Reading *The Brothers Karamazov* in Burundi

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Abstract for thesis: Reading the Brother's Karamazov in Burundi- Tom Atfield
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An exploration of how theodicy fails to interact with concrete examples of life suffering. The legacy of the Rwandan genocide is examined through the lens of the 'protest theodicy' of Dostoyevsky's character Ivan Karamazov, which itself is based upon Dostoyevsky's observation of real life suffering as reported through the Russian press. While Ivan's protest claims to champion the consideration of innocent suffering, the judgment of this paper is that it does no better than traditional theodicy in countenancing the suffering found in history, and can provide no answer to, nor comfort for either survivors of the Rwandan genocide or any participant in other examples of 20th and 21st century horrors.

Tom Atfield

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"…evil is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be encountered and lived through. But for the spectator, just because he is not personally undergoing this suffering, but can reflect upon the fact that someone is undergoing it, the problem of evil inevitably arises."- John Hick[1]

Introduction

In 1999, aged eighteen, I read *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky. I read this novel in Burundi, where I witnessed the suffering of others.[2] The country's basic problem was civil war, which is best described in this terse note: "Rwanda, the sequel. Same story, different location. Nobody cares."[3] The well-publicised problems in Rwanda in 1994 didn't end, they went next-door. The only thing separating the problems of those two countries was the most heavily land-mined stretch of road on the planet. It was on this road, which was littered with the remains of vehicles and people, that I experienced the immediacy of 'the problem of evil'

I had hoped that the book I held in my hands on those lifetime-long hours on the road would resonate with my experience. Ivan Karamazov's accusation of the God who creates a world of atrocities seemed fuelled by an unflinching look at senseless, disteleological suffering. I had hoped that Ivan, with his face turned against God, could countenance the horror I saw. Karamazov's stance has been seen as the antithesis of theodicy,[4] which is the attempt to reconcile faith in God with the existence of evil. This antithesis seems to overcome the distance between the experience of real suffering and the account of that suffering given by academic theodicy. Ultimately, however, that distance remains. Dostoevsky's protagonist in his railing against God connects no more with the victims in this world than a writer of theodicy does with her defence of God.

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[1] John Hick, Evil and the God of Love (London: Fontana, 1968), p.10

[2] *The World's Most Dangerous Places* gave Burundi a five-out-of-five star rating in its late 1998 edition, which meant that it was classified in the category of "Hell on Earth. A Place where the longer you stay, the shorter your existence on this planet will be. These places combine warfare, banditry, disease, landmines and violence in a terminal adventure ride."[2] [Robert Young Pelton, Coskun Aral and Wink Dulles (Eds.), The World's Most Dangerous Places (Third Edition) (Redondo Beach, California: Fielding Worldwide, Inc., 1998), p.264] In its rating system, only three other countries earned this rating; Columbia, Sierra Leone and Somalia

[3] Op. cit., p.265

[4] John Roth calls Ivan's position an "anti-theodicy" [John Roth, 'A Theodicy of Protest', in Stephen T. Davis (Ed.), Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), p.19]

Chapter I: The failure of theodicy to countenance suffering

I.1 Theodicy- an answer to a question not asked

It is often assumed that the task of theodicy is to construct a universally binding answer to the problem of evil. Such an answer will, it is hoped, explain *all* suffering for *all* time[5]. An objection could be made that nobody has been able to give a universally binding answer to the problem of evil is because there is no actual question being asked. No singular question emerges out of suffering, yet theodicy attempts to construct a single answer. Using Alan Garfinkel's distinctions, Kenneth Surin in his book *Theology and the Problem of Evil* constructs an extremely helpful demonstration as to how theodicy thus fails in its attempt to respond to the questions raised by suffering. The highly 'theoretical' discourse of theodicy attempts to answer a question that is never asked:

> "... [in] the 'theoretical' approach, the implicit or explicit question being answered is 'Given that there is evil (*in general*), why does evil (*in general*) exist?' whereas for the victim..., the implicit or explicit question being asked is 'Why is *this* (specific evil) being done to *me/us* by *you/them, here* and *now*?'"[6]

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[5] This is reminiscent of Douglas Adams' satirising of the search for the answer to 'The Ultimate Question':

> "It was a long long time before anyone spoke. Out of the corner of his eye Phouchg could see the sea of tense expectant faces down in the square outside.
> "We're going to get lynched, aren't we?" he whispered.
> "It was a tough assignment," said Deep Thought mildly.
> "Forty-two!" yelled Loonquawl. "Is that all you've got to show for seven and a half million years' work?"
> "I checked it very thoroughly," said the computer, "and that definitely is the answer. I think the problem, to be quite honest with you, is that you've never actually known what the question is."
> "But it was the Great Question! The Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe and Everything," howled Loonquawl.
> "Yes," said Deep Thought with the air of one who suffers fools gladly, "but what actually *is* it?"
> [Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. (New York, Ballantine Books, 1980), p.182]

[6] Kenneth Surin, Theology and the Problem of Evil. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986), p.145-146, italics original

Most theologians are happy to accept the problem of evil as an intellectual puzzle to be solved, indeed "[t]he dominant academic approaches to evil and suffering primarily addresses theoretical issues of explanation and justification."[7] Evil however is not a philosophical, theological or even metaphysical abstract, it is an historical reality, something that concretely exists "...at particular times and in particular places..."[8] Evil is not an academic notion, it is something that happened in Cambodia in its 'Year Zero' (1975), Auschwitz in 1942-1945 and in Rwanda in 1994. To discuss evil is not to debate an abstract; it is to bear witness to "[t]he evil perpetuated in these places and at these times..."[9] Kenneth Surin claims that instead of bearing witness, theodicy removes the concrete, historical instances of suffering out of their historical contexts in order to provide some sort of overarching, universal reformulation of suffering. In doing this, the attempt to engage with suffering becomes instead an attempt to answer 'the problem of evil'. As a result, questions arising from concrete situations of suffering are not addressed.

I.2 The problem of providence

Instead of answering questions which come out of suffering, academic theodicy mistakenly attempts to "...slot occurrences of evil and suffering into a scheme of things consonant with the essentially rational workings of divine providence."[10] Any appeal to divine providence is problematic, especially when it is invoked to gloss over instances of suffering which seem to show the absence of a loving deity's design in the world[11], but it is foundational to many forms of theodicy. Leibniz's not only marked the beginning of a distinct intellectual discourse when he created the world ' *theodicy'* to describe his theological response to the Lisbon earthquake, but he also seems to have permanently imbued that discussion with the appeal to providence, believing that we live in the 'best of all possible world'[12]. The idea of God's providential design of the world as a defence of God is a weapon of choice to theologians, and is particularly favoured by John Hick.

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[7] Sarah K. Pinnock. Beyond Theodicy: Jewish Christian Continental Thinkers Respond to the Holocaust. (New York: SUNY, 2002), p.2

[8] Surin (1986), p.51

[9] ibid.

[10] Op. cit., p.53

[11] Richard Swinburne makes extensive use of the idea of divine providence in his own theodicy. [c.f. Richard Swinburne,. Providence and the Problem of Evil. (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1998)]His argument that God places limits on he amount of physical pain we can be subjected to by giving us the ability to become unconscious if we feel intolerable agony seems like a hollow platitude on the evidence of victims of torture and those with terminal

I.3 John Hick: The boundaries of the vale of soul-making

John Hick is perhaps the most well-known, and thus most discussed and criticised advocate of theodicy of the last fifty years. Hick is a lucid and erudite scholar, and he makes extensive appeals to the biblical text in composing his argument, which most theologians do not do. His formulation of the idea that the world is a 'vale of soul making' is a paradigmatic example of theodicy. He pays much credence to providence, consequentially believing that suffering can be fitted into a teleological framework.

Kenneth Surin believes that all theodicy attempts to provide a "...a *teleology* of evil and suffering..."[13], and Hick is exemplary in this respect. But if theodicy is an attempt to construct a teleology of evil, then it may be an impossible task as, according to Johann-Baptist Metz, "The least trace of meaningless suffering in the world we experience cancels all affirmative ontology

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diseases. On such grounds, Peter Vardy actually calls Swinburne's position 'obscene' [c.f. Peter Vardy, The Puzzle of Evil. (London: Fount, 1992)] The notion of a providential design to the world is challenged by the testimony of those who experience a reality in which both human acts and natural processes cause unrelenting and destructive pain.

[12] A phrase inferred from Liebniz's *Monadology*, but which is only a verbatim quotation from Voltaire's satirising of Liebniz as 'Dr. Pangloss' in *Candide.*

[13] Surin (1986), p.53

and *all teleology* as untrue…."[14] Echoing Metz, Sarah Pinnock claims that "…a major challenge to Hick's theodicy is the existence of disteleogical evil; evil ruthlessly destructive and damaging to persons…"[15]. It would seem that gratuitous non-teleological evil would split the earth of Hick's intellectual landscape. The 'vale of soul making' proposed by Hick is bearable as it is filled with teleological evil. The world however, seems more of a slough of despond than a vale, and some of the suffering witnessed in this place falls far outside of the bounds of Hick's domain. Because Hick insists that evil is teleological, it may be the case that he cannot address real-life suffering.

I.4 The history of theodicy: more of a bar room brawl than a debate

Hick's theodicy is an attempt to define himself over and against Augustine's reading of Genesis three. Augustine claims that evil and suffering are a result of the fall. Hick is a careful, but contentious reader of Augustine. To Hick, something does not ring true in Augustine's account of evil. He does not see Augustine as a true interpreter of the Genesis narrative, but rather as a re-interpreter of Genesis, with a re-interpretation which has imbibed "…pervasive presupposition[s] which he breathed in from the philosophical atmosphere of his time, dominated as it was by neo-Platonism."[16] It can be inferred from Hick that Augustine Platonises the Genesis narrative by making Adam and Eve fully culpable for their actions. While Irenaeus had previously viewed Adam and Eve as little more than children, Augustine portrays them as adults, fully culpable for the consequences of their actions: "To make the first parents responsible for original sin, Augustine demolished Irenaeus' idea that they were children…[a]fter Augustine, everyone considered them to be adults."[17] This 'demolishing' of Irenaeus is what Hick objects to, and what he wishes to undo with his own reading of Genesis.

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[14] Johann-Baptist Metz, 'The future in the Memory of Suffering', trans. John Griffiths, in Johann-Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann, Faith and the Future (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), p.9, my italics

[15] Pinnock (2002), p.6

[16] John Hick, Evil and the God of Love (London: Fontana, 1968), p.55

Hick wrestles with Augustine because he assumes that the bishop of Hippo is fighting Irenaeus. In assuming this, Hick is getting involved in the wrong fracas. Hick misidentifies Augustine's 'victim', as Augustine was actually struggling with the Irish monk, Pelagius. Joseph F. Kelly explains the reason for their quarrel: "Augustine felt that Pelagius did not make enough of divine grace in salvation…"[18] The reason given by Kelly for this is that Pelagius simply "…reflected the views of many monks that their rigid asceticism and mortification could take them back morally to the Garden of Eden."[19] Augustine's reaction against the view of Adam and Eve as children is because this optimistic view of humanity, which minimises humanity's deep complicity in evil, furnished Pelagius and his monastic peers with a false confidence in their ability to overcome evil. Augustine believed that deliverance from evil could only come through God, and not through monastic effort.

I.5. How Irenean is Hick's Irenean theodicy?

