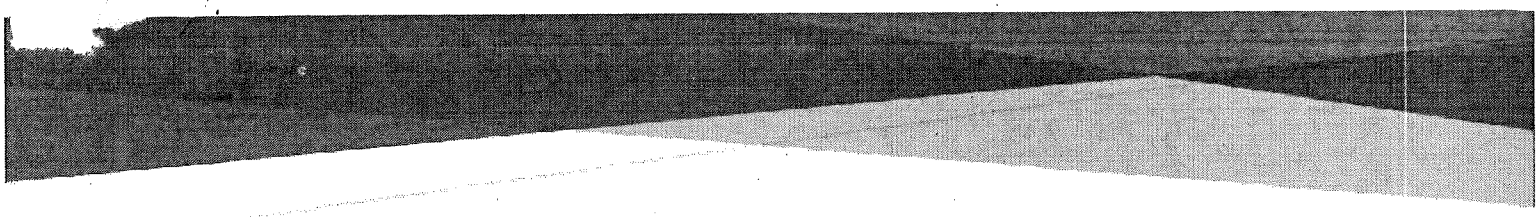

THE MORAL QUESTION OF THE HOLOCAUST AND HIROSHIMA

And What It Means for Concerned Citizens of the Modern Age

Abstract

Since the end of World War II, the threat of repeating its two biggest atrocities has not disappeared. Why didn't humanity's inner morality prevent these atrocities? What does it take to stand up for one's morals? How can we prevent such atrocities in the future?

Jessica Schwartz

I – Introduction

Dull gray clouds loom above the old buildings of Majdanek on the outskirts of Lublin, Poland. Many modern high-rises of Lublin overlook the site. The old barracks sit untouched as if their occupants have only just vacated. The gas chambers still stand, the crematorium ovens remain intact. Majdanek was a Nazi extermination camp and remains largely as it was during World War II. According to the camp's tour guides, Majdanek could be up and running again in just twenty-four hours.[1]

Around the world, nuclear warheads sit deployed and ready for use. In the U.S., the president alone has authority to order a nuclear strike. Within five minutes of deciding to use a nuclear weapon, the weapon could be launched.[2] As Kingston Reif explains,

> The U.S. right now deploys approximately 900 nuclear warheads that are on the order of 10 to 20 times more powerful than the weapons that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And those 900 warheads are available for use at virtually a moment's notice.[3]

Since the end of World War II, the ominous threat of repeating its two biggest atrocities has not disappeared. It is imperative to remember the Holocaust and Hiroshima because both are so close within reach. But remembering is not enough. One must understand how so many people ignored their intrinsic moral compass and committed terrible crimes or stood by and watched them happen. Why was humanity's inner morality insufficient to prevent these atrocities? And what does it take for one to stand up for one's morals? By understanding the forces at work, one can work to have one's morality prevail and prevent such atrocities in the future.

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[1] A tour guide said this on a tour I took of Majdanek in 2011.
[2] Dave Merrill, et al. "To Launch a Nuclear Strike, Donald Trump Would Follow These Steps" *Bloomberg*, 20 Jan. 2017, www.bloomberg.com/politics/graphics/2016-nuclear-weapon-launch/.
[3] Dugald Mcconnell and Brian Todd. "Nuclear Biscuits and Footballs: How the President Launches an Atomic Bomb." *CNN*, 7 Aug. 2016, www.cnn.com/2016/08/06/politics/nuclear-football-president-button/.

II – Background

"Holocaust" refers to the Nazi discrimination against and ultimate genocide of the Jewish people.[4] The Holocaust was mainly carried out by German soldiers who shot prisoners or sent them to extermination camps where they were poisoned with Zyklon-B gas. Auschwitz-Birkenau is the most famous of these camps; Majdanek is another. The genocide was known as the "Final Solution" and was planned by Nazi leadership.

> Hitler gave Himmler broad authority to physically eliminate any perceived threats to permanent German rule.... In the autumn of 1941, S.S. chief Heinrich Himmler assigned German General Odilo Globocnik (S.S. and police leader for the Lublin District) with the implementation of a plan to systematically murder the Jews of the General government.[5]

Himmler saw Jews as a threat to permanent German rule and therefore assigned Globocnik to physically eliminate the Jewish threat. Thus, the Final Solution was formulated by the Nazi leadership and orders for the planning and implementation were issued from the top down.

In contrast, the impetus for designing and constructing an atomic bomb came from the rank and file scientists who worked on it. Albert Einstein and Leo Szilard sent a now-famous letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt informing him of the potential impact of atomic energy and requesting that the U.S. government fully support atomic research.[6] The Einstein-Szilard letter was a moral act explicitly designed to prevent Nazi Germany from becoming the first nation to develop atomic weapons that would clearly be used for an immoral purpose. However, once set in motion, the momentum of the project quickly got away from the scientists. In June of 1945,

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[4] "Introduction to the Holocaust." *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143 (6 December 2017).
[5] "Final Solution: Overview." *Holocaust Encyclopedia,* United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005151# (6 December 2017).
[6] Albert Einstein and Leo Szilard. "Einstein-Szilard Letter." Received by President F. D. Roosevelt, 2 Aug. 1939. https://www.atomicheritage.org/key-documents/einstein-szilard-letter.

several of the scientists working on the Manhattan Project contributed to a petition that became known as the Franck Report, named for James Franck, the head of the committee that produced it. The Franck Report asked U.S. political and military leaders to consider the deployment of an atomic bomb "as a problem of long-range national policy rather than military expediency."[7] These scientists wanted the government to fully understand the global implications of using such a weapon and hoped that American leaders would reconsider. Unfortunately, although the report was delivered to the Interim Committee, it was never passed on to President Truman.

