Re-evaluating the Relationship Between Evil and Slavery:

An Integrated Approach

In this paper, I aim to explore the intricate interplay between slavery and the concept of evil, ultimately seeking a deeper understanding of their relationship. While critically evaluating these notions, I posit that solely relying on a historical analysis of contingent acts of evil, as proposed by Steven Mintz in his work "*The Problem of Evil: Slavery, Freedom, and the Ambiguities of American Reform*," falls short of providing a comprehensive moral perspective on the evil-slavery connection. To enhance the scope of this thesis, I advocate for including philosophical and theological perspectives—those that Mintz attempts to exclude. Such a multifaceted approach is essential because every contingency is inherently linked to some form of necessity. By acknowledging this link, we can gain more insight into contingent acts of evil, such as slavery. Thus, a holistic understanding of the relationship between evil and slavery necessitates historical analysis and philosophical and theological explanations regarding the underlying necessities that give rise to evil.

Indeed, it is not within the scope of this paper to definitively resolve the intricate question of how a historically contingent act of evil, exemplified by slavery, relates to the philosophical necessity underpinning the existence of such contingent acts of evil. Instead, the primary objective of this paper is to shed light on the inherent limitations of a purely historically contingent perspective on evil and underscore the essential need for concurrent philosophical and theological considerations. Only by embracing this multidimensional approach can we hope to attain a more profound comprehension of the

intricate relationship between slavery and evil. I will embark on a comprehensive journey in the forthcoming sections, beginning with reconstructing Mintz's argument. This will serve as a foundation for a critical examination, during which I will pinpoint two specific fallacies within his reasoning. Subsequently, I will articulate how my thesis provides a more nuanced and comprehensive perspective on this complex issue, elucidating the intricate connection between slavery and evil.

In his work titled "The Problem of Evil: Slavery, Freedom, and the Ambiguities of American Reform," Steven Mintz articulates a compelling argument. He posits that Americans stand to gain significant insights through historical introspection concerning the intricate interplay among evil, slavery, and freedom. Central to Mintz's thesis is the foundational premise that history unequivocally demonstrates the inseparable connection between the problem of slavery and the issue of race, ultimately labeling slavery as a profound historical evil that the United States has yet to acknowledge or make amends for entirely. Consequently, Mintz contends that history, as opposed to philosophy or religion, offers a more robust foundation for forging a moral understanding of the intricate relationship between evil and slavery in the American context.

Mintz's argument hinges on the inseparable link between the problem of slavery and the concept of race, a connection that has evolved significantly throughout history. He contends that to grasp this intricate relationship fully, scholars must adopt a perspective that views race "not as a biological category grounded in genetics but as a historically shaped and highly contested cultural construct,"[1] in his own words. Mintz's

[1] Mintz, *Evil*, 8

conclusion regarding the dramatic shifts in the meaning of race over time is built upon several fundamental premises. During the colonial and antebellum eras, African Americans were often called "colored" or "people of color." In the later 18th and 19th centuries, the terminology shifted to "Negroes." However, in the late 20th century, the prevalent term became "African Americans." These linguistic transformations reflect a more profound metamorphosis in societal perception. This evolution in the understanding of race over time is intrinsically tied to complex considerations, including the demand for labor and the prevailing belief that specific genetic characteristics rendered African Americans more exploitable than other groups. This perception stemmed from the erroneous notion that African ancestry was associated with savagery and animality. Consequently, Mintz's argument underscores how the historical interplay between race and slavery has been deeply influenced by changing perceptions and societal dynamics.

