

communicate that two and two equals four, that others can or even must understand the universal truth of this judgment (even though in this case we dealing with an objective principle), so also can we assume that there is a common sense in everyone to which we can communicate the subjective judgment of the beautiful. For this reason Kant gives as his fourth definition that the Beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, is cognized as object of a necessary delight."

Although no less a thinker than Hegel found in Kant's theory of aesthetics "the first rational word concerning beauty," Kant was himself aware, as he puts out in the preface to his *Critique of Judgment*, that "the difficulty of solving a problem so involved in its nature may serve as an excuse for a main amount of hardly avoidable obscurity in its solution."

16

Hegel: Absolute Idealism

Hegel's historical significance lies in the fact that he accomplished with extraordinary and systematic thoroughness what Kant had so recently said could not be done. Kant had argued that metaphysics is impossible, that it is impossible for the human mind to achieve theoretical knowledge about all of reality. Hegel, on the other hand, set forth the general proposition that "what is rational is real and what is real is rational," and from this concluded that everything that is, is knowable. Here was an elaborate metaphysics, which provided a new basis for thinking about the very structure of reality and about its manifestations in morality, law, religion, art, history, and above all thought itself. It might be argued that the eventual decline of Hegelian philosophy was more a matter of abandonment than of studied attack, more like deserting a mansion than capturing a stronghold. But to imply that Hegel's successors merely decided to ignore his elaborate metaphysical system is to misjudge the impact and grip his ideas had upon the generations that followed him. The power of Hegel's thought can be measured by the fact that most twentieth-century philosophy represents ways of revising or rejecting aspects of his absolute idealism.



Hegel (The Bettmann Archive)

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was born at Stuttgart in 1770 and lived through Germany's most brilliant intellectual period. This was the year when Beethoven was born and when the poet-scientist Goethe, that "complete civilization in himself," was twenty years old. Kant was forty-six years old and had not yet written his classic philosophical works. The Englishman Wordsworth was also born in this year, and his poetry in time formed a part of that romanticism that shared some of the attitudes of German idealism. At an early age, Hegel was deeply impressed by the Greek writers, coming eventually to believe that Plato and Aristotle were not only the sources of modern philosophy but even now its life-giving roots. After being a rather ordinary pupil at school in Stuttgart, Hegel enrolled at age eighteen in the theological school at the University of Tübingen. Here he became friends with Hölderlin and Schelling and was caught up in lively discussions over the issues of the French Revolution. During his five years at Tübingen his interest gradually turned to the relation between philosophy and theology. It was after he left the university that his interest in philosophy finally flowered. He became a family tutor for six years, in Berne and in Frankfurt, and during these years wrote some minor works

that nevertheless contained germs of the major problems he eventually made central in his philosophical works.

By this time German idealism had found two influential spokesmen in Fichte and Schelling. In 1801, when Hegel was appointed to the faculty of the University of Jena, he published his first work, on the *Difference between the Philosophical Systems of Fichte and Schelling*, in which he expressed a dislike for Fichte's identification of the ego and the nonego in the Absolute. While he was more sympathetic with Schelling in these early days, it was not long before his independent and original approach to philosophy was made public in his first major work, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, which, he says, he finished at midnight before the Battle of Jena in 1807. As this battle closed his university, Hegel supported himself and his wife, whom he married in 1811, by becoming rector of the secondary school at Nürnberg, where he remained until 1816. It was here that he wrote his influential *Science of Logic*, which brought him invitations from several universities. In 1816 he joined the faculty at Heidelberg, where in the following year he published his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, the work in which Hegel presents the grand structure of his philosophy in its threefold aspect, namely, logic, philosophy of nature, and philosophy of mind. Two years later, Hegel was given the chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin, where he remained until his death from cholera in 1831 at the age of sixty-one. At Berlin Hegel's writing was massive, although most of it was published after his death. His works during this period included his *Philosophy of Right* and lectures, published posthumously, on *Philosophy of History*, *Aesthetics*, *Philosophy of Religion*, and *History of Philosophy*.

