

## Hegel's Philosophy of World History as Theodicy

### On Evil and Freedom

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My objective in this chapter is to explore what Hegel means when he claims that the philosophy of history is theodicy.<sup>1</sup> Most often associated with Leibniz, the term *theodicy* means literally a justification of God, or, as Hegel puts it, "a justification of the ways of God."<sup>2</sup> The principal task of theodicy is to address the problem of evil that arises when one claims, on the one hand, that a good and omnipotent God exists, and when one acknowledges, on the other hand, that there is evil in the world. These two claims appear incompatible and the challenge for the philosopher engaging in theodicy is to explain why such a God would allow evil to exist.

In the 1830 manuscript, Hegel introduces the topic of theodicy as follows:

The aim of human cognition is to understand that the intentions of eternal wisdom are accomplished not only in the natural world, but also in the realm of the [spirit] which is actively present in the world. From this point of view, our investigation can be seen as a theodicy, a justification of the ways of God (such as Leibniz attempted in his own metaphysical manner, but using categories which were as yet abstract and indeterminate). It should enable us to comprehend all

the ills of the world, including the existence of evil, so that the 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.<sup>3</sup>

This passage leaves us with the impression that Hegel's theodicean project is essentially the same as Leibniz's. In other words, it seems that, like Leibniz, Hegel intends his theodicy to address the problem of evil. It is certainly true that for Hegel there are particular events that are a necessary part of history's development and are therefore justified. However, I will argue that when Hegel claims that the philosophy of history is theodicy, he does not pretend to have resolved the problem of evil but has a different philosophical project in mind. For Hegel, the philosophy of history is theodicy first and foremost because it demonstrates that God is at work in the world and that this work leads ultimately to a state in which evil or suffering can be overcome.

### The Philosophy of History as a Response to the Problem of Evil

At first glance, it is puzzling that Hegel would claim that the philosophy of history is theodicy. One might expect him to associate theodicy with theology or metaphysics, since God is an object of study in these disciplines, but normally the focus of history is not on God but on human events. Hegel helps to resolve this puzzle when he tells us that God is at work in history. As he writes, "History is the unfolding of God's nature in a particular, determinate element."<sup>4</sup> For Hegel the task of the philosophy of history is to show *how* God is active in history's development. This explains why the philosophy of history can be theodicy: insofar as it deals with the role of God in history, the philosophy of history has God's activity as its subject matter.

What does Hegel mean by the term *God* when he claims that history is the unfolding of God's determinate nature? I cannot address this question here in detail, but I must take a position on it. As a number of scholars have already argued effectively, the God that Hegel is referring to here is not the transcendent, autonomous creator of traditional Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Hegel's God is not one who plays a role in history by determining the course of historical events from beyond as a puppet master determines the actions of his marionettes.<sup>6</sup> In Hegel's philosophy of history, God is reason both as Idea and as spirit. As the latter, God is reason as it manifests itself in the events of world history. When Hegel

says that history is the unfolding of God's nature, or when he claims alternatively that world history is governed by providence, he is simply expressing in religious language what he takes to be the fundamental claim and the starting point of the philosophy of history, namely, that history does not consist of a mass of purely contingent events, but that it develops in a necessary way.<sup>7</sup> God is at work in history insofar as history is rational, and the primary task of the philosophy of history is to show how it is rational. For Hegel, the reason governing the process of history is teleological: historical development is not only necessary, but it proceeds necessarily toward a final purpose.<sup>8</sup> For Hegel the final goal of world history is the realization of freedom, the conditions for which are achieved when history reaches the period of the modern European world.

This outline of how Hegel conceives of the role of reason in world history is brief, but it is sufficient to give an initial indication of what Hegel means when he claims that the philosophy of history is theodicy. Contrary perhaps to first appearances, his claim is not that the philosophy of history examines the role played in the world by a transcendent God. It does not attempt to explain how the existence of evil can be reconciled with the existence of an omnipotent, benevolent being. Rather, if God for Hegel is reason, then the philosophy of history is theodicy insofar as it considers the role of reason in the development of history. To the extent that the philosophy of history provides a solution to the problem of evil, it does so by giving a justification of reason. Reason for Hegel is the good, and in the domain of spirit, in the sphere of human history and culture, reason itself determines or guides the process through which freedom or the good is actualized. Yet there is also evil in the world. If Hegel's philosophy of history is to resolve the problem of evil, it must reconcile in some way the existence of evil with reason that governs the development of history. It must explain how it is possible for evil to exist in a world that is governed by reason and that is ultimately good.

