately obvious.

Following from the ideas above, Culp elaborates on different approaches to theism, in regard to human and divine agency (and the issues within omnipotence). The first type he discusses is open theism, which resolves the conflict between human agency and divine agency, by positing divine relationship with humans, defined by self-limitation. For, there are some human actions which are apart from divine actions (free will) and it is these 'free' actions that we can choose to either direct towards the fulfilment of divine purposes (good acts) or away from God (bad acts). Under this idea, it seems to me that God can remain omnipotent because He is choosing to be interactive in our decisions, and because of His ultimate power, He can limit His own omnipotence in order to allow us to be free and not intervene. Process theism on the other hand responds to evil in the sense that it allows for an emphasis on the interaction between God and created reality i.e. that the divine is affected by the created.[96] Under process theism, God is subject to metaphysical principles that apply to both God and human beings. Therefore, everything has varying levels of agency or power e.g. humans are

[95] Ibid, p. 271.
[96] Ibid, p. 272.

greater than cells, God is greater than humans, etc. However, process theism does stress that no being has total control over another. Under this type of theism, God needs humans to actualise His power, and His power can be affected by humans. The question is though whether God can be omnipotent if He relies on human beings in order to be actual. Surely, if God was omnipotent, He could make it so that our decisions suit and benefit Him. But then if this was the case and He could manipulate our decisions in this way, number one: would we be truly free or simply instruments that God can play when he chooses? And number two: If God has the power to make us act in a way that actualises Him, then why can't he just actualise Himself without us? Surely if He was omnipotent, He would not rely on anything outside of Himself to exist. So, is He really omnipotent in the sense of ultimate power, or is He omnipotent in a different way? Culp says that under process theism, God's power does not compete with the power of another divine being nor with any platonic matter. Instead, God's power works via human action and in doing so, God provides us with opportunities to overcome evil and in turn suffers with us.[97] Culp states that omnipotence is not a form of control, but rather an assistance. In fact, God contrasts evil with good by making possibilities for us to choose from.

The next topic Culp discusses is the postmodern response to God and evil and the issues with omnipotence. These responses usually accept the impossibility of understanding God and explaining evil. Instead, they try and define omnipotence through the interaction between theoretical and practical responses to evil. Richard Kearney stated that God provides hope in confronting evil by being immanent and encouraging humans to be more loving and creative.[98] Kearney therefore understands God eschatologically i.e. in the sense that God promises and always delivers on those promises, if not in this life, then in the next. He goes on to say that God helps us become more human and we also help God become more 'fully God'. Thus, the relationship between God and creation is mutual and not asymmetrical.[99] This understanding of the God/human relationship as being mutual is based on the

[97] The idea of a suffering God is prevalent in certain theistic ideas and is also mentioned by anti-theodicist Kenneth Surin and will be elaborated on in future chapters.
[98] Kearney, R., *Anatheism (returning to God after God)*, (New York : Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 182-185
[99] Kearney, R., *The God Who May Be: A hermeneutics of religion*, (Bloomington: Indiana, 2001), pp. 114-119.

experience of the unknown ability of God in the sense that we cannot know God fully, but we have to trust in Him and trust in His choices. Similarly, to process theism, postmodern responses also emphasise divine and human agency in omnipotence, as well as the nature of divine action as "presentation of possibilities"[100] and stresses the importance of "human actions in the response to evil".[101] Nevertheless, in emphasising human agency in this way, process theists change the traditional idea of divine omnipotence and thus the ways in which God can overcome evil. For, it seems that God cannot defeat evil alone and needs the help of human agents to act in ways that overcome evil. And so, one must find a way of explaining how God can provide salvation from evil whilst at the same time does not guarantee salvation. Marilyn McCord Adams offers an account of how God can be the source of salvation when God suffers with us. She highlights how God is a supreme, metaphysical being, whose goodness defeats evil, no matter how awful.[102] She goes on to stress that it is through compassionate suffering that God is able to respond to evil, but that this suffering with us is not a sufficient response to evil. In fact, she believes that God must be omnipotent in the sense that He can create an afterlife for those who have suffered in this life, as this would allow God to reduce realities such as horrendous evils into nothing.[103] It seems that Adams' understanding of omnipotence does not entail a sense of control, but rather allows people to be agents in and of themselves, whilst also cooperating with divine action. Under her ideas, God works and suffers with us, as opposed to overwhelming us, which shows that God's purpose for us is developing all the time.

Can Theodicy Withstand its Critics?

This final section examines whether or not theodicy has any value in defending the problem of evil and whether it can withstand the criticism it faces. Atle Søvik refers to theodicy as a "theoretical answer to the theoretical problem of the apparent inconsistency between belief in a good and omnipotent God… and the existence of evil".[104] Whereas Søvik calls moral critique something "which rejects theodicies

[100] Culp, 2015, p. 273.
[101] Ibid, p. 273.
[102] Adams, M. M., *Horrendous evils and the goodness of God*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 82.
[103] Ibid, pp. 83- 84.
[104] Søvik, A., 'Why Almost All Moral Critique of Theodicies Is Misplaced', *Religious Studies*, 2008, 44(4), p. 479.

because of their bad consequences".[105] To sum up, moral critiques suggest that theodicies create more evil.

According to Søvik, moral judgement depends on what is true i.e. it is dependent on factual circumstances. Yet, moral critiques very often presuppose something to be true (which is a matter of debate) and this begs the question. For instance, if the theodicy is true then it doesn't mis-declare what evil is. However, it appears to Søvik to be question- begging to presuppose something else as true, and then on this assumption, criticise the moral consequences of a theodicy. He argues that the consequences depend on what is actually true and that this where the debate arises.[106] Therefore, it could be said that we can never fully dismiss theodicy because it allows us to discuss evil and propose possible solutions to the problem of evil. However, often these solutions are merely theoretical and fail to address the problem of evil in a practical way. On the other hand, Søvik argues that while it is acceptable to disagree with some lines of arguments based on these criticisms e.g. the argument that the most horrendous evils, such as the Holocaust, could be part of some greater good and that people's suffering was part of a plan to redeem good in the future, he still believes we need to find a line between disagreeing with a moral assumption in a theodicy, and dismissing the theodicy altogether. Therefore, he states that we must always enter the debate and that we cannot simply dismiss the theodicy as immoral by presupposing the truth as something else.

Søvik argues that moral critiques also wrongly assume that it is not always wrong to communicate the truth. In other words, he suggests that even if it is wrong to communicate the truth in theodicies sometimes, it isn't always wrong. For example, a theodicy may indicate that God isn't always good, but that He is always just. Therefore, even though evil does happen, it does not always happen for no reason as God is not unjust. For theodicy to portray this version of God is not always wrong, as it allows us to ask questions about why God would allow such things to happen, i.e. for reasons we cannot understand, to help us grow and develop. Also, by asking such questions

[105] Ibid, p. 479.
[106] Ibid, p. 480.

we keep the discussing going and in turn learn things about God, theology and philosophy, which we may not have understood before.

Moreover, he believes there are times when telling the truth can have bad consequences e.g. telling someone they are ugly, and that not everything that is true should be communicated all the time. And so, we should use our wisdom to determine the right place and time. Søvik states that there are good ways and bad ways of expressing the truth, but that we can never judge a proposition based on its consequences. He believes that consequences are too vague and hypothetical, and so it would be wrong to judge a theodicy based on its possible outcomes (which may or may not happen). He goes on to stress that we should learn to distinguish between searching for the truth and communicating the truth. For Søvik, searching for the truth is not wrong, for it is what theology and philosophy are all about; we seek to find answers to the most unanswerable questions. In fact, he says that "searching for the truth about God is not immoral".[107] However, he states that communicating the truth depends on the context- we need to learn to read the room to determine when it is appropriate and when it is not. Therefore, the general dismissal of theodicies is ultimately wrong since it fails to recognise the difference between searching for the truth and communicating them.

I can understand Søvik's points here, for often in everyday lives we tell little white lies in order to protect people we care about. And if we are to apply Søvik's logic to horrendous evils like the Holocaust, then it could be said that when a victim asks, 'why did this happen to me?' sometimes telling them the truth (that we actually don't know why they suffered and that their suffering might be pointless) might actually cause them more pain. Whereas, if we were to offer them a theoretical theodicy, to help understand the possible reasons why they suffered, we may be able to bring them some peace and comfort. However, for me this seems like a lacking response. Why should we try and explain something that cannot be explained? Often people try and explain away problems, especially within philosophy of religion, but they don't actually

[107] Søvik, 2008, p. 483.

add anything of value to the discussion, usually because they don't have the correct, in-depth knowledge. In other words, if one does not have the correct understanding of a certain topic, one should not attempt to discuss nor explain it. Sometimes saying nothing is better than saying something meaningless, as it adds no significant comfort to the sufferer, nor does it make their pain go away.

John Culp, whilst understanding that there are limits to theodicy and its practice, believes that these limitations can be overcome. Culp highlights that theodicy, by trying to explain how God is not responsible for evil, actually misuses language. This misuse of language comes from using human terms to describe divine actions, which results in accepting evil as helping character development.[108] As humans we cannot understand God's actions due to our physical and limited mental capacity. However, theodicies in their attempt to understand God and explain evil, presume to know God's motives/actions. In other words, "theoretical explanation of God's actions as not being responsible for evil, contributes to the practical effect of an evil distortion of the truth".[109] Therefore, it seems we need to accept that God is a mystery and simply have faith in His reasons and not try to understand them.

Culp goes on to show how some may see a theodicy as something which does not deal with actual evils and in actual fact underestimate types of evil, as well as the complexity of them. To put it another way, they do not consider evils with no purpose and do not offer comfort to those who encountered innocent suffering. It can be said that many anti-theodicists state that the very nature of theodicy is too theoretical, and so the question therefore is whether a such a theoretical response to evil can have practical effects? Can it actually help those who have suffered deal with the consequences of evil? Culp responds by suggesting that theodicies can help guide beliefs that direct "practical responses to evil"[110] i.e. theodicy is thus a "meaning making activity".[111] Specifically, the goal of most theodicies is to provide ways to help one understand the world as more than just a constant state of flux/chaos. It is to help

[108] Culp, J., '2015, p. 263.
[109] Ibid, p. 264.
[110] Ibid, p. 265.
[111] Ibid, p. 265.

one understand that God does exist and will bring an end to evil, thus allowing good to prevail. Therefore, theodicy is a way of offering hope and faith to victims of suffering, in the idea that good always overcomes evil. According to Culp, a theoretical response to evil is much more objective and we often need this distance in order to fully understand evil (one cannot be clouded by any personal experiences). However, does this actually help? Often theoretical responses to evil leave victims with more questions than answers in the sense that they may be unsatisfying and make the victim even more confused than before. It may also be said that this focus on theoretical theodicies could result in other types of evil (not covered by such theoretical explanations) being excluded? In an attempt to generalise evil, we are forcing any such explanations to become depersonalised and insensitive, in fact ignoring evils can actually be seen as an evil in itself. Therefore, "theodicies must deal with the significance of the specific situation".[112]

If theodicies and practical actions are both important for a suitable response to evil, then we need to find ways to relate them. Culp says that if they can both respond to evil then they must have some commonality. He suggests that we could either: give the theoretical priority and therefore the practical is developed on the basis of the theoretical; or we could give the practical the priority and therefore the theoretical understandings justify different practical responses to evil. Although, if we allow theoretical to take priority this might make some responses to evil not plausible. For example, if the theoretical approach relies on divine sovereignty, then all actions must be understood as controlled or caused by God in order to be valid. This therefore excludes non-believers and/or theists who do not believe in predisposed actions i.e. those who believe in the power of free-will as a God given gift. Culp responds by suggesting that we could instead focus on the theoretical and practical working together and responding to a specific evil. Therefore, depending on the context, one would either take the theoretical approach and explain the problem, or take the practical approach and respond to the problem, as this gives us the ability to adapt to and handle various situations, including the acts and events of the Holocaust.

[112] Ibid, p. 267.

Consequently, we need to focus on the consequences of evil, rather than the reasons for its existence, and try and cope with the aftermath of suffering in real life. In other words, we need to focus on the practicality of how we address evil instead of stressing over the theoretical aspects of the problem of evil; a problem in which will never fully be resolved. And in turn, this will be the focus of the next chapter, aptly titled ‘anti-theodicy’, which will develop the counter arguments put forward in this chapter by theodicists and aim to show how it would be hard to justify to a survivor of Auschwitz or to a family member of someone who perished, that their suffering was for a greater good or part of the bigger picture. Overall, the third chapter will demonstrate how instead of approaching the problem of evil theoretically and trying to justify the Holocaust and propose an explanation as to why God allowed such evil to occur, we instead should focus on approaching the problem of evil practically and aim to reconcile the existence of such suffering with a belief in God (even if this God is different to the God of the philosophers, which is central to theodicies’ defence).

Chapter Three- Theodicy: Helping Solving the Problem of Evil or Contributing to its Problems?

For as long as the problem of evil has existed, there have been attempts to solve it, especially using theodicies. Yet, there have also been reactions against said solutions, including anti-theodicy which is what this chapter will focus on. Toby Betenson defines the term 'anti-theodicy' as something which "rejects, often on moral grounds, the process of justifying God's ways or God's existence in light of the evil of the world".[113] He states that examples of anti-theodicy can be found in as early as Judeo- Christian traditions, such as the Book of Job, as well as more modern texts such as the Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov.* Betenson also states that anti-theodicy is "a criticism of the discussion [of the problem of evil], rather than a criticism within the discussion"[114] and that it aims to actually dissolve the problem of evil by rejecting it as a problem. In fact, he asks why we need to have any answers at all. Likewise, Barbara Gunnell said "by talking of them as 'evil' we do not need to ask why they act as they do or feel outraged or oppressed… Evil simply demands opposition rather than analysis or understanding".[115] In other words, is it not enough to just trust in God and trust that the world is the way it is for a reason? In fact, maybe we don't have the capacity for understanding evil because we are merely finite beings with rational understanding, whereas God is infinite and has the capacity for all knowledge. And thus, we should accept we will get the answers in the next life, where will be able to truly comprehend why things happened and why we suffered.

Within this chapter, the arguments against theodicy will be presented and will aim to show how theodicy is insensitivity and treats people as means, not ends in themselves. The arguments presented will aim to argue that theodicies have nothing to offer victims of the Holocaust, as there can be no great comfort found in saying that a person's suffering will be countered by a greater good, either in this life or the next.

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[113] Betenson, T., 'Anti-Theodicy', *Philosophy Compass*, 2016, 11(1), p. 56.
[114] Ibid, p. 57.
[115] French, P., Wettstein, H., *Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XXXVI The Concept of Evil* (Malden: Wiley Periodicals, Inc., 2012), p.2.

This chapter will eventually demonstrate that the arguments from theodicy are impractical and merely theoretical. Instead, one should instead focus on the practicality of overcoming suffering and aim to resolve the dilemma between the problem of evil and the existence of God, by moving away from the God of the philosophers and towards a more new-old concept of God, as found within scripture.

Kantian Anti-Theodicy

According to enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant, the mainstream approach to the problem of evil in philosophy of religion is usually theodicist. Theodicism refers to attempts to deal with the problem of evil and defend an omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient being.[116] Theodicism and evidentialism are closely connected because evil is seen as a logical/ evidential problem within theodicism, for theodicies often tell us how to deal with and discuss the problem of evil when evil is regarded as evidence. Therefore, as you will see, Kantian criticisms of theodicism are relevant and can be used against evidentialism.

In Immanuel Kant's essay *Über das Misslingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee* (On the Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials in Theodicy), he discusses his proposal of authentic theodicy that can be recognised as anti-theodicy, and states that we should reject theodicies for ethical and intellectual reasons.[117] Kant's rejection of theodicies is part of his critical philosophy because they aim at "theoretical knowledge of God"[118] and ultimately will always fail because humans lack pure reason/ knowledge. Instead, we must limit our knowledge to make room for faith[119], and specifically after the tragedy of Auschwitz, we must rethink how we approach the meaning of evil, either from a place of knowledge or from a place of hope and faith.

[116] Kivistö, S. & Pihlström, S., 'Kantian Anti-Theodicy and Job's Sincerity', *Philosophy and Literature*, 40 (2), 2016, p. 348.
[117] Ibid, p. 350.
[118] Ibid, p. 350.
[119] Bernstein, R., *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), pp. 3–4.

Kant begins his essay by arguing that theodicy must prove "either that whatever in the world we judge counter purposive is not so; or, if there is any such thing, that it must be judged not at all as an intended effect but as an avoidable consequence of nature; or, merely of those beings in the world to whom something can be imputed".[120] Kant categorises counter purposiveness into three separate parts: firstly, there is evil as a proper sin, which can never be condoned as either a means nor an end; secondly, there is evil as which is physically counter purposive, which can never co-exist with wisdom of will as an end; and finally, there is evil as a proportion of ill to moral evil, which is where there is a disproportion between crimes and penalties.[121] According to Kant, all these examples of counter purposiveness can be used as reasons to challenge a creator's goodness and justice. In fact, they act as Kant states, a "multidimensional challenge that thus puts God on moral trial".[122]

Kant continues by discussing the possibility that divine wisdom is not the same as human wisdom. Yet this makes God detached from humanity and makes it seem like He does not care about morality.[123] He also states that in the case of evil and suffering, God could be defended for allowing it to occur, by saying that moral evil could not have been prevented because human beings are limited in their nature since they are finite. Furthermore, as well as God being blameless, human beings can also not be blamed since they cannot alter their nature to foresee and avoid evil. Also, if human beings cannot be blamed for evil, it should no longer be called moral evil. On the other hand, Kant argued that if there is moral evil in the world and humans are in fact guilt of it, but God does not prevent it, as He cannot do so without violating other ends e.g., human freedom, then humans again cannot be held responsible because evil is essentially "grounded in the necessary limitations of humanity".[124]

[120] Kant, I., *Religion and Rational Theology*, translated by Wood, A., & Giovanni, G.D., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 20–37, 8:255 **(for the sake of referencing the standard *Akademie-Ausgabe* numbering is used)**
[121] Ibid, 8:256-7.
[122] Kivistö, S. & Pihlström, S., 2016, p. 351.
[123] Kant, I., 1996, 8:255**.**
[124] Ibid, 8:258-9.

After his thorough evaluation of theodicies and their attempts to justify evil using justice, punishment, free will, etc., Kant concludes that every previous theodicy has not performed what it promised.

Anti-theodicy and its Objections to Theodicy

As demonstrated throughout the previous chapters, we must find a way of reconciling a belief in God with the existence of evil, in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Beforehand, I have delved into the attempts theodicy has made to explain the horrors of the Holocaust in a way that allows for the existence of God. However, the following arguments presented within the realm of anti-theodicy, will establish how theodicy displays a stark moral insensitivity and does not take suffering seriously. As well as this, the arguments will show how theodicy adopts too detached a perspective and is too willing to adopt a 'God's eye view' of the world (a view from above/ apart from the world). Furthermore, theodicy exhibits an irremissible moral blindness and often uses the wrong moral theory- not only is theodicy callous with how it uses moral theory, but it also uses it incorrectly. Most importantly, anti-theodicy suggests that theodicy treats people as means, not ends in themselves, and in actual fact results in actually adding to the evils that already exist in the world by endorsing the justification of evil we are just making things worse. The following sections will go into detail some of the moral, philosophical and theological objections that anti-theodicy presents in the face of theodicy's defence of evil.

Moral Objections to Theodicy

One of the major moral objections to theodicy that Betenson highlights is that theodicy demonstrates a stark moral insensitivity and does not take suffering seriously. Betenson shows how D.Z Phillips, Kenneth Surin and Nick Trakakis are just a few of the people who make this objection. They say that theodicy indicates that suffering can be outweighed by a greater good, and thus downplays the severity of evil, by diminishing its physical and emotional impact on people. It seems that theodicy fails because it puts all categories of evil together and says that all types of evil can be

overcome by greater good.[125] However, this seems insensitive and unfair, specifically it is extremely insulting to compare the suffering of those in the death camps, to the pain of other trivial events as they are on a completely different scale. And like with anything in life that has varying degrees, each thing must be treated separately and appropriately. For example, the suffering endured at the dentist is overcome by the greater good of no longer having toothache, but the suffering endured at Auschwitz cannot possibly be overcome by any amount of good, as it is too extreme and evil. Therefore, by assuming it can, we are diminishing the extremeness of such an evil and thus being disrespectful to the victims.

Samuel Shearn adds to this objection by stating that theodicy can be seen as making light of evil and does not give horrific experiences their due. To put it simply, theodicies fail to correlate the theoretical explanations of evil with the actual real-life experiences of evil.[126] He states that we could understand a trivialisation of suffering as a reinterpretation of that experience in ways the person does not approve or accept. He goes on to distinguish between two objections to this view. Firstly, there is the perspectivism objection, which states that trivialisation in this way commits us to 'strict perspectivism' and does not admit any intersubjective judgements. Therefore, it states that everyone's version of events is true, which cannot be the case. Secondly, there is the hypersensitivity objection, which argues that a sensitive person could insist their discomfort was terrible and could not be interpreted as good in some way, yet not every discomfort is as terrible as people make out. For there are some cases where one may accept that the hypersensitive person is overplaying their suffering.[127] Yet, most agree that horrendous evils can never be discounted or trivialised, hence why anti-theodicists focus on the worst cases of horrendous evils, such as the Holocaust, to explain why any justification of such evils is always wrong.

However, in contrast, Robert Simpson argues that theodicy trivialises suffering if it is false, but it could be possible that the theodicy may be true or plausible, and so it may

[125] Betenson, 2016, p. 57.
[126] Shearn, S., 'Moral critique and defence of theodicy', *Religious Studies*, 2013, 49(4), p. 440.
[127] Ibid, p. 441.

not actually be insensitive. He goes on to say that one cannot argue that all theodicies are inherently insensitive because there may be a theodicy not yet produced or discovered that has plausible answers and is good/ moral.[128] However, who is to say that the odds are in theodicy's favour? They have been around for over 300 years, and many have tried and have supposedly fallen somewhat short of their ultimate goal- that is to successfully support and defend exclusively the existence of God in the face of evil. It seems that all theodicies have similar issues in common and not one has been flawless. So, it seems the chances of a new theodicy being without problems and actually offering positive outcomes to victims of suffering, is unlikely. According to Simpson, the difference between a sensitive and insensitive theodicy rests on its plausibility. Simpson does not distinguish between the truth of a common good and the plausibility of a common good because he sees it as common sense. Therefore, the plausibility of such goods that come from evil is a matter of degrees.[129] Shearn highlights the Humean Argument, which assigns plausibility to theodicies depending on whether the common goods are evident. The argument also insists that a theodicy which claims to know of any good that comes from horrendous evils, must be judged as implausible. And so, it seems that any theodicy which justifies horrendous evil e.g. the Holocaust, is implausible and insensitive.

Similarly, to Shearn, Michael Scott argues that theodicies have nothing to offer victims, for there is no comfort found in saying that a person's suffering will be countered by a greater good. And so, theodicies appear to be morally insensitive in their failure to address people's experiences of suffering.[130] On the other hand, Richard Swinburne argues that there are limits to people's suffering (both the length of time they suffer for and the intensity of their suffering). He also states that we need suffering to truly understand it and therefore be able to be compassionate to others. Swinburne suggests that "God has good reason to bring about or allow to occur that amount of suffering which exists for the sake of the greater good".[131] According to Swinburne, theodicy is invaluable to any "meaningful claim made about the existence of God on

[128] Ibid, p. 442.
[129] Ibid, p. 443.
[130] Scott, M., 'The Morality of Theodicies', *Religious Studies,* 1996, 32(1), p. 1.

[131] Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 220.

the basis of the existence of evil, even if the claim is made from personal experience".[132] The question is though whether claims about God made in this way, can be valuable to theodicists. David O'Connor argues that there are two types of religious belief: life-guiding belief, which focuses on strength, confidence and inspiration, and that which is personal but also fundamental to the community; and cognitive belief, which revolves around the truth of a religious theory e.g. theism.[133] He argues that theodicy is therefore important for defending theism against rival theories such as scientific and naturalistic arguments. In fact, theodicies are needed for a "philosophically and scientifically literate person to be able to interpret the world in religious terms".[134] Some have argued that O'Connor wrongly assumes theoretical theodicy is needed for religious language. The likes of Surin, Phillips and Wittgenstein have said that religious language is not empirical but rather is rooted in practices of religious communities.[135] Another criticism of O'Connor is that he presumes that religious language will be meaningful only if it can compete with a scientific explanation of the world. Yet, Scott asks whether religion has credit on its own. For me, it seems irrational to assume that believers should be concerned only with statements which are factual, rational and intellectual. The basis of religion is actually not empirical but usually based on revelation and feeling, which cannot be falsified in the same way scientific claims can. Therefore, it would be absurd to assume religious language is meaningless because it is not verifiable.

One approach in which theodicists try and overcome some of the criticisms they face, is by explaining God's actions/plan via analogy i.e. comparing God to a parent. For example, a parent allows a child to make mistakes and suffer in order for the child to learn. They claim that God's actions are always for the greater good and that the good in the world always balances out the evil. Kenneth Surin however claims that there are some evils which cannot be accounted for by theodicies, and that theodicists often focus too much on explaining the functions of evil in God's plan and however much they try, they can never explain unconditional evils.[136] Also, there are cases where this

[132] Scott, 1996, pp. 4-5.
[133] O'Connor, D., In Defense of Theoretical Theodicy, Modern Theology, 1988, 5(1), p. 68.
[134] Ibid, p. 71.
[135] Surin, K., *Theology and the Problem of Evil*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 13.
[136] Surin, 1986, pp. 52-53.

justification fails to be permissible, for even if God allows unconditional evils for the greater good, it is actually worse for Him than us because it destroys His goodness. Swinburne counters the argument from Surin by arguing that "we normally through experience, come to change our judgements on the detailed application of such principles; and we grow in moral understanding".[137] For example, a two-year-old who falls and hurts themselves doesn't understand pain, but the parent does and that's why it is their responsibility to teach them to get back up (and that the pain is temporary and we need to overcome it). Swinburne says that a child sees pain as unjustified because they have never experienced greater pain, but a parent who has can potentially justify it. However, it is fair to say that we need to experience suffering to judge it as unjustified. For me, the answer is no. Personally, I did not experience the horrors of the Holocaust, but it isn't unreasonable for me to argue that the suffering the victims endured was unjustified.

Another issue that theodicy faces is that it adopts too detached a perspective and is too willing to adopt a 'God's eye view' of the world (a view from above/ apart from the world). A view of this kind, Betenson argues, is immoral and impersonal, as it views and calculates costs of suffering against the possible benefits of the good.[138] Irving Greenberg famously said that "no statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of burning children".[139] Likewise, Kenneth Surin added that "to regard theodicy as a purely theoretical and scholarly exercise is to provide a tacit sanction of the myriad evils that exist".[140] To put it another way, it seems unjust and rude to make a practical problem, such as the problem of evil, a theoretical one and to assume it can be solved with premises and conclusions. Instead, we should focus on how we can practically deal with suffering in our everyday lives and how we can reconcile the existence of evil with the existence of God. In this sense, we don't necessarily need to know why things happen in order to deal with them, we just need to know how we can overcome them and accept them.