One month later, in July of 1945, seventy scientists of the Manhattan Project followed up on the Franck Report by signing the Szilard Petition which provided that,

> In view of the foregoing, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition: first, that you exercise your power as Commander-in-Chief, to rule that the United States shall not resort to the use of atomic bombs in this war unless the terms which will be imposed upon Japan have been made public in detail and Japan knowing these terms has refused to surrender; second, that in such an event the question whether or not to use atomic bombs be decided by you in light of the considerations presented in this petition as well as all the other moral responsibilities which are involved.[8]

Like the Franck Report that preceded it, the Szilard Petition never reached President Truman.[9] Between requesting atomic research be supported and requesting the atomic bomb not be used, the project got away from the scientists and became an assignment controlled by the leadership. At some point, deference to authority overcame the scientists' humanitarian mission.

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[7] James Franck, et al. "Report of the Committee on Political and Social Problems (The Franck Report)." June 11, 1945. http://www.dannen.com/decision/franck.html.

[8] Leo Szilard, et al. "Szilard Petition." July 17, 1945. http://www.dannen.com/decision/45-07-17.html.

[9] Margot Norris. "Dividing the Indivisible: The Fissured Story of the Manhattan Project." *Cultural Critique,* no. 35, 1996, pp. 5–38. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1354570, p. 12.

The Holocaust and the atomic bombings were completely different events. Nonetheless, both resulted in unimaginable destruction. In numbers, Auschwitz overwhelmed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The immensity of Hiroshima is in the technical efficiency of the atomic bomb; it makes gas chambers seem incredibly inefficient.[10] The atomic bomb could have been devastating in the hands of the Nazis. Hiroshima was not an atrocity in the same way Auschwitz was, but it represents the potential for a massive evil.

While these two atrocities of World War II are extremely different – the Nazi camps intended to eliminate all Jews whereas the atomic bombings had no such intention – there are important parallels to draw.[11] As John Treat wrote, both the Holocaust and Hiroshima are examples of the ability to do awful things efficiently and both alienate the relationship of victim and victimizer.[12] These are two important attributes of both the Holocaust and Hiroshima and play important roles in overcoming the victimizers' intrinsic morality.

III – Removal of Responsibility

There are different ideas about how Nazi soldiers and scientists working on the atomic bomb avoided feeling responsible for their actions. If Germans who participated in Hitler's Final Solution had felt a greater sense of personal responsibility for their contributions to such horrific treatment of Jewish prisoners, perhaps they would have resisted any involvement. Some historians believe Nazi scientists were able to obviate or at least minimize any sense of personal responsibility because the results were foregone conclusions, while others believe they were able to compartmentalize their actions.

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[10] Darrell J. Fasching. *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalypse or Utopia?* State University of New York Press, 1993, p. 97.
[11] John Whittier Treat. *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb.* University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 14.
[12] *Ibid,* p. 9-10.

Both the Nazi soldiers stationed at the extermination camps and the scientists working on the atomic bomb tried to avoid taking responsibility for their actions because they were convinced that they were merely pawns in a much larger game. The outcome of their actions was a foregone conclusion; no individual could prevent the results and therefore any resistance was futile. As Raphael Sassower reports, theoretical physicist Werner Heisenberg felt no responsibility for producing the bomb because as an individual scientist he was replaceable; no person could stop the bomb.[13] Given that the atomic bomb was developed through a collective scientific process, some other scientist would simply have done the same work and achieved the same result. Using that justification, Heisenberg acquitted himself of all responsibility for the development of atomic weaponry.

The Nazi soldiers assigned to extermination camps justified their actions in a similar fashion. As Fasching describes, the fact that a person was at the camp meant he or she was already dead; their fate could not be changed so the individual performing the execution had no reason to feel responsible for murder.[14] By viewing the people at Nazi extermination camps as already marked for death, Nazi soldiers were able to minimize their feelings of guilt for committing murder. By utilizing this self-serving form of rationalization, both the scientists working on the bomb and the Nazi soldiers carrying out orders were able to focus on a specific goal while simultaneously side-stepping the nagging question of their own responsibility for contributing to the outcome. Because the bomb was already planned and the prisoners of the camps were already

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[13] Raphael Sassower. "Responsible Technoscience: The Haunting Reality of Auschwitz and Hiroshima." *Science and Engineering Ethics,* 1996, Volume 2, Number 3, Pages 277-290. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2FBF02583914, p. 286.
[14] Fasching, *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima,* p. 90.

marked for death, the individuals in both cases absolved themselves of any responsibility for their actions.

Lifton, on the other hand, claims that Nazi physicians managed to perform demonic acts by "doubling," a process by which one divides the self into two separate functional wholes for self-deception, allowing one self to carry out horrible acts while the other self still feels like a moral human.[15] This represents another theory of how these people avoided taking responsibility for their actions. Because their lives in the extermination camps were separate from their outside lives, they carried out evil orders as a different self. Upon returning to the outside world, they lived as a separate person and ignored the demonic acts they committed inside the camps. In a somewhat similar manner, the scientists at Los Alamos were isolated, meaning their outside lives felt completely foreign.[16] Therefore, working on the bomb was separate from their normal life and upon returning to their normal life, they could ignore that separate experience. From the perspective of a moral person, this idea of separation and "doubling" seems convincing—how else could a human being be part of such an atrocity and feel no regret? However, this idea must evoke a certain amount of skepticism because it assumes these people were moral people, that they were able to live normally afterward, and that they were not traumatized by their actions.