DEALING WITH THE LEGACY OF KANT

Following closely upon Kant's critical philosophy was the movement of nineteenth-century German idealism as formulated by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Kant had reacted against the pretensions of the rationalist metaphysicians who assumed that human reason could penetrate the secrets of ultimate reality. Against these assumptions Kant set forth his critical conception of philosophy, which consisted in describing the limits beyond which the human mind could never proceed. His argument was that the mind is structured in such a way that it is forever barred from going beyond the realm of sense experience, the realm of phenomena or appearances. Moreover, our interpretation of the world of experience is permanently fixed by the categories that the mind imposes upon the objects of experience. These categories—such as cause and effect, existence and negation, and others—said Kant, are concepts that the mind possesses prior to experience and employs in relation to objects, and this is what makes knowledge possible.

The impact of Kant's critical method, however, derived from his argument that in addition to the world of experience, the world of phenomena, there is also the world "behind" phenomena called the *noumenal world*. The nou-

menal aspect of any object is what that object is *as such*, what the object is like when the categories of the mind are not imposed on it. We experience only the *appearance* of the red apple but not what the apple is *as such*. We can *never* experience anything except the appearance of a thing. Still, Kant said, we can *think* of that aspect of objects that *has* the appearances. Behind the redness of the apple there must be something to which the color red is related or which can *have* the color red. But, again, though we can say there is, besides the appearance of the red apple, the thing-as-such, we can never know anything about this thing-in-itself. We cannot *know* anything about the thing-in-itself because the categories of the mind apply only to the phenomenal world and not to the thing-in-itself. Since knowledge is possible, according to Kant, only when the categories of the mind are imposed upon the objects we experience through our senses, and since we do not sense the thing-in-itself, we cannot have any knowledge about it. Finally, since ultimate reality was for Kant the thing-in-itself, to say that we cannot have knowledge about it meant that we cannot have knowledge about reality.

The idealists, especially Fichte, quickly recognized the glaring contradiction in Kant's argument concerning the thing-in-itself. How is it possible to say that something exists but that we can know nothing about it? Do we not already know something about it when we say that it exists? Moreover, Kant had asserted the existence of the thing-in-itself in order to account for our experiences of sensation, saying in effect that the thing-in-itself is the *cause* of any given sensation. But he had clearly argued that the categories of the mind, such as cause and effect, could not be used to give us knowledge about the noumenal world. For Kant to say, then, that the thing-in-itself is the cause of our sensations is to contradict his own rule for limiting the use of the categories to our judgments about the objects of sense experience. Even to say that the thing-in-itself *exists* is to go beyond the limits Kant had set for knowledge because *existence* is a category of the mind, a concept, which applies only to objects that we experience through our senses. Indeed, Kant's strongest argument against the earlier metaphysicians was that they had wrongly ascribed *existence* to supposed beings and realities beyond sense experience. Now with his doctrine of the thing-in-itself, Kant appeared to have retained just what his critical philosophy was supposed to eliminate. Not only is it impossible, on Kant's terms, to ascribe the category of existence to the thing-in-itself, it is also a clear contradiction to say that there can be something in existence that is unknowable. We can, of course, distinguish between something that is at the moment unknown (but knowable) and what is unknowable. But to say that something is unknowable is contradictory, because such a statement implies that we already know that something *is* and to that extent it is knowable. The conception of the thing-in-itself collapsed, therefore, because it violated Kant's own rules for limiting the categories of cause and existence to objects of sense experience.

Now the idealists put forward the opposite thesis, namely, that whatever *is*, is knowable. At the same time, the first idealist, Fichte, had no intention of

reverting to the kind of metaphysics Kant had rejected. Fichte believed that Kant had achieved genuine progress in philosophy, and he intended to carry forward what Kant had begun. What Fichte tried to do, therefore, was to use Kant's method, now stripped of the concept of the unknowable thing-in-itself, and transform Kant's critical idealism into a metaphysical idealism. That is, Fichte and the other German idealists took Kant's theory that the mind imposes its categories upon experience and transformed this into the theory that every object and therefore the entire universe is a product of mind.

