Kent Academic Repository

Friesen, Ina (2016) ***The Experiential Core of the Humanitarian Vocation: An Analysis of the Autobiographical Narratives of Contemporary Humanitarians.*** **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent,.**

Downloaded from

https://kar.kent.ac.uk/63928/ The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

This document version

UNSPECIFIED

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

UNSPECIFIED

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal* , Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies).

The Experiential Core of the Humanitarian Vocation: An Analysis of the Autobiographical Narratives of Contemporary Humanitarians

Ina Friesen

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International Conflict Analysis from the School of Politics and International Relations, University of Kent, December 2016

Word count: 100,969 words (excluding footnotes, appendix and bibliography)

To my grandfather

Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor Stefan Rossbach for his faith in this project, his trust in and his patience with me. I would not have done it without your calm and encouragement.

I would like to thank the University of Kent for the Graduate Teaching Assistantship scholarship which allowed me to pursue the PhD project.

Meeting my husband, Andrew Brogan, during my time at Kent was an unexpected and most precious surprise life has given me. You are and you give more than I could have hoped for.

I would like to thank my mother for teaching me how to read. Showing me how to string the different letters together, you have opened the door to countless worlds to me and sparked a lifelong love.

I would like to thank my parents-in-law for becoming my family which in practice meant sacrificing their dining table for my chapter surgeries and making me countless cups of tea. Most of all, however, for having raised a kind and compassionate son. I am well aware that I am the main beneficiary of your efforts, so, thank you.

Contents

List of Abbreviations i

Introduction 1

Part I 9

1. The Humanitarian Landscape: Principles, Actors, and Current Framework 10
   1.1 The Humanitarian Principles 11
   1.2 The Humanitarian Actors 16
   1.3 The Current Framework – 'New Humanitarianism' 17

2. The Humanitarian Aid Workers 34
   2.1 Emerging Research on Humanitarian Aid Workers 34
   2.2 The Objectives of the Study 38
   2.3 Methodology 56

Part II 71

3. James Orbinski: An Imperfect Offering 72
   3.1 Background and Motivation 72
   3.2 Humanitarian Aid Work 79
   3.3 Epilogue 97

4. Damien Brown: Band-Aid for a Broken Leg 98
   4.2 Background and Motivation 98
   4.3 Humanitarian Aid Work 101
   4.4 Epilogue 117

5 James Maskalyk: Six Months in Sudan 118
   5.1 Background and Motivation 118
   5.2 Humanitarian Aid Work 123
   5.3 Epilogue 137

6. Jessica Alexander: Chasing Chaos 139
   6.1 Background and Motivation 139
   6.2 Humanitarian Aid Work 141
   6.3 Epilogue 160

7. Review of the Common Ethical Experiences: The Need for further Analysis 162
   7.1 Significant Experiences for Aid Workers' Motivation 162

7.2 Significant Experiences during Humanitarian Aid Work 165

Part III 168

8. Martin Buber's and Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics 169

8.1 Martin Buber: The Potential of the 'in-between' 170

8.2 Emmanuel Levinas: Face-to-Face with Alterity 180

8.3 The Differences between Levinas's and Buber's Concepts 191

9. James Orbinski: An Imperfect Offering 196

9.1 The Baidoa Man – Resistance to the Primacy of Calculations 196

9.2 The Girl and her Mother – Responsibility as Resistance 201

9.3 Ummera-sha – Alterity as Relation 204

10. Damien Brown: Band-Aid for a Broken Leg 209

10.1 Motivation – Making Up for Missed Opportunities 209

10.2 The Beer Bottle Girl – The Power of the Powerless 211

10.3 The Woman and her Husband – The Infinite Responsibility 213

11. James Maskalyk: Six Months in Sudan 217

11.1 Motivation – "Here I am!" 217

11.2 Aweil – Maskalyk's Wound 219

11.3 The Little Girl – The Question of Success 224

12. Jessica Alexander: Chasing Chaos 227

12.1 Motivation – Search for Meaning 227

12.2 Ahmed's Niece – Becoming For-the-Other 231

12.3 Leaving Darfur – The Cost of Turning Away 235

13. The Face-to-Face – The Experiential Core of the Humanitarian Vocation 238

Appendix 253

Examples of IPA line-by-line analyses 253

References 261

List of Abbreviations

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
BA	Damien Brown. *Band-Aid for a Broken Leg: Being a Doctor with no Borders (and other Ways to Stay Single).* London: Allen and Unwin. 2013.
BMM	Martin Buber. *Between Man and Man*. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. London: Kegan Paul, 1947.
BPW	Emmanuel Levinas. *Basic Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1996.
CC	Jessica Alexander. *Chasing Chaos: My Decade In and Out of Humanitarian Aid*. New York: Broadway Books. 2013.
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
EI	Emmanuel Levinas. *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo.* Translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press. 1985.
EN	Emmanuel Levinas. *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*. Translated by Michael Bradley Smith and Barbara Harshav. London: Continuum. 2006.
GDT	Emmanuel Levinas. *God, Death, and Time*. Translated by Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2000.
HCP	Health Care Practitioner
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IO	James Orbinski. *An Imperfect Offering: Humanitarian Action for the Twenty-First Century*. 2nd ed. London: Rider. 2009.
IT	Martin Buber. *I and Thou*. Translated by Walter Kaufman. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. 1970.
KM	Buber, Martin. *The Knowledge of Man*. Edited by Maurice Friedman. Translated by Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965.
LR	Emmanuel Levinas. *The Levinas Reader*. Edited by Seán Hand. Oxford: Blackwell. 1989.
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without borders)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

OB	Emmanuel Levinas. *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essenc*e. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. London: Martinius Nijhoff Publishers. 1981.
PI	Martin Buber. *Philosophical Interrogations*. Edited by Sydney Rome and Beatrice Rome. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 1964.
PM	Emmanuel Levinas. "The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas." Translated by Andrew Benjamin and Tamra Wright. In *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, edited by Robert Bernasconi and David Wood, 168-180. London: Routledge. 1988.
PMB	Paul A. Schilpp and Maurice Friedman, eds. *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court. 167.
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PW	Martin Buber. *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*. Translated and edited by Maurice Friedman. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1957.
RGF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RPF	Rwandan Government Forces
RTLM	Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines
SAF	Sudan Alliance Forces
SM	James Maskalyk. *Six Months in Sudan. A Young Doctor in a War-torn Village*. Edinburgh: Canongate. 2009.
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
TI	Emmanuel Levinas. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press. 1969.
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
WM	Martin Buber. *The Way of Man: According to the Teachings of Hasidism*. London: Routledge. 2002.

Introduction

Set up more than 150 years ago to save lives, alleviate suffering, and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of crises, the international humanitarian system has undergone an extraordinary transformation over the last two decades. In 2014, the international humanitarian system comprised of 4,480 aid organisations, with combined humanitarian expenditures of over $25 billion and an estimated total of 450,000 humanitarian aid workers worldwide (ALNAP 2015). The remarkable significance that humanitarian issues hold in the 21st century was illustrated in the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit on the 23rd and 24th of May 2016 in Istanbul. Launched by United Nations (UN) Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the summit gathered approximately 9,000 participants from 173 states, 700 national and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), 250 international NGOs, 130 representatives of the United Nation, and many other actors. The different stakeholders came together to commit to Ban Ki-moon's *Agenda for Humanity* - a plan that outlines the necessary changes to alleviate the suffering, reduce risk and lessen vulnerability on a global scale.

Considering the importance of humanitarian matters in global politics, and the size of the international humanitarian enterprise, we know very little about the 450,000 humanitarian aid workers who make humanitarian ideals a reality. Their absence in academic analyses of the international humanitarian aid system in the field of political science is a reflection of international relations' focus on theoretical abstractions and its disregard of ordinary people. Academic investigations of the humanitarian aid system assess humanitarianism as a formal set of ideals and ethical norms which exist independently from the individuals enacting them. The majority of the academic literature on the humanitarian system revolves around the notion of the 'crisis' in which the international humanitarian movement has found itself since entering the global stage of international politics, and focuses on the challenges humanitarian agencies face in trying to uphold their principles when providing assistance to those in need. Although almost every account of the foundation of the modern humanitarian movement will include the story of Henri Dunant's experience of the battle at Solferino which led to the foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), an

investigation of contemporary humanitarian aid workers has only begun to emerge over the last decade.

The first study to assess the entirety of the international humanitarian system was published by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), in a pilot State of Humanitarian System report in 2010**.** The study estimated the number of humanitarian aid workers worldwide at 210,800 for 2008, a figure that has since grown to an estimated total of 450,000 in 2014 (ALNAP 2015). We know that the majority of humanitarian aid workers work for international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), and that 95% of those working for INGOs are national staff members (ibid., 2015) – but we know little else about them. Who are these people? What is their gender, age, and profession? What motivates them to pursue humanitarian aid work? How do they understand humanitarian aid work and their humanitarian engagement? What challenges do they encounter working in the field, and how do they cope with these challenges? Do they and if so, how, resist the external pressures to instrumentalize their efforts to assist those in need? My thesis takes steps to answering some of these questions and adds to the emerging research on humanitarian aid workers.

Scholars have only recently turned to humanitarian aid professionals as a matter of interest in and of themselves, and so, begun to shed light on the above questions. This turn is part of a broader scholarship which challenges the current disregard for ordinary people in the study of international relations and development studies, and argues for the inclusion of individuals in both fields (Barkawi and Brighton 2011; Eyben 2011; Fechter 2012a, 2014; Sylvester 2012; Hindman 2014; Verma 2014; Roth 2015). The few existing studies on humanitarian aid workers can be separated into three blocks: studies examining individuals' motivation for humanitarian aid work; studies exploring the challenges aid workers experience during their engagement; and studies investigating the physical and psychological implications humanitarian aid work has on aid professionals.

Contrasting the general absence of humanitarian aid workers' experiences in academic literature on the international humanitarian system, is the increasing number of published memoirs written by humanitarian aid workers. Fechter argues that humanitarian aid workers publish such memoirs as *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and War* (2001) by Tony Vaux or *Emergency Sex (and Other Desperate Measures): True Stories from a War Zone* (2004) by Kenneth Cain,

Heidi Postlewait and Andrew Thomson because they are not given any opportunities to present their personal views in the official discourse on aid (2014, 147).

My interest in humanitarian aid workers, and as such the beginning of this project, dates back to a chance encounter with the ICRC emergency doctor and surgeon Richard Munz in May 2007. I happened to be at a book launch where Munz was presenting his book *Im Zentrum der Katastrophe: Was es wirklich bedeutet vor Ort zu helfen* [1](2007). Having worked for national and international organisations, and the ICRC for more than 20 years, Munz addressed the discrepancy between the media reports about humanitarian disasters and the situation he had experienced in the field. Stressing that it was the humanitarian aid workers' responsibility to correct the existing portrayal of humanitarian aid work and to provide a more comprehensive picture, Munz illuminated the most prevalent myths about humanitarian aid work. Presenting a subjective account of his everyday life as a humanitarian aid professional, Munz provided a more grounded and realistic insight into humanitarian aid work than I was familiar with from the common sensationalist headlines.

In addition to wanting to provide a more realistic picture of the humanitarian aid system, other aspects that motivate humanitarian aid workers to present their experiences in public are the wish to offer a realistic perspective of themselves and their work. Jessica Alexander, for instance, who has worked for the UN and various other organisations in the humanitarian sector, wrote her memoir *Chasing Chaos: My Decade in and Out of Humanitarian Aid* (2013a) in order to demystify people's perceptions of aid workers as heroes and to present a more accurate account of their day-to-day experiences (Alexander 2013b). Other aid workers are driven by a desire to show the human stories behind humanitarian crises and international aid statistics, and to counterbalance the usual portrayal of the recipients of humanitarian aid as passive victims. Damien Brown, a physician who has worked with MSF in Angola and Sudan, wrote his memoir *Band-Aid for a Broken Leg: Being a Doctor with No Borders (And Other Ways to Stay Single*) (2013a) because he wanted to convey "the individual stories of the kids, the local people, and the healthcare workers" (Brown 2013b) and most of all, to emphasise their resilience to

[1] *In the Centre of the Disaster: What it really means to help on-site* (my translation).

demonstrate that they "weren't the victims many in the first world assume rural Africans are" (Brown 2015). Overall, memoirs demonstrate how – and how much – the personal is intertwined with the professional, best illustrated in the former MSF president's James Orbinski's statement that his memoir *An Imperfect Offering: Dispatches from the Medical Frontline* (2008) is about "personal moments, political moments, or moments when there is no difference" (IO 4).

This close connection, however, is widely ignored in the academic investigation of humanitarian aid. Aid workers are generally seen as mere implementers of aid policies and are not viewed as having an agentive impact on the outcome of aid projects (Fechter 2012b; Hindman 2014). Orbinski's memoir on his motivation to work with MSF in Rwanda in 1994 demonstrates how inadequate the assumption of a clear-cut separation between the personal and the professional is in reality. Explaining why he accepted the offer of working in Kigali, despite knowing of the genocide and the safety risks of the assignment, Orbinski states: "if I did not at least try, I could not live with myself" (IO 181). This statement illustrates that Orbinski's motivation to work in the humanitarian sector cannot be separated from his personal convictions and from his understanding of his identity. Orbinski's statement demonstrates that the connection between the personal and the professional is not merely an overlapping of two independently existing spheres but that both levels cannot be separated from each other, and that in order to understand humanitarian aid workers' engagement, we have to explore their personal convictions, values, and ethics. For Orbinski, his humanitarian engagement is an act intended to preserve his integrity, demonstrating that the core point of his motivation for humanitarian aid work lies outside of political frameworks and interests. The existing academic debate on humanitarian assistance cannot explain Orbinski's understanding of his humanitarian work because it ignores the important relationship between personal ethics and political action. In disregarding the aid workers and their personal ethics, the current discussion misses a defining aspect of humanitarian aid work.

Another example from Orbinski's memoir which demonstrates the incomplete understanding of what constitutes humanitarian aid work, concerns a situation from his time in Kigali in which he had to decide whether to take a little girl and her mother with him to the hospital. The situation was characterised by time pressure and high risk: MSF were only permitted to drive on the roads until 6 p.m. and it

was five to six. Orbinski knew that if the militia stopped the car and found the girl and her mother, they would all be killed. Having no time to contemplate his response, but forced to decide what he should do in an instant, Orbinski writes that "[t]here was no choice, no thinking. I just did it. I picked up the girl's mother and carried her to the truck" (IO 216). This unpredictable encounter and the time constraints required an instantaneous response, which left no space for any deliberation regarding his reaction. There was no time to consider his course of action, reflect on the organisational guidelines regarding such situations, and no one to ask for advice. This instant was an autonomous space – there was only Orbinski and the girl's plea for help – which, for a brief moment existed outside of the political framework that is driven by expectations, outcomes, efficiency, and instrumentality. Orbinski acted out of his own accord, out of his personal convictions regarding the right response to the situation, and in doing so resisted the external constraints set out in the form of the curfew.

If the investigation of humanitarian aid workers' personal ethics can show that the motivation for their humanitarian aid work lies outside of the reach of political power, and individuals act on the basis of these convictions during their humanitarian aid work, we will have explored a level which cannot be instrumentalized. This has profound implications for the current debate on the movement's crisis and the ways in which humanitarian agencies attempt to resist their instrumentalization. We will have shown that, in ignoring the personal level of the engagement, the current state of research does not only fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of humanitarian assistance, but also ignores an important source of resistance to its instrumentalization.

My thesis argues that humanitarian aid workers, and their motivations and values, are an intrinsic part of the international humanitarian system, and need to be investigated in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the humanitarian system. Exploring the personal ethics of humanitarian aid workers and their significance for the humanitarian movement, this project aims to illuminate the intersection of the personal and professional level of humanitarian aid work – an aspect which is currently ignored – and to contribute to the underdeveloped research on humanitarian aid workers.

In doing so, my thesis follows an 'empirical approach' to humanitarian ethics, and analyses four contemporary memoirs written by international humanitarian aid

workers in order to explore the experiential foundations of the ethics humanitarian professionals embody in their humanitarian engagement. Aiming to reveal the ethical experiences that define humanitarian aid work, I will analyse James Orbinski's *An Imperfect Offering: Dispatches from the Medical Frontline* (2008), James Maskalyk's *Six Months in Sudan: A Young Doctor in a War-torn Village* (2009a), Damien Brown's *Band-Aid for a Broken Leg: Being a Doctor with No Borders (And Other Ways to Stay Single*) (2013a) and Jessica Alexander's *Chasing Chaos: My Decade in and Out of Humanitarian Aid* (2013a).

I suggest that humanitarian aid workers' ethical formation is a result of particular ethical encounters – a conceptualisation of ethics that can be found in the works of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. In contrast to the traditional Western philosophical approach to ethics that focuses on the rational ego as the source of ethical behaviour, Levinas and Buber locate ethics outside of the realm of knowledge and in concrete encounters between individuals. Ethics for both thinkers is embedded in a specific human relation in which we are asked to respond to another human being. In contrast to the focus on the consequentialist, deontologist or virtue ethics in the academic discussion on humanitarian ethics, Levinas and Buber offer a position which does not aim to provide universal rules that should guide our behaviour but illuminate the situations in which the ethical person emerges and provide the language and concepts to illuminate the ethical encounters described in the memoirs.

I explore the ethics of humanitarian aid workers by examining three specific aspects. First, I examine whether humanitarian aid workers connect their motivation to particular experiences and explore the nature of these experiences. Second, I investigate whether humanitarian aid workers attribute their ability to withstand the challenging nature of humanitarian aid work to specific experiences. Third, I explore whether there are common patterns and characteristics among these experiences, and therefore, a shared core to humanitarian aid workers' motivation and commitment.

In order to illuminate how humanitarian aid workers understand *their* engagement in humanitarian aid work, I will use the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA). IPA is a qualitative research approach which seeks to provide a detailed examination of personal lived experiences, the meaning

of specific experiences to participants, and the ways in which participants make sense of these experiences.

The choice to use memoirs rather than interviews as the data basis for the project results from my interest in the exploration of the long-term impact of humanitarians' formative experiences. Offering a longitudinal insight, the memoirs allow me to explore the evolution of humanitarians' attitudes and self-understandings over time, and in doing so, will offer a more dynamic view of their motivation than has been provided in the existing research on humanitarian aid workers' motivation. The majority of the existing studies on humanitarian aid workers are snapshots of particular aspects of particular moments in the aid workers' lives. Focusing on an exploration of the variety of factors that motivate individuals to work in the humanitarian sector, the studies do not provide an in-depth investigation of the origins of the motivating aspects, nor offer an insight into the development of this commitment over time. Memoirs, in contrast, allow me to present a long-term view, from the starting point of developing an ethical awareness throughout the process of refining this awareness and living out this commitment during their humanitarian work.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the reader to the current discussion on the international humanitarian system and humanitarian aid workers and serves as the foundation for the following analysis of the memoirs. This section also introduces the core humanitarian principles and draws out the changes in the political framework over the last two decades which have resulted in a 'new humanitarianism' and contributed to the proclaimed crisis of the international humanitarian movement. The second chapter gives an overview of the current state of research on humanitarian aid workers, provides a detailed explanation of my approach and methodology and clarifies how my thesis relates to the existing research on humanitarian aid workers. In this section, I aim to address all three research questions, by including the IPA analyses of the memoirs by James Orbinski, Damien Brown, James Maskalyk, and Jessica Alexander. The examination of each memoir follows a chronological order and is separated into three sections: 'Background and Motivation' explores the individual's background and the experiential basis of their decision to become involved in humanitarian aid work; 'Humanitarian Aid Work' examines specific experiences that humanitarian aid workers describe as having been significant

during their humanitarian aid work and which humanitarian aid workers connect with their ability to withstand the difficulties they encountered in the field; 'Epilogue' reveals the more distanced evaluation of their work which humanitarians present as a concluding reflection on their humanitarian work.

After identifying common elements in aid workers' self-analysis with the use of the IPA method, I proceed in the third part of the thesis to further examine those elements by introducing and using conceptual tools developed by philosophers Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. Both Buber and Levinas conceptualise ethics as a result of intersubjective encounters, understand responsibility in a direct sense as a response to the other and see the ability to respond to the other as the only way in which we gain subjectivity and constitute ourselves as human. For Buber, the ethical subject constitutes itself through entering into relation with the other and approaching the other as a Thou rather than an It. For Levinas, the ethical subject arises in a face-to-face meeting in which the self is put in question by the infinitely other, and is called to assume responsibility for the other's wellbeing. I will first introduce the two thinkers and their main concepts, and will then use their key notions to examine three particularly significant encounters or aspects from each aid worker's memoirs (which were revealed in the IPA analyses). Therefore, this part of the thesis is an extension of humanitarians' self-reflection, and provides a more comprehensive analysis of the shared nature of humanitarians' ethical experiences.

My conclusions present my findings, relate them to the existing research on humanitarian aid workers, and provide a discussion of the results and their implications/contribution for the wider research on humanitarian aid work. Alongside this, I reflect on the limitations of the study and suggest possible directions for future research.

Part I

The International Humanitarian System: Current Trends

1. The Humanitarian Landscape: Principles, Actors, and Current Framework

The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit, called by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, took place in Istanbul on the 23rd and 24th of May 2016. It gathered approximately 9,000 participants from 173 states, 700 national and local NGOs, 250 international NGOs, 130 representatives of UN agencies, and other stakeholders, including representatives of the private sector, academia and the media. It was the first time that so many different stakeholders had come together on such a scale, to commit to reduce the unprecedented level of humanitarian need in the world today. That this summit took place demonstrates the remarkable importance that humanitarian issues hold in contemporary politics. Over the last two decades, the humanitarian movement has experienced a remarkable transformation regarding its scope, scale, and significance. Humanitarian issues have gained an unprecedented significance in the international political agenda, and are now described as a powerful "orientating feature for global social life" (Barnett and Weiss 2008, 29) and "a potent force of our world" (Fassin 2012, xi). The international humanitarian system of the 21st century is better institutionalized, better funded, better supported, and better able to save lives than ever before. From a handful of organisations working in the humanitarian field prior to the 1980s, their number has increased dramatically, and in 2014, comprised of 4,480 aid organisations, with combined humanitarian expenditures of over $25 billion, and 450,000 professional humanitarian aid workers (ALNAP 2015). This institutionalization of the humanitarian movement has been described as a "revolution in the ethics of care" (Barnett 2011, 17) and appraised as "one of humanity's great moral achievements" (Slim 2015, 2).

Strikingly, the increased importance and attention attributed to humanitarian values on the global political stage stand in stark contrast to the overall perception that the movement is in crisis, and that it "has become a victim of its own success" (Terry 2003, 3). Instead of being an indication of humanitarianism's golden age, the prominence of humanitarian issues is seen as a cause for concern. The academic discussion of the contemporary humanitarian enterprise reflects this attitude; according to some of the titles of works published in the last two decades, the

movement is “under fire” (Minear and Weiss 1995), “in crisis” (Rieff 2002), “in question” (Barnett and Weiss 2008), and “contested” (Barnett and Weiss 2011). The crisis arises from humanitarianism’s instrumentalization – that is, the use of humanitarian aid as a tool to pursue political, security, military, development, economic, and other non-humanitarian goals (Donini 2012, 2).

The question of whether humanitarian agencies, acting in a complex web of competing power interests, can uphold their core principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, is intrinsic to humanitarian practice. Historical analyses of humanitarian missions demonstrate that the simple idea of providing relief and protection to populations in extreme situations has always been subject to a mishmash of political, economic, and military considerations. The overall view on the state of contemporary humanitarian action is that, even though it has always been difficult to represent humanitarian values in wars, a principled positioning has become even more difficult in the 21st century (Terry 2002; Forsythe 2005; Barnett 2011; Donini 2012; Minear 2012; Smillie 2012).

This chapter serves as an overview of the state of the international humanitarian system and the current discussion of humanitarian matters. It will first introduce the classical humanitarian principles that form the foundation for humanitarian action. Then, it will examine the changes in the political framework in which humanitarian actors have operated over the last decades, and illustrate how these changes have led to the emergence of a ‘new humanitarianism’ – and the crisis of the humanitarian field. In view of the overall project, this chapter introduces the wider framework in which humanitarian aid professionals are operating today, and sets the scene for the analysis of aid workers’ memoirs.

1.1 The Humanitarian Principles

Humanitarian assistance is defined as aid and action which aims to save lives, alleviate suffering, and protect human dignity, during and in the aftermath of both man-made crises and natural disasters. Humanitarian action is based on the concept of humanity that derives from the belief in the equality of human beings and the conviction that it is a universal duty to provide assistance to those in need (Alkire and Chen 2004; Darcy 2004; Hunt 2011; Fassin 2012; Slim 2015). Humanitarian

assistance differs from other forms of foreign and development assistance because it is intended to be governed by the key principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.

Although ideas of compassion and charity originated in ancient times, and are present in all religions, they only gained a formal institutional, conceptual, and legal form in the nineteenth century. The foundation of the ICRC in 1863[2] and the declaration of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded Armies in the Field in 1864 are considered to be the birth of the modern institutionalized humanitarian movement.

Humanitarian principles are the moral architecture of humanitarian assistance, and are applied at two different levels. The first usage of 'humanitarian principles' refers to states' legal obligations for the conduct of armed conflict, and respect for the rights of war victims that are expressed in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and the three Additional Protocols of 1977 and 2005. The second use of 'humanitarian principles' refers to principles of humanitarian action that are intended to guide the activities of humanitarian agencies, but have no legal status. Whereas the primary obligation in holding up humanitarian principles lies with the warring parties, respect for principles of humanitarian action lies with the organisations aiming to provide humanitarian assistance to suffering populations (Leader 2000).

The Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols provide humanitarian agencies with a legal basis to insist on access to suffering populations and the provision of humanitarian assistance, if they abide by certain conditions. Although the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the three Additional Protocols of 1977 and 2005 do not explicitly define 'humanitarian', they do provide a description of the characteristics of a humanitarian actor; situations in which states must allow such actors to deliver assistance; conditions which states are allowed to impose on humanitarian actors for relief delivery; and the reasons for withholding consent for access (Mackintosh 2000). The third article which is common to all four of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 states that "an impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, may offer its services to the Parties

[2] The original name of the organisation was International Committee for Relief to the Wounded.

to the conflict" (cited in Pictet 1952, 38). Thus, for an organisation to legitimately offer its services in conflicts, it must be strictly humanitarian: it should be concerned with the condition of men considered solely as human beings, without regard to their military (or any other) value, and the services provided must be impartial (Pictet 1952, 108-109). Those principles which are commonly referred to as 'humanitarian principles' today, were originally defined as the conditions imposed by states on aid agencies in return for their permission to operate. The deal between humanitarian agencies and states is based on the concept of impartiality and non-interference; conflict parties agree to respect humanitarian principles and to allow for free passage of relief goods, but only if they have no reason to fear that the relief aid will be of a definite advantage to their enemy, and if humanitarians refrain from any interference in conflict (Leader 2000, 12).

The Core Humanitarian Principles

The ICRC's four principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence[3] are widely recognised as the core humanitarian principles. These principles are reaffirmed in the UN General Assembly resolutions, and enshrined in numerous widely accepted humanitarian standards and guidelines. Jean Pictet, the former Vice President of the ICRC and the main commentator on ICRC's principles, differentiates between *substantive* principles like humanity and impartiality (which constitute the objectives of the movement) and *derived* principles such as neutrality and independence (which constitute the ways and means to realise the substantive principles). *Substantive* principles rank higher than all other principles, and Pictet stresses that the ICRC cannot surrender them at any cost or "it will not survive" (1979, 138).

The principle of humanity constitutes ICRC's ideal, motivation, and objective, and is the essential principle from which all other principles derive. Pictet describes 'humanity' as "the sentiment or attitude of someone who shows himself to be human" whereby 'human' means to be good to one's fellow beings (1979, 143). Humanity, therefore, is "a sentiment of active goodwill towards mankind" and the term 'humanitarian' describes all actions that are beneficent to men (ibid., 143).

[3] The ICRC is guided by seven fundamental principles of which voluntary service, unity and universality are not discussed here as they refer to the specific organisation and structure of the ICRC.

The principle of humanity is formulated as the desire "to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health, and to ensure respect for the human being" (ibid., 12). Slim points out that the principle of humanity consists of two aspects: a value and a virtue. Humanity as a value means that there is no greater goal beyond the person's life in humanitarian aid, and humanity as a virtue concerns our engagement with others. Slim stresses the importance of genuine attention towards others in humanitarian work: encountering the other in a genuine meeting means not to inspect him, but to seek to connect with him on equal terms, and to try to understand him, and respond to him (2015, 50).

The principle of impartiality means that humanitarian action "makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours only to relieve suffering, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress" (Pictet 1979, 24). Impartiality consists of three principles: non-discrimination, proportionality and impartiality. Non-discrimination means that no objective differences of sex, race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or any other similar criteria, shall play a role in the treatment of victims, and aid priorities are to be solely calculated on the basis of need. The principle of proportionality means that those whose condition requires immediate care are treated first. The standard which should be applied in distributing relief in situations with limited resources is as follows: "for equal suffering, equal assistance; for unequal suffering, assistance in proportion to the extent of suffering, taking into account the urgency of the various cases" (ibid., 27). The principle of impartiality refers to subjective distinctions and prescribes that ICRC staff members set aside their subjective opinions on whether the recipient of aid is good or bad, innocent or guilty (ibid., 32).

Whereas the principle of humanity and impartiality are substantive principles that constitute the movement's objectives, neutrality and independence are derived principles and are the means to achieve these objectives. The principle of neutrality is defined as follows: "in order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Red Cross may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature" (Pictet 1979, 34).

The principle of neutrality stands on two pillars: military and ideological neutrality. Military neutrality denotes that the ICRC will not take sides in hostilities,

and that its assistance will not contribute to the advantage of any side in a conflict. Ideological neutrality requires that the organisation does not take part in controversies of a political, religious, or ideological nature. The principle of neutrality reflects an essentially pragmatic attitude: if the organisation was to engage in ideological disputes, its credibility as a neutral actor would be damaged and it would not be allowed to carry out its work.[4] Pictet describes the ICRC as a swimmer who is up to his neck in politics, but who must keep his head above the water to survive, and stresses that "the ICRC must reckon with politics without becoming a part of it" (Pictet 1979, 38).

Whereas the principle of non-participation in ongoing conflicts is widely accepted among humanitarian agencies, the views on the principle of ideological neutrality are more contentious. While some scholars evaluate the ICRC's position of ideological neutrality as the guarantee for its good reputation, integrity, and survival (Minear and Weiss 1995, 168; Forsythe 2007, 71-72), others see the ICRC's reserved approach as complicity with perpetrators (Fox 2001, 277-278). Other scholars highlight that the majority of humanitarian agencies consider the ICRC's strict understanding of the principle of neutrality as inappropriate (Leader 2000, 19; Kent 2003, 440; Barnett 2005, 734; Stein 2005, 741).

The principle of independence means that the ICRC and its national societies "must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with Red Cross principles" (Pictet 1979, 40). In order to satisfy its impartial approach and to provide assistance on the basis of need, the organisation requires access to populations on all sides of the conflict, and the ability to gain this access depends on the trust of all conflict parties. Any involvement in politics would endanger the parties' trust in the ICRC, and consequently, the organisation's access to the populations in need. Hence, the ICRC refrains from any involvement in politics, refuses cooperation with any institution that does not absolutely respect its independence, and rejects financial contributions which would only be granted

[4] As a general rule, the ICRC abstains from making public statements about specific acts committed in violation of International Humanitarian Law and prefers discrete diplomacy as its course of action. Furthermore, the principle of neutrality requires the ICRC to seek permission from all conflict sides to have access to the victims before intervening. For this purpose, ICRC delegates keep up a regular dialogue with all conflict parties and make no distinction between members of armed forces, rebel groups, paramilitary forces or other groups involved in conflict (ICRC 2005, 22).

under conditions that would be incompatible with its humanitarian principles (ICRC 2005, 51).

The adherence to the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence is crucial for humanitarian organisations because they are a framework on which the legitimacy of humanitarian action is constructed, and are a standard by which the performance of humanitarian agencies is measured (Stockton 1998, 359). A loose handling of such principles jeopardizes both an agency's credibility, and its access to the suffering population. Furthermore, a principled approach is a useful guideline for humanitarian workers in negotiations with conflict parties (Leader 2000, 5; Kent 2003, 440), and a moral compass to help humanitarians navigate the morally challenging situations that are part of their daily routine (Slim 1997, 343).

1.2 The Humanitarian Actors

Although the humanitarian movement and its importance have significantly increased over the last decades, until recently, basic information about the system as a whole – its size, reach, and scope of action – did not exist (ALNAP 2010, 2015; Walker and Russ 2010). The first attempt to assess the entirety of the international humanitarian system, and to map the overall size and scope of humanitarian activities and resources, was published by ALNAP in a pilot State of Humanitarian System report in 2010. The most recent ALNAP report defines the 'humanitarian system' as "the network of interconnected institutional and operational entities through which humanitarian assistance is provided when local and national resources are insufficient to meet the needs of the affected population" (2015, 18). The core actors providing humanitarian aid are local, national and international NGOs, the ICRC, and national government agencies with responsibility for crisis response (ibid., 19).[5] The number of aid organisations in the international humanitarian system was estimated at 4,480 in 2014. This number encompasses 11

[5] In addition to these core actors, non-core actors who engage in humanitarian activities include militaries, private-sector entities, religious institutions, diaspora groups and formal and informal private donors. In contrast to the core actors, the non-core actors engage in humanitarian activities but have different ultimate goals and approaches (ALNAP 2015, 19).

UN agencies, 189 Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, the ICRC and IFRC, and 4,278 NGOs. The majority of NGOs (81%) are national or local organisations that work only inside their own countries. Most aid organisations, national and international, are engaged in both emergency humanitarian relief and development aid (ALNAP 2015, 38). The number of humanitarian aid workers worldwide has been increasing steadily over the last decade. From an estimated number of 210,800 humanitarian aid workers worldwide in 2008 the figure rose to 274,000 in 2010 and peaked at an unprecedented 319,000[6] humanitarian aid workers worldwide in 2014 (ALNAP 2012, 2015).

1.3 The Current Framework – 'New Humanitarianism'

The Politicization of Humanitarian aid – the Coherence Agenda

The growing importance of the humanitarian field is a result of the complex global transformation since the 1990s. The increase in conflict and the changing nature of conflicts, the process of globalization, and the weakening of the concept of state sovereignty have changed the framework in which humanitarian actors operate, and redefined humanitarian assistance (Leader 2000, 3-6; Macrae and Leader 2000b, 11-12; Minear 2012, 56).

One of the most important contributions to the prominence of humanitarian issues was the redefinition of the peace and security concept after the end of the Cold War. The publication of An Agenda for Peace by the Secretary-General of the UN Boutros-Ghali in 1992 introduced a broad concept of security, which included ecological, demographical, and economic elements, and emphasised the importance of coherence between humanitarian and political action. Based on the assumption that weak governance, instability, poverty, and underdevelopment fuel violent conflicts and pose a threat to international peace and global security, the new understanding of security demanded a coordinated response from political, military, and economic actors (Macrae and Leader 2000b, 12; 2001, 295; Collinson, Elhawary, and Muggah 2010, 278).

[6] The previously stated number of aid workers of 450.000 includes the number of 130,993 of aid workers from the IFRC that was only made available in 2014. For detailed description see ALNAP 2015, 38-39.

The emergence of the coherence approach coincided with a period of withdrawal of Western states' political engagement from the least developed countries after the end of the Cold War. Withdrawing their support from countries that had lost their strategic significance, Western states expected developmental and humanitarian agencies to fill the governance gap their departure left behind. Subsequently, aid became the primary form of political engagement in many non-strategic areas during the 1990s, and humanitarian actors, who until then enjoyed a relatively low profile, were transformed into de facto political actors (Leader 2000, 14; Duffield 2001, 88; Walker 2005, 324; Collinson and Elhawary 2012, 8). While in the beginning of the 1990s the discussion about aid and conflict focused on the link of relief and development aid and conceptualised humanitarian aid as a tool to enhance development in less developed countries; in the late 1990s the discussion was reframed and changed its focus towards humanitarian aid as a tool for conflict management and prevention (Harmer and Macrae 2004, 2-4). The coherence agenda was reaffirmed in the UN Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations from 2000 (better known as the 'Brahimi Report') which further broadened the purpose of humanitarian aid to include human rights, economic development, democracy promotion, and state-building.

The coherence agenda turned humanitarian action that had previously focused on the alleviation of immediate suffering into a political tool. Whereas previously, humanitarian aid and political action were considered to be separated areas of action, it is now assumed that the separation between the two spheres is neither feasible nor desirable (Macrae and Leader 2001, 291). The coherence agenda and the securitization of aid are based on the subordination of humanitarian principles to political objectives, disregarding the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and resulting in conditionality and selectivity of humanitarian assistance. The changing role of humanitarian aid has transformed its very meaning (Barnett 2005, 723), and is frequently referred to as 'new humanitarianism' because it includes features that were formerly separated from the humanitarian agenda. The 'new humanitarianism' is characterised by the end of the distinction between development and humanitarian aid, the inclusion of human rights and peace building elements, and the denunciation of the principle of neutrality (Fox 2001, 276; Macrae 2004, 32; Smillie and Minear 2004, 159-160; Barnett and Weiss 2008, 29).

The Institutionalization of the Humanitarian Sector

With humanitarian aid serving the goal of conflict management and conflict-prevention under the coherence agenda, donors not only wanted to control the distribution of their funds but also demanded greater evidence of the results of humanitarian assistance. For this purpose, states began to introduce accountability measures and apply public management principles to humanitarian agencies. On the whole, these demands resulted in the institutionalization and bureaucratization of the humanitarian sector; agencies developed standardised codes of conduct, procedures to improve efficiency and accountability, and methodologies for calculating results. At the same time, the movement became professionalised. Whereas previously, aid agencies had consisted of individuals with little or no experience in the humanitarian sector, now specialised training programmes and university degrees were developed to prepare future humanitarians for their role in the field (Barnett 2005, 729-730; Roth 2012, 1460).

It is important to clarify that the institutionalization of humanitarian agencies was not solely driven by external actors, but was equally shaped by the internal debate in the humanitarian field. Against the background of major famines in the Horn of Africa in the mid-1980s, the US-led military intervention in Somalia in 1992, and the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the humanitarian community engaged in internal discussions about the legitimacy, values, and practices of humanitarian assistance. Confronted with criticism that, in spite of its good intentions, humanitarian assistance could have negative consequences and harm beneficiaries (de Waal 1997; Anderson 1999), humanitarian agencies critically evaluated their role in conflicts and their relationship with political parties.

Another important aspect that influenced the organisations' reconsideration of their positioning was the change in the nature of conflicts, and the emergence of intrastate wars. In contrast to interstate wars, in which governments are generally willing to respect the rights of their adversary's civilian population in exchange for the respect of the rights of their own, intrastate wars are characterised by warring parties' openly targeting civilians, and the diversion of relief supplies to combatants (Weiss and Collins 2000, 34). Belligerents who no longer seek consent from, nor accountability to, the population, have no interest in the protection of the health and security of civilians, and ignore ideas of non-combatant immunity. This in turn has crucial implications for humanitarian agencies' ability to operate in conflicts,

because their access to suffering populations depends on warring parties having an interest in the protection of civilians.

With the changing nature of conflict, the distinction between combatants and civilians that humanitarian action is based on, broke down. Subsequently, the deal that had previously existed between armed groups and humanitarians regarding aid agencies' impartiality and neutrality as a trade-off for access to populations in need, broke down too. Confronted with the warring parties' disregard for humanitarian principles, humanitarians began to rethink their loyalty to principles of impartiality and neutrality. As a result, the majority of humanitarian agencies rejected the ICRC's strict adherence to the principle of ideological neutrality and non-interference. Leader points out that agencies' willingness to participate in the coherence agenda, and to accept the conditionality of aid, is a reaction to the changing nature of conflicts, and their attempt to impose humanitarian principles on warring parties (2000, 12-13).

The internal evaluation process in the humanitarian sector during the 1990s resulted in a development of standardised guidelines that would establish what constitutes good humanitarian assistance (Leader 2000, 23; Barnett 2011, 213; Roth 2012, 1460; Bennett 2016, 16). In the following years, three particularly important documents which Slim describes as the "soft law" (2002, 2) of the NGO community were launched: the Code of Conduct (1994), the SPHERE Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (1998) and the Humanitarian Charter (1998). Barnett points out that humanitarian agencies' emphasis on the principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence, that were demonstrated in the standardised guidelines, was the sector's attempt to present themselves as an independent identity, and to shield themselves from the increasing political pressure (2011, 30-31). Walker and Purdin come to a similar conclusion, arguing that it was the fear of external regulation and an act of self-defence which motivated NGOs to develop their own system of standards and accountability (2004, 101).

One of the first standards of practice to be proposed on the intra-organisational level in the humanitarian community was the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (1994), which was prepared jointly by the IFRC, the ICRC, and the members of the Steering

Committee for Humanitarian Response[7]. Initially, the Code of Conduct was targeted at relief agencies working in natural disasters, but in practice it has also always been applicable to humanitarian agencies working in armed conflicts (Slim 2002, 3). The Code established ten guiding principles for humanitarian actors, which echoed the core principles of the ICRC – humanity, impartiality and independence – and described the relationship humanitarian agencies should seek with donor governments, host governments, and the UN system. The principle of neutrality is dealt with implicitly in article three, which states that aid will not be used to further particular political or religious standpoints, and is a compromise between the ICRC's strict position on the aspect of non-interference and other organisations' rejection of this aspect of the principle of neutrality (Hilhorst 2004, 7; Slim 2015, 70). The other six principles are inspired by development-oriented perspectives, and refer to accountability, respect for culture and custom, cooperation with local partners, and long-term reduction of vulnerabilities to disaster. The Code does not provide detailed operational advice as to how humanitarian aid should be done, but rather aims to provide parameters for that aid. This might explain why, according to a survey about the use of the Code ten years after its introduction, humanitarian agencies made little explicit use of the Code of Conduct in programming or negotiating access in the field. Instead, many agencies used the Code as part of their training and evaluation processes (Hilhorst 2005).

The Code of Conduct is the most widely approved statement of principles in the humanitarian field. The number of its signatories has risen from 8 agencies in 1994 to 610 signatories in March 2016.[8] Leader argues that although the wide acceptance of the Code demonstrates an agreement about the guiding principles of humanitarian action, the sheer number of signatories also shows that these principles are increasingly stretched (2000, 18). In a similar way, Smillie claims that the fact that so many organisations are even available to sign the Code raises

[7] The members of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response are as follows: Caritas Internationalis, Catholic Relief Services, The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Save the Children Alliance, Lutheran World Federation, Oxfam, The World Council of Churches, The International Committee of the Red Cross.

[8] The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief List of signatories, accessed December 12, 2016, http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/Code%20of%20Conduct%20UPDATED_MARCH%202016.pdf.

questions as to whether it is at all possible to adhere to the guidelines. He sees the organisations' eagerness to proclaim the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence as a tactic to attract potential donors, rather than a reflection of a genuine understanding and adherence to the principles (Smillie 2012, 40-41).

Another initiative to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance and the accountability of humanitarian actors is the Sphere Project, which was established in 1997 by a group of humanitarian NGOs[9] and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The project aimed to set up operational standards for the delivery of humanitarian aid, and to embed these standards into a wider framework of legal and political responsibility (Darcy 2004, 112). The Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (1998) are technical standards that specify the content of particular humanitarian duties for five core areas of humanitarian assistance: water, sanitation, food aid, shelter, and health action.

Aiming to embed the minimum standards for the delivery of humanitarian aid into a wider framework of legal and political responsibility, the Sphere Project initiated the Humanitarian Charter in 1998. The Charter focuses on the legal side of humanitarian assistance and combines Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, International Refugee Law and humanitarian principles. It reaffirms the humanitarian principles set out in the Code of Conduct, and sets up three further principles: the right to live with dignity, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, and the principle of non-refoulement. The Humanitarian Charter stresses the secondary role and responsibilities of humanitarian agencies in relation to other key actors, and clarifies that the primary duty to assist a population which is affected by calamity or armed conflict lies with their governments or de facto governing authorities. The role of humanitarian agencies is secondary to that relationship, and comes into place to fill the gap if those with primary roles and responsibilities are unable to meet people's needs. The Humanitarian Charter further makes a commitment to accountability, and stresses that humanitarian agencies are fundamentally accountable to the people they seek to serve (SPHERE 2004, 16-19).

[9] The full list of 18 board member organisations, accessed December 12, 2016, http://www.sphereproject.org/sphere/en/about/governance/board-member-organizations/.

Whereas the Code of Conduct, the SPHERE Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, and the Humanitarian Charter were initiated by humanitarian organisations and aimed at regulating their own practice, the Good Donorship Initiative is aimed at the donors of humanitarian aid. Endorsed in 2003 by a group of 17 donor countries [10], UN agencies, NGOs, and the ICRC, the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative aims to enhance donors' accountability in the humanitarian sector. The actors agreed on a set of 23 principles which provide both a framework to guide official humanitarian aid and a mechanism for encouraging greater donor accountability. The initiative stipulates that humanitarian action should be guided by the central principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence, and that funding should be less conditional and allocated according to need (Smillie and Minear 2005, 2).

The Economization of Humanitarian Aid

The increased political significance of humanitarian aid was reflected in increasing budgets for humanitarian assistance. Official funding for humanitarian assistance went up from $2.1 billion at the beginning of the 1990s (Buchanan-Smith and Randel 2002, 1), to the highest funding level yet at $24.5 billion in 2014 (GHA 2015), with the long-term trend of humanitarian funding remaining upward (ALNAP 2012; 2015).

The vast majority of funding to humanitarian emergency responses is provided by governments. In contrast to contributions to the UN budget or peacekeeping operations, humanitarian contributions are voluntary and not assessed according to a member state's wealth. In 2012-2014 the top three donors – the United States, the European Community and the United Kingdom – funded more than 50% of total governmental humanitarian contributions. In addition to these traditional donors, rising contributions are likewise evident from outside Western countries, with Saudi Arabia accounting for the largest increase in contributions in 2012-2014. In contrast to government funding, private contributions from corporations, foundations, and individuals make up less than 10% of humanitarian funding and

[10] The list of donor countries has grown to 42 members since 2003, accessed August 13, 2016, http://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/about-us/our-members.html.

reach significant levels only after high-profile, sudden-onset natural disasters (ALNAP 2015, 41-42).

Due to lack of credible data (especially prior to the 1990s), it is impossible to determine whether there is a correlation in the relationship between an organisation's financial dependence on a donor and its activities (Barnett 2011, 44). The general assumption, however, is that 'you don't bite the hand that feeds you', and the more an aid organisation is dependent on a donor, the more likely it is that they will conform to the donor's interests. Government-based funding comes with strict conditions and restrictions, and has a direct impact on humanitarian agencies, who are often expected to reflect their donors' policies (Charny 2004, 14; Kent 2004, 861; Vaux 2006, 242; Fassin 2012, 14-15). The benefits and downsides of accepting official funding from governments or the UN are a matter of debate among NGOs. Government funding provides a safe basis for humanitarian agencies and their projects, and some actors argue that it allows them to shape their governments' humanitarian policies. Other organisations are more cautious regarding the implications government funding has on their independence and ability to criticise their donors (Smillie and Minear 2004, 15). Unsurprisingly, agencies like MSF or World Vision, which are able to generate most of their funds from private contributions, are envied for their operational freedom (Barnett 2009, 631).

In the last decades, the focus on the distribution of funding has shifted from multilateralization, towards a bilateralization of aid and increased earmarking of funds (Macrae and Leader 2000a, 5; Barnett 2005, 731). Whereas multilateral aid is assistance given to multilateral organisations to spend at their discretion, bilateral aid is given by one country to another country or organisation, and usually includes conditions as to how it is to be spent. Therefore, although funding for humanitarian aid agencies has increased, governments' tendencies to tie the allocation of resources for humanitarian needs to their security-related concerns has resulted in more conditions and restrictions for humanitarian actors. Macrae and Leader argue that bilateralization encourages the perception of the 'politicization' of humanitarian response, and compromises its independence, without providing a corresponding political benefit in terms of conflict management (2000a, 5). Especially if the donor government is a conflict party, the contributed relief is

perceived as a contribution to war, and humanitarians are likely to be seen as marionettes of their governments rather than independent actors.

Rather than being guided by the humanitarian principle that relief must be allocated according to need, the factors determining international response to emergencies are the degree of political interest of donors in the concerned region; the presence of international humanitarian agencies and their comparative strength in the country; and the degree of media coverage (Olsen, Carstensen, and Høyen 2003). It is the political or security interest of one or more major powers that generate first-class emergencies like Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, or Iraq, which get the most attention; second-class emergencies that attract an intermediate level of international involvement; and third-class emergencies that are otherwise referred to as 'forgotten' or 'neglected' crises (Smillie and Minear 2004, 145-146).

The majority of humanitarian resources today are directed to chronic complex emergencies. The 10 countries receiving the majority (59%) of country-allocated humanitarian assistance in 2014 were, in descending order: Syria, South Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, the Philippines, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the same period, Palestine, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan were on their tenth consecutive year of being among the top 10 recipients of the most international humanitarian aid (GHA 2016, 55). One of the most widely recognised tools for identifying and responding to 'neglected' emergencies is the Forgotten Crisis Assessment index published by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO). Many of the crises that appear on the index do so for many consecutive years, and often affect particular minority groups within a country. The top five countries in 2015 were Bangladesh, Colombia, India, Myanmar, and the Philippines (ECHO 2015).

On the whole, governments prefer to distribute their contributions for specific emergency response efforts through UN agencies (61% of contributions in 2014), NGOs (19% in 2014), and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement (8% of contributions in 2014) (ALNAP 2015, 40). Although the majority of NGOs are located in the global South (ALNAP 2012), the NGO sector is dominated by five large organisations from the US and Western Europe. In the period 2012-2014, in terms of humanitarian expenditure, these were, in descending order, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Save the Children, Oxfam, World Vision International, and the Rescue Committee. Representing only 0.1% of humanitarian NGOs worldwide,

these five organisations accounted for ca. 31% of NGO humanitarian expenditures (ALNAP 2015, 40-41).

The increased political significance of humanitarian aid and governments' willingness to increase funding for humanitarian action resulted in a drastic surge in the number of humanitarian agencies. Whereas before the 1990s, the humanitarian field consisted of only a few agencies – for instance the Red Cross, CARE or MSF – the number of agencies has grown dramatically, and was estimated at 4,480 in 2014 (ALNAP 2015). The high number of humanitarian organisations, most of which are dependent on government funding, has resulted in high competition for funding, and a difficulty in coordinating the various projects. In addition to the increased number of non-governmental agencies, the growing involvement of military actors and the private corporate sector in the humanitarian domain have added an even bigger rivalry to the already crowded aid marketplace (Kent 2003, 438; Smillie and Minear 2004, 146-153; Bennett 2016, 39-40). Competition reinforces organisations' dependencies on donors and their vulnerability to political pressure, and complicates the provision of principled humanitarian aid. A further negative impact of competition is the organisations' tendencies to conceal their failures in the field, exaggerate their successes, and offer services in areas outside of their expertise (Heyse 2003, 178-179; Barnett 2005, 732; Stein 2005, 742). This attitude often results in the impression that aid agencies are at times more concerned with their organisational survival than with the suffering populations they are meant to be serving (Donini, Minear, and Walker 2004, 196).

In spite of the overall rise in funding, the humanitarian system demonstrates a declining ability to meet humanitarian needs particularly in chronic crises such as the Central African Republic and South Sudan. Due to the increased number of people targeted for assistance, the average amount contributed per aid recipient in 2012-2014 has dropped by 26% in comparison to 2010-2012 (ALNAP 2015, 44). Growing needs are a result of a combination of factors, including the increase in climate-related natural disasters, agency efforts to account for the true total of affected populations, and humanitarian agencies' widened roles. In addition to supporting populations in need, humanitarian actors are asked to contribute to the populations' resilience, support securitization, substitute for weak or neglectful governments and fill gaps left by development actors. The problem, according to

ALNAP, is not that the system is 'broken' – as has become a common proclamation – but that it was not set up to deal with the variety of demands placed on it, and therefore lacks the "capacity and the agility" to fill out these multiple roles, while at the same time being constrained by external political forces (2015, 10). Being pulled in different directions and increasingly stretched thin across crises, humanitarian aid is falling short in supporting vulnerable people in crises (ibid., 68).

The Securitization of Humanitarian Aid

The latest example of the merging security and humanitarian agendas is the 'War on Terror'. The 'War on Terror' constitutes an intensification of the securitization of aid, and includes an intense political-military intrusion in the humanitarian arena. In this framework, humanitarian aid is seen as a crucial part of a military's 'hearts and minds' campaigns, which aim to increase the acceptance of military presence with the local population and decrease the likelihood of hostile attacks by the population on the forces.

Although attempts to instrumentalize humanitarian aid in order to win "hearts and minds" have been visible before 9/11 (Tennant, Doyle, and Mazou 2010, 13), this campaign made such methods more evident, especially when the US Secretary of State Colin Powell infamously called on NGOs to partner with NATO as a "force multiplier", and described their position and purpose as "part of our combat team" in Afghanistan (Powell 2001).

Afghanistan was the first example of the practical implications of the 'War on Terror' on the humanitarian sector. Having been a neglected crisis for years, the country's sudden political importance after 9/11 catapulted Afghanistan to international center-stage, and was accompanied by donors' willingness to fund aid projects in the country. Between 2000 and 2001, humanitarian aid for Afghanistan increased by 241.5% from US$174 million to US$594.2 million, and reached a peak of US$890.0 million in 2002 (GHA 2011, 13). Prior to 9/11, the only visible form of international engagement in the country was a handful of humanitarian actors who, despite the difficulties of working under the Taliban regime, were able to build up a broad acceptance by all parties, and distribute relief according to humanitarian principles (Atmar 2001, 322-329; Smillie and Minear 2004, 84-86). In 2001, aid agencies that had previously worked in relative anonymity, were

overnight trapped in American war efforts against terrorism, and intentions to use humanitarian aid as a face-saver for the military campaign (de Torrente 2002, 2; Rieff 2002, 232).

The allocation of resources was based on military considerations as to how best to win the loyalty of the population, and was determined by the community's strategic importance. The politicization and militarization of humanitarian aid contradicted the humanitarian principle of providing assistance according to need, and had tremendous negative consequences on principled humanitarian assistance and effective delivery of humanitarian relief (Morton and O'Hagan 2009; Donini 2011).

The mixing of the political, military, and relief sectors in Afghanistan took the form of various types of civil-military cooperation, ranging from the direct involvement of the military in relief activities to the activities of the less militarized Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) (Donini 2011, 149). In practice, many of the PRTs' projects, such as well construction or the provision of medical care, were identical to projects carried out by the aid community, and blurred the boundaries between humanitarian and military assistance (Marsden 2009, 187-188; Rubenstein 2010, 1; Crombé 2011, 53). The blurred lines between humanitarian and military actors were further exacerbated by the military's use of un-marked white land cruisers (instead of their traditional green or brown vehicles) which for decades have been used by NGOs and UN agencies, and have therefore been associated with the delivery of humanitarian aid. As a result, several civilian convoys were mistakenly attacked by insurgents (Cornish and Glad 2008, 15-16). Another example was the coalition's decision to drop food aid that was packaged in the same yellow color as cluster bombs, from the same airplanes that had been previously bombing military targets (Kent 2004, 857). The military's disrespect for humanitarian principles and the conditionality of aid was further made explicit to the population when the military distributed leaflets that called the population to give out information on the Taliban or Al Qaeda if they wished to continue to receive humanitarian aid (de Torrente 2002, 4; Terry 2011, 175). Labelling aid that aims to improve the military's reputation or is bound to a military cooperation as 'humanitarian' contradicts the neutral, independent, and impartial humanitarian assistance that is set out in the Geneva Conventions, which is why NGOs and other

aid agencies have traditionally rejected the cooperation with the military (Smillie and Minear 2004, 149).

The blurred distinction between the roles of military and humanitarian actors destroyed the image of neutral humanitarian aid workers and endangered agencies' ability to negotiate access to populations in need (de Torrente 2004, 6; Macrae 2004, 32-34; Donini 2006, 27; 2011, 155), and it is widely seen as the reason for the increased hostility towards humanitarian aid workers (Rieff 2002; Kent 2004; Minear 2004; Vaux 2006; Marsden 2009; Tennant 2010; Allié 2011).

In the last decades, the number of attacks in which aid workers were kidnapped, injured or killed in the field has significantly increased. Whereas in 1997, the number of targeted aid workers was 73 (35 of these aid workers were killed), this number has since more than quadrupled. Between 1997 and 2015, 3,880 aid workers have been victims of targeted violence, and 1,451 of those aid workers were killed.[11] In 2014, the last year for which comprehensive data is available, 329 aid workers were victims of 190 attacks (AWSD 2015), which represents a decrease of roughly 30 per cent from the all-time high number of 475 incidents in 2013 (AWSD 2014). Compared with the estimated number of 450,000 humanitarian aid workers in 2013, the global attack rate was 10.5 victims per 10,000 aid workers in the field. The majority of victims were national staff (87% in 2013), who worked for national NGOs or Red Cross/Crescent societies in their own countries (AWSD 2015). In 2013 three quarters of all attacks took place in five settings: Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Pakistan, and Sudan. Afghanistan continues to be the setting with the most attacks on aid workers, with short-duration kidnappings making up a major part of the incidents (AWSD 2014).

Although the increased hostility towards humanitarians, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq, is often attributed to the blurred distinctions between the roles

[11] Only a few of the security incidents reach mass media. In the last decades, these include the murder of six ICRC nurses in Chechnya in December 1996; the bomb attacks against the UN headquarters and the ICRC offices in Baghdad, Iraq in 2003; the murder of 17 national staff members of Action Contre le Faim in Sri Lanka in 2006; and the suicide car bombing on the UN building in Abuja, Nigeria that killed 21 people. More recent incidents include the killing of two MSF staff in Mogadishu in 2011; the abduction of two Spanish MSF staff members in Kenya who were held in captivity for 21 months; the killings of ICRC staff members in Central African Republic and Yemen in 2015; the beheading of the abducted British aid worker David Cawthorne Haines in Syria in 2014; and the US airstrike on the Kunduz hospital in October 2015 that killed 14 staff members, 24 patients and 4 caretakers.

of military and humanitarian actors, which destroys the image of neutral humanitarian aid workers, there is no empirical evidence supporting the causality between the politicization/militarization of aid and the attacks on humanitarian aid workers. Until recently only very little research and empirical evidence on the topic existed at all, because neither the UN nor the majority of the NGOs have a fully functioning single mechanism for tracking, reporting and analyzing incidents affecting their personnel (Stoddard, Harmer, and DiDomenico 2009, 7). Most writing on the topic cites only a handful of studies, including a study from 2000 by Sheik et al. who investigated aid workers' deaths between 1985 and 1998 and revealed that the majority of deaths (68%) were caused by intentional violence, and that 58% of those killed were national or local staff working for UN programmes. These findings were supplemented by King (2002) who examined the ReliefWeb document database for the years 1997–2001, and demonstrated that almost half (47%) of aid workers' deaths were the result of ambushes on vehicles or convoys, carried out by bandits or rebel groups. The first comprehensive study that provided a link between empirical evidence and causes for violence against aid workers from 1997 to 2005 was conducted by Stoddard, Harmer and Haver (2006) and showed that the majority of attacks on aid workers were politically motivated.

The most recent study that aimed to analyse the determinants of attacks against aid workers was conducted by Hoelscher, Miklian and Nygård (2015), and was based on a global sample at the country-level from 1997-2014. The study found a correlation between the conflict intensity and the expected number of attacks on aid workers; a country with a major conflict is likely to see double the number of attacks on aid workers than a similar country with a minor armed conflict. The study further confirmed previous findings (AWSD 2012) that the general level of insecurity and criminal violence in a country is not related to the number of aid worker attacks. Contrary to the common assumption that military presence of great powers increases the likelihood for attack humanitarian workers, Hoelscher, Miklian and Nygård (2015) showed that an international military presence, such as NATO, does not add to the risk for aid workers. Although countries that have large UN peacekeeping operations do see more attacks against aid workers, the type of operation plays a crucial role for the occurrence of incidents. While peacekeeping operations with a traditional mandate are associated with more attacks on aid

workers, operations with transformational mandates are not associated with a higher number of attacks on aid workers.

The Shift in Ethics

America's proclamation of humanitarian relief as an integral part of its war on terror evoked diverse reactions from the NGOs. The general misuse of humanitarian concerns for political or military objectives is widely criticised by humanitarians because it undermines their neutrality and independence (Gebauer 2003; Weissman 2010; 2011).

Initially, however, many humanitarian agencies accepted the coherence agenda because they were frustrated by the lack of international political engagement in Somalia, Rwanda and Goma, and saw the need for more comprehensive solutions to these crises than the mere provision of humanitarian aid (Macrae and Harmer 2003, 5; Collinson and Elhawary 2012, 14). Although Collinson and Elhawary (2012) point out that, in the aftermath of 9/11, humanitarian organisations' enthusiasm for the coherence agenda had begun to fade because they realised that it subsumed humanitarian action into political and security objections, it is hard to determine when this shift occurred and how many or which organisations distanced themselves from the agenda. In Afghanistan, particularly those organisations with long histories of engagement in the country like the ICRC and MSF, refused to adhere to the American attempts to subordinate humanitarian assistance under military objectives (Barnett 2005, 728; Kölbl and Ihlau 2007, 232). MSF, for instance, has rejected any funding from belligerent governments for their activities in Afghanistan and has seceded from all UN and NGO humanitarian co-ordination bodies in order to assert its independence (Donini 2012, 156).

The overall view is that the majority of organisations either view the neutral approach as inappropriate or impossible, or comply with the subordination of humanitarian relief to the politico-military campaign due to the lack of alternative funding (Rieff 2002, 251; Charny 2004, 14; Barnett 2005, 724-725; Hoffman and Weiss 2006, 145; Terry 2011, 17). Given that the United States was the largest donor of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, and all major assistance donors, with exception of Switzerland and India, were part of the belligerent party, it was hard for principled NGOs to attract funding (Smillie and Minear 2004, 87; Donini 2011, 151). In addition, NGOs' struggle for funding was exacerbated by

governments' tendency to channel their resources directly through their military units or institutions that promoted the integration strategy (Chisholm 2009, 34). However, besides the financial reasons for organisations' acceptance of the coherence agenda, their cooperation also illustrates an ideological shift that has taken place within the humanitarian movement.

It is difficult to determine whether it is the 'new humanitarianism' that has led to an ideological shift in the humanitarian field, or whether it was the change in the understanding of the ethical principles that allowed for the emergence of the 'new humanitarianism'. It is certain, however, that an ideological change has taken place. Whereas in the past, humanitarians understood themselves as being in opposition to politics, the majority of humanitarian actors today acknowledge their role in the political theatre. This development has been accompanied by a shift from deontological – or duty-based – ethics to consequentialist ethics.

Deontological ethics are rooted in the conviction that some actions are simply good in and of themselves, regardless of their consequences. Ethical action in this view consists of identifying and performing these good actions. For consequentialists, whether an action is ethical, depends on the outcome, and an ethical decision requires the identification of possible outcomes of the particular action. The decision is then based on the likelihood for positive results. The consequentialist ethical position corresponds with the reasoning of the coherence agenda, where humanitarian assistance is only good when it enhances broader objectives such as development, conflict management or conflict prevention. Consequentialist ethics also corresponds with the increased institutionalization of the field and the strict regulations for funding (Barnett 2005, 732-733).

The introduction of consequentialist ethics into what was previously considered an absolute morality is a significant change in the philosophy of humanitarianism. Whereas previously, humanitarian agencies focused on the alleviation of immediate suffering, humanitarian agencies today are focusing on calculations of their impact. Consequentialism legitimises the risk of inaction in pursuit of long-term political goals and can legitimise the death of the populations today in hope for a better tomorrow. The core problem that arises with consequentialist ethics is that a focus on quantifiable impacts of humanitarian action ignores a central element of the humanitarian idea: the desire to demonstrate compassion and solidarity with the victim (Barnett 2005, 733). At the same time, agencies have no equation at hand to

determine the outcome of their actions (Leader 2000, 20). There is no mechanism to calculate or predict whether providing (or not providing) humanitarian assistance will influence the outcome of conflicts, and no accountability-measures for those responsible for making these calculations, when they are proven wrong in reality (Macrae and Leader 2000a, 5).

Now that we have an understanding of the state of the contemporary humanitarian system, the developments that have led to the emergence of the 'new humanitarianism', and the challenges humanitarian actors are facing in upholding their principles, we turn to the humanitarian aid workers who are widely ignored in the academic discussion on humanitarian issues.

2. The Humanitarian Aid Workers

2.1 Emerging Research on Humanitarian Aid Workers

Considering the increased significance of humanitarian matters, and the dramatic growth of the humanitarian sector, we know surprisingly little about humanitarian aid workers. The academic examination of the humanitarian field is marked by the striking absence of an in-depth investigation into the lives of the 450,000 humanitarian aid workers around the world (ALNAP 2015, 38-39). As pointed out by Walker and Russ, we do not know "what their specialisations are, how frequently they change jobs, or any of the other things one would like to know in order to better understand the demographics and sociology of the population" (2010, 14).

This disregard of humanitarian aid workers in the academic discussion on humanitarian matters results firstly, from a general neglect of the individual level of analysis in the field of international relations and development studies; secondly, from a conceptualisation of aid work as a fundamentally altruistic activity; and finally, from difficulties in data collection.

