

*Philosophy of History
Философия на историята*

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN HISTORY

Vyara Nikolova

South-West University "Neofit Rilski"

Abstract. Hegel points out that "today we went beyond the limits of Kant's philosophy", but, as he specifies, this can be done in two ways: forwards and backwards. Has Hegel "gone ahead" in the solution of the problem of evil? What is the nature of evil and what is its role in history? Both Kant and Hegel explore different aspects of the nature of evil. But for both evil comes from the natural essence of man. Hegel dwells in details on this moment and distinguishes between the natural essence of the animal (which is innocent) and the natural essence of man (who is responsible). Both associate evil with the possibility of free choice. Kant and Hegel bind together into a whole morality, reason and religion. The welding element is freedom.

Keywords: evil, history, reason, religion, freedom

Hegel notes, "today we went beyond Kant's philosophy, but this can be done in two ways: as far forward and as far back" (Hegel, 1974: 155). Has Hegel "gone ahead" in the solution of the problem of the evil? – A problem, which continues to be debated from antiquity to the present day. The problem has several dimensions: the nature of evil, the reasons for the evil, evil in history.

Kant defines evil as destruction that follows from its "internal disunity with itself". This disunity is the cause for the good "to be born" from the subsoil of evil. (Kant, 1992: 230 – 231). Thus, if the nature of evil is the destruction, its natural development is to self-destruct itself. Kant's definition is too general. This makes it compelling but difficult to be applied in specific historical situations. Is evil the same in all its manifestations? Is it enough to say that the evil is "internally disunited" (Kant).

Hegel also defines evil as destruction. But Hegel's analysis is more detailed and allows for historical extrapolations. He aims at revealing the essence of evil through an analysis of human nature. Hegel seeks the common features and the most important differences between man and animal. This approach has the advantage that, starting from a certain point of view, various logical extrapolations can be drawn. Therefore, the problem needs to be analyzed not just with respect to human nature, but as regards to the structure of human personality.

In its entirety human personality consists of four different structures. Plato calls them “dispositions of the soul” (Plato, 1981: 433 b). They represent the four stages of development, interrelated and independent, as personality’s development may remain in each stage.

First is the man of his natural essence. Plato calls this stage “satisfaction of the immediate needs” and clarifies that it should be under the control of reason.

There are two opposing views on the question of the nature of evil in the history of philosophy: the notion of man as a natural, instinctive and therefore evil creature. The other is the idea of man as a being that is innocent and good by nature. The second view is widespread at the time of Kant and Hegel – the period of the Enlightenment and finds concrete expression in the views of Rousseau. But Hegel is far from Rousseau’s romantic notions of man as a good being by nature. Before him, Kant also points out that man has a natural essence in which the “law of nature” excludes freedom.

Humans as natural entities are instinctive creatures akin to animals. What is common between a human and an animal as a natural entity is a whole range of inclinations and instincts motivated by the quest for survival. This first human essence – natural and instinctive, includes evil as innate, as long as it is instinctive.

Hegel defines the natural essence as non-freedom because of man’s dependence on instincts and inclinations. In a human, this “non-freedom” or dependence on instincts and inclinations is a sphere of evil and aggression. – Unlike an animal that is also possessed by instincts and inclinations, but which is not evil. Innate aggression in animals is not evil, while in humans it is evil. The difference is that the animal has no choice; there is no moral law to deter it from killing. A human has a choice. But human natural inclinations are so strong that they can suppress moral principles.

This is natural, primitive evil. This kind of evil is primitive, because in the pursuit of goals, it has no moral constraints. It is typical of people who have an under-developed moral side.

Secondly, an essential element in the human personality is the sphere of emotions, feelings and passions. Plato calls this second part of the human soul impulsiveness. – Because when the emotions are not controlled by reason and morality they are impulsive and destructive.

In the field of emotions and passions there is freedom, as this is an entirely subjective area – an area of assessment where there is no normativity, no restrictions. The most vivid illustration is the art which is the result of human emotions and passions, and is aimed at the emotions and feelings of the people. It is liked or not, but not “right or logical” There is absolute freedom; it is freedom beyond morality.

Evil in the emotional part of personality is different from “natural” evil. There, nature is a legislator, pushing the living creature to actions aimed at its survival. Here the intention is different; the evil does not serve for survival but for a self-

expression or the humiliation of another person. So, the emotional and the sensual side is subject to the strong demand for an assessment, which makes it highly subjective and therefore non-compliant with ethical rules.