Mintz's argument gains further depth when considering the substantial shifts in understanding race over time. He contends that even the scientific understanding of race remains incomplete when explaining the intricate relationship between evil and slavery. Mintz postulates that a pivotal turning point occurred when a cohort of highly influential natural scientists challenged the traditional biblical belief that all humans were created in the image of God.[2] As Mintz argues, this challenge set the stage for the emergence of modern racial categories.[3] Mintz's thesis rests upon the foundational premise that these early scientific notions allowed for the classification of races along a spectrum from

[2] *Evil*, 8
[3] *Evil*, 8

superior to inferior. This classification, in turn, contributed to the proliferation of modern racism and facilitated the emergence of other malevolent concepts, such as the rise of eugenics. For Mintz, this historical trajectory serves as compelling evidence that race should be perceived as a product of a complex, historically shaped, and hotly contested cultural construct.

Mintz's exploration leads him to the pivotal task of elucidating how the problem of slavery intricately intertwines with the problem of race. He posits a nuanced perspective, asserting that "race" exists as both a fiction and a concrete reality, a dichotomy that demands further examination.[4] From one vantage point, Mintz contends that "race" can be considered fiction.[5] This assertion stems from the historical reality that human groups have been marked by amalgamations of various ethnicities, resulting in minimal genetic distinctions among individuals. This scarcity of genetic divergence underscores the fundamental unity of the human species, ultimately rendering the concept of "race" fictitious. However, Mintz also emphasizes that "race" is not entirely fictitious. It exerts tangible effects on individuals' lives, profoundly shaping their experiences. This impact manifests through the social barriers it erects and the economic disparities it perpetuates. Consequently, racial categories wield substantial influence over public behavior and have historically played a pivotal role in rationalizing and perpetuating the institution of slavery. This inextricable linkage between the problem of slavery and the concept of race

[4] *Evil*, 7
[5] *Evil*, 8

underscores the profound and enduring influence of racial ideas on society, reaffirming the inseparability of these two complex issues.

In light of the enduring presence of the problem of slavery and the pervasive persistence of racism in America, Mintz asserts that slavery stands as a historical evil that the United States has yet to acknowledge or atone for entirely. He emphasizes the pressing need for Americans to overcome the moral inertia that has hindered the recognition of responsibility for past injustices.[6] Mintz argues that this acknowledgment is imperative because, since the late 1970s, several transformative shifts have reshaped our understanding of slavery, demanding that Americans catch up to this evolving perspective.

These shifts encompass four significant upheavals in our comprehension of American slavery: Historians have situated American slavery within a broader global and comparative framework, highlighting its connections to other instances of slavery worldwide. The conventional view of slavery as a static, regional institution has given way to a recognition of its dynamic nature and its pervasive influence across the entire nation. Historians have increasingly emphasized that slavery involved an ongoing negotiation process, challenging the notion that all power resided solely with the slaveholders. There has been a growing focus on the moral dimensions of slavery, prompting more profound reflections on the ethical questions raised by this institution. Mintz contends that these transformations in our understanding of slavery demand that Americans reassess their perception of this historical evil and reckon with its enduring legacy. This reevaluation is

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[6] *Evil*, 6

essential to foster a more comprehensive and empathetic comprehension of the complexities inherent in the history of American slavery.

Mintz offers compelling evidence to underscore the urgency of overcoming this moral immunity. One such piece of evidence highlights that American society has, for a considerable period, avoided confronting the issue of slavery at its most critical public sites. In his own words, "not until 2011, a century and a half after the commencement of the Civil War, did a Congressional mandate finally compel the National Park Service to address the role of slavery at Civil War battlefields."[7] Mintz cites additional illustrative examples that underscore this need for acknowledgment and reckoning. Enslaved individuals played pivotal roles in constructing iconic symbols of American democracy, such as the White House and the U.S. Capitol. However, there exists no marker or official recognition of their significant contributions.

Furthermore, the cotton produced by enslaved laborers, amounting to 75% of the nation's exports before the Civil War, financed its infrastructure and underpinned its economic prosperity. Additionally, Mintz underscores how slaveholders were disproportionately represented in the nation's executive and judiciary systems, facilitating the perpetuation of slavery and its associated injustices. This overrepresentation lent legitimacy to the institution of slavery and made it easier to justify its continuation. These examples underscore the deep-seated reluctance to confront the historical and moral implications of slavery in America. They serve as compelling evidence of the pressing

[7] *Evil*, 6

need to address this moral immunity and candidly examine the nation's complex history with slavery.

