

Notes on Rosen Chapter 7  
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6:45 a.m.

To begin with, here's an outline of the sections in chapter 7.

1. Autonomy and Alienation (189-229)
  - 1.1. Theodicy (189-191)
  - 1.2. The Alienation Dilemma (191-194)
  - 1.3. Divine Goodness and the Devil (195-200)
  - 1.4. Existential Loneliness (200-202)
  - 1.5. Arbitrariness and Alienation (202-203)
  - 1.6. Autonomy (203-207)
  - 1.7. Morality as Identity (207-210)
  - 1.8. Schopenhauer (210-214)
  - 1.9. Hegel: The Spirit of Christianity (214-217)
  - 1.10. Love and Alienation (217-221)
  - 1.11. Being with Oneself in Otherness (221-229)

## Overview

We ended the last chapter with a hope that Hegel's conception of freedom, which ties it to a notion of reason as it develops across history, offers a range of concerns that we might want to address before embracing the position. It seems to be, for instance, fundamentally illiberal, positively militaristic, and only "semi-particular." We ended the chapter with the hope that we would be able to develop a Hegelian conception of freedom that speaks to Hegel's critics. This chapter does not yet do that. Instead, it weaves a complicated net of interactions between the themes of autonomy and alienation, showing the ways in which the demand for one often leads to the prevalence of the other. The chapter develops a reading of Kant's notion of autonomy that pushes against Rawls's reading of Kant as well as against Korsgaard's. He develops an account of Hegel's criticism of Kantian moral theory out of the early, unpublished work *The Spirit of Christianity*. The main move here is to compare Kant's account of duty with a form of Judaic law culture. Christianity, by contrast, on Hegel's account, offers "a picture of moral life in which individuals are given possibilities for *reconciliation* with the community" (214-15). Finally, we get an account of the form of alienation that Kant misses – namely the alienation that comes from a form of morality without love. The discussion of Maria von Herbert's case, at the end of the chapter, leads to a first presentation of the German Idealist account of freedom according to which *Geist* and the individual are essentially inter-dependent.

## 1. Theodicy (189-191)

### Summary

The overall question for the chapter is whether Kant's kind of religious Socratism succeeds as an answer to the question of theodicy in the broadest sense. Theodicy in the narrow sense is specific to

monotheism. It asks whether, despite whatever evil is in it, the world created by a single, all-powerful God, is good. The goodness in question need not promote human happiness, however. It needs only to be a world that God was *justified* in creating. To understand this, MR distinguishes among three different narrow kinds of theodicy from one, broader form. There is, thus, a four-fold distinction among forms of justification of the world and its ground:

1. Traditional Christian
  - a. “the goodness of the world lies in it being an expression of divine justice, not beneficence alone” (189)
  - b. Problem: How can the Christian view of original sin be just?
2. Enlightenment
  - a. “the world is indeed made for human happiness ... it is governed by causal laws, but ... those laws are harmoniously ordered to promote human well-being” (190)
  - b. Problem: The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755.
3. Kantian
  - a. Focuses on individual freedom and justice: “the world has value because it contains genuine freedom ... [which is] the foundation for moral responsibility” (190).
  - b. Emphasizes the contrast between the violence and anarchy of the state of nature and the objective legal order of society.
  - c. God as a constitutional monarch whose laws are fully available to rational human beings.
4. Broadest Sense
  - a. New Project: How can we use *all cultural devices* (not just the single, all-powerful God) to reconcile ourselves to “the existence of death and suffering”? (191)
  - b. Three approaches from Nietzsche
    - i. Dionysianism: the intoxicated dissolution of the self
    - ii. Apollonianism: escape into the realm of dream and beauty
    - iii. Socratism: conviction that the world is intelligible
      1. Kant’s account of freedom and moral agency is the culmination of Socratism.

### Interesting Passages Cited

1. Nothing more shocks our reason than to say that the sin of the first man rendered those culpable who, being so distant from the source, seem incapable of participation in it. This transfusion does not only seem to us impossible, but even most unjust, for there is nothing so repugnant to the rules of our miserable justice as to damn eternally an infant incapable of will, for a sin in which he seems to have so scanty a share, that it was committed six thousand years before he was in being. [190, Pascal *Pensées* §434]
2. God is the only ruler of the world. He governs as a monarch, but not as a despot; for he wills to have his commands observed out of love, not out of servile fear. [190, Kant *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*, Ak. 28:1114]
3. Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* calls the Greeks’ contemplation of the happiness of the gods of Olympus “the only true theodicy.” [191, Not further attributed]

