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THE END OF GERMAN CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE DOCTRINES

OF HEGEL AND MARX.

BY

HOWARD WILLIAMS

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I trace the fate of a traditional philosophical problem, 'the problem of knowledge' in the writings of Hegel and Marx. My aim has been to refute the thesis that their ultimate rejection of the problem was without a positive outcome and, in particular, the thesis of Habermas that in rejecting the problem they, in effect, negated the achievements of previous epistemology.

My aim has not been to deny that Hegel and Marx transform the problem of knowledge in their writings. Rather, I have attempted to bring out the positive aspects of their criticism of previous epistemology. The theme of their criticism is that previous theories of knowledge had given an inadequate account of experience. In its place they offer what I believe to be new and important accounts of experience.

Furthermore, Hegel and Marx's criticisms of previous epistemology are far from being identical. Hegel, on the one hand, directs his criticisms at the sceptical attitude of his forerunners. He is for this reason particularly blunt with the Empiricist philosophers. Marx, on the other hand, concerns himself more with the abstractness of the philosophical approach in general. In his view philosophy itself is the obstacle to a correct notion of experience. But what Marx means by philosophy is German Idealist philosophy and, in particular, that of Hegel. It is further my thesis, therefore, that the differences in the manner in which Marx and Hegel carry out their criticism of traditional epistemology constitutes the End of German Classical Philosophy.

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PREFACE

I have outlined the main argument in the first Chapter. There is little need, therefore, for me to elaborate on it here. However, I should like to make a few brief remarks about the general structure of the work and, in particular, about the approach that I take to Hegel's philosophy.

This study broadly falls into three parts. In the two opening chapters I discuss the philosophical background to Hegel's system. This I call his Critique of Modern Philosophy. In the following two chapters I deal with Hegel's concept of Experience. For these two chapters I draw on the Phenomenology of Mind. In the final three chapters I deal with the development of Marx's concept of Experience. I concentrate on his earlier works because it is there that he works out his general theoretical position.

In the opening chapters of this study I have adopted an approach to Hegel's philosophy which is, in my view, a most fruitful one. In general, Hegel's system has either been approached directly, that is, through a consideration of one or many of his major works, or indirectly, through an account of the philosophical and literary works of his immediate contemporaries. It is of course in this latter context that the study of his early works has become important. But both these approaches, I believe, run the risk of leaving us without a secure foothold in the Hegelian system. The first does so simply because it is, perhaps, too direct. Hegel's

philosophy is notoriously obscure; so there is for the explanation which is couched in terms of the system itself the ever-present danger that it itself may be as obscure as the system. On the other hand, the second approach, through contemporary literature and philosophy, may have to be pitched at such a general level that we prohibit ourselves from dealing with the central tenets of the system.

The approach that I have adopted avoids, in my view, these difficulties. By introducing Hegel's philosophy through an assessment of his views on the major Modern Philosophers we get to the heart of his system, but in a manner which does not always require us to deal with the system in its own, opaque, terms. On the one hand this approach will satisfy the demand of the student, that he be introduced to Hegel's major doctrines by an analysis of less complex ideas (and who can doubt that the philosophies of Descartes and Locke, for instance, are less difficult), and, on the other, it will satisfy the demand of the professional philosopher that Hegel's ideas be first tested against those of other philosophers.

I have used the Theorie Werkausgabe edition of Hegel's Werke published by the Suhrkamp Verlag, and for Marx's writings I have used the Dietz Verlag edition of the Marx-Engels Werke. All translations from the German are my own.

I am grateful to Henry Tudor for his help and encouragement in writing this work. This, also, is the place to thank the Social Science Research Council for financing my

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Durham, October, 1974.

CHAPTER ONE

HEGEL AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Epistemology and Experience

Marx and Hegel are most readily distinguished from their forerunners in philosophy by their rejection of what Ayer would call 'The Problem of Knowledge'. This rejection entailed that they, unlike other modern philosophers, were prepared to forgo a search for an absolute criterion of truth. As Habermas tells us,¹ this was, until then, a major preoccupation of Modern Philosophy. Descartes, Locke and Hume, for instance appear to concentrate entirely on the problem. Critical Philosophy receives its name, we are to assume, from the criticism of the epistemological premises of previous metaphysics. Moreover, it is clear that the problem does not recede into the background in the philosophies of the great system-builders, Spinoza and Leibniz. To the admirers of that tradition, amongst whom Habermas is to be counted, Marx and Hegel's abandonment of 'The Problem of Knowledge' in their enquiries represents a sad loss to philosophy. They assume that philosophy is the poorer

1. 'If it was required to reconstruct the philosophical discussion on the modern period in the form of a judicial hearing it would be called to decide the one question: how is dependable (zuverlässige) knowledge possible'. Jürgen Habermas Erkenntnis und Interesse, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1968, p. 11.
In saying this Habermas probably has in mind the monumental work of Ernst Cassirer: Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit which is an attempt, in several volumes, to trace the development of the problem of knowledge in Modern Philosophy. The volumes first appeared in Verlag Brune Cassirer, Berlin.

for not knowing a priori the nature of knowledge. The specific criticisms of Habermas is that owing to Marx and Hegel philosophy no longer has a serious grasp of science.² In his view, the last person to achieve such an understanding of science was Kant. It is because they neglected this achievement of Kant's Habermas believes that Marx and Hegel squandered the gains of classical epistemology. Marx in particular, rather than being the inheritor of classical German philosophy, 'had completed the demolition (Abbau) of epistemology'.³

I do not intend to deny that Marx and Hegel in their works transform classical epistemology. What I wish to deny, however, is that this was merely a work of 'demolition'. The claim that our knowledge suffered a great loss through the abandonment of the 'Problem of Knowledge' suggests, I believe, an ignorance of the grounds on which Marx and Hegel abandoned the problem; and there is the added implication that no such grounds exist. But, on the contrary, they do, since Marx and Hegel do not prefunctorily abandon the quest for certainty in knowledge. The quest is given up only as a result of a critical enquiry into the whole philosophical tradition surrounding the problem. Contrary to what Habermas implies, sentence is not passed without trial.

2. J.Habermas. op.cit.; p.12.

3. J.Habermas. op.cit., p. 14. He did so, Habermas argues, because 'he had misunderstood his own concept'. (ibid) This is a strange argument. It seems to me that there was no-one more eminently well placed to understand his own concepts than Marx.

Hegel deals at length with the theories of knowledge of his predecessors. Marx also does not cursorily reject the question. As is the case with Hegel his rejection of the 'Problem of Knowledge': the criticism of the search for certainty in the knowledge of our knowledge, is a leading motive in the construction of his Weltanschauung. It is my belief that the study of the grounds of that mutual criticism of Marx and Hegel will not only show Habermas' assessment of the impact of its results to be false but will also provide significant conclusions concerning Erkenntnis and Interesse or what I have chosen to call Epistemology and Experience.

My thesis is, then, that the transformation that classical epistemology undergoes in the philosophies of Marx and Hegel is not only a work of demolition but also one of construction. This construction must clearly follow the lines of their criticism. The theme of this criticism is that previous epistemologies had given an inadequate account of experience. Their task, then, is to construct a more adequate account of experience within the context of epistemology. Similar intentions do not, however, imply similar achievements. So that it is further my thesis that the radical differences in the manner in which this task is carried out by both Hegel and Marx constitutes the end of German Classical Philosophy. Marx informed by different presuppositions sets about the task in a manner alien to Hegel and it is that which transforms philosophy into (to borrow a phrase of Marcuse's) social theory.

It is logical to begin the account of this whole process, from

Hegel to Marx, with an analysis of Hegel's objections to the epistemologies of the principal Modern philosophers. Our main source must be the Lectures on the History of Philosophy. This can be supplemented from time to time by Hegel's major published works, The Phenomenology of Mind, The Science of Logic, and The Encyclopedia, in order that we may further support our conclusions. For reasons that will become more evident in the thesis itself an understanding of Hegel's critique of Modern Philosophy will place us in an excellent position to interpret the Phenomenology of Mind. That work represents Hegel's most developed theory of knowledge and experience; and it is a theory of knowledge and experience built on a profound understanding of Modern philosophy.

The Critique of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz

I shall analyse Hegel's critique of Modern Philosophy in three stages. This first stage, as is evident, will deal with Hegel's objections to the philosophies of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz; the second will deal with Hegel's critique of Empiricist philosophy, i.e. the philosophies of Locke and Hume; finally I shall devote a chapter to his critical examination of the philosophies of his fellow German Idealists, Kant, Fichte and Schelling.

The attempt to analyse Hegel's critique of the theories of knowledge of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz conjointly probably requires some explanation. In advance of the full explanation which can only come in the analysis itself, I might say this. For our purposes these three philosophies form one distinct section because of the manner in which they seek to integrate theology with the theory of knowledge. The philosophies I intend to consider in the other two sections do not aim at such an integration. In one way or another, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, all regard God as the absolute ground of knowledge. In contrast, God figures markedly little in the theories of knowledge of Locke and Hume. The concept does admittedly gain greater significance in the third of our sections, firstly with Kant and Fichte but as an object of belief, not of knowledge and secondly, with Schelling and Hegel himself, but not again as an object of certain knowledge but as a concept alone. It is true that as a concept alone God does retain a primary significance in the philosophies of Schelling and Hegel but I shall argue that this is in a sense such that the break with theology is absolute.

Nobody can or is supposed to believe in the God of the philosophies of Schelling and Hegel nor, on the other hand, do they regard Him as the absolute ground of all knowledge.

Let us now make a beginning with Hegel's discussions of Descartes. I have suggested, concerning Descartes, that for him God is the absolute ground of all knowledge. This appears to contradict the initial, historical point that Hegel brings up in the discussion. There he applauds Descartes for the 'subjectivity' of his philosophy. This subjectivity is embodied for Hegel in the famous principle of Descartes cogito ergo sum. Hegel believes that with this principle Descartes set aside forever the authority of the Church in philosophical matters.⁴ In his view, the whole of philosophy prior to Descartes had been vitiated by the constant presupposition of something as being true. Therefore the merit of Descartes, he says, is to insist that we should hold nothing to be true which does not possess an inward evidence in our thought. At least, this is how Hegel understands the cogito, I think therefore I am. He takes it to mean that all certainty in our knowledge is to be derived from the I think or the I. It is the same principle, he adds, that reappears in the philosophy of his contemporary Fichte.

