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# Hegel, History, and Evil

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# Hegel, History, and Evil

Philip J. Kain

## I.

In the Philosophy of Right, Hegel tells us that what he means by “right” includes not merely morality (Moralität) and ethics (Sittlichkeit) but world history.<sup>1</sup> He even tells us that the right of world history “is the highest right” (PR [White] §33, §33A).<sup>2</sup> He tells us that, through interaction with other nations, the spirit of a people realizes itself in world history (PR §33). This can involve a collision of rights, and such collision will mean that one right gets subordinated to another: “Only the right of world spirit is absolute without restriction” (PR [White] §30R).<sup>3</sup> It is quite clear, then, that, without understanding spirit’s realization in world history,<sup>4</sup> we cannot understand right in its highest sense. That is what I will try to explain in what follows.

Hegel tells us that world history falls outside the perspective from which justice, virtue, wrongdoing, violence, guilt, and innocence have their significance (PR §345). He tells us that “world history moves on a higher plane than that to which morality properly belongs” (LPWHI, 141; see also PR §337R). This, clearly, is to say that world spirit is higher than morality--but it is not to say that world spirit is higher than right. And it is certainly not to say that world spirit subordinates right to might, as Popper (1966, 2:66) would have it. Hegel tells us that world history is a

court of world judgment--a judgment, moreover, that is rendered not merely by its might and a blind destiny. . . . World history is this divine tragedy, where spirit rises up above pity, ethical life, and everything that in other spheres is sacred to it. . . . Nothing

profounder can be said than Schiller's words, "World history is a court of world judgment. . . ." The court of world judgment is not to be viewed as the mere might of spirit. . . . World history . . . is always an advance to something higher (LNRPS §164; see also PR §259A, §340).

Hegel also says, "world-history is not a court of judgment, whose principle is force, nor is it the abstract and irrational necessity of a blind fate. It is self-caused and self-realized reason, and its actualized existence in spirit is knowledge" (PR [Dyde] §342).

World history, for Hegel, very clearly is not merely a matter of power--it is not the rule of might. It is the realization of reason (PR [Knox] §273R). World history, while it can violate morality, nevertheless realizes not only right but the highest right. It is in this sense that we must understand Hegel's claim that the "the state consists in the march of God in the world, and its basis is the power of reason actualizing itself" (PR §258A).<sup>5</sup>

World spirit can violate morality--let us not pull our punches here--world spirit involves a great deal of evil:

In the history of the world, we see before us the concrete image of evil in its most fully developed form. If we consider the mass of individual happenings, history appears as an altar on which individuals and entire nations are immolated; we see all that is noblest and finest destroyed (LPWHI, 212).<sup>6</sup>

If world spirit involves such highly developed evil, how, then, could it possibly produce right, let alone the highest right? Such a view is not really that unusual. Traditional theology holds that God's providence brings good out of evil. Human evil is used by God to bring about a good that humans neither intended nor foresaw. And, indeed, in the introduction to the

Philosophy of History, Hegel says that his “investigation can be seen as a theodicy, a justification of the ways of God”:

It should enable us to comprehend all the ills of the world, including the existence of evil, so that thinking spirit may be reconciled with the negative aspects of existence; and it is in world history that we encounter the sum total of concrete evil. . . . In other words, we must first of all know what the ultimate design of the world really is, and secondly, we must see that this design has been realized. . . . In order to justify the course of history, we must try to understand the role of evil in the light of the absolute sovereignty of reason. (LPWHI, 42-43)

## II.

It is quite clear that Kant too holds that evil can produce a higher good. He writes in Perpetual Peace (hereafter PP):

[M]any assert it [a republic] would have to be a state of angels because human beings, with their self-seeking inclinations, would not be capable of such a sublime form of constitution. . . . The problem of establishing a state, no matter how hard it may sound is soluble even for a nation of devils (if only they have understanding) and goes like this: “Given a multitude of rational beings all of whom need universal laws for their preservation but each of whom is inclined covertly to exempt himself from them, so to order this multitude and establish their constitution that, although in their private dispositions they strive against one another, these yet so check one another that in their public conduct the result is the same as if they had no such evil dispositions.” (1966, 8:366)<sup>7</sup>

