An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy.[1])

By Herbert Marcuse.

I

German idealism has been called the theory of the French Revolution. This does not imply that Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel furnished a theoretical interpretation of the French Revolution, but that their philosophy was largely the German response to the challenge from France: to reorganize the State and Society on a rational basis so that social and political institutions might accord with the freedom and interest of the individual. Despite their bitter criticism of the Terror, the German idealists unanimously welcomed the French Revolution as the dawn of a new era, and linked their basic philosophical principles to the ideals advanced by that revolution.

The ideas of the French Revolution enter the very content of the idealistic concepts and, to a great extent, determine the philosophical structure of the idealistic systems. To the German idealists, the French Revolution not only abolished feudal absolutism and replaced it with the economic and political system of the middle class, but completed what the German Reformation had begun, emancipating the individual as a self-reliant master of his life. Man's position in the world, the mode of his labor and enjoyment, was no longer to depend on some external authority, but on his own free rational activity. Man had passed the long period of immaturity during which he was the victim of overwhelming natural and social forces, and had become the autonomous subject of his own development. From now on, the struggle with nature and with social organization was to be guided by his own progress in knowledge. The world was to be an order of reason.

The ideals of the French Revolution were materialized in the processes of industrial capitalism. Napoleon's empire, while consolidating its economic achievements, liquidated the radical tendencies of the revolution. To the French philosophers of this time

[1]) The author wishes to thank the Oxford University Press, New York, for permission to print this introduction to his forthcoming book "Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory."

the realization of reason came to mean the liberation of industry. Expanding industrial production seemed capable of providing all the necessary means to gratify human wants. Thus, at the same time that Hegel was elaborating his system, Saint-Simon in France was exalting the industry as the sole power which could lead mankind to a free and rational society. The economic process appeared as the foundation of all progress.

Economic development in Germany lagged far behind that in France and England. The German middle class, weak and scattered over numerous territories with divergent interests, could hardly contemplate a revolution. The few industrial enterprises that existed were but small islands within a protracted feudal economy. A strong and centralized State power, such as was exemplified in the Prussian monarchy, seemed the only guarantor of rationality in the midst of disunity and arbitrariness. The individual in his social existence was either the enslaved or the enslaver of his fellow individuals. As a thinking being, however, he could at least comprehend the contrast between the miserable reality and the human potentialities which the new epoch had emancipated, and as a moral person, he could in his private life at least preserve human dignity and autonomy. Thus, while the French Revolution had already begun to assert the reality of freedom, German idealism was first occupying itself with the idea of it. The concrete historical efforts to establish a rational form of society were here transposed to the philosophical plane and appeared in the efforts to elaborate the notion of Reason.

The concept of Reason is central to Hegel's philosophy. For Hegel, philosophical thinking presupposes nothing beyond it. History deals with Reason and with Reason alone, and the State is the realization of Reason. These statements will not be understandable, however, so long as Reason is interpreted as a pure philosophical concept. Hegel's idea of Reason preserves, in an idealistic form, the revolutionary attempts to attain a free and rational order of life. Robespierre's deification of Reason as the "Etre Suprème" is the counterpart to the glorification of Reason in Hegel's system. The core of Hegel's philosophy is a structure the concepts of which, Freedom, Subject, Mind, Notion are derived from the idea of Reason. All of them contain elements of that ideology with which the French middle class justified its action. Unless we succeed in unfolding the concrete content of these concepts and their intrinsic interconnections, Hegel's system will seem to be obscure metaphysics, which it in fact never was.

Hegel himself related his concept of reason to the French Revolution, and did so with the greatest of emphasis. That revolution had demanded that "nothing should be recognized as valid in the organi-

zation of the State (in the constitution) except what has to be recognized according to reason's right."[1])

Hegel further elaborates this idea in his lectures on the philosophy of history: "Never since the sun had stood in the firmament and the planets revolved around it 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. Anaxagoras was the first to say that Nous governs the World; but not until now has man advanced to the recognition of the principle that Thought ought to govern spiritual reality. This was accordingly a glorious mental dawn. All thinking beings shared in the jubilation of this epoch."[2])

In Hegel's view, the decisive turn which history took with the French Revolution was that man came to rely on his mind, and dared to submit the given reality to the standards of reason. "Nothing is reason that is not the result of thinking." Man has set out to organize reality according to the demands of his free rational thinking, instead of simply accommodating his thoughts to the given reality and living according to prevailing empirical values. Man is a thinking being. His reason enables him to recognize his own potentialities and those of his world. He is thus not at the mercy of the facts which surround him, but capable of subjecting them to his reason. If he follows its lead, he arrives at certain concepts which comprehend reality as antagonistic to the actual state of affairs. For example, reason finds that freedom belongs to the essence of man, that his individuality requires a sphere of private property as the medium of his fulfillment, and that all men have an equal right to develop their human faculties. Actually, however, bondage and inequality prevail, most men have no liberty at all and are deprived of their last scrap of property. Consequently the "unreasonable" reality has to be altered until it comes into conformity with reason. In the given case, the existing social order has to be reorganized, absolutism and the remainders of feudalism have to be abolished, free competition has to be established, everyone has to be made equal before the law, and so on.