But it is the historical juncture that is significant with Descartes: 'Thus philosophy regained its own ground in that

4. G.W.F.Hegel. Werke 20 Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1971, p. 126.

thought begins from thought as something which is certain in itself, not from something external, something given; not from authority; but simply from this freedom which is contained in the I think.⁵ If thought begins from the certainty of the I think then it appears that an epistemological dependence on God is an improbability in Descartes' philosophy. Nevertheless, Descartes comes to rely on the postulate of God to give certainty to our knowledge,⁶ and it is the analysis of this development in Descartes' philosophy that constitutes Hegel's critique of his epistemology.

It is from the cognito ergo sum - the corner-stone of philosophy - that Descartes derives the subjective certainty of knowledge. No matter how sceptical I am, he says, I cannot deny that I think. Now, it is the certainty of this knowledge that supplies the certainty as a model to all our other knowledge. We have in the cognito, Descartes believes, one proposition that we know to be true. In order that we may obtain a criterion for certainty in all our other knowledge all we have to do is to examine the grounds of certainty in that original case. What he concludes on examining the cognito in this way is well-known: . 'Observing that there is nothing in the proposition I think therefore I am, to assure me that I am

5. Ibid. p.135.

6. R.Descartes. Meditations, Penguin Classics: Descartes. Discourse on Method, 1960, p. 160. Here he argues that we know our ideas emanate from material things because God does not deceive in making us think this. See below p. 9.

speaking the truth, except that I see very clearly and distinctly that, in order to think, one must exist, I concluded that I could take as a general rule that the things that we conceive very clearly and distinctly are all of them true, but that there is some difficulty in the proper discernment of distinct propositions.⁷ In other words, all that is required for the certainty of our knowledge is the personal assurance that in it things are conceived 'very clearly and distinctly'. Ideas are true because we conceive them clearly and distinctly or, simply, because we know them to be true. There need be no empirical reference. And here lies Descartes' difficulty. His aim is to establish a mathematical certainty in the realm of philosophy,⁸ but it is Hegel's belief that this aim can only be pursued at the cost of the neglect of the content of philosophy. Philosophy, in his opinion, has to concern itself with knowledge as a whole and not with a moment of it, such as certainty. The aim of philosophy, he believes, is not simply to attain a certainty for our knowledge but to gain a mastery for thought over the whole of objective reality. What is more, concentrating on the one aspect of philosophy, establishing a certainty for our ideas, has its own inherent

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7. R.Descartes. Discourse on Method, Penguin Classics, p.62.
8. A.Wollaston. Introduction to Descartes (op.cit) Penguin Classics. He says: 'The aim of Descartes..was..to compose philosophy in the likeness of mathematics, to exhibit all varieties of knowledge as the consequence of a set of ultimate principles of final simplicity which would be universally accepted like mathematical ~~exams~~.' p.8.

defect, and this defect, he argues, becomes apparent when Descartes turns his attention to acquiring a concrete content for our ideas. Hegel bases his argument on this quotation from Descartes' Principles of Philosophy: 'The consciousness which solely knows itself to be certain seeks now, however, to extend its knowledge and finds that it has conceptions of many things in which conceptions it does not deceive itself so long as it does not assert or deny that something similar outside corresponds to them.'⁹ The consequence of concentrating on certainty alone is that a cleft is introduced between our conceptions and things outside our consciousness, since it is only thought that is established to be certain in itself. The possibility now exists that we can have clear and distinct ideas which may be regarded as true as long as they are not predicated of objects. Descartes therefore finds himself in the position of being able to assert that the mind does not deceive itself in its ideas but also of having to assert that the mind will immediately lay itself open to deception as soon as it seeks to apply those ideas to the external world.

It is to guard against this threat of deception, to overcome the dichotomy established between our conceptions and things outside ourselves that Descartes invokes God. 'But God', he claims, 'does not deceive, and so it is manifest that he does not send me these ideas directly or through some creature in whom their reality is only virtually contained.'

9. G.W.F.Hegel. Suhrkamp Werke 20, p. 136.

For He has given me no means of knowing that this is so, but on the contrary, a great propensity to believe that these ideas emanate from material things, and it would be difficult not to think that He had deceived us if they came from any other source. Our ideas therefore, emanate from material things' because 'God does not deceive,' conversely, material things exist because their ideas as being such things are ultimately derived from God. In both cases the dichotomy between conceptions and things outside ourselves is evaded only by the assurance that 'God does not deceive'. But even this, Hegel claims, is not sufficient for the dichotomy to be fully overcome. In Hegel's view that would only be the case when, as I have indicated, thought gains a mastery over the whole of objective reality. It is only when we know everything that the division of thought and reality is surmounted. There still enters an impediment to this in Descartes' philosophy although 'God does not deceive'. That is because those material things are primarily known to us through our senses and what we perceive through our senses, according to Descartes, 'is notably obscure and confused'.¹¹ It follows for him that it is only what we perceive clearly and distinctly in our thought that has absolute objective reality. This is why philosophy must aim at a mathematical certainty because in the mathematical sciences we are given the best example of what is absolutely distinctly real. That is because they deal with thought alone.

10. R.Descartes. op.cit., Meditations, p. 160

11. Ibid.

This, then, is Hegel's case against Descartes. God, he believes, has to be invoked in Descartes' epistemology because 'we have this opposition: subjective knowing and reality'. Where they are regarded as different, as in the contrast between sensation and thought, 'there enters the need to mediate them'.¹² This need to mediate subjective knowing and reality arises from Descartes' failure to conceive thought in the form of sensation.¹³ Consequently, what is true for Descartes is always an object of thought, an universal in Hegel's terms. In not conceiving thought as sensation he has no human link between thought and material things and, likewise, between material things and thought. He has therefore to rely on the divine.

This criticism of Descartes' theory of knowledge is clearly two-edged. On the one hand, Hegel is pleading the significance of sensation in knowledge, the position of a materialist, and on the other, he is suggesting that it only be taken as a form of thought, the position of an idealist. This, I would argue, is one of the sophistications of Hegel's idealism, indeed one of the reasons he likes to call his idealism objective idealism. And it is from this point of view that he argues that Descartes is wrong in conceiving sensation merely as a nullity. Sensation becomes a nullity for Descartes because he is unable to regard what we sense-perceive as being in any way true. In our sensation, he claims, things are continually changing. There are therefore

12. Hegel. Suhrkamp Werke 20, pp. 144 - 145.

13. Ibid. p. 155: 'In the sharp opposition between thought and extension, the former is not considered as sensation (Empfindung), so that the latter can isolate itself.'

no fixed properties that we can attribute to things that arise in sensation. Appearance, smells, tastes, sounds, etc., cannot be predicated to things because they do not inhere in those things. Descartes even seeks to demonstrate that solidity and hardness which we sense-perceive are not essential to matter. He believes that all that can with certainty be predicated to matter is extension. This is the case, he argues, because all things of matter (e.g. the wax in the Meditations) give way under pressure without losing their nature. Now it is at this point that Hegel raises his objection.¹⁴ It may be, he says, that things give way under pressure but this does not entail that they will lose all their properties apart from extension. Solidity and hardness will remain attributes of those things. Under pressure the resistance that those things offer may become quantitatively less but not non-existent. It is clear that Hegel is here wearing his materialist hat. We have now to analyse his criticism of Descartes to see why Hegel's objective idealism allows this empiricism. Hegel argues that thought has, also to be considered in the form of sensation. Descartes, however, wants thought alone; thought opposed to sensation. He fails to grasp therefore that the properties we detect in objects with our senses are, as soon as they are expressed, themselves thoughts. Hegel therefore is prepared to grant to the materialist that thought considered as sensation does have objects opposed to it. These, furthermore, are not immediately reducible to thought. But this in no way establishes for Hegel that things exist independently of human consciousness. These

14. Ibid., pp. 150 - 151.

things are to Hegel nothing but self-consciousness in the form of sensation. At this point he takes off his materialist hat. Descartes makes the error, in Hegel's estimation, of not regarding the determinations of objects sensed as ideal.

The sum of Hegel's criticism of Descartes would, I think, be that he is a metaphysician. Metaphysics Hegel understands, in the sense of Kant, as the reaching after Substance. The point of view of metaphysics, he argues, presupposes an opposition of individuality and substantiality or, in more modern terms, the individual and reality, and strives for their unity. In metaphysics, 'one thought, one unity is maintained against idealism, just as with the Ancients - Being.'¹⁵ The metaphysician seeks with his philosophy to unite individual and Substance. Thought becomes the mediator between the two terms. But, Hegel claims, where thought and reality are initially conceived as being different they are never successfully united. The attempt to unite individual and substance is, as in Descartes' case, a confession that they are irrevocably divided. God, therefore, has to perform the task of artificial union. 'My individual thought is substantial or real with Descartes because God does not deceive me.

Now, as I have already suggested, the notion of God does play a role in Hegel's own philosophy but he believes that Descartes' description of God as the physical guarantor of our knowledge

15. Ibid., p. 122.

misrepresents that role. It is, he thinks 'the form that is somewhat mistaken expressing above all only the opposition which self-consciousness has to the consciousness of its other, of the objective; and it (i.e. God) has to do with the unity of both, - whether that which is in thought also has objectivity. Now this unity lies in God, or is God himself.'¹⁶ God is rightly to be understood in philosophy as the unity of thought and being. To this extent Descartes' depiction of his role is correct. For Hegel, however, he is not to be understood as the mediator of individuality and Substance. This would imply that God were a third term bringing about that unity. Rather, God is for Hegel that unity itself. God is a relationship that falls entirely within thought and reality, a relationship in which the opposition of thought and reality is overcome.¹⁷

Because Descartes does not conceive God in this way, his philosophy remains for Hegel at the opposition of being and thought. We can see this dualism most sharply expressed, Hegel thinks, in Descartes' absolute separation of extension and thought. Descartes recognises 'no more than two species of

16. Ibid., p. 137.

17. He describes the relationship more technically in the Logic as the transition of the Notion (Begriff) into Objectivity and adds that it was Descartes' 'sublimest thought, that God is that whose notion includes within itself its being'. He claims there as well that Descartes did not comprehend his principle in its full significance. In his view he degraded the principle by presenting it as an ontological proof of God's existence. Hegel. Suhrkamp Werke 6, (Wissenschaft der Logik Teil II) p. 402.

things: namely the one is the species of thinking things and the other the species of things that relate to what is extended.¹⁸ Thought and extension are distinct for Descartes because, apart from God, they are the only two substances in the universe which are totalities in themselves. The one substance, he would argue, may be clearly and distinctly conceived without the other. This ontology implies for Hegel however that, 'thought, the notion, the spiritual, is that which is at home with itself and has its opposite in not being at home with oneself, extension, the unfree.'¹⁹ Descartes argues that the essence of thought is thought and the essence of objects is extension. It appears therefore that there is no way in which they can be immanently united, the one is opposed to the other as freedom to necessity. It is only in God their creator that they are one. Hegel, however, finds a great deal that is artificial in this ontology. This is because it is an ontology that maintains an unreasonable bifurcation (*Entzweiung*) between the individual and reality. This is a bifurcation which is the object of Hegel's philosophy to overcome.²⁰ Descartes'

18. Hegel. S. Werke 20; p. 148

19. Ibid.

20. That this is the object of Hegel's philosophy requires little proof from me. The significance of the notion Entzweiung in Hegel's philosophy was pointed out by Herbert Marcuse as early as 1933 in his book Hegels Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit (Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main) pp. 9 - 25. More recently R. Plant (Hegel, Allen & Unwin, 1973) and G. Rohrmoser (Subjektivität und Verdinglichung. Theologie und Gesellschaft im Denken des jungen Hegels 1961) have argued the same case most convincingly.

ontology suggests to Hegel that there are in the beginning two things, thought and body (extension). Subsequently God makes an appearance to reconcile them. But because he is 'outside both' as their Creator, 'not the notion of unity and the two elements themselves, not the notion,' he is unable to achieve it.²¹ Bifurcation therefore is not overcome. In order that this may be achieved, Hegel claims, God has to be properly conceived. As we already know, that correct conception of God is as the immanent unity of thought and being.

