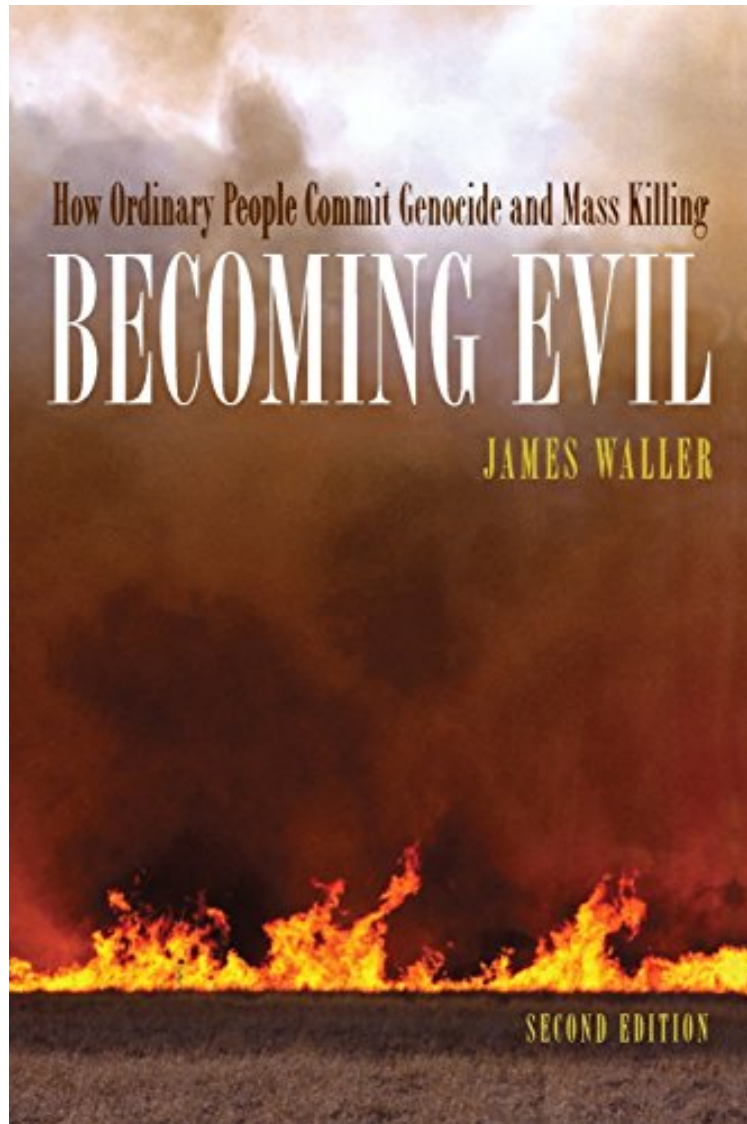


(Download) Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing

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James E. Waller

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James E. Waller : Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A brave attempt, merits another edition!By LessfatmanMost people think that there is something very special in the people who do horrible things.That Nazis or Hutus or Bolsheviks were