According to Hegel, the French Revolution enunciated reason's ultimate power over reality. He sums this up by saying that the principle of the French Revolution asserted that thought ought to govern reality. The implications involved in this statement lead into the very center of his philosophy. Thought ought to govern reality. What men think to be true, right and good ought to be realized in the actual organization of their societal and individual life. Thinking,

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[1]) *Ueber die Verhandlung der wuerttembergischen Landstaende, Saemtliche Werke,* ed. H. Glockner, Stuttgart 1927, vol. VI, p. 395.

[2]) *Philosophy of History,* transl. by J. Silbree; London 1899, p. 447.

however, varies among individuals, and the resulting diversity of individual opinions cannot provide a guiding principle for the common organization of life. Unless man possesses concepts and principles of thought which denote universally valid conditions and norms, his thought cannot claim to govern reality. In line with the tradition of Western philosophy, Hegel calls the totality of these concepts and principles Reason. The philosophies of the French enlightenment and their revolutionary successors, all posited reason as an objective historical force which, once freed from the fetters of despotism, would make the world a place of progress and happiness for all. By virtue of its own power, reason would triumph over social irrationality, and overthrow the oppressors of mankind. "All fictions disappear before truth, and all follies fall before reason."[1]) The implication, however, that reason will immediately reveal itself in practice is a dogma unsupported by the course of history. Hegel believed in the invincible power of reason as much as Robespierre did. "That faculty which man can call his own, elevated above death and decay, . . . is able to make decisions of itself. It announces itself as reason. Its law-making depends on nothing else, nor can it take its standards from any other authority on earth or in heaven."[2]) To Hegel, however, reason cannot govern reality unless reality is in itself rational. He consequently sets out to demonstrate that reality is adaptable to reason by virtue of the fact that the very structure of the universe is rational. His entire philosophy is an attempt to prove and to verify this assumption. It is founded on a dynamic conception of reality. Reality is a process in which everything passes from one form or stage of existence to another one and constitutes itself as a unity in this movement. It is this conception which Hegel summarizes in his statement that Being is, in its substance, a "subject."[3]) This idea of the "substance as subject," fundamental in Hegel's ontology, is implied in his notion of reason. "Subject" denotes not the epistemological ego or consciousness, but a mode of existence, to wit, that of a developing unity in a process of continuous change. Everything that exists is a real thing only insofar as it operates as a "self" through all its contingent conditions of being. It must thus be considered a kind of "subject" which wields power over its own existence. Its reality lies in the fact that it carries forward its existence in the different states and stages that it attains. For example, the stone is a stone only insofar as it remains the same thing, a stone, throughout

[1]) Robespierre in his report on the cult of the Être suprême, quoted by A. Mathiez, *Autour de Robespierre*, Paris 1926, p. 112.
[2]) Hegel, *Theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. H. Nohl, Tübingen 1907, p. 89.
[3]) *Phenomenology of Mind*, transl. by J. B. Baillie, London 1910, p. 15.

its action and reaction upon the things and processes that interact with it. It gets wet in the rain; it resists the axe; it withstands a certain load before it gives way. Being-a-stone is a continuous holding out against everything that acts on the stone; it is a continuous process of becoming and being a stone. To be sure, the "becoming" is not consummated by the stone as a conscious subject. The stone is changed in its interactions with rain, axe, and load; it does not change itself. A plant, on the other hand, unfolds and develops itself. It is not now a bud, then a blossom, but rather the whole movement from bud through blossom to decay. The plant constitutes and preserves itself in this movement. It comes much nearer to being an actual "subject" than does the stone, for the various stages of the plant's development grow out of the plant itself; they are its "life" and are not brought about from the outside.

The plant, however, does not "comprehend" this development. It does not "realize" it as its own and, therefore, cannot reason its own potentialities into being. Such "realization" is the process of the true subject and is reached only with the existence of man. Man alone has the power of self-realization, the power to be a self-determining subject in all processes of becoming, for he alone has an understanding of potentialities and a knowledge of "notions." His very existence is the process of actualizing his potentialities, of molding his life according to the notions of reason. We encounter here the most important category of reason, namely, freedom. Reason presupposes freedom, the power to act in accordance with the knowledge of the truth, the power to shape reality in line with its potentialities. The fulfillment of these ends belongs only to the subject who is master of his own development and who understands his own potentialities as well as those of the things around him. Freedom, in turn, presupposes reason, for it is comprehending knowledge alone which enables the subject to gain and to wield this power. The stone does not possess it; neither does the plant. Both lack comprehending knowledge and hence real subjectivity. "Man, however, knows what he is,—only thus is he real—Reason and freedom are nothing without this knowledge."[1])

Reason terminates in freedom, and freedom is the very existence of the subject. On the other hand, reason itself exists only through its realization, the process of its being made real. Reality answers to reason only because there is subjectivity in the world, in other words, that which by its very existence carries reason into the world. Reason is an objective force, and an objective reality only because all modes

[1]) *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. J. Hoffmeister, Leipzig 1938, p. 104.

of being are more or less modes of subjectivity, modes of realization. Subject and object are not sundered by an unbridgeable gap, because the object is in itself a kind of subject and because all types of being culminate in the free "comprehensive" being of man who is able to realize reason. Nature becomes a medium for the development of freedom in the history of mankind.