It is the philosophy of Spinoza that, in Hegel's view, takes an important step towards the realisation of this notion of God. It is, he claims, Spinoza's notion of Substance that achieves this. This Substance Hegel describes as being the 'abstract unity' of extension and thought, or body and soul. In his opinion, therefore this notion bears a direct relation to the principal ideas of Descartes' system. Indeed 'the philosophy of Spinoza relates to the philosophy of Descartes as a consistent implementation of the latter's principle.'²² In the philosophy of Descartes we have the opposition of extension and thought with a third term, God, posited as uniting them. Hegel understands Spinoza to have implemented Descartes' principle in that the notion of Substance draws together extension and thought in a more satisfactory way than Descartes' notion of God. Spinoza's Substance is the essence

21. Hegel. Suhrkamp Werke 20 p. 157

22. Ibid.

both of mind and matter. It is 'that which is in itself and is conceived through itself'.²³ It consists of 'infinite attributes';²⁴ nothing lies outside of it. Therefore, it is God, 'the cause of all things'.²⁵ In short, it is everything in everything. It is the world, or simply reality itself. God or reality, which embraces both extension and thought, mind and matter.

In short, Hegel finds Spinoza's notion of one Substance to be a radical improvement on the dualism of Descartes' philosophy, but that is not all he has to say in praise of the idea. He would argue that as an abstract principle, Spinoza's Substance has to be the starting-point of all thought that claims to be philosophy. 'That thought', he says, 'has placed itself at the standpoint of Spinozism is the essential beginning of all philosophising.' Everyone has first of all to be a Spinozist if he wishes to be able to philosophise. He 'must bathe' his soul 'in the ether of the one Substance in which everything that is held to be true perishes.'²⁶ This one Substance is, then, for Hegel the negation of all that is particular. We are, he claims, with Spinoza's philosophy at once at the level of the universal. What Hegel means by this is not immediately clear. It is, however, clear what he thinks it implies for the problem of knowledge.

23. B. Spinoza. Ethic, Part I, Definition 3.

24. Ibid. Proposition XI.

25. Ibid. Proposition XVIII

26. Hegel. Suhrkamp Werke 20 p. 165. See also Lucio Colletti: Marxism and Hegel (New Left Books, 1973) p. 28.

The standpoint of Spinoza, he claims, raises us above such mundane problems as those concerning the certainty of our thought. From that standpoint it is the content of a philosophy that is of prime interest.

It is worth trying to understand what Hegel means by this. He appears to be suggesting that this one Substance of Spinoza as everything in everything is a notion that is intended to provide more than certainty to our thought. Spinoza is not simply concerned that our thought should correspond with extension. On the contrary, thought in the one Substance is not only subject, it is object as well. It is a case, therefore, of the identity of thought and extension. Perhaps I can make the point clearer in the following way. Spinoza's Substance, as I have already said, is God. Now God for him only has two attributes, thought and extension.²⁷ So that whatever is said of thought is said of God or Substance and whatever is said of extension is equally said of God or Substance. Since, then, whatever is said of Substance is said of both its attributes, extension and thought, predicates of the one are, at one and the same time, predicates of the other. Or, as Spinoza puts it, 'The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things'.²⁸ He gives this example in the Corollary to the same proposition: 'the circle existing in nature and the idea that is in God are one and the same thing which is manifested through different attributes'. The one Substance as the attribute

27. Spinoza. Ethic Part II Propositions I and II.

28. Ibid. Part II, Proposition VII.

of thought, the circle as an idea, is the same as the one Substance as the attribute of extension, the circle as a reality in nature. Both express the same 'essence of God'. It is now more than evident that in a context such as this, problems concerning the relation of thought to extension, or subject to object become simply irrelevant. Both subject and object are enveloped in the one Substance or God. As I indicated, their relation is one of immediate identity; and it is for this reason that Hegel regards Spinoza's Substance as the true beginning of philosophy.

If this is so, Hegel would like to add this one qualification, namely, that Spinoza's Substance expresses the identity of subject and object in too abstract a fashion,²⁹ Here Hegel revives a criticism he levelled at the philosophy of his erstwhile friend Schelling. In his view Schelling, too, expresses the identity in his notion of Absolute Identity in too abstract a manner. This is because both he and Spinoza do not present the difference between thought and extension as residing in the two different attributes themselves. Their difference is, rather, depicted as a self-differentiation of God or Substance. Hegel would not wish to deny the principle of the philosophies of Spinoza and Schelling: the identity of nature and mind. But he believes that he takes 'a higher tone' in demanding that they should have demonstrated that principle differently. In the proper demonstration of that principle, he argues, it has to be pre-

29. Hegel. op.cit. p. 166.

supposed that both nature and mind are rational. We are not, however, to stop at this assertion, as though the mere possibility of the identity of mind and nature entailed its reality. We have to show the assertion to be true, that it is 'the totality which is developing itself within itself' that is that identity.³⁰ At no stage will it do simply to pronounce the identity of mind and nature. Hegel would perhaps say that nature and mind are united as Reason. But Reason for him consists, in this instance, in nothing other than the reasoning process that shows nature and mind to be identical. He believes that the philosopher, by his reasoning, has to show that nature embodies Reason and that man is inherently rational. Because Spinoza and Schelling do not do this in their philosophies of identity they have to depict the difference between nature and mind as a self-differentiation of God. Their notion of identity is therefore abstract.

We have now to consider the implications of this objection to Spinoza's notion of Substance for the epistemological principles embodied in Spinoza's philosophy. In this respect Hegel's own assessment is that by depicting the unity of thought and being as he does, Spinoza introduces a contradiction into his theory of knowledge. This contradiction is that at the one time we can be absolutely certain of the truth of our conceptions about reality while at another, we can be absolutely indifferent as to their congruence. Spinoza indicates the absolute certainty in this way: 'Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the

30. Ibid. p. 177.

human mind must be perceived by the human mind. That is to say, if the object of the idea constituting the human mind be a body, nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the mind.³¹ The knowledge of everything which happens in the object of any idea necessarily exists in God, for he is for Spinoza both extended and thinking substance. In so far as that idea is an idea of a thinking thing, and since God is all thought, the idea is necessarily an expression of God. It is consequently correct. On the other hand Spinoza indicates what Hegel calls the absolute indifference of thought and reality in this way: 'The human mind does not know the human body itself, nor does it know that the body exists, except through ideas of affections by which the body is affected.'³² What Hegel appears to be getting at, then, is that in Spinoza's philosophy knowledge does not appear as an outcome of the activity of the human mind in relationship to things. It is simply an attribute of God. This appearance

31. Ethic. Part II, Proposition XII; Stuart Hampshire (Spinoza, Pelican Original, 1970, pp. 65 - 66) says of this: 'From his conception of the unique Substance and its attributes, Spinoza is deducing that the system of ideas which constitute God, as conceived under the attribute of thought, must not only correspond to, but coincide with, the objects of these ideas; he is showing that, if God is rightly conceived as the unique Substance, the problem which confronted Descartes - how can we be certain that our clear and distinct ideas correspond to reality? - cannot even arise; there can be no question of the correspondence between the order of thought or ideas and the order of things, because there are not two orders to correspond.' This is remarkably like Hegel's interpretation of Spinoza's Substance, see especially p. 18-19 above.

32. Spinoza. Ethic Part II, Prop. XIX.

is maintained, Hegel would claim, because just as with the epistemology of Descartes the direct link between the human mind and the external world (sensation) is, so to speak, severed. Descartes and Spinoza sever that link on the grounds that what the individual person senses directly is not so much the limitations of an object as himself limited by the object. The argument is a familiar one. It is, as Spinoza puts it, that 'the ideas we have of external bodies indicate the constitution of our own body rather than the nature of external bodies.'³³ The implication is that we as individuals are not the source of adequate knowledge. In Spinoza's case all knowledge pertains to the universal thought which is an attribute of the one Substance, God. This, we know, is an absolute presupposition of Spinoza's philosophy. Spinoza, consequently, is not so much concerned with discerning the individual properties of objects as with leading them back to the one Substance. The concern is always, and this is Hegel's case, with the explanation of the one Substance as opposed to the individual particular thing.

This, he says, is the source of the contradiction in Spinoza's theory of knowledge. The absolute indifference of thought and object is implicit in their identity. It is the notion of Substance that is incomplete. In that notion thought and reality are not initially affirmed to be independent or self-differentiated. The consequence of not depicting them in that way is that it is a matter of indifference what the one signifies to the other.

33. Ibid. Part II, Prop. XVI. Corollary 2.

It is of little consequence how the individual's thought relates to objects, if all thought and all objects are a priori divine. The whole of Spinoza's philosophy, Hegel would argue, is coloured by this presupposition. It is the unity of thought and being that is alone significant, he says. the One.³⁴ Knowledge for Spinoza is but the contemplation of God.³⁵ This is, of course, his Ethic as well. The good life, Spinoza argues, is the one spent in contemplation of God.

Hegel is convinced that this point represents the extreme limit of Spinoza's system.³⁶ Instead of everything being explained for itself, it is led back to God. Individuation has no place in his philosophy. By individuation Hegel means not only the individual, particular existence of objects but also the freedom of the individual. He thinks, then, that in Spinoza's system the individual, in both these senses, appears only as what he calls a 'vanishing moment'. The individual exists only as an embodiment or mode of one of the two attributes of Substance, as thought or as extension. In this fashion, Hegel claims, 'All differences and determinations of things are simply returned to the one Substance; so, one can say, in Spinoza's system all things are merely thrown down into this abyss of

34. Hegel. Werke 20, p.177: For Spinoza 'God alone is, all worldliness has no truth'.

35. Ibid., p. 190.

36. Ibid., p. 182.

annihilation'.³⁷ And from this abyss of annihilation nothing emerges. Both the possibility of an individual existing particular and the possibility of an independent individual consciousness are obliterated.