[137] Swinburne, 1979, p. 221.
[138] Ibid, p. 58.
[139] Greenberg, I., 'Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire', in *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications,* (Minnesota: Paragon House, 1989), p. 315.

[140] Surin, 1986, p. 50.

Furthermore, in order to reconcile the existence of God with the existence of evil and in turn overcome the events of the Holocaust, we must adopt a new outlook on what this type of God could be. Perhaps a God that allows evil to exist for reasons beyond our comprehension, or perhaps a God that unlike the God of the philosophers, is not all-loving or all-powerful, but instead has other attributes that allow for the existence of evil; a God that may be capricious and cruel, but who ultimately seeks the greater good for humanity and who is still, despite the events of the Holocaust, is worthy of worship. I will discuss this in further detail later in the thesis.

Theodicy also exhibits an irremissible moral blindness and causes one to mediate a "social and political practice which averts its gaze from cruelties that exist in the world"[141]. Betenson again draws on the ideas of Kenneth Surin, who states that to be open minded about the idea that the Holocaust can be justified by the greater good, "is to show oneself to be incapable of making certain exigent moral discriminations".[142] He goes on to say that "failure to lend a voice to the cries of the innocent is to have lost capacity to tell the truth".[143] In other words, if you attempt to ignore or even justify suffering you have lost all sense of humanity, or as Surin states, someone who tries to justify the acts of such evil is clearly evil themselves. Surin also suggests that once you start justifying and/or explaining suffering, you actually become blind to the problem itself. Therefore, to me it seems more compassionate to say nothing than to try and explain away the horrendous evil with an insufficient response that will only leave the victim with more questions than answers. Similarly, to the previous issue, theodicy treats people as means, not ends in themselves. Betenson argues that theodicy treats people with an instrumental view, which diminishes their value as individuals. Eleonore Stump famously said, "there is something morally repulsive about supposing that the point of allowing a child to suffer is some abstract benefit for the race as a whole".[144] Every person should be treated with respect, and their suffering should be dealt with accordingly; they should not be allowed to suffer for the benefit of the rest of mankind.

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[141] Betenson, 2016, p. 59.
[142] Surin, 1986, p. 84.
[143] Ibid, p. 84.
[144] Stump, E., 'Suffering and Redemption: A Reply to Smith', *Faith and Philosophy*, 1985, 2(1), p. 433.

Theodicy, according to Betenson, too often takes a utilitarian approach and in doing so fails to recognise evils as bad as they are and justifies them via greater goods. Therefore, by using the wrong moral theory they cannot possibly produce accurate results.[145] D.Z Phillips aims to demonstrate this problem by using the soul-making theodicy (SMT), which says that God allows evil to exist as it helps develop our moral character (as true character building can only occur in a hostile environment). Moreover, the SMT suggests that to act for your own reasons e.g. to build your own moral character, this actually detracts from the moral worth of the act itself and therefore makes the act selfish and not moral at all. Phillips explains this further by stating that "the suffering of others is often treated as opportunities for me to be shown at my best"[146] when in fact it shows you at your worst- it shows you are selfish and immoral. It seems that this approach to suffer encourages us to be selfish and put our own needs and development above the pain and suffering of others.

Finally, Betenson argues that theodicy adds to the evils that already exist in the world, in other words, by endorsing the justification of evil we are just making things worse. He highlights the point that by engaging in theodicy, you are actually engaging in bad moral practice and thus adding to the evil in the world.[147] Terrence Tilley says that engaging in theodicy also weakens our 'moral responsiveness', as to dismiss evil is to become detached from the world and shows little respect for the victims of suffering. This refers to the point I made earlier: if we acknowledge evil and then try to justify it, we are not actually helping deal with the problem itself; we are instead masking the problem and making it theoretical. Instead, we should focus on practical solutions which involve actually facing the problem of evil and overcoming the effects. By justifying suffering, such as the Holocaust, we are in a way saying that what happened is acceptable and it can be justified, whether that be by a greater good or some other redemption. Either way you look at it, the problem still remains. The pain caused

[145] Betenson, 2016, p. 61.
[146] Phillips, D., *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*, (London: SCM Press, 2004), p. 57.
[147] Betenson, 2016, p. 61.

doesn't go away, and some half-hearted attempt at trying to explain it away doesn't justify it or make it disappear.

Philosophical and Theological Objections

There are also philosophical and theological objections to theodicy, which unlike the ones named before, are non-moral and point out the conceptual mistakes in the concept of God within the problem of evil. D.Z. Phillips gives an example against the notion of moral perfection to show how theodicy is self-defeating. Phillips states that either God permits the evils of the world with or without a second thought: if he commits them with a second thought, God is morally insensitive and callous, as He has had time to consider the impact of evils and yet still permits them; but if God allows evils with a second thought, He still knows of the evil and allows it anyway and therefore He is still responsible. And so, Phillips argues that either way you look at it, and whichever scenario you accept, God cannot be morally perfect.[148] For me, it is clear from Philips's argument that no matter which view you take, God cannot be omnibenevolent. And so, if one accepts that God is not omnibenevolent then does this solve the problem of evil? For one could argue that God is omnipotent and omniscient, and so He could prevent evil, as He has the power and the knowledge; but because He isn't perfectly loving and good, He chooses not to. However, this may pose a problem for theists who have always known and accepted their God to be all-loving. For can they accept that a God who isn't loving gift us such a world, like the one we have, which is so perfectly sustainable for human life? In the novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, the main character Ivan describes how people suffer innocently and that no amount of good could outweigh it: "to agree to build a cosmos in which even though it ended in bliss involved such innocent suffering, would be to agree to undertake an immoral task".[149] Ivan stresses that a moral person would not willingly worship a God who creates such a world. He also talks about free will and its relationship with evil. In actual fact, he states that if God made us to be free then this ultimately limits His omnipotence (since we cannot be both free and determined). And so, it seems that not only are humans free to choose evil, but that God must have created the world with the possibility for evil and therefore He is partly responsible. Ivan also rejects the architect's job aka God's creation and endorses a similar pessimism about the world.

[148] Phillips, 2004, p. 40.
[149] Shearn, 2013, p. 453.

He argues that since there are innocent children who suffer, it may have been better that the world was never created in the first place.[150] There does exists the argument that as good as the world is, it could be better and could exist without evil, and this too points to a God who isn't perfectly good. However, on the contrary, it could be argued that the world needs evil to balance out the good- life need balance to be sustained and we need a balance of good and bad in order for us to grow and to freely choose good over evil (and choose God over temptation). Without the existence of evil, we wouldn't have totally free choices and therefore wouldn't be truly free. Therefore, we should adopt a new view of God which is more compatible with the Holocaust, a God who potentially allows evil for reasons we don't understand, but a God who can still exist in a theological realm and be accessible to religious believers.

Another argument against theodicy is that it is too anthropomorphic, as they use phrases like 'good' and 'evil' in the sense that God is part of the 'moral community'[151], which in a way seems to imply that God has human qualities and/or describe God in human ways. For example, the Perfect Being Theology often models attributes of God on human virtues, in other words the model extends human values to God and makes God seem like an inflated superhuman. This treats God as a thing or object in the universe and therefore "places God in the same ontological order as ordinary human beings and objects".[152] It seems absurd to apply physical terms such as good to a metaphysical being in the same way we would apply the term to ourselves. One must speak of God in grander terms than we speak of ourselves and others, for He is infinite, and we are finite. Likewise, in the same sense that God cannot be talked about in physical terms, we should not try to comprehend God's reasons for He is above our understanding. However, Trakakis states that whilst anti-theodicists reject this anthropomorphism, they don't indicate that one has to reject natural theology as a whole. Actually, by rejecting anthropomorphism we are not denying the value of certain images of God portrayed in biblical texts and scripture e.g. "walking in the Garden of Eden" [Genesis 3:8]. Yet, Trakakis states that even though these images of God are meant to connect the divine and His creatures in a more personal way, this too has its

[150] Ibid, p. 453.
[151] Betenson, 2016, p. 63.
[152] Trakakis, N., 'Against Theodicy: A Response to Peter Forrest', *Sophia,* 2010, 49(1), p. 131.

problems, as it can make religious belief appear to originate in the human psyche.[153] Therefore, in order to avoid such problems, we need to learn how to better interpret images in a proper philosophical analysis.

The idea of anthropomorphism can be linked to the objection against theodicy, which states that one cannot fully understand God, since we are finite and He is beyond our human understanding. Thus, we should not try to justify evil and suffering. In Book of Job (which is probably one of the first types of anti-theodicy we see), we see Job answer God by saying "I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; thrice, but will proceed no further" [Job 38:4, 40:2]. In other words, Job accepted that he didn't have the capacity to understand God's motives and purpose behind his suffering and so decided it was best to just keep his faith and trust in God. Maybe this is what anti-theodicy aims to do- instead of seeking to find an answer, we should accept that there isn't a suitable one that would appropriately answer our questions. Karen Kilby states that theodicy should be considered a treated as "utterly unanswerable"[154] and not by creating a solution to a problem we cannot solve. She goes on to say that by not creating a theodicy, we are avoiding further problems which may arise from doing so. Equally, Rowan Williams said that "it is more religiously imperative to be worried about evil than to put it into a satisfactory, theoretical context".[155] To sum up, we cannot waste time making the problem of evil theoretical as it has traditionally been treated within philosophy of religion; instead, the focus should be on how we address the problem as a religious and practical issue.

The Problems with Theodicies from a Religious Perspective

In addition to the moral, philosophical and theological objections proposed above, theodicy, despite its traditional connections with religion and theology, also faces objections from religious perspectives. For instance, Karen Kilby shows that traditional

[153] Ibid, p. 133.
[154] Kilby, K., 'Evil and the Limits of Theology', *New Blackfriars,* 2003, 84(983), p. 24.
[155] Williams, R., Redeeming Sorrows: Marilyn McCord Adams and the Defeat of Evil. In: *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology,* (London : SCM Press, 2007), p. 272.

Judaeo-Christian theology doesn't need to construct a theodicy or ignore the problems theodicies address. She states that instead, theologians should just accept that there are questions you cannot answer and/or make sense of. In most theodicies, God is an 'abstract entity' with concepts and who can be described without reference to narratives.

Terrence Tilley believes that theodicies make the relationship with evil wrong- even when theodicies try and distinguish evils, still only talk about moral and natural evils, thus excluding and ignoring evils that don't belong to either category. Kilby states that theodicies also invoke the notion of greater good i.e. God allows evil for a purpose e.g. moral growth, test of faith, etc.[156] Kilby argues that theodicies all fail to solve evil, and instead they allow us to become complacent about it. Theodicies are too caught up with the idea of free will and with this comes the idea that divine and created beings are in a competitive relationship i.e. the more God does, the less we do and the less free we are. It is the case that an action cannot be both determined and free- it is either caused or uncaused but never both. And there is the idea that human freedom requires God to back off and allow us to have freedom, but when He does, we can misuse this freedom and in turn create evil.[157] But we always find ourselves in a difficult position, for the more God acts the more we come to being, and so the more involved He is the freer we are. Therefore, is it the case that God needs to be distanced for us to be free or is it in fact the opposite? Kilby states that an immanent God would allow for relationships to be intimate and personal and allow God to watch over and nourish us, whilst allowing us to have some freedom. Kilby concludes this matter by saying that we shouldn't ignore the problem of evil altogether, but we should just accept that Christian Theology cannot offer a legitimate answer. Instead, we could say that evil is a mystery and that we cannot fully understand it due to our limited human understanding- only God knows why things happen. Therefore, we should trust that God will make things good again, whilst at the same time trying not to diminish the impact evil has. Terrence Tilley agrees and states that theodicies should be

[156] Kilby, 2003, p. 15.
[157] Ibid, p. 17.

abandoned altogether, and we should instead uncover evils and find their causes, and then seek to remove them.[158]

Surin and Anti-Theodicy

In the latter part of the chapter, the focus will turn to the ideas of Kenneth Surin, who argues that theodicies typically use abstract or depersonalised notions of evil, making them difficult to apply to real-life cases. He says we can only appeal to the idea of a suffering God (one that suffers with us) as this shows that God wasn't inactive and passive in the face of the victims' pain, but that He felt it too and allows God to still be loving.

Surin starts his argument against the use of theodicy by defining what is meant by the term 'theodicy'. He states that a "theodicy requires adherents of a theistic faith to reconcile the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and morally perfect God with the existence of evil".[159] In other words, a theodicy is an attempt to show how the existence of God can be compatible with evil, and aims to solve the famous Epicurean Paradox of evil, made famous by David Hume in his essay *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1964).

Surin thinks that theodicies are often failures for a number of reasons, such as the fact that nowadays, many people don't always acknowledge evil as a problem that can be answered by using theodicies. In fact, theodicies only work if we fully understand the world as divinely ordered by a higher being, namely God. Since the Enlightenment period, the focus has been shifted from a religious worldview to a worldview revolving around science and cosmology. And it is this mechanical worldview that makes it much harder for philosophers to reconcile the existence of evil with the "workings of a divine providence".[160] Therefore, Surin argues that we need a new approach, an approach which allows us to solve the problem of evil and of an absent God.

[158] Tilley, T., *The Evils of Theodicy*, (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1991), p. 250.
[159] Surin, K., 'Theodicy?', *The Harvard Theological Review,* 1983, 76(2), p. 225.
[160] Ibid, p. 227.

Surin continues by saying that theodicies also fail because their idea of evil is depersonalised and they focus on the theoretical implicational caused by evil, and not the actual implications. Even Plantinga admitted that his Free Will Defence was not there to offer any comfort to the victims of evil and suffering: "neither the free-will defence or free-will theodicy is designed to be much of help to one suffering…probably neither will enable someone to find peace with himself and with God in the face of evil the world contains".[161] John Hick also endorses this point when he stated that theodicy often offers understanding of why we suffer, but doesn't offer us any practical help or comfort when dealing with the aftermath of evil and suffering.[162] And this is the point Surin is making; a theodicy, in order to succeed, must engage with evil from the perspective of a human being. He goes on to say that theodicy, by its very nature, tries to apply "principles of reason to a problem that is essentially such that it defies application of all rational principles".[163]

Surin stresses that we cannot possibly solve the problem of evil, especially the question of the Holocaust by using the Soul-Making Theodicy or the free- will defence. He says we can only appeal to Elie Wiesel's argument that states that God suffers with us: He is our companion, and He understands our pain. Thus, according to Surin, only by accepting the idea of a suffering God can one mediate the problem of evil with the existence of God. It could be said that God chooses to suffer, as an act of compassion, and this shows His omnibenevolence. And it does not detract from His power as He chose to give it up temporarily so He could sympathise with us. To conclude, it could be that theodicy is only a problem for people who believe God to have infinite power and goodness, specifically those who believe in the God of the philosophers, as well as for people who believe that evil exists at all. In contrast, one might simply wish to accept that there is no answer worth searching for in response to evil such as the Holocaust. Surin suggests that the answer to the problem of evil does not lie in the "acquisition of a cosmic perspective"[164], which enables us to justify God; instead, it lies

[161] Plantinga, A., God, Freedom and Evil, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), p. 29.
[162] Hick's ideas on suffering can be found in 'An Irenaean Theodicy', in: S. T. Davis, ed. *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981).

[163] Surin, 1983, p. 232.
[164] Ibid, p. 246.

within the very being of God. Therefore, it seems that we cannot possibly know the answers to God's actions and purposes because we only have basic, finite, human understanding of the physical realm (not metaphysical), and so as Surin puts it, "we run the risk of being stupefied by grim equivocity of human experience".[165] Finally, Surin states that "theodicy has to be silence qualified by the stammering utterance of broken words"[166] - to put it simply, we cannot possibly find an answer to satisfy everyone and so any attempt to do so is futile. Instead, it might be enough to simply know *how* God and evil are compatible and not *why* evil happens in the first place.

The Avoidability of Theodicy

Considering the objections and problems theodicy faces, Surin proposes a form of 'practical theodicy' as an alternative to theodicy, which ultimately acts as a middle ground, that can be found between theologians and victims of suffering. This type of theodicy does not try to explain evil but instead replaces the God of classical theism and the God of the philosophers, with a suffering God. This in turn allows us to address the consequences of suffering for victims.[167] But could this actually work? James Wetzel argues that "practical theodicy could not enjoin theology's perpetual silence in the face of evil without beginning to assume the non-believer's distance from resources of faith".[168] In other words, to eliminate theoretical theodicy altogether would not allow theologians to address evil without religious insight. Wetzel ultimately says that practical theodicy takes away the opportunity for theologians to speak of evil with religious input, and that religious input can only be achieved via theoretical theodicy.

On the other hand, practical theodicists argue that theoretical theodicies are morally objectionable because they are insensitive. And whilst practical theodicies don't offer a valid explanation of why God allows evil, simply because they believe that no explanation can be applied (in a moral way), they argue that we should focus on strengthening faith and helping victims overcome the stresses of evil. Yet Wetzel says

[165] Ibid, p. 247.
[166] Ibid, p. 247.
[167] Surin, 1986, p. 52.
[168] Wetzel, J., 'Can Theodicy be Avoided? The Claim of Unredeemed Evil', *Religious Studies*, 1989, 25(1), p. 11.

that religious believers need theoretical theodicy to bridge the gulf between recognising unconditional evils and a theistic belief. He goes on to say that the believer is incapable of accepting that there are certain things that are not appropriate for human understanding. Michael Scott argues that "it is not a limitation on faith but a consequence of being in the world".[169] Thus, we cannot shield faith using theoretical theodicy without making faith insensitive to human suffering.

Therefore, it seems to me that the religious believer must maintain faith despite suffering, whilst at the same time not denying that suffering exists. In other words, they need to find a practical way of overcoming evil and reconciling it with God's existence. In order to achieve this aim, I propose that we must find a concept of God that is more compatible with evil, and I would suggest that this God be rooted within scripture and detached somewhat from the ideas of philosophy. This God would still be worthy of worship following the Holocaust, but who has attributes that are more consistent with the existence of evil. In the next few chapters, the focus will turn to Jewish responses to evil, with specific reference to the Book of Job, in an attempt to demonstrate that there is evidence within scripture to show how God can be compatible with evil, namely the Holocaust.

[169] Ibid, p. 12.

Chapter Four- The Book of Job

The story of Job has fascinated people in and out of philosophy for years and plays a vital role in the discussion of evil within religion, specifically Judaism. The importance of it within this thesis is to give us a new picture of our relationship with God and nature, including the idea that human values are not inherent; that justice is not a law of nature in this world; and that the world is not a place where any injustices are corrected. Specifically, the ideas of the Book of Job are important when confronting the events of the Holocaust in the face of God's existence, as it offers an explanation as to why evil occurred and/or why God allowed such evil to exist in His presence. According to Oliver Leaman, there are two reasons why people are fascinated with the story of Job. One reason is because it discusses the issues, we are all familiar with e.g., the issue of why innocent people suffer. And secondly, people are fascinated simply because of the beauty of the book itself, including its sharp, dramatic, and poetic response from God.[170] Throughout this chapter, the Book of Job will be central to uncovering possible explanations for evil and suffering, namely the Holocaust, as well as helping religious believers understand how a God could allow/ fail to prevent such atrocities. Overall, the ideas of the Book of Job are important when confronting the events of the Holocaust in the face of God's existence, as it offers an explanation to why kind of God allowed such evil to exist in His presence- specifically not the God of the philosophers, which was central to theodicies' explanations, but rather the God of the Old Testament.

The story of Job explains how Job is devout follower of God and a good person with wealth, happiness, and strong faith. However, at some point this is removed, and Job becomes unhappy and destitute, and so he appeals to God and demands for God to hear his case (it is important to note that Jews don't usually take the Book of Job literally, instead they understand it to be more allegorically i.e., it contains a hidden

[170] Leaman, Oliver., 'Job and Suffering in Talmudic and Kabbalistic Judaism', in *The Origin and Overcoming of Evil and Suffering in the World Religions Vol 2* by Peter Koslowski, (New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), p. 80.

moral and meaning). The narrative begins by God explaining to another being (usually understood to be Satan) that Job is a good man- that he is God-fearing and blameless. Satan replies that Job is only this way because he has lived a sheltered life and has never had any reason to question his faith in God. To test this, God allows Satan to take everything from Job, but stresses that Job is not to be harmed. Job eventually loses everything: his family, his wealth, his crops, his livestock, his home, etc. yet he never curses God. And so, God allows Job to be harmed to see if he would lose his faith, but Job still does not curse God. Instead, Job gives a speech to his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, in which he curses his birth (but not God). Eliphaz replies by attacking Job's attitude to God and insists he must be guilty if he is being punished. Bildad states that God is just, and Job will get future reward for his suffering because he is blameless. Finally, Zophar explains that we cannot understand God and so we cannot know why things happen. All three friends agree, though, that God cannot be wrong, and that Job is right when he says injustices are common e.g., when good people die, whilst bad people live and prosper.

Job eventually gets a reply from God. God, who does not offer any explanations, but rather poses questions to Job such as 'where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?' [Job 38:4-11][171] and asks Job about all aspects of life and whether he can truly understand them. Job replies that he cannot. At the end, Job is left humbled and withdraws his criticisms of God, and for this, God praises Job and doubles his fortunes and his children (here it is worth noting that Job does not get his original children back, instead he is blessed with new children from God).[172]

In the narrative, it appears that whatever God says to Job, although may have humbled into submission, also seems to offer him some sense of comfort. And what Job learns from God is key to his transformation. According to Wettstein, the Book of Job gives us a new picture of our relationship with God and nature, including the idea that human values are not inherent; that justice is not a law of nature in this world. Thus, values can remain objectively appropriate to the type of beings we are, but they are not

[171] Story of Job taken from *Old Testament*, The Book of Job (1: 8–12, 38:4-11 and 42:1–6)
[172] The Book of Job (1: 8–12 and 42:1–6).

objective for all (as if they were written into a plan for the whole of mankind). Wettstein highlights that as humans we often seek justice, but he says it is naïve to assume that the universe conforms to our sense of justice. Therefore, instead of seeking to find out what justice is and trying to find faith in the idea of justice, we should just have faith in God and trust our relationship with Him (because this is what will bring about justice).[173] For me, there remains the question of whether, we as mere human beings with finite knowledge, have the capacity to question God and His motives. It could be that we will never truly understand why things happen, but we should just trust that God has a good enough reason for allowing certain things to happen.

Maimonides on Job

One famous and important perspective on the Book of Job comes from philosopher Maimonides, who famously commented on the Book of Job in his book *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimonides discusses the book in great detail and gives valuable insight into its interpretations and how we can apply the lessons within the story to our relationship with God and the idea of justice.

Maimonides firstly notices that the story of Job never mentions Job's intelligence, it only ever talks about his goodness. Now, whilst it can be argued that this is trivial and insignificant, Maimonides disagrees. In fact, he states that if Job was wise, he would fall within the purview of God's providence and therefore could possibly understand suffering and the reasons for it. To explain this point, Maimonides refers to God's providence- he stated that providence is aimed at intellects for intellect is the most 'God-like' part of us. Yet, merely having intellect is not enough, we must develop it. And so, if Job lacked wisdom and intellect, it seems he also lacked providence, which would explain why he suffered. And so, Maimonides suggests that Job's suffering is not related to something evil he has done (punishment) but is rather related to his lack of understanding of God. In fact, one thing that Job wrongly does is believe that his misfortunes are important, and that because he is good, he doesn't deserve to suffer. Maimonides however states that because we are material beings, we cannot escape

[173] Leaman, O., 2001, p. 137.

the confines of this life. Intelligence is what allows us to not necessarily escape our problems but rather realize that most of them are actually very unimportant. Yet, because Job lacked intelligence and wisdom, he could not escape his sufferings.[174]

Maimonides goes on to develop his ideas on wisdom by relating it to the idea of divine providence (God's guardianship over His people). He believes that divine providence is not the same as our notion of providence. In fact, we do not know what divine providence is. Therefore, we cannot say anything positive about God, nor does speaking negatively about God tell us much about Him either. All we know is that material things are destroyed, and bad things happen, however we do not know when or why, we just accept they are like this. Maimonides highlights that our choice of action is not guaranteed to succeed since the materiality of things can change/ go wrong; yet we often do not regard this as unjust, we just accept it. At the end of the narrative, Job admits he now understands what he didn't understand before- Maimonides believe this is Job's way of admitting he wasn't wise and not under providence before he got answers from God and was humbled. Therefore, Maimonides argued that had Job been wise at the start and focused more on knowledge of God, via wisdom (philosophy), he would have been protected under God's providence.

Maimonides developed his original point by suggesting that we need both intelligence and rationality to develop spiritually and morally. And it is this capacity for both that links us with providence from a higher realm (divine providence).[175] Therefore, according to Maimonides, Job's ethical behaviour was thus limited until he fully understood it in a wider 'theoretical perspective' (prayer and rituals can help put us on the path to enlightenment).

Maimonides highlights that Job's problems began when his imagination ran away with itself (even if it was influenced by Satan). Job became too obsessed with the loss of

[174] Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 2 vol, translated by Pines, S., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 479.
[175] Ibid, pp. 474- 475.

his material possessions, and it was this obsession that led to him "falling into the clutches of imagination and evil inclination".[176] This view suggests that obeying laws and pursuing mitzvot (Jewish laws) is not a route for achieving divine providence. Instead, we need to understand both physics and metaphysics to overcome certain matters. However, Maimonides once again stresses that divine providence only benefits perfectly intellectual people, whereas some people and animals who cannot achieve this level, will only receive general providence and therefore their lives would not be governed by divine justice.[177]

For me, the ideas of Maimonides, despite their obvious strengths, still show how theodicy does not work, simply because our language and God's language is not the same. We cannot apply the same words we use in the finite world to an infinite being like God. Likewise, we cannot explain the actions of an infinite being, using finite explanations. Furthermore, the question still arises as to why Job just accepts his misfortunes even after he realises that he doesn't have the capacity to understand. Why does he not ask why God hasn't given him the capacity to understand, or why God doesn't explain things to him in simple, finite terms? It isn't what God told Job it is what He omitted that is more important.

Gersonides on Job

Another influential thinker who discusses the ideas within the Book of Job is Gersonides. He proposes that the Book of Job deals with many ethical and philosophical issues, such as challenges to the "notion of individual providence, the suffering of the righteous and the prospering of the wicked".[178] In fact, the Book of Job raised questions about God's knowledge, His power, and His providence. Gersonides opens his commentary on the Book of Job by stressing its importance in teaching

[176] Leaman, O., 2001, p. 85.
[177] Ibid, p. 85.
[178] Ibid, p. 243.

about human perfection in the “realm of philosophy and the realm of political philosophy”.[179]

Gersonides explains how no one, other than Maimonides, understands the true meaning of the Book of Job. In fact, many have misunderstood its meaning, words, and language. It is the case that to fully understand the Book of Job in the truest sense, we need to understand sources of evil. Gersonides explains that evil can come from two sources: firstly, from matter- this is evil that is responsible for bad conduct and ill health, as well as evil that arises from violent acts of other beings; and secondly from chance events- this includes earthquakes, lightning, natural events/ processes that rectify an imbalance within the elements.[180] Gersonides states that first instances of evil comes from man, but the second instance does not. He also articulates that some forms of evil (such as what we would consider natural evil) does not come from God but instead is tied to matter. God simply places us beings in a world that has the capacity to allow evil to occur and this is what is meant by free will.[181]

Gersonides’ interpretation of Job is that he is a man with good qualities and who never blames God. He is also a man who shuns evil, but who lacks the fully understanding of divine providence. The conversation between God and Satan in the first passages of the story, is interpreted by Gersonides as an allegory. For example, Satan represents all evil that befalls Job. And after all the instances of evil that occur in Job’s life and after all the suffering he endured, Job goes from a state of confusion to rejection and believes that human affairs are governed by the heavenly bodies and that these heavenly bodies have no regard for the individual’s well-being.[182] Job also believes that there is no individual providence, and that God cannot provide such providence because He cannot know the “changing particulars”[183] since He is outside time and space (metaphysical, transcendent, and timeless). Therefore, this God does not need to concern Himself with human things such as bodily faculties.

