

Both in ordinary parlance and in philosophical reflection through the ages, a core way of representing someone as acting well is to say that she is acting selflessly. Conversely, someone is represented as failing to act well when she is said to act selfishly. This way of speaking appears to be so formative of ethical thought that one may undertake to understand the tradition of reflection on the good as the attempt to achieve clarity with respect to this original idea: the idea of selfless action. For, the idea is puzzling, and may even strike one as mysterious.

It is puzzling because it seems that action, as a form of vital activity, returns to itself: animal action sustains itself. An animal acts in a way that conforms to the inner standard of perfection that resides in its life-form, and that, in this sense, is good, sustains itself, and sustains this way of acting. Insofar as human agency maintains any form of conceptual continuity with animal movement, it appears it too must return to itself, even while that to which it returns – and therefore it – may be something sublime and spiritual in a way that makes it discontinuous with the life of other animals.

Thus is a difficulty there not only with the idea that action is good as it is selfless. There is the converse difficulty in the idea that action is evil as it is selfish. For, this appears to imply that human action is evil precisely insofar as it participates in the general form of vital activity, and returns to itself. That seems to condemn the human being to evil; it seems to mean that human life cannot but be evil. And now it seems we must assert the goodness of life against the morbidity of morality.

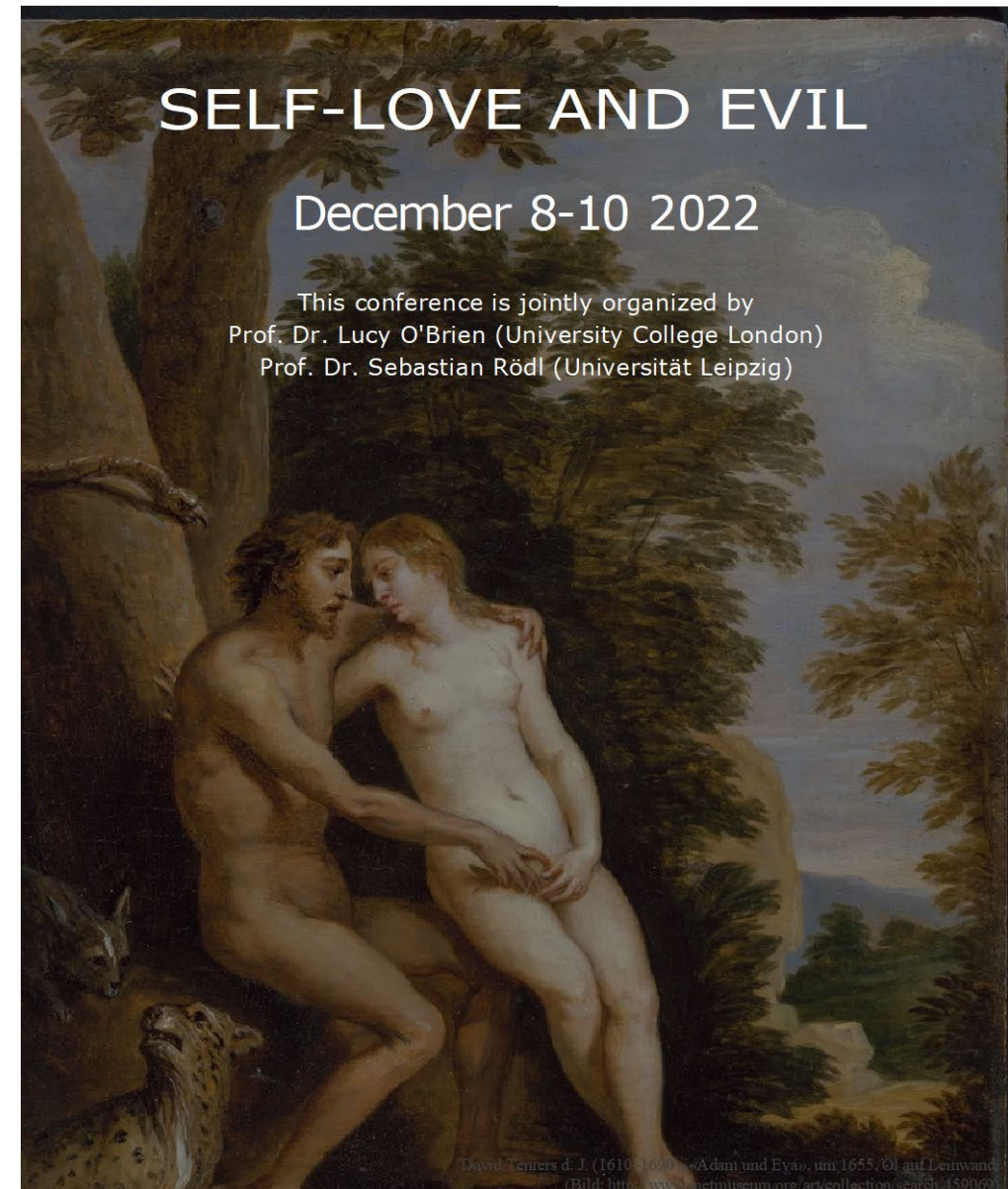
All of these very just and fine reflections, however, have no power whatsoever to dislodge the authority that the original idea exerts over our practical thought that she who acts selflessly therein acts well. Whence the puzzle, and the mystery. The conference “Self-love and Evil” will be devoted to exploring the conceptual space circumscribed by the idea of good and evil, of self-love and love of others.

Venue

Villa Tillmanns
Wächterstraße 30, 04107 Leipzig
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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8th 2022, 4.30 pm – 5.00 pm

Welcome

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8th 2022, 5.00 pm – 6.30 pm

Sebastian Rödl (Leipzig)

The Life

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9th 9:45 am – 11:15 am

Edward Harcourt (Oxford)

**Which Excellences? Human Excellence in Psychotherapy, in Moral
Philosophy and in Contemporary Society**

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9th 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Katrien Schaubroeck (Antwerpen)

**Evil and unselfing: Can Iris Murdoch support the theory of moral
encroachment?**

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9th 2.30 – 4.00 pm

Zdravko Kobe (Ljubljana)

Reason in Love: Reason, Love and the Self in Kant and Hegel

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9th 4.15 – 5.45 pm

Lucy O'Brien (London)

Self-Concern and Non-Selfish Well-Being

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10th 10:30 am – 12:00 pm

Daniela Dover (Oxford)

TBO

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10th 2 pm – 3:30 pm

Christoph Menke (Frankfurt)

Law and Command. The Transcendence of Normativity

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10th 4.15 – 5.45 pm

Tom Stern (London)

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on Life and Evil