It is the implications that this lack of individuation might have for human thought and action that are most remarkable. Human consciousness is only conceived as a mode of the One Substance. It is but a mode of the attribute thought. Its own independent capabilities are therefore severely limited. As we have seen, the mode human consciousness cannot attain knowledge through its own perceptions of the world. It can only know reality through its contemplation of God. Correct thought and right action, as I have indicated, can only be achieved through this contemplation of God. For neither can the body determine the mind directly to movement or rest nor the mind the body to movement or rest.³⁸ Correct thought and right action then have their common ground not in the one individual but in God. Acting as well as knowing have to be mediated by the one Substance.

Hegel contends that this is the case because in Spinoza's Ethic as in the philosophy of Descartes' thought has only the significance of the universal, not of self-consciousness'.³⁹

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37. Ibid.p. 166. Hegel finds it interesting to speculate at this point whether Spinoza's death of consumption was itself an indication of the 'all-consuming' nature of his own principle. Hegel makes a better pun in German since consumption (Schwindsucht) means literally 'fading away sickness'. p.167.
38. Ibid p. 183 - 184.
39. Ibid p. 185.

Quite simply, self-consciousness has for Hegel to be understood as being an attribute of the one Substance not merely as a mode. This, evidently, is not the position in Spinoza's philosophy. Thus Spinoza proceeds in a manner which is alien to Hegel. His philosophy descends from the universal, Substance to the particular, thought and extension and finally to the individual, the mode. This descent he regards as a progressive 'loss' of Substance. The result is that the mode appears less essential than the One. Or, viewed from the opposite direction, the modes simply disappear in the one Substance. They are not, Hegel complains, 'raised to the notion'.⁴⁰ The independence of self-consciousness is extinguished in the one Substance. This implication of Spinoza's philosophy is, Hegel believes, the reason why Spinoza's system arouses so much indignation since the individual's being for himself is denied.⁴¹ In such a system of philosophy we cannot be at home with ourselves, we are not free. Spinoza's philosophy depicts only 'a rigid (starre) Substance, not yet spirit'.⁴² The lack of self-consciousness, the lack of freedom in Spinoza's philosophy has to be remedied, then, by conceiving the one Substance not merely as substance but as mind or spirit (Geist). This remedy that Hegel proposes for

40. Ibid. See also Colletti. op.cit. p. 30.

41. Ibid. Hampshire, op.cit., p. 149, draws our attention to the same thing: 'It was Spinoza's 'hideous hypothesis', and the only part of his philosophy which immediately became generally famous, that this criterion of distinguishing human beings as exercising rational will and choice is mere superstition.'

42. Hegel, Werke 20, p. 166

the Ethic is necessary not simply because Spinoza has misinterpreted the prevailing religion, Christianity, but because Spinoza's notion of Substance fails to correspond with reality. This is the source of Hegel's methodological objection to Spinoza's philosophy. His notion of reality is different. Reality, he argues in The Science of Logic, has to be seen as the realisation of freedom, of the Notion.⁴³ For this reason the analysis of reality is the critique of Spinoza's Substance. It is this analysis that forms the transition from the objective logic to the subjective logic. Reality itself has to be shown to entail subjective freedom. Reality or the correct philosophic system (one and the same thing to Hegel) has to have 'the significance of the I'.⁴⁴ Reality, he wishes to argue is not only Substance but self-consciousness. It is also my reality.

Hegel now argues that the principal defect of Spinoza's philosophy, the lack of what he describes as individuation, is made good in the philosophy of Leibniz.⁴⁵ Indeed, he claims, as far as external aspects are concerned, Leibniz' principle of

43. Hegel. Suhrkamp Werke 6, p. 240. The analysis of the relation of Substance (reality) reciprocity leads to the conclusion '- This is the Notion, the kingdom of subjectivity of Freedom'. This very phrase concludes the Objective Logic and is therefore the transition to the Subjective Logic or the 'Doctrine of the Notion'.

44. Werke 20., p. 189. Also the chapter that opens up the Subjective Logic 'The Notion in general' (werke 6, p. 245) gives an account of what Hegel takes to be the actual significance of the I in philosophy. See especially p. 253 - 256.

45. Hegel. Werke 6, p. 198.

individuation completes Spinoza's system of philosophy. In Leibniz' Monadology, the monads are the simple substances that make up the universe. The advantage they have over Spinoza's Substance, Hegel claims, is that they are more fluid and workable. As we know, he regards Spinoza's Substance as rigid and therefore unworkable (starre). The monads of Leibniz are not, however, limited in this fashion. They are not fixed and unchanging: they continue to develop themselves from themselves. Leibniz takes it 'as granted that every created thing, and consequently the created monad also, is subject to change and indeed that this change is continual in each'.⁴⁶ Hegel suggests therefore that we can regard them as Spinoza's Substance shattered into fragments: 'In opposition to the simple universal Substance of Spinoza Leibniz takes as his basis absolute multiplicity, the individual substance... These monads are not material nor extended, also they do not originate nor do they pass away in a natural fashion;...they are rather substantial forms'.⁴⁷ Each monad is universal, substantial but at the same time individual.

Each individual monad is, then, a world of its own. 'They have no windows, by which anything could come in or out'.⁴⁸ Because it has no windows the monad cannot be determined from outside. The monads are thus not casually related nor is their

46. Leibniz. Monadology in Leibniz: Philosophical Writings (Everyman Library) p.3.

47. Hegel. Werke 20, pp.238 - 239. (Hegel's emphasis).

48. Leibniz. op.cit., p. 3.

relation one of assistance. They are hard, repelling unities which allow of one relation only, implanted at their creation: harmony. In order that it may participate properly in this harmony each monad is endowed with the faculty of representation or perception. By means of this perception the individuality of the monad is preserved. Each monad is to that extent intellectual. Even the monads of matter represent themselves to themselves in this fashion. Consequently, in Leibniz' system one of the main distinctions of Spinoza's philosophy is radically transformed. The two attributes, thought and extension, are not attributes of God only. Everything possesses that distinction. The monads are both extended and intellectual. Our consciousness and the consciousness of God are simply higher forms of the perception that is an attribute of each monad. Self-consciousness is merely apperception.⁴⁹

The important methodological principle incorporated in this system is, for Hegel, that of self-differentiation: the monad develops itself from itself.⁵⁰ Not only do the natural changes of 'monads come from an internal principle' but 'there must be differentiation within that which changes'.⁵¹ Each thing is

49. Ibid.p.5.

50. The importance of Leibniz' philosophy for Hegel 'lies in the principles, in the principles of individuality and the proposition of undifferentiability (Ununterschiedbarkeit)'. J.C.Horn, Monade und Begriff: Der Weg von Leibniz zu Hegel (Oldenburg, Wien und Munchen, 1970.)

51. Leibniz.op.cit. p.4

indeed limited in itself, but it is so constituted that it limits itself accordingly. In Spinoza's system, on the other hand, things are only distinguished externally. They are simply limited, or in Hegel's terms, finite. They are the finite modes of an infinite Substance. These finite modes, if they are to be known properly, have, however, to be understood as self-differentiating. Indeed Hegel argues that we have to regard them as Leibnizian monads, limiting themselves in the manner in which they appear to be limited. This argument is one that is difficult to follow because of the admixture of Spinozistic and Leibnizian terminology. What Hegel means though is, I think, both simple and significant. The point is, as I have indicated, methodological in nature. He is arguing that our understanding of objects has to be more than a convenient categorization, that we have to set about things in a more circumspect way, recognising that things are different in themselves. It is those inherent differences that have to be the basis of any categorization. The way we qualify an object in our description has to be a limitation of the object itself. That this is Hegel's point can be seen by the example he gives: 'It is not only we that differentiate the animal by its claws, but it essentially differentiates itself in that way. In that way it defends itself and preserves itself.'⁵²

52. Hegel, Werke 20, p. 241. It seems to me that this methodological principle is important to Marx as well. I think he would claim that what was significant about his concept of capitalism was that it was not simply one way of seeing his society but that it was how that society was organised in itself.

Hegel makes this principle of individuation so much his own that he feels able to regret that the principle is not implemented in its most telling sense in Leibniz' philosophy.⁵³ This he believes is to be so because, as I have already pointed out, the monads cannot be determined from outside. Each monad encloses all life within itself. It cannot be influenced by the lives of any of its fellow-monads. As Hegel puts it, the passive moment of being is not present in the idea of the monad. They are, as I have suggested, hard repelling unities. Their peculiar property is that although each one repels the other none is repelled. All are active, none are passive. For example, our thinking may know these hard repelling unities but being itself part of a monad it does not perceive these monads directly. It cannot directly perceive anything, because that would imply that it were passively related to an object outside itself.

There is, then, Hegel suggests, the contradiction in Leibniz's philosophy, that in our thinking we know the individual, particular thing, the monad, but not as it primarily appears to human consciousness, as the particular object of our sense-impressions. Leibniz' notion of individuation he claims therefore, 'has only the sense of being the excluding one, not encroaching on the other'. So that the perception of the monad is not the perception

53. Hegel. Werke 6, p. 200 Horn (op.cit. p.136) misses the point in suggesting that Hegel simply finds Leibniz' principle of individuation to be unsatisfactory. Hegel meets Leibniz on his own ground.

of the ordinary human consciousness. It is not the perception of something that is distinct or different from itself. The perception of the monad, as Russell puts it, 'cannot be conceived as an action of the object on the percipient, since substances never interact'.⁵⁴ Rather, the monad's perception can only be conceived as its self-perception. The perception or the apperception of the human consciousness is, therefore, not of objects external to itself. It perceives only what is implanted in it at its creation. These perceptions which are implanted in the human consciousness Leibniz describes as eternal truths. It is therefore the important distinction of man as part of the world of monads that he is capable 'of the knowledge of eternal truths',⁵⁵ but in his manner of receiving that knowledge he is as badly placed as the simplest of monads.

Our knowledge is, then, according to Leibniz not of objects but of these eternal truths. It is again an instance, Hegel would claim, of thought not being considered in the form of sensation. Indeed, as ought to be clear already, Leibniz' system does not allow of such a relation. Leibniz, therefore, in his attempt to provide certain knowledge does not advance, in Hegel's estimation, beyond the position of Spinoza and Descartes.

