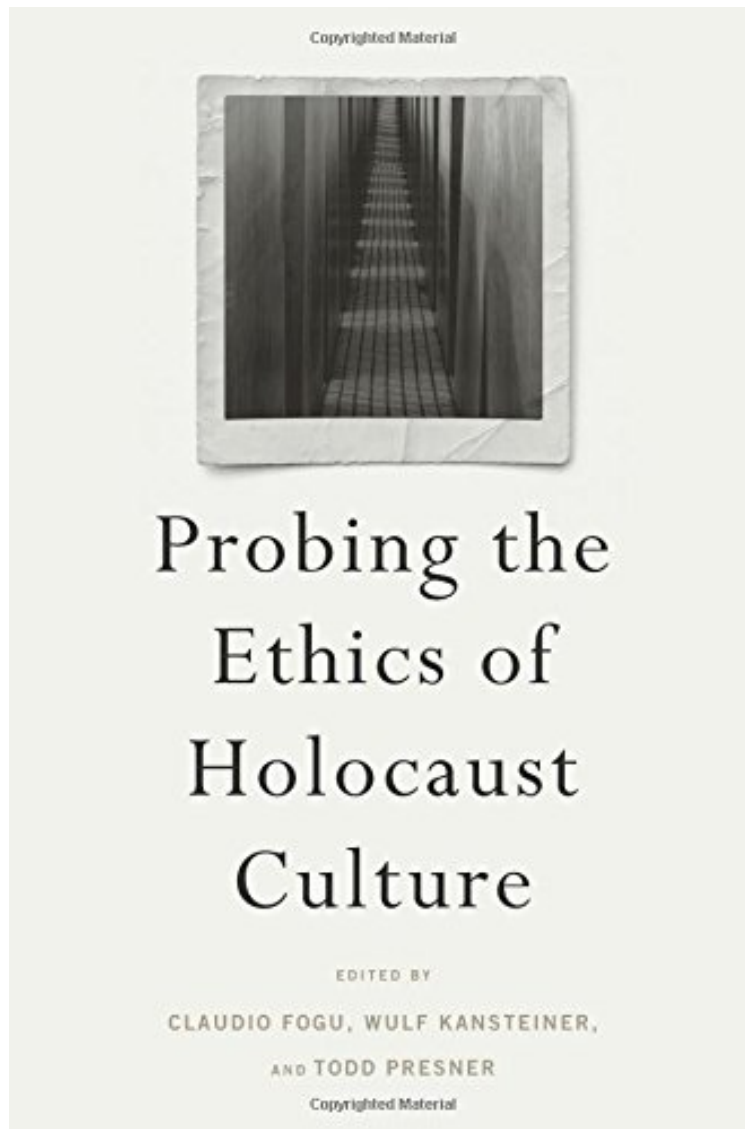


[Download] Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture

## Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture

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**From Fogu Claudio : Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Holocaust Supremacism: Old and New. Continued Soft-Peddling of German Guilt: The Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of EuropeBy Jan PeczkisConsider these salient topics:OLD-FASHIONED FORMS OF HOLOCAUST SUPREMACISMClassically, the elevation of the Holocaust over the genocides of all other people has been justified (rationalized) through the argument that all Jews were targeted for

extermination, and never before in history has a state tried to exterminate an entire group using all the resources at its disposal. (Fogu et al. p. 13). This can be refuted by the fact that the Nazis did NOT try to exterminate ALL Jews. In fact, they deliberately spared several classes of Jews. [See the first and second comment under this review.] Interestingly, Steven Katz, the author of *THE HOLOCAUST IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT* (see my review), has abandoned his effort to prove the uniqueness of the Holocaust. (Fogu et al., p. 431). In addition, editors Fogu et al. point out that, far from being some sort of all-consuming Nazi obsession, the destruction of the Jews was a fairly amateurish effort. They comment, One could, for instance, argue that state-sponsored genocides have occurred in numerous other settings and that the leadership of the Third Reich hardly mobilized all available resources for mass murder. After all, the Nazis committed genocide on a shoestring budget with a handful of mediocre, poorly trained, midlevel bureaucrats; at almost any point during the war, Hitler could have easily assembled a much more sizable and accomplished army of murderers. (p. 13).

