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ALTRUISM: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ASKED. THE RESCUE OF JEWS IN NAZI EUROPE

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Altruism: The Importance of Being Asked.

The Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe.[1]

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Abstract

The rescue of persecuted minorities – such as the Jews in Nazi occupied Europe – is seen in this paper as taking place in a peculiar market. In such a market rescuers face at least two dilemmas. Firstly, they might be willing to help but be uncertain how to go about rescuing. Secondly, they might be unsure over the nature of the request to help. To make a mistake and help the "wrong" person could be very costly.

Following secondary analysis of the APPBI data on those who rescued Jews (rescuers) and those who did not (non-rescuers) during the Nazi occupation of Europe we find that (a) the first dilemma was solved by a direct request for help from those in need; (b) the second dilemma was solved by helping those who were either known to the rescuers, or sent by a trusted mediators.

We thus conclude that the observed acts of altruism in society do not account for the potential acts of altruism human beings are capable of. If the market for altruism works more efficiently, more people might be helped.

"If I am not for myself, who is for me?
And when I am for myself, what am I?
And if not now, when?"

[1] We are grateful to Diego Gambetta for encouraging us to pursue this research and for his many suggestions. Samuel P. Oliner, the director of the 'Altruistic Personality Project', has shared with us the data he collected on rescuers of Jews during the Nazi occupation of Europe. Without his generous act, this paper would have never been written. We are indebted to Vittorio Bufacchi, Cecilia Garcia-Penalosa, Jouni Kuha, Gerry Mackie, Avner Offer, Aage Sørensen, Marc Stears, George Smith, and the participants to the ECSR Conference on 'Rational Choice Theories in Sociological Analysis: Applications and New Developments' (Stockholm, 16-19 October 1997) for useful comments. The usual disclaimers apply. Address for correspondence: Federico Varese, Nuffield College, Oxford, 0X1 1NF, UK. E-mail: Federico.Varese@nuffield.oxford.ac.uk

(Rabbi Hillel, The Mishnah, Avot 1:14)[2]

1. Introduction

A common phenomenon in social life is that some people help others and show an interest in their well-being. Some individuals are even prepared to incur costs in order to increase the welfare of others. Donations to charities, responses to appeals for famine relief in the Third World, organ donations, voluntary contributions for the provision of public goods, are all instances of altruistic behaviour. At the extreme, people are willing to risk their lives to benefit others, as in the case of the individuals who helped Jews escape Nazi persecution in Europe during World War II (WWII). In most of these circumstances, no reward – or at least no reward that can be compared to the costs – is expected in return. Or is it so? Some may offer help because they might be in need of help in the future. Others may offer help so as to obtain access to favoured networks or to increase their prestige in the public eye. In either case, their acts are a form of self-interested behaviour. Such a motive is echoed in the Jewish Mishnah by Rabbi Hillel who asked: '*If I am not for myself, who is for me?*'

Two alternative views of altruism can be identified: one that considers altruism irreducible to self-interest – we label this *pure* altruism; and one that points out how self-interest might hide behind altruistic acts – we label this *impure* altruism. Both views emphasise the motivations, rather than the practice of helping behaviour. In this paper, we argue that motivations are not sufficient for behaviour to occur. Rabbi Hillel himself was aware of this when he asked: *If not now, when?* In other words, given individuals' willingness to help and, regardless of their motivations, *when* and *how* will the helper and the helped meet each other?

Helping may be seen as occurring in a peculiar 'market' where demand and supply are not easily matched. A supply of people in need is not easily available on the shelves of a shop, as a pool of willing helpers might not be easy to find. Helpers may not know whom to help, and those who need help might not always know where to find it. This symmetric problem is more significant in situations of high risk, such as rescuing Jews during the Nazi occupation of Europe. In situations of high risk, helping

[2] Translated by J. Neusner (1988: 674).

the “wrong” person, and being helped by the “wrong” person, is full of portentous and disastrous consequences.

Following secondary analysis of data on people who rescued Jews (rescuers) and people who did not rescue Jews (non-rescuers) during the Nazi occupation of Europe, we conclude that *being asked* is a significant predictor of helping behaviour. The act of asking is a first step for demand and supply to match. People who may be inclined to help then have the opportunity to do so. Our answer to the third question of Rabbi Hillel (‘If not now, when?’) would be: ‘One helps when he or she is asked to do so’. We also explore the other side of this situation, namely ‘to whom were the Jews more likely to ask for help?’ The answer to this question is that Jews were more likely to ask individuals known to them, such as friends and family members (F&F). However, when this was not possible, they turned to trusted individuals who acted as mediators. Mediators would then act on behalf of the Jews (rescuees) and approached individuals they knew. We find that a request for help from a trusted mediator increased the likelihood that Jews who had no F&F would be rescued.

Finally, our data show that very few (4%) of those who were asked to help *did not* help. We speculate that this finding points to the existence of a selection mechanism. Rescuers who were asked to help, either directly or by a mediator, were selected on the basis of signals they had given. Rescuers signalled their disposition to help and were subsequently asked.

The paper is organised as follows: the next two sections discuss pure and impure altruism, with an emphasis on studies that are relevant to the problem of helping Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. Section four sets out a framework for the study of helping behaviour, followed by section five which presents the data and the analytical technique of the study. Section six and seven look at helping from the point of view of the helper, and helping from the point of view of those who were in need. Section eight concludes the paper.

2. Pure altruism

Jon Elster has forcefully argued the view that altruism cannot always be reduced to self-interest. He has called attention to pure altruists: these individuals contribute to a

worthwhile cause regardless of how much others donate or of the likely efficacy of their action. Elster (1989) sees the altruistic behaviour of the citizens of Le Chambon in this light. In this small village in southern France, inspired by a Protestant pastor, Andre Trocmé, the villagers provided asylum for a large number of German Jews at great risk to themselves and under constant surveillance by the Vichy government and, later, the German army.[3] Elster describes these rescuers in terms of a 'pure and strong Kantianism': 'they explicitly refused to consider the consequences, to themselves *or others*, of their action. Instead they relied on a simple principle: "Never turn away anyone who needs help"' (Elster, 1989: 193).[4] It would not be correct to argue that they were irrational, or did not consider the consequences of their action: what mattered for them was the universal good, rather than the conceivable impact of their contribution to attain that good (Elster, 1989: 193; see also 1990). In this view of altruism, "the individual does not ask whether her own actions, considered in isolation, yield preferred outcomes. Instead, she acts on rules which, when generally followed, yield preferred outcomes" (Sugden 1993: 72).

