

## RESEARCH ON EVIL: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Most annotated bibliographies begin by noting how vast the literature on a certain subject is and how impossible it would be to present to eager readers a complete picture of the literature available. What is unusual is to claim that this vast array of books falls into fairly discrete subcategories. And yet, this is, to some extent, the case with books on evil. Disciplinary approaches divide the study of evil by the ways in which they define or explain it. Legal studies take on evil as crime. Psychological studies of evil focus on the individuals who have committed evil deeds. Theological approaches deal with evil as sin. Philosophical works take up evil as a problem about whether or not, and how, there can be an all-good, all-powerful God given the extent and kinds of evil in the world today. For the sociologist, evil is studied as, in part or wholly, a result of the social forces at work shaping and misshaping individuals and institutions. History books narrate particular events deemed evil. In every case, though, the subject of evil is seen as intricately connected to the most important questions we face as humans, living our lives and living our lives together.

Listed below are several categories of books on evil, each with representative selections. The list of categories is not exhaustive but should give the reader a sense of the map of “evil studies” and a way to navigate through it in light of the specific interests she or he might have.

### *Classics in the Study of Evil*

Certain works are cited again and again in writings on evil. These works span numerous centuries, geographical areas, and writing genres; their authors include Christian theologians, atheist philoso-

phers, Jewish intellectuals, Russian novelists. What they have in common is a deep grappling with the nature of evil. Is evil a person, e.g., Satan, or a force at work in the world and in the wills of humans? Is evil the distortion of good or the lack of a measure of goodness? Is evil a radical choice or a banal thought-less-ness? Is God responsible for evil or are humans? How do humans conceive of evil and how does that relate to their understandings of human nature, the good, and God?

- Aquinas, Thomas. *On Evil*. Trans. Jean Oesterle. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.
- Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Revised and Enlarged Edition. New York: Viking, 1965.
- Augustine. *The City of God*. Trans. Henry Bettenson. New York: Penguin, 1984.
- ————. *Confessions*. Trans. F. J. Sheed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts*. Trans. Richard Peaver and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage, 1991.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1961.
- Hume, David. *Principal Writings on Religion*. Ed. J. C. A. Gaskin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1966.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *The Symbolism of Evil*. Trans. Emerson Buchanan. Boston: Beacon, 1967.

### *The Psychology of the Evil Individual*

While some books focus on the social conditions that foster violence, propel injustice, or misshape societies, the following books

focus either on the inner workings of individuals who have committed horrendous crimes, acts so bad as to merit the appellation “evil,” or on individuals’ understandings of evil and how they come to see something as “evil.” These psychologically oriented books take the forms of interviews, with the executors of evil (e.g., Goldberg), their victims, or those who have had experiences of evil (e.g., Alford); write-ups of findings of psychological studies and/or case studies from clinical practices (e.g., Peck); meditations on the motivations for committing evil deeds (e.g., Diamond); discussions of how individuals conceive of evil, what form it takes in their imaginations or in their lives (e.g., Jung). One assumption and hope of many of these works is that by studying the psychology of individuals who commit evil, we will learn something about how to prevent or reduce its occurrence. The strength of this approach is its ability to show us the complexities of evil: how varied its motivations are, how powerfully destructive one individual can be, how evil often breeds itself in its victims. Two limitations of this approach, which moves from the inside out, are, first, its temptation to reduce evil to biochemistry or unhappy life experiences and in the process to eclipse the agency involved in acts of evil, and, second, its tendency to ignore the larger social forces at work in shaping moral development and understandings of evil.

- Alford, C. Fred. *What Evil Means to Us*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Baumeister, Roy F. *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty*. New York: Freeman, 1997.
- Diamond, Stephen A. *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Psychological Genesis of Violence, Evil, and Creativity*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- Goldberg, Carl. *Speaking with the Devil: Exploring Senseless Acts of Evil*. New York: Penguin, 1996.
- Jung, C. G. *Jung on Evil*. Ed. Murray Stein. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Peck, M. Scott. *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983.

*Evil as a Social Problem*

Sociologists are unlikely to use the word “evil” in their discussions of social life. But when they do, their focus is often on the social conditions that are conducive to widespread violence and crime. The health of society is at issue in these social problems. The onus for resisting evil is placed on transforming social institutions and conditions, such that the individuals and communities within them will be morally bound to each other in constructive ways. Like the psychologist, the sociologist may err in eclipsing the agency of evil doers, but not because she reduces evil acts to biochemistry or certain life experiences, but rather because she may find the partial explanation of social causes to be sufficient explanation for why an individual does what he does. Nevertheless, sociological studies make a vital contribution to the study of a subject that has for so long been discussed in abstract terms with no empirical grounding, particularly since the evils that result from corrupt social structures have a much greater capacity for destruction than does a single individual.