How then does Hegel's philosophy of history attempt to address the problem of evil? According to one response, the philosophy of history is theodicy because it shows how evil events in history are a necessary means for achieving a higher end. Hegel himself suggests that evil plays this role: "So we have to consider world history and what its final purpose may be; this final purpose is what God wanted with the world. For this final purpose all sacrifices upon the altar of the world are brought."<sup>9</sup> The progress of world history leads ultimately to a stage in which humans are able to be fully free for the first time, but this freedom can only be actualized as the result of a long development, and

evil is inevitably a part of this development. The evil of history occurs both at the level of individuals and of whole peoples; it includes the tragedy that accompanies the downfall of great civilizations, as well as the suffering of the individuals who fall prey to history's momentous events and other sorts of evil. According to what I will refer to as the means/end view, the philosophy of history is theodicy because it shows that certain evil events are a required part of the historical process that results in freedom and so are justified.<sup>10</sup> Hegel's view presupposes that although this evil is regrettable, it ought to have happened. According to the means/end interpretation, Hegel would say that it is better for humanity to become fully free and to suffer evil along the way than it would be for humanity to avoid this evil at the expense of freedom.

Hegel believes that the philosophy of history can provide some justification for the evil that occurs in the course of the world's historical development. But if we take this to be the explanation of how the philosophy of history functions as theodicy, then I think that it attributes to Hegel a theodicy that is, at best, weak or incomplete. There are three ways in which Hegel's theodicy in this interpretation falls short of providing a full response to the problem of evil. First, the philosophy of history is able to justify the evil of some historical occurrences, but not others. The events that it can justify are world-historical events, since these are necessary moments in the development of world spirit. For example, the civil war in which Julius Caesar prevailed as emperor brought about a major political transition in history and constitutes for Hegel an "inherently necessary determination in the history of Rome and of the world."<sup>11</sup> Like all wars it involved evil and suffering, but because this evil was required for the development of freedom, it is justified according to the means/end account of Hegel's theodicy. However, not all large-scale events in history involving evil are of such great significance, and presumably one would have a hard time arguing that all were necessary for spirit's development toward freedom. As a result, Hegel's theodicy is in these cases unable to explain why this evil was required. The same applies even more strongly to the actions of individuals. Caesar's actions in the civil war brought about death and destruction but were justified because of their historical importance. Yet most murders and other crimes are not the work of world-historical individuals like Caesar, and play no significant role in pushing the progress of history along. The evil associated with such events cannot be excused by appealing to their necessary place in history.<sup>12</sup>

Second, Hegel's theodicy in the means/end interpretation is unable to justify nonmoral forms of evil. For Hegel reason is at work in history in the actions of humans, and it is the evil of certain human actions that

can be accounted for. But not all evil in the world is caused by humans, since there is also natural evil, the harm and suffering that results, for example, from natural disasters, disease, the infirmities of old age, etc. Traditionally the job of theodicy has been to justify or account for not only the evil that is caused by humans, but also for this natural evil. But the philosophy of history is unable to do this if it is theodicy in the way that has been suggested. Since spirit does not advance the progress of history in the events of nature, and since diseases and natural disasters are merely contingent occurrences, they cannot be justified as necessary events on the road toward freedom.

Finally, according to the means/end interpretation, theodicy can only serve effectively as a justification for evil that has occurred in history, since this justification is dependent on the fact that such evil has a necessary role in history, and so must be viewed in the context of history's complete development. But alongside the conditions of freedom that have been attained in the modern world, evil continues to be a reality: wars are still fought, people are still oppressed, etc. These evil events cannot be justified by this form of theodicy, first, because the good toward which they could potentially contribute has for Hegel already been reached, and, second, even if there was a higher goal toward which they could contribute, their necessity and hence their justification would only be apparent in retrospect. Hegel's theodicy in this interpretation has no bearing on the evil in our own lives, but is only able to give an account of evils that are already long past.