A number of authors have argued – with specific reference to helping Jews during the Nazi occupation of Europe – that altruism is not motivated by the expectation of material rewards or self-interest. Rescuers might have helped as a consequence of a particular set of personal traits, which form the 'altruistic personality', or out of a sense of duty to uphold particular moral principles.

Oliner and Oliner (1988) use the label 'altruist personality' in their extensive study of rescuers in Nazi Europe. They interviewed 231 gentiles (non-Jews) who saved Jews, and 126 non-rescuers matched on age, sex, education, and geographic location during the war. Oliner and Oliner link a variety of psycho-social conditions to the 'altruist personality' and conclude that rescuers had a capacity for 'extensive

[3] Gross (1997: 134, 279) drawing on Hallie (1979) questions the view that the villagers were indeed running a great risk. In La Chambon, only one successful Gestapo raid was carried out, in the summer of 1943, resulting in the arrest and eventual execution of Trocmé's cousin, Daniel Trocmé. Gross concludes that the risk involved in rescuing Jews in La Chambon was "relatively low" (Gross, 1997: 279). Although it is an issue that cannot be fully explored here, the evidence presented by Gross does not seem conclusive. The death of Daniel Trocmé must have been a strong reminder of the risk rescuers were running.

[4] Similarly, the actions of the Danes who saved Jews have been described as deriving from 'clear convictions […] in accord with the inner truth of man's own rational nature, as well as in accordance with the fundamental law of God: "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"' (Merton, 1971: 167, quoted in Gross, 1997: 128).

relationships', defined as a 'stronger sense of attachment to others and their feeling of responsibility for the welfare of others, including those outside their immediate familial or communal circle' (1988: 249).

Monroe *et al*. (1990) base their study on a sample of thirteen rescuers of Jews, an unidentified number of entrepreneurs, and five ordinary Europeans who lived in Nazi-occupied Europe but did not participate in rescuing Jews. They describe the altruism of rescuers in terms of 'self-identity', by which individuals perceive themselves 'as one with all humankind', an identity which reaches beyond group affiliation, mere empathy and calculation of expected utility. For rescuers, the concept of a cost/benefit calculus was 'meaningless'. On the contrary, they were motivated by the 'shared perception of a common humanity' (1990: 117; see also Monroe, 1991 and 1996).

Geras (1995), the author of a philosophical critique of Richard Rorty, discusses 'the Righteous Among the Nations'. In a detailed review of the existing literature on the rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe, he examines whether rescuing behaviour was associated with gender, class status, political affiliation, religion and other personal characteristics, and prior acquaintance with Jews. Geras concludes from this review that none of the above mentioned sociological factors are good predictors of altruistic behaviour towards Jews in Nazi Europe. On the contrary, he argues that people were moved by a sense of belonging to 'human kind'. A 'universalistic moral outlook' motivated helping behaviour (1995: 36).[5]

All of these studies implicitly or explicitly adopt a pure view of altruism.[6] Although rescuers were aware of the costs or at least the risks involved in helping Jews, this awareness did not impinge on their decision to rescue; it simply made rescuers more cautious (see Monroe *et al*. 1990: 108; Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 126-7). These authors, however, do not question the link between motivations and action. In other words, the inclination to help is seen as a sufficient condition for helping. Monroe *et al*., for instance, argue that 'identity and self-recognizing role' offer an

[5] As far as the distinction between pure and impure altruism is concerned, the position of Richard Rorty (1989) would not differ fundamentally from that of Geras. Rorty argues that helpers were moved by feelings of psychological attachment to members of smaller groups, such as 'comrade in the movement', 'fellow Bocce player', or 'fellow Milanese', rather than a sense of belonging to humanity. Rorty still does not imply that it is personal interest that motivated helpers.

[6] Other authors who subscribe to this view are Friedman (1980), Bejski (1989), Stein (1988), Fleischner (1989) and Tec (1986).

'explanation of rescue activity' (1990: 104), while Geras stresses 'sympathy for the need or suffering of another being' (1995: 21). Oliner and Oliner address this issue as follows:

> [Our] analyses cannot identify the particular situational or personality factors influencing any one individual's decision to rescue or not to rescue. Each individual act must be regarded as a unique event shaped by many discrete factors. An individual may have possessed all the personality and attitudinal characteristics we find correlated with acts of rescue, and yet, because of high risk or lack of resources, did not carry out a rescue. In another situation an act of rescue might have been easily accomplished because of little or no risk and many resources, but was not attempted because an individual's particular values or personality characteristics. Each identified contributing factor makes a rescue action more likely, but we cannot specify the exact combination necessary or sufficient to precipitate one on the part of a particular individual in a particular set of circumstances (1988: 271-272).

They acknowledge that material opportunities, information and other factors outside the scope of the individual rescuer played a role in explaining rescue activity, but their work stops short of offering an account of the nature and importance of such factors.

3. Impure altruism[7]

A second view holds that altruistic behaviour can be reduced to self-interest. Altruism may emerge in the context of long-term reciprocal exchange within the family or among friends. Self-interested individuals who repeatedly interact with each other (with an infinite time horizon) may engage in altruistic behaviour if they can observe each other's action and place a sufficiently high value on future transactions (Regan, 1980; Sugden, 1984). Helping friends and family members may be seen as an act of reciprocity (see Offer, 1997: 461-2), a form equivalent to 'casting thy bread upon the water' in the expectation of treading the same trail in the future (Eccles, XI, 1).[8] A

[7] In a different sense, Andreoni (1990) also refers to 'impure altruism'.