A crucial factor in this discussion is the fact that individuals are not considered to be key stakeholders in international relations (Sylvester 2012, 2013), and the focus of development research lies on aid institutions and programmes. Aid workers are seen as mere facilitators and implementers who transform policies into reality, and not as agentive actors or a potential source of influence on project outcomes (Fechter 2012b; Hindman 2014). The prevalent indifference towards individuals in both fields has been recently challenged however, and there has been a growing discussion regarding the importance of the inclusion of people and their experiences into the study of international relations and development research. Scholars such as Robben and Nordstrom (1995), Barkawi and Brighton (2011), and Sylvester (2012), criticise international relations' focus on theoretical abstractions and its disregard of individuals – particularly in the study of wars – and stress that including peoples' lived experience is crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of wars.[12] Similarly, an increasing number of scholars argue for an

[12] Barkawi and Brighton argue that the prevailing focus on military operations cannot convey the real meaning of war, which they understand as "a whole range of social phenomena on and off the battlefield" (2011, 132). In a similar way, Christine Sylvester

inclusion of aid workers' personal values and relationships in development research (Eyben 2011; Fechter 2012a, 2014; Hindman 2014; Verma 2014; Roth 2015). These scholars stress that aid workers' personal values and relationships significantly shape perspectives and practices of aid work and need to be investigated in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of all important actors in the development processes and to improve development practice. Reflecting the growing discussion on the importance of investigating aid workers in development studies is the increased number of studies on development aid workers in the last decade. The majority of this research covers three areas: studies investigating workers' motivations and self-understanding[13]; studies examining their social relations and their importance for aid practice[14]; and studies that explore the professional aspects of being an 'aid worker'[15].

In addition to the disregard for the relevance of aid workers' experiences, Fechter points out that the dominant conception of aid work as a fundamentally altruistic and self-sacrificing activity also contributes to the neglect of workers in

---

opposes international relations' ignorance of ordinary people and their experiences, and argues that war cannot be apprehended unless it is "studied up from people who experience it in myriad ways" (2012, 483). Sylvester stresses that ordinary people and their experiences also "comprise international relations, especially the relations of war" (ibid., 484), and suggests a conceptualisation of war as "a subset of social relations of experience" that is based on individuals' experiences of war (ibid., 483). Nordstrom and Robben argue that a study of conflicts that ignores the importance of lived experience will lack an in-depth understanding of conflicts, and therefore will not be able to "begin to forge solutions" to such conflicts (1995, 3).

[13] For studies that explore how aid workers understand their identities see Gunetilleke, De Silva and Lukuge 2011; Lewis 2011; Rajak and Stirrat 2011.

[14] The majority of research on development aid workers focuses on aid workers' social relations and their significance for development practice. For an investigation of gender relations in the aid field see Goetz 2001; O'Reilly 2006; Coles and Fechter 2007; Damman, Heyse, and Mills 2014; Roth 2015. Unequal power relations between national and international aid workers are investigated by Harper 2011; McWha 2011; McWha and MacLachlan 2011; Roth 2012; Verma 2014. For aid workers' and aid recipients' relations and mutual perceptions see Hilhorst, Weijers, and van Wessel 2012. For research focusing on the impact of individuals' personal relations on aid practice see Mawdsley, Townsend, and Porter 2005; Girgis 2007; Eyben 2012; Heuser 2012. One of the few studies exploring the relations between local and workers is Yarrow 2014. Many of the studies on aid workers' social relations explore these within the context of a specific development project and/or country. Hindman (2002), for example, explores the everyday life of American development workers in Nepal; McKinnon (2007) focuses on development professionals in northern Thailand; Eyben (2011) illuminates the connections between the social and professional lives of aid workers in Bolivia; Fechter (2014) explores the diversity of aid workers, their motivations, jobs and experiences in Cambodia.

[15] For research on the increasing professionalisation of the field and its impact on aid workers' daily lives see Lewis 2008; Hindman 2013, 2014; Roth 2012; Visser et al. 2016.

academic discussion. This conceptualisation of aid work focuses only on the recipients of aid, and views it as inappropriate to devote much attention to aid workers. The tendency to foreground the recipients and ignore the aid givers discourages critical examination of aid workers' motives, experiences, and challenges, that arise from their engagement (Fechter 2012b, 1489). The clichéd idea that aid workers are pure altruists obscures the reality of their (working) lives and the fact that they too, like any other employee, need to consider career logic, work-family balance, and benefits packages. The invisibility of aid workers is further perpetuated by the field's professionalisation and its emphasis on organisational principles, organisational accountability, and the increased pressure to attain documentable and externally defined statistical goals in aid programmes (Fechter 2012a, 2012b; Hindman and Fechter 2014).

Fechter claims that, in ignoring aid workers, their motivations, and personal values, the formal development discourse ignores the reality of the work, because aid workers "are acutely aware of the relevance of the personal" (2012a, 1387). Aid workers "spend substantial efforts reflecting on what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what they should be doing" and frequently discuss the relationship between the personal and professional in colloquial forums like meetings or conferences (ibid., 1393). Another manifestation of aid workers' desire to express the personal stories of their engagement in humanitarian and development aid, and a reflection of the lack of possibilities to do so within established aid discourses, is the increasing number of memoirs and blogs written by aid workers. The most prominent examples of aid workers' memoirs are perhaps *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and War* (2001) written by Tony Vaux about his time working for Oxfam GB in the 1980s, and the diary-style account *Emergency Sex (and Other Desperate Measures): True Stories from a War Zone* (2004) written by Kenneth Cain, Heidi Postlewait and Andrew Thomson about the authors' humanitarian work for the UN during the 1990s. Some of the prominent aid workers' blogs are "Shotgun Shack"[16] or "Stuff Expat Aid Workers Like"[17]. Fechter stresses that aid workers' memoirs and blogs demonstrate both how, and how much, the personal is intertwined with the professional, and suggests that

[16] "Shotgun Shack," accessed December 12, 2016, https://shotgunshackblog.com.
[17] "Stuff Expat Aid Workers Like," accessed December 12, 2016, https://stuffexpataidworkerslike.com.

studying aid workers' biographies – a source of primary material that has been ignored – would provide a much more grounded and nuanced debate than has been held thus far (Fechter 2014, 147).

A final important aspect contributing to the invisibility of humanitarian aid workers arises from challenges in data collection. A major difficulty encountered when collecting data from this group is that a 'humanitarian aid worker' is not a clear category of work or a certified job title. Even though humanitarian work has evolved into a well-established profession over the recent decades, this development has not been accompanied by the usual processes that constitute the development of a profession: there are no professional associations for humanitarian workers, and no agreed definitions of competencies. Although training opportunities have increased, and there are various degrees related to the humanitarian field, the training does not take place in any systematic way, and there is no agreement on the content of the curriculum, length of training, or requirements for its completion and admission to practice. Being a 'humanitarian professional' usually means practicing an existing profession within an organisation that pursues humanitarian goals in the specific environment of an emergency situation, disaster, or conflict zone, and the humanitarian sector harbours a wide range of professions including medical, engineering, logistical, security, and others. In the absence of a professional association for humanitarian workers, or a central body that collects data on employees from the different humanitarian agencies, information on humanitarian aid workers can only be generated through aid agencies, which would need to keep complete and accurate data on their staff and be willing to share it with others. However, both are uncommon, as most agencies do not keep centrally gathered data on their employees and have no agreements on sharing their data (Walker and Russ 2010, 9-14).

A particular challenge that arises from the lack of a definition of a 'humanitarian aid worker' is the prevailing lack of distinction between development and humanitarian aid workers. The difficulty in differentiating between these two fields of work can be explained by two aspects. First, the majority of agencies are multi-mandated, provide emergency humanitarian relief alongside development aid work, and do not differentiate their staff who work in humanitarian aid from staff who

work in development aid.[18] Secondly, the field is characterised by a high turnover – aid workers often change their jobs between both the individual organisations, and the development and humanitarian sectors – which makes it difficult to get an accurate overview of humanitarian aid workers at any point in time (Loquercio, Hammersley, and Emmens 2006; Walker and Russ 2010; Hindman and Fechter 2014).

Research that focuses particularly on humanitarian aid workers has only begun to emerge over the last decade and comes from the fields of anthropology, development research, psychology, and bioethics. The majority of available studies concentrate on international humanitarian professionals only, and explore three areas: humanitarian aid workers' motivations, the challenges they encounter during their work, and the psychological and physical impact aid work has on humanitarian professionals.

2.2 The Objectives of the Study

Now that we have an understanding of the main aspects of the current academic discussion on humanitarian issues, and its disregard of humanitarian aid workers, the following pages will lay out the research questions driving this thesis and the overall aim of this project. In doing so, I will introduce the theoretical background of my investigation, contrast my project with the little existing research on humanitarian aid workers, and explain the relevance of my research.

Like other scholars who are advocating the investigation of the personal dimension of aid work, I also oppose the narrow view of humanitarianism as an abstract –ism, and argue that a comprehensive analysis of humanitarian matters needs to include humanitarian aid workers, their motivations, and their values. By disregarding humanitarian aid workers and their motivations and experiences,

[18] Many organisations differentiate between 'volunteers' who go on a posting in addition to their regular job and 'professionals' who work in the aid sector long-term. One particular form of volunteering that has grown in recent years, especially after disasters like the tsunami in Southeast Asia, Hurricane Katrina and the Haiti earthquake, is short-term medical volunteerism (Asgary and Junck 2013). Volunteering might be a one-off act but it is also often the first step into securing a job in the sector, and a volunteer might leave his regular job in order to pursue a long-term position in the aid field after volunteering (Hindman and Fechter 2014; Roth 2015).

academics have subscribed to a political agenda that prescribes a particular conceptualisation of humanitarian aid, and are participating in the politicization of humanitarian aid which emphasises its efficacy. Ignoring not only aid workers, but their experiences, they present humanitarian aid as the question of "Who gets what, when, how?"[19] – Lasswell's definition, which is traditionally used to describe politics. I believe that there is, in the ignorance of humanitarians and their experiences, a form of self-censorship that needs to be resisted. Rather than automatically participating in the instrumentalization of humanitarian aid, we need to explore the possibility that it is in the nature of this work that it resists its instrumentalization.

The objective of this project is to investigate the personal ethics of humanitarian aid workers, and to demonstrate the significance of individuals' personal ethics for the humanitarian movement – both of which are ignored in the current academic discussion. The academic discussion on humanitairan ethics follows the three major approaches in normative ethics: deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics which see the rational ego as the source of ethical content and understand ethics as sets of rules, which can be applied to different situations in order to guide our behaviour. In contrast, my thesis is based on an understanding of ethics as arising from specific intersubjective experiences which can be found in the works of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas and Buber contrast deontological, consequential and virtue ethics by locating ethics outside of the realm of knowledge and in an encounter between individuals.

For Levinas, ethics is "first and foremost an event. Something must happen to me in order for me to stop being 'a force that continues on its way' and wake up instead to pangs of conscience" (quoted in Barnett 2011, 26). Levinas does not discuss rights, duties or virtues because he understands ethics as being embedded in a concrete human relation of infinite responsibility to the other person (Critchley 2002, 6; Davis 2004, 47). Responsibility in Levinasian thought is not enforced by any rational argument but by the Other's position of height in a face-to-face encounter I meet the infinitely Other who questions my being for myself and commands me to put my being and my possessions into the service of the Other.

[19] The standard lay definition of politics is based on Harold Lasswell's book *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (1936).

My asymmetrical responsibility does not depend on reciprocity from the Other's side because the Other can always demand more from him than I can ask from him. The ethical encounter with the Other can therefore not be transformed into universal rules or a moral code which apply to all. As Bauman puts it. '"I am ready to die for the Other" is a moral statement, "He should be ready to die for me" is, blatantly, not' (cited in Davis 2004, 52). Levinasian ethics is therefore not an obligation mediated through the formal and procedural universalization of maxims or some appeal to good conscience but lived in the concrete encounter between two people (Critchley 2002, 21).

In a similar way, Buber emphasises the significance of life-experience for ethics and understands responsibility as our ability to respond to situations in which we are addressed (BMM 16). Buber stresses that responsibility, which he understands as my response to the unique address, cannot be planned and prepared for because it should arise from the specific situation and my unique personality. This does not mean that Buber rejects all norms as "no responsible person remains a stranger to norms" (BMM 114), but that he is against the norm becoming a mechanical or preconceived code of behaviour which suppresses the individual response to the specific situation (Hodes 1975, 32-33).

I suggest that humanitarian motivation is based on an ethics that results from concrete personal experiences and explore the experiential origins of the humanitarian commitment. Analysing contemporary memoirs written by humanitarian aid workers, I unpack the ethical experiences that define humanitarian aid work in three steps. My first goal is to examine how humanitarian aid workers articulate their motivation for engagement in the humanitarian field, and to investigate whether humanitarians connect their motivation to specific experiences. The second aim of the thesis is to illuminate the ways in which humanitarian professionals deal with the challenges of their work, and to examine whether they attribute their ability to cope with challenges of humanitarian aid work to specific experiences. The third aim is to investigate whether those experiences that humanitarians described as being significant for their initial motivation, and those which were significant for their ability to cope with the challenging nature of their work share specific common features. Examining common patterns and characteristics among such experiences, the project aims to develop what might be

thought of as a collective story that represents humanitarians' common ethical experiences.

What difference does the investigation of humanitarians' ethics, and the understanding of ethics as being embedded in experience, make? I believe that an exploration of the situational ethics as conceptualised by Buber and Levinas will provide us with a deeper understanding of how moral guidance is found, and offer a way to explore the possibility that the core of the humanitarian motivation resists instrumentalization. If humanitarian ethics are not a handbook or a set of rules that are imposed on me from outside, but something I experience, to follow my ethical convictions is simply to be truthful to myself – this level of commitment is much harder to instrumentalize. What if humanitarian work engenders its own ethical imperatives which are based on the experiences of unpredictable encounters and therefore, no 'interests' can be imposed on it from outside? If it is possible to show that humanitarian motivation is embedded in particular experiences, and that humanitarian aid workers refer to these experiences in challenging situations as a source of their ability to resist certain pressures, we will be able to see an internal source of resistance to the pressures of instrumentalization, thus qualifying and possibly relativizing the significance of external sources of moral guidance such as guidelines or role models. The investigation of the humanitarian commitment as a result of particular personal (ethical) experiences therefore has important implications for a movement that is in danger of losing its distinctness within the pressures of self-interested politics.

The Role of Experiences for Aid Workers' Motivation

The following section serves as a background for my first research question, regarding the significance of particular experiences for humanitarian aid workers' motivation for working in the humanitarian sector. I will briefly review existing studies on humanitarian aid workers' motivation, and demonstrate how my project fills the gap in the current state of research.

Despite the prevalent public assumptions that aid workers are exclusively driven by a desire to help, research on development aid workers' motivation has shown that aid workers are not driven by either exclusively altruistic motives, nor by self-serving career ambitions, but a mixture of professional and personal interests (de Jong 2011; Eriksson et al. 2012; Fechter 2012a, 2014; Roth 2015).

These findings contest the common stereotype of aid workers as missionaries, mercenaries or misfits which has been elucidated by Stirrat (2008)[20].

Existing studies on humanitarian aid workers' motivation are usually based on semi-structured interviews with 2-19 health care practitioners (HCPs), and confirm the mixed motivations found in research on development aid workers. The earliest cited study on humanitarians' motivation was conducted by Bjerneld et al. (2006) who explored the motivations of 19 Scandinavian health practitioners who were preparing for an assignment in the humanitarian field, and had no previous working experience in the humanitarian sector. The participants stressed that their main inspiration was a desire to contribute to society and to make a difference. Some participants mentioned that they had been inspired by examples of heroic doctors or nurses from television dramas or documentaries in their childhood. Others expressed feelings of guilt regarding their privileged lives and saw their future humanitarian engagement as a way to pay back a part of these privileges. Participants were equally attracted by the opportunity to travel, to live abroad and experience other cultures, and some were motivated by a longing for personal development and challenging professional experiences. Despite having a comfortable life and holding professional jobs that were valued in their society, some participants were "extremely bored and frustrated" and were looking for an experience "that would test their personal limits" (Bjerneld et al. 2006, 54). Participants who were dissatisfied with their boring roles in the Scandinavian health system saw their future humanitarian work as more enjoyable, satisfying, creative, exciting, and challenging. Some expressed that they wanted to work in the aid field because they believed that their contributions would be more significant and longer lasting in an emergency setting than what they experienced as the outcome of their work in the Swedish health care system.

[20] The stereotype of the mercenary refers to an aid worker who is driven by self-interest, works for a multilateral or bilateral official aid agency, leads a comfortable life in the field and is detached from the people he is meant to help. In contrast to mercenaries, aid workers confirming the stereotype of missionaries are motivated by a personal moral commitment and a sense of duty and usually work for NGOs in close proximity to their beneficiaries. Misfits represent the third stereotype of aid workers and are individuals whose involvement in aid work is not motivated by money or mission but a desire to escape the routine at home and to experience a level of social recognition and authority that they do not experience in their home country (Stirrat 2008).

The influence of the so-called negative motivation for the pursuit of aid work was confirmed in a study by Campbell et al. (2009) who demonstrated that dissatisfaction with one's employment, as well as stress and isolation, can be motivating factors for seeking an appointment abroad. The researchers explain that this motivation results from the changes in health care practitioners' working environment in their Western home countries, where medical staff members' responsibilities include many managerial and bureaucratic tasks which decrease their contact with patients. Coming from this professional background, aid work appealed to participants because it offered a working environment with only few institutional and organisational requirements in which medical professionals could concentrate on a primary healing role and see a more immediate impact of their work. Similarly, Roth argues that aid workers' conceptualisation of aid work as "meaningful work" (2015, 13), which takes place in an exceptional and separate space from "normal life" (ibid., 45) and provides an opportunity to experience a "genuine" and "authentic" lifestyle (ibid., 83), is a critique of work experiences in the Global North.

The mixture of motivating factors demonstrated by Bjerneld et al. (2006) were confirmed by Hunt (2009), whose study demonstrated that participants' primary motivation to offer assistance to people in need was intertwined with the desire to experience new parts of the world, challenge themselves, and build relationships with people from other cultures. These findings were further confirmed in a study on humanitarian professionals' motivation by Eriksson et al. (2012) with 214 recently recruited humanitarian aid workers. The majority of the participants (96%) reported that they were motivated to pursue aid work to contribute to a better world and help those less fortunate. Other strong motivations included the desire to travel (84.4%), to satisfy professional interest in the work and/or professional development (80.1%), and to have an adventure or a challenge (72.6%).

In addition to research exploring the variety of humanitarian aid workers' motivation, Tassell and Flett (2011) provided some insight into the changes in humanitarians' motivation during their engagement. Aiming to explore why humanitarians engage in aid work, and continue their engagement despite knowing that it might endanger their lives and personal well-being, the study revealed that the motivation to *begin* volunteering differs from the motivation to *continue* volunteering. Whereas the five participants' initial reasons to engage in

humanitarian aid work are self-focused, and driven by a desire to fulfil personal pursuits such as a longing for self-esteem or a way to extricate their feelings of guilt regarding their better socio-economic circumstances, their continuing engagement was focused on others and driven by a desire to assist them.

Participants in Hunt's study (2009) not only illuminated the variety of driving factors for humanitarian aid work but also addressed the way in which motivation influences one's performance in the field. They stressed that a mixed motivation has a positive impact on humanitarians' ability to face difficulties, and pointed out that those who were able to do this job long-term are people who combined their desire to help others with aspects of self-fulfilment. In contrast, an overly idealized motivation could lead to heightened self-doubt and increase the likelihood for feelings of disillusionment and anxiety, which could result in aid workers quitting their positions prematurely.

Overall, research on motivation among development and humanitarian aid workers concentrates on the exploration of the variety of motivating factors driving individuals' engagement in the development and humanitarian field. It demonstrates that both humanitarian and development aid workers are attracted to the respective fields by a variety of factors such as the desire to help others and professional and personal development, as well as the possibility of travelling and experiencing different cultures, and does not confirm the widely held assumption that they are solely driven by altruistic values.

Whereas the existing research on humanitarians' motivation provides an overview of the different existing motivating aspects for aid work, it widely ignores the role of experience for aid workers' motivation. Although some scholars take note of the significance of some experiences for individuals' decision to pursue humanitarian aid work, they do not provide an analysis of these experiences. Bjerneld et al. (2006), for instance, point out that some participants have been inspired by either examples of heroic doctors or nurses from television dramas or documentaries in their childhood, but do not explore the nature of these experiences. In a more recent analysis of aid workers' motivations, Roth (2015) establishes a close connection between specific experiences and individuals' engagement in aid work, and describes three patterns that have led the participants into the aid field. First, their interest in development and relief work is developed in their childhood and youth, through encounters with people who have experience

working overseas, by watching crises reports in the media, or through personal experiences of inequality. A second path into aid work is a gradual development through social and political engagement or through overseas experiences. The third path into aid work is triggered by an experience of a crisis, such as the death of a relative, a relationship break-up, or divorce, which results in a turning point in the participants' lives and prompts them to engage in the humanitarian or development aid sector (Roth 2015, 68-69). Whereas Roth provides a classification of the different paths that lead individuals to humanitarian aid work, and acknowledges the connection between specific experiences for some participants' decision to get involved in aid work, she does not investigate the nature of these experiences and does not analyse what exactly in these experiences prompted the individuals to consider working in the aid field.

In contrast to the existing research on aid workers' motivation, my project aims to explore the role of particular ethical experiences for humanitarians' motivation, and the nature of these experiences. The importance of these experiences in influencing individuals' humanitarian engagement has been briefly addressed by Barnett, who, similar to Roth (2015), suggests that humanitarian commitment is a result of personal crises of faith, caused by cataclysmic events which he calls "ethical awakenings" (2011, 26). The most famous example of such an ethical awakening in the narrative of the humanitarian movement is the story of Henri Dunant, and his experience of the aftermath of the battle of Solferino that resulted in the foundation of the ICRC.

Henri Dunant

In June 1859, Henri Dunant, a 31-year-old Genevan businessman visiting Solferino in Italy in order to discuss his business with the French emperor Napoleon III, witnessed the aftermath of one of the bloodiest battles of the nineteenth century. The battle, in which the allied Sardinian and French army defeated the Austrian army, had left more than 40,000 killed or injured. Neither the small and inadequately equipped medical services attached to the French and Sardinian forces, nor the surrounding villages, were able to cope with this number of wounded, and many soldiers died from non-fatal wounds that were left untreated. Dunant, a mere tourist, was appalled at the sight of the thousands of abandoned and

dying soldiers, and decided to support the local population in their attempts to assist the injured (Joyce 1959, 17). The distribution of aid took place without regard to the victims' side in war, and soldiers from both sides were treated as "Tutti fratelli" – "all are brothers" (Dunant 1986, 72). This experience of the destitute situation of wounded soldiers in Solferino was a defining moment in Dunant's life, and he returned to Geneva with a dream to "form relief societies for the purpose of having care given to the wounded in wartime by zealous, devoted, and thoroughly qualified, volunteers" (ibid., 115). The memoir *A Memory of Solferino*, which Dunant wrote upon his return, differed greatly from the standard heroic narratives of war at that time, and provided one of the first unvarnished descriptions of war's brutal costs. Dunant described how he tried to assist the wounded with the little he had at hand – giving out water or a handkerchief to cover the wounds, and talking to the soldiers to console them in the last minutes of their lives. In the last pages of the book Dunant presented the idea of setting up relief societies which would be made up of volunteers and assist the wounded in wars. Dunant printed the first 1,600 copies of his memoir at his own expense and distributed them among leading political and military figures throughout Europe (Moorehead 1998, 8). *A Memory of Solferino* made Dunant and his vision famous, and resulted in the foundation of the International Committee to Assist the War Wounded in 1863 which was later renamed the International Committee of the Red Cross. In the first year of its existence, the members of the Committee drew up guidelines for the establishment of national societies to aid the wounded, and campaigned for the approval and recognition of such societies by European governments (Hutchinson 1996, 22-23). Only one year later, on 22 August 1864, sixteen countries adopted the first Geneva Convention which is the basis for contemporary International Humanitarian Law.

Historical accounts of the foundation of the ICRC draw a clear connection between Dunant's experience of war, his refusal to accept the status quo and the consequent commitment to engage with the situation politically in order to change it. Although this story is retold very often, one striking element from Dunant's account of his motivation for creating the ICRC is usually erased from the accounts. Explaining why he wrote the memoir, Dunant states:

> I was as it were, lifted out of myself, compelled by some higher power and inspired by the breath of God. [. . .] In this state of pent-up emotion which filled my heart, I was aware of an intuition, vague and yet profound, that my

> work was an instrument of His will; it seemed to me that I had to accomplish it as a sacred duty and that it was destined to have fruits of infinite consequence for mankind. This conviction drove me on. (quoted in Hutchinson 1996, 12)

It is perhaps not surprising that a man who was born in 1828 into an influential Calvinistic family in Geneva, and who was involved in various religious and charitable activities throughout his youth, attributes his motivation to divine inspiration. Dunant explains that from childhood he had "experienced a keen compassion for the unhappy, the humble, the weak, and the oppressed" (quoted in Moorehead 1998, 11-12). One particular childhood experience that was of profound significance for Dunant's later humanitarian work was visiting Swiss prisoners held in Toulon in France with his father, who worked as a supervisor of prisons. Dunant writes that he never forgot the sense of horror he felt when at the age of eight he saw the men shackled to one another as they broke up stones in the road. In his youth, Dunant became a member of an Alms society and spent his free time visiting prisoners in Geneva (ibid., 11-12). Strikingly, the supervision of prisoners of war became one of the core duties of the ICRC, and today the ICRC is the only organisation whose goal is to secure humane treatment and conditions of detention for all detainees.

The personal experience of the aftermath of the battle of Solferino, and the experience of being called by God fuelled Dunant's determination to establish the ICRC. The significance of particular religious experiences for the development of an individual's humanitarian commitment can also be found in the biographies of Florence Nightingale, who is known for her nursing work in the field hospital in Skutari during the Crimean War (1853-1856), and Eglantine Jebb, the founder of the organisation Save the Children in 1919.

Florence Nightingale

Born into an upper-class British family in 1820, Nightingale spent the major part of her life searching for a means of fulfilling what she understood to be a divine calling. Shortly before her seventeenth birthday, Nightingale wrote in her personal journal that God had spoken to her and called her to his service (1989, 17). Although it was unclear to her what this service could be, Nightingale became obsessed with finding a practical way to live her vocation. When, years later, she became

convinced that her vocation lay in hospital work, Nightingale revolted against the will of her family and Victorian conventions regarding the appropriate role for women of her status. She had experience in nursing in neighbouring villages, and in taking care of her sick relatives, but wanted to pursue a more formal hospital training in order to help people more effectively. However, there were no such training possibilities open for women in England (Nightingale 1989, 20; Small 1999, 10-11). The experience of being called by God sustained Nightingale, despite the lack of practical possibilities to pursue her vocation for many years. The strength of her commitment is perhaps best illustrated when Nightingale, without training or a job and no visible proof that she was getting closer to living her calling, rejected a marriage proposal because she feared that marriage would interfere with her ability to fulfil her God given duty. In 1848, seven years after her first experience of hearing God's call, Nightingale travelled to a convent in Rome where she experienced what she believed to be a direct revelation from God in which she was instructed to surrender her will completely to Him (Nightingale 1989, 40). In Rome, Nightingale also met the English politician Sidney Herbert who worked in the Secretary at War Office, and who offered her a position as an unpaid superintendent in a hospital in London. In 1854 he asked Nightingale to take a group of nurses to work in the hospitals in Crimea – a position for which she became famous.

Eglantine Jebb

Eglantyne Jebb, who, together with her sister Dorothy Jebb Buxton, founded Save the Children in 1919 in England, is another example of a humanitarian whose actions were driven by particular spiritual experiences. From an early age, Jebb was preoccupied with a sense of the social inequality that generated experiences of what she described as "happy pains" (quoted in Mulley 2009, 26). At the age of eight Jebb told her eldest sister: "I don't know all my complaints, only one … a complaint which does for everything […] [t]he world is wrong" (cited in Mulley 2009, 26). In her biography of Jebb, Mulley draws a connection between Jebb's social engagement and the death of her sixteen-year-old brother. The death of Gamul, who had aspired to be a doctor, inspired Jebb to make her own contribution to society in his place (Mulley 2009, 42-43). Praying about this wish

in the days after his death, Jebb wrote that she had a mystical experience, and felt "as if [she] was slipping out of [her] body" adding that "unfortunately [she] was a timid child, and … [she] struggled back into normal consciousness" (quoted in Mulley 2009, 41). Similar experiences sustained Jebb throughout the years as she looked for a way to engage in public social duty, and felt oppressed by the lack of career opportunities for educated Edwardian women. Shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, Jebb's brother-in-law – who had founded the Macedonian Relief Fund for people in the Second Balkan War – asked her to travel to Macedonia to oversee the distribution of aid for the organisation. The starving, displaced women and children, and the inadequate provision of relief that she witnessed on her journey had a lasting impression on Jebb. In 1919, together with her sister Dorothy Jebb Buxton she founded the Fight Famine Council, later renamed Save the Children.

The life stories of Dunant, Jebb and Nightingale – historical figures who played an important role for the humanitarian movement – provide examples of a close connection between specific experiences and humanitarian engagement. Strikingly, these individuals do not articulate their motivation for humanitarian work in general terms, as a way to live Christian charity, but describe specific experiences in which they heard a call that they understand to be God's call, which required their response, and which they could not ignore. All three explain their humanitarian work as a response to this call. Furthermore, these experiences were not only significant for sparking their initial interest in public service and humanitarian work but were crucial to sustain them for years when they struggled to find a practical outlet for their vocation.

In its origins, the term vocation has deep religious roots and associations. Derived from the Latin term 'vocatio', it describes a call away from the world of productive activity in order to dedicate one's life to prayer and contemplation. A 'vocation' or 'calling' originally referred to the work of monks, nuns and priests who removed themselves from daily life and served the church (Dawson 2005). The monastic ideal of vocation underwent a significant reversal during the Protestant Reformation of the late 15th and early 16th centuries (Goldman 1988; Hardy 1990; Applebaum 1992; Beder 2000). Instead of understanding vocation as the calling away from the world of productive activity theologians such as Martin Luther or John Calvin introduced the idea of daily work as a divine vocation

(Bernstein 1997). In the following centuries, vocation took on an increasingly secular connotation and occupational work became an increasingly central dimension of human worth and dignity. In the 20th century vocation has come to reflect a quest for personal meaning and self-fulfilment (Dawson 2005). This broader, more secularised concept of calling is commonly viewed as an important factor of people's work experiences, regardless of their religious heritage (Bellah et al. 1985; Baumeister 1991; Hall and Chandler 2005; Steger et al. 2010).

Scholarship on what it means to have and live a calling has increased substantially in the last decade within psychology, sociology, and management with research exploring the relation of calling to both work-related and well-being outcomes. Reviewing dozens of proposed definitions of 'calling' Dik and Duffy (2009) highlighted three components that, when occurring together, are characteristic for work as a calling: viewing one's job as a source of meaning and purpose, using one's job to help others, and having an external calling source. As a result, Dik and Duffy define calling as "a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation" (2009, 427).

Exploring the question of how one finds one's calling, Duffy and colleagues (2014) point out that according to three prominent views: (a) calling arises from something or someone external, (b) destiny, or finding a career one is ''meant to do,'' and (c) finding an ideal match for one's interests, values, and skills. Individuals who see their call as arising from an external source, attribute the call to either God, a higher power, a family legacy or the needs of society (Hall and Chandler 2005; Dik and Duffy 2009). In addition, critical life events, experienced directly or vicariously, may also contribute to a sense of calling or vocation (Dik and Duffy 2009). People who refer to destiny as the source of their calling and emphasise the importance of finding what one is ''meant to do'' are not necessarily motivated by an external summon or higher power (Elangovan, Pinder, and McLean 2010) but acknowledge that one's destiny may stem from an inner voice (Palmer 2007), one's dharma or central life task (Bogart 1994), or internal motivation (Hall and Chandler 2005). The third source of calling stems from self-exploration and is based on the identification of one's interests, values, and skills

which are used to find a career match. Interestingly, the source of the calling does not result in differences in the individuals' levels of satisfaction as participants who indicated that they were living a calling experienced high levels of satisfaction with work and life irrespective of the particular source of the calling they perceived (Duffy et al. 2014).

Existing research has consistently demonstrated that perceiving that one has a calling is linked with greater job and life satisfaction (Davidson and Caddell 1994, Wrzesniewski et al. 1997, Duffy and Sedlacek 2007; Dik and Duffy 2009), and the reason for these links are the increased sense of work meaning, career commitment, and life meaning (Berg, Grant, and Johnson 2010; Steger et al. 2010; Duffy et al. 2012; Duffy et al. 2013; Duffy and Autin 2013; Duffy et al. 2014). People who approach work as a calling have reported greater commitment to their profession (Serow, Eaker and Ciechalski 1992); greater self-concept clarity and use of problem focused coping; and less stress, depression, and avoidance coping (Treadgold 1999; Peterson et al. 2009) compared to those with other approaches to work (Dik and Duffy 2009).

Intrigued by Dunant's, Jebb's and Nightingale's accounts of particular incidents that sparked their motivation for humanitarian work, I aim to investigate the way contemporary humanitarians articulate their motivation, and explore whether humanitarians today connect their decision to work in the humanitarian field to specific experiences. In doing so, I do not intend to explore the role of religion for contemporary humanitarian movement but to examine the concrete experiences humanitarians describe as being significant for their humanitarian work. It is likewise important to emphasise that, by investigating humanitarian motivation by going back to the origins of ethics in experience, my study is inspired by Buber's and Levinas's theoretical framework on situational ethics, but is not an imposition of these thinkers' framework onto the memoirs. Instead, the analysis is based on the humanitarians' accounts and is informed by what they write about their motivation. I have no pre-defined concept of what such an ethical experience is, but aim to explore what humanitarians write about their motivation, whether this motivation is evoked by particular experiences, and what the nature of such experiences is.

The Role of Experiences for Aid Workers' Continuing Engagement

The second goal of my thesis is to investigate whether specific experiences play a role in humanitarians' ability to cope with the challenges they face in humanitarian aid work. The following section will briefly introduce the existing research on the (ethical) challenges humanitarian professionals experience, the psychological impact humanitarian aid work has on them, and the strategies suggested in order to increase aid workers' ability to cope with the difficulties and psychological effects of their work.

Whereas it is widely acknowledged that humanitarian aid is a field filled with ethically challenging situations, and the ethical challenges of humanitarian assistance have been widely discussed on the structural level (de Waal, 1997; Anderson 1999; Terry 2002, Smillie and Minear 2004; Donini 2012), the analysis of ethical aspects of humanitarian aid work on the personal level is still nascent. Research that explores the ethical challenges humanitarian aid workers experience has only began to emerge in the last years in the field of bioethics, and focuses on humanitarian HCPs. Although these studies describe challenges in health care practice, the characteristic features of humanitarian aid that bring forth these ethical challenges – highly volatile working environment, heavy workload, unfamiliarity with social, political and cultural contexts, language barriers, unfamiliar roles, and isolation from usual support structures (Bjerneld et al. 2004, Schwartz et al. 2012) – are shared by humanitarian aid workers with various professional roles in the field.

Practicing health care in a humanitarian setting involves a significant change in professional, regulatory and cultural contexts (Hunt 2008, 2009; Schwartz et al. 2010). Humanitarian work takes place in an insufficient health care structure, and an unstable political situation and is characterised by limited resources. Confronted with a higher volume and urgency of need, but having only limited means to address them, HCPs experience many ethical challenges regarding the allocation of the available resources.[21] The high needs of the population and limited availability of trained medical staff usually result in a high workload for HCPs. Working extremely long shifts with only limited opportunities to take a break results in

[21] The particular dilemma of 'patient selection' and health care professionals' ability to deal with a situation which required refusing to treat a patient due to limited resources was investigated by Sinding et al. (2010).

exhaustion and decreases the possibility of reflecting on ethically complex issues (Hunt 2011, 608-609). In contrast to the explicit professional and legal parameters which guide the ethics of clinical work in the West, there is no such firm guidance in humanitarian assistance. Working in a legal vacuum, expatriate health care professionals often find that their roles are less defined and less regulated than they are accustomed to, and that they have to perform tasks that are at the limits, and often even beyond, their professional expertise (Hunt 2008). Cultural differences in health care practices are another aspect that lead to ethical challenges for humanitarian aid workers. These include different understandings of health professionals' roles and interactions, different understandings of illness and death, and different ways of approaching these topics with the patients or their relatives (Hunt 2008; Schwartz et al. 2010).[22] Aid workers' unfamiliarity with the historical, political, cultural, social, and commercial structures, in which they work makes it difficult to navigate ethically challenging situations (Schwartz et al. 2010).

Research on the psychological impact of humanitarian aid on aid workers reveals that the exposure to traumatic events is a common experience among humanitarian aid workers, and has profound implications for their psychological and physical welfare (Eriksson et al. 2001, Lopes Cardozo et al. 2005). Connorton et al. (2012) has found that the five most common primary traumas amongst relief workers are frightening situations (55%–78%), threats or being chased (16%–47%), forced separation from family (40%), shelling/bombing of office or home (13%–43%), and hostility of the local population (10%–37%).

One of the earliest cited studies on the impact of humanitarian work on humanitarian aid workers' mental health, discovered that approximately 30% of the 113 participants showed significant symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

[22] Examples of such ethically challenging aspects are for instance the different approaches towards HIV testing and Female Genital Mutilation which have been illuminated by Sheather and Shah (2011).

(PTSD)[23] (Eriksson et al. 2001). An even higher figure for the risk of burnout[24] (40%) was demonstrated in a study conducted with 111 humanitarian aid workers by Eriksson et al. in 2009. A study on the mental health of 376 national humanitarian aid workers in Northern Uganda revealed similarly negative implications for national humanitarians' psychological welfare. The majority of the participants reported symptoms associated with high risk of depression (68%), anxiety (53%), and PTSD (26%). The three most frequently cited chronic stressors were financial and economic problems (86%), the high workload (65%), and tensions in disparity of treatment between international and national staff (59%) (Ager et al. 2012).

In the first longitudinal study on expatriate humanitarian aid workers from non-governmental organisations, Lopes Cardozo et al. (2012) showed that aid workers' continuing exposure to chronic stress leads to a higher risk of depression and burnout. The study determined a pattern in the long-term impact of depression and burnout amongst humanitarian aid workers. Whereas feelings of anxiety and de-personalization diminished three to six months after the assignment, the risk of depression and the feeling of emotional exhaustion did not decrease during the first three to six months after assignment completion. Overall, compared with pre-deployment, aid workers had lower levels of life satisfaction after their deployment.

Similar to studies on humanitarian aid workers' motivation, the research on ethical challenges of humanitarian aid work concentrates on providing classifications of the variety of existing ethical challenges. The elaboration of the circumstances, which result in ethically difficult situations for humanitarian aid workers, is usually followed by researchers' suggestions as to what could be done to better prepare humanitarian aid workers for the challenging nature of the work. The recommendations are usually limited to the organisational level, and focus on

[23] Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is an anxiety disorder that arises as a response after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event involving actual or threatened death or serious injury to self or others. It is characterized by intense fear, helplessness, or horror. An individual suffering from PTSD persistently re-experiences the traumatic event in the form of distressing recollections, recurrent dreams, sensations of reliving the experience, hallucinations, or flashbacks and often experiences insomnia, irritability, difficulty concentrating or hypervigilance (Oxford Dictionary of Psychology).

[24] Burnout is a distinct work-related stress disorder which is most likely to occur in professions that require extensive care of others. Burnout is defined by three principal components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and diminished feelings of personal achievement (Lopes Cardozo et al. 2012, 5-6).

mechanisms that aid agencies can adopt to provide suitable ethics training and appropriate support to their employees. Hunt, for instance, suggests that aid agencies should "endeavour to foster an organisational culture that is responsive to ethics" (2008, 68), and stresses that agencies should develop ethics training and guidelines that are appropriate to assist clinicians in the field. Furthermore, agencies should provide mentoring for aid workers and encourage ethics dialogues with local stakeholders (ibid., 67-68).

In practice, however, ethical questions are rarely a focus in humanitarian aid workers' training sessions. In the rare cases in which ethics are discussed, these are addressed in an abstract manner on the example of humanitarian principles (Hunt et al. 2012). Instead of providing special ethics training, aid organisations rely on the professionalism of health care practitioners and their professional codes of ethics (Schwartz et al. 2010). Traditional teaching and values of clinical health ethics are, however, insufficient for addressing the realities of health care practice during humanitarian missions because the context in which humanitarian aid takes place is significantly different from the context of clinical practice in HCPs' home countries (Schwartz et. al 2010; Schwartz et. al 2012).

Whether ethics training and further development of guidelines are of practical use in the field remains questionable. The little available research on the matter emphasises the importance of personal relationships for addressing ethically difficult situations. Exploring the resources humanitarian HCPs have found to be beneficial, or which they felt would have been helpful had they been available for addressing the ethical challenges in the field, Hunt et al. (2012) reported that participants did not mention guidelines or models or frameworks which they could use for analysing and responding to ethical issues in practice. Instead, participants pointed out that their relationships with local staff members were the most important source of psychological, practical, and professional support for coping with ethically difficult situations during their postings. The importance of local staff members for expatriate staff members' ability to navigate ethically challenging situations has been previously addressed by Slim (1997), who suggests that Western aid workers used their local colleagues or patients as role models and a source for moral guidance. Slim further emphasises the role of "everyday virtues" such as courage, patience, practical wisdom, diligence, integrity, hope, and struggle, for

humanitarians' ability to cope with the challenging nature of their work (2015, 241-246).

Studies on the psychological impact of humanitarian aid work demonstrate that social and organisational support networks are crucial to mitigate the negative impact of humanitarian aid work on aid professionals. Aid workers with strong social support networks, and positive team relationships and friendships, have higher levels of life satisfaction throughout their deployment, and are less likely to suffer negative mental health consequences such as depression, psychological distress, or burnout (Eriksson et al. 2009; Lopes Cardozo et al. 2012). In order to minimize chronic stressors for humanitarian aid workers, aid organisations can improve accommodation facilities, facilitate as much access to communication with home as possible, regulate workload, improve management directions to the teams, and provide recognition by the organisation for optimal work performance (Lopes Cardozo et al. 2005; Eriksson et al. 2009; Lopes Cardozo et al. 2012).

In addition to the existing studies on the variety of ethical challenges humanitarian professionals encounter during their posting, my focus lies on the role of particular experiences as formative moments that provide a means of dealing and coping with the presented challenges. In order to answer my research questions empirically, I will investigate the four humanitarian aid workers' memoirs using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

2.3 Methodology

Following Fechter's argument that aid workers publish memoirs because they have no other channels to share their experiences in formal discussions on aid, and her suggestion to use these memoirs as a primary source of material which has been ignored so far in the research on aid work (2012a, 1400), the data basis of this project is four contemporary humanitarian workers' memoirs. Given my interest in the long-term significance of specific ethical experiences, the memoirs provide the best way for investigating the implications of these experiences in the context of the individuals' lives. I will examine the humanitarian aid workers' accounts in two stages: first, I will explore my first and second research questions regarding the significance of specific experiences for individuals' motivation for humanitarian

aid work, and the importance of specific experiences for humanitarian aid workers' ability to cope with the difficult nature of their work by using the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA). IPA is a qualitative research approach that examines individuals' lived experiences, the meaning of specific experiences to individuals, and the ways in which they make sense of these experiences, and allows me to illuminate the authors' self-reflections. In order to answer my third research question regarding the shared nature of humanitarians' ethical experiences, the second stage of data analysis will use the more abstract tools from Levinas's and Buber's work in order to identify and highlight the general features of the relevant encounters and experiences.

Data Collection - Memoirs

Twenty-first century society has been described as an "auto/biographical society" in which individuals are encouraged to present their life stories in public (Plummer 2001, 78). Originating from Greek 'auto-bio-graphia' ('self-life-writing'), the term autobiography refers to a literary work in which the author writes about his own life. The term first appeared at the end of the eighteenth century but has previously existed under other names such as 'memoirs' or 'confessions' (Olney 1980, 6) with Saint Augustine's Confessions (c. AD 398–400) considered as the landmark for modern Western autobiography. Gusdorf (1980) and Plummer (2001) argue that the genre of autobiography is limited in time and is a literary consequence of the rise of individualism in Western culture during Enlightenment. Furthermore, the genre of autobiography is limited in space because it is premised on the "conscious awareness of the singularity of each individual life" which is prevalent in Western societies and is not found in African and East Asian cultures. Although "autobiography" and "memoir" are often used interchangeably, they differ in the timeline covered in the text. Strictly, an autobiography covers the author's entire life to the present and a memoir is a subcategory of an autobiography which covers only certain events in the author's life (Smith and Watson 2010, 1-5).

Reflecting the increasing number of available memoirs and biographies, narrative studies are increasingly used in the fields of psychology, gender studies, education, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, or law. Narrative studies are used in order to explore a variety of aspects: the personal identity, specific experiences, lifestyle, culture, and historical world of the narrator (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach,

and Zilber 1998). However, in spite of its prominence with certain groups, the use of narratives remains "at the margins of mainstream academic research" (Plummer 2001, ix) and is "a field in the making" (Chase 2011, 430).

The importance of studying personal narratives arises from two main points: their meaning-making importance and their ability to show a relation between a particular life story and the wider social world. Putting one's experience in narrative form is understood as the "organising principle of human action" (Riessman 1993, 1), and a primary way for individuals to make sense of their experiences. Narratives are essential meaning-making structures because they require the author to organise the experiences into sequences and to connect them with each other in order to present a whole story (Riessman 1993, 19; Elliott 2006, 24). This ordering process requires the author to reflect on his experiences to be able to select the salient aspects and to order them into a coherent whole. It enables the author to see the consequences of interrelated events or experiences over time and to see the significance of each event through its relation to other events and to the whole story (Riessman 1993, 19; Elliott 2006, 3; Chase 2011, 421). Hence, the fact that the autobiography or memoir is a construct (Mandel 1980) is seen by narrative researchers as their core advantage and narratives are considered as an ideal medium for researching and understanding individuals' experiences, the way individuals understand those experiences, the meaning they give to them, and the ways they communicate these experiences to others (Elliott 2006, 26).

Many scholars in psychology and sociology (Bruner 1991, Gergen and Gergen 1986, McAdams 1990; Fisher-Rosenthal and Rosenthal 1997) go as far as advocating that personal narratives are people's identities. Bruner for instance argues that self-narration is the defining act of the human subject, an act which is not only "descriptive of the self" but "fundamental to the emergence and reality of that subject" (Eakin citing Bruner 1999, 21). Stories are more than mere recapitulations of past events; they have a defining character. They not only present an inner reality to the outside world but shape and construct the narrator's personality and reality. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell about ourselves (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 1998; McAdams, Josselson, and Lieblich, 2006). The story therefore is one's identity, a story created, told revised, and retold throughout life (Palus, Nasby, and Easton 1991).

Plummer (1983) suggests that individual stories and personal documents have the potential to take us beyond the individual, to an awareness of that individual in society. Based on an understanding of the individual as being closely connected to the social, collective, cultural, and historical moment, narratives do not simply demonstrate evidence about individuals, but provide a resource to understand more about the broader cultural framework shared by a community of individuals (Plummer 2001). A close analysis of narratives produced by a relatively small sample of individuals can therefore provide evidence that "is considered to provide an understanding of the intersubjective meanings shared by the whole of a community" (Elliott 2006, 28).

Given my interest in the long-term significance of specific ethical experiences, the memoirs provide the best way for investigating the implications of these experiences in the context of life. One advantage of using memoirs is that they are more likely to provide a deeper reflection on the questions of interest than spontaneously given answers in an interview or a blog. Whereas spontaneity has its place in revealing impulsive (and seemingly more natural) replies and views on certain matters, my interest in how humanitarians make sense of significant experiences in their lives with regards to their humanitarian engagement requires a process of time-consuming and intensive reflection on the part of the humanitarians. Reflecting on the moments and experiences that have shaped us and impacted on the course of our lives requires some temporal distance from the event, and an openness to share the result of this reflection with others which is provided in the memoirs. Furthermore, memoirs offer more material than could be gained through interviews within the temporal constraints of a PhD project, and circumvent the challenge of organising a series of interviews with several aid workers within the temporal constraints that are part of their profession.

The willingness to share one's sensitive experiences within the framework of an interview requires a level of trust towards the researcher that I was not sure was possible in the limited time available. The memoirs, in contrast, present a set of data whose very purpose is to be shared with a wide audience. Aid workers deliberately chose to write these memoirs as a way of illustrating their humanitarian work. The memoirs do not constitute academic literature in the conventional sense, and are intended to be read by a population beyond academic circles which might not necessarily be familiar with the academic discussion on humanitarian issues. They

are therefore a way to present humanitarian matters in a more accessible way and to illustrate specific humanitarian crises from the point of view of those working in the field.

The ease of accessibility of the memoirs is another advantage of this project: whereas the majority of the available research on aid workers is based on interviews which are not accessible to the reader, the empirical basis of my thesis is widely available. The accessibility of the empirical basis for this thesis increases the validity of the project that comes from the reader's ability to cross-examine my analysis against each memoir.

Having decided to base my project on memoirs, I initially examined 10 memoirs that were published in English. The additional six initially investigated memoirs, which are not included in the thesis, are in chronological order: Paula Grim: Just Here Trying to Save a Few Lives: Tales of Life and Death from the ER (2002); John Sherman: War Stories: A Memoir of Nigeria and Biafra (2002); Kenneth Cain, Heidi Postlewait, and Andrew Thomson: Emergency Sex and Other Desperate Measures: True Stories from a War Zone (2004); John S. Burnett: Where Soldiers Fear to Tread: At Work in the Fields of Anarchy (2005); Lisa French Blaker: Heart of Darfur (2007); Marc Vauchon: Rebel Without Borders: Frontline Missions in Africa and the Gulf (2008). At the beginning of the project, it was not clear how much material on motivation and the significance of specific experiences these memoirs would entail and how many memoirs would be included in the final version of the thesis. In the first step, I read all memoirs and set up a spreadsheet which separated each account into three sections: background, first mission and second mission. In order to get an overview of all accounts, I re-read the accounts and took notes on the themes addressed in each memoir for each section. What did the authors write about their background? How did they explain their motivation? Did they recount particular experiences which played a role for their decision to consider working in the humanitarian sector? How did they approach their work and the suffering and death around them? How did they deal with the risks of working in a war zone? What did they write about relations to their colleagues and their patients, their daily routine, their hopes, their fears, their self-doubts, the disillusionment, loneliness, rage, their successes, their failures? How did they see their role in humanitarian aid work? What did they write about returning home, did they feel relieved when leaving their first mission? How did they deal with the

emotional implications of their work during and after the posting? Why did they go on a second mission and why did they quit their postings? Why had they decided to write a memoir? What was their overall evaluations of their engagement in the field? As a result, I had constructed a spreadsheet with themes from each memoir and could compare these themes across the memoirs. More importantly, I could see that the authors described specific experiences when writing about their initial motivation to work in the humanitarian field and referred to particular incidents during their postings when describing what helped them coping with the difficult nature of humanitarian aid work. Given my interest in the role of specific experiences for aid workers' motivation and ability to do humanitarian aid work, and aiming to offer a comprehensive analysis of these experiences, I chose to present four rather than all investigated ten memoirs. I selected Orbinski's, Maskalyk's, Brown's and Alexander's accounts because they provided the richest description of such experiences. The four memoirs presented in the thesis are therefore not the only memoirs in which specific ethical experiences play a significant role for aid workers but the best examples of a bigger sample. Another criterion for the selection of these four memoirs was the participants' long-term engagement in the humanitarian sector which helps me explore the enduring implications of particular ethical experiences in the lives of humanitarian aid workers. Wanting to examine contemporary humanitarian aid professionals who work in the context of the 'new humanitarianism', the memoirs were also selected on the timeframe covered and give insight into humanitarians' engagement in the last two decades.

The first memoir An Imperfect Offering: Dispatches from the Medical Frontline (first published in 2008) was written by the former MSF president James Orbinski. Orbinski's memoir describes his engagement in the humanitarian field, from his first posting with the organisation in Somalia during the civil war and famine in 1992-1993, Afghanistan in 1994, Rwanda in 1994, and Goma in 1996-97, to his time as MSF's international president in 1998-2001.

The second memoir Band-Aid for a Broken Leg: Being a Doctor with No Borders (And Other Ways to Stay Single) (2013a) by the Australian doctor Damien Brown started its life as a blog. Brown began writing a blog because it was a "therapeutic" way to "try and make sense of the chaos" (Brown 2013b) during his first posting with MSF in Mavinga, Angola. In turning his blog into a book, Brown

wanted to portray a more realistic picture of the recipients of aid, and to convey "the individual stories of the kids, the local people, and the healthcare workers" (Brown 2013b). Most of all, he wanted to describe Angolans resilience and coutnerbalance the image of rural Africans as helpless victims (Brown 2015). Brown states that another reason for writing the memoir was the desire to compensate for the lack of possibilities for discussing his work with friends and families, which grew out of his disappointment with those who upon his return home expected him to summarise his experiences in "30 seconds" (Brown 2013d). The memoir follows Brown from his first posting with MSF in a small Angolan hospital, to his positions with MSF in Mozambique and Sudan in 2006-2008.

The third memoir Six Months in Sudan: A Young Doctor in a War-torn Village (2009a) was written by the Canadian emergency physician James Maskalyk, about his work with MSF in Abyei, Sudan in 2007. The book began as a blog which Maskalyk wrote during his time in Abyei in order to share his experiences with his friends and family. Although the focus of the memoir is only on one posting, the memoir is included in the thesis because it was not Maskalyk's first humanitarian position, and he continues working in the field.

The fourth memoir Chasing Chaos: My Decade In and Out of Humanitarian Aid (2013a) was written by Jessica Alexander. Alexander describes the challenges of her work for the UN and various NGOs in the major crises of the last decade including Darfur, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia in 2005, Sierra Leone in 2006-2007, and Haiti in 2010. Having had the experience of people wanting to hear only pithy anecdotes about her work, she uses her memoir as a way to demystify people's perceptions of aid workers, and to provide a realistic account of her profession and aid workers' day-to-day experiences (Alexander 2013c).

Analysing memoirs, one needs to address the role of memory and the question of truth in the accounts. Given that autobiographies are written in the present and in the consciousness of the present moment, autobiographies and memoirs cannot be approached as simply reports of past events (Gunn 1981, 83). Any form of autobiographic writing and indeed any recollection of the past, is based on memories and "memories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves" (Schachter 1996, 6). The act of remembering involves a re-interpretation of the past in the present because the past the author recalls is always the past remembered in the present, not the past as it was. Looking

back and recollecting our experiences, we remember the past not as the individual we were back then but as the one we are now and the picture of ourselves from the past is distorted by the fact that we no longer are the same being we were as a child or adolescent who lived that past. Whereas in the immediate moment we fail to see the experience in its entirety, the memory of the experience allows us to contextualise the experience in time and space (Gusdorf 1980, 38). In doing so, the remembering subject actively creates the meaning of the past (Sidonie and Watson 2010, 22).

Although autobiographies and memoirs are constructed accounts and share features we ascribe to fictional writing such as plot, dialogue, setting or characterization, they are distinguished by their relationship to and claims about a referential world (Mandel 1980; Lejeune 1989; Sidonie and Watson 2010). According to the autobiography theorist Philippe Lejeune (1989), the distinguishing mark of autobiography is the author's identification with the narrator or the "autobiographical pact". By giving the protagonist the same name as his own, the author promises the reader to tell the reader the truth as it appears to him or inasmuch as he knows it and in doing so orients the attitude with which the reader reads the work and sets out a set of expectation that differs from reading fiction. Whereas novels often include a note stressing that any resemblance with real personalities is accidental, autobiographies and memoirs are introduced with the statement that the account is based on the author's recollection. Whereas the aim of a novel is to represent "a world", an autobiography or memoir intends to convey the particular worl of the author to the reader (Mandel 1980, 52-54). When we recognize the narrative as autobiographical we read it differently and assess the narrative as making truth claims that contrast our reading of fiction. In contrast to fiction, we expect an autobiography to tell the truth about the author's life (Mandel 1980, 62).

Following Donald P. Spence (1982), narrative researchers differentiate between "narrative truth" and "historical truth" and argue that the value of the narrative is that it provides us with access to peoples' identity and personality and reveals how the individual makes sense of himself and his life. Thus, the informative value of autobiographies extends its factual grounding (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 1998, 8-9) and the focus in narrative research is not on the factual accuracy of the story but on the meaning it has for the author. One of the

most frequently cited quotes on the question of truth in literature on narrative research is a quote by The Personal Narratives Group, a feminist group working in the late 1980s in the USA:

> When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past "as it actually was," aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences. … Unlike the Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. (in Riessman 1993, 22)

Martens stresses that the main motivation for reading autobiographies is the wish to get to know the personal truth, which is why the reader demands more than mere factual truth from an autobiography but wants a story which only the person herself can tell (2014, 323-324). The significance of autobiographies lies therefore beyond truth and falsity in the conventional sense for it contains a truth that is "affirmed beyond the fraudulent itinerary and chronology, a truth of the man, images of himself and of the world" (Gusdorf 1980, 43). An autobiography shows us a person in his inner privacy, not as he was, not as he is, but as he believes and wishes himself to be and to have been (Gusdorf 1980, 45). Abbott (1988) claims that the historical truth in autobiographies is important only insofar as it expresses the identity of the author and in this regard autobiography, unlike fictional writing is always true. Similarly, Stanley Fish (1999) argues that "autobiographers cannot lie because anything they say, however mendacious, is the truth about themselves whether they know it or not. Any utterance in an autobiographical text, even if inaccurate or distorted, is a characterization of the writer". Sidonie and Watson argue that autobiographic truth as an intersubjective mode which resides in the intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader and is therefore outside of a logical or juridical model of truth and falsehood. The truth of the narrative is therefore undecidable; it can be neither fully verified nor fully discredited (2010, 15-17).

The focus of my account are humanitarian aid workers' ethical experiences that played a role for their involvement in humanitarian aid work. Whereas I can investigate the veracity of the circumstantial information provided in each memoir (Did Orbinski really work for MSF in Somalia? etc.), it is impossible for me or

anyone but the author to verify whether what she writes about the significance of specific experiences in her life is their actual significance. The author's lived experience is the primary evidence asserted in an autobiography which cannot be externally verified nor disproved. Working with the memoirs presented in the thesis, I therefore follow a middle-course suggested by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998, 8): I do not take the memoirs at face value, as complete and accurate representations of reality but understand that they are constructed around a core of facts or life events and that these core remembered facts have been selected. I am aware that the memoirs do not represent the whole life of the individual or the whole story of the period of life they are describing but are one account that they present of themselves at a particular point in time. I am equally aware that the ten initially investigated memoirs and the four accounts presented in the thesis are not representative of the majority of aid workers who do not write memoirs and that these individuals' decision to publish a memoir can be accused of illustrating their heightened sense of self-importance and publicity-seeking. Notwithstanding, following Fechter's suggestion to take the memoirs written by aid workers seriously because they illustrate that aid workers are using this medium because they have no platform to discuss their experiences in official aid discussions, I approach the memoirs with a certain level of openness and assume that the memoirs do reveal the authors' view on their humanitarian engagement and the ways in which they make sense of their humanitarian aid work.

Data Analysis – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The IPA originated in psychology where it has become one of the most commonly used qualitative methodologies, and has theoretical roots in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith 2011, 9). IPA's phenomenological emphasis lies on the experiential claims of the individual of interest. IPA views human beings as sense-making creatures, and understands the accounts participants provide as their attempts to make sense of their major life experiences. IPA researchers seek to explore experiences that take on particular significance for the participants and aim to investigate how participants are making sense of their experiences. These experiences can take on various forms: they can be of a positive or negative nature, they can come about as a result of the individual's decisions or occur unexpectedly, and they can refer to a single moment or occupy a longer period of time. What all

experiences must have in common is that they are of major significance for the person who is going to engage in a detailed reflection about them (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013, 2-3). The aim of IPA is to understand the experience from the standpoint of the individual, to explore the way in which the participant relates to this experience, and to interpret and situate the means by which participants make sense of their experiences (Larkin, Watts, and Clifton 2006, 110).

The memoirs satisfy two core requirements for an IPA study: first, they provide a rich and detailed account of participants' thoughts and feelings. Humanitarian aid workers' memoirs offer rich data regarding the humanitarians' background, their decision to work in the humanitarian field, their ways of coping with the challenges that are intrinsic to humanitarian work, their experiences of returning home, and the reasoning for either returning to the field or quitting their humanitarian work. Second, the memoirs constitute an account in which the participants were granted a sufficient amount of time and space to tell their story freely, and in which they were able to elaborate on their ideas and express their experiences in their own terms rather than according to predefined category systems (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013, 56-58).

Examining another individual's experience requires the researcher's interpretation – a process which is informed by hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation. IPA researchers are aware that their access to the participant's experience always depends on what the participant shares about that experience (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013, 33). Aiming to get as close as possible to the participant's experience, IPA combines the rich description of a phenomenological 'core' – which aims to capture the claims and concerns of the participant – with the more speculative form of an interpretative account – which aims to interpret the meaning of the given claims and concerns (Larkin, Watts, and Clifton 2006, 117). Interpreting humanitarians accounts of particular experiences in the thesis, I engage in a process of double hermeneutics, which means that I am trying to make sense of the humanitarian, who is trying to make sense of what is happening to him, and I present my interpretation of the individual's understanding of particular experiences in his life and the concepts he uses when doing so. The participant's meaning-making is hereby first-order, and my 'making sense' is of second order, because I only have access to the participant's experience through the participant's account (Smith 2011, 3).

Idiography is concerned with the study of specifics in contrast to the study of general objects, and has traditionally been associated with the study of individual persons in psychology (Larkin, Watts, and Clifton 2006, 103). IPA's commitment to a detailed and systematic analysis of an individual's account aims to situate participants in their particular contexts in order to understand how this particular individual understands specific phenomena in his particular situation (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013, 29).

IPA's idiographic focus means that IPA researchers are commited to a detailed and systematic analysis of an individual's account and aim to situate participants in their particular contexts in order to understand how this particular individual understands specific phenomena in his particular situation (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013, 29). The aim of IPA is to understand the experience from the standpoint of the individual, to explore the way in which the participant relates to this experience, and to interpret and situate the means by which participants make sense of their experiences (Larkin, Watts, and Clifton 2006, 110). Analysing the memoirs using the IPA method, my aim is twofold: first, trying to understand the individual's world, and describing what a particular experience is like for this individual, and second, providing an interpretative analysis that positions the initial description in relation to the individual's social and cultural context. Here, I analyse what it has meant for the participant to have made these claims and to have expressed these feelings and concerns in this particular situation, and offer a critical and conceptual commentary upon the participant's personal 'sense-making' activities.

The value of IPA studies lies in their ability to provide detailed analyses of particular lived experiences which explains why IPA studies value subjectivity over objectivity. To produce an objective account in an IPA study means to present a coherent, third-person description that tries to get as close to the participant's view as possible (Larkin, Watts, and Clifton 2006, 104). Although truth claims provided in an IPA analysis are always tentative, and the provided analysis subjective, this subjectivity arises from a dialogical, systematic, and rigorous investigation (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013, 80).

Rather than being a strict method with a set of specific steps to be followed, IPA is a stance from which to approach qualitative data analysis (Larkin, Watts, and Clifton 2006, 117). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin suggest six steps for the data

analysis. The first step is an intensive reading and re-reading of the participant's account, that ensures a familiarity with the data and an overall understanding of the structure of the account, its different sections, and the connections between them. The second step involves exploratory notes that include descriptive and interpretative elements, and are based on a line-by-line analysis of the experiential claims, concerns, and understandings of each participant.[25] The aim of the notes is to describe both the key objects of concern for the participant (relationships, processes, places, events, values, and principles) and the meaning these concerns have for the participant. In the third step in the process of data analysis, the researcher is asked to develop emerging themes from the data, and in the fourth step to provide connections between them. For an IPA study that involves more than one case, the fifth step is a reiteration of the previous steps for each of the cases, and the final step is an examination of overall patterns across the inspected cases (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013, 82-103).

This exploration will help me uncover the ways in which humanitarian aid workers make sense of their work in the humanitarian sector and the specific experiences they connect to their motivation to become engaged in the humanitarian sector. Furthermore, the IPA analyses will allow me to explore the common characteristics among these formative experiences, for example whether the authors use the same language or same concepts, when explaining these experiences to themselves and the reader.

Due to my research focus on the significance of specific ethical experiences, my examination is based on a line-by-line analysis of the specific experiences humanitarian aid workers describe as defining for their motivation and humanitarian work. In order to allow for a better understanding of the importance of each experience for the particular individual and my analysis, the discussed experiences will be embedded in the description of the circumstances in which they took place and supported with quotations from the memoirs. The examination of each memoir follows a chronological order and is separated into three sections: 'Background and Motivation', 'Humanitarian Aid Work' and 'Epilogue'.

The 'Background and Motivation' section explores the time period prior to the aid workers' first posting described at length in the memoir and elucidates

[25] You can find two examples of the line-by-line analysis in the appendix.

the events humanitarian aid workers present as having influenced their decision to work in the humanitarian aid sector.

The section 'Humanitarian Aid Work' takes up the major part of every account and examines the specific experiences that impacted the individual's ability to do humanitarian aid work. This section also explores the specific experiences aid workers describe as being important for their ability to cope with the impact of their work once they return home. As all chosen memoirs were written by humanitarian workers who decided to continue working in the field after the first posting, this section will further elaborate on their reasons for doing so. What is it that pulls them back into the field? Equally, I am interested in the reasons and experiences that lead individuals to quit a posting in the humanitarian sector.

The 'Epilogue' part covers the more distanced evaluation humanitarians give, either at the beginning as part of the 'Author's Note' or at the end of their memoir, where they provide a concluding reflection on their humanitarian work. This part is of particular importance because it provides an overall evaluation of the individual's humanitarian work and helps to determine the meaning of the actions and events within the text.

