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XVII. *Hegel*

THE INFLUENCE OF HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY UPON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

No other philosophical system has exerted such a strong and enduring influence upon political life as the metaphysics of Hegel. All the great philosophers before him had propounded theories of the state which had determined the general course of political thought but played only a very modest role in political life. They belonged to the world of "ideas" or "ideals," not to the "actual" political world. Philosophers have often complained of this fact. Kant wrote a special treatise in which he tried to refute the slogan "That may be right in theory but it is not applicable to practical life." Yet all such efforts were vain, for the gulf between political thought and life remained insurmountable. Political theories were eagerly discussed; they were attacked and defended, proved and refuted; but all this had little, if any, effect upon the struggles of political life.

When studying the philosophy of Hegel we meet with an entirely different situation. His logics and metaphysics were at first regarded as the strongest bulwarks of his system; yet it was precisely from this side that the system was open to the most violent and dangerous attacks. And after a short struggle they seemed to have been successful. Yet Hegelianism has had a rebirth not in the field of logical or metaphysical thought, but in the field of political thought. There has hardly been a single great political system that has resisted its influence. All our modern political ideologies show us the strength, the durability and perma-

nence of the principles that were first introduced and defended in Hegel's philosophy of right and in his philosophy of history.

It has however been a Pyrrhic victory. Hegelianism has had to pay the penalty of its triumph. It has immensely extended its sphere of action but its unity and inner harmony are lost. It is no longer a clear, homogeneous, consistent system of political thought. Different schools and parties all appeal to Hegel's authority but, at the same time, they give entirely different and incompatible interpretations of his fundamental principles. These principles have become the scattered remains of a philosopher. To Hegel's political theory we may apply the saying of Schiller in his prologue to *Wallenstein*, "Confused by party hate and party favor his portraiture in history is varied." Bolshevism, Fascism, and National Socialism have disintegrated and cut into pieces the Hegelian system. They are incessantly quarreling with each other about the remnants of the booty. And this is no longer a mere theoretical dispute. It has tremendous political effects.

From the beginning Hegel's commentators were divided into two camps. The Hegelian "Right" and "Left" wings incessantly fought one another. This discussion was comparatively harmless as long as it was a mere contest between philosophical schools. In the last decades, however, the situation has completely changed. What is now at stake is something quite different from the previous controversies. It has become a mortal combat. A historian recently raised the question whether the struggle of the Russians and the invading Germans in 1943 was not, at bottom, a conflict between the Left and Right wings of Hegel's school.¹ That

1. See Hajo Holborn, "The Science of History," *The Interpretation of History*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (Princeton, University Press, 1943), p. 62.

may seem to be an exaggerated statement of the problem but it contains a nucleus of truth.

For a study of the philosophy of Hegel we cannot proceed in the same way as in the case of other thinkers. We may hope to come to an insight into the character of Plato's theory of knowledge, of Aristotle's natural philosophy, or of Kant's ethical theory by simply describing the principal *results* of these philosophers. In a discussion of Hegel's system, however, such a description would be entirely insufficient. "Where could the inmost truth of a philosophical work be found better expressed than in its purposes and results?" asks Hegel in the preface to his *Phenomenology of Mind*.

And in what way could these be more definitely known than through their distinction from what is produced during the same period by others working in the same field? If, however, such procedure is to pass for more than the beginning of knowledge, if it is to pass for actually knowing what a philosophical system is, then we must, in point of fact, look on it as a device for avoiding the real business at issue. . . . For the real subject-matter is not exhausted in its purpose; . . . nor is the mere result attained the concrete whole itself, but the result along with the process of arriving at it. . . . The naked result is the corpse of the system which has left its guiding tendency behind it. . . . Instead of laying hold of the matter itself, a procedure of that kind is all the while away from the subject altogether. . . . The easiest thing of all is to pass judgments on what has a solid substantial content; it is more difficult to grasp it, and most of all difficult to do both together and produce the systematic exposition of it.²

This difficulty accounts for the various and divergent interpretations of Hegel's philosophy. If we single out a particular feature, it is not only easy, it is even neces-

2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, English trans. by J. B. Baillie (London, S. Sonnenschein & Co.; New York, Macmillan, 1910, 2d ed. London, George Allen & Unwin; New York, Macmillan, 1931), I, 3 f. 2 vols.

sary, to find its very opposite. Hegel was not afraid of these contradictions; he saw in them the very life of speculative thought and philosophic truth. Over and over again he challenged the famous principle of identity and contradiction. This principle is not untrue; but it is merely formal and abstract and, therefore, a shallow principle. What we find in reality is always an identity of opposites.

Even in Hegel's political thought every thesis is followed by its antithesis. It is, therefore, impossible to define this political system by a special catchword. He always asserted himself to be a philosopher of *freedom*.

As the essence of matter is gravity, so, on the other hand, we may affirm that the substance, the essence of Spirit is Freedom. All will readily assent to the doctrine that Spirit, among other properties, is also endowed with Freedom; but philosophy teaches that all the qualities of Spirit exist only through Freedom. . . . It is a result of speculative philosophy that Freedom is the sole truth of Spirit.³

Hegel's opponents were convinced that this was a caricature rather than a true description of his doctrine. The philosopher Fries declared that Hegel's theory of the state had grown "not in the gardens of science but on the dunghill of servility." All the German liberals felt and spoke the same way. They saw in the Hegelian system the firmest stronghold of political reaction. In their judgment Hegel was the most dangerous enemy of all democratic ideals. "So far as I can see," said Rudolf Haym in his book *Hegel und seine Zeit*,

all that Hobbes or Filmer, Haller or Stahl have taught, is relatively open-minded in comparison with the famous phrase regarding the rationality of the real in the sense of Hegel's Preface (to his *Philosophy of Right*). The theory of divine free grace and the theory of absolute obedience

3. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, English trans. by J. Sibree (London, Henry G. Bohn, 1857, p. 18; new ed. London, G. Bell & Sons, 1900).

are blameless and innocuous in comparison with the frightful doctrine which canonizes the subsisting as such.⁴

But here we have to face a great problem. How was it possible that a philosophical system which canonized the "subsisting as such" should become one of the greatest *revolutionary* forces in modern political thought? How was it that, after Hegel's death, his doctrine suddenly was seen from an entirely different angle and used in a quite different way? The philosopher of the Prussian State became the teacher of Marx and Lenin—the champion of "dialectic Marxism." Hegel himself is not responsible for this development. He would surely have rejected most of the consequences drawn from the premises of his political theory. As regards his character and his personal temperament he was opposed to all radical solutions. He was a conservative who defended the power of tradition. Custom (*Sitte*) was to him the basic element in political life. In his early writings Hegel had given a description of the Greek polis and the Roman Republic, in which he glorified this ideal. He always maintained and defended the same view. He does not acknowledge any ethical order higher than that which appears in custom.⁵

Here we grasp the fundamental difference between the "idealism" of Hegel and that of Plato. Plato spoke as a pupil of Socrates. He appealed to the Socratic demand for individual responsibility. Custom and habit were declared to be invalid. It is not in tradition or

4. R. Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit* (Berlin, R. Gaertner, 1857), p. 367. Cf. Hugh A. Reyburn, *The Ethical Theory of Hegel; A Study of the Philosophy of Right* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921), p. 63.