54. Bertrand Russell. A Critical Exposition of Leibniz' Philosophy. Allen & Unwin (1957) p. 132. Hegel's claim concerning Leibniz notion of individuation is to be found on p. 250 Werke 20.

55. Leibniz .op.cit., p. 8.

Indeed, there is little to be said from Leibniz' point of view. We must either accept all our knowledge as eternal truths or reject his system altogether. Extension and thought, just as with Descartes and Spinoza, have no direct connection.⁵⁶ Their relation is the same as that among the monads themselves: one of pre-established harmony. There is, then, no question of discussing how they might be related in themselves. To this extent Leibniz, in Hegel's view, forsakes his own principle of individuation.⁵⁷

The relation among the monads is not, then, one of their own making; it is one established by God. Thus, Hegel claims, is an extremely artificial account of the relation between things. A prime example of this artificial relation he argues is the circuitous connection that exists between thought and extension. (or, what is the same, body and soul) in Leibniz' philosophy. The connection, Hegel claims, takes on the following form: 'The soul has therefore a series of conceptions which are developed from within itself and this series is originally placed within it at its creation.' And 'parallel with this series of varying conceptions there runs a series of movements of the body or of what exists outside the soul'. 'Both are essential moments of reality' but 'they have indifference to one another'.⁵⁸ There is no direct connection between the two. It appears, therefore, as though the soul is programmed at birth with conceptions that

57. Ibid.

56 Hegel *ibid.*, p 250

58. Ibid., pp 250 - 251.

correspond to all possible corporeal occurrences⁵⁹ and at the very same time the body is programmed with all those possible corporeal occurrences. That is their only link, and that link is in God. But this, Hegel argues, is an extremely artificial account of the matter since the activities of body and soul are not linked of themselves. Indeed such a relation is precluded. So that in actual life the activities of mind and body run side by side without the one directly affecting the other. Just as in Spinoza's philosophy, neither can the body determine the soul to act nor the soul the body. Their sole direct relation in Leibniz' philosophy is their pre-established harmony in God.

It is that pre-established harmony which in Hegel's view takes the place of a properly developed notion of individuation. This is the reason why Leibniz abandons his own principle since 'those absolute barriers in the in itself of Monads are not present in and for themselves, but disappear in the Absolute.'⁶⁰ The self-differentiation of the monads is a differentiation implanted by God. But Hegel claims, it is as though 'when a dog gets a beating the pain develops itself within him, similarly

59. J.C.Horn. Op.cit., gives us this example: 'The individual concept of Alexander or Caesar contains everything within itself that he will actually run across' and concludes 'so that in the final analysis the concept of Adam contains the whole human race'. p. 35. See also *ibid.* p. 50.

60. Hegel. Werke 6, Wissenschaft der Logik II, p. 225.

the beater develops itself, just as the beater develops himself within himself, their determinations all correspond to one another - but each is independent - thus not through their objective relation'.⁶¹ Individuation takes on this derisory form with Leibniz because there is no objective relation between the monads themselves. They interact not at their own behest but at that of God. None can be caused to act by another monad; none can coordinate its activity with that of another. They are not therefore individual particular things since an individual in this sense bears a relation to other things. Their differences ultimately disappear in God. They are not genuinely self-determined since they are determined by God to give the best possible of all worlds. So Hegel concludes that with Leibniz as with his fellow metaphysicians Spinoza and Descartes God 'is the drain (Gosse) into which all contradictions flow'. Since individuation is not properly conceived, it is God that has to take on the burden of the contradictions of the world.

61. Hegel Werke 20, p. 251.

HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF EMPIRICISM: THE PHILOSOPHIES OF LOCKE
AND HUME

As I indicated at the beginning of this enquiry the theories of knowledge of Locke and Hume present a marked contrast to those we have just discussed. God figures little, if at all, in their philosophies. In their accounts of the origins of our knowledge, Locke and Hume place great emphasis on its being our knowledge conveyed in our thought. Thus, in contrast to the Rationalist philosophers who tended to treat thought as a disembodied universal opposed to extension, the 'thought' with which they deal is always the thought of a human individual. Consequently the problems that arise for them in examining knowledge are of a kind wholly different from those encountered by Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. They are the problems that are more traditionally associated with the 'Problem of Knowledge'; that is they concern the relation of our thinking to its object. And Hegel, despite Habermas' strictures, has a great deal to say on the matter.

John Locke in his Essay concerning Human Understanding tackles the problem of knowledge in four stages, which correspond to the four books of the Essay. In Book One he endeavours to refute the notion that there can be innate ideas. In one way or another this notion has been implicit in the philosophies of the Rationalists. (We have just seen how, for example, it figures in the philosophy of Leibniz; as eternal truths implanted in us by God at our creation.) Locke, having to his own satisfaction refuted this notion, is then faced with the task of

describing the true origin of ideas. This, as is well-known, forms the content of the second book of the Essay: 'Of Ideas'. It is in deliberating on our ideas, their combination and their origin, that the significance of language, of our use of words is brought home to him.⁶² Book Three therefore deals with 'Words or Language in general'. And it is after that necessary digression that Locke returns to his principal concern which is to discover what knowledge we have by the use which the understanding makes of our ideas. Book Four of the Essay is therefore 'of Knowledge and Opinion'.

Hegel thinks that Locke with this account that he gives in the Essay of the origin and significance of our ideas 'had tried to satisfy a genuine need of philosophy'.⁶³ It is not to their credit that Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz dispense with such an account for the consequence is that we have to accept immediately as true the fundamental ideas of their systems. These ideas therefore appear as uncontestable definitions, axioms, propositions etc. It is in this way that the meaning of such terms as Substance, mode, extension and the Monad are fixed - without the appropriateness of the definitions being argued. Hegel finds this procedure to be unsatisfactory since, he claims, it is the object of a philosophy to prove its truth, not simply to assert it. It is therefore necessary that the derivation of such

62. John Locke. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Collier Books, New York-London 1965. Ed. M. Cranston. p.225.

63. Hegel Werke 20. p. 209.

ideas as Substance and Monad should be explained and some indication as to how they may be verified should also be given. It is Locke's merit, Hegel claims, to have drawn attention to this necessity. From now on, he therefore argues, the main ideas of philosophy have to be derived and not oracularly pronounced.⁶⁴

It is for this reason that Hegel finds Locke's starting-point in epistemology to be the correct one. Locke, he argues, rightly begins with what is 'immediate to consciousness,' by which Hegel means that Locke begins from the data supplied by our sense-impressions. It is from the content of experience beginning in this way with our sense-impressions that universals (that is, concepts such as Substance, attribute and mode) have to be derived. This starting point Hegel thinks corresponds to the experience of each individual; each therefore will be able to verify the concepts for himself. Because in the individual's experience the immediate, the sense-data, always precedes the universal: 'Space, for example, comes later to consciousness than the spatial, the species later than the individual..⁶⁵ The universal cannot therefore be presupposed since it is always a result. Indeed, Hegel suggests that everybody knows this is the case, that he begins in his thinking from wholly concrete circumstances and only subsequently organises that data into knowledge. Hence philosophy has to proceed

64. Ibid p. 223.

65. Ibid p. 209.

in that manner not only because it is the manner in which ordinary thinking proceeds, but also in order that the ordinary thinker may attest to its truth.

In adopting this course in his philosophy Locke is in Hegel's view completely correct. However he falls down in Hegel's estimation by not pursuing it dialectically.⁶⁶ Starting with individual sense-experience Locke seeks to show that all ideas originate in sense-impressions, and it is the manner in which he sets about doing this, Hegel claims, that it is undialectical. According to Locke ideas are either arrived at through the individual's perception of the body's sensations or through the individual's reflection on his mental activity aroused by those sensations. There is no mental activity prior to the stimulus of sensation. All thinking therefore is brought about by 'the impressions that outward objects make on our senses'.⁶⁷ It is in this way, Hegel says, that 'universal ideas' are shown by Locke 'to arise subjectively, from objects'.⁶⁸ Instead of his proceeding dialectically from the object and the subject to the universality of the I and the universality of the object, Locke remains at the starting-point: individual, contingent sense-perception. In his philosophy therefore, Hegel argues, we have always to do with the individual sense-perception, never with objects as objects of thought or with

66. *ibid.* 'So the course which Locke adopted is quite correct. But it is not dialectically (adopted) rather the universal is analysed from the empirical concrete'.

67. Locke. Essay concerning Human Understanding (op.cit)p. 68.

68. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 205.

thought as shared (universal) thought. It is on these grounds that Hegel thinks Kant was right to criticize Locke by arguing that 'it is not the individual who is the source of universal conceptions but the understanding'.⁶⁹ Hegel is prepared to grant that ideas may originate in individual sense-perception but they are not in his opinion wholly formed or, indeed, to be verified there. This is Hegel's major methodological criticism of Locke: that he places too high a value on sensation in our knowledge. This overestimation of the significance of sense-data arises because Locke does not conceive this starting-point dialectically. Had he conceived it in that manner, Hegel believes, he would have found that with the advance of the argument our conception of its beginning is continually modified.

