

Arne Johan Vetlesen

Studies of Evil

Studier i ondskap

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English sample translation available

NON-FICTION
PHILOSOPHY



PHOTO: SIMEN KJELLIN

When a bomb exploded in Oslo's government district on 22 July 2011, followed by mass killings on Utøya, Norway found itself at the centre of an act of evil that no one in the country could have imagined. Carried out by a fellow Norwegian.

Arne Johan Vetlesen has worked on the phenomenon of evil for several decades. In this book, he studies a number of historical examples of atrocities in order to answer difficult and important questions: What is the motivation behind acts of evil? Are perpetrators venting their inner aggressions when perpetrators rape, maim or kill? Or is the opposite the case? That the emotional life must be shut off in order to carry out evil?

What about the victims of evil and their families? Should they be required to be part of reconciliation? Should we forgive cruel perpetrators rather than hold resentment against them? Is there such a thing as an unforgivable act?

The goal of this book is to make us better prepared to explain and counteract evil.

Arne Johan Vetlesen studied philosophy with Jürgen Habermas in Frankfurt from 1985 to 1990. He submitted his PhD on the role of emotions in morality in 1992 and has since 1998 been professor of philosophy at the University of Oslo, teaching mainly in the fields of moral, social, political, and environmental philosophy. Vetlesen has published twenty books, among them *Perception, Empathy, and Judgment* (Penn State Press, 1994), *Evil and Human Agency* (Cambridge U.P., 2005), *A Philosophy of Pain* (Reaktion Books, 2010), and *The Denial of Nature* (Routledge, 2015). Vetlesen is a columnist in several newspapers and one of Norway's most prolific public intellectuals, frequently lecturing to audiences outside of the university such as schools and various professions.

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