5. *Rechtsphilosophie*, § 151. English trans., *The Ethics of Hegel; Translated Selections from his "Rechtsphilosophie,"* by J. Macbride Sterrett (Boston, Ginn & Co., 1893), p. 142. Complete English trans., *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. by S. W. Dyde (London, G. Bell & Sons, 1896), p. 161.

routine that we can find the principles of a true political life. These principles are based not upon "right opinion" (*doxa*) but upon knowledge (*epistēmē*), that new form of rationality and moral consciousness that had been discovered by Socrates. "Reason" for Hegel is not of this Platonic type.

In point of fact the notion of the realization of self-conscious reason . . . finds its actual fulfilment in the life of a nation. Reason appears here as the fluent universal substance . . . which at the same time breaks up into many entirely independent beings. . . . They are conscious within themselves of being these individual independent beings through the fact that they surrender and sacrifice their particular individuality, and that this universal substance is their soul and essence.⁶

Conservatism is, therefore, one of the most characteristic features in Hegel's ethical theory. Nevertheless it is not all. It is only a particular and one-sided aspect which we should not mistake for the whole. In Hegel's political theory and philosophy of history we find a strange mixture of two opposite tendencies. He tries to embrace the whole of the historical world. He speaks of Oriental culture, of China or India as well as of Greek, Roman, or German cultures. What he wants to reveal in his system is not the spirit of a particular nation but the universal spirit, the spirit of the world. "The *genii* of peoples as concrete *Ideas* have their truth and character in the *Absolute Idea*. They stand around the throne of the world-spirit as the executors of its realization, and as witnesses and ornaments of its glory. As world-spirit it is only its own need of coming to itself—to conscious knowledge of its own being and mission of freedom."⁷

Yet in his political system and practical politics

6. *Phenomenology of Mind*. English trans., I, 341 f.

7. *Philosophy of Right*, § 352. Sterrett trans., pp. 210 f. Dyde trans., pp. 345 f.

Hegel was not equal to this all-comprehensive task. He himself always emphasized that the philosopher cannot avoid the limitations of his present world. And this "present world" of Hegel was a rather narrow one. It was tied down to Germany and Prussia. Hegel began as a German patriot. He was deeply concerned with the problems of his time and his own country. In one of his first political pamphlets, written in 1801, he deals with the constitution of Germany. He declares that Germany's political life is approaching a dangerous crisis, that it has lost its power and all its dignity. Later on, after the war of liberation, he was convinced that the crisis of Germany's political life had found its solution. Since Prussia had played the leading role in this solution all his thoughts and hopes were henceforward concentrated upon the Prussian State. When dealing with all these actual political problems Hegel had more and more to restrict his philosophical universalism. He passed from that universalism not only to nationalism but also to a sort of particularism and provincialism. In the preface to his *Philosophy of Right* he even gave vent to his personal feelings, antipathies, and idiosyncrasies.

In this regard the form of the Hegelian system was greatly superior to its immediate content. Long after the death of Hegel and after the breakdown of his metaphysics it continued to work. It became one of the explosive forces in the development of political thought during the nineteenth century. Henceforth it was exempt from all those personal and temporary conditions that had influenced Hegel's political theory. It very often worked against Hegel himself. It contradicted and undermined some of his firmest and dearest political convictions. This process is, indeed, entirely in keeping with the general character of the dialectic method. Thought always shows such a double face. Like a statue of the god Janus it looks backward

and forward. In the dialectic process every new step contains and preserves all the former ones. There is no abrupt change and no break in continuity. But on the other hand this act of preservation is, necessarily, an act of abrogation. Whatever comes into being by the dialectic process has its truth and its value only as *aufgehobenes Moment*. It is preserved as integral element; but its isolated reality is annulled. Every finite existence has to perish in order to give place to new and more perfect shapes.

Such a conception is, however, not consistent with any "canonization of the subsisting as such." When Hegel, in his last period, yielded more and more to this temptation he acted contrary to the spirit of his own system. In one of his early treatises, *Concerning the Scientific Modes of Treating Natural Right*, written in 1802, he had stressed the opposite attitude. Here he had described the history of the world as a great tragedy of ethical life which the Absolute is constantly performing with itself. It is the destiny of the absolute spirit incessantly to give birth to itself into objectivity, to submit to suffering and death and to rise from its ashes to new glory. The Divine in its shape and objectivity has a duplicate nature and its life is the absolute unity of these two natures.⁸ Obviously this is no mere conservatism or traditionalism but the very opposite.

If we are to understand the true character of Hegel's political theory we must, therefore, project the problem upon a larger plane. It is not enough to study his own opinions about concrete political problems. These opinions have only an individual, not a philosophic interest. "*Die Meinung ist mein*," said Hegel in one of his famous puns. What matters here is not the political credo but the new *orientation* of political thought

8. Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, ed. Georg Lasson, "Sämtliche Werke," VII (Leipzig, Felix Meiner, 1913; 2d ed. 1923), 384 f.

that was introduced by his system. It is much more the new mode of *questioning* than the particular answers given by Hegel which proved to be of prime importance and had an enduring interest and influence. But in order to clarify this point and to do full justice to Hegel's political thought we must enlarge our horizon; we must go back to the first principles of Hegel's philosophy.

THE METAPHYSICAL BACKGROUND OF HEGEL'S POLITICAL THEORY

The problem of religion and the problem of history are the two intellectual centers of Hegel's doctrine. From the beginning they were the great and most powerful concerns of his philosophic thought. When studying the first writings of Hegel we can scarcely draw a line between them.⁹ They are fused into each other and form an inseparable unity. We may describe the fundamental tendency of Hegel's thought by saying that he spoke of religion in terms of history and of history in terms of religion.

Thereby one of the oldest and most difficult problems of religious thought suddenly assumed a new shape. Ancient and modern thinkers had approached the problem of theodicy from various angles. The Stoics, the Neo-Platonists, and Leibniz had given their vindication of divine providence with the existence of physical or moral evil in view. The period of the Enlightenment rejected most of these theological solutions. Nevertheless the question was still in the focus of the general philosophic interest. It became the bone of contention between Voltaire and Rousseau. Now all the arguments used in this contest were declared by Hegel to be obsolete. We need not seek an "excuse," a

9. Hegel, *Theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. H. Nohl (Tübingen, Mohr, 1907).

justification of physical and moral evil. Evil is not a merely accidental fact. It follows rather from the fundamental character, from the very *definition* of reality. To separate the positive and the negative pole of reality is arbitrary and superficial.