Hegel joined with Fichte and Schelling in the enterprise of transforming Kant's critical philosophy into a metaphysical idealism. But each of these philosophers approached this enterprise in his own and somewhat different way. What they did agree on, however, was that there can be no unknowable thing-in-itself. Moreover, knowledge, as Kant had shown, was possible because the mind itself produced the forms of knowledge through its various categories. But while Kant had assumed that these forms of knowledge received their material content from the *given* of our experience, from an external thing-in-itself, the idealists now argued that the content as well as the forms of knowledge must be the product of mind. In this way, they came to the conclusion that every object of knowledge, including *things*, is the product of mind. This would mean also, as Hegel did assert, that every reality is rational and that the rational is real. And, since there can be nothing unknowable, the idealists were confident that they could know the inner secrets of absolute reality. This reality must be some form of rationality because it had just been argued that there is no independent and essentially unknowable external thing-in-itself that causes consciousness, that only mind produces the objects of knowledge. We do experience a world of things external to us, which we recognize as existing independently of us and which we did not create. If all objects of our knowledge are the products of mind, but not *our* minds, it must be assumed that they are the products of an intelligence other than that of a finite individual. The idealists concluded that all objects of knowledge, and therefore all objects, and indeed the whole universe, are the products of an absolute subject, an Absolute Mind.

Whereas for Kant the categories of the mind merely make knowledge possible, for Hegel the categories have a mode of *being* that is independent of any individual's mind. Again, for Kant, the categories represented the mental process of an individual and provided for Kant the critical explanation of the modes and limits of human knowledge. The categories, he said, are concepts in the human mind that the mind brings to experience and by which the mind can understand the world of experience. Hegel, on the other hand, considered the categories not only as mental processes but as objective realities possessing *being* independent of the thinking individual. The transformation of Kant's critical philosophy into metaphysical idealism consisted in Hegel's saying that the categories, which Kant thought were merely concepts of the human mind, had objective status, that is, possessed a mode of being independent of any individual's thought. The categories, said Hegel, have their being in the Absolute

Mind. But, as we shall see, Hegel did not mean to say that there were categories or ideas, on the one hand, and things, such as chairs and apples, on the other. Such a distinction would suggest that ideas have a separate existence and that things have a separate existence and that knowledge consists in somehow fitting the appropriate idea to the appropriate thing, the way Plato connected his Forms to things. Hegel, unlike Plato, did not ascribe any independent existence to the categories or universals. What he said was that they have *being* and have their being independently of a person's mind or thought. Hegel wanted to say that the real world is more than the subjective conceptions of men's minds. At the same time, he was saying that reality is rationality, or Thought.

Take, for example, a chair. What is a chair, or what does it consist of? Hegel said that if we take seriously the conclusion that there can be no unknowable thing-in-itself, as we must, a chair must consist of the sum of the ideas we can have about it. On this basis a chair must consist of all the universals we find in it when we experience it. We say that the chair is hard, brown, round, and small. These are all universal ideas, and when they are related to each other this way, they are a chair. These universals have their being in the chair; universals or categories never exist singly or independently. Since there is no unknowable aspect of the chair, that is, nothing in addition to the qualities we experience, it follows that the chair is what we know about it, and what we know about it is that it consists of a combination of universals or ideas. To say, then, that the categories and universals have objective status means that they have their being independent of the knowing subject. At the same time, as the example of the chair indicates, Hegel says that the object of thought consists after all in thought itself. There is, he said, an identity between knowing and being. Knowing and being are simply two sides of the same coin. To be sure, Hegel recognized that there is a subject and an object, a person and the world. But the essence of his idealism consisted in his notion that the object of our consciousness, the *thing* we experience and think about, is itself *thought*. In the end, Hegel arrived at the notion that reality is to be found in the Absolute Idea.

So far, two major points in Hegel's argument have been set forth, namely, that we must reject the notion of an unknowable thing-in-itself and that the nature of reality is thought, rationality, and that ultimate reality is the Absolute Idea. To indicate some of the steps by which Hegel came to this conclusion that reality is Thought, we turn next to a few of the basic elements in his intricate system of philosophy.