- Hibbert, Christopher. *The Roots of Evil: A Social History of Crime and Punishment*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1963.
- Katz, Fred E. *Ordinary People and Extraordinary Evil: A Report on the Beguilings of Evil*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Katz, Jack. *Seductions of Crime: The Moral and Sensual Attraction of Doing Evil*. New York: Basic, 1988.
- Lemert, Edwin M. *The Trouble With Evil: Social Control at the Edge of Morality*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Oppenheimer, Paul. *Evil and the Demonic: A New Theory of Monstrous Behavior*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.
- Pillsbury, Samuel H. *Judging Evil: Rethinking the Law of Murder and Manslaughter*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.
- Sanford, Nevitt, Craig Comstock, and Associates, eds. *Sanctions for Evil: Sources of Social Destructiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971.

### *God and the Problem of Evil*

Probably the largest category of writings on evil are those dealing with the problem presented to belief in an all-good, all-powerful God by the occurrence of evil in the world. Being all-good, the argument goes, God would not want there to be any evil and suffering. Being all-powerful, God would be able to prevent any and all evil and suffering from occurring. And yet, there is evil in the world. Is God either not all-good or not all-powerful? Is evil not really evil, but a necessary part of a good plan? Philosophers and theologians have argued and written about this problem for centuries. Some argue that the simple and most logical answer to the problem is that there is no God, i.e., the existence of evil is proof that God does not exist or gives reason to believe that it is more probable than not that God does not exist. Theodicies argue for God's existence and defend God's goodness and omnipotence. These arguments take numerous forms, but most suggest some reason, some greater good, God might have for permitting evil. Finally there are those who argue that the effort put into writing theodicies is misguided: we simply cannot know why God permits evils, and we should be spending our time and effort trying to prevent and resist evil, to alleviate suffering, and to make sure that justice is carried out.

- Adams, Marilyn McCord. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Adams, Marilyn McCord, and Robert Merihew Adams, eds. *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Buber, Martin. *Good and Evil*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952.
- Chopp, Rebecca S. *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies*. Mary Knoll: Orbis Books, 1986.
- Farley, Edward. *Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Farley, Wendy. *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990.

- Griffin, David Rey. *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsiderations*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Hick, John. *Evil and the God of Love*. Revised Edition. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Leaman, Oliver. *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Levenson, Jon D. *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Peterson, Michael L., ed. *The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992.
- Pinn, Anthony B. *Why, Lord?: Suffering and Evil in Black Theology*. New York: Continuum, 1995.
- Plantinga, Alvin. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
- Surin, Kenneth. *Theology and the Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Swinburne, Richard. *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998.
- Tilley, Terence. *The Evils of Theodicy*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991.

### *Philosophy and Evil*

While philosophy of religion books contend with the problem evil raises for belief in God, another vein of philosophy takes up the subject of evil quite apart from any questions about God. Tracing their roots to Kant's idea of radical evil and considering the failures of Western societies to achieve the ideals proposed by the Enlightenment, these books contend with the questions: How are we to understand evil and human nature? What does the occurrence of evil say about our moral life? Is the human will evil at its base? Is it possible to overcome evil?

- Copjec, Joan, ed. *Radical Evil*. London: Verso, 1996.

- Kekes, John. *Facing Evil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Midgley, Mary. *Wickedness: A Philosophical Essay*. London: Routledge, 1984.
- Taylor, Richard. *Good and Evil*. Revised Edition. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2000.

### *Evil in Anthropology and World Religions*

Most of the writings in this bibliography focus on Western perspectives on evil, but the following books either examine other cultures' views on evil or compare Western views of evil with those of other cultures, and in doing so, they provide an important perspective on our own understandings of evil.

- Alford, C. Fred. *Think No Evil: Korean Values in the Age of Globalization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Bowker, John. *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Boyd, J. W. *Satan and Mara: Christian and Buddhist Symbols of Evil*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975.
- Doniger O'Flaherty, Wendy. *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Parkin, David, ed. *The Anthropology of Evil*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985.

### *Evil and Literature*

Literature has been a vital part of discussions of evil from at least the time of the writing of Job. More and more philosophers and theologians are turning to literature in their discussions of our moral life. Certain literary texts have become touchstones in discussions of evil: e.g., Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. While many writings make reference to literature in their discussions of evil, a few books focus

explicitly on the relation between literature and evil, discussing the ways specific literary works present evil to us (e.g., Bataille); arguing that certain genres explore the sorts of questions that are raised by experiences of evil (e.g., Bouchard); or suggesting that literature can draw us into fascinated admiration for evil through glamorous (mis)representations of it (e.g., Shattuck).

