SCHELING, HEIDEGGER, AND EVIL

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by

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INTRODUCTION

In his 1809 treatise, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, F.W.J. Schelling offers a free-will theodicy that seeks to establish a positive ontology for evil, a project begun by Immanuel Kant, and to revive natural philosophy. My project is to establish a secularized concept of evil by filtering Schelling’s philosophy through that of Martin Heidegger. In order to establish why Schelling’s philosophy is essential to my project, it is important to understand how it stands apart from its predecessors. Likewise, to draw conclusions regarding the best concept of evil for a contemporary context, it is important to understand how Schelling’s philosophy connects to its successors. As such, I first will review various contemporary concepts of evil so as to define the “evil” with which my project deals. Then, I will review philosophers relevant to the creation and development of a positive ontology for evil; these philosophers include Aristotle, Kant, Schelling, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Hannah Arendt. Special focus will be paid to Schelling, of course, as I will use Heidegger’s phenomenology to draw out a secularized conception of evil from Schelling’s free-will theodicy.

Chapter one defines the concept of evil and offers several general varieties. As we will see, this project will focus only on narrow moral evil. Also excluded will be an account of moral personhood. Instead, I seek to establish a positive ontology for evil, which centers evil’s existence in action. Thus, I assume those who perpetrate evil are necessarily moral agents of the human variety. I make no further claims about moral agency other than assuming that human beings are, in fact, capable of it. The end of chapter one reviews the philosophies of Aristotle and
Kant as the most important predecessors of Schelling in the context of this project. Specifically treated are each philosopher’s conceptions of evil and, more broadly, morality. As a virtue ethicist, Aristotle considers character of paramount importance to morality. Evil, for Aristotle, grows out of a malformation of character. There are varying degrees of severity in regard to malformed character, the worst of which is wickedness. Wickedness involves a willing departure from the tenets of good character. Kant also sees evil as a willing departure, but from universal, rational, moral law, rather than habituated good character. Kant considers evil radical, or present in the root of humankind. Kant seeks to delineate a secular, moral evil, but in his insistence that humans have a “propensity” to evil, he blurs the line he tried to create between Christian ideas of original sin and humans’ metaphysical capacity for evil. Schelling’s philosophy shows clear connections to Kant’s concept of will and his desire to create a positive ontology for evil.

Chapter two focuses on Schelling’s theodicy and filters it through Heidegger’s phenomenology by way of key points of similarity. The chapter begins by briefly discussing the theodical project and its varying degrees of relevance for philosophers (especially the contrasting opinions of Kant and Schelling) to the concept of evil. Schelling viewed nature and God as equiprimordial, or simultaneously existent. Further, God contains nature even though nature is separate from Him. Nature is a creative force that represents a dark ground for Schelling. In God, then, there are two principles: light and dark, or understanding and chaos. These principles are in perfect harmony in God, because He is wholly unified—his principal parts are inseverable. In humans, who share God’s principle parts, light and dark are not perfectly unified. Because the principles of light and dark can separate from each other and from the centrum, or nexus, within humans, the possibility of evil exists. Heidegger’s concept of humankind, called Dasein, also has pure possibility. Several of Dasein’s modes of being and activities, like authenticity, anxiety,
facticity, and falling, align with the Schelling’s conceptions of evil’s possibility and actuality in humans. Chapter two ends with an explanation of these terms and their connection to Schelling’s theodicy.

Chapter three, then, treats the progression of the concept of evil from Schelling to Nietzsche to Arendt. Nietzsche witnessed the beginning of the Nazi movement and Arendt witnessed its climax. In Nietzsche’s philosophy we see the same reverence for balance in nature of order and chaos. He echoes Schelling’s belief that light cannot exist without dark, just as dark cannot exist without light. We also see in Nietzsche’s philosophy the more explicit ancestor, "ressentiment," of Arendt’s later concept of “the banality of evil.” Ressentiment is a spiteful desire for revenge often driven by superficial jealousies or perceived slights. Manifested in a social or political context, ressentiment combined with nineteenth-century Europe’s concern that humanity was degenerating to create an atmosphere ripe for the Nazi movement. Chapter three closes with Arendt’s analysis of the banality of evil, which encompasses the bureaucratic structures that enabled mass murder during the Holocaust. Arendt makes clear the new reality of evil in a global community. Her report of the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the former Nazi officer, reveals the accountability that follows accepting an action-based positive ontology of evil. The state, or the “movement,” in Eichmann’s case, cannot remove responsibility for one’s actions, even if those actions are banal outside the context of the broader group’s (state’s or movement’s) actions. Over the course of this project, we will find that when we uncover evil’s positive ontology and lay bare its actualization by humans, we ground an approach to evil suited to the political necessities of the twenty-first century. That is, we see that a proper philosophical understanding of evil necessarily calls us to a political address of the same. The view of this
thesis is that such an address must combine perpetrator, victim, and by-stander approaches to the evil at issue. I will explain this combination approach in the next chapter, after I define “evil.”
CHAPTER I

Defining the Concept of Evil

The struggle to define “evil,” and even the question of whether there is an “evil” to define, are contentious matters among philosophers. For my purposes, then, it is necessary to identify the “evil” with which I will deal below. Evil can be classified as either “broad” or “narrow.” In the broadest sense, evil can be defined as all character flaws, wrongful actions, or unsavory states of affairs. Paul Formosa refers to this sense of evil as “axiological”: “evil” and “bad” function synonymously given an axiological understanding of evil.¹ Broad evil further can be subdivided into natural evil and moral evil, the latter distinguished by the necessity of a moral agent who perpetrates evil. Natural evil refers to all bad states of affairs that do not result from the intention or negligence of a moral agent. Natural disasters such as tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, and floods are examples of natural evil. By contrast, moral evil results from the actions of moral agents. Moral evil, in the broad sense, is synonymous with “wrong”—that is, “wrong” within a moral context. The most severe “evil-skeptics,” as Luke Russell defines them, end their discussion of evil here: there is no “evil” apart from “bad” or “wrong.”² Narrow evil centers on the most egregious instances of moral evil. John Kekes also refers to this as

“gratuitous evil.”³ Narrow evil is so significantly beyond “wrong,” that moral condemnation is reserved for actions judged to be instances of narrow evil. Again, narrow evil and the condemnation it engenders only are assignable to moral agents. Narrow moral evil is the focus of this project.

Narrow moral evil necessitates a moral agent. This project does not investigate what is essential to moral agency—what makes a being a “person” with moral standing. Also worth noting is that narrow evil assumes a moral agent, not an evil agent. I will not delve into the various ways in which one might judge a moral agent to be evil. In this way, I adopt acts as primary to a conception of evil. Intention or motivation on the part of a moral agent can contribute to our judgment of acts as evil, but only in relation to the act in question. Not only does this define evil as qualitatively different from bad or wrong, but also it excludes judgments of evil from being quantitatively driven. For example, evil is not simply the result of a multiplicity of wrong actions; rather, evil actions have a quality, or qualities, that wrong actions do not. An act of evil reaches farther than the perpetrator of the act. We also must consider how the effects of the act on victims and by-standers might, or might not, figure into our judgment of an act as evil. Formosa identifies four possible approaches to a conception of evil: the perpetrator approach, the victim approach, the by-stander approach, and the combination approach.⁴ Perpetrator approaches judge actions as evil based on the motive or intention of the perpetrator. Perpetrators are, of course, moral agents, and their intentions have two main drivers. The presence in them of something abnormal, diabolical, or incomprehensible could drive them to act evilly. Alternatively, a lack, or ineffectiveness, of something normal or reasonable in them could allow them to perform evil acts. Victim approaches conceive evil to be tied to the consequences


⁴ Formosa, 219.
of evil acts upon their victims. Similarly, by-stander approaches define evil in terms of by-
standers’ evaluations or judgments of acts. Combination approaches to evil, then, mix
perpetrator, victim, and by-stander approaches. While the components of a combination
approach do not have to be weighted equally, I agree with Formosa and other proponents of the
combination approach that the inclusion of perpetrator’s, victim’s, and by-stander’s perspectives
is important for a well-rounded conception of evil capable of meeting the demands of
contemporary society.

Some philosophers, such as Luke Russell, John Kekes, and Marcus Singer, place
significant emphasis on intention. As a result, they adopt perpetrator approaches. Perpetrator
approaches sometimes are termed “psychologically thick,” because they can limit the evil-
qualifying motive. In other words, acts only are evil if performed by a moral agent from a
particular character or with a specific intention. Perpetrator approaches do not necessarily have
to be psychologically thick, but it is rare, if not impossible, to conceive of a psychologically
thick victim or by-stander approach. A “psychologically thin” conception of evil recognizes
many roots of evil; it does not specify kinds of intention or motive. Russell divides all
conceptions of evil along this line of thickness or thinness. He terms supporters of
psychologically thick conceptions of evil “evil-skeptics,” even though more than a few evil-
skeptics deny evil’s existence entirely. All who support psychologically thin conceptions of evil,
Russell dubs “evil-revivalists.” There are many thick conceptions of evil, but Russell addresses
the three he says often enjoy the support of evil-skeptics. These thick conceptions reserve the
label “evil” for only those agents and actions that spring from a qualifying kind of motive or
character. The first, demonic evil, Russell describes as “extremely wrong acts performed in
defiance of what the agent knows to be the laws of morality [. . .].” The demonic conception of evil is well-known, as it is often used in literature. It has three important subspecies: instrumental, malicious, and delinquent. Instrumental demonic evil is an act of evil performed in service of the agent’s own self-interest. Malicious demonic evil is an evil act performed in order to harm others. Finally, a delinquent demonic-evil act is performed because the agent wishes to defy moral commands. Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is an excellent example of the demonicly evil delinquent Russell defines.

The second thick conception of evil Russell offers is the fixed conception of evil. According to the fixed conception, evil actions are extremely wrong and are performed out of a fixed character that is directed at extreme wrong. Importantly, this fixed character need not include agents’ understanding of the inherent wrongness of the actions they perform. In fact, fixedly evil agents may believe that their actions are morally obligatory. Finally, Russell offers the unpersuadable conception of evil. This conception overlaps somewhat with the two previous thick conceptions of evil. It holds that evil actions result from agents who perform those actions they know are evil, despite rational explanation advising them against those actions.

Russell claims that psychologically thin conceptions of evil allow for an over-application of the term “evil.” Thin conceptions of evil support multiple roots of evil, which Russell finds unsatisfactory. While he admits that thin conceptions of evil fit colloquial usage of “evil” at least as well as thick conceptions, he claims that thin conceptions do not provide overwhelming evidence that they are more accurate than thick conceptions. Further, Russell claims that thick conceptions are more consistent with ancient and traditional conceptions of evil as originating in

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5 Russell, 96.
6 Ibid., 97.
the make-up of the moral agent.\(^7\) By placing such heavy emphasis on the perpetrator, Russell ignores the victims’ and by-standers’ judgments that are inherent in the thick conceptions of evil that he discusses. He sets up a false dichotomy between thick and thin conceptions of evil. Furthermore, while he allows that the term “evil” can be used, he limits its use to the context of broad moral evil. He denies “evil” classification in instances where the intentions of perpetrators cannot be clearly established as morally wrong. As Russell admits, though, two of the thick conceptions of evil do not necessitate that perpetrators understand the moral nature of their actions. Why cannot an action perpetuate evil in the absence of specific motive toward evil, or simply moral wrongness, on the part of the perpetrator? Russell’s concern that the word “evil” not be overused seems better guarded against if we enlist more criteria in our assessments of evil than simply the psychology of the perpetrator.

Formosa points out that by adhering to any one approach to a concept of evil, as Russell does with perpetrator approaches, we risk overlooking instances of evil. The psychological thickness of perpetrator-based approaches make it difficult to deal with multiple roots of evil, whereas the thinness of victim-based approaches put undue onus on a highly subjective measure—the harm victims experience. Formosa states, “A useful theory of evil cannot remove the need for judgment, but it can draw our attention to what factors are important and relevant to making the judgment.”\(^8\) Formosa supports a combination approach. His specific formulation has at least three components: a perpetrator component, which delineates why the way an act is performed qualifies as evil; a victim component, which identifies why the amount or kind of harm inflicted is morally abhorrent; and an unjustifiability component (this is the by-stander component), which defines what about an act is morally unjustifiable.

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\(^7\) To be clear, while I do claim that moral agency is necessary for evil, I do not claim the reverse: the capacity for evil is not necessary in itself for moral agency.