Given such conditions, the evil of devils can produce a good that one might only expect from angels. Moreover, I have argued elsewhere, this very same notion is found in Kant's philosophy of history, a philosophy of history that very much anticipates Hegel. In the "Idea for a Universal History" (hereafter IUH), Kant tells us that, in history, there are two forces at work. The first is the conflict of particular interests; the second is morality. And both, for Kant, lead to the same end. Conflict and war, that is, evil, leads toward morality (1963, 8:24-25).<sup>8</sup>

The pursuit of national self-interest impels nations toward conflict, aggression, and war. At the same time, these nations have an interest in commerce and trade. The interaction between these forces, Kant thinks, will eventually lead to peace, international law, and a league of nations. Selfishness and aggression will lead toward morality. As wars become more threatening, destructive, and costly, they become more risky. As they become more disruptive, they interfere with commerce. As nations become more economically interdependent, war poses a bigger and bigger problem for the international market. Other nations will step in to arbitrate, to prevent the war, in order to safeguard their own national concerns. This will start the move toward a league of nations (IUH, 8:20-21, 28; PP, 8:360-62, 365, 368).

At the same time, the second force at work in history, namely, morality, would demand just laws and an end to wars. We could not will the opposite--that is, the universalization of war and unjust laws. Morality, for Kant, would also require a league of nations (PP, 8:356). And the first force, we have just seen in the previous paragraph, would drive us toward the very same end. War between nations, given their commercial interests, will drive them toward peace, law, and a league of nations. In Kant's view, both morality and war converge toward the same end (IUH, 8:24-25; PP, 8:365-67).

Either of these forces alone without the other would be insufficient to achieve our end. Morality alone is too weak to produce a league of nations and just states. Human beings, Kant thinks, are too corrupt (IUH, 8:23). At the same time, conflict and war could never actually make us moral. They effectively drive us toward peace, a league of nations, and legality, which is to say that self-interest drives us toward these things, but self-interest cannot be moral for Kant. Put more provocatively, then, it is evil that drives us toward morality.

It is important to be very clear here that Kant is not a consequentialist or a utilitarian. Evil that produces good consequences is still evil. Kant says,

Even if a constitution more in conformity with law were attained illegitimately, by the violence of a revolution engendered by a bad constitution, it could then not be held permissible to lead the people back to the old one, although during the revolution anyone who took part in it by violence or intrigue would be subject with right to the punishment of rebels (PP, 8:372-73).

If a higher good is brought about by evil means, we accept the higher good; indeed, we would be morally obliged to accept it. Nevertheless, the evil that produced it remains evil and must be treated as evil. Evil does not become good because it produces good consequences.

### **III.**

I have argued at length elsewhere (Kain 1995) that Machiavelli also holds this sort of view. A common, but I think mistaken, way to interpret Machiavelli is as a utilitarian or a consequentialist in the moral realm. From such a perspective, it might seem that, if something is necessary for the good of the state, it would be morally justified. Machiavelli, it is very definitely the case, holds that to act for the good of the state it is sometimes necessary to perform acts that

are evil and that they are, therefore, to be approved--I think we should say--politically. But it does not at all follow from this that they would be justified morally. Perhaps Machiavelli slips now and again, but he understands the difference between good and evil with exceptional clarity and, generally speaking, does not pull his punches. He says clearly and explicitly that the prince “must learn to be able not to be good” (1985, 61) and that the prince must “know how to enter into evil” (ibid., 70). Just because something is politically necessary does not change the fact that it is morally evil.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps Machiavelli’s views are most dramatically expressed in a passage from the Mandragola where Callimaco says, “[T]he worst you can get from it is that you’ll die and go to Hell. But how many others have died! And in Hell how many worthy men there are! Are you ashamed to go there?” (1965, 2:805). This implies that good and evil are absolutes. Evil is objectively, God-proclaimed, evil. There is no utilitarian or consequentialist escape here--evil cannot be transformed into good. Evil lands you in hell. Nevertheless, it is politically necessary to do evil. So you must accept that. You perform the evil, and then you must courageously endure the punishment. After all, as Machiavelli tells us, there are some very worthy people in hell.<sup>10</sup> There is a lot of bravado involved here. It is even rather impressive. Nevertheless, it is clear that it does not get you out of hell. Evil is evil. And you pay the penalty in hell.