The life of reason constitutes man's continuous struggle to comprehend what exists and to transform it in accordance with the truth comprehended. Reason, then, is essentially a historical force. Its fulfillment takes place as a process in the spatio-temporal world, and is, in the last analysis, the whole history of mankind. The term that designates reason as history is Mind (*Geist*). Mind denotes the historical world viewed in relation to the rational progress of humanity,—the historical world not as a chain of acts and events but as a ceaseless struggle to adapt the world to the growing potentialities of mankind.

History is organized into different periods, each marking a separate level of development, each representing a definite stage in the realization of reason. Each stage is to be grasped and understood through the prevailing ways of thinking and living which characterize it, through its political and social institutions, its science, or religion and philosophy. Different stages occur in the realization of reason, but there is only one reason, just as there is only one whole and one truth: the reality of freedom. "This final goal it is, at which the process of the world's history has been continually aiming, and to which the sacrifices that have ever and anon been laid on the vast altar of the earth, through the long lapse of ages, have been offered. This is the only final aim that realizes and fulfills itself; the only pole of repose amid the ceaseless chain of events and conditions, and the sole true reality in them."[1]) An immediate unity of reason and reality never exists. The unity comes only after a lengthy process, which begins at the lowest level of nature and reaches up to the highest historical existence, that of a free and rational mankind, living and acting in the selfconsciousness of its potentialities. As long as there is any gap between real and potential, the former must be acted upon and changed until it is brought into line with reason. As long as reality is not shaped by reason, it remains no reality at all, in the emphatic sense of the word. Thus reality changes its meaning within the conceptual structure of Hegel's system. "Real" comes to mean not everything that actually exists (this should rather be called appearance) but that which exists in a form concordant with the

[1]) *Philosophy of History*, loc. cit., pp. 19-20.

standards of reason. "Real" is the reasonable (rational), and that alone. For example, the State becomes a reality only when it corresponds to the given potentialities of men and permits their full development. Any preliminary form of the State is not yet reasonable, and, therefore, not yet real.

Hegel's concept of reason thus has a distinctly critical and polemic character. It is opposed to all ready acceptance of the given state of affairs. It contradicts every prevailing form of existence, destroys its claim to be true, and overrules it by passing to a higher form. We shall attempt to show that the "spirit of contradicting" is the driving motive of Hegel's dialectical method.[1])

In 1793, Hegel wrote to Schelling: "Reason and freedom remain our principles." In his early writings, no gap exists between the philosophical and the social meaning of these principles; which are expressed in the same revolutionary language the French Jacobins used. For example, Hegel says the significance of his time lies in the fact that "the halo which has surrounded the leading oppressors and gods of the earth has disappeared. Philosophers demonstrate the dignity of man; the people will learn to feel it and will not merely demand their rights, which have been trampled in the dust, but will themselves take them,—make them their own. Religion and politics have played the same game. The former has taught what despotism wanted to teach, contempt for humanity and the incapacity of man to achieve the good and to fulfill his essence through his own efforts."[2]) We even encounter more extreme statements which urge that the realization of reason requires a social scheme that countervenes the given order. In the *Erstes Systemprogramm des Deutschen Idealismus*, written in 1796, we find the following: "I shall demonstrate that, just as there is no idea of a machine, there is no idea of the State, for the State is something mechanical. Only that which is an object of freedom may be called an idea. We must, therefore, transcend the State. For every State is bound to treat free men as cogs in a machine. And this is precisely what it should not do; hence, the State must perish."[3])

However, the radical purport of the basic idealistic concepts is slowly relinquished and they are to an ever increasing extent made to fit in with the prevailing societal form. This process is, as we shall see, necessitated by the conceptual structure of idealism, which retains the decisive principles of liberalistic society and prevents any

[1]) Hegel himself once characterized the essence of his dialectic as the "spirit of contradicting" (Eckermann, *Gespraeche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, October 18, 1827).

[2]) Hegel, Letter to Schelling, April 1795.

