

Introduction

The problem of evil in its classical form refers to the question of whether it is possible to reconcile the existence of evil with the existence of God, who is a perfectly benevolent omnipotent being. In *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo confronts this central problem: if human beings were created as good then how did *evil* come into the world? A wide range of responses to this question has been given not only in philosophy and theology but also in literature and film. “Literature is not innocent” stated Georges Bataille, who persuaded that literature can communicate fully and intensely only by acknowledging its complicity with the knowledge of evil. Literature affords diverse accounts of the manifestation of evil (its nature, origins and consequences in human life). Numerous writers have delved deeply into the psychological and metaphysical dimensions of evil, among them there are Russian novelists like Fyodor Dostoevsky or Mikhail Bulgakov. Not only have they provided a detailed insight as to how psychology is tied to the metaphysical aspect of human existence, but they have also addressed the question of whether crime and transgression can be a privileged avenue of access into the human interior. The various accounts of evil in texts—including the Bible, Greek myth, and philosophy (Plato, Plotinus, Augustine of Hippo, G.W. Leibniz, I. Kant, F. Nietzsche, and H. Arendt)—have been related to major attempts to square God’s justice with the presence of evil.

The articles presented in this volume explore the intersections between philosophical thought and literary modes of representations of evil. They address not only a critical look at the classical or recent literary manifestation of evil but also demonstrate new aspects of a philosophical account of this issue. The volume begins with an article by Michał Bizoń who deals with the concept of evil in ancient Greek thought. The author focuses on two Greek terms *aischron* and *kalon*, and points out the functional, aesthetic, and ethical components of their semantic field. He argues that the functional and aesthetic components entail fundamental difficulties for viewing *aischron* as denoting moral evil. Krzysztof Mech turns to Mikhail Bulgakov’s famous novel *The Master and Margarita*. The author presents Bulgakov’s complex and ambiguous domain of evil which leads to the expansion of our under-

standing of the domain of good. Kimberly Young examines Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* by paying particular attention to Ivan Karamazov's Euclidean Mind. Virgil W. Brower, in turn, experiments with Kant's account of rational religion, culled from the *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Miłosz Puczydłowski's essay explores a novel by Pär Lagerkvist *The Dwarf* in light of the classical metaphysics of good and evil based on Plotinus' *Enneads*. The author of the last article, Maciej Michalski, poses a question of whether literature can address evil, understood as the experience of absence and loss. He offers some answers by analyzing texts about absence, such as *Container* by Marek Bieńczyk, *Is Not* by Mariusz Szczygieł, and *Things I Didn't Throw Out* by Marcin Wicha. The present volume does not aim to exhaust contemporary reflections on the problem of evil in literature. It is rather an overview that includes the most recent accounts addressing this question.

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