Mintz compellingly argues that such evidence underscores a haunting reality: slavery is a historical evil that America has yet to acknowledge or atone for entirely. He poignantly states that even those who believe they possess a solid grasp of this nation's history often misconstrue the depth of slavery's brutality and its pivotal role in shaping the nation's politics and economic progress.[8] Mintz bolsters his argument by presenting physical and psychological factors as supporting evidence.

He points out that fewer than ten percent of enslaved individuals were allowed to learn how to read, and even fewer were allowed to write, underscoring the systematic deprivation of knowledge and agency. Mintz highlights the heart-wrenching consequences of the slave trade, which led to the separation of families and the dissolution of marriages, inflicting profound emotional wounds. The staggering infant and child mortality rates among enslaved individuals, double that of their white southern counterparts, illuminate the severe physical hardships they endured. Despite their physical prominence, enslaved African Americans suffered immensely, challenging prevailing stereotypes about their well-being. The deliberate erasure of African American culture and identity and the instillation of dependency further emphasize the suffering endured under slavery. The role of African-American parents was systematically weakened, impairing their ability to provide guidance and support to their children. All these factors culminate in a stark revelation: due to persisting misconceptions about the true extent of slavery's

[8] *Evil*, 5

cruelties, this historical evil remains unacknowledged and unatoned for in American society. Mintz's argument compels us to confront the uncomfortable truths about the nation's past and the enduring legacy of slavery.

Mintz contends that part of the problem lies in how Americans have grappled with the concept of evil amidst the pressures of modernity. He asserts that a curious fascination exists with evil, particularly among young Americans. In Mintz's words, this fascination reflects the profound impact of the last century, during which the human capacity for evil was dramatically spotlighted, often in situations where such evils were perpetrated in the name of some ostensibly higher good.[9] Mintz suggests that the pervasiveness of evil, particularly when justified in the name of loftier ideals, has given rise to a sense of bewilderment and fascination among people. They struggle to reconcile the existence of evil with their understanding of the world, leading to an increasing presence of evil in popular culture. Mintz goes as far as to claim that many young Americans have even embraced this fascination with evil. Paradoxically, he argues that the intense moralism aimed at combating evil has sometimes resulted in its problems, including discrimination and other forms of injustice. Given this complex interplay, Mintz ultimately posits that Americans have, to some extent, lost their clear sense of what constitutes evil and how to account for it properly. His argument underscores the need for a nuanced and thoughtful examination of the multifaceted nature of evil in the modern world.

This is why, Mintz argues, history emerges as a more effective conduit for fostering a moral comprehension of the intricate relationship between evil, slavery, and freedom,

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[9] *Evil*, 3

surpassing the capacities of philosophy or religion. In his words, A paramount objective of a moral history of evil should revolve around grasping the intricate interplay of social, economic, cultural, and political factors and ideologies that distort societies, providing fertile ground for the emergence, establishment, and proliferation of collective evil.[10] Mintz further asserts that secular explanations of evil have progressively supplanted religious and philosophical ones, reflecting the evolving nature of our understanding. In his view, contemporary accounts of evil necessitate a shift in focus towards elucidating the diverse motivations behind and the far-reaching consequences of evil acts. This emphasis on diversity and contextual analysis underscores the hallmark of many historical accounts of evil—their contingency. Philosophical or theological necessity, Mintz contends, cannot adequately encompass the multifaceted and historically contingent nature of these accounts.