THE NATURE OF REALITY

Hegel looked upon the world as an organic process. We have already seen that for him the truly real is what he called the Absolute. In theological terms, this Absolute is called God. But Hegel was particularly concerned to indicate that he was not here referring to a Being separate from the world of nature or even

from individual persons. Whereas Plato made a sharp distinction between appearance and reality, Hegel argued in effect that appearance *is* reality. Nothing, said Hegel, is unrelated. For this reason, whatever we experience as separate things will, upon careful reflection, lead us to other things to which they are related until at last the process of dialectical thought will end in the knowledge of the Absolute. Still, the Absolute is not the unity of separate things. Hegel rejected the premise of materialism, which held that there are separate, finite particles of hard matter, which, when arranged in different formations, make up the whole nature of things. Nor did Hegel accept the extreme alternative put forward in the ancient world by Parmenides and more recently by Spinoza, namely, that everything is One, a single substance with various modes and attributes. Hegel described the Absolute as a dynamic process, as an organism having parts but nevertheless unified into a complex system. The Absolute is therefore not some entity separate from the world but *is* the world when viewed in a special way.

Hegel believed that the inner essence of the Absolute could be reached by human reason because the Absolute is disclosed in Nature as well as in the working of the human mind. What connects these three, the Absolute, Nature, and man's mind, is Thought itself. A person's way of thinking is, as it were, fixed by the structure of Nature, by the way things actually behave. Things behave as they do, however, because the Absolute is expressing itself through the structure of Nature. Thus, a person thinks about Nature the way the Absolute expresses itself in Nature. Just as the Absolute and also Nature are dynamic processes, so also human thought is a process, a dialectic process.

Logic and the Dialectic Process Hegel laid great stress upon logic. To be sure, he understood logic to mean virtually the same thing as metaphysics. This was inevitable in his case inasmuch as he believed that knowing and being coincide. Still, it was Hegel's view that we can know the essence of reality by moving logically step by step and avoiding all self-contradiction along the way. Descartes had advocated a similar method, whereby certainty in knowledge would follow from the movement from one clear idea to the next. Unlike Descartes, however, whose emphasis was upon the relations of ideas to each other, Hegel argued that thought must follow the inner logic of reality itself. That is, since Hegel had identified the rational with the actual, he concluded that logic and logical connections must be discovered *in* the actual and not in some "empirical ratiocination." He argued that "since philosophy is the exploration of the rational, it is for that very reason the apprehension of the present and the actual, not the erection of a beyond, supposed to exist, God knows where." Logic, then, is the process by which we deduce, from our experiences of the actual, the categories that describe the Absolute. This process of deduction is at the very heart of Hegel's dialectic philosophy.

Hegel's dialectic process exhibits a *triadic* movement. Usually this triadic structure of the dialectic process is described as a movement from *thesis* to *antithesis* and finally to *synthesis*, after which the synthesis becomes a new

thesis, and this process continues until it ends in the Absolute Idea. What Hegel emphasized in his dialectic logic was that thought *moves* and that *contradiction*, rather than bringing knowledge to a halt, acts as a positive moving force in human reasoning.

To illustrate Hegel's dialectic method, we can take the first basic triad of his logic, namely, the triad of *Being*, *Nothing*, and *Becoming*. Hegel said that the mind must always move from the more general and abstract to the specific and concrete. The most general concept we can form about things is that they are. Although various things have specific and different qualities, they all have one thing in common, namely, their being. Being, then, is the most general concept the mind can formulate. Also, Being must be logically prior to any specific thing, for things represent determinations or the shaping of what is originally without features. Thus, logic (and reality) begins with the indeterminate, with "the original featurelessness which precedes all definite character and is the very first of all. And this we call Being." Hegel's system begins, therefore, with the concept of Being, and this is the thesis. The question now is, how can thought move from such an abstract concept to any other concept? More important still is the question, how is it possible to *deduce* any other concept from such a universal idea as Being?

