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Bruce Wilshire

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#7679086 in Books Lexington Books 2005-10 2006-10-02Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.06 x .71 x 6.05l, .78 #File Name: 0739112791226 pages | File size: 77.Mb

Bruce Wilshire : Get 'Em All! Kill 'Em!: Genocide, Terrorism, Righteous Communities before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Get 'Em All! Kill 'Em!: Genocide, Terrorism, Righteous Communities:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Dynamics of a Philosophy Lesson.By elius yanakisWilshire is wonderful in his depiction of we (the people) doing genocide in oh so innocent ways.The way, he keeps insisting, is

the general manner we act at the confluence of guilt, terror, rightness, and religion. We build communities to ID our basic goodness, which, once defined by gossip and very boisterous leaders we indemnify our group and assail the foreign group as vicious, brutal, beyond boundaries, despicable, and devious. It is a greater congregation of dire traits which this group uses against the in-group eventuality being first to "kill 'em all" (us) if we don't kill "em first. Tirades and Apocalypse and Fiction, Oh my. The foreign group is tainted, diabolical, and grotesque in their strange goings on. They must be eradicated completely. All this in the first two chapters. I can hardly wait to get to succeeding non-linear (circular) chapters. The writing is intellectual, suspenseful, and breath taking. Not bad for a Rutgers Philosopher. More to come...2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Be Warned!: Not a serious study of genocide

By Sierra Erdinger
This book is poor in the extreme - a fatally flawed discussion of genocide which takes no account of major contemporary work in the field and presents a woefully unsubstantiated explanatory thesis. Wilshire unquestioningly endorses a picture long abandoned by leading scholars: in which genocide is universally characterised by "hysteria and group frenzy" (p.52). This is a terribly inaccurate understanding, true only for a small minority of genocidal perpetrators, as even a cursory engagement with recent studies of the Holocaust, Armenia, Stalinist oppression or ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, would indicate. The book revolves around one central explanatory claim: that when a group confronts an 'alien' 'other' group, this encounter exposes the contingency of cultural worldviews (which Wilshire terms a group's 'world-experienced'). The resulting crippling uncertainty and visceral terror causes an 'ontological hysteria' amongst members of a community, resulting in a sudden frenzy of rage to eliminate this threatening alien-other group. This thesis, whilst not literally baseless, is complete nonsense as a general explanation of genocide. It jars with a very basic historical fact regarding most cases: that they did not occur between two groups meeting each other for the first time, and whose profound otherness thus shocks them to the core, but between communities which had lived alongside each other for centuries (as with Jews in Germany and Poland, Armenians in the Ottoman Empire; or Cambodians killed in the 'autogenocide' under Pol Pot). In Yugoslavia, ethnic cleansing occurred between groups which had sometimes shared villages, social networks and even displays of interfaith religious participation for decades prior to the descent into violence. None of these groups were suddenly shocked by "retching encounters with alien masses" (p.68), on the contrary, many victims were not even from groups with a meaningfully different 'world-experienced' from their killers at all. Wilshire's thesis has a certain limited resonance regarding colonialist violence, but it is clearly an unsustainable claim about genocide in general. Wilshire's claim that in genocide there is universal conformity amongst "monolithic" groups of perpetrators (p. 15) is equally absurd. How are we to explain the numerous cases of dissent or refusal to participate if "as the head of the corporate body inclines, so inclines the group - a mindless automatism" (p.16). We cannot - but then this is a cartoon caricature of top-down conformity that no credible theorist of genocide could endorse. Of course, in all these matters, it could be the majority of contemporary theorists who are at fault, rather than Wilshire. But if this possibility is to be taken seriously then Wilshire must, at a bare minimum, explain why rival theories are being rejected, and provide a detailed historical analysis to demonstrate why his proffered alternative is superior. Yet this is almost entirely absent in *Get 'Em All, Kill 'Em* - I am not even sure that Wilshire has any real awareness of existing scholarship, despite the lengthy bibliography at the book's end (almost none of which makes any appearance in the main text). When Wilshire does discuss a few major historical events his portrayals are simplistic and often shockingly ignorant. And sometimes the crudity of his analysis is truly staggering, as when Wilshire labels Maoist violence as genocide: "After all, a man who exceeded Hitler by a factor of ten in the destruction of his enemies - sixty million estimated - must be a genocider! I am strongly attracted to this conclusion" (p.60). This would be a grating line of reasoning from a school student: from a tenured academic, it is quite extraordinary. Overall, it is manifestly apparent that Wilshire does not possess any genuine understanding of his central "case studies" - inappropriately labelled as such, since each of them is discussed in a maximum of five pages (with the single exception of violence against the Digger Indians in California, which receives eight). Instead of sustained historical evidence, Wilshire offers us numerous personal anecdotes, which are sometimes heart-warming and related with considerable authorial flair, but frequently bear little or no relevance to the topics or claims he is discussing. And sometimes they are truly farcical, as when Wilshire relates how a visit to a New Jersey ice cream parlor and observation of a humble worker prompted his reflection that "very probably [this] man was incapable of reflecting on his place in the universe" (p.36). A paragraph later Wilshire warns us that, were we to seriously interrogate this parlor worker on his worldview, "he might have a strong desire to kill us". Recognising this, Wilshire believes, helps us get to grips with genocide. It does not, and what is most damaging about this book is that it will only reinforce the misplaced contempt many social scientists and historians have for philosophers in general. In Wilshire we see a real stereotype of the armchair theorist: high on speculation, devoid of serious study, confidently pronouncing his sweeping views on a major global problem, but in a way which makes no serious effort to engage with available evidence or scholarship regarding that which he purports to explain. To some degree, though, all this critique may itself take this book rather too seriously. Its opening chapters read like a faulty but nevertheless meaningful work of academia, but this impression gradually disintegrates as the book progresses. We are treated to ever more abstract and tangential reflections rendered in ever more needlessly melodramatic prose. What limited history was in this book disappears altogether, replaced by an assortment of quotations from poetry. Eventually,