Americans would undoubtedly gain valuable insights from engaging in a historical analysis akin to the one Mintz has proposed. This analytical journey is grounded in two essential principles: the first is a steadfast commitment to a historical exploration that grapples earnestly with foundational moral dilemmas. In contrast, the second underscores the pivotal role played by ideas in shaping our understanding of these issues.[11] To elucidate further, the first commitment entails recognizing that specific individuals throughout history have risen above the pervasive influence of evil, confronting it head-on. In doing so, they have expanded our collective consciousness regarding the intricacies

[10] *Evil*, 5
[11] *Evil*, 1

of evil and its intricate relationship with morality. This profound recognition underscores that moral considerations do not exist in isolation; instead, they are intricately interwoven with the historical and societal contexts in which they manifest. Because these individuals have succeeded in addressing evil at its core, it becomes imperative for history to transform into a moral enterprise. Such an endeavor should unravel the intricate narratives explaining how individuals of intelligence and moral character can be entangled in evil acts. This transformative approach empowers us to navigate the complexities of morality and confront the unsettling truth that even the most virtuous among us may, under certain circumstances, participate in acts of moral transgression.

Furthermore, Mintz underscores ideas' critical role in examining the past. He posits that since human beings possess cognitive faculties and mental capacities, their perceptions and deeply ingrained value systems invariably shape their conduct and actions.[12] In essence, because human perception and unwavering commitments drive human behavior, ideas emerge as the fundamental conceptual lens through which individuals perceive and interpret the world surrounding them. However, Mintz introduces a crucial perspective: he maintains that ideas should not be viewed as abstract, free-floating philosophical or theological entities that exist in isolation from the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which they originate. Instead, he contends that ideas derive significance from their inherently intertwined and historically constructed character. It is this intrinsic connection to the unique settings of their time that renders ideas indispensable tools for comprehending the complexities of the past.

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[12] *Evil*, 1-2

In conclusion, the intrinsic connection between the problem of slavery and the issue of race underscores that slavery is a historical evil that has yet to receive the thorough acknowledgment and atonement it demands in American society. Given this profound reality, it becomes evident that a historical examination provides a more potent framework for cultivating a moral comprehension of the intricate relationship between evil and slavery, surpassing the capabilities of both philosophical and theological perspectives.

I will contend that Mintz's proposition is susceptible to two fundamental philosophical fallacies: the fallacy of composition and the fallacy of false dichotomy. To establish this contention, I will connect the historically contingent nature of slavery as an evil and the classical formulation of the problem of evil, as expounded by philosophers and theologians. Subsequently, I will demonstrate that neither a purely philosophical nor a theological perspective can singularly suffice for a comprehensive moral comprehension of slavery as an evil. The crux of my argument lies in the recognition that contingency, which is integral to understanding evil, has inherent dependencies on necessity, which, in turn, unfolds in a historical context—thus, contingently. Consequently, a holistic approach necessitates the synergy of historical, philosophical, and theological analyses to foster a more profound moral understanding of slavery as an evil. However, before delving into these aspects, I will address some overarching evaluative issues with Mintz's thesis.

In my perspective, the challenge in adequately addressing slavery as a moral evil lies in the historical accounts that predominantly focus on the contingent aspects of this reprehensible act. This concentration on contingencies has contributed to a situation where even well-informed individuals often diverge in their interpretations of historical

narratives detailing these acts of evil. This enduring disagreement is evident today, where not all Americans concur on how to interpret the legacy of slavery. Some may argue against providing reparations to Black American families, contending that the experiences of other minority groups, such as Asians, suggest that Black Americans should transcend a perceived victim mentality and demonstrate their capability for self-sufficiency.

As a result, historical accounts, which center primarily on contingencies, can only yield a spectrum of explanations, ranging from the most compelling to the least convincing, depending on one's perspective. The crux lies in comprehending how contingent acts of evil interrelate with the underlying necessity for such evils to occur. Therefore, the most robust understanding of slavery as an evil emerges when we bridge the gap between the contingent and necessary elements of this complex historical phenomenon. This nuanced approach allows us to holistically account for the multifaceted dimensions of evil and its profound implications.