IV – Science

The idea of science is a strong common theme between the Holocaust and Hiroshima. The systematic extermination of the Jewish people was viewed as a scientific process, and the atomic bomb was a scientific development. The idea of science also gave people reason to avoid feeling responsible by convincing those involved that they were working toward accomplishing an

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[15] *Ibid*, 88.
[16] *Ibid*, 102.

unquestionable truth. As Raphael Sassower describes, the Holocaust and atomic bombings were each results of a highly rationalized process of "technoscientific"[17] progress.[18] Rudolph Hess, for one declared that National Socialism was a form of "applied biology;" Aryans were biologically superior which legitimated the extermination of non-Aryans.[19] By viewing biological superiority as a scientific problem, Hess removed the responsibility of those carrying out the genocide of the Jews. Instead of committing mass murder, these people were working in favor of a scientific truth. As Sassower states, the concentration camps were rational manifestations of the concern with the "Jewish problem" — if "racial hygiene" can be improved, then the Final Solution is no wonder.[20] By approaching racial superiority in a scientific manner, the issue of morality was removed. Because the Holocaust was approached in a scientific manner, it was a highly efficient system. The Holocaust was an example of genocide carried out by highly educated experts in a scientific way.[21] The system was morally barbaric but it was an extremely organized process. By approaching the Holocaust scientifically, the Nazis removed the issues of morality and personal responsibility and implemented a highly efficient system of extermination.

The development of the atomic bombs demonstrates the ease with which a scientific system can overcome the intentions of a project initiated with a moral purpose. The scientists sought out the assignment to build them bomb and urged Roosevelt to match the work being done in Nazi Germany.[22] The Einstein-Szilard letter to Roosevelt led to the start of the project and the intention

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[17] Sassower defines "technoscience" as the "constellation of science, technology, and engineering" in "Responsible Technoscience," p. 278.
[18] Sassower, "Responsible Technoscience," p. 277.
[19] Fasching, The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, 87.
[20] Sassower, "Responsible Technoscience," pp. 280-283.
[21] Fasching, *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima,* p. 74.
[22] Michael Walzer. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations.* Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2015, p. 263.

was to defeat the evil Nazi threat. Einstein later said he would not have done anything if he knew Germans would not succeed in developing the bomb.[23] Einstein's regret shows that he felt responsible for the project and that he only initiated it to defeat the Nazis who represented a particularly evil form of cruelty. But as Walzer describes, by the time it was clear the Germans would not get bomb, the high-level work of the scientists was complete and the project was now in the hands of technicians.[24] Those working on the Manhattan Project who felt themselves to be replaceable were not completely off the mark. Of course, that does not acquit them of taking responsibility for their part in the bomb's development. Nonetheless, by the time it was clear Germany would be defeated before they developed an atomic weapon, the system was already in place for the U.S. to develop the bomb and it would have happened one way or another. Furthermore, although the bomb was intended to defeat Nazism, it was used against Japan whose military expansion was not as big a threat to peace and freedom as the Nazi quest for world racial domination.[25] Because of this distinction, according to Walzer, unconditional surrender should not have been asked of Japan.[26] Had unconditional surrender not been asked, it is possible Japan would have surrendered before the bomb was used. This is, of course, counterfactual, but it is nonetheless interesting to consider

Einstein intended that the atomic bomb be used against the particular evil of Nazi Germany. However, once Einstein made the request and unleashed the project, the use of the bomb was not in his control. He requested the project to beat a force of total evil in acquiring a weapon of total evil. In the end, the evil enemy did not get the evil weapon. Nonetheless, the power fighting for

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[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid,* 268.
[26] *Ibid,* 267.

morality still used this weapon against a different enemy who was not as big a nuclear threat. And therein lies Einstein's regret. As Shillony wrote, the shocking aspect of the atomic bombing was that it was the U.S., the leading democracy that defeated Germany and Japan, that used such an immoral weapon.[27] The US was fighting against the immorality of the Axis powers and yet did not shy away from massacring Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic bombs. The bomb was initially requested for moral purposes, but once the project got started, the scientific system overcame the intention and it was used in awful ways.

V – Obedience

The discussion of morality would be incomplete without a discussion of obedience. The extent of the ability of obedience to trump morality is shocking. David Blumenthal mentions Hannah Arendt's thesis of the "banality of evil," describing how Adolf Eichmann who facilitated the transportation of Jews into ghettos and extermination camps did so as "a matter of obedience, even a matter of conscience, of dutiful adherence to the demands of authority."[28] Not only was Eichmann not acting out of a fanatic evil, but he was trying to adhere to his conscience by being a dutiful subject. While this may feel like a poor excuse for bad behavior, it is not a novel idea. People often go along with what others tell them to do, and subsequently use their lack of initiative as an excuse. How many times do children justify their actions with the statement, "He started it" or, "It was her idea?"