\(^8\) Formosa, 230.
Singer are fellow proponents of the combination approach. Both Kekes and Singer place particular emphasis on the perpetrator component, much like Russell, although they recognize the importance, and inherence, of the other components to a worthy judgment of actions as “evil.”

Singer goes so far as to claim persons and organizations as primary for evil, and conduct and practices secondary, much like Russell. However, Singer’s willingness to include “support staff” in evil brings him closer to Formosa. The phrase “support staff” refers to the banality of evil that Hannah Arendt identified in Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (1963), which I treat at length in my third chapter. Adolf Eichmann was a lieutenant colonel in the Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS). Eichmann organized the mass deportation of Jews to extermination camps in German-controlled Eastern Europe during World War II. Arendt argues that Eichmann’s actions were evil despite a lack of first-person involvement in the mass slaughter. Eichmann’s actions were a paradigm of “banal evil,” because he claimed his motivation was duty to his commanding officers and a desire to perform his given orders well. Perhaps alone among significant contemporaries involved in defining evil, Russell finds Arendt’s argument unconvincing. While Eichmann’s motives were not directed at killing Jews, the results of his actions were the deaths of millions of people. The distinction Russell draws between kinds of intention seems counter-intuitive when applied to such an example. Indeed, Formosa quips, “Philosophers who think that there is a single root of all evil [. . .] are simply suffering from the effects of a poverty of examples.”

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11 Formosa, 220.
Kekes focuses on gratuitous evil, which translates roughly to “evil for evil’s sake.”

Humans who are gratuitously evil know that their actions are evil and intend to perform these actions. Initially, Kekes does not include indifference as a possibly gratuitously evil intention, which serves to impede the prevention of greater evils. The three types of evil Kekes discusses in detail include: 1) evil as corruption, because human nature is inherently good; 2) evil as inherent in human nature, which implies that good comes from controlling our natural bias; and 3) evil as extant equiprimordially with good, in a dualistic fashion, with morality functioning to develop good. Kekes also describes two additional types of evil in his notes: 4) evil as a non-essential part of human nature, because our most basic nature is neutral; and 5) evil as possibly part of an individual’s nature, because no universal human nature exists. Ultimately, Kekes argues that endorsing either of the first two types of evil (evil as corruption of our inherent good, and evil as inherent) amounts to a one-sided approach to solving the same problem. These two approaches to evil entangle their proponents in an asymmetrical debate that reinforces an unacceptable moral pluralism. This unacceptable pluralism denies the existence of a *summum bonum*, or greatest good. Kekes supports the third, dualistic explanation of evil, because it supports a different kind of pluralism. He explains this acceptable moral pluralism as the recognition that morality has two distinct aspects. These distinct aspects—preventing evil and promoting good—are equally important, serve different functions, and require different types of justification. Much like Singer, Kekes falls into Formosa’s camp in a somewhat roundabout way after initially seeming to agree with Russell.

I will argue below that acts are primary in a concept of narrow moral evil, and that a combination approach to evil is best. While a perpetrator’s evil acts are primary, our judgment of those acts as evil is affected by both victims’ and by-standers’ perspectives. Having discussed
the contemporary conversation of the concept of evil and having defined in specific terms what concept of evil I will employ, the remainder of this chapter engages philosophers historically key to the discussion of evil. Aristotle represents the origin of the negative, or privative, conception of evil’s ontology that dominated Western culture, and Christianity, until the modern era. By contrast, Kant represents three significant innovations in relation to the concept of evil after Aristotle and after centuries of evil’s placement solely within a religious context. Kant seeks to ground evil in morality, not religion; he seeks to create a philosophy of autonomy, or freedom; and he seeks to build a stronger ontological status for evil. The degree to which Kant is successful in his pursuits will be discussed, but more importantly his contribution clears a path for F.W.J. Schelling and those philosophers who follow him. My ultimate goal is to arrive at a secularized conception of evil in which I establish a positive ontological status for evil. I will filter Schelling’s theodicy through the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger to accomplish this task. Thus, my historical review will include the predecessors of Schelling and Heidegger who engaged the discussion of evil, as well as those philosophers eminent in the discussion of evil post-Heidegger. This lot includes Friedrich Nietzsche and Hannah Arendt, whom I will discuss in chapter three. Heidegger did not publish any work specifically addressing evil. Some have faulted him for this omission, especially considering his contact with Nazi ideology. However, Heidegger did teach Schelling’s *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, and he lectured on the treatise in 1936. Schelling was the first of the German Idealists to confront the origins of evil. It is within his unique understanding of the essence of human freedom that I compare his thought to Heidegger’s philosophy. Common to all the philosophers I will engage in this work, and to Heidegger, is the underlying assumption that there is a moral framework. As Formosa said, “The concept of evil is conceptually dependent on, and
presupposes, theories of the right and the good, as well as an account of moral responsibility.” Therefore, the following discussion also reviews each philosopher’s concept of morality.

**Aristotle’s Evil**

Aristotle is a natural starting point for the discussion of evil in a moral context, because he is the first to systematically treat ethics, or practical wisdom (*phronesis*), as a distinct sub-field. Aristotle wrote two treatises on ethics, *Nichomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*. He is also attributed with the work *Magna Moralia* by some ancient sources, but that attribution is contentious. I will refer to the *Nichomachean Ethics*, because it largely repeats the *Eudemian Ethics* and includes additional material not found there. Thus, some consider the *Nichomachean Ethics* a revision and expansion of the *Eudemian Ethics*. Moreover, Aristotle simply refers to his ethical works as the *Ethics*. The names “*Nichomachean*” and “*Eudemian*” were given to the works by others and may refer to Nichomachus and Eudemus—Aristotle’s son and friend, respectively. These works may have been intended for, or dedicated to, Nichomachus and Eudemus, or the works may have been edited by them.

Aristotle is a virtue ethicist. Virtue ethics focuses on the pursuit and development of excellent, or virtuous, character. Contrary to his predecessors, Aristotle did not believe one is virtuous only as a by-product of achieving knowledge as a whole. Virtue is more complex, and it requires reason and action. For Aristotle, knowledge is hierarchical. The most basic type of knowledge is comprehension, or understanding, which is the acquisition of truth about first principles. First principles are those things that we gain from induction (*epagoge*), as are

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12 Formosa, 231.
universals, and they are the building blocks of things. Next is scientific knowledge (episteme), which, according to Aristotle, “is a state of capacity to demonstrate [. . . ]; for it is when a man believes in a certain way and the principles are known to him that he has [scientific] knowledge [. . .].” Then comes art, or craft (techne), and practical wisdom, or prudence (phronesis), both of which are types of knowledge concerned with “things that can be otherwise.” In other words, there is a relative nature to both types of knowledge. Aristotle further claims that practical wisdom is neither art nor scientific knowledge. Art involves “making,” not “acting,” the latter being the realm of practical wisdom. Scientific knowledge, however, requires demonstration (apodeixis), or deduction (syllogismos), from invariable first principles. Thus, scientific knowledge concerns itself with universals, or first things, whereas practical wisdom, given its situational nature, is concerned with particulars, or last things. Finally, there is philosophical wisdom (sophia), sometimes translated as “wisdom” or “theoretical wisdom.” Aristotle says that wisdom combined with comprehension of first principles is the most finished form of knowledge. He also suggests that practical wisdom does indeed have its own first principles. This seems a bit convoluted, but it actually reveals a more complicated hierarchical structure involving Aristotle’s conception of the soul (psuchē) and his distinction between moral and intellectual virtues.

Aristotle believed that all living things have a soul, and depending on the type of living thing, that soul has one or more parts. There are in fact three possible parts: the nutritive or vegetative part, the appetitive or sensitive part, and the rational part. All living things have the

16 Ibid., 1140a1.
18 The Greek word for soul, psuchē, means breath or sign of life. It is not a religious notion.
nutritive part of the soul, which provides its keepers with the ability to take in nutrition so as to grow and reproduce. Plants are living things that only have the nutritive part of the soul. In addition to the nutritive part, animals and humans also have the appetitive part of the soul, which endows them with the five senses, locomotion, and passions or desires. Finally, the rational part of the soul, which houses our capacity to reason, is present in human beings alone. For Aristotle, the soul’s appetitive part is amenable to reason, even while not strictly capable of rationality as it exists in the soul’s rational part. Specifically, the soul’s appetitive part is capable of moral virtue, which is a subset of intellectual virtue known as “variable intellectual virtue.” Moral virtue includes art and practical wisdom. In turn, practical wisdom has three categories: ethics, economics, and politics. Moral virtue, achieved through habituation, orients the soul’s appetitive part toward moderation. Thus, virtue always is the mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency (otherwise known as the doctrine of the mean). The other subset of intellectual virtue is known as “unchanging” or “invariable.” This subset is identified with the soul’s rational part, and Aristotle considered it superior to variable intellectual virtue. Invariable intellectual virtue includes philosophical wisdom (sophia), of which scientific knowledge (episteme) and understanding (nous) are subsets.

The passions or desires in the soul’s appetitive part not only can be influenced by reason, but they also play an important role in moral excellence for Aristotle. He states, “[…] moral excellence is a state concerned with choice, and choice is deliberate desire, therefore both the reasoning must be true and the desire right if the choice is to be good, and the latter must pursue

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19 Aristotle, “Nichomachean Ethics,” 1102b29. Interestingly, Nietzsche, who I will discuss below, will agree with Aristotle on this point. Nietzsche will critique Aristotle, though, and many other philosophers, for enlisting reason in morality; he reaches further back in time than Aristotle, and finds support for his philosophy in Heraclitus (mid-6th century B.C.E.), as well as in Dionysian and Apollonian mythology. Heraclitus was a significant influence to his successors, including Aristotle, and will appear in the work of Heidegger.

20 Ibid., 1106b36-1107a7.
just what the former asserts.”\footnote{Aristotle, “Nichomachean Ethics,” 1139a22-25.} The nature of one’s “deliberate desire” is one’s character. As I stated above, moral virtue, which includes one’s positive moral character traits, is achieved through practice, or action. Now Aristotle adds “reason” as a necessary component to his ethical theory. Rationality is what separates us from all other living things. By way of virtue (good character) and rationality, human beings achieve their purpose (telos), which is happiness or excellence (eudaimonia). As we will see below, both Kant and Schelling posit a division of the human will in much the same way as Aristotle describes soul (psuchē). This division represents the permeation of morality into both the physical, or bodily, and the intellectual aspects of human existence. Morality is not only the lofty goal achievable for philosophers, but also the necessary tool of all members of society.

Aristotle’s entire philosophy can be described as teleological, not just his ethics, in that he conceives of not only human action, but also the fundamental causes of human existence, as the pursuit of a goal, purpose, or end. Aristotle states, “The origin of action—its efficient, not its final cause—is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end. That is why choice cannot exist either without thought and intellect or without a moral state; for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of intellect and character.”\footnote{Ibid., 1139a32-35. For Aristotle, there were four principle causes that together make up all things. He mentions two of them above: efficient cause and final cause. The efficient cause (arche) is known as the moving cause, because it represents the agency of a thing. The final cause (telos) is the goal, purpose, or end of a thing. Additionally, there is the formal cause (morphē) and the material cause (hyle). The formal cause provides the structure or shape of a thing, and the material cause provides the matter, or stuff, of a thing. Aristotle often conflated the formal, final, and efficient causes, which makes it interesting that above he chose to distinguish the efficient cause of action as “choice.” This seems applicable to Heidegger’s ontology of humankind, specifically to Dasein. Heidegger’s philosophy shows affinity for Aristotle and Heraclitus.} Here, Aristotle again makes clear the importance and place of morality. It is not our telos, but it is required to reach our telos. Choice is the efficient cause, or the action, behind morality. Morality is necessary for excellence (eudaimonia). While he reacts against the belief that ethical behavior
is only a by-product of knowledge, Aristotle does not exclude reason from the pursuit of the final cause, or end. Reason, or the rational soul, is what allows humans to gain philosophical wisdom and, ultimately, to become completely virtuous.