From my perspective, relying solely on a historical account of a contingent act of evil falls short of providing a comprehensive answer to a fundamental question: what is the intricate relationship between these contingent acts of evil and the underlying necessity for such evils to occur? However, it is equally important to recognize that exclusively philosophical or theological accounts which attempt to address this question do not offer a superior foundation for fostering a moral understanding of the intricate connection between slavery and evil. This is because they often overlook the critical element of contingency within the necessity of these acts.

For instance, some philosophical traditions, like Indian philosophy, may put forth theories such as karma and retribution, positing that individuals receive what they deserve based on past actions. According to these theories, a baby with a disability deserves its fate due to some unspecified previous action that necessitates retribution. However, such accounts are fraught with uncertainty and often fail to satisfy because they neglect to explain the broader social, economic, and political contexts that enabled these evil acts to manifest. A holistic understanding of the relationship between slavery and evil necessitates a framework considering the contingency and necessity inherent in these complex historical phenomena. Through this integrated approach, we can unravel the intricate layers of moral understanding and confront the multifaceted aspects of these challenging issues.

In my perspective, one's compassionate objection to the proposition mentioned earlier represents a contingent act of compassion and self-doubt. However, it does not comprehensively explain the underlying, ahistorical reason why the baby was born with that condition. Similarly, any historical analysis that primarily delves into the contingencies of slavery as an evil—such as an examination of the social, economic, and political factors that facilitated it—fails to account for the essential connection between these contingent acts and the underlying necessity of evil that permitted these contingencies to manifest. Consequently, there remains an elusive element, one that we have yet to fully comprehend, concerning the intricate relationship between a contingent act of evil and its intrinsic necessity.

In my perspective, the presence of uncertainty signals the existence of fundamental epistemological challenges. This predicament revolves around the issue of meaning—specifically, how can we ascribe meaning to slavery as an evil act beyond merely comprehending it from a historical standpoint? While historical facts unequivocally establish that slavery was an evil practice, they leave us grappling with the profound question of how to extract deeper meaning from this dark chapter in history. The elusive meaning remains submerged beneath murky waters, awaiting our diligent exploration.

The central inquiry confronting us is: What constitutes the necessary and sufficient conditions for understanding and accounting for evil acts? We are well acquainted with the historically sufficient conditions encompassing the political, social, and economic factors that pave the way for contingent evil acts to occur. However, the crux of the matter lies in identifying the indispensable prerequisites for evil—those conditions without which the political, social, and economic factors alone would be incapable of engendering a contingent act that could be classified as evil. This critical aspect represents a profound philosophical and epistemological challenge that continues to elude us.

The interplay between contingency and necessity is an inescapable dualism. We can begin to grasp this complex relationship by recognizing the distinction between slavery and the moral evil inherent in slavery itself. These two aspects are distinct from historical, philosophical, and theological perspectives. Slavery, when seen as a contingent manifestation of evil, can be conceptualized as a property or attribute of a broader, necessary substance, which we can term "evil."

A fundamental duality exists in the overarching concept of evil, which represents a necessary and intrinsic entity, and the contingent acts of evil—such as slavery—that emerge within historical contexts. These contingent acts of evil function as expressions of the inherent property of evil within the larger framework. Contrary to Mintz's assertions, it is plausible to understand evil as a foundational and autonomous entity, referred to as "evil," that underpins and permits contingent evil acts. This nuanced perspective acknowledges the inherent connection between contingency and necessity in moral understanding.

These evaluative remarks bring forth thought-provoking inquiries concerning Mintz's presumption that a historical analysis provides a superior foundation for cultivating a moral understanding of evil. Because philosophical and theological accounts meticulously delve into the intricate relationship between contingencies and their necessities, it becomes imperative to reexamine the conventional philosophical and theological formulations of the problem of evil. Subsequently, we can draw parallels between this reinterpretation and the historical manifestation of slavery as a contingent form of evil. Nevertheless, this intellectual exercise serves as a poignant reminder that relying solely on philosophical and theological accounts does not inherently give us a more robust moral elucidation of the intricate connection between slavery and evil.