[8] *Kin selection altruism* (Hamilton 1963) and *reciprocal altruism* (Trivers, 1971) have also been used to explain acts of altruism that take place in nature between blood relatives, and between non-relatives who have entered into a pact to exchange favours. The former implies a free gift of help to a relative, while the latter the exchange of help between non-relatives. Hamilton and Trivers have shown that these types of altruism are beneficial to the 'altruistic' gene. Humphrey (1997) argues that *Kin selection altruism* and *reciprocal altruism* are more closely related than assumed by both Hamilton

second self-interested motive for helping others may be the search for material benefits that in the end offset the costs of helping. For instance, individuals may donate to charities, whose work they do not care about, in order to obtain tax exemptions. Another motive for altruistic behaviour may be the desire to gain access to favoured networks. In this case, a donation to a charity would amount to a fee people pay in order to enhance their social contacts which may, in turn, be used to acquire material benefits, such as a valued job (Frank, 1996: 136). Granovetter (1983), for example, has shown the importance of social networks for job allocations. Gary Becker has suggested that altruism may also be motivated by the desire 'to avoid the scorn of others or to receive social acclaim' (Becker, 1974: 1083), while Andreoni (1990: 464) has argued that donors may be motivated by considerations of 'social pressure, guilt, sympathy, or simply a desire for a *warm glow*'. The 'warm glow' argument differs from the desire to gain social acclaim or to conform to social pressure. According to 'warm glow', individuals derive a psychological pleasure from the act of giving, regardless of whether others know or care about their act. Once altruism is included in one's utility function, it might be argued that actors are selfishly maximising their utility function.[9]

With reference to the rescue of Jews, no author has seriously argued that helpers acted as they did in order to enter a favoured group. In case one would be tempted, Monroe has already pointed out that 'rescue networks did not serve as clubs which one wished to join' (1990: 112). Nor have the 'search for social approval' or the 'warm glow' arguments been put forward as sensible motivations.[10] Opp (1997), a defender of Rational Choice, has focused instead on the rescuers' perception of risk. He argues, contrary to others (see, e.g., Monroe *et al*. 1990: 109, Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 126-7 and Monroe, 1996: 156-158), that rescuers did not fully perceive the risk they were facing. In particular, the greater the resources available to the rescuer, the lower the perceived risk of helping. Opp draws attentions to factors that affect one's

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and Trivers.

[9] A number of the above arguments have been subject to criticism. See, e.g., Sugden (1993: 72) and Frank (1996: 137) for reservations on the Beckerian argument. It is beyond the scope of this paper, however, to pursue a critical review of impure altruism as such.

[10] As a matter of fact, the 'warm glow' argument, although logically consistent, cannot be tested: any behaviour can be explained *ex-post factum* as the result of the 'warm glow'.

motivations for helping and reduce the perceived cost of acting. He however fails to address directly the connection between motivation and behaviour. Even if rescuers did not fully perceive the risk they were about to take, and were therefore inclined to help, they still faced the practical dilemma we explore in this paper.

Gross (1997: 127-57) presents the most extensive empirical study of rescuers after the pioneering work of Samuel Oliner. He focuses on the collective rescue of Jews in Le Chambon, several small villages in the Cevennes region in southern France, and in Niewlande, Holland. The study is based on historical records and memoirs, and a survey of 175 French and Dutch rescuers. The most significant aspect of this work is the attempt to link motivations with behaviour. 'From a rational perspective, moral motivations must be considered in conjunction with non-moral motivations, situational factors, and mobilization contexts' (1997: 129). Gross stresses the presence of 'social and organizational networks, authoritative leadership, and resources' as crucial to having enabled rescuers to organise successful *collective* rescue operations (1997: 133). He contrasts the presence of both motivational and situational factors with instances where situational factors were missing, such as the case of the Japanese-Americans who were deported during WWII in the United States (1997: 129; see also Gross, 1993).

Gross's treatment of the rescue of Jews is a major step forward. He recognises that the collective rescue of Jews could not come as a consequence of motivations alone. Social and organisational networks, authoritative leadership and resources proved to be crucial for the collective effort of the rescue to succeed. However, he focuses only on cases of collective help, thereby failing to offer a more general model of helping. Instances of individual acts of rescue occurred alongside collective efforts. Even within Gross's sample of rescuers, mainly drawn from individuals involved in collective rescue activities, instances of individual acts of rescue are apparent: twenty one percent of the French respondents said that 'no one' had organised their rescue activities (Gross, 1997: 140, Table 5.2). A framework that focuses on the connection between motivations and action, and takes account of both individual and collective efforts, is still lacking in the literature.

4. The market for altruism

In this section we argue that helping behaviour may be seen as a market that consists of buyers and sellers of altruism. Accordingly, the demand for altruism is a summary of the various decisions that buyers make with respect to this good. The key feature of a demand curve is that it is, most of the time, downward sloping: as the cost of the good increases, fewer people will demand it.[11] Thus, in the context of rescuing Jews we may say that as the cost of helping Jews went up, fewer people were willing to help. This is consistent with the fact that most Europeans *did not* help Jews (see Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 2). A downward sloping demand curve for altruistic goods does not imply that helping is a form of self-interested behaviour: the rescuer might have had a disposition (or a 'taste') for helping without expecting anything in return, and would therefore qualify as a pure altruist.

On the opposite side in this market, we have a supply schedule. Supply is upward sloping. Simply put, the total cost of helping increases as the sum of those helped increases. Helping two refugees is more expensive – and risky - than helping one. In our case, the main determinant of supply is government policy towards Jews. As the policies become more punitive, the entire supply side schedule shifts upwards, increasing the unit cost of helping one persecuted Jew. It amounts to levying an extra tax on those who want to help.

An equilibrium point is reached where the two schedules meet. In equilibrium, all those who are willing to pay the cost of helping can match with those in need. Further gains from trading cannot be obtained and welfare is maximised.[12] This is, however, a peculiar market. First, it is not confined to a single time and location, as in the case of an auction. There is not a place where all buyers and sellers meet at a designated time and trade goodwill and need. There are of course markets where most

[11] The exception is the demand for strongly inferior goods, known as Giffen goods (Frank, 1991: 115).

[12] A further question is whether helping is a public or a private good. Impure altruism would be compatible with the view that helping is a private good with a positive externality, while pure altruism can be derived from a modified 'public good theory of altruism'. According to the standard theory, rational altruists, who are only interested in the final outcome, would reduce their contribution if they see someone else supplying the good. Sugden (1982, 1984) has amended the theory in a Kantian direction, by suggesting that people act on moral principles. Each person does his or her share, regardless of what others do. Still, rescuers were sensitive to the cost associated with helping and, in the aggregate, as costs go up, fewer people helped.

participants never meet or even see one another. However, in these cases, trading takes place in virtual meeting places, such as the Stock Exchange (Frank, 1991: 29). In the market for altruistic goods, actors can neither take part in an auction, nor trade on the Stock Exchange, nor can they choose whom to help from a range of listed options. Second, a potential rescuer has imperfect information over the supply. Who is in need of help is not readily available. In ordinary situations, people in need follow strategies intended to advertise their need. For instance, beggars advertise themselves to potential helpers by sitting on street pavements. This may not be an efficient system since only those passing along that street will observe the beggars, but it enables beggars to catch some of those willing to donate. Jews in Nazi Europe, however, were even more disadvantaged. They could not advertise themselves openly. The "wrong" person might see them and turn them in. For the same reason, potential helpers could not freely advertise their willingness to help.[13]

To summarise the above, reaching an equilibrium between supply and demand in the market for altruism is far from straightforward. People in need are not easily matched with individuals willing to help, and this is even more so in situations of high risk. Nonetheless, it is an empirical fact that some Jews were helped in Nazi Europe. In section 6 and 7, we explore the mechanisms at work that enabled demand and supply to meet. The next section is devoted to the presentation of the data we use.