Finally, we arrive at Aristotle’s definition of “evil.” Evil results from a malformation, or internal disorder. Aristotle describes three classes of internal disorder: continence (enkrateia), incontinence (akrasia), and wickedness (kakos, or phaulos). Continence is a class of internal disorder, because it is distinct from virtue. Similarly, incontinence is distinct from vice. Vicious action does not necessarily result from internal disorder, and the continent person can perform virtuous actions. Both the continent and incontinent person experience conflict between emotions, or desires, and reason to a greater extent than does a virtuous individual. The incontinent person chooses actions in accordance with those emotions, whereas the continent person makes choices consistent with reason. Virtuous people also make choices consistent with reason, but they do not experience conflict between emotion and reason often. Aristotle further divides incontinent people into those who have weakness (astheneia) and those who have impetuosity (propeteia). Weak incontinent people have reason, and deliberate about action, but then are overwhelmed by their emotions and act pathologically. Impetuous incontinent people make choices in accordance with their emotions without any deliberation.\(^\text{23}\) For Aristotle, weak incontinent people are far more dangerous than impetuous incontinent people because they are by nature incontinent rather than by habituation. Impetuosity grows out of impatience to wait on reason, according to Aristotle, and can be changed. Weakness is the direct denial of reason and

\(^{23}\) Aristotle, “Nichomachean Ethics,” 1150b19-28. Aristotle brings up an interesting point just before this regarding Socrates’ claim that incontinent people cannot be said to have knowledge. While Aristotle agrees that this claim appears to be true, because no person who has knowledge would allow emotion to overtake reason, he points out that it is necessary to define the kind of knowledge an incontinent person has. He gives several examples, such as drunken or sleeping people, in which knowledge is impaired to an extent that the person becomes incontinent. See 1149b6-19. Aristotle does later state that no incontinent person can have practical wisdom. See 1152a7-8.
choice. Aristotle states, “And thus the incontinent man is like a city which passes all the right decrees and has good laws but makes no use of them, [. . .] but the wicked man is like a city that uses its laws, but has wicked laws to use.”24 Wickedness represents a kind of willing incontinence, for, as Aristotle notes, nothing stops a clever man from being incontinent.

Wickedness (kakos, or phaulos) is evil for Aristotle. It is the complete reversal of the moral order, and it results from malformation. As we will see below, a willing reversal of moral order is at the heart of many other philosophers’ conceptions of evil. However, insisting that malformation causes this kind of re-prioritization leads to a privative, or negative, ontological status for evil. It is merely a lack of something, most likely “goodness” or “reason,” which results in evil. Further, it suggests a weaker form of moral agency than is needed to support an ontologically positive conception of evil—that is, affording evil its own existence. Kant is the first philosopher to take on both of these challenges.

**Kant’s Evil**

Kant defines “pure” philosophy as being “founded entirely on a priori principles.”25 He subdivides pure philosophy into logic, which is formal, and metaphysics, which deals with determinate objects of understanding. As such, metaphysics precedes empirical knowledge. Kant calls the science of ethics “the doctrine of morals,” and he divides morals into two parts: the metaphysics of morals and practical anthropology (Kant’s term for the empirical side of ethics).26 Kant cites “the common idea of duty and of moral laws” as evidence for the existence of pure moral philosophy. “Everyone must admit,” he states, “that if a law is to be morally valid, i.e., is

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26 Nietzsche will later critique his predecessors, including Kant, by using the phrase “science of morals” in a highly sarcastic way to allude to their use of “science” as an unearned pretense.
to be valid as a ground of obligation, then it must carry with it absolute necessity.”

Moral laws apply to all rational beings, without exception. Rationality establishes human beings’ ability to be moral. Therefore, it also establishes that moral laws cannot be empirically based. Kant states that humankind must concede that the ground of obligation here must therefore be sought not in the nature of man nor in the circumstances of the world in which man is placed, but must be sought a priori solely in the concepts of pure reason; he must grant that every other precept which is founded on principles of mere experience—even a precept that may in certain respects be universal—insofar as it rests in the least on empirical grounds—perhaps only in its motive—can indeed be called a practical rule, but never a moral law.

Thus, the foundation of moral law must be pure; it must be a priori. Empirical knowledge cannot constitute universal laws, for Kant. Moral laws do make important use of empirical knowledge, though. Experience sharpens our judgment, according to Kant. It enables us to discern which laws apply to which situations. Most importantly, experience provides access to the human will, and thus, influence over it in implementation of moral law. Kant states, “For man is affected by so many inclinations that, even though he is indeed capable of the idea of a pure practical reason, he is not so easily able to make that idea effective in concreto in the conduct of his life.” For Kant, “inclinations” are desires that depend on sensations and represent needs. Sensations need not be external, and Kant eventually refers to the moral law as an inclination, as I will discuss below. Kant seeks to establish a supreme moral principle that can guide our use of moral law and place the proper pressure on, or encourage the proper priority in, our inclinations, so as to purify our motives. He states, “For in the case of what is to be morally good, that it conforms to the

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27 Kant, *Grounding*, 2.
28 Ibid., *Grounding*, 2-3.
29 Ibid., 3, emphasis in original.
30 Ibid., 24n3.
moral law is not enough; it must also be done for the sake of the moral law.” Kant regards intention, or motive, as the source of moral worth. For any action to be moral, it must be intended only because it is moral. Kant states, “The moral worth depends, therefore, not on the realization of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of volition according to which, without regard to any objects of the faculty of desire, the action has been done.” Actions driven by inclinations other than the moral law are not immoral, but they are not moral either. They occupy a neutral, amoral space. Like Aristotle, Kant views moral actions as truly rare, because he believes that the majority of our actions fall into this “amoral” category. Also crucially important is the distance this creates between the metaphysics of humans, especially their ontology, and the metaphysics of morals. Morality’s existence is not dependent on human beings’ existence. While Kant seeks to define radical evil based in agency and choice in a moral context, he does not intertwine evil’s existence with the constitution of human beings. I will discuss this further in chapter two, where I also discuss Schelling’s response to his predecessors, Kant key among them.

Kant defines moral, amoral, and immoral actions in terms of duty. He states, “Duty is the necessity of an action done out of respect for the [moral] law.” Moral actions are done from duty, amoral actions are done in accordance with duty but not solely from duty, and immoral actions are done contrary to duty. Kant also discusses the interplay between duty and inclination. Actions done from duty are moral precisely because one chooses to be motivated by duty instead of by inclination. We act in accordance with duty because those actions which satisfy our inclinations are not morally wrong; they simply don’t have the moral law as their sole motivation.

31 Kant, *Grounding*, 3.
32 Ibid., 13.
33 Ibid., 20.
34 Ibid., 13. Kant distinguishes duty from inclination in *Grounding*, but later, in *Religion* (1793), he lumps duty (as the representation of the moral law) into inclination. The moral law is an inclination.
and end. Because the moral worth of action is based on our intentions, the only acceptable end, or object, of moral actions is the moral law. Kant states, “An object of respect can only be what is connected with will solely as ground and never as effect [. . .]—in other words, only the law itself can be an object of respect and hence can be a command.” Actions done because they are commanded—actions done from duty—set aside all other inclinations and objects of the will except the moral law and one’s respect for the law. Kant states, “Therefore, the pre-eminent good which is called moral can consist in nothing but the representation of the law in itself, and such a representation can admittedly be found only in a rational being insofar as this representation, and not some expected effect, is the determining ground of the will.” According to Kant, the only thing capable of being good in itself is a good will, and a will is good only through its determination by the moral law. The will’s determination by the moral law is itself an act of will; so, through its willing, the will can be good. Thus, the supreme principle, which ensures that the moral law determines the will, states: “I should never act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law.” This is the universal-law formulation of Kant’s supreme principle, or the categorical imperative. He states,

there is one imperative which immediately commands a certain conduct without having as its condition any other purpose to be attained by it. This imperative is categorical. It is not concerned with the matter of the action and its intended result, but rather with the form of the action and the principle from which it follows; what is essentially good in the action consists in the mental disposition, let the consequences be what they may. This imperative may be called that of morality.

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36 Kant is careful to explain his use of “respect” as a “representation of a worth that thwartst my self-love,” and not as a feeling or inclination. In Kant, *Grounding*, 14n14.
37 Ibid., 13.
38 Ibid., 7.
39 Ibid., 14.
40 Ibid., 26.
There are several other equivalent formulations of Kant’s categorical imperative, but the universal-law formulation is the most widely known.\(^{41}\) Each formulation identifies the categorical imperative with its important qualities, functions, or character. The formulations serve as epithets for the categorical imperative. One of the most important epithets is autonomy, or choice. Because morality is a priori, which our rationality makes wholly intrinsic to us, only autonomy can lead to morality. The autonomy formulation of the categorical imperative states that “the idea of the will of every rational being [. . . is] a will that legislates universal law.”\(^{42}\) It follows, then, that heteronomy is a source of immorality. Kant states, “In every case where an object of the will must be laid down as the foundation for prescribing a rule to determine the will, there the rule is nothing but heteronomy.”\(^{43}\) If an object of the will determines the will’s action, the immorality of that action is two-fold. First, moral actions can have no object except the moral law itself; and second, intentions cannot be extrinsic by definition. Kant states, “An absolutely good will, whose principle must be a categorical imperative, will therefore be indeterminate as regards all objects and will contain merely the form of willing; and indeed that form is autonomy.”\(^{44}\) It is important, here, to note another of Kant’s key notions: the necessity of sublimating particulars to universals in the service of morality. Aristotle struggled to define this notion in his own philosophy because of his distaste for Plato’s extreme realism.

This necessitates a brief discussion of Kant’s conception of will in order to explain his concept of evil. As John R. Silber states, “The will according to Kant is a unitary faculty. But, [. . .] it is subject to division into ‘parts’ for the purpose of analysis.”\(^{45}\) Kant divides the unified

\(^{41}\) Other formulations of Kant’s categorical imperative include the law-of-nature, end-in-itself, autonomy, and kingdom-of-ends formulations. In Kant, *Grounding*, 30-40.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 38.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 47.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., *Grounding*, 48.

faculty of volition into three parts, each with a special function: Willkür, Wille, and Gesinnung. In translations of Kant’s work, Willkür and Wille both often appear as “will.” However, Willkür suggests conditional discretion, whereas Wille more literally translates as “volition.” Willkür and Wille are distinct “predispositions,” even though at times Kant refers to the unitary faculty of will as Wille. Gesinnung translates suitably into English as “disposition,” and is the effect of Willkür. In turn, Willkür can be determined by Wille, if Willkür chooses. Willkür is the executive branch of the will. Willkür allows us to prioritize our desires and choose the strongest desire to actualize, or determine the Willkür. The Willkür is self-determined, or autonomous, because it chooses the strongest desire before being determined by it. Kant states,

freedom of the will [Willkür] is of a wholly unique nature in that an incentive can determine the will [Willkür] to an action only so far as the individual has incorporated it into his maxim (has made it the general rule in accordance with which he will conduct himself); only thus can an incentive, whatever it may be, co-exist with the absolute spontaneity of the will [Willkür] (i.e., freedom).

Wille is an incentive that Willkür can choose. While distinct from Willkür, Wille is not free. Kant refers to it as the “predisposition to personality in man.” He states, “We cannot regard this [Wille] as included in the [Willkür . . . ], but necessarily must treat it as a special predisposition.” Wille represents the moral law, and it makes us aware that we are accountable for our actions; it functions as legislator. Further, Kant states, “[This] law is the only law which informs us of the independence of our will [Willkür] from the determination of all other

48 Kant uses “inclination” and “incentive” interchangeably in his discussion of will. Both inclination and incentive cause desire. Inclination (Neigung) is sometimes used to signify an internal or inborn tendency, while incentive (Triebfeder) seems to signify an external enticement at times. See Kant, Grounding, 23-24.
49 Kant, Religion, 21, emphasis in original.
50 Ibid., 21n.
Silber summarizes the contrast between *Wille* and *Willkür* well, saying, “Whereas *Willkür* is free to actualize either the autonomous or heteronomous potentialities of transcendental freedom, *Wille* is not free at all. *Wille* is rather the law of freedom, the normative aspect of the will, which as a norm is neither free nor unfree.”