Believing that Augustine's target is Irenaeus, Hick counters with his own 'Irenean' theodicy. In this theodicy, Hick reads Genesis as evidence not of the fall of morally culpable adult beings, but as the interruption of "man's first condition [of] primitive simplicity…"[20] Although reading Irenaeus no doubt furnishes Hick with such a picture, this is not a theodicy as such, but rather only the conditions for a theodicy. Kenneth Surin criticises Hick when he states that Irenaeus' work: "...has absolutely nothing to do with [Hick's] kind of 'soul-making' or with anything resembling a theodicy."[21] Hick actually admits that this is the case, saying that "[w]e are thus not so much dealing with a continuous Irenean tradition of theodicy as with a type of theodicy, or a manner of theological approach to the subject."[22] In his insistence on naming his theodicy after Irenaeus, Hick is confusing 'a type of theodicy' with 'a manner of theological approach to the subject'. While Irenaeus may provide Hick with a setting for a theodicy, he does not provide the theodicy that Hick names after him. Hick uses Irenaeus' account of Genesis as the backdrop for an explanation of evil that is more an exercise in evolutionary monism than it is the exposition of a patristic writer's thoughts on theodicy. Hick's theodicy is more properly 'Hickian' than it is 'Irenean'.

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[17] Op. cit., p.57

[18] Kelly, Joseph F. The Problem of Evil in Western Tradition: From the Book of Job to Modern Genetics. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002), p.52

[19] ibid.

[20] He continues the description of newborn humanity: "…he is not set in a heavenly or paradisal state but in an earthly garden which he must tend; the snake is a snake and not a fallen angel, and there is no suggestion either of an inherited guilt or of a congenital tendency to sin." Hick (1968), p.209-210

I.6. Suffering within the vale of soul-making

Hick takes Irenaeus' paradisal garden and plants a theodicy in it. The presence of evil in the garden turns the space into a 'vale of soul-making' within which God's plan for the moral development of humanity can continue. Because of evil, the processes in the vale are more painful than those in the garden. Suffering is a part of this "...more difficult stage of God's creative work."[23] Through suffering, Hick believes that humanity can develop into the beings that God wishes us to be. This 'soul making' is hard work, but is apparently worth it, as "human goodness slowly built up through personal histories of moral effort has a value in the eyes of the

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[21] Surin (1986), p.18

[22] Hick (1968), p.245

[23] John Hick, 'The Vale of Soul-Making' Theodicy' in M. Larrimore, (ed.) The Problem of Evil: A Reader (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p.356

Creator which justifies even the long travail of the soul-making process."[24] Under this understanding of the good of suffering, evil is entirely teleological and purposive.

A major problem to Hick's understanding is that suffering is not always purposive or 'soul-making', and the evil encountered in the world is not always reconcilable to an intelligible and defensible teleology. The 'vale of soul-making' is not fully descriptive of the world in which suffering occurs, as it is the case that there is suffering which cannot be fit inside the teleology of the vale.

I.7 Suffering outside of the vale, part one: animal suffering

While Hick believes suffering is good for human growth, at the same time he neglects to seriously consider the problem caused by non-human suffering. The suffering of animals in the world, who do not benefit from soul-making, seems gratuitous and unnecessary. Animals suffer in the world, yet their suffering is not part of the vale of soul-making. Hick gives no real convincing explanation for the omission of animals in his theological account of suffering.

Hick criticises Augustine's theologising of animal suffering[25], but he does not even attempt to theologise animal suffering himself. All Hick does is turn to science to attempt to rationalise the good of animal pain:

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[24] Hick (1968), p.292

[25] Hick believes that Augustine implies "… that the vast mass of animal suffering is divinely arranged for our benefit…" Hick (1968)., p.91 He finds this deeply theologically unsatisfactory, as it "…implies a strikingly different conception of God from that of the heavenly Father who cares for the birds and flowers, and without whose knowledge not a sparrow falls." (ibid.)

> "…a realistic response to the problem of pain in the lower vertebrates and higher invertebrates will not deny that there is any such problem, but will claim that in so far as these lower animal do feel pain this occurs within the general system whereby organic life is able to survive, namely by reacting to its environment through a nervous system which steers the individual away from danger by means of pain sensations."[26]

Whatever its scientific lucidity may be, this is not a *theological* account of why animals suffer as they do. In failing to provide a theological account of animal suffering, he places animals outside of the vale of soul-making, and so exposes a serious weakness in his conception of the world.

I.8 Suffering outside of the vale, part two: the challenge of specific instances of suffering

Sarah H. Pinnock, writing on the Holocaust, accuses Hick of simply not paying enough attention to the specific instances of suffering which would create problems for his hypothesis of 'soul making'. Simply, some people suffer so much that Hick's assertion that suffering is part of a good plan by God seems ludicrous. Pinnock highlights well the problem that Hick's theodicy has with even countenancing general patterns of suffering, and the uneven distribution of suffering that blights the existence of some people and groups:

> "…his theodicy glosses over worst-case scenarios where suffering warps and destroys persons rather than fosters soul-making. He does not deal with how theodicy discourse functions in situations of suffering, nor does Hick give attention to the uneven distribution of suffering among groups, such as Jews or African Americans. Especially for such groups, to say that suffering is for the sake of moral training and faith building ignores the institutionalization of prejudice and violence against them and its lethal effects."[27]

Hick fails by providing a generalised account of suffering. The vale of soul-making is far too general to be able to deal with the specific instances of gratuitous, pointless suffering as experienced by countless numbers of people throughout history. Hick's is such a generalised picture that he cannot even recognise constantly recurring negative patterns in the world, such as institutionalised prejudice. It may be, however, that Hick does not want to recognise such patterns, as these ancient and well-trodden paths do not lead to some glorious teleological destination, but instead lead people outside of the vale on roads to nowhere. These veritable highways of evil are the blocked arteries of redemption, but Hick carries on believing that the world has a clean bill of health. With such obvious recurring examples of evil falling outside of the vale of soul-making, it is hard to imagine how Hick could then include the concrete sufferings of people because of such patterns. It would seem that there is no place within the vale of soul making for certain types of extreme and destructive suffering.

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[26] Op. cit., p.348-349
[27] Pinnock (2002), p.136

Chapter II: Ivan Karamazov

II.1 Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov

Fyodor Dostoyevsky's 1880's epic novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, as well as being a gripping tale of murder and familial and societal dysfunction, contains what Peter Vardy describes as "…the most effective attack against God ever produced."[28] Dostoyevsky, writing from his perennial concern that suffering can destroy[29] gives vent to his revulsion at the level of innocent suffering in the world through the unlikely character of Ivan Karamazov:

> "I mean to speak of the suffering of mankind generally, but we had better confine ourselves to the sufferings of children…[who] are innocent… if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth, then I protest that the truth is not worth such a price… I would rather remain with my unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, *even if I were wrong*. Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it is beyond our means to pay so much to enter. And so I must give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man, I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God I don't accept…only I must respectfully return Him the ticket…"[30]

Dostoyevsky uses Ivan to describe the needless brutality and cruelty exhibited towards children in Russian society. From grotesquely abusive parenting and the alleged atrocities committed by Turkish armies, to the murder of the children of peasants by landowners, Ivan's argument provokes a strong emotional response. Ivan takes such evidence to the point where he constructs an "anti-theodicy"[31] upon it- a rejection of any attempt to justify God along the lines usually given in theodicies. Ivan's argument is that children suffer terribly and needlessly, and that if this is the necessary price for a system of redemption to work in the world, then that system must be rejected as an obscenity.

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[28] Peter Vardy, The Puzzle of Evil (London: Fount, 1992), p.72

[29] Robert Bellnap argues that"…characters who suffer in Dostoevskii are morally and spiritually worse after suffering than before "[Robert L. Belknap, 'Dostoevskii and psychology', in W. J. Leatherbarrow (ed.), The Cambridge Companion To Dostoevskii (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.137]

[30] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, in The Bruderhof (eds.), The Gospel in Dostoyevsky (Farmington PA: Plough Publishing House, 1988), p.44-45, 55

[31] John Roth, 'A Theodicy of Protest', in Stephen T. Davis (Ed.), Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), p.19

II.2 Dostoyevsky against Ivan

It would be a mistake however, to confuse Dostoyevsky's infusion of his own horror at meaningless, destructive suffering with the conclusions developed by Ivan Karamazov. Dostoyevsky, a devout member of the Russian Orthodox church, would not have supported Ivan's 'rebellion' against God. I contend that Dostoyevsky intended for Ivan's use of real-life suffering to be found ultimately hollow- a false ideology hitching a ride off bleakest horror.

While Ivan uses evocative examples of suffering to build his intellectual rebuttal of theodicy, there is no particular evidence presented in *The Brothers Karamazov* that he takes the suffering of others seriously. Ivan may be simply playing an intellectual game. While Ivan uses the darkest irony to describe his scenes of horrific child abuse as "...Charming pictures..."[32], it is more ironic that through his lack of concern for suffering children, he gives no reason that they should be anything but 'charming pictures'. The sufferings of children to Ivan are quite simply useful examples for making a point.

There is truly little to distinguish Ivan's narrating the suffering of children from another speech made to Aloysha by Lise Khokhlakova later in the novel in which she reveals her desire to sit and enjoy eating pineapple dessert while a child is crucified for her entertainment. Here, the reader is put into the position of Aloysha. Hearing both Ivan and Lise's arguments, we may not find much difference in their voices. Dostoyevsky's voice, however, remains distinct from that of Ivan.

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[32] ibid, p.50

Others' suffering for Ivan remains solely an intellectual problem. Ivan does nothing to further the cause of suffering children. In fact, Ivan himself is the cause of much suffering, as his pseudo-intellectual rants inspire his half-brother, living as a servant in the Karamazov house, to murder their father. Despite all of Ivan's posturing that he will 'return the ticket' to God is some kind of ultimate suicidal act, he does nothing of the sort. Ivan's fate is a slide into dementia because of his complicity in parricide, where he imagines a conversation with the devil, who parrots Ivan's own rhetoric dressed in Ivan's clothes. The devil Karamazov meets is his own demonic mirror-image.

Dostoyevsky tries to show us that Ivan's rejection of suffering is not "...[f]rom love of humanity..."[33], but from his lack of love of humanity. Although Dorothee Soelle calls Ivan "...an atheist for love's sake..."[34], Ivan's real rejection is not of God for love's sake, but of love itself. Ivan's rejection of suffering, however magnificent an intellectual stance, is ultimately a rejection of humanity:

> "I must make you one confession," Ivan began. "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbours. It's just one's neighbours, to my mind, that one can't love, though one might love people at a distance. I once read somewhere of John the merciful, a saint, that when a hungry, frozen beggar came to him, he took him into his bed, held him in his arms, and began breathing into his mouth, which was putrid and loathsome from some awful disease. I am convinced that he did that in self-laceration, in a self-laceration of falsity, for the sake of charity

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[33] Dostoyevsky in The Bruderhof (eds.) (1988), p.55

[34] Dorothee Soelle, Suffering (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1975), p.175

imposed by duty, as penance laid on him. A man must be hidden for anyone to love him, for as soon as he shows his face, love is gone."[35]

Ivan is incapable of imagining having compassion; suffering with others out of a love for them. He concludes that "Christ-like love for men is a miracle impossible on earth."[36] It was not Dostoyevsky's intent to give Ivan the last word on the matter. Dostoevsky intends for Ivan to be refuted, and for his argument eventually to be found hollow.

II.3 Father Zossima and the refutation of Ivan

When Ivan pronounces the impossibility of Christ-like love he is making what at best is an ironic statement. The character of Father Zossima, his brother Aloysha's mentor, acts as a demonstration that, as far as Dostoevsky is concerned, Ivan is entirely refutable, and that Christ-like love is possible on earth.

Father Zossima does nothing to intellectually refute Ivan. Rather, "...what Dostoevsky is doing [is] offering 'an artistic picture, so to speak', instead of 'an answer point by point to the thesis previously expressed'."[37] This approach is entirely successful. Dostoevsky is able to refute Ivan's statement that Christ-like love is impossible through the hagiography that is Zossima's life.