5. Data and Methodology

Our study is based on two types of data. The first are published narratives by rescuers and rescuees reported in a wide range of memoirs and interviews. Historical narratives offer a vivid picture of the situation these individuals where facing, their motivations and opportunities, and we use them for illustrative purposes. We also carry out a secondary analysis of data collected by The Altruistic Personality and Prosocial Behaviour Institute (APPBI), which were first analysed by Oliner and Oliner (1988). The data as we received them from APPBI contain a sample of 346 identified Jewish

[13] On October 15, 1941, the German authorities announced that Poles hiding Jews or abetting their concealment would be put to death. 1,100 helpers of Jews were also executed for their activities in the Netherlands (Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 28 and 37). Even the children of people caught helping Jews might be persecuted (See Tec, 1986: 63-8, quoted in Geras, 1996: 44).

rescuers,[14] and a sample of 164 individuals who lived in Nazi-Europe during WWII but were not identified as Jewish rescuers (N=510; cf. Oliner and Oliner, 1988: appendix A). The data we received from the APPBI are slightly different from the set used by Oliner and Oliner (1988: appendix B), and we were unable to reconstruct their analyses. In what follows, we refer to the data as we received them from APPBI in October 1996. In this section we present the data, their sampling designs, variables and analytical technique employed in the analysis.

Studying the rescuers of Jews in Nazi occupation of Europe is best seen as the study of rare events. Accordingly, the dependent variable (rescuing Jews) would not be easily identified in a random sample of men and women who lived in Europe during the WWII period. A solution to this problem can be achieved by the use of *retrospective* samples – known also as *case-control* samples – (see Agresti, 1990 and 1996; Lacy, 1997; Manski, 1995; Manski and Lerman, 1977; Xie and Manski, 1989). In the collection of the APPBI data, Oliner and Oliner (1988) followed this sampling method.

The first task is to identify a sample of *altruist* individuals who helped Jews during the War period – i.e., the *case*. For Oliner and Oliner, behaviour is characterised as altruistic when: '*(1) it is directed toward helping another; (2) it involves a high risk or sacrifice to the actor; (3) it is accompanied by no external reward; (4) it is voluntary*' (1988: 6).[15] The majority of rescuers (95%) were sampled from the *Yad Vashem* list of 'Righteous Among the Nations,' which includes approximately 6,000 rescuers. However, individuals were not randomly sampled from that list; they were selected so that the entire sample will be as diversified as possible in terms of age, socioeconomic class, country of origin, as well as other factors (Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 263). The other five per cent in this category consists of individuals whose names were obtained from rescuees interviewed by the project (Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 262). The APPBI data we analyse include 346 individuals that meet these criteria of altruistic behaviour.

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[14] The Yad Vashem institute in Jerusalem undertook the identification process. The Yad Vashem is an Israeli agency established in 1953, seeking to identify and give due recognition to rescuers of Jews during Nazi rule in Europe. Over the years, it has certified more than six thousand people as 'Righteous Among the Nations' (Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 262).

[15] This definition of altruism may be seen as problematic because it excludes individuals who were paid for their services. Consequently, a bias in favour of the 'pure' view of altruism is generated, which in turn may yield a skewed picture of altruism (Gross, 1993: 51).

The second task was to identify a sample of individuals who did not help Jews during the War period – i.e., the *control*. Oliner and Oliner defined a non-rescuer as 'a person neither on *Yad Vashem* list nor verified by our project as a rescuer living in Nazi occupied Europe during the War' (1988: 263). Again, these individuals were not randomly sampled from the entire universe of non-rescuers. Furthermore, the case and the control samples do not share the property of *matched* case control samples. Instead, non-rescuers were selected so that no statistically significant differences between the rescuers and the non-rescuers existed in relation to age, sex, education, and geographical location during the War period (1988: 263).[16] The data we analyse include 164 non-rescuers. However, when the non-rescuers were interviewed, it became apparent that they were not homogeneous on the dependent variable; that is, with respect to helping behaviour. Some 40 per cent of the 'identified' non-rescuers claimed to 'have done something out of the ordinary to help people during the War period' (in our data 67 individuals claimed to have helped others and 97 did not).

The APPBI data we analyse (N=510) include two samples consisting of three sub-populations: (i) identified rescuers (N=346); (ii) self reported rescuers (N=67); and, (iii) non-rescuers (N=97). Oliner and Oliner approached these data by analysing the three sub-populations separately (1988: 264). For our purposes, there is no reason to keep (i) and (ii) separate. The only appreciable difference between the two populations is that self reported rescuers were not – in 1988 - certified by the Yad Vashem authority (a number of them were certified later). Since our aim is not to establish an historical truth but rather to explore how rescuers and rescuees were matched, we have no reason to doubt the claims of self-reported rescuers. For this reason our *case* sample includes both the identified rescuers and the self reported rescuers (N=346+67=413), while the *control* sample includes only those who did not help anyone during the War period (N=97). Furthermore, we focus our analysis on the *first* action or involvement in rescuing others. We are interested in the trigger of altruist behaviour, rather than subsequent involvement in rescuing activities.

The most appropriate method to adopt in the analysis of these data is the method of *case-control* samples. Accordingly, the response variable – i.e., the dependent variable – is first identified and sampled, while the independent variables

[16] In the non-rescuer sample the mean average age is four years lower than in the rescuer sample.

(which we present below) are the random variables in the analysis. We apply the logistic regression technique, which is based on odds ratios, to estimate the retrospective effects of the independent variables on the response variable. Since we do not have information on the true marginal distribution of the response variable in the population, we are unable to weight the data. This would cause some problems in interpreting the intercept in our models. However, the coefficients for the effects of the independent variables are interpretable. That is to say, we loose the predictive power of the models, but we can learn about the effects of various variables on the outcome we are interested in.

