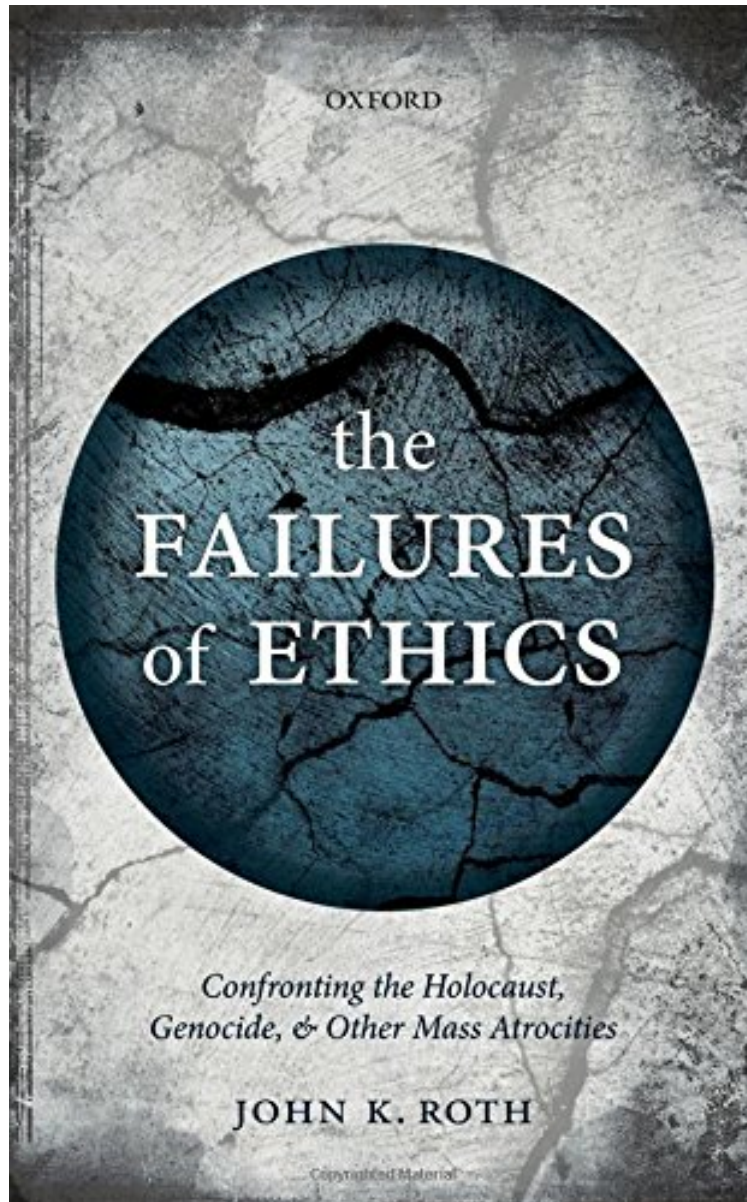


The Failures of Ethics: Confronting the Holocaust, Genocide, and Other Mass Atrocities