Disposition (*Gesinnung*) is like character or mindset, and it results from *Willkür* (a predisposition). Kant states, “The disposition, *i.e.*, the ultimate subjective ground of the adoption of maxims, can be one only and applies universally to the whole use of freedom. Yet this disposition itself must have been adopted by free choice [*Willkür*], for otherwise it could not be imputed.” Kant makes three points here: first, each individual has one disposition at a time that applies to all of his or her actions; second, and as a result of the first point, no individual lacks a disposition; and third, in that dispositions result from *Willkür* and help to establish responsibility, there is no “original,” or in-born, disposition. The concept of disposition also reveals that *Willkür* acts in more than one way. First, *Willkür* performs a dispositional act—either it chooses the *Wille* (the moral law) to determine its disposition or it chooses another incentive to determine its disposition. Then, the *Willkür* performs particular acts that follow from the disposition. Silber states, “The dispositional act concerns the willing or the rejecting of the spirit of the moral law and establishes the *morality* of the acts of the *Willkür*, the underlying intentional ground of all its specific acts and therefore its character.” The disposition of an individual cannot be directly identified, because it represents the pattern of intention of that individual. As Kant established in

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51 Kant, *Religion*, 21n.
52 Silber, civ.
54 Silber, cxvi, emphasis in original.
Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, intentions are complex and often convoluted. At best, we can infer the disposition of an individual from the specific actions of the Willkür.

For Kant, the disposition is like a meta-maxim of the will in that it helps to determine all other maxims adopted by the Willkür. As such, disposition is the root of evil in humankind. Kant states,

We call a man evil, however, not because he performs actions that are evil (contrary to law) but because these actions are of such a nature that we may infer from them the presence in him of evil maxims. [...] In order, then, to call a man evil, it would have to be possible a priori to infer from some several evil acts done with consciousness of their evil, or from one such act, an underlying evil maxim; and further, from this maxim to infer the presence in the agent of an underlying common ground, itself a maxim, of all particular morally-evil maxims.

In this capacity to adopt evil maxims, human beings have what Kant calls a “propensity” to evil. A propensity (Hang) is not necessarily innate in individuals like a predisposition is; rather, it can be acquired in the same sense as disposition is acquired. Propensity is that which makes inclination, or habitual craving, possible. In this way, Kant describes our propensity to evil as a part of general human nature, but not necessarily a part of all individual’s natures. He further clarifies human nature, stating,

... evil by nature, means but this, that evil can be predicated of man as a species; not that such a quality can be inferred from the concept of his species (that is, of man in general) [...]. Hence we can call this natural propensity to evil, and as we must, after all, ever hold man himself responsible for it, we can further call it a radical innate evil in human nature (yet none the less brought upon us by ourselves).

There is a similarity here between Aristotle’s definition of evil—the reversal of vice and virtue, which he also calls “wickedness”—and Kant’s radical evil. Both philosophers see the emergence
of evil as a corruption or perversion of essential qualities in human beings, and they both see evil as reversible. However, Kant refused to ground evil simply in inclination or desire (for Aristotle, this was the appetitive soul). Kant insisted that corruption was the effect of wrongful subordination: evil results when the Willkür subordinates the moral law to any inclination. Kant divides our propensity to evil into three categories: frailty, impurity, and wickedness. Frailty refers to the consistency with which one observes his or her adopted maxims—namely, that one is inconsistent in upholding adopted maxims. Impurity is the mixing of moral and amoral intentions, even in the practice of good maxims. Impurity is equal to actions performed in accordance with duty. Wickedness, for Kant, is the propensity to adopt evil maxims. Kant states, “the corruption (corruptio) of the human heart is the propensity of the will [Willkür] to maxims which neglect the incentives springing from the moral law in favor of others which are not moral.”

Wickedness reverses the moral priority of incentives in the Willkür. Perhaps a final example from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who had a great influence on Kant, will elucidate things. In Book IV of Emile, Rousseau writes, “the good man orders his life with regard to all men; the wicked orders it for self alone. The latter centres all things round himself; the other measures his radius and remains on the circumference.”

In reversing moral priority, the wicked person subordinates the whole to the part.

Conclusion

59 Kant, Religion, 25.
Both Aristotle and Kant offer conceptions of evil based on corruption. Evil has no ground of its own; rather, it is at best a lack of good that something broken in humankind causes. F.W.J. Schelling insists that evil has a ground, thereby giving it a positive existence, and he does so by way of the agency Kant sought to establish for morality. Schelling’s approach to evil is decidedly religious, and as such he offers a theodicy, albeit one rooted in freedom. His free-will theodicy is important for the project at hand because it divorces Kant’s agent-driven morality from rationalism and connects its same concepts to a natural philosophy. Thus, a positive concept of evil can emerge. The work of the next chapter will be to establish these claims, but also to discuss the trouble of theodicy and seek to secularize Schelling’s theodicy by way of Heidegger’s phenomenology.
F.W.J. Schelling’s *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* argues that the ontological status of evil is a positive one. That is to say, for Schelling, evil is not merely the negation, or privation, of good. Further, evil is necessarily moral: it results from the actions of moral agents. Schelling would argue that natural evil—disastrous events not caused by moral agents, such as earthquakes, catastrophic weather events, or plagues—is not truly “evil,” because it is not the creation of moral agents. Being that natural evil would be the creation of God, Schelling denies its existence. In his theodicy, Schelling argues that the possibility of evil grounds itself in human beings’ free will. Made in the image of God, humans share God’s constitutive parts. Humans are distinguished from God by the severability of the bond, or unity, of these parts. This unity is necessary in God, but humans can choose to unify their constituent parts in the core, or *centrum*, of their being. Thus, inherent in creation – specifically, inherent to individual identity – is the possibility of evil, given human freedom.

Schelling’s philosophy of freedom and its implications for evil constitute a dialectical reconciliation of previous philosophical conceptions of agency and theological conceptions of creation. This response paved the way for later philosophers, such as Martin Heidegger, who endeavored to create a philosophy that included an idea of freedom independent of privation.

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61 This ignores the existence of biological weapons and natural disasters that are the result of human actions. Examples such as these rightly fall into the “moral” rather than the “natural” category of evil.
While Heidegger did not explicitly address evil in his published works, he did study and teach Schelling’s *Philosophical Inquiries*. In Heidegger’s lecture notes on Schelling’s treatise, we find connections between Schelling’s explanation of the possibility of evil in the creation of individual identity, and Heidegger’s conception of Dasein, which is the root of Heidegger’s ideas about freedom. That is, Heidegger’s Dasein understands itself and its own existence through the possibility of itself – the choices Dasein makes or neglects. Only a particular Dasein can determine its existence, and this determination takes the form of actions in the world. Similarly, Schelling states that the selfhood of humans— their difference from God, as characterized by severability— allows them ultimate freedom. Thus, evil is possible because of humans’ ability to choose.

In this chapter, I will filter Schelling’s discussion of human freedom through Heideggerian phenomenology and argue that when one does so, we can arrive at a secularized explanation of evil’s possibility, as well as how evil is actualized through human action. Ironically, then, we find that Schelling’s theodicy opens a space for a “secular evil,” which in turn severs evil from theodicy itself.

**The Theodical Project**

Because I have chosen to engage Schelling, the lone theodical apologist among the cohort of philosophers this project treats, it is necessary that we briefly contextualize where Schelling fits into theodicy. I am working toward a secularized, positive conception of evil with the help of Schelling’s theodicy, thus it is important to understand how he departs from modern theodicy’s most formidable figure, G.W. Leibniz. Also important is the question of why Schelling chose theodicy as a vehicle for his concept of evil.
According to Alvin Plantinga, a theodicy is “an answer to why God permits evil.”62 Leibniz first coined the word “theodicy” in his 1710 book, Theodicy. Theodicy is the combination of the Greek words theos (θεός, God) and dikē (δίκη, righteous judgments).63 Its etymology suggests its meaning: justification for the presence of evil, in light of God’s existence. The question for which theodicy is conceived as an answer is also known as “the problem of evil,” and it asks, if God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, why did he create a world with evil in it? Some apologists, Plantinga among them, assign a stronger definition to theodicy, insisting that it uncovers God’s reasons for the presence of evil. However, most settle for the more general definition that does not require theodicies to represent God’s own reasoning. Schelling uses this more general definition. The problem of evil is much older than Leibniz’s conception of theodicy, of course, but he viewed the problem from a new angle. Philosophers prior to Leibniz might be said to have engaged in natural theology, which is an argument, or proof, of God’s existence, rather than the more narrow concern of why God permits evil. Natural theology often is a tool used to prove that religious belief is rationally acceptable.64

Leibniz’s theodicy centers on rationality. He famously says, “nothing takes place without sufficient reason.”65 Just as Leibniz views natural theology from a different and more-narrow angle than his predecessors, his claim about reason can be viewed from different angles, too. On the one hand, his claim suggests a triumph of reason over all things, a harmonic order imposed on the world, the best of all possible worlds, by God during the world’s creation.66 On the other

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64 Plantinga, 2.
65 G.W. Leibniz, Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil, ed. Austin Farrer, trans. E.M. Huggard (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1985), 210, emphasis in orginal. This is one of several formulations of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), which is attributed to Leibniz in modern thought. The concept can be traced as far back as Anaximander of Miletus (610 BCE-546 BCE).
66 Ibid.
hand, it could be viewed as a claim that only “nothing,” a thing without existence, is absent of reason. Indeed, Leibniz defines evil as lacking reason and existence. As Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt point out in their introduction to Schelling’s *Philosophical Investigations*,

> With this conception of evil Leibniz is able to make the familiar defenses of God’s goodness, omniscience and omnipotence. But, what is more, he is able to defend the indwelling rationality of creation as system by showing that evil cannot have any other function in the perfect order of the system than an ancillary one, the function of a servant.67

Leibniz’s re-interpretation of the privative concept of evil, which I discussed in chapter one, neatly fits evil and God into systemic modern thought.

There are two important points to be made about theodicy here, which Love and Schmidt also note. First, that God, in the context of philosophically driven theodicy, is an instrument of modern science in its quest to conquer the natural world. As Love and Schmidt put it, “theodicy becomes the tool of purely human ambitions for hegemonic mastery over an only apparently hostile nature.”68 By using theodicy to render God’s creations, e.g. the world and human beings, wholly rational, humans justify their dominance over nature through nature’s accessibility to human rationality. Second, Leibniz’s privative evil has a positive role within the system. This is a troubling state of affairs and risks contradicting human experience. It suggests that evil not only is necessary for the system, but also somehow is a systemic good. Carried to its worst conclusion, this line of thought excuses the banal evil of people like Adolf Eichmann and the Holocaust in which he participated.

Schelling departs from the modern conception of theodicy in several key ways: he focuses on human beings, rather than on God; he embraces nature, rather than seeking to overcome it, which requires that he also embrace chaos; and he insists that evil has a positive

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68 Love and Schmidt, xiv.
ontological status, rather than a negative one. Intricately intertwined with these key departures is Schelling’s conception of the constitution of God Himself. Schelling engages in a free-will theodicy, which seeks to justify the presence of evil by way of human beings’ free will. This requires that he establish human beings’ freedom as directly resulting from their creation by God without enlisting God in the creation of evil. I will discuss this in greater detail below, but worth mentioning here is the influence of Kant, who definitively rejects theodicy, on Schelling’s attempt to revive theodicy. Kant’s moral theory surrounding his concept of radical evil often is criticized, especially by his contemporaries, for its apparent instability, also called the “Kantian paradox.” The Kantian paradox refers to Kant’s imposition of Gesinnung, or disposition, into his metaphysics of human will. Human disposition (Gesinnung) is the character of human will, and it seems to function as a check on the propensity (Hang) in human nature toward evil. Kant claims at once that humans are radically free to choose good or evil and that they are the seat of radical evil (an evil deeply rooted in the nature of human beings). The latter (propensity for evil) suggests a limitation on the former (autonomy) that Kant tries to resolve in the concept of disposition (Gesinnung). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe accused Kant of offering a dressed-up version of original sin in his combination of autonomy and radical evil. Goethe writes in a letter to Johann Herder on June 7, 1793, that Kant “had criminally smeared his philosopher’s cloak with the shameful stain of radical evil, after it had taken him a long human life to cleanse it from many a dirty prejudice, so that Christians too might yet be enticed to kiss its hem.”69 One can’t help but be reminded of Nietzsche by this quotation, and Schelling will respond to the Kantian paradox in a way that foreshadows Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity, as we shall see. Love and Schmidt offer the following on Kant’s paradox and Schelling’s response:

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If radical evil in Kant places a certain kind of question mark behind his thinking about autonomy, suggesting a pessimism about human beings that courses through all of Kant’s thought, Schelling in striving to overcome that pessimism, takes it to a more dangerous brink, an “abyss of freedom,” that Kant could not have countenanced.\(^7\)

Schelling seeks to revive theodicy while retaining Kant’s more powerful concept of evil. In doing so, he insists on a God whose very constitution critiques Christianity’s Doctrine of Sin in its dynamism. For Schelling, this dynamism is the essential tension of life, and it is a tension that reason cannot resolve.