Mindlessly following along with what others suggest extends far beyond children trying to avoid punishment. In the 1960s, Stanley Milgram conducted his famous obedience experiments which demonstrated that 65% of subjects would deliver a deadly shock to another person at the

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[27] Ben-Ami Shillony. "Auschwitz and Hiroshima." *IHJ Bulletin* (Winter 2007). 1-18, p. 6.
[28] David R. Blumenthal. "Auschwitz And Hiroshima: Icons of Our Century." www.js.emory.edu/BLUMENTHAL/HolocAndHirosh.html (6 December 2017).

command of the experimenter.[29] This is a striking result. Over half the population was willing to deliver a shock they knew to be deadly to another human being simply because they were told to. There was no threat of retaliation if they refused, they simply continued to follow the experimenter's orders.

The power of obedience also works the opposite way. As Blumenthal notes, 67% of Holocaust rescuers only performed their act of rescue because they were asked.[30] This is somewhat less surprising; people would likely not take the initiative to rescue someone else knowing the risk involved. However, it is interesting that the moral act of rescue was largely not initiated by a strong moral inclination, but rather obedience to the wishes of others.

Nonetheless, obedience is no justification for evil actions. Obedience to one's own country is often assumed and used to excuse one's actions. As Michael Walzer mentions in *Just and Unjust Wars*, "by and large we don't blame a soldier, even a general, who fights for his own government."[31] Because the obedience of soldiers to their country is assumed, soldiers aren't blamed for their misdeeds. However, Walzer argues that orders are no defense when someone violates the rules of war.[32] One who commits a crime should be held responsible for their actions, regardless of whether someone else told them to do it.

VI – Nationalism

Nationalism also affected morality during World War II. Nationalism is a "kind of ideology capable of creating cohesion and loyalty among individuals participating in social

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, p. 39.
[32] *Ibid.*

systems on a huge scale."[33] This is a powerful concept. Nationalism is compelling because it "offers security and perceived stability at a time when life-worlds are fragmented and people are being uprooted."[34] During times of war, nationalism is easily adopted as it provides a sense of stability. However, nationalism also has the potential to be problematic. It creates a system "where people's loyalty and attachment should be directed towards the state and legislative system rather than towards members of the kin group or village. In this way, nationalist ideology is functional for the state."[35] Nationalism is problematic because of this notion that it is functional for the state. Because nationalism is such a compelling concept, it has strong potential to mobilize citizens to act in ways the state demands even if those actions would otherwise conflict with their morals.

Nazism was a form of nationalism in Germany. As Eriksen describes, "Some violent nationalisms may try to eradicate the anomalies; such was the case of Nazism, where millions of members of so-called lower races occupying parts of German territory were killed or forced to emigrate."[36] Nazism took nationalism to the point of violence because it not only demanded loyalty to the state, but it also defined who was part of the nation and called for elimination of all others. Thus, Nazism convinced people to act in ways that defied their morals because their inner morality was temporarily superseded by the state-defined moral compass of racial purity.

The U.S. also had a surge of nationalism regarding the war. U.S. citizens' view of the U.S. during World War II even fifty years later was characterized by "the self-image of American

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[33] Thomas Hylland Eriksen. "Nationalism." *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, Pluto Press, London; New York, NY, 2010, pp. 117–146. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183h0h1.12, p. 126.
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid,* 139.

exceptionalism, of American innocence, and of American righteousness."[37] Therefore, even the scientists working on the atomic bombs may have felt as if they were working on behalf of righteousness because they were acting in accordance with national goals. In this way, acting on behalf of the nation was acting morally. Both the Nazi soldiers and the U.S. scientists working on the atomic bombs had their morality affected by nationalism. While Nazi soldiers' moral compasses were temporarily superseded by the ideal of national purity, U.S. scientists working on the bombs were convinced that by working the state's project they were working toward righteous goals.

VII – Reactions to the Bomb

Those affected by the bomb and its outcomes reacted to it in ways that by and large contradicted morality. William Styron was a U.S. soldier during World War II. When Styron heard about the atomic bomb, he felt ecstatic; his destiny had been turned around. He once recounted this feeling on television in Tokyo and felt as if he had badly misspoken. Later, a man who had been a Japanese soldier during the war came up to him and told him that he had been ecstatic at the news of the bomb as well.[38] This story demonstrates how frightened the soldiers of both armies were to fight each other. Not only were U.S. soldiers happy to hear of the bomb being used on the enemy, but even Japanese soldiers felt relief that their lives would not be the ones sacrificed to end the war. These reactions contradict morality in that the soldiers felt joy at the destruction of civilians. However, these soldiers' lives were on the line so their relief is no surprise. Bosworth mentions a story of a rumor in Japan that Japan had the same weapon and used it on America

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[37] Melvin P. Leffler, "Truman's Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb," *IHJ Bulletin* (Summer 1995).

[38] William Styron. "The Enduring Metaphors of Auschwitz And Hiroshima." *Newsweek*, 10 Jan. 1993, www.newsweek.com/enduring-metaphors-auschwitz-and-hiroshima-192256.

which made people cheerful.[39] Those who had suffered from an atomic bomb attack were not horrified that their country had inflicted the same pain on others. Their cheerful reactions demonstrate how powerful the concept of revenge can be. In a war, reactions to such horrific events are filtered through the lenses of survival and retaliation. While these reactions to the bomb make sense from a logical standpoint, they represent a stark departure from morality and empathy. It is important to note how easily moral instincts can be overcome during times of war.