Nevertheless the old problem of a theodicy is not forgotten. On the contrary, Hegel is convinced that he was the first to see this problem in its true light. According to him we have to redefine the question: we have to discover, behind its religious and theological meaning, a more profound philosophic significance. This was the task to be performed in his philosophy of history. In general history is the development of Spirit in Time, as Nature is the development of Idea in Space.

It was for a while the fashion to profess admiration for the wisdom of God, as displayed in animals, plants, and isolated occurrences. But, if it be allowed that Providence manifests itself in such objects and forms of existence, why not also in Universal History? This is deemed too great a matter to be thus regarded. But divine wisdom, i.e. Reason, is one and the same in the great as in the little; and we must not imagine God to be too weak to exercise his wisdom on the grand scale. . . . Our mode of treating the subject is, in this aspect, a Theodicaea—a justification of the ways of God—which Leibnitz attempted metaphysically, in his method, i.e. in indefinite abstract categories—so that the ill that is found in the world may be comprehended, and the thinking Spirit reconciled with the fact of the existence of evil. Indeed, nowhere is such a harmonizing view more pressingly demanded than in universal history; and it can be attained only by recognizing the *positive* existence, in which that negative element is a subordinate and vanquished nullity.¹⁰

Hegel's opponents always declared this harmonization of history to be a mere falsification. They saw in it nothing but a shallow optimism. Hegel's philosophic

10. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, p. 16.

opposite, Schopenhauer, said that such an optimism is not only absurd but nefarious. This is, however, an obvious misconstruction of Hegel's view. Hegel never denied the evils, the miseries, the cruelties and crimes that are inherent in human history nor did he intend to minimize or exculpate these evils. In this regard he admitted all the arguments of pessimism. What we call happiness, he declares, belongs to the sphere of particular purposes. "He is happy who finds his condition suited to his special character, will, and fancy, and so enjoys himself in that condition. The history of the world is not the theatre of happiness. Periods of happiness are blank pages in it, for they are periods of harmony—periods when the antithesis is in abeyance."¹¹ Without this antithesis history becomes lifeless; it loses its meaning and its impulse. What we seek and what we enjoy in the history of mankind is not man's happiness, but his activity and energy.

The harmonization of the historical world that is promised is, therefore, quite different from all the previous attempts of a theodicy. It stresses rather than eliminates or removes the fact of physical and moral evil. It does not assert that the individual will, as such, can find its satisfaction in the objective world. Such a demand is declared to be an idle hope. Reality does not comply with our personal wishes or desires. It is made of a harder stuff, it follows its own inexorable law. If we seek the fulfilment of our own purposes in the real world the only consequence can be deep disappointment. We are then led to a complete estrangement between the subjective and the objective sphere. But the same estrangement appears, in a much more dangerous form, in another trend of thought. All the idealistic schools, from Plato up to Kant and Fichte, have given us the advice to flee from the real world to a

11. *Idem*, p. 28.

higher and more sublime order. They have constructed a moral order which is in strict opposition to our empirical world. "Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world or even out of it," said Kant, "which can be called good, without qualification, except a Good Will." But what does this "good" or "moral" will mean? It is no longer a particular but a universal will. But its universality remains entirely abstract. What we oppose here to the actual world, the world of human experience, is a formal moral demand. We look at the world not as it is, but as it ought to be. That seems to be a high and sublime conception. For here we are no longer concerned with our personal interests. We are ready to offer all these interests on the altar of duty. But when applied to the real world this moral altruism leads to the same disillusionment as the egoism of our private wishes. The course of the world constantly and inevitably frustrates our moral demands. Our consciousness does not accept this frustration; but instead of accusing ourselves, we accuse reality. And this estrangement from reality goes so far as to attack and destroy the actual order of things.

Hegel has described this destruction in a famous chapter of his *Phenomenology of Mind* entitled "The Law of the Heart and the Frenzy of Self-conceit." Obviously he is thinking here of the French Revolution that began with the highest moral ideals—of liberty, equality, and fraternity—and ended with the reign of terror. By the French Revolution the "law of the heart" was declared to be the supreme moral principle. But opposed to this principle stood a reality, a violent ordinance of the world which contradicted the law of the heart, and a humanity suffering under that ordinance. It became the first and principal task to attack this reality. "There is in consequence no longer here the frivolity of the former mode, which merely wanted some particular pleasure; it is the earnestness of a high

purpose that seeks its pleasure in displaying the excellence of its own true nature, and in bringing about the welfare of mankind. . . . The individual, then, fulfils, carries out the law of his heart. This law becomes a universal ordinance." But if we begin to enforce this law upon the actual world, if we try to carry our point, we meet with the strongest and fiercest resistance. We cannot overcome this resistance without abrogating the whole historical order of things. Thus the "law of the heart" instead of being a constructive principle, a principle that confirms and corroborates the true ethical order, becomes a destructive and subversive principle. The French Revolution has glorified this destruction. "The realization of the immediate undisciplined nature passes for a display of excellence and for bringing about the well-being of mankind." "When it gives expression to this moment of conscious destruction, . . . the law of the heart shows itself to be this inner perversion of itself, to be consciousness gone crazy, its own essence being at once not essence, its reality directly unreality."¹²

The reconciliation which Hegel attempted in his philosophy of history is quite a different type of thought. He accepts the given order of things; he sees in it the true ethical substance. He does not attempt to do away with the evils, the miseries, and the crimes of the historical world. All this is taken for granted. Nevertheless he undertakes to justify this hard and cruel reality. From the point of view of speculative thought it no longer appears as an accidental fact or as a dire necessity. It is not only "reasonable"; it is the very incarnation and actualization of reason. But by "reason" we must no longer understand the "practical reason" of Kant. It is not a mere abstract and formal principle, a moral demand like the Kantian categorical im-

12. *Phenomenology of Mind*, English trans., I, 359, 363.

perative. It is reason that lives in the historical world and organizes it. "The insight to which . . . philosophy is to lead us, is, that the real world is as it ought to be—that the truly good—the universal divine reason—is not a mere abstraction, but a vital principle capable of realizing itself. . . . Philosophy wishes to discover the substantial purport, the real side of the divine idea, and to justify the so much despised reality of things."¹³

But how could Hegel say that all philosophic thinkers before him had underrated the "substantial power" of reason? Were not most of them, Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz, and Kant, determined rationalists? And how could he charge the great religious thinkers—St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Pascal—with not having understood what "divine providence" really means? All this is understandable only if we bear in mind the specific tendency of Hegel's philosophy of religion and of his philosophy of history.