Zossima is also able to provide at least an equally compelling protest against the mistreatment of children as Ivan:

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[35] Dostoevsky in The Bruderhof (eds.) (1988), p.43

[36] Op. cit., p.44

[37] Stewart R. Sutherland, Atheism and the Rejection of God: Contemporary Philosophy and *The Brothers Karamazov* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), p.86

> "In the factories I've seen children of nine years old, frail, rickety, bent and already depraved. The stuffy workshop, the din of machinery, work all day long, the vile language, and the drink, the drink- is that what a little child's heart needs? He needs sunshine, childish play, good examples all about him, and at least a little love. There must be no more of this, monks, no more torturing of children- rise up and preach that, make haste, make haste!"[38]

Zossima's impassioned appeals are grounded in as concrete examples of children suffering as Ivan's, and exhort others to help end suffering, while Ivan does no such thing. Zossima also ends with a call to action rather than the call to self-annihilation.

Zossima's radical conclusion born out of his life of compassion is that "...every one is really responsible to all men for all men..."[39] This responsibility is evidently not shared by Ivan, who demonstrates responsibility for no one. Opposed to this, Aloysha and Zossima practice "... an earthly *imitatio Christi* that involves solidarity with those who suffer."[40] In contrast to Ivan's unfruitful intellectualism, Zossima shows a response to evil that truly does take suffering seriously, by acting to stop the commission of evil. Ivan is the poor reversed-image of this, as he does nothing to stop evil, yet commissions parricide through his words. Dostoyevsky seems determined to help us to choose Zossima over Ivan. Ivan's story of The Grand Inquisitor should greatly help firm up our choice.

II.4 Ivan Karamazov's Grand Inquisitor

In Ivan's prosaic 'poem', Jesus arrives in Toledo during the height of the Inquisition. He is brought before the Grand Inquisitor, who proclaims to have corrected the work of Christ. The

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[38] Dostoevsky in The Bruderhof (eds.) (1988) p.241
[39] Op. cit., p.171
[40] Surin (1986), p.114

Inquisitor claims that the church has deliberately rejected Christ's challenge of freedom, and instead given people what they 'really' need- as symbolised by the temptations offered to Christ by Satan. Instead of the impossible challenge to freely follow God and to love, the church has instead offered an easier path of accepting an existence of placid servitude to authority. As the Inquisitor says:

> "Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering…Instead of taking possession of men's freedom, You increased it, and burdened the spiritual kingdom of mankind with its sufferings forever…they could not have been left in greater confusion and suffering that You have caused, laying upon them so many cares and unanswerable problems."[41]

Out of love for humanity, the church instead offers an easier existence in which the majority of humanity is left content in a kind of infantile dependence on its leaders, who are paradoxically the only victims of such a system: "For only we, we who guard the mystery, shall be unhappy. There will be thousands of millions of happy babes and a hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil."[42] For the sake of near-universal happiness, the knowledge of good and evil, and the freedom to choose between them, is taken from humanity to become the sole burden of a few ecclesiarchs.

It is difficult to know on whose side Ivan stands. Ivan, who believes that Christ-like love is impossible on earth, may be presenting the Inquisitor so we see Christ as only ultimately offering a foolish seduction by freedom. If Christ-like love is only an invitation to suffering, then it must be rejected. The vehemence of the Inquisitor's denial of the ability to follow Christ is fuelled by Ivan's own criticism: "Whom have you raised up to yourself? I swear, man is weaker and baser by nature than You have believed him! Can he, can he do what you did?"[43] Ivan sympathises fully with the Inquisitor's rejection of Christ. It is harder to see how fully Ivan endorses the Inquisitor. While D. H. Lawrence controversially identifies Ivan as the Inquisitor[44], it would be hard to see Ivan happily endorsing the burning of thousands of innocents in the name of love. Ivan allowing the Inquisitor to speak for him to reject Christ's offer of freedom is like using Hitler to denounce communism- it engenders a certain amount of guilt by association.

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[41] Dostoevsky in The Bruderhof (eds.), p.29

[42] Op. cit., p.36

II.5 George Steiner's Hitler

George Steiner's Adolph Hitler in *The Portage to San Cristóbal of A. H.*, has a terrifying resonance with Ivan's Grand Inquisitor. Hitler justifies the Holocaust using the same logic as Ivan's protagonist. He states that Christ's offer of freedom is nothing but a cruel torment of humanity as it is wholly unattainable. Like the Inquisitor justifying the Inquisition, Hitler justifies the Holocaust as being far less cruel in its destruction of a 'few', rather than letting all perish under the burden of Christ's offer of freedom:

"The white-faced Nazarene. Gentlemen, I find it difficult to contain myself. But the facts must speak for themselves. What did this epileptic rabbi ask of man? That he renounce the world, that he leave mother and father behind, that he offer the other cheek when slapped, that he render good for evil, that he love his neighbour as himself, no, far better, for self-love is an evil thing to be overcome. Oh grand castration! Note the cunning of it. Demand of human beings more than they can give, demand that they give up their stained, selfish humanity in the name of a higher ideal, and you will make of them cripples, hypocrites, mendicants for salvation. The Nazarene said that his kingdom, his purities were not of this world. Lies, honeyed lies. It was here on earth that he founded his slave church. It was men and women, creatures of the flesh, he abandoned to the blackmail of hell, of eternal punishment. What were our camps compared with *that*? Ask of man more than he is, hold before his tired eyes an image of altruism, of compassion, of selfdenial which only the saint or madman can touch, and you stretch him on the rack. Till his soul bursts. What can be crueller…?"[45]

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[43] Dostoevsky in The Bruderhof (eds.) (1988), p.31

[44] Lawrence contentiously states: "If there is any question: who is the Grand Inquisitor?- then surely we must say it is Ivan himself." [D. H Lawrence, 'Preface to Dostoevsky's *The Grand Inquisitor*', in René Wellek (ed.), Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p.90]

George Steiner's Hitler appears as an almost Nietzschean figure in his denunciation of the alleged hypocrisy of Christian morality. Ivan Karamazov, who shares this Hitler's rejection of Christ's offer of freedom, could either be compared to Hitler as a mouthpiece for terrible evil, or as a Nietzschean figure. While Hitler may be the darkest possible end-product of Neitzsche's logic, Ivan Karamazov may be just a man who has stared too long into the abyss, and has been consumed by its stare[46].

Kenneth Surin poses what is perhaps the most singularly interesting question about Ivan's 'rebellion'. He asks whether Ivan would maintain his position if he knew about Elie Wiesel's suffering during the Holocaust, whether "If, perchance, Karamazov were acquainted with Wiesel's narrative, would he still think himself justified in 'returning his ticket' to God?"[47] This is a pertinent question, as if Ivan fully endorses the logic of the Grand Inquisitor, he also endorses the Hitler of George Steiner. If however, Ivan only can fully endorse the Inquistor's, and Hitler's, rejection of Christ, not their subsequent murderous ideologies, then there is a fascinating avenue to be explored- the relation between Ivan Karamazov and Hitler.

In the play *Ivan and Adolf: The Last Man in Hell*, Stephen Vicchio posits a situation in which Ivan Karamazov finally learns about the Holocaust, and can confront Adolf Hitler. They meet, as the last two occupants of hell. In this infernal, eternal waiting room, what Ivan says to Adolf is this:

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[45] George Steiner, The Portage To San Cristóbal of A. H. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.165-166

[46] cf. Neitzsche's aphorism: "He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster. And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee..." [Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Helen Zimmern (http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext03/bygdv10.txt *The Project Gutenberg Etext of Beyond Good and Evil, by Friedrich Nietzsche*)]

[47] Surin (1986), p.119

> "You should make yourself comfortable, eternity is not long enough punishment for the likes of you...If He...really is omniscient and all good, then he will kick out the murders from Heaven and send them back here where they belong. In the meantime, I have hastened to give back my ticket. The only satisfaction I get while waiting is knowing that He had enough sense to keep "Mein Führer," here, exactly where he belongs."[48]

If Vicchio is right, Ivan would be wholly repulsed by Hitler. They do however remain the last two souls in Hell, and Vicchio posits that Hitler can eventually leave hell, while Ivan remains, perhaps eternally. Regarding Surin's question, Viccho replies that Ivan would still remain a rebel. While Ivan may not endorse either the Grand Inquisitor's or Hitler's murderous *reductio ad absurdum* of their rejection of Christ, he still remains linked through his sympathies to both Hitler and the Grand Inquisitor.

Dostoyevsky's own belief in the destructive power of suffering fuels Ivan Karamazov's passionate rejection of any theology which makes innocent suffering a necessary part of redemption. In doing so, the attempt to provide a teleology of suffering, as prevalent in theodicy and well-argued by John Hick, is forcefully argued against. On this matter, we would do well to listen to Ivan, as he is expressing Dostoyevsky's convictions, and has great moral force and integrity in his arguement. When Ivan then takes this appeal against suffering and uses it to bolster a rejection of Christ's offer of freedom and love, we should listen more cautiously. Ivan no longer speaks for Dostoyevsky. I believe he instead begins to let himself be spoken for by the architects of the Inquisition and the Holocaust by lending his voice to them. Dostoyevsky, did not intend for us to endorse Ivan at this point. Within the novel, and without, the life of Ivan Karamazov provides enough evidence that Ivan's conclusions should not be endorsed. While we may applaud Ivan for his impassioned refusal to let children suffer, and perhaps have compassion on him if we see him as a man who has stared too long into the abyss, we may have to finally leave him in the hell he creates for himself with the Inquisitor and Hitler.

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[48] Stephen Vicchio, Ivan & Adolf: The Last Man in Hell (Baltimore, Maryland: Woodholme House Publishers, 2000)' p.6

Ivan's voice may begin as the voice of compassion, but it ends as the voice of hell. His voice then, has little hope of helping me with the suffering I witnessed in Burundi.

Chapter III: The memory of suffering in the Holocaust

III.1 Dreams and our response to Holocaust suffering

Part of the legacy of being in Burundi for me has been in an increased propensity to dream about horror. Although I no longer suffer from nightly terrifying nightmares, as I did when I first returned from Burundi, my dreams are still disturbing. I have dreamt about the Holocaust. Even while writing this section, I dreamt that I was a visitor on a tour of Auschwitz. In my dream, upon arriving at the place, I was overcome by the sheer weight of horror that still seemed to hang in the air, and became unbearably conscious of the dehumanised, tortured and murdered human beings who must have died on the ground on which I stood. The very substance of the buildings, the ground and air seemed permeated with suffering. I collapsed to the ground, weeping for the horror that this place had witnessed. The other tourists with me simply stepped over my body and walked around unconcernedly and bored, looking for the gift shop[49]. This dream is perhaps illustrative of the emotional impact that engaging the horrendous sufferings of other human beings has on me, although theodicy does not often allow much room for the expression of such feelings.

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[49] Auschwitz, unbelievably, does have a gift shop. The apparent total incongruity and inappropriateness of this is best captured by an article I found on the site *Chicklit.com*: "Is there a gift shop at Auschwitz? That's not a rhetorical question. I'm not being facetious. I honestly don't know. I can't help wondering how global the impulse to capitalize on every tragedy is. Is it human nature, or is our consumerist culture as screwed up as I think it is? It's my understanding that it's possible to tour the death camps, and I'm sure it's a profoundly sickening and overwhelming experience. The only thing I can imagine wanting to walk into after such an experience is a place to sit down and cry and pray. But what I've seen of how Western culture commodifies every last thing naturally gives rise to fears that the tour ends in a shop (the profits from which would no doubt go to extremely worthy causes). And the shop, if one exists, probably sells books and videos about history and the Holocaust and Judaism. It couldn't possibly sell Auschwitz keychains and coffee mugs. It would only sell sensitive and appropriate items...right?"[49] [September 11, 2002 - is there a gift shop at Auschwitz? Viewed: April 2005] Auschwitz's gift shop, apparently only sells books. I am unsure if that softens the horror of its very existence.