**Schelling on God’s Creation**

Schelling criticizes three prominent theories of God’s process of creation as insufficient, not only in their inability to provide a positive conception of evil, but also because they pay no heed to the primordial stuff out of which God Himself springs. These three processes of creation are immanence, or being as the result of containment within God; concursus, or being as God’s accompaniment of all things; and emmanence, or being that flows from God. The first and the third (immanence and emmanence) both have the same difficulty admitting of a positive conception of evil. As Schelling puts it,

> either real evil is admitted and, hence, it is inevitable that evil will be posited within infinite substance or the primal will itself, whereby the concept of a most perfect being is utterly destroyed, or the reality of evil must in some way be denied, whereby, however, at the same time the real concept of freedom vanishes.\(^7\)

These conceptions make the existence of evil necessarily negative: evil is reduced to “the so-called *malum metaphysicum* [metaphysical evil] or the negative concept of the imperfection of

\(^7\) Love and Schmidt, xix.

creatures.” Evil cannot have full-fledged existence, because it would negate God’s pure
goodness. To affirm God’s goodness, one must also accept that human actions are predetermined
by the will of God, because a purely good being could not will that there be evil in the world.
Therefore, evil results from a lack, or a brokenness, in humans that prevents adherence to God’s
will. Likewise, concursus, the second process of creation Schelling addresses, is no better suited
to a positive conception of evil. As he explains, “permitting an entirely dependent being to do
evil is surely not much better than to cause it to do so. Or, likewise, the reality of evil must be
denied in one way or another.” Being all good, God cannot allow his creations the capacity for
evil because He is never separated to a high enough degree from His creations such that He
would not be implicated in evil, too.

For Schelling, it is not only traditional notions of humans’ creation by God that lead to a
prative conception of evil, but also traditional notions regarding the stuff of God’s own
creation (His ground) that result in the inability to positively conceive of evil. Schelling posits the folllwing:

In order to be divided from God, they [humankind] must become in a ground
different from God. Since, however, nothing indeed can be outside of God, this
contradiction can only be solved by things having their ground in that which in
God himself is not He Himself, that is, in that which is the ground of his
existence.

What immanence, concursus, and emmanence fail to articulate in humans’ likeness to God is the
nature of that likeness. Further, they fail to accurately depict God’s own ground. Schelling’s
articulation of the nature of humans’ likeness to God is the foundation for his claim that evil is
human beings’ creation. As Fred Dallmayr writes, “Against the backdrop of these critical
observations, Schelling delineates his own alternative conception—a conception which stresses

72 Schelling, 36.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., 28.
difference without dualism, and unity without monistic sameness.”75 Schelling synthesizes his predecessors’ theories into a revelatory addition to theodicy that enlivens the possibility of a philosophy based on freedom and, with it, the possibility of a positive conception of evil.

Schelling views nature, and God, as containing a distinctively non-rational component. Reason, or order, is not the original state of affairs. Rather, there is being as “the ground of existence” and being as “existence.” The “ground of existence” is non-rational darkness, while “existence” is rational light; each component is separate from the other, but they depend on each other for their being, as well. Schelling states, “[s]ince nothing is prior to, or outside [außer], God, he must have the ground of his existence in himself.”76 God’s ground is nature itself; nature is inseparable from Him, but it is distinct from him. Schelling offers an analogy to explain. Gravity and light are corollaries to the ground and the existence of God, respectively. Gravity’s darkness reveals the light of existence. Joseph P. Lawrence characterizes these forces well, stating, “Schelling depict[s] this polarity as the opposition between the forces of contraction [gravity] and expansion [light] that constitute the field of material reality.”77 The ground represents potentiality, and as such is required by, or is the matter of, existence. The tension between these forces cannot be reconciled, because this tension is required for creation. As Schelling states, “Even light does not fully remove the seal under which gravity lies contained.”78 God contains within Himself that which He is not. Furthermore, He is both subsequent and prior to His ground. Schelling explains:

76 Schelling, 27.
78 Schelling, 27.
that which relative to gravity appears as existing also belongs in itself to the ground, and, hence, nature in general is everything that lies beyond [. . .]. [A]s far as this precedence is concerned, it is to be thought neither as precedence according to time nor as priority of being. In the circle out of which everything becomes, it is no contradiction that that through which the One is generated may itself be in turn begotten by it. [. . .] God has in himself an inner ground of his existence that in this respect precedes him in existence; but, precisely in this way, God is again the prius [what is before] of the ground in so far as the ground, even as such, could not exist if God did not exist actu [acutally].79

Just as gravity’s darkness reveals light’s existence, darkness cannot exist without light’s revelation. This intermingling of God and nature represents one of the key departures Schelling makes from modern theodicy: nature is not something to be conquered. In fact, nature cannot be conquered. Lawrence succinctly makes this point, saying, “[t]o understand Schelling is above all to understand that […] ontological polarity can never be resolved in a developmental process.”80 God’s nature, which is nature itself, cannot be defined by only ground or only existence. For Schelling, “essence can only reveal itself in its opposite, love only in hate, unity in conflict.”81

**Schelling on Humans’ Creation**

For evil to have possibility, a positive existence, in a theodical context, it must occur separately from God. God’s essence, located in His centrum, is the unity of His ground and existence, or dark and light. His centrum is completely inseverable. Created in God’s image, humans have all that God has, but cannot be identical with God. As Schelling states, “The same unity that is inseverable in God must therefore be severable in man—and this is the possibility of good and evil.”82 Human beings are capable of infinite possibility, or freedom, because inherent

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79 Schelling, 28.
80 Lawrence, 168.
81 Schelling, 41.
82 Ibid., 33.
to their make-up is the dark and the light, chaos and order. Human beings’ existence reveals their Being, which is freedom. Dallmayr clarifies, writing,

An important point re-emphasized in this context is the linkage of freedom with the possibility of real evil—a linkage which is denied by some (Enlightenment) doctrines which construe freedom as the rational mastery of desires and inclinations, and goodness (or good will) as a synonym of pure reason. For Schelling, these doctrines completely divorce good and evil from any kind of grounding—neglecting that freedom is not just an empty capacity but a response to the ground-existence nexus [centrum].

More than just a response to the ground-existence centrum, freedom is created by the ground-existence centrum. Darkness and light—self-will and universal will—combine to create an individuated “One Being.” Schelling writes,

The principle, to the extent that it comes from the ground and is dark, is the self-will of creatures which, however, to the extent that it has not yet been raised to (does not grasp) complete unity with the light (as principle of understanding), is pure craving or desire, that is, blind will.

The self-will represents the contraction of gravity (darkness) in its overwhelming concern for individual needs. While not sufficient, the self-will is absolutely necessary for the creation of an individual, particular will. Schelling continues,

The understanding as universal will stands against this self-will of creatures, using and subordinating the latter to itself as a mere instrument. But, if through advancing mutation and division of all forces, the deepest and most inner point of initial darkness in a being is finally transfigured wholly into the light, then the will of this same being is indeed, to the extent it is individual, also a truly particular will […].

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83 Dallmayr, 177.
84 A helpful comparison to Kant’s Willkür and Wille can be drawn from Schelling’s self-will and universal will, respectively. Just as Willkür and Wille are analyzable parts of the unitary will for Kant, so are self-will and universal will parts of a particular will for Schelling. Either part could not constitute a particular will in isolation. However, the self-will of humans need not be unified with the universal will. This is part of what distinguishes humans from God: God’s self-will and universal will are properly balanced and inseparable, whereas humans’ wills are capable of separation and imbalance.
85 Schelling, 32.
86 Ibid., 32.
The self-will individuates, but only when fully revealed by understanding (light, or existence), which is the universal will. The self-will and the universal will are both required for the single whole to come into being. In their proper, wholly unified relation, self-will (darkness) and universal will (light and understanding) individuate God. To the extent that God’s will, the primal will, is individual, it is a particular will, like the particular will in an individual human. Schelling states, “This raising of the deepest centrum into light occurs in none of the creatures visible to us other than man.”\(^87\) However, because humans’ principles are severable, they are distinct from God, and this constitutes humans’ spirit. Humans’ ground in darkness is transfigured in light, but not fully. Thus, the tension that is stayed in God by His unity is far less stayed in humans. Schelling calls this tension in humans their selfhood. Schelling states, “man is spirit as a selfish [selbstisch], particular being (separated from God) [. . .].”\(^88\) Selfhood and spirit are one as long as selfhood remains unified with light and understanding. Like spirit, selfhood is distinct from the governing principle of light and the grounding principle of darkness. Selfhood—the tension between human beings’ principles of darkness (ground) and light (existence)—can cause disruption by pushing the self-will away from the center, where it is subordinated to universal will. Schelling tells us, “But no sooner than self-will itself moves from the centrum as its place, so does the bond of forces as well [. . .].”\(^89\) The moment this centrum is disrupted and the balance of ground and existence is upset, unrest and corruption begins to grow. Humans’ centrum, their center, where self-will resides, forever is linked to the universal will in God because self-will owes its creation to the universal will. Importantly, the ground of existence generates this onus; hence the necessity for the self-will to remain in its proper place, our centrum, so as to participate accordingly in the reason and order that is the universal will, or

\(^{87}\) Schelling, 32.
\(^{88}\) Ibid., 33.
\(^{89}\) Ibid., 34.
light. Darkness and light cannot be temporally distinguished from each other; they are equiprimordial. Logical subordination is equally impossible because of the principles’ unity in God. These principles are severable in humans, however, which makes prioritization possible, but only through humans’ self-will, humans’ choice.

For Schelling, evil is unrest and distortion in our core, or centrum. Humans’ essential unity is severed when our self-will moves, even slightly, away from our centrum. The self-will concerns itself with its own desires, and is naturally subsumed and subservient to universal will. If the self-will overpowers the universal will, then the universal will no longer is capable of unifying the separate forces within us. Schelling offers this elucidation:

The most fitting comparison is here offered by disease which, as the disorder having arisen in nature through a misuse of freedom, is the true counterpart of evil or sin. Universal disease never exists without the hidden forces of the ground having broken out [. . .].

There are parallels, here, between Schelling’s self-will and universal will and Kant’s Willkür and Wille, respectively. There are differences, too, in that Schelling’s self-will is not as able to determine character (what Kant would call disposition, or Gesinuung), but Kant’s Willkür is. Thus, the universal will in Schelling is stronger in its executive powers than is Kant’s Wille. It is interesting to note that Schelling has avoided an immediate buttressing of the doctrine of sin by grounding God, in a self-referential way, in nature, whereas Kant cannot avoid such a charge because of his insistence on a rationalistic moral law. Herein lies part of Schelling’s critique of his predecessors. Schelling states, “Idealism is the soul of philosophy; realism is its body; only the two together constitute a living whole. Realism can never furnish the first principles but it must be the basis and the instrument by which idealism realizes itself and takes on flesh and

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90 Schelling, 34.
blood.” Schelling is clearly inspired by Kant’s innovation of will and what it means for autonomy and evil. Yet, he goes about keeping in check modernity’s unbridled individualism more effectively than does Kant. Schelling denies a necessary linkage of progress and rational order while affirming ultimate freedom within the religious ground that Kant assumed would make such a project untenable.

**Heidegger on Schelling**

The conception of Dasein in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* bears a striking resemblance to Schelling’s ideas about individual identity and human freedom. I will discuss here three points of intersection that show not only Heidegger’s reverence for Schelling’s thought, but also how Heidegger’s philosophy extends Schelling’s philosophy, especially through the concept of individuation. Heidegger’s Dasein defines and grounds its existence by way of its possibility. Dasein’s existence is revealed in the light of the possibility that it *is*, by its underlying order. Because Dasein’s Being is essentially in freedom, though, Dasein can neglect choice. In its neglect, Dasein flees its own Being, and merely exists, in the lesser sense. Heidegger writes, “In each case Dasein *is* its possibility, and it ‘has’ this possibility, but not just as a property [eigenschaftlich], as something present-at-hand would.” An object that is present-at-hand is somehow deficient, or existing in a secondary way in relation to Dasein. Were possibility merely a coincidental, or accidental, property, and not essential to Dasein, then Dasein would possess possibility. Heidegger is making clear, though, that possibility possesses Dasein. Possibility is therefore primary to Dasein, and it characterizes Dasein’s existence. Furthermore, Heidegger

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91 Schelling, 30.
93 Ibid., 68.
introduces the “authenticity” of Dasein. Authenticity is a certain command of individual identity, and it is a mode of Being for Dasein. Equally, inauthenticity is a mode of Being, but this mode lacks command of individual identity. Heidegger continues: “But only in so far as [Dasein] is essentially something which can be authentic—that is something of its own—can it have lost itself and not yet won itself.”