Thus, we see in these three ways that according to the means/end interpretation Hegel's philosophy of history provides only a weak reply to the problem of evil. The fact that Hegel's theodicy may be weak is not in and of itself a problem for interpreters, since this is perhaps what Hegel intended. For those who defend the means/end interpretation, this weakness of Hegelian theodicy may even be viewed as its strength, since it shows that Hegel does not try to deny or play down the full reality of the world's pain and suffering.<sup>13</sup> However, I believe that the means/end interpretation on its own is insufficient. If we look closely at what Hegel writes in the 1830 manuscript about the role of philosophy of history as theodicy, Hegel appears to have a significantly stronger form of theodicy in mind. In the passage that I read at the outset of this chapter, Hegel tells us that his theodicy encompasses not only some evil but all evil. "It should enable us to comprehend all the ills of the world, including the existence of evil."<sup>14</sup> Here Hegel clearly distinguishes human or moral evil (*Böse*) from evil in general (*Übel*) or what Nisbet translates as "ill." When he claims that theodicy should allow us to grasp "all the ills of the world," he is referring not just to

the evil that results from human action, but to all suffering whatsoever, including that brought on by acts of nature. The means/end interpretation cannot explain why Hegel thinks that the philosophy of history functions as a theodicy in this way.

Furthermore, from what Hegel tells us in his discussion of theodicy, we see that it does more than just justify evil as a means to an end. It shows, rather, that evil is itself overcome in history. Here he writes about the reconciliation that theodicy must bring about between spirit and the negative aspects of existence.

A reconciliation of the kind just described can only be achieved through a knowledge of the affirmative, an affirmative in which the negative is reduced to something subordinated and overcome. 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 and that evil has not been able to maintain a position of equality beside it.<sup>15</sup>

From this passage we see that there is some sense for Hegel in which the good wins out against evil or in which the problems associated with evil and suffering are resolved for us. Once again, the means/end interpretation of Hegel's theodicy is unable to account for why Hegel might be saying this. The means/end interpretation shows that certain evil occurrences in history are necessary, but, on its own at least, it does not explain how evil is overcome. History could lead necessarily to the advent of freedom without having any effect on the place of evil in the world or our relationship to it.

#### Freedom as the Overcoming of Evil

The passages that I have just presented give us good reason to look more closely at how Hegel's philosophy of history is theodicy. The starting point for such a reconsideration is to be found in the manuscript passages that I have already considered above. Hegel's initial explanation of theodicy is that it ought to allow us to grasp the evil (*Übel*) of the world in general and that it ought to allow thinking spirit to be reconciled with the negative. Elaborating on this reconciliation, Hegel says a little farther that it requires the perception (*Recentness*) of an affirmative in which the negative (i.e., evil) is subordinated and overcome. When Hegel speaks of an affirmative in which evil is transcended, what is he referring to? The answer is given in what follows, where he goes on to

spell out three points through which this perception of the affirmative is achieved. First, this perception requires that we be conscious of what the final purpose of the world is. Although Hegel does not say so explicitly here, we have seen that this final purpose is freedom. Second, it demands consciousness that this purpose, or freedom, is actualized in the world. Third, this perception involves a recognition that evil does not count alongside this purpose. In other words, in freedom evil is overcome; it no longer has force. Thus, the affirmative in which evil is transcended is freedom itself.<sup>16</sup> Hegel is suggesting that for the individual freedom is itself a type of solution to the problem posed by evil, that with the advent of freedom evil is in some way overcome. The philosophy of history is theodicy because it shows that history progresses necessarily toward freedom in which evil is transcended, and that this state of freedom has been realized in modern European culture.

