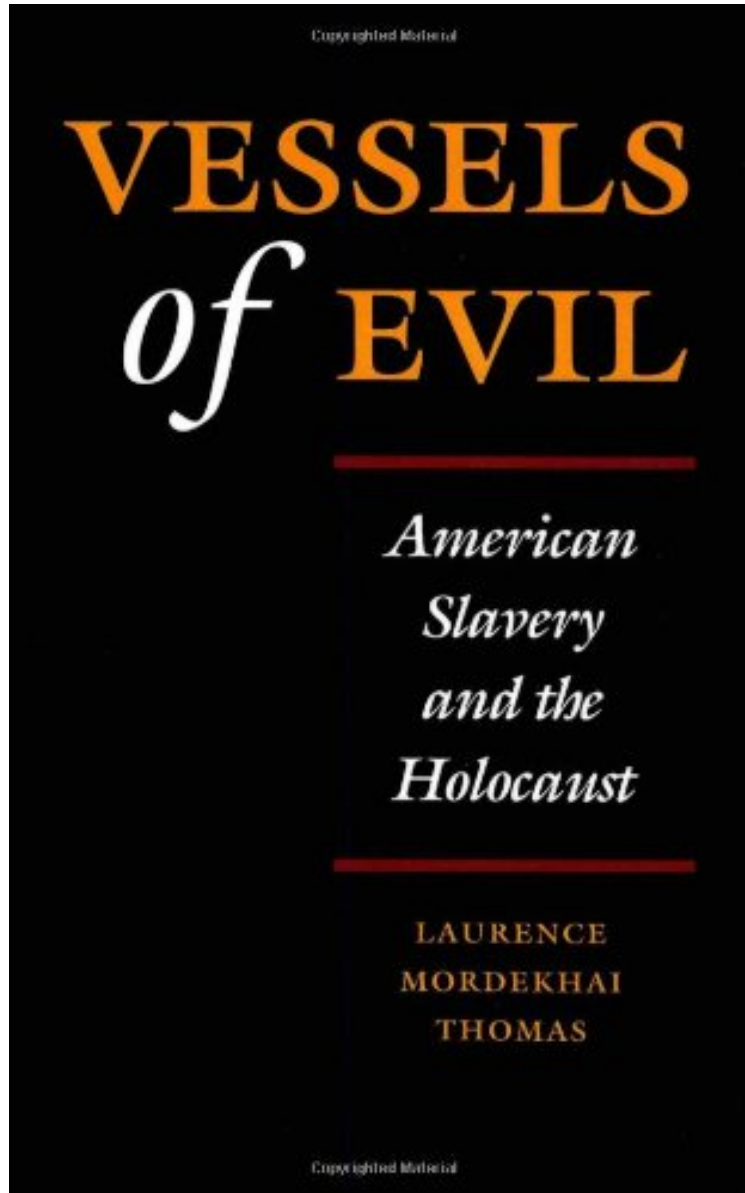


(Download) Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust

Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust

Laurence Mordekhai Thomas

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Laurence Mordekhai Thomas : Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great read for anyone interested in Philosophy. By John Young A great comparison between the holocaust and American slavery that opens your eyes to the unique differences.

Additionally, he uniquely describes degrees of evil using the Holocaust and American Slavery. The author being both an African American and a Jew gives him an interesting perspective that he employs throughout the book. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Profound and illuminating discourse on how ordinary people come to do evil. By Harvey S. Cohen. *Vessels of Evil* examines how ordinary people come to do evil. The book uses two enormous and well-documented cases in point-- American slavery and the Holocaust. (A few clueless individuals have objected to "comparisons" between the two cases. Had they actually read the book, they would appreciate the author's clear and extensive disclaimer that these are two outstanding cases in which many ordinary people came to do evil, and that no other similarity between the two cases is expressed or implied. One can only roll one's eyes and shrug upon reading such misguided reviews.) Prof. Thomas's writing is lucid and graceful, and I found his reasoning and conclusions generally compelling. It is a short book, but (as my son remarked on his first experience with a serious work of philosophy) "you have to read every word." It does not reward skimming. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A credible and elegantly presented theory of human good and evil. By Harvey S. Cohen. Prof. Thomas uses the two most notable and best-documented recent cases in which ordinary people came to do extraordinary evil-- American Slavery and the Holocaust-- to illuminate his theory of human good and evil. Thanks to the author's lucid, graceful prose and careful exposition, the book is about as easy a read as any serious work of philosophy could be. The theory itself is credible and appealing and has important real-world implications.

Two profound atrocities in the history of Western culture form the subject of this moving philosophical exploration: American Slavery and the Holocaust. An African American and a Jew, Laurence Mordekhai Thomas denounces efforts to place the suffering of one group above the other. Rather, he pronounces these two defining historical experiences as profoundly evil in radically different ways and points to their logically incompatible aims. The author begins with a discussion of the nature of evil, exploring the fragility of human beings and the phenomena of compartmentalizing, unquestioning obedience to authority, and moral drift. Citing compelling examples from history and contemporary life, he characterizes evil acts in terms of moral agency, magnitude, and intent. With moving testimony, Thomas depicts the moral pain of African Americans and Jews during their ordeals and describes how their past as victims has affected their future. Without invidious comparison, he distinguishes between extermination and domination, death and natal alienation, physical and mental cruelty, and between being viewed as irredeemable evil and as a moral simpleton. Thomas also considers the role of blacks and Jews in the Christian narrative. In *Vessels of Evil*, Thomas also considers the ways Jews and blacks have gone on to survive. He analyzes the relative flourishing of Jews and the languishing of blacks in this country and examines the implications of their dissimilar tragedies on any future relationship between these two minorities.

From Publishers Weekly. Philosopher Thomas (*Living Morally*) is probably uniquely qualified to write a comparative essay on the Holocaust and American slavery, being both Jewish and African American. This text is an admirably lucid and cogently argued comparison of two profoundly evil institutions, one that recognizes the differences between the Jewish and African American experiences of oppression without offering invidious comparisons. He does so in elegant, oddly Victorian-sounding prose that never loses itself in a welter of jargon. Delving into a basic understanding of human behavior, Thomas demolishes the notion that humankind is innately evil, offering in its place a theory of modest goodness in the context of a human fragility that may prevent the development of moral sensibilities. He goes on to offer a devastating critique of "common-sense morality," which requires only that one do no harm, not that one actively help another person in trouble. He uses slavery and the Holocaust as guides to understanding the comparative states of Jews and blacks in America, with some very tentative suggestions on where the tenuous relationship between these two groups could go. An important and engrossing book. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal. Instead of a ponderous tract on two very different events, Thomas (philosophy political science, Syracuse Univ.) provides a readable, even absorbing philosophic examination of the many faces of evil. Thomas views each of the catastrophic events of slavery and the Holocaust as unique, though he argues that they disclose a troubling aspect of human beings to compartmentalize evil and to be easily swayed from what is moral and ethical. Beginning with a discussion of the nature of evil, Thomas moves into concrete examples of suffering by both Jews and blacks. The final chapters address the present-day fates of these victimized peoples. This study deserves a wide readership. Recommended for most libraries.- Paul Kaplan, Lake Villa Dist. Lib., Ill. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. "This text is an admirably lucid and cogently argued comparison of two profoundly evil institutions, one that recognizes the differences between the Jewish and African American experiences of oppression without offering invidious comparisons.... An important and engrossing book." Publishers Weekly