One renowned interpretation of the problem of evil is attributed to the Greek philosopher Epicurus,[13] and his formulation of this problem is as follows:

- Is God willing to prevent evil but not able to? Then, he is not omnipotent.

[13] Bayne, *Philosophy of Religion*, 64

- Is he able but not willing? Then, he is malevolent.
- Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?
- Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?

In essence, the problem of evil, as traditionally contemplated by philosophers and theologians, posits that evil in the world appears incompatible with the existence of a God-like being. Since a God-like being is typically conceived as supremely good, any instance of evil in the world seems to contradict the very nature of this God-like being. In other words, if such a God-like being exists as a being of supreme goodness, the coexistence of evil raises questions about the viability of this deity's existence. However, this interpretation of the problem of evil presents a challenge because it involves projecting one's material understanding of goodness onto an immaterial God-like being and questioning the existence of this immaterial entity if it does not conform to one's material conception of goodness. This raises a fundamental question: why assume that an immaterial God-like being must necessarily adhere to a material conception of goodness if it exists?

Drawing parallels between Epicurus' formulation of the problem of evil and slavery as an example of a historically contingent act of evil, we encounter a similar conundrum:

- Was God willing to prevent slavery but not able to? Then, he is not omnipotent.
- Was he able but not willing? Then, he is malevolent.
- Was he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?
- Was he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?

In essence, if slavery existed, it could raise doubts about the existence of a God-like being. This reasoning hinges on the notion that a God-like being represents the epitome of supreme goodness. Consequently, the presence of slavery, as a manifestation of evil, inherently challenges the notion of the existence of such a perfect God-like being. However, this interpretation of slavery as a form of evil confronts a notable challenge. It involves superimposing one's conception of goodness, which may encompass evil, onto a God-like being. Subsequently, if this God-like being does not align with one's conception of goodness, it leads to questioning the existence of this divine entity. Yet, this perspective fails to consider that a perfect God-like being, if it indeed exists, might possess purposes or reasons for the existence of evil that surpass human understanding. It invites us to challenge the assumption that such a God-like being must necessarily adhere to a conception of goodness that excludes the existence of evil.

Therefore, the intricate relationship between contingent acts of evil and their connection to the necessity that permits such contingent acts cannot be comprehensively elucidated through reliance solely on philosophical or theological accounts of evil. Such an approach imposes material values onto an immaterial entity, which lacks logical coherence. Furthermore, as we have observed, historical accounts primarily focusing on the contingencies of past acts of evil are insufficient in accounting for the underlying necessity of evil that facilitated the occurrence of those historical acts. Thus, my thesis remains steadfast: only through an amalgamation of historical, philosophical, and theological analyses can we hope to draw closer to a more profound comprehension of the intricate relationship between evil and slavery. This holistic approach acknowledges

the multifaceted nature of these complex issues and allows for a more nuanced exploration of their interplay.

Now that I have highlighted specific evaluative issues with Mintz's thesis and have established that a solitary philosophical or theological account is insufficient to foster a more profound moral comprehension of the intricate relationship between evil and slavery, it is imperative to introduce two fallacies that undermine the sufficiency of historical analysis in isolation. These fallacies emerge from Mintz's association of slavery as an evil with the philosophical problem commonly referred to as the problem of evil. This exploration will draw upon the interpretation of Epicurus' formulation of the problem of evil presented earlier.