Moreover, this cannot easily be dismissed as something that might be attributed just to Callimaco and not to Machiavelli. Machiavelli’s biographers inform us that he told the following story on his deathbed.<sup>11</sup> I quote de Grazia’s translation:

He sees a long file of people, ragged, sick, weak, and weary. Asking who they are, he is told that they are the blessed of paradise whom one reads about in scripture: “Blessed are the poor for theirs in the kingdom of heaven.” As they fade from sight he sees gathering a

group of impressive persons in courtly attire, walking and gravely discussing matters of state. Among them he recognizes Plato, Plutarch, Livy, Tacitus, and other famous men of antiquity. These, he is told, are the damned of hell, because it is written: “The wisdom of this world is the enemy of God.” As they stroll off, Niccolò hears himself being asked: “With whom would you rather go?” “Me?” he said, “I am not tagging along with those ragbags to go to paradise. I am staying with that other company, to talk about the state and go to hell” (de Grazia 1989, 341).<sup>12</sup>

There is a widespread belief, especially among Straussians, that Machiavelli is an atheist. Not that it matters for my argument, but my suspicion would be that Machiavelli actually believes in hell. It is obvious that he is not very religious, but he does not seem to be an atheist. As de Grazia rather elegantly puts it, “The most his enemies can say is that while he does not lack faith, there is not much to spare” (1989, 4). Furthermore, as de Grazia points out, Machiavelli never questions the existence of the clergy, the papacy, or the church (ibid., 115). Nor does he ever attack Christian dogma (Villari 1883, 4:422). Ridolfi (1963, 250) and Villari (1883, 4:421) tell us that, on his deathbed, he confessed his sins. It would seem that Machiavelli believes in hell. That means that he thinks that evil is evil and that it will send you to hell. Despite that, he thinks it necessary to do evil. But even if Machiavelli is an atheist, as the Straussians think, he still thinks evil--as necessary as it might be politically--remains evil. And so if we were to decide that the Straussians are right, then we would want to say that Machiavelli uses religion as a metaphor to indicate that evil, despite being necessary, remains evil. Either way, it is clear that he completely lacks the utilitarian’s ability to cheat and to transform evil into good. Machiavelli is a consequentialist in the political sphere. In the moral sphere, he is a rather strict deontologist and not a consequentialist at all.<sup>13</sup>



#### IV.

Hegel discusses Machiavelli in several places and argues that he and Machiavelli share the same concern: the realization of a modern state out of a feudal morass. Moreover, Hegel agrees with Machiavelli that the actions necessary to realize a modern state are justified--in Hegel's view, they are justified by world spirit. Moreover, Hegel agrees with Machiavelli that such actions are justified even if from the perspective of morality they are abominable. For both Hegel and Machiavelli, evil is necessary to produce a higher right. Hegel says of Machiavelli's The Prince:

This book has often been thrown aside in disgust, as replete with the maxims of the most revolting tyranny; but nothing worse can be urged against it than that the writer, having the profound consciousness of the necessity for the formation of a State, has here exhibited the principles on which alone states could be founded in the circumstances of the times. The chiefs who asserted an isolated independence, and the power they arrogated, must be entirely subdued; and though we cannot reconcile with our idea of Freedom, the means which he proposes as the only efficient ones, and regards as perfectly justifiable--inasmuch as they involve the most reckless violence, all kinds of deception, assassination, and so forth--we must nevertheless confess that the feudal nobility, whose power was to be subdued, were assailable in no other way (Hegel 1956, 403).

In this passage, it is clear that evil means, while necessary to achieve a higher right, are nevertheless not reconcilable with freedom--which is to say they are not moral. In earlier writings, such as The German Constitution, Hegel also discussed Machiavelli, but there it was not perfectly clear that he thought such actions, for Machiavelli, were morally evil (1999, 80-81,

98). In another of these earlier writings, Hegel and the Human Spirit, he even says that, in The Prince, “in the constituting of the state, in general, what is called assassination, fraud, cruelty, etc., carries no sense of evil” (1983, 155).

In later writings, however, it is clear that Hegel’s view is that evil acts can produce a higher right, but, nevertheless, immoral acts remain immoral:

In the Roman people the injustice of continually interfering in everything was justified because it was the right of world spirit. Individuals who take the lead in such a people and at such a time, even if they act in an immoral fashion by despising the rights of others, are nonetheless responsible for its being executed [that is, the right of world spirit]. Here the absolute idea of spirit has absolute right against everything else. (LNRPS §164)

Hegel (1983, 171) even says that war is crime on behalf of the universal. He also says that “for the sake of world spirit . . . Caesar had the right to overturn the republic,” yet, at the same time, “Brutus meted out justice, his right deserts, to Caesar as an individual” (LNRPS §8). In other words, Caesar’s actions both produced a higher right and, at the same time, were justly punished as evil. Here Hegel even sounds like Kant, who, in a passage quoted above, argued that, if a revolution were to produce a better constitution, we would be morally obliged to accept that constitution, but that the revolutionaries would still rightly be subject to punishment (PP, 8:372-73). Evil means can produce a higher right but are still evil and should be treated as evil.