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[179] Eisen, R. ‘Gersonides' Commentary on the Book of Job’, *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, 10 (2), 2001, p. 242.
[180] Gersonides, *Wars of the Lord*, *Milbamot Ha-Shem*, translated by S. Feldman, vol. 2, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984-99), p. 30f.
[181] Eisen, 2001, p. 245.
[182] Ibid, pp. 246-247.
[183] Ibid, p. 248.

In the passage that involves Eliphaz, it is stated that Eliphaz believes that when the righteous suffer and they have not sinned, their suffering is due to person's own folly i.e., when their own actions have indirectly caused. Whereas, on the other hand, he believes that all other types of evil are caused by sin. He also states that he believes in providence and argues that experience of such providence proves God's justice. Therefore, the wicked die for their sins and the righteous, even though they suffer, they are allowed to live, for God is perfect and would not allow people to suffer unjustly.[184]

In contrast, Bildad upholds divine justice but argues for it in a slightly different way. He believes that the righteous suffer because there is some good that will come from it. Zophar replies by suggesting that if the suffering of the righteous person seems unjust, it is because we, as humans, cannot understand God because we don't have His insight and knowledge. For instance, a righteous person may be being punished because God knows they can do better, or God may reward a wicked person because He knows they have done their best (even if it doesn't result in a good outcome).[185]

However, according to Gersonides it is only the ideas of Job's friend Elihu (one of the friends who are discussed as a collective previously in this chapter) who offers the correct answer to Job's challenge. Elihu states there is individual providence but that not all people deserve it. The providence depends on "intellectual perfection and the proximity to active intellect".[186] In simple terms, the more intellect one has, the more chance one has of protecting themselves from evil and this protection can come in two ways: firstly via prophecy, whereby active intellect provides a warning of evil and allows one to avoid harm; and secondly, providential suffering, which is either where intellect provides painful obstacles that protect us from greater harm, or whereby intellect brings evil to a person beginning to sin to avoid them sinning further.[187] Gersonides believed that Job lacked intellectual perfection, and therefore he could not receive

[184] Gersonides, *Wars*, trans. S. Feldman, 1984-99, pp. 155, pp. 158-62.
[185] Ibid, pp. 158-159.
[186] Eisen, 2001, p. 250.
[187] Ibid, pp. 250-251.

providence and thus protection from evil. Gersonides also stated that while Elihu rightfully explains why the righteous suffer, he forgot to explain why the wicked prosper. God eventually explained that the wicked prosper because providence provides benefits for all. Job eventually comes to understand his lacking and that he needs to perfect his intellect to avoid evil. And so, Gersonides concludes that Job's view was closer to the truth than any of his friends because it was based on sense perception and his friends was merely speculation. He also concludes that what the Book of Job seems to show is that to achieve intellectual perfection, you must first achieve moral perfection.[188]

Overall, Gersonides' intention was to approach the Book of Job in the same way as Maimonides as he was greatly influenced by his writings. For example, Gersonides interprets Satan and divine beings as the "powers that govern existence as the messengers of God".[189] This is like the interpretation of Maimonides who states that divine beings are connected to natural processes.[190] Maimonides and Gersonides also agree on the idea that Satan is allegorical and Gersonides accepts Maimonides interpretation of the term Satan deriving from the verb *satah* meaning 'to turn away' because "he leads people astray from the correct path".[191]

Gersonides also follows Maimonides' lead in the sense that he accepts that God's speech to Job emphasises the limitations of our human knowledge of providence. There are differences between the two thinkers however, for Maimonides understands Job as a man who supports rewards and punishments and who eventually understands providence in spiritual terms. In contrast, Gersonides sees Job as someone with an idea of providence and immortality, but who comes to understand there is providence in this world that will protect his well-being.[192] Overall, Gersonides' view of Job is more positive than Maimonides, for he seems him as having

[188] Gersonides, *Wars*, trans. S. Feldman, 1984, pp. 196-199.
[189] Found in rabbinic Bible (*Mikra 'ot Gedolot*)- all citations will be from the *Mikra 'ot Gedolot* translated by Louis- Henri D'Aquin (Paris, 1623). Page numbers are not referenced as they differ between editions.
[190] Eisen, 2001, p. 268.
[191] Gersonides, Commentary on the Book of Job, Guide III: 22, p. 489, found in *Mikra 'ot Gedolot* (Paris, 1623).
[192] Maimonides, 1963, pp. 492-3, 497.

considerable wisdom, whereas Maimonides seems him as lacking wisdom. Also, Gersonides says that Job, despite his suffering, still defends his ideas on providence and never denies God.

The message Gersonides takes from the Book of Job is that one should never lose hope. There are messages within the passages that "contain insights of importance to the Jewish people and their circumstances".[193] In other words, Job can be used as a symbol of Jewish people and can represent their suffering and their questions about God and evil. In terms of the Holocaust, one could use the story of Job as a way of understanding why innocent people suffer and for what possible reason. Furthermore, the story of Job could be used as a way of understanding God in a different way, as opposed to the traditional all-loving being that would never cause any harm. Instead, we may use Gersonides' interpretation to understand God as a being who may sometimes inflict sufferings upon His beings but who would never do so meaninglessly or without justification (even if we do not fully understand the reasons why at this very moment due to our finite knowledge). Therefore, it appears that the Book of Job can be used to reimagine our idea of God in a way that is more compatible with the existence of evil, specifically considering the Holocaust.

Job and Suffering

The next person referenced here is Kenneth Seeskin, who discusses the Book of Job and its importance within the problem of evil. He highlights that Job never denied God's existence, but it is because God exists, that Job cannot comprehend why he is suffering. Also, without God, Job could not argue his case as there would be no one answer his questions. Therefore, it seems that God hasn't not existed but has instead hidden Himself from mankind temporarily. Finally, when Job finds God, he can plead his case, however this doesn't offer Job any valuable answers, as it is that he gets more questions than answers.[194] Seeskin wonders whether we would gain any information about natural theology if we did get answers from God. Would the answers

[193] Eisen, 2001, p. 286.
[194] Frank, D. & Segal, A., 2017, p. 167.

help Job deal with his suffering? Would they bring him comfort? For me, the answer is no, as no amount of justification would make the suffering he endured less significant. Also, if Job was aware that is suffering was the consequence of a wager, it would have possibly made his outlook on the situation vastly different, for he would not have had unwavering faith in God and the choices He was making. In terms of evil, specifically the Holocaust, if we were to say to a survivor that their suffering, as awful as it was, has an explanation and that God had reason for doing what He did, it probably wouldn't bring them comfort. They might ask why God allowed them to suffer and was their suffering necessary. Seeskin states that by trying to defend suffering is making the problem worse. Therefore, it seems to me that a solution to the problem of suffering should not be found, as it offers no real comfort or practical solution.

Seeskin also states that the Book of Job is not able to solve the problem of evil because it lacks a notion of the afterlife. Yet, he also states that even if it did include the afterlife, Job would still not reach a resolution because his suffering is and always will be unjustifiable. Job wants answers now for why he suffers. In the book, God never tries to justify suffering and Seeskin suggests that this creates an impossible situation in which we can neither explain nor justify suffering. He also states that the Book of Job points to the idea of knowledge in the sense that humans cannot comprehend God's wisdom. If we don't have God's wisdom, then we cannot know God's purpose and therefore make judgements needed for theodicy. Seeskin furthers his ideas by stating that we cannot know God's intentions by looking at creation either, as purpose is hidden from us and that "God's ways are only known to Him".[195] Seeskin concludes that both God and humans are rational agents and that the moral law is the same for both: God is a moral agent in the sense that He is the one who guarantees the possibility that the world is perfect; whereas humans are moral agents in the sense that we cannot tell when God's perfection has been realised or why God wills things, we just have to trust in Him and follow His directions, which will lead us to the good and away from evil.[196] Seeskin ultimately concludes that the universe has both evil and good beyond our understanding (both of which are controlled by God). Thus, the lesson learned from the narrative is that we have no comprehension of God's abilities

[195] Ibid, pp. 169-172.
[196] Ibid, p. 173.

and power, and so we have no reason to question God and for Him to justify Himself. We should just accept that things happen and that there is a purpose for it all- a purpose which we cannot know due to our limited finite knowledge.

In order to understand the relationship between the Book of Job and the problem of evil and suffering in light of the Holocaust, we must look at different perspectives on the suffering in the story. The first ideas come from Seeskin, who discusses the perspectives of Job's friends, who attempt to console Job by offering him "ancient Israelite theodic explanations"[197], for example that suffering provides the opportunity for moral and religious reflection and growth. The friends argued that Job was being punished for his own actions and that he needs to repent for his sins and restore his relationship with God. The second perspective is articulated by Job himself, who refuses his friends' ideas and argues that he was not being punished and that he does not believe in God's retributive justice. Job actually thinks that God brings rewards to the innocent and to the wicked, and that God is a relentless being who attacks without reason [Job 16:1-17, 19:1-20]. The third perspective comes from God who responds to Job but not to his accusations, as these were not up for discussion. God instead discusses the foundation of the universe and how beings behave in mysterious ways, yet God's exact position on Job's suffering is not apparent at all. It is important to note that none of these perspectives contribute to Job's final position; instead, Job's final position is one of total restoration of his relationship with God and his life as one of fulfilment and success.[198]

The ending of the book is equally as problematic and has many contradictions. Firstly, when God says Job was right and spoke the truth, this contradicts when He said that Job spoke "words without knowledge" [Job 38:2]. Another example is when God condemns Job's friends for what they said about Him but then confirms their arguments by restoring Job's wealth due to his piety. It seems that God's approval goes to those who challenge Him and also to those who keep the faith, which is confusing as it does not make it clear which perspective we are supposed to accept.

[197] Ibid, p. 24.
[198] Ibid, pp. 24-25.

Job himself actually supports multiple perspectives on post-Holocaust thought, yet we still never have a conclusive answer: “it is not a decisive metonymic reduction of disaster in the service of a decisive theological agenda”.[199] Therefore, perhaps most weight should go towards God’s perspective. And so, rather than focusing on what is said between Job and God we should focus on the fact that the relationship is restored, and that God speaks with Job at all. In relation to the Holocaust, this serves great purpose in showing how Jews can maintain their faith in God despite the suffering they faced. If we indeed focus on the positive relationship between God and man as opposed to the suffering that was endured, we can see that God, despite perhaps allowing the Holocaust to occur and allowing His people to suffer, is still there as a prominent figure in the Jews’ lives. Most post-Holocaust thoughts are based on the idea that we can have a relationship with God at all after such an awful atrocity. This is important in the grand scheme of this thesis, as it indicates how there can be a reconciliation between a belief in God and the existence of evil.

The Talmudic Tradition- God the Personal and Job

In this next section, we look at the ideas of both Oliver Leaman and Rabbi Nissim Gaon who argue that the interpretation of the Book of Job can be better understood if we accept that God is personal. And that this interpretation can better help us comprehend how evil, in this case the Holocaust, can occur in the presence of God’s existence. Leaman specifically discusses his ideas in relation to Talmudic Traditions and the Torah. Particularly, he states that God created evil but also created Torah to counter it. Therefore, even though Job suffered, he was also rewarded. He also states that human beings need to question divine providence in order to gain greater knowledge, and so Job should not be blamed for calling out to God. Rabbi Nissim Gaon on the other hand, argues that Job kept his faith and in fact, it was his personal contact with God that helps show that God can respond to people in a personal way, and that God is available to everyone.

[199] Ibid, p. 27.

The ideas of Oliver Leaman begin by referring to the Talmudic teachings, which see Job as a devout person (like a saint but not on same level as Abraham). In fact, in the *Talmud Bava Bathra* it states that God created evil inclination, but that He also created the Torah to counter it (the Torah teaches us how to behave justly and how to follow God's commands). Therefore, in relation to Job, even though he suffered, he was also rewarded (God countered evil with good). The Talmudic tradition also states that Job should not be blamed for complaining about his suffering, as he is simply saying things out of distress. The *Talma Bavli* shows how questioning divine providence is a route to greater knowledge of God and His guardianship. And so, by doing so, Job was able to fully understand the truth and was rewarded by contact with the Divine Himself.[200]

Following on from this, we can look at the personal relationship between God and His people, and whether this can help us understand why people keep faith in times of hardship. Rabbi Nissim Gaon once said that what persuaded Job to keep his faith was his personal contact with God. In fact, it was this personal relationship with God that made Job's faith stronger.[201] According to Rabbi Nissim Gaon, the contact Job has with God helps show that God can respond to people in a personal way, and that God is available to everyone. Also, the fact that God responds to Job at all shows there is more to justice than simple punishment and reward. He also highlights how Job doesn't curse God but instead uses the good and bad things that happen to him, to affirm his faith.

One could argue that this personal connection with God might not actually help affirm Job's faith, for Job might demand better answers for why he suffered, and not just accept that he cannot comprehend God's reasons. It isn't a satisfactory answer to say 'we simply cannot know'; either God cannot justify the innocent suffering of people and so He doesn't give us an answer, or He has reasons for allowing innocent suffering, but we cannot understand God's reasons for doing so. Either way, innocent people still suffer, and we are still at a loss as to why. Even Job himself highlights that there is no evidence that the innocent people get rewarded, and that guilty people get punished.

[200] Leaman, O., 2001, pp. 87-87.
[201] Ibid, p. 90.

And thus, by simply insisting that there is divine justice and believing that everything will work out, is not a good enough answer.

Kant and Job

This next section draws upon the ideas of Immanuel Kant in order to demonstrate the relationship between the idea of virtues and morality and our relationship with God in the face of evil such as the Holocaust. The main virtue that Kant focuses is on is the key virtue of Job's known as sincerity: "Job speaks as he thinks and with the courage with which he, as well as every other being in his position can well afford it".[202] Job's virtues of sincerity, honesty and integrity are what Kant admires the most, especially considering Job does not lose any of these virtues despite his suffering. Kant also highlights the differences between Job and his friends, specifically that Job's friends have intellectual, ethical and religious vices which are visible when they try to give rational explanation to suffering and present a fake theodicy by trying to defend and justify God's goodness in the face of evil. In fact, they often make Job out to be the one at fault for his own suffering by suggesting he may have sinned.[203]

Another issue Kant raises about Job's friends is that they wrongly believe that divine justice is the same as human justice. The problem with evil and suffering is that it can't be explained rationally nor by appealing to narrative patterns such as reward and punishment. We simply use teleological views to understand the processes within the world, yet we do not use them to presuppose them to be true. However, Job's friends falsely maintain that divine causes "can be illuminated by human reason".[204] Kant suggests that instead of trying to create justification for suffering, they should aim to relieve the pain inflicted on the victims.

Overall, the message Kant takes from the Book of Job is not so much about Job's relationship with God (or our relationship with God), it is more about Job's relationship

[202] Kant, 1996, 8:265.
[203] Kivistö, S. & Pihlström, S., 2016, p. 355.
[204] Ibid, p. 358.

with his friends (or our relationship with other human beings). Therefore, we should stop focusing on justifying and explaining God's permission of evil and focus on people's personal suffering and the outcomes of evil that impact our lives. Kant also states that the insincerity of theodicism does not recognise the "essential human capacity for freedom and responsibility"[205] and so theodicies are essentially "failures to think".[206] Essentially, Kant believes that theodicies are immoral because they treat people as a means to an end as opposed to an end in themselves. And even though there seems no sufficient reason for God to cause suffering, if there was, by treating beings as an end or blaming them we are creating more evil.

If we apply Kant's thinking here to the Holocaust, it seems that people who often try to justify or explain the suffering that the Jews endured can be compared to Job's friends, for they try to rationalise why God would allow such suffering and in a sense place blame on the victims. For example, some suggest that God must have good reason for allowing such horrendous evil, and effectively this reason shifts blame away from God for allowing evil, to the victims for possibly causing their own pain and suffering through their actions, either indirectly or directly. However, as Kant suggested this is not an acceptable justification for suffering and is in fact a fake theodicy. One cannot blame victims of the Holocaust in any way for their suffering; only one group of people are to blame, and it is not the Jews. It seems that using the Holocaust as an example makes it almost impossible to defend God and justify His lack of prevention of such evil.

Post-Holocaust Jewish Interpretations of Job

Following from the ideas above, which focus on the more ancient interpretations of the Book of Job, we in turn move the attention to the more modern interpretations which come in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Post- Holocaust interpretations of Job offer an insight into the ideas of Jewish thinkers following the atrocities that occurred and how

[205] Ibid, p. 359.
[206] Ibid, p. 359.

they aim to offer an explanation and/or resolution to a belief in God at a time when their faith was most questioned.

The term 'Post-Holocaust' can be interpreted in different ways. For instance, orthodox Jews such as Eliezer Berkovits addresses it by looking at faith after the Holocaust but reject a break between past and present.[207] On the other hand, thinkers such as Wiesel, Fackenheim and Rubenstein focus on the discontinuities created by the Holocaust and reject traditional responses to catastrophe: "the experience of our time has exploded our ancient categories of meaning".[208] In contrast, Blumenthal seeks to synthesise traditional ideas with insights found in Holocaust Theology. He states that we need to confront the challenges facing Jews after the Holocaust but also respect traditional methods of interpretations.[209] Despite the differences within the interpretations of the term post-Holocaust, most people agree that all post- Holocaust Biblical hermeneutics should focus on victim and survivor testimony and should avoid explaining away and/or rationalising pain. Wiesel for example, says that the deeper meanings of Biblical stories only become apparent when they are retold in light of the Holocaust. Post- Holocaust Biblical hermeneutics emphasises the fragile and ambiguous character of Biblical texts and are aware of the gulf that separates the reader from the experience of testimony and the politics of reading and interpreting the text.[210]

Some argue for positive interpretations, for example Martin Buber states that the story offers many different perspectives on suffering, but that it never offers any explanations- God simply reveals Himself to Job and mends the divine-human relationship[211]. Jonathan Sacks stated that Job's restoration provides meaning to the Holocaust, and even though Job doesn't get the answers he wants, he does get a new

[207] Wollaston, I., 'Post-Holocaust Jewish Interpretations of Job', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible,* 2011, p. 3 [accessed 17/07/2022] https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199204540.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199204540-e-34

[208] Linafelt, T., *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible after the Holocaust*, (New York: NYU Press, 2000), p. 246.

[209] Wollaston, I., 2011, p. 4.

[210] Ibid, p. 5.

[211] Mathewson, D., 'Between Testimony and Interpretation: The Book of Job in Post-Holocaust Jewish Theological Reflection'', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, *41*(2), 2008, p. 20.

life after his tragedy and becomes stronger as a result of his suffering.[212] Likewise, Abraham Joshua Heschel says that Job is the one who seeks out God even in suffering and thus the Holocaust can be seen as something modelled by Job as a call to return to God.[213] Finally, Joseph Soloveitchik argues that Job shows us our limited capacity, and how we don't fully understand the true meaning of the telos of suffering, but instead can use our pain and suffering to grow spiritually. He states that "afflictions are intended as means for mending both soul and spirit".[214] Furthermore, Soloveitchik suggests that if God gave Job twice as much as He took and a better life after his suffering, then who is to say that God won't do the same for Holocaust survivors. In fact, all of the thinkers above agree that the interpretation of Job "reduces Job's message to a positive model of hope in a post- Holocaust age".[215]

References to Job both during and after the Holocaust are both generic (in the sense that they identify victims/ survivors and/or generational survivors with Job) and specific (in the sense of utilising particular elements of the story). Specific references such as Job's demands for his protests to be heard is thought of as apposite. There are examples of these references found at significant sites, such as Belzec and Bergen-Belsen memorials, as well as at Mount Zion in Jerusalem (the chamber of the Holocaust).[216] Elie Wiesel said the story of Job embodies "an outcry which from generation to generation, through pogroms and massacres, reverberates from one end of exile to the other".[217] On the other hand, generic references include when Samuel Bak (a Holocaust survivor and artist) described Job as "one of the six million".[218] In simple terms, Bak is suggesting that every survivor of the Holocaust resonates with Job and his suffering and questioning of God. Other people tend to focus on the relationship between Job and non-survivors/ later generations. For example, Berkowitz finds the story of Job to have creative theological connections. He

[212] Sack, J., 'The Valley of the Shadow', Wrestling with God, 2007, p. 678.
[213] Mathewson, D., 2008, p. 20.
[214] Soloveitchik, Joseph B, *Kol Dodi Dofek: The Voice of My Beloved Knocks*, (New York: KTAV Publishing, 2006), p. 387.
[215] Mathewson, D., 2008, p. 21.
[216] Wollaston, 2011, p. 7.
[217] Wiesel, E., *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), p. 229.
[218] Fewell, D. N., Phillips, G. A., & Sherwood, Y., *Representing the Irreparable: The Shoah, the Bible, and the Art of Samuel Bak*, (Boston: Pucker Art Publications, 2008), p. 46.

believes that Job's brother offers more to post-Holocaust thought than Job himself. This fictitious character does not suffer, but rather sympathises with Job, which shows how those who did not suffer in the Holocaust, but may be affected indirectly or not at all, can resonate with victims, and understand their pain and suffering.[219] Likewise, Yehuda Bauer prefers to focus on Job's wife and children as they are the best models of the Holocaust. Unlike Job who was given the option of whether or not to keep his faith, his family were not- they were victims without a choice, just like the Jews of the Holocaust.[220] These varying interpretations of Job show how the meaning of the story is contested and how the meaning of the Holocaust is also contested and unclear. In fact, the meaning of both the story and the Holocaust can be made to support different "social, political and theological positions".[221]

On the other hand, other thinkers believe that there is no consolation to be found in Job's suffering. Rubenstein stated that Job is a figure of continued faith in God despite his awful suffering. However, this figure has no relevance to the victims of the Holocaust since these victims were incapable of maintaining such faith in God "in light of the complete absurdity of abject evil and death".[222] And, even if one was to argues that the "post-Auschwitz Jew"[223] could be an example of Job, it's a mistake to overlook the differences between the "assumptions underpinning Biblical text about the nature of divine-human relationships, and the reality of the Holocaust".[224] Rubenstein explained this further as follows:

> "No matter how terrible his condition became, he was at all times recognized as a person by both God and man. At Auschwitz, the Jew did not sit upon the dung heap. He became less than the dung heap…No 'Thou' was addressed to the Auschwitz Jew by either God or man. The Jew became a nonperson in the deepest sense. Neither his life nor his death mattered. There was no question

[219] Berkovitz, E., *Faith After the Holocaust*, (New York: KTAV Publishing, 1973), p. 69.
[220] Bauer, Y., 'Returning to the Source of Human Morality: In Response to Moshe Unna's 'Who Can Heal You?', in Wrestling with God, ed. by Katz, S.; Bîderman, Š.; and Greenberg, G., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 294-95.
[221] Mathewson, D., 2008, p. 22.
[222] Ibid, p. 21.
[223] Wollaston, 2011, p. 9.
[224] Ibid, p. 9.

because there was no Job. Job went up in smoke. His question went with him".[225]

In other words, God never explained Himself to the Jews like He did to Job; He never gave them twice as much as He took from them, nor did He repair what He broke: "as for the six million, He still owes the Jews for them".[226] Rubenstein goes on to say that Job can be relevant to some who survived because their sufferings were true to them, but that the story of Job is not relevant to non-survivors or future generations. For Berkovits, there are two different Jobs that can be addressed. Firstly, there is the Biblical Job, who has God answer his questions and demands; and secondly, there is the "Job of the gas chambers"[227] and in this situation, God does not reply but rather remains silent and lets people suffer and despair.

Some orthodox readings of Job say Job's suffering was not undeserved and his complaint is found to be unjustified. In fact, they believe that Job was faithful or patient, nor was he totally innocent, and true understanding of his suffering will only come with acceptance of his own sinfulness and the fact that he was lacking understanding.[228] In contrast, Primo Levi (Holocaust survivor and writer) said that Job was the embodiment of the "just man oppressed by injustice".[229] In other words, Job never got the answers that sufficed so he was rightfully frustrated. Additionally, Wiesel said that "God said nothing that Job could interpret as an answer or explanation or justification of his ordeals".[230] In fact, Wiesel is deeply troubled at how quickly Job surrendered at the end of the passage. He believes that instead, Job should have "defied the transcendent, inhuman justice".[231]

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[225] Rubenstein, R., *The Religious Imagination: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Jewish Theology*, (New York: University Press of America, 1968), pp. xviii–xix.
[226] Donat, A., *Voices from the Ashes: Wanderings in Search of God*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. 283.
[227] Berkovitz, E., 1973, p. 69.
[228] Soloveitchik, J., 'Kol Dodi Dofek', in *Theological and Halakhic Reflections on the Holocaust*, ed. B. Rosenberg and F. Heuman, (Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1993), p. 59.
[229] Levi, P., The Search for Roots: A Personal Anthology, (London: Grove Press, 2002), p. 11.
[230] Wiesel, 1976, p. 231.
[231] Wiesel, E., The Town Beyond the Wall, (London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), p. 52.

There are certain instances where images of Job can be used to represent the Holocaust. In fact, certain images may show Job appearing to be the perfect symbol of innocent victims. For example, there is a bronze statue of Job at Yad Vashem which depicts Job as a Holocaust concentration camp inmate with a number inscribed on his arm. This image can be interpreted in many ways, including as a symbol of Job praying and preparing for death and as someone who is willing to die for the sanctification of God (Kiddish Hashem); or as someone who protests, with pleading hands, as a man whos' cries won't be heard.[232]

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that Job can be seen as both a survivor and a victim, whilst at the same time demanding answers for his suffering. Yet, Job has to accept that he will not have complete knowledge of the universe's order and operations and must accept that God cannot be held to our human standards. God is simply responsible for putting wisdom into the universe, and this wisdom can only be fully understood by God. Job himself has become the spokesperson for all Jews in a post-Holocaust world, hence why he is so important to understanding the impact of the Holocaust within religion, ethics and philosophy, and also how we can use the story of Job to help us understand how to deal with suffering, as well as confronting the change in Judaism and its relationship with God. In the chapters that follow, the focus will shift to discussing in more depth the ideas of Jewish thinkers post- Holocaust and how they can be used to shape the conversation of God's existence in the face of evil. Finally, how there seems to be a demand a new notion of God and how the ideas of this chapter can be used to shape our new idea of God following the Holocaust.

[232] Wollaston, 2011, p. 12.