The claim that freedom allows us to transcend evil is one that does not fit well either with ordinary conceptions of freedom or with conceptions of freedom normally attributed to Hegel. Although scholars agree strongly that the concept of freedom is of central importance in Hegel's thinking, there is still a lot of debate over what this freedom involves. Some stress that freedom is ultimately the capacity to make decisions that are truly independent or self-determined.<sup>17</sup> This means that our decisions are not merely determined by our natural impulses or desires, but are rationally justified by us insofar as they are actions that we are able to support with good reasons. For others, Hegelian freedom is ultimately self-actualization,<sup>18</sup> and in yet other cases the emphasis is put on freedom as reconciliation with the other.<sup>19</sup> None of these views gives us an obvious explanation of why Hegel thinks that freedom allows us to overcome evil. If interpreted in any of these ways, freedom is undoubtedly a good. Moreover, being a member of a society in which freedom is promoted might arguably shield someone from evil more than being a member of another type of society would. But it is not apparent on any of these readings why freedom would allow us to overcome evil in the way that Hegel is suggesting. Whether freedom means having the capacity to make independent decisions or being fully self-actualized or being at home in the world, it does not, in and of itself, spare a person from evil and does not offer any obvious way of dealing with evil. Further explanation is required.

Hegel has claimed that the advent of freedom involves a transcending of evil, and I believe that there is other textual evidence to suggest at least that Hegel does see freedom as a state in which evil is overcome. As I will argue, freedom for Hegel ultimately involves liberation, and this is rooted in the fact that freedom not only allows us to supersede

our particular existence but even requires that we do so. In the 1830 manuscript Hegel closely associates freedom with the capacity to think or to act as a universal, and, in turn, with the ability to renounce one's particular or natural self.

Since man alone—as distinct from the animals—is a thinking being, he alone possesses freedom, and he possesses it solely by virtue of his ability to think. Consciousness of freedom consists in the fact that the individual comprehends himself as a person, i.e. that he sees himself in his distinct existence as inherently universal, *as capable of abstraction from and renunciation of everything particular*, and therefore as inherently infinite.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel's point is even stronger: freedom involves not only the capacity to renounce one's particular natural existence, but requires that the individual ultimately carry out this renunciation. In a discussion of the cultus, he writes:

This highest rupture is what generates the field of true freedom. Here the view is that human beings are no longer naturally good; rather the natural state, the immediate life of the heart, is what must be renounced, since it is the moment of immediate naturalness that does not leave spirit free. . . . Now there is the requirement that the heart should break, i.e., that the immediate will, the natural self-consciousness, should be given up.<sup>21</sup>

To take another example, Hegel writes the following in his discussion of the third moment of the consummate religion: "[T]he knowledge of it belongs to finite spirit so that finite spirit has its freedom in this knowledge, and is itself the process of casting off its particular individuality and of liberating itself in this content."<sup>22</sup>

Commentators on Hegel's theory of freedom are well aware that for Hegel freedom involves the capacity to rise above our natural inclinations, and so I think that most would be comfortable with Hegel's claim from the manuscript passage at least. It makes sense for Hegel to hold this position, since the ability to control one's natural side, one's desires and inclinations, is a necessary condition for any form of rational choice. To be free is to be rationally self-determined, and to be rationally self-determined is to act as reason tells us to act. Different interpreters understand rational self-determination for Hegel differently. For some, it

is consistent with being motivated by one's particular desires, while for others it is not.<sup>23</sup> However, all would accept that for Hegel free actions cannot be ones that are immediately determined by our inclinations. For Hegel we need the ability to override or stand above these desires if we are to act as a free and rational agent should, since the dictates of reason often conflict with these desires.

That rational self-determination requires in this way the ability to resist desires and inclinations is certainly true. I am suggesting that for Hegel this ability of the thinking agent to overcome or rise above her particularity plays another important role in freedom: by being able to renounce her particularity or the natural side of herself, the agent is able to overcome her suffering, or, to put it positively, she is in a position to reconcile herself and her expectations with the world. Before we consider the textual evidence, we should first try to clarify what Hegel means by this expression "overcoming evil." There are at least a couple of things that he could mean by this. First, "overcoming evil" can be interpreted as the *elimination* of pain and suffering. When an agent overcomes pain in this sense, the pain no longer exists for the agent as pain. Here suffering is fully transcended. Second, "overcoming evil" can be interpreted as the *enduring* of pain and suffering. Unlike the first interpretation, here the agent continues to feel pain or to suffer, but the agent is able to bear the suffering. Here the agent has accepted the pain or is reconciled with it, and it no longer poses a problem.