Assuming that the reader will encounter these memoirs in the thesis for the first time, I will provide a selection of extracts and longer quotations of significant aspects and moments from each memoir, which will be followed by an interpretative commentary. In contrast to the third-person account, the longer quotations will be kept in the first person in order for the reader to be able to hear the original voice of each aid worker. Making the evidentiary base for my interpretation of the individual experiences transparent allows the reader to probe my analysis against the original text. Where necessary, particularly in order to illuminate particular aspects of humanitarian aid workers' accounts, I include information from interviews which humanitarians gave to promote their memoirs.

Data Analysis – Martin Buber's and Emmanuel Levinas' Situational Ethics

The aim of my thesis is to convey how humanitarian aid workers understand their humanitarian engagement; to describe and analyse the ethical experiences humanitarians articulate as being important for their humanitarian work; and to

provide an overview of the main characteristics of these experiences. Whereas the examination of the memoirs using the IPA methodology answered many of my initial questions, and demonstrated a clear connection between humanitarians' motivations and ability to cope with the challenging nature of their work to specific ethical experiences, it revealed that humanitarians did not provide a deeper analysis of these experiences. The IPA analyses offered an overview of the commonalities in aid worrkers' experiences but these commonalities raised questions about the nature of the described experiences which humanitarians themselves did not examine. Wanting to provide a deeper and more abstract analysis of the shared nature of these experiences, I decided to enrich and enhance the self-analysis conducted in the autobiographical narratives by cautiously incorporating the language and concepts provided by Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas into the narratives. As I will argue in the relevant section of this thesis, Buber's and Levinas's concepts allow me to extend the analyses offered in the autobiographies to the point where the core of the formative experiences can be articulated in a manner that allows for comparisons between and across the different cases considered in this study.

Part II

IPA Studies:

Humanitarian Aid Workers' Memoirs

3. James Orbinski: *An Imperfect Offering*

James Orbinski, is a Canadian doctor and former president of MSF. He began working with MSF whilst studying medicine at the McMaster University's School of Medicine in Ontario, and was involved in the humanitarian responses to several major crises during the 1990s. Orbinski worked as MSF's Medical Coordinator in Baidoa, in Somalia during the Civil War and famine of 1992-93; as Medical Coordinator in Jalalabad, Afghanistan in 1994; and as MSF's Head of Mission in Goma, Zaire in 1996-97. Orbinski was also MSF's Head of Mission in Kigali during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 – a service for which he was awarded the *Meritorious Service Cross*, Canada's highest civilian award. In 1998, Orbinski was elected MSF's first international president, and he accepted the Nobel Peace Price on behalf of the organisation in 1999.

Orbinski's memoir *An Imperfect Offering: Dispatches from the Medical Frontline*[26] illuminates his humanitarian engagement and presents in his own words "a personal narrative about the political journey [he] [has] taken over the last twenty years as a humanitarian doctor, as a citizen, and as a man" (IO 4). It is a book about "finding a way to confront unjust human suffering in the world as it is" (ibid., 10), and a story about "personal moments, political moments or moments when there is no difference" (ibid., 4).

Today, Orbinski lives in Toronto with his wife and their three children. He is the CIGI Chair in Global Health Governance at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, and a professor of International Policy and Governance at Wilfrid Laurier University. He is also a professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, and a Senior Fellow at both Massey College, and the Munk School of Global Affairs.

3.1 Background and Motivation

"How am I to be, how are we to be, in relation to the suffering of others?" –Orbinski states that this question has preoccupied his thoughts for the majority of his life (IO

[26] The international edition is entitled *An Imperfect Offering: Humanitarian Action in the Twenty-first Century* (2008).

4). Orbinski's concern for the suffering other was a consistent feature throughout his life, having developed from personal encounters with suffering during his childhood. This concern eventually became the guide for his search for meaning in his life, and the foundation for his humanitarian engagement.

First Encounters with Others' Suffering

Orbinski describes three particular experiences during his childhood, all of which revolved around suffering, violence, and mortality, and gave rise to his concern for others' suffering. The first incident involved his younger brother's sudden illness, shortly after the family had migrated from England to Canada. The seven-year-old Orbinski woke in the middle of the night to his brother's screams, and witnessed his parents in a state of distress. The incident was characterised by his parents' helplessness: they did not have a car to take the boy to the hospital, and could not afford an ambulance. The seriousness of the boy's condition was illustrated in Orbinski's mother's crying, his father's attempts not to cry, and the young Orbinski's prayer for his brother to be allowed into heaven. Lacking other options, Orbinski's mother sought help from a young doctor in their neighbourhood, who agreed to come to examine the boy that night. He brought medicine the following day, and continued visiting the patient every day for the following week, in spite of the fact that the family could not pay him in anything other than tea and cake (IO 20-21).

The second central series of events revolved around the Holocaust, and took place when Orbinski was nine years old. Seeing a TV documentary on the Holocaust for the first time, Orbinski became riveted by the pictures of

> yellow-starred people being loaded into cattle cars, children holding dolls in one hand and clutching their mothers' hand in the other, the separate piles of spectacles, shoes and suitcases outside the crematoria, the lampshades made of human skin, the piles of gold from human teeth, people lying dead in pits at Auschwitz covered over by a white blanket of lime, stick-people walking dazed around barbed-wire fences as British and Canadian forces liberated Bergen-Belsen. (IO 21)

Orbinski remembers that, although he could barely understand what he was watching, the pictures held his attention, and he insisted on continuing to watch the broadcast when his father wanted to change the channel. The pictures depicted a hitherto unknown and unbelievable horror, and incredulous,

Orbinski asked his father whether they were real. His father affirmed that they were, but added that it had happened a long time ago. When the camera zoomed in on a woman's arm, which showed a row of numbers tattooed onto her forearm, Orbinski asked what the numbers meant, and his father reluctantly explained that the people were Jews and the numbers were tattooed by Nazis.

The TV pictures introduced a new dimension to Orbinski's understanding of death. He writes: "Before that day, I had a different knowing of death. [. . .] Now, with the Nazis and the yellow-starred people on television, death was something we could do to each other" (IO 22-23). Death now, was not something which only happened naturally at the end of life or as a result of an accident or ill health, but could be the consequence of someone's deliberate choice to harm.

The following day, as part of an annual routine prior to the beginning of a new school year, Orbinski was taken by his mother to a shoe store. He was intrigued by the shop full of boxes, and the elderly couple who owned it. He observed the old man and remembered thinking that his sharp blue eyes were beautiful. When the man took the shoes from the box, "his sleeve lifted, and [Orbinski] saw the blue tattooed numbers on his forearm. They weren't straight, and the numbers got smaller towards his elbow. [Orbinski] tried to add them up as [the man] put one of the shoes on [his] foot. Nazis. Bulging eyes" (IO 24). In that moment, the television pictures from Auschwitz seen the previous day transcended time and space. Now they were not simply images depicting a long past reality that happened far away, like his father had tried to reassure him, but were embodied in a real human being, standing in front of him. A man with blue eyes and warm hands – he was the living proof that the television pictures were real.

Later that day Orbinski sought to understand what happened in the Holocaust and asked his parents why the Nazis had wanted to kill the Jews. His father's response, "[b]ecause they were Jews" was only followed by another question: "[j]ust because they were Jews? Why?" (IO 25). His father's subsequent attempts to elucidate this motive, by adding that Nazis killed Jews because they hated Jews for being Jews, however, failed to clarify their motivation to the young Orbinski. Unsatisfied with his father's responses, he came up with his own, to him a more credible, explanation, and asked whether

the Nazis killed the Jews because the Jews had killed Jesus. His father replied that it was more complicated than that, and hard to explain, adding that "[s]ometimes we can be terrible things" (ibid., 25).

In the day time, Orbinski's immediate reaction to the newly gained knowledge of humans' ability to torture and murder others was a myriad of questions, as an attempt to rationally comprehend the matter. However, during the night, his emotional response to the disturbing events was a wordless crying. Waking up in tears in the evening of his visit to the shoe store, he remembers:

> I couldn't explain what's wrong. The Holocaust was now about the man who sold us my new shoes. I didn't have the words for what I knew of a world where people could become lampshades. I couldn't stop crying. (IO 25)

The third episode described in Orbinski's account, is another example of human suffering, which he saw in a television report on the 1974 Ethiopian famine, at the age of thirteen. Unlike the images from Auschwitz, these pictures depicted present-day suffering, and Orbinski states that even though decades have passed since watching the report, he can still recall the face of a tired, listless girl, and remembers that the report was followed by another night of crying (IO 27).

All three of the described episodes are constitutive experiences in Orbinski's life which changed his understanding of the world. His brother's sudden illness made him realize that a stranger's compassion and sense of responsibility could be the difference between life and death. The Holocaust documentary and the encounter with the Jewish shop owner taught him that death could be something deliberately inflicted on others. Finally, the report on the Ethiopian famine illustrated to Orbinski that massive human suffering was still happening today. Orbinski's reaction to the television pictures of Auschwitz and Ethiopia, and the encounter with the Jewish man, demonstrate a sensitive person who, from a very young age, was unable to turn away from the suffering of others. In each of the sequences, he responded to it, and his response went beyond the immediate feeling of compassion and marked a starting point for his quest to determine how he should live his life. What is particularly striking about the three episodes that Orbinski places at the beginning of the story of his journey as a humanitarian aid worker, is that they provide a clear connection to Orbinski's later humanitarian

engagement, and are windows into his future. Years later, Orbinski himself will be a doctor, and, working for MSF, will witness both a famine in Somalia and a genocide in Rwanda.

Benedict and the Search for the Right Way to Live

One particular individual who helped Orbinski navigate his preoccupation with the suffering of others was Benedict, a monk from the Oka Monastery. Having first met when Orbinski was fifteen, Benedict became Orbinski's confidant and mentor. Benedict is the only person mentioned whenever Orbinski describes significant conversations that take place during his teenage years, which suggests that the monk is the main (and maybe only) trusted person with whom Orbinski discussed his concerns and questions. Benedict helped Orbinski to find a way to translate his concern with others' suffering into action, and later helped him cope with the questions that arose from his humanitarian work. Orbinski describes three encounters with Benedict prior to his first humanitarian mission. Each of the conversations with Benedict shaped Orbinski's understanding of what he wanted to do, and much of what Orbinski later writes as his motivation to work in the humanitarian field, and his approach towards this work, reflects these conversations and echoes Benedict's guiding words.

At first, Orbinski met with Benedict because, he, like many teenage boys with a Catholic upbringing, was toying with the idea of becoming a monk. During their first conversation, Benedict tried to find out what had led Orbinski to consider this path, and Orbinski states that Benedict listened to him more carefully than he had ever been listened before:

> At first I spoke tentatively, and then less so. I was preoccupied by questions about suffering, the struggle to escape it or the living of lies in it. I tried to describe how confused I was by what we are capable of, by the pain we inflicted on one another. As he listened, he remarked on the sunlight falling differently on the layers of coloured leaves on the branches above us. I watched the bright sun coming through the leaves and making shadows on my suede jacket and I remember feeling safe and unafraid. "There is no escape James, there is only what you do." I wrote down what he said, though I had little idea what his words meant. (IO 29-30)

Benedict told Orbinski that it was a choice not to turn away from others' suffering, but to engage and respond to it. He claimed that there was no escape

from the question that others' suffering poses to us, and assured Orbinski that he was not as helpless as he felt facing others' hardship, because he could respond to it. Orbinski writes that Benedict's words relaxed "a knot of unanswered questions" (IO 30) and made him feel like he could breathe more fully. The conversation helped Orbinski realize that his desire to become a monk was an attempt to escape the world of suffering, and marked the "end of [his] short-lived monastic fantasy and the beginning of learning how to live in the world" (ibid., 30).

During another visit, which took place a couple of years later, when Orbinski was working as a youth worker at a juvenile detention centre, he asked Benedict "how he knew the way to right living" (IO 31). Benedict responded:

> "Well, like everyone else, James, I get out of bed and put one shoe on at a time. I walk around this log and I break these small branches as I step. I am acting and being acted upon. Meaning is in the living, not simply in the thinking or feeling. And it seems to me that living well is mostly about loving well." As we walked, he remarked, "Correct answers can rarely be given. We can, though, be conscious of the questions, so that we can live ourselves into the answers, into what in retrospect can be right living. (IO 31-32)

Orbinski's question reveals that he thought that there *was* a right way of living. Furthermore, it suggests that, for Orbinski, Benedict lived it, illustrating the significance and guiding role which the monk occupied in Orbinski's life. Similar to the response that "[t]here is only what you do" (IO 30), Benedict, aware of Orbinski's preoccupation with the suffering of others, urged him to take his questions seriously, and to try to respond to them, to live his answer in order to find meaning.

Orbinski's concern with his relationship with others' suffering was a guiding question in his search for a way to live a meaningful life, and the starting point for his humanitarian motivation. Orbinski, from a young age, presented an understanding of his life as being determined by others' suffering and wanted to live his life as a response to the other. He recounts that already as a teenager he "wanted to be able to live in the world so that [he] could live with [himself]" and that he "wanted to do something practical to relieve the suffering of others, while at the same time striving to understand the circumstances of such suffering" (IO 32). These statements specify Orbinski's awareness of the relation between him and

the other as being one of responsibility. Orbinski does not address the source of this responsibility, and does not explain why he thought that one had to relate to the suffering of others. Nonetheless, at no point in his memoir does he question the existence of this responsibility. His statement "I wanted to be able to live in the world so that I could live with myself" (ibid., 32) illustrates that he has accepted the responsibility for the other and understands this responsibility as a constitutive part of his identity. Only if this responsibility is already accepted, and only if the other is understood as closely connected to oneself, does the failure to respond – the ir-response-ability – constitute a "letting down of [himself]" (ibid., 32). Orbinski's answer to the question about our relationship to others' suffering is a decision to study medicine at the McMaster University School of Medicine in Ontario, and to become a doctor who can do something practical to relieve others' pain.

A third encounter with Benedict took place during Orbinski's first year of medical school. When Orbinski told Benedict about a teenage boy who had died in the hospital, and whom he had not been able to stop thinking of for weeks, Benedict reassured him that it was good and right to be compassionate, and warned him of becoming a mere professional who applied his medical knowledge without engaging his whole person (IO 33-34).

> "The knowledge is one thing. Who you are and what you do with it is quite another," he remarked. "It may be that you are struggling with the choice of meeting the world with your whole person. And it is the right struggle – and a good one at that." (IO 34)

During medical school Orbinski was accepted for a one-year long fellowship with the Canadian Medical Research Council and moved to Rwanda to conduct research in paediatric HIV. Confronted with poverty and its implications, Orbinski began to think about "who gets what, when, about why some get more than others, and most importantly, who decides" (IO 64), and returned to Canada with the desire to work in the developing world.

Back in Canada, Orbinski became involved with MSF, and volunteerd as a founding member of MSF Canada, explaining that he felt drawn to MSF because of the organisation's willingness to question its own actions (IO 70). Despite his desire to work for the organisation full-time, Orbinski decided to take over a medical practice after graduating, because he needed to pay off his student debt. He

recalls being “bitterly disappointed” (ibid., 76) that he could not work for MSF, and although he loved his job, he remained “drawn to what [he] had learned in Rwanda, to [his] questions, and to the idea of MSF” (ibid., 72). In the Summer of 1992, two years after taking over the practice, Orbinski, refused to allow his debt to determine his choices, and handed the practice over to another doctor (ibid., 6). Orbinski writes that his decision to finally quit his job in the practice in order to work with MSF was driven by a desire “to be as useful as [he] could be as a doctor” (ibid., 72), suggesting that he wanted his life choices to be determined by the needs of others rather than by the requirements of debt management.

3.2 Humanitarian Aid Work

Somalia 1992

After handing over his practice, Orbinski took an MSF training course in health emergencies in Amsterdam. This is where he met Jules Pieters, the head of the Dutch MSF emergency desk, who asked him whether he would be willing to work in Baidoa, Somalia. At this time, Somalia was MSF’s most pressing mission, and the team in Baidoa needed more doctors to treat the daily flow of several hundred patients. Pieters described the working environment in Baidoa to Orbinski as “not easy, but […] not impossible either” (IO 77), informed him about the security risks, and reassured him that the UN would evacuate staff members if need be.

When Orbinski arrived in Baidoa in October 1992, the city was the “epicentre of the famine” (IO 85). Accommodating an estimated number of 90,000 people, Baidoa was referred to as a ‘city of death’ due to its fifty times higher than usual death rate. In early September, the death rate reached its peak of 1,700 per week. Over the course of the previous months, 40% of all children under five and 40% of people over sixty-five had died mainly from starvation, and 95% of the children who were still alive, were severely malnourished (ibid., 85).

Upon his arrival, Orbinski was told that he was going to be the Medical Coordinator of the programme. Having had no training and no experience in medical coordination – a position that required skills other than medical

excellence – he accepted the challenge and in the following months was responsible for the organisation of MSF's clinics, hospitals and feeding centres. The MSF team in Baidoa consisted of 120 national and 20 expatriate aid workers who were "exhausted from the work, anxious and scared, and […] drinking too much" (IO 86). In Baidoa and the rest of the country, clans and sub-clans were fighting each other and constantly shifted their alliances between opposition groups. MSF kept regular contact with local clan elders to keep track of the fighting, trying to assess which clan controlled which territory, and which posed a threat to the organisation (ibid., 92-95). Relief organisations were dependent on the particular clan militia which controlled the area in which they operated. A proportion of food that was brought into the country was diverted to clans as a protection payment, and, according to Orbinski, another 20% was stolen from warehouses or looted on the roads (ibid., 83). In order to be able to work, all organisations were forced to purchase armed protection from the local militias, thus forcing humanitarian agencies such as the Red Cross or MSF to break with one of their core principles and hire armed guards for their operations. Due to the highly insecure situation, MSF team members had to follow strict security rules which demanded carrying a walkie-talkie at all times and never leaving the compound without an armed guard (ibid., 86).

The Baidoa man – Orbinski's understanding of humanitarian aid

One particular event, which Orbinski describes as his "first act as a humanitarian doctor" (IO 4) is of central significance for understanding his conception of humanitarian aid. The incident occurred on the day of his arrival in Baidoa when he visited a feeding centre:

> In a corner of the feeding centre was a single white tent that had been designated the medical tent. Beside it were three others designated as the morgue. They were full – bodies piled as small imperfect pyramids, each at least three feet high. From the corner of my eye, I saw a movement on top of one of the piles. I turned away. I didn't want to know what it could mean. I looked to see if the wind was strong enough to cause a tent flap to move, or a piece of cardboard to fly through the air. It was.
>
> Then I saw his eyes flutter. The wind caught his long shirt and ballooned it over his body. He lay among the dead, skin stretched taut over his exposed ribs and pelvic bones. One of his hands grasped at something, anything, whatever the wind might hold. I carried him to the medical tent. He weighed

> less than 70 pounds, and I thought him light as I tried to catch his arm from falling. I did this without thinking. I acted not as I thought I should but as I had no choice but to do.
>
> All the beds inside the medical tent were taken, so I laid him on the ground. A helper put a blanket over him. She was irritated and told me impatiently that he had been moved to the morgue because there was not enough time or people to look after all of the patients, and in any case, he was going to die anyway. At that moment, I felt rage at the efficiency of placing the living among the dead. And I felt despair – for him, for myself. I could be him, dependent on the actions of a stranger for the hope of at least dignity in death.
>
> His eyes opened and closed. He shivered under the blanket, and soon he was dead. This was the last violated remnant of a fuller life. I didn't even know his name, but I knew he had been someone's son, someone's friend and possibly someone's husband, someone's father. (IO 5-6)

The urgency of the situation required an immediate response. Orbinski's explanations for his action – "I did this without thinking" and "acted not as I thought I should but as I had no choice but to do" (IO 6) – implies that there was something unattached to his conscience which was strong enough to prompt him into action, so forceful that he could not but follow. He was compelled to carry the man out, and this was not a decision based on a rational examination of the situation, but on an impulse, that occurred before conscience, before thinking. Back in the medical tent, we see two drastically different approaches to the care of patients. The helper's response that the man was going to die anyway demonstrated that he had not been put into the morgue by accident, but as a result of a deliberate rational calculation. She treated the man according to her knowledge of his medical state and did not see beyond his medical condition. She was an example of a person who failed to engage with the patient as an individual – a kind of person that Benedict had warned Orbinski not to become. She saw the misery of the feeding centre and the man's suffering as logistical problems that needed to be tackled with professional efficiency. Her calculating approach towards the man stands in stark contrast to the impulse that led Orbinski to take the man back to the medical tent. Orbinski saw the man not as a hopeless medical case but, first and foremost, as a human being who was still alive, and thus to be respected, not to be put on top of dead bodies on account of any rational efficiency. He was not just another patient, another example of Somalia's misery, another streak on the tally, but another human, "someone's son, someone's friend and possibly someone's husband, someone's father" (IO 6).

In the helper's defence, one might say that her cold approach was a result of the insufficient resources at hand, and the overwhelming suffering she felt around her. Orbinski, however, felt despair at the woman's reaction because to him, the respectful and dignified treatment of the other has priority over all efficiency. He writes:

> Humanitarianism is about more than medical efficiency or technical competence. In its first moment, in its sacred present, humanitarianism seeks to relieve the immediacy of suffering, and most especially of suffering alone. (IO 7)

The core value of humanitarian aid for Orbinski is one's presence with the suffering other, which should not be subjected to calculations of efficiency or utility. It is, in the first instance, the choice of not turning away from others' suffering and leaving them alone with their pain, but to turn towards them and to be with them. Orbinski explains that "[i]n being with the victim, one refuses to accept what is an unacceptable assault on the dignity of the other, and thus on the self" (ibid., 8). In light of this understanding, the decision to put the man into the morgue before he was dead was to leave him alone with his suffering, which contradicted the essential value of the humanitarian idea. Orbinski points out that, whereas his job was to apply his medical knowledge to treat patients, he was "first a man" and aimed to approach his patients with his "whole person" (ibid., 7).

The refusal to escape the suffering of others

By the end of October 1992, MSF was treating a thousand people a day in the clinics and thousands more in the feeding centres, and together with other aid organisations managed to bring the death rate in the area down to twenty-five times the normal rate. Security concerns remained a real threat, and one day Orbinski and his driver's vehicle was ambushed but they were able to escape (IO 99-100). The following night, Orbinski fell ill and was flown out to a hospital in Nairobi. After he recovered from pneumonia and a viral infection, Pieters offered Orbinski the chance to quit his position, telling him that a ticket had been arranged for him to return to Canada. Presented with a way out Orbinski writes:

> I could not sleep that night. There were three doctors in the entire Baidoa region, and thousands of people still dying. It was difficult, but we were still able to work. I got up and went into the bathroom. I looked at my face in the

> mirror. Knowing what I knew, I had to try. I could not live with who I would be if I did not go back. The next day Jules and I agreed that I would fly to Baidoa. (IO 100)

The offer to leave illustrates the organisation's acknowledgement that, after a month in Baidoa, Orbinski was overworked and exhausted and the fact that everything had been already arranged demonstrates that it was assumed that he would accept the offer. Orbinski, however, resisted the possibility of escaping the suffering in Baidoa and decided to go back.

There are two important aspects in his decision: his desire for integrity and the lack of a promise of success. The decisive reason to go back is illustrated in his statement: "I could not live with who I would be if I did not go back" (IO 100). This motive mirrors what Orbinski had previously written about his search for the right way to respond to others and his desire "to be able to live in the world so that [he] could live with [himself]" (ibid., 32). In this instance, Orbinski demonstrated a close connection between his humanitarian engagement and self-understanding. The decision that he had made during his teenage years, that he would not turn away from others' suffering but respond to it, determined his understanding of who he was. Being a humanitarian aid worker for Orbinski was not simply a professional choice, but a way to live his life, and to live his answer to the question of what our relationship to others' suffering should be. Presented with a possibility to escape Baidoa, he was concerned that accepting this possibility would undermine his integrity and the fear that he might betray his principles was bigger than the fear for his safety. Being driven by the desire "to be as useful as [he] could be as a doctor", he understood that his response to this situation would determine whether he could stay truthful to his principles, and with the principles, to the person he understood himself to be – the one who responded to others' suffering rather than turning away from it. Refusing to accept the possibility to leave Baidoa, Orbinski reasserted his commitment to the other. The source of his ability to resist the offer to leave was in the others' need. What drove his decision to go back were the thousands of people in need of medical care, who had only three doctors to treat them. Their needs weighed more heavily on him than his concerns for safety. Orbinski states that "knowing what [he] knew, [he] had to try" (IO 100) which demonstrates that he felt compelled to the point where other choices were out of the question. This 'choicelessness' was equally illustrated in his statement that he could not have lived

with himself had he returned to Canada. Paradoxically, despite this notion of inevitability and of lack of choice, Orbinski's decision to return to Baidoa was an autonomous decision. He made the choice to be true to himself instead of having the choices made for him by fear for his life.

The second aspect of Orbinski's decision is the acknowledgement of the limitations of his work in Baidoa which demonstrates that he was not driven by naivety or the desire for success. Whereas in Amsterdam, when he first decided to go to Somalia, Orbinski did not know what it meant to work in Baidoa, now he knew exactly what difficulties he would face if he went back. Returning to Baidoa meant to work in an insecure political situation and to constantly fear for his own safety, as well as for the safety of his patients and his team. Orbinski's statement about the working environment in Baidoa – "[i]t was difficult, but we were still able to work" (IO 100) – illustrates a realistic evaluation of the situation on the ground and shows that he was under no illusion that the situation had changed for the better. There was no irrational or naïve notion of the possibility of great success, but instead an acknowledgement of the limitations. Strikingly, Orbinski did not use these limitations to justify inaction, nor began to believe that, in light of the sheer immeasurable suffering and his restricted ability to work, he might as well refrain from doing anything because his contribution would be insignificant. Instead, he entered the uncertainty of a working environment that did not offer any promise of success, and engaged with it. As long as it was not impossible to work, there was a space and potential, however restricted, that allowed for some assistance, and he accepted this restricted space as the basis for his action. This attitude does not mean that he did not care whether MSF would be able to help others, but that he was driven by a possibility to help rather than the promise of success. This approach corresponds to what Benedict told him when he as a teenager was contemplating the right way to respond to others' suffering: "[t]here is only what you do" (ibid., 30).

Back in Baidoa, the situation was deteriorating. Daily gun battles claimed between ten and fifty militiamen and many more civilians every day (IO 111). Aid agencies like CARE, the Red Cross, and World Vision were plundered, food convoys were looted before they could reach the feeding centres, and many aid workers were either shot at or held at gunpoint. The dire security situation peaked in the attempt to kidnap a British doctor working for MSF. It was the first

kidnapping attempt in Baidoa which resulted in the evacuation of most MSF expatriates, leaving Orbinski and two other team members as the only expatriates on MSF's team in Baidoa (ibid., 108). Bush's announcement on the 3rd of December, 1992 that the UN Security Council had approved the US-led United International Task Force for the purpose of humanitarian relief was followed by the country's most intense fighting and looting (ibid., 113), which only calmed down after the American troops arrived mid-December. Orbinski left Baidoa in January 1993 and returned to Canada where he continued working in his practice, paying off his medical-school debt and working on the formation of MSF Canada (ibid., 124-126).

Somalia was a changing point for Orbinski's understanding of the relationship between humanitarianism and politics. Whereas previously he had "naively accepted the cloak of the apolitical doctor" and believed that humanitarianism was "outside of politics, in some ways even superior to it, and a way of avoiding its messy business" (IO 6), this belief changed during his time in Baidoa. By witnessing the outcomes of political anarchy; the political and financial calculations that determine international engagement; the consequent ups and downs in the international attention paid to the suffering of Somalis; the use of humanitarian aid as a substitute for genuine political engagement; and the diversion of humanitarian aid in order to manifest one's power, Orbinski learned that humanitarian actors needed to understand the political context in order to position themselves appropriately, and to recognise their risks and possibilities. He stated that Somalia made him realize "that even for the neutral and impartial humanitarian, politics matters, and matters a lot" (ibid., 7) and he came to see "humanitarianism not as separate from politics but in relation to it, and as a challenge to political choices that too often kill or allow others to be killed" (ibid., 6).

Rwanda 1994

On the 12th of May 1994 Orbinski received a call from Jules Pieters, who asked him to take over the role of the Head of Mission in Rwanda and to open the King Faisal Hospital in Kigali where the UN was protecting six thousand civilians at the time (IO 164-165). Within a week of the genocide, every embassy, aid organisation and UN agency had evacuated their offices leaving the Red Cross, MSF, two members of the UN Advance Humanitarian Team and the United Nations Assistance Mission

for Rwanda (UNAMIR) peacekeeping force as the only international representation in Kigali (ibid., 171).

Incidents in which members of Interahamwe[27] stopped Red Cross ambulances and shot the patients (IO 180), and raided MSF compounds looking for Tutsi staff, demonstrated that the genocide did not spare humanitarian organisations and hospitals (ibid., 173). The Centre Hospitalier de Kigali in which Orbinski had worked in 1987-88 was frequently shelled and had become a "slaughterhouse" (ibid., 173), with a thousand dead in the morgue and more hacked bodies in the hospital grounds. Due to MSF's early assistance to the victims and its public denouncement of the killings as a genocide, the Interahamwe considered MSF as being pro-Tutsi. As a result, MSF clinics were regularly attacked, and MSF living quarters were searched for Tutsi staff and their families, who, if found, were immediately murdered (ibid., 173). The insecure situation forced MSF to reduce its expatriate team from 126 to 11 people by May 11th and the organisation made an agreement with the ICRC that MSF team members in Kigali would work in the ICRC hospital under the ICRC logo and coordination.

Orbinski accepted the request to go to Rwanda because he knew people in Kigali, and many of the friends with whom he had worked in 1987-88 were Tutsi. He further states that he trusted Pieters, and believed that he would never ask him to take a risk he would not be willing to take himself. Knowing the limitations of MSF's work in Rwanda, Orbinski explains his decision to go as following: "[i]f it proved impossible to work, then so be it. I was thirty-three, single and free. If I did not at least try, I could not live with myself" (IO 181). This explanation mirrors the explanation he had provided for returning to Somalia, and demonstrates once more the strong connection between his self-understanding and the desire to preserve his integrity and his humanitarian commitment. Orbinski's statement that he was "single and free" further illustrates that this time he had no other commitments and responsibilities that were holding him back in Canada, such as his student debt previously. His explanation demonstrates that he understood that his humanitarian work would demand all his attention and that he was willing to give it without knowing what it would entail.

[27] The Interahamwe is a Hutu paramilitary organisation.

Orbinski arrived in Rwanda at the beginning of June 1994. The MSF staff was split between the territory of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) where five staff members stayed with UNAMIR and worked in the Faisal Hospital and the territory of the Rwandan Government Forces (RGF), where four expatriate staff members worked at the Red Cross hospital (IO 184-185). Although MSF team members working in the Red Cross hospital had done their best not to be recognised as MSF workers (removing all T-shirts and stickers with MSF's logo and wearing Red Cross T-shirts), it was publicly known that MSF aid workers were working in the hospital (ibid., 193). Due to MSF's continuing public labelling of the incidents in Rwanda as genocide, the organisation and UNAMIR were an open target in RGF areas, and it was too dangerous for the team to operate outside the area that UNAMIR occupied in RPF territory. Orbinski states that they were ready to evacuate at any time (ibid., 198). For the most part, team members were only able to travel if an UNAMIR vehicle and a peacekeeper to drive it were available, which, given the underequipped state of UNAMIR, was far from a satisfactory arrangement. The daily routine consisted of 16 to 18 working hours under unbearable circumstances. Orbinski writes that "[t]here was no water, no fuel, no food, no maps and no emergency medical supplies. There was no evacuation plan, other than the plan to make a plan. We had two vehicles, and as I now knew, one had a flat tire and neither had fuel" (ibid., 186).

Living in the hospital, the few hours of sleep at night were filled with patients' screams and emergency calls, and did not offer a respite (IO 209). With RPF's advancement in Kigali towards the Red Cross hospital, the Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) broadcasts, which could be heard everywhere in town, grew more desperate and one morning announced cash rewards for Romeo Dallaire's[28] body and the arms of whites. Orbinski was warned that each of his arms was worth $50 and was in constant fear for his own and his team's safety (ibid., 208). Orbinski writes that he "was tired beyond what [he] thought [he] could bear any longer" and "felt beaten by the waves of suffering, of killing, of screams, of silent stares, of terror, and waves of not just political indifference but malfeasance" (ibid., 234). There was no possibility for organised humanitarian assistance in Rwanda:

[28] Romeo Dallaire was the Force Commander for UNAMIR.

> Rwanda existed in a state of exception – a black hole in the community of nations where the law against genocide existed but could not be applied because genocide would not be said to exist. There was no possibility of organised humanitarianism. Ours were individual acts of kindness, sometimes possible in the face of what we knew was happening around us, most times not. (IO 218)

The girl and her mother – responsibility as resistance

Orbinski's duties as MSF's Head of Mission were to coordinate the team that was split between the Faisal and the Red Cross hospitals and to provide whatever supplies could be found to as many people as possible in Kigali (IO 206). Orbinski and other team members often drove through Kigali to look for victims whom they could take to the hospital, or, if this proved impossible, could support with food and medicine. Orbinski recalls acting despite his fear, driven by the feeling that he had to at least try to help those who were seeking refuge in churches, schools, and abandoned homes. He writes:

> I was often very afraid when I left the UNAMIR HQ or the Faisal hospital. But I had to try. Others were trying. I had doubts, confusions, uncertainties about what we were doing, about the risks we were taking. Sometimes I was so afraid that I hoped that it would be impossible to leave the compound or the hospital. I hoped that others would stop trying, so that I could. Every time we went out it made it more difficult to go out again, but even more difficult not to at least try. (IO 203)

At one of such trips, Orbinski visited the Sainte-Famille Cathedral to deliver medical supplies to the nearly two thousand people hiding in the church. MSF had permission to pass on the roads until 6 p.m. and had to leave the cathedral soon after arriving. Leaving the church, Orbinski was interrupted by a girl of about ten or eleven years old walking towards him and calling him. When he stopped, she took his wrist and directed him to the gutter next to the cathedral where her mother lay among other corpses that had been thrown out of the church.

> She was covered in vomit and diarrhea. She was delirious, emaciated and barely alive. Her chest heaved, the skin rising and then failing back between her ribs with each breath. Jacques was now screaming at me to get in the truck. "For fuck's sake! It's five to fucking six!"
>
> There was no choice, no thinking. I just did it. I picked up the girl's mother and carried her to the truck. For Jacques, there was no choice either. He put the girl in the cab and showed her how to stay down below the dashboard.

> If Interahamwe saw her or her mother on our way back to the hospital, we would all be dead. I lifted her mother into the back of the pickup and lay her out on the flatbed. I got into the cab and Jacques took off. "We've got three minutes," he said, "and then someone's gonna take a shot at us." (IO 216-217)

Driving at full speed whilst ducking to avoid the bullets fired at them, they made it to the hospital where the mother died two days later.

The situation in which Orbinski found himself was defined by the tension between the external constraints, in form of the curfew that was enforced upon MSF by the Interahamwe, and the girl's call for help. The curfew was the political framework that was meant to make him betray his humanitarian commitment: it limited his possibility to offer assistance to others and was intended to force him to turn away from others' suffering. In this instance, Orbinski resisted the restrictions, and the basis for his resistance was the girl's call for help. In spite of the risks, leaving the girl and the mother was not an option. Talking about this moment in the documentary *Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma* (Reed, 2008) Orbinski remembers the driver shouting at him that they could not take the girl and him replying that they could not leave her. His statement that "[t]here was no choice, no thinking" (IO 216) illustrates the same 'choicelessness' he described in the explanation for taking the man out of the morgue tent in Baidoa. An action that was performed not as a result of a deliberate decision but a feeling of being compelled. There was something in the girl's destitute call that he could not refuse, something so strong that he could not turn away from her and which outweighed the concern for his own life. It is striking that Orbinski did not weigh the woman's chances of survival against the chances of them being killed if they took her and the little girl with them. He did not wonder whether she would survive even if they made it to the hospital safely, and later, when the woman died, did not state that he regretted having taken her with them and putting their lives in danger. In a situation that was defined by others' power to impose limitations to his behaviour, answering the girl's call and taking the mother and the girl with them, Orbinski reaffirmed his integrity and autonomy, and demonstrated his humanity amidst inhumane circumstances.

Ummera-sha – the courage to let go and the courage to act

The French announcement to lead a Franco-African humanitarian intervention, named Operation Turquoise, on the 19th of June 1994 was followed by an intensification of the RGF's and Interahamwe's killings throughout Kigali. One day during the fighting, Orbinski and his team were called to come to the Red Cross hospital which was overrun with hundreds of women, children, and men, who had to be laid out on the street because they had run out of space in the hospital. Orbinski describes the situation as chaotic with people screaming for help everywhere and staff members being overwhelmed with the situation. In many cases doctors had to operate on the wounded on the street and Orbinski remembers that the gutters around the hospital ran red with blood (IO 220-26). One of Orbinski's patients was a woman whom he would never forget.

> I was on my knees on the dirt road beside a patient who lay on a tarp slowly bleeding to death from multiple lacerations. I started an IV line and pushed fluids into her. I examined her carefully, identifying slow bleeders on her head, torso and legs. I quickly tied them off with sutures as I went. Her body trembled. She was conscious and afraid.
>
> A nurse called me to go to the next patient. "Maintenant! Tout de suite, Docteur!" The woman moaned and winced as I stitched. And then her hand reached to touch my forearm. I looked up to her face from the small bleeding artery I was sticking on her chest. She looked at me, and only then did I understand what had happened to her.
>
> She was slightly older than middle aged. She had been raped. Semen mixed with blood clung to her thighs. She had been attacked with machetes, her entire body systematically mutilated. Her ears had been cut off. Her face had been so carefully disfigured that a pattern was obvious in the slashes. Both Achilles tendons had been cut. Both breasts had been sliced off. Her attackers didn't want to kill her; they wanted her to bleed to death. They knew just how much to cut to make her bleed slowly. She lay on the road, a 1[29] taped to her forehead, and now we were looking at each other.
>
> "Je m'excuse, je m'excuse," I said, apologizing for the pain my pinching forceps gave her. She blinked once, slowly, to let a wave of pain pass. She held my forearm. I felt a wave of nausea as I looked again at the pattern someone had cut in her face. I turned from her and vomited for the first and only time during the genocide.
>
> She waited as I spit out what was left of the bile in my mouth. Then she touched my forearm again. I looked into her brown eyes. "Ummera." I

[29] Triage is a medical practice to assign degrees of urgency to wounds to decide the order of treatment of a large number of casualties. In this instance patients were taped with a 1, 2 or 3 on their foreheads: 1 meant treat now, 2 meant treat within twenty-four hours, and 3 meant irretrievable (IO 226).

> wasn't sure if she was saying it to herself, but then she continued. "Ummera-sha." Sha, I thought, it means my friend. She was speaking to me. "Ummera, ummera-sha," she repeated. I tied off the bleeding arteries where her breasts had been. The nurses were calling again, "Docteur, le prochain, le prochain! Vite, Docteur!"
>
> The woman was one among many, among hundreds. She knew there were so many more. Again she reached to touch my forearm. She didn't hold it this time. She nodded, looking at me. "Allez, allez . . . Ummera, ummera-sha," she said in a slow whisper. "Go, go. Courage, courage, my friend." It was the clearest voice I have ever heard. (IO 226-227)

At first, Orbinski was concentrating on treating the woman's wounds. Given the hundreds of patients waiting for assistance, he worked mechanically – already colleagues were calling him to move on to the next patient. Only when he looked up from the wounds, when the woman touched his arm, did he see her in her entirety and understood what had been done to her. The woman had been raped and tortured by someone who had played with her pain, and she was experiencing unbearable agony – a realization that caused Orbinski to throw up.

The woman, at the same time, in spite of her pain, saw that Orbinski was overwhelmed by her destitute state and the suffering around him. Despite her own pain and need, she found the selfless strength to give Orbinski all that she could, and what he needed most in this moment: encouragement to leave her and to attend to others. Retelling this story in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech Orbinski stated that with her words the woman "released [him] from [his] own inescapable hell" (Orbinski 1999) and years later, in an interview, said that this moment was his most significant memory of his time in Rwanda (Orbinski 2008b).

What happened next, demonstrates the application of the core humanitarian principle of impartiality in practice. Orbinski's next patient was a soldier – a man who belonged to the group of people who had tormented the woman and many others like her. "Does the humanitarian treat a solider?" –Orbinski asks the reader. His own answer is that "[t]he doctor looks for the wounded and not for the uniforms" (IO 228). Orbinski treated the soldier and moved on to the next patient.

Humanitarian aid – an imperfect offering

One day Orbinski received a letter from Benedict which contained a few lines from Gerard Manley Hopkin's poem "God's Grandeur":

> Generations have trod,
> Have trod,
> Have trod;
> And all is seared with trade;
> Bleared, smeared with toil;
> And wears man's smudge and shares
> Man's smell: the soil
> Is bare now, nor can foot feel,
> Being shod.
>
> And for all this, nature is never spent;
> There lives the dearest freshness
> Deep down things… (quoted in IO 239)

Orbinski was confused by the poem and found it useless in his circumstances. The poem demonstrated that his family and friends at home could not fathom what he was going through. Reading the letter, Orbinski was overcome by a feeling of loneliness, writing that if even Benedict could not comprehend the situation and offer some words of support, he was truly "alone in this hell" (IO 239).

The morning after receiving the letter, Orbinski was called to treat a teenage boy whose leg had been destroyed by a land mine. The wound had already caught an infection leaving an amputation as the only option to save the boy's life. Orbinski explains that it was the first amputation he had to perform alone – a challenge that was further complicated by the fact that all surgical saw blades had been broken in the previous weeks and all he had at hand as a substitute was a sterilized hacksaw. He describes that he was very nervous, covered in sweat and terrified of cutting an artery and killing the boy, but in the end managed to perform the amputation with success (IO 240-241). After the surgery Orbinski observed the boy's mother's reaction to her son's survival.

> His mother screamed [. . .] as she lunged towards her son, one hand outstretched, the other clasping her yellow shawl. She held him and stroked his forehead. The light came in through the windows, making the sweat on his brow glisten, and making the yellow of her cheap synthetic shawl yellower still. His leg was in a bucket, and he was alive – an imperfect offering. She held him around his head as he quietly whispered, "Mama-we, Mama-we." They were beautiful to me. And I saw what Benedict had wanted me to see. (IO 241)

Amidst the horror of the genocide that surrounded them, presented with imperfect circumstances and improvised instruments, all Orbinski could do was to offer the boy and his mother an imperfect solution. This imperfect solution, however, was

the only possibility to ensure the boy's survival. *An Imperfect Offering* is the title of Orbinski's memoir, which was inspired by a line in Leonard Cohen's song "Anthem" (IO 431). The title sums up Orbinski's humanitarian engagement and his view on humanitarian assistance: it is an offering which, in all its imperfection, is still an offering; an offering that opens the possibility to save lives. In an interview, Orbinski expressed this attitude as following:

> What I've experienced is that I can't know the future. I can't know if anything that I do will change what happens tomorrow. I can't know with certainty, but what I do know is if I do nothing, nothing will change. (Orbinski 2008a)

This quote once more demonstrates that Orbinski's actions are not determined by the possibility for – but not the promise of – success. He does not wait for the moment when the success of his actions will be guaranteed, but instead accepts the uncertainty, and works towards the outcome he wants to see. This understanding corresponds to the advice Benedict gave him regarding the search for meaning in his life. He could only find meaning in living himself into his answers; his answer would be determined by what he did (IO 32).

When Kigali fell on the 4th of July 1994 and the RPF declared the war over on July 18th, Orbinski writes that it was pure luck that he and his team members had survived the genocide. When Pieters asked him to go to work in Zaire where hundreds of thousands Hutu had fled to from Rwanda in fear of retaliation, Orbinski declined the offer. He explains that he "was spent" and "had nothing left to give" (IO 252). Orbinski's explanation for his decision to go back home instead of continuing working with MSF illustrates that the core motivation of his work is to make himself available to others, and to give to others the assistance they need. His rejection of the offer to work in Zaire was therefore not a turning away from others' suffering but a confirmation of his motivation. Having given everything, he had in Rwanda, he had nothing left to give and could not carry on.

Home

Orbinski summarises his experience of the genocide in Rwanda as "hell" (IO 239) and his "undoing" (ibid., 163). Back in his childhood, pictures of Auschwitz had made him realize the potential of humans to dehumanize, torture, and kill others. In Rwanda, this realization was turned into lived experience. In Rwanda, Orbinski

"came to know intimately the fullness of what we are capable of as human beings" (ibid., 163). He knew now what it meant to be surrounded by people who wanted to massacre their fellow human beings, all whilst trying to aid in the survival of those who were to be murdered. In Rwanda, something was broken "that could never be fixed again" (ibid., 253). Orbinski writes:

> No illusions or fantasies were possible after this; no retreat into false hopes or comforting yearning for a lost past. I lost my questions, and for eighteen months afterwards existed in a kind of netherworld of confusion, trying to sidestep memories that could impose themselves ad any time. I struggled against what I knew and could not escape. I struggled to find a way to understand and regain my footing as a man, as a doctor and as a putative humanitarian. And I still struggle now when I confront memories of that time, memories that are no longer unspeakable, but still unbearable. (ibid., 163)

For someone whose life is based on living an answer to his question, losing one's question is to lose one's ground and direction. If meaning is to be found in living oneself into one's questions, losing the questions it to lose the way to find meaning in one's life. Orbinski tried to hold his world together by working in a hospital, pursuing a Master's degree in medical epidemiology, and working with MSF as vice-president for MSF Canada. On the inside, however, he was "possessed by what [he] had seen in Rwanda, trapped between rage and despair" (IO 258). He did not know how to continue to live with what the horror he had seen in Rwanda. Orbinski was diagnosed with PTSD which manifested itself in weight loss, increased smoking, and the desire to be alone (ibid., 257-258).

Orbinski recalls a particular dream from this time that connected his childhood encounter with the Jewish man with his experiences in Rwanda:

> I went to bed and dreamt of the white blanket of lime covering the bodies at Auschwitz and of the beautiful eyes of the shoe-store man on St. Laurent. I could see now why those eyes were beautiful. They were beautiful because they were ready to die and yet chose to live; beautiful because he had made life with the same slow deliberateness with which he and his wife removed one shoebox from between others. He smiled at me, and I felt his hand on my neck. (IO 258)

The memory of the Jewish man offered solace – he was an example of someone who chose to continue to live in spite of the horror he had lived through. Orbinski's father encouraged him to continue to live even if he did not yet know how he could overcome what he had experienced. He told him: "You can't just lie down in the

snow. You've got to get up. You'll find your way" (IO 258). Orbinski went to see Benedict and thanked him for sending him the poem. The most important contribution to finding his ground again occurred unexpectedly, when Orbinski met his future wife Rolie Strivastava who brought "a thawing" (ibid., 259) into his life and made him feel like he could breathe again.

Orbinski decided "to continue working with MSF, and subsequently to continue engaging with the world" and explains that this was a "very simple rational choice" because he had seen "what happens if one doesn't work to make the situation better" (2008b). He writes that in spite of the evil, good is a choice:

> I have witnessed the good of which we as human beings are capable: the good that calls a mother to feed her child regardless of how unbearable her own suffering may be; the good of a mother and a grandmother who carry their sick boy to a clinic in South Africa. The good of those who refuse to remain silent as another is violated, and who act to right a wrong. It is the good we can be if we so choose. (IO 15)

In the following years Orbinski worked with the Canadian Public Health Association in Zambia and returned to work with MSF in Goma, Zaire in 1996-97. In 1998 Orbinski completed a Master's degree in international relations at the University of Toronto and was elected International President of MSF.

International Presidency of MSF 1998-2001

In 1999, MSF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "in recognition of the organisation's pioneering humanitarian work on several continents"[30]. The Nobel Lecture Orbinski delivered when accepting the prize on MSF's behalf was of great significance because it was a public statement, and a unique chance to promote the organisation's goals and to gain publicity. In addition, for Orbinski, it was the moment in which he had to define the relationship between humanitarianism and politics with which he had struggled since he worked in Somalia. Orbinski realized that what had been broken in Rwanda and would never be fixed again was his "naïve notion" that humanitarian assistance could "remain completely outside of politics" (IO 301). Preparing the speech with his colleagues Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier and Philippe Biberson, who pointed out that humanitarianism is the

[30] The Nobel Peace Prize 1999, accessed August 21, 2016 http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1999/.

"struggle to create human spaces in the midst of what is profoundly abnormal", Orbinski resolved "that in order to allow that space to exist, we had to be willing to confront political power" (ibid., 338). The most important message when drafting the speech, was to demonstrate MSF's "commitment to speaking out clearly and unambiguously in [their] refusal to accept the unacceptable" (ibid., 339). In the speech, Orbinski presented humanitarian assistance as a practice of resistance to the elements that persisted in destroying human dignity, and "the struggle to create the space to be fully human" (ibid., 8). Orbinski stressed that the humanitarian ethic was an "ethic of refusal" (Orbinski 1999), and a vision that by definition must ignore political choices and keep its independence from political influence. Orbinski delineated the difference between the world of politics which is characterised by borders and calculations between different interests and powers, and humanitarian responsibility which has "no frontiers" and which refuses "all forms of problem solving through sacrifice of the weak and vulnerable" (ibid.). The first aim of humanitarian assistance is always to relieve human suffering, but to stop there is to offer "simple generosity, simple charity". MSF's goal goes beyond the demonstration of generosity but is a desire to "to provoke change" and to "enable individuals to regain their rights and dignity as human beings" (ibid.). He affirmed the difference between humanitarianisms' and politics' responsibilities, and stressed that the state has the responsibility to take care of its citizens and that MSF would "speak-out to push the political to assume its inescapable responsibility" (ibid., 1999). Orbinski closed his speech by saying:

> Despite grand debates on world order, the act of humanitarianism comes down to one thing: individual human beings reaching out to their counterparts who find themselves in the most difficult circumstances. One bandage at a time, one suture at a time, one vaccination at a time. (Orbinski 1999)

After the presidency Orbinski co-chaired MSF' s Neglected Diseases Working Group[31] from 2001-2004. He decided to quit his work with MSF when he and his wife had their first child, because the constant travel and the potential risks of his work for MSF were not compatible with having a family. Orbinski writes that with

[31] The DNDi is a global not-for-profit drug development organization that develops medicines and other health technologies for diseases largely neglected by profit driven research and development companies.

his wife and their son he had found a different way to live his questions (IO 374), and explained in an interview in 2008 that his primary responsibility was now to be a father. He stated: "[n]o one can replace me in that responsibility. While I have that responsibility, I have to be very careful that my other choices allow me to meet that responsibility" (Orbinski 2008a). In the same way that his responsibility for others came before anything else during his work for MSF, now the responsibility for his family came first. The statement demonstrates that previously he had accepted the possibility of dying during his engagement with MSF. With a family, he could not take the same risks and could not make this offer anymore.

Orbinski found another way to live his question but humanitarian work remained part of it. After leaving MSF he became a research scientist at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and a professor at the University of Toronto. In 2004 he, together with James Fraser, founded Dignitas International, a non-governmental organisation which works on the improvement of the treatment and prevention of HIV and Aids in Malawi.

3.3 Epilogue

At the end of the memoir, Orbinski follows Benedict's footprints and gives advice to those who are looking for answers to their questions. Orbinski does not tell the reader what to do, and only lists possible options, stressing that it is not about one individual doing everything, but about everyone doing something. He writes:

> The most important thing any of us can do is to actively and pragmatically assume our responsibilities as citizens for the world we live in. In the first instance, we can each support independent humanitarian action, and insist that in war governments and belligerents respect international humanitarian law, refugee law, and the conventions prohibiting the use of torture. Beyond this, no one can do everything, but everyone can do something. Choose the issue that concerns you most. (IO 397)

At the end of the story about his attempts to live the answer to his questions, he passes on Benedict's advice and encourages the reader to do the same: to listen to their questions and to live themselves into their questions.

4. Damien Brown: *Band-Aid for a Broken Leg*

Damien Brown is an Australian doctor who, in 2006, at the age of twenty-nine, started working with MSF and has since worked in Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan. The book about his humanitarian work *Band-Aid for a Broken Leg: Being a Doctor with No Borders (And Other Ways to Stay Single)* was published in 2013. The memoir's title is a nod to the dysfunctional social life that comes with working in the humanitarian sector, and a reference to the book *Emergency Sex (And Other Desperate Measures): True Stories from a War Zone* (2004) by Kenneth Cain, Heidi Postlewait, and Andrew Thomson. Brown explained that he wanted to counterbalance their account about their work for the UN during the 1990s, and to show that not every humanitarian mission involved drunken parties and casual sexual encounters (2013d).

Brown states that his memoir is not a political book, and was neither written as a "guilt trip for the West" (2012), nor meant to be an endorsement or rebuke for MSF. Rather than portraying the hardship of expats on humanitarian postings, he wanted to convey the stories of the local health workers, the patients, and other people he had met during his work and offer a counter-image to the common portrayal of rural Africans as victims. Brown points out that another reason for writing the book was that he did not want people to be able to say that they did not know about the conditions that others were living through, and wanted to generate a sense of empathy with the world's most vulnerable populations (Brown 2015).

Since his last posting with MSF in Sudan, Brown has worked in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory of Australia, has completed a Master's degree in International Health at the London School of Tropical Medicine, and is now working as a Health Advisor for MSF in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

4.2 Background and Motivation

Brown's humanitarian engagement is rooted in his childhood experiences of inequality in South Africa which gave rise to the desire to help the less privileged. This desire was strengthened when Brown encountered poverty whilst travelling around the world during term breaks at university in his twenties.

Childhood in South Africa – Accepting Inequality

Reflecting on his decision to work with MSF, Brown admits that it is not quite clear to him how he had ended up volunteering, and states that he cannot recall any precise moment of decision-making. Instead, Brown presents a history of his childhood in Cape Town, South Africa, where he was born in the later years of Apartheid, and spent the first fourteen years of his life. Brown describes his middle-class childhood as privileged and "cocooned" (BA 14) from the wider political realities of the country. His ignorance was perpetuated by the state-controlled media and the whites-only education system, which left no space for black friends who would share their stories and introduce him to the reality of their lives. Brown remembers that only occasionally, when the family drove past the shanty towns, did he have a glimpse at the circumstances in which the majority of the black South Africans lived. They were "fleeting objects of curiosity" (ibid., 14) and remained as foreign to him as the favelas of Brazil. Brown's description of his childhood and teenage years in South Africa is ambiguous because in the middle of the recollection of his protected upbringing he suddenly states: "[m]aybe I'm just making excuses" and goes on to describe that, even in his sheltered life, he did see children begging in the streets or trying to hide from the winter cold beneath sheets of newspaper. But, he concludes that back then "[he] took this to be an inescapable fact of life on the continent" (ibid., 15). In 1991 Brown's family migrated to Melbourne, Australia, where he decided to study medicine. Brown cites this as an obvious career choice for someone "who'd been fascinated by the surgical procedures of the nearby vet, and who harboured a vague notion of 'helping' – maybe even of returning to Africa" (ibid., 16).

In contrast to the vague link between his upbringing in South Africa and his decision to become a doctor in the memoir, Brown presents a much clearer connection between his childhood, his decision to study medicine, and his work with MSF, in the various interviews he has given promoting his memoir. In interviews, Brown states that he has never been comfortable with the stark disparities and the divide between the haves and have-nots in South Africa, that he had wanted to return to Africa in order to do his part to address these issues, and that he chose to study medicine "with the clear idea that [he] would work in underprivileged areas" (Brown 2013c, 2013d).

Travelling the World – Openness to Others' Hardship

Travelling around the world during term breaks at university, Brown encountered poverty close-up, and describes lepers begging in Kathmandu, children and the elderly trying to sell anything on busy intersections in South American cities, and a young woman who told him that she could not afford the thirty dollars a month for her mother's medication. These eye-opening encounters made Brown realize his privileged position. Brown writes:

> And the only common denominators I could see in all this were opportunity and circumstance. That I was a medical student who spent time backpacking had more to do with the chance events of my birthplace and parents than any great effort or brilliance on my part: it could have been me staring into that car window from the edge of a shanty-town. So there was no religious compulsion, family pressure or career disillusionment behind my decision to volunteer. It wasn't about escapism, though I'll admit that the travel and cultural aspects of working in less-developed contexts were far from a deterrent. But I wanted to help. Or at least try, in some capacity. (BA 16)

Brown's statement illustrates that what was different in these encounters with inequality from similar, if rare, experiences of poverty in his childhood is that he did not accept them as "an inescapable fact of life" (BA 15) but understood his privileged position as pure luck. Realizing that he could have been one of the people he encountered, he acknowledged the responsibility of his privileged position and wanted to help those with fewer opportunities. These encounters during his travels influenced the path of his medical career. After graduating, Brown spent two years working in paediatric, obstetric, surgical, medical, and emergency departments in order to gain as broad a range of medical experience as possible, and moved to Peru to study for a diploma in tropical medicine (ibid., 16-17). After the course, Brown took a year off and moved to Thailand where he volunteered in a clinic and decided that he wanted to continue working in the humanitarian field. Brown writes: "[e]verything about the experience appealed to me, and I was sold. This work, I decided, was what I wanted to do with my life" (ibid., 17).

After the placement in Thailand ran out, Brown applied for a position with MSF and was offered a position in a hospital in Mavinga, Angola. According to the background literature Brown received from MSF, four years after the ceasefire, Mavinga was still one of Angola's worst affected areas. MSF was the sole provider of medical healthcare in the area and its team treated three hundred patients on the

wards, and an additional two thousand outpatients every month (BA 33). The security regulations for the position were strict and allowed for only a small movement perimeter of about fifteen minutes' walk from the hospital. Reading the information, none of these aspects changed Brown's mind. He explains:

> But, as I read on, with none of this particularly reassuring, it became clear anyway that there was no decision to make. I was in from the start. Because really, fuck it: one could talk about maybe trying to help, of doing something like this in the coming years – when the loans are paid off, when the Master's degree is under the belt, or when a decent house deposit has been saved – and never actually make it happen. Now was the time. I was ready to roll up my sleeves. (ibid., 19-20)

This quote illustrates that Brown was aware of all the justifications he could have used for postponing working in the field, for not going to Mavinga. At the same time, he knew that any delay entailed the danger of not doing it at all. Once he had settled down and had more responsibilities and more commitments, the price of leaving would be bigger than it was now. On the one hand, Brown presents his decision to accept the position in Mavinga as a deliberate choice not to distract himself from his desire to help others, and to remain faithful to this commitment. On the other hand, however, his statement that "there was no decision to make" (BA 20) demonstrates a compulsion which he could not silence. Pulled by the desire to work in the humanitarian field, the option of not accepting the position due to the security risks was not an option.

4.3 Humanitarian Aid Work

Mavinga 2006

Mavinga turned out to be a collection of dusty mud-hut villages – nothing like Brown had ever seen before. Brown's first impression when he arrived in "this incomprehensive, pitiful, frightening universe" (BA 1) was an overwhelming feeling of being out of his depth. The hospital that he, as the only doctor with a formal medical education, was meant to supervise, was the "most daunting, heartbreaking place" (ibid., 28) he had ever been to and, he admits, a "real source of fear" (ibid., 4). Brown was responsible for the running of the hospital, and the only other expatriate MSF colleague with a medical background was a midwife.

Visiting the hospital for the first time, the weight of his responsibility was daunting on him and he wondered what he had imagined he was going to achieve by coming to Mavinga (ibid., 12-13). Brown was overwhelmed with regards to both the professional and the personal side of his job. Unsettled by the number of people in the hospital, he wondered how he would be able to manage the hospital on his own, and how he would be able to relate to people from such a different world. Mavinga, Brown concluded, was "going to be unlike anything [he has] experienced" (ibid., 5).

In spite of his professional training and experience, the feeling of being out of depth did not disappear with the daily routine, but was intensified by it. Most patients were using the MSF hospital as their last option, after having visited traditional healers in their villages. Often, by the time they arrived in the hospital, their illnesses were in more advanced stages than Brown had ever seen in hospitals in Australia (BA 100). Patients with gunshot wounds and victims of explosions presented further cases he had had no possibility to train for in Australian hospitals (ibid., 70). Abundant tests – the backbone of Western medicine – which were necessary for accurate diagnosis were absent in Mavinga. The hospital could only test for HIV, syphilis, malaria, and hepatitis, which was far from sufficient considering the variety of infections patients presented. Confronted with the most infectious diseases he had ever come across in textbooks, Brown struggled to provide a confident diagnose because he had never seen them in practice and could not test for them (ibid., 81-82). In order to improve his expertise, Brown studied medical guidelines and textbooks and sought professional advice from MSF's medical staff in Europe and specialists in Australia. The major obstacle to their well-meaning advice was that the hospital in Mavinga rarely had the equipment to implement it. Brown compares working in Mavinga to practicing medicine in the nineteenth century, stating that they were working on a best-guess basis and with improvised means – an approach that contradicts the "very instinct as a Western doctor regarding certainty" (ibid., 100). Brown admits that at times he was not sure whether the patients got better because or in spite of the improvised treatment (ibid., 178), and knowing that this hospital was the only option for medical care in the area only aggravated his constant unease regarding their improvised treatments (ibid., 31).

Challenging colleagues and the desire for recognition

In addition to the challenges that resulted from the limited resources in the hospital, the relationship to local staff members was the most difficult aspect throughout Brown's time in Mavinga. Brown worked together with local health workers – clinicos – whose level of expertise lay between a doctor and a nurse. Most of his local colleagues were ten to thirty years older than Brown, but technically less qualified and some found it difficult to accept Brown's higher position in the hospital. The fact that none of the national health workers spoke English and Brown could not speak Portuguese and had to communicate through a colleague, complicated the daily work and was a major obstacle in the relationship with the clinicos. In addition to the language barrier, their different cultural backgrounds and understandings of medical practice resulted in continuous disagreements regarding patients' treatment. Brown was repeatedly accused of not being able to speak Portuguese, of being too young, of having no experience in working in Africa, of having no expertise in recognising the typical diseases, and knowing nothing about Mavinga and the traditional ways of treating patients. Debates over the hospital's management were rooted in different cultural expectations of a doctor's role – how, for instance, they asked him, could Brown call himself a doctor if he could not perform a surgery (BA 31-33, 38-41, 53-54, 71-75, 81-84).

One example of the practical implications of their differing medical approaches concerned the question of providing a surgery for a woman who had, what Brown assumed, was cancer in the final stages. Roberto, a surgical clinico, wanted to operate on the woman, and argued that the family had come to the hospital for help and that they should at least try to help her. Brown, on the other hand, assumed that the cancer had spread and was convinced that the woman was not going to survive an anaesthetic, that all they could do for her was to make her comfortable. Brown admits that he felt lost when Roberto kept pressuring him to perform a surgery. No one would consider a surgery on a patient in such a weak state back home, but how should he act in Mavinga? He did not know whether the family would rather prefer for the woman to die during surgery but having been given a last chance (BA 44-45). Not knowing how to proceed, Brown called an MSF surgeon abroad who agreed that the woman was likely to die during the surgery and that per medical ethics their first task was to do no harm (ibid., 53). Roberto thought differently:

> "We are from here," he continues sternly. "This is our home, and these are our people. *Our* patients. We all have worked here a long time. For years, even during the war. Long before MSF came here, we were looking after patients. And you? You have been here what – not even a week? You have only just arrived! You know nothing about us, about our medicine – nothing even of our language!" (BA 45)

Brown was surprised by Roberto's brusque attitude towards him, writing that he had imagined "arriving and just getting on with seeing patients, and that on at least some level people would be grateful for [his] having come here; that [he'd] learn from them, they from [him], and in the process [they'd] all work as a happy team" (BA 45).

Surgeries continued to be one of the biggest challenges in the hospital resulting in numerous clashes with Roberto. According to MSF's mandate, the hospital could only offer operations for life-threatening conditions that they could realistically manage. The biggest obstacle in assessing whether a condition was life-threatening was the lack of resources to provide a correct diagnosis. Brown, who had to authorise each surgery, writes: "[i]t's a classic Catch-22: the only way to be sure in many cases is to open patients up and look, yet the only reason to open them up is if we're relatively sure of what the condition is" (BA 133).

Brown had to balance out both Roberto's eagerness to operate in order to show that the hospital was trying to help the patient, and the patients' desire for surgeries which were considered to be the "Rolls Royce of medical care" (BA 133), with MSF's guidelines and his own assessment of the effectiveness of surgery in a hospital where ketamine was the sole anaesthetic, and a sterilizer was a pot on a fire. Brown was also cautious when it came to surgeries because Roberto, who had received his medical training in the military, had experience in performing amputations but not necessarily in routine surgeries. Brown describes the first surgery Roberto and he performed on a woman with an appendicitis as a terrifying experience, one that illustrated their very different understandings of each of their professions. When, during the surgery, Roberto asked Brown which of the organs he should remove, confusing the appendix and the ovaries, Brown could not believe he was serious and pointed out that Roberto was the surgeon and this was his decision to make. When Roberto countered that he was not a surgeon but only a surgical clinico who was responsible for the cutting, and Brown, as the doctor was responsible for the diagnosis, Brown could not believe this "*utter insanity*" (ibid.,

108) and hoped that they would "never, ever, have to operate on someone again" (ibid., 109).

Brown and the other three expatriate MSF staff members shared a house across the road from the hospital. Although at the beginning Brown wondered how, given their different backgrounds, they were going to survive working and living together for the next six months, he later stated that he had been very lucky with his team members. Being each other's only source of company, they inevitably got to know each other very well, and over the course of the months became each other's relationship counsellors, career advisors, and political sounding boards. In contrast, the relationship with the local staff members remained challenging throughout the six months Brown spent in Mavinga (ibid., 49, 98, 124).

The girl with the beer bottle doll and the decision to stay

The work-load, the responsibility for the hospital, the difficulties with the clinicos, and the prospect of being called to the next tragedy every day or night for the foreseeable future soon became "draining" (BA 100), and Brown considered quitting his position (ibid., 74). Whereas in an emergency department back home Brown would see ten patients per shift, in Mavinga he had sixty-five patients who needed to be reviewed daily on the wards and an additional hundred patients coming through the outpatients on a normal day (ibid., 53).