Chapter Five- Jewish Responses to the Problem of Evil

As demonstrated in the first half of this thesis, the problem of evil is one that has been topic of hot debate within philosophy for a significant length of time. The incompatibility of suffering with the existence of the God of the philosophers, who is supposedly omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient, is an issue that has called for attempts of such reconciliation between the problem of evil and the existence of God. Within Jewish philosophy, the problem of evil is often relayed simply as if God is all-powerful and perfectly just, then why do people suffer? And in order to understand suffering and solve this dilemma, we must understand what is meant by justice and how it links to the relationship between God and man. Within Judaism, it is claimed that there are two types of justice: granting people what they have the right to; and giving people that which match their merits- the former refers to paying debts, whereas the latter refers to returning a pledge. I will consider the ideas of Edward Halper and Frank and Segal on the topic of justice, as well as other thinkers such as Maimonides, who digested the idea of justice within Jewish laws.

These thoughts will help shape the next part of the chapter, which focuses on Jewish approaches to evil, specifically how Jews tackle the contradiction between their faith and their suffering in the aftermath of the Holocaust. For instance, I will draw upon the works of Jewish thinkers such as Elie Wiesel, who argued that in light of the Holocaust the very nature of God's character is questioned, especially His justice. As well as this, I will consider the ideas of Emil Fackenheim who stated that Jews must respond to tragedy of the Holocaust and the issues it proposes to religious belief by trying to reaffirm God's presence in history. Another major addition to this chapter will be John Roth who argued that no matter how awful the Holocaust was, it was a tragedy has the power to raise the right questions i.e. the philosophical questions we need to ask in order to pursue a life worth living. In fact, he suggested that the Holocaust ultimately signifies a failure in ethical, religious and political frameworks, and shows how individuals are responsible for their actions and consequences. Overall, the aim of this chapter is to show how we can approach the problem of evil from exclusively a Jewish perspective and how we can reconcile the events of the

Holocaust and suffering with the existence of a God that is compatible with the Jewish faith.

The Currency of Justice: Divine Justice and Human Suffering

In Jewish philosophy, the problem of evil is presented as: "if God is all-powerful and perfectly just, then why do the righteous suffer?".[233] This question is particularly important in this thesis as it demonstrates the importance of why I am aiming to reconcile suffering with a belief in God- it is not for the purpose solely of answering a philosophical dilemma, such as the problem of evil, but more so to highlight potential reasons within Judaism as to why people suffer, and to possibly help reconcile Jews with a belief in God following the Holocaust.

In the first half of this chapter, the focus will be on the idea of justice within Judaism, with reference to ideas Kenneth Seeskin, who said when discussing the book of Job, that any theory that says suffering is good should be rejected. Likewise, Maimonides said that God's providence depends on the level of prophetic rank/ virtuousness, and that the condition for the good life is knowledge of God, which is in our control. Finally, Edward Halper referred to the saying 'an eye for an eye' from Exodus and '*midda k'neged midda*' (measure for measure) from the Torah. Both of which mean whoever does good gets good and vice versa. However, Halper stated that this also depends on what good is: if the performance of God's commands is good, then this is the currency of justice; yet if knowledge of God is good then this is the currency of justice. The importance of highlighting all these views is that, despite their differences, they all share a common idea, which is the claim that justice is about what we can do for ourselves, and now how we suffer.

Edward Halper states that within Judaism, it is believed that God is just, but that good and evil are rarely justly distributed, as seen throughout Biblical Narratives such as the Story of Abraham and the Book of Job (which was discussed in great detail in the

[233] Frank, D. & Segal, A., *Jewish Philosophy Past and Present* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 165.

previous chapter). This makes God appear unjust, for if God teaches us to be good, He should reward us when we are. Also, God should not treat people who disobey Him or act badly in the same way or better than He treats His followers. In the case of the Holocaust, this claim is front and centre, for God allowed His people to suffer at the hands of those who turned away from God and His morality. Halper argues that we cannot determine justice without knowing what it actually involves, and to do so, we must answer these three questions: what makes a person righteous? What is suffering? What counts as an appropriate reward/ punishment?[234]

Under the Code of Hammurabi, it is believed that the perpetrator "suffers in his own person the same type of pain he inflicts on others".[235] Yet, we cannot take this literally, for instance if you take the life of an animal you don't pay with your own life, instead you now owe the value of the animal. Halper also discusses the term 'eye for an eye' in terms of punishment and says that such punishment must be both qualitatively and quantitatively related to the crime committed. He links this phrase from Exodus 21:23-27[236] to the Hebrew phrase '*midda k'neged midda*' which means measure for measure- according to this phrase, reward and punishment must fit the defective or virtuous trait i.e. you get what you deserve. In this case, justice is self-certifying.

Types of Justice

Frank and Segal go on to discuss types of justice, and draw upon the ideas of Maimonides, who defines justice as "justice being granting to everyone who has a right to something, that which he has a right to and giving to every being that which corresponds to his merits".[237] He then goes on to describe two types of justice: firstly, granting people what they have the right to; and secondly, giving people that which match their merits. He compares the two to giving a hired man his wages and paying a debt. In each of these instances, both people get what they are due. Put simply, the

[234] Frank, D. & Segal, A, 2017, p. 177.
[235] Ibid, p. 177.
[236] International Bible Society, *Holy Bible,* (Bungay: Clays Limited Publishers, 1984).
[237] Maimonides, M., *The Guide of the Perplexed*, e.ds. Shlomo Pines and Leo Strauss, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), p. 631.

former refers to returning a pledge, whereas the latter refers to paying a debts.[238] And according to Maimonides, the difference between these two is where justice lies. He stated that the person who receives what they have the right to receives justice from others, and the person who returns a pledge acts with justice and has justice in his soul. Maimonides highlights that the second type of justice (returning a pledge) is what he called proper justice, for its this type that helps one person get what they are owed and helps the person who returns the pledge act justly (measure for measure). Maimonides goes on to say that the currency of the first type of justice is material and the currency for the second type is virtue in the soul. Therefore, the first type of justice is necessary for justice, but the second one gives the soul what it is due, and this is what has real value.[239]

Developing the ideas of Maimonides, Frank and Segal identify various types of justice. Firstly, they talk of material justice, which relies on us completing God's commands (*mizvot*), as this is what helps us develop a worthy soul. The second type of justice they discuss is moralistic and requires that the righteous be granted the circumstances to perform *mizvot* and the wicked be denied. An intellectualist version of justice also requires that *mizvot* is essential as it provides the conditions for the soul to pursue intellectual pursuits and desires. The *mizvot* also contributes to the study of the Torah and the development of our knowledge. Finally, naturalism's idea of justice believes that natural processes generally are beneficial, but they can be thrown off balance and become destructive.[240]

According to Frank and Segal, moralism and intellectualism assume perfect justice exists for each person (both in this life and the next), whereas naturalism does not. They go on to say that this is because naturalism adopts a mechanical worldview and under such a view, things cannot be perfect as they are constantly changing (in flux) and therefore we require development and growth in order to achieve better justice.[241]

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[238] Shapira, H., 'The Virtue of Mercy According to Maimonides: Ethics, Law, and Theology', Harvard Theological Review, 2018, 111(4), p. 578.
[239] Frank, D. & Segal, A, 2017, p. 179.
[240] Ibid, p. 180.
[241] Ibid, p. 181.

They also state that under moralism, the likes of Job and Abraham were being tested and due to their resilience and trust in God, they are worthy of future reward. This is evident in the Torah where m*izvot* is often rewarded by another *mizvot* and through this good behaviour and dedication to God, one will get to live in the promised land. Overall, Frank and Segal argue that "justice is a goal of human governance not a feature of nature"[242] and therefore we could combine all approaches to justice. However, the central idea remains. Justice is about what a person does for himself and others, not about what he suffers or endures.

Ultra-Orthodox Reflections on the Holocaust and Evil

This next part of the chapter will focus on orthodox approaches to the Holocaust. There is a view within Orthodox Judaism that believes that the nations of the world were rooted in evil, and this evil was either set in place at creation or at the point of redemption. Shalon Noah Brazovsky stated that when God created the universe, He created holiness (*Kedushah*) and unholiness (*Tumah*), and in the case of the Holocaust, Nazism was the result of *Tumah*. Under this idea, all catastrophes and evil were a part of God's plan and creation, and without these catastrophes the world would eventually return to "precreation chaos"[243]. In the midst of Hitler, there was a war between God, His chosen people and Israel, and Germany with its divinely chosen status. Therefore, Hitler needed all Jews removed as they opposed his perfect Aryan state. In a way, Hitler brought about a "metaphysical dualism between divine eternity and morality (Israel) and the nations that hated them".[244] There is a word in Hebrew A*malek* which is known as the enemy of the Israelites. Some Ultra-Orthodox Jews see Hitler as the embodiment of *Amalek* and view his attack on the Jews as unjustified and went beyond Israel and attacked God Himself.

Another major claim is that once God created the world, He remained distant and did not intervene, both to administer punishment or prevent evil.[245] It can be said that

[242] Ibid, p. 181.
[243] Kwiet, K. & Matthäus Jürgen, 2004, p. 111.
[244] Ibid, p. 90.
[245] Ibid, p. 91.

under this claim, God can be seen as more a transcendent being, as He sits above the world and watches from a distance, as opposed to being immanent and involved. It also stresses that God made us free beings to choose good or evil. On the other hand, other Ultra-Orthodox Jews believe that evil is a sacrifice and that the Holocaust was the "sanctification"[246] of Israelites where they can enter a higher relationship with God. Thus, the Holocaust is seen as a sacrificial act and that God's absence during the Holocaust, along with His breaking of the covenant with Israel, created an opportunity for acts of faith. For example, many victims of the Holocaust carried out different acts of *Mitzvot* (commandments) through to death, therefore making death into a meaningful and sacrificial act in God's name. Shalom Noah Brazovsky stated that "given the greatness of the sanctification of the name of six million holy ones, it cannot even be estimated how much creation has been uplifted and sanctified".[247] In simple terms, the death of God's chosen people removed the *Tumah* from the world and replaced it with *Kedushah*. And so, it appears that the "ashes of Isaac that spread across the altar became the ashes to those burned in the death camps in sanctification of God's name".[248]

The Kabbalah and Evil

In contrast to the ideas of above, the Kabbalah (school of thought within Jewish mysticism), teaches that the relationship between God and evil are complex, for it teaches that "no evil comes down from Heaven" [Genesis Raba 51:5] but also that "an evil thing from God has come down" [Micah 1:12]. In other words, evil exists outside things sent from Heaven but also transcends from those things and can be triggered by actions of man. For example, in the Bible, it says that on the first day it was good, but it never mentions the second day. Kabbalist Joseph Gikatilla says that the second day marks the 'separation of waters' and that this separation is not good. In actual fact, under Kabbalah the channels between different realms are fragile and need repairing, and also the actions of human beings can affect them. Thus, evil occurs due to the channels being blocked, so much so that energy becomes hostile and confronts the

[246] Ibid, p. 107.
[247] Adret, B., *Halek 5. Siman 55* in *She'elct U-teshovot*, (Jerusalem, 2000), p. 31.
[248] Kwiet, K. & Matthäus Jürgen, 2004, p. 111.

world.[249] Under this idea, God did nothing evil when He separated the waters, as the separation was necessary for the world to be created.

According to the Kabbalists, the nature of separation gives rise to the creation of evil. As Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag explains in *An Entrance to the Zohar*:

> "We know quite clearly that God's Thought of Creation, whose whole purpose was to give enjoyment to those He created, created out of necessity the *Will to Receive* from Him all the goodness and pleasantness that He thought for them. This *Will to Receive* was not contained in the essence of the Almighty before He created it in the souls; therefore, He created something completely "new" that was not contained within Him. In spiritual matters difference in form works in the same way that a blade separates material substances. The distance between the two will be in proportion to how opposite in form they are to each other…. It was by means of this difference of form that the souls were detached from the Creator and became separate from Him, so that they became something that was created."[250]

This was the creation of this world- a world which contained both Good and Evil. The Kabbalists describe the Creator (God) Himself at containing goodness, who then created man with the desire to rise and evolve to the highest level of nature. When God created man, He therefore created a vessel or a receiver, with a nature entirely opposite to His own so that he could share His goodness. The purpose of this creation was to fill our souls with His Light so we could become like the benevolent creator Himself. As Michael Laitman puts it, “the Creator is the Creator, the goal to which I aspire, and the Torah is the entire corrected mechanism, the ties of love that connect the souls together”.[251] Put simply, as long as the vessel is full of Light, then the vessel will take on the characteristics of the Creator e.g. endless goodness, endless sharing,

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[249] Leaman, O., 2001, p. 88.
[250] Ashlag, Y., *An entrance to the Zohar: The key to the portals of Jewish mysticism,* (Jerusalem: Research Centre of Kabbalah, 1975), translated and paraphrased on ‘Nature of Evil’, *Kabbalah Centre,* https://www.kabbalah.com/en/articles/the-nature-of-evil/, (September 2016).
[251] Laitman, M., ‘From Darkness to Light’, in *Unlocking the Zohar*, (Laitman Kabbalah Publishers, 2011), pp. 101-104.

etc. Furthermore, man can also fill their souls with light by earning it by behaving in a morally sound way. Yet, when the Light is not earned, darkness filled the void- this darkness the Kabbalists say, is evil. It is understood that every human being in this world includes the polarities of both desires: to share and to receive. Therefore, when we make individual decisions, we collectively affect the whole. For example, when people act with goodness there is Light in the world, yet, if we are lazy, intolerant, or hateful in any way, the light is kept out and darkness begins to grow. Laitman continues this point but stating that "if the connection between the souls is one of hatred and not one of love, there is no Torah, and it is hidden. The souls that do not feel the ties of love among them are in exile from the Torah and from the Creator, meaning detached from the right connection (Torah) and from the light that fills the right connection (the Creator)".[252] Therefore, under Kabbalism, it is the case that evil must be acknowledged, not as a thing in itself, but as an absence of good.

Following on from the above are specific ideas within Judaism which focus on how Jews deal with evil. Firstly, we can look to the Hebrew phrase '*gam-zeh le-torah*', which translates to 'eve that was for good' i.e. what looks bad at first, could have actually been a lot worse, and may be better than you think. Therefore, it is not a case of God making a bad situation look good, but rather God showing us a way of interpreting things via our intellect- we just have to believe that whatever is happening is better than it seems (and better than the alternative).[253] Secondly, and also linked to the idea above, is the Hebrew concept of *Tikkun Olam*, roughly translated to 'repairing the world' or 'repair what is broken'. Jews take this idea as a responsibility which God has bestowed on them during creation. When God created man and allowed for the light to enter the souls, He placed an expectation on humankind to rise to highest level of nature, thus striving towards goodness and preventing unnecessary suffering. In doing so, man increases the light and reduces the darkness and ultimately repairs what is broken. In fact, the Mishnah says that "God created humankind from a single ancestor for the sake of peace".[254] Therefore, since we are made in God's image and aim to

[252] Ibid, p.104.
[253] Leaman, O, 2001, p. 88.
[254] Winer, M. L., 'Tikkun Olam: A Jewish Theology of 'Repairing the World'', *Theology*, 2008, 111(864), p.434.

achieve ultimate goodness by following His commands, “we must accept God’s role as the creator, and preserve life, rather than destroy it”[255] It is by knowing God that leads to the emulation of His attributes and eventually allows us to work towards *Tikkun Olam*. Nahman of Bratslav explains that human beings work alongside God in perfecting the world, and he akin this to the idea of two partners collaborating. In fact, he states that:

> “The ways of God are not like the ways of humans. When a person makes an article of clothing, it seems very important when it is new. But, after a while, when it has been torn and been mended a few times, its importance becomes less each time as it gets older. But the Holy One created the world, and at first it was faulty. Later, each time a righteous person came along, it was perfected a bit more…Thus, with each righteous act, the world is perfected a bit more, and for God, the world becomes more important”.[256]

When discussing the ideas above, Mark Winer argues that even the Holocaust has deepened our commitment to Tikkun Olam. He suggests that Jews have remarkably and miraculously, “arisen phoenix-like from the ashes of one of history’s worst calamities, the extermination of one third of our people, to an even greater moral passion, to cultural and political rebirth, even to faith and hope”.[257] He goes on to say that Jews see the Holocaust as a metaphor and lesson for all mankind- it reminds us of our moral responsibility to protect and love one another and in doing so, repair what is broken. He stresses that “during an era of moral darkness, one is obliged to stretch out one’s hand to assist others, even if that act endangers one’s own life. Those who stand by and watch but do nothing to oppose the government or to raise their arms against the forces of evil, are considered guilty of terrible crimes of silence, of apathy, of being by standers, which is to permit others to do evil by not opposing them”.[258]

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[255] Ibid, p. 436.
[256] Nachman of Breslov, *Sichot HaRan 239,* in *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan, (Jerusalem, Breslov Research Institute, 1973).
[257] Winer, M. L., 2008, p. 437.
[258] Ibid, p. 437.

It can be said that the ideas above demonstrate how Orthodox Jews can potentially approach the problem of evil and reconcile these issues with the existence of God. Whether this be through the explanation of evil as a privation of goodness, and/ or whether this is simply by explain how one can overcome the pain of suffering and find a way forward. However, despite these suggestions, as shown throughout the remainder of this thesis, this isn't the only solution. In the next section, we will look towards more modern approaches the Holocaust and evil found within Judaism.

Jewish Thinkers on the Holocaust and Suffering

Author John Roth talks about the influence Richard Rubenstein has had on Jewish philosophy, specifically his views and beliefs about the Holocaust within a theological and philosophical sphere. Although they share some views, Roth maintains that he and Rubenstein don't agree on everything. Roth states that he is not convinced that we live a "functionally godless world"[259] like Rubenstein does, yet if this is the case, and God is not involved, then we battle with God's failures in the light of evil and suffering. And thus, this can ultimately be a major factor in arguing against injustice that aids the idea of a world without God. Roth stated that "religion was not a sufficient condition for the Holocaust, but it was a necessary one".[260] In other words, the torture and murders that occurred in the Holocaust are inconceivable without the beliefs in God held by Jews. Therefore, according to Roth, the Holocaust is different from other genocides because it raises directly and insistently the question of how such a series of horrific events can be reconciled with the traditional idea of God and His so-called involvement with history. In fact, the Holocaust "resonates and collides with the theological and philosophical and ethical traditions of Biblical religion".[261]

Roth goes on to note that Rubenstein's main contribution to the debate about faith after Auschwitz was his refusal to admit that "*Gott mit uns* under any circumstances".[262] The phrase *Gott mit uns* (God is with us) is an ancient and Biblical

[259] Roth, J., Sources of Holocaust Insight, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2020), p. 11.
[260] Ibid, p. 11.
[261] Ibid, p. 11.
[262] Rubenstein, R., 'Some Perspectives on Religious Faith after Auschwitz', in *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications*, ed. John K. Roth and Michael Berenbaum, (St. Paul: Paragon, 2018), p. 356.

phrase used to give encouragement and hope, yet Rubenstein notes how the phrase was inscribed on the uniforms and equipment of the German armed forces, who helped destroy the lives of millions of Jews. In support, Roth states that the "cost of blood and suffering to be paid for invoking God in that way were too high"[263]. Rubenstein's personal and intellectual ideas changed drastically after 1961 when he interviewed German Christian leader, Heinrich Gruber, who was imprisoned at Sachsenhausen for his crimes for aiding and rescuing Jews, and who also testified at the trial of high-ranking Nazi official Adolf Eichmann. Gruber affirmed a Biblical faith in a God who acts in history, and he believed that Jews were God's chosen people, and that everything that ultimately happened to them was part of God's plan. Therefore, Gruber believed that God had intended for Hitler to destroy the lives of European Jews, and that "God was ultimately responsible for the Holocaust".[264]

The conversations he had with Gruber, prompted Rubenstein to write his book *After Auschwitz*, which was one of the first books to discuss religious life after the Holocaust. Interestingly, this book actually caused controversy because Rubenstein argued that a belief in a redeeming God i.e. a God that is active in history and who will bring about fulfilling ends, is no longer credible. And because of this, Rubenstein was considered a "death of God"[265] theologian, yet Roth notes that calling his ideas radical theology may be better suited. Rubenstein's ideas called into question the need for a traditional, transcendent God, and in fact, he focused more on the idea of God and religion in an anthropological sense. He believed that when we speak of God, we are talking about what we believe about Him, which is not the same as talking directly about God. Rubenstein was quick to state that the death of God does not necessarily mean the death of religion; instead, religion may be revitalised and reviewed, and our view of God may change. He went on to say that history, namely the Holocaust, has shattered a system of religious meaning that has kept people going for years. This change in how we view God and religion is not cause for celebration because it means the God we once knew is questioned and may not exist, and thus traditional theism is thrown into chaos. Rubenstein in the end rejected the idea of a traditional God and tried to

[263] Roth, J., 2020, p. 12.
[264] Ibid, p. 13.
[265] Ibid, p. 13.

make sense of the Jewish traditions of convent and election. Common to this idea was the claim that "radical communal misfortune"[266] meant either that God found the chosen people wanting and punished them accordingly; or that God called upon innocent people to suffer for the guilty; or a combination of both. Yet, either way, the Holocaust is not compatible with the Biblical tradition of covenant and election.

Roth considers how Rubenstein's work focused more on history, politics, economics and sociology, following his claim that theology was becoming more anthropological. In fact, Rubenstein understood the Final Solution to be analogy of how society wants to remove those who are unwanted due to "religion, race and politics, ethnicity, or economic redundancy".[267] However, the ideas of the Holocaust did not come from nothing, in fact they are rooted in years of antisemitism. For instance, the Christian belief stated that Jews were "God-bearing and God-murdering people"[268], specifically Christian literature depicts Jews as responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. Rubenstein goes on to show how the Holocaust was not just constructed and undertaken by officials, it was also made possible by ordinary people with ordinary jobs. For example, pastors and priests made certificates to identify those who were Jews and those who were not; teachers spread messages about antisemitism and helped indoctrinate the youth; and engineers helped build and drive trains to transport Jews to the death camps.

Rubenstein moves on to talk about human rights, specifically the idea of "unalienable rights"[269] which are conditions of existence that are so basic and fundamental to human integrity that they cannot be evaded. In actual fact, he talked about the functional status of such rights and stated that the Holocaust showed that there are no limits to the "degradation and assault" people can inflict on others who lack power and status. And so, it appears that these rights are not unalienable at all. Similarly, to these ideas, Rubenstein discusses how Jews were considered by the Nazis to be surplus people, meaning they were expendable and pointless. This ideology stemmed from

[266] Ibid, p. 15.
[267] Ibid, p. 16.
[268] Rubenstein, R., *After Auschwitz: History, Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, (John Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 131.
[269] Roth, J., 2020, p. 18.

ancient views of Christian antisemitism and modern ideas of nationalism and racism and a society which contains such ideas, “drives out what it does not want to keep or what it desires for itself”.[270] Rubenstein argued that we need a more inclusive world view and hoped that a “new religious consciousness could build on the inclusive aspects of the major religious traditions”.[271] In other words, we need to find a new way of approaching religion and a new way of thinking of God, that is compatible with the world after the Holocaust.

On the other hand, Alexander Donat, as a witness and survivor of the Holocaust, actually rejects the idea of God. He does not participate in theoretical discourse nor philosophical arguments; instead, he focuses on his own personal responses to evil.[272] The traditional response and justification that we cannot know why evil happens is unsatisfactory for Donat, as too is the idea that suffering has some aspect of goodness and that it is a part of a divine plan. Donat also rejects the free will argument, which he believes ultimately lets God off the hook. He states that under the free will argument, there are no rules and limitations to evil which God has to adhere to. Donat insists that God must prevent us from going too far, otherwise He himself is a “partner to evil”.[273]

It is therefore, that Donat thus not only rejects a traditional view of God, but also rejects God outright. However, he does retain hope in a form of Judaism without a need for God. Under this idea, Judaism would represent a “sublime concept of personal and social justice and also is a sacrifice for the ideals and noblest aspirations of all people throughout all history”.[274] For Donat, Judaism after the Holocaust cannot be the same as before, as religion does not give us answers or give comfort to the victims. God betrayed them and there is no way back. Overall, Donat rejects “the God of Treblinka

[270] Ibid, p. 21.
[271] Ibid, p. 21.
[272] Donat, A., ‘Voice from the Ashes: Wanderings in Search of God’, in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, ed. Katz, S. T.; Biderman, S; and Greenberg, G., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 274.

[273] Ibid, p. 274.
[274] Ibid, p. 285.

and Auschwitz, and all the attempts to avoid the problem using beautiful prose, sophistry or casuistry but believes in rebellious, suffering, struggling humanity".[275]

After discussing the thoughts of Rubenstein, Roth considers the view of Jewish thinker Elie Wiesel, who stated that he did not like answers, but he did love stories. Roth notes how the significance of Wiesel is that his work is simple, but poignant; and this is shown through his short works which are impactful and abrupt. Unlike Wiesel, Robert Mendl (who lived 100 years before the Holocaust) was obsessed with finding truth, and always demanded why things happen and why God allows such horrific things to exist. Wiesel took the stories of Mendl to show how he despaired and searched for answers, even when there often weren't any answers to suffice. Wiesel did however seek some understanding- he wanted people to study the Holocaust, but also for people to be aware that one cannot know or comprehend everything about it. He was adamant that the Holocaust does demand interrogation, as it questions our ethical systems and values. However, by constantly asking questions does not automatically imply that we will get answers, nor that the world will get better; questions will always remain, which is vital for human development, as they provoke inquiry and dialogue.[276]

Wiesel believed that the Holocaust happened because human minds tried to figure everything out and convinced others that Jews were less. He also believed that the Holocaust cannot be compared to any other event in history, as it completely "transcends history" and "reduces us to silence".[277] Wiesel often talked about Hasidism, which combines an "awe of God with a direct and emotional reactions towards God".[278] Under this idea, we can speak to God but not fully understand Him, as well as being able to fully trust God, whilst at the same time protest against him. Wiesel stated that standing against God is often needed, but he stressed that when we do this, we must do it from a standpoint that affirms God. It is well known that

[275] Ibid, p. 286.
[276]Roth, J., 2020, pp. 33-35.
[277] Found in essays such as 'Trivialising the Holocaust' (p.158) 'Gates of the Holocaust'(p.211) and 'What is a Jew?' (p. 272), written by Wiesel, E., *Against Silence: The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel: Vols 1-3,* ed. Abrahamson, I., (New York: Schocken Books, 1988).
[278] Roth, J., 2020, p. 40.

Wiesel never forgave God for the atrocities that happened at Auschwitz, but he wished to move on. Yet, in order to do so we need to break the silence and make up for God. For example, if God refuses to be accountable, we need to be responsible and if God is absent, we need to be present and try and diminish pain and grief.[279] In fact, Wiesel argued that we don't need to full comprehend why evil happens, we just need to remove indifference to ensure suffering does not continue. In his Nobel Prize winning speech, Wiesel stated "indifference, to me, is the epitome of evil… To be in the window and watch people be sent to concentration camps or being attacked in the streets and do nothing, that's being dead".[280]

The ideas that Wiesel discussed here can be related back to the Hebrew idea of *Tikkun Olam* which was mentioned previously in this chapter. Wiesel believed that it was human beings' responsibility to repair what was broken and to transform "divine injustice into human justice and compassion".[281] He refers to Abraham, Isaac, Moses and Job as examples of how God intends for man to endure hardship and suffering, but at the same time expects us to continue His moral work through to death. Therefore, Wiesel seemed more concerned with the practicality of overcoming evil, as opposed to theoretical explanation of why it occurred. As too is this thesis- less too concerned with why the Holocaust happened, and more concerned with how one can overcome the existence of such suffering and reconcile it with a belief in God.