Although there is some evidence to suggest that Hegel has in mind the first interpretation of "overcoming evil,"<sup>24</sup> the preponderance of evidence indicates that for Hegel the overcoming of evil in freedom is not a complete elimination of suffering but an acceptance of suffering. At the outset of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, where Hegel writes about spirit's essential nature, he associates freedom with the ability not to escape pain but to endure it. There he tells us that free spirit is able to "abstract from all that is external and even from its own externality, its determinate being [*Dasein*]."<sup>25</sup> He then goes on to explain "[spirit] can bear the infinite *pain* of the negation of its individual immediacy i.e. maintain itself affirmatively in this negativity and have identity as a being-for-self."<sup>26</sup> Thus, for Hegel the free individual has the capacity to endure pain and suffering. She may not be able to make the suffering go away completely, but Hegel indicates that she is able to deal with it.

Hegel may be starting to sound a lot like a Stoic, but it is important to note that a Stoic, at least in the narrow sense, Hegel is not. With the formal or abstract freedom of the Stoic, the agent identifies entirely with herself as a thinking being capable of abstraction—her undifferentiated, immediate universal nature—and in so doing gives

up her particularity or her desires. She no longer sees these desires as a part of herself, and it is this renunciation of her desires that allows her to overcome suffering. That Hegel distances himself from the Stoic model is perhaps clearest from the critique of Catholic monasticism and asceticism that Hegel raises at numerous points throughout the Berlin writings. Hegel rejects Catholic celibacy in favor of family life, vows of poverty in favor of diligent and honest acquisition of earthly goods, and blind obedience to authority in favor of rational freedom.<sup>27</sup> Hegel does not advocate a life of abstract freedom, one in which a person seeks to liberate himself by attempting to deny or eliminate desire altogether. As we all know, true freedom for Hegel is concrete freedom, and the concretely free individual is one that expresses himself as a particular and that has particular wants. The person who is concretely free may be in a position to renounce his particular desires, but he does not actually do so. Rather, the satisfaction of particular desire has an important role to play in the rational way of life.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, if the person that is concretely free is able to overcome suffering, she does so in a different way than the person who is abstractly free. Hegel explains this difference as follows: "In abstract freedom I am able to sublimate all content, all determinateness in me; in concrete freedom I annihilate the other in my determinateness—restriction, negation—[and] am only at home with myself [*bei mir*]."<sup>29</sup> Insofar as concrete freedom involves being at home with oneself in suffering, Hegel is suggesting here that one is reconciled with this suffering. In order to show how concrete spirit is able to endure suffering, Hegel compares how negation affects both the natural and the spiritual. When certain properties of a natural object undergo negation, the object is changed or transformed completely; it is no longer what it was. To take Hegel's example, if gold no longer had its specific weight, it would no longer be gold.<sup>30</sup> Spirit, however, is able to undergo the negation of its particularity without being fundamentally altered. It "is able to maintain itself in contradiction and consequently in pain, to survive wickedness [*Böse*] as well as evil [*Übel*]."<sup>31</sup> The individual is able to endure suffering as a concrete universal, because as spirit she is able to sublimate negation and so remains with herself in this other. Pain and suffering are themselves determinations of spirit, and so spirit can find itself at home with them and be free. Pain ultimately does not, or need not, disturb the identity of spirit with itself. As Hegel states, "Since we also have the consciousness of our freedom, the harmony of our souls and our peace of mind will not be destroyed by the misfortunes that befall us."<sup>32</sup>

Thus, in concrete freedom we overcome evil not by eradicating suffering but by learning to live with it or by being reconciled with it.

Hegel is saying quite simply that the free individual can recognize pain as just another one of its particular determinations, one that the mind is able to distance itself from, or one that is ideal just like any other determination and so can be taken in stride. As with abstract freedom, the agent that is concretely free is ultimately able to achieve a form of liberation from suffering. However, she does so not by stamping out all desire and inclination, but by accepting the negation of particular desires whenever this occurs.

