

sented itself to Hegel at the end of the eighteenth century, all too soon the "theoretical practitioner" despaired of practical political action. He escaped into a "practical theory" turning ever less practical and more ideological until it became undistinguishable from traditional metaphysical attempts to bridge the hiatus between the real world and the ideal claim. As it is presumably the dialectical philosopher's first and foremost duty to discover the reflection of the rational idea even in the crudest facticity, a semi-feudal society evolving towards capitalism, a corporative state growing into a constitutional monarchy, and an authoritarian legal system of privilege developing towards formal equality find themselves raised to images of the highest reality, i. e. of the "Absolute Mind"<sup>18</sup>. Possessed by the idea that "the universe regards as rational the one who regards the universe as rational", Hegel described the core institutions of his age as if they were approximating closely the ideal. The "new Copernicus" was one of the first who both glorified the basic contradictions of human culture and society, and at the same time unintentionally revealed them in such a manner as to invite the revolutionary criticism of the status quo on the part of the left Hegelians. While, according to the famous words of the preface of his "Rechtsphilosophie"<sup>19</sup>, "what is real is rational" it is held equally true by Hegel that only "what is rational is real".

For Hegel reality is not identical with that common-sense world that to the naive realist appears to embody all that is. It is only his system of rational categories in their "genuine unity" that form a "diamond net" that deserves that name. The categories are but "the universal of the things themselves, not something subjective which belongs to us, but are, on the contrary, as a noumenon opposed to the transitory phenomenon, the true, the objective, the reality of the things themselves". For Hegel as well as for Fichte and Kant, for Plotinus and Plato - to mention only a very few significant names - reality is thus a realm of abstractions, of eternal and timeless ideas, of universally valid categories. Understanding and knowledge are ultimately reduced to the logical and dialectical advancement of the mind. It will free itself by making use of ever more perfect categories, notions, and ideas. Truth then is essentially the resolution of inner contradictions, the achievement of an ever more comprehensive consistency, the flowering of the intellectual

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18) An explanation of some of the specific terms of Hegel's philosophy may be found under the heading "Hegel's Terminology" in J. M. Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Vol. I, New York 1940, pp. 454-465 (Glossary on p. 465). - In the following the terms "mind" and "spirit" are used indiscriminately for Hegel's "Geist". W. T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*, London 1924, may serve as a first help for an understanding of Hegel. Cf. esp. pp. 50 ff.

19) Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, translated by S. W. Dyde, London 1896, p. XXVII.