VIII – Resistance

A discussion of resistance is also significant. A key group of people in the U.S. voiced opposition to the use of the bomb – the scientists working on it. Many scientists working on the bomb contributed to the Franck report, describing potential repercussions of using the bomb and urging him to consider all possible effects of using it. Furthermore, the Szilard Petition which was intended for Truman and urged him not to use the bomb never saw the light of day.[40] These scientists attempted to resist, demonstrating that they were not merely pawns without their own agency to decide to carry out orders or not. But although they wrote reports and signed letters, they still did the work and made the bomb.

The Israeli Holocaust Museum, Yad Vashem, has awarded 26,120 individuals and groups from forty-four countries the Righteous Among the Nations award.[41] This award is given to those who were actively involved in saving Jews from the Holocaust with the sole motivation of saving lives and who risked their own lives to do so.[42] Those recognized as Righteous Among the Nations

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[39] Richard J. B. Bosworth. *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War, 1945-1990.* Routledge, 1993. 167.
[40] Norris, "Dividing the Indivisible," p. 12.
[41] "Righteous Among the Nations." *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008217# (6 December 2017).
[42] *Ibid.*

represent that there were still people acting in line with their morality during this troubling time and resisting the horrific events of the Holocaust, even if it put their lives in danger.

It is important to consider what could have happened to those who engaged in acts of resistance. The Manhattan Project scientists could have been thrown off the project – a top secret project – which would have resulted in great difficulty for getting another job. In fact, "[F]ew of the [Szilard] petition's signatories were able to continue working in the weapons industry after the war."[43] People lost their careers over signing the petition. In Nazi Germany, rescuers' lives were at risk. It is important to recognize how difficult it would be for one person to risk their career or their life to engage in resistance. It is even more important to remember and honor those who did.

IX – Failures of Education

It is evidently easy for normal people to become complicit in horrible crimes. As Fasching states, the lesson of Auschwitz is that ordinary people can commit demonic acts.[44] However, people do not seem afraid of committing these atrocities again. Why is that so? The U.S. still has nuclear warheads deployed and ready to fire. As Kurihara Sadako mentions, Nazi and Japanese racial superiority seem to be reviving.[45] How is this possible? Why are people not more frightened? Why is no one speaking up? Perhaps it is because national memory in Germany, Japan, and the U.S. do not address the awful acts these countries have committed.

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[43] *Ibid.*
[44] Fasching, *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima,* p. 87.
[45] Kurihara Sadako. "The Literature of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Thoughts on Reading Lawrence Langer's The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* vol. 7, no. 1 (Spring 1993): p. 77-106. http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/hologen7&id=89&collection=journals&index=#.

Germany does not sufficiently address the Holocaust. Buruma describes how German fiction is reluctant to look Auschwitz in the face outside of museums and schoolrooms.[46] An American television series about the Holocaust called "Holocaust" was officially forbidden in the German Democratic Republic.[47] Not only do people not address it, but there is even a history of censorship of the Holocaust in Germany. Buruma mentions a story of a German woman who had been a teenager during the war and years later went to tour a concentration camp. She told her tour guide she knew nothing about the atrocities being committed; the tour guide told the woman she could not believe her.[48] Even years later, people have difficulty facing their own complicity. This woman may have not known the conditions in the concentration camps, but it would have been hard to ignore her Jewish neighbors disappearing and she could not honestly have believed they were being sent anywhere better. The lack of education and confrontation of the German citizens' complicity allowed this woman to convince herself she was not responsible for Nazi atrocities.

Japanese national memory and education have also avoided taking sufficient responsibility for its wartime atrocities. Local peace activists in Japan petitioned to incorporate the history of Japanese aggression in the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima but were turned down.[49] This memorial—a defining piece of Japanese national memory of the atomic bombs—was created as a memorial to the atomic bombings, but in it, the Japanese ignore the atrocities they committed that preceded the bombing. When mention of Japanese chemical warfare during World War II crept

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[46] Ian Buruma. *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan.* Berghahn Books, 2015, p. 84.
[47] *Ibid*, 88.
[48] *Ibid*, 76.
[49] *Ibid*, 106-107.

into Japanese textbooks, the Ministry of Education removed it.[50] Japanese students are not fully educated in the crimes their people committed in the past that led to the war's horrific end.

The U.S. also does not address the horrors of the atomic bombs even though it memorializes the Holocaust. As Bosworth mentions, the atomic bombings were forgotten for a time in Japan because it could embarrass the American ally and competitor.[51] Allowing the U.S. to ignore its crimes justified allowing Japan to forget its unique history of atomic victimhood. Richard Minear, a revisionist historian, addresses the lack of American memory for the atomic bombings and discusses the differences in American memory of the atomic holocaust and the Nazi holocaust. In the U.S., there are monuments to the atomic holocaust. However, these monuments take the viewpoint of the victimizer whereas the U.S. museums of the Nazi holocaust take the viewpoint of the victims.[52] By not addressing the victims, the monuments to the atomic holocaust cannot fully address the U.S.'s complicity in the destruction of innocent people. Minear also states that the U.S. commemorates the Nazi holocaust and not the atomic holocaust because the Nazi holocaust was not the U.S.'s doing.[53] Because the Nazi holocaust was not the U.S.'s doing, the U.S. can remember the atrocities committed without taking responsibility for such destruction. Minear digs even further, and questions why a museum to the Nazi holocaust belongs on the American Mall. He mentions how some people, including Thomas Laqueur, son of Jewish Holocaust refugees, say the U.S. should have Holocaust memorials but that it is not part of the civic religion of the U.S. He continues by stating that the U.S. is responsible for its own