This acceptance of suffering need not be viewed merely as a state of resignation. Not only does the free individual reduce the effect of suffering by being able to let go of what she cannot have, but she also benefits from the good that freedom itself brings, a good that works to offset the negative aspects of suffering.<sup>33</sup> This good is the feeling of blessedness that results from identifying with the universal and from acting in accordance with one's own rational nature. Nor should the overcoming of evil be viewed as a capacity that can be immediately exercised. The overcoming of evil that is present in freedom needs to be understood as mediated by ethical life. Hegel is not proposing that we are automatically able to endure any pain simply because we decide to accept it. Rather, this aspect of freedom is one made gradually possible by habit (*Gewohnheit*), and, more specifically, by participation in ethical life.<sup>34</sup> A detailed discussion of how ethical life shapes this capacity for freedom cannot be undertaken here, but I can give a brief outline of what I think this explanation would be like. An ethical life for Hegel is a modern life. It involves possessing property, marrying and raising a family, having a career, acting morally, being a member of the state, etc. Far from being ascetic, ethical life gives the individual a lot of room in which she can, indeed ought to, pursue her own particular desires. However, for Hegel ethical life is governed first and foremost by duty. It is a life in which all of a person's actions or activities are justified by, or are at least consistent with, the achievement of the highest good, namely freedom. The individual's particular subjective existence—her own personal subjective identity with all her likes and dislikes, needs, talents, experiences, expectations, etc.—is a necessary moment of who she is as a free individual, and it needs to be developed and nurtured. But as a moment, it is also sublated or ideal; it can be affected or changed without affecting her universal nature. By living a life of duty, a life in which she ultimately subordinates her particular interests to the imperatives of her universal, rational side, the agent's capacity to act and view herself as the universal is strengthened gradually, and with it her ability to rise above or to bear pain is also strengthened. To put it in Hegel's terms, she develops the capacity to eliminate the otherness of the negative and

to be at home with herself in it. It is in this way that the ethical life allows one to be reconciled slowly with life's adversity.

### The Philosophy of History as Theodicy

Let us return to the main topic of this chapter, namely, Hegel's claim that the philosophy of history is theodicy. I have argued that the means/end view does not account for all the claims that Hegel makes about his theodicy, and I have explored Hegel's claim that theodicy involves recognizing that evil is overcome in freedom. It should be noted that even if evil for Hegel is overcome in freedom, this fact does little to strengthen Hegel's response to the problem of evil. Freedom as overcoming of evil is perhaps good news for those who are free or part of a free society: it can contribute to the individual's own struggle with suffering because it suggests that in freedom the reality or full force of evil can be mitigated. This also can contribute to addressing the problem of evil in a small way, since it shows for one group of people in history that evil need not be the problem that it initially appears to be. However, this does nothing to justify the unmitigated suffering of those in both the past and present who are not free. It may be the case that in truth evil is ideal, but this of little comfort or use to those who cannot benefit from this truth. If we recognize this, then we see that we are not much farther ahead than the means/end interpretation in our justification of evil.

We make better sense of Hegel's claim that the philosophy of history is theodicy if we abandon the view that it is a theodicy as a response to the problem of evil. The *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* do demonstrate that certain evil events in history are necessary, but the primary task of Hegel's theodicy is not to try to provide a rational justification for the world's suffering. A strong case can be made for the fact that Hegel often employs his religious terminology in unconventional ways. I have in mind here terms such as *immortality*, *eternity*, *creation*, *proof* as in the proofs for God's existence, *the mystical*, and, perhaps most importantly but also most controversially, the term *God* itself. If Hegel is employing such terms in unusual ways, there is no reason to assume that his use of the term *theodicy* could not also be unusual. In considering the few other instances where Hegel speaks of theodicy in his Berlin writings, we see that philosophy is theodicy for Hegel in a more general sense, insofar as it simply demonstrates to the philosophical observer that spirit is present in the world, or demonstrates that the world or history is governed by reason.<sup>35</sup> If we assume that

this is what Hegel means by "theodicy," then theodicy need not be first and foremost an explanation of why there is evil in the world. In this interpretation of theodicy, the demonstration that God is at work in the world allows the observer to comprehend evil or to be reconciled with the negative, not because it shows that all of this evil had to be or because it justifies all the suffering in history in the way that full theodicy ordinarily demands, but because it shows the individual that evil is ultimately overcome by free spirit. On this reading, theodicy allows the individual to be reconciled with the negative insofar as it demonstrates that evil by its very nature is ultimately ideal.

