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Reconsidering evil : confronting Reflections with Confessions

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The notion of evil is not undisputed in contemporary philosophy and theology. The reasons for this vary from aversion to the use of a vague, comprehensive term like evil to hesitation at the suggestion of an uncontrollable, non-human power of force that seems to cling to the idea of evil. On the other hand, in popular discourse speaking of evil prevails — one almost keeps stumbling over allusions to it. However, such language often seems to be incidental and not a natural part of a whole way of thinking. Thus the present situation demands a regauging of the notion of evil. *Reconsidering Evil* attempts this regauging by comparing the nature and status of the theme of evil in four different approaches. Paul Ricœur's approach via symbols and myths of evil provides a focus that enables an analysis and comparison of the highly reflective views of Immanuel Kant, Karl Jaspers and Karl Barth — who represent an ethical, tragic and a non-theodician theological view respectively. This book sets out to determine whether one can claim that speaking of evil is most at home in a specific way of thinking. In the final chapter the notion of "the end of evil" turns out to be very important for understanding the specific character of a religious view of evil. In comparison with Kant's ethical view and Jaspers' tragic one, the broadest or richest understanding of evil is to be found in a religious context. However, the comparison of the different approaches also shows the possible dangers of this religious view. Thus, by means of an in-depth analysis and comparison of these thinkers, the relevance of the theme of evil for present day philosophy of religion is critically examined.

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