

## **Crimes crying out to heaven? A philosophical exploration of the religious in responses to mass atrocity**

The purpose of this post doc project is to explore the nature and value of uses of religious language, beliefs and practices in attempts to understand or come to terms with an atrocious past. Confronted with massive and heinous violations of human rights - the Holocaust and other genocides of the twentieth century - witnesses, judges, commissioners, artists and others have often used religious vocabulary or images in attempts to deal with the questions arising in the aftermath of such mass atrocities. Moreover, several theologians and other scholars have claimed that religious perspectives and values have an essential and valuable role to play in relation to efforts to understand and deal with mass atrocity; that without such perspectives we - anyone - cannot grasp the nature of evil or the sense of horror; that without a notion of eschatological hope, we risk giving in to despair; that without a devotion to the value and virtue of forgiveness there is no future; that religion is a key to preserve our sense of evildoers as fellow human beings and as something apart from their deeds, etc. There is, however, a need for a critical assessment of the possibilities and problems pertaining to attempts to bring religious - or semi-religious - allegiances and perspectives to bear in responses to mass atrocities of our time: When and how can religious language or religious beliefs and practices be either necessary or helpful? And what are the problems and reasons for caution or critique?