[3]) *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, ed. J. Hoffmeister, Stuttgart 1936, p. 219f.

crossing beyond it. The particular form, however, which the reconciliation between philosophy and reality assumed in Hegel's system, is determined by the actual situation of Germany in the period when he elaborated his system. Hegel's early philosophical concepts were formulated amid a decaying German Reich. As Hegel declared at the opening of his pamphlet on the German Constitution (1802), the German State of the last decade of the XVIIIth century was "no longer a State." The remains of feudal despotism still held sway in Germany, the more oppressive because split into a multitude of petty despotisms, each competing with the other. The Reich "consisted of Austria and Prussia, the Prince-Electors, 94 ecclesiastical and secular princes, 103 barons, 40 prelates, and 51 Reich towns; in sum, it consisted of nearly 300 territories." The Reich itself "possessed not a single soldier, its yearly income amounting to only a few thousand florins." There was no centralized jurisdiction; the Supreme Court (*Reichskammergericht*) was a breeding ground "for graft, caprice, and bribery."[1]) Serfdom was still prevalent, the peasant was still a beast of burden. Some princes still hired out or sold their subjects as mercenary soldiers to foreign countries. Strong censorship operated to repress the slightest traces of enlightenment.[2]) A contemporary depicts the current scene in the following words. "Without law and justice, without protection from arbitrary taxation, uncertain of the lives of our sons, and of our freedom and our rights, the impotent prey of despotic power, our existence lacking unity and a national spirit . . .—this is the status quo of our nation."[3])

In sharp contrast to France, Germany had no strong, conscious, politically educated middle class to lead the struggle against this absolutism. "Hardly anyone in Germany," remarked Goethe, "thought of envying this tremendous privileged mass, or of begrudging them their happy advantages."[4]) The urban middle class, distributed among numerous townships, each with its own government and its own local interests, was impotent to crystallize and effectuate any serious opposition. To be sure, there were conflicts between the ruling patricians and the guilds and artisans. But these nowhere reached the proportions of a revolutionary movement. Burghers accompanied their petitions and complaints with a prayer that God protect the Fatherland from "the terror of revolution."[5])

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[1]) Th. Perthes, *Das Deutsche Staatsleben vor der Revolution*, Hamburg 1845, pp. 19, 34, 41.—See also W. Wenck, *Deutschland vor hundert Jahren*, Leipzig 1887.

[2]) K. T. v.Heigel, *Deutsche Geschichte vom Tode Friedrichs des Grossen bis zur Auflösung des alten Reichs.* Stuttgart 1899 ff., vol. 1, p. 77.

[3]) J. Müller, in v. Heigel, l. c., p. 115.

[4]) *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in: *Werke, Cottasche Jubiläumsausgabe*, vol. 22, p. 51.

[5]) v. Heigel, loc. cit., pp. 305-6.

Since the German Reformation, the masses had become used to the fact that, for them, liberty was an "inner value" which was compatible with every form of bondage, that due obedience to existing authority was a prerequisite to everlasting salvation, and that toil and poverty were a blessing in the eyes of the Lord. A long process of disciplinary training had introverted the demands for freedom and reason in Germany. One of the decisive functions of Protestantism had been to induce the emancipated individuals to accept the new social system that arose with it by diverting their claims and demands from the external world into their inner life. Luther established Christian liberty as an internal value to be realized independently of any and all external conditions. Social reality became indifferent as far as the true essence of man was concerned. Man learned to "turn within" his demand for the satisfaction of his potentialities and "to seek within" himself, not in the outer world, his life's fulfillment.[1]) The rise of German *culture* is inseparable from its origin in Protestantism. There arose a realm of beauty, freedom, and morality, which was not to be shaken by external realities and struggles; it was detached from the miserable social world and anchored in the "soul" of the individual. This development is the source of a widely visible tendency in German idealism: its character of resignation to and reconciliation with social reality. We have already mentioned its critical rationalism; this tendency and its reconciliatory introversion constantly conflict with each other. Ultimately, the ideal with its critical aspects set forth, a rational political and social reorganization of the world, becomes frustrated and is incorporated into the existing order. The world of culture is the sphere through which this renunciation is fully exercised. Cultural values triumph over material circumstances.

The "educated" classes isolated themselves from practical affairs and, thus rendering themselves impotent to apply their reason to the reshaping of society, fulfilled themselves in a realm of science, art, philosophy and religion. That realm became for them the "true reality" transcending the wretchedness of existing social conditions; it was alike the refuge for truth, goodness, beauty, happiness and, most important, for a critical temper which could not be turned into social channels. Culture was, then, essentially idealistic, occupied with the *idea* of things rather than with the things themselves. It set freedom *of thought* before freedom *of action*, morality before practical justice, the inner life before the social life of man. This ideal-

[1]) See *Studien über Autorität und Familie. Forschungsberichte aus dem Institut für Sozialforschung*, Paris 1936, p. 136 ff. and *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, vol. V, Paris 1936, p. 188 et seq.

istic culture, however, just because it stood aloof from an intolerable reality and thereby maintained itself intact and unsullied, served, despite its false consolations and glorifications, as the repository for truths which had not been realized in the history of mankind.