It is the synthesis, the correlation and mutual penetration of these two elements, of the historical and the religious, that was the principal theme of his philosophy. And he was convinced that he was the first to see this interdependence in its true light. From Plato to Kant the whole history of metaphysics was marked by a fundamental distinction between the "sensible" and the "intelligible" world. Philosophers did not agree about the relation of human knowledge to these two worlds. Plato was convinced that truth and reality are only to be found in the world of pure ideas or forms. In the phenomenal world we cannot find the truth; what we find here are only fugitive shadows. But Kant took the opposite view. He confines human knowledge within the limits of the empirical world. "The fundamental principle ruling all my idealism is this: All cog-

13. *Philosophy of History*, p. 38.

nition of things from mere pure Understanding and Reason is nothing but mere illusion and only in experience is there truth."¹⁴ But what was generally agreed, and what is common to all previous forms of philosophic idealism is that there is a demarcation which separates the *mundus sensibilis* from the *mundus intelligibilis*. This dualism had been the very basis of metaphysical thought.

It is true that there are great metaphysical thinkers whose systems are usually described as "monistic." Spinoza spoke of God not as a *causa transiens* but as a *causa immanens*. God is not beyond or outside Nature; God and Nature are one and the same. But even here the fundamental dualism of metaphysical thought is by no means overcome but only appears in a new shape. What we find in this Spinozistic God is, according to Hegel, only a lifeless unity. It is the rigid and abstract One that admits of no differences, of no change or variety. There remains a chasm, an insurmountable gulf between two different orders: the order of time and the order of eternity. In Spinoza's system time has no true reality. Since philosophic thought deals with reality, time is no proper subject of philosophy. It is only a mode of "imagination," not of philosophic thought or intuition. The idea of time is an "inadequate" idea. In his history of philosophy Hegel says that it is a misconception of the Spinozistic system to speak of it as a system of "atheism." What we find here is the very opposite. Spinoza did not deny the reality of God, but the reality of the world: we should call him an "acosmist" rather than an atheist. The reality of nature evaporates, so to speak, in Spinoza's thought. Nature has no longer a self-dependent meaning. It is absorbed by the abstract unity of God—

14. Kant, *Prolegomena*, *Kant's Critical Philosophy for English Readers*, trans. John P. Mahaffy and John H. Bernard (3d ed., London, Macmillan, 1915), II, 147.

by the Spinozistic substance that is in itself and is to be conceived by itself. Time is unsubstantial and unreal and unworthy of philosophic thought, for it is the fundamental characteristic of this thought to look at things under the form of eternity.

Christian philosophy seems to be fundamentally opposed to this abrogation and annihilation of time. The Christian religion is based upon the fundamental dogma of incarnation. But the incarnation of Christ is not a metaphysical but a historical fact. It is an event in time; it makes a sharp incision; it makes a new beginning in the life and destiny of mankind. Time can no longer, therefore, be regarded as a merely accidental thing; it is essential. All the great Christian thinkers had to face this problem. St. Augustine accepted the Platonic distinction between the sensible and the supra-sensible, the phenomenal and noumenal world. But in contradistinction to Plato and all the other philosophers of antiquity he had to add a new feature. He had to develop a philosophy of history in his *City of God*. He determined the relation between the eternal order and the temporal or secular order. He opposed the *civitas terrena* to the *civitas divina*; the visible worldly city to the invisible divine city. But even in St. Augustine the gulf that separates these two orders remains insuperable. There is no possible reconciliation between time and eternity. As regards the value of human history, the medieval dualism of the Christian thinkers since the time of St. Augustine, judged in quite the same way as Plato. All secular life is corrupt in its very principle; its redemption can only be brought about by its radical destruction which is the climax of the great historical and religious process. The estrangement between the divine and the temporal order cannot be removed by Christian thought; it is simply inevitable and incurable. Philosophy has to accept this fact. As Pascal emphasized, the Christian God will

always remain a stumbling block to all philosophers. He is impenetrable to philosophic thought; he is a hidden God wrapped in mystery.

Hegel undertook to reveal this mystery. What he presents in his philosophy of history is a paradox. It is a "Christian rationalism" and a "Christian optimism." Hegel was convinced that only by this attitude can the Christian religion be understood and interpreted in its positive instead of in its merely negative sense.

In the Christian religion God has revealed Himself—that is, He has given us to understand what He is; so that He is no longer a concealed or secret existence. And this possibility of knowing Him, thus afforded us, renders such knowledge a duty. . . . The time must eventually come for understanding that rich product of active Reason, which the History of the World offers to us.¹⁵

Now we understand the purport of Hegel's saying that what he intended to do in his philosophy of history was to justify the "despised reality." The Christian thinkers had made a sharp distinction between what they called the realm of nature and the realm of grace. Even Kant's political system starts from the opposition between the "realm of nature" and the "realm of ends." All this is rejected by Hegel. He does not accept this opposition. According to him, a true, a speculative view of history is enough to convince us of the artificiality of this division. In history the two factors of "time" and "eternity" are not separated the one from the other; they interpenetrate each other. Eternity does not transcend time; it is, on the contrary, to be found in time itself. Time is not only a scene of change; it contains a true substantiality. "It is the theme of philosophy to ascertain the substance which is immanent in the show of the temporal and transient, and the eternal which is present."¹⁶ Unlike Plato Hegel does

15. *Philosophy of History*, pp. 15 f.

16. *Philosophy of Right*, Preface. Dyde trans., p. xxvii.

not seek the "Idea" in a supercelestial space. He finds it in the actuality of man's social life and of his political struggles.

While we are thus concerned exclusively with the Idea of Spirit and in the History of the World regard everything as only its manifestation, we have, in traversing the past—however extensive its periods—only to do with what is *present*; for philosophy, as occupying itself with the True, has to do with the *eternally present*. Nothing in the past is lost for it, for the Idea is ever present; Spirit is immortal; with it there is no past, no future, but an essential *now*.¹⁷

From the very beginning Hegel had been accused of pantheism. All his theologian opponents charged him with it. This charge is not altogether unfounded; but it calls for an explanation and restriction. If "pantheism" means that all things are brought to the same level, that there are no intrinsic differences of being or value, neither Spinoza nor Hegel can be called a pantheist. In Spinoza's system there is a sharp and clear-cut distinction between the substance and its modes; between eternal and temporal, necessary and accidental things. The same holds for Hegel. He never identified reality with empirical existence. When his identification of the Real and the Rational was interpreted in this sense he regarded the interpretation as a complete misconstruction of his fundamental thought.

We must presuppose intelligence enough to know . . . that existence is in part mere appearance, and only in part reality. In common life, any freak of fancy, any error, evil and everything of the nature of evil, as well as every degenerate and transitory existence whatever, gets in a casual way the name of reality. But even our ordinary feelings are enough to forbid a fortuitous existence getting the name of a real; for by fortuitous we mean an existence which has no greater value than that of something possible which may as well not be as be. As for the term reality, these critics would have done well to consider the sense in which

17. *Philosophy of History*, p. 82.