In another passage, Hegel is even clearer:

Those who, on ethical grounds . . . have resisted what the progress of the Idea of the spirit required, stand higher in moral worth than those whose crimes have been transformed by a higher order into the instruments of realizing its will. (LPWHI, 141)<sup>14</sup>

Thus, I think it is Hegel's view that evil realizes a higher right, a higher right that is justified, yet the evil that realizes it remains evil. We do not, like utilitarians, decide that evil gets transformed into good, just because it realizes a higher right.

Going further, Hegel even argues that morality has relatively little to do with realizing a higher right. He makes this point, as I have argued elsewhere (Kain 2005, 106ff), in the section of the Phenomenology titled "Virtue and the Way of the World," which should be read as a commentary on Kant's philosophy of history. In that section, Hegel describes "virtue" such that it is clear that he has Kant's ethics in mind. Virtue is the consciousness that law is essential and that particular interest must be rejected (PhS, 228-30). On the other hand, the "way of the world" actively pursues self-interest and thus subordinates the universal to itself. For Kant, we saw, morality and the conflict of particular interests both lead toward the very same end. Likewise, for Hegel, the way of the world achieves the universal--the same universal that virtue wants to realize (PhS, 228-29, 235). For Kant, morality was supposed to guide the conflict of particular interest and help it toward its goal. So also, for Hegel, virtue attempts to aid the way of the world. But here Hegel begins to disagree with Kant. Hegel holds that, really, virtue's help is not necessary; the way of the world is able to bring about the universal by itself (PhS, 230-32; see also PP, 8:366). Virtue thinks it must realize the good through the sacrifice of particular interest. But it is particular interest that is able to realize the universal. As Hegel says in a famous passage from the introduction to the Philosophy of History,

The particular interests of passion cannot . . . be separated from the realization of the universal; for the universal arises out of the particular and determinate and its negation.

The particular has its own interests in world history; it is of a finite nature, and as such, it must perish. Particular interests contend with one another, and some are destroyed in the

process. But it is from this very conflict and destruction of particular things that the universal emerges, and it remains unscathed itself. For it is not the universal Idea which enters into opposition, conflict, and danger; it keeps itself in the background, untouched and unharmed, and sends forth the particular interests of passion to fight and wear themselves out in its stead. It is what we may call the cunning of reason that it sets the passions to work in its service, so that the agents by which it gives itself existence must pay the penalty and suffer the loss. (LPWHI, 89)

It is Hegel's view, then, that what emerges in world history is reason, the universal, the highest right. And it is not his view that morality can be relied upon to produce this higher right. What produces it is the opposition of particular interests and the dangerous conflict, even war, that results from this opposition. Moreover, there is no suggestion that, in utilitarian fashion, these interests are to be judged moral just because they give rise to the highest right. In many cases, they are destroyed in the conflict--and fortunately so. In short, evil in conflict with evil produces the highest right, despite that fact that it is and remains evil.

## V.

And so I disagree with Avineri on these matters. He thinks Hegel rejects the conventional theory that "condemns war on general moral principles but ultimately finds justification for legitimizing some kind of military service." Avineri thinks that "a theory which would just dismiss the means as utterly unworthy while welcoming the results, would be both a very poor theory on theoretical grounds, and hypocritical, if not outright immoral, on ethical ones." And so Avineri thinks that Hegel wants an understanding of "war which would transcend the mere moralism of condemnation" (1972, 195). I think there is a scrupulous integrity in Machiavelli, Kant, and

Hegel that Avineri misses. They realize that evil can bring about good. They accept and value the good. But they do not therefore give in to utilitarianism and count the evil as a good. Evil is evil, despite the fact that it can lead to good.