Another influential thinker who comments on the Holocaust is Emil Fackenheim, a Jew who was imprisoned at Sachsenhausen concentration camp, and who claimed that the Holocaust was the most "radically discriminating epoch-making"[282] event in all Jewish history. He stated that Jews must respond to tragedy by trying to reaffirm God's presence in history. He goes on to say that God was not a saving presence at Auschwitz (as some may have originally thought). Yet, despite this, we mustn't give

[279] Ibid, p. 43.
[280] Wiesel, E., 'Acceptance Speech' (delivered in Oslo, Norway, December 1986), reprinted in *Night,* trans. Marion Wiesel, (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), p. 118.
[281] Wiesel, E., *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends,* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), p. 235.
[282] Roth, J., 2020, p. 123.

Hitler a posthumous victory by letting him take away God: “we are forbidden, to deny or despair of God, however much we may have to contend with Him or with belief in Him, lest Judaism perish”.[283] Roth notes how Fackenheim’s interpretation of the Holocaust is so influential in Judaism and Jewish philosophy, for he allows people to have faith after Auschwitz, but states that those who abandon God are the biggest destroyer of Jews. Fackenheim argued for a 614th Commandment in Judaism, namely a commanding voice of God in Auschwitz, and stated that those who didn’t hear it, wilfully rejected God- they “stopped their ears” [284], which is a voluntary act and shows rejection of God. However, Roth notes that this idea is not without its problems, for instance, it alienates some victims from others and makes them feel as if they are to blame for their pain and suffering. Also, one cannot simply formulate a new commandment as all commandments must come from a divine source (Fackenheim later understood that he could not feasibly speak of a saving presence after Auschwitz).

Following from this, are the ideas of Jewish thinker Emmanuel Levinas, who famously stated that “the Holocaust of the Jewish people…seems to me the paradigm of gratuitous human suffering, in which evil appears in its diabolical horror”.[285] He argued that to try and justify the suffering of the Holocaust in a religious, ethical or political way is “the source of all immorality”.[286] Ultimately, Levinas rejected all forms of theodicy and affirmed that suffering cannot be comprehended in any manner. Similarly, to Levinas, Lawrence Langer said that “there is nothing to be learned from a baby torn in two or a woman buried alive”.[287] Levinas understood that there was an importance for humanity following the Holocaust. For he held that “must not humanity now, in a faith more difficult than before, a faith without theodicy, continue to live out sacred history; a history that now demands even more”.[288] Therefore, we need to find a way

[283] Fackenheim, E., ‘Jewish Values in the Post-Holocaust Future’, *Judaism*, 16, 1967, pp. 272-273.
[284] Roth, J., 2020, p. 124.
[285] Levinas, E., ‘Useless Suffering’, in *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 97.
[286] Ibid, p. 99.
[287] Langer, L., *Preempting the Holocaust*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 10.
[288] Levinas, E., 1998, pp. 99-100.

to overcome the pain and suffering of the Holocaust and move forward, whilst simultaneously keeping faith in God.

The final thinker to be discussed in this section is Zygmunt Bauman, who believed that the Holocaust was a Jewish tragedy, but that it shouldn't be treated as solely a Jewish problem or an event in just Jewish history. In fact, he stated that "the Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society… at the peak of human cultural achievement" and that "we live in a society that made the Holocaust possible, and that contained nothing which could stop it from happening".[289] In other words, it was through the Third Reich's dehumanisation and racist agenda that there became no possibility for justice and prevention of genocide.

Hannah Arendt- Evil: Banal and Otherwise

One very influential philosopher who discusses the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish thought is Hannah Arendt. Arendt's reflections on the Holocaust came following her attendance at the trial of Adolf Eichmann during the Nuremberg trials for war crimes. When attending and reporting on the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Arendt said she expected to see an evil man or what she called, the "devil personified".[290] Yet, what she saw was merely a mediocre man. In fact, she found this "banality of evil" to be "word-and-thought- defying"[291] because he was nothing more than an ordinary man committing extra-ordinary evil crimes against humanity. Arendt found it hard to accept and understand the crimes of the Nazis because they "explode the limits of the law... and this guilt, in contrast to all criminal guilt, oversteps and shatters any and all legal systems… we are simply not equipped to deal, on a human, political level, with a guilt that is beyond crime".[292] To put simply, it is the case that we need to understand the Holocaust as more than a series of horrible acts against Jews, for when people misunderstand the extent of the evil, they are at the root of the problem itself. There is no denying that the Holocaust itself was an exceptionally

[289] Bauman, Z., *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cornell University Press, 1989, p. 88.
[290] Ibid, p. 99.
[291] Arendt, H., Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, (New York: Penguin, 1963), p. 252.
[292] Aschheim, S., 'Nazism Culture and The Origins of Totalitarianism: Hannah Arendt and the Discourse of Evil', *New German Critique*, 70, 1997, p. 131.

awful series of events, and something that is so different in essence to anything that has ever occurred. Arendt herself stated that “Eichmann’s deeds defied the possibility of human punishment”[293] and in fact believed that no punishment would ever suffice. It appears that possibly the worst realisation that people came to after the Holocaust was that it was not completely pointless- the acts of the Nazis were methodical and that is what makes them so evil. For example, by asking Jews to pack a bag of their belongings weighing no more than a certain amount that they could take on their journey to relocate to the East, or to ask them to remember what peg they put their clothes on before they went for a ‘shower’[294]; the meticulous planning of the whole operation was carefully construed to disguise the real evil intentions.

Arendt goes on to show how the Holocaust demonstrates how we, as human beings, forget the moral lessons we have been taught e.g. how to choose the lesser evil. However, could it be the case that under the Nazi regime and during the Holocaust, that there was no lesser evil? For all the evil acts seem too drastic to form part of a gradual distinction of evil. There is no clear way to separate different events within the Holocaust and categorise some as less evil than others; all instances of suffering towards the Jews were evil, no one worse than the other (if we measure evil qualitatively here and not quantitatively). Another lesson Arendt think humanity forgot is the idea of obedience in relation to our obligations and duties. It is ironic here to mention that whilst Arendt thought we had forgotten our duties, Eichmann used the idea of duty as part of his defence in his trial. For he stated that he was purely following his duty, which was to obey the orders of Hitler.[295] However, with the use of Natural Moral Law and the Human Rights Declaration, it was argued that people have an innate duty and should ignore others who go against it. Arendt states that obedience is dangerous because it habituates itself and makes people think it is normal behaviour to adhere to a set of rules. Instead, she believes that we need to

[293] Ibid, p. 131.
[294] French, P. &Wettstein, H., 2012, p. 107.
[295] Ibid, p. 121.

undertake critical thinking and judgement to avoid obedience and deal with the temptation of evil.[296]

The main points to take from these thinkers is that firstly that the Holocaust targeted a particular group of people (Jews) and tried to annihilate their race. Also, that as human beings, we must build on the foundations we already know about the Holocaust, as there is still so much that we don't know or fully understand. Thirdly, we must realise that the Holocaust has the power to raise the right questions i.e. the questions we need to pursue a life worth living, and more importantly that the Holocaust was wrong and ultimately signifies a failure in ethical, religious and political frameworks, and shows how individuals are responsible for their actions and consequences. Moreover, the Holocaust did not need to happen, and so we should always use it as an example of what not to repeat; it is a warning and a much-needed compass to guide our future moral behaviour. Finally, it is obvious that the Holocaust shattered trust in the world and the idea of goodness and a just God. Therefore, we need to find a new version of the traditional idea of God that is much more compatible and coherent with the existence of evil, specifically the tragic events of the Holocaust. [297]

Israeli and European responses during and following the war

The Holocaust was unlike any other event of genocide in history because of several elements, for example it had the intent to systematically remove every member of a particular group and cause them utter destruction and complete dehumanisation.[298] The Holocaust was unique because it "overturned a number of hitherto accepted historical, philosophical, sociological and anthropological assumptions".[299] Likewise, the Holocaust was also considered inconsistent in the sense of the randomness and/ or pre-meditation of the killings. For instance, some were random e.g. when people on their way to labour camps were forced to kneel whilst they were shot and killed- there

[296] Ibid, p. 122.
[297] Ibid, pp. 258-259.
[298] Biderman, S., 'Israeli responses during and following the war: Introduction', in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, ed. Katz, S. T.; Biderman, S; and Greenberg, G., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 205.
[299] Ibid, p. 205.

was no reason for this as they were on their way to die anyway- it was random and cruel. On the other hand, some were premeditated, planned, and meticulously orchestrated all the way from the indoctrination of ordinary people using Nazi propaganda to the gassing of innocent children in the gas chambers. This inconsistency further highlights the uniqueness of the Holocaust; for the events did not just dehumanise the Jews and remove their status as human beings, but also aimed to show how all Jews, by virtue of their blood and status, were sub-human.[300] Thus, Jews essentially became a "subhuman object and an autonomous subject".[301] Repressions after the Holocaust meant that victims felt like outsiders, in fact many felt that those who had not experienced it, repressed the atrocity as a whole, thus making survivors feel it may be best to avoid talking about the topic altogether. However, this caused questions to arise within both ethical and philosophical spheres.

One form of religious justification of the Holocaust comes from Rabbi Yoel Schwartz and Yitzchak Goldstein, who state that the term victim should be changed to "sacrifice"[302]. This way, the deaths were not meaningless or random but instead had "profound religious significance".[303] In a way, this can be related to the story of Isaac in Genesis 22, for Schwartz and Goldstein say that "we cannot understand the deeds without relating them to the whole. We must see them against the backdrop of Jewish history, as a direct continuation of the sacrifice of Isaac and the many other sacrifices throughout the ages".[304] Yet, it seems that despite whatever merits religious interpretations of the Holocaust had, this option was not possible for most Israelites who were sceptical of traditional religion. For these new Jews, the victims of the Holocaust had no religious standing, and were compared to sheep who willingly and passively went to the slaughter. In fact, these new Jews left no room for philosophical or theological reasoning.

[300] Ibid, p. 206.
[301] Ibid, p. 206.
[302] Ibid, p. 209.
[303] Ibid, p. 209.
[304] Ibid, p. 209.

In more recent times, Israeli thinkers have confronted the Holocaust more dominantly. Yehoyada Amir explains how theological investigations enable us to speak more eloquently about the Holocaust and help us explore and ask questions about how we address the suffering and move forward. He focuses on the meaning of *Galut* (Hebrew for personal and national exile) to try and help understand the Holocaust by looking at a "cosmic-ontological condition of exile that involves God Himself".[305] Therefore, we must struggle against the cruel realities of exile, including injustice and meaningless suffering, in order to try and live a life with meaning and dignity.

Warren Zen Harvey considers the source of evil and its significance on the analysis of the Holocaust. He stresses that in the tradition of Maimonides and medieval rationalism, evil is due to human ignorance. In other words, evil is actually a result of "uncontrollable negative cosmic forces".[306] However, this offers no comfort as there appears to be nothing we can do to change the course of events. In contrast, Shalom Rosenberg sees the Holocaust as mysterious and as something which resists analysis. In this case, one should not focus on God and His attributes, but rather on the character of Jews and their life after the tragedy. Therefore, our concern should be on the meaning of the Jewish existence and Judaism post- Holocaust.[307] The focus should be on moving forward and not dwelling on the past and searching for answers that will offer us nothing meaningful in terms of closure.

Another commentator on the Holocaust, is Yosef Achituv, who in his essay *Theology and the Holocaust,* states that when faced with atrocities, religious people tend to focus on traditions and language in order to gain understanding. In other words, they try to understand God's presence and providence through history.[308] According to Achituv, the Holocaust destroyed many Jews' truth and faith in an all-loving God and forced them to rebuild their world which is now void of God. And for those who stayed

[305] Ibid, p. 212.
[306] Ibid, p. 213.
[307] Ibid, p. 213.
[308] Achituv, Y., 'Theology and Holocaust', in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, ed. Katz, S. T.; Biderman, S; and Greenberg, G., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 318-319.

faithful to God, they sought an explanation for the Holocaust within their religious framework: “whether consciously or unconsciously the believers mobilise all the interpretive options available to them in order to come up with adequate interpretations of the conflicting reality that threatens their world”.[309] Likewise, Yishai Rozen- Zvi, shows how the tradition from justifying God’s ways to justifying the Holocaust led to a “de-catostrophisation of the Holocaust”.[310] The Holocaust does not therefore precede redemption, but instead forms a part of it. The Holocaust is a divine operation designed “to cut Israel off from the exile”, and thus in a sense serves to reinforce providence.

Shalom Rosenberg, in his essay *The Holocaust: Lessons, Explanations, Meaning,* considers how forgetfulness is a part of human nature and how generations come and go, all whilst forgetting important aspects of their lives/ history. Rosenberg states that memory whilst being based on identity, also at the same time creates identity, in other words, we need to remember things that happen as they help build and develop who we are and who we become.[311] However, before we remember certain events, we need to give them structure and context, so we can learn from them. Rosenberg explicitly refuses to derive lessons from the Holocaust, as he believes that the Holocaust left behind a collective message/ lesson for Jews, which was the need for Jewish politics, since this gave them the motive they needed to pursue an establishment of a Jewish state.

Many people thought too many Jews were silent after the Holocaust, but this was actually what Rosenberg calls a period of reflection or awareness that allowed us to find a practical answer to the Holocaust. Put simply, the Holocaust is a “symbol and event that unites all of us but the lessons can divide us”.[312] It may be said that there are political lessons to be learned from the Holocaust such as how to deal with racism, fascism, and xenophobia, and how we can use those lessons to help us deal with

[309] Ibid, p. 319.
[310] Ibid, p. 324.
[311] Rosenberg, S., ‘The Holocaust: Lessons, Explanation, Meaning’, in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, ed. Katz, S. T.; Biderman, S; and Greenberg, G., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 334.
[312] Ibid, p. 335.

events in the future, for example the Rwanda Genocide, the issues in Palestine, etc. However, the Holocaust remains not like any other act of mass murder, war or evil; instead, it is a collation of all types of evil that cannot be described, explained, or compared- it is a "theological mystery".[313] It seems that one cannot offer the same explanation for anti-semitism and for the Holocaust, considering they are a different phenomenon. For instance, anti-semitism can be explained in political, historical, and sociological ways, yet this does not apply to the Holocaust.

One example of a psychological attempt at an explanation comes from Bettelheim and Arendt who explain the Holocaust as "an episode in struggles of authoritarian regime to control the world".[314] For example, the camps were used as a way for Nazis to change and influence the masses, within a system that supervised and all human beings and removed all aspects of free will. This essentially was a system that caused people to lose individuality and made them belong to a bureaucratic system. However, it is important to note that this is not a Jewish phenomenon, rather it was the Jews that became a part of a fundamental social experiment.[315]

On the other hand, Rosenberg disagrees, for he believes that there is no connection between xenophobia and the Holocaust, in fact he argues that there is no single ideology that explains the Holocaust. Furthermore, it appears that explanations steal the true meaning of the Holocaust, thus making it abstract and depersonalised. Therefore, there can be "no narrative to the Holocaust".[316] Rosenberg continues by saying that the Holocaust "confronts us with a world in which God's face is hidden"[317], in other words God does not take accountability for evil and therefore evil remains a mystery. In this sense, the Holocaust is not only a mystery from a religious and theological perspective, but also from a scientific perspective, for instance the human psyche and comprehension cannot understand or cope with the Holocaust. And so, in order to understand it truly, we need to understand that the Holocaust went beyond

[313] Ibid, p. 339.
[314] Ibid, p. 340.
[315] Ibid, p. 341.
[316] Ibid, p. 342.
[317] Ibid, p. 343.

"an economic, historical or even biological struggle"[318] and that to discover the true essence of the tragedy, we must discover a Jewish identity in the sense that Holocaust was not just a war against Judaism, but also a "a religious and philosophical war".[319]

Michael Wyschogrod, in his essay *Faith and Holocaust,* argues that Judaism cannot be given the new way of life following the Holocaust, nor can the Holocaust be used as a way to digress the meaning of faith. The Holocaust as a whole was a totally destructive event which makes keeping faith and remaining a Jew much harder than ever. He stresses that we should not just remain a Jew to avoid handing Hitler a posthumous victory. Instead, what is more important is allowing freedom of choice to prevail to allow people to either choose or deny God for themselves- a freedom that was taken away during the Holocaust.[320]

Overall, it is the case that the Holocaust was not isolated from historical context but instead flourished in a society that portrayed a particular human/ social ideology. It was the Nazi philosophy that allowed buried, historical feelings to flourish and become hostile. Therefore, by actually thinking about the Holocaust means "confronting the absurd".[321] One may suggest that a father cannot fully educate his son as a Jew after the Holocaust without recognising that he may be bringing his child into an eternal covenant with God. There could be the possibility that there is a destiny even without the covenant and that we need to ask how we find purpose and meaning of our existence in light of such a tragedy. From a religious perspective, this destiny could be finding meaning in faith beyond the absurd. Some argue that Judaism centres around redemption and salvation, as well as the destruction of Israel, which was followed by redemption and celebrations such as Passover and Hannukah. This idea of redemption also includes the idea that the God of Israel was redeeming. However, it appears that there is no salvation to gain from the Holocaust nor is there any reason

[318] Ibid, p. 344.
[319] Ibid, p. 344.
[320] Wyschogrod, M., 'Faith and the Holocaust', in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, ed. Katz, S. T.; Biderman, S; and Greenberg, G., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 458.
[321] Rosenberg, S., 2007, p. 349.

to continue faith and Judaism. To conclude, it seems that any hope we get comes from those who believe and keep the faith, and those that use their voices to speak louder than the oppressors. In a sense, their voices "sweep over the crematoria and silence the voices of Auschwitz".[322]

Holocaust and the State of Israel:

The Holocaust was a major event that changed the face of Judaism today, in fact the "terrors of the Nazi regime profoundly influenced Jewish consciousness".[323] It was the retreat from Europe and the flee from fascism, that ultimately ended in a vast number of Jews landing in Palestine, their sacred promised land, the place they believed to be freedom of religion.

One major objection to the Jewish state came from Holocaust deniers, who believed the Jews did not deserve any peace or retreat to safety, as they believed nothing ever actually occurred. The deniers are adamant that Jews constructed the story of the Holocaust for their own purpose, such as for financial gain in order to help them in the creation of their own state. Paul Rassinier attempted to show that survivors' claims were unreliable and alleged that the whole genocide was a myth. Specifically, he stated that "the gas chambers were an invention of the Zionists".[324] Deborah Lipstadt stated that if "Holocaust denial has taught us anything, it's the fragility of memory, truth and reason and history".[325] This denial just further shows the underlying hatred and anti-semitism within the world and has been used to create a divide between Judaism and other religions.

Following the Holocaust, many began to struggle with the religious issues and struggles raised by the murder of six million Jews. In fact, many began to re-evaluate their idea of God and how He played a role in the world during the Holocaust. Unlike

[322] Wyschogrod, M., 2007, p. 462.

[323] Cohn-Sherbok, D., *Judaism Today: An Introduction*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2010), p. 59.
[324] Ibid, p. 60.
[325] Ibid, p. 61.

Rubenstein and Wiesel who believed that God was not the same after Auschwitz and that we should no longer believe in a loving God, Yaffa Eliach argued that faith can be reaffirmed. She argues that Hasidism expressed courage and that it was religious faith that allowed people to cope and survive and maintain the strength to endure the horrors of the Holocaust.[326] Others, including Ignaz Maybaum, argued that the Holocaust was not part of God's providential plan.

One of the ways some keep faith is by suggesting that the Holocaust is a mystery and cannot be explained; this in a sense allows the traditional idea of God to be maintained and allows Him to remain omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent. To express the main point of this thesis, it seems the case that all theodicies or explanations are futile and any explanations as to how God could have allowed the deaths of six million Jews is inexplicable.

Various viewpoints have been discussed throughout this chapter, including orthodox views and more modern Jewish approaches to the Holocaust. Many of the viewpoints mentioned agree that the Holocaust has majorly impacted Judaism and caused a juxtaposition between the existence of evil and the existence of an all-loving and all-powerful God. Therefore, it seems we should instead focus on how to create a new concept of God that is not in conflict with the Holocaust, for example the God of the philosophers, but who does allow for the existence of evil (not meaningless evil, but evil that exists for reasons we cannot understand). This new concept of God will not paint the picture of a perfect, sinless being, but rather an image of a God who allows human beings to be free and make mistakes and who will also not interfere with our actions, both good and bad. This God will also not have to explain His reasons, for our physical capacity would not allow us to understand nor would our explanations suffice, especially when it comes to the Holocaust. In the final chapter, these ideas will be discussed in greater detail in order to conclude this thesis and reconcile a belief in God following the atrocities of the Holocaust.

[326] Ibid, p. 63.

Chapter Six- Abandoning the Notion of God

Throughout the previous chapters, it has been demonstrated that the Holocaust raises directly and insistently the question of how such a series of horrific events can be reconciled with the traditional idea of God. The reason the Holocaust really tests theodicies is because the events are so callous and unnecessary. For instance, the sheer volume of innocent people killed, for simply no reason at all (or no plausible or moral reason), in such a drastic manner, in such a short space of time, really tests the morality of society and/ or the plausibility of an omnibenevolent and omnipotent God. Specifically, John K. Roth highlights that "religion was not a sufficient condition for the Holocaust, but it was a necessary one".[327] In other words, the torture and murders that occurred in the Holocaust are inconceivable without the beliefs in God held by Jews. This is not to say that the Jews in any way bare responsibility for their suffering, but instead that the events of the Holocaust occurred due to the systematic fascism that was present. Therefore, my intention in this final chapter is to address the problem of reconciling God and the Holocaust by going beyond philosophical attempts at theodicy and taking the problem back to its theological roots. This will mark a decisive break with how the problem of evil has traditionally been approached.

One explanation that is offered to believers in the face of such suffering, is the claim that silence may be considered to be a better solution to the theological, ethical and philosophical problems that the Holocaust poses. For, it seems more plausible to say nothing than to offer an explanation which diminishes the victims and their suffering and thus makes the effects of the Holocaust impersonal. However, as seen in previous chapters, and more so explicitly in this chapter, it has been and will more so be demonstrated that God's silence and our silence in the face of the Holocaust does not help the cause for maintaining Jewish faith, as it shows how the God of classical theism is not compatible with the Holocaust. The only way to accept God's silence is to accept that He acts for reasons beyond our finite human knowledge. Furthermore, even without the Holocaust we still experience God's absence in everyday life; it was just the sheer extent and volume of the suffering in the Holocaust that made us stand

[327] Roth, J.K., *Sources of Holocaust Insight*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), p. 11.

up and take notice. Yet, despite this extreme suffering, believers have still found a way to maintain a belief in God and have just adjusted their understanding of God.[328]

Examples of God's silence are also evident through various stories in religious history, for example through the Book of Job which has been examined in earlier chapters, and also through the troubles and suffering of Abraham as told throughout the Torah and Old Testament. Rabbi Akiva talks of when God is absent, human beings are left with nothing but our own selves and it is through this that we learn to stay true to ourselves. This can be likened to Abraham and his journey to Mount Moriah whereby, despite being enveloped by silence, abandoned by God and tempted by Satan, Abraham keeps his faith and stays truthful to both himself and God [Genesis 22:2-14].[329] In the words of Elizabeth Shanks, "Abraham states that all he can know is the rhythm and meter of his own holy trek".[330] The main question remains whether we can, in the face of such tragedy, bring divine presence and faith into our lives. Yet, this does not mean we have to conclude that the divine presence is the traditional God society and religion has become accustomed to assuming, but instead it could possibly be a God who is known to be absent and who does not intervene in order to prevent evil, and who also allows evil to exist for reasons beyond our capability to comprehend.

Most theists believe God is the ultimate creator of the universe and that through His attributes we can see evidence of His existence in the world and nature. God, overall, does do more good than He does allow or permit evil, and overall, it seems that the amount of good in the world, does outweigh the bad. Theodicy, or how we see God and His existence, gets questioned in the face of evil, specifically the Holocaust, as many people cannot comprehend how a seemingly perfect God and such evil can coexist. The first few chapters of this thesis showed the issues surrounding theodicy and its counterparty Anti- Theodicy, thus demonstrating that aside from the obvious conflict between the traditional God of classical theism's goodness and the presence

[328] Frank, D. & Segal, A, 2017, p. 172.
[329] All Biblical references found in the *International Bible Society version of the Holy Bible*, (Bungay: Clays Limited Publishers, 1984).
[330] Shanks, E., 'Dialogues on the Theme of Martyrdom', *Post-Modern Jewish Philosophy Network Journal*, 5 (1), 1996, unpaginated.

of evil, specifically the Holocaust, there also remains conflict between "God's goodness on the one hand and His powerfulness on the other".[331]

David Blumenthal adopts the idea of limiting God's goodness and states that "common sense and reason do not allow one to deny or limit God's power. Rather, the very assertion of God's ongoing presence in creation implies that God is at all times active in nature and human affairs".[332] Blumenthal goes on to explain that "from time to time, [God] acts in evil ways; that God, at unpredictable moments in the ongoing divine-human relationship, does evil".[333] He also states that the possibility for evil is inherent in God and that evil does not always occur due to human sin. In response to the Holocaust specifically, he noted that healing and recovery is not a single act but is rather a long-term process. Therefore, we must worship God through protest and thus allow Jews and other religious believers to heal, whilst simultaneously finding a theological response to evil: "asserting God's presence in human history and then worshipping God through protest is a better path for those for whom God's ultimate sovereignty and responsibility are real, though it does not require a willingness to face God without flinching".[334]

However, other thinkers have argued that this response may not be the way forward and that if God is an 'abuser' in the sense that Blumenthal suggests, why do we continue to have faith and trust in a God that abuses His power and who causes us harm? It may be the case that a new way of thinking about God is required in order to face evil such as the Holocaust. Hans Jonas is just one of the thinkers touched upon throughout this thesis, who argues that the traditional idea of God may be outdated, and we may need to reimagine what we think God to be. For example, Jonas states that a transcendent God is a better solution for "transcendence awakens itself and henceforth accompanies His doings with the bated breath of suspense, hoping and beckoning, rejoicing and grieving, approving and frowning… while, not intervening in

[331] Reiss, B., 'Jewish Thought About God After the Holocaust', *Theology*, 109(850), 2006, p. 265.
[332] Blumenthal, D., *The Fascination of Evil*, (London: SCM Press, 1998), p. 96.
[333] Ibid, p. 97.
[334] Ibid, p. 99.

the dynamics of His worldly scene".[335] However, this infers that God becomes a suffering and becoming God; suffering throughout time from the moment of creation, and becoming in the sense that what happens in the created order affects God and makes Him not unchangeable. Under this concept, God is not remote and detached, but He can still separate Himself from us and not interfere with worldly events, whilst at the same time having compassion for human beings and caring for His creation.