A description of the variables we have constructed follows (in parentheses we report the variables code, see Oliner and Oliner, 1988: appendix C). The dependent, or response, variable is **Altruist**. Based on two variables (RESCUE and E9a) we have identified two categories. Altruist=1 for those who did behave altruistically (RESCUE=1 and E9a=1), while Altruist=0 for those who did not behave altruistically (RESCUE≠1 and E9a≠1). These categories correspond to the *case* and the *control* samples, as we have explained above.

The variable **Asked** distinguishes between those who were asked to help (Asked=1), and those who were not asked to help (Asked=0). We constructed this variable for the case and the control samples, separately. On the one hand, those who did behave altruistically during the War (Altruis=1) were asked to report (E27a): '*How did you become involved in this first activity? Did you initiate it yourself or did someone asked for your help*?' On the other hand, those who did not behave altruistically during the War (Altruist=0) were asked to report (E40): '*Was there ever a time during the war that you were asked to help somebody and had to say no*?'[17] The remaining independent variables may fit into the following three categories: (i) demographic variables, (ii) opportunity variables, and (iii) risk indicators.

[17] As in every survey, the issue of the validity of the answers applies here. This issue is even more significant in the case of individuals who might be unwilling to admit having being asked and refused to help fellow human beings in danger. The question asked by Oliner and Oliner (*Was there ever a time during the war that you were asked to help somebody and had to say no?* See 1988: Appendix C) enables the respondent to admit not having helped with the minimal loss of reputation. As we see below, the survey was able to establish that most people had to be asked in order to help Jews. In other words, rescuers did not offer their help spontaneously, an admission which might also be unwelcome. Moreover, the survey was able to identify a number of people who were both asked and replied in the negative. Set aside the general question surrounding the reliability of survey data, the validity of the results presented below seems to us worth taking seriously.

(i) Demographic variables:

Age – respondents' age in 1940.

Educational **Qualifications** (C1, C4, C6, C7a): 1=elementary school, 2=gymnasium, 3=apprenticeship, 4=university.

Religiosity – self reported religiosity before the War (D14): 1=very religious, 2=somewhat religious, 3=not very religious, 4=not religious at all.

Gender – 1=men, 0=women.

(ii) Opportunity variables:

Economic condition during the War (E70): 1=very well off, 2=quite well off, 3=neither rich nor poor, 4=very poor.

Number of **rooms** in the home where respondent lived during the War (E66): a continuous variable.

Attic in the home where respondent lived during the War (E68): 1=yes, 0=no.

Cellar in the home where respondent lived during the War (E67): 1=yes, 0=no.

Lived in a **House** during the War (E65): 1=yes, 0=no.

Lived in a **city** during the War (E62): 1=yes, 0=no.

Many **neighbours** nearby (E64): 1=yes, 0=no.

Jews lived in neighbourhood **(JNeigh)** (E4): 1=yes, 0=no.

(iii) Risk indicators:

Member of a **resistance** group (E15): 1=yes, 0=no.

Taking **Chances** as a child (C18e): 1= very much, 2=some, 3=not very, 4=not at all.

In addition to the above, we have two variables that provides us with information on sub-groups in the population. **Asker** contains information on those who were asked to help only. This variable corresponds to the following open-ended questions (E27a for Altruist=1, and E46 for Altruist=0): '*Who asked you to give help*?' We collapsed the information from this question to five categories: 1=friend, 2=family, 3=stranger, 4=known person in the community (e.g., priest), 5=rescued person. The first four categories also correspond to the use of a mediator, while the fifth category corresponds to a direct request by the rescued person. **Rescued** is a variable that provides us with information on those who did behave altruistically only (i.e.,

Altruist=1). This variable corresponds to the following open-ended question (E26): '*Who were the people that you helped your first time*?' We then collapsed the information from this question to two categories: 1=friends and family (including neighbours), 2=strangers.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Variables in the Analysis

Variable	*Categories*	*Frequency*	*Per cent*	*N*
Altruist				
	Yes	413	81.0	
	No	97	19.0	510
Asked				
	Yes	247		
	No	203		450
Educ. Qualification				
	Elementary	207	41.3	
	Gymnasium	106	21.2	
	Apprenticeship	79	15.8	
	University	109	21.8	501
Religiosity				
	Very	106	27.0	
	Somewhat	149	37.9	
	Not very	85	21.6	
	Not at all	53	13.5	393
Gender				
	Men	247	48.4	
	Women	263	51.6	510
Economic condition				
	Very well off	95	19.8	
	Quite well off	67	14.0	
	Neither r/p	194	40.5	
	Quite Poor	76	15.9	
	Poor	47	9.8	479
Attic at home				
	Have	337	77.3	
	Have not	99	22.7	436
Caller at home				
	Have	341	77.0	
	Have not	102	23.0	443
Lived in a House				
	Yes	227	48.0	
	No	246	52.0	473
Lived in a City				
	Yes	372	78.5	
	No	102	21.5	474
Have many Neighbours				
	Yes	301	83.6	
	No	59	16.4	360
Jewish Neighbours				

	Have	320	67.9	
	Have not	151	32.1	471
Belonged to Resistance				
	Yes	181	36.3	
	No	317	63.7	498
Took Chances in life				
	Very	133	34.5	
	Some	127	32.9	
	Not very	61	15.8	
	Not at all	65	16.8	386
Asker				
	Friend	71	40.1	
	Family	32	18.1	
	Known	50	28.2	
	Stranger	24	13.6	
	Rescued	54	12.0	203
Rescued	Friend/Family	99	43.2	
	Stranger	130	56.8	229
	Mean	*s.e.*		
Age in 1940	27.03	8.00		510
Number of rooms	4.64	2.59		451

6. Whom Should I help? The importance of being asked

Jean Kowalyk Berger lived in a Ukrainian village where the Germans had set up a labour camp and she ‘saw the cruelty ... day after day’. She added: ‘when I saw people being molested, my religious heart whispered to me, “Do not kill. Love others as you love yourself”’. But yet, she did not volunteer to help. She needed a trigger to stimulate her helping behaviour, as it emerges from the detailed narrative of her first encounter with a rescue. She and her family agreed to help a Jewish doctor (whom she knew) when he arrived one night at their door, ‘begging for help’. After the first act of help, a snow ball effect was set in motion: ‘Then more and more people came during that night...’ (Block and Drucker, 1992: 237-40, quoted in Geras, 1995: 30-31). In the arid jargon of the social science, the subsequent helping behaviour can be accounted for by a path-dependent process. Being asked, however, was the trigger of her first act of rescue.