Hegel's system is the last great expression of this cultural idealism, the last great attempt to render thought a refuge for reason and liberty. The original critical impulse of his thinking, however, was strong enough to induce him to abandon the traditional aloofness of idealism from history. He made philosophy a concrete historical factor and drew history into philosophy. History, however, when comprehended, shatters the idealistic framework. Hegel's system is necessarily associated with a definite political philosophy, and with a definite social and political order. The dialectic of Civil Society and the state of the Restoration are not incidental in Hegel's philosophy, nor are they just a part of his Philosophy of Right; their principles already operate in the basic conceptual structure of Hegel's system. His basic concepts are, on the other hand, but the culmination of the entire tradition of Western thought. They become understandable only when interpreted within this tradition.

We have thus far attempted in brief compass to place the Hegelian concepts in their concrete historical setting. It remains for us to trace the starting point of Hegel's system to its sources in the philosophical situation of his time.

II

German idealism rescued philosophy from the attack of British empiricism, and the struggle between the two became not merely a clash of different philosophical schools, but a struggle for philosophy as such. Philosophy had never ceased to claim the right to guide man's efforts toward a rational mastery of nature and society, nor to base this claim upon the fact that philosophy elaborated the highest and most general concepts for knowing the world. With Descartes, the practical bearing of philosophy assumed a new form. He announced a "practical philosophy by means of which, knowing the force and the action of fire, water, air, the stars, heavens and all other bodies that environ us . . . we can employ them in all those uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature."[1]) The achievement of this task was, to an ever increasing extent, bound up with the establishment of universally valid laws and concepts in knowledge. Rational mastery of

[1]) Discourse on Method, part VI, in: *Philosophical Works*, ed. by E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, Cambridge 1931, vol. I, p. 119.

nature and society presupposes knowledge of the truth, and the truth is a universal as contrasted to the multifold appearance of things or to their immediate form in the perception of individuals. The same conviction motivated the earliest attempts of Greek epistemology. The truth is universal and necessary, and thus contradicts the ordinary experience of change and accidence. This conception that the truth is antagonistic to the matters of fact of existence and independent of contingent individuals, has run through the entire historical epoch in which man's social existence has been characterized by the antagonisms of conflicting individuals and groups. The universal has been "hypostatized" as a philosophical reaction to the historical fact that, in society, the common interest is asserted only "behind the back of" the individual. When, in modern society, the demand was raised that an appropriate social order must be brought about through the knowledge and activity of emancipated individuals, the contrast between universal and individual took on an aggravated form. It was supposed that all men were free and equal, but in acting according to their knowledge and in the pursuit of their interest, they created and experienced an order of oppression, injustice and recurring crises. The general competition between free economic subjects did not permit a rational community which might safeguard and gratify the wants and desires of all men. The life of society was surrendered to the economic mechanisms of commodity production which opposed individuals to one another as isolated buyers and sellers of labor-power. This actual lack of a rational community was responsible for the philosophical quest for the unity (*Einheit*) and universality (*Allgemeinheit*) of reason.

Does the structure of individual reasoning (the subjectivity) yield any general laws and concepts which might constitute universal standards of rationality? Can a universal rational order be built upon the autonomy of the individual? In expanding on an affirmative answer to these questions, the epistemology of German idealism aimed at a unifying principle that would preserve the basic ideals of individualistic society without falling victim to its antagonism. The English empiricists had demonstrated that not a single concept or law in knowledge could lay claim to universality, that the unity of reason is but the unity of custom or habit, adhering to the facts but never governing them. According to the German idealists, this attack jeopardized all efforts to impose an order on the prevailing forms of life. Unity and universality were not to be found in empirical reality; they were not given facts. Moreover, the very structure of this reality seemed to warrant the assumption that they could never be derived from the given facts. If men did

not succeed, however, in creating unity and universality through their autonomous reason and even in contradiction to the facts, not only theoretical truth but man's concrete existence itself would have to be surrendered to the blind pressures and processes of the prevailing empirical order of life, and the implications of this were not simply philosophical but concerned the historical destiny of humanity. Within German idealism, the latter implication of epistemology appears in the connection between theoretical and practical reason, a connection shared by all the systems of German idealism. There is a necessary transition from Kant's analysis of the transcendental consciousness to his demand for the community of a *Weltbürgerreich*, from Fichte's concept of the pure Ego to his construction of a totally unified and regulated society (*der geschlossene Handelsstaat*), and from Hegel's Idea of Reason to his designation of the State as the union of the common and the individual interest, and thus as the realization of Reason.