Wood takes a different tack. In Hegel's Ethical Thought, he argues that there is nothing new in the notion that evil can produce good. Mandeville, Adam Smith, and others held the view (1990, 228). In my opinion, what is new and different about Hegel, Kant, and Machiavelli is not simply the idea that evil produces good, but rather that, in doing so, the evil remains evil. Wood does not agree with this. He thinks that what makes Hegel's view new (and scandalous) is that, in doing evil, great individuals have absolute right on their side, which is to say that the evil does not remain evil--it becomes absolutely right (ibid., 228). Moreover, Wood thinks that such absolute right is not to be understood as an "ethical advance," not an advance to a "superior ethical order," but a movement to something "higher than the ethical." He thinks that what we have in "world history is a right that supersedes the ethical. It is, if you like, a right that is beyond the ethical, beyond good and evil" (ibid., 223). Consequently, Wood thinks that, in judging world-historical individuals, Hegel holds that "there can be actions that morality (even ethics) has no right to judge." Hegel even holds that such individuals "have an 'absolute right' or supramoral justification for their evil deeds" (ibid., 230). But this simply does not fit with the passage quoted above where Hegel says, "Those who, on ethical grounds . . . have resisted what the progress of the Idea of the spirit required, stand higher in moral worth than those whose crimes have been transformed by a higher order into the instruments of realizing its will" (LPWHI, 141). To say that these individuals stand higher in moral worth because they resist the progress of spirit on ethical grounds is to say that they stand higher in moral worth because they stand against evil. It is an evil that is necessary to realize a higher order, but it is still evil. Nor

does Wood's view fit with Hegel's claim that "Brutus meted out justice, his right deserts, to Caesar as an individual" (LNRPS §8). This too suggests that Caesar's actions, while necessary to realize a higher right, remain evil--and were justly punished as such. And so I do not think that Hegel holds, as Wood puts it, that there is "an absolute right to do wrong" (1990, 235).

Hegel, it is true, belittles the schoolmaster who can see nothing but the evil in world historical figures, who reduces them merely to their self-interest, and has no sense that a higher right was realized (LPWHI, 87). However, the point here, I suggest, is not that the schoolmaster is completely wrong, but rather that the schoolmaster lets go one side of the issue. Yes, the world historical figure acted immorally, but, at the same time, the world historical figure contributed to the realization of a higher right. We must hold together the higher right and the evil that realized it. We must not transform one into the other, either as the schoolmaster reduces the higher right to the self-interested evil of the world historical individual or as the utilitarian does in deciding that the evil means necessary to produce the higher right must be seen as moral.

Nor do I think it the case that the higher right realized in history for Hegel is to be understood as something supramoral, beyond the ethical, or beyond good and evil. It is clear, as Hegel himself says, that, when he speaks of right, he means "morality, ethics, and world history" (PR §33A). It is certainly the case that the higher right actualized in world history is higher than previously existing morality or ethics (PR [White] §33), but, at the same time, it is clear that it is not completely outside, beyond, or other than they because morality, ethics, and world history--all three of them--are forms of right. And world history realizes a higher right. Nor is it the case, as Walsh puts it, that just because something "succeeded in getting itself accepted, it must have been right" (1969, 54). It is Hegel's view that world history realizes what really is right, a higher

right, not something beyond right--if that is what "beyond the ethical, beyond good and evil" is supposed to mean.

Wood distinguishes between two standpoints that he thinks are found in Hegel, one amoral and one moral. The latter holds that (1) great men can, from a moral standpoint, be accused of moral evil but that this standpoint has no significance from (2) the higher standpoint of world history that is amoral--or beyond good and evil (1990, 229-30, 223). I think Wood is mistaken. In the first place, I think that (2), the higher standpoint of world history, is not amoral--not beyond good and evil. It gives us a higher right, a higher good, a higher morality, and precisely in doing so is it justified. Moreover, I do not think that (1), the moral standpoint, lacks higher significance. It does not because it is evil that produces the higher right, the higher morality. That makes it quite significant. Furthermore, the evil that produces the higher right remains evil. It is not justified by the higher right; it is not transformed into good. It remains evil. Yet it does so without being stripped of its significance--because it is what produces the higher right.

World history drives us toward the universal. It drives us toward greater and greater universality--it drives us toward the ethical, toward a higher and higher right. To take an example that Hegel uses in several places: we find in early history the principle of revenge (PR §102, §102A, §349R).<sup>15</sup> If a member of my clan is harmed, I have an obligation to retaliate and kill the offender. Thus, the ethical prohibition against killing extends no further than the clan. You must not kill a clan member. There is no such prohibition against outsiders who harm the clan. Outsiders are not treated in the same way as clan members.

