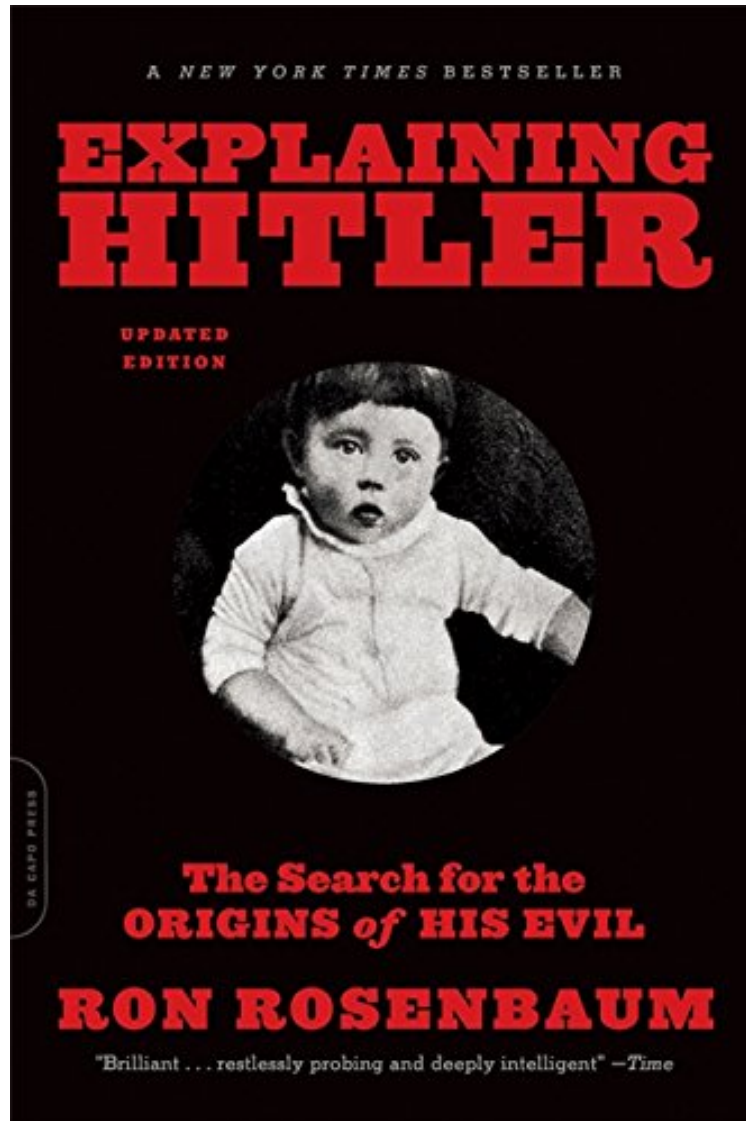


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Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil, updated edition

Ron Rosenbaum

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Ron Rosenbaum : Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil, updated edition before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil, updated edition:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Masterpiece That Doesn't Try to "Explain" Hitler's Evil By M.

JEFFREY MCMAHON In this ambitious, well researched, well thought book, Rosenbaum critiques those theorists and academics who try to come up with explanations for Hitler's behavior whether Hitler is motivated by childhood traumas, sadistic power, sincere belief in his anti-Semitism, etc., and what Rosenbaum discovers, to his dismay, is that too many deep thinkers cannot accept evil without "the fig leaf of rectitude." In other words, too many good-intentioned people unwittingly give Hitler a pass, excusing his evil in a way, by saying he was crazy, deranged, sincerely misguided, a true believer in his own vision. What these theorists are doing, Rosenbaum convincingly argues, is trying to come up with a single theory that says more about themselves than it does Hitler. A single theory advances their specialty and more importantly a theory is a form of consolation, a comfort because we deluded ourselves into believing that evil--even the kind of evil on the magnitude of Hitler--can be explained. In fact, what I got from reading this book is that evil cannot be explained entirely. Hitler, the mountebank, became a cult figure who created an Evil Culture, complete with art, architecture, music, and fashion, and the Cult of his Personality was necessary for the Nazi evil. You couldn't replace him with some other anti-Semite to advance his vision. In other words, Hitler was Nazism. What I concluded from this book is that Hitler was a fake, a clown who became intoxicated by his own cheap demagoguery and the German people's belief in it and in this intoxication he unleashed pure evil: a man who takes sadistic pleasure in torturing and killing others. Rosenbaum warns us not to try to explain evil with one over simplistic theory to suffer the either/or fallacy of Hitler was either a true believer or a cunning manipulator because he was in fact both. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. excellent By CSR excellent 5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Journalism, not history, but very fine journalism By A Customer Rosenbaum's synthesis of current argument about "the nature of Adolf Hitler" makes a good introduction to the field. Like all good journalists, he seems to come away from each meeting (the book is structured as a series of interviews with historians, elucidated by informed asides by Rosenbaum) with some telling give-away, some unguarded response he has managed to provoke, which suggests a special insight. Trouble is, these "insights" are into the minds of the historians, rather than into the mind of Adolf Hitler himself -- and long before the end of the book, the reader is aware that Goldbaum is too wily a commentator to be going to risk any attempt at really explaining, as the subtitle has it, "The Origins of His Evil." The book is admirable in many ways, not least in that it marshals the main positions within "Hitler psychohistory" in a very readable fashion. But it is a fine piece of journalism, rather than a work of scholarship, and unlikely to provoke as much thought -- or stir up as many hornets -- as (for example) Daniel Goldhagen's flawed but extraordinarily illuminating "Hitler's Willing Executioners." You won't find any explanation for the origin of Hitler's evil here, unfortunately. In fact, this book is oddly bloodless and shadowless. But Goldbaum's fine intelligence is evident in every line.