The importance of being asked emerges from other stories. A Dutch rescuer in France recalled that '[m]ost of the Jews did not know me at first. They simply approached me for help' (Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 132). Margot, a German-Dutch rescuer, told her interviewer: 'You help whoever you can when you are asked'; Bert, a Dutch upholsterer, recalled coming home to find Henny (the first Jew he saved) at his house. He added: 'Suddenly I know why she comes. "She stays", I say' (both instances are reported in Monroe *et al.*, 1990: 118). Another Jew approached Ivan Vranetic, a rescuer operating in Yugoslavia: 'He had no shoes, nothing, and when he started to tell me his story I had to help him' (Block and Druker, 1992: 226, quoted in Geras, 1995: 26). In Le Chambon, rescue activity started the night a refugee knocked on the door of the presbytery and asked if she could come in. Magda Trocmé, the pastor's wife, answered, 'Naturally, come in, come in' (Hallie, 1979: 120, quoted in Badhwar, 1993: 97).[18] In the sample analysed by Gross, 80 percent of the French and 72 percent of the Dutch rescuers were asked to rescue (Gross, 1997: 140).

The importance of being asked also emerges in the APPBI data. A cross tabulation of the variables **Asked** by **Altruist** is presented in Table 2. It shows that two-third (237/359=66%) of the rescuers were asked to help, and only one third initiated their action. Moreover, *nearly all* of those who were asked to help Jews did so (237/247=96%), while a request to give help increases the likelihood of helping others by a factor of two compared to help that was initiated without a request (237/122=1.94). These figures show that being asked might be a fundamental trigger for altruistic behaviour in this context.

Table 2: Cross Tabulation of the Variables Asked by Altruist (*N*)

		Altruist		
Asked		*Yes*	*No*	*Total*
	Yes	237	10	247
	No	122	81	203
	Total	359	91	450

[18] Magda Trocme told Hallie: 'I do not hunt around to find people to help. But I never close my door, never refuse to help somebody who comes to me and asks for something. This I think is my kind of religion.' (Hallie, 1979: 153).

We turn next to test this proposition in a more robust way. Table 3 presents two logistic regression models on the dependent variable: helping vis-à-vis not helping. Model I assesses the log-odds effects of demographic, opportunity and risk variables on helping behaviour in the APPBI data. As expected, the different levels of educational qualification do not have statistically significant effects on helping behaviour, while age does: the older the respondents the more likely they were to help.[19] However, women were more likely to help Jews during WWII than men. Finally, the less religious the respondents, the more likely they were to help. Amongst the opportunity variables, only the number of rooms has a statistically significant effect on helping behaviour; each additional room in the house increases the likelihood of helping by one-and-a-third times ($e^{0.295}$=1.34).

When we include the variable **Asked** (see model II), these results remain unchanged. In addition, model II shows that asking for help is positively and statistically significantly associated with helping behaviour. Respondents who were asked to help were more than 17 times more likely to help ($e^{2.847}$=17.23) compared to respondents who were not asked. By far the most important trigger of helping during WWII identified by model II is being asked to help.

Table 3: Logistic Regression on the Variable Altruist (s.e. in parentheses)

	Model I	*Model II*
Independent Variables	*Effect*	*Effect*
Constant	0.691	-1.007
	(1.701)	(1.942)
Age in 1940	0.078**	0.109**
	(0.028)	(0.032)
Gender	-0.959**	-1.089**
	(0.442)	(0.515)

[19] This result is expected since the data were collected in such a way that no significant differences would be found between rescuers and non-rescuers with respect to educational qualification, gender, and place of residence during the War, while rescuers are on average four years older than non-rescuers (see Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 263-4).

Educ. Qualification		
Elementary	-0.056	0.171
	(0.397)	(0.691)
Gymnasium	-0.196	0.229
	(0.432)	(0.736)
Apprenticeship	0.628	0.919
	(0.443)	(0.802)
Religiosity	0.468**	0.501*
	(0.229)	(0.262)
Have many Neighbours	-0.890	-1.153
	(0.650)	(0.782)
Jewish Neighbours	-0.150	-0.113
	(0.452)	(0.523)
Economic condition	-0.327	-0.363
	(0.244)	(0.276)
Attic at home	-0.629	-0.628
	(0.532)	(0.593)
Caller at home	-0.723	-0.061
	(0.569)	(0.746)
Lived in a House	0.311	0.083
	(0.481)	(0.584)
Lived in a City	-1.087*	-0.979
	(0.649)	(0.769)
Belonged to Resistance	10.203	11.378
	(17.092)	(26.373)
Number of rooms	0.295**	0.261**
	(0.099)	(0.113)
Took Chances in life	-0.092	-0.278
	(0.201)	(0.244)
Asked		2.847**
		(0.604)
-2 log likelihood	150.61	119.48
d.f.	16	17
N	239	239

* p<0.10
** p<0.05

Even if individuals are inclined to help, they may find themselves facing a dilemma: *Whom should I help?* Being asked to help, then, may partially solve this dilemma. Given that somebody is willing to help, being asked provides them with the *opportunity* to help. Asking for help might also be a subtle way of inducing the receiver of the request to say 'yes'. In a situation such as the Nazi occupation of Europe, when open communication with other people was difficult and dangerous, it would have been possible for individuals to rationalise their own decision not to help, while retaining the sense of not acting cowardly. This is because everyone else was doing the same.[20] However, when one person received a request for help, it would

[20] Shaw, Batson and Todd (1994) have devised a psychological experiment in order to study people

have been much harder to keep that rationalisation.[21] It is difficult to evaluate the significance of the 'shame effect' outlined here. Its role may be exaggerated by an *ex post* rationalisation, based on the widely accepted view (after the war) that helping Jews in need was a good act. Furthermore, even those who did not support Nazi policy regarding the genocide of Jews might still have been bound by a competing norm; namely, the norm of protecting their own family. In these circumstances, people might have felt no shame in saying 'no' to a request for help that would put their family in extreme danger. Only those individuals who believed they should help – without actually wanting to help – would have felt ashamed. In light of the above, being asked for help provides individuals with the opportunity to put to test their disposition to help.[22]

The APPBI data show that it does pay to ask for help. Even when agents are willing to help, they may be paralysed by uncertainty over whom to help. Such a dilemma is likely to be solved by being asked and is consistent with altruistic behaviour in other domains. Evidence from donations to charity point to the fact that individuals are more inclined to contribute money *when asked* (Freedman, 1993). Simmons *et al*. (1977, quoted in Piliavin and Charng, 1990: 35) found that kidney donors were more likely to have been informed in person of a need for a donor than were non-donors (80% vs. 58%). The most common reason given for failure to donate to charities, give blood or volunteer time to worthwhile causes is *not* having been asked (Piliavin and Charng, 1990: 35).