The above concept is a major pillar of the Jewish faith which is drawn upon throughout discussions of evil and the Holocaust. However, the discussions often infer that God cannot be omnipotent and omnibenevolent whilst evil exists, for if God can control His own power or it can be limited in any way, or He can allow us to suffer despite His unconditional love for us, then He is neither of those things, as it causes a contradiction. Therefore, it is evident throughout this thesis that the same recurring issue is constantly arising: how do we explain how such a powerful and good God could not prevent such an evil like the Holocaust? The purpose of this chapter is to therefore show how the Holocaust has changed our understanding of God, specifically within Judaism, and how we can resolve the idea of God with instances of evil. Specifically, that God has given Himself to us and now we must manage our freedom in a way that allows us to make free choices whilst also following His guidance and maintain the faith.

It is well-known that the Holocaust is the most "fully witnessed, documented and studied long- term mass atrocity".[336] When trying to move forward and deal with the aftermath of long- term atrocities such as the Holocaust, we are often faced with two questions: what are survivors and what does the term mean? And what is morally at stake in surviving such atrocities? In the case of such atrocities, the term 'surviving' often refers to those who live through to the end and who continue to function afterwards. Surviving is therefore better understood as living beyond something that was intended to be fatal, like the Final Solution. It has been made evident throughout

[335] Jonas, H., 'The Concept of God after Auschwitz' in *A Holocaust Reader, ed.* Michael L. Morgan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 263.
[336] French, P., Wettstein, H., 2012, p. 35.

this thesis that the slaughter of European Jews has only further shown how Jewish believers have to reassess their future and come to terms with the fact that God (or what they thought God to be) was not going to save them, and they needed to save themselves. The Jews also needed to simultaneously remain loyal to their faith and keep Judaism as a whole strong, to avoid giving Hitler and antisemitism the win. Indeed, many believe that "Jews today must confront the demons of Auschwitz and prevail against them"[337], especially since there can be no theological solution to the problem.

The Holocaust, above all else, is a prominent catalogue of events that caused philosophical, theological and ethical issues. It is not just a Jewish problem but is a catalytic event that affects all of humanity, and which has had an impact on all religions who believe in a God who is all-loving and all- good. We, as human beings, often have the idea that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people because of the idea that God is righteous and keeps the world orderly. We in turn maintain the image of God as "all-loving, all-powerful and totally in control".[338] Simply put, many philosophers and theologians alike often try to find a way to justify what happens to us- but how adequate are these answers? The idea that God gives us what we deserve is a good one and is attractive when trying to solve the problem of evil but is has many limitations. For one, it allows people to blame themselves and allows guilt to creep in, but most of all it does not fit the facts. That is, "how can anyone who recognises the names of Auschwitz… dare to answer the question of the world's suffering by quoting Isaiah 'Tell the Righteous shall be well with them?'" [339] A somewhat better explanation for evil could be that God has His reasons, and we must trust in Him that he would not allow evil for unnecessary reasons. Yet, if we applied this same reasoning to Adolf Hitler and his crimes against the Jews would we have the same response? It would be inhumane and callous to justify the mass genocides of the Holocaust with the reasoning that Hitler had just cause and reason to do so. Therefore, "why should we excuse God for causing such undeserved pain, no matter

[337] Cohn-Sherbok, D., 2010, p. 67.
[338] Kushner, H. S., *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, (London: Pan, 2002), p. 7.
[339] Ibid, p. 8.

how wonderful the ultimate result may be?".[340] Another explanation is that suffering is educational, in that it comes to enable a man and repair that which is faulty in his personality. In this sense God treats humanity like a child- He keeps the meaning of the lessons from us but allows us to suffer in order for us to make mistakes and grow.

All these lines of reasoning which are so often offered a part of the responses to the problem of evil, do not help us nor do they help the sufferer or offer them comfort. They are merely used to defend God's actions. They are simply ways "to use words and ideas to transform bad into good and pain into privilege".[341] The prices humanity pays for evil are always too high; the death and suffering of innocent men, women and children cannot be justified by an explanation of lessons or unknown Godly reasons. For any "reasoning shows too little regard for human life".[342] Therefore, the focus of this chapter is to show how God's silence or lack of intervention does threaten the entire structure of Judaism and Jewish faith and calls for an entire restructuring of the traditional concept of God. After the Holocaust, the "traditional faith in providence and in the historical covalent is no longer tenable".[343]

The Holocaust and Jewish Survival

One way in which Judaism attempts to survive is by adapting its framework away from a traditional orthodox view, towards a more conservative one. Judaism could be understood as an "evolving dynamic religion"[344], in which whilst preserving traditions, it also adjusts to environmental and cultural conditions. Alternatively, Judaism after the Holocaust could be understood as reconstructed in the sense that God is not thought of as a supernatural being but instead is trans-natural and super- experimental. Mordecai Kapla suggested that God does not interfere with nature, nor does He guide people to their destiny.[345] Similarly, Humanistic Judaism believes in the value of human existence and the power of human beings to solve their own problems. People who

[340] Ibid, p. 17.
[341] Ibid, p. 21.
[342] Ibid, p. 23.
[343] Rosenak, M., 'Theological Reflections on the Holocaust Between Unity and Controversy', in *The Impact of the Holocaust on Jewish Theology*, (New York: NYU Press, 2005), p. 166.
[344] Cohn-Sherbok, D., 2010, p. 81.
[345] Ibid, p. 83.

follow this framework reject the traditional understanding of God and His nature and aim to focus more on free will and choice. Kaplan stated that “we learn more about God when we say that love is divine than when we say that God is love.… When religion speaks of salvation it means in essence the experience of the worthwhileness of life. When we analyse our present experience of life’s worthwhileness, we find that it is invariably based on specific ethical experiences – moral responsibility, honesty, loyalty, love, service. If carefully pursued, this analysis reveals that the source of our ethical experience is found in our willingness and ability to achieve self-fulfilment through reciprocity with others. This reciprocity in turn is an expression of a larger principle that operates in the cosmos in response to the demands of a cosmic force, the force that makes for creativity and interdependence in all things”.[346] To put simply, the Torah does not lie solely with God, it is with us here on earth. Therefore, it should be understood in our way and on our terms. We need Judaism and to be the same, for we need to understand events and catastrophes in human ways without trying to explain it via God, which in turn makes all reasoning inaccessible to human beings.

Overall, both the reconstructive and humanistic views want Judaism to be reimagined. The humanistic wanting to remove God altogether, and the reconstructive wants the concept of God to be understood in terms of its effect. In relation to this thesis, it appears that we must come to understand God in a way that is more compatible with the existence of evil. Namely, we must find a God that can exist in the aftermath of the Holocaust; a God which does not have the problems of omnipotence, nor which has similar attributes which are inconsistent with evidence of evil (this God being that of philosophy). Instead, the idea of God should be taken back to its theological roots and attributed traditional characteristics found within scripture. More of which will be discussed later in this chapter.

<u>The promise of a new past</u>

A major question within the problem of evil and throughout this thesis, is how the God of classical theism could have allowed and/or not overcome the power of such evil like

[346] Kaplan, M., *Judaism as a Civilization* , (New York: Schocken, 1967), pp. 317– 18.

the Holocaust. Many Jewish thinkers have often grappled with the issue so much that they instead turn to whether God could have prevented the Holocaust; or whether God could have changed the past and make it so that evil never existed; or whether God would even want to change the past at all. There are two theories which I will mention here: firstly, there is the divine proof- reader theory, which states that God will one day change the past by eliminating evil; and secondly, there is the agent substitution theory, which argues that all past evil will not be eliminated, but instead the responsibility for the sins is removed from the sinner themselves.[347] The first theory will be the focus firsthand and within this theory comes claims from the idea of Ultimate Forgiveness (UF) and the idea of No More Evil (NME).

Within the idea of eradicating evil comes the view of Ultimate Forgiveness is discussed by Rabbi Tzadok Hakohen, who argued that ultimate forgiveness assumes that God will erase all humanity's history of sins, making it as if they never happened. However, Rabbi Tzadok Hakohen does not endorse the claim that sinners can simply ignore their past sins, instead he says the forgetfulness of said sins can be bestowed onto us by God, if and only if, we repent and apologise for our mistakes and wrong doings. According to the idea of ultimate forgiveness, everyone will forget certain sins, but until we do it is our job to remember them so we can learn from them and do better[348]. It seems to me that this idea seems to indicate so far that sins are merely erased from our memory but not from history altogether. However, it is stressed that under ultimate forgiveness, all sins are erased by God completely. Tzadok tries to solve this confusion by referring to "trenchant idealism"[349] which believes that things are only real if they exist in God's mind and that the distinction between God and humans is merely an illusion because everything exists in God's mind. And so, if we are to apply this to idea of ultimate forgiveness, we can say that sins aren't just being erased from memory but from history itself, for since God forgets all sins, they are no longer in His mind and thus cease to exist.

[347] Lebens, S. & Goldschmidt, T., The Promise of a New Past, *Philosopher's Imprint,* 2017, 17(18), p. 1.
[348] Ibid, p. 2.
[349] Ibid, p. 2.

The question remains nevertheless as to whether God can truly be omniscient if He could forget things such as sins, as this would infer there is something He doesn't know. But at the same time, it can be said that God can be omniscient, and one can accept the idea of ultimate forgiveness. For if we accept that everything that exists does so in God's mind, then if we erase those sins from His memory, they no longer exist, therefore God cannot have forgotten such sins because they never existed in the first place. A claim similar to this can be found in the Old Testament, where Isaiah states that "I, even I, am He that erases your transgressions for my sake; and your sins I will not remember" [Isaiah 43:25]. There is also the question surrounding God's nature here, for one may query whether God can be omnibenevolent if He is content with simply erasing atrocities such as the Holocaust. Firstly, there is the simple fact that God would allow such evil to exist in the first place, and secondly there is the issue of how a God that is that all- loving deems it to be acceptable to erase such evil as if it never happened. Erasing sins seems to have no real benefit. Yes, in some ways it can be positive, for if we erased the sins of the Holocaust we no longer have to live with the pain, for the memories won't exist. But on the other hand, if we have no memories of such an atrocity, we have nothing to learn from. We need the memories of the Holocaust to make sure it is never again repeated. Finally, there is the issue of God's omnipotence, for it seems a logical contradiction to accept that the God of classical theism is omnipotent and that He has the power to erase the sins of Holocaust, if we also accept that He didn't stop them from occurring in the first instance. It seems therefore that if God was wholly omnipotent, it would have been a lot more time efficient and beneficial to mankind to prevent the Holocaust before it even happened, rather than cleaning up the mess in the aftermath.

There is one other approach to the idea that God can eradicate evil after the fact, and this comes in the shape of the claim known as No More Evil (NME), which is advocated by Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Leiner. He describes the approach as God removing all traces of evil from the past (both moral and natural evils), so it becomes that no evil has ever occurred. He states that "the blessed God will clarify that Adam not only ate the good, and the sin was only in His mind".[350] Yet, this is dangerous territory because

[350] Leiner, Y., *Mei HaShiloah*, (Bnei Brak: Sifrei R. Izhbitza-Radin, 1995), unpaged.

it may suggest that what Adam did, becomes completely erased and/or that because evil was eradicated that his act doesn't constitute sin. If we accept the former that the sin never happened at all then that changes the whole chain of events that followed and thus changes the whole course of history. Although, if we accept the latter and accept that his sin is no longer a sin, then we are left with a dilemma. If Adam didn't actually commit a sin in eating the forbidden fruit, then why was he punished for the fall of mankind? It seems unjust to punish him for something that wasn't a sin, plus it seems absurd now to say that evil is a result of the fall and that mankind (who come from the loins of Adam) are punished for a sin we now realise isn't even a sin.

Both theories discussed above demonstrate an explanation as to how God could have either caused evil and/or allowed evil to exist, and also why He didn't stop evil and suffering once it had already been caused by someone or something else e.g. free will. However, despite the theories above it seems that there still exists incompatibility with God's nature and the Holocaust. These theories in fact rely heavily on the concept of God within philosophy, such as possessing attributes such as omnipotence, omnibenevolence and omniscience. As demonstrated throughout this thesis and more so in this chapter, it seems that the issues with such attributes in turn cause incompatibility with religious belief and evidence of evil. Therefore, religion must find a way to reconcile God's nature with the existence of evil, even if this nature is not what traditionally is thought. Hence, I propose the renounce of the traditional, theistic idea of God which is much more compatible with the existence of evil, namely the Holocaust, and which would help explain the why evil exists and/or why God did not prevent it, either from occurring in the first place or stopping it once it had been caused by human free will.

A major addition to this sphere of thought comes in the shape of Hud Hudson, who argued that God can change the past, but maintained that there are some evils He cannot change. These evils are called "hyper-past".[351] Hudson elaborates by proposing five theories of time: Presentism- only present things exist; The Growing

[351] Hudson, H., *The Fall and Hypertime,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 79.

Block Theory- only present and past things exist; The Shrinking Block Theory- only present and future things exist; The Disappearing Branch Theory- past, present and future things exist and the future consists of real branches that disappear when life takes a path which in turn excludes them; and Externalism- past, present and future things exist without anything disappearing.[352] All of these theories (bar externalism) involve change, either via growth, shrinkage or disappearance. For this to happen, we need a dimension which is external to time. Lebens and Goldschmidt propose here the idea of "hypertime".[353] For example, under hypertime, we would refer to the past as hyper-was, the present as hyper-is and the future as hyper-will be. And so, if we apply this idea of hypertime to the theories of time that Hudson proposed, it goes as follows**:** Presentism infers that only hyper-exists; The Growing Block Theory suggests that over hypertime, spacetime is growing. The past is in the past and the present is now. There is no future because it is either happened or is happening; The Shrinking Block Theory argues that over hypertime, spacetime is shrinking. The future exists in the future and the present is now. There is no past because it is either happening or it will happen; The Disappearing Branch Theory says that at any hypertime, the past, present and future all exist and branches could hyper- disappear into the next hyper-moment; and Externalism suggests that at any point in hypertime, the past, present and future all exist but cannot disappear. There is no distinction between the past, present and future, as all times exist unchangingly.[354] Therefore, if all times exist unchangingly and simultaneously, and ultimately cannot be changed, then even if we allow God to be omnipotent and omniscient, He would still not be able to prevent or remove evil from existence. And so, as previously mentioned, it seems the idea of an omnipotent God or the concept of the God of the philosophers may be a hinderance in itself. Instead, it would be better to focus on the theological construct of God as found within scripture, to better explain the coexistence of a God who is still worthy of worship and who exists outside the physical realm, but who is also more compatible with the existence of evil.

[352] Ibid, p. 79.
[353] Lebens, S. & Goldschmidt, T., 2017, p. 3.
[354] Ibid, p. 3.

In response to these claims suggested by Lebens and Goldschmidt, Hudson proposes what he calls a "morphing block".[355] This new theory of time suggests that time is growing both into the past and into the future, simultaneously at the same moment; but that time could also grow just into the past or just into the future, or that both the past and future could disappear. To sum up, the morphing block in unpredictable and can change in many ways, hence the term morphing. Lebens and Goldschmidt suggest that we can use Hudson's idea of the morphing block to help us further understand ultimate forgiveness and no more evil. For instance, if we combine the idea of hypertime with ultimate forgiveness we can form what is called UF-Hyper, which is where the spacetime block present to hyper-present contains the past in which the person sinned. If the sinner repents, then God ensures that in the hyper-will be, the sin will not exist. Likewise, if we apply hypertime to no more evil, then we create NME-Hyper where the spacetime block present to the hyper-present contains past evils, but the hyper- will be, there will be no more evils at all.[356] Under this idea it can be suggested that God is clearly not bound by time, and so something that happened in the hyper-was may not always be in the hyper-will be, as it can be erased. Also, it can also be argued that if God is omnipotent and exists outside of space and time then He should be able to prevent evil and/or erase it, but He doesn't, either because He doesn't have the power or He chooses not to. However, the authors stress that God is bound by hypertime, and so an NME-Hyper God can remove evil from the hyper-was, but that there will always be a trace left behind. Therefore, God can remove sins from the past, but not from the hyper-past. These sins thus cease to exist in history, but not in hyper-history.[357]

Yet, it can be questioned whether there is any point in this at all, if it is the case that God cannot remove the sins entirely. For if all traces of evil are not removed then why bother removing any at all? By removing sins, we aren't benefitting the victims, although on the surface it may seem this way, we are simply forgetting about their pain and suffering. The removal of sins is only of any benefit to the sinners themselves. Take the Holocaust as the example, if we remove all traces of this horrific event, we

[355] Hudson, H., 2014, p. 81.
[356] Lebens, S. & Goldschmidt, T., 2017, p. 5.
[357] Ibid, p. 6.

take the blame and responsibility away from the perpetrators, whilst at the same time minimising the effect it had on people. Also, it can be said that under ultimate forgiveness or no more evil, it seems unjust for God to allow sinners to be excused and not pay the consequences. If God simply deletes evil as if it never happened, it is as if He is saying the sinners are forgiven and He is dismissing the pain and suffering caused to the victims. If God was to delete the sins of the Holocaust, He is not only allowing the perpetrators to escape without punishment, but also, He isn't respecting the severity of the victims' pain. Even the Hebrew Bible suggests that God treats everyone fairly and that people will be judged on their decisions: "He will judge all nations with equity" [Psalms 96:10]. In response, Lebens and Goldschmidt highlight that under ultimate forgiveness, sins may only be deleted if they are repented, so the sinner isn't merely excused and have to work hard to reprieve their wrongdoings. God therefore isn't forgetting, but rather is forgiving us, which is part of His very nature. Also, under NME God deletes all sins (even those not repented) but still punishes those sinners before removing their sins[358]. However, these theories may not be compatible with Judaism, for example, if we return to the idea of orthodox religions, especially Judaism, we see that the *Mishnah* (Holy Book of the Torah) states that one is forbidden from praying for a change in the past or present: "He who beseeches over the past- behold that is a vain prayer" [Berakhot 9:3]. If one prays to change the past, this is in vain because it has already happened and it is too late for God to undo it. If one prays to change the present, this is in vain because it has already started and it is too late for God to intervene. Therefore, it can be argued that in order to fit better with orthodox religions, the ideas of ultimate forgiveness and no more evil need to be revised. However, if evils never happened then they don't need to be changed, for you can't change something that never existed. And so, praying to change evil is pointless, not because God can't change it, but because it never happened in the first place.

One major question always seems to appear when talking about removing evil, and that is why would God want to change the past if it risks removing the freedom, He has given us? God made us free to develop and earn rewards and free to choose God for ourselves. Yet, how do we keep this freedom if God removes all our bad choices?

[358] Ibid, p. 11.

It appears that under no more evil there remains the possibility for free will to exist as well as for the possibility of evil never occurring. The divine proof-reader theory argues that God gives us freedom and says, “go ahead”, thus allowing us to make good and bad choices without any intervention.[359] However, at the end of time, God says ‘cut’ (like a director at the end of the scene) and removes all the bad acts we performed during that time frame. The scene then resets and we try again. We keep going until all that is left is goodness, and there are no bad acts performed, no matter how long or how many attempts it takes. This theory makes God act like a proofreader, He doesn’t intervene with our actions, rather He simply edits out our mistakes. It is up to each and every person to decide how long and how many attempts it takes them to get the perfect film, every person is different, and some may take longer depending on how many bad choices they make. This theory allows us to maintain our freedom, whilst having multiple opportunities to get it right and make good choices.[360]

However, when it comes to the Holocaust, it seems absurd to try and justify the fact that God stood back and allowed people to have freedom to make their own choices, especially when it resulted in the mass extermination of six million innocent people. Also, the question will always be asked as to how many times humanity will have to repeat the events of the Holocaust before someone makes the right decision. It seems an unnecessary loss of lives for the sole purpose of God wanting us to be free and make our own choices. Surely, a temporary suspension of freedom is better than the misuse of freedom that results in such tragedy. Furthermore, many have suggested that playing with the past leaves too many gaps in history and causes collateral damage that affects us morally, metaphysically and physically. For example, if we remove all evil then good will no longer exist because there will be no need for it (there will be no good because there will be no need to make up for the bad things). Also, if we remove the bad then we also remove the good- they are intertwined and so removing one affects the other directly. However, Lebens and Goldschmidt argue that history could remain physically, metaphysically and aesthetically seamless. God could be in more control than we think i.e. everything would be controlled by God, except for

[359] Ibid, p. 18.
[360] Ibid, p. 19.

our moral choices. Moreover, when deleting evils God could put goods in their places, thus not leaving any gaps.[361]

Overall, even though it may be suggested that by taking away the sins and allowing people to forget, we are actually helping them, as they will no longer feel the pain, it is the argument here that by removing the sins we are making it seem like their suffering didn't matter, like it can simply be erased and forgotten. We must allow sins to remain in order to learn from them and to remind us to never repeat them. However, God doesn't forget, and so the guilt of the sinners is not removed for God; He will still punish us accordingly when the time comes for judgement, and so in some ways this does bring some consolation to those who have suffered at the hands of others. In some ways, this view of God as unforgetting but unforgiving, does shed some light on how God can coexist with evil; God's very nature may be able to allow for the existence of evil as it does not go unpunished. Therefore, even if we accept that God may not be omnibenevolent and prevent evil before it occurs, He can still be loving in the sense that He does not let evil go unpunished or unforgotten- He puts the feelings of the victims first, even if it is in the aftermath of the evil He permits. Consequently, it seems that the idea of eradicating evil from human history doesn't solve the issue of the problem of evil but instead creates new ones. Therefore, it seems a better use of time to focus our attention towards dealing with the aftermath of evil, as opposed to trying to erase what it caused. In terms of this thesis, a better outcome is to find a God that is compatible with the existence of evil, namely the Holocaust, and which can also be worshipped, respected and adorned in the way that is required from religious believers in order to maintain their faith.

God after Auschwitz

Many theologians and philosophers alike have used their own personal experiences of the Holocaust to comment on the implications it had on belief in God. One thinker prominent to these challenges is Hans Jonas who aimed to address the metaphysical, theological and philosophical questions relating to the implications Auschwitz has on

[361] Ibid, p. 20.

a belief in God[362]. First, he asks what did Auschwitz add to our knowledge about what humans can do to one another? Then he asks what did Auschwitz add to the knowledge Jews have about their suffering? Overall, he concludes that it is hard to explain why Auschwitz happened, especially when children are dying for no reason at all[363]. Jonas is explicit when he believes that victims did not die because of their faith, even if ironically, they were killed on the basis of their faith/religion. The Holocaust, as Jonas states, was an act that caused "dehumanisation by utter degradation and deprivation that proceeded their dying, no glimmer of dignity was left…hardly a trace of it was found in their surviving skeleton spectres of the liberated camps".[364] Yet the question remains then, if Jews weren't killed because of their faith, and more importantly, they kept their faith despite their suffering, why did their Almighty, omnipotent God let this happen. Surely, an all- loving God would protect His people more so than people without faith and/or the perpetrators, which in the case of the Holocaust were the Nazis. Therefore, whatever reason there may have been for God allowing such tremendous suffering endured in the Holocaust, it seems that this reason will never be a good enough one to provide justification for the death and slaughter of six million Jews.

Jonas goes on to stress that the question of why the Holocaust happened, is as you would expect, a bigger problem for Jews than it is to other religions such as Christianity. He states that for Christians, the world already contains the devil and the idea of evil due to the original sin. But, for Jews who see the world as divine creation and God as the 'Lord of History' it is a much bigger issue, and thus the events of the Holocaust, call their whole beliefs about God into question. However, this doesn't mean they have to abandon the whole idea of God, but instead I think we should seek to rethink what He is and what qualities He has, hence the aim of this thesis is to marry the tragedy of the Holocaust with a new outlook on what God could be and/or what

[362]Hans Jonas was a German- born Jewish philosopher who studied in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s. he worked on various topics such as philosophy of religion, ethics and famously his doctoral research on the concept of knowledge, in which is mentor was Martin Heidegger. It is important to remember here that Hans Jonas, although a student of Heidegger who famously was involved with Nazi activity, actually repudiated his mentor for his involvement with the Nazi party from 1933 onwards.
[363] Jonas, H., 1987. The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice. *The Journal of Religion,* 67(1), pp. 1-2.
[364] Ibid, p. 3.

qualities such a God would possess. Jonas elaborates on what He knows about the Lord of History, as expressed in the Hebrew Bible. He states that in the beginning, the Divine chose to be an "endless variety of becoming"[365] and therefore was unconditionally immanent. In fact, "God renounced His being… to receive it back from the odyssey".[366] And so, God committed Himself to effacing Himself for the world and so His immanence slowly transformed into transcendence. As life developed, God began to see that His creation was good, but we must remember that with life comes death and it seems that morality is thus the price we pay. From this, it may be said that God in this sense can still be seen an omnipotent because He had the ability to choose when to be in the world and when to be above it. He chooses when to give up his metaphysical abilities for the benefit of mankind, and when to take them back in order to allow mankind to flourish and be free. And so, from this, we can assume that God gives us the world to do with as we please. In other words, He trusts us to be guardians and take care of/ respect the world He has gifted us.

One way in which Jonas tries to reconcile the idea of God and the Holocaust is to suggest the idea of a suffering God, in which case would mean that if God suffers with us, then when we harm each other, He feels it, but when we are compassionate to one another, He rejoices.[367] However, this idea of a suffering God seems to clash with the Biblical conception of God (even though there are examples of suffering in the incarnation and crucifixion of God incarnate). Yet, Jonas talks of a suffering God in the sense that God suffers from the moment of creation (and also the idea that His creatures suffer also). Therefore, it seems to me that if we allow that God suffers with us then this in some way can resolve the issue of the Holocaust, as it shows that God wasn't inactive and passive in the victims' pain, but that He felt it too, thus He remains omnibenevolent. However, this doesn't help solve the issue of God's omnipotence, for if God is powerful then why doesn't he prevent the suffering of His people and thus the suffering of Himself? How can God be omnipotent and yet allow suffering to occur? One way to approach this is to suggest that God is so powerful that He can allow Himself to suffer so He can be compassionate for His people and form a better, more

[365] Ibid, p. 4.
[366] Ibid, p. 4.
[367] Ibid, p. 5.

personal relationship with them. However, it seems that the relationship with God be stronger, if His followers knew He saw their suffering and thus used his omnipotence to end it. Yet, we again come to the famous dilemma within philosophy of religion concerning freedom and free will, for if God was to always intervene it would impede on the freedom he gifted us during the Creation. The only way to possibly solve this is to say that God can only do what is logically possible and because He has gifted us freedom, it would be a logical contradiction for Him to take it away, even if it is to prevent suffering- the gift of freedom is greater than the suffering endured. However, this does not solve the issues inflicted upon Judaism by the Holocaust. The suffering the Jews endured is enough for God to take away our freedom temporarily, as it is more morally acceptable to suggest that a temporary suspension of freedom would be better than the Holocaust.