The combination of possibility (freedom) and authenticity (identity) that is Dasein illuminates the first point of similarity with Schelling.

This combination also represents an earlier demonstration in Heidegger’s thought of that which he would later express in his lecture on Schelling’s treatise. Heidegger characterizes Schelling’s freedom as follows:

For freedom is here, not the property of man, but the other way around: Man is at best the property of freedom. Freedom is the encompassing and penetrating nature, in which man becomes man only when he is anchored there. That means the nature of man is grounded in freedom. But freedom itself is a determination of true Being in general which transcends all human being. Insofar as man is as man, he must participate in this determination of Being, and man is, insofar as he brings about this participation in freedom.

Dasein participates in possibility (freedom) because Dasein is capable of authenticity (identity) at an essential level. Yet the capacity for authenticity, or “mineness,” that comes from Dasein’s determination of self is “always [done] in the light of a possibility which it is itself and which, in its very Being, it somehow understands.” Here, Heidegger has described Schelling’s conception of a human being: a being whose nature is freedom, whose constitutive principles are defined by their severability, and who contains within him- or herself both the ground for his or her existence and his or her existence itself. Schelling discusses the ground of Existence (God’s existence), which also is present as ground in humans’ existence (primordial darkness). This

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94 Heidegger, Being and Time, 68.
96 Heidegger, Being and Time, 69.
darkness as it is represented by the self-will can inspire separation in humans, drawing us away from our center. Heidegger terms this same activity in Dasein “falling.” In his lecture notes on Schelling, Heidegger describes Schelling’s inner possibility of evil in Heideggerian terms, stating, “The greatness of a Dasein is first shown by the test whether it is capable of discovering and holding fast to the great resistance of its nature which towers above it.”97 Our ability to embrace the “great resistance,” or the tension within us that allowed for our own creation, and make our own choices is the measure of our being. For Schelling, embracing this tension would be to maintain balance between ground and existence in our *centrum*, and for Heidegger, it would be embracing authenticity and not falling in the face of our pure possibility.

The notion of discovering one’s own being leads us to the next similarity in Heidegger’s and Schelling’s thought. To discuss Heidegger’s notion of “discovering,” or “uncovering,” first we must understand something about his conception of truth. Heidegger goes to great lengths to isolate a primordial definition of truth. This definition is not one of correspondence or relation, but rather one of revealment or unconcealment. The Greek word *aletheia* signifies the notion of unconcealment. Heidegger tells us, “Truth, understood in the most primordial sense, belongs to the basic constitution of Dasein.”98 Because it is pure possibility, Dasein’s Being can tend toward the light (revelation), or toward darkness (concealment). Thus, Heidegger says, “Dasein is equiprimordially both in the truth and in untruth.”99 Here, Heidegger again exemplifies Schelling’s notion of the containment of both light and dark, order and disorder, in human beings. Truth and untruth are equally primary, or first-in-nature, to Dasein. Heidegger states, “For Schelling, existence always means a being insofar as it is *aware of itself (bei sich selbst).* Only that, however, can be aware of itself which has gone out of itself and in a certain way is

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97 Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise*, 105.
99 Ibid., 265.
always outside of itself.” Evident here is the same co-dependency of ground and existence we considered above. Self-awareness, or uncovered-ness and understanding (light), only is possible if there first is a lack of awareness, or covered-up-ness.

“Facticity,” then, is the actuality of Dasein’s being. Heidegger tells us, “To be closed off and covered up belongs to Dasein’s facticity.” Facticity also allows Dasein to become entangled with other beings in the world, because Dasein’s basic state of being is Being-in-the-world. The pure possibility of the world creates anxiety in Dasein. This anxiety causes Dasein to turn away from itself and to fall. Heidegger writes, “That in the face of which one is anxious is completely indefinite.” The indefinite nature of the world, the ultimate possibility, is thus a type of disorder, or darkness, as Schelling would characterize it. Because the myriad possibilities are indeterminate, Heidegger likens them to a “nothing and nowhere within-the-world,” which translates into “utter insignificance.” Here again, there is a co-dependency between light and dark (existence and ground), but it occurs in the reverse order to the relationships exemplified above. This reflexivity mirrors Schelling’s characterization of God. God contains the ground for His existence within Himself, making that ground prior to Him. But, God’s existence is also prior to His ground for existence in that His ground (being unqualified darkness) would have no actuality were it not contained within Him. As seems fitting, Dasein intimately feels this cycle of reflexivity. Heidegger writes, “Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about—its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world.” This relentless confrontation with pure possibility, which seems undefinable to Dasein—which actually is its own identity—causes Dasein to fall. The falling of Dasein can be likened to the

100 Heidegger, Schelling’s Treatise, 109.
101 Heidegger, Being and Time, 265.
102 Ibid., 231.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., 232.
possibility of evil for Schelling. In its retreat from itself, Dasein relinquishes its essence and loses its unity. Heidegger agrees that Dasein is the only being capable of this type of possibility. He writes, “Therefore, with that which it is anxious about, anxiety discloses Dasein as Being-possible, and indeed as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization [vereinzeltes in der Vereinzelung].”¹⁰⁵ For Heidegger, Dasein cannot avoid this confrontation with itself. In Schelling’s terminology, avoidance of humans’ severabiltiy amounts to the assumption that humans’ divinity is next to God’s. Humans’ severability is their defining feature, and this makes them not only capable of evil, but also capable of good. Heidegger concludes, “Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its Being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-Being—that is, its Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself.”¹⁰⁶ Leslie Paul Thiele reiterates this point well, stating,

For Heidegger—and in stark contrast to the Western metaphysical tradition—freedom is not a value, but beyond valuation; freedom is evidenced not in decisionistic willfulness but through careful nonwilling; freedom is not an unbounded power to do but a discovery and disclosing of one’s place within bounds.¹⁰⁷

This characterization reminds us of Schelling’s selfhood. Selfhood is at its best when it is unified with light (understanding) because this union allows rationality to harmonize light and dark. Selfhood is truly spirit when it is bounded by the structure of understanding.

Conclusion

The possibility of a positive conception of evil is a by-product of the reality of human freedom, a freedom not determined by God, or any other being. Schelling reconciles human

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¹⁰⁶ Ibid.
freedom with divine creation through explication of God’s existence by way of a separate ground of existence, which God also contains within Himself. In the process of creating humans in His own image, God would necessarily pass this ground, which is unqualified darkness, on to humans. Lacking God’s essential unity, humans have the capacity for evil because of the severability of their principles. Thus, freedom is the essential nature of humans’ Being. For Heidegger, Dasein’s existence is accessible to it only through its own possibility. Its pure possibility can lead it to seek escape from itself, in anxiety, thereby falling away from its own Being. A fallen Dasein is in a state of inauthenticity and is not in command of its own identity. Both Schelling and Heidegger construct a philosophy structured by co-dependent concepts of ground and existence for the purpose of proving the possibility of human freedom. Selfhood, the principle of humans’ severability, allows them the capacity to choose unification with the light and understanding—allows them to choose goodness. Humans also may choose to sublimate light through the exaltation of self-will and darkness, which is to say that humans may choose evil. Schelling states,

Hence it is entirely correct to say dialectically: good and evil are the same thing only seen from different sides, or evil is in itself, that is, considered in the root of its identity, the good, just as the good, to the contrary, considered in its turning from itself [Entzweitung] or non-identity, is evil.108

The freedom Schelling’s selfhood enjoys is identical to the freedom of Heidegger’s Dasein. Therefore, the possibility of evil, as Schelling defines it, does exist as a positive construct in Heideggerian phenomenology. As such, evil not only enjoys a positive ontology, its status does not necessarily depend upon theodicy.

108 Schelling, 63-64.
CHAPTER III

Evil after Theodicy

Evil’s positive existence is possible because of humans’ essential freedom. The process of individuation, or “mineness,” as Heidegger might say, creates instability in humans in that their principles are severable. Importantly, the possibility of evil does not mean that its actuality is inevitable. Schelling states in the closing section of his treatise,

The arousal of self-will occurs only so that love in man may find a material or opposition in which it may realize itself. To the extent that selfhood is the principle of evil in its breaking away [Lossagung], the ground does indeed arouse the possible principle of evil, yet not evil itself and not for the sake of evil.\textsuperscript{109}

The presence of ground, darkness, is necessary for the actualization of good in human action, but unfortunately it makes evil’s actualization possible as well. Schelling continues:

For evil can always only arise in the innermost will of our own heart and is never accomplished without our own act. […] Nevertheless, activated selfhood is necessary for the rigor of life; without it there would be sheer death, a falling asleep of the good; for, where there is no struggle, there is no life.\textsuperscript{110}

We can see here an obvious connection to Nietzsche. While Nietzsche falls between Schelling and Heidegger chronologically, there are important connections among the three philosophers.

\textsuperscript{109} Schelling, 64.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 63. This may be a reference to Plato’s \textit{Phaedo}, in which Socrates explains to Cebes why there are two processes of becoming, increase and decrease. He makes an analogy to the myth of Endymion, who was granted eternal sleep by Zues. “If, for example, there was such a process as going to sleep, but no corresponding process of waking up, you realize that in the end everything would show the story of Endymion to have no meaning. There would be no point to it because everything would have the same experience as he had and be asleep.” Plato, “Phaedo,” in \textit{Plato: Five Dialogues}, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. John M. Cooper, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), 72b-c.
Also, Nietzsche’s concern over modern Europe’s seeming lack of awareness of the moral issues that threatened its culture is echoed by Hannah Arendt almost a century and a half later.

Unfortunately, Arendt must echo these sentiments in the wake of the Holocaust. In the trials that followed the close of World War II, she warns that we are again missing the moral implications of the Holocaust and the post-war justice meted out to war criminals. Nietzsche’s ideas about the constitution of human beings and the construction of morality anticipate changes in Western philosophy in their critique of post-Enlightenment and modern ideologies. The driving force behind the dominant morality in Western culture, Christianity, is actually the root of evil for Nietzsche. Likewise, Arendt sees evil as growing from similar sentiments. The Holocaust serves as her primary example of the positive existence of evil in the world, as it does for many scholars. Further, she identifies a banal quality to evil that tugs at common threads running through the philosophies of all the figures assessed in this work. When we examine Nietzsche and Arendt together, we arrive at the central thrust of this project: evil possesses a positive ontological status, and humans actualize it. Evil cannot be eradicated from the world, because it is a possibility endemic to humans’ constitution. Furthermore, modernity creates opportunities for the exercise of evil in ways that are qualitatively different and quantitatively more grave than previous eras. Hence, it is imperative that a philosophical understanding of evil be coupled with a political confrontation with evil that successfully and steadfastly manifests the combination approach we considered above.