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[50] *Ibid*, 110.
[51] Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima,* p. 173.
[52] Richard H. Minear. "Atomic Holocaust, Nazi Holocaust: Some Reflections." *Diplomatic History*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1995, pp. 347–365. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/24912300, p. 350.
[53] *Ibid*, 351.

inhumanities like slavery and the destruction of indigenous peoples, but the people concerned with remembering those events do not have the resources to get a museum on the Mall.[54] Minear describes how the U.S. should take responsibility for its inhumane actions and memorialize the victims of its aggressions including the atomic bombs. However, the U.S. only memorializes the Nazi holocaust and remembers its heroic rescue of people from the hands of evil, ignoring the violence it has committed itself.

X – Lessons for the Future

The U.S. could drop another atomic bomb in a moment's notice. Germany and Japan are experiencing increased trends toward racism. It seems that humanity does not have the healthy dose of fear that would prevent the repetition of World War II's horrors. Particularly as the generation that experienced the war is dying out, the younger generations do not understand and fear the horrific realities of war. Ordinary people contributed to awful crimes during World War II and it seems reasonable to suspect it could happen again. Is this due to a systemic problem that allows the scientific process and obedience to take over and let morality take the backseat? Could it be prevented by improving collective memory of these horrors and addressing the horrors that have been committed by one's own people?

Is there a way to address the lack of morality in the scientific process? As Sassower states, the de-politicization of medicine and technoscience is a double-edged sword; it can allow for freedom in the name of truth or it can become a form of cruelty and destruction.[55] Using the scientific process to address issues of politics and population can result in horrific acts being carried out without considering the morality. The scientific community has begun addressing the

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[54] *Ibid*, 351-352.
[55] Sassower, "Responsible Technoscience," p. 284.

issue of morality, creating Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) that are meant to protect the rights of human subjects that participate in research studies. On the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's website, it states, "The FDA regulations do not preclude a member from being compensated for services rendered. Payment to IRB members should not be related to or dependent upon a favorable decision."[56] It would likely be easy to bribe members of the IRB, and therefore circumvent these protections. All regulations can be corrupted. While it is important to institute these regulations in the hopes of making scientists exercise their moral compasses regularly, this is not a failsafe method to prevent awful things being done through scientific processes.

Perhaps the best that can be done is creating more nuanced education about these events. By teaching about atrocities committed through scientific processes like the Holocaust and scientific advances like the atomic bombs, people can be taught that science is not always *right* even if it is logically correct. Richard Minear states that because the U.S. is uniquely guilty and uniquely powerful, it is imperative for the U.S. to study from those who suffered from its actions. To do so effectively, the U.S. needs to stop thinking of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima as bookends of the Pacific War.[57] Differentiating between these two events would allow people to see the suffering inflicted by the atomic bombs and stop justifying such suffering with Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor was an awful attack carried out by Japan on the U.S., but it was a military target unlike the areas obliterated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The U.S. is not aware of the atrocities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As Minear states,

> It is mute testimony to American (un)consciousness of Hiroshima and Nagasaki today that there are no plans for memorials, that there is no debate. The only

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[56] "Guidance for Institutional Review Boards and Clinical Investigators." *U.S. Food and Drug Administration,* 25 Jan. 2016, www.fda.gov/RegulatoryInformation/Guidances/ucm126420.htm (6 December 2017).

[57] Minear, "Atomic Holocaust, Nazi Holocaust," p. 363-364.

> American memorials to Hiroshima and Nagasaki are to the victimizers, not the victims, and there is no debate.[58]

The U.S. has no debate about the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and U.S. citizens are generally unaware of how their collective memory has been shaped by the Orthodox view of the bomb to reject all conversation and debate about it. Minear points out that museums exist not simply to condemn or express sympathy with victims, but to allow us to study.[59] This is incredibly important. In the U.S., there is little opportunity for people to confront the past and to learn about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is not only important for people to learn about the victims and sympathize with them, but people also need to learn about the effects of the bomb. Perhaps the creation of a museum that addresses the decision to drop the bomb as well as its effects could allow for nuanced education, bringing these factors into the U.S.'s national collective memory.

In 1995, the Smithsonian planned to exhibit the fuselage of the "Enola Gay," the first aircraft to drop an atomic bomb, along with a script which aimed to "probe the motivations for the bomb," "illustrate the impact of the bomb," and "examine the legacy of the bomb."[60] This exhibit would have provided the necessary nuanced education about the bomb. However, there were many criticisms of the exhibit from claims that the exhibit didn't put the war in proper context by ignoring Pearl Harbor, to claims that the exhibit disregarded the suffering of American soldiers during the war.[61] Due to these criticisms, the script was terminated and the fuselage was displayed without commentary.[62] It is a shame the script was discarded instead being edited in a way that it would both be acceptable and create conversation about the atomic bombs. Hopefully, with the

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[58] *Ibid*, 365.
[59] *Ibid*, 362.
[60] Leffler, "Truman's Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb."
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] *Ibid.*

passage of time, the U.S. will be able to create a space in which people can confront how and why the moral U.S. dropped the atomic bombs and the consequences of allowing it to happen again.