Brown's thoughts of leaving Mavinga changed in a chance encounter with a little girl. One morning, on the way to the hospital, Brown was followed by a group of children who wanted him to take a picture with them. Among them was a little girl who was holding an empty beer bottle with a tuft of black hair stuck in its top. The bottle sparked Brown's curiosity, and he asked the girl what she was doing with a beer bottle. She replied "with all the dignity of a little princess" that this was not a beer bottle, but her doll (ibid., 80). Brown writes:

> Poverty this extreme can't be quantified. It's a state of existence. Hollow cheeks, four skinny limbs and a belly swollen with parasites; patches of ringworm causing bald spots all over these kids. And it's why I am here, I've decided. For the sister that should never have had polio. For this young girl, proud as punch with her hairy, eyeless beer-bottle doll. And for the countless others, sleeping on cowpat floors in smoky huts, for whom the hospital represents the only hope when their kid gets malaria or their partner develops TB.

> So fuck it: I'm not about to be bullied out by a chubby health worker. Nor his non-chubby, highly imposing, war surgeon of a colleague, although I'll be honest that he does frighten me. So I step in, this third week, and confront my accusers on the ward. (BA 80-81)

The girl's dignity touched Brown – something the poverty and the circumstances in which she lived could not erase. Life itself struggled to the fore through the bareness of her life in the form of a beer bottle which was not a beer bottle, but a beloved doll. The challenges in the hospital and the persistent arguments with the clinicos had averted Brown's focus from those he came to work for. The girl reminded him of his motivation for coming to Mavinga and gave him the strength to reaffirm his commitment and to withstand the arguments with the clinicos.

Making sense of Mavinga

Brown's initial assumption that Mavinga would be unlike anything he had experienced before was proven to be true during the course of his engagement, not only with regards to his medical practice but also with regards to his experiences with death. As a doctor, he had previously dealt with death on various levels: discussing end-of-life decisions with families, certifying bodies in local morgues, or contacting relatives of the deceased. He writes that being familiar with the statistics of the mortality rate for children under five in Angola, where one in four children will die before their fifth birthday, he had expected death to be an inevitable part of his work. Nevertheless, when a young girl died in the hospital, he found himself unnerved and insomniac, writing that he had never seen a child die before and had never seen people react to death or anything like this before. Witnessing the family mourning their child in the hospital, Brown learned that this was "clearly not the Africa of newspaper articles and TV documentaries where people just accept tragedy" (BA 94).

The life in Mavinga was characterised by contrasts. Experiences of life and death went hand in hand, and Brown struggled to bring these contradicting experiences together into one whole picture. He writes:

> Last week, two young boys found an unexploded grenade washed out by the rains and pounded the shiny toy until it did explode, killing them instantly; hours later we performed an emergency Caesarean, saving two lives. Ten days ago a woman walked here, mute with fear, having been raped in the police barracks; that same day, José beat another severe infection. It goes

> on. Needless tragedies and improbable recoveries; thuggish policemen, and inspirational staff. (BA 181)

After five months in Mavinga, Brown was no closer to making sense of the place, doubting whether indeed anyone could ever make sense of it and finally accepting the contrasts as part of life in Mavinga. He writes:

> And for me, this is the thing about Mavinga overall. These powerful contrasts, these glaring dichotomies, that make working and living out here what it is: a confusing, intoxicating, frustrating, heartbreaking, inspiring, disillusioning and life-affirming blend of all the best and worst things. Every day, all at once. I don't think I've really started to make sense of it, but I'm not sure one could. So for now I don't even try. I blow out the candle, shut my eyes, and do what I do each night: try to picture something good. (BA 157)

Letting go of the question of success

Brown often felt torn between a sense of duty and a sense of futility. He wanted to ensure that the hospital could run independently when MSF closed the mission at the end of the year. He writes: "if I'm to be the last volunteer doctor here, it's essential that this hospital soon runs at a competent level, and independently. Our aim as volunteers, in my mind at least, should be to make ourselves redundant: to leave self-sufficient, sustainable facilities when we pull out" (BA 84). At the same time, he was preoccupied with doubts "whether massaging arms in one needy village out of the thousands on the continent will make any difference at all, no less if [they're] going to leave soon anyway" (ibid., 101). For months, his mood ebbed and flowed with the failures and successes in the hospital, until he decided to stop going in circles and focus on the things that they were able to accomplish. Brown writes:

> I can't keep wondering whether what we do makes any difference, whether any of this is actually worth it, so I don't. I light a candle. I grab a book, tuck my mosquito net in and ignore the termites, and remind myself of our successes and there are *many*. (BA 156)

Brown's decision to stop wondering every day anew, whether his work in the hospital had a long-lasting impact and would change anything, was a moment of surrender. He accepted that there was no way he could find an answer to this

question, and that all he could do, was to focus on the good that they had done already, and continue to try his best each day.

One visible sign of the positive impacts of their work was the low death rate at the hospital, which Brown ascribed to the tireless commitment of the local staff members who, day after day, treated easy-to-manage conditions with cheap drugs. Realizing that it was not hard or expensive to provide basic medical care to the population, Brown found "immensely empowering, yet equally heartbreaking that such a situation [existed]" in the first place (BA 157).

Brown found comfort in the glimpses into the everyday life in the village: seeing children walking to school hand in hand, hearing people singing and walking to the river, which was the "very heart of Mavinga" (BA 90), and a place where Brown's doubts about what he was doing in Mavinga disappeared. Another source of comfort was Dominga, the team's cook who was the only Angolan Brown got to know outside of the hospital, and whose "bizarrely familiar, strangely comforting presence" brought back "long-forgotten warmly pleasant memories" (ibid., 65) of his childhood in South Africa.

The most important source of strength and perseverance for Brown were his patients. He was at first surprised, and then humbled, by the fact that the people around him did not perceive themselves as victims and was astounded by Angolans' resilience (BA 115). Brown writes:

> But what I'll remember most is this: that Toto, the albino woman and her demented mother, for whom we do little other than provide pills, dressings, and three bowls of maize and beans a day, don't ever ask for anything else. Nor does Jose with the burns, who still wraps up those magazines I gave him months ago, or the old man with the bag of pee, who came back to Outpatients yesterday for review […]. Nor do any of our other patients, police aside. And for me, this is the thing. No one mopes, or says Poor us. They just get on with it. (ibid., 181).

Brown's cathartic moment in Mavinga unfolded when he was called to an emergency: a young pregnant woman had fallen from the back of a cart and needed a surgery. Roberto, the surgical clinico, was not in the hospital and Brown had to operate on the woman with the less experienced surgical clinico, Agostinho. Although they were not able to save the unborn baby, they successfully managed to save the woman, who, as it turned out after the surgery, was Roberto's niece.

Brown was overwhelmed with relief that they were able to save her life and describes the celebration afterwards:

> And everyone's thrilled and grateful and it's a joyous moment, and her family and congregation begin singing for her outside *Intensivo* as patients gather around to listen. [. . .] the woman's family come to thank me and I say cheers but Agostinho is the man, and he says that no, I am the man, although who really gives a shit who the man is at that moment; and Roberto and his brother the pastor are ecstatic and we all laugh and pat each other on the back, and instead of being a tough-guy doctor my voice breaks and I fight back tears. At least until I get back to the compound. And then, for the first time since my arrival, I cry. Big, dirty, get-all-that-stuff-out sobs, though I'm not sure why. Pent-up frustration? What-might-have-been? Relief? Joy? Who knows? *Who cares!* But I need it, and it feels good. And I don't want to leave this place. (BA172)

The successful operation had positive implications on Brown's relationship with Roberto and other colleagues, drawing them closer together and making the last month of his posting much easier.

Leaving Mavinga at the end of his six-months posting, Brown felt "thrilled about not being on call, sad about leaving, delighted at the prospect of restaurants, and deeply regretful about abandoning what feels like a sinking ship" (BA 182).

Home

Back home, Brown began working in an Intensive Care unit in a hospital which was "the opposite in nearly every respect to Mavinga" (BA 187). Brown did not resent the comparatively unlimited resources he had at his disposal, pointing out that this was exactly the level of care that he wanted for his family and believed everyone should have access to, but "[t]he problem now [was] that working here, after being in Mavinga, is a glaring, uncomfortable reminder of the disparities between here and *there"* (ibid., 187). Brown's position in the hospital was part of a specialty training in Emergency Medicine that he had accepted before going to Mavinga. The programme was set up to run for five years, but Brown soon found the predictability of his immediate future restrictive, and wondered how much of what he would learn in a Western hospital would be applicable to the work in the field.

The criteria for his evaluation of the usefulness of the training programme – how much of it was applicable to the work in the field – illustrates that Brown's

professional choices were determined by humanitarian aid work. Before he went to Mavinga, the training programme seemed to be a good idea, but Mavinga had changed the criteria for its utility. Brown found himself constantly comparing his job in the hospital to MSF's work, stating that, while MSF was helping another cholera outbreak, his job consisted mostly of paperwork, referrals, nursing home transfers, and drunks during night shifts, and concluded that he would "rather deal with malaria for free than this for a decent salary" (BA 189). Unsure, whether he should continue the training or return to the field, he sought advice from a specialist in the hospital who had previously worked in the humanitarian sector. The colleague encouraged Brown to go back to humanitarian aid work, arguing that once Brown finished his training, he would have climbed up the career ladder, settled in Australia, and have hundreds more reasons not to go (ibid., 189).

In addition to the doubts regarding the training, Brown also found it difficult to readjust to the life back home (BA 187). Brown describes a particular conversation with his mother which illustrated that the feeling of being lost that he had had in Angola was something that he now felt at home:

> Meanwhile, things at home begin to make even less sense at times than in Mavinga. Mum calls to tell me that she's just taken the family dog to the vet and that he wants to prescribe a new medication –
> "Anxiety pills," she says. "Apparently he's got an anxiety disorder of sorts."
> "The *dog*?"
> "*Ja*. Some sort of nervous tremor." (BA 190)

Another incident that illustrates his alienation from life at home took place in a supermarket where he watched an overweight child having an outburst because his mother bought him a different chocolate bar from the one he wanted. Brown could not help but wonder "how he'd feel about therapeutic milk up his nose instead" (BA190), although he knew that such comparisons were futile, naïve, and self-righteous, and that things were not as simple.

Contemplating whether he should continue the training in the hospital or go back to work with MSF, Brown searched through MSF's open positions, reassuring himself that he was just browsing and hoping that "someone [would] talk sense into [him]" (BA189). Torn between the desire to go back to humanitarian aid work and the opportunity of building his career and settling down at home, he finally decided to go back to the field. Brown presents his decision as an inevitable step and writes:

> yet here I sit, later in the year, tuning out when colleagues speak of new cars and property renovations, recalling instead images of re-thatched roofs and re-mudded walls, and I wonder what happened to our staff, or José with the burns . . .
>
> *Bugger it. I'm in.* No point agonising over the inevitable. (BA 190)

Brown contacted MSF and said that he would like to commit to working with them for the next two years, and was immediately offered a position in a project for malnourished children in Somalia which he accepted. On the morning Brown was meant to fly to Somalia, three MSF workers were killed in a targeted attack only meters from their compound and all expatriate staff members were evacuated from the project. Looking at the three portraits of the killed colleagues, Brown realized that the "risks [of his work] [were] no longer theoretical" (ibid., 196). Thinking about the dangers involved in working in conflict areas, he writes that this work required a constant supply of volunteers who were prepared to accept the risks. He wondered, however, how, and if a thirty-something health professional from a wealthy country, and with no background in international politics and security – someone like him – could indeed make a truly informed decision about a position in an insecure environment. Having read the documents about the security challenges and spoken with people who had previously worked in Somalia, Brown states that he still did not understand the implications of stock phrases like "increasing ethnic tensions" (BA 195).

Instead of the position in Somalia, Brown was offered a position in Nasir, a small town in Sudan. Brown accepted it because the project took place in an isolated environment, came with difficult conditions, and a high workload – all of which are considered to be "the quintessential MSF experience" (BA 215).

Sudan

The compound in Nasir was an "ugly, dusty, insect-riddled place" (BA 225) but that, to Brown, was part of the experience of being a humanitarian aid worker. He writes that working and living in simple conditions, the low salary, and the fact that one missed the festive occasions at home, were part of working in the humanitarian field and insignificant in the face of the rewards:

> falling asleep with the knowledge that tomorrow you'll get to work in one of the most fascinating, challenging, inaccessible environments on the planet. A sacrifice, being out here? I'd swap it for nothing. (BA 225)

The hospital's catchment area encompassed approximately 160,000 people and the hospital treated 5,000 patients on the wards and 40,000 outpatients yearly (BA 257-258). The expatriate MSF team consisted of ten people who lived together, and to Brown's surprise - and despite representing five continents, seven first languages and a forty-years age range - they got along well.

Brown's first day in the hospital began with two children dying. When seven more patients died during his first week, Brown wondered whether the underlying problem was him, but a colleague reassured him that this particular week had been far busier than normal, and that he was not the only doctor who had lost patients during this week (BA 258). Brown remembered that when he came home from Mavinga, a friend had asked him if aid workers had a 'God Complex'. The friend speculated that aid workers thrived on the responsibility of life-and-death decisions, of being in control of such large numbers of patients and staff in difficult situations, and enjoyed the degree of responsibility they would never have at home. He asked Brown whether aid workers were thrilled by being flown to places where they were allegedly important, needed, and highly regarded. Brown replied that some people might feel that way, but if they did, they were rather suffering from a "complete lack of insight" (ibid., 284). He himself, far from having a 'God Complex', was most of the time "overwhelmed by the scale of needs" and his "inability to do anything much lasting about it" (ibid., 285).

The Nuer, a tribe known for their nomadic lifestyle and devotion to cattle, made up almost half of the population in Nasir, and raids between the clans over cattle brought the majority of the patients into the hospital (BA 229-230). Although there had been no hostility towards MSF in the past, the team was aware that the hospital could be accidentally caught up in crossfire during one of the raids, and in expectation of more gunfights, team members were told to pack their valuables, passports and entry permits together and keep them close at hand for an eventual evacuation (ibid., 268-269).

Brown found it difficult to deal with the culture of gun fighting and the "machismo, or bravado, or plain aggressiveness" (BA 287), and faced various threats from men in the hospital. He was reprimanded by a man for undermining

his authority because Brown had treated the man's daughter with only his wife's permission. A health worker whom Brown pulled aside for not attending teaching meetings threatened that, if Brown ever told him what to do again, he would kill him. Another threat was pronounced by a parent whose child died in the hospital, and who accused Brown of having administered the wrong medicine. Although Brown was reassured by his colleagues that these threats were empty, he found them "deeply unnerving" (ibid., 287). In the briefing prior to the posting, he had been told that a threat meant the end of one's placement, and he knew that expatriate aid workers had been evacuated on the basis of similar threats in the past. How, he wondered, was one supposed to know which threats to take seriously and which ones to laugh off? He writes that it seemed to be "a retrospective assessment: if you don't get hurt, they probably weren't serious" (ibid., 287-288).

Although Brown acknowledged the significance of cattle for the Nuer, he could not understand why, after thirty-nine years of war, men continued to fight each other over animals. He writes that he could not comprehend

> that life is so precious here; that these people battle to coax an existence from this severe land to raise their kids, to carry a sick relative for days to a hospital and then sit by their side for weeks; yet life is equally cheap. Disregarded during a cattle raid, valued secondary to a clan's honour, and constantly threatened by these armed men – even if the majority of people would rather get on with things. (BA 302-303)

Facing the victims of the fighting between the clans every day in the hospital, he could not but see them as "petty squabbling among armed men, [who were] willing, despite decades of hardship to risk not only their lives but also those of innocent bystanders – for animals" (BA 288). Although he thought that as a foreigner and guest in the country he should not question their culture and traditions, seeing their consequences on the wards, he questioned the practice more and more (ibid., 288). Brown states that the violence drained the organisation's resources: when victims from rival clans arrived at the hospital at the same time, the organisation flew out members from one clan in order to avoid further clashes, and to ensure the security of the hospital. Furthermore, expensive flights were frequently chartered or diverted in order to transfer the wounded. Brown found that this money would be better invested in educating the community about nutrition, hygiene, family planning, HIV, or training of health workers, so that the hospital became independent of

expatriate staff. He also wondered what incentive was there for a government to step up and respond to their own disasters and to provide health care to their population or indeed "do much of anything" (ibid., 303-304), if they knew that organisations like MSF would come and provide these services with no strings attached. Thinking about his own engagement in the field, he wondered what long-term impact this work had on aid workers who

> spend year after year in the field, repeatedly living its unbeatable highs and unrivalled lows. Does your emotional barometer simply reset itself? Is it irreversible? Is there a line you cross, beyond which a 'normal' life at home becomes impossible? Why you *have* to return to the field, simply because you don't experience things to the same degree, for better or worse, back home? Like a Disaster Gypsy, maybe, just floating from one international crisis to the next . . . (ibid., 296-97)

Decision to leave

One particular incident which illustrates the restrictions cultural expectations posed on Brown's ability to assist his patients concerned a woman who needed life-saving surgery, but was refused treatment by her husband.

She was brought in to the hospital with a molar pregnancy by her brother. Having gone into premature labour, she was losing a lot of blood, and urgently needed a blood transfusion and a surgery to stay alive. Ignoring the urgency of the situation, her brother refused any treatment because they needed her husband's permission. While they were waiting for the husband to arrive at the hospital, the woman was slowly bleeding to death. Brown first wondered whether the brother had not understood the severity of the situation and explained to him again and again that if he did not allow for the surgery, he would be responsible for his sister's death, but the brother remained adamant. When the husband arrived next afternoon, he too refused a blood transfusion and any other treatment. Brown explained to the husband that his wife would die without a blood transfusion, tried to persuade him to allow staff members in the hospital to donate blood for her, tried to bargain with him for partial treatment, tried to have other colleagues talking sense into him, but the husband refused each offer and instead, wanted to take his wife back home (BA 309-312). Faced with the man's refusal to allow treatment Brown lost any sense of cultural sensitivity:

> *Christ!* This makes no sense! My hands begin shaking and I lose any self-restrain and step closer, and I find myself shouting with pointed finger that he's about to murder his own wife, and I wonder if maybe she's brought shame on him or frightened him for having borne this unsightly complication instead of a healthy child, because bearing children is a woman's most important role out here […] but I couldn't give a damn about cultural considerations at this moment because hers is one life we can actually *save*.
>
> I ask Joseph to tell him that she's going to die soon because of his decision and that we can't just stand here and watch it happen, so the husband has three options. One, we take her to theatre and fix this; two, we just give her the blood, *Christ* – our blood if he wants; or three, we do as he says and don't treat her, but in that case he's to stay beside her all day on this ward. He's to sit here and attend to her, and he must watch the consequences of his decision play out. He doesn't get to walk away. Not from this. Not from his wife.
>
> The ward is silent. I'm trembling. The man glares and I'm hot-wet with nerves. Joseph's unsure of what he should translate but I tell him all of it, every word, this man is to understand the gravity of his decision, and in this moment I feel more anger towards a person that I've known before. I hate this man and what he represents; what these women, these children and so many other men have to put up with because of people like him, the *strongman*, the self-righteous minority of men who impose their wills on the rest. [. . .]
>
> The woman lies quietly. My eyes meet hers and I don't know if I'm more heartbroken for her or outraged with him. (BA 312-313)

When the husband explained that if his wife died, it would be God's choice, Brown writes that he had "not ever lost it like this before" (BA 313) and told the man that if he took the woman back home and she died, it would be not God's, but solely his responsibility. When the husband asked whether they could give him a sheet to carry his wife home, Brown was speechless. Walking out of the hospital after the man had taken his wife home, Brown was overwhelmed by the desire to walk "past the compound, the fuck out of town, and away from this entire volunteering thing", trying "to remember why [he had] wanted so much to do this work in the first place" (BA 314).

Later, Brown discussed the incident with a colleague, explaining that he was losing his patience and admitting that he wondered whether the outcome would have been different if he had been able to handle the situation better. He struggled with his reaction, knowing that he was not there to judge the people and that he should not expect them to act like he would. "I mean, aren't we *humanitarians* supposed to be these unconditionally compassionate, caring people?" he asked the

colleague (BA 317). He told her that the guns and increasing clan movements – especially after two other MSF projects had been partially evacuated the same week – scared him. He also admitted that he was tired from being on call and not being able to sleep through the nights, and that he was afraid of making a mistake when treating a patient or assessing the security situation of the project. He confessed that the real problem was not mere exhaustion but him losing the "desire to be here, to do this work, or to even care about anyone else anymore" and that he had never thought like this before (ibid., 317). Frustrated and disillusioned he asked the colleague what the point of their work was:

> Do we all spend the rest of our lives flying around, trying to visit these thousands of impoverished towns, spreading ourselves so thin as to be almost useless a times? And at what personal cost? And why should this be my battle anyway? Wouldn't the more sensible thing be to get on with life at home, to at least take full advantage of the opportunities that *I've* been given? Why then this burden of white middle-class guilt we all seem to have? (BA 317)

He closed the conversation by saying that he was not sure he was "the right person for this anymore" (BA 317) and asked her to look for a replacement because he could not finish the six months he had left in Sudan. When the organisation found a permanent surgeon to replace him, Brown returned back home – simultaneously relieved and embarrassed by his resignation (ibid., 325).

The situation which led Brown to quitting his position was an incident in which culture and tradition prevented him from living out his responsibility for his patients. Although Brown questioned his suitability for this job, his decision to leave Mavinga was not a turning away from his commitment but a demonstration of how deeply he felt about it. The man who refused his wife's treatment exemplified the machismo that Brown had found difficult to deal with in Nasir. In this particular situation, the tradition had a face, a man who valued his power to say 'no' more than his wife's life, and Brown was in despair that he was forced to watch him make this decision because the tradition allowed him to do so. Not allowed to live out his commitment, Brown quit his job because he could not bear to not be there for those who needed help. An aspect that is significant in this situation is that, at the same time that Brown considered giving up his position in Nasir, the question about the success of his work and the personal sacrifices this work

requires, arose. In contrast to the beginning of his humanitairan aid work, Brown now wondered whether the sacrifices this work required, were worth it.

4.4 Epilogue

Brown writes that after returning back home, he questioned whether there was any point in doing aid work, whether this work had any lasting benefit for the people or whether the aid industry was just perpetuating its own existence finding solace in the fact that they were at least trying to help. He summarises his answer as follows:

> As for my own answers to any of this? I have none. I'm far more confused than before I first went. I've had no great epiphanies, no profound realisations, but since returning home I've resigned myself to this one thing: that, putting the economics and politics of it all aside – naïve as that may be – what it all boils down to is individuals. It's a simple interaction between just two people: one, a person with opportunities and choices, and who could get a flight out tomorrow should they choose; the other, a person with few options – if any. If nothing else, it's a gesture. An attempt. Food and a tent for Toto. Brand dressing for José. A little operating theatre with car batteries and boiled instruments, where Roberto can play his trade. Free HIV treatment for Elizabeth, who'll never be cured and will always live in a hut anyway, but who'll have a longer, healthier life because of it. And sometimes, it's little more than a bed in which to die peacefully, attended to by family and health workers . . . but hey, that's no small thing in some parts.
> My head says it's futile.
> My heart knows differently.
> I hope to be in the field again sometime soon. (BA 338)

Questioning humanitarian aid work, the answer that Brown found for himself is that humanitarian assistance, when broken down, is about one individual with opportunities helping another who does not have the same opportunities. This statement demonstrates that Brown has found his way back to his initial motivation for working in the humanitarian sector. You see inequality, you understand that you were lucky to have your privileges, and you decide to do something about it, all without finding excuses and wondering what others should do, but focusing on what you can do about it yourself. The quote also illustrates that Brown, torn between the thoughts of futility and the care for others, decided not to follow his head but his heart.

5 James Maskalyk: *Six Months in Sudan*

The book *Six Months in Sudan: A Young Doctor in a War-torn Village* (2009a) follows Canadian physician James Maskalyk on his first mission with MSF to Abyei, a small town in Sudan. The chapters in Maskalyk's book are complemented by blog entries from his blog "Six Months in Sudan"[32], which he wrote in 2007. These blog entries offer immediate reflections on events taking place when he lived in Abyei, and add an enriching insight to the more distanced reflections in the memoir.[33]

After his posting in Abyei, Maskalyk continued working with MSF and has worked in the refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya. In Canada, he practices emergency medicine at the St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and is an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine. Maskalyk also works as a Visiting Professor of Emergency Medicine at Addis Ababa University, and is the director of the Emergency Medicine department at Toronto Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration – a project uniting the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine in Canada and Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, and offering sub-specialty training to future physicians. Maskalyk continues to write about his experiences in the blog "James Maskalyk"[34] and is currently working on his second book, *Life on the Ground Floor* which is scheduled to be published in January 2017.

5.1 Background and Motivation

Maskalyk does not provide any information on his upbringing or decision to study medicine. His humanitarian journey begins when he goes to Chile during his medical training and is touched by the severity of patients' suffering. His decision

[32] "Six Months in Sudan," accessed December 12, 2016, www.sixmonthsinsudan.com.
[33] The excerpts from Maskalyk's current blog are presented as stand-alone pieces throughout the memoir. They differ from the rest of the account in that they omit capital letters, include the date on which they were originally written and do not include page numbers. In quotes from the original blog Maskalyk wrote during his time in Abyei and included in the memoir, I have kept the use of small letters to indicate for the reader that the passage is from the blog but have included page numbers so that this section can be found in the book more easily and can be easily distinguished from references to information that was taken from Maskalyk's current blog "James Maskalyk".
[34] "James Maskalyk," accessed December 12, 2016, http://www.jamesmaskalyk.com.

to work in the humanitarian sector was reaffirmed when he worked in Cambodia and South Africa.

Placement in Chile – a Decision Made

Maskalyk's desire to work in the humanitarian field grew out of his experience in a Chilean hospital during his medical training. In the summer between his first and second year of medical school, a 23-year-old Maskalyk went to Chile for a six-week international rotation. He states that his decision to go abroad differed from his fellow students' placement choices, and admits that it was partially driven by the desire to impress an older girlfriend. Being "somewhere else" (SM 2) for the first time, Maskalyk encountered a previously unknown degree of suffering. He writes:

> It was at that hospital that I saw a man whose fingers were so heavy with gout, so knotted, that he couldn't pick up a coffee cup. I was working with a cardiologist who spent his days employed in a public system where families tried to find someone with a credit card to finance their grandfather's angioplasty. At nights, he travelled to private hospitals to consult on the health of the wealthy so he could send his children to university. I went home convinced that if I was being trained to take care of the sickest they surely were in other places. (SM 6)

Although Maskalyk does not elaborate on his motivation for becoming a doctor, this quote illustrates that he understands his profession as not merely being in the service of the sick, but the *sickest*. His placement in Chile was an eye-opening experience because it made him realize that the sickest were not in Canada, and the severity of the patients' needs in Chile inspired Maskalyk to pursue humanitarian work. Looking back on his decision in a speech he gave in 2012, he stated that he simply decided "to go to them" (Maskalyk 2012), and in another interview, explained that he "found that doing this kind of work is some of the best enunciations of [his] medical knowledge" (Maskalyk 2011).

Maskalyk assumed responsibility for the suffering he saw not as the one who had caused it, but as the one who could do something practical to alleviate it, and he did not abandon his resolution when he returned to Canada. Instead of waiving it off as a foolish impracticable idea once he was back home, Maskalyk's experiences in Chile, and his subsequent decision to engage in humanitarian work, defined the course of his professional training. Deliberating on the type of medical

expertise he would require for working in the humanitarian field, Maskalyk chose to specialise in emergency medicine because this training would provide him with the widest set of skills. This specialisation further meant that he did not have to have a medical practice, which would make leaving Canada to go on humanitarian postings more easily (SM 6).

Cambodia – a Decision Reaffirmed

Maskalyk reaffirmed his resolve to work abroad when, four years after his placement in Chile, he spent a month working as a medical resident with a group of Khmer Rouge in rural Cambodia who had recently surrendered. Maskalyk writes that:

> It was there I ate my first meal surrounded by starving people, there I saw a woman whose breast cancer had pushed through her skin and to whom I had nothing to give but acetaminophen, there that I walked out of my guest house to find food and stumbled over the feverish body of a woman nearly dead from HIV left at my door, like a cat would a mouse. Overwhelmed and alone, I first discovered my helplessness in a world beyond my control. (SM 6)

Going to Cambodia and exposing himself to a situation that would inevitably put him face-to-face with a similar level of suffering that he had experienced in Chile, Maskalyk was testing both himself and his resolve to pursue humanitarian work. In Cambodia, Maskalyk was overwhelmed by his helplessness, resulting from the lack of resources and the insufficient treatment he could offer to the patients. His feeling that the world was beyond his control did not, however, result in a capitulation, but rather strengthened his determination to work for those in great need. Maskalyk expressed no desire to turn away and to withdraw himself from others' needs, but looked for a practical way to engage with the situation. Two years later, he returned to Cambodia to set up a university project that introduced medical students to what Maskalyk calls the "medicine of poverty" (SM 7).

After graduating, Maskalyk worked as an emergency doctor in hospitals in Canada and Bolivia, and researched neglected diseases for MSF in South Africa. Writing research reports on neglected diseases, he realized that numbers alone could not convey the real misery they meant. Maskalyk writes that, "[n]o matter how many hollow zeros were added to the death toll, [his] family and neighbours could not understand what the numbers measured, because they could not feel the

consequences" (SM 7). Maskalyk concluded that the reason others did not understand the implications of such suffering was not their indifference, but their distance, and decided to show the human consequences of such diseases through his writing, in an attempt to bridge that distance.

Accepting Risk

When Maskalyk applied for a field job with MSF and received an offer for a high-security position in Darfur, he hesitated, asking himself "what [he] was willing to lose" (ibid., 8). He found the encouragement he needed in a quote from Joan Didion:

> I'm not telling you to make the world better, because I don't think that progress is necessarily part of the package. I'm just telling you to live in it. Not just to endure it, not just to suffer it, not just to pass through it, but to live in it. To look at it. To try to get the picture. To live recklessly. To take chances. To make your own work and take pride in it. To seize the moment. And if you ask me why you should bother to do that, I could tell you that the grave's a fine and private place, but none I think do there embrace. Nor do they sing there, or write, or argue, or see the tidal bore on the Amazon, or touch their children. And that's what there is to do and get it while you can and good luck at it. (quoted in SM vii)

Didion's words encourage us to embrace life fully and to assume an active role in the world; to create possibilities by taking chances and seizing opportunities, to explore the world and to try to understand it. Didion, however, does not mean for us to use the world in an irresponsible way, but in all activity to be open to what life presents us with and to embrace each moment. When Maskalyk was at a crossroads, unsure how far he was willing to go for his commitment to work for the sickest, Didion's words served him as a push into the right direction. Reading the quote, he decided that he "might as well risk it all" (SM 8).

Shortly after, Maskalyk accepted the position, but the situation in Darfur deteriorated and the position was cancelled. Instead, he was offered a post in Abyei, a small town in Sudan, which he accepted for two reasons: first, he was interested in exploring himself in an isolated environment which is illustrated in his statement that he "wanted to see who [he] was when everything was taken away, when all the insulation between the world and [him] was removed" (SM 7). Maskalyk wanted to remove all distractions that separated him from fully experiencing the world in its rawness and purity, and wanted to explore who he was, when all the distractions his life in Canada was padded with, disappeared. The second reason for Maskalyk's

decision to go to Abyei was his desire to get "[c]lose to war and its consequences" (ibid., 15). Maskalyk explains that he was

> [p]ushed by the sharp thrill of being somewhere new and rare and exciting, pushed towards that free feeling where anything can happen. Pulled because I wanted to understand. I understood the blind actions of large companies because they were a multiplication, a millionfold, of a greed I knew, stripped of accountability. I appreciated the wisdom of the Red Cross's silence because I have, at least briefly, known patience. I valued MSF's vigour and indignation because I understood outrage at injustice. But war, I didn't know it. Not yet. Not well. But it's in me somewhere. (SM 15)

Both aspects illustrate that Maskalyk was driven by a desire to understand the world, and himself, through experience. He wanted to know what war was, not from a safe distance but from the situation itself, and therefore exposed himself to a location that was close to war. Seeing war as something that existed in himself, getting close to war was the only way to explore a part of himself that would otherwise remain hidden. Based on his understanding that it was not indifference but distance that separates people from each other, Maskalyk's motivation for humanitarian aid work was the desire to overcome this distance and to come closer to understanding and experiencing life more fully. In a recent interview Maskalyk summarised this desire as being "available to as much of the experience of being alive as possible. That means joy and sorrow and peace and war and love and heartbreak. All of it" (2016).

An additional aspect that has played a crucial role in his decision to accept the security risks that came with the position in Sudan dates back to a particular experience during his medical training. Maskalyk explains that one day, as a new medical student, he had to tell a patient that she had an incurable brain tumour. He remembers watching "the colour wash from her face" while her "husband sat beside her like a stone" and writes that it was in this moment that he, "for the first time, understood that though [he] was living, [he] was also dying" (SM 16). He stresses that he had never forgotten this lesson, and because of it, part of him wanted to walk towards it. This experience taught Maskalyk that death was not something that will take place in the moment he would make his last breath but something that accompanies him throughout his life, since his first one. Another aspect that made the security risks easier to accept was that he was free from other responsibilities:

there was "[n]o wife, no kids, no house, no debt, no one waiting for [him] to get back" (SM 12/02 p. 10).

5.2 Humanitarian Aid Work

Abyei 2007

Abyei is an area between North and South Sudan, and a source of a longstanding dispute between both parties about the boundaries of the territory. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the Sudanese Civil War in 2005 left the question of the Abyei area unresolved, but arranged for an Abyei Area Referendum to be held simultaneously with the Southern Sudan Referendum in January 2011.[35] After the peace agreement, residents who had previously fled Abyei, were encouraged to return to their homes and MSF opened its mission in order to assist the growing number of returnees and to observe the situation in the area.

The small hospital in Abyei was situated between the two sides of the conflict– soldiers from the Sudan Alliance Forces (SAF) and soldiers from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) were stationed at either side of the clinic. Maskalyk's responsibility in the hospital encompassed caring for the inpatients, all emergencies, and the therapeutic feeding centre for malnourished children. He was expected to be able to treat a wide variety of casualties, ranging from wounds to tuberculosis, malaria, pneumonia, and HIV. In addition, he was also responsible for the supervision of the Sudanese and expatriate staff members (SM 29-30). The hospital's equipment was rudimentary: no running water, no electricity, no access to x-ray machines, and no possibility to run basic lab tests. In the first weeks after Maskalyk's arrival, the area was affected by a measles epidemic and the hospital was overrun with patients. Maskalyk admits that, having wanted to come to Abyei partially because he wanted to test his resolve, he had not anticipated that it would be tested so well (ibid., 102). He describes that the weight of his responsibility never let go:

[35] The referendum was meant to offer Abyei's residents the choice of retaining their special administrative status in Northern Sudan or becoming part of Southern Sudan but did not take place in 2011 and was postponed indefinitely.

> You feel that if you leave the hospital, let your guard down for a second, someone might die. For fear that it will not get done, you take the syringe and feed the child yourself, you hold it, fret over it. It becomes a symbol of your success, the reason why you came here in the first place. If you can't save them all, if you can't be there all of the time, at least you can save this one, at least you can be there this time. So, you try. You keep on looking after him, and even in your sleep, you hang on tightly. (SM 282-283)

The expatriate staff members and national staff members lived in separate compounds close to the hospital. Although Maskalyk states that they got along well, he points out that they did not speak about their work except to state that they were tired (SM 105). Whereas there had always been another doctor or nurse one could talk to when facing difficult decisions or a patient's death in a hospital back home, in Abeyi he did not speak to his colleagues about similar experiences because he thought that "everyone [had] enough of their own weights" (SM 30/04 p. 179). Maskalyk further stresses that when working in the humanitarian field, one had to rely on one's own conviction, that what one did was right and could not expect to be encouraged or applauded by others. He explains:

> This work is not what one does if he is interested in being told that he is doing the right thing. We are expected to know. The work is not easy, not for anyone, and it never ends. If you keep on looking over your shoulder, waiting for a pat on the back, you've missed the point. It's not about you. If you are expecting it to be, better you stay at home. (SM 105)

He admits that, whilst caught in the everyday struggles, one could easily miss the point that the work was not about oneself and long for encouragement, and his blog was a channel to receive the support he needed (SM 105). Maskalyk began writing a blog as a way to help his family and friends to get close to Abyei (ibid., 4), illustrating his desire to bridge the distance between people and places. He explains that he wanted to tell Abeyi's human story and "allow a different exposition to life in the field" which would be "insistent, rough and fresh" (ibid., 16). Instead of "telling the political story", he wanted to detail "the medicine of poverty" (ibid., 16) and leave it to the readers to draw conclusions themselves. Maskalyk's blog was one of the first blogs written by an MSF staff member, and he was briefed on topics he was allowed to write on, and aspects he had to leave out in order to avoid problems with the Sudanese government, which might lead to the withdrawal of MSF's work permit in Sudan. During his time in Abyei, the blog became a way to preserve his experiences and to ensure that he did not forget or question them when

he returned home. This concern emanated from a conversation with a colleague, who had been on several missions prior to coming to Sudan, and warned Maskalyk that once his posting ended and he returned back home, he would forget Abyei. Maskalyk was worried that once he was back in Canada, the physical distance would turn into emotional distance, and his experiences in Abyei would cease to feel real. The blog was therefore a precautionary measure to protect his experiences from being forgotten, and to remain close to Abyei in future (ibid., 212).

The difficulties of calculations

As a general rule, the hospital did not provide an ambulance service and did not pick up sick patients from surrounding villages. Every patient needed to find their own way to the hospital, and when discharged, back to their village. If the patient died in the hospital, his relatives had to find a way to transport the body back home because the hospital had no morgue, and did not transfer dead patients to the grave yard or back to their families. The rationale behind this practice was that once MSF offered an ambulance service, they would be called to insecure areas and endanger their staff, and if they began to transport bodies to the graveyard, the hospital would become a morgue. Maskalyk explains that when people in the surrounding areas got ill, they did not come to the hospital straight away because the transport to the hospital was too expensive. Instead, the family spent their money on services provided by the traditional healer. When his treatments failed to achieve the desired results and the patient's condition worsened, the family had no other choice but to hire a donkey or a car to bring the patient to the hospital, often spending their last money or selling their possessions in order to afford the transport. Often, by the time the patients got to the hospital, they were in shocking conditions, and for many it was too late. One of Maskalyk's most shocking experiences in Abyei was trying to save a woman who had come to the hospital after delivering only one of her twins.

> twins, we were told. one delivered, the other not. we took her to the delivery room and removed the blanket. between her legs, a tiny blue arm. i touched it, and the skin came loose. how many days ago was the delivery? six. six days ago, a baby was born, and her brother almost. he made it to his shoulder, and finding nothing to hold on to, went no farther. [sic] (SM 10/04 p. 145)

Presented with such devastating cases, Maskalyk found it hard to adhere to the hospital's rule not to pick up sick people from surrounding villages. Knowing that there was a reasoning behind the rules, an attempt to ensure that MSF's could offer its assistance long-term, was "poor comfort" when he had to make "impossible decisions" that were "contrary to [his] spirit" (SM 05/05 p. 196). Facing yet another patient who arrived ten minutes too late, Maskalyk wanted to:

> drive each patient where they need to go until you run out of gas, use every last dose of rabies vaccine for the small chance the dog was infected and the child dies foaming, to give the starving family money even if it will only feed them for a day, drip all of the blood into this patient, the human (someone's father, brother, son, best friend) bleeding in front of you even though it means there might be none for the next ten, but today you have it, and today is his lucky day, and tomorrow you will worry about tomorrow. But we don't. We are measured, and careful. It is what tomorrow's patients expect of us and the tomorrows stretch towards forever, and today is nearly done. (SM 196-197)

Maskalyk demonstrates that his desire to help others is a desire to give everything without limitations, a desire that opposes the calculations that are made necessary by the limited resources. This quote demonstrates that the desire to give whatever the other might need is a separate internal reality that appears to exist independently of the reality of the circumstances. The ability to follow the impulse to give to the other everything is restricted but it does not lessen the desire.

Maskalyk writes that even if a patient did make it to the hospital in time, his adequate treatment could not be guaranteed due to the inadequate resources in the hospital. When a four-year-old boy arrived in the hospital with severe breathing problems, Maskalyk decided to intubate[36] the child. Lacking a ventilator to assist the child's breathing, a nurse had to push a compression bag – precisely twelve times per minute, 720 times per hour – throughout the night in order to keep the child alive. Leaving the hospital for the night, Maskalyk wondered whether such battles were worth fighting, or whether it would be wiser to accept likely defeats and to preserve one's energy for more hopeful cases (SM 86). He writes:

[36] Endotracheal intubation is an emergency procedure in which a plastic tube is inserted into the trachea (windpipe) to maintain an open airway. If the patient cannot breathe independently, mechanical means such as a ventilator or a compressing bag are used to assist the patient in breathing.

> But then there is the other tack. Battle, every time, with everything you have. Do the best you can for the person in front of you. Persuade the family of every malnourished kid to get into the truck, to come to the hospital, to be fed until they're better. Track down each TB patient who left, frustrated, halfway through his long treatment and try to get him to come back even though the countryside is littered with tuberculosis patients we will never see and one case will not tip the balance sheet noticeably towards a TB-free future. To the world it doesn't matter that much. Until you remember that it means the world to the patient. One exact world, bright and full of sounds, per person. That's what is lost. (SM 85-86).

This quote demonstrates once more, Maskalyk's struggle between the limitless desire to be there for the other and oppose calculation, and the limited resources he has available to help the patients. When Maskalyk returned to the hospital next morning and removed the tube, the child was able to breathe independently at first, but at lunchtime his breathing got worse and Maskalyk decided not to intubate him again because they had neither the resources nor trained staff to ventilate him. When the boy died shortly afterwards, Maskalyk, defeated, resolved to not intubate anyone again (SM 86-87).

The wish to adopt Aweil

One of Maskalyk's most significant encounters in Abyei is Aweil, a ten-month-old girl who was brought to the hospital after her mother died. For weeks, Maskalyk's attempts to treat the infant for various diseases were fruitless. He worried that, given that her father was a soldier and her mother recently died, Aweil's fevers and weight loss were a sign that she was HIV positive. Having grown fond of the girl over the course of his time with her, and without any news from her father or other family members, Maskalyk considered adopting her. When he shared this idea with a colleague, he was told that "[i]t's a bad idea" (SM 92).

> "Think so?"
> "Definitely bad. It wouldn't be a popular move. You would make a lot of people angry."
> "Kay."
> "I get it, James. 'If I can't save them all, why not one?' Right? Everyone goes through it. Wait it out."
> "Kay."
> Pause.
> "What about money? Are we allowed to give money to particular people? Like is it okay to give her some of my per diem? Or just some money so she can go to school, or whatever? Not even now. Later."

> “People do it. But it’s not a good idea.” (SM 92-93)

Although Maskalyk agreed with the colleague during their conversation, his desire to care for Aweil did not stop and he considered the consequences an adoption would have on his life.

> Maybe she is right. Maybe I want to do it because I want one small island of control to cling to. But it isn’t that simple. I don’t want to only save Aweil, treat-her-malaria save her. I want to take her home with me, put her in school, let her decide who she will be. I think I might love her a little bit. I can’t help it. It’s bigger than me. Could I do it? I would have to quit, particularly if she doesn’t get better. Get to a hospital where she can be diagnosed. I would have to get a new place. Mine’s too small. I would have to commit to Toronto, or move back to Alberta. Commit somewhere. No more MSF. Who would babysit for me during my night shifts. Steve? Greg? Jeff? No way. I would need a nanny. What if she is positive? Could I watch her die? (SM 94)

Maskalyk was not concerned with Aweil as a doctor but as a possible future father. He not only wanted to treat her illness, but wanted to care for her and make sure she could lead the life she wanted. He admits that this desire, the love for this particular child, was bigger than him and that he could not help it. He tried to follow his colleague’s rational advice who suggested that his desire to adopt Aweil was a desire for visible success, but rather than stopping thinking about an adoption, he contemplated the consequences the adoption would have on his lifestyle. The deliberation Maskalyk presents is not a calculation of the pros and cons, but a list of the things he would need and of the aspects of his life he would be willing to change if he adopted Aweil. In an interview Maskalyk explained his desire to care for Aweil and adopt her as following:

> So the human in you identifies with the human in that person. The connection comes from the "I-ness" in me that is the same as the "I-ness" in you and when you identify that in someone who is suffering and you can diminish that, it's a lovely human response, right? And it's a very natural thing. It should be pursued and celebrated and in some ways that's what [organisations] like MSF are about. A very true, natural understanding that exercises a part that's in each of us, that when enunciated, feels completely correct, completely congruent with life's goals and doesn't diminish your own experience. It enhances your own experience. It makes you happier and better. (Maskalyk 2011)

Maskalyk responds to the girl because he identifies with the “human” (Maskalyk 2011) in her. Seeing that she is an orphan, that no one from her wider family had

come to visit her in the hospital, that no one but the hospital staff cares for her, makes Maskalyk want to fill this void and be there for her. Maskalyk understands the desire to be there for the other who is in a destitute situation as a "very natural thing" (ibid.) not a sacrifice on his part but rather an act that has a positive impact on his life.

When Aweil is tested negative, Maskalyk writes that his relief at this result had taught him more about the importance of preventing and treating HIV than all the months he had spent travelling through Africa and writing about the disease (SM 96-97). This realization is an example of the distance that he has addressed at the beginning of his memoir as being the main reason why people did not understand the implications of statistics on HIV or any other numbers on human suffering (ibid., 7). Knowing and caring for someone who might have HIV brought the disease and its impact close to him, and made him understand the urgency of the necessity to prevent it. When after weeks there were still no news from Aweil's family, the team found a woman in the hospital who was willing to take care of Aweil and supported her financially. Maskalyk continued to check on Aweil frequently and made sure that she was taken care of and got better (ibid., 98) but did not mention his adoption plans anymore which illustrates that, in the end, he accepted his colleague's advice that adoption would be a bad idea. When, in a recent interview, Maskalyk was asked what the biggest lesson he learned from his work in Sudan was, he mentioned Aweil and stated that he learned to "not miss an opportunity to listen when your heart is speaking to you" (Maskalyk 2016). He explains:

> By that I mean that although I could tell what I was feeling say, with regards to one of the babies that I had as a patient and deeply cared about, Aweil, who figures so strongly in my book, I wasn't really listening; I wasn't really there for it. What I told myself intellectually was that I was transferring my feelings of being overwhelmed and that wanting to help her, particularly her, was a way to remedy a sense of helplessness. It wasn't just what I was telling myself, it was what other people were telling me. While some of it may have been true, my heart was just telling me to do as much as I could for this girl- to not hold back. I did, and it was a mistake. I thought holding back was going to help one of us, but it helped exactly neither. I still think of her all the time. She'd be about 9 and I don't even know if she's alive. And it's a shame, one of the great shames of my life. I didn't know how to listen to something that was coming through loud and clear, so instead of exploring it, I shut it down. I try not to do that anymore, and that was a lesson for me to learn. (Maskalyk 2016)

More than nine years after meeting Aweil, Maskalyk deeply regrets having rationalized his desire to care for her. He explains that back then he did not know how to listen to his heart. Instead of doing what he felt was the right thing to do, he held back and calls this decision "the greatest shame" (Maskalyk 2016) of his life. This incident illustrates that there is a consequence to ignoring one's desire to be there for the other. In Maskalyk's case the consequence was a feeling of shame which did not disappear with time.

Presence as the core value of humanitarian work

Maskalyk's understanding of humanitarian aid is closely related to his understanding of his profession. Maskalyk writes that there exists a

> sacred space between a doctor and a patient, one that is inviolable and beyond undeclared interests, that happens when I close the curtain or gesture towards the somali woman sitting underneath the thin shade of a tree with ten others, and say, "Hi, my name is james, I'm from canada. How can i help you", then let nothing stand in my way from doing that. Medicine as an example of life caring for itself. [sic] (Maskalyk 2012)[37]

To Maskalyk, what happens between him and the patient when he meets the latter with no other purpose but to offer his skills in order to help him, is a sacred interchange. What defines this as sacred is his capacity to be selfless and indifferent to what he can gain from the patient, and his ability to focus solely on what he can do for the patient. Maskalyk sees the value of his work, not in the first instance in his medical capacity to alleviate the other's pain, but in his human capacity to offer his presence and compassion to the other. He does not reduce the person who comes to see him to his medical condition but sees the person in his entirety. For him, medicine is only a tool to get closer to the person and there is more to his job than addressing the patient's illness. The first goal is not to heal the patient but to get close to him and to diminish the distance between him and the other. Whereas it might not always be possible to alleviate the patient's pain and to heal his illness, Maskalyk can always offer his presence to the other and address the patient's loneliness and "fear of being unheard" (Maskalyk 2013b).

[37] Although the most suitable quote to illustrate his understanding of being a doctor comes from the blog he has written years after his posting in Abyei, there are many examples in his memoir in which he demonstrates this approach but does not articulate his understanding as concise.

Maskalyk's understanding of offering his presence as the core value of his medical work was reflected in his work in Abyei. One example that illustrated this approach was meeting a father and his son who came to the clinic after the boy had cut off the tip of his finger. Maskalyk writes:

> I sewed it back on as best I could and he and his father came back to see me every few days for a month. After the stitches were taken out, something I did after a week, the visits were unnecessary. Still, when they asked me if they should come back, I said yes. Every three or four days, in a crowd of feverish patients, I would see the boy with his wrapped finger, its gauze now black with dirt, and I would catch his father's eye. He would smile at me and I would stop whatever I was doing and wave them towards the emergency room where I would unwrap the long string of cotton and replace it with a new one. The father would ask me, for the tenth time, how best to care for the healing wound, and I would sit down beside him and explain. (SM 331-332)

In an interview Maskalyk explained that he had asked the father to come back again and again without medical necessity because it was a chance for both of them to interact as "just two men" and a possibility to "make friends" (Maskalyk 2011). Amidst the many patients who did not get better seeing the boy and the father "was a pleasure" (ibid.).

Three months into his posting Maskalyk delayed his mandatory holiday in spite of his exhaustion because he longed for "a true experience", and wanted "to arrive at all the important points in the mission so that [he] could better understand them" (SM 14/05 p. 219). Although other team members suggested that he took a step back and did not take emergency calls, he declined because these were the moments in which he got to meet new patients. He explains:

> often, it takes up the best part of my day. i get to meet someone, someone new, listen to their story and feel their anxiety. i get to touch their child's forehead, then quietly listen to his heart. and sometimes, i get to put my hand on the father's shoulder, tell him that everything is going to be all right, and i get to feel the coolness of his relief. [sic] (SM 14/05 p. 220)

Maskalyk's understanding of the core value of his profession as an offer of his presence and full attention to the other is reflected in his understanding of humanitarian aid and his humanitarian aid work. He writes that he supports humanitarianism's idea

> that we should put ourselves in the middle of places that threaten to tilt into war or be swallowed by diseases. i believe this sincerely. we are here, you, me, and everyone we know, because there is something inherently valuable to our presence. it is the concrete manifestation of a quality in all of us, one that when exercised feels entirely correct. the feeling of standing between two people who are angry enough to fight, or stopping to help someone stranded by the side of the road. once you do, you realize the perceived risk is less than the actual one. we all know that it is better than the feeling we have when we turn our heads and pretend not to see. so, that's why we are here. because of that part I share with you and everyone we know. [sic] (SM 22/06 p.285)

The core value of humanitarian assistance for Maskalyk is presence, which he describes as a universal quality and an inherent ability in all of us to acknowledge and to respond to others' vulnerability. For Maskalyk, the difference between humanitarian and other actors in the humanitarian sector lies in humanitarians' ability to be disinterested in what they can gain from those they are working for. Even if foreign governments and private investors acknowledge the importance of assistance to suffering populations, the humanitarian interest competes with their other interests and rarely comes first (Maskalyk 2012). Elaborating on his motivation for humanitarian aid work, Maskalyk writes:

> it is one of the ways that I make sense of the world, to believe that it hangs in a grand balance. but no matter the distance, no matter how much I travel, no matter how much I read, no matter how carefully i look, can i determine which way it tips. good, or bad. success, or failure. hope, or despair. i can't say, and it doesn't matter. all i can do is pile as many efforts as possible, no matter how small, on the side i want the most. [sic] (SM 10/06 p. 259-260)

Maskalyk's work in the humanitarian field is his attempt to do good, and to contribute to the world he wants to live in. Humanitarian aid is a way of living his idea of overcoming the distance between people. In his blog, Maskalyk writes that he "would give [his] life for the idea, that if we make the world easier, even briefly, for someone, the illusion of our separation from them disappears" (Maskalyk 2013a).

Maskalyk is aware that this endeavour is not accompanied by a promise of success, but this uncertainty does not stop him. It is impossible to know the future but he can try his best so that it becomes what he would like it to be. What motivates him is a version of a different future in Abyei, a future that in his view "already exists; it simply needs to be arrived at, uncovered, rolled into place" (M. 22/06 p.

285). This approach is reaffirmed in his blog where he writes that "there is always a lag between when you glimpse what's possible, and the arrival" (Maskalyk 2014) and the only thing that can shorten it is attention. Attention is "the world's only true magic" through which "the world changes" (ibid.).

Maskalyk's understanding of humanitarian aid and his acceptance of its limitations is informed by his work as an emergency doctor. Both realms are limited in what they can offer to the other, but instead of finding these limitations restricting, Maskalyk finds them liberating. He explains:

> In truth, no matter how unpopular our approach happens to be, it appeals to me. It has the same merit as working in the emergency room. I get to deal with emergencies. Everything else, no matter how important, is not my business.
>
> It is the contrast between relief and development. We put fingers in the dam until the water goes down or someone comes along to repair it. We are not here to improve the community's ability to thrive. We are here to save lives that would otherwise be lost. That's our expertise. When we are asked what we are going to do about unaddressed problems, we say: "We're going to do what we're doing. The question is, what are you going to do?" (SM 160)

By focusing on saving the life in front of him, Maskalyk can blend out everything else that needs to take place in order to improve the patient's situation long-term. He can fully focus on what he, as an emergency doctor, can do. It is not that Maskalyk is unaware of the importance of other aspects, but that, if he was to wait for long-term solutions for the problems around him before he acted, the life in front of him would be lost and this would be unacceptable. This understanding reflects a particular view of success: success is not the elimination of the circumstances that make humanitarian aid necessary or bring a person to the emergency room, but what he can do for the person in front of him in this moment. Not being able to do everything to solve the underlying problem does not stop him from doing what is in his capacity to address the situation.

Although humanitarian aid is focused on the immediate alleviation of suffering, its insistence on the equality of people demonstrates not merely a vision of a different future, but its practical possibility. Maskalyk writes:

> It doesn't matter if you are from the north, or the south, or a christian, or a muslim, or a civilian, or dinka, or misseriya, or soldier, or civilian. we deliberately don't care. our intention is to make a place that is safe and solid for everyone in abyei. And it is not just about medicine; that is only our tool.

> the hospital is not just a place to treat the dinka infant with meningitis or the little misseriya girl with malaria, but a place here their fathers can reach for the water barrel at the same time and say to the other, after you, no after you. and maybe, two weeks later, when they pass in the market, they will nod. and perhaps, two years from now, they might stop and talk. [sic] (SM 15/04 p.157)

Humanitarian assistance creates a space where it does not matter who you are and where you come from. Instead, your need is your only feature that matters. The impartial approach of humanitarian aid brings together people who may have avoided each other outside of the hospital, and reduces the distance between them. In the space that is characterised by impartiality, alleviating others' suffering gains a deeper dimension and creates a possibility for a different future.

The little girl and the desire to give everything

With only a few days left before his position in Abyei was coming to an end and he returned to Canada, Maskalyk was evaluating what he had been able to achieve in Abyei.

> so i was in the tb office thinking about what i will leave behind. as i was balancing in the interspace, the one between here and there, then and now, one of the young tb patients walked in. she is about eight years old and has been on treatment for two months. after the first meeting, i have not seen her parents. she comes every week on her own and always wears the same torn, overlarge black dress. she peeks around the corner, then bashfully slides into the room barefoot, and steps onto the scale. she answers my questions shyly, only with nods. when i finally place the foil packages in her hand, she skips out of the room. i adore her. so brave.
>
> when i saw her this time, for the last time, i had this overwhelming urge to give her everything. i didn't even know what everything was, i just wanted to give it.
>
> and i knew then that i was thinking about things the wrong way. when the plane takes off and the abyei ground falls from beneath my feet for good, the best things i will have left behind are not the ones that can be summarized on my end-of-mission report. they are the bright, beautiful parts of the day that can only be lived here. there are many. i will miss them. [sic] (SM 10/07 p. 300)

When Maskalyk was trying to calculate the success of his work, a little girl entered the scene and drew his attention away from these thoughts. Her shabby dress and her bravery that pushed her over the hospital's doorstep every week, touched Maskalyk and he was overwhelmed by the desire to "give her everything" (SM

10/07 p. 300). The fact that he did not know what this everything was illustrates that his desire is an impulse which he was not prepared for, could not have prepared for. This moment makes him understand once more that the value of his work does not lie in calculable achievements. Success is not what one can measure at the end but what one can live through by being close to the other. The significance of his time in Abeyi could only be understood in the presence of being there. Thinking of going home and the impact his work in Abyei has had on him, Maskalyk writes that he "realized that no matter how much [he tried], [he would] never go back to being the person [he] was before [he] left (SM 10/06 p. 259). When at the end of his posting, a colleague asked him whether he would do another mission, Maskalyk's reply was a firm "Yes." (SM 288).

Home

Maskalyk had been warned that back home he would feel an irreconcilable distance between himself and others. The same colleague who told him that he would forget Abyei once he returned home, also cautioned him of feeling "ruined" (SM 30/04 p. 176) because of the things that he would not be able to share with his family and friends at home. He warned Maskalyk that they would either not be able to grasp what he told them about Abyei, or that they would not want to know anything about his work.

Maskalyk, however, was convinced that the "irreconcilable invisible distance" he was warned about would in his case only be a narrow fissure and that "things would be like always" (SM 2). Maskalyk's memoir begins with the moment in which he realizes that he had been wrong and that "[e]verything is in its right place, but it doesn't fit. Whatever it was before, this round thing that [he] was a part of, seems broken now" (SM 318). He writes:

> The rift, of course, is not in the world: it is within us. And the distance is not only ours. We return from the field, from an Ebola outbreak or violent clashes in Sudan, with no mistake about how the world is. It is a hard place – a beautiful place, but so too an urgent one. And we realize that all of us, through our actions or inactions, make it what it is. The people I left behind in Sudan don't need us to help them towards a health system that can offer immunizations – they need the vaccine. Fucking yesterday. Once that urgency takes hold, it never completely lets go. Just as our friends wonder at our distance from their familiar world, we marvel at theirs from the real one. We feel inhabited by it. We plan our return. (SM 2-3)

Back home, Maskalyk's thoughts and feelings were preoccupied with Abyei. A sense of urgency that had entered his life in Abyei was preventing him from fully arriving back home – barely landed, he was already planning his return. Having experienced life in Abyei, he knew that people's needs did not allow for a delay. In an interview, Maskalyk explained that upon his return from Abyei he did not feel angry or resentful about the life he returned to but was absorbed by a sense of urgency and wondered how he could make his friends and family understand that "[people] were suffering unnecessarily RIGHT NOW" (Maskalyk 2009b).

At the same time, Maskalyk had difficulties speaking with others about his experiences in Abyei and explain what this time had meant to him. He writes that it took him three months to speak about Abyei to people who were close to him, and when he tried, he did not know what to say and they ended up talking about something else (SM 333). By trying to get close to the people far away from home, he experienced an alienation from the people he knew and shared his life with before he went to Abyei. What once had been home, was no longer familiar. Through his time in Abyei, Maskalyk has become lonely. In his desire to experience things as close as possible in order to be able to share in these experiences with the suffering, Maskalyk distanced himself from his family and friends, in spite of his attempts to get them close to his life in Abyei through his blog.

A moment in which Maskalyk was able to share about his experiences in Abyei with someone back home unfolded in an encounter with a cleaning lady. When Maskalyk returned to Canada, he continued working in an emergency room and hired a cleaner, but because she was recommended to him by a colleague, and only cleaned his flat when he was working in the hospital, they did not meet in person for some time. However, one day Maskalyk returned from work earlier than expected, and they met and began talking. During the conversation Maskalyk realized that she had moved his bed, and her unexpected care for him touched him and opened the space in which he could share his story.

> "You mentioned in one of your notes that you weren't sleeping very well, and I keep on hearing the pipes bang behin' this wall, and thought that it would be better if your head was against this one."
> I nod.
> "And then when I moved it, I saw all these bags under your bed. Now, Dr. James, a body can't breathe good if his bags are where he is sleeping. They make him dream about leaving."

> I nod again.
> "You need to make your home a sanctuary. I know where you just came back from; you were helping my people. The other James told me. He's my client too, you know."
> She puts a book she had in her hand on my bed.
> "Now there's something you should know about me, Dr. James. I don't just clean people's houses. I help them take care of themselves."
> I don't know what to say. I haven't given myself a minute since I came back. Not one. Running, running, running. I wanted to run so much that I am worn out, huffing, exhausted, dreamless. Then this kindness, my bed from one wall to the other. For a minute, I can't really speak.
> "Merl. I don't . . . um . . . I guess it's . . . I mean, thank you."
> She stands in the middle of room, resting one arm on my frayed broom, and looking right at me. Right at me. I tell her everything. (SM 326)

A stranger's care reminds Maskalyk of the necessity of taking care of himself. The cleaner demonstrates that she sees her job not as merely cleaning his flat, but as caring for him, and Maskalyk is touched by her attention. She helps him understand that he needs to take care of himself so that he can continue taking care of others.

5.3 Epilogue

Writing his memoir contrasted starkly to how Maskalyk tried to cope with his return back home. Instead of filling up his time and keeping himself busy, writing forced Maskalyk to slow down and to reflect on his experiences, making him realize that "things [weren't] the same" (SM 328). He states that although he had done humanitarian work before Abyei, he had never looked back. In an interview, Maskalyk admitted that when he first started writing the book, he regretted that he had agreed to do so because it forced him to open "[t]he door that [he] had so carefully shut, the one to Abyei, the one that held back all those feelings of helplessness, the deep questions about the nature of human beings and [himself] as one" (Maskalyk 2009b). Writing the book, Maskalyk wanted to "make it real" (SM 331) and for it to relate only truth, as it happened and without embellishment, which also meant reflecting on parts he was ashamed of. He describes one particular incident when he stuck to the organisation's policy, and refused to take a man and the body of his wife who died in labour in the hospital, back home to his village. It was only when he saw the man two weeks later that he realized that this man was the hospital's guard. Remembering the situation, Maskalyk was deeply ashamed

and could not understand how he had failed to recognise him the night his wife died, stating that if he had recognised him, he would have driven the man himself. Then, immediately questioning himself, his memory and his justifications, he asks himself: “Would you have? Are you sure you didn’t recognise him?” (SM 330)

Maskalyk writes that neither living in Abyei, nor recounting his experiences, for the memoir was easy. He stresses, however, that he is “grateful for both opportunities” because they allowed him to “stay firm in the world” and “to make peace with things [he] may otherwise have tried to ignore” (SM xii).

When Maskalyk heard the news that Abyei had relapsed into war, and that people in town have fled and the MSF team had to be evacuated, he wondered whether Aweil was safe and whether the woman who took care of Aweil still did so (SM 339). Maskalyk finished his book with the resolve to go back to the world:

> I can’t write about this anymore. My thoughts are with the people huddled under tarps in the rain, with Sylvester in the hospital again, overwhelmed by war and the dead bodies and the dwindling pipes. It’s time to stop writing about the world and return to it. (SM 339)

6. Jessica Alexander: *Chasing Chaos*

Jessica Alexander has spent the last twelve years working in humanitarian operations for the UN and various NGOs. In her memoir *Chasing Chaos: My Decade In and Out of Humanitarian Aid* (2013a) Alexander describes her experiences in the aid field from her first internship in Rwanda, to her postings in Darfur, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Sierra Leone, New York, and Haiti.

Alexander states that she wrote the book in order to demystify people's perceptions of aid workers and to present a more balanced and realistic account of aid workers' day-to-day experiences (Alexander 2013b).

Today, Alexander is pursuing her PhD at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine where she researches accountability in humanitarian action. Alexander is also an Adjunct Professor at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health, New York University's Wagner School of Public Service, and the Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs at Fordham University.

6.1 Background and Motivation

Her Mother's Death and the Search for Meaning

"It was her death […] that had set me on the path to this career" (CC 328-329) writes Alexander, about the event that prompted her engagement in the humanitarian field. After a five-year-long battle with cancer, her mother died when Alexander was twenty-two. Having had a protected upbringing, her mother's death shattered Alexander's world view, and made her realize for the first time that "bad things could happen" (ibid., 16) to her family too. Having lost the "lighthouse" (ibid., 15) in her life, Alexander was "in more pain" than she "could have ever imagined" (ibid., 15).

At that time, Alexander was working for a marketing consultancy company – a position she kept, in spite of feeling that she did not really belong, because of the high salary and a lack of ideas about what else to do. Her mother's early death changed Alexander's priorities, and she writes that, what once had seemed to be important, no longer mattered to her at all (ibid., 12). Alexander realized that if she "could die at age fifty," she "wanted a more meaningful profession" and "live life

to the fullest," which "meant breaking the conventional course" of her life (ibid., 16). Whereas previously she suppressed her dissatisfaction with her marketing job, her mother's death gave her the courage to listen to herself and the strength to act upon her desire for a more meaningful occupation. Although she did not have another job in prospect or an idea of what to do, she accepted the uncertainty, and quit her job, explaining that she did not care that she did not know what she was doing next (CC 16-17).