There is a legitimate question raised by this dream of how we respond to the Holocaust. Disinterest would seem to be the worst possible response, and any activity in response to the Holocaust which seemed to involve what can only be described as a kind of intellectual voyeurism concerning the suffering of others is truly repulsive. Also, to use such suffering just to score a theological point could engender similar criticism. It would be hoped that, instead, responses to the Holocaust could do something to limit the further commission of such evil. Here, Ivan Karamazov's injunction against suffering seems comparable to Emil Fackenheim's response to the Holocaust.

III.2 Fackenheim and Frankel

Fackenheim's striking response to the Holocaust is to formulate a new commandment for Jews. This he does, in full knowledge of the posthumous impact of Hitler on Judaism. The Holocaust is devastating to Fackenheim, as it is as an event which permanently shatters the Biblical and Rabbinic idea of redemptive history, and continues to destroy in its ability to promulgate hatred towards Nazi persecutors and apathy towards God. In full knowledge of this, and to counter the continuing devastation of the Holocaust, Fackenheim commands:

> "Jews are forbidden to hand Hitler posthumous victories. They are commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. They are commanded to remember the victims of Auschwitz lest their memory perish. They are forbidden to despair of man and his world, and to escape either into cynicism or otherworldliness, lest they cooperate in delivering the world over to the forces of Auschwitz. Finally, they are forbidden to despair of the God of Israel, lest Judaism perish....In ancient times, the unthinkable Jewish sin was idolatry. Today it is to respond to Hitler by doing his work."[50]

In doing this, Fackenheim allows for the possibility of some kind of future for Jews. He creates the possibility of reconciliation and forgiveness by making space for God and the world, in doing so he forbids Jews from becoming lost in 'doing the work of Hitler'.

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[50] Emil L. Fackenheim, God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections (New York: New York University Press, 1970), p.84

Perhaps the theoretical response to the Holocaust that opens up the greatest space for life and hope is that of Viktor Frankel. Frankel's view of his experience of Auschwitz in *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* is ostensibly an attempt to find meaning in his suffering. For Frankel, life is ultimately made meaningful by love, and he denies even Auschwitz the power to take this meaning away from life. Any suffering, according to Frankel, can be endured if life is meaningful, and the task of enduring suffering itself can be a reason for living if no other is available. What is most remarkable about Frankel's affirmation of life is not his belief in the primacy of love, but rather the exclusory power that it has on revenge. Frankel said that simply, due to his love of life there was no room for thoughts of revenge to be harboured. Frankel's approach to finding meaning in suffering is entirely individualistic however. His approach cannot be used to make the suffering of others meaningful: "Frankel emphasises that only the individual can apply reasons or meaning to personal suffering. He would agree with Emmanuel Levinas that the suffering of the other is "useless" and that unjustified suffering should be resisted and not condoned by bystanders."[51]

In Fackenheim and Frankel, a space is created out of the concrete, historical evils of the Holocaust for a reflection on evil which allows them to overcome the destructiveness of suffering. These reflections are not attempts to answer the question of why suffering occurs, but to restrict the further commission of evil. It is with such reflections that literature born of the Holocaust is most powerful in responding to evil, rather than in its supposed usefulness as a provider of material in which theodicy can be found. Treating the Holocaust as just a storehouse of material from which to make points is obscene. It is concerning that Ivan Karamazov seems to use examples of the suffering of Russian children to a similar end. Many theologians do however use material describing holocaust suffering to score their own theological points[52]. The sheer graphic evil contained in accounts of the Holocaust would make such an appropriation of the sufferings of others seem grotesque. The evil of the Holocaust, for me, is perhaps best summarised by the following war crimes trial extract:

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[51] Pinnock (2002), p.137

> "*Witness*... women carrying children were [always] sent with them to the crematorium...The children were then torn from their parents outside the crematorium and sent to the gas chambers separately... When the extermination of the Jews in the gas chambers was at its height, orders were issued that children were to be thrown straight into the crematorium furnaces, or into a pit near the crematorium, without being gassed first.
> *Smirnov* (Russian prosecutor) How am I to understand this? Did they throw them into the fire alive, or did they kill them first?
> *Witness* They threw them in alive. Their screams could be heard at the camp. It is difficult to say how many children were killed in this way.
> *Smirnov* Why did they do this?
> *Witness* It was very difficult to say. We don't know whether they wanted to economise on gas, or if it was because there was not enough room in the gas chambers."[53]

When faced with this, Alan Greenberg writes: "No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children."[54] His injunction should be universally heeded by anyone discussing the Holocaust, yet it seems greatly ignored by theologians, who freely use material like the account of children being systematically burnt to death in their work. Sarah Pinnock helpfully elaborates on Greenberg's injunction for theologians: "I understand Greenberg's statement as having two distinct implications: (1) theodicy is inappropriate in the actual presence of such suffering (at the time it occurs), and (2) it is inappropriate to project theodicy onto such a situation after the fact."[55]

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[52] For example, Richard Swinburne's *Providence and the problem of evil;* all of the contributors (except David R. Griffin) to *Encountering Evil: Live options in theodicy*; Michael L. Peterson invokes Auschwitz on the first page of *God and Evil: An introduction to the issues*; John Roth unforgivably uses his co-editorship of *Genocide in Rwanda: The complicity of the churches* as a platform for discussing Jewish suffering; Dorothee Soelle uses the Holocaust to talk about responses to the Vietnam war in *Suffering*; John G. Stackhouse, Jr. uses Elie Wiesel's memory to bolster a theological argument in *Can God be trusted*; and these are just a few random selection from the numerous books on evil from a nearby bookshelf.

[53] Surin (1986), p.147

[54] ibid.

III.3 The theologising of Elie Wiesel's memory

Disregarding Pinnock's injunction, theodicy is projected heavily onto stories of suffering from the Holocaust. The story of a child hanged by the S.S. in Elie Wiesel's *Night* demonstrates this process:

> "One day when we came back from work, we saw three gallows rearing up in the assembly place, three black crows. Roll call. SS all round us, machine guns trained: the traditional ceremony. Three victims in chains- one of them, the little servant, the sad-eyed angel... All eyes were on the child. He was lividly pale, almost calm, biting his lips. The gallows threw its shadow over him... 'Where is God? Where is He?' someone behind me asked...At a sign from the head of the camp, the three chairs tipped over...Total silence throughout the camp. On the horizon the sun was setting...Then the march past began. The two adults were no longer alive....But the third rope was still moving; being so light, the child was still alive... Behind me, I heard the same man asking: 'Where is God now?' And I heard a voice within me answer him: 'Where is he? Here He is- He is hanging here on this gallows...'"[56]

According to Thomas Winandy, it is Jürgen Moltmann who first theologises this moment[57]. From this moment onwards, this passage ceases to be the record of Wiesel's specific historical answer to the question as to where God was to be found during a brutally concrete and specific moment in history, and instead becomes an anecdote about the suffering of God. The subject of this passage ceases to be a child being hanged, but a God who suffers. Because this event is removed from the context of Wiesel's narrative, its meaning is entirely changed, and in this case seem entirely lost on the numerous authors who repeat his story. The specific suffering that Wiesel witnesses becomes irrelevant, one example amongst many used to build an answer to 'the problem of evil'.

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[55] Pinnock (2002) p.136

[56] Elie Wiesel, 'Night', trans. Stella Rodway in Elie Wiesel, Night, Dawn, The Accident: Three Tales (New York: Hill and Wong, 1972), p.71-72

[57] cf. Thomas G. Winandy, "Does God suffer?" in First Things 117 (November 2001, pp. 35-41)

Not unlike one of the 'pictures' of children's suffering that Ivan Karamazov reels off in a speech over dinner, the horror of this event becomes lost, eclipsed by the academic argument it is used to merely bolster. Ultimately, the suffering of a child becomes a means to a end. Ironically, that end is usually an academic argument about how the ends justify the means. Johann-Baptist Metz argues that the memory of suffering should prevent us from reading history as either "...a mere background for occasional festive interpretation of our existence, or merely as distanced material for historical criticism."[58] That Soelle seems to be able to step over the actual suffering of a child to make a point about the suffering of God seems to show some kind of forgetting of that child's suffering, if Metz is right about memory.

Once Wiesel's story is claimed by the discourse of theodicy, his own response to his sufferings is silenced. It may come as a great surprise to us, both as English-language readers of *Night* and as people engaged to some extent with theodicy that Wiesel is not engaged in theodicy. Naomi Seidman, after comparing Wiesel's original Yiddish manuscript of Night with its English translation, notes that "Wiesel redirected his rage from Germans to an existential quarrel with God..."[59] Wiesel is not interested in constructing a theodicy; he is interested in revenge.

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[58] Metz in Metz and Moltmann (1995), p.8

[59] Ron Rosenbaum, Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of his Evil. (New York: HarperPerennial, 1999), p.361

Wiesel's own vehemence is not hidden, as he writes openly of his hate: "I began to hate them, and my hate is still the only link between us today."[60]

In the Yiddish manuscript of *Night*, Wiesel is more vocal in his rage, and he apparently writes vengeance-filled statements against his persecutors, and tells of his disappointment that those who suffered like himself did not take their revenge on (often, their fellow) Germans after the war, writing that "[t]he historical commandment to revenge was not fulfilled"[61]. This, in itself is not shocking, as Holocaust literature can be used for such an agenda. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's controversial recent bestseller, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, has been described as an exercise in "displaced revenge"[62] Wiesel's desire for revenge, his unforgiveness and hate, is fuelled and constantly re-affirmed by his memory of his suffering, which he vows never to forget.

III.4 Elie Wiesel's dangerous memory of suffering

> "Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life in one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.
>
> Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.
>
> Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never."[63]

This memory of suffering fuels Wiesel's refusal to forgive. With such a strong vein of unforgiveness running through Wiesel's response to the Holocaust, we may agree with Miroslav Volf that "...the memory of exclusion suffered is itself a form of exclusion."[64] Because of his memory, Wiesel has only hate as the link between himself and his persecutors. It would be hoped that this could change. Volf argues that being rid of the memory of suffering is the only way that suffering can be overcome, and forgiveness to occur. While Volf may be seen to be advocating a kind of amnesia, he is actually presenting a more nuanced position; he is not advocating for the past to go up in smoke, but rather that we will have no reason to recall our memories of suffering:

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[60] Wiesel in Wiesel (1972), p.28-29
[61] Rosenbaum (1999), p.360
[62] ibid.
[63] Wiesel in Wiesel (1972), p.43
[64] Volf (1996), p.132

> "…memories of evil will *not come to mind* for the citizens of the world of love… *not coming to mind* describes the freedom from these troubling memories surfacing to consciousness. If one made up one's mind to remember, one could presumably remember. But I suggest that we will neither need nor desire to do so. 'Not coming to mind' is therefore not best described as *forgetting*."[65]

It would seem that such a situation sits in sharp contrast to that of Wiesel's, though. In Wiesel's account of the Holocaust it seems almost impossible not to remember the evil we have personally suffered.

Johann-Baptist Metz would disagree with Volf that not remembering evil is essentially a good process. Metz advocates an understanding that seems less incompatible with Wiesel's memory. Remembering evil is vital as it prevents such evil from happening again. Wiesel's memory of suffering is important to the world; without the testimonies of the survivors of the holocaust it is conceivable that the horror suffered by millions would remain hidden, unexorcised, and unconfronted. And without the confrontation of an evil, it can be argued that it could never be forgiven. Even if non-remembering is the best possible end for us, it is vital that we first remember before we ‘forget’. Volf, in fact, states “...remembering does much more work for us as humans than forgetting.”[66]

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[65] Miroslav Volf, Memory of Evil in the World of Love: A Thought Experiment (unpublished manuscript), p.7

Metz seems to advocate remembering because forgetting is far more fraught with danger. An impoverished or selective memory of suffering can allow great evil, as we need these memories to identify evil so we can confront it when it next appears. But Metz concedes that the memory of suffering is indeed dangerous, as well as beneficial. Memory can foster almost a prerogative of revenge: “...there are dangerous memories, memories that make demands on us.”[67] Wiesel’s testament in *Night* demonstrates this danger. Memory is dangerous as while forgetting allows evil to flourish by sins of omission, evil remembered can lead to the commission of new evils.