Responses to the American war in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrate how education can inspire citizens to speak out against their country's immoral wartime methods and cause morality to prevail. As destruction of the Vietnamese people increased during the war, many U.S. citizens questioned what this ruthlessness revealed about the U.S.'s values.[63] These criticisms expressed themselves in a massive antiwar movement throughout the country which included civil disobedience strategies and strikes.[64] These demonstrations not only showcased people's moral objections to the war and its methods, but also had the effect of educating others, moving "thousands of students from apathy to action."[65] Thus, the demonstrators provided education to their contemporaries, generating stronger moral opposition to the war and its methods, and sparking an even stronger antiwar movement. While it is unclear how much of an effect criticisms of the war had on its end, it is evident that "domestic social pressures help to account for American disengagement from the fighting."[66] The end of the war is thus a huge victory to the U.S. citizens who fought for their morality. Importantly, their demonstrations educated large numbers of others about the horrors of the war and instigated others to stand up for their morals as well. The response of U.S. citizens to the war in Vietnam demonstrates how people can stand up for their morality

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[63] David L. Anderson. "Studying the Vietnam War." *The Columbia Guide to the Vietnam War,* Columbia University Press, 2002, pp. 3–6. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/ande11492.6, p. 4.

[64] Zoe Altaras. "The May 1970 Student Strike at UW." *Antiwar and Radical History Project – Pacific Northwest*, http://depts.washington.edu/antiwar/may1970strike.shtml (6 December 2017).

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones. "Introduction." *Peace Now!: American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War*, Yale University Press, 1999, pp. 1–12. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt32bstr.4, p. 12.

during times of war, providing an example of how education can increase activism and influence policy.

Through better education regarding wartime atrocities, people will learn how to advocate effectively for humanity. As Sadako and many others have said, the Germans who looked on at concentration camps and did nothing are also guilty.[67] People cannot allow themselves to become guilty of such complicity. As Blumenthal so poignantly put it,

> It is by the terror we have sown and by the lessons we draw from it that we shall be remembered. It is by the destructiveness we have loosed into history and by our moral response to it that we shall be known. Hiroshima and the atom bomb, Auschwitz and the shoah[68] – these will be the icons of our times.[69]

The moral response to "the terror we have sown" is still being determined. The lessons drawn from these horrific events are still being learned. It is not too late to increase education and improve collective memory to ensure these atrocities will not be repeated. It is time to advocate for better, more nuanced education into past atrocities and to bring these events into national memory. Germany must remember the Holocaust, Japan must remember Rape of Nanking, and the U.S. must remember the atomic bombs. It is not too late to improve the lessons learned and the lessons taught to the next generation. But it could be, soon.

Being engaged in thought about morality is always important. Nonetheless, history seems to show that looking back on times of war will always lead to moral challenges; the importance of war goals will overcome moral qualms time and again because the outcomes are incredibly important. Thinking about morality only in times of war will not be enough to oppose the system. However, that does not reduce the importance of considering morality. If one constantly exercises

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[67] Sadako, "The Literature of Auschwitz and Hiroshima."
[68] "Shoah" is the Hebrew term for the Holocaust.
[69] Blumenthal, "Auschwitz and Hiroshima."

one's moral compass, perhaps morality can become as instinctual as survival. If one constantly learns from the past and address its moral challenges, one will be more inclined not to repeat past atrocities. At the very least, one can hope Majdanek will remain empty, the nuclear warheads will remain unfired, and our own morality will prevail.

Bibliographic Essay

My research was inspired by Ben-Ami Shillony's "Auschwitz and Hiroshima." This article describes the similarities and differences between these two events and the Jewish and Japanese reactions to them. I was intrigued by the parallels Shillony found and was interested in whether his Revisionist perspective of the bomb affected the attributes he emphasized. As I began to delve into more comparisons of the Holocaust and Hiroshima, I found myself drawn to the question of morality and the parallels between how those involved in carrying out these events dealt with any moral objections they may have had.

As I began exploring this topic, I stumbled upon a 1993 Newsweek article by William Styron, author of the 1980 US National Book Award for Fiction winner *Sophie's Choice.* In this article, Styron describes his ecstatic reaction to Hiroshima as a U.S. soldier during World War II. He continues, mentioning how a Japanese soldier confided in him how he had been ecstatic as well. I found these reactions striking—how could one be happy at the news of utter destruction, particularly of one's own people? I concluded that people's realities during the war vastly altered their ideas of morality and I decided to look further into what systems shaped these realities.

Raphael Sassower's "Responsible Technoscience: The Haunting Reality of Auschwitz and Hiroshima" describes the system of highly rationalized technoscientific progress in which both the Holocaust and Hiroshima occurred. I found this framework fascinating and chillingly compelling.

"Atomic Holocaust, Nazi Holocaust: Some Reflections" by Richard H. Minear frames Auschwitz and Hiroshima both as deserving the classification of "holocaust" and discusses the lack of a museum to the atomic bombs in the U.S. He also approaches the question of why the U.S. has a museum to the Nazi holocaust and not the atomic holocaust. While I was less

convinced by his insistence on referring to both Auschwitz and Hiroshima using the term "holocaust," his discussion of the need for a museum to the atomic bombs in the U.S. was persuasive.