At the very least, the view that freedom for Hegel involves an overcoming of evil gives the philosophy of history a more optimistic feel from Hegel's point of view than it might otherwise have. It shows more than the fact that history develops in a necessary way toward its final purpose, the goal of freedom. Freedom is not a good that simply exists for the individual alongside the evil that she continues to suffer. Freedom itself is a form of response to evil. It is a state in which one has the knowledge and social context necessary to live a life in which suffering can be handled. In the free individual's own life at least, good wins out against evil, not because evil is completely eliminated but because it is possible for her in her freedom to accept and be reconciled with it.

#### Notes

1. I would like to thank Ardis Collins, David Duquette, George di Giovanni, William Maker, Bryan Smyth, Ken Westphal, and anonymous reviewers for valuable feedback on earlier versions of this chapter.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 42 (hereafter *LPW*).

3. *Ibid.*, 42–43.

4. *Ibid.*, 42. See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte: Berlin 1822/23*, Vol. 12, ed. Karl Heinz Ilting, Karl Brehmer, and Hoo Nam Seelmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996), 23 (hereafter *VPW*).

5. See, for example, Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth, and History*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 24–25; Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 39–48; George Dennis O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 53–57; Terry Pinkard, "Hegel on History, Self-Determination, and the Absolute," in *History and the Idea of Progress*, ed. Arthur M. Melzer, Jerry Weinberger, and M. Richard Zinman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 53–54.

6. I have borrowed this analogy from Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth, and History*, 24.

7. *LPW*, 27. As he indicates explicitly in his discussion of providence, Hegel maintains that religious and philosophical language provide two parallel ways of making the same claim about history. "I could have refrained from mentioning that our principle (i.e. that reason governs the world and always has done so) has a religious equivalent in the doctrine of a ruling providence" *LPW*, 37.

8. *VPW*, 21, 22.

9. *Ibid.*, 24.

10. McCarney's account of Hegel's philosophy of history as theodicy is a version of the means/end view, as is Beiser's. See McCarney, *Hegel on History*, 206–207; Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 272.

11. *LPW*, 76.

12. In his discussion of Hegel's theodicy in the philosophy of history, Beiser claims that *all* evil events in history are taken to be necessary and are therefore justified. "In Hegel's fundamentally optimistic account, nothing is lost or done in vain in the realm of history. All struggles in the past are preserved as necessary moments toward the self-awareness of freedom." Beiser, *Hegel*, 273. If Beiser's view were indeed true, it would lead to consequences that pose serious problems for Hegel's theory. For if all acts of evil are a necessary part of historical progress, then all who commit evil are world-historical individuals, and their evil actions are sanctioned by a standard that is higher than the ethical. McCarney shares my view of the matter, claiming that some evil deeds are committed by individuals who have no world-historical significance. See McCarney, *Hegel on History*, 116.

13. For example, Joseph McCarney claims that Hegel's theodicy "should, perhaps, be seen not so much as an attempt at a formal solution of the problem of evil but rather as a magisterial sidestepping of it." McCarney, *Hegel on History*, 201. It is one that leaves us with a bleak picture of world history, *Ibid.*, 205. Hegel takes the reality of evil in the world seriously and acknowledges its true sadness, *Ibid.*, 199–200.

14. *LPW*, 42.

15. *Ibid.*, 43; translation modified.

16. Elsewhere, Hegel speaks explicitly of freedom as an affirmative in which the negative is subordinated. "Spirit's negation is in spirit subordinated to its affirmation, the unity with itself. This is the determination of freedom in general." *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes: Berlin 1827/1828*, Vol. 13, ed. Franz Hesse and Burkhard Tuschling (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994), 14 (hereafter *VPG*).

17. See, for example, Robert Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 109. Alan Patten in *Hegel's Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11, identifies his interpretation as a self-actualization reading, but in fact his interpretation of what freedom involves is similar to Pippin's. In Patten's reading, subjective freedom, the capacity for autonomous decision making, is an essential part of

full freedom, and its promotion for Patten is what ultimately justifies the norms of ethical life.