While Metz acknowledges that the further commissioning of evil is a danger of memory, he does not acknowledge the destructive power of memory over those who remember. Volf advocates non-remembering because the memory of evil is damaging to people, as “[a] remembered wound is an experienced wound.”[68] That Metz makes no such acknowledgement of the pain that memory can cause engenders some sharp criticism from Sarah H. Pinnock. She asks whether the duty of remembrance is worth the negative effect that those memories can have on the lives of those who keep them:

> “Is the memory of suffering helpful for victims? Metz assumes so, but he does not consider that memories of suffering may discourage or enrage victims, or that an obsession with such memories may block recovery from the trauma of past horrors.”[69]

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[66] Op. cit., p.8
[67] Op. cit., p.7
[68] Volf (1996), p.132
[69] Pinnock (2002), p.111

Pinnock's criticism of Metz seems justified. While remembering suffering seems almost necessary to prevent the dangers of forgetting, the cost of bearing witness to suffering is almost too great for those who remember. The benefits of Wiesel's testimony about the evil of the Holocaust to the world do not justify his life becoming an endless night. That Metz can tacitly affirm burdening Wiesel with his memories may indicate that he may not appreciate the real burden of memory, or the real horror of the events remembered. Pinnock criticises Metz for this apparent failure to understand how terrible the memory of suffering truly is:

> "Metz's reflection on Holocaust victims and the role of dangerous memory remains entrapped in bourgeois assumptions. Metz employs memory to see suffering through the victim's eyes. But his theological approach assumes the gaze of someone who is privileged and not enmeshed in suffering. For the middle-class person who remembers, memory is dangerous because it provokes socioeconomic critique and protest. On the contrary, from a victim's position, the memory of suffering may merely reproduce the painful symptoms of trauma and bear destructive psychological consequences."[70]

The memory of suffering can be entirely destructive. It can also be positive. Pinnock believes that for Elie Wiesel, the memory of suffering can provide a meaning to his suffering, which allows for the creation of a good which would not be present if Wiesel had no memory of his suffering:

> "As Elie Wiesel and other Holocaust writers have articulated, concentration camp suffering appears retrospectively as meaningless and useless in itself, rather than purposive...However, the memory of suffering (not the suffering itself) may be meaningful for victims, when shared as a witness to the terrible scars and ruptures found throughout history."[71]

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[70] Op. cit., p.110

[71] Op cit., p.112-113

While Pinnock makes a good point, that suffering can be made somewhat purposive through memory, in the case of Elie Wiesel the purpose that the memory of suffering is harnessed for is revenge.

With such a negative outcome from Wiesel's memory of suffering, it would seem that best thing for sufferers is that their memories lay at rest, unremembered. While the memory of suffering can be beneficial, in that it provides a witness to suffering, it seems all too capable of birthing new suffering. This is in the form of trauma for those who remember, and for their audience. It can also lead to the commission of new suffering from that memory, in terms of Wiesel's command to revenge.

The judgement of Miroslav Volf on memory seems the most fitting comment on Wiesel's testimony: "…if we must remember wrongdoings in order to be safe in an unsafe world, we must also let go of their memory in order to be finally redeemed…"[72] Volf's openness to the possibility of forgiveness as a final response to evil is encouraging,[73] as Elie Wiesel's resounding 'Never' also becomes a 'never' to forgiveness and reconciliation.

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[72] Volf (1996), p.131-132

[73] Volf's reflection on evil demonstrates a hopeful trend in responses to evil. Although the examples of responses to evil previously discussed in this essay are completely unique, as they are in response to greatly different concrete instances of evil, the attempt in theodicy to bring all of these responses into dialogue with each other is not futile. While it is misleading to try and make these texts fit into some kind of a-historical abstract 'solution' to evil, as theodicy would try, they can interact in that they note a trend of change in response to historical evils. While this may just be an optimistic reading of these texts, it would seem that in the period between the Ivan Karamazov and the responses to the political massacres in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, there is a hopeful trend towards responses to evil which are able to transcend the call for justice and revenge, and which instead open up a route into a hopeful and good vision of the future through forgiveness and reconciliation. This is not a universal trend though, nor does it note the arrival at some kind of final, enlightened, intellectual destination. Just as there is no 'answer' to the problem of evil, there is no single response to a concrete evil that can stand as a universal response to either that evil, or all evil.

Thus, despite Volf's laudable response to evil in *Exclusion and Embrace*, his work does not mark an entirely satisfactory response to evil. What his work represents is a response to evil that allows for much hope for the future.

III.5 *The Sunflower*, and the possibility of forgiveness

Another recollection of the Holocaust, by Simon Wiesenthal also speaks negatively of the possibility of forgiveness. In *The Sunflower*, the moral stance of Ivan Karamazov that nobody has the right to forgive on another's behalf, is articulated by Wiesenthal's exploration of the question of who can offer forgiveness to the Nazis on behalf of their victims.

Simon Wiesenthal tells of a meeting between himself as a Jew and a dying German soldier, who wishes to confess to his own part in the Holocaust. Wiesenthal listens to the soldier, but offers nothing that can be construed as forgiveness or absolution. Part of this is because of the conditions the two men find themselves in. To some extent one man cannot forgive the other because they are in a situation where neither 'confessor' nor 'penitent' is considered to be human. Wiesenthal's encounter is one where "…a defenceless sub-human, had contrived to lighten the lot of an equally defenceless superhuman…"[74]

There are no symbols which can be found to draw together the two men. Everything around them highlights their division. The title of the book, *The Sunflower*, refers to this insurmountable gap, as it refers to the flower which will be reverently placed upon the grave of the dying German soldier, whereas Wiesenthal can only look forward to a place in a mass grave. Even in death,

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Tempering this however, is Volf's less than hopeful reading of Revelation, in which he clearly sets limits on what can be done to overcome evil. Using the typology of human evil in Revelation, in which people act as both 'beasts' and 'false prophets', he states that "…*nothing* is potent enough to change those who insist on remaining beasts and false prophets." [Volf (1996), p.297] Like the demand for justice of Ivan Karamazov which keeps the universe waiting for hell to be emptied of its last occupant, Volf's granting of this form of absolute power to those who wish to side with evil shuts down any hope for a universal reconciliation.

[74] Simon Wiesenthal, The Sunflower, trans H. A. Piehler (London: W. H. Allen, 1970), p.41

Wiesenthal is in a situation which robs him of his humanity, creating a gulf between him and the soldier. Wiesenthal writes:

> "…I envied the dead soldiers. Each had a sunflower to connect him with the living world, and butterflies to visit his grave. For me there would be no sunflower. I would be buried in a mass-grave, where corpses would be piled on top of me. No sunflower would ever bring light into my darkness, and no butterflies would dance above my dreadful tomb."[75]

Wiesenthal's penitent will eventually receive a sunflower, but he will not receive forgiveness. Wiesenthal tries to find the humanity within the soldier to which he could anchor his forgiveness, but he can say nothing to comfort the man. He asks "…what could I say? Here was a dying man-a murderer who did not want to be a murderer but who had been made into one by a murderous ideology."[76] The man is not a monster to Wiesenthal, and even the soldier's corruption by Nazism does not make him somehow irredeemably evil. Wiesenthal does not blame his sufferings just on the demonise-able figure of 'The Nazi', saying "…I asked myself if it was only the Nazis who had persecuted us. Was it not just as wicked for people to look on quietly and without protest at human beings enduring such shocking humiliation?"[77] The invocation of humanity, even if it is to condemn it, is one of two positive moves Wiesenthal makes to overcome his circumstance and grant the dying German soldier some basic semblance of human nature. The other is his later visit to the soldier's mother. By avoiding characterising him as a 'Nazi', or in some other way as to rob him of humanity, Wiesenthal is almost able to do the impossible and acknowledge that some sort of human encounter is possible between himself and the soldier. From this, he is able to write that "Two men who have never known each other had been brought together by Fate. One asks the other for help." However, Wiesenthal concludes this description of their meeting but saying that "But the other was himself helpless and able to do nothing for him."[78]

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[75] Op. cit. ,p.20

[76] Op. cit., p.57

[77] Op. cit., p.60

The helplessness Wiesenthal confesses is caused by more than his own dehumanisation. There is a hard moral question that Wiesenthal faces when he listens to the German soldier: whether he has the right to forgive him. Wiesenthal may not wish to offer his own forgiveness to the soldier, and he asks: "He sought my pity, but had he any right to pity? Did a man of his kind deserve anybody's pity?"[79] No pity is ultimately given to the soldier. Wiesenthal walks away.

Informing this scenario is a far more difficult debate; whether or not the soldier deserves forgiveness, there is a question as to whether Wiesenthal himself has any right to forgive him, as the soldier's actions have been injurious to others, not himself. Returning after his visit to the soldier, the author is confronted by another camp inmate who states that Wiesenthal has no right to forgive the dying solider:

> "...I feared at first, that you had really forgiven him. You would have had no right to do this in the name of the people who had not authorised you to do so. What people have done to you yourself, you can, if you like, forgive and forget. That is your own affair. But it would have been a terrible sin to burden your conscience with other people's suffering...You have suffered nothing because of him, and it follows that what he has done to other people you are in no position to forgive."[80]

This is reminiscent of the position of Ivan Karamazov, who forbids anybody, even God, the right to forgive on behalf of another:

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[78] Op. cit., p.58
[79] Op. cit., p.53
[80] Op. cit., p.68

> "I don't want the mother to embrace the oppressor who threw her son to the dogs! She dare not forgive him! Let her forgive him for herself, if she will, let her forgive the torturer for the immeasurable suffering of her mother's heart. But the sufferings of her tortured child she had no right to forgive; she dare not forgive the torturer, even if the child were to forgive him! And if that is so, if they dare not forgive, what becomes of harmony? Is there in the whole world a being who would have the right to forgive and could forgive?"[81]

Wiesenthal offers no strong rebuttal to the fellow prisoner who forbids him to offer forgiveness to the German soldier. In doing so he agrees with Ivan, who issues a call for a justice that shuts down the possibility of forgiveness and of reconciliation. Ivan's denial of forgiveness is persuasive rhetoric, and is an articulate response to suffering. In being articulate, it is problematic as the language of suffering is inarticulate.

