Rationality and the Problem of Evil

Introductory

The notion of evil has been in the centre of philosophical thinking since the beginning of philosophy. What is evil and where does evil in the world come from? Is human being predestined to act in an evil way (naturally evil) or she can choose what to do? What is the relation between knowledge and evil? What should be our response (responsibility) to the (problem of) evil? Can we eliminate evil from the world?

Traditionally, in Augustine, Plotinus and Thomas Aquinas philosophy of evil was understood as a problem which arises from the privation – (necessary) imperfection of the human world. Plotinus saw matter as the true evil, Augustine stated that evil comes from decomposition, and Thomas Aquinas argued that evil is deprived of form. But all of them also comprehended evil as a problem of free will. Augustine in *Confessions* described evil as a perversion of the will which has turned from God, as a supreme being, to the lowest beings, and which discards its inward desire with the desire for what is on the outside. Furthermore, Leibniz in *Teodicy. Essays of Theodicy on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil* "defended" the existence of evil and said that natural and moral evil exist because they contribute to the realisation of a greater good or to the obstruction of a greater evil.

In the Age of Enlightenment "faith" in progress came in the place of faith in Providence, and in the modern process of secularisation God has been replaced by history. Emancipation of human beings in history enabled us to open the question of the anthropology of evil. Is human being evil by nature, as Machiavelli and Hobbes suggested, or civilisation has corrupted her as Rousseau argues? What are the consequences of the Christian concept of original sin?

Kant suggested that the radical evil in human nature exists, and he gave the cynical example of a member of the English Parliament who once exclaimed, in the heat of debate: "Every man has his price, for which he sells himself." In the 20th century the consequences of World War II gave a new perspective on the problem of evil. Hannah Arendt, who witnessed Adolf Eichmann's trial (1961), concluded that Eichmann just followed the given orders. Hence, Arendt focused on the connection between thinking and conscience, and she discovered that an absence of thinking in totalitarianism is the cause of evil. This she called the *banality of evil*. Furthermore, other concepts and ideas such as philosophy of Hitlerism (Levinas), function of totalitarian regimes (Bernstein), the intelligence of evil (Baudrillard), and new bio-technological attempts at moral enhancement contributed to the better understanding of evil in the contemporary world historical situation.

Following that theoretical ground, this volume contains some of the papers presented during the international conference *Rationality and the Problem of*

Evil, held in Trogir on the 2nd and 3rd of September 2016, organised by the Order of Preachers (Croatian Dominican Province), the Humane Philosophy Project, the Centre of Excellence for Integrative Bioethics (University of Zagreb), and the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion (University of Oxford). Reflecting the papers and discussions of the conference, this thematic block sheds a new light on clarifying the complexity of the historical problem of the relationship between good and evil, existence of God, suffering, death, and many others.

In this respect, the volume comprehends five papers. In his paper "The Existence of Evil in Christian and Naturalistic Worldviews" Göcke discusses that there are two different kinds of causes of evil: natural causation and by free will. He distinguishes between problems of evil, solutions to problems of evil, and theories of evil, and argues that Christian worldviews have the resources to successfully establish a theory of evil. Furthermore, Weir discusses traditional responses to the problem of evil by defending the aporetic response where the problem of evil appears to human beings as intractable because of the limitedness of human minds. Vuger reviews the phenomena of evil through the works of Hannah Arendt, and the crimes of the Nazi regime. The paper brings into light the thesis that Arendt's views, for the first time, fully describe evil as the problem of human consciousness and the inner dialogue which points out a contemplative nature of our being in the world as technosphere. Sławkowski-Rode compares two attitudes to death and the two contrasting ways of understanding mourning. He argues that without the latter prospects for both community formation and self-determination may be damaged. Janeš proposed the concept of the mereology of All-Oneness as guidance towards better methodological analysis of evil. Following prior proposal to the solution of understanding true nature of good and evil, Janeš suggests the notion of "openness–closeness" relation of energy as a way of understanding complex manifestations of evil which are often falsely understood through pairs such as virtue–sin, paradise–hell, and black–white, specially focusing on the problem of psyche.

We hope that following papers will contribute to the clearer understanding of the notion of evil, and by that also help its repression. Finally, to this theoretical search for a better world we would like to contribute by reminding on Kant's critique of a "foul stain on human species". This refers to the deliberate guilt, involving something fraudulent in the human heart, in which the man deceives himself about his own good and bad attitudes and regards himself as justified before the law so long as his actions don't have bad consequences – which they easily could do, given the maxims that were at work in them. And that Kant calls the source of the peace of conscience of so many men.

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