

## Call for Papers

### The Problem of Evil in Modern and Contemporary

### European Philosophy

For many, the developments and often dazzling breakthroughs of the modern sciences since the 19th century have sustained the hope that evil will find sociological, psychological and even neurological and genetic explanations. These explanations were looked to with the aspiration that they would eventually bring about measures which, without completely eradicating evil, would nevertheless significantly reduce the pain and suffering it causes. For others, however, such hope, inherited from the ideals of Enlightenment, has revealed itself to be a mere illusion. In their view, both human reality, in its moral, political and historical dimensions, as well as natural reality, seem to show that evil, in all or part, is irreducible to this hope and the “solutions” that it conveys. In this regard, it is well known that a certain number of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers and writers, amongst which Theodor W. Adorno, Hannah Arendt, Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel are assuredly the most famous, have developed their thoughts on evil with reference to the horrors of Auschwitz and the concentration camps. More recently, the term or notion of evil has attracted a great deal of attention, as George W. Bush, in the aftermath of 9/11, justified the U.S. intervention in Iraq by claiming the need to combat what he described as “the axis of evil”. Moreover, the important political upheavals of the recent years coupled with the numerous attacks perpetrated by Al-Qaeda, ISIL and other groups labeled as terrorists have only but maintained this focus.

In this context, it is not surprising that philosophers, theologians and thinkers have undertaken to pursue and to expand their reflections on evil. For some of them, such reflections had to take the form of a re-examination of the major milestones of the philosophical view since Kant who, as is well-known, once claimed in his famous writing on religion that evil is a propensity (*ein Hang*) that has its origin within human reason itself. According to Susan Neiman (2002), Peter Dews (2006) et other commentators, this view combined with the responses and critics it received from philosophers such as Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger Bataille, Lacan, Ricoeur as well as the above mentioned philosophers, lead to defining the terms of an understanding that would really do justice to what many believe is the unfathomable, abysmal, even enigmatic or banal character of evil.

This conference is intended as an opportunity to revisit and to examine anew the terms around which the different views of evil have been defined from Kant to contemporary European post-Kantian philosophy. In this framework, several themes and sub-themes may be addressed, among which:

- The notion of evil in the work of one of the above mentioned philosophers.
- The problem of the origins of evil in Kant and in the works of post-Kantian philosophers.
- The different dimensions of evil (metaphysical, physical, moral, political)
- The connection between evil, freedom and the will.
- The notion of evil and the issue of the theodicy.
- The differences and similarities between the notion of evil in Kant and in the work of one of his predecessors (Leibniz, Spinoza, Descartes, Aquinas, Augustine).
- The notion of evil in the work of a theologian who places his reflections within the Kantian and/or post-Kantian philosophical frameworks.
- The experience of evil in the “disenchanted” and secularized” (post) modern world.
- Psychoanalysis and evil.
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The conference *The Problem of Evil in Modern and Contemporary European Philosophy* is organized by the Department of Philosophy at Bishop’s University (Sherbrooke, Quebec) and will take place on **April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> 2017**. Proposals (in either English or French) must be submitted by email to Prof. Martin Thibodeau ([mthibode@ubishops.ca](mailto:mthibode@ubishops.ca)) and Prof. Jamie Crooks ([jcrooks@ubishops.ca](mailto:jcrooks@ubishops.ca)) before December 31, 2016. Proposals must be 300 words long and accompanied by a short CV. Selected writers will be notified by January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017, and will be asked to submit a 30 minute-presentation by March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

We intend to publish some of the presented papers in a collective work. Therefore, we kindly request that you reserve your paper for this publication.