As history advances, the prohibition against killing may extend to a city or a religious faith. In the modern world, Hegel thinks, the scope of any law will extend to a whole nation. For

Kant, the law should become international--regulated by a league of nations. One wonders whether Hegel is not driven in this direction also, but he definitely resists it (for example, PR §324A, §333R). At any rate, the scope of any law increases through history--it becomes more and more universal.

What makes this occur? Restricting laws to a limited range will inevitably produce conflict. If my clan takes its revenge, the other clan will be forced to take its revenge, which then forces our clan to take its revenge again. We soon end up with a feud cycle that will be hard to stop (PR §102). As we have seen in Kant, it is such conflict that drives us toward the universal. Anything that is less than universal, anything we cannot universalize, anything that is not the same for all, will inevitably come into conflict with the interests of others and will drive us to expand the law, make it more universal, to evade the conflict. We will, thus, be pushed toward the universal, the rational, the right. That is the very core of the philosophy of history found in Kant and developed by Hegel (LPWHI, 82).

## **VI.**

It is also Hegel's view that "World history is . . . divine tragedy, where spirit rises up above pity, ethical life, and everything that in other spheres is sacred to it" (LNRPS §164). He tells us,

One is sad to see the decline of great peoples. . . . But what has been laid low, has been laid low and had to be laid low. World spirit is unsparing and pitiless. Even the finest, highest principle of a people is, as the principle of a particular people, a restricted principle, left behind by the advancing spirit of the age. (LNRPS §164)



And in another text, “If we consider the mass of individual happenings, history appears as an altar on which individuals and entire nations are immolated; we see all that is noblest and finest destroyed” (LPWHI, 212).

Hegel is a tragic thinker. Such thinkers try to find a higher good within tragic pain, suffering, and collapse. Spirit is quintessentially tragic. The higher good only emerges out of the conflict, collapse, and destruction of lower, more limited principles. World spirit must destroy what previously counted as valid if it is to realize a new higher right (LNRPS, 329).<sup>16</sup> World history is, as another translation (Reason in History) has it, “the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been sacrificed” (1953, 27).

What we have in tragedy, as well as in history, for Hegel, is a clash of rights, not a clash between right and wrong. After all, the triumph of right over wrong would hardly be tragic. Furthermore, as we have seen, Hegel does not think virtue is that powerful a force in history. History is a clash between rights, which leads to the destruction of those rights, out of which a higher right emerges (Hegel 1999, 70). As Hegel put it in a passage previously cited,

[T]here was no greater right than that Rome should be a republic; but for the sake of the spirit of the world, whose tool he was, Caesar had the right to overturn the republic, yet Brutus meted out justice, his right deserts, to Caesar as an individual. The single individual who sets himself up as the embodiment of the will of the world ends by being destroyed. (LNRPS §8).

As Hegel puts it in the Aesthetics,

The original essence of tragedy consists . . . in the fact that . . . each of the opposed sides, if taken by itself, has justification; while each can establish the true and positive content

of its own aim and character only by denying and infringing the equally justified power of the other. The consequence is that in its moral life, and because of it, each is nevertheless involved in guilt. (1975a, 2:1196; see also PhS, 448)

This conflict of rights can be found within a single community or between different communities. An example of the first, Hegel argues in the Phenomenology, would be the conflict between divine law and human law in the ancient polis, especially as depicted in Sophocles's Antigone (PhS, 266ff). An example of the second would be war between states, where two rights clash, both of them legitimate, with no accepted adjudication except war itself (see Avineri 1972, 202). Such rights, we must realize, are deeply embedded in the customs, traditions, practices, institutions, and laws of a community. When such rights clash and are destroyed, despite the fact that a higher right will emerge, it means the tragic destruction of a whole community, even a whole nation (LPWHI, 82; also see Lukács 1975, 416-17).<sup>17</sup> There is a serious price to be paid for the realization of the higher right. Its realization inevitably involves a great deal of suffering and destruction, that is, of evil.

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## **Notes**

1. There are four translations of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (cited here as PR) available in English--that by Nisbet (Hegel 1991), by Knox (Hegel 1952), by Dyde (Hegel 2005), and by White (Hegel 2002). I will usually use the Nisbet translation. When I cite from the other translations, I will indicate the translator: for example, PR (White). In citing the PR, I will cite paragraph numbers, rather than page numbers, so that any edition, English or German, may be

used: for example, PR §127. To these numbered paragraphs, Hegel appended remarks. Depending on the translator, these appear after the main text in a different font or as indented. These will be indicated as, for example, PR §127R. Besides these remarks, there are additions incorporated by E. Gans from the lecture notes of Hegel's students. These will be indicated as, for example, PR §127A. And besides these additions, White, in his translation, adds supplements taken from now-published versions of student transcriptions of Hegel's lectures. These I will indicate as, for example, PR §127S.