18. See Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 36.

19. McCarney takes reconciliation and the overcoming of alienation as central to Hegel's concept of freedom. See McCarney, *Hegel on History*, 77–79. In the philosophy of world history, this reconciliation is understood as finding oneself at home in one's political setting, *Ibid.*, 80. For Will Dudley, complete freedom involves various forms of reconciliation. See Will Dudley, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and Philosophy: Thinking Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 111. These forms of reconciliation include being at home in one's social and political situation, as well as having a theoretical understanding of the fact that the natural world is not an other. Dudley's account of freedom as reconciliation and as liberation is closest in spirit to my own. However, I have found no evidence that Dudley interprets Hegel's concept of freedom as the capacity to endure suffering.

20. *LPW*, 144; my italics.

21. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3 vols., trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–87), 1:362 (hereafter *LPR1-3*).

22. *Ibid.*, 223. Hegel also associates freedom with the loss of particularity in the following passages: *LPR-1*, 342–43; *LPR-2*, 623, 634; *VPW*, 501, 519. The theme of overcoming of particularity is one that thoroughly pervades Hegel's work in the Berlin period. It is a central part not only of Hegel's philosophy of religion, but plays a role for Hegel in education, art, philosophy, and ethical life.

23. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 44, belongs to the former, while Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom*, 51, and Richard Schacht, *Hegel and After: Studies in Continental Philosophy: Between Kant and Sartre* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), 76, have a more Kantian reading of Hegel's freedom.

24. For example, in the preface to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*—perhaps the most rhetorical and passionate couple of pages that the mature Hegel wrote—Hegel gives the impression that religion offers a type of liberation or escape from suffering. “Finite purposes, disgust at petty interests, the pain of this life, even if only in isolated moments that are themselves unhappy, the troubles, burdens, and cares of ‘this bank and shoal of time,’ pity and compassion—all this, like a dream image, seems to float away into the past like the soul that drinks from the waters of forgetfulness, its other, mortal, nature fading into a mere semblance, which no longer causes it anxiety and on which it is no longer dependent.” *LPR1*, 85. Moreover, in a remarkable passage from the *Science of Logic*, Hegel indicates that a person ought not to care about the state of his particular existence. Replying here to Kant's famous argument against the ontological proof for the existence of God, Hegel states that the Christian ought to be indifferent whether he does or does not possess the infamous one hundred dollars, and Hegel goes on to say that “it ought to be a matter of indifference to him whether he is or is not, that is, in finite life,” G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's*

*Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1993), 89. In this passage Hegel's ideal Christian is suggestive of the Stoic: he does not care about the particulars of his existence or does not cling to the satisfaction of his own desires, and so does not suffer when these desires are not met. In the *Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel tells us that a person is able to overcome pain or is able to be liberated from sensation through habit (*Gewohnheit*), G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, 3 vols., trans. M. J. Petry (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1978), 2:§410, Remark. Hereafter *PSS1-3*. Habit or custom makes it possible for a person to harden his body against external sensations such as heat, cold, or fatigue, and to harden the mind against unhappiness. Habit also makes it possible for a person to become indifferent with regard to whether or not his desires are satisfied. It is not entirely clear to what extent Hegel thinks we can inure ourselves through habit to pain and deprivation. However, all of this evidence indicates that for Hegel it is possible, at least to some degree, to be indifferent to loss and to rise above pain.

25. *PSS-1*, §382.

26. In his discussion of stoicism in *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, Teile 1–4*, Vols. 6–10, ed. Pierre Garniron and Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986–1996), 3:114, hereafter *VGP1-4*, Hegel confirms his view that the free individual is able to resist pain, and he claims that this understanding of freedom is what is great in Stoic philosophy.

27. G. W. F. Hegel, *Berliner Schriften: 1818–1831*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956), 45–51. One also finds a very similar critique of Catholic holiness in *LPR-1*, 473; *LPR-3*, 341–42, 455–56.

28. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), §154; §261, Remark.

29. *VPG*, 14.

30. *PSS-1*, §382, Addition.

31. *Ibid.*

32. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §147, Addition (hereafter *EL*).

33. This point was suggested to me by Ken Westphal.

34. *PSS-2*, §410.

35. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 457; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*, Werke vol. 20, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 455; *VGP-4*, 6. For other references to theodicy, see *LPR-1*, 147; *EL*, §147, Addition.