**Nietzsche’s Evil**

According to Nietzsche, the two greatest ills of modern society were Christianity and nihilism, which he sees as intricately connected. He is quite well-known for the quotation, “God
is dead,” which is found in more than one of his published works, but appears for the first time in *The Gay Science* (1882).\(^{111}\) It is important to contextualize Nietzsche’s claim not only within his philosophy, but also historically. Nietzsche’s critique of morality is far-reaching and cultural in nature. He does not merely critique particular moral theories, but all morality. Brian Leiter states, [Nietzsche] is a genuine critic of morality as a real cultural phenomenon [. . .]. Nietzsche [. . .] situates his critique of morality within a broader “cultural critique,” in which morality is attacked as only the most important of a variety of social and cultural forces posing obstacles to human flourishing. This approach to critique places Nietzsche [. . .] in that European tradition of modernist discontent with bourgeois Christian culture [. . .].\(^{112}\)

Nietzsche’s critique centers on people’s implicit trust in Christian morality. For Nietzsche, automatic trust in any value system is illogical—the height of imprudence masquerading as prudence. Such behavior represents a complacency that characterizes what he calls the “last human beings.”\(^{113}\) The last human beings are a herd with no shepherd. They follow tradition blindly and take far too much comfort in it. The scientific and academic community of the late-nineteenth century was more than a little preoccupied with the concept of *dégénérescence,* or racial and cultural degeneration. Gregory Moore discusses Nietzsche’s use of *dégénérescence* to contextualize the language and rhetoric of Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity, which Nietzsche viewed as the source of the nihilistic threat facing modernity. Moore tells us that French psychiatrist Bénédict-Augustin Morel first articulated *dégénérescence* in his 1857 theory of human heredity. Moore states, “Morel was responsible for the lasting impression of immorality being both causal and symptomatic: physical degeneration led to intellectual and moral decay,

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Degeneration was lapsarian (based on the idea of Christian original sin) at its root, but employed a heavily medicalized vernacular that blended Christian eschatology and Lamarckianism. The movement pathologized everything from criminality to race to gender to social class. Nietzsche agreed that modernity was sick, but viewed the situation as an apotheosis, or culmination, rather than as a gradual period of decline. Further, he viewed degeneration as appearing and running its course in parallel with the birth and eventual domination of Christianity. For Nietzsche, religious sentiment was itself a sign of physiological decadence, and it served to be life-denying and non-vitalistic. Ultimately, Moore claims that Nietzsche arrives at an interpretation of morality as an abstraction of organic processes, “a semiotics of unconscious bodily impulses.” In other words, one attends to morality in the same way one attends his or her physical health. Thus, Nietzsche proposes a transvaluation of values as purification, both morally and physiologically. Unfortunately, Nietzsche’s ideas about religion, and other tenets of exceptionalism in his philosophy (i.e., the Übermensch, discussed below) bear a superficial resemblance to the Nazis’ platform. Nazis described themselves as gottgläubig, which means “religious,” without belonging to a church. This signifies their belief in a divine being, God,

115 Eschatology is literally the study of the last things. It is concerned with the final destiny of both individuals and humanity, and of the universe. It comes from the Greek words eschatos, “last,” and logos, “study of.” In John Bowker, ed., The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 179-80.
116 Moore, 15-16.
but also their break from organized religion, especially Christianity. The Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, who Arendt discusses at length, identified himself as a *Gottgläubiger*.118

Intricately linked to his ideas about morality is Nietzsche’s metaphysics—namely, his ideas regarding human beings’ will and other constituents to their make-up. Nietzsche did not consider himself a metaphysician, although Nietzsche’s “will to power” has a decidedly metaphysical cast (so much so that Heidegger calls Nietzsche the last metaphysician). Nietzsche explains our drives, or desires, as sharing a single impulse, which is the “will to power.” The drives themselves are irreducibly multiple. John F. Whitmire, Jr., concludes that the self as functional unity in Nietzsche is *constructed*; the self is order out of chaos—that is, the chaotic plurality of drives that make up human beings. Furthermore, the constructed order of self squares with Nietzsche’s sociopolitical philosophy. Nietzsche’s transvaluation of values will allow us to move beyond dichotomous good and evil: to control all moral concepts, no matter how contradictory those concepts might be, and make them a coherent whole. However, the constructed self is achieved neither through rationality nor through language.119 Nietzsche warns against assuming that thought or consciousness is primary to, or behind, drives and affects. The only thing naturally given about the plurality of drives is their multiplicity. Whitmire states, “Nietzsche’s interpretive gesture here, is a kind of phenomenological inference: we are aware of the operations of some of our drives, and there is compelling evidence [. . .] that suggests the same instincts, and others like them, are constantly at work underneath any conscious registering of them.”120 Thus, the unifying thing is actually one of the drives, which overpowers the others

118 Arendt, 23. *Gottgläubiger* is the noun form of *gottgläubig*, which is an adjective.
119 Like Schelling, Nietzsche is dissatisfied with realism and idealism, and sought to create a philosophy grounded in the empirical world. Nietzsche goes further than Schelling, however; Nietzsche denies rationality.
and wins supremacy. For Nietzsche, what “wills” is the plurality of affects. Our commanding
affect attaches to the drive that wins supremacy, identifying only with that commanding affect’s
power. The will to power is the most basic form of affect, from which all other affects descend.
Reason is the system of relationships between the various drives, and consciousness is their
battleground. Our entire worldview is shaped by this warring. Nietzsche states, “To our strongest
drive, the tyrant in us, not only our reason bows but also our conscience.”
Nietzsche eschews
the idea of “will” as Schelling, and Kant before him, conceives it. And yet, the plurality of
possible affects later will be echoed in Heidegger’s philosophy. Heidegger’s Dasein is radically
free, as are humans for Kant and Schelling, but Dasein is susceptible to being overcome by the
pure possibility of him- or herself to a greater extent than Kant and Schelling allow.

For Nietzsche, it is crucial that we understand our constitution as human beings. That is
the lynchpin in overcoming the problems of Christian morality. Nietzsche says,

After all, today at least we immoralists have the suspicion that the decisive value
of an action lies precisely in what is un intentional in it, while everything about it
that is intentional, everything about it that can be seen, known, “conscious,” still
belongs to its surface and skin—which, like every skin, betrays something but
conceals even more.

For Nietzsche, understanding, or accepting, these metaphysical tenets allows us to question
values handed down to us by tradition. Our intentions are not as “intentional” as we might think.
Brian Leiter offers a nice summary of Nietzsche’s point: “Since we do not experience our
thoughts as willed the way we experience some actions as willed, it follows that no thought
comes when ‘I will it’ because the experience to which the ‘I will’ attaches is absent.”
Our
inability to accurately determine the source of our own intentions upsets causality. Thus, we

\[121\] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter
\[122\] Ibid., 32, emphasis in original.
\[123\] Brian Leiter, “Nietzsche’s Theory of the Will,” *Philosophers’ Imprint* 7, no. 7 (September 2007): 5, accessed

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should not just accept “traditional” morality (Christian morality in 19th-century Europe), or any morality, without understanding the defunct nature of causality. Nietzsche claims that morality grew out of *ressentiment*—specifically, that the “good and evil” of Christian morality is a transvaluation of “good and bad.”124 Good and bad was *not* a moral dichotomy originally, but according to Nietzsche simply could have originated from the descriptive assignment of “good” to the actions of noble classes of people, making all other actions “bad” by default. The reaction of the non-noble, or slave, classes was, of course, to recast the value system into something prescriptive, such that the noble classes embodied “evil,” while their own traits were “good.”125 Granted, Nietzsche does not offer much support for his view of the history of morality, but his goal in relating his history is not factual accuracy; rather, it is the establishment of the “noble” and “slave” types.

Nietzsche intimately connects the physiology and psychology of people. Of particular concern to his critique of morality is the claim that morality appeals to sameness in human beings. This appeal is a debasing force. Typically, the human feature enlisted is rationality. Nietzsche states,

> One must shed the bad taste of wanting to agree with many. “Good” is no longer good when one’s neighbor mouths it. And how should there be a “common good”? The term contradicts itself: whatever can be common always has little value. In the end it must be as it is and always has been: great things remain for the great, abysses for the profound, nuances and shudders for the refined, and, in brief, all that is rare for the rare.126

We see here not only a repetition of the idea that values cannot be accepted implicitly, but also an allusion to Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*: “the rare.” Nietzsche introduces the concept of the

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124 *Ressentiment* is French for “resentment,” but the French concept is more robust than its English counterpart, hence Nietzsche’s employment of the French term.


126 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 43.
Übermensch in Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1884-5). Übermensch often is translated into English as “overman.” The Übermensch is not clearly defined, but Zarathustra, as teacher of the Übermensch, tells us that, “Human being is something that must be overcome. [. . .] The overman is the meaning of the earth.” Zarathustra implores the crowds, “Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth.”\(^\text{127}\) What Zarathustra discovers is that the majority of people are, in fact, last humans, and they have no desire to overcome themselves. Nietzsche contrasts these last humans with his Übermensch, stating, “We believe that morality in the traditional sense, the morality of intentions, [. . .] must be overcome. The overcoming of morality, in a certain sense even the self-overcoming of morality [. . .].”\(^\text{128}\)

We must “overcome” the “good and evil” morality especially because it originated in ressentiment, which represents the ever-present danger of evil for Nietzsche. As Richard Bernstein tells us, “Nietzsche’s critique of morality is directed to exposing the self-deceptive illusion that the morality of good and evil is the universal, the only genuine morality. He also wants to show that the good/evil morality, which appears so reasonable, is founded on ressentiment.”\(^\text{129}\) Nietzsche writes about ressentiment in Ecce Homo (1888), the final work published during his lifetime. He states, “Nothing burns one up faster than the affects of ressentiment. Anger, pathological vulnerability, impotent lust for revenge, thirst for revenge, poison-mixing in any sense—no reaction could be more disadvantageous for the exhausted [. . .]. Ressentiment is what is forbidden par excellence for the sick—it is their specific evil—unfortunately also their most natural inclination.”\(^\text{130}\) Ressentiment pushes the sick, the slave-

\(^{127}\) Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Zarathustra’s Prologue 3, emphasis in original.

\(^{128}\) Ibid.


types, to revalue everything out of revenge. *Ressentiment* is particularly sinister in its capacity to infect societies and cultures through individuals. Any system, and especially a moral system, that grows out of *ressentiment* is “evil” for Nietzsche.

This is a particularly poignant introduction into Arendt’s report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Nietzsche was vehemently against the Nazi movement. His sister, Elizabeth, married a Nazi, and until her husband’s death by suicide, she lived with him in Paraguay trying to establish a Nazi colony. Nietzsche’s ideas about *ressentiment* show his disgust for the Nazis’ version of exceptionalism, which led to the attempted extermination of the Jewish people. It is precisely the risk of *ressentiment* taking political form that constitutes the most dangerous possibility for evil’s actualization today.

**Arendt and the Banality of Evil**

Hannah Arendt first coined the phrase “banality of evil” in her 1963 book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, where she details the trial and execution of Adolf Eichmann, a former Nazi officer, who was responsible for the deportation of Jews from Germany and surrounding countries earlier in World War II, as well as for organizing the transportation of Jews to extermination camps later in the war. For Arendt, Eichmann represents the face of evil in a way even more terrifying than other Nazis, such as the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele, who performed horrifying medical experiments on Jewish captives at the Auschwitz concentration camp.\(^{131}\) Eichmann was entirely ordinary outside of his Nazi career; he was an exceptional under-achiever, in fact. His willingness to be a “joiner” was evident throughout his life.\(^{132}\) Eichmann felt most in control and at ease when he was being led and had rules and regulations to

\(^{131}\) Unfortunately, Dr. Mengele eluded capture and lived out his life in South America after World War II.

\(^{132}\) Arendt, 28.
reference. In following orders, he was able to excel and satisfy his desire for “success.” In a Nietzschean way, he was driven far more by his own affects than by personal reflection and rationality, as we shall see.

At his trial in Jerusalem, his official plea was “not-guilty” for two reasons: 1) He never, by his own hand, killed a Jew, or any other human being, nor did he order the death of any human being, Jewish or otherwise; and 2) the language of the indictment suggested that he had acted out of malicious intent with full knowledge that his deeds were criminal, which he categorically denied. Eichmann insisted that he was acting on orders, and that he only would have felt guilt had he not followed orders. The defense did point out that during the Nazi regime, the Führer’s verbal order, let alone a written order, held the force of law. Disobedience would have meant certain punishment, possibly execution. However, there is evidence that the threat of punishment did not drive Eichmann to follow orders as much as did his own drive to advance socially. Eichmann took risks, such as having a Jewish mistress, as well as defying orders from Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer Schutzstaffeln (S.S.), or the leader of the S.S., Adolf Hitler’s right-hand man.