It was here that Hegel believed he had discovered something new about the nature of thought. Ever since the time of Aristotle, logicians had thought that nothing could be deduced from a category that was not contained in that category. To deduce *B* from *A* requires that in some way *B* already be contained in *A*. Hegel accepted this. But what he rejected in Aristotelian logic was the assumption that nothing could be deduced from a *universal* term. For example, Aristotle argued that everything is a distinct thing and that logic, therefore, provides us only with specific universal terms from which no other universal terms could be deduced. Thus, for example, there is either *blue* or *not-blue*; there is no way to deduce any other color from blue. If blue is blue, you cannot at the same time say that it is something else, a non-blue. This principle of noncontradiction is very important in any formal logic. Still, Hegel believed that it is not true that a universal does not contain another concept. Returning, then, to the concept of Being, Hegel said that we have here an idea which contains none of the particular qualities or characteristics of the many things that have being. The idea of Being has no content, for the moment you give it some content, it would no longer be the concept of pure Being but the concept of something. Unlike Aristotle, however, Hegel believed that from this concept of Being it is possible to deduce another concept. He argued that because pure Being is mere abstraction, it is therefore absolutely negative. That is, since the concept of Being is wholly indeterminate, it passes into the concept of not-Being. Whenever we try to think of Being without any particular characteristics, the mind moves from Being to not-Being. This, of course, means that in some sense Being and not-Being are the same. Hegel was aware, as he said, that "the proposition that Being and Nothing are the same is so paradoxical to the imagination or understanding, that it is perhaps taken for a joke." Indeed,

to understand Being and Nothing as the same, said Hegel, "is one of the hardest things thought expects itself to do." Still, Hegel's point is that Nothing is deduced from Being. At the same time, the concept of Nothing easily leads the mind back to the concept of Being. Of course Hegel is not implying here that we can say of particular things that they simultaneously are the same as nothing. His argument is limited to the concept of pure Being, which, he says, contains the idea of Nothing. He has, then, deduced the concept of Nothing from the concept of Being. The antithesis, Nothing, is contained in the thesis, Being. In Hegel's logic, the antithesis is always deduced from, because it is contained in, the thesis.

The movement of the mind from Being to Nothing produces a third category, namely *Becoming*. The concept of Becoming is formed by the mind when it understands that Being, for the reasons already mentioned, is the same as Nothing. Becoming, says Hegel, is "the unity of Being and Nothing." It is, he says, "*one idea*." Becoming is therefore the *synthesis* of Being and Nothing. If we ask how something can both be and not be, Hegel would answer that it can both be and not be when it becomes.

Throughout his vast and intricate system, Hegel employs this same dialectic method of logic. At each step, he sets forth a thesis from which is deduced its antithesis; this thesis and antithesis then find their unity in a higher synthesis. In the end, Hegel arrives at the concept of the Absolute Idea, which he describes, in accordance with his dialectic method, as Becoming, as a process of self-development. Beginning, then, at the lowest level of knowledge, with the sensation of qualities and characteristics of particular things, Hegel sought to expand the scope of knowledge by discovering the ever-widening interrelationships of all things, always making sure that the mind takes no flight of fancy but rather moves rigorously by way of deduction from one concept to the other that the mind finds as categories in actuality. Single facts, for Hegel, are irrational; only when such single facts are seen as aspects of the whole do they become rational. Thinking is forced to move from one fact to another by the very nature of each concept that facts engender. As an example, which does not accurately illustrate Hegel's point but does suggest how single facts acquire a rational quality, one can consider the parts of an engine. By itself, a spark plug has no rational character; what confers rationality upon it is its relation to the other parts of the engine. To discover the essence of the spark plug is, thus, to discover truth about the other parts and, eventually, the entire engine. The human mind, then, moves dialectically, constantly embracing an ever-increasing scope of reality, discovering the truth of anything only after discovering its relation to the whole, to the *Idea*.

The *Idea* of which Hegel speaks is deduced in his logic by the same method that yielded Becoming out of Being. The category of *subjectivity* is deduced from the fact that a person can have a notion of a thing, make a judgment about it, and be able to reason out logical connections. But from *subjectivity* there can be deduced its opposite, namely, *objectivity*. That is, the notion of *subjectivity* already contains the idea of *objectivity*. To say that I am a self (*subjectivity*) already contains the idea of *objectivity*. To say that I am a self (*subjectivity*)

tivity) implies that there is a not-self (objectivity). Subjectivity consists of thought in its formal sense. Objectivity, on the other hand, is thought that is, as it were, *outside* itself and *in* things. Describing the objective character of a person's notion, Hegel says that it consists of *mechanism*, *chemism*, and *teleology*. What a subject knows about nature as mechanical laws, for example, objects express in their behavior. The synthesis of the subjective and the objective, says Hegel, is their unity in the Idea. That is, in the Idea, the subjective (formal) and the objective (material) are brought together in unity. The Idea, however, contains its own dialectic, namely, life, cognition, and the Absolute Idea. Thus, the Idea is the category of self-consciousness; it knows itself in its objects. The whole drift of Hegel's logic, therefore, has been to move from the initial concept of Being finally to the notion of the Idea. But this Idea must also be understood as being in a dynamic process, so that the Idea is itself in a continuous process of self-development toward self-perfection.