The Decision to Become an Aid Worker

Alexander spent the following months travelling alone through Central America – a trip that introduced her to inequality at close range. Passing through towns with no running water, and seeing people with curable diseases go untreated, Alexander was touched by people's vulnerability and helplessness. Meeting international aid workers who led a "different and intriguing way of life," something "clicked" and she realized that this was something "far bigger" than her life in New York, and that she wanted to be part of it (CC 17). Feeling lost after her mother's death, these aid workers presented her with an idea of what she could do with her life, and Alexander returned home determined to work the aid field.

Back in New York Alexander began working for an international development organisation, became engaged to her boyfriend, began studying for a Master's degree in the development area, and felt that her world was finally coming together again after the shattering experience of her mother's death. Intrigued by the course and her fellow students, who were recounting stories of their working experience in the aid field, Alexander was drawn to work in the aid sector. She writes that others' stories made her realize how much more she wanted to see and to do instead of settling down. Writing that "a voice inside" her "compelled" (CC 46) her to continue living on her own, and to immerse herself in this career and the lifestyle it required, she broke off her engagement (ibid., 44-46).

Writing about her initial motivation, Alexander admits that she was not sure that she understood what she was getting herself into. Even more than a decade later, she finds it difficult to provide a single motive for her decision to work in the aid field (ibid., 17). She elaborates:

> Part of me was enticed by the idea of travelling to foreign places and being part of a global community. I imagined my life abroad would be filled with adventure and rewarding, intellectually intriguing work. Another side of me *was* looking for a way to dodge the painful repercussions of my mom's death. A career that would bring me to the most extreme places on earth could do just that. I would be distracted, from the grief that still lingered at home, and inside me. There was other suffering out in the world, and I wanted to touch it. Whatever my intentions, subconscious or not, they led me to the conclusions that the traditional grind could wait: I was young and free and animated by a newfound sense of possibility – the urge to move out into the world, and to be moved by it. (CC 17-18)

In this passage, Alexander presents a self-centred motivation that consists of two different aspects that drive her towards aid work. First, she wanted to live life to the fullest and have a meaningful, intellectually intriguing and rewarding profession that would allow her to travel to foreign places and be part of the global community. At the same time, she was looking for a way to overcome the grief over her mother's death. Having stated previously that she was looking for a more "meaningful profession" (CC 16), Alexander does not articulate what it is in aid work that makes it meaningful, and instead provides a list of the benefits that aid work would have on her life. Although Alexander's description of the inequality she encountered in Central America may imply that her wish to work in the aid field was motivated by a desire to help people in similar circumstances, and that meaning was to be found in helping others, she does not articulate this aspect as part of her motivation. Nor does she express a notion of solidarity, striving for equality, or compassion. It is not a sense of responsibility but a sense of possibility that motivated Alexander to pursue aid work. She demonstrates the self-centred approach when she writes about others' suffering as an instrument for coping with her bereavement. Alexander states that she wanted to see and to touch others' suffering, not as an attempt to alleviate their pain but as a way to distract herself from her own grief.

6.2 Humanitarian Aid Work

Rwanda 2003

Knowing that working experience was an essential requirement for a career in the aid sector, Alexander undertook an internship with the UN in Rwanda in the Summer of 2003. About her motivation, she writes:

> I didn't sign up to go in a fit of passion, or out of a desire to escape to the most far-flung exotic place I could get a job. I wanted a good job, where I'd learn, make some contacts, and try out life 'in the field'. (CC 32)

Although Alexander states that, retrospectively, Rwanda represented "everything good about being young, idealistic, and free" (CC 22) and remembers herself as "idealistic and energetic, intent on making things better and undaunted by the work that would require" (ibid., 22), the explanation for her decision to go to Rwanda does not fit this picture. Explaining her motivation for the internship, she only expresses the desire to improve her employability.

The placement in Rwanda introduced Alexander to the daily reality of aid work and aid workers' lifestyle. While Alexander rented a room in a house with two Rwandan women and their families, most of her colleagues lived in a "parallel universe" (CC 60) which included spacious houses with porches, backyards and an interior that matched the standard of the houses in their home countries. Alexander was surprised by the luxurious lifestyle and the aid workers' detachment from the lives of the local population, and appalled by the entitlement aid workers adopted with regards to their lifestyle and their personnel. Alexander was disillusioned by the majority of aid workers she met in the field – their self-absorbed, indifferent attitude stood in stark contrast to the aid workers in Latin America who inspired her to pursue this work. There was, for example, her manager who accepted his position in Rwanda because it offered an opportunity to climb to a higher level in the UN bureaucratic system, save a lot of money, and enjoy decadent living conditions, but who hated being in Rwanda, and openly expressed his racist views (ibid., 66-67). When Alexander told another colleague that she had moved in with two Rwandan women, the colleague's first question was, whether Alexander's room had a lock and whether she had left any valuable possessions in the house. The same colleague wore rubber gloves when she went to the refugee camps because she was afraid of catching an infection from the refugees (ibid., 51-52). Alexander was not shocked at her colleagues' calculated decision to accept positions in Rwanda to further their careers – she too came to Rwanda because it presented a great opportunity to boost her CV. What was different in her approach was, however, that once she had the position, she focused on the people her job was meant to be helping and tried her best to improve their situation – an attitude she did not see in many of her colleagues.

Alexander's tasks in Rwanda included rewriting refugee status determination interviews into formal English, and reregistering families in the refugee camps Kiziba and Kibungo (CC 71). Alexander describes the interviews with the refugees as a heartless box-ticking procedure that often resembled an "interrogation" (ibid., 64). A colleague assured Alexander that she would get used to the upsetting nature of the interviews, but Alexander found that her work did not get any easier with time. Seeing people, not cases, and talking to children who had been mutilated and witnessed their family members being killed, she left most interviews "speechless and nauseous" and felt "ashamed" (ibid., 65) by her powerlessness.

In Rwanda, Alexander gained an insight into the calculations that drove the aid industry, and determined which crises attracted attention and which were ignored. She writes that although refugee camps were overpopulated, resettlement cases were unresolved, and thousands of refugee cases still needed to be processed, the office was operating on limited resources. Ten years after the genocide, Rwanda had been eclipsed by the conflict in Afghanistan, which now attracted donors' attention and forced other operations to scale down (CC 62).

Alexander describes herself on her first posting abroad as "painfully naïve, annoyingly exuberant", and "green to the point of repulsion" (CC 39). Her attempts to get to know her colleagues were met with reservation when they learned that she was only staying for three months, and her first weeks in the country were characterised by an "unbearable" (ibid., 56) loneliness. Alexander writes that, in retrospect, she could not really blame her colleagues for keeping their distance from her, and that she too would later develop the same attitude towards short-term colleagues in the attempt to protect herself from "the constant emotional jolts of this life" (ibid., 59) and to preserve emotional stability. Alexander's loneliness was alleviated when she fell in love with a Rwandan colleague whom she describes as one of the few people who cared about the people he was working for. She was surprised to learn of the disparity in income and living conditions between him and her expatriate colleagues. Charles, who was seven years older, who had been working in the industry for almost a decade and ran a field office, earned only half of what Alexander was given as a school stipend for her scholarship (ibid., 78).

In Rwanda, Alexander found the intriguing life she had been looking for. She writes that "Rwanda was so far from New York and the life [she] had been leading there, so vastly distant from the life [she] might have continued to live" (CC 80) so

that when the three months of her internship drew to a close, she left determined to come back to Africa (ibid., 81).

Home

Coming home from Rwanda, Alexander was "overwhelmed by American excess" (CC 85) but appreciated that everything from the internet to the subway to the streets, and the service in the restaurants was working smoothly. It was the interactions with her friends that made her realise the degree to which living in Rwanda had changed her. She was not surprised by the way some of her friends reacted to her stories about her work, because she herself would not have been able to find Kigali on the map just a few months previous. Their incredulous and prejudiced reaction to her and Charles' relationship, and her attempt to get a tourist visa for Charles – one asked what she would do if he "robs a bank" (ibid., 87) – however, made her realise that she and her friends had begun to part ways (ibid., 88).

West Darfur 2005

After finishing graduate school in 2005, Alexander accepted a job with an NGO in Darfur. She admits that she had not really questioned her motives at that point and did not know whether she was aiming to work in the aid field out of altruism or because she enjoyed the adventure, or some combination of both (CC 86). Having accepted the position in Darfur in spite of the high security risks, she writes about her motivation:

> I wondered why I was doing this. Why was I voluntarily going to a remote part of the Sahara desert where there was a war, where an American was recently caught in a spray of random gunfire, where I knew no one, where I didn't speak the language, where I had to get a new passport because I couldn't enter the country with the Israel stamps in mine? Was I going for humanitarian values? Right then, I didn't feel compelled by them. I didn't necessarily feel connected to the plight of Darfurians, either. This was what I needed to be doing for my career; it just happened that Darfur was the place I would be doing it (CC 93).

Alexander's decision for the new position is based on the same calculation that she expressed for accepting the internship in Rwanda. She felt forced to accept the job if she wanted to have a career in the field:

> If I wanted to keep doing aid work, I had to go to a place like Darfur. Touring the countryside of Rwanda nearly a decade after the genocide was like doing a desk job in the Green Zone, never facing actual combat. Hardship duty stations like Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo, or northern Uganda were where you moved up in the ranks and built your résumé. (CC 90)

Strikingly, her decision to go to Darfur was based on the same logic that Alexander ascribed to donors and aid agencies in Rwanda: more than ten years after the genocide, for Alexander too, Rwanda was not attractive enough. Wanting to climb up the career ladder, she was looking for a more prestigious – a more remote and more dangerous – position. Understanding the seriousness of the security risks that came with the job in Darfur, Alexander asked a friend to speak at her funeral if she died in Darfur (CC 91-93). Although Alexander states that she accepted the security risks of the position in Darfur voluntarily, the freedom of this decision is questionable. Rather, it seems that her desire for a career in aid work did not leave her any other choice but to play by the rules and accept the sacrifices a career in the field demanded.

Alexander's job in Darfur was to explore how children in the refugee camps were coping with the changes in their lives, and investigate any signs of antisocial behavior. Alexander states that she "loved" (CC 130) her job and enjoyed talking to the children and learning about their lives. Working in the camps, Alexander learned "just how messy aid work" (ibid., 130) could be, and learned of the immense effort that went into coordinating the various interconnected aid programmes. Despite their best efforts, Alexander was always aware of the limitations of what they offered to the children in the camps. She explains:

> Whatever program we ended up providing for these children would be such a small offering for a chance at a promising adulthood. What they really needed was structural change, a swift response to the conflict so they didn't spend their childhoods languishing in some makeshift camps. But that wasn't really the business we were in. Political negotiations were happening simultaneously to our humanitarian intervention; we just had to wait and see what would happen – and keep working in the meantime. (CC 133-134)

Aid workers in Darfur enjoyed a similarly luxurious lifestyle that Alexander had come across in Rwanda. Expatriates could afford extravagances that would be beyond their means in their home countries – spacious houses with swimming pools, gardens, and personnel including cooks, maids, and drivers. She states that most expats did not have to deal with such annoying mundane tasks like mortgage

payments, car repairs, or roof leakages because the organisation hired someone to maintain the infrastructure of their daily lives (CC 99-100). On the one hand, Alexander understood that this lifestyle was a trade-off for the fact that aid workers were separated from their families and friends. Nonetheless, she felt unease at such detachment from real life and the sense of entitlement aid workers adopted regarding their privileges. On one occasion, a colleague, whose cook had fallen ill, was annoyed about having to wash up her dishes herself and told Alexander: "I come to these places so I don't have to do things like this" (ibid., 99).

One specific situation that illustrates the extent to which some aid workers were more concerned with themselves than with the people in the camps took place when a Sudanese woman, who had been raped, came for help to one particular agency. Alison, the agency's gender-based violence advisor, called for a doctor to examine the woman. When another aid worker with years of experience as a rape counsellor from a different organisation, who happened to be around at the same time, offered to help in the meantime, Alison told her to step back because the woman "came to our agency, not yours" (CC 139). Witnessing the incident, Alexander explains that agencies competed with each other for beneficiaries in the same way that businesses competed for customers. Some aid workers personified this competition because they wanted to tell their donors about the good they were doing in order to increase the donations for their agency, which in turn would secure their positions. "For Alison, this tragedy could represent a huge professional victory", writes Alexander (ibid., 139).

Alexander felt a similar discomfort regarding the lavish parties in the aid community, stating that no matter how many of these parties she visited over the course of her career, she always felt uncomfortable. On the one hand, the parties provided an opportunity to forget aid workers' demanding job and the suffering around them, and Alexander found that having a way to enjoy themselves and relax was "a way to stay sane" because no one was an "altruistic robot" (CC 117). On the other hand, "there was always something unsettling about [their] revelry" that took place in such close proximity to the refugee camp and others' suffering and she felt uncomfortable at the "pronounced imbalance of it all" (ibid., 117).

Discomfort with praise

Alexander did not like being compared to Mother Teresa or Angelina Jolie by people at home, and was tired of being told that the world needed more people like her (CC 9). Throughout her memoir, she stresses that she does not want to be seen as a hero and is eager to provide an accurate picture of aid workers' daily lives in order to balance out the public clichés about aid workers. She writes that:

> people didn't understand that this work hadn't turned me into a saint. People like me, out there "doing God's work" and "saving the world," wanted to get drunk and laid, too. We have the same concerns – ageing, putting on weight – as anyone else. (CC 255)
>
> I am a humanitarian aid worker. I've organised food and shelter distributions for tens of thousands of people displaced by conflict. I've bargained with stubborn customs officers looking for bribes to get shipments of life-saving supplies across borders. I've managed programs to provide children education opportunities in the aftermath of war. I've slept in tents with rats and gone many a hot West African day without bathing. But most of the time I work behind a desk staring at budget lines and spreadsheets cataloguing the number of jerry cans delivered or latrines built. I write a lot of reports and send plenty of dull e-mails. But I'm not a famous actress, I'm no hero, and I'm certainly not a saint. (CC 9-10)

She stresses that although she was committed to her work, she did not pursue it out of pure altruism:

> Yes, I was committed to aid work and the difference I still believed it could make, but I went to these places not only out of philanthropy. Like other aid workers, I had plenty of selfish motives as well: the building of a career, the adventure of travel, the excitement of meeting different people. Except unless people were fleeing, dying, ailing, or starving, I wouldn't have a job. (CC 255-256)

North Darfur 2005

After her first job in Darfur, Alexander returned to Sudan because she felt that this was where "the most exciting work" in her field was happening (CC 141). Working for a much bigger organisation this time, she was originally hired to work as the community officer but when the camp coordinator quit her job, was promoted to replace her. At twenty-seven, Alexander's responsibility was to oversee activities in the internally displaced person (IDP) camp Al Salam that sheltered 24,000 people and she was "terrified of failing" (ibid., 160).

Coordinating the different programmes that were run by various aid agencies turned out to be "hard and frustrating" (CC 185), and Alexander often felt like a "shock absorber for everyone's frustration" (ibid., 176). She was overwhelmed and exhausted by the thought that whatever her agency was doing was not enough. She felt like every time things were on track, another setback was just waiting around the corner: villages close by were attacked by the Janjaweed, a rainstorm flooded the camp, a staff member fell ill with malaria and was not able to work for weeks, a car got ambushed and all activities had to be halted until the situation was safe again. Alexander was exhausted by the "endlessness" of the crisis, overwhelmed by an "unrelenting feeling of futility within the enormity of this war" and began to question what her organisation could accomplish in the camp (ibid., 5). In view of the circumstances, their victories felt insubstantial and did not solve the country's real problems: the raids, murders, and rapes continued. All they could do for the fleeing families was to provide them with some plastic sheets, rice, and oil (ibid., 5). In Darfur, Alexander's attitude towards her work changed, and she, who was adamant to get into this profession, and who had worked hard to get into the position she now held, began to critically assess the humanitarian aid industry. She realized that given that the Sudanese government terrorized its own population, their programmes could only offer short-term solutions and a sustainable solution required political engagement (ibid., 218-219).

Ahmed's niece – the compulsion to help

Alexander's sense of futility regarding her work was interrupted by an incident that concerned a colleague's ill niece. This is the only time in the memoir that Alexander describes a personal encounter with someone she was working with in detail. Ahmed, the leader of the camp committee with whom Alexander had become friends, asked her to visit his niece who required life-saving surgery which could only be performed in Khartoum. When Alexander visited the girl, she was shocked by the infant's state: the girl was malnourished, her head was twice its size, her nose was distorted, her eye sockets were sunken in, and her cheeks and forehead were full of fluid. Alexander states that she had never seen anything like this and instantly promised Ahmed and his sister to find a way to get the girl to Khartoum. Afterwards, Alexander called her father, a physician, to ask for advice and he

suggested that the swelling in the girl's head was hydrocephalus and that she needed to be treated soon or she would die. Alexander writes that "there was an urgency about the situation that felt new" (CC 192). In contrast to the situation around her over which she had no control – the IDP camp that was likely to continue to exist for years, the attacks on the villages, the raping of women, the rainstorms – here was one sick child she could help. The feeling of futility of her efforts in the camp was put on hold while she was trying everything she could to find a flight for the girl. The agency Alexander was working for refused to provide a free flight, fearing to set a precedent; if they offered to fly out this child, they would need to offer the same service to everyone else. Alexander's suggestion to pay for the flight herself was rejected because her private donation would be seen as the organisation's willingness to help one particular individual. Her colleagues told Alexander to let go of her idea, and pointed out that all the time she spent trying to help this one child, she could have used to help many more people. Alexander responded to every rejection with an even harder determination, stating that she had learned this persistence from her mother. Refusing to "rationalize the path of least resistance" (ibid., 195) Alexander looked for other agencies willing to provide a flight but every agency in town refused to fly the girl out, and pointed out that their task was to run large-scale operations and working on an individual level was not part of their mandate. Alexander states that it was the first time that she had met such "clinical detachment" (ibid., 193) in the aid community and, although she understood their reasoning in the abstract, her friendship to Ahmed did not allow her to give up. She writes: "[h]ow could I go back to Ahmed and tell him that there was nothing I could do, nothing that the humanitarian community could do, to help? That I was sorry, but he would have to watch his niece die" (ibid., 193). Alexander questioned whether what humanitarian agencies provided – shelter, food, hygiene articles, schools and medical care – was truly the best they could do. "*Shouldn't* we be flying sick people to Khartoum for treatment? I mean, shouldn't that be part of our job? We're here to save lives and reduce suffering, aren't we?" -she asked herself (ibid., 194). In the end, Alexander managed to find an agency which accepted to fly the girl out, organised for a doctor to accompany Ahmed's sister and niece on the flight, and found a doctor in Khartoum, who agreed to treat the girl free of charge (ibid., 197-98).

The desire for success and the decision to leave

The success of having organised a flight for Ahmed's niece to Khartoum did not hold on for long. Alexander was haunted by a sense of futility regarding her work, stating that sometimes it did not matter whether they were trying their best or not, because if one thing didn't go wrong, another would (CC 205). She knew that what she and her team were doing in the camp was not enough and that, whereas they could solve the immediate problems, "this war was much bigger than [her], than the agency that [she] worked for" (ibid., 218-19). What the country really needed, was a political solution and a government that took the responsibility for its citizens seriously.

After seven months in Darfur Alexander was moving more and more towards a nervous breakdown. She writes that her loneliness started to strip her of her sanity, and that her stress started to show (CC 203). She trudged to the office, "almost in a coma" (ibid., 210), and was impatient with her co-workers, realizing that she had become "the vey person [she] had despised" (ibid., 211). When after a heavy storm, she learned that children in the camp had accidentally drowned in holes for depositing garbage, Alexander blamed herself for not having foreseen this eventuality and for not having checked that women disposed of their garbage through the camp's waste disposal system:

> Regardless of what I told myself, I couldn't help feeling that I had been somehow responsible for the drownings – that the cause of death, for each of these children, had been my neglect. If I had known what to look out for, if I had more experience, maybe I could have anticipated this. (CC 207-208)

Alexander felt "at turns dizzy, tired, and depressed" and wanted "to get the hell out of here" (CC 8), when she unexpectedly received a job offer from one of the largest aid agencies, responding to the tsunami in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. The position was to evaluate programmes implemented after the tsunami – a task that in Alexander's perception was easier than working in the camp. Frustrated by the working conditions in Sudan, she was intrigued to see how it would be to work in a developed, functioning state where she could work towards a goal with "some hope" and to "genuinely [build] a momentum and traction" (ibid., 222). At first, Alexander felt bad for wanting to leave Darfur and did not know how to break the news to her colleagues (ibid., 212). Much to her surprise and relief, instead of being angry at her, her African expat colleagues had "a seemingly sensible take" (ibid.,

213) on her decision and encouraged her to leave. She states that although they cared for their work, they saw their jobs as contracts which could be terminated and told her that "this whole thing we whites thought of as philanthropy was irrelevant" because "Sudan was just a means to an end" (ibid., 213). A Kenyan colleague reassured her that the "shit hole" (ibid., 213) that was the camp would be there no matter if she was or was not.

When Alexander told the men from the camp committee that she was leaving, they asked her why and where she was going to. Alexander, ashamed of her decision describes her reaction:

> What was I going to say? *Sorry, but I'm leaving to go to Sri Lanka and Indonesia, to work there. It's not that I don't really care about you all, it's just, well, I got a better job.* So I lied. I said, I was going home for my family.
>
> "But we *are* your family," Ahmed protested.
>
> "I know you are." My hands were shaking. I could barely speak, I was so ashamed. "I need to go home, though," I said softly, my voice quivering.
>
> Two of the members spoke at the same time. "They want to know when you are coming back," Ishaq translated.
>
> The truth was, I wasn't coming back. I was just one of many camp coordinators who would fill this role. Just like the person who would replace me, I came in for a few months, did what I could to make life a bit more pleasant. But I could leave, and would; I had options, and at any point I might get on a plane and go home or on to a better job. These people were left in their broken country, ruled by a relentlessly corrupt government that often seemed to do more to fracture the nation than rebuild it. Most of them would remain in these – or similar – conditions for the rest of their lives. (CC 214)

Alexander sought her father's advice, and he too encouraged her to leave, pointing out that she, as "one stick in a river of shit" (CC 216), could do nothing that would solve the wider problems, Alexander replied that she wanted to feel like she has finished something and explains:

> Each day I won small battles, lost others, but I didn't feel like I had done anything substantial. I'd come to learn that this feeling of powerlessness, this recognition of the insignificance of your own work beneath the overwhelming endless avalanche of problems, is what aid workers face every day. We worked hard, put an exhausting effort to move the bar a mere two inches. Such little progress after so much exertion – it was psychologically demoralizing. (CC 216)

In the end, Alexander gave in, stating that the fate of Darfur did not depend on whether she stayed or left, adding that "[e]ven Ahmed's niece whom [she] had

managed to get out – who had been, briefly, [her] one shining achievement – had died after medical complications" (CC 217).

Alexander left Darfur because she was exhausted, disillusioned, and overwhelmed with a sense of futility of her work. The job offered in Sri Lanka and Indonesia promised her, not only the circumstances Darfur was lacking, but the possibility of success and confirmation. Alexander wanted to accomplish something and see a visible result of her work, but no matter what she did in Darfur, she felt that it was not enough. In the end, she believed that it did not matter whether she was there or not, but she felt guilty for leaving nonetheless. Speaking to her colleagues and her father, she sought their approval for leaving Darfur, but their rational arguments did not whitewash her feeling of guilt. Regardless of how many reasons and how sensible the justifications were that they offered her, they did not lessen the guilt she felt about her decision. Although she stated that, in contrast to the people in Darfur, she had the privilege to leave at any time, she was ashamed of using this possibility. Mentioning Ahmed's niece, when writing about her decision to quit the position, illustrates how much it had meant to Alexander to help the girl, and how disappointed she was that the girl had died in spite of her efforts to help.

Sri Lanka and Indonesia 2005

Despite the "tropical paradise" (CC 222) that was her working environment in Sri Lanka and Indonesia, Alexander sums up her next job as "hell" because she was haunted by the feeling of guilt and shame for having "abandoned the camp" (ibid., 224). The contrast between her living conditions in Darfur - where she had to use bottled water to wash herself - and the five-star resorts with lavish buffets, steaming showers, hundreds of television channels, and poolside bars in Sri Lanka and Indonesia could not have been greater. Alexander struggled to adjust to the extravagances of her new position and was unable to enjoy the luxury, explaining that being pampered only made her guilt about Darfur worse. She writes:

> I spent most of my time there in a daze. Even nightly dose of Ambien couldn't get me to sleep. Every morning, my eyes throbbed with exhaustion. I'd look into the bathroom mirror at my pale face, raccoon circles around my eyes, the edges of my lips drawn down, my hair overgrown and knotted. *I don't look like this. This isn't me.* (CC 224-225)

In Sri Lanka and Darfur Alexander observed the enormous difference between the international response to the tsunami and chronic emergencies like Darfur. Chronic crises, despite killing more people than the tsunami, did not receive any attention or funding because they did not provide "iconic images" and could not be summarised in "easy-to-digest sound bites" (CC 228). She had hoped that with more money, the response in Sri Lanka and Indonesia would be better, but soon realised that instead of being a solution, the large donations agencies received after the tsunami were a problem (ibid., 228-229). After the tsunami, organisations, relishing the rare experience of being inundated with funding, were unable to spend their funding in the required six-month time frames. Pressured by their donors, the media and the public to deliver quick results, the quality of implemented projects and their impact on the population often came as an "afterthought" (ibid., 231). Following the flow of funding, hundreds of organisations had come to Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and the lack of coordination among them resulted in chaos and counterproductive outcomes. Alexander describes orphanages which stood empty because aid agencies did not coordinate their programmes and had not inquired whether a particular area needed one more orphanage. With not enough orphans to fill the orphanages, parents were sending their children to orphanages because these provided meals and shelter that they could not afford themselves. Alexander further describes donations which entirely disregarded cultural customs by sending women, who were only used to wear Saris, ripped jeans and high heels. How, she wondered, would Americans react to bags of Burkas donated to them after a disaster? Alexander points out that people, regardless of their good intentions, did not understand that it was a waste of time and money to get these donations through the customs, to sort and distribute them. Economic distortion was another negative consequence of the aid industry. With the arrival of international organisations, the most educated members of the society were leaving their jobs to work as drivers and translators for the aid agencies. Attracting local employees through higher salaries, aid organisations were creating a situation that was not sustainable because these jobs would disappear as soon as the aid agencies left (ibid., 232-236).

Alexander found the aid organisations' lack of accountability to the beneficiaries disturbing, and saw her position as an evaluator as a "voyeur" (CC 240) who was peering on the suffering of others without giving anything in return. She states that the people she interviewed in order to evaluate the impact of the

organisation's programmes, did not know how the information they provided would be used and did not understand the decision process behind the delivery of aid (ibid., 240-241). Without any mechanisms to measure programme effectiveness from the point of view of the aid beneficiaries, organisations could do whatever they wanted, as long as they justified their actions to their donors. Alexander came to see that "this good-hearted profession [was] an industry just like any other"; an industry that was controlled by their dependency on donors with those in need of assistance having little say in the process, and no possibility to hold companies accountable for their failures (CC 229-231). The dependency on money led to a situation in which everyone involved in the process was trying to make a good impression and to keep up appearances – an atmosphere in which failures were whitewashed and numbers were massaged in order to comply with the funding requirements. Alexander points out that no party involved in the aid process wanted to know the truth about aid. A donor government, which spent fifty million dollars of taxpayers' money did not want to hear what went wrong. The agency, who ran the project, wanted to show that it had done a good job because it wanted to receive funding for future projects. The local agency wanted to demonstrate that they implemented the project well, as otherwise they would not be contracted again (ibid., 314-315). Although Alexander saw that genuine progress had been made, she began to question some of the most fundamental assumptions about aid (ibid., 241) and adopted a cynical position, stating that over the years she had come to learn that "disasters [were] actually good for aid organisations" because they "[represented] opportunities for agencies to attract more funds, garner greater publicity, and essentially grow global empires" (ibid., 229).

Here, Alexander demonstrates that she has a much better and deeper grasp on the humanitarian aid system than during the earlier missions, and it is in her criticism of the aid industry that her care for those she is working for is most visible. She writes that people affected by crises deserved respect and should receive services based on best practice and thought-out plans rather than organisations working on a whim. She points out that efficient aid takes time and investment, the willingness to listen to what the population needs to and provide it, as well as the willingness to learn from mistakes, and to share those mistakes within the humanitarian community in order to improve general practice (CC 310-315). Alexander's disappointment was born out of the desire to find the best way to

deliver assistance that serves people, not aid agencies. She wanted to resist the pressure of simply doing something without any care or thought about what this 'something' was and how it affected the population it was supposed to help. It was her disappointment with the aid industry that offered an insight into her motivation, and stands in contrast to the beginning of her memoir and her articulation of her self-centred motivation to engage in aid work.

Home

When Alexander returned to New York, she found it difficult to readjust to the life back home. Alexander writes that the stressful months in Darfur, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia had "eroded" (CC 256) her, and that by the time she returned home she was "unhinged" (ibid., 251). Her guilt for having left the camp in Darfur had not ceased. Alexander attributed her depression not only to the feeling of being out of place at home but to a "sense of disorientation" (ibid., 256) that she felt in all worlds. When abroad, she was looking forward to coming home "where things seemed to make sense" (ibid., 253), but at home experienced that everything felt different and that she did not know what normal was anymore. Not having wanted to live a conventional life in the first place, Alexander struggled fitting into a world that suggested that a woman her age should be earning money, buying a property, and aiming to settle down (ibid., 256-257). She felt disconnected from her friends and their lives, stating that they did not recognise the person she had become and did not know how to integrate her back into their lives. In the same way, she did not know how to readjust and assimilate herself. Alexander wondered whether she had become one of the so-called disaster addicts and emergency enthusiasts who returned to the field again and again because they could not bear the banality of the daily life at home: paying bills, fixing the dishwasher or picking up the children from afternoon sports activities (ibid., 256). Back home, she felt like she had no identity:

> At least in Africa, as an expat, I may not have been part of the culture, but I was part of a subculture. I knew where I stood. It wasn't the novelty pushing me to these places anymore. Now I kept going because I saw myself as someone who kept going, and so did other people. It was how they defined me, and it was how I defined myself. As much as I may have wanted to slow down, I couldn't. If I wasn't the person pushing herself to the next scary place, then who was I? (CC 257)

The job as an aid worker had provided Alexander with an identity and the disillusionment with her profession and criticism of the aid industry resulted in an identity crisis. She writes:

> It wasn't just the lingering guilt of abandoning the camp after these two consecutive assignments, my idealism seemed to have vanished. I felt lost, betrayed. With such high ambitions for this industry, the flaws seemed overwhelming. And – while I was questioning the extent to which aid had positive outcomes – what did this commitment even mean anymore? Did my endless fatigue mean I wasn't cut out for the psychical rigors of this job? It was disorienting to suddenly doubt the profession that I had spent years trying to break into. Was I still willing to throw my life into chaos for an industry that I now questioned? And if the answer was "no," then what *would* I do? (CC 251)

The chapter in which Alexander writes about coming back home from Darfur, Indonesia and Sri Lanka is entitled "I Make a Living Off the Suffering of Strangers" and Alexander addressed this statement when she described that this is what she thought when people pointed out how wonderful the work she did was. She states that she never knew what to do with such compliments because she thought of herself as someone who had abandoned the camp and made her living off the suffering of strangers (CC 254-255).

Sierra Leone 2006

Shortly after returning to New York, Alexander left for a position in Sierra Leone. She had applied for a Fulbright grant to conduct a study on child soldiers in Sierra Leone, and when receiving the funding decided to accept it despite dreading going away, because she was interested in the project. Alexander does not elaborate on how she overcame her depression, what it was that helped her to get through her disillusionment, and why she decided to continue her engagement in the aid field. Her decision to go back to aid work and to go to Sierra Leone is a coping mechanism. Not knowing what else to do apart from aid work, and not having a sense of identity that was independent of being an aid worker, Alexander needed the job because it would help her to regain some ground, to have something she could cling to and overcome her feeling of being lost.

At the same time that Alexander's arrived in Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia, was brought to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to be charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity. Alexander states that the

excitement about Taylor's trial took away her anxiety about leaving home (CC 267). She immersed herself in her project and writes that Sierra Leone was the first place where the professional and personal lives genuinely merged, and that she did not experience any of the isolation, loneliness or restriction of movement she had experienced in Darfur. She writes that she loved her life in Sierra Leone, that she found her research fascinating and enjoyed being part of a larger project and mission, especially when it became clear that her work would contribute to Taylor's indictment (ibid., 286-288). She states that "[w]orking on the Taylor case and contributing to his conviction, even in a marginal way, was about the most exciting opportunity [she] could imagine" (ibid., 293).

However, although Sierra Leone was "the kind of place you could have a life" (CC 288) and Alexander had made friends, she longed for "a sense of belonging", a "community" and "and the closeness of loved ones" (ibid., 300). She writes:

> Sure, I had accumulated more stamps in my passport and made friends from places I didn't even know existed a few years before. But the catalogue of countries I had been were memories that I shared with people scattered across the globe. The work I found so rewarding threatened to destroy everything else meaningful in my life. I loved a job that made loving anything else seemingly impossible (CC 303).

In Sierra Leone Alexander realized that the adventurous life that she had admired so much and the work she "found so rewarding threatened to destroy everything else meaningful" in her life, and returned to New York after finishing the study wanting to "simplify" her life (CC 303).

New York Cit 2008 and Haiti 2010

Back in New York, Alexander began working in the organisation's headquarters – a position that was far less exciting than her life abroad, but which provided her with the stability she longed for while allowing her to remain engaged in the field (CC 305). Detached from the field in the New York office, she had to remind herself that this position played an important part in helping people, and used memories of "the expressions of people standing in line for food distributions in Darfur, the interactions that [she] had with children who had been assisted after the war in Sierra Leone, the names of asylum seekers in Rwanda" to keep up her motivation whilst spending her days filling in forms and spreadsheets (ibid., 318). Alexander

settled down in New York, began a PhD programme and a new relationship, and had everything that she had wanted during her previous postings abroad (ibid., 356). However, when the earthquake hit Haiti and she was offered a field position, she accepted without hesitation. She explains this decision in the following way:

> Sheer adrenaline was what was pulling me to Haiti – the addictive rush of being part of a major response. I loved that my career was intertwined with the most urgent events in the world. Sitting around in New York, I felt like a football player on the disabled list, watching the game unfold in front of me, but not being able to get off the bench. All my other jobs now felt like practice runs. In Haiti, I'd be in a position of seniority, with the chance to contribute more than I ever had before. So when I got the call, how could I refuse? This disaster was bigger than my nice life in New York; the allure was too powerful to ignore, and its force helped me rationalize my decision, as I persuaded myself I could have both the job and the relationship. (CC 338-339)

Looking back Alexander describes the decision that jeopardized her relationship as "reckless" and "foolish" (CC 338). She does not explicitly state whether she and her partner broke up during or after her posting in Haiti, but as she does not mention him in the rest of the book, it is fair to assume that they separated.

In Haiti, Alexander was responsible for the strategic planning of the organisation's response to the earthquake. Part of her role was to help determine how the organisation should spend the millions of dollars that came in every day. Here, she could put her criticism into practice and ensure that the programmes the organisation ran were of high quality (CC 344). Alexander's description of the work in Haiti differs in many ways from the accounts of her previous postings. Here, she does not focus on herself anymore but writes about their hard work and her colleagues' commitment and dedication that she would never forget. Working up to eighteen hours a day, seven days a week, she could see that, in spite of some drawbacks, they were making a difference: a child would get more meals per day than previously, a girl would be able to go to school. In her writing about her job in Haiti, we find a much softer and approachable Alexander. She states that Haitians' resilience and pride, their determination to build up their country, and their compassion for others as well as their ability to celebrate their survival in the middle of a disaster left her "humbled" (ibid., 355). In Haiti, we can also see that Alexander's expectations regarding her work and the outcome of her work changed. She no longer expected unrealistic outcomes but states that her agency's aid was

“basic, and it was messy, but it was *there*, and people were grateful” (ibid., 343). Alexander re-evaluated her criteria of success:

> Donations of millions of dollars came in every day, and part of my role was to help determine how that would be spent and make sure our programs were of high quality. It may have taken time, it may have required patience and perseverance, but I was part of a chain that made progress. Just knowing that was rewarding enough. (CC 344)

Like in every other emergency, organisations in Haiti competed with each for funding which Alexander found “crude and shameless” (CC 362). Alexander encountered the same absence of accountability towards beneficiaries that outraged her in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Because Haitians were the recipients and received the aid for free, their opinions were rarely taken into account. In the “take-it-or-leave-it-relationship” (ibid., 365) they had no choice about the goods they received or the time they received them. Aid agencies did not rely on Haitians’ opinions or positive evaluations of their work in order to survive – only their donors could put an end to the organisation by withdrawing the funding.

Alexander was equally critical of volunteers who travelled to emergency sights “to help out” (CC 359), writing that their agenda seemed always the same: to clear some rubble, say a few prayers, take many pictures with children and leave. She writes that professional aid workers hated the volunteers and accused them of wanting to feel noble and to return home from their “hug vacations” (ibid., 360) with a good story. Alexander writes:

> Revulsion clenched my stomach whenever I thought of the people I saw at the camp, and yet still I knew I recognized myself in them. Perhaps my motives for coming here weren't so different from theirs. These church groups wanted to *see* Haiti, wanted to touch it – wanted, in other words, to be part of an extraordinary experience. But so did a lot of the people I worked with, who updated their Facebook statuses every two minutes in order to keep everyone they had ever met apprised of their latest activities in Haiti. (CC 361-62)

For the first time, Alexander is self-critical of her motivation. She admits that her reasons for being in Haiti are not dissimilar to the emergency tourists, although she is likely to justify her presence by her professionalism and her ability to actually help. Previously, she criticised the aid community and the structures within which aid agencies operated, but not herself and her own motivation or approach to her work. In this quote, Alexander, for the first time provides a reflection on her own

motivation, although she does not elaborate on it and does not reflect on the fact that what she describes as her motivation to be in Haiti has indeed been her motivation to work in the aid field in general. Instead, she quickly turns to other aid workers who, in contrast to her, ensured that they received credits for their work by writing about their work on social media.

6.3 Epilogue

After Haiti Alexander was tired of "running around and putting what *felt* like real life on hold" (CC 376). She writes that she had reached a point at which she not only "no longer *needed* to be part of the latest breaking emergency" (ibid., 376) but also did not want to. Wanting to remain "in the profession [she] loved" (ibid., 376), Alexander was looking for a way to do so in New York. Alexander continued her PhD and began teaching courses on humanitarianism at three New York City universities, in addition to doing consultancy work for various humanitarian organisations. She writes that although aid is still her profession, her current position allows her to contribute in a way that is more suitable with the life she has now. She states that her life now is a compromise she can live with because it is more important to her now to have stable friendships that are not interrupted every few months, a relationship that is not conducted through Skype, and the possibility to solve family problems in person rather than through phone calls (ibid., 370-371). In Alexander's decision to continue to work in the aid field in New York, despite its lack of adventure and excitement that she sought during her previous posts, we can see that there is a core genuine interest in aid work itself. However, for the most part of her professional life as an aid worker, this interest is overshadowed by other aspects of aid work. Here, Alexander admits that she had needed the thrill of the job and she decided to work in New York because she did not need the adventure anymore. When looking back on her career Alexander writes:

> It's been a spectacular and surreal journey, and some days I find the destination – my life as a humanitarian aid worker – nearly as astonishing, particularly when held against the distant backdrop of the life I might have had (CC 376-377).

Here again the emphasis lies on the exciting lifestyle and the possibility this profession has given her to escape the dull and boring life she might have had.

Alexander remains critical of the aid world, aware that agencies take over tasks that, in the long run, are the responsibility of the local government, wondering whether their aid was "just a Band-Aid struck on larger political problems" (CC 372), a salve that allowed political leaders to ignore their responsibility for their citizens. "But what choice do we have, if without the aid people are going to die?" -she asks (ibid., 372). Although she believes that saving lives today without critically thinking about saving lives in the future can perpetuate a dysfunctional situation, waiting for a political solution at the cost of losing lives is not an option.

> But over the years I learned to be realistic in my expectations of what aid could achieve. Whatever the context we're working in, it's never simple. Things take time, it's messy, there are always mitigating factors and extenuating circumstances. But to focus on just the negative aspects of internal aid work – of which there are many – and conclude that aid is a failure is not the solution. Our work in humanitarian settings matters, and to wait for broader social, political, and economic reforms to address the needs of the most vulnerable is not an option. Systemic change is only possible through an amalgamation of short-term/long-term, micro/macro, national/subnational, policy/project investments. We will never be able to prove a counterfactual argument – What would people's lives be like without aid? Would they be better, or worse off? - so in some ways it is a profession based more on belief that empirical evidence. And I stay with it because I believe in the purpose of aid: to alleviate suffering of people when they need help most. (CC 373)

Only at the very end of her memoir, in the epilogue, looking back at her life as a humanitarian aid worker, does Alexander explicitly articulate a concern for the other as part of her motivation to work in the aid field. She states that she had continued working in the aid sector in spite of her disillusionment and frustration because she believes in its purpose to alleviate others' suffering. However, she rarely articulates and unwrapped this belief in her memoir so that this statement almost comes as a surprise and it remains unclear when this belief became the driving force of her work.

7. Review of the Common Ethical Experiences: The Need for further Analysis

My thesis aims to explain how humanitarian aid workers understand their humanitarian engagement and to explore, describe, and analyze the ethical experiences which they describe as being crucial for their engagement. The IPA analyses of the memoirs of James Orbinski, James Maskalyk, Damien Brown, and Jessica Alexander answer two of the research questions regarding the significance of specific experiences for individuals' humanitarian aid work. First, the IPA studies reveal that the authors' motivations for humanitarian aid work were evoked by particular experiences and second, that particular experiences helped them to continue their work in spite of its challenging nature. In order to answer my third research question regarding the commonality among these experiences, the following section will first uncover the common characteristics in the significant experiences which motivated the aid workers, and second, compare them to the commonalities among those experiences which aid workers described as the source of their perseverance whilst on-assignment.

7.1 Significant Experiences for Aid Workers' Motivation

The first element that all experiences have in common is that they are encounters with others' suffering, distress, and death. Orbinski recalls his brother's illness, his encounter with the Jewish man, and seeing the girl in the television report on the Ethiopian famine. Maskalyk decides to work in the humanitarian sector when he sees patients' destitute state in Chile. Brown describes the street children he saw growing up in the Apartheid system in South Africa, and specific encounters with people who could barely make a living during his travels. Maskalyk describes the desperate state of the patients he met working in Chile. Alexander writes that her interest in humanitarian aid work was triggered by her mother's death and the poverty she witnessed when travelling through Central America.

A second common characteristic among these experiences is their unplanned nature and the lack of control the individuals have over them. These encounters

happen to them – they have no power to make these moments happen and could not have prepared for them.

A third commonality is the eye-opening element in these moments: suddenly, these individuals are awoken to a reality they did not see before. Orbinski learned that one person's death can be another person's deliberate decision; Alexander realized that her storybook-family and sheltered life could be hit by a tragedy beyond their control; Maskalyk learned that the sickest he was training to work for were not in Canada but in countries like Chile; Brown came to understand the arbitrariness of his privileged life. Brown presents the clearest example of the eye-opening element – it is not that he had not seen inequality or suffering before, but the difference when he was travelling was his openness to others' hardship. Whereas during his childhood and teenage years he had considered others' poverty as an unchangeable fact of life, in seeing poverty during his twenties, Brown was touched and approached others' suffering as something that concerned him personally and required his response.

The personal approach is likewise visible in other humanitarians' immediate responses in similar situations: they do not question the necessity of responding, do not contemplate general solutions, and do not look for others to change the situation. Instead, they see themselves in relation to others' suffering and are preoccupied with what they as individuals can do to change these peoples' living conditions. Strikingly, all of them know what their response to these encounters should be – for Maskalyk and Alexander this realization occurs in the situation itself, for Orbinski and Brown finding their answer to these situations takes more time.

Another common element in the experiences, that aid workers describe as having been significant for their motivation to work in the aid field, is their empowering nature. None of the authors feel powerless regarding others' hardship and none of them doubt whether they can indeed do something to change the situations they witness. It is striking, particularly in light of their later self-doubts during humanitarian work, that there are no calculations regarding the success of their undertakings in these moments.

The final common element found in Orbinski's and Brown's accounts regarding their decision to work in the humanitarian sector is the notion of 'choicelessness'. We find the most explicit articulation of such 'choicelessness' in Brown's summation that "there was no decision to make" (BA 20) and that his

decision to become a humanitarian aid worker was a ‘non-decision’. Brown articulates his decision as an inevitable step, as a choice that was not a choice, but a feeling of being compelled. Orbinski articulates a similar notion of ‘choicelessness’. When he postpones his humanitarian work because he needs to pay off his student debt, the desire to work for MSF does not let go of him, and in the end, he “resign[s] […] to carrying debt a little longer” (IO 76) and goes on to his first posting. The notion of a lack of choice is demonstrated not only at the beginning of their humanitarian work, but is a constant feature of their humanitarian engagement. Brown describes his decision to go back to the field after his first job in Mavinga as “inevitable” (BA 190). Orbinski returns to Somalia because “[he] could not live with who [he] would be if [he] did not go back” (IO 100), and presents the same reason for accepting the offer to work in Rwanda during the genocide (ibid., 181). The ‘choicelessness’ which humanitarians describe in these moments goes hand in hand with their ability to let go of a particular concern for themselves. Orbinski lets go of his desire for financial stability, Brown decides to delay building up his career, Maskalyk lets go of a concern for his safety. In each of these instances, we see a passive element, a decision that is a surrendering, a following of one’s feeling of being compelled to work in the humanitarian field. Although Maskalyk does not articulate his decision for humanitarian aid work as an inevitable step, when he comes back from Abyei, he describes a sense of urgency and restlessness that draws him back. He writes that the knowledge of people suffering unnecessarily in Abyei would not allow him to settle down in Canada, and describes his desire to go back as something that he could not turn away from or silence. Out of the four memoirs, Alexander is the only humanitarian aid worker whose motivation does not encompass a passive element. In contrast to others, her first position in the humanitarian sector is a well-calculated step in order to improve her chances of employability and the following decisions for both positions in Sudan are equally driven by a desire to build a career in the aid sector.

Having explored these common elements in the experiences which humanitarian aid workers link to their decision to work in the humanitarian sector, we now turn to the experiences which they describe as having been significant during their work in the field.

7.2 Significant Experiences during Humanitarian Aid Work

The IPA studies revealed that specific encounters not only play an important role for humanitarian aid workers' motivation, but are also crucial for their performance in the field. When addressing difficulties which they faced during their postings and the ways in which they coped with these challenges, the four humanitarian aid workers describe specific experiences which helped them to overcome feelings of futility and exhaustion. A major finding of the thesis is that these encounters share many of the characteristics with the encounters humanitarians attribute as their motivation for humanitarian aid work. They are unplanned, they revolve around the notion of suffering, they include an eye-opening element, and have an empowering impact on the humanitarians. Here too, humanitarians take the situations personally and describe their actions as lacking other alternatives. In all of these encounters, the aid workers find the strength to resist the temptation to turn away from their job, and the necessary persistence to endure the difficulties of their engagement.

A common characteristic among these experiences is that they are particular encounters with others' suffering, weakness and destitution. For Orbinski it is the encounter with the girl and her mother, the Ummera-sha woman, and the boy with the amputated leg. For Brown, it is the encounter with the girl with the beer bottle doll. For Maskalyk it is meeting Aweil, and later, another girl who comes to the hospital for treatment on her own. For Alexander, it is the encounter with Ahmed and his niece.

These encounters occur during a time when the humanitarians are struggling with the weight of their responsibility and the challenges of their work. Working non-stop in order to assist victims of the genocide, Orbinski is exhausted and hopeless. Maskalyk, looking back on his time in Abyei shortly before leaving, wonders what he was able to achieve. Brown is disappointed with his local colleagues' attitude towards him and longs for recognition, while Alexander is overwhelmed by a sense of futility regarding her efforts to accomplish anything in the camp in Darfur.

These encounters interrupt them and cut through their clouds of concern with the difficulties of their work, the possible long-lasting impact of their efforts, and tiredness. Although these encounters do not change the circumstances in which the humanitarians work, they change the situation by changing humanitarians' attitude.

These encounters re-instate humanitarian aid workers' commitment, give them the strength to resist the temptation to give up, and the courage to let go of a concern for their own safety or recognition.

The encounter with the beer bottle girl enables Brown to take a step back from his desire for acknowledgement for his work and gives him the necessary strength to confront the clinicos in the hospital and to continue working in Mavinga. Ahmed's niece makes Alexander forget her thoughts of futility, restores a sense of purpose in her work, and gives her the necessary determination to withstand all obstacles when looking for a flight for the girl. Although Alexander does not articulate 'choicelessness' as part of her initial motivation to become a humanitarian aid worker, in this instance, she demonstrates a notion of having no other choice but to find a flight for the girl. She writes that she could not give up and tell her friend that his niece would have to die because every agency refused to help them. Similarly, when taking the girl and her mother to the hospital in spite of the danger to his life, Orbinski writes that this decision was not a choice. We find a similar notion of being compelled to respond to the other in Maskalyk's account when he meets Aweil and describes his wish to adopt her as a sentiment that was bigger than him, and in the encounter with a little girl to whom he had wanted to give "everything" (M 10/07 p. 300).

Stating that not following through with his wish to adopt Aweil was the biggest shame of his life, Maskalyk illustrates that there is a cost to not taking what is happening in these specific ethical experiences seriously. Other accounts in which we find a similar notion of guilt is Alexander's decision to leave Darfur, and Brown's decision to quit his position in Nasir. Both of their decisions share common characteristics. Brown and Alexander are overwhelmed with a sense of futility regarding the impact of their work, long for visible achievement, and ask themselves how much they are willing to sacrifice for their commitment.

The IPA analysis of the four memoirs demonstrates that humanitarian aid workers connect their initial motivation to engage in the humanitarian field, as well as their ability to cope with the difficulties during their work, with specific encounters. In contrast to accounts of Nightingale, Dunant, and Jebb, who understood the specific experiences that motivated them to engage in humanitarian aid work as being called by God and explained their humanitarian work as their response to this call, contemporary aid workers do not present a similar – or indeed

any – analysis of their significant experiences. Although they articulate the significance of specific encounters, they do not analyse the nature of these encounters.

How, for example, shall we understand the lack of choice in Alexander's, Brown's and Orbinski's accounts? How shall we understand Orbinski's statements: "I acted not as I thought I should, but as I had no choice but to do" (IO 6) and "I could not live with who I would be if I did not go back" (IO 100)? What is it in these experiences that defies choice? The commonalities of their experiences seem to suggest that all humanitarians come to accept that 'taking care of themselves' ultimately entails and implies 'taking care of others' and that it is this close interconnection that compels them to continue working in the field. However, they only articulate the link and do not provide an in-depth analysis of the encounters. How are we to understand Maskalyk's "overwhelming urge" to give "everything" (SM 10/07 p. 300) to the little girl he sees for the last time before he leaves Abyei? And how can we understand why he, accepting the arguments for why he should not adopt Aweil, is filled with shame when looking back on his decision years later? How can we explain why Alexander, who presents a list of sensible reasons for quitting her position in Darfur to accept another job offer in Sri Lanka and Indonesia, is then haunted by a feeling of shame for months?

In order to provide a deeper analysis of the nature of these experiences, I have therefore decided to enrich and enhance humanitarians' self-reflection by cautiously weaving the language and concepts provided by Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas into my interpretation of the specific encounters. Buber's and Levinas's concepts allow me to extend the IPA analyses to the point where the core formative experiences can be articulated in a manner that allows for comparisons between and across the different cases considered in this study. In their analysis of the encounter between the self and the other, Buber and Levinas focus on different aspects and, as will become evident, using both thinkers will provide us with a rich texture of notions and concepts to explore the events and encounters that the humanitarians consider formative for their humanitarian engagement. Moreover, it is precisely the creative tension between Buber's and Levinas's philosophies that will help us shed light on the ethical experiences narrated by the humanitarian aid workers.

Part III

Martin Buber's and Emmanuel Levinas's Situational Ethics: The Experiential Core of the Humanitarian Vocation

8. Martin Buber's and Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics

Although there are important differences and oppositions between Buber's and Levinas's thought, the thinkers share "a common basis" (Strasser 2004, 38). A major similarity between Levinas and Buber is that, by putting the core of their philosophical approach to ethics in an encounter between individuals, they are contrasting the traditional Western philosophical approach to ethics that focuses on the rational ego as the source of ethical content. Both thinkers locate ethics outside of the realm of knowledge and see the starting point of ethics in intersubjective encounters. In the encounter with the other, I am called to become responsible – and this call imposes a duty of action towards the other. Buber describes the birth of ethics as my ability to say Thou to the other and to enter into relation with him. For Levinas, ethics takes place in a face-to-face meeting in which the self is put in question by the infinitely other. Ethics for Levinas is not a matter of character, sense of duty or consequences like advocated by virtue ethics, deontologists, or consequentualists but something that unfolds in our approach of otherness (Corvellec 2005). Levinas and Buber emphasise the practical application of this call in everyday life and understand responsibility in a direct sense as a response to the other. The ability to respond to the other – and to become responsible – requires a level of egolessness, and is for both thinkers a prerequisite for the self to gain subjectivity (Atterton, Calarco, and Friedman 2004, 5-6).

In the following section of the thesis, I first introduce the two thinkers, their key notions and concepts, and provide a brief overview of their major differences. After providing the theoretical basis for the next step of the study, I will use the introduced theories to explore in greater depth three particularly significant encounters or aspects from each IPA analysis. Examining the aid workers' self-analysis with help of Buber's and Levinas's concepts will allow me to identify and highlight the more general features of the relevant encounters and illuminate the aspects that have been left unsolved in the IPA analyses. In order to increase the readability of this section for the reader, I have repeated the relevant quotations from each experience.

8.1 Martin Buber: The Potential of the 'in-between'

In Buber's thought, responsibility emerges through the speech that addresses us in our everyday encounters. Buber claims that throughout our lives we are addressed in situations in which we feel that something important has happened to us, in specific moments in which we are touched. Being addressed is a constituent part of every life, and "[e]ach concrete hour allotted to the person" is "speech for the man who is attentive" (BMM 16).

The events, in which something important is spoken into our lives, are not extraordinary in themselves, but concern ordinary occasions. I can, for example, meet someone "about whom there is something, which I cannot grasp in any objective way at all" (BMM 9) but who has the power to say something to me, to touch me. The essential characteristic of the address is its uniqueness – I am addressed as the individual that I am in this particular moment. Buber writes that the address does not have an objective form, and what is said to me "has never been said before nor is it composed of sounds that have ever been said" (ibid., 12).

The address does not require a vocalized dialogue with the other nor for the other to want to address me. Buber claims that the other has indeed "nothing to do with what is said" (BMM 9); he might not even notice me, but can still touch me through his being – for it is not he who says something to me, "but *it* says it" (ibid., 9). The address takes place in what Buber calls the "sphere of between" (WM 203), an independent reality that comes into being when two individuals meet. The 'sphere of between' is, according to Buber, "the real place and bearer of what happens between men" (ibid., 203). Buber understands this space as a 'between' because the interaction that takes place between me and the other reaches beyond the special sphere of each of us. The meaning of our encounter cannot be found in me or the other, nor in both of us together, but only in our interchange (Friedman 1965, 26). Buber writes that "[t]he view which establishes the concept of 'between' is to be acquired by no longer localizing the relation between human beings, as is customary, either within individual souls or in a general world which embraces and determines them, but in actual fact between them" (WM 203).

The sphere of the 'between' comes into being when two individuals meet, and is therefore not fixed but is recreated every time individuals meet each other (WM 203). Furthermore, it is an independent space because, although the address occurs

between me and the other and requires both of us, neither I nor the other can force it into being. In the same way that I cannot will to be touched by the other, the other cannot force me to be moved by him. Buber describes the space of the between as "mysterious" (BMM 24) – the address is an exclusive experience which "can neither be interpreted nor translated" (ibid., 12).

In the address, something happens to me which I might not understand myself, and find difficult to explain to others. Buber writes that the addressed might not "be able to tell no one, not even himself, what he had experienced" (BMM 4) and that he cannot describe the person through whom something has been said to me (ibid., 10). Said into my very life, I cannot explain what happened to me and make others understand the significance of what I have experienced in the moment of the address. The address cannot be explained or displayed to others, for it "is not a *what* at all" (ibid., 12), and cannot be understood independently of the situation in which it occurred. The address is unique – it can be that the man needs me, it can tell me something about myself, it might be that I have to answer for it at another time to someone else, but in any case, "a word demanding an answer has happened to me" (ibid., 10).

The Address

Buber understands responsibility in its precise and direct sense as a response to what addresses us in our everyday encounters, and claims that "[g]enuine responsibility exists only where there is real responding" (BMM 16). Responsibility, in Buber's thought, is therefore not a pre-defined concept but arises from a particular situation. Buber explains:

> A dog has looked at you, you answer for its glance, a child has clutched your hand, you answer for its touch, a host of men moves about you, you answer for their need. (BMM 17)

The ways in which one can respond to the address are embedded in Buber's concept of two different ways of relating to the world, which he describes in word pairs: the 'I-It' and the 'I-Thou'. For Buber, the I does not exist independently but always appears in combination with the second part of the word pair 'Thou' or 'It'. Buber writes that "[s]aying I and saying one of the two basic words are the same" (IT 54). The two different attitudes I-Thou and I-It do

not describe two different types of personalities, but are two different modes of relating to the world that are inherent to everyone (Friedman 1955, 57). I can either say 'Thou' to something or someone or I can address the something or someone as 'It'.

The I-It

The basic word I-It is characterised by detachment and distance and describes a typical subject-object relationship, in which the self revolves around himself and encounters others as objects which can be consumed for his pleasure without any reciprocity (IT 83, 114). Buber likens the self in the I-It realm to a scientist who observes the object of his interest through a telescope without any feeling or understanding of their uniqueness (IT 80-81). Responding to the other as an It is not to see him in his entirety, but only as a sum of features; not to enter into relation with him, but to keep one's distance.

The I-Thou

In contrast to I-It, I-Thou constitutes the world of relation and is characterised by directness, presentness, and mutuality. To say 'Thou' to the other is to overcome the detachment of the I-It realm, to approach the other in his entirety, and to enter into a life of dialogue with him (BMM 37). To say 'Thou' to the other is not to see him as just a thing that exists among other things, but to confront him in his entirety as a being. In the I-Thou relation the other

> is no longer He or She, limited by other Hes and Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of name qualities. Neighborless and seamless, he is You and fills the firmament. (IT 59)

In contrast to the I-It realm in which the self is preoccupied with what he can get out of the encounter for himself (IT 54), the I-Thou is non-egoistic in nature. I am not concerned with how the other can be used for my purposes and what I can gain from him for myself. Buber claims that every means is an obstacle to the I-Thou encounter and real meetings occur only where all means have disappeared (IT 63). This relation requires the self to open himself up to the other, and to let go of any prior knowledge about the other. The I-Thou relation is what Buber calls an "unmediated" (IT 62) relation in which nothing

conceptual stands between the self and the other, and the only purpose is to meet the other in his particular being with the intention of establishing a mutual relation with him (IT 112-113; Friedman 1955, 87). 'Relation' here does not necessarily mean a long-lasting affinity and does not even require a vocalized dialogue with the other. The I-Thou relation can be a glance between two individuals, and constitutes a relation as long as it is "unreserved" (BMM 37).

At the basis of every I–Thou encounter lies confirmation. Buber claims that each individual is looking "for a Yes which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another" (KM 71) and stresses that "actual humanity exists only where this capacity unfolds" (ibid., 68). The mutual confirmation is most fully realized in what Buber calls "imagining the real" and "making present" (ibid., 71). 'Imagining the real' describes a person's capacity to conceive what another person at this very moment might be wishing, feeling, perceiving, and thinking as this specific individual. Buber describes this act as "a bold swinging" (ibid., 81) of my being into the life of the other. In this moment, I make "the particular person in front of me present to myself in his wholeness, unity, and uniqueness" (ibid., 81). This level of relation surpasses general sympathy with the other's pain but makes me realize "this particular pain as that pain of the other" (ibid., 70). It is in the moment in which I make the other present to me as the individual; that "the other becomes a self for me" (ibid., 71). Buber writes that a "[r]elation is fulfilled in a full making present when I think of the other not merely as this very one, but experience, in the particular approximation of the given moment, the experience belonging to him as this very one" (ibid., 71).

Such an awareness is impossible if I am detached from the other, if I am preoccupied with observing the other, and contemplating him. Buber writes that the wholeness of the other does not reveal itself to contemplation or observation, but is only possible when "I step into an elemental relation with the other, that is, when he becomes present to me" (KM 80). To confirm the other in his individuality is to confirm him in his otherness (ibid., 69). Buber acknowledges the other's otherness as a constitutive part of his identity and states that the other is "essentially other than myself" (ibid., 80). He stresses that "[o]nly when the individual knows the other in all his otherness as himself, as man, and from there

breaks through to the other, has he broken through his solitude in a strict and transforming meeting" (WM 201-202).

The I-Thou relation is therefore not an elimination of differences, but an affirmation of the other in his difference. This, however, is not the same as approving of the other's opinion. Buber points out that even if I oppose the other, in order to have a genuine dialogue with him, I have first to affirm him as a person and to accept him as my partner (KM 85). Genuine dialogue requires me to turn to my partner in all truth, and to exercise the degree of making present which is possible for me at that moment (ibid., 85). Truth in the interhuman realm for Buber means to be authentic and to communicate oneself to the other as the one I am (ibid., 77), and to allow the other to have a say in my life (Friedman 1955, 86).

Relation is reciprocity (IT 58), claims Buber, and genuine confirmation occurs only in mutuality (PW 225): I open myself and say Thou to the other and the other opens himself to me and says Thou to me (IT 84). At the heart of every I-Thou encounter lies the paradox of freedom and determinism, which Buber describes as an "election and electing" (IT 62). On the one hand, the Thou requires my attentiveness and willingness to enter into relation, and on the other hand it encounters me by grace because I cannot will for the other to say 'Thou' to me. I offer only one side, mine, and although it is indispensable to the I-Thou relationship, my side alone is not sufficient. Buber explains that, like falling in love, the I-Thou encounter can never be accomplished by me but it also cannot be accomplished without me (IT 62).

Mutuality, however, is not a rule in Buber's understanding of I-Thou relations (PI 28). Relationships vary in their degree of mutuality and Buber stresses that "there are also many I-Thou relationships that, by their very nature may never unfold into complete mutuality if they are to remain faithful to their nature" (IT 178). Examples of such I-Thou relations are relationships between the educator and the pupil, the psychotherapist and the patients, and the spiritual leader and the congregation. Here, the relation is mutual but the giving and receiving is not symmetrical. Mutuality therefore merely means that for a relation to occur, both sides are necessary. It does not mean that I offer my presence and attention to the other under the condition for the other to give his

attention to me. Such attitude would constitute a purpose and contradict the purposelessness that is a basic feature of I-Thou.

Response is Responsibility

Buber emphasises the importance of responding to the other in accordance with one's uniqueness, and stresses the significance of reacting to every situation in a way that is peculiar to oneself. Our response, writes Buber, should be like the address we respond to – untranslatable (BMM, 17). My response should arise from the specific situation, spring from the depths of my personality and depend on the request of the particular person confronting me. Buber rejects any mechanical or preconceived code of behaviour and opposes dogmas because a dogma states an absolute truth in advance of any given situation, and suppresses the individual response (Hodes 1975, 32-33). This is not to say that Buber rejects norms, as "no responsible person remains a stranger to norms" (BMM 114), but that he is against the norm becoming a maxim or a habit. Instead, he prefers for the norm to remain "latent in a basic layer" (ibid., 114) of one's life and identity until it can reveal itself in a concrete way in a particular situation. Buber stresses that one cannot prepare oneself for the address or preplan one's response, map out a strategy, a one-for-all solution to be applied to all situations. When addressed, we should not hide behind our "knowledge" or "technique", "system", or "programme", for that would be to run away from lived life (ibid., 16). Instead, Buber invites us to embrace the concretion that cannot be classified, to enter into the situation and to open ourselves to the other (ibid., 16). For Buber, responsibility is one's ability to face each situation as "ever anew" (ibid., 69) and to respond to it accordingly. A genuine response requires for me to be attentive towards life "as it happens" (ibid., 16) and to accept uncertainty (ibid., 71).

Buber is convinced that when I am addressed as the individual I am, I will know what my answer should be. He writes that what the address "has to tell him is revealed whenever a situation arises which demands of him a solution of which till then he had perhaps no idea" (BMM 114). Buber is not looking for an ideal response, but stresses that I should aim to respond as wholly as I can in this particular moment – that "I answer for my hour" (ibid., 68). Buber trusts that if I respond according to my individuality and the possibilities available to me, I

will answer "by accomplishing among the actions possible that which seems to my devoted insight to be the right one" (ibid., 68). Buber is well aware that this approach offers not the slightest assurance that our decision is right in any way but a personal one (ibid., 69). As a way of guidance for one's answer, Buber points to our conscience. He stresses that he does not mean our worn out routine conscience, but "the unknown conscience in the ground of being, which needs to be discovered ever anew" (ibid., 69). The certainty of this conscience is, of course, only a personal certainty, which Buber calls "uncertain certainty" (ibid., 69), but there is nothing more on offer. Even if our response is only a shy "stammering", it is not discarded by Buber as long as it is an "honest stammering" (ibid., 17). What counts for Buber is that we enter into the situation that presents itself to us and offer a response from the depth of our being. He writes that "[o]nly one thing matters, that as the situation is presented to me I expose myself to it as to the word's manifestation to me, to the very ground where hearing passes into being and that I perceive what is to be perceived and answer it" (ibid., 69).