### Questions

### Comments

1. Reading the presentation of Nietzsche this time, I'm not sure I understand why MR thinks that he is involved in a form of *theodicy* at all. I get that it is a broader form of theodicy than is traditional because it's not asking about God – about the *theos* in theodicy. It doesn't see the ground of existence as God, but as whatever understanding of being our cultural practices make possible. But I hadn't been clear about the fact that it's not about *justification* either – it reinterprets the *dike* in theodicy too. Instead of *justification*, the broadest form of theodicy asks about *reconciliation*, according to MR. But it is very strange indeed to think of Dionysianism – which amounts mostly to getting drunk and forgetting about your problems – as a form of *theodicy* in any sense. It's fair enough to say that it is a form of *reconciliation* – your problems don't seem so bad when you get drunk and forget about them. And you could say the same thing about Apollonianism, which is also a form of escape (albeit escape into the beautiful). At its worst, the pinnacle of this kind of Apollonianism looks like listening to Bach's B minor Mass as the troops are marching into town. Indeed, it doesn't even seem like *reconciliation* is the right word for what MR has Nietzsche offering the Greeks. It seems more like the kind of persistent *self-deceit* from which the hermeneutics of suspicion (of the sort that Ricoeur says Marx and Freud are practicing) is supposed to free us. But Nietzsche doesn't think there's any deceit in either Dionysianism or Apollonianism, which is why he can rail against the need for a kind of Socratism that makes the truth of the world intelligible to us.

## 2. The Alienation Dilemma

(191-194)

### Summary

MR begins by quoting a long passage from Iris Murdoch's *The Sovereignty of Good*. The passage presents Kant as having introduced an interpretation of human beings that leads to our sense of alienation. MR believes that Murdoch's interpretation of Kant is wrong in three crucial respects:

1. Kant did not see the "will as creator of value" (193).
  - a. Instead: the good will is the *condition* for the goodness of other things.
2. Kant did not see "life as self-enclosed and purposeless" (193)
  - a. Instead: teleology was at the center of Kant's system.
3. Kant did not "abolish God and make man God in his stead" (193)
  - a. Instead: "human beings are connected with the divine by morality and practical reason"

Still, Murdoch is not wrong that Kantianism is associated with alienation. In response, MR wants to distinguish two different kinds of alienation. The first of these, the *alienation of impersonality*, is a consequence of Kant's "modern Socratic rationalism" (194). The second, the *alienation of arbitrariness*, is what Kant's project is meant to resolve. The problem, what MR calls the *Alienation Dilemma*, is that the very Socratic rationalism that Kant uses to resolve the *alienation of arbitrariness* introduces the *alienation of impersonality*. Although Murdoch was wrong in diagnosing the problem Kant introduced, therefore, she was not wrong that Kant introduced it. MR's suggestion is that the *impersonality* of Kant's God makes it impossible to conceive of him as a loving father.

### Interesting Passages Cited

1. The idea of life as self-enclosed and purposeless is of course not simply a product of the despair of our own age. It is the natural product of the advance of science and has developed over a long period. It has already in fact occasioned a whole era in the history of philosophy, beginning with Kant and leading on to the existentialism and the analytic philosophy of the present day. The chief characteristic of this phase of philosophy can be briefly stated: Kant abolished God and made man God in His stead. ... It is not such a very long step from Kant to Nietzsche, and from Nietzsche to existentialism and the Anglo-Saxon ethical doctrines which in some ways closely resemble it. In fact Kant's man had already received a glorious incarnation nearly a century earlier in the work of Milton: his proper name is Lucifer. // The centre of this type of post-Kantian moral philosophy is the notion of the will as the creator of value. ... Art, choice, decision, responsibility, independence are emphasized in this philosophy of puritanical origin and apparent austerity. [191-2, Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, pp. 79-81]

## Questions

## Comments

### 3. Divine Goodness and the Devil (195-200)

#### Summary

Iris Murdoch claims that Kant's picture of human beings as essentially free is like Milton's depiction of Lucifer. This section compares the two, highlighting what MR sees to be the difference. The main difference is that Milton's Lucifer is "a rebel whose rejection of the moral law is truly the first disobedience" (195). In this sense, Lucifer is a rival to the deity. On MR's interpretation of Kant, however, the Devil is not anything independent from God at all but is instead "an aspect of the world as it has been made by God for free beings" (195). God made the Devil, and the possibility of evil that he incarnates, on this interpretation of Kant, so that we can earn our reward from God as free beings by freely doing our duty and resisting the Devil's temptations. Kant's depiction of the Devil, therefore, is more like the Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust* than like Lucifer in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. (Mephistopheles, in German folklore, is a *demon* – which is to say *an agent of Lucifer* – rather than the *Devil* himself. Lucifer, by contrast, is the traditional Latin name within Christianity for the Devil.<sup>1</sup> I'm not sure this makes a difference to MR's interpretation, though.) The Mephistophelean tradition, MR wants to say, involves a form of *providentialism*: "the idea that apparent evil will turn out to be part of a greater good" (196). Providentialism could be an example of God as a loving father. But Kant's Socratism sets limits to providentialism, since it insists that God's actions be intelligible to us. If apparent evil, upon reflection, is genuinely evil, then we can't

