

called "cunning of the idea (or of reason)", an adaptation of dialectical mediation to the historical process. This concept was invented by Hegel to rationalize the antagonistic interplay of universal history on the one hand, and the various subordinate historical units and personalities on the other.

Universal history as a whole is personified by the so-called World-Spirit each of whose essential four phases - the so-called National Spirits - embodies one of the then known four world empires (the Oriental, the Greek, the Roman, and the Germanic). Within the limits of each National Spirit the great historical personalities, the *Weltgeschichtliche Individuen*, are the agents of historical progress. In pursuing their egoistic and subjective goals, they are but the means to the ends of the World Spirit that is not "implicated in opposition and combat and that is (not) 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"²⁴. Hence the great world-historical figure scarcely fares better than the criminal whose function it is to further and realize right and justice through his misdeed and punishment²⁵.

For Hegel, the actions of the individual, the course of the National Spirits, and the progress of the World Spirit are of gradually increasing importance - in the last resort they too are only steps to the realization of the transcendent life of the Absolute Mind. History abounds with "spirits" great and small that remain ignorant of the true meaning and purpose of historical development. Only the Absolute Mind is fit to serve as true subject of history. In other words, the final meaning of history reveals itself only to the secretive philosopher of history. Philosophy of history is, of course, part of philosophy. Philosophy together with art and religion suggest the ultimate "holy trinity" of the idea. This supreme incarnation of reason, the Absolute Mind, is not subject to the vicissitudes of history: History remains a subordinate element of a super-historical totality²⁶.

In truth, this realm of religion, art, and philosophy is very sensitive to the impact of history. Today we know that all cultural creations reflecting as they do a specific social structure and human situation can

24) G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, tr. by J. Sibree, New York 1900, p. 80.

25) Cf. O. K. Flechtheim, *Hegel and the Problem of Punishment*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. VIII, 1947, pp. 293 ff.

26) This is, of course, a more or less subjective interpretation; for an interpretation emphasizing and even over-emphasizing more the temporal, social, realistic aspect of Hegel's system cf. Loewenberg's *Introduction to Hegel, Selections*, New York 1929; and H. Marcuse, "An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy", *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, 1939, Vol. VIII, pp. 394-412.