2. Hegel distinguishes Moralität from Sittlichkeit. Moralität is morality that is rational and reflective. Reason decides what is moral, and one acts because reason tells one it is the right thing to do. For Hegel, Moralität begins with Socrates and reaches its high point in Kant. Sittlichkeit, on the other hand, is found especially in the Greek polis before the rise of Socratic Moralität (PR [White] §144S ). It is ethical behavior based on custom and tradition and developed through imitation and habit in agreement with the practices and laws of the community. Sittlichkeit is ethical life built into one's character, disposition, and feelings. For an earlier and lengthier treatment of these matters, see Kain 2005, 88ff. I will, however, often use the word "morality" much more loosely, that is, without distinguishing Moralität from Sittlichkeit, when that conceptual distinction is not being emphasized, or is not apparent, in Hegel's text or when both Moralität and Sittlichkeit are meant.

3. See also Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History (hereafter LPWHI) (Hegel 1975b, 124); also Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science (hereafter LNRPS) (Hegel 1995, 329).

4. To begin to understand what Hegel means by spirit (Geist), or world spirit (Weltgeist), we might think of things like the "spirit of an age," the "spirit of capitalism," or the "American

spirit,” in other words, a worldview in which a people expresses its aims, values, significance, and meaning to itself. Hegel calls this the “Idea.” This people, then, through its activity in the world will embody this Idea in its laws, practices, customs, morality, ethical life, culture, philosophy, and religion. The Idea gets objectified, concretized, institutionalized. As it does so, it will be recognized by its people and will animate the people’s passion, activity, and drive. The people will act in history--act for its Idea (LPWHI, 52, 56, 58, 101, 112, 138). From the perspective of the Idea, we might metaphorically speak of the intentions of a mind. Nothing is outside this spiritual consciousness--this absolute totality. Hegel even calls it God (LPWHI, 46, 77). This Idea has a drive to unfold itself, to become aware of itself, to reflect upon itself, to know itself, to know everything in itself (LPWHI, 53, 56). This reflection, however, is inseparable from, is nothing but, the reflections of a people--their aspirations, values, self-understanding, and goals. Spirit, the Idea, the Absolute, requires humanity for its realization. Hegel writes, “The province of the spirit is created by man himself; and whatever ideas we may form of the kingdom of God, it must always remain a spiritual kingdom which is realized in man and which man is expected to translate into actuality” (LPWHI, 44). For an earlier treatment of these matters that I follow here, see Kain 2015, 234-35.

5. By the realization of a “higher right,” I hope to show as we proceed (especially in Section V) that Hegel means the realization of a principle with greater scope and universality. Conflict in history, he thinks, forces us beyond the restriction of principles to a narrow range. To take one example, for revenge codes, in early history the prohibition against killing was restricted only to one’s clan (see, for example, PR §102, §102A). You may even be obliged to kill outsiders. You are prohibited only from killing clan members. In later history, such prohibitions (indeed, all laws) would extend to a whole nation. This sort of historical

development toward universality Hegel takes to be a rational development, and, we will see, he takes it to be a necessary development. Indeed, in a passage that will be cited at the end of the present section, he will refer to it as the “absolute sovereignty of reason” (LPWHI, 43).

Moreover, I think this is what Hegel means when he speaks of “the power of reason actualizing itself” as the “march of God in the world.”

6. I will use the term “evil” the way that Hegel uses it in many places (as also do Kant and Machiavelli), that is, simply to indicate an action that is seriously immoral or seriously destructive of persons and/or their institutions. Hegel has a great many other things to say about evil. He thinks that “the origin of evil is to be found in the mystery of freedom, i.e., its speculative aspect--in the necessity that freedom emerge from the will’s natural condition.” It “marks the divide between irrational animals and human beings.” Human beings “are good only because they can also be evil. Good and evil are inseparable.” Evil is something that is both necessary and that ought not to be. Indeed, Hegel thinks evil “is essential within the concept of spirit.” (See PR [White] §139R, §139A, §139S. See also Phenomenology of Spirit (hereafter PhS) (Hegel 1977, 467-78). One might also compare Hegel’s view here to that of Kant (1991, 221-34). In a different sort of article, we might further pursue this speculative and theological conception of evil.