I employ it. In a detailed logic I had treated amongst other things of reality, and accurately distinguished it not only from the fortuitous, which, after all, has existence; but even from the cognate categories of existence and other modifications of being.¹⁸

When speaking of Hegel's system we must, indeed, always bear in mind these logical distinctions. He distinguishes sharply between what he calls "reality" and what he calls *faule Existenz* (idle, worthless existence).¹⁹ That marks the peculiar type of his "pantheism." Hegel was no Spinozist; he never accepted the identification of God with nature. In Hegel's system nature has no independent being. It is not the Absolute; it is the "Idea in its otherness"—*Die Idee in ihrem Anderssein*.

Nature . . . is not to be deified; nor are the sun, the moon, animals, plants to be regarded as works of God rather than human deeds and events. Nature in itself, in its idea, is divine; but in its existence it does not conform to its notion. . . . Nature has, therefore, been described as the defecation of the Idea from itself—the idea being in this shape of externality inadequate to itself. . . . It gives way to accidentality and chance; it cannot in all its particular determination be penetrated by reason.²⁰

The true life of the Idea, of the Divine, begins in history. In Hegel's philosophy the Spinozistic formula *Deus sive natura* was converted into the formula *Deus sive historia*.

But this apotheosis does not apply to particular historical events; it applies to the historical process taken as a whole. "That this 'Idea' or 'Reason' is the True, the Eternal, the absolutely *powerful* essence; that it reveals itself in the world, and that in that world nothing else is revealed but this and its honour and glory—is the thesis which has been proved in philosophy, and is

18. *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, § 6.

19. *Philosophy of History*, p. 38.

20. *Encyclopedia*, § 248.

here regarded as demonstrated."²¹ Even previous philosophic or theological thinkers as for instance St. Augustine, Vico, or Herder had spoken of history as a divine revelation. But in the Hegelian system history is no mere appearance of God, but his reality: God not only "has" history, he *is* history.

HEGEL'S THEORY OF THE STATE

The conception of the state follows from that of history. To Hegel the state is not only a part, a special province, but the essence, the very core of historical life. It is the alpha and omega. Hegel denies that we can speak of historical life outside and before the state.

Nations may have passed a long life before arriving at this their destination, and during this period, they may have attained considerable culture in some directions. . . . But that apparently so extensive range of events lies beyond the pale of history. . . . But it is the State which first presents subject-matter that is not only *adapted* to the prose of history, but involves the production of such history in the very progress of its own being.²²

If *reality* must be defined in terms of history rather than in terms of nature, and if the state is the prerequisite of history, it follows that we have to see in the state the supreme and most perfect reality. No political theory before Hegel ever proposed this. To Hegel the state is not only the representative but the very incarnation of the "spirit of the world." While St. Augustine regarded the *civitas terrena* as a distortion and disfigurement of the *civitas divina*, Hegel saw in this *civitas terrena* the "Divine Idea as it exists on earth." This is an entirely new type of absolutism.

In order to carry his point Hegel had, however, to remove the obstacles created by previous political

theories. His fight against the Natural Right theories of the state began as early as 1802 in his treatise *Concerning the Scientific Modes of Treating Natural Right* and was continued in all his later works. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century it was the current opinion that the state originates in a contract. That such a contract is bound to certain conditions, to legal or moral restrictions, seemed to be a foregone conclusion. In order to avoid this difficulty Hegel had to take a very bold step. He had to change the very idea of "morality" that had prevailed for many centuries. He declared that this idea was merely a "subjective" conception which cannot lay claim to a true objective validity.

"Morality" in the sense in which it was understood by the previous ethical systems, as for instance by the systems of Kant or Fichte, pretends to be a universal law. "There is but one categorical imperative," says Kant, "namely, this: Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law." But this categorical imperative gives us only an abstract and formal law, a law that binds the individual will but is entirely powerless against the reality of things. In Kant's system the moral world, the realm of ends, is opposed to the natural world, the world of causes and effects. We can *postulate* a unity of these two worlds but we can never *prove* it—it remains a vain desire. *Fiat iustitia, pereat mundus*—is the maxim of this morality. In doing his duty the individual must negate the world and must destroy himself. For his moral nature is incompatible with his physical nature—his duty is in eternal conflict with his happiness.

The moral consciousness takes duty to be the essential reality. . . . But this moral consciousness, at the same time, finds before it the assumed freedom of nature: it learns by experience that nature is not concerned about giving con-

21. *Philosophy of History*, p. 10.

22. *Idem*, p. 62 f.

sciousness a sense of the unity of its reality with that of nature, and hence discovers that nature may let it become happy, but perhaps also may not. . . . It therefore finds reason for bewailing a situation where there is no correspondence between itself and existence, and lamenting the injustice which confines it to having its object merely in the form of pure duty but refuses to let it see this object and itself actually realized.²³

One of the principal aims of Hegel's theodicy is to do away with such idle lamentations. According to him they follow from a deep misunderstanding of what ethical reality is and means. We cannot find the true ethical order, the ethical "substance" in a mere formal law. It is expressed in a much higher sense, in actual and concrete reality, in the life of the state. "The State," says Hegel in his *System der Sittlichkeit*, in which he first introduces his sharp distinction between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*,²⁴ "is the self-certain absolute mind which acknowledges no abstract rules of good and bad, shameful and mean, craft and deception."

Here is, in a sense, a complete transvaluation of values, a reversal of all previous standards. According to this revaluation there is no longer any moral obligation for the state. Morality holds for the individual will, not for the universal will of the state. If there is any duty to the state it is the duty to preserve itself. "It is a generally acknowledged and well known principle," says Hegel in his treatise on the constitution of Germany,

that the particular interest of the State is the most important consideration. The State is the spirit that dwells in the

23. *Phenomenology of Mind*, English trans., II, 611 f.

24. English translations have tried various ways to express this distinction. Usually *Moralität* is rendered by "morality"; *Sittlichkeit* by "ethicality." See, for instance, J. M. Sterrett, *The Ethics of Hegel* (see above, p. 315, n. 5), p. 60.

world and realizes itself in the world through *consciousness*, while in nature the spirit actualizes itself only as the other of itself, as dormant spirit. . . . It is the course of God through the world that constitutes the State . . . When conceiving the State, one must not think of particular states, not of particular institutions, but one must much rather contemplate the *Idea*, God as actual on earth, alone.²⁵

In this respect Hegel's doctrine is not only in sharp contrast to all the previous theories of natural right but also to the romantic theories of the state. To be sure Hegel was deeply indebted to romanticism. He accepts some of its fundamental ideas. In his general conception of history and in his idea of the "national spirit" the influence of Herder and of the writers of early romanticism is obvious. But his politics is based upon entirely different principles. His connection with romantic thought is only a negative one. He rejects the "mechanical" theories, according to which the state is no more than an aggregate of individual wills, held together by the legal bonds of a social contract or a contract of submission. Like the romantic political writers Hegel insists that the state possesses an "organic" unity. In such an organism the whole is, according to the definition of Aristotle, "prior" to the parts. But as to the nature of this organic whole Hegel's view deviates from almost all the romantic writers. The very term "organic unity" cannot be used by him in the same sense as it was used by Schelling, the real philosopher of romanticism. Hegel's unity is a dialectic unity; a unity of contraries. It not only allows but even requires the strongest tensions and oppositions. From this point of view Hegel had to reject the esthetic ideals of Schelling or Novalis. Novalis had spoken of the state as a "beautiful individual." In his essay on

25. *Philosophy of Right*, § 258. Sterrett trans., p. 191; Dyde trans., pp. 244-247.

