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Tales of Good and Evil, Help and Harm

Philip Hallie

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In *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*, Philip Hallie chronicled the story of the French village of Chambon, whose inhabitants saved 5,000 Jews from certain death during World War II. Showing that good can exist even in the most horrible situations, it touched readers from coast to coast and became a classic text that continues to be widely used in philosophy courses.

Tales of Good and Evil, Help and Harm focuses on the same themes by examining the lives of three unlikely heroes. Returning to the story of Chambon, Hallie first looks at Major Julius Schamling, the SS officer who, despite his somewhat seamy personality, allowed the villagers to do their rescue work. Next comes the riveting account of Joshua James, the 19th-century founder of the Life Saving Rescue Service, who regularly risked his life to save survivors of ships foundering off the New England coast. The final section profiles Hallie's own neighbor, Katchen Coley, who started a halfway house in Connecticut. Written with grace and passion, these tales of good and evil shed surprising light on our capacity for greatness and will resonate in the hearts and minds of readers long after the last word is read.

In *Tales of Good and Evil, Help and Harm,* Hallie continues his intensely personal exploration of the human choice to do helpor harm. In his acclaimed book *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*, he chronicled the story of the village of Chambon in France, whose inhabitants saved 5,000 Jews during World War II under the noses of Nazi SS troops.*Tales of Good and Evil, Help and Harm* focuses on the same theme, on what Hallie calls the lucid mystery of those who choose to help others in need, through the life stories of three people. Hallie tries to understand the ambiguous decency of MajorJulius Schm,hling, the German officer in charge of Chambon, who looked the other way as the villagers did theirrescue work. He follows his portrait of the major with a riveting account of Joshua James, the Massachusetts manwho in the early 19th century founded the Life Saving Rescue Service, later institutionalized by the Coast Guard, in which he and his crew of oarsmen regularly risked life and limb saving the passengers and sailors of ships foundering off the coast in violent storms. The final section of the book is a profile of Hallie's Connecticutneighbor, K,tchen Coley, who founded The Connection, an organization devoted to rehabilitating drug- andalcohol-dependent young men and women.*Tales of Good and Evil* is also the story of Hallie himself, as he tries tounderstand his own ambiguous moral actions, first as a child in the Jewish ghetto of Chicago, fighting to protecthimself and his younger brother from anti-Semitic bullies, then as a World War II artilleryman, and finally as aphilosopher of ethics who realized he could be coldly objective in studying the viciousness of human beingsthroughout history. In this study in moral ambiguity, written with great eloquence, we see a distinguished ethicist'sconcern with grasping the essence of good and evil both in daily life and under extraordinary circumstances.

PhilipHallie was Griffin Professor of Philosophy at Wesleyan University, where he taught for 32 years. He died in1994, leaving this manuscript. That it can now be published is due to the devotion of his wife, Doris Ann Hallie,who contributed an afterword. The foreword by John Compton, fellow philosopher and longtime friend of theauthor, will help the reader understand this unusual document in the context of Hallie's life and thought. A wonderful collection of narratives, which in their sum offer all of us an opportunity for moral inspiration. Philip Hallie was a person of great wisdom, and these stories tell us what he tried to uphold in his life the significance of a goodnessthat is lived out day by day.

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Regina Nichols:

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