The idealistic counter-attack was provoked not by the empiricist approaches of Locke and Hume, but by their destruction of the principle that reason is universal and necessary. Philosophy was threatened not by the empiricist insistence that "observation and experiment" was the sole basis of science and philosophy, but by its refutation of general ideas. We have attempted to show that reason's right to shape reality depended upon man's ability to hold generally valid truths. Reason could lead beyond the brute fact of what is, to the realization of what ought to be only by virtue of the universality and necessity of its concepts (which in turn are the criteria of its truth). These concepts the empiricists denied. General ideas, said Locke, are "the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for its own use, and concern only signs. . . . When therefore we quit particulars, the generals that rest are only the creatures of our own making. . . ."[1]) For Hume, general ideas are abstracted from the particular, and "represent" the particular and the particular only.[2]) They can never provide universal rules or principles. If we do possess such principles, they derive from other sources. If Hume was to be accepted, the claim of reason to organize reality had to be rejected. For as we have seen, this claim was based upon reason's faculty to attain truths, the validity of which was not derived from experience and which could in fact stand against experience.

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[1]) "Essay Concerning Human Understanding" Book III, ch. 3, sec. ii., in: *Philosophical Works*, ed. J. A. St. John, London 1903, vol. II, p. 14.

[2]) *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part I, Section VII. ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford 1928, p. 17 ff.

" 'Tis not . . . reason, which is the guide of life, but custom."[1]) This conclusion of the empiricist investigations did more than undermine metaphysics. It confined men within the limits of "the given," within the existing order of things and events. Whence could man obtain the right to go beyond not some particular within this order, but beyond the entire order itself? Whence could he obtain the right to submit this order to the judgment of reason? If experience and custom were to be the sole source of his knowledge and belief, how could he act against custom, how act in accordance with ideas and principles as yet not accepted and established? Truth could not oppose the given order nor reason speak against it. The result was not only skepticism but conformism. The empiricist restriction of human nature to knowledge of "the given" removed the desire both to transcend the given and to despair about it. "For nothing is more certain, than that despair has almost the same effect upon us as enjoyment, and that we are no sooner acquainted with the impossibility of satisfying any desire, than the desire itself vanishes. When we see, that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented."[2])

The German idealists regarded this philosophy as expressing the abdication of reason. Attributing the existence of general ideas to the force of custom, and the principles by which reality is understood, to psychological mechanisms, was, to them, tantamount to a denial of truth and reason. Human psychology, they saw, is subject to change, is, in fact, a domain of uncertainty and chance from which no necessity and universality could be derived. And yet, such necessity and universality were the sole guarantee of reason. Unless, the idealists declared, the general concepts which claimed such necessity and universality could be shown to be more than the product of imagination, could be shown to draw their validity neither from experience nor from individual psychology, unless, in other words, they were shown applicable to experience without arising from experience, reason would have to bow to the dictates of the empirical teaching. And if cognition by reason, that is, by concepts that are not derived from experience, means metaphysics, then the attack upon metaphysics was at the same time an attack upon the conditions of human freedom, for the right of reason to guide experience was a proper part of these conditions.

Furthermore, Hume's doctrine threatened to destroy the very

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[1]) Hume, *An Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature*, published for the first time in 1938, Cambridge University Press, p. 16.

[2]) Hume, *Treatise*, loc. cit., Introduction, p. XXII.

basis of science. According to him, experience yields no facts or connexities which might justify necessary and universal judgments. But the fact remains that such judgments are formed and that they do yield real knowledge. At least two sciences, the idealists contended, are predicated on the possibility of universal necessary judgments: mathematics and physics. Unless these are unsound in their foundations, they must derive the validity of their judgments from a source other than experience. Hume had thus attacked not only metaphysics but the entire structure of the exact sciences.

Kant adopted the view of the empiricist that all human knowledge begins with and terminates in experience, that experience alone provides *the material* for the concepts of reason. There is no stronger empiricist statement than that which opens his Critique of Pure Reason. "All thought must, directly or indirectly, . . . relate ultimately to intuitions, and therefore, with us, to sensibility, because in no other way can an object be given to us." Kant maintains, however, that the empiricists had failed to demonstrate that experience also furnishes the means and modes by which this empirical material is organized. If it could be shown that these principles of organization were the genuine possession of the human mind and did not arise from experience, then the independence and freedom of reason would be saved. Experience itself would become the product of reason, for it would then not be the disordered manifold of sensations and impressions but the comprehensive organization of these. Kant set out to prove that the human mind possessed the universal "forms" which organized the manifold of data furnished to it by the senses. The forms of "intuition" (space and time) and the forms of "understanding" (the categories) are the universals through which the mind orders the sense manifold into the continuum of experience. They are *a priori* to each and every sensation and impression, so that we "get" and arrange impressions under these forms. Experience presents a necessary and universal order only by virtue of the *a priori* activity of the human mind which perceives all things and events in the form of space and time and comprehends them under the categories of unity, reality, substantiality, causality, and so on. These forms and categories are not derived from experience, for, as Hume had pointed out, no impression or sensation can be found which corresponds to them; yet experience, as an organized continuum, originates in them. They are universally valid and applicable because they constitute the very structure of the human mind. The world of objects, as a universal and necessary order, is produced by the subject,—not by the individual, but by those acts of intuition and understanding that are common to all individuals since

they constitute the very conditions of experience.