Christianity or Europe he had dreamed of a unity of all Christian nations under the guidance and authority of a universal, a really "catholic" church.²⁶ This ideal of political and religious peace was not the ideal of Hegel. According to him it is necessary to introduce into political thought what he calls "the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labour of the negative."²⁷

The negative role of political life is contained in the fact of war. To abolish or terminate war would be the death blow of political life. It is a mere utopianism to think that the conflicts between nations could ever be settled by legal means—by international courts of arbitration. There is no praetor who can judge of states, and the Kantian idea of an everlasting peace by a league of nations settling disputes and arranging discords by virtue of a power acknowledged by every single state would presuppose the unanimity of the states which always would rest upon particular independent wills and would, therefore, be highly contingent.²⁸ "Since states in their relation of self-subsistence are opposed to one another as particular wills and the validity of treaties depends on this, and since the content of the particular will of the state is its welfare, this particular welfare is the highest law in the relation of one state to another."²⁹

From his early youth Hegel had rejected all "humanitarian" ideals. He declared the "universal love of mankind" to be nothing more than an "insipid invention." Such a love that has no real concrete object is shallow and unnatural.³⁰ Much better to accept all the

26. See above, p. 232, n. 13.

27. *Phenomenology of Mind*, Preface, p. 17.

28. *Philosophy of Right*, § 333. Dyde trans., p. 338.

29. *Idem*, § 336. Dyde trans., p. 339.

30. Hegel, *Theologische Jugendschriften* (see above, p. 319, n. 9), pp. 295, 323.

inherent defects of real political life than to indulge in such vague generalities.

Every state, though it may be declared wretched according to somebody's principles, though this or that imperfection in it must be admitted—possesses always, if it belongs to the developed states of our times, the essential elements of its true existence. But since it is easier to discover faults than to understand positive characteristics, it is easy to fall into the error of overlooking the internal organism of the state itself in dwelling upon extrinsic phases of it. The state is no work of art; it exists in the world, and hence in the sphere of choice, accident, and error. Hence the evil behavior of its members can disfigure it in many ways. But the most deformed human being, the criminal, the invalid, and the cripple are still always living human beings: the affirmative, life, remains in spite of all defects, and here we have to do with this affirmative alone.³¹

Unlike Novalis, Hegel is not interested in the beauty of the state but in its "truth." And according to him this truth is not a moral one; it is rather "the truth which lies in power." "Men are as foolish as to forget . . . in their enthusiasm for liberty of conscience and political freedom, the truth which lies in power." These words written in 1801, about 150 years ago, contain the clearest and most ruthless program of fascism that has ever been propounded by any political or philosophic writer.

The same principle holds not only for the actions of nations and states, but also for those exceptional individuals who determine the course of the political world and are the real makers of history. They too are exempt from all moral demands. To measure their deeds by our conventional standards would be ridiculous. In Hegel's system the worship of the state is combined with hero worship. The greatness of a hero has nothing to do with his so-called "virtues." Since great-

31. *Philosophy of Right*, § 258. Sterrett trans., pp. 191 f.; Dyde trans., p. 247.

ness means power it is obvious that vice is just as great as virtue. An abstract moral view gives rise to that "psychological" interpretation of history which seeks to belittle all great deeds and heroes by reducing them to petty and mean psychological motives. "This is the view of psychological valets to whom no men are heroes, not because there are no heroes but because they themselves are only valets."³² Of such an interpretation of history Hegel always speaks with utter contempt.

To be sure he himself had no illusions about the motives of most of the great political actions. He never makes an attempt to "idealize" these motives. Here too he is far from a trivial optimism. He knows very well that personal ambitions not only have their share in all great political actions but that, in most cases, they are the real driving force. All this does not detract from their value but rather increases it. He who speaks of human passions in a disparaging tone blindfolds himself against the true character of the historical process. The power that puts all historical actions in operation and gives them determinate existence, is the need, instinct, inclination, and passion of man. This is the absolute right of personal existence, to find *itself* satisfied in its activity and labor.

We assert then that nothing has been accomplished without interest on the part of the actors and if interest be called passion we may affirm absolutely that nothing in the world great has been accomplished without *passion*. Two elements, therefore, enter into the object of our investigation; the first, the Idea, the second, the complex of human passions; the one the warp, the other the woof of the vast arras-web of Universal History.

By abstract moralists passion is regarded as a thing of sinister aspect, as more or less immoral. But here too

32. *Idem*, § 124. Sterrett trans., p. 113; Dyde trans., p. 120.

Hegel accepts Machiavelli's conception of *virtù*. "Virtue" means strength; and there is no stronger and more powerful motive in human life than the great passions. The Idea itself would not actualize itself without engaging all human passions.

The special interest of passion is thus inseparable from the active development of a general principle: for it is from the special and determinate and from its negation, that the Universal results. Particularity contends with its like, and some loss is involved in the issue. It is not the general idea that is implicated in opposition and combat, and that is exposed to danger. It remains in the background, untouched and uninjured. This may be called the *cunning of reason*—that it sets the passions to work for itself, while that which develops its existence through such impulsion pays the penalty, and suffers loss.³³

On this view of universal history Hegel abolishes the common distinction between "altruistic" and "egoistic" acts. Nietzsche's "immoralism" was no new feature; it was already anticipated in Hegel's system.

The first glance at History convinces us that the actions of men proceed from their needs, their passions, their characters, and talents; and impresses us with the belief that such needs, passions, and interests are the sole springs of action—the efficient agents in the scene of activity. Among these may, perhaps, be found aims of a liberal or universal kind—benevolence it may be, or noble patriotism; but such virtues and general views are but insignificant as compared with the World and its doings. . . . Passions, private aims, and the satisfaction of selfish desires are, on the other hand, most effective springs of action. Their power lies in the fact that they respect none of the limitations which justice and morality would impose on them; and that these natural impulses have a more direct influence over man than the artificial and tedious discipline that tends to order and self-restraint, law and morality.³⁴

Hegel was not afraid of egoism; he was the first philo-

33. *Philosophy of History*, p. 34.

34. *Idem*, p. 21.

sophic thinker who not only regarded it as an unavoidable evil but elevated it to the rank of an "ideal" principle. He introduced that concept of *sacro egoismo* which after him has played such a decisive and disastrous role in modern political life. It is true that after Hegel's times the emphasis was shifted. He himself regarded the individuals as marionettes in the great puppet show of universal history. According to him the author and the dramaturge of the historical drama is the "Idea": the individuals are nothing but the "agents of the world-spirit."³⁵ Later on, when Hegel's metaphysics had lost its influence and binding power, this conception was turned upside down: the "ideas" became the agents of the individuals who are the real "leaders."