John K. Roth

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John K. Roth : The Failures of Ethics: Confronting the Holocaust, Genocide, and Other Mass Atrocities before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Failures of Ethics: Confronting the Holocaust, Genocide, and Other Mass Atrocities:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Thought-Provoking Contribution to the Study of Genocide Studies
By STEPHEN M SIEGEL
Professor Roth's review of modern moral and ethical world issues in "Failure of Ethics" brought me back to two of his most popular classes, "Perspectives on the Holocaust" and "Perspectives on the American Dream." As in those classes, this book provokes the reader to think critically about these issues, challenges assumptions, and encourages personal action. He deftly marries history with current events and policy with theology. He brings in music, poetry, and art to drive home his points. Through these words, John Roth's voice rings clear with the quiet, thoughtful delivery this reader remembers from his misspent youth. He doesn't bludgeon the reader; he heads us down the path of discovery, reason, and--hopefully--action.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By E. R. Hart
A very important book that everyone should read, especially given political events today.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A thoughtful discovery of issues and assumptions in the Holocaust
By Charles S. Weinblatt
John Roth is one of a handful of highly respected and insightful authors on the topic of genocide. The Failures of Ethics is a testimonial to Roth's extensive research and analysis about a topic with significant implications for humanity's survival. This masterful book/textbook offers a critical exploration of the vulnerability of ethics and why genocide remains a persistent possibility for vulnerable groups and cultures. Ethics, the knowledge of right and wrong, is the foundation of all civilizations. Ethical responsibility is the purview of each member of that society. Roth examines genocide, especially the Holocaust, for its root causes. He helps the reader understand why some people are more susceptible to ethical failures. The result of this book is a thoughtful discovery of issues and assumptions, hopefully leading to action that fosters resistance to immorality and collaboration rather than conflict. Roth postulates that honorable intentions and the depersonalized advances of civilizations have become incoherent and subverted by the accumulated ruins of history. We see that respect and honor for those who save lives and resist atrocity must be valued so that future societies can avoid persecution and genocide. Roth clearly posits that impressive philosophical arguments used by the nefarious can result in prejudice, oppression, and genocide, just as easily as it can be used to advance human rights. He also reveals that ethics can become a valuable commodity, subject to misuse and perversion. He agrees that genocide exists for one or more of four different conditions: 1) to reduce or eliminate a perceived threat from a designated group, race or religion, 2) to spread terror among real or potential enemies, 3) to acquire economic wealth, or 4) to implement a particular belief, ideology or theory. In Roth's view, nothing matters more than how we react to and deal with failures in ethics. Despite the human propensity for violence, persecution, and genocide, we can escape it in the future. To accomplish this, we must openly praise the courage of those who sacrifice to help the persecuted; we must always study the actions leading to past genocides and find a way to foster a new and powerful commitment for equality and human rights. Indifference, Draconian ethnic beliefs, and the failure of differentiation between right and wrong have led religions, nations, and cultures to collapse into genocide or to collaborate and avoid confrontation. Roth delivers a focus on the inadequacies of reason, decision-making and actions that incite humans to perpetrate vast harm. He reveals how ethics can become vulnerable to misuse and perversion; and that no simple reaffirmation of ethics will prevent future genocides. We learn that only a spirited commitment and political will can alter the human propensity for destruction, brutality, and genocide. Roth emphasizes that only through respect and honor can atrocities be avoided and lives saved. His insight is thoughtful, based upon empirical data and written in a very clear, evocative style. Roth engages the reader with profound conclusions that are well-designed, intuitive, and at times deeply reflective. He views our failure to end genocides through a particularly clear lens of perspective. This book will allow teachers and students to confront immensely critical decisions about morality in an age still troubled by persecution of the innocent. While many philosophers insist that their peer-reviewed conclusions are of a certain veracity, Roth encourages the reader to challenge existing concepts and to foster wide-ranging discourse about preeminent ethical conclusions. Roth concludes that we neither should nor can eliminate the darkness into which genocides plunge us. But we can stand in solidarity with those who resisted the Holocaust and mass atrocities and we can join those who resist them today. Facing the brutality, persecution and slaughter inflicted by the Holocaust and other atrocities reveals the failures of ethics as no other events can. Deep within that resistance, joy and satisfaction for the human spirit can be found.

Charles S. Weinblatt was born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1952. He is a retired university administrator. Mr. Weinblatt is the author of published fiction and nonfiction. His biography appears in the Marquis Who's Who in America, Who's Who in American Education, and Wikipedia.

Defined by deliberation about the difference between right and wrong, encouragement not to be indifferent toward that difference, resistance against what is wrong, and action in support of what is right, ethics is civilization's keystone. The Failures of Ethics concentrates on the multiple shortfalls and shortcomings of thought, decision, and action that tempt and incite us human beings to inflict incalculable harm. Absent the overriding of moral sensibilities, if not the collapse or collaboration of ethical traditions, the Holocaust, genocide, and other mass atrocities could not have happened. Although these catastrophes do not pronounce the death of ethics, they show that ethics is vulnerable, subject to misuse and perversion, and that no simple reaffirmation of ethics, as if nothing disastrous had happened, will do. Moral and religious authority has been fragmented and weakened by the accumulated ruins of history and the

depersonalized advances of civilization that have taken us from a bloody twentieth century into an immensely problematic twenty-first. What nevertheless remain essential are spirited commitment and political will that embody the courage not to let go of the ethical but to persist for it in spite of humankind's self-inflicted destructiveness. Salvaging the fragmented condition of ethics, this book shows how respect and honor for those who save lives and resist atrocity, deepened attention to the dead and to death itself, and appeals for human rights and renewed spiritual sensitivity confirm that ethics contains and remains an irreplaceable safeguard against its own failures.