The Philosophy of Nature From the Idea is derived the realm of Nature. As Hegel puts it, Nature represents the Idea "outside itself." This expression is somewhat misleading, because it implies that the Idea exists independently of the world. In addition, Hegel ascribes "absolute freedom" to the Idea as it "goes forth freely out of itself as Nature." Recalling, however, Hegel's premise that the real is rational, it must follow here that Nature is simply rationality, or the Idea, in *external* form, somewhat the way a watchmaker's idea is found outside of himself in the watch. But Hegel's view is more subtle than the relation of the watchmaker to the watch would suggest inasmuch as Hegel does not really refer to two separately existing things, Idea and Nature. Ultimate reality is a single organic and dynamic whole. Hegel's distinction between the logical Idea "behind" all things, on the one hand, and Nature, on the other, is his attempt simply to distinguish between the "inner" and "outer" aspects of the self-same reality. Nature, in short, is the opposite, the antithesis, of the rational Idea (thesis). Our thought moves dialectically from the rational (Idea) to the nonrational (Nature). The concept of Nature leads our thought finally to a synthesis represented by the unity of Idea and Nature in the new concept of Spirit (*Geist*, translated as either Spirit or Mind). What drives our thought from Nature back to Spirit is the dialectic movement within the concept of Nature. Just as logic begins with the most abstract concept, namely, Being, so the philosophy of Nature begins with the most abstract thing, which is, says Hegel, space. Space is empty (just as Being is indeterminate). At one "end," then, Nature touches emptiness. At the other end, it passes over into Spirit. Between space and Spirit is the diversity of particular things, which is what Nature is. Nature exhibits the laws of mechanics, physics, and organics. Each of these aspects of Nature is in turn analyzed by Hegel into its dialectic terms.

Much of what Hegel says about Nature is somewhat outmoded by the developments of science since his day. But it was not his intention to take over

the work of the scientists. He was concerned, rather, to discover through the philosophy of Nature a rational structure and pattern in all of reality. At the same time, he tried to show the difference between *freedom* and *necessity*, saying that Nature is the realm of necessity whereas Spirit is freedom. Nature, says Hegel, "is to be considered as a system of stages, of which one proceeds necessarily from the other." Freedom, on the other hand, is the act of Spirit. There is, then, a dialectic opposition between Spirit and Nature, between freedom and necessity. Indeed, the "career" of reality, the teleological movement of history, represents the gradual and continuous unfolding of the Spirit, of the Idea of freedom.

The Philosophy of Spirit The third part of Hegel's system, following his logical Idea and his philosophy of Nature, is the philosophy of Spirit or Mind. Here again, Hegel sets forth the elements of his dialectic in which the thesis is subjective spirit, the antithesis is objective spirit, and the synthesis is Absolute Spirit. He goes into considerable detail, piling triad upon triad to illustrate that the Absolute is Spirit and that this Spirit finds its manifestation in the minds of individuals, in the social institutions of family, civil society, and the state, and finally in art, religion, and philosophy. The subjective spirit refers to the inner workings of the human mind, whereas the objective spirit represents the mind in its external embodiment in the social and political institutions. At the apex of knowledge are art, religion, and philosophy, which are the achievement of Absolute Spirit.

Most of what made Hegel's philosophy famous was that portion of his thought that he developed around his concept of objective spirit. Here we come upon the unity of Hegel's thought as he now attempts to connect his moral, social, and political thought with the rest of his system. The whole sphere of human behavior, both individual and collective, is described by him as part of the actual and therefore is essentially rational. Moreover, as part of the actual this objective side of the Spirit is seen as involved in the dialectic process. Human behavior and social and political organisms contain or embody the Spirit, just as Nature is the objective embodiment of the Absolute Idea. For this reason, Hegel looked upon institutions not as the creations of man, but as the product of the dialectic movement of history, of the objective manifestation of rational reality. Speaking, for example, about his book on the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel writes that "containing as it does the science of the state, [it] is to be nothing other than the endeavor to apprehend and portray the state as something inherently rational. As a work of philosophy, it must be poles apart from an attempt to construct a state as it ought to be." This identification of the actual state with the very grounds of reality is what caused Hegel's political theory to have such a captivating influence among those who wished to think about the state in totalitarian or at least nondemocratic terms. We turn, then, to some of the "moments" in the dialectic process by which Hegel seeks to indicate the natural move-