Hegel's political theory is a watershed between two great streams of thought. It marks the turning point between two ages, two cultures, two ideologies. It stands on the border line between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hegel was firmly convinced that no individual thinker could go beyond his own time. "Philosophy is its time apprehended in thoughts. It is, therefore, just as foolish to fancy that any philosophy can transcend its present world, as that an individual could leap out of his time and jump over Rhodes." That is the most characteristic expression of the difference between the spirit of the Enlightenment and the new spirit of the nineteenth century. Neither the French Encyclopedists nor Kant were afraid to think *against* their own time. They had to combat the *ancien régime*; and they were convinced that in this struggle philosophy had its share as one of the most powerful weapons. But Hegel could no longer assign this role to philosophy. He had become the philosopher of *history*. History can be described and expressed but it cannot

35. *Idem*, p. 32.

be created or transformed by philosophic thought. Hegel's "historism" is the necessary correlate of his rationalism. The two illustrate and interpret each other. That is one of the greatest merits, but at the same time it is one of the essential limitations of Hegel's political theory. This theory seems to be the outcome and the culminating point of purely speculative thought. But amidst those speculations we always feel the pulse beat of actual political life. This gives to all the Hegelian concepts, notwithstanding their universality, their special color and aspect. Almost all the previous concepts undergo a profound change of meaning in his system. Every thinker of the eighteenth century could have subscribed to Hegel's definition of the history of the world as "progress in the consciousness of freedom." As a matter of fact it was not Hegel but Kant who had first given this definition.³⁶ But neither the term "freedom" nor the term "progress" nor even the term "consciousness" meant the same in the Kantian and in the Hegelian system.

What Hegel objected to in Kant and Fichte was that their idealism was only a "subjective" idealism. According to him such an idealism gives us a philosophy of reflection (*Reflexionsphilosophie*), not a philosophy of reality. Hegel's theory has been extolled and criticized as an outgrowth of "constructive" thought. But it was no longer constructive in the same sense as the systems of the eighteenth century. It was rather contemplative; it contented itself with an interpretation of the given historical reality. Kant had declared that the human understanding does not simply find the laws of nature, but that it is itself the source of the laws of nature; "the understanding does not draw its laws (*a priori*) from nature, but prescribes them to

36. See Kant's treatise *Ideen zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784), "Werke," ed. E. Cassirer, IV, 149 ff.

it.³⁷ The same principle holds for him in the field of ethical thought. Even here man does not simply submit to laws imposed upon him by the will of God or by any other authority. The will of every rational being is a "universally legislating will." A rational being obeys no law but that which he himself also gives.³⁸ With Fichte this autonomy of the will becomes also the highest metaphysical principle.

Hegel did not simply deny or abrogate the idealism of Kant and Fichte nor did he underrate the value of the political ideals of the French Revolution. In his youth he had been deeply impressed by them. When Hegel was still a student in the theological seminary in Tübingen and the first news of the French Revolution came to Germany, it was hailed with enthusiasm both by himself and by his friends Schelling and Hölderlin. Even later, when Hegel had become a sharp adversary of the Revolution, he never spoke of it as a professed enemy.

These general conceptions . . . —the Laws of Nature and the substance of what is right and good—have received the name of Reason. The recognition of the validity of these laws was designated by the term *Eclaircissement* (*Aufklärung*). From France it passed over into Germany, and created a new world of ideas. The absolute criterion—taking the place of all authority based on religious belief and positive laws of Right . . . —is the verdict passed by Spirit itself on the character of that which is to be believed or obeyed. . . . It may however be remarked that the same principle obtained speculative recognition in Germany, in the Kantian philosophy. . . . This is a vast discovery in regard to the profoundest depths of being and freedom. The consciousness of the Spiritual is now the essential basis of the political fabric, and Philosophy has thereby become dominant. It has been said that the

37. Kant, *Prolegomena*, § 36, cf. *Critique of Pure Reason* (1st ed.), p. 127.

38. See Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, English trans. T. K. Abbott (6th ed., London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1927), pp. 50 ff.

French Revolution resulted from philosophy, and it is not without reason that Philosophy has been called "Weltweisheit" (World Wisdom); for it is not only truth in and for itself, as the pure essence of things, but also truth in its living form as exhibited in the affairs of the world. . . . The conception, the idea of Right asserted its authority *all at once*, and the old framework of injustice could offer no resistance to its onslaught. A constitution, therefore, was established in harmony with the conception of Right, and on this foundation all future legislation was to be based. Never since the sun had stood in the firmament and the planets revolved around him had it been perceived that man's existence centres in his head, i.e. in Thought, inspired by which he builds up the world of reality. . . . This was accordingly a glorious mental dawn. All thinking beings shared in the jubilation of this epoch. Emotions of a lofty character stirred men's minds at that time; a spiritual enthusiasm thrilled through the world, as if the reconciliation between the Divine and the Secular was now first accomplished.³⁹

The man who could speak in this way was not simply a political reactionary. He had not only a deep insight into the true character of the French Revolution and of all the ideals of the Enlightenment but also a profound respect for them. Nevertheless he did not think these ideas to be an adequate means of organizing the social and political world.

What he objected to in Kant, Fichte, and the French Revolution was that the idea of freedom, enthroned and proclaimed by them, remained "merely formal." What does this "formality" mean? It means that thought, in finding and asserting itself, had, at the same time, lost touch with the real world. The real world is a historical world, and all that the French Revolution could do was to negate and destroy the historical order of things. Such an estrangement can never be deemed to be a true reconciliation between the "real" and the "rational." To design an ideal pic-

39. *Philosophy of History*, pp. 460-466.

ture of things, a mere "ought to be" over against the historical world cannot be the task of philosophy. Such an idealism would be vain and futile. Hegel professes an "objective" idealism, therefore, which does not look at ideas as if they were only haunting men's minds. He seeks them in reality, that is, in the course of historical events.⁴⁰

In the field of actual and practical politics this principle led to conclusions which sometimes seem to be very objectionable. Hegel could reconcile himself to almost everything—supposing it had proved its right by its power. When Napoleon in 1806, after the battle of Jena in which he had defeated the Prussian Army visited Jena, Hegel spoke of this event with the greatest enthusiasm. "I saw the emperor, this soul of the world," he wrote in one of his letters, "riding through the streets." Later on he judged quite differently. Napoleon was defeated and exiled; Prussia had become the predominant power in Germany. "The soul of the world" had shifted to another part of the political body. From now on Hegel became "the philosopher of the Prussian State"; when appointed to his professorship in Berlin he declared that the Prussian State is "based on intelligence."⁴¹

It would, however, be unjust to charge Hegel with a sheer political opportunism. He was no mere time server who trimmed his sails to the wind of the stronger party. As we pointed out, he always made a sharp distinction between what is "real" and what has only an "idle existence."⁴² But how can we apply this distinction to our political and historical life? How can

40. See *idem*, pp. 9 f.

41. See Hegel's Address to his audience at his inauguration in Berlin on October 22, 1818, in "Sämtliche Werke," VI, xxxv–xl, and in *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, ed. G. Lasson (2d ed. Leipzig, Felix Meiner, 1905), pp. lxxi–lxxvi.