As I have already remarked, Locke begins his Essay on the Human Understanding with a refutation of the notion of innate ideas. He is opposed to the idea on perfectly clear grounds. They are that 'if we will attentively consider new-born children, we shall have little reason to think that they bring many ideas into the world with them. For, bating perhaps some faint ideas of hunger and thirst, and warmth...there is not the least appearance of any settled ideas at all in them; especially of ideas answering the terms which make up those universal propositions that are esteemed as innate principles.'⁷⁰ Unfortunately, Hegel's attitude to the matter is more ambiguous. He is neither

69. Ibid p. 206.

70. Locke. op.cit. p.52.

fully able to accept the notion of innate ideas nor (like Locke) to reject it completely. He is not prepared to discard the notion since he thinks Locke's rejection of the notion to be tied up with a conception of the mind as a tabula rasa,⁷¹ and he is not able to accept the implication of this conception that the mind receives all its content through external stimulation and that therefore there is no part of an idea that is attributable to the mind alone. For this is what Locke claims: that the mind which is a tabula rasa receives all its content from sense-experience. Hegel grants that there is some strength to the criticism of the notion of innate ideas. As we already know, he believes that philosophers through presenting their principal ideas as innate or eternal truths had evaded the task of proving those ideas to be true. What is more, Hegel thinks that Locke had established the important precedent in philosophy that ideas should be regarded as first being caused 'through something external'. 'The activity of mind', he argues, 'is first reaction; only in this way will it become conscious of its essence'.⁷² Accordingly, it is not sufficient that ideas be regarded simply as being existent in the mind. We have to understand them, following the precedent established by Locke, as first being caused by our environment. Against this background, however, Hegel does want to argue that the notion of innate ideas has a significance. They do exist in the mind in a

71. Hegel. *Ibid.*, p211.

.72. *Ibid.* p. 211

certain sense for him but, maybe, not in the sense initially intended by the philosophers who had first argued their existence. He would rather regard them as 'properties of a germ (Keim), that do not yet exist',⁷³ not as completely developed ideas. In this sense he believes them to be essential aspects of the thinking process. So he modifies the notion to the extent that he believes the ideas are not to be regarded as inborn but as 'implicit' in the human consciousness. This, then, as far as it goes is Hegel's attitude to the notion of innate ideas. It is clearly a peculiar response to the problem, and I believe there are two reasons why this appears to be so. Firstly, it is strange that the idealist philosopher, Hegel, should argue that the first stimulus to thought is provided by the external world, for this suggests, that certainly at one level, he admits the existence of a world external to mind. Secondly, although Hegel is prepared to admit that the mind first receives its content from outside, he is not like Locke prepared to regard the mind as a blank. We can perhaps agree with Hegel that the mind is not a blank but this tells us nothing about the origin of ideas. Peculiarly, it is sufficient for Hegel to insist that those ideas are 'implicit' in the human mind. 'The question whence they came' is devoid of interest for him.⁷⁴

But it is precisely that question that is of interest to

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

Locke, so that willy-nilly Hegel has to engage in the discussion concerning the origin of our ideas. Locke takes all ideas to have their origin in experience. He believes this is so since if we 'suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, devoid of all characters, without any ideas: How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge. To this I answer, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observations employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understanding with all the materials of our thinking'.⁷⁵ Hegel does not wish to disagree with this. He believes, however, that the important question is 'what one understands by experience'.⁷⁶ Locke, as, we can see, understands by experience 'our observations employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds' awakened by external stimulation. Experience is, for Locke, the experience of the impression that the world makes on ourselves, and it takes its origin in the senses. The senses convey to the mind, 'Several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them'.⁷⁷

75. Locke. Essay op.cit.. p. 61. (Locke's emphasis.)

76. Hegel. Suhrkamp Verlag Werke 20, p. 215.

77. Locke. ibid. p. 215.

Once in the mind these ideas are operated on by our 'internal sense' and through this internal sense observing its own activity we have the ideas of reflection. Thus both the ideas of sensation and reflection are derived from experience conceived as the observation of the objects of our senses. This account of experience Hegel regards as the 'natural' epistemology of natural science. However, he says, it is not for that reason true. The theory of knowledge, in his view, has to be more than a reflection on the activities of natural scientists.

In the question at issue, the proper account of experience, Hegel agrees with Locke that everything is experienced. Everything, he admits, has to be in our experience before it is known. It would be absurd for one to believe that one can know what is not experienced. But it is what is understood by experience that has, in Hegel's view, to be clarified. When Locke talks of the experience of the mind, what he means is its reflection on what is external to it, what, therefore, does not pertain to its nature. But this is not how Hegel understands experience. For him 'I must have that myself, be that myself, what I have and am is experience'.⁷⁸ In his view experience is not simply what we sense, but what determines and moves my mind. Even if we add the notion of reflection to that of sensation we still do not have an adequate account, since experience is not of something that is simply external to me; that something must either be part of my identity or be something that I possess. For example,

78. Hegel. *ibid*, p. 213.

'I am a man, have activity, will, a consciousness of that which I am and others are, and so this is certainly experience'.⁷⁹ So experience, Hegel appears to be arguing, is always personal and active in nature. It presupposes a will. Equally it is not only the experience of myself qua individual or simply of objects of my perception, but of others. Thus experience, Hegel suggests, is immediately social; certainly it is never blank.

It is immediately apparent that experience conceived in this fashion is not confined to observation as with the empiricist philosophers. According to Hegel it is both practical and social. And it is his opinion that the problems of the empiricist philosophers, who rest their arguments on a narrow conception of experience, recede into the background if we understand experience as he suggests. For example, that I know man from experience implies that 'all are men, I do not need to have seen them all' to be sure of that. That 'I have a consciousness of myself and what others are' implies that I know what men in general are.⁸⁰ My experience correctly conceived is per se universal. By which Hegel means we do not have to search outside ourselves for a criterion of truth; it is contained in experience itself.

It seems we have now come near to understanding what Hegel means by experience; it does not appear all that different from

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

what is normally understood by experience. But the appearance is deceptive, experience, as we normally use it is far too vague a term for Hegel's purposes. In his vocabulary it has a more precise meaning. According to him 'it is nothing more than the form of objectivity; that there is something in consciousness means that it has an objective form for it or, it experiences the same, it looks on it as something objective, - immediate knowledge, perception'.⁸¹ Everything that there is to be known must, in his view, take on this form, it has to be something for consciousness. The object must be seen, heard - sensed in one way or another. It has to be an appearance in the world. An essential component of Hegel's notion of experience is, then, paradoxically the empiricist's depiction of it. Since 'there is in Empiricism this great principle that what is true must be in reality and must be there for perception'.⁸² So our experience, he suggests, is firstly the connection that unthought has with reality. It is this link that is not developed in the philosophies of Leibniz, Spinoza and Descartes since 'thought is not considered as sensation'. But as we have now been led to expect, that, for Hegel, is not all that there is to experience. It has, he says, to be differentiated from the simple individual perception of individual facts.⁸³ The fact that something has taken on an objective form for consciousness in its sense-experience does not exhaust experience. Just as essential to the notion of experience, in Hegel's view, is the content of the appearance

81. Ibid p. 215.

82. Hegel, Suhrkamp Werke 8 Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I, p. 100.

83. Ibid.p. III.

(Welterscheinung) what it is 'in itself'. This is, admittedly, a complex argument; but it accounts for the universal and personal nature of Hegel's view of experience. What is as essential in understanding experience is, he argues, that it should also be seen as 'the overcoming (Aufheben) of the semblance of otherness and the recognition of the necessity of the thing through itself'.⁸⁴ The other essential aspect of experience is then that we should know what is experienced 'in itself'. That is the task of science (Wissenschaft). In science Hegel thinks that the semblance of the 'in itself' being external to me is overcome. The object has to become something for me as well as being objective as the empiricist in his account of experience claims. It becomes something for me, Hegel believes, in being known. In science, then, he argues, experience is both personal and universal. It is that which constitutes genuine experience.

We have already encountered the idea that the lack of unity of being and consciousness implies an 'otherness' to Hegel. It enters into his criticism of both Descartes and Spinoza. As we have seen, he believes that it is the purpose of philosophy, to overcome this otherness. It is, as ought now to be clear, a leitmotiv in his criticism of Locke. It is in the empiricists' notion of experience that this otherness takes on its sharpest form. Certainly, Hegel believes Locke's philosophy wakens in the modern era 'the bifurcation' of thought and being, of the I and reality.⁸⁵

84. Werke 20 p. 215.

85. ibid. p. 210. That bifurcation he depicts as identical with need and pain.

Locke in regarding experience merely as individual and passive had placed reality on the one side and thought on the other in such a manner that it was impossible to mediate the two successfully. But experience properly conceived is the overcoming of that bifurcation. Experience is, Hegel has argued, not only the form of objectivity in general but is also the consciousness of what I am or have. Experience is the overcoming of bifurcation since it is the process of the objective world being internalised, becoming my own.

I shall not discuss here the merits of this, Hegel's account of experience as the process of overcoming objectivity. I think it will be more appropriate to discuss it when we come to Marx's criticism of the Phenomenology of Mind, for it is there that the whole discussion concerning externalisation and alienation in Hegel's philosophy arises. What concerns us here is the strength of Hegel's criticism of Locke's theory of knowledge. That I think lies in his objection to the narrowness of Locke's idea of experience. Experience, as Locke understands it, is almost exclusively confined to the individual's sensation. What, according to him, we are to suppose when we examine experience is that the mind is, as he says, a white paper, void of all characters, without any idea of its own. Experience is what subsequently impresses itself on the mind through the organs of sense. Experience, then, is confined to tasting, seeing, hearing, feeling and smelling. Hegel, however, argues that this is but the matter of thought not thinking itself. For that reason, he suggests, Locke's notion of experience lacks universality. Now what Hegel

appears to mean by this is that what we experience according to Locke's account of it is deficient in two respects. Firstly, it lacks universality because it is the sense-experience of an individual; and who, Hegel would argue, can convey a feeling other than subjectively? Secondly, it lacks universality because it is the experience of an isolated individual not, as I indicated earlier, a shared experience. Experience conceived in this way cannot furnish knowledge, certain or otherwise.

Hegel seeks to ground this criticism more firmly by examining Locke's account of the derivation of complex ideas. Now, according to Locke such complex ideas as the notions of cause and effect are derived from experience in this way: 'In the notice that our senses take of the constant vicissitudes of things, we cannot but observe that several particular, both qualities and substances, begin to exist; and that they receive this their existence from the due application and operation of some other being. From this observation we get our ideas of cause and effect'.⁸⁶ This account of the origin of our complex ideas, Hegel argues, is tautologous in nature. It appears that Locke is claiming that we obtain the notions of cause and effect simply by observing the 'constant vicissitudes of things'. By observing that constant vicissitude of things we perceive that some things begin to exist, and we attribute that existence to the action of another existent thing. We call the thing coming into existence 'effect' and the thing that is already existent 'cause'. Locke seems then to be

86. Locke.op.cit.,p. 188.

saying that the complex ideas cause and effect are simply labels we attach to two distinct but connected observations. What has happened in Hegel's opinion is that we have been asked to take note of two objects in our sense-experience that already stand in a concrete relation to one another.⁸⁷ From the particular instance of this relation we are asked to pass immediately to the universal: the categories or the complex ideas of cause and effect. It is, Hegel argues, 'a translation from the determinate into the form of universality, wherein the same lies at its basis...'⁸⁸ The tautology, Hegel would claim, consists therefore in the categories being derived from what is already known to be a particular instance of their applicability. For, at the basis of the observation which is employed to derive the categories lie the categories themselves. Hegel's point appears to be simply that we cannot point to a particular instance of the applicability of the ideas cause and effect without our beforehand possessing those ideas.

This, then, is what Hegel believes to be the defect of Locke's derivation of complex ideas from sense-experience. Locke, of course, does not immediately proceed to this derivation in his Essay on the Human Understanding. It comes at the end of a lengthy account of the general process of abstraction that takes place in our thinking. It is the nature of this general process of abstraction that for him casts doubts on the certainty of our knowledge. He begins, as Hegel notes, by making a distinction

87. Hegel, Suhrkamp Verlag Werke 20, p. 219. 'One could say,' he adds, 'that there is nothing more superficial than this deduction of ideas.'