universal self-consciousness. A particular individual, he said, is conscious of himself insofar as he is a part of this larger self. And, says Hegel, "since the state is mind objectified, it is only as one of its members that the individual himself has objectivity, genuine individuality, and an ethical life." A person's spiritual reality is also found in the state, for as Hegel says, a human being's "spiritual reality consists in this, that his own essence—Reason—is objectively present to him, that it has objective immediate existence for him." Recalling that Hegel was not interested in formulating a theory of the *ideal* state, his descriptions of the *actual* state are all the more striking. It was the actual living state about which he said that "the state is the embodiment of rational freedom," and, most striking of all, that "the State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth."

All these highly exalting descriptions of the state would make it appear that Hegel had advocated the totalitarian state. He did insist, however, that insofar as the state is the synthesis of particularity and universality, of the family and the individual, there be the preservation by the state of individual liberty, that liberty which the individual possesses as a member of civil society. Neither the family nor civil society is destroyed by the state; they continue to exist within the state. The laws of the state and, in general, the legislative and executive arms of the state do not issue arbitrary commands. Laws are universal rules, which have their application in individual cases involving individual persons. Moreover, laws must be rational and directed at rational persons. The reason for laws is that men, in their ability to make free choices, are capable of choosing ends that harm others. Insofar as their acts harm others, their behavior is irrational. The function of law is therefore to bring rationality into behavior. What makes an act rational is that it at once achieves a person's private good as well as the public good. Only a person who acts rationally can be free, because only rational acts can be permitted in society, because only rational acts avoid social harm. The function of the state is therefore not to compound personal harm or misery by issuing arbitrary and therefore irrational commands, but rather to increase, through its laws, the aggregate of rational behavior. The state is thus an organism that is seeking to develop the Idea of freedom to its maximum, and to achieve objective freedom only as its individual members do. In this way, the laws of the state, rather than being arbitrary, are rational rules of behavior that the individual himself would choose if he were acting rationally. The only limitation upon the individual will that reason allows is the limitation required by the existence of other wills. The sovereign acts in the name of the universal will and reason and not arbitrarily. The state then, "is the Idea of Spirit in the external manifestation of human Will and its Freedom."

When it comes to the relations between states, Hegel emphasizes the autonomy and absolute sovereignty of each state. The relation of one state to another is different for Hegel from the relation of one person to another in civil society. Above two persons who disagree in society, there is the state as a higher power capable of resolving the dispute. But as between two states, there is no

higher entity. Each nation, says Hegel, "is mind in its substantive rationality and immediate actuality and is therefore the absolute power on earth." For this reason, "every state is sovereign and autonomous against its neighbors. It is a fundamental proposition of international law that obligations between states ought to be kept." But, says Hegel, "states are... in a state of nature in relation to each other," and for this reason there is no universal will binding upon them. The "rights of states are actualized only in their particular wills," insofar as there are no constitutional powers over them. There is no one to judge between states.

Why Hegel did not carry his dialectic movement to the next level, at which individual states would be united into a community of nations, is not clear. He was of course aware that Kant had an idea of securing "perpetual peace" by a League of Nations to adjust every dispute. But he said that such an arrangement could not work because it would still be necessary for each state to *will* to obey the international tribunal. But a state will always *will* its own welfare. Indeed, says Hegel, "welfare is the highest law governing the relation of one state to another." There can be no moral limitations upon the state, for the state is "the ethical substance." It follows, says Hegel, that "if states disagree and their particular wills cannot be harmonized, the matter can only be settled by war."