The value of our response lies "in the fact that it is being made a real expression of the self, that making it will deepen our realization and our sense of I-Thou" (Hodes 1975, 34). The value of my response to the other lies in my ability to encounter him with an open heart and an open mind, to approach him as the person I am, and to realize his individuality to the extent that is possible to me in this particular moment. Approaching the other in this openness is, for Buber, to be truly free as a human being – to practice the free and direct giving between I and Thou "even if he were the only man on earth who did it" (KM 79). Only when we respond to the responsibility addressing us in this particular moment do we enter "a newly created concrete reality" (BMM 17) and are able to experience "a life that is something other than a sum of moments" (ibid., 17). Whoever stands in relation, writes Buber, participates in an actuality that is not appropriable. The space of the 'between' is not owned by me or the other, but is an independent reality in which both I and the other participate without being able to appropriate it. Buber writes that "[a]ll actuality is an activity in which I participate without being able to appropriate it. Where there is no participation, there is no actuality. Where there is self-appropriation, there is no actuality" (IT 113). Friedman explains that the more direct one's contact is with the Thou, the

fuller is one's sharing and "the fuller his sharing, the more real his I" (1955, 68). This is why in the I-It relation in which the self only appropriates everything under itself he does not participate in actuality (ibid., 68).

To respond to the situation, and the other who addresses me according to my very identity from the "whole of [my] substance" (BMM 113) rather than from a system of maxims is, for Buber, to be an "active person" and a "great character" (ibid., 113). A great character does not categorize different situations according to their similarities and then looks for an appropriate response to this one type of situation from the reservoir of established norms and habits. To approach the world in this way is to be oblivious to the extraordinary and unusual in a given situation (BMM 113). Instead, Buber advocates an attentive approach to the world and the other which requires that I give up a certain amount of autonomy over my life, listen to the sounds of what happens to me, and become open to being touched by others and willing to respond to what they might ask of me. Buber claims that "a situation of which we have become aware is never finished with, but we subdue it into the substance of lived life" (ibid., 17). Thus, responsibility has no endpoint, and becoming responsible is an activity which needs to be repeated over and over again.

Implications of the I-Thou Relation

Encountering others openly, with our whole being, is of crucial importance for our subjectivity. Buber claims that a being who does not genuinely engage with others and does not share itself is not a subject, but an individual who will never gain any substance. He writes that "[t]he ego remains like a point, functional, that which experiences, that which uses, nothing more" (IT 114). This does not mean that the I-It realm is a negative attitude per se. Buber acknowledges that the I-It is a necessary part of human life and constitutes the major part of how we encounter the world and our fellow human beings around us. It is an appropriate approach to many vital activities, without which we cannot live (ibid., 85). Situations in which we are approached as an It by others or are approaching others as an It encompass such mundane activities like asking someone for help or information, and at the same time being asked for similar favours by others. We do not always mind being treated as means – helping the other, answering a question, or offering comfort to the other (Kaufman 1970, 16-

17). The I-It attitude is only to be considered as harmful when it gains mastery in one's life (Friedman 1955, 64). Only when an individual is so preoccupied with himself and his own life that he does not open himself to others, and refuses to genuinely respond to them, is the I-It attitude destructive and is considered by Buber as a source of evil (Diamond 1960, 22-23). Thus, although a human being cannot live without It, "whoever lives only with that is not human" (IT 85) and "if [one was] to die into it, then [one] would be buried in nothingness" (ibid., 83).

In order to constitute oneself as a human and to become a person rather than an individual, one needs to respond to the other as Thou, instead of It. By differentiating between individuals and persons Buber does not mean that there are two kinds of human beings, but rather that each human being lives a twofold I. No person can fully belong to the I-It or the I-Thou realm, and no one is a pure person or a pure ego. How much person a human being is depends on how strong the I of the basic word I-Thou is in one (IT 114-115). Only through entering into the I-Thou relation does a being transcend the mere existence as an individual and becomes a person (ibid., 112). A being is, according to Buber, never a whole being in itself but becomes complete in relation to another human being. Buber writes that "[m]an can become whole not in virtue of a relation to himself but only in virtue of a relation to another self" (BMM 168). Contradicting the belief that one's inmost growth happens in man's relation to himself Buber is convinced that the self only achieves his authentic personality

> in the relation between the one and the other, between men, that is, pre-eminently in the mutuality of the making present – in the making present of another self and in the knowledge that one is made present in his own self by the other – together with the mutuality of acceptance, of affirmation and confirmation. (KM 71)

I need the other human being to become a human and achieve my authentic being or in Buber's poetic words: "It is from one man to another that the heavenly bread of self-being is passed" (KM 71).

The I-Thou relation is not only the only way to become an authentic being; it is also the only realm in which a human being can find meaning and truth. Like responsibility, meaning is not a predefined concept and does not have an objective form, but is embedded in the uniqueness of one's being and becomes

concrete in the specific I-Thou encounter (Diamond 1960, 36-37). Meaning is not found in reflection and the analytical investigation of life but "is open and accessible in the actual lived concrete" and "the unreduced immediacy of the moment" (BMM 16). It is by entering into relation with the other that:

> Human life possesses absolute meaning through transcending in practice its own conditioned nature, that is, through man's seeing that which he confronts, and with which he can enter into a real relation of being to being, as not less real than himself, and through taking it not less seriously than himself. (BMM 167-168)

Similar to Buber's conceptualisation of meaning, truth is to be found in the realm of the 'between'. Truth is "bound up with the responsibility of the person" (BMM 82) and can only be demonstrated in action. Risking our response to the address "leads us to where the breath of truth is to be felt" (ibid., 71). Buber writes:

> You cannot devour the truth, it is not served up anywhere in the world, you cannot even gape at it, for it is not an object. And yet there does exist a participation in the being of inaccessible truth – for the man who stands its test. There exists a real relation of the whole human person to the unpossessed, unpossessable truth, and it is completed only in standing its test. This real relation, whatever it is called, is the relation to the Present Being (BMM 47).

There is, however, always the possibility of turning away from the address and not responding to the other. Although being attentive is a prerequisite for hearing the address, awareness alone does not automatically result in a response. On many occasions we prefer to close our eyes, turn away, and continue on our way as if nothing had happened. Even though being addressed is a constitutive part of our lives, and "living means being addressed" (BMM 10), most of the time we are "encased in an armour whose task is to ward off signs" (ibid., 10) and have "turned off our receivers" (ibid., 11). Knowing ourselves addressed, we often find it "too dangerous" (ibid., 10) to take what is said to us in a particular moment seriously, sensing that it will have an implication on our lives. We are aware that a response is required from us but are too afraid of the cost that our response might entail. Buber illustrates that one way to avoid the implications of the address is to approach what is happening to me merely as

part of the world events which do not concern me personally. Buber writes that all our knowledge assures us,

> [b]e calm, everything happens as it must happen, but nothing is directed at you, you are not meant; it is just 'the world', you can experience it as you like, but whatever you make of it in yourself proceeds from you alone, nothing is required of you, you are not addressed, all is quiet. (BMM 10)

Approaching the world in this way is to remove the seed of address from it, and to sterilize it. Refusing to respond to the address again and again, I will grow so accustomed to my defence apparatus that I no longer notice it as such (BMM 10-11) and will cease to hear the address (ibid., 45). Our failure to respond and to become responsible has a wider impact and leaves its mark on our lives. Buber claims that every time we fail to respond to the address directed at us "we carry away a wound that is not to be forgotten in any productivity or any narcotism" (ibid., 16-17).

8.2 Emmanuel Levinas: Face-to-Face with Alterity

The starting point for Levinas's understanding of ethics is the self as an independent being who exists for himself, and whose world is characterised by enjoyment. Enjoyment is "the very pulsation of the I" (TI 113) – the self revolves around himself and uses the world around him to satisfy his needs. Levinas writes:

> In enjoyment I am absolutely for myself. Egoist without reference to the Other[38], I am alone without solitude, innocently egoist and alone. Not against the Others, not "as for me . . . " – but entirely deaf to the Other, outside of all communication and all refusal to communicate – without ears, like a hungry stomach. (TI 134)

In the natural state of enjoyment, the self approaches the human other as just another object to be consumed and manipulated for his pleasure – an attitude which Levinas

[38] Levinas distinguishes between two forms of otherness: *autre* and *Autrui* in French, which are sometimes capitalized and sometimes not. L'a*utre* refers to anything that is other and *Autrui* is reserved for the other human being with whom I have an ethical relation (Critchley 2002, 16). I have adjusted my own usage to this rule. Levinas is, however, not consistent in the capitalization which is reflected in the different spelling in the direct quotes in the thesis.

calls ‘totalization’. To totalize the other is to reduce him to what I can know and understand of him and to deny that he can be more than the concept I have of him. This attitude is best illustrated with the example of meeting someone for the first time. In an encounter with the other, the self’s first impulse is to get to know and to understand him. According to Levinas, the attempt to understand the other typically derives from a self-centred point of view – I begin from what I know of myself and compare the other to myself. In likening the other to myself, I break up his personality into my categories and reduce the other to what I can know of him (TI 43).

The other, however, resists my totalizing approach, and the source of this resistance lies not in his power but in his alterity (TI 80). Alterity constitutes the other’s identity (TI 251) and describes a dimension of separateness, secrecy, and interiority that escapes my comprehension (Critchley 2002, 26). The other is not simply different from me, another me with different features, but a fundamentally separate being who will always remain “infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign” (TI 194). Davis explains that describing the other as merely ‘different’ would imply that there is some objective perspective from which one’s qualities could be viewed and compared. This would also imply a knowledge of the other that would contradict Levinas’s understanding of the other’s otherness. Describing the other in opposition to the self would present the self and the other as two sides of a coin, defined in relation to one another, and therefore belonging to the same totality (Davis 2004, 42). The other, however, is a being “beyond all attributes” (EN 28) – his uniqueness and infinite otherness transcend what I can know of him. As detailed as my description of the other might be, it will never capture him in his entirety, and I will never know what it is to be him. The expression Levinas uses to illustrate the other’s infinite alterity is ‘face’, which he defines as “the way in which the other presents himself, exceeding *the idea of the other in me*” (TI 50). The face is “by itself and not by reference to a system” (ibid., 75); a self without a concept, unreducible to any perception (EN 28-29). Peperzak explains that by encountering the face I touch a reality that does not fit into any *a priori* idea, a reality that “overflows” (1993, 118) all my ideas and concepts. A face, he explains further, “is pure experience, conceptless experience” (ibid., 118).

Alterity presents itself in vulnerability, which Levinas often describes as poor, destitute, unprotected, and naked. The other is exposed to me in pure weakness that

is “worse than weakness, the superlative of weakness” (PM 170) and which in some way seems to provoke the temptation to neglect him, and even to go to the extreme, to murder him (EN 89; 145; 198-199; EI 86). At the same time, however, the face speaks with an authority of a master who comes from a position of “height” (TI 215) and commands me “Thou Shalt not Kill” (EN 89). This command does not simply mean the prohibition of murdering the other, but asks me to assume responsibility for the other’s ability to live a human life (Peperzak 1993, 22). The other’s command makes me realize my potential capacity to cause harm or even death to the other. In the face-to-face encounter, I come to see that, in the preoccupation with myself and my life of enjoyment, egoism, and indifference toward others, I contribute to others’ death in different passive ways (PM 173). Levinas writes:

> The death of the other man puts me in question, as if in that death that is invisible to the other who exposes himself to it, I, through my eventual indifference, became the accomplice; and as if, even before being doomed to it myself, I had to answer for this death of the other, and not leave the other alone in his death-bound solitude. (EN 125)

The encounter with the face and the realization of my injustice causes “an earthquake in my existence” (Peperzak 1993, 25). The other calls my being for myself into question, and invites me to give up my egoistic position, to turn away from myself, and to become for the other. This critical questioning, the “calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other” (TI 43) is what Levinas calls ‘ethics’. To be called in question in my being for oneself, my power and freedom, my egoistic enjoyment of the world, is to be challenged in the very nature of my being. Levinas stresses that the face-to-face encounter is “an ultimate situation” (TI 81) and a “fundamental event” (PM 168) that interrupts the order of my life. The face-to-face is an acute situation: the other awaits my response and the urgency of the situation does not allow for me to ask for time for consideration (TI 178). My response, responsibility itself, tolerates no delays (Peperzak 1997, 129). The accusation by the other puts the self into a state of guilt and awakens a bad conscience and an apology within the self (TI 40; EN 51, 127), who realizes that his neighbour is not just another object to enjoy, but someone to respond to. The face-to-face is therefore “the beginning of a new way of existing and being conscious of myself and the world” (Peperzak 1993, 53).

The Infinite Responsibility

The radical nature of Levinas's concept of ethics unfolds in his understanding of responsibility. In Levinasian philosophy, responsibility is uncontracted but yet infinite, and decoupled from reciprocity because it arises from an asymmetrical relation. Responsibility does not start at any particular moment but is always already there – it precedes my being and the being of the other for whom I am responsible. Emerging from the other who calls me from a position of height, responsibility is not based on any kind of agreement between me and the other. Confronted with my possibility to cause death to the other, it is impossible for me to deny the other's call and to abandon him to his aloneness (EN 30, 125-127). The vulnerability of the face transforms itself into absolute undeclinability (EN 51). Levinas claims that "[t]o be in relation with the other face to face – is to be unable to kill" (EN 9).

The other introduces into my life a form of unknown passivity, which is in stark contrast to the world of enjoyment that is lived in the mode of satisfaction and autarchy (Peperzak 1997, 110). Passivity here is not the opposite of activity, but a state that is "prevoluntary, previrtuous, preconscious, and premoral" and different from "will, choice, consent, or denial, and, in this sense, of autonomy and heteronomy" (ibid., 76). Levinas illustrates the self's passivity and inability to deny the other's call by describing him as being the other's hostage. The experience of responsibility is therefore not an experience of a free choice, but rather an experience of the impossibility of evading the other's call (BPW 95; Bernasconi 2002, 236). Levinas insists that in my responsibility for the other, no choice, not even an attitude of half-forced, half-voluntary consent is involved (Peperzak 1997, 76). Facing the other, I am called to responsibility prior to free choice and consent (EN 51) and am responsible for the other before I am aware of my own being, before I can even think or choose to accept the responsibility (Peperzak 1997, 67-68). Critchley explains that the ethical subject for Levinas is not a conscious, but a sensible subject, because the ethical relation takes place at the level of sensibility, not at the level of consciousness (2002, 20-21). Levinas writes:

> Nothing is more passive than this prior questioning of all freedom, it must be thought though with acuity. Proximity is not a consciousness of proximity. It is an obsession which is not an overenlarged consciousness, but counterconsciousness, reversing consciousness. It is an event that strips consciousness of its initiative, that undoes me and puts me before an Other in a state of guilt; an event that puts me in accusation – a persecuting indictment, for it's prior to all wrongdoing – and that leads me to the self, to the accusative that is not preceded by any nominative (EN 51).

Responsibility in Levinas's thought is not only uncontracted, but is also decoupled from any kind of reciprocity. If I am the other's hostage, there is no symmetry in our relationship, and my responsibility is not dependent on any reciprocity from his side. Yes, the other in facing me is exposed to his responsibility towards me, but, as Levinas points out, "that is his affair" (EI 98). Levinas claims that "I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it" (ibid., 98). I cannot excuse my inaction with the other's failure to accept his responsibility towards me, and while I can sacrifice myself for the other, to ask the same from the other would be equivalent to murder (Peperzak 1993, 65).

Another characteristic of responsibility in Levinas's thought is its infinity (TI 178; EN 146). In contrast to the traditional understanding of responsibility as being accountable for one's own actions, Levinas claims that one's responsibility goes beyond one's doing. I am not only responsible for the suffering of the other which I might have caused, but also for the suffering that is brought upon him by others or even by the other himself (OB 112). I am responsible for the other up to the point of being responsible for his responsibility towards me (EI 95-96; OB 117; LR 226). I am infinitely responsible for the other or, in Levinas's famous words, "to be me is always to have one more responsibility" (EN 52). Levinas stresses that "one is never quits with regard to the Other" (EI 105) – at no time can one say that one has done all his duty.

The Desire

The other calls me into question but he is not a threat, his command does not do violence to me for he addresses my deepest desire (TI 202-203). In addition to needs, the self in Levinasian thought carries a desire for something more than

what the world of the ego can offer. Alterity constitutes not only the other's identity, but also my own, and my alterity manifests itself in the desire for the other. Whereas my needs (eating, drinking, sleeping etc.) can be satiated in the world of enjoyment, my desire for the infinite, for something that cannot be appropriated by me, cannot be found in the world of economy. Only the Other introduces an infinity into my life that corresponds to the desire for the infinite in me. By desiring the other, desire transcends me and my self-centred categories (Wild 1969, 16). In contrast to the way in which I approach everything in the world of enjoyment, I do not seek the other for my satisfaction or comfort, but as the one whose face orients my life and gives my life meaning (Peperzak 1997, 167). The desire in me is "[t]he infinite in the finite, the more in the less" (TI 50) which pushes me towards the other. Levinas writes that desire "moves the self toward the Other, and in this encounter the unconscious and nonintentional affectivity of the self is revealed as preoriginally having been meant for and tied to another" (GDT 175). I do not decide to be moved towards the other, or to become responsible for the other, but I always already am. Peperzak writes that from the very beginning in my desire "I carry the Other in me" and am "decentred from myself" (Peperzak 1997, 185). He explains:

> The attempts to unfold all of my potentialities is contested by another ontological structure more ethical than that of initial egoism. I do not belong to myself and I elude myself, not because of preconscious opacities or because of a historical burden that I have to integrate positively, but because my essence consists in a being toward and for the Other. (Peperzak 1997, 184-185)

"Here I am!" – the Response of Responsibility

Accused by the other, hostage to his vulnerability, and confronted with limitless obligations towards him, I can only capitulate my assumed autonomy and surrender to the other's call. Levinas writes that "[u]nder the weight that exceeds my capacity, a passivity more passive than all passivity correlative of acts, my passivity breaks out in saying: 'Here I am!' (EI 109).

My response is not the result of an act of will, but of my position as the other's hostage: I cannot escape from the alterity of my own responsibility, I cannot do differently but to respond to the other (Peperzak 1998, 116).

Responsibility for Levinas "is initially *for the Other*" (EI 96) and assuming this responsibility means to reverse the order in which I lived before. To say 'Here I am!' is to offer myself and what I have to the other, and to say to the other that I am at his disposal. Now, the other comes first and I am for the other before being for myself. The for-the-other indicates for Levinas, "the absolute of the social" and "the very delineation of the human" (EN 136). In his view, the human first emerges in the face-to-face encounter and the "very identity of the human" (EI 100-101) begins in responsibility. Ethics, for Levinas, is not a second-order experience that adds to a prior reality; we do not first relate to one another and then relate to one another ethically in the second step. "Ethics, here, does not supplement a preceding existential base; the very node of the subjective is knotted in ethics understood as responsibility" (EI 95), writes Levinas.

There is no naivety in Levinas's concept or understanding of one's life as a hostage: it is tiresome and exhausting; it burdens and wears one out. It also includes the possibility of suffering for the other and, even more, of suffering gratuitously, without meaning (Peperzak 1997, 169). One's responsibility surpasses the level of offering one's properties to the other, but means to give one's own substance for the other (Lingis 1998, xiii). Levinas writes that to be for the other is "to give to the other the bread from one's own mouth" (OB 79). Rather than being a negative category, a state of enjoyment is the pre-requisite for the ethical subject in Levinas's thinking. It is here that the self establishes his autonomy and independence which is the foundation from which he can build an ethical relation (Peperzak 1993, 23-24). Critchley explains that only a being who knows hunger and knows the enjoyment of eating can know what it means to give what he had enjoyed for himself to the other (Critchley 2002, 21). Therefore, without "the selfishness of enjoyment, giving could not be a giving of oneself" (Peperzak 1993, 231). The state of enjoyment in Levinas's thinking is not a negative category because only by absorbing the elements, things, and events, can the self establish his autonomy and individuality; it is the opening from which the self can enter an ethical relation (ibid., 23-24). The ethical subject in Levinas is an embodied being of flesh and blood who has experienced the pleasure of satisfying his needs, and only he will be able to share what he has enjoyed for himself with the other. Only by offering to the other what I have until then enjoyed myself, do my possessions receive their definitive meaning.

Put in the service of the other, detached from their previous egocentric function, they become "gifts, symbols of welcoming" (ibid., 165) and receive an intersubjective meaning and existence.

The ethical relationship of being-for-the-other requires on the one hand, a level of 'non-indifference', and on the other hand, a level of 'disinterestedness' from the self. Non-indifference calls for my attentiveness and openness towards the other which enables me to recognise the other's call (TI 178). To be non-indifferent means to give up the natural state of indifference to what surrounds me, to accept that the other is not an instrument for my enjoyment or a means to my ends, but an authority I have to respond to. Disinterestedness is another way to describe the opening of one's self to the other, and is an acceptance of responsibility without knowing what this responsibility may entail. Levinas writes that the 'Here I am!' is a gratuitous response to the other without wondering and worrying about reciprocity (EN 143). In my unconditional responsibility, I am not concerned with what I can gain from the other, but let go of myself, step back, and put the other first (den Boer 2003, 53-55). Living for the other means to sacrifice a specific kind of concern for myself and makes it possible for me to overcome the extreme anxiety concerning my existence (Peperzak 1997, 187).

In spite of the radically demanding call for my infinite responsibility, the other's call does not oppress me, but rather liberates me from the claws of the ego and gives me an opportunity to realise my desire, to live out a part of me that I would not have been able to live out without him. This does not mean that the other satisfies the desire in me. Far from it! In contrast to hunger that disappears as soon as I have eaten, desire grows the more I try to satisfy it. Peperzak explains that my desire for the Other can never be satisfied because the closer I come to the other, the more I am confronted with the profound distance that arises from the other's alterity (Peperzak 1993, 67).

Implications of Responsibility

Responsibility in Levinas's thought is of central significance for the self, as it is only through responsibility that the subjectivity of the self is established. My subjectivity is embedded in my responsibility, in which I am irreplaceable (EN, 196). Calling *me* and demanding *my* response, which is not generalizable and

not transferable (EI 100), the other's demand establishes my uniqueness. To be me is to be chosen (EN 126), to be me is to be responsible (ibid., 52). For Levinas, responsibility is "the essential, primary and fundamental structure" (EI 95) of my subjectivity, and subjectivity is an unchosen form of subjection to the responsibility for the other. Subjectivity for Levinas is "initially hostage" (EI 100). Arising from the condition of being the other's hostage, subjectivity includes the possibility of sacrifice to the point of my substitution for the other (ibid., 100) and is not to be understood as an active initiative but as a passive condition (Lingis 1998, xxii-xxiii).

The other's ethical resistance to my totalizing approach is not measurable in terms of force because the face is an "authority but it is not a force" (PM 169). The other orders me not to kill but has no means of persuading me to obey (Davis 2004, 50). My obligation is not enforced by any rational argument or physical coercion. Despite the other's command not to kill him, the possibility to neglect him - up to the extreme point of murdering him - is always given (EN 89). Facing the other, I can also decide to reject his call and to neglect him. I can turn away, close my eyes, and pretend that nothing happened. I can silence the voice that is calling me and distract myself. I can remain with myself, concerned only with myself, revolving around myself. For Levinas, in the decision of not responding to the other, lies the possibility of evil (ibid., 97). I can decide to avoid the risk of changing myself and responding to the other and in doing so, I refuse the other to reveal himself as the one he really is. Refusing to respond to the other, I oppose the face that is calling me with the brutality of an attitude that is only willing to hear and to see what suits my egoistic desires (Peperzak 1997, 125). The impossibility of refusing my responsibility constitutes itself in the remorse that follows (ibid., 94). Ignoring the other's call has a crucial impact on my being and my life. As subjectivity, for Levinas, is a form of subjection to my infinite responsibility for the other, refusing to subject myself to the other's call is to deny myself the only opportunity I have to gain subjectivity. If I do turn away from the other, if I refuse to take up my responsibility, I will never become an authentic human being, I will not find out who I am, and I will not find meaning in my life.

The Other and the Third – Ethics and Politics

In the encounter with the Other I not only recognize the obliging height of the one facing me but also any other human being whom Levinas calls 'the Third'. At the same time as I discover the Other, I also discover innumerable others who urge me with an equal absoluteness to dedicate myself to them and realise that the interpersonal relation I establish with the Other, I must also establish with them. Although I owe everything to the Other – and this responsibility is not negated through the existence of the Third – I have to moderate the privilege that I grant him and must divide my time and energy because I am responsible for more than one individual. The simultaneity of many others puts me into a situation in which I have to decide whom to respond to first – a decision that requires from me to compare those who are incomparable and which introduces the necessity of justice (Peperzak 1993, 168). The infinite claim of the Other that is multiplied by the existence of the Third can only be overcome if all others are served, respected and treated justly (Peperzak 1993, 181). Justice is therefore the extension of the principles of proximity, openness and responsibility to the Third party or to all human beings. Levinas writes that "it is the presence of the Third that necessitates justice, knowledge, equality, politics, etc. – for decisions need to be made as to how responsibility has to be divided and fulfilled" (EN 168). The necessity to weigh up, calculate and choose between Others requires an institutionalization of ethical guidelines or series of rules regulating social behavior and institutes the realm of politics, institutions and processes by which the competing claims of the Other and all other Others are mediated, negotiated, limited and organized (Fagan 2009, 11). Justice for Levinas originates in the anarchical and asymmetric relation to the Other; in the immediate response of the unique individual for the unique other (Peperzak 1993, 182). Society for Levinas is therefore "not founded on a unity of species, such as humankind, but on a multiplicity of others, in which each subject is unique; and justice is not founded on universal principles or on some social contract" but on a community in which each is responsible for all (Davis 2004, 83).

Although justice is necessary in order to ensure that at least the minimum of the demands of all are met, it is for Levinas also the beginning of all violence because in trying to balance my response and act justly, I have already turned

away from the Other and broken my infinite obligation to him. The existence of the Third distances me from the infinity of my responsibility but it does not supplant the original ethical relationship. The others limit not my responsibility but my action – I remain infinitely and asymmetrically responsible for the Other; an obligation which I cannot fulfill (Simmons 1999, 94-95).

Ethics and justice exist in relation and separation; each with the capacity to question the other. Whereas the face-to-face serves as a corrective to the institutions and the laws of political society, even when these are based on equality, the Third, present in the face of the Other, serves as a corrective to the exclusivity of the relation to the Other who would otherwise have no reason to pay attention to the demands of the other Others (Bernasconi 1999, 77). Ethics and politics each have their own justification – neither should be taken to their extremes and each must be moderated by the other (Simmons 1999, 97). Ethics and justice coexist in tension and Levinas did not and did not mean to resolve the never-ending oscillation between ethics and politics and did not propose a means by which the conflict between ethics and politics could be resolved in individual cases (Bernasconi 1999, 80-81). Bernasconi explains that Levinas's concern "was not with maintaining the purity of an ethics ignorant of politics, but rather with the conflict between ethics and politics, where ethics questions political society and yet at the same time is remorselessly drawn out of itself to negotiate the political" (ibid., 83). Although Levinas appears always to be in favor of ethics over politics, it is never to the exclusion of the second term, because the terms are not set in opposition to the other. There is for Levinas no ethics without politics (Bernasconi 1999, Fagan 2009, Simmons 1999). Politics, however is not meant to subsume ethics but to serve ethics (Simmons 1999, 98). Levinas writes:

> In order for everything to run along smoothly and freely, it is absolutely necessary to affirm the infinite responsibility of each, for each, before each. . . . As I see it, subjective protest is not received favourably on the pretext that its egoism is sacred, but because the I alone can perceive the'secret tears' of the Other which are caused by the functioning – albeit reasonable – of the hierarchy. (BPW 23)

For Levinas, no matter how justly and well the political realm might be functioning, from an ethical perspective, it will remain insufficient because there

is always more that could be done (Bernasconi 1999, 80). Originating in the interpersonal relation, justice must always be held in check by the initial interpersonal relation (EI 90). Levinas writes:

> But, on the other hand, it is in terms of the relation to the Face or of me before the other that we can speak of the legitimacy of illegitimacy of the state. A state in which the interpersonal relationship is impossible, in which it is directed in advance by the determinism proper to the state, is a totalitarian state. (EN 90)

Levinas emphasizes the danger of the idea of pure politics, of generalization, universalization, and a concern only with the Third in an abstract sense (2009, 17). The face to face provides the basis for an ethical questioning of the political because "politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus as in absentia" (Levinas cited in Bernasconi 1999, 78). The ethical interrupts the political but not to demonstrate to it what it must do but "to challenge its sense that it embodies the ultimate wisdom of "the bottom line"" (Bernasconi 1999, 86).

8.3 The Differences between Levinas's and Buber's Concepts

The encounters between Levinas and Buber are in and of themselves, a matter of academic inquiry.[39] The aim of the following section is not to provide an in-depth examination of the argument between Levinas and Buber, but to acknowledge the academic contention on their differences, and to briefly introduce the main differences in both thinkers' understanding of the relation between the self and the other. The brief overview of the main differences between Levinas's and Buber's concepts is important in so far as it justifies why both thinkers are included in the

[39] Whereas Buber has never published his own reading of Levinas's work and only responded to Levinas's critique of his own thought, stressing that Levinas misunderstood him, Levinas - who is widely assumed to have been influenced by Buber's work - has addressed and opposed Buber's ideas in many commentaries. Overall, these commentaries demonstrate an inconsistency in Levinas's critique of Buber. Initially, Levinas's criticism of Buber served to distinguish and to differentiate his ethical philosophy from Buber's work (Atterton, Calarco, and Friedman 2004; Bernasconi 2004; Friedman 2004; Lipari 2004). However, Levinas's later writings, particularly "Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel and Philosophy" from 1978, demonstrate that Levinas's assessment of Buber has undergone a transformation which reflects Levinas's progress in his own work (Atterton, Calarco, and Friedman 2004; Bernasconi 2004).

study. Using both will provide us with a variety of concepts which we can apply on to the examples from the memoirs in order to illuminate the shared nature of humanitarian aid workers' ethical experiences.

Mutuality and Reciprocity

The main difference between Levinas's and Buber's understanding of the relation between the self and the other, and one of the core points of Levinas's objection to Buber, is Buber's understanding of the I-Thou relation as mutual and reciprocal. Whereas for Buber, I and Thou are close and engage in a mutual relation, in Levinas's thought the self and the other are separated because the other in its infinite alterity is not knowable. Although alterity is what orients me towards the other in Levinas's concept of the desire, it is at the same time what separates me from the him. For Levinas, mutuality and reciprocity between the self and the other are impossible because the other comes from a position of height and demands from me to subject myself to his call. My responsibility for the other always separates me from him which is why Levinas calls the relation between me and the other a "relation without relation" (TI 79). For Levinas, my responsibility for the other is incompatible with reciprocity because what I can demand from the other is incomparable with what the other has the right to ask from me. Our relation is asymmetrical and cannot be reversed because the other is always superior to me, his command always counts more than mine, and I am asked to respond to the other up to the point of substituting myself for the other.

Gordon argues that in criticising the idea of a reciprocal relationship in Buber, Levinas mistakenly conflates reciprocity with symmetry. Whereas for Levinas, the relation with the other is based on an asymmetry that emanates from the other's alterity and is non-reciprocal in nature, for Buber the relation between I and Thou is mutual and reciprocal but the giving and receiving in the relationship is not necessarily symmetrical (Gordon 2004, 103). Although Buber claims that "relation is reciprocity" (IT 58) and genuine confirmation occurs only in mutuality (PW 225), he stresses that relationships vary in their degree of mutuality and that "there are also many I-Thou relationships that, by their very nature may never unfold into complete mutuality if they are to remain faithful to their nature" (IT 178). Examples of I-Thou relations which are mutual and reciprocal but not symmetrical are, for example, relationships between the educator and the pupil, the psychotherapist and

the patients, the spiritual leader and the congregation. Here, the relation is mutual but the giving and receiving is not symmetrical. For Buber, the asymmetrical relationship is "only one of the possibilities of the I-Thou relation, not its rule, just as mutuality in all its graduations cannot be regarded as the rule" (PI 28).

Reciprocity in Buber's understanding does not mean equivalency: what I give to the other is not identical to what I receive from him and does not meant that I only give to the other on the assumption that I will receive something in return. Lipari explains reciprocity in Buber's work as an openness to receive from the other and "an appreciation of the values of the other" (2004, 136). In Buber's understanding of the relation between I and Thou, the gift of giving includes the gift of receiving from the other whereas in Levinas's understanding of a unidirectional ethical relation, the possibility of the other giving something to me is not thematised (ibid., 136).

Levinas, however, opposes the idea of a reciprocal relationship and argues that mutuality is not sufficient grounds for ethics because it can not account for the radical separation between the I and the other which is the core point of his understanding of the relation between the self and the other (Atterton, Calarco, and Friedman 2004, 6).

Levinas understood Buber's I and Thou relation as having no defining content and criticised that, if the self becomes an I in saying Thou to the other, then I and Thou are interchangeable. Levinas writes, that "[i]f the self becomes an I in saying Thou, as Buber asserts, my position as a self depends on that of my correlate" (LR 72) and the symmetrical relation "may therefore be read indifferently from either side" (PMB 147). Buber replies to this criticism that the I and Thou are interchangeable, that Levinas misunderstood him, and stresses that in contrast to Levinas's understanding, I do not owe my subjectivity to my partner but to "the relation to him" (PMB 697). For Buber, the self becomes a subject in the space of the 'between', which is an independent realm which appears in the meeting between the I and the other. For Levinas, I owe my subjectivity to entering into relation; "to saying Thou, not to the person to whom I say Thou" (ibid., 697). The sphere of the 'between' is not a static space but is reconstituted every time individuals meet each other (WM 203), which means that the relation and its content depend on the individuals who enter in this relation.

Contrary to Levinas's accusation, Buber stresses on several occasions that the I and the Thou are not identical (PMB 697), and that the other's otherness is preserved in the encounter. I and Thou are not and cannot be interchangeable because the other is "essentially other than myself" (KM 80). A genuine meeting does not mean an elimination of differences but to the contrary, can only take place "when the individual knows the other in all his otherness as himself, as man, and from there breaks through to the other" (WM 201-202). Even when Buber claims that, in making the other real to me, I share in the experience of the other, the other's otherness is not eliminated because I encounter him as the individual he is and see "always only one being" (IT 83).

Levinas's and Buber's different understandings of the relationship have implications for their conceptualisation of ethics and their understanding of the foundation of ethics, one's subjectivity, and the ethical response to the other.

Subjectivity and the Ethical Response

Friedman describes the contrasts between both thinkers' approach to ethics as "vertical" in Levinas and "horizontal" in Buber (2004, 121). For Levinas, ethics begins with the infinitely other who comes from a position of height and calls me to assume my responsibility. Subjectivity, for Levinas, arises in one's subordination to the other's call. Buber, in contrast, does not think that one gains subjectivity by substituting oneself for the other, but sees the origin of my subjectivity in my ability to enter into relation with the other. For Buber, ethics begins with the self and my willingness to open myself to the other, to say Thou to the other, and to prepare the foundation for the other to be able to say Thou to me. Although ethics for Buber begins with the self, it "does not aim at oneself or is preoccupied with oneself; rather one proceeds towards the other, awaiting the mystery of the other, awaiting grace" (Gordon 2004, 114-115). Whereas for Levinas I owe my subjectivity to the other, for Buber I owe it to the space of the 'between'.

Based on their different understandings of the foundation of ethics, Buber and Levinas differ in their understanding of what constitutes an ethical response. Whereas Buber grounds the ethical behaviour in the internally defined attitude towards the other and in my relation to the other, Levinas establishes the ethical in externally defined acts such as feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and does not articulate the ethical aside from these examples (Friedman 2004, 120). Buber,

however, thinks that by clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, one demonstrates care but is not necessarily in relation with the other. He writes that one can "clothe [the naked] and feed the hungry all day" and still not be in the relation with Thou which is why for Buber the "real ethical problem" arises when all are "clothed and well nourished" (PMB 723). For Buber, one's ability to offer one's full presence to the other is more valuable than mere material help. He explains that

> [i]n mere solicitude man remains essentially with himself, even if he is moved with extreme pity; in action and help he inclines towards the other, but the barriers of his own being are not thereby breached; he makes his assistance, not his self, accessible to the other. (BMM 170)

By clothing the naked and feeding the hungry I care for the other's need, but without relating to him I treat him as an It and do not give to the other what, according to Buber, he longs for more than anything else: "to be confirmed in his being by man, and […] to have a presence in the being of the other" (KM 71).

The main tension between the two thinkers concerns the question whether there can be a mutual relation between the self and the other in spite of the other's alterity. Whereas for Levinas the other's alterity prevents the self from having a mutual relation with the other, for Buber, alterity does not stop me from entering into a mutual relation with the other. By including both Buber's and Levinas's concepts, my investigation of the specific ethical experiences found in the four humanitarians' memoirs will also be able to shed light on this question.

9. James Orbinski: *An Imperfect Offering*

The first encounter to be examined more closely through the lens of Buber's and Levinas's concepts is Orbinski's encounter with the man in the morgue in Baidoa, and was chosen because Orbinski described this moment as his first humanitarian act in Somalia. The second encounter concerns the girl in Rwanda who asked Orbinski to take her and her mother to the hospital, and is an example of the 'choicelessness' Orbinski often articulates as explanation for his actions. The third encounter concerns the Ummera-sha woman and was selected because Orbinski described it as his most significant memory of Rwanda (2008a).

9.1 The Baidoa Man – Resistance to the Primacy of Calculations

> In a corner of the feeding centre was a single white tent that had been designated the medical tent. Beside it were three others designated as the morgue. They were full – bodies piled as small imperfect pyramids, each at least three feet high. From the corner of my eye, I saw a movement on top of one of the piles. I turned away. I didn't want to know what it could mean. I looked to see if the wind was strong enough to cause a tent flap to move, or a piece of cardboard to fly through the air. It was.
>
> Then I saw his eyes flutter. The wind caught his long shirt and ballooned it over his body. He lay among the dead, skin stretched taut over his exposed ribs and pelvic bones. One of his hands grasped at something, anything, whatever the wind might hold. I carried him to the medical tent. He weighed less than 70 pounds, and I thought him light as I tried to catch his arm from falling. I did this without thinking. I acted not as I thought I should but as I had no choice but to do.
>
> All the beds inside the medical tent were taken, so I laid him on the ground. A helper put a blanket over him. She was irritated and told me impatiently that he had been moved to the morgue because there was not enough time or people to look after all of the patients, and in any case, he was going to die anyway. At that moment, I felt rage at the efficiency of placing the living among the dead. And I felt despair – for him, for myself. I could be him, dependent on the actions of a stranger for the hope of at least dignity in death.
>
> His eyes opened and closed. He shivered under the blanket, and soon he was dead. This was the last violated remnant of a fuller life. I didn't even know his name, but I knew he had been someone's son, someone's friend and possibly someone's husband, someone's father. (IO 4-6)

Buber's Perspective

The man addressed Orbinski and called for his help. It is not that the man voiced his call but that his being spoke to Orbinski and did not let go of him. Noticing a movement on top of the piles, Orbinski at first turned away, writing that he did not want to know what the movement could mean. There was an element of ambiguity in this moment: it could just have been the wind causing the movement but it could also be that the man was still alive. In this ambiguity lay the possibility of turning away. Orbinski could have decided to assess the situation as merely having been caused by the wind – something that would not have any implications on him. This moment illustrates the power of our openness to what happens to us and our relation to what occurs around us. Buber writes that to approach what happens around us as events that do not concern us personally is to remove the seed of address from our lives (BMM 11). Orbinski, from a very young age, demonstrated an opposite approach: he saw the Holocaust pictures, the Jewish man in the shoe store, and the report of the Ethiopian famine, as personal addresses which required his response. In this moment, too, Orbinski resisted his initial reservation, and turning back to the man, he responded to the address and became responsible.

The difference between Orbinski's attitude towards the man and that of the helper illustrates the difference between the I-Thou and the I-It mode of relating to the other. The I-Thou relation is characterised by directness, presentness, and mutuality. Relating to the other as a Thou is to overcome one's detachment and to approach the other in his entirety -not a mere sum of his features. This relation does not require an articulated dialogue and does not have to be long-lasting; it only requires one's "unreserved" attitude towards the other (BMM 37). For Orbinski, the man was "someone's son, someone's friend, and possibly someone's husband, someone's father" (IO 6). This statement demonstrates that Orbinski has made the man real to himself to the extent that was possible to him in that moment, approached the man in his entirety, and confirmed the man as the individual he was.

We cannot say anything about the mutuality of this relation because we know nothing from the man's side. It is possible that on the verge of dying, he barely acknowledged Orbinski. What matters most, however, is that Orbinski entered into relation without being concerned about reciprocity from the man's side, understood that the man needed him, and responded to his need without worrying about what he would gain in return. Approaching the man as a Thou, Orbinski offered his side

and provided the basis for a possible relation to unfold, giving all that he could from his side. In entering into relation with the dying man, Orbinski constituted himself as someone who lives "in real contact, in real reciprocity with the world in all the points in which the world can meet man" (KM 184). Because relating to another human being as Thou is how an individual establishes himself as human and becomes a person, in this encounter Orbinski constituted himself as a human and a person.

Whereas Orbinski approached the man as his Thou, the helper approached the man as an It. She was detached from him and observed him through the lens of his medical condition. In doing so, she approached the man in what Buber calls the mode of "reflexion", which is not the same as simply turning away from the other but a state in which one "withdraws from accepting with his essential being another person in his particularity" (BMM 23). Seeing the man as merely another patient, she could not see him in his entirety because the wholeness of the other does not reveal itself to contemplation or observation, but only becomes visible when we step into relation with the other and make the other present to ourselves (KM 80).

Buber writes that in order to hear the address "we have to be attentive with the unreserved effort of our being" (BMM 76). The helper could not offer her unreserved attention to the dying man because she was preoccupied with what she could gain from the encounter, hoping to increase the efficiency in the hospital. Her calculation stood in the way of opening herself to the man and responding to the him freely. The helper justified her attitude with a reference to efficiency, which in this situation was her armour to cast off the address. It might be that she thought that, given the circumstances, the hospital was not the place to approach others as individuals. Buber, however, cautions us against dividing the world into two spheres; one in which we can be addressed and in which we are willing to relate to others as Thou, and another in which these possibilities are shut off. He warns us against thinking that "there are places excluded from creation" in which we are concerned with "business" only, and consider meeting another human being as a romantic idea that is out of place (BMM 36). A dialogue can take place anywhere as long as we approach the other openly (BMM 36-37). The I-Thou encounters do not constitute experiences that are reserved for special occasions and which are removed from the routines of the everyday life and require an exceptional intuition or exceptional abilities. Buber stresses that no situation is too mundane and no

human being is too ordinary for the I-Thou relation and that "[t]here are no gifted and ungifted here, only those who give themselves and those who withhold themselves" (ibid., 35).

In his essay "Productivity and Existence" (1914) Buber argues strongly against productivity and efficiency standing in the way of saying Thou to another person. He writes that "the presence of a man who is simply and immediately present" is "more powerful and more holy" than any efficiency (PW 7). Efficiency that results in us shutting down vis-à-vis the other and his address has no substance, and Buber states that an individual "who cannot stand in a direct relation to each one who meets him has a fullness which is futile" (BMM 21).

It might of course be that that the helper gave up on the man after a long battle for his life. It might be that she had treated the man previously and the treatment had failed to improve his condition. For Buber, however, the value of what we do is not measured by how much we have done for the other, how much we have tried and how much we have given to him, but by how present we were in doing so, and whether we have approached the other in his wholeness as a person. Buber differentiates between solicitude for the other and entering into relation with him. Merely caring for someone, according to Buber, does not require me to enter in relation with him (PMB 723). Helping the other without opening ourselves up to him as the being he is, has no real substance and no value for Buber because we treat the other as an It. Although we help him, we do not offer to him what he seeks more than anything: to be confirmed in his being. The helper's approach illustrates a situation in which the I-It has gained mastery and is destructive, and her inability to enter into relation with the man renders her attempts to run the hospital into "nothingness" (IT 83).

Levinas's Perspective

The man was calling Orbinski and required his immediate response – there was no time to consider his options and no one else he could have passed his responsibility on to. The 'choicelessness' Orbinski' articulates when explaining why he took the man illustrates what Levinas calls 'passivity' – a responsibility that occurs prior to consciousness. Levinas writes that in a relationship with the other, consciousness "loses its first place" (EN 96) and that the ethical subject is not a conscious subject but a sensible one. In the face-to-face encounter, one does not first receive an order

by perceiving it and then obeying it as an act of will, but rather, finds oneself in a situation in which "the subservience of obedience precedes the hearing of the order" (ibid., 130). Orbinski did the good before he knew it. Although the possibility to turn away from the other is always given, doing so was not an option for Orbinski because in the face-to-face encounter the vulnerability of the face transforms itself into absolute undeclinability (EN 51). Levinas writes that "[r]esponsibility is what is incumbent on me exclusively, and what, humanly, I cannot refuse" (EI 101) and in answering the man's call Orbinski reasserted both his humanity and subjectivity.

In contrast to Orbinski, who was facing only one man still alive in the morgue, the helper faced many others and had to decide how to divide the hospital space between the patients. She tried to do justice to all patients and in attempting to balance her response broke the infinite obligation to the individual patient. She silenced his call by adopting the look of the medical professional, and in doing so refused to acknowledge that the man was more than what she knew of him and that he was more than his hopeless medical condition. She did not become for-the-other because she was preoccupied with what she could gain from him and saw his condition as a chance to increase the efficiency in the hospital. This situation illustrates Levinas's claim that justice, albeit necessary, is the beginning of violence because it requires from me to abandon my infinite responsibility for the Other and demonstrates the impossibility of fulfilling my infinite obligation to the Other.

Orbinski does not question the necessity of balancing the responsibility to all patients, but argues that efficiency must have a bottom line which has been crossed here. He demonstrates that in spite of the difficult circumstances the Other is still an ethical authority and that his responsibility for the man does not disappear by the existence of other patients. To treat him like another tally on the sheer endless list of patients was to treat him in exactly the same way which had caused his misery – to see him as expendable, as an insignificant part of a bigger game; someone whose death was a matter of indifference. Levinas writes that in the possibility of not awakening to the other lies the possibility of evil (EN 97). In this situation, the face-to-face encounter with the man serves as a corrective to the regulations in the hospital, which however just, are insufficient. Orbinski's decision to take the man out of the morgue tent is an act of resistance against the primacy of the calculating, economic approach towards the other, and a demonstration that the other's call is stronger than any efficiency. This resistance is not a result of a long deliberate

thought process about the right way to respond to the other, but arises from the undeclinability of the face and is embedded in the passivity of being the other's hostage.

Orbinski's evaluation of this encounter as the first act of his humanitarian engagement illustrates that for him, the core value of humanitarian assistances is not medical efficiency or any other form of material assistance but one's "sacred present" and one's decision not to leave the other to suffer alone. He stresses that he was always "first a man" and met his patients with his "whole person" (IO 7). For Orbinski, humanitarian assistance that approaches the other as just another body to take care of, without relating to him in his entirety and processes the other without giving him the space to be human and to confirm him, is to betray the humanitarian idea.

9.2 The Girl and her Mother – Responsibility as Resistance

> A girl of about eleven was crouched by the side of the church. She got up, calling, and walked towards us, holding out her hand as if to shake mine. I stopped and took a step towards her. She took my wrist and gently directed me to the gutter alongside the cathedral. She let my wrist go and bent down to lift a printed shawl. She had placed rocks on the corners of the cloth to hold it over her mother, who lay in the gutter. Her mother's eyes and mouth opened and closed to dissuade the flies that swarmed around her face. She was too weak to use her hands. She lay sweating among several corpses that had been thrown out of the church. She was covered in vomit and diarrhea. She was delirious, emaciated and barely alive. Her chest heaved, the skin rising and then failing back between her ribs with each breath. Jacques was now screaming at me to get in the truck. "For fuck's sake! It's five to fucking six!"
>
> There was no choice, no thinking. I just did it. I picked up the girl's mother and carried her to the truck. For Jacques, there was no choice either. He put the girl in the cab and showed her how to stay down below the dashboard. If Interahamwe saw her or her mother on our way back to the hospital, we would all be dead. I lifted her mother into the back of the pickup and lay her out on the flatbed. (IO 216)

Buber's Perspective

In this situation Orbinski demonstrated an openness to the world, to what happens to him and to those he encounters by chance. This openness required for Orbinski to give up a certain amount of autonomy over his life and to expose himself to the

other's call and be willing to respond to what the other might ask of him spontaneously. Buber stresses that instead of planning one's response in advance, we should respond to the situation and the other from the depth of our identity and being, and Orbinski demonstrated an unreserved approach towards the girl. Although she crossed his and Jacques's plans to leave the church in time to make it back to the hospital before the curfew, Orbinski did not use the curfew as an excuse to turn away from her and to hide from the address, but allowed her to interrupt their plan. In responding to her, Orbinski entered the space of the 'in-between' which defies intentionality and calculations: Orbinski was aware of the implications his decision to take them to the hospital might have on his life, but did not allow for the risk to his life to determine whether he responded to the address. His ability to forgo any concern for his safety demonstrates that the space of the 'in-between' enables us to resist a particular concern for ourselves and at the same time, to resist external pressures that stand in the way of freely responding to the other.

Buber claims that we constitute ourselves as human and gain our authentic personality only in entering into the I-thou relation. Responding to the unique address that interrupted his plans from the substance of his whole being, Orbinski affirmed his humanity and subjectivity.

Analysis Levinas

The Other in this situation was a little desperate girl who asked Orbinski to help her dying mother and called into question his freedom to leave. Orbinski did not deploy any defence mechanisms to evade the girl's call, and despite the implications for his safety, did not look for excuses to pass on his responsibility to someone else. The girl asked him to assume *his* responsibility and required *his* response. Her ability to make Orbinski stop on his way and to turn around to check on her mother did not arise from any position of power, but from her weakness and vulnerability which he could not violate. What in this moment opposed and resisted power in form of Interahamwe's curfew was a powerless girl and the moral force of the Other. Levinas writes that one's "reaction to the face is a response. Not just a response, but a responsibility" (1988, 169). Orbinski's response was becoming for-the-other, and his decision to take the girl and her mother with them demonstrates that their wellbeing mattered more to him than his own, and that he feared the woman's death more than he feared his own. Confronted with the possibility of

dying himself or leaving the woman to die, he accepted to sacrifice his life for the other and replied: “Here I am!”.

Orbinski presents his decision to take the girl and her mother not as an act of will but as a sense of the impossibility of evading the other’s call, of being the other’s hostage. In this encounter Orbinski confirmed once again that, “[i]n the proximity of the face, the subjection precedes the reasoned decision to assume the order that it bears” (EN 148). Faced with the girl’s demand, Orbinski demonstrated that he was a responsible person who did not have to make up his mind about taking on the responsibility any more than he had to identify his own identity.

It is likely that, as a physician, Orbinski knew that the chances the “barely alive” (IO 216) woman would survive were low, and his decision to take her to the hospital nonetheless, in spite of the danger that this decision posed on them, was a refusal to allow for such calculations to determine his response to the other. This encounter demonstrates that the other’s call not only liberated him from a concern for his life, but also opposed calculation and enabled him to resist external political pressure.

Orbinski’s willingness to sacrifice his life for the girl and her mother demonstrates what Levinas describes as “the very delineation of the human” (EN 136) and the “meaning of the human adventure” (ibid., 97). Orbinski’s inability to turn away from the girl and her mother confirms both Buber’s and Levinas’s claims that our subjectivity and our humanity arise in relation to the other. For both thinkers, our humanity and selfhood are not a static state but a process and a result of our responsibility. This understanding explains the ‘choicelessness’ in Orbinski’s account: he could not turn away from the Baidoa man or the girl and her mother because it was in these instances that he was called to assume *his* responsibility and in his response to the other was mostly human and mostly himself. Turning away was not an option because if it is only in the encounter with the other that we discover our subjectivity, letting down the other means to betray not only the other but ourselves. Amidst a situation which was defined by limitations that were imposed by others, in the decision to take the mother and the girl, Orbinski reaffirmed his autonomy. If our ability to be for the other before being for ourselves is what constitutes us as human, in this act, he also reclaimed his humanity amidst inhumane circumstances.

9.3 Ummera-sha – Alterity as Relation

> I was on my knees on the dirt road beside a patient who lay on a tarp slowly bleeding to death from multiple lacerations. I started an IV line and pushed fluids into her. I examined her carefully, identifying slow bleeders on her head, torso and legs. I quickly tied them off with sutures as I went. Her body trembled. She was conscious and afraid.
>
> A nurse called me to go to the next patient. "Maintenant! Tout de suite, Docteur!" The woman moaned and winced as I stitched. And then her hand reached to touch my forearm. I looked up to her face from the small bleeding artery I was sticking on her chest. She looked at me, and only then did I understand what had happened to her.
>
> She was slightly older than middle aged. She had been raped. Semen mixed with blood clung to her thighs. She had been attacked with machetes, her entire body systematically mutilated. Her ears had been cut off. Her face had been so carefully disfigured that a pattern was obvious in the slashes. Both Achilles tendons had been cut. Both breasts had been sliced off. Her attackers didn't want to kill her; they wanted her to bleed to death. They knew just how much to cut to make her bleed slowly. She lay on the road, a 1 taped to her forehead, and now we were looking at each other.
>
> "Je m'excuse, je m'excuse," I said, apologizing for the pain my pinching forceps gave her. She blinked once, slowly, to let a wave of pain pass. She held my forearm. I felt a wave of nausea as I looked again at the pattern someone had cut in her face. I turned from her and vomited for the first and only time during the genocide.
>
> She waited as I spit out what was left of the bile in my mouth. Then she touched my forearm again. I looked into her brown eyes. "Ummera." I wasn't sure if she was saying it to herself, but then she continued. "Ummera-sha." Sha, I thought, it means my friend. She was speaking to me. "Ummera, ummera-sha," she repeated. I tied off the bleeding arteries where her breasts had been. The nurses were calling again, "Docteur, le prochain, le prochain! Vite, Docteur!"
>
> The woman was one among many, among hundreds. She knew there were so many more. Again she reached to touch my forearm. She didn't hold it this time. She nodded, looking at me. "Allez, allez . . . Ummera, ummera-sha," she said in a slow whisper. "Go, go. Courage, courage, my friend." It was the clearest voice I have ever heard. (IO 226-227)

Buber's Perspective

At first, Orbinski approached the woman as an It and saw only the patient and her wounds. She was one patient among a hundred others and he treated her pain as a professional who knew how to suture her wounds and ease her agony. Only when she touched his arm to point out that he was hurting her did he raise his eyes and

see more than a collection of wounds. In the moment of looking up to her, we see a transformation from Orbinski approaching her as an It to saying Thou to her. Looking into her eyes, Orbinski was not a professional physician anymore but a man who saw that this woman had been deliberately mutilated and experienced unbearable pain. In this instant, Orbinski made her present to himself and understood, however imperfectly, what she was going through. All professional distance and self-control vanished and he vomited. "It wasn't the blood" Orbinski clarified in the documentary, but the realization that she was "a woman" (Reed 2008). The disgust at someone's decision to inflict this agony upon her manifested itself physically in nausea. The way Orbinski's confirmation was demonstrated in a physical reaction here might perhaps be unusual, but it is not different from beginning to cry when hearing someone sharing a painful experience. He physically confirmed that her pain was too much to bear.

Approaching the woman as his Thou, he offered his full attention to her. In entering into the space of the 'in-between' the frenzy and the chaos around him stopped, if only for a brief moment. Buber writes that the encounter with the Thou is "an exclusive confrontation in which everything else can only be background from which it emerges" (IT 81). Although others were already calling him, demanding his attention and hurrying him to move away from her and to treat other patients, in this moment, she was the only one who existed for Orbinski. Having attended to her wounds, Orbinski could give her nothing more but his presence and his confirmation.

Then, something extraordinary happened: the woman spoke to Orbinski and we can see the other side of the dialogue. This encounter is an example of the ideal directness, presentness and mutuality of an I-Thou relation: both sides entered into relation with the other, made the other present to themselves, and responded to the other. Reciprocity in this encounter does not mean that they gave something to each other as a condition to receive something in return but that they both entered into relation and opened themselves to the other. Orbinski was surprised that the woman spoke to him, and even more stunned at the words of encouragement that she passed on to him. In spite of her unbearable agony, she approached Orbinski openly and was willing to respond to him. Entering the in-between and making Orbinski present to herself, she saw a man who was giving himself to others and who was overwhelmed by the number of the wounded around him and the weight of his

responsibility and the infinity of his desire to be there for her. In the midst of all the horror, there was someone who did not and could not abandon her and who confirmed her in her being and her pain. She too could hear others calling for him, she too knew that there were many others who needed him. They both knew that there was nothing else he could do to ease her pain, that he had to leave her to move on to other patients and that she would die. The confirmation she received in the presence of the in-between enabled her to let go of herself. She called him her friend and encouraged him not to lose heart but to continue doing what he could do for others. Her words of encouragement demonstrate that in the same way in which the only aim of the encounter for Orbinski was to be there for her, the only aim of the encounter for her was to be there for him. Her words illustrate her egolessness – entering into the 'in-between', she had stepped back from herself and the concern with her pain and was not preoccupied with what he could do for her. Instead, she only focused on what Orbinski needed in this moment and, seeing that he needed her to allow him to leave her and to encourage him so that he could continue treating others, she offered it to him. In the middle of chaos, she gave him peace.

Levinas's Perspective

The challenge in analysing this encounter from Levinas's point of view lies in the fact that his ethical relation has only one direction: from me to the other. In his conceptualisation of responsibility, Levinas focuses only on my side and my responsibility for the other. Although the other is responsible for me as well, Levinas stresses that his responsibility is his affair and I should not concern myself with it, but focus on my obligation towards the other. Levinas does not present an example in which in addition to calling me to my responsibility the Other receives the same command from me and assumes his responsibility towards me. Whereas in Buber's thought the I and the Thou meet in the 'in-between', Levinas does not theorize the space which is shared by me and the other and where the other and I become for-the-other at the same time. Although Levinas writes that in our desire for the other we are always oriented towards the other, and are always already related to the other, this relation remains distanced because I and the other are separated by our mutual responsibility. The encounter between Orbinski and the woman is, however, an example of such a situation: both sides simultaneously assume their responsibility for their respective other.

The face-to-face encounter took place when Orbinski looked up from the woman's wounds and saw a being "beyond all attributes" (EN 28) who was made to suffer excruciating agony by someone who refused to follow the command 'Thou shall not kill!'. In this face-to-face meeting everything around him was shut out, and although colleagues were calling him to hurry up, he refused to hasten. Although there was nothing more that he could do for her, he could not leave her, and his inability to leave her alone illustrates the infinity of his responsibility. Orbinski did not think that it would be better to move on to other patients with better chances of survival, which illustrates that the infinite responsibility does not allow for such calculations.

At the same time, the woman encountered Orbinski as the other who called her to assume her responsibility towards him. She replied 'Here I am!' to him and became responsible for Orbinski's ability to continue his work. It is striking that in spite of her suffering, she was not concerned with what Orbinski could do for her but stepped back from her needs and focused solely on what he needed, and how she could be there for him. There was nothing material that she could have offered him to ease the situation around him, no physical assistance that she, who was barely alive herself, could have offered to help him with the hundreds of wounded. Her life was all she had, and in encouraging Orbinski to leave her so that he could attend to others she gave "to the other the bread from [her] own mouth" (OB 79) and surrendered herself to the Other's call. The "inescapable hell" that Orbinski said that she released him from was his infinite responsibility towards her (2009).

The woman's ability to sacrifice herself stemmed from her alterity, the part of her which cannot be totalized or killed. Although her body was severely mutilated, her alterity – what makes her human, what makes her her – remained unbroken. Levinas writes that the other's face will always exceed "the idea of the other in me" (TI 50) and will therefore always remain untouched. Davis explains that Levinas shows that violence always fails to succeed in its true aims because I can only succeed in killing the other - or even innumerable others - but killing the Other will always remain beyond my powers, because the alterity of the Other escapes my control (2004, 51). Here, the Other who cannot be killed, the face that appears in the world but does not belong to it, speaks back. In assuming her responsibility to the point of sacrificing herself for others, the woman confirmed the "very identity of the human" (EI 100-101). In surrendering herself, she reasserted her

independence: it is not the individual who tried to kill her who will have taken her life, but her own decision to give it for others.

Buber is able to capture the real encounter between Orbinski and the woman. Here, we can see how both parties entered the 'in-between' and both assumed responsibility for the other at the same time. There was a mutuality between them in which each of them confirmed the other, acknowledged and accepted his responsibility towards the other without appropriating the other. The fact that the other was infinitely other did not prevent Orbinski or the woman from being able to enter into relation with each other. To the contrary, here, it was the woman's alterity which sought the relation with Orbinski and which allowed for the encounter to occur! She responded to the Other in him because what he did – giving himself to others – was his alterity, a part that did not belong to him, that transcended him. In this encounter, we can see that both sides recognised the other's alterity without violating it and that alterity is, in spite of being impenetrable, a relation. This encounter demonstrates that alterity brings us together and the face-to-face is a meeting between two alterities. Levinas and Buber are not incompatible because the alterity of the other is not lost in the encounter because the mystery of the 'in-between' preserves the other's alterity. Entering into relation with their whole being both of them constituted themselves as human and in the immediacy of the I-Thou encounter found meaning for their lives.

10. Damien Brown: *Band-Aid for a Broken Leg*

The first aspect from Brown's account to be investigated more closely with the aid of Buber's and Levinas's concepts is Brown's ambiguous recollection of his childhood experiences in South Africa, and the connection between these encounters and his decision to pursue humanitarian aid work. The second example concerns Brown's encounter with the beer bottle girl in Mavinga and will shed light on the question of how a little girl has the power to sway Brown's decision to quit his job in the hospital. The third encounter concerns the dying woman in Sudan, whose husband refused to grant permission for her treatment and Brown's following decision to quit his position.

10.1 Motivation – Making Up for Missed Opportunities

In the memoir, Brown wrote that growing up in South Africa, he was sheltered from the wider realities of the Apartheid system. He writes that he never had black friends who would share their stories about their lives and this ignorance was perpetuated by a state-controlled media and whites-only education system (BA 15). However, he then suddenly states:

> Maybe I'm just making excuses; I did see street kids, ragged throngs of them begging in the city centre, or huddled from the cold of Cape winter mornings beneath sheets of newspaper, but I took this to be an inescapable fact of life on the continent. (BA 15)

In contrast to the memoir, where Brown only implies the connection between his upbringing and his later humanitarian engagement, he provides a close link between his childhood and humanitarian aid work in some of the interviews he had given promoting his memoir. In the interviews, Brown points out that back in his childhood he had always been aware of the inequalities and studied medicine with the aim of returning to Africa (2013c).

Buber's Perspective

Buber explains that although being addressed is an intrinsic part of our lives, we often silence the address instead of responding to it. Often, we are aware of the

address, but do not want to accept its implications on our lives and fail to respond because we are "encased in an armour whose task is to ward off signs" (BMM 10). Brown's defence mechanism to ward off the address during his childhood and teenage years was to see the inequality around him as events which did not concern him personally. Accepting the inequalities as an unchangeable fact of life in South Africa, Brown removed the seed of address from the situation – although he saw the suffering, he did not open himself to it.

Buber claims that our failure to respond leaves its mark on our lives, and states that whenever we fail to respond to the speech directed at us "we carry away a wound that is not to be forgotten in any productivity or any narcoticism" (BMM, 16-17). Brown demonstrates that on some level he was aware of an address, and the failure to open himself to it resulted in a wound that is visible in his bad conscience and the ambiguity in his recollection of this time in the memoir. Brown's bad conscience that arose from the wound was transformed into the desire to study medicine in order to go back to Africa and to make up for missed opportunities. Buber writes that each address requires a response – it might be that we need to respond in the situation or it might be that we have to answer at a later point in our lives. Brown's decision to study medicine and to work in the humanitarian field was his answer to the address from his childhood in South Africa, which was reaffirmed when he saw inequality and poverty when travelling in his twenties. When Brown encountered inequality during his travels, his reaction was the opposite to how he engaged with similar situations in his teenage years: he was open to others' struggles and did not hide from the implications the address would have on his life. Instead, Brown refused to accept the inequality as a given and acknowledged others' destitution as something he could respond to.

Levinas's Perspective

Brown's example demonstrates that it is impossible to protect ourselves from the other's call and to escape our responsibility without implications for our lives. Brown's way of protecting himself from the other's call was to rationalize the inequality he saw, but despite his efforts he could not escape it. Peperzak explains that in trying to protect myself from the other's command, I am destroying my responsibility and with it "what I always already am" (1997, 76). The consciousness of Brown's ego that turned away from the other's call constituted itself in a bad

conscience. Looking back on his childhood, Brown felt uncomfortable with his reaction to others' poverty: did he really not see it or did he not want to see that it had implications for his life?

We can see in Brown's explanations for his inaction – his sheltered upbringing, not having black friends, being educated in the whites-only system –did not reduce his bad conscience. In spite of the reasons he presents, he could not shake it off because, arising prior to conscience, responsibility does not let itself to be silenced by rational explanations. Brown's feeling of guilt is therefore not the question about how much he, as a child or teenager, could have done to address the inequalities he was aware of, but is rather a confirmation of the infinity of responsibility. In the end, Brown's desire to be for the other moved him towards his responsibility and a profession that aimed to alleviate others' suffering.

10.2 The Beer Bottle Girl – The Power of the Powerless

The encounter with the beer bottle girl occurred at a time when Brown considered quitting his position in Mavinga due to the difficulties with his colleagues. One morning on the way to work Brown was stopped by a group of children among whom was a little girl who was cradling an empty beer bottle. Brown asked her what she was doing with it and was surprised by her response.

