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Humanity: A Moral History Of The Twentieth Century, Second Edition



Synopsis

Renowned moral philosopher Jonathan Glover confronts the brutal history of the twentieth century to unravel the mystery of why so many atrocities occurred. In a new preface, Glover brings the book through the post-September 11 era and into our own timeâ€”and asks whether humankind can "weaken the grip war has on us." Praise for the first edition:â€œIt is hard to imagine a more important book. Glover makes an overwhelming case for the need to understand our own inhumanity, and reduce or eliminate the ways in which it can express itselfâ€”and he then begins the task himself. Humanity is an extraordinary achievement.â€•â€”Peter Singer, Princeton Universityâ€œThis is an extraordinary book: brilliant, haunting and uniquely important. Almost 40 years ago a president read a best seller and avoided a holocaust. I like to think that some of the leaders and followers of tomorrow will read Humanity.â€•â€”Steven Pinker, New York Times Book Review

Book Information

Paperback: 496 pages

Publisher: Yale University Press; 2 edition (September 11, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0300186401

ISBN-13: 978-0300186406

Product Dimensions: 5 x 1.2 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 38 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #37,957 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Good & Evil #91 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Violence in Society #108 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Political

Customer Reviews

Jonathan Glover is director of the Center of Medical Law and Ethics at Kingâ€™s College, London, and a fellow of the Hastings Center.

I gave it 5 stars and 'Love it' came up. I don't love the notion or the theory/outcome, but the conceptualization is mandatory for any person who still believes in free society. This piece reveals a pragmatic application of genocidal maniacs whose brilliance in manipulating and brainwashing millions is only secondary to their sadistic, methodical tendencies, which had clear intended

outcomes. Reader beware that you will no longer look at any aspect of society without a chilling cynicism for the true underlying intent as this book gives a chilling rational approach to not only how madmen have run the world at times, but one can easily extrapolate how governments and private industry still subvert 'authority' through reality altering, applied psychology on the masses and at times, the leaders themselves.

Jonathan Glover has written an interesting and lively chronicle of the twentieth century using the prism of morality as his filter. Noting that the last 100 years were the most brutal in human history, Glover seeks the reasons why this became the case. In Europe at the start of the century, most people accepted the authority of morality. What happened to undermine that authority? Glover states that barbarism is not unique to the twentieth century: atrocities have always been with us throughout recorded time. Technology has made a difference; hyped as the answer for a better life, technology has also made it easier for programs such as genocide and biocide, not to mention the total destruction of humanity via nuclear weapons. Never before has the fate of so many been in the hands of so few. Perhaps it has been that the view of human psychology developed during the Enlightenment has stagnated, failing to adjust to new developments and the outgrowths of those developments in the industrialized world. Glover tellingly quotes John Maynard Keynes's criticism of Bertrand Russell's comments about life and affairs as "brittle" because there was "no solid diagnosis of human nature underlying them." But Glover errs by leading his book with a look at Nietzsche as a harbinger of the new type of thinking, concentrating on Nietzsche's values of "cruelty," which the philosopher had associated with the overman, the man who overcomes himself, creating new values in the process. Nietzsche did not endorse his values of the *ubermensch* as values for the mass of humanity. The Nazis attempted to adopt Nietzsche as a philosophical cornerstone, but it is evident from their writings, especially those of Alfred Baumler (quoted by Glover), that they did not understand exactly what their chosen philosopher was really saying. Glover would have been much better off in this study by leading off with a study of Nietzsche's study of resentment. The twentieth century marked the triumph of resentment over rationality, taking the technology developed through and by a brittle rational world-view and using it not for the enhancement of human life, but rather the destruction of life. Glover also misses another opportunity when he fails to note that the bloody reigns of Stalin and Mao are in a very large sense based on the Enlightenment view of human psychology that mankind was perfectible. Those not in step with the new order were deemed expendable, Glover quotes a chilling statement Stalin made while issuing arrest warrants, "Who's going to remember all this riff-raff in ten or twenty years' time? No one." Most of Glover's analysis is

spent with Hitler, and from the viewpoint of twentieth century history we can understand why. Much more is known about Hitler and his regime than those of Stalin and Mao, of whom new revelations are made with every passing year. In covering the excesses of all three dictators, Glover remains on target with an analysis that keeps the reader turning the pages. Other strong points include chapters on Hiroshima, Rwanda, the Gulf War, and the refusal of Italians to help their allies, the Nazis exterminate Jews in Croatia, serving as a beacon of hope and rationality in a deadly irrational darkness. Well worth your time and money, especially that it is now in paperback, and thus easier to read on the train or bus. The book will make you think and is the perfect tome to read on the way to and from work.

great account of the moral history of most of the developed world. useful for analyzing moral dilemmas through multiple perspectives.

This book left me inspired and something horrified and embarrassed. His factual accounts of the horrendous acts carried out on mankind throughout the 20th century are fascinating and very informative. I originally thought this book would be somewhat demanding with lots of academic jargon but I was immediately hooked. From WWI, Stalin, Hitler all the way up until the Gulf War, Glover breaks the psychology of war and the social climates that enabled such events to take place. This is truly a wake up call for anyone interested in such topics and I'd recommend it to anyone.

This book is amazing. It is so sad to know the suffering of so many people either in other countries or here in America, and even sadder to know it is due to tradition or religion or even pure cruelty. I did not enjoy knowing about these things, that very rarely are mentioned, but I am glad to have had the opportunity to read it (not finish yet) because I might become a better person.

It's very good for the price

Oof. Not an easy read - you have to step away from it now and then and process its clear-eyed, horrific accounting of the atrocities of the 20th Century. But it will deepen your understanding of what it means to be a human being in the modern age.

this book was in perfect condition and was a very good read. I would definitely recommend it to a friend

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