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[81] Dostoevsky in The Bruderhof (eds.) (1988), p.55

Chapter IV: The Language of suffering

IV.1 The (anti)language of the night

There is a question as to what extent an articulate response such as Ivan's would be a real engagement with suffering, as it would seem that what comes out of suffering is not an orderly, articulate discourse. For a person to talk coherently about their suffering is a mark that a lot of healing has already been undertaken. To hear about the suffering of others also requires some movement from our own immediate moments of suffering. The immediate language of suffering is inarticulate, being the raw expression of pain consisting of cries and screams. Elie Wiesel, writing on the language of the Holocaust, states that the expression of immediate suffering bears so little resemblance to the language of normal discourse that it is a 'language of night', a hidden, nocturnal reversal of the sounds of speech:

> "...the language of the night was not human, it was primitive, almost animal- hoarse shouting, screams, muffled moaning, savage howling, the sound of beating... This is the concentration camp language. It negated all other language and took its place."[82]

These utterances seem to be an inverted-language, an 'anti-language'. It does not seem to be coincidental that George Steiner attributes similar properties to the speech of Hitler in *The Portage to San Cristóbal of A. H.* Steiner describes the relation between the words of Hitler and normal language as like the relationship between "'Matter and antimatter.'"[83] He is aware that a similar relationship also exists in the relationship between the language of concentration camps and positive language. He leaves the explanation of the perverse evil of Hitler to a concentration camp survivor, Lieber, who portrays "'...the hideous pathos of the death camp victims in maimed and fragmented sentences…"'[84] In the novel, the arch Nazi-hunter Lieber gives this account of the evil power of Hitler's words:

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[82] Wiesel in Surin (1986), p.146

[83] Steiner in Rosenbaum (1998), p.307

> "All that is God's, hallowed be His name, must have its counterpart, its backside of evil and negation. So it is with the Word, with the gift of speech that is the glory of man and distinguishes him everlastingly from the silence or animal noises of creation. When he made the Word, God made possible also its contrary. Silence is not the contrary of the Word but its guardian. No, he created on the night side of language a speech for hell…there shall come a man whose mouth shall be as a furnace and whose tongue as a sword laying waste. He will know the grammar of hell and teach it to others. He will know the sounds of madness and loathing and make them seem music."[85]

This evil is like a pervasive, destructive nothingness, a leak of anti-creational waste and void into the world. Yet at the same time it is like the lyre of Orpheus being plucked; Hitler's destructive words were spellbinding as well as destructive. The speech of the Holocaust, even when it is coherent is not real language. The words of the Nazis in their destructiveness, are not so much a human language, but a method by which evil is done. Wiesel demonstrates the power of speech as a tool of unimaginable suffering with his account of how his mother was sentenced to death:

> "A noncomissioned officer came to meet us, a truncheon in his hand. He gave the order: "Men to the left! Women to the right!" Eight words spoken indifferently, without emotion. Eight short, simple words. Yet that was the moment when I was parted from my mother."[86]

Coherence does not take speech out of the realm of the language of night. In fact, the coherence of speech in this case belongs to the agents of evil, and the inarticulate sounds of suffering belong to their victims. Both patterns of articulate and inarticulate speech are caught up in the pervasive vortex of malfeasance. Concentration camp language is destructive of humanity to the point where Wiesel can only attribute human speech to a prisoner in charge he meets long after his arrival in the concentration camp, who, in his kindness, speaks to him "..[t]he first human words..."[87] he hears.

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Steiner (1999), p.45
[86] Wiesel in Wiesel (1972), p.28

The eloquence of the cadences and tones of Hitler's addresses would not be considered human speech by Wiesel. Hitler's words jerked the strings that moved the not unwilling marionettes of Nazis. He provided the overture that orchestrated the Holocaust. This cadent linguistic darkness is irresistible, according to Steiner, and functions as an explanation of the power Hitler had to create the abyss. He created the anti-language of Auschwitz out of his own irresistible speech. The word became burning flesh. Hitler's speech is still considered powerful even to those who have already been ravaged by its evil. In Steiner's novel, Lieber instructs the Nazi-hunters tracking Hitler to not listen to Hitler for fear of him overcoming them with the power of his language: "You must not let him speak...Gag him if necessary, or stop your ears... If he is allowed speech he will trick you..."[88]

Stopping one's ears against evil may seem to be a commendable course. To repeat Nietzsche's aphorism, "[h]e who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster. And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee..."[89] would seem the perfect injunction against listening to the 'anti-words' of evil. It would seem that the words creating evil, and any immediate words in response to evil exist as a sort of twilight antithesis to language. The language of evil and the 'language of the night' are perilous, as evil often begets evil and suffering births suffering.

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[87] Op. cit., p.50
[88] Steiner (1999), p.44
[89] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Helen Zimmern (http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext03/bygdv10.txt *The Project Gutenberg Etext of Beyond Good and Evil, by Friedrich Nietzsche*)

IV.2 The language of 'victim' and 'agent'

In the wordless vortex of evil, perpetrators and victims become indistinct. Elie Wiesel indicates this graphically in *Night*, with the story of a son killing his father over a piece of bread:

> "A crowd of workmen and curious spectators had collected along the train. They had probably never seen a train with such a cargo. Soon, nearly everywhere, pieces of bread were being dropped into the wagons. The audience stared at these skeletons of men fighting one another to the death for a mouthful.
>
> A piece fell into our wagon. I decided that I would not move. Anyway, I knew that I would never have the strength to fight with a dozen savage men! Not far away I noticed an old man dragging himself along all fours. He was trying to disengage himself from the struggle. He held one hand to his heart. I thought at first he had received a blow in the chest. Then I understood; he had a bit of bread under his shirt. With remarkable speed he drew it out and put it to his mouth. His eyes gleamed; a smile, like a grimace, lit up his dead face. And was immediately extinguished. A shadow had just loomed up near him. The shadow threw itself upon him. Felled to the ground, stunned with blows, the older man cried:
>
> 'Meir. Meir my boy! Don't you recognize me? I'm you father… you're hurting me… you're killing your father! I've got some bread… for you too… for you too…"
>
> He collapsed. His fist was still clenched around a small piece. He tried to carry it to his mouth. But the other one threw himself upon him and snatched it. The old man again whispered something, let out a rattle, and died amid the general indifference. His son searched him, took the bread, and began to devour it. He was not able to get very far, Two men had seen and hurled themselves upon him. Others joined in. When they withdrew, next to me were two corpses, side by side the father and the son."[90]

Kenneth Surin believes this story "…illustrates with an unbearable poignancy the truth of Wiesel's claim that he who is the victim can simultaneously be the executioner…"[91] The convergence of ideas between Wiesel and Steiner, invoking a concept of 'anti-language' to describe both evil and the response to evil could demonstrate the blurring of categories of agent and victim of evil.

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[90] Wiesel in Wiesel (1972), p.105-106

[91] Surin (1986), p.121

If such indistinctness is created by the 'anti-language' of suffering, the attempt to neatly package the phenomena of suffering in wholly mutually exclusive categories of 'agents' and 'victims' of evil does not work in every circumstance. In this circumstance, 'agent' and 'victim' are not mutually exclusive. In Wiesel's account of the boy hanged by Nazis, they are. The Holocaust contains both examples of when 'agent' and 'victim' are discrete, and when they are blurred. Theological reflection fails to take these accounts of suffering seriously when such reflection assumes a singular picture of who the 'agents' and 'victims' of Nazism were.

What may be needed instead is a listening to the 'anti-words' of those who suffer, be they 'agents' or victims', and for academics to try and listen to the 'antimatter' and the 'night' language of suffering. If philosophers of religion could engage with these sounds then perhaps it would be possible to provide an answer to those in pain.

IV.3 Ivan and the language of suffering

Ivan Karamazov's protest about suffering works on articulate examples of suffering, from which he formulates an articulate response. From the evidence of Wiesenthal and Wiesel, it would seem that the suffering described in the Holocaust begins with what cannot be fully described. Ivan's response cannot connect to this; it is beyond his power to respond to the inarticulate sounds of raw suffering. For suffering to be made wholly articulate requires both time and distance, and it is only this distanced response that Ivan can countenance in his argument. It takes much time, healing and reflection for anybody to talk coherently about their pain, and thus, for anyone other than the sufferer themselves, there is automatically a distance imposed between an account of experienced suffering and that raw suffering itself. That distance means that Ivan cannot speak to the raw suffering itself, only to the subsequent report on that suffering by the sufferer, made articulate by time and distance. An articulate account of suffering is already a *reflection* on the experience of suffering, and not an encounter with the suffering other. An articulate narrative of suffering is an *account*, not an *encounter*.

Ivan Karamazov's 'anti-theodicy' is no better a response to evil than the theodicy it decries, as it suffers from exactly the same fallacy. Ivan's passionate moral outrage is distanced from the suffering other. Ivan is trying to engage, but his insistence on seeking the raw "facts" of suffering only distances himself further from those who suffer. There are ultimately no facts of suffering, merely articulations of suffering which are made to serve the narrator's purpose. That Ivan draws upon the "fact" of children suffering to build his anti-theodicy actually pushes those suffering children further out of his reach. Like a theodicist, he removes these instances of suffering from their context, and thus from the meaning the sufferers themselves find in their experience, in order to make his own point. Ivan thus cannot engage with the Holocaust. It does not matter whether or not he knew about those who suffered, to refer back to Kenneth Surin's question[92]. Ivan could not engage with the suffering of the Holocaust even if he knew of it, as his discourse can only deal with *accounts* of suffering, not *encounter* the sufferers themselves.

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[92] "If, perchance, Karamazov were acquainted with Wiesel's narrative, would he still think himself justified in 'returning his ticket' to God?"[Op. cit., p.119]

IV.4 Jon Steele

Simon Wiesenthal says his dying soldier's account of the horror he participated was "...spoke[n] in the style of a war correspondent... full of stupid phrases which he had taken from newspapers."[93] Wiesenthal denies that the hackneyed phrases of journalism are able to address the evils they claim to countenance. Like Ivan Karamazov's diatribe, or the formulations of an academic theodicy, reportage from a war zone tries to grant us a link to suffering, to connect the suffering 'them' with the comfortable 'us'. It fails entirely, succeeding only to make brute horror palatable for our living rooms and offices, and anesthetising us against suffering by kidding us that we have fulfilled our responsibility to those suffering, shared their suffering with them, and have 'been through what they've been through'.

One of the most revealing accounts of the dichotomy between the account of suffering an encounter with the suffering other comes from Jon Steele, who was an ITN cameraman sent to cover the Rwandan genocide[94]. Even when surrounded by suffering humans, and overwhelmed by the experience, he was forced to distance himself from that suffering to provide an account of that suffering, in the form of video footage. Steele is the first to acknowledge the failure of his visual account to capture his experience. Writing on trying to record the experience of seeing so much death, he writes: "Another courtyard. Seven more bodies hacked to pieces. Silence and horrible death smells. I framed the bodies through the grass and from behind bushes, trying to turn the hideous mounds of rotting flesh into pictures...all the time wishing I could cram the smell into the lens and broadcast it through every television in the world."[95] Steel admits he cannot bridge the gap between his account of suffering and his firsthand witnessing of the suffering of others. When he literally trips over the body of a child who has been hacked to death, he acknowledges that his account cannot get the viewers of his footage even close to the body of the murdered boy:

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[93] Wiesenthal (1970), p.42

[94] This essay uses the phrase "Rwandan genocide" as it is the commonly agreed upon designation of the events of 1994 in Rwanda. I do not hold that this is an accurate description, but is in fact part of the perpetrator's concealment of the political motivation behind their actions (see pages 52-53 for further explanation). I use the phrase "Rwandan genocide" with great difficulty, and only because it is the adopted, if inaccurate, linguistic signpost for events I wish to discuss.

> "Tall green grass swaying in the wind. And through the grass a small blue shape steaming in the sun. Just a hint of blood. And me thinking of the people thousands of miles away looking at the picture on their TV screens and seeing nothing but a small blue shape with a hint of blood…and not seeing *him*. Not knowing the small blue shape was once a little boy who laughed and dreamed. Not smelling his body rot in the dirt. Not seeing his blood-matted head, his still begging eyes."[96]

Watching Steele's "account" of suffering does not get anybody closer to seeing the dead boy. The audience is automatically distanced from that suffering other. The audience, having paid their moral debts by watching an image of a TV screen, becomes unaccountable for the suffering of others.

Steele is honest about the distance between the account he creates of suffering in his videos, and his own experience, as he uses his account making as a shield to hide behind so that he does not have to feel involved in the suffering around him; he hides behind his camera: "I shoved the lens close to the terrified faces, waiting for the faces to look into the glass so I could grab every shred of their fear and squeeze it for more…anyone's fear but my own."[97] Here it seems, is a man trying to cower from the abyss as it stares back.

