



Ethics in an Age of Terror and Genocide: Identity and Moral Choice

Kristen Renwick Monroe

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What causes genocide? Why do some stand by, doing nothing, while others risk their lives to help the persecuted? *Ethics in an Age of Terror and Genocide* analyzes riveting interviews with bystanders, Nazi supporters, and rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust to lay bare critical psychological forces operating during genocide. Monroe's insightful examination of these moving--and disturbing--interviews underscores the significance of identity for moral choice.

Monroe finds that self-image and identity--especially the sense of self in relation to others--determine and delineate our choice options, not just morally but cognitively. She introduces the concept of moral salience to explain how we establish a critical psychological relationship with others, classifying individuals in need as "people just like us" or reducing them to strangers perceived as different, threatening, or even beyond the boundaries of our concern. Monroe explicates the psychological dehumanization that is a prerequisite for genocide and uses her knowledge of human behavior during the Holocaust to develop a broader theory of moral choice, one applicable to other forms of ethnic, religious, racial, and sectarian prejudice, aggression, and violence. Her book fills a long-standing void in ethics and suggests that identity is more fundamental than reasoning in our treatment of others.

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