This common structure of the mind Kant designates as "transcendental consciousness." It consists of the forms of intuition and of understanding, which, in Kant's analysis, are not static frames but forms of operation that exist only in the act of apprehending and comprehending. They are the *a priori* principles which organize the data of sense into universal connections, yielding the synthetic unity of experience. The transcendental forms of intuition or outer sense synthesize the manifold of sense data into a spatio-temporal order. By virtue of the categories, the results of this are brought into the universal and necessary relations of cause and effect, substance, reciprocity, and so on. And this entire complex is unified in the "transcendental apperception" which relates all experience to the thinking ego, thereby giving experience the continuity of being "my" experience. These processes of synthesis, *a priori* and common to all minds, hence universal, are interdependent and are brought to bear in toto in every act of knowledge.

What Kant calls the "highest" synthesis, that of transcendental apperception, is the experience of an "I think" which accompanies every experience. Through it, the thinking ego knows itself as continuous, present, and active throughout the series of its experiences. The transcendental apperception therefore, is the ultimate basis for the unity of the subject and, hence, for the universality and necessity of all the objective relations.

Transcendental consciousness depends on the material received through the senses. The multitude of these impressions, however, becomes an organized world of coherent objects and relations only through the operations of transcendental consciousness. Since, then, we know the impressions only in the context of the a priori forms of the mind, we cannot know how or what the "things-in-themselves" are that give rise to the impressions. These things-in-themselves, presumed to exist outside of the forms of the mind, remain completely unknowable.

Hegel regarded this skeptical element of Kant's philosophy as vitiating to his attempt to rescue reason from the empiricist onslaught. As long as the things-in-themselves were beyond the capacity of reason, reason remained a mere subjective principle without power over the objective structure of reality. And the world thus fell into two separate parts, subjectivity and objectivity, understanding and sense, thought and existence. This separation was not primarily an epistemological problem for Hegel. Time and again he stressed that the relation between subject and object, their opposition, denoted a concrete conflict in existence, and that its solution, the union of the

opposites, was a matter of practice as well as of theory. Later, he described the historical form of the conflict as the "alienation" (*Entfremdung*) of Mind, signifying that the world of objects, originally the product of man's labor and knowledge, becomes independent of man and comes to be governed by uncontrolled forces and laws in which man no longer recognizes his own self. At the same time, thought becomes estranged from reality and the truth becomes an impotent ideal preserved in thought while the actual world is calmly left outside its influence. Unless man succeeds in reuniting the separated parts of his world and in bringing nature and society under the scope of his reason, he is forever doomed to frustration. The task of philosophy in this period of general disintegration is to demonstrate the principle of the missing unity and totality.

Hegel sets forth this principle in the concept of reason. We have attempted to sketch the socio-historical and philosophical origins of this notion. Both these roots terminate in his concept of reason effecting a juncture of the progressive ideas of the French Revolution with the given level of development of the problems of traditional philosophy. Reason is the veritable form of reality in which all antagonisms of subject and object are integrated to form a genuine unity and universality. Hegel's philosophy is thus necessarily a system, subsuming all realms of being under the all-embracing idea of reason. The inorganic as well as the organic world, nature as well as society, are here brought under the sway of Mind.

Hegel considered philosophy's systematic character to be a product of the historical situation. History had reached a stage at which the possibilities for realizing human freedom were at hand. Freedom, however, presupposes the reality of reason. Man can be free, can develop all his potentialities, only if his entire world is dominated by an integrating rational will and by knowledge. And the Hegelian system anticipates a state in which this possibility has been achieved. The historical optimism that is patent here provided the basis for Hegel's so-called "pan-logism" which treats every form of being as a form of reason. The transitions from the Logic to the Philosophy of Nature, and from the latter to the Philosophy of Mind are made on the assumption that the laws of nature spring from the rational structure of being and lead in a continuum to the laws of the Mind. The realm of Mind achieves in freedom what the realm of nature achieves in blind necessity,—the fulfillment of the potentialities inherent in reality. It is this state of reality which Hegel refers to as "the truth." Truth is not only attached to propositions and judgments, it is, in short, not only an attribute of thought but of