#### SOME SECOND THOUGHTS ON HOLOCAUST

**EXCEPTIONALISM** The editors point out that Tony Judt and Jeffrey Alexander disavowed notions of Holocaust uniqueness they previously shared. (p. 313). They also state that Omer Bartov changed his position several times, and has now taken distance from some aspects of Holocaust uniqueness that he had previously endorsed. (p. 313). This is how Omer Bartov describes his current views, One reason why the Holocaust refused to recede into the historical past like most other events was that it became part of a fierce competition of victimhood, in which past victimization was made into a central reference point for identity assertions and restitution claims, and the Holocaust came to be perceived as a measuring rod for all other cases of genocide and crimes against humanity. I found assertions about the uniqueness of the Holocaust unhelpful, indeed harmful, not least because any ranking of victimhood is inherently pernicious and potentially provides license for a vicious cycle of endless retributive violence. (p. 321). How could it possibly be otherwise? The foregoing matter is rather academic. What matters is not what some professor thinks, but what policies are in force—namely policies that continue to relegate all the non-Jewish genocides into (at best) second-class events in history.

#### NEWFANGLED FORMS OF HOLOCAUST SUPREMACISM. THE ROLE OF

**POSTMODERNISM** The fact that there has been somewhat of a retreat from Holocaust-uniqueness thinking does not mean that the genocides of other peoples will now finally get a fair share of public attention and recognition. Far from it. Instead, the pre-eminence of the Holocaust is now rationalized under a different guise. The editors of this book write of the Holocaust as, in their words, *THE DECISIVE EVENT IN WORLD HISTORY* that broke the very instruments (historical or otherwise) for measuring, comprehending, and narrating events themselves. (Emphasis added. p. 15). [For elaboration, see A. Dirk Moses: pp. 335-336]. What an expansive mystification of the Holocaust! Where did the Holocaust acquire such amazing, transcendental, magical powers? Who decreed it? When did the world's peoples vote the Holocaust into this supremely privileged position? If one is willing to overlook the magnitude of Jewish influence in academia and media, the answer can, in part, be found in postmodernism. Editors Fogu et al. quip, In this regard, Holocaust exceptionality was fundamentally grounded in postmodern theory by both its proponents and its critics. (p. 15). What about the Cult of the Holocaust? This is affirmed using other words. The bibliography identifies what the authors, in their words, call Holocaust memory as civil religion. (p. 435).

**THE INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF THE HOLOCAUST: TOO NARROW A FOCUS** In the past, the Holocaust was criticized, even by some Jews, as an instrument that was used to justify Israeli wrongs against the Palestinians. The editors interviewed Holocaust scholar Saul Friedlander, who challenged Israelis to decouple the Holocaust from what he called nationalist politics, and to enlist it in the aid of human justice and peace. (p. 425). However, there is much, much more to the instrumentalization of the Holocaust than has been considered in this book. The Holocaust elevates the Jews to a perpetual moral high ground, enabling them to criticize others while exempting themselves from any criticism in return. As a vivid example of this in practice, Jewish Polonophobes wield the Holocaust, as a club, to make all sorts of accusations against Poles. They use their influence in the media to make these accusations widely known. When Poles refute these accusations, they regularly are dismissed as nationalists that are stuck in a heroic narrative or Jesus Christ of nations.