not of the same human race as us, the rest, the normal people. Waller drives home the point that this is not the case. We have nothing to clearly set us apart from those who killed by the millions in Nazi Germany or Soviet Union, in Rwanda, Timor or Cambodia. The bad news is: The killers were ordinary people and the extreme violence was just a banality. He describes different genocides from different parts of the world and identifies certain patterns that repeat themselves. There is a state of lawlessness. Old values or traditions have lost their meaning and the government is weak for whatever reason. There is a conflict between us and them. The latter can be almost whoever but normally another ethnic, religious or economical group that competes for the available resources. There is a lot of random violence. And then there are those who take advantage of the situation, flaming hate with their propaganda and recruiting eager young men full of ideals and testosterone to be trained for the Mission. They are isolated from their social background physically and psychologically. They are made to repeat the common credo in front of everybody else. They are deprived of their own personality and they wear the symbols of the movement, greet each other with the Greeting and get used to violence little by little. In Greece, the militiamen were subjected to beatings and torture. This was to banalise violence. It happened to us, we can make it happen to others. Then, the subjects started getting some action. Throwing stones, breaking windows, driving, beating up. And finally, torture and killing. There was no turning back. Waller explains how it is essential to make people commit atrocities by showing them how, taking them along and finally forcing them to cross the line. Once this has been achieved, the subjects start rationalizing their behavior because nobody wants to be bad. The normal scheme uses depersonalization of the victims, turning them to subhumans by various measures. In Germany the Jews were starved and refused sanitation and clothes. Everything imaginable was done to make them lose their dignity. The perpetrators consumed huge amounts of alcohol before the killings and after them in the victory parties. And there was a lot of propaganda going on about how the International Jewry was guilty of the problems of the Reich. The Turks and the Armenians, the Serbs and the Croates, the Indonesians and the Timorens, always the same story and the same tactic. Depersonalisation, diffusion of responsibility, exaggerated differences between us and them... Waller points to Milgram's experiment on obedience where students were in fact ready to execute the subject with an electric shock as the team leader insisted. That is an interesting aspect and some essential features of the situation in Milgram's experiment do correspond to the ways for instance young police recruits behave in the face of the authority. He quotes a veteran pilot who was made to kill civilians under the threat of being court-martialed and how he finally learned to enjoy it. And also, the Stanford Jail experiment where two randomly chosen groups of students got to play guards and prisoners. This experiment had to be aborted prematurely as the 'guards' started to behave aggressively. I had the feeling that the author himself had been shocked by the findings he had made during the research. His conclusion is realistic: Given the right circumstances, our Beast will take us for the ride and everything we have learned from morality or good manners just ceases to exist. He sees the hope in keeping those circumstances from happening. Individual education is important but does not really matter when blood begins to flow. The Sondergruppe that destroyed 30 000 Jews in one week consisted of lower middle class citizens, teachers and former policemen. A stable state is an essential factor as is the avoidance of ethnic polarization. Security, state monopoly of violence and democratic control of those in power by free press and fair elections seem to protect also against generalized evil. There are pockets within the monopolized violence - the armed forces and the police force - where, not surprisingly, violent evil surfaces in ways not acceptable to modern society. What can be done without risking the functionality of those units seems to be a difficult question to answer. This book was a heavy read. I have a lot of respect towards the author who has gone through the material full of blood and gore. He has meticulously avoided falling into the easy trap of preaching moralism or to isolate himself from the reality he is describing. He freely admits being one of the potential killers if the time and place would so decide. Our responsibility only just goes so far. I wish he'd have another take at the subject, once he has had time to digest it better and maybe come up with some more propositions. As it is, an excellent book, well worth the time and the bother. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Incredibly well-written. By Anastasia I was always fascinated with the question of human cruelty and the history of genocides, and after researching review on .com, settled on this book by James Waller. I was 100% right. It's incredibly well-written. Very easy to read, written in clear language in short chapters. Thoroughly researched. James Waller references and examines all the works that have been written on this topic before. His conclusions are profound, and dare I say it, correct. It's a flawless book. It brings together history and psychology in a language that is very relevant and easy to read on a very important subject. I'd recommend this to anyone without a hesitation. Not just educating, but also enjoyable. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Phenomenal By skyler bosworth By far the best book I've read on genocide. Waller presents an excellent assortment of how genocide occurs, and more importantly, what internal and external mechanisms make genocide possible for the individual. Discussion of evolutionary psychology was great, made me interested in the field itself. Waller does a great job of staying impartial, and piecing together an objective view of human behavior previously dubbed as 'evil.'

The first edition of *Becoming Evil* spoke unforgettably to a world shell-shocked by 9/11 that faced a new war on terror against members of an Axis of Evil. With this second edition, James Waller brings us up to date on some of the horrific events he used in the first edition to illustrate his theory of extraordinary human evil, particularly those from

the perennially troubled Balkans and Africa, pointing out steps taken both forward and back. Nearly a third of the references are new, reflecting the rapid pace of scholarship in Holocaust and genocide studies, and the issue of gender now occupies a prominent place in the discussion of the social construction of cruelty. Waller also offers a reconfigured explanatory model of evil to acknowledge that human behavior is multiply influenced, and that any answer to the question "Why did that person act as he or she did?" can be examined at two levels of analysis-- the proximate and the ultimate. Bookended by a powerful new foreword from Greg Stanton, vice-president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, and a devastating postscript that addresses current outbreaks of genocide and mass killing, this new edition demonstrates that genocide is a problem whose time has not yet passed, but Waller's clear vision gives hope that at least we can begin to understand how ordinary people are recruited into the process of destruction.

"...offers a psychological explanation as to why some human beings are so deliberately harmful to others...A fascinating glimpse of evolutionary psychology is presented... an eyewitness account of inhumanity."--Journal of American Medicine Association
About the Author James E. Waller is a Professor and Chair in the Psychology Department at Whitworth College.