- Bataille, George. *Literature and Evil*. Trans. Alastair Hamilton. New York: Marion Boyars, 1985.
- Bouchard, Larry. *Tragic Method and Tragic Theology: Evil in Contemporary Drama and Religious Thought*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989.
- McGinn, Colin. *Ethics, Evil, and Fiction*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1997.
- Shattuck, Roger. *Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.
- Tolczyk, Dariusz. *See No Evil: Literary Cover-Ups and Discoveries of the Soviet-Camp Experience*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

### *Evil and the Gothic*

Ten years ago, a bibliography on evil would not have included such a section, but in the past decade, interest in the Gothic, both as a literary genre and as a cultural phenomenon, has soared, and it is shaping our cultural understandings of evil, particularly those held by younger generations. Several elements of the Gothic have caught the attention of those interested in evil: its exploration of horror, violence, and terror; its engagement with the supernatural and its setting in an eerie past; and its focus on the mysterious, evil other. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when rationality was being championed in intellectual circles, the Gothic novel was exploring the irrational and the limits of rationality, bringing to the fore in literature what was being repressed in intellectual life. A similar situation is seen by many to be occurring today. The very idea of evil is being eclipsed by, among other things: the hyperbolically pos-



itive rhetoric of advertising; the new-age, self-help industry; the expectation that humans will be able to choose not just some specific traits, but everything about themselves (or at least their children-to-be). Eclipsed by these cultural phenomena, interest in evil erupts in other places. What follows are a few of the books that take up the Gothic as either a culture, a genre, or a way of thinking about evil.

- Edmundson, Mark. *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sodomasochism, and the Culture of Gothic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Davenport-Hines, Richard. *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil, and Ruin*. New York: North Point, 1999.
- Halttunen, Karen. *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Martin, Robert K., and Eric Savoy, eds. *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998.
- Punter, David, ed. *The Literature of Horror: A Companion to the Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

### *Evil, Suffering, and Pain*

Suffering has been evil's partner for centuries; it is evil's effect, its flip side. Discussions of evil cannot help but speak of suffering. However the two books listed below stand out in their attempts at understanding the personal and cultural significance of suffering; they focus specifically on the phenomenology of suffering and pain, on what the experience of pain is like, and how it both is shaped by the world and social context in which it occurs and shapes, or more accurately, misshapes the world for those who undergo it:

- Morris, David B. *The Culture of Pain*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

### *Women, Feminism, and Evil*

The connection made throughout history between women and evil is sorely obvious to anyone who takes a moment to think about it. Eve is often portrayed as the source of all evil, as both weak in giving in to the serpent's temptation and wily in leading Adam astray. Feminist thought has pointed out the ways in which women have been relegated to the margins, and, worse, made to be the evil other of men, and a long list of books could be listed as dealing with the equating of women and/or the feminine with what is wrong with the world. However, a few books specifically take up the connection between women and evil:

- Noddings, Nel. *Women and Evil*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Sands, Kathleen M. *Escape from Paradise: Evil and Tragedy in Feminist Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994.

### *The Devil and The Antichrist*

While Satan's death has recently been reported (Delbanco), he has had a long and lively career. Jeffrey Burton Russell's historical series on this figure, under his various aliases (the Devil, Lucifer, Mephistopheles, Prince of Darkness, Satan) is hard to surpass, for the sheer amount of information it brings to those interested in evil's most prominent representative. But these and other books on the devil—as well as those on evil's second most prominent representative, the Antichrist—are not mere biography: they chart conceptions of evil through time, externalizations of cultural understandings of evil, and ways in which societies or groups locate an other who is labeled evil.

- Delbanco, Andrew. *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995.
- Forsyth, Neil. *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*. New York: Random House, 1995.

- Fuller, Robert. *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- McGinn, Bernard. *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Pagels, Elaine. *The Origin of Satan*. New York: Random House, 1995.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- —————. *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- —————. *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.
- —————. *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- —————. *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

### *Evil in History: The Holocaust*

Historic evils abound but one, in particular, has focused discussions of evil: the Holocaust. Almost all recent writings on evil refer at some point to the Holocaust, and some of the most profound writings on the subject of evil are those written specifically about the Holocaust. Anyone interested in evil would do well to consider reading any number of the following books.

- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Browning, Christopher R. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.
- Hilberg, Raul. *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Three Volumes. Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

- Lang, Berel. *The Future of the Holocaust: Between History and Memory*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Thomas, Laurence Mordekhai. *Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.
- Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. Second Edition. Trans. Stella Rodway. New York: Bantam, 2000.
- —————, and Philippe-Michaël de Saint-Cheron. *Evil and Exile*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1990.