Hitler did not escape the bunker in Berlin but, seven decades later, he has managed to escape explanation in ways both frightening and profound. Explaining Hitler is an extraordinary quest, an expedition into the war zone of Hitler theories. This is a passionate, enthralling book that illuminates what Hitler explainers tell us about Hitler, about the explainers, and about ourselves.

.com Debates concerning the historical and moral significance of Adolf Hitler have gone on since the beginning of his rise to power in Germany. In the decades after his bunker suicide, those debates elevated to arguments over the very nature and existence of evil. An integral part of the arguments has been the ongoing attempt to understand the why of Hitler. In this engaging work of literary journalism, Ron Rosenbaum travels the world to converse with some of the historians, philosophers, filmmakers, and others who have attempted to make sense of Hitler's actions, to find a root cause for the Holocaust. Rosenbaum methodically examines the evidence for and against all the major hypotheses concerning the origin of Hitler's character. He sifts through all the rumors--including his alleged Jewish ancestry and what biographer Alan Bullock refers to as "the one-ball business"--and the attempts to derive some psychological cause from them. Various Hitlers emerge: Hitler as con man and brutal gangster, Hitler the unspeakable pervert, Hitler the ladies' man, Hitler as modernist artist working in the medium of evil.... But Rosenbaum's portrayals of those who would define Hitler are as fascinating as the shifting perspectives on the führer. Here we see the brave journalists of the Munich Post who attempted to reveal Hitler's evil to the world as early as the 1920s. We witness Shoah director Claude Lanzmann's imperious attempts to stifle analysis of Hitler and the Holocaust, branding such historical inquiries as "obscene." We see the effects, on a frazzled Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, of the controversy surrounding the publication of his *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. We see the interior crises of Hitler apologist David Irving and philosopher-novelist George Steiner, among others, as they struggle with the ramifications of their work and thought. And, best of all, we have Rosenbaum to serve as an informed, intimate, and on occasion witty guide. In *White Noise*, Don DeLillo depicted the satirical academic discipline of "Hitler studies;" Ron Rosenbaum breathes a life into the field that no fiction can match. --Ron Hogan From Publishers Weekly Seeking explanations for Hitler's monumental evil and the Holocaust, Rosenbaum traveled from Vienna and Munich to London, Paris and Jerusalem, interviewing leading historians, biographers, philosophers, psychologists and theologians. While this convoluted, selective survey of Hitler scholarship will frustrate readers looking for hard answers, it offers groundbreaking insights into the enigma of Hitler's

psyche. Essayist Rosenbaum (Travels with Dr. Death), a frequent contributor to the New York Times Magazine, gives voice to a diversity of opinion, from Hugh Trevor-Roper, whose best-selling *The Last Days of Hitler* presents the Führer as a self-deluded demigod, sincere in his demonic hatreds, to Oxford historian Alan Bullock, for whom Hitler is a shrewdly calculating, knowingly evil politician. Rosenbaum also interviewed critic/novelist George Steiner, who has interpreted Hitler as an "evil genius" the culmination of dark forces within European civilization; British historian of religion Hyam Maccoby, who argues that Christianity must bear responsibility for the Holocaust; documentary filmmaker Claude Lanzmann; and best-selling Harvard scholar Daniel Goldhagen (*Hitler's Willing Executioners*). Rosenbaum effectively re-creates the hitherto largely untold story of the heroic anti-Hitler Munich journalists who courageously took on the Nazis from 1920 to 1933. And he provides compelling testimony refuting the oft-repeated claim that Hitler had one undescended testicle. Author tour. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

Rosenbaum, a literary journalist (*Esquire*, *New York Times Magazine*), believes that although much has been written about Hitler, not much has been settled. Drawing on archival research and interviews with historians, he has produced a well-written work of historiography and, at times, investigative journalism, tracing the history not of Hitler per se but of the "Hitler explainers." Beginning with the intrepid Munich Post reporters of the 1920s and early 1930s, who dared to challenge Hitler's controlled public image and were a thorn in his side, to the early postwar historians (Trevor-Roper and Bullock) and the new generation of scholars (Browning and Goldhagen), the author gives these historians opportunities to address questions that might not have been covered in their published works. Readers expecting a full-length biography of Hitler (which was not the author's purpose) will no doubt be disappointed, but Rosenbaum admirably sheds light on the many quarrels and inconsistencies in the literature, from the mysterious death of Geli Raubal (Hitler's niece), to the question of Hitler's evil, to the debate between functionalists and intentionalists. For both public and academic libraries. (Notes not seen...-A) John A. Drobnicki, CUNY York Coll. Lib., CUNY Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.