Kurihara Sadako's "The Literature of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Thoughts on Reading Lawrence Langer's The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination" notes how the Holocaust and Hiroshima are becoming history and how Nazi and Japanese racial superiority seem to be reviving. It describes how many people were complicit in these atrocities and urges people to keep that in mind for the future. While I found this conclusion important, Sadako's position as a survivor of the bomb introduces some problematic elements. The biggest issue with the text is that it claims the atomic bomb survivors were worse off than Holocaust survivors because the survivors of the Holocaust could move on with their lives while the survivors of the atomic bombs had to live with the invisible horrors of radiation poisoning. This is an impossible comparison to make; many Holocaust survivors suffered lifelong health issues due to the conditions they faced, not to mention the horrors of the Holocaust and the trauma inflicted.

In "Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Icons of Our Century," David Blumenthal, a professor of Judaic Studies at Emory University, discusses how important the Holocaust and Hiroshima will be in determining the future's perception of the twentieth century. He describes how the concept of obedience shapes morality in our time. His analysis of both Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil" and Stanley Milgram's experiments provided another highly compelling framework in which to place the moral perceptions of concentration camp guards and atomic bomb scientists. However, it doesn't sufficiently address the other reasons people were compelled to act the way they did.

In *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima,* R. J. B. Bosworth describes the way the Holocaust and Hiroshima affected Jewish and Japanese identity. He also emphasizes how important it is to remember Japanese atrocities and not simply view them as victims. He concludes that of all approaches to Auschwitz and Hiroshima, the model of fascism is most suggestive. I find this view too narrow; I believe the other systems I bring up are significantly more important in framing how average people acted in ways that brought about these harrowing events.

The moral issues of the Holocaust and Hiroshima are the focus of Darrel J. Fasching's *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalypse or Utopia?* He examines the scientific framework and other moral approaches including Lifton's "doubling." A huge strength I found in his work is how he emphasizes that even though the number of people killed in the Holocaust far surpassed those killed by the atomic bombs, the immensity of the bomb was in its efficiency. He claims that had the Nazi's won the race for atomic weaponry, they would have won. This source was one of the most helpful for me in approaching different moral frameworks to the Holocaust and Hiroshima.

Ian Buruma details how Japan and Germany have censored their crimes in his *The Wages of Guilt: Memory of War in Germany and Japan.* I found these instances of denial telling because they show how countries try to deal with their guilt by ignoring their crimes. This response is clearly problematic because it allows people to avoid confronting their own morality by continuing to deny their involvement in such horrors. His description of censorship was very useful to my research.

Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* approaches the morality of war. He describes the role of obedience and argues that it is not a

valid excuse. He mentions how those working on the atomic bomb felt they were replaceable. He also states that Japan was not as big a threat to peace and freedom as Nazi Germany because they were merely engaged in military expansion. Therefore, unconditional surrender should not have been asked of Japan, which could have ended the war earlier. Walzer's moral clarity is refreshing, but he does not sufficiently analyze danger and other important factors that contributed to people's actions. His differentiation between Germany and Japan is also compelling, but it's difficult to determine how much of that difference was apparent to U.S. policymakers at the time.

In *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb,* John Whittier Treat draws important parallels between the Holocaust and Hiroshima. His observations on the alienation between victim and victimizer as well as the efficiency of the Holocaust and Hiroshima are important, but he does not differentiate the two strongly enough. Thomas Hylland Eriksen's "Nationalism" effectively describes the relevance of nationalism and the ways it can be manipulated. His insights into the effects of nationalism were quite useful to me. Melvin P. Leffler's "Truman's Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb" provides a good overview of the "Enola Gay" controversy and is important in my discussion of how a museum to the atomic bomb and its victims could help U.S. citizens confront our atomic past.

In thinking of a time when people followed their moral compass and morality prevailed, I remembered Zoe Altaras's paper, "The May 1970 Student Strike at UW" in which describes the reasons students protested the Vietnam War as well as the effects of such protests. She concluded that this strike effectively educated others about the war and in turn mobilized them against the war. In the *Columbia Guide to the Vietnam War* David L. Anderson specifies the types of moral objections people had to the war. In Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones's *Peace Now!: American Society and*

the Ending of the Vietnam War, Jeffreys-Jones mentions the effect such protests had on policy. These three works, taken together, provided me with a comprehensive view of how U.S. citizens' morality prevailed during the Vietnam War.

I utilized several other resources to gather facts for my paper. I used the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Holocaust Encyclopedia* to find facts about the Holocaust; Margot Norris's "Dividing the Indivisible: The Fissured Story of the Manhattan Project" to learn more about Szilard's attempts to stop the bombs from being used; and I used "Guidance for Institutional Review Boards and Clinical Investigators" from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to learn more about current U.S. attempts to regulate scientific processes to prevent immoral scientific studies. In addition, I consulted Dugald Mcconnell and Brian Todd's CNN article "Nuclear Biscuits and Footballs: How the President Launches an Atomic Bomb" because it describes the current U.S. nuclear arsenal, as well as Dave Merrill et al.'s "To Launch a Nuclear Strike, Donald Trump Would Follow These Steps" in Bloomberg to understand the process of launching and an atomic bomb as well as how long it would take to do so.

I used a number of primary sources regarding the Manhattan Project as well. I consulted the "Einstein-Szilard Letter" which requested government funding for atomic research and was the impetus for the Manhattan Project, "The Franck Report" which asked the president to consider the use of an atomic weapon in terms of long-range national policy, and the "Szilard Petition" which urged President Truman not to use the bomb.

This research was a lengthy and rewarding process and I am grateful to all those whose works I have consulted in its pursuit.

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