88. Ibid.

similar to that of Descartes and Spinoza between ideas 'as they are ideas or perceptions in our minds, and as they are modifications of matter in the bodies that cause such perceptions in us'.⁸⁹ It is in the basis of this observation that Locke makes the distinction between the primary qualities of an object: the modifications of matter in the bodies and its secondary qualities: ideas or perceptions in our minds. The primary qualities are 'such as are utterly inseparable from the body, in what state soever it be'.⁹⁰ He suggests that the principal examples of such primary qualities are solidity, extension, figure, motion and rest. Secondary qualities are on the other hand those 'which in truth are nothing in the objects themselves but powers to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities'.⁹¹ It follows for Locke that simple ideas derived from sense-impressions do not necessarily resemble the objects which are their effective cause. He appears, then, to be claiming that simple sense-ideas, such as that of colour, are not derived from things by themselves but rather from our manner of sensing things. Thus simple ideas 'whatever reality we by mistake attribute to them' are, he repeats, 'nothing in the objects themselves but powers to produce various sensations in us'.⁹² Simple ideas of sensation in his estimation fall short of giving an accurate description of the object which induces them. This distinction, as Hegel points out, is one made by Descartes and Spinoza. We might remember, however, that the distinction takes on a slightly

89. Locke. op.cit.. p. 82.

90. Ibid. p. 83.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid. p. 85.

different form in their philosophies since they are prepared to admit only one primary quality of objects: extension. They therefore believe that the knowledge imparted by our senses is more restricted than Locke suggests. They are, however, at one though with Locke in stressing the deceptive nature of the ideas imparted by our sense-experience.

Hegel is of the opinion that this emphasis on the deceptive nature of our sense-experience represents, in Locke's theory of knowledge, a contradiction. He accounts for the contradiction in this way. Truth, Locke asserts, 'is the agreement of our ideas with the reality of things'.⁹³ This, obviously, is a correspondence notion of truth according to which we establish the true nature of things by observing 'the product of things operating on the mind' that is, by examining our sense-ideas.⁹⁴ The touchstone of knowledge is, then, our observations of external sensible objects. The contradiction arises, Hegel claims, in that this touchstone, in the course of Locke's distinguishing primary and secondary qualities in objects, is itself shown to furnish unreliable knowledge. So, Hegel suggests, in Locke's theory of knowledge the standard of truth is itself untrue. Hegel expresses this in a somewhat complex manner by claiming that, in Locke's epistemology, 'the moment of being for another is explained to be inessential' and nonetheless (Locke) sees 'all truth in being for another'.⁹⁵ By which I take him to mean,

93. Ibid., p. 325.

94. Ibid., p. 320.

95. Hegel, Werke 20, p. 216 He thinks that Locke himself is aware of this problem.

as I already indicated, that on the one hand Locke stresses the deceptive nature of sense-impressions (the moment of being for another is explained to be essential) and on the other he takes as the standard of truth that very same sense-experience (he sees all truth in being for another). Hence the claim is that Locke undermines his own theory of knowledge by arguing that the simple ideas of sensation are deceptive.

It is nevertheless through the combination of these various imprecise simple ideas that, according to Locke, we are able to construct those complex ideas with which to perceive substances. It is more than evident that 'such a complex idea cannot be the real essence of any substance for then the properties in that body would depend on that complex idea, and be deducible from it, and their necessary connection be known.'⁹⁶ Locke argues that the ideas making up a complex idea ought to be derived from the substance itself. However, what our senses secure from the observation of the substance itself (at least in the case of the ideas of the secondary qualities of that substance) is unreliable knowledge. So the only way that our complex ideas can possibly be congruent with the properties of the substance by itself is 'that the properties in that body would depend on that complex idea.' But this is clearly incompatible with the standard of truth which is the object as it is by itself. It follows that all our complex ideas are imperfect and inadequate. Since, if we did have an exact collection of all the secondary qualities of a substance in our complex idea, we should not have an idea

96. Locke. *ibid.* p. 215.

of the essence of that thing.⁹⁷ In Locke's view, we cannot know what a substance is in itself.

Locke conceives the problem more fully under the notion of co-existence. This is a simple enough notion. It is his contention that there is no certainty that what we understand to co-exist in one subject in our ideas does so in reality. So, as far as Locke is concerned, it is impossible for us to know what properties have a necessary union or inconsistency with one another. It follows that it is impossible for us to know how we should properly demarcate substances with our ideas. He claims that this is so because firstly, it is most probable that there are insensible parts of objects which equally co-exist with the causes of our other ideas in the object and, secondly, because it may be that the very same object will be found elsewhere in nature with yet another property co-existing in it.⁹⁸ In both these instances we would be prevented from demarcating an object properly. We are, then, on these grounds again not able to claim adequate knowledge of substances since such knowledge would consist in knowing what all the properties of an object are 'by itself'.

Hegel concludes from all this that 'the universal as such is according to Locke the product of our mind; it is not objective, but only relates itself to the object'.⁹⁹ Since we do after all have complex ideas of substances it appears to Hegel that Locke

97. Ibid. p. 220.

98. Ibid. p. 310.

99. Hegel, Werke, p. 220.

is obliged to argue that those ideas are something we formulate for our subjective purposes only. The last thing he can argue is that they are objective or true. This notion of a complex idea Hegel equates with his notion of a species-idea (Gattungsbegriff). So he takes Locke's reasoning to imply that 'the species indeed expresses something that is in the objects; they do not exhaust the objects however.'¹⁰⁰ In his view, this reasoning accounts for the distinction that Locke makes between real and nominal essences. The species ideas are necessarily nominal essences rather than real essences because they do not exhaust the nature of their objects. For example, in speaking of man or gold or any other species which we suppose to consist of a precise essence imparted to the objects by nature, we cannot be certain, Locke thinks, of the truth of any affirmation made about it.¹⁰¹ We are indeed, in his view, quite out of our way when we think that things contain within themselves the qualities they appear to possess.¹⁰²

Therefore Locke is, as Hegel notes, quite in awe when it comes to understanding nature. According to him we have but little insight into its essence. Things, however absolute and

100. Ibid.

101.. Locke. *ibid.* p. 332.

102. 'To suppose that the species of things are anything but the sorting of them under general names, according as they agree to several abstract ideas of which we make those names the signs, is to confound truth, and introduce uncertainty into all the general propositions that can be made about them.' *ibid.*

entire they may seem in themselves, 'are but retainers to other parts of nature for that which they are most taken notice of by us'. Those of their qualities that we observe, including any of their actions and powers, are 'owing to something without them'.¹⁰³ There is not one part of nature, he would claim, that is not in this way dependent on something beyond our apprehension. Because of this dependence of our knowledge on our limited experience 'a science of nature and the corporeal world is', for Locke, 'impossible; what remains to us are more or less probable intimations which through each new fact can be overthrown'.¹⁰⁴ What nature is in itself is, then, in Locke's view forever beyond our ken.

Hegel suggests that this is so because Locke never achieved a full understanding of the nature of the thing in itself (Ansich). We have already had some indication of this argument in Hegel's account of experience. For Hegel, what a thing 'in itself' is, is its concept, that is, the thing as it is understood and not, as Locke would have it, the thing as it is passively perceived by our senses. Hegel would claim therefore that the thing in itself is only properly experienced in our understanding. There its 'apparent otherness' is overcome. Because Locke does not have this view of the in itself (Ansich) Hegel thinks his epistemology is shallow. Obviously, there is an element of Hegel's

103. Locke. *ibid.*, p. 339.

104. Ernst Cassirer. *op.cit.*, Vol. 2. p. 209. Hegel thinks this objection to the certainty of natural science to be the old old litany: 'Ins Innere der Natur dringt kein erschaffener Geist'. Werke 20, p. 220.

antipathy to all materialism contained in this criticism. None the less we might agree with Hegel when he argues that Locke's epistemology remains at the level of appearance. Since, after all, Locke is concerned with how things appear to our senses Hegel seems to be right in asserting that all Locke has to offer is knowledge of phenomena or 'that which is and not what is true.'¹⁰⁵ Be that as it may, he believes that Locke through his shallowness has misconstrued the purpose of philosophy. In Hegel's view it has as its purpose the examination of the content of experience for its truth. It is certainly not its aim to limit experience as the empiricists do. With Locke, he adds, the truth (unless it is merely verbal truth) simply signifies the harmony of our ideas with external things. All that then arises in his philosophy is the question of the relation of thought to its object. (This is what we have identified earlier as the problem of knowledge.) The result of this, attempting to discover the limits of our knowledge, Hegel maintains, is that the content of thought itself is left to one side. But where on the other hand 'thought is from the beginning concrete, thought and the universal identical with extension, the question concerning the relation of the two is incomprehensible, without interest'.¹⁰⁶ This we might regard as one of the formal grounds for Hegel's rejection of the problem of knowledge. He reasons that it cannot represent a problem to

105. Hegel *ibid.*, p. 214. The general objection is to the positivity of the approach.

106. The opposite of this is, of course, bifurcated thinking. See Werke 20 p. 210.

genuine philosophy which is immediately the concrete knowledge of its object (of the *Ansich*). In effect, what he is saying is fairly simple. He is saying that where philosophy is knowledge there is no question as to whether it might be.

If that is one of the formal grounds for Hegel's rejection of the problem of knowledge, we might learn more of the substantial grounds in examining his objections to the philosophy of David Hume, for in Hume's philosophy the problem takes on its most vexing form. It leads, as we shall see, to a species of scepticism. Now Hume, Hegel thinks, took Locke's principle of experience as his starting-point 'but followed it through more consistently'.¹⁰⁷ Hume took experience to mean 'immediate perception' or, what he calls the impressions made by objects on our senses. As with Locke immediate perception (or these impressions) is the only source of our ideas. Ideas, according to Hume, are then either derived from sense impressions or the impressions of reflection i.e., our feelings concerning the objects about us or our feelings concerning the activity of our mind. From this starting-point, Hegel explains, Hume proceeds to undermine in a consistent fashion the objectivity of all our ideas: 'he abrogated the objectivity, the being in and for itself of the determinations of thought.'¹⁰⁸

107. Ibid p. 281.

108. Ibid. Hegel does not simply regard the achievement of Hume's negatively. This is indicated by his use of the term aufheben for abrogate. Aufheben can also mean overcome. Read in this sense it implies that Hume's achievement was to create the conditions for a higher form of philosophy. This in Hegel's view is his main achievement. He sets the scene for Kant. See below p.64.