42. See above, p. 329.

we know what is substantial or accidental, what is apparent and transitory or real and permanent in the human world? To this question the Hegelian system can only give one answer. The history of the world is the judgment of the world. There is no way left other than to apply to this highest tribunal, the judgment of which is infallible and irrevocable. Even the "national spirits" cannot escape this judgment.

The spirit of a nation is an existing individual, having in particularity its objective actuality and self-consciousness. Because of this particularity it is limited. The destinies and deeds of states in their connection with one another are the visible dialectic of the finite nature of these spirits. Out of this dialectic the universal spirit, the spirit of the world, the unlimited spirit produces itself. It has the highest right of all, and exercises its right upon the lower spirits in world-history. The history of the world is the world's court of judgment.⁴³

If we study the influence of Hegel's philosophy upon the subsequent development of political thought we find here a complete reversal of one of his fundamental views. In this respect Hegelianism is one of the most paradoxical phenomena in modern cultural life. There is perhaps no better and more striking example of the dialectical character of history than the fate of Hegelianism itself. The principle defended by Hegel is suddenly converted into its opposite. Hegel's logic and philosophy seemed to be the triumph of the rational. The only thought which philosophy brings with it is the simple conception of Reason; that the history of the world presents us with a rational process. But it was the tragic fate of Hegel that he unconsciously unchained the most irrational powers that have ever appeared in man's social and political life. No other philosophical system has done so much for the preparation of fascism and imperialism as Hegel's

43. *Philosophy of Right*, § 340. Dyde trans., p. 341.

doctrine of the state—this “divine Idea as it exists on earth.” Even the idea that, in every epoch of history, there is *one* and only one nation that is the real representation of the world spirit and that this nation has the right to rule all the others was first expressed by Hegel.

The world-spirit, in its onward march, hands over to each people the task of working out its own peculiar vocation. Thus in universal history each nation in turn is for that epoch (and it can make such an epoch only once) dominant. Against this absolute right to be the bearer of the present stage of the development of the world-spirit, the spirits of the other nations are absolutely without right, and they, as well as those whose epochs are passed, count no longer in universal history.⁴⁴

Never before had a philosopher of the rank of Hegel spoken in this way. In the first decades of the nineteenth century we find the rise and ever-increasing influence of nationalistic ideals. It was, however, a new event in the history of political thought, an event pregnant with far-reaching and fearful consequences, when a system of *Ethics* and a philosophy of *Right* defended such a ruthless imperialistic nationalism, when Hegel declared the spirits of other nations to be “absolutely without right” against the nation which, at a given historical moment, is to be regarded as the only “agent of the world-spirit.”

There is, however, one point in which the difference between Hegel's doctrine and modern theories of the totalitarian state becomes obvious. While it is true that Hegel exempted the state from all moral obligations and declared that the rules of morality lose their pretended universality when we proceed from the problems of private life and private conduct to the conduct of states, still there remain other bonds from which the

44. *Idem*, § 347. Sterrett trans., 209. Dyde trans., pp. 343 f.

state could not be released. In the Hegelian system the state belongs to the sphere of the “objective mind.” But this sphere is only one element or moment in the self-actualization of the Idea. In the dialectic process it is transcended by that other sphere which, in Hegel's language, is called the realm of the “Absolute Idea.” The Idea develops itself in three moments: Art, Religion, and Philosophy. It is clear that the state cannot treat these highest cultural goods as mere means for its own purposes. They are ends in themselves that have to be respected and furthered. It is true that they have no separate existence outside the state, for man cannot develop them without having organized his social life. Nevertheless these forms of cultural life have an independent meaning and value. They cannot be brought under a foreign jurisdiction. The state remains, as Hegel says, “on the territory of finitude.”⁴⁵ Hegel could not subordinate art, religion, and philosophy to it.

There exists then a higher sphere that stands above the objective mind embodied in the state which is conceived as a spiritual and, therefore, as a generous power. It should never attempt to suppress the other spiritual energies but should recognize them and set them free. “The highest aim that the state can attain is that art and science are cultivated and come to a height corresponding to the spirit of the people. That is the principal end of the state—but an end that it must not bring about as an external work but that must arise from itself.”⁴⁶

Hegel spoke not only of the power of the state but also of its “truth,” and he was a great admirer of “the truth that lies in power.” Nevertheless he did not con-

45. *Encyclopedia*, § 483.

46. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Georg Lasson, “Sämtliche Werke,” VIII-IX (Leipzig, F. Meiner, 1919-20), 628.

fuse this power with sheer physical force. He knew very well that a mere increase of material wealth and power is not to be regarded as a standard of the wealth and health of a state. In a passage of his *Greater Logic* he has emphasized this view. As he points out, the enlargement of the territory of a state may very often enfeeble or even dissolve its form and, therefore, become the beginning of its ruin.⁴⁷

Even in his treatise on the *Constitution of Germany* Hegel had emphasized that the strength of a country lies neither in the multitude of its inhabitants and fighting men nor in its size. The guarantee of a constitution lies rather "in the indwelling spirit and the history of the nation by which constitutions have been made and are made."⁴⁸ To make this indwelling spirit subservient to the will of a political party or of an individual leader was impossible to Hegel. In this respect he would have rejected and abhorred the modern conceptions of the "totalitarian" state.

And there is still another reason why Hegel never could subscribe to these views. One of the principal aims and fundamental conditions of the totalitarian state is the principle of *Gleichschaltung*. In order to subsist it has to eliminate all other forms of social and cultural life and efface all distinctions. According to Hegel such an elimination can never lead to a true, organic unity. Its result would only be that "abstract" unity which he incessantly denounced. A real unity does not erase or obliterate the differences; it must protect and preserve them. Though Hegel was strongly opposed to the ideals of the French Revolution he was convinced, nevertheless, that to abolish all distinctions in the social and political body, under the

47. *Science of Logic*. English trans. by W. H. Johnston and L. G. Struthers (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1929), I, 354.

48. *Encyclopedia*, § 540.

pretense of strengthening the power and unity of the state, would mean the very end of freedom. "The one essential canon to make liberty deep and real is to give every business belonging to the general interests of the state a separate organization wherever they are essentially distinct. Such real division must be: for liberty is only deep when it is differentiated in all its fullness and these differences manifested in existence."⁴⁹ Hegel could extol and glorify the state, he could even apotheosize it. There is, however, a clear and unmistakable difference between his idealization of the power of the state and that sort of idolization that is the characteristic of our modern totalitarian systems.

49. *Encyclopedia*, § 541.