Of chief importance regarding this situation, for Arendt, is that the methods Nazi leadership used to ensure total compliance from their Jewish captives, even in their own deaths, were precisely the same methods they used to ensure obedience from their subordinates and the German people at large. This was a rather hard pill for most to swallow. Arendt sums up the perception of Eichmann at his trial in Jerusalem, saying,

Alas nobody believed him. […] None were willing] to admit that an average, “normal” person, neither feeble-minded nor indoctrinated nor cynical, could be perfectly incapable of telling right from wrong. They preferred to conclude from

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133 Arendt, 18-22.
134 Ibid., 27 and 123.
occasional lies that he was a liar—and missed the greatest moral and even legal challenge of the whole case.\textsuperscript{135}

The kind of self-deception necessary for one to deny that the extermination of Jews was happening, and, worse, not to find it unacceptable, seems inconceivable. Arendt continues:

Eichmann’s astounding willingness […] to admit his crimes was due less to his own criminal capacity for self-deception than to the aura of systematic mendacity that had constituted the general, and generally accepted, atmosphere of the Third Reich. […] Now, he proceeded, he “would like to find peace with [his] former enemies”—a sentiment he shared […], unbelievably, with many ordinary Germans, who were heard to express themselves in exactly the same terms at the end of the war. This outrageous cliché was no longer issued to them from above, it was a self-fabricated stock phrase […].\textsuperscript{136}

Not only does this bring Nietzsche to mind in the striking resemblance that this behavior holds to his “slave” type, but also to the “wickedness” that Aristotle and Kant discuss. Members of the Nazi party, and large portions, at minimum, of the German population were “sheep”—complacent in the presence of leaders who acted out of ressentiment to exterminate an entire race of people. Surprisingly, when Eichmann was pushed as to why, beyond the legality of the Führer’s orders, he chose to do as he was told, he responded by claiming to be a good Kantian. He claimed to have read Critique of Practical Reason, and he was able to approximately recite the categorical imperative. Eichmann admitted to only following a distortion of the categorical imperative after joining the Nazi party, one he called “the version of Kant ‘for the household use of the little man.’”\textsuperscript{137} Arendt says of this distortion, “Whatever Kant’s role in the formation of the ‘little man’s’ mentality in Germany may have been, there is not the slightest doubt that in one respect Eichmann did indeed follow Kant’s precepts: a law was a law, there could be no exceptions.”\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{135} Arendt, 23.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 47-48.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 121.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 122.
In 1934, Eichmann applied and was appointed to a job in Himmler’s Reich Security Service, or *Sicherheitsdienst* (S.D.). It was relatively new, and its original purpose was to spy on members of the Nazi Party so as to give the S.S. more power within the Party. However, by the time that Eichmann joined the S.D., it was primarily gathering information on potential outside “threats” (i.e., Freemasonry, Judaism, Catholicism, and Communism). Eichmann eventually was assigned to gather information on Jews. His first order was to read Theodor Herzl’s *Der Judenstaat*, the famous Zionist classic. During the period of 1933-1938, the Jews had been systematically stripped of their political rights. While legalized discrimination was not new in Europe, Eichmann was being enlisted in a much larger project that would eventually lead to the “Final Solution,” or the physical extermination of the Jews. After reading *Der Judenstaat*, Eichmann was a Zionist convert. He viewed the Zionists as idealists, a descriptor he used for himself as well. Arendt states, “[Eichmann] was by no means alone in taking this ‘pro-Zionism’ seriously; the German Jews themselves thought it would be sufficient to undo ‘assimilation’ through a new process of ‘dissimilation,’ and flocked into the ranks of the Zionist movement. […] This did not necessarily mean that the Jews wished to emigrate to Palestine […]” However, many German officials at the time did believe this, even though it was never publicly endorsed by the Nazi Party. Within the Party, the emigration of Jews, at increasing levels of coercion from 1933-1939, was considered the “First Solution” to the “Jewish Question.”

It is here that the immoral, and sinister, nature of the Nazi project is most readily apparent for three reasons. First, as exemplified with the Jews, the Nazis made systematic efforts to

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139 Arendt, 33.
140 Ibid., 36. Zionism is the international, political, and ideological movement dedicated to restoring Erez Israel (the Jewish Promised Land) to the Jewish people. Modern political Zionism was first conceived by Theodor Herzl, and the movement was launched at the First Zionist Congress of 1897. Its stated aim was to “establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law.” In *Oxford Concise Dictionary of World Religions*, s.v. “Zionism.”
141 Ibid., 53-4.
understand the conventions and ideologies of the Jewish culture, information which they then used to suggest a “solution” that would lead to the de-naturalization and displacement of the Jews, rendering them stateless. Second, the Nazis employed “language rules,” which were essentially euphemistic codes designed to preserve secrecy. As Arendt points out, “The net effect of this language system was not to keep these people ignorant of what they were doing, but to prevent them for equating it with their old, ‘normal’ knowledge of murder and lies.”\(^{142}\) Third, the upper-echelon of Nazi leadership was entirely separated from the “middle management” within the Party by these language rules. Specifically, people like Eichmann were highly susceptible to “catch words” and “stock phrases,” as Arendt calls them.\(^{143}\) In other words, they were controllable by the same rhetoric used to control the Jewish people: systematic negation of their humanity. Recall what Aristotle says of evil as defined by “wickedness.” He states, “the wicked man is like a city that uses its laws, but has wicked laws to use.”\(^{144}\) Eventually, there would be a “Second Solution,” because the ability of the Jews to successfully emigrate, despite Eichmann’s role in expediting that process, would run out. The Second Solution was concentration, shortly followed by the “Final Solution,” extermination. The progression was made possible by separation of the Jews from their state and the separation of the lower-level Nazi-Party members, and the German people at large, from their morality. The systematic removal of human possibility, of humanity as such, made the worst atrocity yet known to humankind possible. This bureaucratic, systematized evil, created by human action, is to what Arendt refers when she says, “the greatest moral and even legal challenge of the whole case.”\(^{145}\)

\(^{142}\) Arendt, 80-1.  
\(^{143}\) Ibid., 81.  
\(^{145}\) Arendt, 23.
Eichmann was convicted and sentenced to death. He was executed by hanging shortly before midnight on May 31, 1962, in Jerusalem. Not only his crime, but also his capture, trial, and execution changed the definition of “war crimes,” which already was changing with the advent of new technology. The Nuremberg Trials, some fifteen years before Eichmann’s trial, had already begun to break down the strictly legal status held by “war crimes” before World War II. Arendt states,

The well-worn coins of “superior orders” versus “acts of state” were handed back and forth; they had governed the whole discussion of these matters during the Nuremberg Trials, for no other reason than that they gave the illusion that the altogether unprecedented could be judged according to precedents and the standards that went with them.¹⁴⁶

For a number of reasons, the definition of “war crimes” was narrowed and rendered nearly synonymous with the new phrase “crimes against humanity.” Among these reasons were the victors’ desires to avoid the *tu quoque* (“you also”) argument (in the case that the accused might turn charges of traditional war crime back on their accusers); the complete lack of necessity of the extermination of Jews for the Germans’ war effort; and the utter shock at the previously unknown scale of the atrocity that was the Holocaust.¹⁴⁷ Interestingly, in the judgment of Eichmann, the justices employed language consistent with a definition of “crimes against humanity,” when the right of Israel to try Eichmann had been based on denying such a claim. Israel claimed that Eichmann’s crimes were solely against the Jewish people, and therefore it was their right alone to sit in judgment over him. Arendt recounts this inconsistency in the trial’s judgment, repeating especially that the justices claimed “in general the degree of responsibility increases as we draw further away from the man who uses the fatal instrument with his own

¹⁴⁶ Arendt, 120.
¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 235.
Arendt’s point here, as stated by the justices, is that evil actions have shown a new character, which is that sometimes banal actions, like pushing papers, are the most evil.

**Conclusion**

Arendt warns us, like Schelling and Nietzsche before her, that we cannot prevent evil in the world, which makes understanding the social and political frameworks that allow for the actualization of evil of paramount importance. She states,

> It is in the very nature of things human that every act that has once made its appearance and has been recorded in the history of mankind stays with mankind as a potentiality long after its actuality has become a thing of the past. […] once a specific crime has appeared for the first time, its reappearance is more likely than its initial emergence could ever have been.

The emergence of the concept of “crimes against humanity” shows the interconnectedness of humans as individuals and humanity as a whole not only with each other, but also with the world in which we live. Individual intention is not enough to account for evil action, nor does it seem reasonable to assess evil purely based on results. Arendt effectively endorses a combination approach to evil in her identification of the social aspects of humanity that evil can exploit. She states,

> The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. […]T]his new type of criminal, who is in actual fact *hostis generis humani*, commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong.

Not only are the perpetrator’s and the victim’s perspectives important in the determination of actual evil, but because of the sometimes banal veil behind which evil hides, by-standers’ (society’s) perspectives are crucial in the identification of evil. Arendt notes that Eichmann’s

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148 Arendt, 225, emphasis added in original.
149 Ibid., 250.
150 Ibid., 253.
final words before his death were characteristically cliché. They were fitting words, though, as she states, “It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lessons that this long course in human wickedness had taught us—the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought defying *banality of evil*.”151

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151 Arendt, 231.
CONCLUSIONS

The concept of narrow moral evil has taken many forms that range from a privative conception centering on malformation in human beings for its existence, to a positive conception capable of actualization even through banal acts of human beings. The philosophers we have examined plot the key points of development along this spectrum. Arendt represents a culmination—an overt recognition of the secularized, positive evil developed above in chapter two via Schelling and Heidegger. The Holocaust, as a paradigmatic example of actualized evil, shows us that evil does not solely depend on the intentions of the perpetrator, the effects on its victims, or its interpretation by onlookers. Perpetrators of evil can take many shapes and forms, and their motives need not be focused on evil. In fact, victims may be enlisted as perpetrators of the evil that affects them. Because the nature of evil actions may not be apparent to their perpetrators or to their victims—a point Kant and Nietzsche variably identified as the ease with which we deceive ourselves and the impossibility of standing outside oneself, respectively—onlookers’ assessments of actions are necessary, too. Hence, we arrive at a combination approach to evil, such that evil has a positive ontology, is qualitatively different from wrong, and is actualized by humans who are free to choose whether they might have avoided it.

Arendt’s prophesy about evil’s future has indeed proved correct: once an evil of the magnitude witnessed in the Holocaust actualizes itself, the possibility of similar evils
The terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, often are cited as just such an example of evil. While the two events are not analogous in many ways, they do both represent the indiscriminate killing of large numbers of civilian noncombatants for ideological reasons—the paradigm for evil of the twentieth century that so vexed Arendt. These ideological reasons grow from fear of the outside, or nature as such; they are, at the same time, part and parcel of the modern project to subjugate and control nature, and the reaction against the impulses of modernity. The paradox of this evil is that demonically evil actions, necessarily the actions of an individual, are perhaps less destructive than banal evil actions, which tend to result from bureaucratic superstructures aimed at some “good.” As Lawrence states,

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\text{evil [...] is an imbedded phenomenon. If it emerges out of an unconditional act of freedom, that freedom cannot be envisioned as an act of detached subjectivity. Instead, it operates through and upon a ground (which it carries within itself). The primary ground is nature, not that nature ‘outside’ of us, but that nature, which we are. Evil does not arise ex nihilo. It is not the simple play of selfishness, but the self-deception and cruelty that surface when we blame suffering, originally a function of the limits imposed on us by nature, on something that we are able to control. [...] From Schelling’s point of view, evil already exists in the epistemological act whereby the knowing subject casts all nature outside of itself, transforming it into an object of scientific understanding and technological manipulation.}
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The radical freedom of human beings, which Kant envisioned, Schelling refined, and Heidegger secularizes simply is the nature that modernity seeks to control. At the same time, modernity’s push toward universal rights under the law (both moral and political) has granted choice to untold millions who never before enjoyed it. Schelling and Nietzsche remind us that modernity’s

\[^{152}\text{Arendt, 250.}\]
\[^{153}\text{“Demonic evil,” as described in chapter one, is “extremely wrong acts performed in defiance of what the agent knows to be the laws of morality [. . .].” In Russell, 96.}\]
\[^{154}\text{Lawrence, 177-8.}\]
presumed invulnerability is illusory. However, as Lawrence states, “Living with invulnerability offers a distinct advantage: it restores to the human the full energy and vitality of the ground.”

To deny evil a positive existence is to deny the vitality of what is essentially human: our freedom to choose. With our free choice comes the possibility of evil, and this evil truly is through our actions. What the evils of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have shown us, especially, is that a stronger, positive conception of evil enables us to assign accountability more effectively to those who commit evil acts. There are as many forms of evil as there are people to actualize them. As technology advances, the “support staff” of evil, as Marcus Singer calls it, will be ever harder to identify. Thus, as Paul Formosa states, “A useful theory of evil cannot remove the need for judgment, but it can draw our attention to what factors are important and relevant to making the judgment.” A combination approach to evil will allow us the best foundation for those judgments. Again, because the possibility of evil cannot be eliminated, we must recognize the importance not only of promoting good, but also of preventing evil.
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