7. I have used the edition of Perpetual Peace found in Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy (1966), but, so that any edition, English or German, may be used, I cite the volume and page (given in the margins of most texts) of the standard Akademie edition of Kant’s works (1910-55).

8. I have used the L. W. Beck translation (1963), but, so that any edition, English or German, may be used, I cite the volume and page (given in the margins of most texts) of the

standard Akademie edition of Kant's works (1910-55). Also see PP, 8:366-67. Also, see my earlier and lengthier treatment of these matters in Kain 1993, Chapter 4.

9. For others who agree with this interpretation of Machiavelli, see Berlin (1980, 63), though Berlin fails to see, as I will argue, that Hegel holds a similar view. Meinecke, on the other hand, sees that Machiavelli "retained the basic Christian views on the difference between good and evil. When he advocated evil actions, he never denied them the epithet evil or attempted any hypocritical concealment" (1965, 33). Moreover, at times Meinecke sees that Hegel holds a very similar view. For Hegel, "absolutely everything serves to promote the progressive self-realization of divine reason; and what is peculiarly subtle and cunning about it is that it forces into its service even what is elemental, indeed even what is actually evil" (ibid., 349; see also 33-34). But then Meinecke thinks that, as Hegel's thought developed, he came to reject this similarity. Hegel "went over to a monistic ethic" and came to hold that the contrast "was no longer one between moral and immoral, it was rather between a lower and a higher type of morality and duty; and the State's duty to maintain itself was declared to be the supreme duty of the State, and ethical sanction was thereby given to its own selfish interest and advantage" (ibid., 357). I will argue that this is not Hegel's view. For a good discussion of Machiavelli, Meinecke, and Hegel, see Beiser (2005, 214-18).

10. Concerning Machiavelli's view of hell, see the fascinating book by de Grazia (1989, Chapters 13-14).

11. Ridolfi (1963, 249-50); Villari (1883, 4:424); De Grazia (1989, 341).

12. On the origins of this story, see de Grazia (1989, 341-42). I suggest the story is a variant on Socrates's argument in the Apology to the effect that the afterlife, if it exists, is not to

be feared because it will allow him to continue conversing as he always has, but now with great men like Homer, Odysseus, and others; see Plato, Apology, 40b-41c.

13. For Mill in Utilitarianism, no action is right or wrong in itself but is so only to the degree that it brings about utilitarian consequences--that is, happiness (2001, 7). While Mill is a rule utilitarian, not an act utilitarian, nevertheless, serious enough consequences can morally oblige us to override a rule (ibid., 23) and thus even to steal or kidnap (ibid., 63-64). Mill, of course, would not accept the notion that utilitarianism turns evil into good. Nothing is good or evil for him until we know how much happiness it produces. But if we are not utilitarians, if we are deontologists, if we hold that some actions simply are evil and if at the same time we accept that they can lead to good, then we would hold that utilitarianism transforms these actions that we know to be evil into moral actions.

14. Avineri (1972, 63-64) even tells us that Hegel supported Napoleon, even welcomed Prussia's defeat at his hands, which paved the way for a modernized and liberalized Prussian state, despite the fact that Hegel's own house was burned down by the French during the battle of Jena and Hegel was left without employment because the university was closed.

15. I have made this argument at greater length in Kain 2015, 226-41, which I follow here.

16. For a very different sort of discussion of Hegel as a tragic thinker, see Lukács (1975, 398-420). Lukács treats the tragic element in Hegel as part of a discussion of Marx and the history of nineteenth-century capitalism. Modern tragedy is a characteristic of declining bourgeois culture that will be overcome in socialism--and, in Lukács' opinion, Hegel has at least a dim awareness of this (ibid., 400-406). At the same time, Lukács says, dismissively, that Hegel

treats tragedy, which is “a specific modern problem as if it were an eternal human conflict” (ibid., 405). And, indeed, Hegel does see tragedy as an eternal element (see also n17 below).

17. Fackenheim argues that, after the radical evil of Auschwitz, Hegel’s philosophy is untenable; see Fackenheim (1967, 11-12). But Fackenheim seems to think that Hegel’s thought takes itself to have achieved a reconciliation or redemption, rather than that his thought is and remains fundamentally tragic.

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