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<sup>1</sup> The name Lucifer has a funny etymology since, literally, it is Latin for "light-bringer" [*lux* + *fero*]. This is the traditional Latin rendering of the Septuagint's Greek word *Phosphorus* (which, as anyone who knows their Frege will remember, is the name of the "morning star," and refers to Venus). But the name has a very different history in the context of the bible. St. Jerome, in his early version of the Latin Vulgate from the late 4<sup>th</sup> c., introduces the term as a translation of Isaiah 14:12. This is the passage in which the prophet Isaiah is talking about the time in the future when the Lord's desire to restore his people will result in the fall of Babylon. The verse is thus taken to refer primarily to the Devil's fall from heaven, and secondarily to the fall of Sargon II, the King of Babylon. "How you are fallen from heaven / O Lucifer the morning star." The New Oxford Annotated Bible adds that this name "draws on the Canaanite myth of the gods Helel and Shahar (Morning Star and Dawn), who fall from heaven as a result of rebellion. In Christianity the myth reemerges as the fall of Lucifer and his attendant angels (cf. Lk 10:18)."

say that it's a part of God's plan that he is keeping hidden from us. This is why Kant is so against the story of Abraham and Isaac (199). But it also means that God is reduced to whatever we can understand about him. "Kant's Socratic religion has led to a conception of God as little more than a wise source of order and an impartial executor of justice" (200).

### Interesting Passages Cited

### Questions

### Comments

1. MR starts off by assessing Murdoch's claim that Kantian human beings are like Lucifer in Milton. But he goes on to say that Kant's notion of the *Devil* is different from Milton's. Even if the latter is true, Murdoch could be right about the Luciferian aspects of Kantian human being. MR will say she isn't, of course. But that gets lost in the presentation. If Murdoch is wrong, it's because of what MR already said in the previous section – that she gets Kant's views of human beings wrong. It doesn't really have to do with what she thinks about the Devil.

## 4. Existential Loneliness (200-202)

### Summary

The source of the romantic and post-romantic theme of existential loneliness, which Murdoch invokes, is often taken to be Schiller's 1788 poem *Die Götter Griechenland* ([The Gods of Greece](#)). This is usually read as a poem about the disappearance of religion and the consequent production of *eine entgötterte Natur*, a de-godded world. But MR wants to insist that Schiller is really focused not on "the disappearance of religion as such, but the change in its character" (201). The relevant issue is a move from the Greek world of many, flawed, personal Gods to the single, perfect, impersonal deity of monotheism. The problem as Schiller sees it, on MR's interpretation, is not atheism but monotheism.

### Interesting Passages Cited

1. Snippets from Schiller's poem, including a passage about how "On Saturn's throne" now sits a perfect, self-sufficient being – a judge whose eye was "never dimmed by tears." [201]
2. When the gods were more human, human beings were more divine. [201, Schiller, unattributed but in fact in the penultimate stanza of the original version of *Die Götter Griechenland*].

### Questions

### Comments

1. Note the relation to the German Idealist project from the late 1790s and early 1800s to tell a story about nature that makes it more than just mechanical. See, for instance, Schelling's *Philosophy of Nature* (1802), *et. al.* Related, of course, to Spinoza's pantheism.
2. Note the connection to Kierkegaard's ambition (is it in *Philosophical Fragments*?) to explain the need for God to become man. The story of the king who was so powerful that he couldn't be loved. It's perhaps the opposite of MR's approach, since it emphasizes God's need to be someone whom *we can love* rather than our need for God to be someone who can *love us*. But perhaps these are two sides of the same coin?

**5. Arbitrariness and Alienation (202-203)**

**Summary**

The kind of alienation that Kant aims to resolve is the kind that proceeds from our not being treated as adults. It is our maturity, our *Mündigkeit*, that must be respected for us not to be alienated.

**Interesting Passages Cited**

**Questions**

**Comments**

**6. Autonomy (203-207)**

**Summary**

**Interesting Passages Cited**

**Questions**

**Comments**

**7. Morality as Identity (207-210)**

**Summary**

**Interesting Passages Cited**

**Questions**

**Comments**

**8. Schopenhauer (210-214)**

**Summary**

**Interesting Passages Cited**

**Questions**

**Comments**

**9. Hegel: The Spirit of Christianity (214-217)**

Summary

Interesting Passages Cited

Questions

Comments

10. Love and Alienation (217-221)

Summary

Interesting Passages Cited

Questions

Comments

11. Being with Oneself in Otherness (221-229)

Summary

Interesting Passages Cited

Questions

Comments

Discussion in Class

Marley – What’s happening in the section in Divine Goodness and the Devil.