The first fallacy that Mintz's thesis succumbs to is the fallacy of composition, which can be summarized as the presumption that what holds for one entity or concept must hold for all. For instance, if an individual holds a conception of goodness that excludes any form of evil, encountering evil acts in the world would naturally lead them to question the validity of their conception of goodness. By extension, when contemplating the existence of a God-like being—presumed to be supremely good—if any evil act is observed in the world, it appears to challenge the very existence of such a deity. However, it is essential to recognize that many people who perceive slavery as an instance of evil simultaneously believe in the existence of God. Therefore, it would be erroneous to assert that slavery, as an evil, negates the existence of God; such a claim would only compound the issue's complexity. The crux of the matter revolves around a

different question: what precisely is the relationship between slavery as a contingent act of evil and the underlying necessity of evil that permits such contingent acts?

An additional problem stemming from Mintz's fallacy of composition is the creation of a false dichotomy, which presents a scenario where either a God-like being exists without any presence of evil or there is evil because this God-like being does not exist. However, as previously mentioned, it is entirely plausible that this God-like being exists and permits the existence of evil, including contingent acts of evil like slavery, for some purpose or reason beyond human comprehension. This realization underscores the necessity of delving into the underlying reasons for the existence of evil, which in turn facilitate the emergence of contingent acts of evil – the focal points of historical analyses that confine themselves to contingencies. Without this deeper exploration, our understanding remains superficial and incomplete.

The connection between slavery and evil similarly falls prey to the fallacy of composition and false dichotomy when it relies solely on historical accounts of contingent evil acts. The inherent contingency of such acts ensures that this relationship remains inherently illogical and can only be comprehended through inference to a possible explanation. Historians may counter my thesis by asserting that the same issue plagues philosophical and theological accounts of evil—they, too, tend to be illogical and offer limited insights into any potential relationship between the necessity of evil and contingent evil acts. Therefore, they might argue that a more historically grounded analysis is preferable—an approach that delves into the social, economic, and political

contexts fostering the emergence of collective forms of evil. At the very least, through this approach, one can grapple with the complex nature of evil to some extent.

However, I contend that there is no reason to settle for less. Just because philosophical and theological accounts may not explain the relationship between the necessity of evil and contingent acts of evil does not mean we should refrain from exploring these inquiries or give up on the quest for understanding. It is crucial to clarify that the primary objective of this paper is not to resolve this question and provide an ultimate answer definitively. Instead, its purpose is to illuminate the constraints inherent in relying solely on historically contingent accounts of evil.

The interconnected concepts of evil, slavery, and their relationship delve into profound depths that go beyond the scope of purely historical contingencies. A superficial understanding emerges if one limits their exploration to the social, economic, and political contingencies that facilitated these phenomena. Therefore, it becomes imperative to reconsider and refine our understanding of the relationship between contingent acts of evil and the philosophical and theological underpinnings that give rise to the necessity of evil and its manifestation throughout history.

The overarching consequence of relying solely on historically contingent accounts of evil perpetuates disagreement among Americans regarding whether these contingent acts qualify as evil. Consequently, individuals are likely to hold onto their moral immunities when addressing issues like slavery and other evils because they lack a comprehensive understanding of the necessity for these phenomena to unfold. However, it is equally insufficient to provide philosophical and theological accounts of evil solely.

In essence, since contingencies are intertwined with necessity, and necessities unfurl throughout history in the form of contingencies, it becomes evident that a holistic approach is the most advantageous for Americans seeking to gain a profound understanding of slavery and its intricate connections to evil. This integrated perspective enables a more comprehensive comprehension of the multifaceted nature of these complex issues, transcending the limitations of singular viewpoints.

Hence, it remains uncertain whether a historically contingent account, as Mintz advocates, can genuinely provide a morally superior comprehension of evil. When Mintz asserts that Americans must transcend the moral immunity that absolves them of past injustices, he inadvertently imposes a similar moral framework on Americans, akin to the imposition of morality inherent in Epicurus' formulation of the problem of evil. However, it is essential to note that Americans are not necessarily bound to conform to such moral impositions, particularly considering Mintz's historical emphasis on contingent acts of evil.

Works Cited

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