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[95] Jon Steele, War Junkie (London: Corgi Books, 2003), p.344
[96] Op. cit., p.348
[97] Op. cit., p.285

The best metaphor available for the difference between the encountering the suffering other and giving an account of that suffering is in the change Steele describes when he stops looking at someone and instead points his camera at them, as the world goes black-and-white as he switches from his own experience to his attempt to create an account of that experience through the black-and-white viewfinder of his camera. The viewfinder is a symbol of the gulf created between *account* and *experience,* between *audience* and *sufferer.*

IV.5 My own response to Burundi

Steele's account of his experiences is particularly resonant with own response to Burundi. I seriously considered a career as either a theologian or a war correspondent. However, neither of these activities, as demonstrated above, actually helps foster a connection with suffering others, only the *account* of their suffering. The account of suffering, be it from a theologian or a war correspondent, cannot connect a person to the sufferings of others. Reading *The Brothers Karamazov* in Burundi was ultimately fruitless as an attempt to better understand or respond to the suffering I saw around me. Like Jon Steele, my attempt to connect an account of suffering to the experience of suffering others was fruitless. This essay, to some extent, marks the realisation of this.

IV.6 The interpretation of dreams

This realisation, that the attempt to connect account and experience is fruitless and at worst can be self-destructive[98], fits well with a vivid dream I had a little over a year ago, in which I declined a commission to continue writing firsthand, war correspondent, accounts for the UN. In the dream, the joy of passing a beautiful, late summer afternoon on the lawn of a grand, irreducibly English guest house with my fiancée was disturbed by the unpleasantly expected arrival of a UN official, played to slimy perfection by Peter Lorre (a superbly villainous interloper in both *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon*). After conferring over the details of where I would be sent to next work, I was instructed to say goodbye to my (then) fiancée and leave immediately, which I did, turning away from her and leaving her, alone, on the steps of the hotel. After walking down the driveway with the UN official, I realised that everything in me wanted to stay, instead of fulfilling my duty and doing the good I thought I was meant to do. I ran back towards the hotel, running up the steps and into the empty, cold marble lobby of the hotel. I then realised that running was actually causing me great pain, and I looked down and saw that my feet were bleeding and bandaged (I was born with severely deformed feet, and could only walk after much physiotherapy). I kept running despite the pain, and went up the numerous flights of stairs, simultaneously looking for my fiancée and turning my back on what waited for me outside. I found my fiancée at the top of the hotel, in what I can only describe as an attic suite, which looked more like a well lived-in home than a hotel room. The sunlight flooded in through the windows, which were high enough from the ground to give a view over the top of the tall trees which marked the edge of the perfectly manicured formal laws of the hotel.

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[98] Steele's is unflinching in his description of the suicidal, self-destructive breakdown he undergoes as a result of his experience in Rwanda.

Approaching my fiancée, I realised that my feet were no longer bleeding, and she removed the bandages, and we lay down together on the soft, quilted bed and I put my arms around her.

IV.7 The interpretation of suffering

Freud believes that all dreams undergo a process, which he calls ‘secondary revision’[99], in which they are expunged of their nonsensical material and given their final meaning. A similar process happens when we try and make an *account* of an *experience* of suffering, in that the ultimate ‘meaning’ of suffering is attributed through later reflection, when we make an account of that suffering. That ultimate meaning is not present when we are actually experiencing suffering. The problem with suffering is that we confuse our interpretation, the account we make, with our initial experience. We believe that our experience already had that fixed, ultimate meaning we only ascribed to it later.

On Holocaust suffering, Sarah Pinnock highlights the difference between the experience of suffering, which may or may not have any immediately apparent meaning, and the memory of suffering, which is meaningful:

> “… concentration camp suffering appears retrospectively meaningless and useless in itself, rather than purposive…However, the memory of suffering (not the suffering itself) may be meaningful for victims, when shared as a witness to the terrible scars and ruptures found throughout history.”[100]

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[99] C.f. Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. A. A. Brill (London: Publisher unknown 1911), chapter 6.

[100] Pinnock (2002), p.112-113

In her understanding of suffering, the account of suffering- the memory- has meaning, while the suffering itself does not. It is contended here that all memories of suffering share this dissimilarity with the original experiences enshrined in those memories.

When we then read accounts of holocaust suffering, in the same way as when we read any account of suffering, we can so easily confuse the memory with the original experience. The already problematic process of remembering suffering here entails another difficulty as we can confuse our memory of suffering (the account) with the suffering itself (the experience). In the memory of suffering, suffering may becomes purposive. When we apply the judgement that suffering is purposive retroactively to the experience of suffering we can force a meaning on that experience which may not be there, nor may even have the right to be there at that time. Instead of trying to encounter the suffering other, we ignore Alan Greenberg's warning and make theological pronouncements over burning children[101] .

Nikos Kazantzakis writes "I believe in a world which does not exist, but by believing in it, I create it."[102] This can be a hugely positive thing to do, but creating a world which does not exist can push the real world of suffering out of sight. We do this when we confuse accounts of suffering given, wherein suffering is ascribed a particular purpose and meaning, with the experience of suffering itself, where suffering may have no evident meaning whatsoever. The world in which writers of theodicy tend to believe in is one in which all suffering is inherently purposive, and thus all accounts of suffering are broken to fit a teleology of suffering. This does nothing to move the readers of these doctrinally doctored accounts closer to those who suffered.

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[101] "No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children." [Surin (1986), p.147]

[102] Kazantzakis in Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p.303

By forcing either our own, or their own later reflective meanings into the very fibre of suffering beings while they experience purposeless evil, we do them a great disservice. We make their suffering worse.

Chapter V: Constructing a path from the experience of suffering to an account -The churches' witness to the Rwandan genocide

V.1 *Hotel Rwanda*: A space for accounts of hope within the Rwandan genocide

The 2005 film *Hotel Rwanda*, is laudatory, being a mainstream Hollywood film that deals with the nightmare of that central-African country in 1994. It is doubly remarkable in its ability to give an account of hope in a time where horrendous evil flourished unchecked. The film tells the true story of hotelier Paul Rusesabagina who sheltered more than 1,200 people from a country turned into legions of murderous gangs inspired by paranoid government propaganda. His hotel literally became a space in which there could be accounts of hope.

What is discussed here is not Rusesabagina's bravery or goodness, but rather the ability of accounts of the Rwandan genocide themselves to be spaces in which hope can be articulated, and in which it is possible to undertake meaningful theological reflection on evil.

While academic theodicy, and Ivan Karamazov's 'anti-theodicy' both claim to respond to the experience of suffering but do not, it is possible to undertake theological reflection on evil which responds to the experience of suffering, and hence suffering people. The problem unrecognised by both theologians undertaking theodicy and Ivan Karamazov is that the road from experience to the sort of accounts which can sustain a theological reflection on evil is a one way street. Theologising accounts of suffering does not lead us to a place where we can engage with other people's experience of suffering, as we cannot back-track from theological reflection and somehow deduce what the original experience of someone else's suffering is like. Theodicy fails as it believes that such a move is possible. What can lead us to some sort of connection to suffering people is *their own* theological reflection on the evil *they* suffered, found in the account that they give of their own suffering, or the suffering they witnessed.

What is thus needed to get to a point where we can connect to the suffering of others is an informed and compassionate understanding of their account of suffering. Through their account, the sufferer both tries to express their experience of suffering and theologically reflect upon it. It is this account which we must listen to, rather than use as material for theodicy or misinterpret as a way of placing ourselves directly into the position of another, whose pain we then misrepresent. Connection with the suffering of others is therefore not gained by the distanced theological interpretation of accounts of suffering, but through trying to understand those accounts as best we can. To have any idea what a Rwandan means when they give account of their suffering, and then reflect theologically upon it, we must not only try to understand what they are saying now, but what they went through at the time of their suffering, and also what led to that suffering.

V.2 Understanding the suffering of the church: The arrival of "Christianity" to Rwanda

The first missionaries in Rwanda were the Catholic "White Fathers", who were followed quickly by missionaries from a number of Protestant churches. The missionaries' strategy of attempting wholesale conversion of the population was to convert the ruling classes, hoping that the masses would follow. In order to assist the conversion of the masses, the missionaries proclaimed a theology of obedience to secular (in this case, tribal) authority, as it was hoped this would make the masses unquestioningly compliant to their Christianized leaders, and so adopt Christianity as their leaders did. Their most frequently used text was the much misused Romans 13: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities…." [103]

According to Roger Bowen, the result of the missionaries' efforts was that the church ended up with a "…naïve and uncritical support of whoever [was] in power…"[104]; one which would eventually make the church powerless against the government, by making it uncritically supportive of the Rwandan regime's most grotesquely anti-Christian policies, namely their plotting and executing of political mass-murder.

V.3 The dangerous construction of Rwanda self-perception

The attempt of the missionaries to inculcate Christian belief in Rwanda through converting the ruling elite had other unintentional, and ultimately genocide consequences. Assuming that the division between the then-ruling class (the Tutsi) and the rest (the Hutu and the Twa) was fixed[105], the missionaries invoked the pseudo-scientific racial ideology of their day to describe the differences they observed in society. While there is some validity in the observation that there are at least some marked differences between Tutsi, Hutu and Twa which are not just socio-economic[106], this does not denote ethnicity.[107] Because of the colonial categorising of society, the belief that ethnicity dictated societal position became a part of Rwandan self-perception:

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[103] The quote continues "…For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." [Romans 13:1-7, NKJV]

[104] Roger W. Bowen, 'Genocide in Rwanda 1994- An Anglican Perspective', in Carol Rittner, John K. Roth and Wendy Whitworth (eds.), Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches (St. Paul, Minnesota: Aegis, 2004), p.41

[105] It isn't: through marriage or the acquisition of wealth or social prestige, a Hutu can become 'Tutsi'. The Twa, however, remain fixed at the bottom of society.

> "As elsewhere in Africa, in order to convert the population in Rwanda, the missionaries considered it important to understand the indigenous culture and social structures, and the interpretations that came from that study both greatly influenced both the colonial administration and, subsequently, Rwandan self-perception.."[108]

Although the colonial administrators left Rwanda, their categorisation of society stayed. Their own mistaken pseudoscience became propaganda in the post-colonial power-vacuum, with the idea that the majority Hutu population was being oppressed by an ethnically different, 'foreign' Tutsi leadership ably disseminated by radical pro-Hutu political groups. Western commentators on the 1994 atrocities in Rwanda unthinkingly assumed that they were witnessing 'genocide', with the Hutu taking revenge on the ethnically different Tutsi.

What actually happened in 1994 was not ethnic slaughter, but calculated political murder. The fanatical pro-Hutu government was unsure of its ability to survive the country's first relatively free democratic election, and so staged a fake Tutsi power coup. They achieved this piece of bloody political theatre by having the Hutu presidential guard shoot down the jet containing the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. This act was then blamed on the Tutsi, who were slaughtered along with anybody who disagreed with the government's hate-mongers. That this wholesale political murder was confused with "genocide" shows the degree to which western commentators were unable to extricate the truth of the situation from the government's ethnic propaganda[109]. To politely concur with the labelling of the Rwandan atrocities as "genocide" it could be suggested that it was perhaps an act of 'autogenocide"- a people exterminating themselves, but this still masks the calm political manoeuvrings behind the "frenzied" slaughter[110].

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[106] Height being an obvious factor: the Twa are pygmies, while the Tutsi are often taller that many Hutu.

[107] To continue with the example of height, access to food and resources, which is determined by one's position in society, has an effect on physiological growth. This non-ethnic explanation could offer an explanation for physiological difference in Rwandan society other than that of variant ethnicity.

[108] Timothy Longman, 'Christian Churches and the Genocide in Rwanda', in Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (eds.), In God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), p.145-146

Not coincidentally, the church in Rwanda was also unable to resist the sway of the government's lies, and thus did their part in abetting the genocide, in part in hiding the architects of the "genocide" from the scrutiny of the world by defending the government's actions, and by also failing to hide the hundreds of thousands of unarmed, defenceless families from government-led bands of killers.

V.4 The voice of the church as the voice of the genocide

Because of its training to be obedient to authority, the church in Rwanda acted as an apologist of its genocidal government: "Far from condemning the attempt to exterminate the Tutsi, Archbishop Augustin Nshamihigo and Bishop Jonathan Ruhumuliza of the Anglican church acted as spokesman for the genocidal government at a press conference in Nairobi."[111] Through its defence of the government, the church allowed its voice to become the voice of the genocide. With its enthusiastic public support of a truly insane military dictatorship, the church then allowed its authoritative language to be used by propagandists in their exhortations to murder:

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[109] A less comfortable idea would be that the liberal, university educated, politically correct media still views Africa through colonial eyes.