Since the idea of a suffering God leaves too much unanswered, Hans Jonas then discusses the possibility of a becoming God, which is a God who emerges in time and is not identical with Himself/ completed.[368] In fact, a becoming God belongs to the lower, sensible, physical world, as opposed to the metaphysical realm, and therefore is affected by events in the world and "has continual relation to creation".[369] The very idea of a becoming God destroys any idea of eternal recurrence (made famous by Fredrich Nietzsche) i.e. the idea that there is unconditional temporality and that the lack of transcendence, allows for the cycle to continue endlessly. For if we assume eternity is not unaffected by what happens in time, there cannot be any recurrence of the same God, as He would not be the same after being altered by events in the world. Thus, eternity would grow over time and there will "not be an indifferent and dead eternity but an eternity that grows with the accumulating harvest of time".[370] The implications of this is that if God is becoming and therefore isn't complete then He cannot be perfect and therefore cannot be perfectly good or perfectly powerful. And so, we must abandon both the notions of omnipotence and omnibenevolence. Essentially, this is the approach the thesis is taking, as it seems this is most

[368] Ibid, p. 6.
[369] Ibid, p. 7.
[370] Ibid, p. 7.

constructive way of reconciling the Holocaust and the problem of evil and suffering, with a God that can still be believed in.

Hans Jonas continues his work by arguing that for the sake of our image of God and the image of God in theology, we must agree that God is not omnipotent. He explains by stating that the concept of omnipotence is contradictory because absolute power infers that it is not limited and has no object on which it has to act. Yet, as objectless power it becomes a powerless power and cancels itself out (in other words all= zero). And so, it needs an object to act on in order to have power, but the very existence of another object actually limits the power, whilst allowing the power to exist (logical contradiction- *reductio ad absurdum*).[371] Moreover, Jonas states that God cannot be omnibenevolent, omniscient and omnipotent and so he argues that we must sacrifice intelligence to allow for the others to exist given that only an unintelligible God would tolerate the world as it is. Even though he accepts that intelligibility could be defended, he states that it depends on God's nature and our capacity to understand Him, and so it seems the easiest to discard. He also argues that the concept of goodness is necessary and is not up for discussion because God must be understanding to some extent (although not always entirely). God must also be understandable to us e.g. through revelation, the Torah, etc. as the idea of a hidden God us not accepted in Judaism. Therefore, it seems that after Auschwitz, either God is not good or is unintelligible. If God is intelligible then His goodness must be compatible with evil and then He is not all-powerful (a difficult paradox we find ourselves in here). And so, it seems to be the conclusion that God cannot be omnipotent.[372] We could imply that God could voluntarily concede His power for the sake of our free will. Jonas argues that God didn't stop suffering because He chose not to, but because He could not intervene. Actually, for a time God deprived Himself of the power to interfere with physical things, in order to allow us to have freedom.

[371] Ibid. p, 8.
[372] Ibid, pp. 9-10.

It seems that the removal of omnipotence leaves us with a choice between 'dualism' or "God's self-limitation through creation from nothing".[373] Dualism can be understood in two ways: one believes that evil is an active force opposing the divine purpose (could be understood that there are two Gods); the second is the idea of form-matter dualism made famous by Plato. The first type of dualism is unacceptable to Judaism, whereas the second seems to answer the problem of imperfections in the world, but not positive evil (caused by freedom not by God) and therefore does not solve the problem of the Holocaust. On the other hand, we are left with 'creation from nothing' which allows for divine principles combined with self-limitation, which in turn allows for autonomy in the world. Under this idea, it seems that creation is an act of divine self-restriction (in Hebrew this is known as *Tzimtzum* which means contradiction, self-limitation or withdrawal). Therefore, Jonas argues that in order to make room for the world to develop, God had to contract Himself so empty space could expand outside of Him.[374] The question is now, if God concedes His power to us (the finite beings) and delivers His cause to us, is there anything left in terms of a relation to God? For it seems that by giving Himself to creation, He has nothing more to give and so it is our turn to give back.

Surviving Long- Term Atrocities

Despite the points above, the focus of this thesis is not to eradicate the past, nor is it to forget what the Holocaust caused in terms of pain and suffering for those who perished and those who were left behind. The main aspect is to show how Judaism and more generally a belief in God can survive such an atrocious act of evil, and how religion as a whole can continue, even if we need a reimagined version of God- a God who may not be all-loving, all-powerful and all-knowing, but instead a God who may be malicious and who allows for mistakes and suffering. However, before one can delve into ways to overcome suffering and move forward with a belief in God, it must be addressed as to how these victims of the Holocaust become survivors, for example, to discover what it actually means to survive long- term atrocities such as the Holocaust. In this next section, this will be discussed in greater detail. The main topics

[373] Ibid, p. 11.
[374] Ibid, p. 12.

within this debate concern the questions: what are survivors and what does the term actually mean? And what is morally at stake in surviving such atrocities? When talking about an atrocity like the Holocaust, the term survivor can often refer to those who lived through the events of the Holocaust, and who continue to function afterwards. However, the term can also refer to those who merely stay alive, but who barely function in the same way as before. Overall, it seems that the terms survivor best refers to someone who lives beyond something that was intended to be fatal.

Famous Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt stated that when she attended and reported on the trail of Adolf Eichmann, she expected to see an evil man aka the "devil personified"[375], yet what she saw was merely a mediocre man. She found this "banality of evil" [376] to be "word-and-thought-defying"[377] because Eichmann was simply an ordinary man, who had committed extraordinarily evil crimes against humanity. Arendt found it hard to accept and understand the crimes of the Nazis since "they explode the limits of the law…this guilt, in contrast to all criminal guilt, oversteps and shatters any and all legal systems… we are simply not equipped to deal, on a human, political level, with a guilt that is beyond crime".[378] In relation to the Holocaust, we need to understand the individual events of the tragedy as more than just horrible acts against the Jews; the Holocaust was an exceptionally awful event that is different in essence to all other events in human history. The crimes of the Holocaust "defy the possibility of human punishment"[379] as no punishment would ever be good enough to compensate the loss of 6 million lives.

Arendt goes on to talk of the lessons possibly learned from the Holocaust. She stated that the events of the Holocaust show how we seemed to have forgot the moral lessons we have been taught i.e. about how to resist temptation of evil and ultimately choose the lesser evils in certain situations. But she also argues that under the Nazi

[375] Zaibert, L., 'Punishment Theory Meets the Problem of Evil', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy: The Concept of Evil*, ed. French, P., and Wettstein, H. (Malden: Wiley Periodicals, 2012), p. 99.
[376] Arendt, H., Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, (New York: Penguin, 1963), p. 252.
[377] Ibid, p. 252.
[378] Aschheim, S., 'Nazism, Culture and the Origins of Totalitarianism: Hannah Arendt and the Discourse of Evil', *New German Critique*, 70, 1997, p. 131.
[379] Arendt, 1963, p. 250.

regime there didn't appear to be any lesser evils, as all evils were too drastic to have a gradual scale of distinction. Another lessons she believes we can learn from the Holocaust is the idea of obedience in relation to obligations and duties[380]. As an example, Arendt refers to when Eichmann argued that he was not guilty for his crimes because he was simply following orders, and he even referred to Kant's Categorical Imperatives to illustrate his point. However, Ardent argued that we all have an innate moral code that ultimately overrides any orders we are given. And so, Ardent argued that obedience can be dangerous as it habituates itself and makes people think it is normal to adhere to a set of rules. Therefore, we need to undertake critical thinking and judgement in order to avoid obedience and deal with the temptation of evil.[381] This is just one way in which we can overcome the suffering of the Holocaust and attempt to allow Judaism to survive in its wake.

Another way in which Judaism attempts to survive the aftermath of the Holocaust is by adapting its framework away from a traditional orthodox view, towards a more conservative one. Judaism could in one way be understood as an "evolving dynamic religion"[382], in which whilst preserving traditions, it also adjusts to environmental and cultural conditions. Alternatively, Judaism, after the Holocaust, could be understood as reconstructed in the sense that God is not thought of as a supernatural being, but instead is trans-natural and super- experimental. In fact, Mordecai Kapla suggested that God does not interfere with nature, nor does He guide people to their destiny.[383] Similarly, Humanistic Judaism believes in the value of human existence and the power of human beings to solve their own problems. People who follow this framework reject the traditional understanding of God and His nature and aim to focus more on free will and choice. Kaplan stated that "we learn more about God when we say that love is divine than when we say that God is love…. When religion speaks of salvation it means in essence the experience of the worthwhileness of life. When we analyse our present experience of life's worthwhileness, we find that it is invariably based on specific ethical experiences – moral responsibility, honesty, loyalty, love, service. If carefully pursued,

[380] Arendt, H., 'Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship', in *Responsibility and Judgement*, ed. Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), pp. 37-45.
[381] Arendt, H., 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy', in *Responsibility and Judgement*, ed. Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), pp. 49-146.
[382] Cohn-Sherbok, D., 2010, p. 81.
[383] Ibid, p. 83.

this analysis reveals that the source of our ethical experience is found in our willingness and ability to achieve self-fulfilment through reciprocity with others. This reciprocity in turn is an expression of a larger principle that operates in the cosmos in response to the demands of a cosmic force, the force that makes for creativity and interdependence in all things".[384] To put simply, the Torah does not lie solely with God, it is with us here on earth. Therefore, it should be understood in our way and on our terms. We need to understand events and catastrophes in human ways without trying to explain it via God, which in turn makes all reasoning inaccessible to human beings. Overall, both the reconstructive and humanistic views want Judaism to be reimagined. The humanistic approach thus wanting to remove God altogether, as there is no need for a deity to be Jewish; and the reconstructive view which wants the concept of God to be understood in terms of its effect.

Throughout this chapter and conclusion to the thesis, different approaches to our views of God in light of the Holocaust have been addressed and evaluated. In turn, a new way of viewing and understanding God will hopefully be achieved in the latter stage of this chapter, which will demonstrate how a belief in God can exist simultaneously with the existence of evil without causing a logical contradiction.

The Move Away from Omnipotence

From the points previously made within this chapter and in fact this thesis as a whole, it seems to lead to the conclusion that the philosophical idea of God (one who is omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient) cannot be compatible with the Holocaust. Therefore, it seems one must find a more compatible concept of God that can be reconciled with the problem of evil, specifically a God who can survive in the aftermath of Auschwitz.

One example of a God who avoids the issues of omnipotence, comes from Peter Geach, who proposed that a better alternative to an all-powerful, omnipotent God, is

[384] Kaplan, M., 1967, pp. 317– 18.

one that is Almighty (the term commonly found within scripture, that is more theologically grounding than the philosophical term of omnipotence). The difference between omnipotence and almighty has been the centre of many theological and philosophical debates, especially concerning the problem of evil. One of the major pillars of whether God can exist in the face of the problem of evil, lies within the definitions of omnipotence versus almighty. Geach believes therefore adopts the stance that almighty is a better, more unproblematic way of describing God. Geach understands omnipotence as an attribute which concerns itself with necessity, more specifically, the necessary limits on "God's potential scope of action".[385] Omnipotence has always been understood to be more philosophical than theological, hence why it often finds itself in hot water when it comes to the philosophical debates such as the problem of evil. Geach states that "when people have tried to read into 'God can do everything' a signification not of pious intention but of philosophical truth, they have only landed themselves in intraceable problems and hopeless confusions".[386]

In order to address the issues that omnipotence faces, Geach discusses four main classes of omnipotence. Firstly, he talks about what he classifies as absolute omnipotence in which God can do everything absolutely. Under this definition, God is not bound in action nor by laws of logic. The second form of omnipotence states that God can do what is logically consistent, in other words, He can only do what does not cause a contradiction e.g. cannot bring about a stone too heavy for Him to lift. The third definition of omnipotence argues that God can do so and so, if God does so and so, and in this sense, it would only be logically consistent when so and so represent logically consistent feats. Put simply, God can do everything that is possible for a being with His properties to do. Finally, Geach discusses the fourth type of omnipotence, which states that what can be done/ brought about by God, includes all future possibilities. In other words, at any given time, God can bring about or do anything that is logically possible for a being with God's properties to do at that time.[387]

[385] Kodaj D., 'Who is almighty?', *Religious Studies*, 57(2), 2021, p. 319.
[386] Geach, P., 'Omnipotence', *Philosophy*, 48 (183), 1973, p. 7).
[387] Ibid, p. 9.

Rene Descartes famously defended the first definition, that of absolute omnipotence, in his quest for the ultimate truth. In this philosophy, Descartes focused on the truths of logic and arithmetic, which he believed were made true by God's will.[388] These truth, were in fact necessary, and were given to us by God so we could decipher necessity and distinguish clear and distinct ideas. Yet, Descartes was clear that since we are contingent beings, we were only able to see and understand what God allowed us to. Geach, despite his respect for Descartes' stance on omnipotence, argues that Judeo-Christian beliefs cannot rely on absolute omnipotence because one cannot fully understand how a 'surpa- logical' God would act or communicate. Instead, he believes that the second definition of omnipotence is more closely related to the beliefs of the Old Testament as it allows God to exist within the realm of logical possibility and free from contradiction, whilst having the ultimate power over all things.

Further support of this second definition of omnipotence, and its relationship with Judeo- Chrisitan beliefs, can be found in writings by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas proposed that God can do anything within logical possibility and that God cannot contain contradictories. However, it can be argued that some things which are possible for God to bring about, may not actually be compossible with others. For example, it may be logically impossible for two separate entities or actions to come about at the same point in time, and thus it is beyond God's power to bring them about. Geach contests that to suggest this limit on God's power is also not compatible with the God of Judeo- Christian beliefs i.e. a God who cannot be limited nor break His promises. Therefore, it seems that both the ideas of absolute omnipotence and omnipotence in the realm of logical possibility are not compatible with a God of theology, in fact they are both "logically untenable".[389]

There seem to be major issues with the definitions of omnipotence, which is what Geach is trying to highlight throughout his argument. The third definition raises the issues that once we allow omnipotence to be revitalised to a set of properties, we open up the possibility that there could be more than one omnipotent being. However, this

[388] Ibid, p. 10.
[389] Ibid, p. 15.

makes the entire idea of omnipotence *reductio ad absurdum* as omnipotent, by its very definition is the most powerful being (singular). On the other hand, one significant dilemma the second definition of omnipotence faces, is the critique that some things which are logically possible, may not be logically possible for a being such as a Judeo-Christian God with traditional attributes. For example, a God of this nature could not commit a morally evil act, such as in the case of this thesis, the Holocaust.

Geach, in his rejection of omnipotence, claims that God is unable to do evil, as a perfectly food God, by very definition, cannot perform evil, as this would constitute a logical contradiction. However, Geach draws upon the ideas of Richard Price, who in turn argues that God's freedom implies that it cannot be "logically impossible for God to do evil".[390] Price therefore believes that there is some chance God will do evil, however Geach rejects this, for even though it is not impossible for God *to* do evil, as it is not beyond His power (as a necessary, almighty being) that does not mean there is the possibility that God *will* do evil. God chooses not to do evil as He is perfectly good; therefore, it is not because He cannot, but that He chooses not to. Geach goes on to discuss the differences between God's *potentia absoluta* (absolute power) and His *potentia ordinata* (the will for what is possible).[391] Under these ideas, God *can* do evil as it is within His power, but He *cannot* do evil in the sense that in actually doing it would be impossible. In this sense, saying God cannot, does not infer that He does not have the power to do so- the difference lies within the two types of *potentia* and comes down to God's will to do or not to do certain acts. Put simply, even if it is logically impossible for God to do evil, it does not infer that He is unable to, thus this does not impact His power in any way. Likewise, the fact God cannot do evil, gives us no guarantee that these promises will not be broken. So, even though God may not break promises and cause evil (to allow Him to be compatible with the God of Old Testament and Judeo- Christian beliefs) it does not mean He does not have the power or the possibility to do so.[392]

[390] Harrison, J., 'Geach on God's Alleged Ability to do Evil', *Philosophy, 51*(196), 1976, p. 209.
[391] Geach, 1973, p. 16.
[392] Harrison, 1976, pp. 214-215.

In an attempt to solve the issues with omnipotence, Geach proposes that instead of using the philosophical term in theological debates, we instead turn to the more traditional term Almighty, which comes from the creeds of the church, and which allows one to retain a traditional belief in God, which is more compatible with Judeo- Christian beliefs. The term almighty refers to power over all things- "almighty derives by the way of the Latin *Omnipotens* (all powerful), from the Greek word *Pantokrator* (ruler of all) … suggest God as having power over all things…. God is not just more powerful than any creature; no creature can compete with God's power… In Heaven or on Earth, God does whatever He will".[393] Geach argues that this concept is more immune to the philosophical challenges that omnipotence faces and focuses more on faith, scripture and God as a creator.

Geach goes on to elaborate that almighty beings can create and destroy contingent entities at their will. Therefore, if we are to ascribe almighty to God, it appears that things God cannot do, are not because He does not have the power, but because He chooses not to. Geach's definition also allows for God to remain traditional in the sense that He can do things traditional thought of e.g. perform miracles, thus making this more compatible with a Judeo- Christiam God and beliefs of the Old Testament, in comparison to that of an omnipotent God.

The term almighty infers that with the power to take away contingent powers/ properties, God, who is a necessary being, cannot have His necessary powers revoked nor can He grant necessary powers to contingent beings. Adopting the term almighty in favour of omnipotence, also allows for God to be unable to sin, for sinning has nothing to do with granting or revoking contingent powers or properties[394]. Likewise, God can remain almighty even if we accept that there are some powers which belong exclusively to others- for example, Eve can freely use her power to pick an apple from the tree. This does not mean God is less powerful, it simply means God and Eve have different types of power- God's being necessary and Eve's being contingent. It seems that the term almighty, as proposed by Geach, avoid some of the

[393] Geach, 1973, pp. 7-8.
[394] Kodaj D., 2021, p. 323.

issues of a “theological conundrum”[395] and the issues of contradiction that omnipotence faces in light of the Holocaust and other instances of evil.

Despite the strong arguments present above, the term Almighty alone is not enough to overcome the issues of omnipotence, nor does the term Almighty allow for the total reconciliation of religious belief with the Holocaust. This is because the term Almighty alone does not seem to avoid all of the problems omnipotence faces, nor does it wholly solve the problem of evil, specifically how one can maintain a belief in God in light of the Holocaust. For, if we accept that God does not cause evil, because He does not want to, and we accept that evil, in this case the Holocaust, was caused by free will, we still have the dilemma of why a God, who has the ability and power to grant and revoke contingent powers, did not prevent such an atrocity. Therefore, in the final section of this chapter, I will propose a new- old concept of God which is more theologically derived and which, although leans on the concept of Almighty, does not solely rest upon it.

A New Old God

The main conflict that arises within monotheism is often a result of the clash between the existence of evil in the world and the existence of an all-loving, all-powerful God. Hence, this thesis focuses on the reconciliation between one of the most famous evil to exist, the Holocaust, and the existence of God, and the claim that the God religious people once knew or focused their beliefs on, is not acceptable in light of the tragedies that unfolded. Most commonly what has been written on evil often fails to talk about where evil originated. Therefore, in order to solve the dilemma between the existence of God and evil, we must focus on this origin, which one thinker, namely Ingrid Faro, believes can be located in the Book of Genesis. In fact, over the course of her work, Faro firstly aims to investigate the use of the main Hebrew lexemes for evil in Genesis (רע, רעה, רעע), then secondly focus on the two-word associations with evil found in Genesis, namely sight and goodness. Finally, Faro aims to synthesise the data and

[395] Ibid, p. 323.

concepts about evil into a 'theologically reflective narrative'[396], which thus reflects on the treatment of evil throughout the Book of Genesis. Overall, her main focus for the book is to ask what is evil and discover how evil is portrayed in the relationship between God, humans and the world. Faro also wants the book to be able to show what Genesis tells us about evil and also who is accountable for evil, according to Genesis.[397] In order to understand the type of God that could possibly be compatible with evil, we first must understand evil as a whole. Faro does so by highlighting how the distribution of the forms of the lexeme evil are examined in context. She shows how evil progresses the plot of the story and how it brings together the texts via "lexical, semantic, syntactic equivalence and linguistic literary linking of periscopes".[398]

Faro begins by demonstrating the first of the six narrative uses of evil occurs in Genesis 2:9 which refers to the Garden of Eden. Evil occurs again in Genesis 2:16-17 whereby the first commandments are spoken by YHWH God to Adam. In this encounter, God makes it clear that Adam has responsibilities: "God has expressed His will from the beginning… For the writer of Genesis 2, to be human consists in living in freedom, within a community, and under the divine imperative".[399] The second narrative with the lexeme evil occurs in the story of the Flood in Genesis 6:5, which shows how God, through His own words, accepts that evil is now a part of humanity, but allows life to continue regardless**.** This clearly shows that the God of the Hebrew Bible, specifically the God portrayed in Genesis, is one who cherishes life over death and who always puts preservation of life first, even if the face of evil. The final narrative of evil occurs in Genesis 41, specifically in the story of Joseph, the Pharoah and the cows. In this passage, the desirable, healthy cows represent abundance and wealth, whereas the hideous, more famished cows represent famine and death. Towards the end of the narrative, we see Joseph take on the role of God's image bearer, who's aim is to turn evil into good intentions.

[396] Faro, I., *Evil in Genesis: A Contextual Analysis of Hebrew Lexemes for Evil in the Book of Genesis*, (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2021), p. 3.
[397] Ibid, p. 4.
[398] Ibid, p. 5.
[399] Childs, B., *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990), p. 51.

Faro makes the point of stressing that even though evil is spoken about throughout the Book of Genesis, nearly 60% of the use of evil in direct discourse actually communicates the attitudes/ feelings of the person.[400] In a way this can make the use of evil highly subjective, as the person is merely using evil to express their point of view. Therefore, what one person may deem as evil, another may argue is not, and so the use of evil may not be consistent throughout. Faro highlights that evil can also be used directedly, to provoke someone into doing something, such as requesting, commanding, directing, etc. She gives the example of the passage in Genesis 19:17 whereby Lot begs the Sodomites to "do not do such wrong thing". Like she stated previously, even though evil can be used in human speech to give perspective or an opinion, when used by YHWH God, it is only ever directive.[401]

Faro continues her points by showing that in Genesis narratives and discourse combine to provide multiple points of view. In fact, "the truth about human nature, the world, and God, cannot be uttered by a single voice, but only by a community of unmerged voices".[402] This, according to Faro, means the reader is drawn into the conflict between good and evil by the dialect tools, the narrative and the "theological reversal to produce a literarily and theologically unified text".[403] The first narrative-dialogic use of evil occurs in Genesis 2:9 whereby we see the beginning of the conflict between the ways of God and the ways of humanity without God. It is in this passage of text that we see God give man a choice between the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Faro notes here that man sees the trees as desirable to our sight and good for food. However, in Genesis 3:6, this shifts so that woman now sees the knowledge tree as good for food and also desirable in the sense that it will make her wise.[404] This is where we first see the use of sight and goodness in relation to evil. It appears that what we may see as good and desirable may not always be what is best for us, and this supposedly good thing we have chosen is in fact evil. If we are to apply this to the Holocaust, the final solution may have seemed like a positive solution to those in power and the only way to achieve their end goal of making

[400] Faro, 2021, p. 44.
[401] Ibid, p. 45.
[402] Newsom, C., Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth, *The Journal of Religion,* 1996, 76(2), p. 301.
[403] Faro, 2021, p. 47.
[404] Ibid, p. 48.

Germany into the great nation that they wanted it to be. However, this was subjective, and what was misconstrued as a positive and used as propaganda to indoctrinate a whole generation of people, caused the worst instance of evil in recent history. Here, one could suggest that if evil can always be interpreted in a way that produces positive outcomes, it seems insensitive and rather naïve to assume that anyone who sees such suffering could find any positive. The only plausible interpretation would be to argue that God, as a metaphysical being, permits evil for reasons outside of our human understanding. But even this explanation doesn't remove the aftermath that evil causes, nor does it give closure to those who have suffered.

Another narrative-dialogical occurrence of evil appears in the story of Sodom in Genesis 13:13. Sodom is introduced first as a place of sin and evil (this is where these two lexemes are used together for the first time), and then again later in the passage at 18:23-25 as a place where wicked people reside (Abraham uses the term 'wicked sinners', which brings together the lexemes 'wicked' and 'evil', which are in turn compared to the adjective 'righteous' used to describe YHWH God). However, later in Genesis 18:25, God is seen as the judge who performs justice, but who kills the righteous with the wicked, for things they didn't do, when he burns the city of Sodom to the ground.[405] This seems to go against God's nature as just and righteous, for if God was just, He wouldn't condemn the innocent for the crimes of the sinners. It appears that God is punishing all of humanity for the crimes of a small group of people. Therefore, this begs the question of whether the God of the Hebrew Bible is really fair, or whether He has form to act unjustly and without reason. If we accept that God is sometimes callous and cruel, we can better reconcile the existence of God with the existence of evil and thus allow faith to be maintained following the Holocaust. God may allow evil for reasons we cannot comprehend, or He may allow evil in order to establish a stronger bond between Himself and His people. Regardless of the reason (for no reason will ever justify the death of six million) we need to find a way to allow for a new concept of God to exist and for Jewish faith to survive.

[405] Ibid, pp. 50- 51.

Faro makes it clear that Genesis shows how God allows evil and good to coexist, for she says that “God works in the midst of good and evil”.[406] She refers to Genesis 50:20, which highlights how Joseph never stated that God caused evil, nor did God ever say evil is good, but rather that God is able to use the bad to bring about divine purposes for those who have faith in Him. In other words, those who follow God faithfully will continue to live a life that is blessed, but also that there is no guarantee of an easy life, free from harm or suffering. Faro indicates that through Genesis we can see that God made life with the ability to be free and make choices, and in this world, good and evil must coexist. Therefore, it is up to us to choose the right path or deal with the consequences of our mistakes. It is only through choosing God and following divine commands, can one truly achieve full character growth and development, and fellowship with God.[407]

Faro illustrates how in Genesis 2:16-17 there is evidence of how good and evil are positioned against each other. For example, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge and desire, both offer humanity the choice between eternal life and autonomous self-hood, or to put it simply, the choice between serving God and following His commands or a life of independence, based on autonomous decisions fuelled by desires and needs.[408] Faro highlights how the consequence of the Fall in Genesis was that Adam and Eve could now see what they had chosen; they now had the knowledge of both good and evil and were the judges of their own decisions. Following the Fall, humanity, which was once made to rule side by side each other in the presence of God, was now separate from God and became a place of “conflict, blame and resentment”[409] with the potential for good and evil. She also indicates how Genesis 5:1-6:8 show evidence of good vs evil and how human decisions can affect the amount of evil in the world. The author directs us toward the story of the Flood, which illustrates how even though all of humanity is going one way and corrupting the earth and moving away from God, Noah does not, and chooses to be righteous and blameless; thus, choosing a life fellowship with God, as opposed to independence away from God. After the Flood,

[406] Ibid, p. 62.
[407] Ibid, p. 63.
[408] Ibid, p. 147.
[409] Ibid, p. 151.

God allows humans to have and use freewill and determination, but not without consequences. From this story in Genesis, we can infer that God is allowing good and evil to coexist and therefore one must trust in God in and believe in the good even when there is evidence to the contrary (in most cases evil). Overall, what Faro is trying to portray here is that the Book of Genesis shows that although the world was created by God and us as humans were created in His image, God never intended to be governed solely by Himself. Instead, as Faro states, "humanity's role is to partner with God to bring about His good plans for creation".[410] In other words, we must work to overcome evil and master the bad forces at play.