> She smiles, takes back the bottle, and with all the dignity of a little princess - a princess wearing a torn, shapeless dress, the colours long since massaged out on the riverbank – she replies "É a minha boneca." It's my doll.
>
> I'd laugh, if only she wasn't serious. […] Poverty this extreme can't be quantified. It's a state of existence. Hollow cheeks, four skinny limbs and a belly swollen with parasites; patches of ringworm causing bald spots all over these kids. And it's why I am here, I've decided. For the sister that should never have had polio. For this young girl, proud as punch with her hairy, eyeless beer-bottle doll. And for the countless others, sleeping on cowpat floors in smoky huts, for whom the hospital represents the only hope when their kid gets malaria or their partner develops TB.
>
> So fuck it: I'm not about to be bullied out by a chubby health worker. Nor his non-chubby, highly imposing, war surgeon of a colleague, although I'll be honest that he does frighten me. So I step in, this third week, and confront my accusers on the ward. (BA 80-81)

Buber's Perspective

In this encounter, there is an address which surpassed the vocalised conversation between Brown and the girl. Buber writes that the other does not have to want to address me in order to say something into my life because the other has "nothing to do with what is said" (BMM 9). The girl moved Brown but it is not her but an independent "it" (ibid., 9) which addressed him in the space of the 'in-between'. The encouragement Brown received did not arise from the girl knowing of his challenges at the hospital and the struggles with his colleagues but from the 'in-between' which was constituted in their encounter.

Buber writes that when we are addressed, we will know what we should answer and this example demonstrates the uniqueness of an address which does not have an objective form and cannot be understood independently of the situation. Brown was spoken to as the individual he was, with the challenges he experienced at this very moment, and knew immediately what his answer should be. Brown's response to the address was the resolve not to give up and leave Mavinga but to try to find a way to solve the problems with the colleagues in the hospital.

This encounter illustrates the independence of the space of the 'in-between' and its impact on those who partake in it. Said into his very life, Brown cannot explain what happened to him in this moment and why, out of all people, it took the encounter with a little girl and her beer bottle doll to give him the strength to carry on. As such, nothing had changed. Buber writes that, as the address is an essential part of life, one could say that nothing particular happens in these moments and yet everything is different through them. Brown would be challenged by his colleagues as he had been during the previous weeks, the hospital would remain underdeveloped and under-resourced, but what happened in the space of the "between" had profound implications for his ability to deal with the external circumstances. The encounter gave him the necessary strength to hang on, to resist his fear of failure and desire for recognition, and to be there for all those who were as poor and as dependent on his service as the little girl. Buber writes that meaning is to be found in responding to the other "in the actual lived concrete" and in "the unreduced immediacy of the moment" (BMM 16) which explains why it was in this moment that Brown rediscovered meaning in his work.

Levinas's Perspective

In this encounter, the girl was the poor, destitute other who, despite her weakness, entered Brown's life with an authority of a master and commanded him 'Thou shall not kill!'. She opposed his possibilities and his freedom to leave Mavinga, not as someone with more power but someone with no power at all. What the circumstances and poverty could not erase was her alterity and the infinity to which Brown felt drawn.

When Brown was thinking of giving up, she called him back to his responsibility. In the face-to-face with the girl he realised that his preoccupation with himself and his wish to be accepted and recognised by his colleagues, and the decision to leave, could cause harm to the girl. Levinas writes that the desire in us orients the self towards the other, awakens apology and goodness within the self and ends the self's egoism (TI 40). Confronted with the destitute face and the possibility that he might worsen her situation by leaving, Brown surrendered himself to the call to his responsibility.

If we can gain our subjectivity only through our responsibility, deciding to remain faithful to his commitment meant at the same time to remain truthful to himself. Surrendering himself to his responsibility liberated Brown from his desire for approval and recognition and gave him the necessary strength to continue his work in the hospital. He once again said 'Here I am!' to the other without knowing what would happen next, and without any promise that he would be able to resolve the problems at the hospital.

10.3 The Woman and her Husband – The Infinite Responsibility

The incident occurred when a woman with a life-threatening condition was brought to the hospital but the team could not begin her treatment because, according to the cultural norms in Nasir, this had to be authorised by her absent husband. When the husband finally arrived, he refused any treatment, and instead demanded to take his wife back home. Although Brown explained that his wife would die without a blood transfusion and further treatment, the man remained adamant in his decision. Confronted with his refusal, Brown writes that he had lost any self-control.

> *Christ!* This makes no sense! My hands begin shaking and I lose any self-restrain and step closer, and I find myself shouting with pointed finger that he's about to murder his own wife, and I wonder if maybe she's brought shame on him or frightened him for having borne this unsightly complication instead of a healthy child, because bearing children is a woman's most important role out here […] but I couldn't give a damn about cultural considerations at this moment because hers is one life we can actually *save*. [. . .]
>
> The ward is silent. I'm trembling. The man glares and I'm hot-wet with nerves. Joseph's unsure of what he should translate but I tell him all of it, every word, this man is to understand the gravity of his decision, and in this moment I feel more anger towards a person that I've known before. I hate this man and what he represents; what these women, these children and so many other men have to put up with because of people like him, the *strongman*, the self-righteous minority of men who impose their wills on the rest. [. . .]
>
> The woman lies quietly. My eyes meet hers and I don't know if I'm more heartbroken for her or outraged with him. (BA 312-313)

Shortly after the incident, Brown decided to quit his position in Nasir, stating that he had lost his desire "to do this work, or to even care about anyone else anymore" (BA 317). In a conversation with a colleague, Brown vented his frustration.

> Do we all spend the rest of our lives flying around, trying to visit these thousands of impoverished towns, spreading ourselves so thin as to be almost useless a times? And at what personal cost? And why should this be my battle anyway? Wouldn't the more sensible thing be to get on with life at home, to at least take full advantage of the opportunities that *I've* been given? Why then this burden of white middle-class we all seem to have? (BA 317)

Buber's Perspective

Brown was confronted with the man who treated his wife as an It and refused to see her as his Thou. The man was reserved and did not confirm his wife as the individual she was. No matter how often Brown and his colleagues tried to persuade him to allow for her to be treated, he did not want to listen. Instead of opening himself to her, he used the tradition as his armour to shield from her address. The cost of the man's refusal to enter into relation with his wife, his inability to see past the tradition and to approach her as his Thou is her life – a life that in contrast to so many others, the team could have saved – led to her death. We do not know why the man refused for her to be treated, but Brown thought that there could be no

justification for letting her die. Outraged, not only by the man's ignorance towards his wife's suffering and life, but his power to prevent others and himself from helping the woman, Brown quit his position.

Levinas's Perspective

Brown was prevented from living out his infinite responsibility for the woman and forced to let the man take his wife home where she would certainly die. Here, it was not the circumstances, not the poverty, not the war, not the underequipped hospital, nor the lack of suitable medication that prevented Brown from saving the woman's life but another human being: her husband, who used his cultural authority to decide whether she would live or die. In the husband, Brown faced someone who totalized his other, who reduced his wife to her cultural position and refused to accept that she was more than what he thought of her. Brown was forced to conform to the cultural norm that allowed the husband to make this decision, but his infinite responsibility for the woman refused to accept it. Brown was forced to not be there for the woman in a situation where he did not want to do anything but be there for her and help her to survive and recover. Levinas writes that in the possibility of not awakening to the other lies the possibility of evil (EN 97) and Brown faced the evil in the man's decision to turn away from his wife.

Although Brown writes that he quit his position because he did not want to "care about anyone else anymore" (BA 317), Levinas helps us to see that he quit his position not because he did not want to be responsible, but because he could not bear the limitations to his infinite responsibility. Brown could not accept the thought that he would only be responsible to the extent allowed him by the cultural norms and that someone – not a stranger, but her husband – would set boundaries to his responsibility.

Brown broke down as he failed to live up to the infinity of his responsibility, and, strikingly, at the same time, his ego came forth to distract him from his infinite responsibility and to make it acceptable that he was abandoning this responsibility. In the questions he asked his colleague regarding the value of their work, his ego was concealed as questions of success: what could his small efforts in one African village really change? Was it worth forgoing the opportunities he had been given in life and to delay his career for his humanitarian work? Was the responsibility he felt really worth the sacrifice? Brown did not regret having decided to become a

humanitarian aid worker but he was calculating whether it was worth to continue to be one. Looking away from the other and focusing on himself, Brown could no longer see the meaning in his work. He was holding his personal costs against the success of his work, trying to calculate whether the former justified and outweighed the latter. Brown's calculation was the opposite from what we saw in his explanation for his engagement with MSF: the desire to put the privileges he enjoyed in his life into the service of others' and the refusal to distract himself from his commitment by settling down and focusing on his career back home. This calculation was the opposite of the surrender that we saw in his encounter with the girl with the beer bottle doll. Brown's focus on the ego and success was a desperate attempt to find some reassurance that would make his decision to leave more acceptable to himself. The ego here is a defence mechanism that helped him justifying and bearing the weight of his infinite responsibility. Brown seems to ask: How else am I supposed to live with the responsibility if I cannot live it out? And the only way he could make his decision for turning away from his responsibility acceptable to himself, was to focus on himself and on the sacrifices his commitment had cost him.

11. James Maskalyk: *Six Months in Sudan*

The first example from Maskalyk's account to be investigated in more detail with the help of Levinas's and Buber's concepts are Maskalyk's experiences working in a hospital in Chile, which led to his decision to become a humanitarian aid worker. The second example illuminates Maskalyk's encounter with Aweil and his wish to adopt her. Meeting Aweil is the most important encounter during Maskalyk's time in Abyei, and this importance is illustrated in Maskalyk's statement that not having followed his plan to adopt her is one of the biggest regrets of his life (2016). The third example sheds light on Maskalyk's overwhelming desire to give everything to a child who came to the hospital for treatment.

11.1 Motivation – "Here I am!"

> It was at that hospital that I saw a man whose fingers were so heavy with gout, so knotted, that he couldn't pick up a coffee cup. I was working with a cardiologist who spent his days employed in a public system where families tried to find someone with a credit card to finance their grandfather's angioplasty. At nights, he travelled to private hospitals to consult on the health of the wealthy so he could send his children to university. I went home convinced that if I was being trained to take care of the sickest they surely were in other places. (SM 6)

Buber's Perspective

Maskalyk does not mention that he had considered humanitarian aid work before coming to Chile, but seeing the severity of the patients' conditions in the hospital in Chile experienced an address and responded to it with his decision to become an aid worker. Strikingly, Maskalyk did not hide from the address, nor the implications that an answer to the address would mean for his life, but responded to the situation that presented itself to him openly. Understanding his profession as being in the service of the sickest and realising that they were not in Canada, the logical step for Maskalyk was to work where they are. Buber writes that when we experience an address we will know what our response should be because the address is unique and is directed to us as the individual we are in a particular situation. Maskalyk does not express any doubts about his response to the address, he did not hide from

it by looking at the bigger picture and thinking that it was not his responsibility to improve the healthcare situation in the country, or stating that he had other plans for his career and life. Taking the situation personally and responding to it from the depth of his identity, his personal approach and response illustrate the uniqueness of the address.

The uniqueness of the address is likewise demonstrated in the fact that Maskalyk did not change his mind when he returned to Canada. Instead, he began to arrange the necessary steps that would enable him to work in the humanitarian sector, by focusing his specialisation on the skills he would need as a physician working in humanitarian aid. In responding to the situation, he demonstrated an openness to what occured to him, which is only possible when one has let go of a certain amount of autonomy over one's life. This openness is likewise visible in Maskalyk not addressing any concerns regarding the implications his decision would have on his life. He does not write that the changes his decision would mean for his life were a sacrifice but rather finds an orientation in responding to the situation, confirming Buber's claim that we find meaning only in responding to concrete situations in which we are addressed.

Levinas's Perspective

In the hospital in Chile, Maskalyk experiences a situation in which the destitute other is exposed to him in pure weakness and who, in spite of his weakness, commands him not to leave him alone in his suffering. Levinas writes that the other's command makes us realise our capacity to cause harm to the other and that, faced with the possibility of causing harm or even death to the other, we cannot do anything but respond to the other. Levinas stresses that our responsibility tolerates no delays, and Maskalyk responds immediately and offers himself in answering 'Here I am!' to the other. Maskalyk does not describe a deliberation process that preceded his decision, which illustrates that his decision was an impulse and a result of feeling compelled to respond to the situation. The lack of rational deliberation prior to his decision confirms Levinas's understanding of the experience of responsibility being an experience of the impossibility of evading the other's call (BPW 95).

Maskalyk's understanding of his profession as being in the service of others demonstrates that he was already responsible, and that for him, the other's needs

came before his own. Maskalyk allowed the other to have a say in his life and for the other's need to determine the course of his life, and in doing so was the other's hostage. There is a sense in Maskalyk's approach to his profession and his humanitarian aid work that he understands that his life is only worth living when put into the service of others.

Maskalyk did not look for others to assume their responsibility but understood the other's call as a call to *his* responsibility. He did not give up his decision to work in the humanitarian sector when he returned to Canada because he was aware that he was the one chosen to respond to the other. This awareness illustrates Levinas's understanding of responsibility being "the essential, primary and fundamental structure" (EI 95) of our subjectivity. Levinas argues that the other who calls my being for myself in question is not a threat and does not do violence to me because he addresses my deepest desire and gives me an opportunity to realise my desire to be for the other (TI 202-203). This idea explains why there is no indication in Maskalyk's account of him feeling restricted by the responsibility he feels towards others. The subjectivity which is established through responsibility explains why Maskalyk was able to let go of the fear for his own safety when he was offered a position in a high-security setting. Being for-the-other, Maskalyk was able to overcome the fear for his own life. Asking himself how much he was willing to lose for his conviction to be in the service of others, he foud reassurance in Didion's quote that encourages an openness to the world and reminds him of the openness to the other that stood at the beginning of his desire to become a humanitarian aid worker.

11.2 Aweil – Maskalyk's Wound

The most important encounter during Maskalyk's time in Abyei is Aweil, a little girl who he considerd adopting. The following passage is taken from the conversation between Maskalyk and one of his colleagues, whom he talked to about his adoption plans, and who told him that it was not a good idea.

> "Definitely bad. It wouldn't be a popular move. You would make a lot of people angry."
> "'Kay."

> "I get it, James. 'If I can't save them all, why not one?' Right? Everyone goes through it. Wait it out."
> "'Kay."
> Pause.
> "What about money? Are we allowed to give money to particular people? Like is it okay to give her some of my per diem? Or just some money so she can go to school, or whatever? Not even now. Later."
> "People do it. But it's not a good idea." (SM 92-93)

Although Maskalyk agreed with the colleague in the conversation, his desire to care for Aweil did not leave him, and afterwards he considered the implications an adoption would have on his life.

> Maybe she is right. Maybe I want to do it because I want one small island of control to cling to. But it isn't that simple. I don't want to only save Aweil, treat-her-malaria save her. I want to take her home with me, put her in school, let her decide who she will be. I think I might love her a little bit. I can't help it. It's bigger than me. Could I do it? I would have to quit, particularly if she doesn't get better. Get to a hospital where she can be diagnosed. I would have to get a new place. Mine's too small. I would have to commit to Toronto…. No more MSF. … I would need a nanny. What if she is positive? Could I watch her die? (SM 94)

Buber's Perspective

Knowing that Aweil's mother was dead and her father was stationed outside of Abyei, and seeing that none of the other family members inquired about her condition, Maskalyk wanted to adopt the child so that he could give her the care she needed. Sharing his idea with a colleague, she rationalized his desire to be there for the child and disregarded its sincerity when interpreting it as a self-centred desire for visible success. By comparing Maskalyk's feelings for Aweil with other aid workers' feelings towards children in similar situations, she was trying to sterilize the address that Maskalyk heard in the situation. Telling him that what he felt was not special because everyone went through this phase, and suggesting that he should follow others' example and wait it out; she was asking him to step out of the 'in-between' and to approach the girl as an It. The address, and one's response to it, however, cannot be understood objectively because they belong in the space of the 'in-between' and cannot be understood outside of the situation. There is no address when looking at the bigger picture and comparing this particular situation with similar ones, because the address is unique and is always directed at a particular individual in a particular situation.

Maskalyk responded to the situation that occurred to him from the depths of his personality and did not hide from it by categorizing this encounter and comparing it with similar situations, but responded to it as "ever anew" (BMM 17). He did not try to order an experience which resisted being ordered but entered into relation with Aweil and approaches her as his Thou. Maskalyk knew that *his* response to the address should be adopting her. His response does not suggest that every aid worker should adopt a child, but rather illustrates a situation which can only be understood through Buber's concept of 'human truth' – a truth which arises from the 'in-between' and which cannot be taken as absolute and as an example to be followed by others. Diamond explains that the I-Thou encounters "disclose the meaning of existence, but they do not provide a perspective which can incorporate this meaning in objective form" (1960, 30). There is, for Buber, no objective certainty in one's response to the other but only a "personal certainty" that arises from one's following one's conscience that resides "in the ground of being" (BMM 69).

Maskalyk did not mention his adoption plans again after this conversation. He continued caring for Aweil and making sure that she recovered and was safe in the hospital but did not adopt her. In the interview in which he admitted that he still regretted not having adopted Aweil, Maskalyk explained that he had not adopted her because he was not really listening to himself and that, back then, he had convinced himself that his desire "to help her, particularly her, was a way to remedy a sense of helplessness" (Maskalyk 2016). He explained that although "[his] heart was just telling [him] to do as much as [he] could for this girl – to not hold back", he did not know how to listen to it but knew now that holding back his feelings has not helped either of them (Maskalyk 2016).

Buber writes that when we respond to the address directed at us with less wholeness that we might have, we will carry away a "wound" (BMM 16-17). Maskalyk's statement that the decision not to adopt Aweil was the one of the biggest shames of his life, and that he still thought about her eight years after the situation, demonstrates the significance of the 'in-between' and the implications that a failure to respond to the other has for one's life. Whereas his colleague tried to reassure him that he did not have to take his feelings for Aweil seriously because everyone was going through similar emotions, and offered him reasons as to why an adoption would be a bad idea, her explanations did not erase his desire to be

there for Aweil and consequently did not prevent his feelings of guilt. Arising from the failure to respond the address that happens in the 'in-between', the guilt, like the address is an independent feeling that cannot be argued away. The guilt arises not only from our turning away from the address but equally from a missed opportunity to constitute our subjectivity. If our subjectivity arises from saying Thou to the other, in the decision not to adopt Aweil, Maskalyk turned away not only from the girl but also himself and a possibility to become a person.

Levinas's Perspective

Seeing the destitute girl that no one but the hospital staff cared for, Maskalyk responds 'Here I am!' to Aweil. His description of the feelings towards this particular child as being bigger than himself demonstrate that his desire to be there for her was not a decision based on a rational calculation, but an impulse he could not but follow. She was the other who called him to assume his responsibility and he responded to her with the desire to adopt her. Maskalyk's consideration of adoption is an illustration of the infinite responsibility. He was not looking to merely ensure her physical wellbeing, and was equally not looking to 'manage' her situation by finding someone else who would take care of her, but responded to her with the biggest offer *he* could give her – adopting her and becoming her father. Levinas writes that confronted with the other's weakness we realise our potential to cause harm to the other by not responding to him, and here, Maskalyk is afraid that if he did not take care of her, no one would. His desire to adopt her was the response to the other's undeclinability – he could not bear the thought of abandoning her to her fate.

Whereas his colleague tried to convince Maskalyk to see the girl as just one child among many, Maskalyk's reaction to the girl confirms Levinas's writing that in the encounter with the face, we touch a reality that does not fit into any a priori ideas or concepts. Although Maskalyk understood the rational explanations his colleague provided for not adopting Aweil, his desire to be there for her and to adopt her did not disappear. This example demonstrates that responsibility defies rationality – no matter how many reasons his colleague listed for not adopting Aweil, the desire to be there for her remained present.

Contemplating the many aspects that Maskalyk would need to change in his life if he was to adopt Aweil was not part of a decision-making process in which he

wanted to determine whether adopting Aweil was indeed a good idea, but was rather a demonstration that his responsibility has already surrendered to the girl's call. Even though he agreed with his colleague during their conversation, his contemplation is an illustration of his desire to be for Aweil pushing him towards his responsibility. His approach was not a calculation but a search for the best way to accommodate Aweil in his life in Canada and demonstrates that he had already subjected himself to his responsibility and the implications Aweil's adoption would mean for his life style.

It is a similarly practical response that we saw when Maskalyk decided to work in the humanitarian sector in Chile: when he returned to Canada, he did not question his decision but concentrated on taking the necessary steps that would enable him to work as a humanitarian aid worker. Interestingly, Maskalyk did not articulate the changes Aweil's adoption would mean for his life as a sacrifice. He does not write that coming back from Abyei as a single father was not how he had imagined his posting with MSF to unfold. Instead, Maskalyk demonstrated an openness to the other, and his willingness to give to the other what the other might ask of him. The list demonstrates his desire to be for her before being for himself. What counts more than the adaptations he would need to implement if he adopted her is that she was safe and that she could lead the life she wanted. Not presenting the costs that an adoption would mean for his life as a negative aspect of the potential adoption, Maskalyk confirms Levinas's writing that the other's call does not cause any damage to us, in spite of its infinity, because it gives our life an orientation and meaning. Peperzak explains that our possessions and what we enjoy in our lives receive their definite meaning only if we offer them to the other (1993, 165). In sharing with the other what we so far have enjoyed for ourselves, our belongings lose their egocentric function and become "gifts, symbols of welcoming" (ibid., 165). Maskalyk' did not consider his desire to put everything he had in the service of Aweil and her wellbeing as an act of sacrifice because it gave his life meaning.

Levinas writes that we constitute our humanity and subjectivity only in responding to the other's call. Only in assuming our responsibility can we realise our desire to be there for the other and become fully ourselves and in his desire to be there for Aweil, Maskalyk was mostly human and mostly himself. The shame Maskalyk feels for not having adopted Aweil is a shame for both rejecting the girl's

call and the implications it had on her life, and rejecting his responsibility that constituted his humanity and subjectivity.

The fact that Maskalyk has not forgotten Aweil demonstrates the infinity of one's responsibility. Turning away from the other does not erase one's responsibility. Aweil did not let go of Maskalyk when he returned to Canada, and she was his first thought when he heard that fighting broke out again in Sudan. Maskalyk's continuing responsibility for Aweil is demonstrated in his continuing concern for her. When he heard the news that people in Abyei were fleeing their homes, he wondered whether the woman who agreed to take care of Aweil was still doing so or whether she had abandoned her and Aweil was "sitting in the middle of a puddle, crying" whilst people were pushing past her (SM 339). Maskalyk admitted that although more than eight years have passed since he came back from Abyei, he still thought of Aweil "all the time" (2016).

11.3 The Little Girl – The Question of Success

> so i was in the tb office thinking about what i will leave behind. as i was balancing in the interspace, the one between here and there, then and now, one of the young tb patients walked in. She is about eight years old, and has been on treatment for two months. After the first meeting, I have not seen her parents. She comes every week on her own and always wears the same torn, overlarge black dress. She peels around the corner, then bashfully slides into the room barefoot, and steps onto the scale. She answers my questions shyly, only with nods. When I finally place the foil packages in her hand, she skips out of the room. I adore her. So brave.
>
> When I saw her this time, for the last time, I had this overwhelming urge to give her everything. I didn't even know what everything was, I just wanted to give it.
>
> and i knew then that i was thinking about things the wrong way. when the plane takes off and the abyei ground falls from beneath my feet for good, the best things i will have left behind are not the ones that can be summarized on my end-of-mission report. they are the bright, beautiful parts of the day that can only be lived here. there are many. i will miss them. [sic] (SM 10/07 p. 300)

Buber's Perspective

While Maskalyk was contemplating his achievements during his time in Abyei, a little girl entered the room and interrupted his thoughts. Maskalyk approached her

openly; he did not see her as merely another patient but remembered that she had been coming to the hospital on her own for weeks, wearing the same torn dress each time. He approached her as a Thou and made her present to himself to the extent that was possible for him in this moment and understood how much bravery it took for her to come to the hospital alone.

In their brief encounter, Maskalyk experienced an address that spoke into his very situation and reminded him of the core value of his work. It is important to stress that, although he was addressed in the encounter with the girl, the girl had nothing to do with what was said to him in this moment. She neither knew of his preoccupation with his achievements, nor that he needed to be reminded of the essential value of his efforts to treat others. This encounter once more demonstrates both the independence of the 'in-between' in which the address occurs, and the uniqueness of the address.

The encounter with the girl reminded Maskalyk that the value of his work could not be calculated but only lived through, by being fully present in Abyei and offering his full presence and attention to the other. Buber sees the value of anything that we do or give to the other in the degree to which we encountered the other openly and offer our full presence to the other. He stresses that "the presence of a man who is simply and immediately present" (PW 7) is "more powerful and more holy" than anything else one could offer. The address reminded Maskalyk that by simply focusing on measurable successes he would not grasp the real value and meaning of his work because it was not his medical skills but his ability to offer his unreserved presence to the other and to confirm the other that was the essential value of his work.

Levinas's Perspective

One moment Maskalyk was preoccupied with calculating his achievements and in the next he was interrupted by the other and surprised and overwhelmed by a desire to be there for the girl. Maskalyk's overwhelming urge to give her everything without knowing what this 'everything' was, was the desire to be for the other, to say "Here I am!" to the girl. Maskalyk describes this desire not as an act of will, but as a feeling that overcame and overwhelmed him, and one which he could not explain to himself. Levinas claims that in the face-to-face encounter, I do not first perceive an order and then follow it but that the "subservience of [my] obedience

precedes the hearing of the order" (EN 130). The wish to give her everything, to be open to give whatever she might ask from him without her even having voiced a request, demonstrates the passivity of the hostage that comes forth prior to conscience. Before knowing what it was that he could give her, there was the desire to give everything, and in this desire Maskalyk had already surrendered to the other's call. Levinas stresses that our responsibility for the other does not involve our consent and is not a choice or an act of will. The 'everything' that Maskalyk did not understand was the passive, unconditional, and infinite responsibility of being for-the-other that arises prior to conscience. When faced with the other, consciousness "loses its first place" (EN 96) and this encounter illustrates that the ethical subject is not a conscious but a sensible subject. Maskalyk was overwhelmed with the desire to be there for the girl even before asking what she needed, without expecting a reward, without calculating how much he could give, without rationalizing. In his desire to be for the other no matter what it was that the other might ask of him Maskalyk demononstrated the "very identity of the human" (EI 100-101).

12. Jessica Alexander: *Chasing Chaos*

The first aspect from Alexander's account to be examined in more depth with aid of Buber's and Levinas' concepts is her motivation for humanitarian aid work. Whereas Alexander mostly presents her motivation as a desire for an exciting lifestyle and only rarely articulates a concern for the other as part of her motivation for humanitarian aid work, Buber and Levinas will help us to shed light on an alternative understanding of Alexander's self-centered motivation. Both thinkers will help us understand that there is more to her motivation than the desire for an exciting lifestyle and illuminate what this 'more' is. The second example is Alexander's encounter with Ahmed's niece and was selected because it was in this encounter that Alexander demonstrated her responsibility for the other. The third element which is explored in more detail is Alexander's decision to quit her position in Darfur and the consequent feeling of guilt.

12.1 Motivation – Search for Meaning

Alexander presents her initial motivation for humanitarian aid work as a collection of many self-centred aspects: the desire to travel to foreign places, to be part of a global community, to engage in rewarding, intellectually intriguing work, and the wish to be distracted from the grief of her mother's death (CC 17-18). Whenever Alexander addresses her motives for accepting a position in the aid sector, she illustrates it as a carefully calculated step which was driven by a desire for a career in the aid field. First, she had to do an internship in Rwanda because she had to have field experience in order to get a job after her graduation. Then she had to go to Sudan because only a posting in a dangerous conflict zone would improve her résumé, and then she went to North Darfur because this was where the most exciting work in her field was happening at that time. What is striking in Alexander's explanation for her motivation is not that she cannot select a single motive, but that for someone wanting to work in the aid field, these explanations are lacking any notion of a concern for the other. Rather than a genuine interest in improving others' living conditions, Alexander states that she was driven by a desire for a career in the aid field. For instance, when accepting the position in Darfur, she admitted that

she was neither motivated by "humanitarian values" nor a particular connection "to the plight of Darfurians", but a desire to improve her career (CC 93). Only at the very end of her memoir does Alexander state that she had continued working in the aid sector in spite of her disillusionment because she believed "in the purpose of aid: to alleviate suffering of people when they need help most" (CC 373). This however, is the only time that she explicitly connects a concern for the other to her motivation to work in the field.

In order to explore a different side to Alexander's motivation that is left uncovered in her memoir, we need to go back to her very first steps into the aid sector. Alexander writes that after her mother's death she quit her position in a marketing consultancy firm because she was seeking "a more meaningful profession" (CC 16). Although she does not explain what she believed it was that would make a job meaningful, it is important to point out that what she was initially looking for, was not simply another, more exciting, or better paid job, but an occupation that would bring meaning into her life.

Buber's Perspective

Analysing this encounter through the lens of Buber's concept of responsibility as a response to an address, we can state that Alexander experienced a call in her mother's death. This call, which she expresses as the desire "to live life to the fullest" and "a more meaningful profession" (CC 16), was strong enough for her to quit her job without knowing what to do next. For Buber, meaning can only be found in entering into relation with the other and responding to the other as a Thou (BMM 167-68), and when travelling through Latin America, Alexander found an example of what meaningful work could mean: being there for others with less opportunities, and engaging in improving the circumstances in which others lived. Alexander believed that the aid workers she met were involved in something "far bigger" (CC 17) than her life in New York and although she admired their "different and intriguing way of life", what was the far bigger than her life back home was the example of people who responded to others' challenging life circumstances and engaged in alleviating others' suffering. Alexander was addressed in these encounters and responded to the address by deciding to change her profession and studying for a degree in the development area. The seriousness of Alexander's decision is visible in her decision to break off her engagement because "a voice

inside [her] compelled [her] to continue living on [her] own, to immerse [her]self in this career, and in the lifestyle it required" (CC 46-47). Strikingly, Alexander explained the call as a desire for a career and a particular lifestyle, and it seems that she does not have any other concepts to understand or to explain the address she hears and responds to.

In spite of Alexander's articulation of her self-centred motivation for humanitarian aid work, the responsibility she felt for the people she was helping was visible in her reaction to her colleagues', who treated others as an It. The majority of the colleagues Alexander describes in her memoir were self-involved, and preoccupied with what they could get from their jobs. They saw their positions as a means to progress their careers whilst enjoying a luxurious lifestyle and keeping their distance from those they were working for. Most of Alexander's colleagues were individuals who were so addicted to the world of It, and so strongly concerned with themselves, that they could not enter into relation with others and did not confirm others. Alexander too experienced their distanced attitude when she began her internship in Rwanda, and realized that her desire to get to know her colleagues was met with a distinct lack of interest once they learned that she would be only staying for three months. What is different in Alexander's attitude from her colleagues' is that, although she too used her positions to improve her career, she drew a line when it came to the people she was working for. When a colleague in Rwanda told her that interviewing the refugees would get easier with time, Alexander stated that it did *not* get easier to listen to teenagers who had seen their parents being killed and their friends' being mutilated. Encountering others openly and treating each person as an individual and not merely another story, most interviews left her "speechless and nauseous" (CC 65).

Levinas's Perspective

Before her mother's death, Alexander lived a life of what Levinas calls "enjoyment" (TI 134) – she existed for herself, revolved around herself, and approached the world as something which existed in order to satisfy her needs. At the same time, however, she felt that the world of needs was not enough. Alexander's longing for meaning, which she expressed as a desire for "a more meaningful profession" (CC 16), is best explained with Levinas's concept of 'desire'. Levinas writes that in addition to needs, which we seek to satisfy in the

world of enjoyment, we experience a desire for something which cannot be appropriated and which can only be met by the Other who does not belong to the world of enjoyment. Desire is the longing for "more!" which is inscribed in me without my having chosen it and which makes me aware of "not-enough" of the world of enjoyment, and pushes me towards the other (Peperzak 1997, 183). Levinas claims that through our desire, we are always already responsible for the other, even prior to being aware of the other's demand. The desire for the Other, who gives our lives meaning, occurs prior to consciousness and does not require our understanding in order to move us. This explains why Alexander was moved towards something "more" (CC 16) without knowing what it was that she longed for. She followed the desire to be for-the-other, and demonstrated that the power of the Other's call does not depend on our ability to rationally understand and analyse our longing. According to Levinas, I can only find meaning in my life if I respond to the other calling me to assume my responsibility. Meaning for Levinas can only be found in the "disinterested being-for-the-Other of responsibility, patience, and peace" (Peperzak 1997, 113). Alexander's desire for meaning was a desire for the Other, and when she found an example of a meaningful profession in aid workers who lived the response of 'Here I am!', she "wanted to be part of it" (A 17).

Although Alexander does not articulate a sense of responsibility for the other when she writes about her decision to work in the aid sector, one way in which she demonstrates her responsibility during her work is her discomfort with her colleagues' attitudes. The majority of aid workers Alexander met during her postings in Rwanda, Sudan, or Darfur differed drastically from the aid workers she met in Central America, and who had inspired her to pursue aid work. Most aid workers Alexander describes lived in the realm of enjoyment and encountered others as means to their ends. Theirs was not a genuine responsibility because they did not offer themselves to the other and did not reply "Here I am!" to the other. Alexander was appalled by her colleagues' racism, entitlement, and cold detachment, and her repulsion is a sign of her responsibility and the desire to be for-the-other. Alexander felt uncomfortable with the luxurious lifestyle they enjoyed but did not share with others. She, for instance, writes that no matter how many parties she attended in the field, their luxury and revelry always unsettled her (CC 116). Although Alexander rationalized her feeling of discomfort by stating that aid workers were not altruistic robots and finding a way to relax was necessary to

stay sane and continue doing this work, this reasoning did not diminish her uneasiness (CC 117).

12.2 Ahmed's Niece – Becoming For-the-Other

> Her malnourished body was tiny and frail; her head twice its size, swollen and puffy. It looked like a balloon floating on top of a skeleton. The child's nose was distorted, her eye sockets sunken in, her cheeks and forehead bags of fluid. When she moved her head, her neck twisted awkwardly, too weak to support the bloated mass. She let out muffled gasps of discomfort […]
>
> I felt queasy. I had never seen anything like this […]
>
> "We'll get her to Khartoum, Ahmed," I said to him. "We'll get her to Khartoum," I said again, looking at his sister, who was still sitting on the floor […]
>
> There was an urgency about the situation that felt new. Perhaps it was the personal relationship I had with Ahmed, but whatever it was jolted me into action. The attacks in Tawila, the Janjaweed raping women, the rainstorms – these were all out of my control. But a sick child? That I could actually do something about […]
>
> With every rejection, my resolve intensified. I hadn't been confronted with this degree of clinical detachment before. How could I go back to Ahmed and tell him that there was nothing I could do, nothing that the humanitarian community could do, to help. That I was sorry, but he would have to watch his niece die. For the next weeks, I spend my nights dreaming of exploding heads, and my days negotiating with WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, none of which would agree to help get the girl on the flight because it wasn't "in their mandate" – it wasn't in other words what they had come to Darfur to do and, therefore, they weren't responsible for it […]
>
> But I refused to rationalize the path of least resistance. I was determined to get this girl to Khartoum, no matter what logistical challenges I had to overcome, no matter what arcane UN bureaucracy I had to navigate, no matter the number of people sitting behind desks who politely sad, "No, I can't help." (CC 190-195)

Buber's Perspective

Buber stresses that we should respond to each situation and each address "ever anew" and that our response should be like the address we respond to – untranslatable (BMM 17). It should arise from the specific situation, spring from the depths of our personality, and depend on the request of the particular person confronting us. When addressed, we should not hide but enter into the situation and open ourselves to the other. Met with Ahmed's plea to help his niece, Alexander

stepped into the 'in-between' and responded to him and the girl as her Thou. Whereas her colleagues approached the girl as an It and saw the girl not in her particularity, but as another tragic case, Alexander responded to the girl in an unreserved way. She did not compare this girl's condition with other, similar, cases who had been turned down by the agencies, but confirmed the girl in her being. Alexander confirmed the girl as the one who needed to be taken care of as an individual, not as another example of Sudan's tragedy. Whereas Alexander's colleagues presented her with rational explanations as to why they could not fly the girl out and hid behind their organisations' rules and mandates, Alexander could not accept that these rules could be more important than saving the infant. Yes, she could understand the logic of her colleagues' explanations, but the girl required an individual response, and the rules and mandates failed to address this girl's situation. Alexander could not follow their argument because the address was unique and was directed at *her* as the person she was. Buber writes that whoever stands in relation, participates in an actuality that is not appropriable and Alexander's inability to follow her colleague's calculations and to turn away from the girl demonstrates the autonomy of the space of the 'in-between' that defies intentionality.

Entering "the unreduced immediacy of the moment" (BMM 16) and approaching the girl freely, without reservation or calculation, Alexander demonstrated her independence and constituted her humanity and personhood. Alexander's open approach in this situation explains why she, who had been fighting thoughts of futility regarding her work in Darfur previously, regained meaning in her work and was able to persevere against all obstacles when trying to find a flight for the girl.

Levinas's Perspective

In the encounter with Ahmed's niece, Alexander, who for the major part in her memoir articulates her humanitarian work as a desire to have an exciting lifestyle and build a career, experiences the transformative impact of the face-to-face encounter and becomes for-the-other. The little girl spoke to Alexander with an authority of a master and commanded her not to leave her alone. Alexander's instant promise that she would help find a flight for the girl when she saw the infant's destitute state, demonstrates the indeclinability of the face. Alexander's

responsibility was not a conscious decision but an experience of the impossibility of turning away from the girl and leaving her alone with her suffering. In the face-to-face, Alexander had no time to consider whether it was indeed possible to find a flight for the girl but was overwhelmed with the desire to be there for the girl and her family.

In the encounter with Ahmed's niece, Alexander, who for the major part of her memoir articulates her motivation for her humanitarian work as a desire to have an exciting lifestyle and build a career, experiences the transformative impact of the face-to-face encounter and becomes for-the-other. Alexander's response and responsibility was not a conscious decision but an experience of the impossibility of turning away from the girl and leaving her alone with her suffering. In the face-to-face, Alexander had no time to consider whether it was indeed possible to find a flight for the girl but was overwhelmed with the desire to be there for the girl and her family.

Alexander's attempt to try to find a flight to Khartoum, where the girl could receive appropriate medical treatment, and the criticism she faced for doing so from her colleagues illustrates the tension between the interpersonal ethics and justice, which in this situation are the organisations' rules for handling such cases. When Alexander's colleagues accuse her of giving a disproportionate attention to this particular infant and point out that she could use the time and energy she spends on this one girl to help many others, she understands the rationality of their argument. Being the IDP camp coordinator, it is an intrinsic part of Alexander's job to weigh up the limited resources at hand in order to find a way to distribute them justly across all people in the camp. However, facing the Other, she sees the general rules and her colleagues' adherence to the guidelines as the path of "least resistance" – an excuse to turn away from the Other. This encounter illustrates Levinas's claim that justice, albeit necessary, is the beginning of violence because it requires from me to abandon my infinite responsibility for the Other. Alexander is unable to apply the general guidelines to the girl because the general approach will mean abandoning her.

Alexander's response is not a questioning of the rules per se but a questioning of the base line the rules offer. How far can the attempt to balance the different demands and to try to do justice to all, can go? Alexander doubted whether what humanitarian agencies offered to the people in the camp was truly the best they

could do. Alexander cannot let go because helping the infant is what she understands her role as a humanitarian aid worker to be. For the first time, she questions the profession she tried very hard to get in to and writes: "Shouldn't we be flying sick people to Khartoum for treatment? I mean, shouldn't that be part of our job? We're here to save lives and reduce suffering, aren't we?" (CC 194). Although she focused on Ahmed's niece, she does not only want to do more exclusively for this girl but her critique includes all others who are in a similar position. The girl is a corrective to the regulations of her and other humanitarian organisations' code of conduct, which however just, was insufficient. For Alexander, the girl is still an ethical authority and that her responsibility for the girl is not negated by the existence of others who have similar needs. Alexander's determination illustrates that she believes that the system must allow for space to care for those individuals who are not met by the general approach and is an act of resistance to the primacy of the weighing up and calculating approach that is a constituent part of her work. She does not explicitly judge helping the girl as more humanitarian than the rest of her work but still clearly demonstrates that there has to be space for individual cases. However, this does not mean that she was naïve about the restricted realm in which humanitarian agencies operate. Alexander writes that she was fully aware that the long-lasting solution for the problems they were facing in the camp had to come from the Sudanese government.

Another element of Alexander's inability to give up is that in this moment she as an individual mattered. Seeing that no one else would try to help the girl emphasised the importance of her efforts. Here, Alexander, who often presents her job as an aid worker as something that anyone with the appropriate training could do – "most of the time I work behind a desk staring at budget lines and spreadsheets cataloguing the number of jerry cans delivered or latrines built" (CC 9) – made a difference. Levinas writes that the Other's call establishes our subjectivity – through the Other's call, I am the one chosen to respond to him and in her determination to assume her responsibility for the girl, she could not have been replaced by anyone else. The other's call empowered Alexander and gave her the necessary strength and perseverance to continue looking for a flight, in spite of the obstacles.

12.3 Leaving Darfur – The Cost of Turning Away

When Alexander decided to quit her position in Darfur to accept a consultancy position in Sri Lanka and Indonesia, she was anxious to tell her colleagues about her decision. To her surprise, her colleagues reacted positively and assured her that she had every right to leave Darfur for a better job offer. The following conversation occurred when Alexander told the camp committee members, with whom she had been working every day, of her decision. Ahmed whose niece Alexander managed to fly out for a surgery in Khartoum was one of the camp committee members.

> What was I going to say? *Sorry, but I'm leaving to go to Sri Lanka and Indonesia, to work there. It's not that I don't really care about you all, it's just, well, I got a better job.* So I lied. I said, I was going home for my family.
> "But we *are* your family," Ahmed protested.
> "I know you are." My hands were shaking. I could barely speak, I was so ashamed. "I need to go home, though," I said softly, my voice quivering.
> Two of the members spoke at the same time. "They want to know when you are coming back," Ishaq translated.
> The truth was, I wasn't coming back. I was just one of many camp coordinators who would fill this role. Just like the person who would replace me, I came in for a few months, did what I could to make life a bit more pleasant. But I could leave, and would; I had options, and at any point I might get on a plane and go home or on to a better job. These people were left in their broken country, ruled by a relentlessly corrupt government that often seemed to do more to fracture the nation than rebuild it. Most of them would remain in these – or similar – conditions for the rest of their lives. (CC 214)

Buber's Perspective

Buber writes that whenever we fail to respond to the address or respond with less wholeness that we might have, we will feel guilt. Although Alexander presented various reasons as to why she had the right to take the opportunity to leave, she was not at peace with her decision but overwhelmed with a feeling of guilt.

The fact that her colleagues' and her father's approval of her decision and reassurance that she was making the right choice failed to soothe her feeling of guilt demonstrates the uniqueness of the address. When Alexander spoke to her colleagues, she was looking for affirmation; she was looking for others to erase the shame that she felt about her decision. However, although her colleagues found numerous reasons as to why she should accept the job offer and encouraged her to

leave Darfur, the guilt did not disappear because she was addressed as the individual she was, and no one else could have taken the responsibility of responding from her.

The guilt that arises from the failure of entering into the space of the 'in-between' can only be healed only in revealing the guilt and "repairing the injured order of existence through an active devotion to it" (Atterton, Calarco, and Friedman 2004, 5). Alexander's decision to go to Sierra Leone after she returned back to New York from Sri Lanka and Indonesia illustrates that, on some level, she wanted to make up for abandoning the camp in Darfur and to reconnect with herself. She writes that coming back from Sri Lanka and Indonesia, she was disillusioned with aid work and doubted whether there was any value to humanitarian aid. This realization resulted in a feeling of being lost – she did not know who she was if she was not an aid worker. Alexander's decision to accept the position in Sierra Leone is a reluctant response, a response that Buber would describe as "stammering", but it was an honest stammering and a first step. In going back to the field, she reaffirmed her decision to work in the aid sector in spite of her doubts, and demonstrates that for her, this was the only way to re-gain a sense of her subjectivity.

Levinas's Perspective

Alexander writes that she had the opportunity to leave and move on and that she would not forgo this option just because the people in the camp did not have similar options. Whereas this was factually true (she did indeed have the options which they did not have), her guilt illustrated another side to this reality. Alexander's bad conscience about her decision was real because her responsibility was real; it illustrated that she was the others' hostage even as she was abandoning them. In looking for justifications for leaving Darfur, Alexander demonstrates and confirms Levinas's understanding of our responsibility as always being there. Turning away from the other, we feel the need to explain our turning away to ourselves and to defend our choice by coming up with explanations that would justify our decision for abandoning the other and our responsibility.

An important aspect that plays a role in Alexander's decision to leave Darfur is her desire for visible success and the sense of futility regarding her work in the camp. Alexander writes that she wanted to feel like she had achieved something

and her efforts resulted in something “substantial” (CC 216) and explains her decision to work in Sri Lanka and Indonesia as the desire to work in an environment in which she could achieve something. The desire for success, however, stands in contrast to the disinterested response to the other’s call for our responsibility. Instead of being for-the-other, in her desire for recognition and validation Alexander revolves around herself.

Alexander’s attempts to erase her guilt by focusing on the rational reasons that justify her leaving, fail. Alexander’s statement that the guilt she felt for leaving Darfur turned her time in Indonesia and Sri Lanka into “hell” (CC 224) illustrates that guilt, like responsibility, cannot be argued away with rational explanations and that our turning away from the other’s call has profound long-term implications.

13. The Face-to-Face – The Experiential Core of the Humanitarian Vocation

Review of the Study

The thesis provides an in-depth investigation of the significance of specific ethical experiences for humanitarian aid work. Following Emmanuel Levinas's and Martin Buber's understanding of ethics as arising from intersubjective encounters, I analysed four contemporary humanitarian aid workers' memoirs, and investigated the experiences humanitarian aid workers describe as being crucial for their humanitarian engagement revealing the nature of the specific encounters in which they arise as an ethical subject. In doing so, I explored three aspects: first, the role of particular experiences for humanitarian aid workers' motivation to work in the humanitarian sector; second, the role of particular experiences for humanitarian aid workers' ability to cope with the challenging nature of their work; and third the commonalities among these experiences.

A major advantage of using memoirs for my investigation, as compared to interviews or short accounts of particular moments, was that it allowed me to examine the impact of face-to-face encounters over time within the overall context of the individual's life, and to illuminate humanitarians' longitudinal evolution of attitudes and self-understanding. Only the longitudinal insight provided in the memoirs enabled me to demonstrate that the experiences that evoke humanitarians' motivation, and the encounters that help them cope with the challenges in the field, share a common structure, and so we can assume that there is a shared ethical experience amongst the four humanitarians.

The in-depth analysis of each of the four memoirs revealed that aid workers' initial motivation for humanitarian aid work was evoked by specific encounters. In contrast to the existing studies on aid workers' motivation which focus on the variety of different – altruistic or self-focused – aspects in individuals' decision for humanitarian aid work (de Jong 2011; Eriksson et al. 2012; Fechter 2012a, 2014; Roth 2015), my study explored the commonalities humanitarians share *in spite* of the differences. My thesis demonstrated not only that there is a core to humanitarians' motivation – the desire to be for-the-other – but more importantly, showed that this core motivation was evoked by particular face-to-face encounters.

At the beginning of each of the individuals' journeys into humanitarian aid work stand specific encounters in which they are called to assume their responsibility, and their consequent humanitarian engagement is a response to this call. My findings add to the emerging research on humanitarian aid workers' motivation, particularly the work of Bjerneld et al. (2006) and Roth (2015) who point out the significance of particular experience for humanitarian aid workers' motivation but do not analyse the nature of these experiences. Furthermore, my analysis demonstrates that aid workers' ability to persist in their work in spite of the difficulties, again lies in specific encounters in which they are called back to their responsibility. When humanitarians struggle with feelings of futility regarding their efforts, specific face-to-face encounters re-establish a sense of purpose and meaning. I also demonstrate that the experiences which humanitarians connect with their motivation to work in the field and the experiences they link to their ability to do their work share common aspects. Providing an in-depth analysis of the most crucial experiences for each humanitarian through the lens of both Buber's and Levinas, I illuminated the commonalities in these experiences and established what can be called a shared ethical experience amongst the four humanitarians.

The Face-to-Face as a Common Core

The commonalities in the experiences Orbinski, Maskalyk, Brown and Alexander share in their memoirs do not mean that the four humanitarian aid workers and their memoirs were indistinguishable, as there are clear differences between the accounts. Orbinski, for example, provides a level of self-reflection that is not matched by Brown, Maskalyk or Alexander. This might be simply a reflection of his personality, but can also be a reflection of his age – compared to Maskalyk, Brown, and Alexander who wrote their memoirs in their early 30ies, Orbinski was 48 when his memoir was published and had been working in the humanitarian sector in different postings for more than 15 years in contrast to Maskalyk who wrote the memoir after his first mission or Brown after his second. Another difference between Orbinski's account on the one side and Maskalyk's, Brown's, and Alexander's account on the other is the continuity of Orbinski's openness towards the Other and his inability to decline the Other's call and the difference in the degree of mutuality in the encounters he describes.

If one wanted to separate the accounts according to the degree of the individuals' openness to the Other's call, Orbinski would represent the ideal case and demonstrate the most consistent being-for-the other. Orbinski demonstrates that from a young age, he is unable to decline the Other's call for responsibility, becomes a doctor as a way to alleviate others' pain, works in the humanitarian sector because he is driven by the desire to be in the service of those who need him most, and presents many examples in which he reconfirms his being for-the-other again and again during his humanitarian work. Maskalyk and Brown would represent the centre of the scale illustrating an openness towards the Other's call at the beginning of their humanitarian journey and examples in which they are drawn back to this motivation during hard times in the field but at the same time acknowledging that there were other self-centred reasons for their humanitarian aid work like the desire to understand what war was for Maskalyk or travelling to remote places for Brown. Alexander would represent Orbinski's opposite, describing her motivation to work in the humanitarian sector as a desire for an exciting lifestyle and providing only one in-depth example of such a face-to-face encounter when she writes about Ahmed's niece.

The second difference between Orbinski's and the other accounts is that Orbinski is the only one who describes an encounter in which we can see both sides of the relation. In the encounter with the mutilated woman, we can see not only Orbinski's response to the woman but also her response to him. Due to the level of mutual confirmation – Orbinski confirms the woman and at the same time is confirmed by her – this encounter represents the ideal type of Buber's I-Thou relation. In Maskalyk's, Brown's, and Alexander's accounts we can see only their side of the encounters they describe. From these one-sided accounts we can surmise that these relations differed in their level of mutuality because the authors do not articulate the notion of confirmation from the other side and because these were encounters with either children who were too small to speak or too shy to vocalize their response, or, as in Brown's encounter with the woman whose husband refused her treatment, too weak to speak. This does not mean that confirmation requires a dialogue because confirmation describes the attitude with which one person approaches the other. But, whereas in Orbinski's and the woman's conversation we can see that they both confirmed each other, we cannot see this level of mutual

confirmation in Maskalyk's, Brown's and Alexander's accounts who do not describe the other side's response.

The question which arises from the differences in the openness towards the Other and the degree of mutuality between Orbinski's and the others' encounters, is then, whether we can say that Orbinski's encounters are of different quality and that he therefore represents an outlier with Maskalyk, Brown and Alexander being more representative of the majority of humanitarian aid workers?

In order to answer the question of whether we can use the level of mutuality to judge Maskalyk's, Brown's and Alexander's encounters as inferior compared to Orbinski's, it is important to remind ourselves what Buber understands a 'relation' to be. A relation for Buber does not have to be a long-lasting affiliation and does not require a vocal exchange but is the open attitude with which I approach the other. A relation does not require a dialogue but can be an "unreserved" glance between two people who confirm the other in his entirety (BMM 37, KM 71). Although Buber states that relation is reciprocity and genuine confirmation occurs only in mutuality (PW 225), he stresses that relationships vary in their degree of mutuality and I-Thou relations display "mutuality in all its graduations" (PI 28). In a relation between a teacher and the pupil, for instance, the relation is mutual and reciprocal but reciprocity does not mean that what each gives to the other and receives from the other in return is the same. Reciprocity in the sense of mutual confirmation is therefore not a rule but a gift. There is, of course, a difference in quality in Orbinski's and the woman's relation because of the ideal type of mutuality and the two-sided confirmation. It is, however, crucial not to accredit the mutual confirmation to Orbinski and some sort of special skillset which he possess naturally and Maskalyk, Brown or Alexander are lacking. Buber writes that the space of the 'in-between', which describes what happens between two people when they meet, is an independent realm which can only be participated in but not owned by either side and the I-Thou relation "an election and being elected" (IT 62). I can, and this is indeed all I can do and all I am responsible for, offer my side to the other and prepare the basis for a mutual relation to unfold but I cannot force the other to step into relation with me and cannot in any way will the other to confirm me. In the encounter with the woman, Orbinski offered his side and confirmed the woman in her being but the confirmation he received from her was the result of her openness towards him. He did not and could not have enforced her confirmation in

the same way in which she could not have asked for him to confirm her. All Orbinski could do, was to offer his openness and to provide the ground for the relation to unfold and it is this openness which we can also see in Maskalyk's, Brown's and Alexander's accounts. Not, as previously established, with the same frequency and not as well articulated as in Orbinski's account, but yet there. Although the accounts differ in the frequency with which the authors open themselves to the Other, when they do so, their desire to be for the other is the same. In Maskalyk's encounter with the infant girl or the girl in the torn dress, Brown's encounter with the beer bottle girl or the dying woman and Alexander's encounter with Ahmed's niece, Maskalyk, Brown and Alexander enter the space of the 'in-between', confirm their Other in his particular situation from the depth of their being, offer their side as an invitation and basis for a relation but have no power over the other side's response. In the face-to-face moments, however infrequent they are, we see a commonality in their response. Using Levinas's and Buber's concepts, I demonstrated that not only the structure of these defining experiences is the same but that their response to these encounters, their becoming-for-the-other, and the meaning of these encounters for each of these humanitairans are the same. They are overwhelmed with the desire to be for the other, they put themselves in the service of the Other without being concerned with themselves, their safety or their success. Orbinski is exceptional in his willingness to open himself up to the Other's call again and again but what my analysis revealed is that Maskalyk, Brown, and Alexader are drawn to the same kind of experiences. The difference between Orbinski's and the other accounts rather demonstrates that responsibility needs to be taken on and practiced again and again and reminds us of Buber's warning of the danger of turning away from the other's address. If we continuously numb ourselves from the address in what happens around us, we will cease hearing the address and become completely preoccupied with ourselves and the world of It. Alexander's response to Ahmed's niece comes as a surprise in the memoir but it demonstrates that even she, who distracts herself from the Other's call wherever possible, experiences the Other's call which she cannot turn away from. In the moments in which they are faced with the Other and in which they turn and respond to the Other, all other differences between Orbinski, Maskalyk, Brown and Alexander are irrelevant. Therefore, although there is a difference in mutuality in Orbinski's and others' encounters and the difference in the frequency of face-to-

face encounters, this difference does not allow for us to dismiss Maskalyk's, Brown's and Alexander's encounters.

Choicelessness

One commonality among the experiences which have sparked humanitarian aid workers' motivation, and the experiences that humanitarian aid workers describe as being significant during their humanitarian work, is the notion of 'choicelessness'. Whereas the general emphasis in research on aid workers' motivation lies in their active pursuit of humanitarian work, and their engagement is presented as a deliberate decision, my findings show that the origin of the humanitarian motivation is a surrendering to the other's call. Humanitarians explain their actions not as a deliberate choice, but rather a feeling of not having another choice, of the impossibility of acting differently. When Brown agrees to work with MSF in Mavinga in spite of the security risks, he explains that "there was no decision to make" and describes his decision to go on a second posting with MSF as an "inevitable" (BA 190) step. Orbinski refuses to accept the offer to quit his position in Baidoa and to return back to Canada because "[he] could not live with who [he] would be if [he] did not go back" (IO 100), and presents the same reason for accepting the position in Rwanda (ibid., 181). In Baidoa, he takes the man out of the morgue because he "had no choice but to do" (ibid., 6) so, and when the little girl in Rwanda asks him to take her mother and her to the hospital, he agrees although this decision means endangering his own and his driver's lives because there "was no choice" (ibid., 216). Maskalyk describes a feeling of being overwhelmed by the desire to care for Aweil which he describes as being bigger than him. Alexander, struggling against all odds to find a flight for Ahmed's niece, writes that she simply *could not* tell Ahmed that his niece would have to die because no one wanted to help her.

Losing and Finding One's Agency

Becoming for-the-other enables Orbinski, Maskalyk, Brown and Alexander to let go of a particular concern about themselves: the desire for a comfortable lifestyle, a career, recognition or a concern for their safety. Brown resists the temptation of delaying his humanitarian work until he has established his career, and meeting the little girl with her beer bottle doll, he can let go of his desire for recognition for his

work in Mavinga. Maskalyk resists his concern for his safety before he agrees to work with MSF, and Orbinski demonstrates again and again that the other's wellbeing is more important to him than his own. Even Alexander, who for the most part of her memoir articulates her humanitarian work as a desire to have an exciting lifestyle and build a career, experiences the transformative impact of the face-to-face encounter when she meets Ahmed's niece.

Strikingly, these individuals do not describe the moments in which they surrender to the other and give up control over their lives as negative experiences or something that they regret. To the contrary, in surrendering to the other's call, they find and re-discover their agency, independence, meaning, and purpose. The fact that humanitarian aid workers describe their response as being compelled, as being an inevitable step, as a choice which was no choice, supports Levinas's and Buber's writing that in the encounter with the other a person's subjectivity and humanity is established. Both Buber and Levinas see our subjectivity and humanity not as a given condition and a static state, but as a process: we become human through responding to the other. Only in responding to the other do we become and experience ourselves as truly human and truly ourselves. This face-to-face experience is a transformative one because it makes me not only discover the other as the one I am responsible for, but also myself as the one who is responsible for the other. Only in responding to the other and becoming responsible do humanitarians get to know a part of themselves which was unknown to them, prior to the moment of responding to the other's call. Although they are compelled to surrender to the other's call, they are aware of the existence of the choice of turning away from the other. They are aware of who they would become if they did not surrender – not themselves – and the 'choicelessness' with which they explain their actions illustrates that betraying themselves is a price too high to pay. The transformation from being for oneself to being-for-the-other explains Orbinski's statement that he could not have lived with himself if he had not gone back to Somalia and Rwanda. Having experienced a face-to-face encounter, it is impossible to turn away from the other and continue as if nothing had happened without being scarred. Turning away from the other, we carry away a wound because we betray not only the other but also ourselves. We reject not only the other but a core part of ourselves – our subjectivity and humanity – which can only be realized in responding to the other. Surrendering to the other's call by going back to Somalia,

agreeing to work in Rwanda or taking the girl and her mother to the hospital, Orbinski stresses that he will not let the circumstances or the concern for his life stand in the way of responding to the other. It is in surrendering to the other that he becomes truly independent and demonstrates that commitment is not a limitation of our freedom but our way to it. In becoming-for-the-other Orbinski, Maskalyk, Brown, and Alexander demonstrate that there is no separation between their humanitarian engagement and their understanding of their subjectivity, and that humanitarian work for them is an act to preserve their integrity. This understanding of their humanitarian work as being an integral part of their subjectivity refutes the dualism of the existing altruism – self-interest debate on aid workers' motivation for humanitarian aid work. Orbinski's statement: "I could not live with myself if I did not go back" (IO 100) illustrates that at the core of humanitarian motivation such a distinction cannot be made. Orbinski's decision can only be considered as egoless when one conceptualises 'egoless' as not being concerned with one's safety and success. At the same time, however, his decision is driven by a particular concern for himself because he returns to Somalia as a way to preserve his integrity. If my subjectivity is established through my ability to respond to the other, as claimed by Buber and Levinas, my being for the other and being for myself is identical. If my responsibility for the other is a way for me to become human and to find meaning in my life, then, in being for the other I find and sustain myself.

My findings illuminate the emergence of ethics in specific experiences, moments in which the birth of the subject and the ethical question that is posed on him are indistinguishable. It is, therefore, not a matter of the personal and the professional being merely interconnected, but being inseparable, which demonstrates the significance of the study of aid workers' lives and experiences for a comprehensive understanding of humanitarian work.

The Question of Success

Buber writes that becoming oneself through responsibility is not a once-and-for-all event but that it needs to be repeated over and over again in new situations. The longitudinal insight provided in the memoirs revealed that humanitarians' decision to live out their being for-the-other through humanitarian aid work is not a singular step but needs to be reaffirmed repeatedly during their engagement. The necessity for re-affirmation of their commitment arises in situations in which humanitarians

question the success of their efforts and this questioning is closely related to their desire for validation. Struggling with the challenging nature of humanitarian aid work and seeing their dependency on other actors refusing to assume their responsibility in order to change the situation long-term, each of the examined humanitarians goes through a phase in which they question the value of their efforts and are overwhelmed with a sense of futility. In Rwanda, Orbinski is overwhelmed by the suffering around him, knowing that no matter how much he and his colleagues try to assist the people in Kigali, it is not enough to help all those who need their support. Maskalyk, in spite of writing that the core value of humanitarian aid work is one's presence, also reaches the point at which he calculates what he was able to accomplish during his time in Abeyi. For Alexander and Brown, the question of success is closely related to their consideration to quit their positions. Brown longs for validation for his work in Mavinga and reaches the point where he can no longer bear being challenged by the clinicos in the hospital. Alexander asks herself what she can achieve in the IDP camp in Darfur given the lack of political solutions to the situation and thinks that, given the circumstances, her efforts are futile. Preoccupied with the desire for visible success, she leaves Darfur, hoping that it will be more attainable in her next position in Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

The question of success and recognition is the question of the ego, which stands in contrast and blocks the desire to be there for the other. To be preoccupied with success means to avert my attention from the other to myself, and to calculate my response to the other instead of opening myself to what the other asks of me. Calculating whether my action will be successful and validate me in the eyes of others stands in contrast to responding to the other freely. Focusing on what I can gain out of the encounter, I transform the other into a means to an end, which prevents a real encounter because the space of the 'between' can occur only where all means have disappeared.

In the situations in which humanitarian aid workers are overwhelmed by a sense of futility regarding their work, all of them describe specific face-to-face experiences which re-instate the meaning in their engagement and help them overcome their sense of futility. In the encounter with the beer bottle girl, Brown found the strength to let go of his desire for recognition and to focus on those who needed for him to stay in Mavinga. In a similar way, Alexander, faced with Ahmed's niece, who required a life-saving surgery, could put her thoughts of

futility aside and focus on finding a flight for the girl and her mother. Amputating a boy's leg and watching the mother tend to her son after the surgery reminded Orbinski that all he could do was to offer his help, and that no matter how imperfect his offering was, it was an offering and a first step. Maskalyk's calculations of his success were interrupted by a little girl who came for her treatment and was overwhelmed by the desire to give her everything. She reminded him that success of his work could not be calculated, but only lived through in the moments in which he opened himself and offered his presence to the other.

In these moments, the other's call entered their lives again and required their response. Stepping back from their concern for themselves meant to let go of the desire for success and recognition and to act in spite of limitations. Face-to-face with the other, humanitarians realized that they had to respond in their given context with what was available to them in this moment. Our infinite responsibility requires that we respond in imperfect conditions: to postpone our response until we have established ideal circumstances is to hide from the other's call. Given our infinite responsibility, our response will always be not-enough, and we will always feel that we could do more for the other. The encounters in which aid workers were called back to their responsibility did not change the external circumstances but they gave them the strength to endure the challenges of their work. Entering the 'in-between' and responding to the other, they were able to surrender to the other's call once again, and in doing so, received the empowerment and strength they needed to continue their work and to perform the task that was asked of them in the specific situation. It is in losing themselves, letting go of their worries about themselves, their possibilities, and their desire for appreciation, that they rediscovered purpose and meaning in their work.

The literature on the politicization of humanitarian aid work focuses on what donor countries, conflict parties, recipient countries, and humanitarian agencies can do to minimise the instrumentalization of humanitarian aid and stresses how these actors have to respect that humanitarian aid is meant to be guided by others' need only. Strikingly, when we look at the existing research on humanitarian aid workers' motivation, no one expects from humanitarian aid workers that others' need should be their only motivation for working in the humanitarian sector. It appears that, when it comes to the personal level, it is considered to be impossible and naïve to expect humanitarians to be motivated only by the desire to be there for

the other. To the contrary, existing research on humanitarian aid workers' motivation focuses on the investigation of the self-focused motivation, arguing that this examination will provide us with a more realistic picture of their work. My thesis demonstrates that this approach does not go deep enough because it does not touch upon the experiential core that humanitarians share in spite of their differences.

The analyses of the four humanitarian aid workers' memoirs demonstrate that the common core of the humanitarian vocation is the relation to the other's alterity. It is the relation to alterity that draws these individuals to humanitarian aid work, and it is the relation to alterity which, in the face-to-face encounters in the field, enables them to persist in their commitment of being for-the-other. The most striking example of such an encounter is the conversation between Orbinski and the Ummera-sha woman. They both enter the realm of the 'between' and make the other present to themselves. Orbinski ignores that his colleagues are calling him to move on to another patient and stays with the woman who, ignoring her immeasurable pain, becomes for-the-other and encourages him to leave her in order to attend to others. In this encounter, each of them sees the Other in the other. They both are aware that what the other does, does not belong to him, but to what is un-encompassable in the other, to what transcends him – his alterity. The woman responds to Orbinski's alterity which enables him to transcend himself, to offer more of himself than what he thought he was capable of doing. Orbinski, at the same time, was aware that the woman's ability to let go of herself and to sacrifice herself did not belong to her, but was the voice of infinity in her. This is why Orbinski stated that hers was the clearest voice he had ever heard. The encounter with alterity is an ultimate experience because it is here that we experience humanity in its purest form. Levinas describes a person's ability to be more attached to being-for-the other than to her own being as "saintliness" and understands this saintliness as the beginning of the "human" (PM 173). In both of their abilities to let go of themselves, the woman and Orbinski demonstrate the "very identity of the human" (EI 100-101) and at the same time bear witness to our humanity in a situation in which that very humanity is in danger of moving out of sight. This encounter contradicts Levinas's understanding of alterity as that which separates us, and shows that ultimately, alterity is what brings us together. In the Ummera-sha encounter, Orbinski experiences the relation with alterity in its purest form, but

all other humanitarian aid workers examined for the thesis share this relation, albeit to a lesser extent.