World History In Hegel's view, the history of the world is the history of nations. The dynamic unfolding of history represents the "progress in the consciousness of freedom." This progress is not a matter of mere chance but is rather a rational process. "Reason," says Hegel, "dominates the world and... world history is thus a rational process." In a special way, the state is the bearer of reason, and it was for this reason that Hegel had said that the state is "the Idea of Spirit" in external form and that the state is "the Divine Idea as it exists on earth." But the dialectic of the historical process consists in the opposition between states. Each state expresses a national spirit and indeed the world spirit in its own collective consciousness. To be sure, only individual minds are capable of consciousness. Still, the minds of a particular people develop a spirit of unity, and for this reason it is possible to speak of a "national spirit." Each national spirit represents a moment in the development of the world spirit, and the interplay between national spirits represents the dialectic in history.

The conflict between nations is inevitable inasmuch as the historical process is the very stuff of reality, is the gradual working out of the *Idea of Freedom*. Nations are carried along by the wave of history, so that in each epoch a particular nation is "the dominant people in world history for this epoch...." A nation cannot choose when it will be great, for "it is only once that it can make its hour strike." At decisive points in history, says Hegel, special world-historical persons emerge as agents of the world spirit. These persons lift nations to a new level of development and perfection. Hegel thought that such individuals could hardly be judged in terms of a morality that belonged to the

epoch out of which a nation is being led, that the value of such persons consists in their creative responsiveness to the unfolding Idea of Freedom.

The time process of history was for Hegel the logical process of the dialectic. History is moving toward a purposive end, namely, freedom. To illustrate the dialectic of history, Hegel used examples of various peoples, which, he thought, indicated the three *moments* in the development of freedom. The Orientals, he thought, knew nothing of freedom except that the potentate alone could do what he wished. Although the Greeks and Romans knew the concept of citizenship, they limited this status only to a few and regarded others as being by nature slaves. It was the *Germanic* peoples who, under the influence of Christianity, developed the insight that man as such is free. Thus, Hegel says that "The East knew and to the present day knows, only that *One* is free; the Greek and Roman world, that *some* are free; the German world knows that *All* are free." The highest freedom, we have seen, occurs, according to Hegel, when the individual acts according to the universal, rational will of the whole society.

ABSOLUTE SPIRIT

Hegel's philosophy has its culmination in man's knowledge of the Absolute. In the process of dialectic, knowledge of the Absolute is the synthesis of subjective spirit and objective spirit. Because reality is rationality, Thought, Idea, it followed for Hegel that man's knowledge of the Absolute is actually the Absolute knowing itself through the finite spirit of man. Just how this moment of self-consciousness of the Absolute occurs in the spirit of man is described by Hegel in a final dialectic.

Our consciousness of the Absolute, says Hegel, is achieved progressively as the mind moves through the three stages from art, to religion, and finally to philosophy. Art provides "a sensuous semblance of the Idea" by providing the mind with an object of sense. In the object of art, the mind apprehends the Absolute as beauty. The object of art, moreover, is the creation of Spirit and, as such, contains some aspect of the Idea. Hegel saw in the movement from Oriental symbolic art to classical Greek art and finally to romantic Christian art an ever-deepening insight into the Absolute.

Art leads beyond itself to religion. What differentiates religion from art is that religion is an activity of thought, whereas an aesthetic experience is primarily a matter of feeling. Although art can direct consciousness toward the Absolute, religion comes closer to it precisely because the Absolute is Thought. At the same time, religious thought, said Hegel, is pictorial thought. In early religions this pictorial element looms large. "The Greek God," for example, "is the object of naïve intuition and sensuous imagination. His shape is therefore the bodily shape of man." At the apex of religion is Christianity, which is the religion of the Spirit.

Hegel regarded Christianity as the pictorial representation of philosophy. He believed that religion and philosophy have basically the same subject mat-

ter, that both represent "knowledge of that which is eternal, of what God is, and what flows out of his nature," so that "religion and philosophy come to the same things." Philosophy leaves behind the pictorial forms of religion and rises to the level of pure thought. But philosophy does not offer man the knowledge of the Absolute at any particular moment, for such knowledge is the product of the dialectic process. Philosophy itself has a history, a dialectic movement, where the major periods and systems of philosophy are not mere haphazard developments. These systems in the history of philosophy represent the necessary succession of ideas required by the progressive unfolding of the Idea. The history of philosophy is for Hegel, therefore, the development of the Absolute's self-consciousness in the mind of man.