Understanding good and evil in Genesis, according to Faro, means conceptualising two views: God's perspective with His intentions; and human perspective with their intentions. Faro states that in Genesis we can see that God's intentions come to us via commands, instructions and dreams, and that their success depends on how well humans respond to and/or interpret them. In comparison, human perspectives and a choice for autonomy comes from human's decisions to choose between good and bad, yet this form of self-power can lead to a deterioration of social order and morality, if misused.[411] Genesis does seem to involve sin and punishment but also grace and recreation. This highlights that there are always two choices, the choice between what Faro calls "good or evil, life or death, blessing or curse".[412] Yet, the question remains: do you follow the commands of God, or do you seek out your own desires and independence? Faro makes a point here of stressing the importance of fully understanding what is meant by the image of God, for she believes that in order to know what we mean by evil in Genesis, we must first understand what it means to be created in God's image. She explains these using ideas from Richard Averbeck: firstly, humanity is created as a physical being who is in the creation and who is represents God and lives in His presence; secondly, humanity's purpose is to stand for God and His authority and rule creation according to God's character and design; finally, we must work hard to maintain the relationship with God and with others.[413] Therefore, it

[410] Ibid, p. 188.
[411] Ibid, pp. 137- 139.
[412] Ibid, p. 140.
[413] Averbeck, R., 2011, pp. 35- 36.

appears as if evil comes from humans abandoning God, as opposed to God directly causing evil. One could argue here for the idea of free will and the fact the humans have abused authority given to them as governors of the creation God gifted them with.

However, Faro states that evil can also come from non-human agents, for example, "theological, anthropological or scientific- evolutionary dogmas advocate belief systems that lead humanity to lethargy and cosmic passivity".[414] She then goes on to illustrate these further: theological Lethargy is the belief that we are powerless to cause a change in the world because everything that happens (even evil) is God's will, and so we have to submit to evil as if it were God. In comparison, Anthropological Lethargy is whereby attempting to change people's behaviour shows an intolerance by diminishing the rights of others to act as they please, thus this causes us to succumb to evil as if it were not bad at all. Finally, Scientific- Evolutionary Lethargy involves the idea that life is random and that we focus on behaviours of self-survival and ascendency, and under this idea it appears that humanity feeds on evil. According to Faro, Genesis does not infer at any point that God causes/does evil, but rather it states that God does bring about consequences of evil and sin upon people or places, such as is illustrated in the story of Sodom [Genesis 18-19]. God actually recognises free will as well as evil inclinations but continues to allow us to choose evil and exploit the creation He gave us.[415] It appears from Faro's text that Genesis therefore understands that there are times when evil and suffering cannot be understood and demonstrates that not all evil is the result of divine judgement. In actual fact, evil is predominantly the consequence of God allowing us to be free beings and to have the choice between good and evil. As Faro puts it, evil has the free reign to decide against God and thus corrupt good into evil. Therefore, God is not the one who wishes evil, it is actually humans who feed it and allow it to grow. God simply allows evil to coexist with good in the world He gave us. Faro states that "nothing will be perfect here on earth until the perfect comes. But the faithful dwell and engage in this world… trusting in the goodness of the Almighty".[416]

[414] Faro, 2021, p. 44.
[415] Ibid, p. 189.
[416] Ibid, p. 193.

Despite Faro's attempt at trying to remove the blame from human entities, the problem of the Holocaust does not disappear, in fact, regardless of whether the blame is placed upon humans or not, the conflict remains between God and evil. If evil exists because of a non-human cause, then a God who is considered to be almighty, omnipotent omniscient and omnibenevolent, should prevent it, or at the very least, lessen the effects it causes. On the other hand, if evil is caused by humans, then God should still intervene when the effects of such evil reach a drastic point. There is no amount of free will that is worth sacrificing the lives of millions. Therefore, we are back to the same dilemma- God cannot have all the attributes we originally considered Him to have, for they are incompatible with the existence of evil. And so, this idea of God must be reimagined to allow for God and evil to coexist, and for people of faith and religion to be able to maintain a strong belief.

Throughout her work, Faro made it clear that evil is something that departs from God and His ways, as established in creation and in covenant with God. Specifically, "evil is a violation of divine design"[417] whereas God is just and rewards and punishes us based on our choices that we make independently. She breaks down the meanings of evil into categories. Firstly, if we are to understand evil lexically then we come to know evil as a major category word that refers to anything bad e.g. ugly, displeasing, harmful, sinful, wicked, etc. However, if we understand evil exegetically then we know it as something that plays a role (alongside good) in developing the plot throughout Genesis. Conceptually, evil is related to concepts of death in direct comparison to good and blessing, whereas theologically evil is anything that departs from God's ways, and thus humanity is responsible for its actions and play a role in the agency of both good and evil.[418] The key points to take away from her work are the main claims regarding evil as found in Genesis. She summarises these in the conclusion as follows. The book of Genesis illustrates that the original creation contained no evil or conflict and was in fact only good. When creating man, God gave humanity the responsibility to make choices, either for or against God. This means that human beings are not passive but actually participate in the choice between good and evil. However, after man's betrayal of God's trust in the Garden of Eden, evil flourished and became an even stronger

[417] Ibid, p. 195.
[418] Ibid, p. 196.

opposing factor to good. Thus, evil appeared to us as something that opposed God's will. Following the Fall, it was clear that humans have the ability to choose good or bad, and that people can be led to bad choices, but can also change and become good. In actual fact, it seems that righteous people are those who follow God faithfully, but not necessarily perfectly, and that these people are those who are a blessing to others. Also, these are the people who can help guide others to goodness i.e. towards something that is orderly, beautiful, trusting, pure and obedient to God. On the other hand, those who oppose God's plans and will are seen as evil and coercive. The book of Genesis also makes it clear that God does not measure success by worldly standards, in fact whether or not one has experienced fulfilment of God's promises does not diminish their truth, for one could make it happen later in this life or in the next life.[419]

From Faro's work it is clear that evil is not a privation of good, nor did it exist before or during creation. Evil only occurs when we twist the good to suit our selfish purposes. In fact, when God does evil, He does not act capriciously or unexpectedly; instead, He simply responds to our actions and acts justly to bring about the consequences of evil we set in motion. In other words, God acts in response to humans choosing to turn away from His ways. Faro in her closing statement draws upon the work of Umberto Cassuto who states that "the primary purpose of the Torah in these chapters [Genesis 2-3] is to explain how it is that in the lord's world, the world of the good and beneficent God, evil should exist and man should endure pain and troubles and calamities".[420] Faro furthers this point by suggesting that "God acts in legal judgement when humanity turns away from Him, bringing upon them the evil of their own actions".[421] However, she concludes that God always acts mercifully and that He can turn the evil of others into good, thus allowing Him to fulfil His purpose for good in humanity.

By combining the ideas of Faro above, with those mentioned previously by Geach, we can begin to paint a picture of a God that has the characteristics of an Almighty creator,

[419] Ibid, pp. 196- 197.
[420] Cassuto, U., *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis Part 1: 1-6,8; from Adam to Noah*, (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989), p. 71.
[421] Faro, 2021, p. 199.

but without the negative implications of omnipotence. This new- concept of God will draw upon the Old Testament and Hebrew Bible, which illustrates how God can sometimes be callous and cause evil, but that this suffering happens, not unnecessarily, but rather for reasons we are yet to understand. This God will always act with good judgement, even if evil and ultimately suffering, still exist. A God with these attributes will have the capacity of power over all things, but who will not take away free will; He will have unconditional love for His creatures but will not always shelter them from pain; He will be able to do things that are logically possible, thus remaining Almighty and worthy of worship. This new- old concept of God will therefore be more compatible with the existence of the Holocaust than the God of the Philosophers, which philosophy and also theodicy, have rested upon for centuries.

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that any attempt to justify the suffering endured throughout the Holocaust is futile, as any possible explanation of evil will never satisfy everyone. The God of the philosophers, which is the main focus of such explanations (including theodicies) aim to explain how such a God could have allowed and/or caused evil such as the Holocaust to occur. Therefore, as shown throughout this chapter and the overall thesis, it seems that we need to abandon the philosophical enterprise of theodicy and the notion of God at its heart (the notion of God as all-powerful, all-knowing and perfectly good, known as the God of the Philosophers). In its place, we must adopt new- old concept of God that coincides with the events of the Holocaust i.e. this being the God of Hebrew Bible; a God who is worthy of worship, who is more aligned with the characteristics of Almighty, but who doesn't have the problems with omnipotence, omnibenevolence and omniscience, being inconsistent and in turn incompatible with evil, in the same way the God of the philosophers does.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to show how one could reconcile a belief in God with the existence of the Holocaust, specifically from the standpoint of a Judeo- Christian perspective with reference to the Hebrew Bible and scripture. The thesis itself was separated into two parts: the former focusing on the problem with the problem of evil itself, namely the conflict between the existence of evil and the God of classical theism, as well as attempts to solve this conflict through theodicy; whereas the latter focused on demonstrating how the explanations put forward by theodicy did more harm than good and ultimately failed to explain the existence of the Holocaust in the face of God's existence, and how ultimately the failure lies with the wrong use of God (the God of the philosophers) when trying to reconcile religious belief with evil. In conclusion, the thesis eventually indicates how there is a better concept of God that can be found within scripture, which is more compatible with evil, that would allow the existence of evil (Holocaust) and a belief in God to co-exist. This God is consequently similar to that of Old Testament e.g. who may appear callous and who acts for reasons beyond our knowledge or realm but yet is still Almighty and who is worthy of worship despite the suffering that He allows His people to endure.

The chapter explored ideas with the problem of evil itself and demonstrated how the problem of evil is an unsolvable problem, for we cannot reconcile a belief in the God of the philosophers (omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient) with evil such as the Holocaust. Despite the fact that many theologians and philosophers have proposed solutions, or theodicies, which seek to identify the reason God would have for permitting innocent suffering, these solutions or explanations are insufficient to explain the systematic murder of 6 million Jews. This chapter, although did mention the sheer volume of people who suffered, the focus was not solely on the number of people, instead the focus was on the type of people. For instance, how can a God who is supposed to be all-powerful, all-loving and all-knowing, allow the suffering of not just any group of people, but in particular a group of people who followed God's commands and teachings, and who were (in the beliefs of Judaism) the chosen people, yet they were not protected by God Himself. The first chapter in the thesis consequently has

sought to address the problem of evil by going beyond philosophical attempts at theodicy and taking the problem back to its theological roots.

Following on from this, the next chapter delved into the attempts at reconciling a belief in God with the existence of evil, in this case the Holocaust. It discussed certain attempts made to show how God can exist despite the events of the Holocaust. The main focus of this chapter was on theodicies, which try to show that the good that exists in the world God has created, outweighs the evil (and/ or that evil exists for a greater good) and that these goods directly benefit the sufferer. The chapter discussed the different types of theodicies including, theodicies which try to explain why God allows any type of evil at all; theodicies that explain types of evil, such as moral evil or natural evil; theodicies that explain the amount of evil; and theodicies that explain all types of evil and why God allows it. The discussion also extended to cover the ideas of both divine and human theodicies, which can be used differently to help overcome the problem of evil, as well as theodicies that stem from a religious perspective, which showed the need for both authority from scripture and the need for contemporary relevance. Overall, the second chapter's primary concern was to ask whether God cares and if He does care, why does He allow evil to exist, and it is this question that theodicy aims to answer. The chapter continues by stating that it is only via real traditional theodicy that we can help affirm the goodness of God. Particularly, it is through the teachings the Hebrew Bible helps us understand evil through keeping faith in a God we know can cause pain, but who does so for good reasons. This in turn shifts the focus towards a practical way of dealing with the problem of evil, that incorporates scripture and takes the problem back to its theological, historical roots. In other words, we must find ways to use scripture and teachings to help discover the true meaning of God, as well as the relationship between God and humans, as this will further help us come to terms and deal with the consequences of suffering. Therefore, theodicy, when approached from both an intellectual and practical viewpoint, can be beneficial and overcome the problem of evil, for example, compassionate theodicy shows how there is no need to make sense of the stories of suffering, but instead focuses on helping people tell their stories of their own suffering and find meaning in it. The chapter concludes by drawing on the ideas of Atle Søvik, who stated that theodicies often create more evil, however, we should not remove

them completely, as they allow us to ask questions about why God would allow such things to happen, and this keeps the discussion going. He also stated that there are good ways and bad ways of expressing the truth, but that we can never judge a proposition based on its consequences and we should learn to distinguish between searching for the truth and communicating the truth. Likewise, John Culp argued that theodicies can help guide beliefs and provide ways to help one understand the world as more than just a constant state of flux/chaos. Finally, the chapter concluded that if we accept that both theodicies and practical actions are important for a suitable response to evil, then we need to find ways to relate them. The next chapter, however, began to discuss theodicy's downfall and ultimate failure in explaining the problem of evil.

Signing off the first half of the thesis, was the third chapter entitled '*Theodicy- Helping Solving the Problem of Evil or Contributing to its Problems?*', which focused on the downfall of theodicy and how it ultimately failed to explain the events of the Holocaust in the face of God's existence. The main points of the charter centred around the concept of anti-theodicy and highlighted how theodicy demonstrates a stark moral insensitivity and does not take suffering seriously, and how theodicy a perspective that is far too detached from reality. Theodicy also exhibits an irremissible moral blindness and often treats people as means, not ends in themselves. Finally, it was evident from the third chapter that theodicy adds to the evils that already exist in the world, in other words, by endorsing the justification of evil, we are in fact, just making things worse. The final portion of part one of the thesis drew upon the ideas of Karen Kilby, who aimed to show how Christ-Judeo theology doesn't need to construct a theodicy or ignore the problems theodicies address- theologians should just accept that there are questions you cannot answer and/or make sense of. Furthermore, the ideas of Michael Scott were also addressed, specifically those that state that theodicies allow evils to exist and that they often display moral blindness in their refusal to support possibility of unconditional evils. Thus, Scott concluded that theodicies fail to consider each individual instance of suffering. Finally, the discussion of anti-theodicy concluded with the thoughts of Kenneth Surin, whose stance on anti-theodicy is one that is favourable. For, Surin states that theodicies typically use abstract or depersonalised notions of evil, making them difficult to apply to real-life cases. He went on to say that

one can only appeal to the idea of a suffering God (one that suffers with us) as this shows that God wasn't inactive and passive in the face of the victims' pain, but that He felt it too and allows God to still be loving.

Overall, the third chapter outlined that theodicies have nothing to offer victims, for there is no comfort found in saying that a person's suffering will be countered by a greater good (morally insensitive). Therefore, we should turn our focus away from the ideas of trying to explain the Holocaust and instead focus on developing a new concept of God, whose attributes are more compatible with evil, yet who is still worthy of worship; perhaps a God whose characteristics have roots within scripture, but who also is compatible with modern adaptations of religious belief and philosophy. The final chapter thus helps guide the way into the second half of the thesis, which instead of focusing on explaining the problem of evil, it centres around Jewish thought on evil and the Holocaust, and how they can be reconciled with God, only if we accept that the God of the philosophers is incompatible, and in turn look to a new- old concept of God, who can be rooted in scripture and who allows for evil.

The second part of the thesis saw a shift in focus from the problem with evil and the issues it brings, as well as the attempts at solving the problem with the use of theodicy and the criticisms it faces, towards trying to find a new concept of God that is more compatible with the Holocaust. The fourth chapter thus shifted the attention towards Jewish thoughts on evil and what type of God would allow such evil and for what reasons. The chapter focused specifically on the Book of Job, a story within the Old Testament which tells the narrative of a man called Job, a devout follower of God and a good person with wealth, happiness and strong faith. Whilst Jews don't usually take the Book of Job literally, they do understand it to be allegorical i.e. it contains a hidden moral and meaning. The chapter then went on to discuss opinions and thoughts from different philosophers, including Maimonides who noticed that the story of Job never mentioned Job's intelligence and only ever talked about his goodness. Under this assumption, Maimonides argued that Job's suffering is not related to something evil he has done (in terms of punishment) but is rather related to his lack of understanding of God. Maimonides then went on to develop his ideas on wisdom by relating it to the

idea of divine providence, for he believed that divine providence is not the same as our notion of providence. In fact, we do not know what divine providence is. When relating this to the Book of Job, Maimonides stated that God tells Job that he is too limited to understand why things are the way they are. For me, the ideas of Maimonides, demonstrated how theodicy does not work, simply because our language and God's language is not the same. Gersonides is another philosopher that commented on the Book of Job, and similarly to Maimonides, he too believed that Gersonides also follows Maimonides' lead in the sense that he accepts that God's speech to Job emphasises the limitations of our human knowledge of providence. However, the overall message Gersonides takes from the Book of Job is slightly different from Maimonides interpretation and is the idea that one should never lose hope. He believed that Job can be used as a symbol of Jewish people and can represent their suffering and their questions about God and evil. In terms of the Holocaust, one could use the story of Job as a way of understanding why innocent people suffer and for what possible reason.

This followed nicely into the discussion of Job and suffering and how the narrative can be used to demonstrate the relationship between God and man in the face of evil, and in this instance, the Holocaust. For instance, the fourth chapter drew upon the ideas of Howard Wettstein who argued that the Book of Job gives us a new picture of our relationship with God and nature, including the idea that human values are not inherent; in other words, that justice is not a law of nature in this world; and that the world is not a place where any injustices are corrected. Likewise, Kenneth Seeskin argued that Job never denied God's existence and without God Job could not argue his case as there would be no one to correct his wrong or answer his questions. Therefore, it seems that God hasn't not existed but has instead hidden Himself from mankind temporarily. To sum up, the fourth chapter demonstrated that Job can be seen as both a survivor and a victim, who demands answers for his suffering, yet at the same time has to accept that all his questions may not be fully answered and that God cannot be held to our human standards. In a sense, this chapter allowed one to see how Job himself has become the spokesperson for Jews in a post-Holocaust world and has helped us in understanding the impact of the Holocaust within religion, ethics and philosophy. Moreover, the Book of Job has allowed us to confront the change

within Judaism post- Holocaust and people's relationship with God. This chapter laid the foundations for the following chapter which delved deeper into the ideas of Jewish thinkers in the aftermath of the Holocaust and how we could possibly reimagine our relationship with God in the light of such tragedy.

In chapter five, aptly titled '*Jewish Approaches to Evil*', the thesis followed on from the ideas within the previous chapter with a more dominant focus on attitudes within Jewish philosophy in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The beginning of the chapter followed from the ideas of Maimonides and justice, specifically drawing on the idea within Judaism that God is just but that good and evil are rarely justly distributed. The chapter debated the aspect of justice and what it actually involves, as well as different types of justice, such as granting people what they have the right to and giving people that which match their merits; the former referring to paying debts, whereas the latter referring to returning a pledge. The discussion then turned to Richard Rubenstein, who argued that a belief in a redeeming God i.e. a God who is active in history and who will bring about fulfilling ends, is no longer credible. In fact, Rubenstein's ideas called into question the need for a traditional, transcendent God, and in fact, he focused more on the idea of God and religion in an anthropological sense. This idea and other similar ideas came into play in the final chapter, when the idea of a new God following the Holocaust was developed.

Another important edition to this chapter were the thoughts of Jewish philosopher Elie Wiesel whose Book '*The Trial of God'* addresses Jewish opinions on their relationship with God in the aftermath of the Holocaust. In fact, this book, in which he puts God on trial for his crimes against humanity and creation, actually relates to Book of Job in the sense of justice. In fact, he stated that God could have prevented such an atrocity, however, since the Holocaust occurred, the very nature of God's character is questioned, especially His justice. Following on from this came the ideas of Emil Fackenheim, who contended that Holocaust most significant event in Jewish history and that Jews must respond to this tragedy by trying to reaffirm God's presence in history. Therefore, he argued that we must have faith after Auschwitz and states that those who abandon God are the biggest destroyer of Jews. However, he questions

whether our faith in God needs reimaging to better align with God after such tragedy. Similarly to Fackenheim, Emmanuel Levinas suggested that trying to justify the suffering of the Holocaust in a religious, ethical or political way is immoral and therefore rejected all forms of theodicy. Yet, John Roth, although agreeing that the Holocaust was immoral, it did give us the power to raise the right questions and ask ourselves what the meaning of our relationship with God in the face of this atrocity is. This fifth chapter paved the way for the final aspect of this thesis which aimed to show how we should instead focus on how to create a new concept of God that is not in conflict with the Holocaust, in a way that the God of the philosophers does, but who does allow for the existence of evil, not meaningless evil, but evil that exists for reasons we cannot understand.

The thesis concluded with the final chapter which aims to develop the thoughts and ideas and presented previously. As we saw in the chapters that preceded, the various attempts to try and solved the problem of evil are insufficient and it appears that there is no plausible way of justifying the suffering of innocent people. Furthermore, it seems much too grand a goal to want an answer that would satisfy everyone, for its not enough to find an answer that satisfies just one person. And so, the final chapter moved forward to draw attention to the ideas of Hans Jonas who focused on developing the concept of God after the events at Auschwitz. He indicated that the Holocaust is problem for Jews as it brings into question their whole faith and belief in God and therefore, we need to find a way forward to reconcile the existence of such evil, with a belief in a God, who is suffering, becoming and caring. Therefore, instead of trying to solve problem we should find practical way to move forward and reconcile the Holocaust with new concept of God. This new concept of God draws upon the ideas of Peter Geach who stated that a better alternative to the traditional term omnipotent (all-powerful), found within the definition of the God of the philosophers, would be Almighty; the latter being scripturally based while the former is not. Under Geach's ideas, God doesn't act without reason (He may however act for reasons we may not understand due to our finite knowledge) and so therefore we should not question Him, we should just accept that the world contains suffering and find ways to overcome and deal with it. Finally, the chapter drew upon the ideas of Ingrid Faro, who argued that we need a theologically authentic notion of God from the scriptures e.g.

the idea that God of Hebrew Bible is capricious and cruel, but who rarely acts without reason. Therefore, we need to abandon notion of God of Philosophers and find type of God that coincides with the events of the Holocaust i.e. God of Hebrew Bible, who is worthy of worship but who doesn't have the problems with omnipotence.

Throughout this thesis, it has been made evident that there is a problem with the problem of evil, specifically the Holocaust and its atrocities, and its compatibility with the God of the philosophers. Furthermore, any attempts at reconciling the problem of evil with a belief in God, namely through theodicy, have fallen short. Despite their various attempts, theodicies often miss the mark when trying to solve the problem of evil, as they fail to grasp the damage done to victims and often make their suffering depersonalised. There seems to be no theodicy worthy enough to justify the murder of six million innocent men, women and children, based on nothing more than a fabricated ideology.

It is evident that for the majority of Jews, the Holocaust caused a crisis of faith, hence why it is important to focus on maintaining a belief in God following the atrocities. The reason the Holocaust was used throughout this thesis as the example of evil, was not only because of its vast scale or because of the quantity of people it claimed the lives of, but rather because of the type of people it happened to. The Jews were systematically targeted because of a radical and ultimately fabricated ideology that wanted to eradicate people of a certain belief that did not align with the future of one nation. Above all else, the main dilemma is that the Jews (who were considered God's chosen people) were not protected by their creator and were seemingly punished at the hands of the Nazi perpetrators. Yet, despite the torture, suffering and senseless murder they endured as a collective, the majority of the Jews kept their faith in God to the end. As a result, this thesis demonstrated how in spite of their ordeals, Jews can still maintain a belief in God, even if this idea of God is somewhat altered from what is traditionally considered within Jewish philosophy.

The main contribution to knowledge therefore is one of hope in the darkness of despair. The thesis aims to offer hope to victims and a way forward with their belief in God, that

does not rely on the insensitivity and uselessness of theodicy. This thesis in a way offers a chance to reflect on the short comings of theodicy and highlight the ways in which theological texts, scripture and a move away from the idea of God found within philosophy and ideas can support the idea of a God which is more compatible with religion in the face of evil. It is important to note here that this project stemmed from a personal reflection of my own, particularly a crisis of faith following a troubling time in my life. Now, on no level am I comparing my hurt and despair to the suffering of the Holocaust, but it is important to stress here that within evil and suffering, no type of evil and no amount of suffering can ever be comparable to another- one instance of suffering for one person, may be equivalent in their eyes to the suffering of another. Therefore, when my own crisis of faith occurred, it allowed me to face religion head on and ask the difficult questions, in particular, what type of God would allow His own people to suffer? This developed into researching the Holocaust in relation to Judeo-Christian reflections and philosophical approaches, to further understand how God can be compatible with such evil.

The overall aim of this thesis has therefore illustrated that the traditional approach to the problem of evil, which has for centuries concentrated on the concept of the God of Philosophers, is a major issue when trying to reconcile the tragic events of the Holocaust with a belief in God. Instead, we focus on a new concept of God, derived from traditional concepts found within scripture, for example, the ideas of Peter Geach, who suggests that a better alternative to the traditional term omnipotent would be Almighty (the latter being scripturally based while the former is not). Likewise, once should take note of the ideas put forward by Ingrid Faro, who suggests that what people need in the face of evil, is a theologically authentic notion of God derived from the scriptures. As exhibited within her ideas and throughout the latter stage of this thesis, the examples of evil in the Bible indicate that the God of Hebrew Bible is now always perfect or kind, but who rarely acts without reason (or acts for reasons we may not understand within our finite realm of knowledge). This new – old concept of God thus combines the traditional aspects of God as found within scripture with other attributes such as Almighty, to allow a move away from the struggles found within the problem of evil and philosophy. Consequently, the thesis concludes that the only way to reconcile a belief in God following the Holocaust is to move away from this outdated

view of God that is not compatible with evil and instead place emphasis on the God of the Old Testament and ideas found within traditional Jewish thought.

Despite all attempts to show how an adapted concept of God can, on the majority, avoid the issues that pose the God of the philosophers within the problem of evil, the main focus remains- in that we cannot possibly find an answer to satisfy everyone and so any attempt to do so is futile. In other words, it is much too grand of a goal to demand an answer that would satisfy everyone, and it is not enough to find an answer that simply satisfies just one person. We should just accept there is evil and learn to find practical ways to deal with it, instead of trying to justify it. This for me seems to be the most personal approach to the problem that both allows for philosophical debate, but also theological reflection. It combines the philosophical ideas of anti-theodicy, with the theological concepts proposed by Geach and Faro.

The contribution of this thesis therefore is to combine the concept of anti-theodicy and the practicality it offers in the face of evil, with the idea that God should not be that which we have come to know within philosophy (God as all-powerful, all-knowing and perfectly good, known as the God of the Philosophers). The idea of theodicy should also be abandoned, and we should focus on approaching the difficult questions that the problem of evil raises in a practical way which offers solutions, not just more questions. The attributes and concept of God should be rooted within scripture (where the first image and understanding of God can be found) and we should understand God as He who is sometimes not perfect, may be considered capricious, but who never acts without just cause or reason. This God, who allows of the existence of evil as a privation of good, is personal and transcendent, and who is worthy of worship. This thesis offers a way forward in the aftermath of the Holocaust, not just for Jewish believer, but for believers who find themselves in a crisis of faith when confronting the unanswerable questions such as the problem of evil.

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