[110] It is a well known statistic that the rate of killing in Rwanda 1994 actually exceeded that of the Holocaust at its peak in 1944. Usually a point is then made about the differences between thousands of 'frenzied' killers with machetes and the dispassionate, calculated atmosphere of Nazi death camps. This is obfuscation: killing in the Rwandan genocide was as dispassionate, calculated and political as Nazi extermination.

[111] "The Organisation (HRW Report- Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda, March 1999)" [http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/Rwanda/Geno4-7-03.htm#p893-245534]

> "In addition to calling on political and intellectual leaders to support their ideas, propagandists used religion and the church to validate their teachings. [The radically pro-Hutu] *Umurava* magazine declared, 'It is God who has given [President Habyarimana] the power to direct the country, it is He who will show him the path to follow.' Most propagandists did not go so far, but they did frequently couch their ideas in religious language or refer to passages from the Bible."[112]

The unchristian voice which most grotesquely imitated that of Christianity during the slaughter was that of the government radio station, *the free radio station of a thousand hills* (*Radio Télevision Libre des Milles Collines).* The voices of this station hysterically repeated the message to kill all enemies of the state day and night for a hundred days, composing hymns extolling the slaughter and praising God for his faithfulness in His support of the extremists' plans. The language of the airwaves was a mix of revivalist fervour and an unslakeable bloodthirstiness. Between the hymns and sermons was the constant exhortation to kill all those labelled *Inkotanyi*- "cockroaches". This term, originally used to describe anti-government Tutsi paramilitary forces[113] became a lethal identifier of anyone thought to be an enemy of the government, be they Tutsi or Hutu. One such imagined enemy remembers the voices calling for his 'extermination' using the words of the church:

> "On 20th June 1994, a Rwandan radio announcer, Kantano Habimana *of Radio Télévision Libre des Milles Collines*, called upon his listeners to join him in singing a song praising genocide. "Friends, let us rejoice... All *Inkotanyi* have perished... Friends, let us rejoice. God is fair." On 2nd July, the same announcer was not only praising genocide, but also using God's name to justify it. "Let us rejoice: the *'Inkotanyi'* have been exterminated! Oh dear friends, let us rejoice, God is equitable... The Good Lord is really equitable. These evildoers, these terrorists, these people with suicidal tendencies will end up being exterminated... In any case, let us stand firm

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[112] "Propaganda and Practice (HRW Report- Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda, March 1999)" [http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/Rwanda/Geno1-3-10.htm#p408-170340]

[113] This term, coined by government soldiers, is derogatory, but in their naming of rebels as cockroaches they betray their fear of the increasing numbers of anti-government forces operating in Rwanda. Cockroaches can either be seen to be worthy of extermination because of their undesirability, or praised because of their stealth and endurance: The paramilitary forces defamed as 'cockroaches' began to describe themselves as such with pride.

> and exterminate them, so that our children and grandchildren do not hear the word *'Inkotanyi'* ever again.'"[114]

This remembrance of the complicity of the churches in this African holocaust is one amongst many testimonies of survivors which utterly condemn the church and point to an almost total failure of Christianity in Rwanda.

V.5 The church's faltering steps towards recovery

The first task of the churches was to simply admit that genocide had occurred. This is incredible as this sounds, given the church's total complicity in the genocide. Early steps towards facing the past were not successful. An example of the unexpunged flame of hate that still burned within the church is the assassination of Vieko Curic, who was murdered for trying to confront the aftermath of the brutal acts of his parishioners. His story is told by Charles Petrie:

> "…Father Vieko Curic, a Croatian Franciscan priest [was], one of the notable examples of moral and physical courage who remained in Rwanda throughout the genocide and saved hundreds of lives… During the genocide and a number of months later, he refused to provide the sacraments to his flock, finding it inappropriate to do so while they were in the throes of madness; and then after the genocide, only once they had undertaken such acts of collective penance and reconciliation as, for example, rebuilding the houses of their victims. Unknown assailants murdered Father Vieko Curic in early 1998."[115]

Moving towards reconciliation, as demonstrated by the murder of Vieko Curic, was not a road on which some Rwandans were prepared to travel. Some even attempted to redraw the bloody path they had travelled down to make it seem like some kind of justifiable route of national redemption. Using the language of reconciliation, some tried to reconcile "…the captive to captivity,… the oppressed to oppression, [and] the slaughtered to the slaughter."[116]

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[114] Tom Ndahiro, 'The Church's Blind Eye to the Genocide in Rwanda', in Rittner, Roth & Whitworth (2004), p.245

[115] Charles Petrie, 'The Failure to Confront Evil', in Rittner, Roth & Whitworth (2004), pp.87-88

C. M. Overdulve attempts to add further suffering to the victims of the Rwanda government in his poisonously anti-Tutsi *Rwanda: A people with a history*[117]. Overdulve attempts to encourage reconciliation by placing the blame on the victims. He sees the Tutsi as provoking the Hutu into killing them, and thus advocates that the 'guilty' victims of the genocide should forgive their 'innocent' murderers. Charles de Lespinay comments that Overdulve unashamedly argues that "…the "guilty" Tutsi victims should ask forgiveness from their murderers for having been obliged to kill them."[118] Overdulve utterly perverts the idea of reconciliation by making it an intellectual machete with which to further hack at already dismembered corpses.

Overdulve's disingenuous covering of the path of Rwandan history is fortunately not the only attempt to travel back to 1994 in the attempt to be a path of reconciliation to the present. Rather than Overdulve's specious attribution of blame for the slaughter, the church needs to accept its guilt for the part it played in the killings in order to have a place in society. That the church has begun to do so is evidenced by the starting point of its self-reflection: lamentation.

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[116] Jerry Fowler, 'The Church and Power', in Rittner, Roth & Whitworth (2004), p.70
[117] C. M. Overdulve, Rwanda: Un Peuple avec une histoire (Paris: l'Harmattem, 1997)
[118] Charles de Lespinay, 'The Churches and the genocide in East Africa' in Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (eds.), In God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), p.175

V.6 From Lament to rejoicing: texts of hope read from a Bible 'bound in blood and skin'[119]

In order to begin an account which stands as a credible reflection on the atrocities of 1994, it would seem that lamentation is necessary. The grief of witnessed suffering, coupled with the grief of culpability for that suffering which many in the church must feel, needs to be expressed, if an account of suffering is to be the least bit representative of the original experience of that suffering.

Academic theodicy, like Ivan Karamazov's anti-theodicy, is unable to encounter experiences of suffering as it conflates the later account of suffering with the primary experience itself, and thereby fails to encounter the experience itself. Accounts of suffering by those who have suffered, and by those who have witnessed suffering are able, at least in part, to communicate their experience of suffering. In these accounts born out of suffering, it is possible to find useful theological reflection on suffering.

I choose to engage with the account of survivors to show that while there may be a gap between the experience of evil and any account we can give of that experience, it is not impossible to construct a meaningful account of evil. These accounts, which allow the experience of evil to inform theological reflection, are able to better link reflection and experience than academic accounts, which often selectively interpret accounts of suffering to fit a pre-existing theological framework. I am privileging Rwandan accounts of evil because, at the most simple level, they resonate with my own experience of evil, more so than Ivan Karamazov's anti-theodicy or the academics theodicies of theologians.

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[119] "And we read from pleasant Bibles that/ are bound in blood and skin/ that the wilderness is gathering /all its children back again" Leonard Cohen, *Last Year's Man*, from the album 'Songs of Love and Hate' (Stranger Music, Inc./ Sony Music Canada, 1971)

These Rwandan accounts of suffering, if they are to keep their humanity, contain expressions of grief. Lament is a theological expression of grief, and acts as an apt response to the experience of suffering. Charles Petrie, a UN official who witnessed vast amounts of suffering, begins his account of the suffering he witnessed with by engaging with Matthew 27:46, which in turn quotes psalm 22: "My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[120] Theological reflection on suffering is a useful activity when undertaken by those trying to provide and account for the suffering they witnessed.

Grief is not the most satisfactory ending for a theological response to evil. While mourning and lament are irreducibly necessary in an authentic response to evil, to be unable to overcome grief and to be able to express only pain is, to some extent, to let evil triumph.

Rwandan attempts to construct a reconciliatory response to the evils perpetuated by members of the church, however faltering or suddenly aborted they may be, show that it is possible for those who have experienced evil to attempt a positive theological response to that evil. Reading the Bible in Rwanda after the genocide is not a fruitless activity. While the church buildings and altars of the country may have become bloodstained and desecrated, the pages of the Book that was quoted from and alluded to by political murderers do not remain forever closed for being once bound in blood and skin. The recurring discussion of Galatians 3:28, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus', altered to read

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[120] Petrie in Rittner, Roth & Whitworth (2004), p.83

'Hutu nor Tutsi',[121] shows that it indeed possible to journey towards a theology of reconciliation of hope even out of the experience of the darkest horrors.

It is possible even for accounts of evil to both present a hopeful theology as a response to evil and to express the experience of that evil, when such theologising on evil is undertaken by the victims of evil. For example, Octave Ugirashebuja begins reflecting on the sufferings of his native land by quoting Luke 15:7: '"...there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."'[122] Ugirashebuja uses this passage to attempt to provide hope in a situation where there is little, as this text can create much hope for Rwanda. If the country will repent of its terrible sins, it will become a source of greater pleasure to God than a country that does not need to undertake such repentance. Rwanda can thus become a place celebrated by the angels, rather than inhabited by demons. As Rwanda is perhaps more of a place that has ninety-nine sinners in need of repentance to one righteous person, then this message is uplifting indeed. Ugirashebuja's hopeful theologising demonstrates that it is possible to create space for accounts of hope even within the cosmos of evil referred to by the phrase "the Rwandan genocide".

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[121] cf. Ugirashebuja in Rittner, Roth & Whitworth (2004), p.58; Bowen in Rittner, Roth & Whitworth (2004), p.39; Ndahiro in Rittner, Roth & Whitworth (2004), p.245; etc.

[122] Ugirashebuja in Rittner, Roth & Whitworth (2004), p.49

Chapter VI: Conclusion
- From reading *The Brothers Karamazov* in Burundi to reading the Bible in Rwanda

VI.1 The road less travelled

In Burundi, I hoped that Ivan's "anti-theodicy" in *The Brothers Karamazov* would, in its passionate appeal against suffering, have helped me engage with the suffering I witnessed; providing me either with a map or a guide who could travel with me along the Burundian roads that bisect the landscape of my thoughts and dreams. Exploration of the text itself now suggests to me that Ivan's position is flawed as a response to suffering. Ivan's appeal is in his insistence that suffering is destructive, which is Dostoyevsky's opinion. This is an appealing contrast to most theodicies, where suffering is considered automatically purposive. However, Ivan's anti-theodicy goes beyond decrying suffering, and ceases to be a reflection of Dostoyevsky's passionate Christianity, and instead becomes an echo of the logic of the Grand Inquisitor, and perhaps even Hitler. There is little that can resonate with real-life suffering from a character who ultimately rejects 'the miracle of Christ-like love'. Travelling down a road with Ivan does not seem to help one engage with those suffering by the roadside. If all Ivan can do is journey towards self-destruction while feigning interest in the 'charming pictures' of suffering along the way then perhaps another companion is needed. A better example of a companion is the use of the Bible in Rwanda following the genocide. There, the gap between sufferer and theological reflection on their suffering, found through our hasty theologising of others' account of suffering, was absent. This journey was undertaken through space created for those who had experienced the devastating effect of evil to reflect upon it with lamentation, and finally, hope. It would be my hope that more could travel along that road.

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