As we have mentioned above, the *Whom should I help?* dilemma is only partially solved by being asked to help. Further analysis of the APPBI data reveals another complementary and related solution to this dilemma. A cross tabulation of the variable **asked** by the variable **rescued** (Table 4) shows that a request for help is more important when the rescuee is a stranger to the rescuer. Thus, when the rescuers

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that avoid placing themselves in a position where they might be asked for help. They observe 'empathy avoidance' when, before exposure to a person in need, subjects are aware that they will be asked to help and helping will be costly.

[21] We are grateful to Robert Sugden for pointing this out to us. Offer (1997) has interpreted this mechanism as the 'satisfaction of regard'.

[22] Acting after a request for help does not make the helper an *impure* altruist. It could have been the case that, had no request for help been made, the rescuer would still have initiated an action, although we cannot establish this with the APPBI data. Nevertheless, the data show that this would be less likely. Being asked and having impure motives should not be equated.

initiate the act of helping, they are nearly twice as likely to help a friend or a family member (F&F) rather than a stranger (51/27=1.9). The reverse is also the case: when rescuers did not initiate help but provided help on request, they were more likely to do so for strangers than F&F (98/42=2.33). When we multiply these ratios we get an odds ratio of 4.4. In other words, offering help to F&F (as opposed to offering help to strangers) is over four times more likely than responding to a request from F&F (as opposed to responding to a request from strangers). This finding may support the 'impure altruism' view according to which helping emerges in the context of long-term reciprocal exchange (see above, section 3). However, it should be noted that helping F&F enables the rescuers to solve the dilemma *Whom should I Help?* without having to wait for a request. Initiating help to strangers could be very dangerous (compared to helping F&F) unless the rescuer is sure that the person they about to help is not a faker (e.g., a disguised SS officer).[23] It does not follow that helping F&F shows 'impure' motivations, but simply that the practical dilemmas involved in helping are solved, as it were, more readily. Similarly, the relatively low proportion of F&F that asked for help (19.3%) would suggest that most rescuers did not wait to be asked by their F&F: had the rescuees given their F&F rescuers more time, they might have not needed to ask for help.

In this section we have identified two variables that increase the likelihood of helping: **number of rooms**, and **being asked**. The latter variable, however, is more meaningful: respondents that were asked were more than 17 times more likely to help. The analysis also shows that asking is more important when the rescuer and the rescuee are stranger. Put the other way around, rescuers were more likely to initiate help when the recipient was a friend or a family member. This latter finding can be interpreted as a confirmation of the 'impure view' of altruism. We endorse, however, a slightly different view. Helping F&F does not give rise to the same uncertainties and risks which are faced by people inclined to help strangers in extremely hazardous situations.

Table 4: Cross Tabulation of the Variable Asked by Rescued (*N*)

[23] This problem may arise also when a request is made. Below we elaborate on this point.

	Rescued		
Asked	*Friends and Family*	*Stranger*	*Total*
Yes	42	98	140
No	51	27	78
Total	93	125	218

7. Whom should I ask? The identity of the rescuer

It is an undisputed fact that Jews were facing a high risk situation. The risk was not only from special SS forces, but also from ordinary police battalions which often operated with the full support of the population. Goldhagen (1996) has drawn attention to the 'search-and-destroy missions' undertaken in order to capture Jews by police battalions with the aid of the local population. A member of Police Battalion 101 recalls one such operation carried out in Poland:

> 'The residential district was searched again. In many cases, with the aid of Poles, numerous Jews were found hiding in blockaded rooms and alcoves. I remember a Pole drew my attention to a so-called dead space between two walls of adjoining rooms. In another case, a Pole drew my attention to a subterranean hideout' (Goldhagen, 1996: 216; for other instances, see 234-8 and 395-6).

Individuals in need would have been very cautious in their search for help. This section asks: Who would have been most likely to say 'yes' or, if unable to help, would have been less likely to inform the police? The following story offers some clues. A German woman had come to know of the atrocities committed by the Nazis. She felt distressed by this but all she could do was to attend sermons by a priest who seemed critical of the regime. When he asked her to help some hidden Jews, she agreed (Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 134). Attending sermons by a priest critical of the regime was a signal to others of her hostility to the Nazi regime. It was indeed a strong signal: in a situation when many people were eager to signal the opposite, namely support for the regime, this German rescuer had made a strong statement against the Nazis by simply going to

a certain service.[24] Asking her would have greatly reduced the risk of being reported to the authorities and increased the probabilities she would say 'yes'. This example points to the existence of a selection mechanism; people advertised their willingness to help in social contexts that might be receptive.

The following analysis looks into this selection mechanism. Its aim is to identify what best predicts 'being asked' to help. The logistic regression presented in Table 6 examines the existence of (intentional and unintentional) signals of willingness to help (or more precisely to be asked to help, which then increases the likelihood of helping) given by potential rescuers. These signals, in turn, might have been interpreted by rescuees and aided them to select the people they would ask for help. Table 6 shows that the more rooms the potential rescuers had, the more likely they were to be asked for help. Having many rooms provided the opportunity for potential rescuers to hide Jews. This opportunity was recognised by the rescuees, as we have already seen in Table 3. Opp (1997) would argue that such an opportunity reduced the perceived risks of helping. More important in our view, however, is the positive and statistically significantly effect of the variable **belonging to resistance**. It indicates that those who were involved in resistance activities were more than twice as likely to be asked for help by Jews than those who were not involved in resistance activities. This is a reliable signal of the disposition of resistance members to helping others.[25]

The other statistically significant variable that increases the likelihood of being asked is **chances**. This is a *subjective* evaluation, on an inverse five-point scale, of the individual's willingness to take risks when they were young. We would expect to find that those who took more chances in their childhood would be more likely to signal their willingness to engage in rescue activities.[26] We find the opposite, however. The *less* risk they took as a child, the higher the likelihood they would be asked to help Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. A plausible explanation of this result is that risk-averse people over estimated the risks attached to their actions.[27]

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[24] We are grateful to Diego Gambetta for pointing this out to us.