#### POPULAR GERMAN MEMORIAL ENSHRINES HOLOCAUST

**SUPREMACISM, AND WHITEWASHES GERMAN GUILT** Author Gavriel D. Rosenfeld describes the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, located in Berlin and opened in 2005. It is a big tourist attraction. The Memorial's designer, German Jew Peter Eisenman, and the German government, decided that it was right that the other groups victimized in the Holocaust are excluded from this monument. (pp. 295-296). Yet elsewhere—Eisenman considers himself motivated by universalistic goals. (p. 297). Really. The reader seeking a break from the customary de-Germanization of the Nazis will not find it. Gavriel Rosenfeld writes, Eisenman had more difficulty, however, reconciling his contradictory views of the perpetrators. On the one hand, he was inclined to minimize the role of Germans in the Holocaust. This was visible in his postmodern view of the Nazi genocide, which, by attributing the killing of the Jews to the abstract forces of reason and technology, shifted attention away from the actual deeds of millions of Germans who were involved in the Holocaust. (p. 296). Peter Eisenman gets creative, trying to get us to believe that the museum's abstraction is actually meant to prompt the Germans to confront their nation's crimes. (p. 298). Gavriel D. Rosenfeld elaborates, In short, while Eisenman was reluctant for his memorial to didactically compel the Germans to face their guilt as a nation of perpetrators, he hoped it would prompt them to do it themselves. (p. 299).

The reader may be as amazed at Eisenmans ability to dissimulate as I was.

Depictions of the Holocaust in history, literature, and film became a focus of intense academic debate in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, with the passing of the eyewitness generation and the rise of comparative genocide studies, the Holocaust's privileged place not only in scholarly discourse but across Western society has been called into question. *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture* is a searching reappraisal of the debates and controversies that have shaped Holocaust studies over a quarter century. This landmark volume brings international scholars of the founding generation of Holocaust studies into conversation with a new generation of historians, artists, and writers who have challenged the limits of representation through their scholarly and cultural practices. Focusing on the public memorial cultures, testimonial narratives, and artifacts of cultural memory and history generated by Holocaust remembrance, the volume examines how Holocaust culture has become institutionalized, globalized, and variously contested. Organized around three interlocking themes—the stakes of narrative, the remediation of the archive, and the politics of exceptionality—the essays in this volume explore the complex ethics surrounding the discourses, artifacts, and institutions of Holocaust remembrance. From contrasting viewpoints and, in particular, from the multiple perspectives of genocide studies, the authors question if and why the Holocaust should remain the ultimate test case for ethics and a unique reference point for how we understand genocide and crimes against humanity.

Twenty-five years after the publication of Saul Friedländer's trailblazing book, the questions being asked about the Holocaust have changed but its importance as a test case for the humanities remains just as strong. *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture* is a worthy successor to Friedländer's volume, skillfully charting as it does the epistemological, intellectual, and cultural issues at stake in engaging with this most defining event of human destructiveness. (Dan Stone, author of *The Liberation of the Camps: The End of the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*) These essays provide a new framework for the study of collective violence and state terror at a global scale. No longer bound to modernist anxieties about narrative and images, this book shows how the Holocaust remains a prism for ethics and politics as we are grappling with our world of continuing violence and denial of rights. A must read for anyone interested in the past and future of Holocaust studies and a great tribute to Saul Friedländer. (Andreas Huyssen, author of *Miniature Metropolis: Literature in an Age of Photography and Film*) The Holocaust is at the center of wide-ranging intellectual discussion, but where exactly is the center? What can words say, explanations do, comparisons offer, assemblages reveal, and self-reflection add? This extraordinary collection of essays traces the shadows of the Holocaust on contemporary thought, providing insights on what we can and cannot know, on what will not be settled. A remarkable contribution that will be read again and again. (Peter Fritzsche, author of *An Iron Wind: Europe Under Hitler*) Masterfully addresses the place of the Holocaust in shaping our understanding of fateful events, trauma, remembrance, and the politics of memory. Written by some of the most distinguished scholars of the Holocaust, the essays in this exquisite collection also point to the future of Holocaust scholarship in helping us formulate our ethical stance when faced with other cases of mass atrocity. An indispensable source for anyone considering how and why our recent past matters. (Amir Eshel, author of *Futurity: Contemporary Literature and the Quest for the Past*)

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