"[A] significant resource on Holocaust and genocide scholarship. The book is Roth's recent contribution to . . . his staggering body of research on the Holocaust. The Failures of Ethics will be suitable to university professors, students, and researchers interested in the subject of the Holocaust and genocide. The book embodies a very rich review of important research and scholarship on the Holocaust, and contributes enormously to the debates on the discourse of ethical practices and dispositions that emerged in the Holocaust's aftermath." Chigbo Arthur Anyaduba, *International Journal on World Peace* "Everything John K. Roth writes is thoughtful, measured, and insightful, and so is this deeply disturbing yet hopeful book. Part intellectual autobiography, part philosophical treatise, and part call to action in dark times, *The Failures of Ethics* deserves and will reward a wide readership." --Peter Hayes, Theodore Z. Weiss Professor of Holocaust Studies, Northwestern University "John K. Roth has joined the issue of historical scholarship with a consideration of ethical discourse and of the inability of that discourse to remain the same in the presence of such anti-human events. His focus on racism and tribalism is pivotal. Roth is boldly willing to challenge himself and others most especially as he confronts the failures of ethics - and overcoming those failures. His style invites engagement -- insists on engagement and dialogue and unlike many philosophers -- dare I say most -- his insights are both profound and accessible." --Michael Berenbaum "The publication of John K. Roth's *The Failures of Ethics* is an occasion for rejoicing--not in the failures of ethics but in Roth's profound realization that those failures matter. Eloquent, insightful, and deeply personal, Roth's reflection resonates with anyone whose soul hungers for meaning. For those who would embrace the ethical in an age haunted by nihilism and despair, reading this book is a matter of ethical responsibility." --David Patterson, Hillel Feinberg Chair in Holocaust Studies, University of Texas at Dallas "The Failures of Ethics by John K. Roth, one of America's preeminent scholars and educators, reflects more than 40 years of scholarship, thinking, and teaching about the Holocaust and other genocides of the 20th and 21st centuries. Thoughtful, provocative, and elegantly written, it is a book educators and students alike should read, ponder, discuss, and learn from, but only if they are willing to confront questions with no easy answers." --Dr. Carol Rittner, R.S.M., Distinguished Professor of Holocaust Genocide Studies and Dr. Marsha Raticoff Grossman Professor of Holocaust Studies, The Richard Stockton University of New Jersey "The Failures of Ethics is a testimonial to Roth's extensive research and analysis about a topic with significant implications for humanity's survival. This masterful book/textbook offers a critical exploration of the vulnerability of ethics and why genocide remains a persistent possibility for vulnerable groups and cultures." --New York Journal of Books "John Roth's *The Failures of Ethics* is anything but a resigned, world-weary confession of helplessness before the iniquities of the Holocaust and other terrible wrongs. To the contrary, this latest book by one of America's senior and widely respected Holocaust scholars is a resolutely ethical reflection on his four decades of scholarship and teaching in the field, looking back over his professional and pedagogical confrontations with some of the most vexing questions of our times." --Journal of Central European History
About the Author John K. Roth is the Edward J. Sexton Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and the Founding Director of the Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights (now the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights) at Claremont McKenna College, where he taught from 1966 through 2006. In addition to service on the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, he has published hundreds of articles and authored, co-authored, or edited more than fifty books, including *Approaches to Auschwitz*, *Ethics During and After the Holocaust*, and *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*. He has been Visiting Professor of Holocaust studies at the University of Haifa, Koerner Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, and Ina Levine Invitational Scholar at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. In 2012 he received the Holocaust Educational Foundation's Distinguished Achievement Award for Holocaust Studies and Research.