



Serial Killers: Being and Killing

S. Waller (Editor) , John M. Doris (Editor) , Fritz Allhoff (Series_editor)

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Serial Killers - Philosophy for Everyone investigates our profound intrigue with mass-murderers. Exploring existential, ethical and political questions through an examination of real and fictional serial killers, philosophy comes alive via an exploration of grisly death.

*Presents new philosophical theories about serial killing, and relates new research in cognitive science to the minds of serial killers

*Includes a philosophical look at real serial killers such as Ian Brady, Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy, Jeffrey Dahmer and the Zodiac killer, as well as fictional serial killers such as Dexter and Hannibal Lecter

*Offers a new phenomenological examination of the writings of the Zodiac Killer

*Contains an account of the disappearance of one of Ted Bundy's victims submitted by the organization Families and Friends of Missing Persons and Violent Crime Victims

*Integrates the insights of philosophers, academics, crime writers and police officers

Serial Killers: Being and Killing Details

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Author : S. Waller (Editor) , John M. Doris (Editor) , Fritz Allhoff (Series_editor)

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From Reader Review Serial Killers: Being and Killing for online ebook

Aryeh says

Definitely a unique take. The editor of this work has gathered and organized a sizeable number of essays, primarily written by philosophy professors and PhD students that focus on serial killers (both as a group and some individuals, both in real life and through the lens of Hollywood) through writings of different philosophers. The reader is treated to the observations of Socrates/Plato/Heidegger/Sartre/Sade/Nietzsche/Rambam/Nozick/Kant and many more, as philosophies through which to analyze serial killer actions as 'necessary', 'good', 'evil', and more. I appreciate books that make me think and question, and I appreciate books even more that use philosophical lenses in ways I wouldn't generally expect. This is worth the read, if only for the novelty factor. Heavily biased toward philosophy and not psychology, and you'll get more out of it if you've studied philosophy formally, in my opinion (I have an undergrad in Philosophy, and feel that some of the references were rather subtle and not easy to catch on the surface reading).

Downfalls: The essays were written independently of one another and by different authors. This is great as far as styles, but not so great as far as overlap. There was significantly too much focus on Dexter.

Kate Diamond says

Just so, so bad.

Annie says

I read about half of the essays in this book and skimmed the rest. Some essays were written well but most offered no new insight and many were written about the same serial killers and the same philosophies. It was overall bland and I was not motivated to finish this book.

E. Kahn says

A collection of essays that explain philosophical concepts using serial killers as a launching pad.

Generally not great, with a few pretty good ones and a couple of bad ones too. Something like half the authors seem to have chosen to write about Dexter to prove how hip they are to pop culture; most of the ones that write about real killers stick to the super-famous.

My favorite essay was Chapter 9, "Killing with Kindness," by Elizabeth and Harold Schechter. Nice and crunchy. I'm going to look for more by them, individually or together, and I also made note of their recommended books on the topic.

Least favorite was Chapter 7, "The Allure of the Serial Killer," by Eric Dietrich and Tara Fox Hall. This one felt like reading a sensationalistic "True Crime" book, not least because it repeats a bunch of old stories that are generally considered exaggerated at best and politically motivated fabrications at worst by modern historians.

Joshua says

Interesting book, but like all books of collected essays, you can't like them all. There are a few choice ones like my friend Andrew Winter's article about the Son of Sam.

Jason Smith says

cool

John says

A series of essays that provide little insight, pop culture understanding and often repeat the same points. Yes we get it, you've watched Dexter and Silence of the Lambs and can write an essay.

Megan says

A good compilation of articles on the psychology of serial killers. Some of the subjects are repeated though.

Arwen says

VERY interesting hehe

James says

What better way to study ethics than by analyzing those who blatantly disregard it?

A great read for laypeople and experienced students.

John Arnold says

I have read quite a lot on this subject, and this book did not really tell me anything new. It is a collection of

essays, mostly by professors. The majority of these essays left me feeling undernourished. They felt pointless and hollow. If you have not read very much about serial killers you might want to add a star. Best part of book is a timeline of serial killers dating back to 144 BCE. There are one hundred or more names. so the list can be used as a reference to look up more serial killers.