Although Levinas would claim that the origin of humanitarians' motivation and strength is in the other's call and his undeclinability, I argue that it lies not in the Other but in the 'in-between', because in order to respond to the other I have to take a step towards him. Without me, without my side, my attention, my response, the other's call would come to nothing. Recognising the other's command is to enter into relation, the space of the 'in-between'. Focusing on only my side and my responsibility towards the other, Levinas does not theorize the space of the in-between and does not describe what happens when I and the other become responsible for each other; when the other and I become for-the-other at the same time. Although Levinas writes that in our desire for the other we are always oriented towards the other, and always already related to the other, this relation remains uni-directional and distanced because of the other's alterity. The encounter between Orbinski and the Ummera-sha woman, however, demonstrates that alterity does not separate us but brings us together. The essence of humanitarian assistance, as shown in humanitarian aid workers' memoirs, is to look out for these moments, to be open to the other's call and to act upon it. The question for the humanitarian movement is whether humanitarians will be able to establish the relationship with alterity, whether they can be open to the completely unknown, whether they can, again and again, surrender themselves to the other's call and assume their responsibility.

Perhaps the very fact that humanitarian aid workers struggle to explain their motivation, and what it was in the experiences that moved them, is now understandable; if the motivation arises from the meeting with alterity which does not belong to my world, it is difficult to capture this experience in words. Levinas's understanding of the sensitive rather than the conscious subject, who responds to the other prior to consciousness, helps us understand why humanitarians find it so difficult to answer the question about what it is that motivates them. Explaining one's motivation to others requires for them to order an experience or experiences which lie outside of the realm of what can be ordered. If the alterity is something that does not belong to my world, words will always be inadequate to express it. The examples in the memoirs show, however, that our ability to respond to the other does not depend on our ability to rationally dissect the call and to provide an explanation for it – all aid workers examined for this study follow their call.

Intersubjective ethics and the ethical framework

In the same way in which the intersubjective ethics and justice are not opposed to each other in Levinas's work, the intersubjective ethics and the wider ethical framework of humanitarian aid are not opposed to each other. Although the authors often describe their struggle with the limited resources and their organisations' guidelines for the distribution of these resources according to humanitarian principles, they do not question the necessity of the ethical framework. They understand that the necessity of these guidelines is real because the problems the guidelines address are real: the limitations of resources, the power imbalance and the possibility to harm others. In situations in which humanitarians oppose the guidelines, they question the baseline they provide for individual cases and the circumstances which make these guidelines necessary but not the necessity of the ethical guidelines per se. Maskalyk, for instance, describes his inner struggle with the rule that prohibits MSF staff to collect sick patients from the neighbouring villages and writes that seeing patients who get to the hospital too late, he wants to pick up every patient who needs their support. But he understands the reasoning behind the guideline and follows it. He writes that the team members "are measured, and careful" because this is was what tomorrow's patients expect of them (SM 196-197). When Orbinski was asked whether he was outraged by the practice of triage, he replied that he did not regret triage because it was a technical decision to cope with an overwhelming situation but that he had "complete outrage about the circumstances that created that situation where that kind of decision had to be made" (Reed 2008). Each of the humanitarian aid workers lives with this duality and has to navigate the balance between the reality of the limitations and the reality of infinite responsibility. Most of the time, they can manage the balance between wanting to offer assistance to as many as possible and doing the best they can for the individual in front of them, but they also experience situations in which they find the ethical guidelines oppressive because they stand in the way of responding to the other freely. There are moment in which these individuals see that although the ethical framework is necessary in order to ensure that at least the minimum of the demands of all are met, it restricts their action and forces them to limit their response. These encounters vividly illustrate that the existence of the Third does

not limit the infinite responsibility we feel for the Other but only the scope of my action.

My aim was to investigate how humanitarian aid workers make sense of their humanitarian engagement and what they describe as their motivation. Whereas none of the humanitarians question the necessity of the ethical framework which allows them to channel their motivation, the ethical guidelines play no role for either their motivation or their decision to continue working in the humanitarian sector. When writing about their motivation and transformative moments in their humanitarian practice, they find their strength not in the ethical guidelines that constitute the humanitarian system but in intersubjective ethical encounters. By focusing on the ethical experiences, my aim was not to refute or diminish the importance of the ethical framework but to introduce humanitarians' personal ethics to the academic discussion on humanitarian aid in order to provide a more comprehensive insight into the reality of humanitarian aid work.

At the beginning of the thesis I argued that by disregarding humanitarian aid workers and their motivations and experiences, academics have subscribed to a political agenda that prescribes a particular conceptualisation of humanitarian aid which needs to be resisted because it is is part of the instrumentalization of the humanitarian sector. If, like Levinas claims, politics and ethics exist in tension with each having the capacity to hold the other to account, the disregard of humanitairan aid workers and their personal ethics in the academic discussion on humanitarian matters ignores a crucial corrective to politics. Levinas writes that originating in the interpersonal relation, justice must always be held in check by the initial interpersonal relation (EI 90). The face-to-face must have the power to interrupt the ethical framework and to challenge its sense that it has the ultimate wisdom of how to respond to the other. Both, the ethical system of humanitarian action and the institutions and processes by which these ethical guidelins are organized, must be tested by the interpersonal relation. In the same way in which the ethical framework must ensure that the minimum of the demands of all are met, it must be checked by the intersubjective ethics and allow for the space of unmediated encounters. What we see, however, is that, whereas the ethical framework enables us to measure our response to all others, and moderates the infinite responsibility, the neglect of humanitarian aid workers and their experiences in the official discussion on aid means that there is no discussion on the intersubjective ethical responsibility having

the capacity to challenge the ethical framework. Without humanitarians and their ethical experiences, humanitarian aid is nothing but politics.

Limitations of the Study and Avenues for Future Research

Whereas the study of only four humanitarian aid workers' memoirs allowed me to explore each of the accounts in detail, the sample size is not representative of the whole population of humanitarian aid workers. The selection bias of the study arises from the fact that I investigated only international humanitarian workers and only those who wanted to share their story with the wider public and wrote down their experiences in a memoir which were published in English. Furthermore, following the IPA's requirement for rich descriptions, only participants who provided an insight into both the motivation for their humanitarian aid work and their experiences working in the humanitarian sector were chosen for the study. A further limitation of the study is that three of the four participants were health care practitioners working for MSF and further research needs to encompass a larger and more diverse sample of participants. While this thesis focused on the humanitarians working in the 'new humanitarianism' framework, another possible avenue to be explored in future is an investigation of aid workers' memoirs from different generations of aid workers. Another important step for future research on humanitarian aid workers is including the local and national humanitarian aid workers who constitute the majority of aid workers worldwide.

The thesis demonstrated that humanitarians gain and sustain their motivation and sense of purpose in encounters that take place outside the intentionality and rationality of political action. The investigated examples illustrate that humanitarians' core motivation has its own commitments which lie outside of political pressures and calculations. In contrast to the existing research on resistance to the instrumentalization of humanitarian aid which concentrates on the external sources (the core principles, role models, or virtues) that would facilitate resistance, my thesis has explored an inter-subjective foundation of the possibility for conceptualising resistance that arises from the 'in between'. However, future research is needed in order to explore whether humanitarians' possibility of entering the 'in-between' and surrendering themselves to the completely unknown can restore the independent, core meaning of humanitarian work at a time when stake holders want to appropriate humanitarian aid as a policy tool.

Appendix

Examples of IPA line-by-line analyses

James Orbinski – Baidoa Man (IO 4-6)

Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
It was my first act as a humanitarian doctor. And there wasn't anything medical about it.	If he describes this act as (his first) humanitarian act, what does it mean? What is the essence of his act? What makes him a humanitarian is not his medical skills.
In a corner of the feeding centre was a single white tent that had been designated the medical tent. Beside it were three others designated as the morgue. They were full – bodies piled as small imperfect pyramids, each at least three feet high.	Piles of bodies like in the Auschwitz pictures seen in his childhood
From the corner of my eye, I saw a movement on top of one of the piles. I turned away. I didn't want to know what it could mean.	The first impulse is to turn away, not wanting to believe that what he sees could be true: that a man who is still alive could lie among corpses.
I looked to see if the wind was strong enough to cause a tent flap to move, or a piece of cardboard to fly through the air. It was.	Looking for other explanations.
Then I saw his eyes flutter. The wind caught his long shirt and ballooned it over his body.	There is no other explanation but that the man is alive.
He lay among the dead, skin stretched taut over his exposed ribs and pelvic bones. One	The man is emaciated but still alive and trying to find hold in something (is he trying to sit

of his hands grasped at something, anything, whatever the wind might hold	up?) but not finding anything to cling to.
I carried him to the medical tent.	There is no question as to what to do next. No deliberation of options. No excuses for the man's situation.
He weighed less than 70 pounds, and I thought him light as I tried to catch his arm from falling	He weighs far too little for an adult man.
I did this without thinking.	This is not a conscious decision based on contemplation of pro and cons. It is an impulse before thinking. An act that happens before conscience.
I acted not as I thought I should but as I had no choice but to do.	He is not acting because he thinks that this is the rightful response. His act is not an example of following a moral rule, virtue or a sense of duty but is based on a feeling of being compelled. This feeling is so strong that he sees no other choice, he cannot act differently.
All the beds inside the medical tent were taken, so I laid him on the ground.	There was no space for the man.
A helper put a blanket over him. She was irritated and told me impatiently that he had been moved to the morgue because there was not enough time or people to look after all of the patients, and in any case, he was going to die anyway.	Her response indicates that he has not been put into the morgue by accident but because he is going to die anyway. She sees him only as a medical case and is treating him according to his condition. Those who are

	supposed to help him give up on him. “Anyway” is the word with which hope is killed. Her action is determined by the outcome and he is not worth the effort. Why should she put any effort in treating him if the outcome is already clear? Too busy to care for now. Preoccupied with efficiency.
At that moment, I felt rage at the efficiency of placing the living among the dead.	Orbinski does not agree with her approach to the man, with the primacy of efficiency in dealing with others.
And I felt despair – for him, for myself. I could be him, dependent on the actions of a stranger for the hope of at least dignity in death.	He draws a connection between the man and himself. He could have been this man, he can be in the same position of being dependent on the compassion of a stranger who sees him first as a human being and respects his dignity.
His eyes opened and closed. He shivered under the blanket, and soon he was dead. This was the last violated remnant of a fuller life.	She was right in her assumption that he is going to die. But her accurate calculation does not result in Orbinski agreeing with her approach towards the man.
I didn't even know his name, but I knew he had been someone's son, someone's friend and possibly someone's husband, someone's father.	He does not save him because he knows him and because the man bears any significance as an individual in Orbinski’s life. But he saves him for what this man shares with every other

	human being: he had been someone's child, someone's friend, someone's partner and parent. There are people who care for this man but who are not around and cannot give him the care he deserves. He is alone now and dependent on compassion of strangers.

Jessica Alexander – Ahmed's niece (CC 190-195)

Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Her malnourished body was tiny and frail; her head twice its size, swollen and puffy. It looked like a balloon floating on top of a skeleton. The child's nose was distorted, her eye sockets sunken in, her cheeks and forehead bags of fluid. When she moved her head, her neck twisted awkwardly, too weak to support the bloated mass. She let out muffled gasps of discomfort. […]	The girl is severely distorted by her illness and in pain.
I felt queasy. I had never seen anything like this. […]	Alexander's first reaction is a feeling of discomfort. She has never seen anyone that ill.
"We'll get her to Khartoum, Ahmed," I said to him. "We'll get her to Khartoum," I said again, looking at his sister, who was still sitting on the floor […]	She immediately agrees to help without knowing what condition the girl has and whether it is treatable.
There was an urgency about the situation that felt new.	The urgency is new and stands in contrast to the measured

	approach that she usually applies to her work.
Perhaps it was the personal relationship I had with Ahmed, but whatever it was jolted me into action.	The difference between this situation and the rest of her job is a relation. It is the relation that drives her.
The attacks in Tawila, the Janjaweed raping women, the rainstorms – these were all out of my control. But a sick child? That I could actually do something about […]	Whereas she is helpless regarding the wider circumstances in which she works, focusing her efforts on one individual, she feels like she can regain control again.
With every rejection, my resolve intensified.	She does not give up. Her determination grows with every rejection.
I hadn't been confronted with this degree of clinical detachment before.	There is something new in how others respond to the girl, a detachment that she has not seen in the aid community before (perhaps because she has not been invested personally before and this is the first relation she experiences in the field). She is disappointed with others' response and the aid community as a whole.
How could I go back to Ahmed and tell him that there was nothing I could do, nothing that the humanitarian community could do, to help. That I was sorry, but he would have to watch his niece die.	She cannot turn the girl away. The option of not helping is not an option. If she does not help her, the girl will die and Alexander will be responsible for her death because she did not try to help her.

For the next weeks, I spend my nights dreaming of exploding heads, and my days negotiating with WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, none of which would agree to help get the girl on the flight because it wasn't "in their mandate" – it wasn't in other words what they had come to Darfur to do and, therefore, they weren't responsible for it […]	The girl does not let go of Alexander and follows her into her sleep. The organisations refer to their rules as an explanation for not getting involved. They are unwilling to do more than what they had agreed to be doing. Their engagement is dictated by the rules/
"We have requests from IDP's to go to Khartoum every day. If we took up every request, we could not operate. It's sad, I know."	He tells her that the girl is not a unique case but that there are many others and they could not help all of them.
"We can't set this precedent. If we fly this girl and her family to Khartoum for free, how do we tell the next sick person that we can't fly them?"	Helping this girl will have negative consequences on the organisation. We have to be fair in our approach and to provide the same treatment to everyone.
"Shouldn't we be flying sick people to Khartoum for treatment? I mean, shouldn't that be part of our job? We're here to save lives and reduce suffering, aren't we?"	Alexander questions others' understanding of humanitarian work. She sees that helping people like Ahmed's niece is exactly what humanitarian organisations are there for.
"We can't save everyone, my dear," Wilbens said.	Wilbens provides an argument she cannot argue with (as if she was too naïve to understand how the system works). In widening the girl's case to include everyone he downplays her efforts. As if he was saying that as they cannot help everyone,

	the single individual does not matter.
Wilbens had a point, as did everyone else, and I may have been wildly naïve. I could understand their arguments in the abstract.	Given that she previously explained her determination with the relation to Ahmed, it is odd, that Alexander suddenly downplays her efforts by stating that her efforts might have been driven by naivety. She understands the reasoning of others' argumentation but still cannot follow it. The understanding of their argument does not lead to her stopping her efforts. Why does she, who calculates every one of her steps does not stop here?
My personal relationship with Ahmed was clearly blurring my logic.	It is a relation that defies the logical argument. As if, seeing Ahmed, the arguments are still there but irrelevant.
But giving shelter, some measly food items, a few bars of soap, and providing overcrowded schools and medical care that wouldn't stand up to malpractice lawsuits at home – this was the sum total of the humanitarian operation? This was the best we could do? […]	What they are doing is neither enough nor of a high standard. They are providing the bare minimum and she questions whether they could not do more.
But I refused to rationalize the path of least resistance. I was determined to get this girl to Khartoum, no matter what logistical challenges I had to overcome, no matter what arcane UN bureaucracy I had to	Alexander sees others' arguments as an excuse and an easy way not to help the girl. Describes her determination as resistance to rationalization

navigate, no matter the number of people sitting behind desks who politely sad, “No, I can’t help.”	although she previously stated that she understands their argument. She is determined to find a solution because there is no one else who is willing to help

References

Abbott, H. Porter. 1988. "Autobiography, Autography, Fiction: Groundwork for a Taxonomy of Textual Categories," New Literary History 20: 597-615.

Ager, Alastair, Eba Pasha, Gary Yu, Thomas Duke, Cynthia Eriksson, and Barbara Lopes Cardozo. 2012. "Stress, Mental Health, and Burnout in National Humanitarian Aid Workers in Gulu, Northern Uganda." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 25 (6): 713–720. doi:10.1002/jts.21764.

Allié, Marie-Pierre. 2011. "Acting at any price?" In *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed: The MSF Experience*, edited by Claire Magone, Michaël Neuman, and Fabrice Weissman, 1-11. London: Hurst.

Alkire, Sabina, and Lincoln Chen. 2004. "Global Health and Moral Values." *Lancet* 364 (9439): 1069-74. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(04)17063-3.

Alexander, Jessica. 2013a. *Chasing Chaos: My Decade In and Out of Humanitarian Aid*. New York: Broadway Books.

———. 2013b. "Aid Worker: Hard to Put Experience into Words." By Michel Martin. *National Public Radio*, November 13. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=244991546.

———. 2013c. "Review and Author Interview. Chasing Chaos: My Decade In and Out of Humanitarian Aid by Jessica Alexander." By Meg. *A Bookish Affair* (blog), November 26, Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://abookishaffair.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11/review-and-author-interview-chasing.html.

ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action). 2010. *The State of the Humanitarian System Report: Assessing Performance and Progress – A Pilot Study*. London: ALNAP.

———. 2012. *The State of the Humanitarian System Report*. London: ALNAP.

———. 2015. *The State of the Humanitarian System Report.* London: ALNAP.

Anderson, Mary. 1999. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace — or War*. London: Lynne Rienner.

Asgary, Ramin, and Emily Junck. 2013. "New Trends of Short-Term Humanitarian Medical Volunteerism: Professional and Ethical Considerations." *J Med Ethics* 39: 625-631. doi:10.1136/medethics-2011-100488.

Atmar, Mohammed Haneef. 2001. "Politicisation of Humanitarian Aid and its Consequences for Afghans." *Disasters* 25 (4): 321-330. doi:10.1111/1467-7717.00181.

Atterton, Peter, Matthew, Calarco, and Maurice Friedman. 2004. Introduction to *Dialogue and Difference*, edited by Peter Atterton, Matthew Calarco, and Maurice Friedman, 1-25. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Applebaum, Herbert. 1992. *The Concept of Work: Ancient, Medieval, Modern*. New York: State University of New York Press.

AWSD (Aid Work Security Database). 2015. *Figures at a Glance*. Aid Worker Security Report. https://aidworkersecurity.org.

———. 2014. *Unsafe Passage: Road Attacks and their Impact on Humanitarian Operations*. Aid Worker Security Report. https://aidworkersecurity.org.

———. 2013. *The New Normal: Coping with the Kidnapping Threat*. Aid Worker Security Report. https://aidworkersecurity.org.

———. 2012. *Host States and their Impact on Security for Humanitarian Operations*. Aid Worker Security Report. https://aidworkersecurity.org.

Barber, Rebecca. 2009. "Facilitating Humanitarian Assistance in International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law." *International Review of the Red Cross* 91 (874): 371-397. doi:10.1017/S1816383109990154.

Barkawi, Tarak. 2011. "From War to Security: Security Studies, the Wider Agenda and the Fate of the Study of War." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39 (3): 701-716. doi:10.1177/0305829811400656.

Barkawi, Tarak, and Shane Brighton. 2011. "Powers of War: Fighting, Knowledge, and Critique." *International Political Sociology* 5: 126-143. doi:10.1111/j.1749-5687.2011.00125.x.

Barnett, Michael. 2005. "Humanitarianism Transformed." *Perspectives on Politics* 3 (4): 723-740.

———. 2009. "Evolution Without Progress? Humanitarianism in a World of Hurt." *International Organization* 63: 621-63. doi:10+10170S0020818309990087.

———. 2011. *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism.* London: Cornell University Press.

Barnett, Michael, and Thomas G. Weiss. 2008. *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics.* London: Cornell University Press.

———. 2011. *Humanitarianism Contested: Where Angels Fear to Tread.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Barnett, Michael, and Janice Stein. 2012. *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baumeister, Roy. F. 1991. *Meanings of Life*. New York: Guilford.

Beder, Sharon. 2000. *Selling the Work Ethic: From Puritan Pulpit to Corporate PR*. London: Zed Books.

Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton. 1985. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life.* New York: Harper and Row.

Bennett, Christina. 2016. *Time to Let Go: Remaking Humanitarian Action for the Modern Era*. Humanitarian Policy Group Report. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Berg, Justin M., Adam M. Grant, and Victoria Johnson. 2010. "When Callings are Calling: Crafting Work and Leisure in Pursuit of Unanswered Occupational Callings." *Organizational Science* 21: 973-994. doi:10.1287/orsc.1090.0497.

Bernasconi, Robert. 1999. "The Third Party: Levinas on the Intersection of the Ethical and the Political" Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology 30 (1): 76-87.

———. 2002. "What is the Question to which 'Substitution' is the Answer?" In *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, edited by Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, 234-251. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bernstein, Paul. 1997. *American Work Values: Their Origin and Development*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Bjerneld, Magdalena, Gunilla Lindmark, Patricia Diskett, and Martha J. Garrett. 2004. "Perceptions of Work in Humanitarian Assistance: Interviews with Returning Swedish Health Professionals." *Disaster Management & Response* 2: 101-108. doi:10.1016/j.dmr.2004.08.009.

Bjerneld, Magdalena, Gunilla Lindmark, Lucia Ann McSpadden, and Martha J. Garrett. 2006. "Motivations, Concerns, and Expectations of Scandinavian Health Professionals Volunteering for Humanitarian Assignments." *Disaster Management & Response* 4: 9-58. doi:10.1016/j.dmr.2006.01.002.

Bogart, Greg. 1994. "Finding a Life's Calling." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 34: 6-37. doi:10.1177/00221678940344002.

Brown, Damien. 2012. "Ten Terrifying Questions." By John Purcell. *Booktopia* (blog), June 20. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://blog.booktopia.com.au/2012/06/20/damien-brown-author-of-band-aid-for-a-broken-leg-being-a-doctor-with-no-borders-and-other-ways-to-stay-single-answers-ten-terrifying-questions.

———. 2013a. *Band-Aid for a Broken Leg: Being a Doctor with no Borders (and other Ways to Stay Single).* London: Allen and Unwin.

———. 2013b. “Band Aid for a Broken Leg.” By Rowena Clark. *Adventure Medic* (blog), June 24. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://www.theadventuremedic.com/features/band-aid-for-a-broken-leg.

———. 2013c. “Practising as a Doctor Without Borders.” By Sue Grant-Marshall, *BUSINESS* DAY, October 8. Accessed December, 12. 2016. https://www.msf.org.za/stories-news/media-coverage/business-day-practising-doctor-without-borders.

———. 2013d. “Cape Talk: Dr Damien Brown Talks About his Book ‘Band-aid for a Broken Leg.” By John Maytham. *Primedia Broadcasting*, September 12, https://soundcloud.com/primediabroadcasting/author-damien-brown.

———. 2015. “The Good Doctor: Saving Lives on the Edge of World.” By Alexander Matthews. *Alexander Matthews* (website), September 27. Accessed December, 12. 2016. https://alexandermatthews.net/2015/09/27/interview-damien-brown.

Bruner, Jerome S. 1991. “The Narrative Construction of Reality.” Critical Inquiry 18: 1-21.

Buber, Martin. 1947. *Between Man and Man*. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. London: Kegan Paul.

———. 1957. *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*. Translated and edited by Maurice Friedman. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

———. 1964. “The Philosophy of Dialogue.” In *Philosophical Interrogations*, edited by Sydney Rome and Beatrice Rome, 27-29. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

———. 1965. *The Knowledge of Man*. Edited by Maurice Friedman. Translated by Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965.

———. 1970. *I and Thou*. Translated by Walter Kaufman. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

———. 2002. The Way of Man: According to the Teachings of Hasidism. London: Routledge.

Buchanan-Smith, Margie, and Judith Randel. 2002. Financing International Humanitarian Action: A Review of Key Trends. Humanitarian Policy Group. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Burnett, John S. 2005. *Where Soldiers Fear to Tread: At Work in the Fields of Anarchy*. London: William Heinemann.

Cain, Kenneth, Heidi Postlewait, and Andrew Thomson. 2004. *Emergency Sex and other Desperate Measures: True Stories from a War Zone*. London: Ebury Press.

Campbell, Clark, Donell Campbell, David Krierc, Ryan Kuehlthaua, Todd Hilmesa, and Melissa Strombergera. 2009. "Reduction in Burnout May be a Benefit for Short-Term Medical Mission Volunteers." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 12 (7): 627-637. doi:10.1080/13674670903124541.

Carbonnier, Giles. 2014. "Reason, Emotion, Compassion: Can Altruism Survive Professionalisation in the Humanitarian Sector?" *Disasters* 39 (2): 189-207. doi:10.1111/disa.12096.

Charny, Joel R. 2004. "Upholding Humanitarian Principles in an Effective Integrated Response." *Ethics & International Affairs* 18 (2): 3-20. doi:10.1111/j.1747-7093.2004.tb00462.x.

Chase, Susan. 2011. "Narrative Inquiry: Still a Field in the Making." In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research,* 4th ed., edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 421-434. London: Sage.

Chisholm, Megan. 2009. "Civil–Military Relations in the Age of Terror: A Humanitarian Worker's Perspective." In *Humanitarianism and Civil–Military Relations in a Post-9/11 World*, edited by Katherine Morton, Jacinta O'Hagan, Michael Barnett, Archie Law, Jacqui Wheland, Brian Cox, Megan Chisholm, and Raymond Apthorpe, 30-37. Canberra: Department of International Relations.

Cohen, Richard A. 1985. Introduction to *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo,* by Emmanuel Levinas. Translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Cohen, Stanley. 2001. *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Coles, Anne, and Anne-Meike Fechter, eds. 2007. *Gender and Family Among Transnational Professionals*. London: Routledge.

Collinson, Sarah, and Samir Elhawary. 2012. *Humanitarian Space: A Review of Trends and Issues*. Humanitarian Policy Group Report 32. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Collinson, Sarah, Samir Elhawary, and Robert Muggah. 2010. "States of Fragility: Stabilization and its Implications for Humanitarian Action." *Disasters* 34 (3): 275-296. doi:10.1111/j.1467-7717.2010.01206.x.

Connorton, Ellen, Melissa J. Perry, David Hemenway, and Matthew Miller. 2012. "Humanitarian Relief Workers and Trauma-related Mental Illness." *Epidemiologic Reviews* 34: 145-155. doi:10.1093/epirev/mxr026.

Cornish, Stephen, and Marit Glad. 2008. *Civil-Military Relations: No Room for Humanitarianism in Comprehensive Approaches*. Oslo: Norwegian Atlantic Committee.

Critchley, Simon. 2002. Introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, edited by Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, 1-32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crombé, Xavier. 2011. "Afghanistan: Regaining Leverage." In *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed. The MSF Experience,* edited by Claire Magone, Michaël Neuman, and Fabrice Weissman, 1-11. London: Hurst.

Damman, Marleen, Liesbet Heyse, and Melinda Mills. 2014. "Gender, Occupation, and Promotion to Management in the Nonprofit Sector: The Critical Case of Médecins Sans Frontières Holland." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 25 (2): 97-111. doi:10.1002/nml.21114.

Darcy, James. 2004. "Human Rights and Humanitarian Action: A Review of the Issues." A background paper prepared for the workshop on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action convened by the IASC Sub-Working Group and co-hosted by UNICEF, the UN High Commission for Human Rights and ICVA, Geneva. *Humanitarian Policy Group*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Davis, Colin. 2004. *Levinas: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Davidson, J. C., and D. P. Caddell. 1994. "Religion and the Meaning of Work." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33: 135-147.

Dawson, Jane. 2005. "A History of Vocation: Tracing a Keyword of Work, Meaning, and Moral Purpose." *Adult Education Quarterly* 55 (3): 220-231. doi:10.1177/0741713605274606.

De Jong, Sara. 2011. "False Binaries: Altruism and Selfishness in NGO Work." In *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The Challenges and Futures of Aidland*, edited by Anne-Meike Fechter and Heather Hindman, 21-40. Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Den Boer, Andrea. 2003. "Beyond Politics: Emmanuel Levinas's Biblical Humanism." PhD diss., University of Kent.

De Torrente, Nicolas. 2002. "Challenges to Humanitarian Action." *Ethics & International Affairs* 16 (2): 2-8. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.2002.tb00389.x

———. 2004. "Humanitarianism Sacrificed: Integration's False Promise." *Ethics & International Affairs* 18 (2): 3-12. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.2004.tb00461.x.

De Waal, Alexander. 1997. *Famine Crimes: Politics & the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*. Oxford: African Rights & the International African Institute.

Diamond, Malcolm L. 1960. *Martin Buber, Jewish Existentialist*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dik, Bryan J., and Ryan Duffy. 2009. "Calling and Vocation at Work: Definitions and Prospects for Research and Practice." *The Counseling Psychologist* 37: 424-450. doi:10.1177/0011000008316430.

Donini, Antonio. 2006. *Humanitarian Agenda 2015. Afghanistan Country Study*. Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center.

———. 2010. *Afghanistan: Humanitarianism Unraveled?* Briefing Paper. Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center.

———. 2011. "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Integration or Independence of Humanitarian Action?" *International Review of the Red Cross* 93 (881): 141-157.

———, ed. 2012. *The Golden Fleece: Manipulation and Independence in Humanitarian Action*. Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Donini, Antonio, Larry, Minear, and Peter Walker. 2004. "The Future of Humanitarian Action: Mapping the Implications of Iraq and Other Recent Crises." *Disasters* 28 (2): 190-204. doi:10.1111/j.0361-3666.2004.00252.x.

Duffield, Mark. 2001. *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*. London: Zed Books.

———. 2010. "Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Everyday Life in Post-Interventionary Society." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4 (4): 453-474. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17502971003700993.

Duffy, Ryan D., and William E. Sedlacek. 2007. "The Presence of and Search for a Calling: Connections to Career Development." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 70: 590-601. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2007.03.007.

Duffy, Ryan D., Elizabeth M. Bott, Blake A. Allan, Carrie L. Torrey, and Bryan J. Dik. 2012. "Perceiving a Calling, Living a Calling, and Job Satisfaction: Testing a Moderated, Multiple Mediator Model." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 59: 50-59. doi:10.1037/a0026129.

Duffy, Ryan D., and Kelsey L. Autin. 2013. "Disentangling the Link Between Perceiving a Calling and Living a Calling." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 60: 219-227. doi:10.1037/a0031934.

Duffy, Ryan D., Blake A. Allan, Kelsey L. Autin, and Elizabeth M. Bott. 2013. "Calling and Life Satisfaction: It's not about Having it, it's about Living it." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 60: 42-52. doi:10.1037/a0030635.

Duffy, Ryan D., Blake A. Allan, Elizabeth M. Bott, and Bryan J. Dik. 2014. "Does the Source of a Calling Matter? External Summons, Destiny, and Perfect Fit." *Journal of Career Assessment* 22(4): 562-574. doi: 10.1177/1069072713514812.

Dunant, Henri. 1986. *A Memory of Solferino*. English Translation. Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross. Originally published as *Un souvenir de Solférino* (Geneva: Imprimerie Jules -Guillaume Fick, 1863).

Eakin, Paul John. 1999. *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

ECHO (European Community Humanitarian Office). 2015. *Forgotten Crisis Assessment*. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echosite/files/forgotten_crisis_assessment.pdf.

Elangovan, A. R., Craig C. Pinder, and Murdith McLean. 2010. "Callings and Organizational Behavior." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 76: 428-440. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2009.10.009.

Elliott, Jane. 2006. *Using Narratives in Social Research. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage.

Eriksson, Cynthia, Hendrika van de Kemp, Richard Gorsuch, Stephen Hoke, and David W. Foy. 2001. "Trauma Exposure and PTSD Symptoms in International Relief and Development Personnel." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 14 (1): 205-212. doi:10.1023/A:1007804119319.

Eriksson, Cynthia B., Jeff P. Bjorck, Linnea C. Larson, Sherry M. Walling, Gary A. Trice, John Fawcett, Alexis D. Abernethy, and David W. Foy. 2009. "Social Support, Organisational Support, and Religious Support in Relation to Burnout in Expatriate Humanitarian Aid Workers." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 12 (7): 671-686. doi:10.1080/13674670903029146.

Eriksson, Cynthia B., Barbara Lopes Cardozo, David W. Foy, Miriam Sabin, Alastair Ager, Leslie Snider, Willem F. Scholte, Reinhard Kaiser, Miranda Olff, Bas Rijnen, Carol Gotway Crawford, Julia Zhu, and Winnifred Simon. 2012. "Predeployment Mental Health and Trauma Exposure of Expatriate Humanitarian Aid Workers: Risk and Resilience Factors." *Traumatology* 19 (1): 41-48. doi:10.1177/1534765612441978.

Eyben, Rosalind. 2011. "The Sociality of International Aid and Policy Convergence." In *Adventures in Aidland: The Anthropology of Professionals in International Development*, edited by David Mosse, 139-160. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

———. 2012. "Fellow Travellers in Development." *Third World Quarterly* 33 (8): 1405-1421. doi:10.1080/01436597.2012.698105.

Fagan, Madeleine. 2009. “The inseparability of Ethics and Politics: Rethinking the third in Emmanuel Levinas” Contemporary Political Theory 8, 5-22. doi:10.1057/cpt.2008.20.

Fassin, Didier. 2007. “Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life.” *Public Culture. Society for Transnational Cultural Studies* 19 (3): 499-520. doi:10.1215/08992363-2007-007.

———. 2012. *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present Times.* Translated by Rachel Gomme. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fast, Larissa. 2014. *Aid in Danger: The Perils and Promise of Humanitarianism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Fechter, Anne-Meike. 2012a. “The Personal and the Professional: Aid Workers' Relationships and Values in the Development Process.” *Third World Quarterly* 33 (8): 1387-1404. doi:10.1080/01436597.2012.698104.

———. 2012b. “‘Living Well’ while ‘Doing Good’? (Missing) Debates on Altruism and Professionalism in Aid Work.” *Third World Quarterly*, 33 (8): 1475-1491. doi:10.1080/09700161.2012.698133.

———. 2014. “Anybody at Home? The Inhabitants of Aidland.” In *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The Challenges and Futures of Aidland*, edited by Anne-Meike Fechter and Heather Hindman, 131-149, Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Fechter, Anne-Meike, and Heather Hindman, eds. 2014. *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The Challenges and Futures of Aidland.* Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Fischer-Rosenthal, Wolfram, und Gabriele Rosenthal. 1997. “Warum Biographieanalyse und wie man sie macht. ” *Zeitschrift für Sozialisationsforschung und Erziehungssoziologie* 17: 405-427.

Fish, Stanley. 1999. “Just Published: Minutiae without Meaning.” New York Times, 7 September. Accessed September, 9. 2017. http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/07/opinion/just-published-minutiae-without-meaning.html?mcubz=1.

Forsythe, David P. 2005. *The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2007. “The ICRC: A Unique Humanitarian Protagonist.” *International Review of the Red Cross* 89 (865): 63-96.

Fox, Fiona. 2001. “New Humanitarianism: Does It Provide a Moral Banner for the 21st Century?” *Disasters* 25 (4): 275-289. doi:10.1111/1467-7717.00178.

French Blaker, Lisa. 2007. *Heart of Darfur*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Friedman, Maurice Stanley. 1955. *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

———. 1965. Introduction to The Knowledge of Man. Edited by Maurice Friedman. Translated by Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Gebauer, Thomas. 2003. "...als müsse die Rettung erst noch erdacht werden." In Macht und Ohnmacht der Hilfe: Eine Dokumentation über die Krise humanitären Handelns, edited by Medico International, 13-20. Frankfurt: Mabuse Verlag.

Gergen, Kenneth J., and Mary Gergen. 1986. „Narrative Form and the Construction of Psychological Science." In Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct, edited by Theodore R. Sarbin, 22-44. New York: Praeger.

GHA (Global Humanitarian Assistance). 2011. *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2011*. Bristol: Development Initiatives.

———. 2014. *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014*. Bristol: Development Initiatives.

———. 2015. *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015*. Bristol: Development Initiatives.

———. 2016. *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016*. Bristol: Development Initiatives.

Girgis, Mona. 2007. "The Capacity-building Paradox: Using Friendship to Build Capacity in the South." *Development in Practice* 17 (3): 353-366. doi:10.1080/09614520701336782.

Goetz, Anne-Marie. 2001. *Women Development Workers: Implementing Rural Credit Programmes in Bangladesh*. New Delhi: Sage.

Goldman, Harvey. 1988. *Max Weber and Thomas Mann: Calling and the Shaping of the Self*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gunetilleke, Neranjana, Nilakashi De Silva and Gayathri Lukuge. 2011. "Development Professionals: Reconciling Personal Values with Professional Values." *IDS Bulletin*, 42 (5): 45-51. doi:10.1111/j.1759-5436.2011.00250.x.

Gunn, Janet Varner. 1981. "Walden and the Temporal Mode of Autobiographical Narrative." In *The American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Albert E. Stone, 80-94, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Gumpert, Martin. 1942. *Dunant: The Story of the Red Cross*. Garden City, New York: Blue Ribbon Books.

Gusdorf, Georges. 1980. "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." In Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical, edited by James Olney, 28-48, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Grim, Pamela. 2002. *Just Here Trying to Save a Few Lives: Tales of Life and Death from the ER*. New York: Warner Books.

Hall, Douglas T., and Dawn Chandler. 2005. "Psychological Success: When the Career is a Calling." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 26: 155-176. doi:10.1002/job.301.

Harmer, Adele, and Joanna Macrae, eds. 2004. "Beyond the Continuum: The Changing Role of Aid Policy in Protracted Crises." Humanitarian Policy Group Report 18. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Harper, Ian. 2011. "World Health and Nepal: Producing Internationals, Healthy Citizenship and the Cosmopolitan." In *Adventures in Aidland: The Anthropology of Professionals in International Development*, edited by David Mosse, 123-138. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Heuser, Eric Anton. 2012. "Befriending the Field: Culture and Friendships in Development Worlds." *Third World Quarterly* 33 (8): 1423–1437. doi:10.1080/01436597.2012.698108.

Heyse, Liesbet. 2003. "Beyond the Age of Humanitarianism: Past Trends and Future Challenges." *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 11 (4): 179-183. doi:10.1111/j.0966-0879.2003.01104004.x.

Hilhorst, Dorothea. 2004. "A Living Document? The Code of Conduct of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief." Research paper produced for the conference Ten Years Code of Conduct: Principles in Practice. The Hague: Disaster Studies Wageningen University, September, 20. Available at https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/3.%20A%20Living%20Document%20-Hilhorst%202004.pdf.

———. 2005. "Dead Letter or Living Document? Ten Years of the Code of Conduct for Disaster Relief." *Disasters* 29 (4): 351–369. doi:10.1111/j.0361-3666.2005.00297.x.

Hilhorst, Dorothea, and Nadja Schmiemann. 2002. "Humanitarian Principles and Organisational Culture: Everyday Practice in Médecins Sans Frontiéres-Holland." *Development in Practice* 12 (3-4): 490-500. doi:10.1080/0961450220149834.

Hilhorst, Dorothea, Loes Weijers, and Margit van Wessel. 2012. "Aid Relations and Aid Legitimacy: Mutual Imagining of Aid Workers and Recipients in Nepal." *Third World Quarterly* 33 (8): 1439-1457.

doi:10.1080/01436597.2012.698126.

Hindman, Heather. 2002. “The Everyday Life of American Development in Nepal.” *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 7 (1): 99-136.

———. 2013. *Mediating the Global: Expatria's Forms and Consequences in Kathmandu*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

———. 2014. “The Hollowing Out of Aidland: Subcontracting and the New Development Family in Nepal.” In *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The challenge and Futures of Aidland*, edited by Anne-Meike Fechter and Heather Hindman, 169-191. Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Hindman, Heather, and Anne-Meike Fechter. 2014. Introduction to *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The Challenges and Futures of Aidland*, edited by Anne-Meike Fechter and Heather Hindman, 1-19. Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Hodes, Aubrey. 1975. *Encounter with Martin Buber*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Hoelscher, Kristian, Jason Miklian, and Håvard Mokleiv Nygård. 2015. “Understanding Violent Attacks against Humanitarian Aid Workers.” PRIO (Peace Research Institute Oslo): Oslo. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Hoelscher%2C%20Miklian%2C%20Nyga%CC%8Ard%20%20Understanding%20Attacks%20on%20Humanitarian%20Aid%20Workers%2C%20Conflict%20Trends%206-2015.pdf.

Hoffman, Peter G. and Thomas G. Weiss. 2006. *Sword and Salve: Confronting New Wars and Humanitarian Crises*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Hutchinson, John F. 1996. *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross.* Boulder: Westview Press.

Hunt, Matthew R. 2008. “Ethics Beyond Borders: How Health Professionals Experience Ethics in Humanitarian Assistance and Development Work.” *Developing World Bioethics* 8 (2): 59-69. doi:10.1111/j.1471-8847.2006.00153.x.

———. 2009. “Moral Experience of Canadian Healthcare Professionals in Humanitarian Work.” *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 24 (6): 518-524. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X00007445.

———. 2011. “Establishing Moral Bearings: Ethics and Expatriate Health Care Professionals in Humanitarian Work.” *Disasters* 35 (3): 606-622. doi:10.1111/j.1467-7717.2011.01232.x.

Hunt, Matthew R., and Lisa Schwartz. 2012. “Editorial: Introduction to Symposium on Ethics and Humanitarian Healthcare Policy and Practice.” *Public Health Ethics*. 5 (1): 47-48. doi:10.1093/phe/phs006.

Hunt, Matthew R., Lisa Schwartz, and Laurie Elit. 2012. “Experience of Ethics Training and Support for Health Care Professionals in International Aid Work.” *Public Health Ethics* 5 (1): 91-99. doi:10.1093/phe/phr033.

ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross). 1996. *The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.* http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0513.pdf

———. 2005. *Annual Report 2004.* Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross.

Joyce, James Avery. 1959. *Red Cross International and the Strategy of Peace*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Katz, Jared, Déborah Nguyen, Carla Lacerda, and Gerald Daly. 2012. “Voices from the Field: Optimising Performance for Humanitarian Workers.” *Development in Practice* 22 (2): 256-266. doi:10.1080/09614524.2012.640989.

Kaufman, Walter. 1970. A Prologue to I and Thou. In I and Thou, by Emmanuel Levinas, 7-48. Translated by Walter Kaufman. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

Kent, Randolph C. 2003. “Humanitarian Dilemmas in Peace and War.” Conflict, Security & Development 3 (3): 437-446. doi:10.1080/1467880032000151680.

———. 2004. “International Humanitarian Crises: Two Decades Before and Two Decades Beyond.” International Affairs 80 (5): 851-869. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2346.2004.00422.x.

King, Dennis 2002. “Paying the Ultimate Price: An Analysis of Aid-Worker Fatalities.” *Humanitarian Exchange* 21 (July): 15-16.

Kölbl, Susanne, and Olaf Ihlau. 2007. *Geliebtes, dunkles Land*. München: Siedler Verlag.

Korff, Valeska P., Nicoletta Balbo, Melinda Mills, Liesbet Heyse, and Rafael Wittek. 2015. “The Impact of Humanitarian Context Conditions and Individual Characteristics on Aid Worker Retention.” *Disasters* 39 (3): 522-545. doi:10.1111/disa.12119.

Larkin, Michael, Simon Watts, and Elizabeth Clifton. 2006. “Giving Voice and Making Sense in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 102-120. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp062oa.

Lasswell, Harald, D. 1936. *Who Gets What, When, How?* New York: Whittlesey House.

Leader, Nicholas. 1998. "Proliferating Principles, or How to Sup with the Devil Without Getting Eaten." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 2 (4): 1-27. doi:10.1080/13642989808406758.

———. 2000. *The Politics of Principle: The Principles of Humanitarian Action in Practice.* Humanitarian Policy Group Report 2. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Lejeune, Philippe. 1989. "The Autobiographical Pact." In *On Autobiography*, edited by Paul John Eakin, translated by Katherine Leary, 3-30, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1969. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

———. 1981. *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essenc*e. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. London: Martinius Nijhoff Publishers.

———. 1985. *Ethics and Infinity*; Conversations with Philippe Nemo. Translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

———. 1988. "The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas." Translated by Andrew Benjamin and Tamra Wright. In *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, edited by Robert Bernasconi and David Wood, 168-180. London: Routledge.

———. 1989. *The Levinas Reader*. Edited by Seán Hand. Oxford: Blackwell.

———. 1996. *Basic Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 2000. God, Death, and Time. Translated by Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

———. 2006. *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*. Translated by Michael Bradley Smith and Barbara Harshav. London: Continuum.

Lewis, David. 2008. "Crossing the Boundaries between 'Third Sector' and State: Life-Work Histories from the Philippines, Bangladesh and the UK." *Third World Quarterly* 29 (1): 125-141. doi:10.1080/01436590701726582.

———. 2011. "Tidy Concepts, Messy Lives: Defining Tensions in the Domestic and Overseas Careers of UK Non-Governmental Professionals." In *Adventures in Aidland: The Anthropology of Professionals in International Development*, edited by David Mosse, 176-198. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Lieblich, Amia, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach, Tamar Zilber. 1998. *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis and Interpretation*. London: Sage.

Lingis, Alphonso. 1998. Introduction to *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essenc*e, by Emmanuel Levinas, xvii-xliv. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Loquercio, David, Mark Hammersley, and Ben Emmens. 2006. *Understanding and Addressing Staff Turnover in Humanitarian Agencies*. Humanitarian Practice Network. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Lopes Cardozo, Barbara, Timothy H. Holtz, Reinhard Kaiser, Carol A. Gotway, Frida Ghitis, Estelle Toomey, and Peter Salama. 2005. "The Mental Health of Expatriate and Kosovar Albanian Humanitarian Aid Workers." *Disasters* 29 (2): 152-170. doi:10.1111/j.0361-3666.2005.00278.x.

Lopes Cardozo, Barbara, Carol Gotway Crawford, Cynthia Eriksson, Julia Zhu, Miriam Sabin, Alastair Ager, David Foy, Leslie Snider, Willem Scholte, Reinhard Kaiser, Miranda Olff, Bas Rijnen, Winnifred Simon. 2012. "Psychological Distress, Depression, Anxiety, and Burnout among International Humanitarian Aid Workers: A Longitudinal Study." *PLoS ONE* 7 (9): e44948. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0044948.

Macrae, Joanna. 2004. "Understanding Integration from Rwanda to Iraq." *Ethics & International Affairs* 18 (2): 29-35. doi:10.1111/j.1747-7093.2004.tb00464.x.

Macrae, Joanna, and Adele Harmer. 2003. "Humanitarian Action and the 'Global War on Terror': A Review of Issues." In *Humanitarian Action and the 'Global War on Terror: A Review of Issues and Trends*, edited by Joanna Macrae and Adele Harmer, 1-12. Humanitarian Policy Group Report 14. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Macrae Joanna, and Nicholas Leader 2000a. *The Politics of Coherence: Humanitarianism and Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era*. Humanitarian Policy Group. London: Overseas Development Institute.

———. 2000b. *Shifting Sands: The Search for 'Coherence' between Political and Humanitarian Responses to Complex Emergencies.* Humanitarian Policy Group Report 8. London: Overseas Development Institute.

———. 2001. "Apples, Pears and Porridge: The Origins and Impact of the Search for 'Coherence' between Humanitarian and Political Responses to Chronic Political Emergencies." *Disasters* 25 (4): 290-307. doi:10.1111/1467-7717.00179.

Mackintosh, Kate. 2000. *The Principles of Humanitarian Action in International Humanitarian Law*. Humanitarian Policy Group Report 5. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Magone, Claire, Michaël Neuman, and Fabrice Weissman *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed: The MSF Experience*. London: Hurst.

Mandel, Barrett J. 1980. „Full of Life Now." In *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, edited by James Olney, 49-72, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Marsden, Peter. 2009. *Afghanistan: Aid, Armies and Empires.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Martens, Lorna. 2014. "The Truth Criteria of Autobiography: Doris Lessing and Telling the Truth.", a/b: Auto/Biography Studies 29 (2): 319-340. doi: 10.1080/08989575.2014.991900.

Maskalyk, James. 2009a. *Six Months in Sudan. A Young Doctor in a War-torn Village*. Edinburgh: Canongate.

———. 2009b. "They Often Seemed too Tired to Breathe." *The Globe and Mail*, May 01. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/they-often-seemed-too-tired-to-breathe/article1196989/?page=all.

———. 2011. "Something to Write Home About: James Maskalyk of Doctors Without Borders On His Work In Sudan." By Christal Smith. *The Huffington Post*. February 17. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/christal-smith/james-maskalyk-doctors-without-borders_b_823368.html.

———. 2012. "Speech Grand Challenges." *James Maskalyk* (blog), December 26. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://www.jamesmaskalyk.com.

———. 2013a. "Those Days." *James Maskalyk* (blog), May 10. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://www.jamesmaskalyk.com/

———. 2013b. "Graduation Speech to Ethiopia's First Emergency Doctors." *James Maskalyk* (blog), October 17. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://www.jamesmaskalyk.com/

———. 2014. "Here goes Everything." *James Maskalyk* (blog), October 29. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://www.jamesmaskalyk.com/

———. 2016 "James Maskalyk on Health, Consciousness and Life." By Chloe Hogg. *Impakter*. February 17. Accessed December, 12. 2016. http://impakter.com/james-maskalyk-consciousness.

Mawdsley, Emma, Janet G. Townsend, and Gina Porter. 2005. "Trust, Accountability, and Face-to-Face Interaction in North–South NGO Relations." *Development in Practice* 15 (1): 77-82. doi:10.1080/0961452052000321613.

McAdams, Dan P. 1990. “Unity and Purpose in Human Lives: The emergence of Identity as a Life-Story,” In Studying Persons and Lives, edited by Albert I. Robin, Robert A. Zucker, Robert A. Emmons, and Susan Frank, 148-200. New York: Springer.

McAdams, Dan P., Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich. 2006. Introduction to *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative*, edited by Dan P. McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich, 1-11, Washington: American Psychological Association.

McKinnon, Katharine. 2007. “Postdevelopment, Professionalism, and the Politics of Participation.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97 (4): 772-85. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8306.2007.00582.x.

McWha, Ishbel. 2011. “The Roles of, and Relationships between, Expatriates, Volunteers, and Local Development Workers.” *Development in Practice* 21 (1): 29-40. doi:10.1080/09614524.2011.530225.

McWha, Ishbel, and Malcolm MacLachlan. 2011. "Measuring Relationships between Workers in Poverty-focused Organisations." *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 26 (6): 485 – 499. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02683941111154356.

Minear, Larry. 2002. “Humanitarian Action in an Age of Terrorism.” Paper presented at The International Council on Human Rights Policy Conference, New York, Arden House, May 24-25. http://www.ichrp.org/files/papers/70/118_Humanitarian_Action_in_an_Age_of_Terrorism_Larry_Minear__May_2002__background_paper.pdf.

———. 2012. “Humanitarian Action and Politicization: A Review of Experience Since World War II.” In *The Golden Fleece: Manipulation and Independence in Humanitarian Action*, edited by Antonio Donini, 43-66. Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Minear, Larry, and Thomas G. Weiss. 1995. *Mercy under Fire: War and the Global Humanitarian Community*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Moorehead, Caroline. 1998. *Dunant’s Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross*. London: Harper Collins.

Morton, Katherine, and Jacinta O’Hagan. 2009. “Humanitarianism Then and Now: Exploring the Boundaries of Civil–Military Relations in a Post-9/11 World.” In *Humanitarianism and Civil–Military Relations in a Post-9/11 World*, edited by Katherine Morton and Jacinta O’Hagan, 1-6. Canberra: Department of International Relations.

Mulley, Clare. 2009. *The Woman Who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantyne Jebb, Founder of Save the Children*. Oxford: Oneworld.

Munz, Richard. 2007. *Im Zentrum der Katastrophe: Was es wirklich bedeutet vor Ort zu helfen*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.

NATO (The North Atlantic Treaty Organization). 2003. *AJP-9 NATO Civil-Military Co-Operation (CIMIC) Doctrine.* http://www.nato.int/ims/docu/ajp-9.pdf.

Nightingale, Florence. 1989. *Ever Yours, Florence Nightingale: Selected Letters,* edited by Martha Vicinus and Bea Nergaard. London: Virage Press.

Olney, James, ed. 1980. Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Olsen, Gorm Rye, Nils Carstensen, and Kristian Høyen. 2003. "Humanitarian Crises: What Determines the Level of Emergency Assistance? Media Coverage, Donor Interests and the Aid Business." *Disasters*, 27 (2): 109-126. doi:10.1111/1467-7717.00223.

Orbinski, James. 1999. *Médecins Sans Frontières - Nobel Lecture*. Oslo. December 10. Oslo. Accessed December 2012, 2016. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1999/msf-lecture.html.

———. 2008a "A Doctor in Kigali." By Stacey Gibson. *U of T Magazine*. Accessed December 2012, 2016. http://www.magazine.utoronto.ca/cover-story/james-orbinski-profile-doctors-without-borders-canadians-in-rwanda/

———. 2008b. "Dr James Orbinski's War." By David Elkins and others. *Canadian Medicine*. Accessed December 2012, 2016. http://www.canadianmedicinenews.com/2008/11/interview-dr-james-orbinskis-war.html.

———. 2009. *An Imperfect Offering: Humanitarian Action for the Twenty-First Century*. 2nd ed. London: Rider.

O'Reilly, Kathleen. 2006. "Women Fieldworkers and the Politics of Participation." Signs 31 (4): 1075-1098. doi:10.1086/500600.

Palmer, Parker. 2007. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscapes of a Teacher's Life.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Palus, Charles J., W. Nasby, and R. D. Easton. 1991. Understanding Executive Performance: A Life-Story Approach. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

Peperzak, Adriaan. 1993. *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. Indiana: Purdue University Press.

———. 1997. *Beyond: The philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

———. 1998. "Levinas's Method." *Research in Phenomenology* 28 (1): 110-125.

Peterson, Christopher, Nansook Park, Nicholas Hall, and Martin E. P. Seligman. 2009. "Zest and Work." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 30: 161-172. doi:10.1002/job.584.

Pictet. Jean, ed. 1952. *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949: Commentary*. Geneva: ICRC.

———. 1979. The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross: Commentary. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Powell, Colin L. 2001. "Remarks to the National Foreign Policy Conference for Leaders of Nongovernmental Organizations." Speech given at the U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., October 26. https://20012009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/5762.htm.

Plummer, Ken.1983. *Documents of Life: Introduction to the Problems and Literature of a Humanist Method*. London: Allen and Unwin.

———. 2001. *Documents of Life 2: An Invitation to a Critical Humanism*. London: Sage.

Rajak, Dinah and Jock Stirrat. 2011. "Parochial Cosmopolitanism and the Power of Nostalgia." In *Adventures in Aidland: The Anthropology of Professionals in International Development*, edited by David Mosse, 161-175. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Reed, Patrick, director. 2008. *Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma*. DVD. Docurama Films.

Rieff, David. 2002. *A Bed for the Night. Humanitarianism in crisis.* London: Vintage.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 1993. *Narrative Analysis*. London: Sage.

Robben, Antonius C. G. M., and Nordstrom, Carolyn, eds. 1995. *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Roth, Silke. 2012. "Professionalisation Trends and Inequality: Experiences and Practices in Aid Relationships." *Third World Quarterly* 33 (8): 1459-1474. doi:10.1080/09700161.2012.698129.

———. 2014. "Dealing with Danger: Risk and Security in the Everyday Lives of Aid Workers." In *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The*

Challenges and Futures of Aidland, edited by Anne-Meike Fechter and Heather Hindman, 151-168. Boulder: Kumarian Press.

———. 2015. *The Paradoxes of Aid Work: Passionate Professionals*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Rubenstein, Leonard S. 2010. "Humanitarian Space Shrinking for Health Program Delivery in Afghanistan and Pakistan" *Peace Brief* 59. Washington: United States Institute of Peace. http://permanent.access.gpo.gov/gpo40347/PB%2059%20%20Humanitarian%20Space%20Shrinking%20in%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan.pdf.

Schachter, Daniel L. 1996. *Searching for Memory: The Brain, The Mind, And The Past*. New York: Basic Books.

Schilpp, Paul A., and Maurice Friedman, eds. 1967. *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court.

Schwartz, Lisa, Christina Sinding, Matthew Hunt, Laurie Elit, Lynda Redwood-Campbell, Naomi Adelson, Lori Luther, Jennifer Ranford, and Sonya DeLaat. 2010. "Ethics in Humanitarian Aid Work: Learning from the Narratives of Humanitarian Health Workers." *AJOB Primary Research* 1 (3): 45-54. doi:10.1080/21507716.2010.505898.

Schwartz, Lisa, Matthew Hunt, Chris Sinding, Laurie Elit, Lynda Redwood-Campbell, Naomi Adelson, and Sonya de Laat. 2012. "Models for Humanitarian Health Care Ethics." Public Health Ethics 5 (1): 81-90. doi:10.1093/phe/phs005

Serow, R. C., D. Eaker, and J. Ciechalski. 1992. "Calling, Service, and Legitimacy: Professional Orientations and Career Commitment among Prospective Teachers." *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 25: 136-141.

Sheather, Julian, and Tejshri Shah. 2011. "Ethical Dilemmas in Medical Humanitarian Practice: Cases for Reflection from Médecins Sans Frontières." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 37: 162-165. doi:10.1136/jme.2010.038448.

Sheik, Mani, Maria Isabel Gutierrez, Paul Bolton, Paul Spiegel, Michel Thieren, and Gilbert Burnham. „Deaths Among Humanitarian Workers." *BMJ* 321: 166-168. doi:10.1136/bmj.321.7254.166.

Shotgun Shack Blog. Accessed December 12. https://shotgunshackblog.com.

Sherman, John. 2002. *War Stories: A Memoir of Nigeria and Biafra*. Indianapolis: Mesa Verde Press.

Simmons, William Paul. 1999. “The Third: Levinas’ Theoretical Move from Anarchical Ethics to the Realm of Justice and Politics.” *PHILOSOPHY & SOCIAL CRITICISM* 25 (6): 83-104. doi: 10.1177/019145379902500604.

Sinding, Christina, Lisa Schwartz, Matthew Hunt, Lynda Redwood-Campbell, Laurie Elit, and Jennifer Ranford. 2010. “‘Playing God Because You Have to’: Health Professionals’’ Narratives of Rationing Care in Humanitarian and Development Work.” *Public Health Ethics* 3 (2): 147-156. doi:10.1093/phe/phq015.

Slim, Hugo. 1997. “Relief Agencies and Moral Standing in War: Principles of Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Solidarity.” *Development in Practice* 7 (4): 342-352.

———. 2002. “Claiming a Humanitarian Imperative: NGOs and the Cultivation of Humanitarian Duty.” Paper presented at the Seventh Annual Conference of Webster University on Humanitarian Values for the Twenty-First Century. Geneva, February 21-22.

———. 2004. “With or Against? Humanitarian Agencies and Coalition Counter-Insurgency.” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 23 (4): 34-47. doi:10.1093/rsq/23.4.34.

———. 2015. Humanitarian Ethics: A Guide to the Morality of Aid in War and Disaster. London: Hurst and Company.

Small, Hugh. 1999. *Florence Nightingale. Avenging Angel*. London: Constable.

Smillie, Ian. 2012. “The Emperor’s Old Clothes: The Self-Created Siege of Humanitarian Action.” In *The Golden Fleece: Manipulation and Independence in Humanitarian Action*, edited by Antonio Donini, 17-42. Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Smillie, Ian and Larry Minear. 2004. *The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World.* Bloomfield: Kumarian Press.

———. 2005. “Welcome in the Club.” *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* 29 (March): 2-4.

Smith, Jonathan A. 2011. “Evaluating the Contribution of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.” *Health Psychology Review* 5 (1): 9-27. doi:10.1080/17437199.2010.510659.

Smith, Jonathan A., Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin. 2013. *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. London: Sage.

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. 2010. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives, Second Edition*. Second ed., Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Spence, Donald P. 1982. *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth. Meaning and Interpretation in Psychoanalysis.* New York: Norton.

SPHERE. 2004. Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. Geneva: The Sphere Project.

Steger, Michael F., N. K. Pickering, J. Y. Shin, and B. J. Dik. 2010. "Calling in Work: Secular or Sacred?" *Journal of Career Assessment* 18(1): 82-96. doi:10.1177/1069072709350905.

Stein, Janice. 2005. "Humanitarianism as Political Fusion." *Perspectives on Politics* 3 (4): 741-744. doi:https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592705050413.

Stirrat, R. L. 2008. "Mercenaries, Missionaries and Misfits: Representations of Development Personnel." *Critique of Anthropology* 28 (4): 406-425. doi:10.1177/0308275X08098259.

Stockton, Nicholas. 1998. "In Defence of Humanitarianism." *Disasters* 22 (4): 352-360. doi:10.1111/1467-7717.00098.

Stoddard, Abbey, Adele Harmer, and Victoria DiDomenico. 2009. Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: 2009 Update. Humanitarian Policy Group. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Stoddard, Abbey, Adele Harmer, and Katherine Haver. 2006. *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: Trends in Policy and Operations*. Humanitarian Policy Group Report 23. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Strasser, Stephan. 2004. "Buber and Levinas: Philosophical Reflections on an Opposition." In *Dialogue and Difference*, edited by Peter Atterton, Matthew, Calarco, and Maurice Friedman, 37-49. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Stuff Expat Aid Workers Like Blog. Accessed December 12, 2016. https://stuffexpataidworkerslike.com.

Sylvester, Christine. 2012. "War Experiences/War Practices/War Theory." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 40 (3): 483-503. doi: 10.1177/0305829812442211.

———. 2013. "Experiencing War: A Challenge for International Relations." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26 (4): 669-674. doi:10.1080/09557571.2013.849410.

Tassell, Natasha, and Ross Flett. 2011. "Motivation in Humanitarian Health Workers: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective." *Development in Practice* 21 (7): 959-973. doi:10.1080/09614524.2011.590889.

Tennant, Vicky, Bernie Doyle, and Raouf Mazou. 2010. "Safeguarding Humanitarian Space: A Review of Key Challenges for UNHCR, UNHCR

Policy Development and Evaluation Service." Geneva: UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service.

Terry, Fiona. 2002. *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action.* London: Cornell University Press.

———. 2003. "Humanitarian Action Victim of its Own Success." CRASH Paper. Paris: MSF.

———. 2011. "The International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan: Reasserting the Neutrality of Humanitarian Action." *International Review of the Red Cross* 93 (881): 173-188.

Treadgold, Richard. 1999. "Transcendent Vocations: Their Relationship to Stress, Depression, and Clarity of Self-Concept." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 39: 81-105. doi: 10.1177/0022167899391010.

Vauchon, Marc. 2008. *Rebel Without Borders: Frontline Missions in Africa and the Gulf*. With the assistance of François Bugingo. Translated by Charles Philips. Toronto: ECW Press.

Vaux, Tony. 2001. *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and War*. London: Earthscan.

———. 2006. "Humanitarian Trends and Dilemmas." *Development in Practice* 16 (3/4): 240-254. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09614520600694653.

Verma, Ritu. 2014. "Intercultural Encounters, Colonial Continuities and Contemporary Disconnects in Rural Aid: An Ethnography of Development Practitioners in Madagascar." In *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The Challenges and Futures of Aidland*, edited by Anne-Meike Fechter and Heather Hindman, 59-82. Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Visser Miranda, Melinda Mills, Liesbet Heyse, Rafael Wittek, and Vincenzo Bollettino. 2016. "Work–Life Balance Among Humanitarian Aid Workers." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, first published online on March 14. doi:10.1177/0899764016634890.

Walker, Peter. 2005. "Cracking the Code: The Genesis, Use and Future of the Code of Conduct." *Disasters* 29 (4): 323-326. doi: 10.1111/j.0361-3666.2005.00295.x.

Walker, Peter, and Susan Purdin. 2004. "Birthing Sphere." *Disasters* 28 (2): 100-111. doi:10.1111/j.0361-3666.2004.00246.x.

Walker, Peter, and Catherine Russ 2010. Professionalising the Humanitarian Sector: A Scoping Study. London: Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA).

Weiss, Thomas, G. 2007. *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Weiss, Thomas, G., and Cindy Collins. 2000. *Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention*. 2nd ed. Boulder: Westview Press.

Weissman, Fabrice. 2010. "'Not in Our Name': Why Médecins Sans Frontières Does Not Support the "Responsibility to Protect." *Criminal Justice Ethics* 29 (2): 194-207. doi:10.1080/0731129X.2010.504426.

———, ed. 2004. *In the Shadow of 'Just Wars': Violence, Politics and Humanitarian Action*. London: Hurst.

———. 2011. "Silence Heals…From the Cold War to the War on Terror: MSF Speaks Out. A Brief History." In *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed. The MSF Experience*, d by Claire Magone, Michaël Neuman, and Fabrice Weissman, 177-197. London: Hurst.

Wild, John. 1969. Introduction to *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, by Emmanuel Levinas, 11-20. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Wrzesniewski, Amy, Clark McCauley, Paul Rozin, and Barry Schwartz. 1997. "Jobs, Careers, and Callings: People's Relations to their Work." *Journal of Research in Personality* 31: 21-33. doi: 10.1006/jrpe.1997.2162.

Yarrow, Thomas. 2014. "Maintaining Independence: The Moral Ambiguities of Personal Relations Among Ghanaian Development Workers." In *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The Challenges and Futures of Aidland*, edited by Anne-Meike Fechter and Heather Hindman, 41-58. Boulder: Kumarian Press.