Hegel observes another function of emotionality. It has an instrumental role, which serves to achieve other, not emotional goals. Hegel notes in particular that “emotional side” of human personality when he talks about the factors of the historical development. – For Hegel to explain history, means to reveal the passions of people, the acting forces and Providence, which is called a plan.

With the metaphor “cunning of reason” (Hegel, 1995: 48) Hegel expresses the whole range of emotions: passion, ambition, lust for power, self-interest that serve to achieve the higher goals of “historical necessity”. – Of course, when the “great personality” is insightful for this historical necessity. Because a man can invest these passions in small intentions or disputes and so “historical necessity” will not be realized. Nothing great in this world happens without passion.

Hegel sets evil in the primitive instincts and emotions; in this subjective human realm that manifests itself as selfishness, ambition, etc. This is the role of evil as a driving force in history. – For Hegel notes that the virtues and the noble love for a country have a little role. The power of passion, self-regard and selfishness is that it does not recognize the boundaries that moral and law struggle to set.

Therefore, history has two aspects: the idea and the human passions, and the term “cunning of reason” combines these two aspects. This expression means that the idea for objective laws makes its way independently and through the individuals. Or in other words, it is the “use” of the individual passions, of the natural essence that holds the evil, to achieve global goals. Great personalities are great because they are insightful about what is needed for this universal. They are humans whose personal goals coincide with historical necessity. They are not a typical instance of sobriety. They give themselves completely to one goal. So, often they are careless or cruel. So, world history is a development of the principle, whose content is the sense of freedom.

Third is the rational nature of man, called by Plato thought, whose supreme form is wisdom. This is the area of reason, thinking, the logical, the rational, which does not allow freedom. Logical laws and rational imperatives are strictly defined. They tolerate only interpretations, not improvisations. Instead of subjective, emotional evaluations, there is discretion to “correct and logical”. This is the sphere of science and philosophy. Here truth is objective, absolute.

Reason is closely related to morals, under the justification of moral laws, and under the justification of the motivation and the sanctions for the non-compliance with them. Socrates was convinced that knowledge of the law is sufficient condition for a man to be no-evil, to be good. For Kant and Hegel knowledge of the law is only a condition. The rational nature of man serves for the awareness and the streamlining of the objectives and motives. Kant develops in detail the role of rea-

son, that of a legislator. Hegel argues that thanks to knowledge, to awareness man distinguishes between good and evil. The distinction is possible because a moral law, as a regulator, has already been formulated.

So the evil, when motivated only by rational motives, is evil for the sake of evil. This is a conscious, deliberate evil that has no moral brakes.

Fourth is morality.

Plato called this part of human personality “justice”. If the second nature of man has passions and feelings, here there is suffering, guilt and remorse. Morality as a structural element of human personality is independent of emotions and feelings. When they are present, and that is often, they just blur moral principles.

Morality is dependent on freedom, not because there is subjectivism and arbitrariness, but because morality is always the result of free choice. – A choice between primitive, instinctual inclinations and moral constraints; a choice between strong feelings and passions and moral boundaries; a choice between rational arguments and moral principles. Morality is impossible without reason and establishment and formation of principles, and as a motive for our will to comply with these principles.

Kant argues that “moral law is what completely detaches us from nature and elevates us above it. And most importantly, it’s not reason but morality what makes a man a man” (Kant, 1994: 87). Thus, Kant binds the notion of evil with morality and freedom. Morality is what makes possible the concept of good (Kant, 1993: 103 – 104). The role of reason is to convince us “to obey moral laws and respect them even at the cost of all pleasures of life that conflict them” (Kant, 1994: 70). Human actions are governed by a law that is not natural, a law of freedom (Kant, 1993: 106). The inclination to evil is related only to the moral power of free choice. Moral evil is the ability to be responsible for the evil of our own deeds (Kant, 1997: 29).

Therefore, freedom of choice is solely responsible for the evil. Thus, according to Kant, to see the evil as a punishment from hands of a superior power is not serious, because it means to deny free will (Kant, 1993: 74 – 75).

Hegel also connects freedom and moral choice. He points out that, contrary to everyday thinking, the inclinations and the natural essence of man are manifestations of non-freedom. Therefore, the animal is a creature entirely natural by its essence and therefore “innocent” (Hegel, 1995: 50); the evil is absolutely alien to it, because it is not free. Man as a natural being is possessed by fear, inclinations and instincts; therefore he is prone to evil and is also no-free. But as a social being, man is the carrier of morality and, in this way, of good. A spirit that is free opposes the natural inclinations.

Thus, Hegel distinguishes between the first animal nature of man and the other – morality. Thus, restricting the impulses and passions is freedom. The inclinations that are the “natural state” are dependent because they have something external. The natural man, the man with inclinations is not in himself because the “content”

of his desires, and thoughts is not his own and his freedom is “formal” (Hegel, 1974: 124).