[25] Given the APPBI data, it is impossible to establish which activity came first – resistance or rescue. Moreover, we cannot rule out the possibility that rescuing was part of the resistance activities.

[26] It also requires that risk aversion has not changed across the population.

[27] We are grateful to Cecilia Garcia-Penalosa for pointing this out to us.

To recapitulate the above, Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe would have been very cautious in their search for help. Jews could not advertise themselves openly since the "wrong" person might notice them and turn them in. The analysis above suggests that potential rescuers were *selected* on the bases of signals they had given. Potential rescuers signalled their disposition to be asked, and subsequently to help, and thus they were asked.

Table 5: Logistic Regression on the Variable Asked (s.e. in parentheses)

Independent Variable	Effect
Constant	-1.575
	(1.111)
Age in 1940	0.003
	(0.018)
Gender	-0.258
	(0.296)
Educ. Qualification	
Elementary	0.174
	(0.235)
Gymnasium	-0.186
	(0.241)
Apprenticeship	0.111
	(0.251)
Religiosity	0.043
	(0.150)
Have many Neighbours	-0.214
	(0.410)
Jewish Neighbours	-0.070
	(0.314)
Economic condition	-0.235
	(0.167)
Attic at home	-0.161
	(0.346)
Caller at home	-0.368
	(0.354)
Lived in a House	0.323
	(0.329)
Lived in a City	-0.241
	(0.378)
Belonged to Resistance	0.846**
	(0.327)
Number of rooms	0.125**
	(0.063)
Took Chances in life	0.326**
	(0.139)
-2 log likelihood	304.03
d.f.	16
N	239

** $p<0.05$

A further question is *who interprets the signal?* This aspect is more crucial when the rescuers and the rescuees do not know each other (when the two know each other, the potential rescuers are more likely to initiate altruistic behaviour, as we have shown earlier). Potential rescuers could not advertise their willingness to help openly, enabling strangers to respond to a signal. One did not want to help the "wrong" person and, symmetrically, one did not want to be helped by the "wrong" person. This last point indicates that a double asymmetric information problem existed. That is, rescuers had to be sure they helped genuine Jews and not fakers, while the Jews had to be sure the people they approached would not turn them in, at the very least. So how did potential rescuers and Jews (who were unrelated to each other) meet?

One German rescuer recalled: 'One evening, the curate from another village asked me if I would take some Jews for a while. I said, "Yes, they may come"' (Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 135). The data presented by Gross show that 49 percent of French rescuers were asked by the clergy and 32 percent by members of the resistance. Some individuals, then, became the focal point both for Jews in need and for potential rescuers. This in particular was the case of priests, a not surprising fact, given the public trust that is associated with the priesthood. But the list of people who asked on behalf of Jews is diverse: 'A high school teacher came to see us one day. He said he had a German Jewish student who needed help', recollected a French rescuer. Other rescuers had been asked by relatives, friends, Jewish acquaintances acting on behalf of other Jews, resistance network contacts, and government officials (see Oliner and Oliner, 1988: 135-6; Gross, 1997: 140).

We use the APPBI data to illustrate the importance of mediators. We concentrate only on those who helped. We contrast those who helped F&F with those who helped strangers to highlight the asymmetric information problem, which applies to the latter. Nearly two-thirds of those who helped strangers were matched by a mediator (71/117=61%).[28] By contrast, less than a third of those who helped F&F were matched by a mediator (27/90=30%). A more elaborated analysis of these data is presented in Table 6, where we apply a logistic regression on the variable **Rescued**

[28] This mediator, moreover, was not a stranger to the rescuers in four out of five cases. This points out that trust was not a problem of the potential rescuers only. Mediators also faced a severe penalty if captured, so they had to have confidence in the people they approached. This issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

(F&F=0, stranger=1). The independent variables are three dummies that we construct from the variables **Asker** and **Asked** (mediator, direct, and initiate). This analysis shows that a direct request for help by a stranger increases the likelihood of being helped by nearly three times ($e^{1.042}$=2.8) compared to F&F who were helped without asking for it.[29] Even more important is the use of mediator, which increases the likelihood of being helped by a factor of five ($e^{1.603}$=4.9).

Table 6: Logistic Regression on the Variable Rescued (s.e. in parentheses)

Independent Variable	Effect
Constant	-0.636**
	(0.238)
Direct	1.042**
	(0.442)
Mediator	1.603**
	(0.238)
-2 log likelihood	256.38
d.f.	2
N	206

** $p<0.05$

This suggests that mediators (the majority of whom were priests, teachers and other known members of a community) served as a focal point for Jews with *no* social networks in the community of their rescuers. Mediators, moreover, solved the double problem of asymmetric information we have mentioned above, since the mediators were more likely to be trusted by both the rescuers and the rescuees.

8. Conclusion

The rescue of persecuted minorities – such as the Jews in Nazi occupied Europe – is seen in this paper as taking place in a peculiar market. In such a market rescuers face at least two dilemmas. Firstly, they might be willing to help but be uncertain how to go about rescuing. Secondly, they might be unsure over the nature of the request to help. To make a mistake and help the "wrong" person could be very costly.

[29] As we have shown earlier F&F did not even have to ask for help; in most cases the rescuers directly approached them.

We have singled out *being asked* as the most significant trigger of altruistic behaviour, which solves the first dilemma. Regarding the second dilemma, we have shown that responding to a request is more likely when a known and reliable person makes it. Symmetrically, people in need of help try to minimise risk by asking individuals they know, such as F&F or individuals that have signalled their disposition to help.

Although the debate on pure and impure altruism has captured the attention of most authors, it is misconstructed. The focus on motivations alone obfuscates the practical dilemmas involved in helping. Our analysis of rescue of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe shows that, indeed, some rescuers helped friends and family members. Rather than being necessarily a case of 'impure' motivations, we have argued that such action solved the dilemma *whom should I help?* and reduces the risk of helping more readily. These dilemmas were also solved by recourse to trusted mediators who matched rescuers and rescuees.

Altruism is rarely performed without taking any account of the foreseeable consequences. Thus, acts of altruism are all the more likely when the request comes from known people, and people in need are more likely to ask people they trust. Our study also points to the existence of signals given by individuals willing to help. A more general conclusion may be drawn from our analysis. The observed acts of rescue do not account for the potential acts of altruism human beings are capable of. If the market for altruism works more efficiently, more people might be helped.

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