Wilshire reveals his intention to, in his penultimate chapter, "search for the means to hold off genocide in a new vision of all humans belonging erotically in Nature" (p.117). I dismiss none of this out of hand, but by this point in the book it is impossible to continue to treat it as serious text. I want to find good things to say to balance out this heavy criticism. Anyone seeking to understand as morally pressing and complicated a phenomenon as genocide is engaging in a worthy project. And Wilshire's intuitions on a few points are defensible. In particular, he makes reasonable if not really original observations regarding the biological themes of infection, disease, cleansing and purity that run through the discourse of genocidal groups. If these lines of thought were detached from his erroneous thesis about a catastrophic ontological hysteria following the collision of 'alien' worldviews, a more productive analysis could be forthcoming. But sadly, there is no escaping the fact that this book cannot, methodologically or theoretically, be considered a serious study of genocide. It endorses an utterly mythical image of the phenomenon, importantly false in almost all its central elements. The book is theoretically unsound, naive regarding the existing sophistication of thinking on this topic, and fails to meet even minimal standards of empirical or logical demonstration. Given the significance of the subject matter, it is all the more important to live up to these standards. They are rooted, not in a form of unreflective scientism which Wilshire rightly rejects, but in a far more basic call for rigour of research and seriousness of argument. Lacking both, Wilshire produces not just a weak contribution to thinking on this topic, but one which positively damages attempts to understand genocide. 15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Get 'Em All! Kill 'Em! is a Must Read By M. Brodrick Bruce Wilshire's Get 'Em All! Kill 'Em! is a searching examination of terrorism and genocide. Wilshire resists the easy supposition that such horrendous acts arise simply out of "human nature." He opts instead for an explanation in terms of the search for immortality, the identification of the individual with the group and the terror of seeing that group's world undermined. In a non-linear series of reflections, Wilshire explores some of the deepest recesses of the human mind, disabusing us of the illusion that awful things "cannot happen here." This is philosophy that matters: soaring thought on a vital topic expressed in an accessible, elegant style. Not everyone will agree with Wilshire's understanding of genocide, but everyone needs to be familiar with it. Wilshire is one of a vanishing breed of public intellectuals who addresses the mind of our community and appeals to its conscience. Must reading. Reviewed by: John Lachs, Centennial Professor of Philosophy in Vanderbilt University Posted by: M. Brodrick, Graduate Assistant

To think about genocide and terrorism is to accept an invitation from hell. In fact, hell may be too benign a term since it makes a kind of sense out of genocide and terrorism and ultimately begs the question: What is genocide? What sense does it make to kill or disable all members of an other group just because they are that other group: men, women, children? What sense can we make of genocide? The very meaning of "sense" threatens to disintegrate. Get 'Em All! Kill 'Em! is the first systematic attempt to understand what, up until now, has seemed inexplicable. Author Bruce Wilshire uncovers what seems to be the deepest root of the genocidal urge: disgust and dread in the face of abounding, fecund, life itself swarming, creeping, scurrying, unboundable, and uncontrollable. If his claims about the genocidal urge is true, genocide and terrorism are the ultimate anti-ecology. Get 'Em All! Kill 'Em! is a rare and seminal work by a distinguished and original thinker.