Kant and Hegel explore different aspects of the nature of evil. But for both evil comes from the natural essence of man. Hegel dwells in detail on this aspect and makes the important distinction between the natural essence of the animal (that is innocent) and the natural essence of man (who is guilty). Freedom is the welding element of morality, reason and religion. – Because freedom is the basis of the choice of both evil and good. Religion has an essential function – to strengthen morality (Kant), but it is also religion thanks to which the value of man is determined and raised.

The connection to the rational side of human nature is through the law and the debt. Thus, this rational side brings the suffering, which Hegel discusses. If “Heaven is full of the innocent”, there is no evil, no suffering. – In human society, “knowledge is suffering”, but not the knowledge of the Pythagorean’s theorem, but the knowledge of the moral law.

Moral is the true sphere of freedom, free choice, and free will. And because reason is not always so strong as to serve to motivate action, religion comes to help. Kant formulated the so-called moral proof of the existence of God and defined God as a regulative principle and a powerful repressive authority.

Hegel on his part emphasizes on religion and law as “external regulations” for morality. To highlight the power of religion in morality, Hegel uses a bright metaphor, speaking of the need for “religious vaccinations against evil” (Hegel, 1995: 73).

Hegel’s analysis really goes further than Kant, as it not only defines evil as destruction, but differentiates different types of evil according to the structure of human personality.

Therefore, based on the structure of personality and the motivation that ensues from it four types of evil can be distinguished.

In the first type – primitive evil, the motivation is survival of the individual or the community. This kind of evil is determined by the natural instincts and in this sense is a manifestation of non-freedom. There is freedom there only if there is an attempt to counter these natural inclinations, which occurs only with the help of morality. In history this type of evil occurs not only among primitive societies who are struggling for survival, but also in civilizations, when fighting for territory and resources. The examples are numerous wars, including the First and Second World War, which were wars for colonies, territories and natural resources.

The second type of evil – subjective evil is motivated by human emotions and is a manifestation of the need for evaluation. This is a sphere of freedom, because there are no rules or regulations that determine the correctness of the assessments. Only morality may limit such arbitrary assessments. In the basis of the assessments stands the deep human need: to be appreciated, to be recognized as significant even at the cost of negative value judgments of the others. Throughout history,

evil manifests itself as wars and aggression aroused for no practical purpose, but motivated by emotional values such as glory, honor, and nobility. Such are some of the medieval wars and chivalrous tournaments.

The third type – rational evil is motivated by reasonable arguments, which makes it an absolute evil, recognizing no moral barriers. This is the absolute freedom from the reins of morality. In history, a manifestation of rational evil is terrorism, where there is no practical purpose (as in primitive evil, where there is a clear practical purpose), no emotional desire for glory and honor (as are the knights' fightings). This "evil is for the sake of evil" as a demonstration of strength and desire to sow fear among peaceful and innocent people.

The fourth type – moral evil, is absurd only at first glance. There are a number of personal acts and actions of communities and countries who use evil in defensive actions to protect people and their life, freedom and dignity.

Therefore, each of the different structures of the individual has its specific manifestation of evil and the only barrier to it is morality.

ЛИТЕРАТУРА

- Платон (1981). *Държавата*. София.
Кант, И. (1992). *Антропология от прагматично гледище*. София.
Кант, И. (1994). *Спорът на факултетите*. София.
Кант, И. (1993). *Критика на практическия разум*. София.
Кант, И. (1997). *Религия в границите на самия разум*. София.
Хегел, Г. (1995). *Философия на историята*. Том 1. София.
Гегел, Г. (1974). *Энциклопедия философских наук*. Т.1. Москва.

REFERENCES

- Platon (1981). *Darzhavata*. Sofiya.
Kant, I. (1992). *Antropologiya ot pragmatichno gledishte*. Sofiya.
Kant, I. (1994). *Sporat na fakultetite*. Sofiya.
Kant, I. (1993). *Kritika na prakticheskiya razum*. Sofiya.
Kant, I. (1997). *Religiya v granitsite na samiya razum*. Sofiya.
Hegel, G. (1995). *Filosofiya na istoriyata*. T. 1. Sofiya.
Gegely, G. (1974). *Entsiklopediya filosofskih nauk*. T. 1. Moskva.

✉ **Vyara Nikolova, Assoc. Prof., DSc.**
South-West University "Neofit Rilski"
66, Ivan Michailov Str.
2700 Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria
E-mail: vnica@abv.bg