



St Paul's High School Philosophy Prize

The Department of Religion at St Paul's High School is promoting an annual essay competition open to all current Grade 12 students on the subject of Philosophy. The winning entry will be awarded a \$500 scholarship at Convocation in June. Each submission will be reviewed by a panel of faculty and judged on its merits, considering:

- Clarity and coherence of expression,
- Persuasiveness of argument, and
- Originality of thought.

The deadline for entries is **Friday, May 30, 2025**. Essays, typed and double-spaced, 500-1000 words in length, should be submitted by email to Dr. R. Puchniak in a *pdf* format (rpuchniak@stpauls.mb.ca). The evaluation of essays will be completed blindly, that is, without knowledge of the student author, by an anonymous panel of faculty judges.

Applicants need not have been personally schooled in the academic study of Philosophy. Consider the words of New York University professor, Thomas Nagel:

"Our analytical capacities are often highly developed before we have learned a great deal about the world, and around the age of fourteen many people start to think about philosophical problems on their own – about what really exists, whether we can know anything, whether anything is really right or wrong, whether life has any meaning, whether death is the end. These problems have been written about for thousands of years, but the philosophical raw material comes directly from the world and our relation to it, not from writings of the past. That is why they come up again and again, in the heads of people who haven't read about them" (*What Does It All Mean?*).

In the spirit of the Proclamation of the *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) to create a World Philosophy Day in 2005, this contest aims to:

1. Foster a commitment to philosophical writing as a discipline that requires critical and independent thought,
2. Create awareness of the need for analytical and responsible reflection, and
3. Encourage the free exchange of ideas among students and faculty at St Paul's.

Below is the question for the 2025 contest:

In her work, *The Monarchy of Fear* (2018), the philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues: "Great leaders understand that we need to retain and fortify the spirit of determined protest against wrongdoing, without comforting ourselves with retributive thinking" (p. 87). [By "retributive thinking" she means that a wrongdoer ought to suffer for what they have done and experience some painful payback, as in "an eye for an eye."]

Nussbaum thinks there is “one species of anger” that is free of wishing for retribution, that is, when someone says, “How outrageous that is. Something must be done about that.” This type of anger “expresses a protest, but faces forward: it gets to work finding solutions rather than dwelling on the infliction of... pain” (p. 74). Some might call this species of anger moral outrage, others righteous indignation.

What, if anything, calls for moral outrage in our world today? What should every conscientious citizen be angry about, and why?

A.M.D.G.