reality in process. Something is true if it is what it can be, fulfilling all its objective possibilities. In Hegel's language, it is then identical with its "notion." The notion has a dual use. It comprehends the nature or essence of a subject-matter, and thus represents the true thought of it. At the same time, it refers to the actual realization of that nature or essence, its concrete existence. All fundamental concepts of the Hegelian system are characterized by the same ambiguity. They never denote mere concepts (as in formal logic), but forms or modes of being comprehended by thought. Hegel does not presuppose a mystical identity of thought and reality but he holds that the right thought represents reality because the latter, in its development, has reached the stage at which it exists in conformity with the truth. His so-called "pan-logism" comes close to being its opposite: one could say that he takes the principles and forms of thought from the principles and forms of reality. The logical laws reproduce those governing the movement of reality. For example, the unification of opposites is a process Hegel demonstrates in the case of every single existent. "Judgment" is an occurrence in reality. Take, for example, the judgment: man is a slave. According to Hegel, it means that the subject, man, has become a predicate, enslaved, and remains himself in this process of change. Although he is a slave, he is still man, thus essentially free and hence opposed to his actual condition. The judgment does not simply attribute a predicate to a stable subject but denotes a dynamic process of the subject. Consequently, when in Hegel's logic concepts pass from one form to another, this refers to the fact that, to true thinking, one form of being passes to another. Reality appears as a process in which all characterizations of it in fixed forms reveal themselves to be mere abstractions, and only the totality of all forms determines the content of every particular.

We have emphasized the fact that, to Hegel, reality has reached a stage at which it exists in truth. This statement now needs a correction. Hegel does not mean that everything that exists does so in conformity with its potentialities but that the Mind has attained the self-consciousness of its freedom, and become capable of freeing nature and society. The realization of reason is not a fact but a task. The form in which the objects immediately appear is not yet their true form. What is simply given is at first negative, other than its real potentialities. It becomes true only in the process of overcoming this negativity, so that the birth of the truth requires the death of the given state of being. Hegel's optimism is based upon a destructive conception of the given. All forms are seized by the dissolving movement of reason which cancels and alters them until they are adequate to their notion. It is this movement which thought reflects in the process

of "mediation" (*Vermittlung*). If we follow the true content of our perceptions and concepts, all delimitation of stable objects collapses. They are dissolved into a multitude of relations which exhaust the developed content of these objects, and terminate in the comprehending activity of man. This activity eventually achieves the truth. The final process of mediation is the conscious historical practice of mankind. When this practice has attained the level of free rationality, there no longer exists any unmediated fact (*unvermittelt*), nor anything that stands as a mere object over against the conscious subject. Everything is then mastered by the comprehending power of reason. The objective world loses its character of blind necessity and becomes the lucid medium for the freely developing subject. Nature is united with history, and the union of subject with object is materialized in a social form.

Hegel's philosophy is indeed what the subsequent reaction termed it, a negative philosophy. It is originally motivated by the conviction that the given facts which appear to common sense as the positive index of truth are in reality the negation of truth, so that truth can only be established by their destruction. The driving force of the dialectical method lies in this critical conviction. Dialectic in its entirety is linked to the conception that all forms of being are permeated by an essential negativity, and that this negativity determines their content and movement. The dialectic represents the counter-thrust to any form of positivism. From Hume to the present-day logical positivists, the principle of this latter philosophy has been the ultimate authority of the fact, and observing the immediate given has been the ultimate method of verification. In the middle of the XIXth century, and primarily in response to the destructive tendencies of rationalism, positivism assumed the peculiar form of an all-embracing "positive philosophy," that took up the torch of traditional metaphysics. The protagonists of this positivism took great pains to stress the conservative and affirmative attitude of their philosophy: it induces thought to be satisfied with the facts, to renounce any transgression beyond them, and to bow to the given state of affairs. To Hegel, the facts in themselves possess no authority. They are "posited" (*gesetzt*) by the subject which has mediated them with the comprehensive process of its development. Verification rests, in the last analysis, with this process to which all facts are related and which determines their content. Everything that is given has to be justified before reason which is not a metaphysical substance but the historical totality of nature's and man's capacities.

Hegel's philosophy, however, which begins with the negation of

the given and retains this negativity throughout, concludes with the declaration that history has achieved the reality of reason. Hegel thought that mankind had become capable of attaining freedom without making the leap to a new form of society. Hegel's basic concepts were still bound up with the social structure of the prevailing system, and in this respect, too, German idealism may be said to have preserved the heritage of the French Revolution.

However, the "reconciliation of idea and reality," proclaimed in Hegel's "Philosophy of Right," contains a decisive element that points beyond mere reconciliation. This is the doctrine that announces the negation of philosophy. Philosophy reaches its end when it has formulated its view of a world in which reason is realized. If at that point reality contains the conditions necessary to materialize reason in fact, thought can cease to concern itself with the ideal and undertake to comprehend what is. The truth now would require actual historical practice to fulfill it. With the relinquishment of the ideal, philosophy relinquishes its critical task and passes it to another agency. The final culmination of philosophy is thus at the same time its abdication. Released from its pre-occupation with the ideal, philosophy is also released from its opposition to reality. This means that it ceases to be philosophy.[1]) It does not follow, however, that thought must then comply with the existing order. Critical thinking does not cease, but assumes a new form. The efforts of reason devolve upon social theory and social practice.

[1]) See Max Horkheimer's article, "The Social Function of Philosophy," in this issue.