According to Hegel, Hume developed his ideas most clearly in connection with the categories, cause and effect. The terms, we would agree, are ordinarily used to signify a necessary connection between two objects or events. Hume thinks that this ordinary usage betokens a conclusion going 'beyond the impressions of our senses'.¹⁰⁹ For that reason the notion of causation immediately arouses his sceptical distrust. As he argues it, we have in our minds the categories cause and effect which, to have any reality must correspond to the impressions of our senses. Their reality, he believes, must be owing to the appearance of an object or event. We are therefore not justified in going beyond appearance in an attempt to establish their reality. In his view all that we could possibly gain by that would be further uncertainty. Since, 'As long as we confine our speculations to the appearances of objects to our senses, without entering into disquisitions concerning their real nature and operations, we are safe from all difficulties and can never be embarrassed by any question'. That is because 'the appearance of objects to our senses are all consistent; and no difficulties can ever arise, but from the obscurity of the terms we make use of.'¹¹⁰ The ideas then of cause and effect must be contained in our experience, in 'the appearance of objects to our senses' to have an objective reality for Hume. But all that may be induced from experience so conceived, as Hume rightly points out, is that the two objects

109. David Hume. A Treatise of Human Nature Book One. Fontana Philosophy Library 1962, p. 120.

110. Ibid. pp. 109 - 110 footnote.

or events that we designate cause and effect are contiguous and successive. Added to that, we may conclude from past experience that they are found in constant conjunction. It is on the strength of this evidence that we are led to describe one object or event as cause and another as effect. Now, the substance of Hume's claim is that the grounds of which we would hold that description to be true are 'that instances of which we have no experience, must resemble those of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same.'¹¹¹ But there is in his view no legitimacy in these grounds. Precisely because we have not yet observed the new experience or, what is the same thing, all instances of the object or event have not yet appeared, we do not, in Hume's opinion, know with certainty that one is the cause of the other. Therefore it is only a probable and not a necessary conjunction that the ideas describe. Where they are taken to describe a necessary conjunction of two objects, that, Hume argues, is our inference only. As he says, 'the necessary connection depends on the inference, instead of the inference's depending on the necessary connection.'¹¹² The necessity, Hegel takes Hume to mean, is not to be found in experience but rather we carry it into experience; we make the connection in a contingent, subjective manner.¹¹³

111. Ibid.p. 135.

112. Ibid. p. 135.

113. Werke 20, p. 278. L.Kolakowski (Positivist Philosophy, Penguin Books 1972) explains Hume's point in this way: 'The ground of conjunction between events is not revealed in experience, all that we perceive is the conjunction itself. This explains psychologically why we believe the causal nexus is necessary: it is a habit rooted in association - but for that very reason refutes the belief. The 'necessity' is in our minds only, not in the things themselves.' p. 47.

Hume develops this claim more fully by analysing the reasons for our holding an idea to be true. When we hold a thought to be true we are said to believe it. So it is the nature of belief that interests him. It is in this analysis of the nature of belief that Hume comes to the conclusion that an idea that we take to be true is nothing other than 'a lively idea related to a present impression.'¹¹⁴ It is the strength of the impression made on our minds by those lively ideas that, he says, causes them to be believed. For 'an idea assented to feels different from a fictitious idea that the fancy alone presents to us: and this different feeling I endeavour to explain by calling it a superior force or vivacity, or solidity, or firmness or steadiness.'¹¹⁵ According to Hume, then, we hold an idea to be true, not because we have reasons to believe it to be so but ultimately because we feel it to be true. 'When I am convinced of a principle, it is only an idea which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence.'¹¹⁶ It follows for Hume then that 'in philosophy, we can go no further than assert, that it is something felt by the mind, which distinguishes the ideas of judgement from the fictions of the imagination.'¹¹⁷ Therefore if philosophy has to offer a criterion of truth it can only legitimately suggest that it be an aesthetic one. Since 'all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. It is not solely in poetry and music we must follow our taste and sentiment but

114. Hume, op.cit., p. 146.

115. Ibid., p. 145

116. Ibid., p. 152.

117. Ibid., p. 145.

likewise in philosophy.¹¹⁸

In Hume's view, not even philosophy then can offer an objective criterion of truth. It obliges us to conclude that all we believe concerning the external world rests on a subjective conviction. So the kind of necessary connection we attribute to the relations between two objects or events in the notions of cause and effect is purely subjective in nature. 'Objects', as far as Hume is concerned 'have no discoverable connections together; nor is it from any other principle but custom operating on the imagination, that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another'.¹¹⁹ Hence any necessary connection we attribute to objects cannot be objective. Hume argues that we attribute the necessary connection to the objects simply as a matter of custom. And Hegel takes this to be the central claim of Hume's whole philosophy. Just 'as we call everything custom which proceeds from a past repetition, without any new reasoning or conclusion, we may establish it as a certain truth,' Hume claims 'that all the belief, which follows upon any present impression, is derived solely from that origin.'¹²⁰ The nature of that customary belief in the instance of cause and effect is that we infer from our past observations of the constant conjunction of two objects or events that they will be found to be in constant conjunction in the future. The constant conjunction which causes this belief, Hume suggests, in some cases may be so familiar that it might not pass through our minds that we are assuming or inferring

118. Ibid., p. 135.

119. Ibid., p. 152.

120. Ibid., p. 151.

a casual relation. For example, the idea of sinking is so closely connected with that of water, and the idea of suffocating with sinking 'that the mind makes the transition' from the one idea to the other 'without the assistance of memory.'¹²¹ The necessary connection between sinking and suffocating is one that we infer simply as a matter of habit.

We will not be surprised to find that Hegel disputes this conclusion. He does however believe that such a conclusion necessarily follows from Hume's account of experience. In his view Hume's conclusions serve to emphasise the self-contradictory nature of empiricism. Indeed he suggests that we might regard ourselves as engaged in the critique of empiricism simply in following through Hume's reasoning. It is in this respect, Hegel claims, that Hume adheres to and implements Locke's principle of experience more consistently. By doing this, all that he has done is make evident the tautologous nature of Locke's derivation of complex ideas. Hegel indeed agrees that complex ideas such as cause and effect cannot be derived from our experience understood simply as sense-perception. To this extent he concedes the validity of Hume's analysis of causality. Since 'experience as sense-perception contains no necessity, no casual relation.'¹²²

121. Ibid., p. 152.

122. Hegel, Werke 20, p. 277. Also 'Consequently what can really be asserted beyond all doubt is limited to individual accounts of immediate observations; assumptions concerning the nature of the world 'given' in those observations, whether touching its reality or the nature of the observing subject, are excluded. It is easy to see that in this conception of knowledge, that which we truly know is utterly barren and unproductive, whereas that which helps us to live, to create a science and enrich our store of information generally is no longer knowledge in the proper sense of the term.' Kolakowski, op.cit., pp. 51-52. His general assessment of Hume's philosophy is close to that of Hegel, especially Hegel's belief that Hume's philosophy serves to show up the inherently contradictory nature of empiricism: Kolakowski says, 'Hume carried empiricism into its radical latter-day phase, making use of criteria elaborated by anti-empirical systems he brought about the self-destruction of the empirical doctrine.' Ibid. pp. 55-56.

If we were to understand experience merely as sense-perception, Hegel suggests, all we would have as its content is a series of disconnected impressions. It is Hume's merit to have pointed this out. Hume makes it clear that we cannot derive any idea that has universal validity from mere sense-experience. Hegel gives this example to illustrate his point. When we say that the pressure of the water is the cause of the destruction of a house during a flood what we have is not 'a pure experience' in the Lockean sense.¹²³ Were it a 'pure experience' we would have observed merely two occurrences: the water forcing itself against the side of the house and the house collapsing. As Hume rightly points out, there is nothing contained in those two impressions themselves which implies that they are necessarily linked. It is we that take the idea of causation into that 'pure experience'. The statement, that the pressure of the water caused the house to be destroyed is not merely a statement of fact but an inference of the observer; and Hume argues, as we have seen, that we make such inferences simply out of habit.

Hume's insistence on this account of causality is a source of amazement to Hegel. This, more than anything else, is what leads him into dispute with Hume. He believes that 'one cannot descend lower in thinking than to imply that all universal and necessary reasoning is arbitrary.'¹²⁴ He suggests that we have an unsavoury contrast in Hume's philosophy for 'perception is supposed to remain the basis of what should count as truth', and 'so universality and necessity appear as something unjustified, as subjective

123. Hegel. *ibid.*, p. 278.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

contingency, a pure custom whose content may be so constituted (beschaffen) or not.¹²⁵ But simply because we make inferences in our observations which go beyond experience, understood as perception, does not imply to Hegel that those observations are contingent. In his view, we have rather to accept that the subject plays a more significant role in constituting scientific knowledge than empiricism cares to allow. This is readily understood, he argues, if we regard experience in a more comprehensive way, not simply as external experience, but as my experience. It is Kant who in Hegel's estimation first takes philosophy in this direction. Hume's greatest merit, Hegel says, therefore, in rounding off his rather summary judgement of him, is that his scepticism gives Kant his starting-point.

125. Hegel. Werke 8, p. 111.

CHAPTER TWO

HEGEL AND GERMAN IDEALISM.

The Critique of Kant.

In discussing the philosophy of Kant we enter, according to Hegel, a new epoch in the history of thought. Kant's philosophy is the philosophy of the I, the 'unity of apperception', or what Hegel calls the 'freedom of self-consciousness'. It is the philosophy which more than any other brings home to us the significance of the subject, of the I in knowledge. This development Hegel links (in a manner we have since learnt to associate with Marx) with the general historical events of the time. The philosophy of Kant, he suggests, is the theoretical consciousness of the practice of the French Revolutionaries.¹ The demand of that practice was that 'everything, all existence, all activity' 'should be something useful'. (ib.) And Hegel, rightly or wrongly, takes the general implication of this utilitarian view to be that what a thing is 'in itself' may be ignored. Its concern, he says, is with what things are 'for another', that other is, of course, man. (ib.) Consequently what reality is 'in itself' is declared to be insignificant. All that was required of reality was that it yield to the demands of the self-conscious individual. Because it takes up this position, the philosophy of Kant is for Hegel the 'Aufklärung' reduced to method. The parallel is clear.

1. 'The consciousness of this practice - an abstract way - is the Kantian philosophy'. Hegel. Werke, Suhrkamp Verlag, Vol. 20, p. 332.

Kant maintains in his theory of knowledge that we cannot know what the thing 'in itself' is. It follows we cannot know what is objectively true. We only know appearances, or, rather, the phenomenon as it is observed by the individual, contingent self-consciousness. Therefore, as with Utilitarianism, 'all that is essential falls within self-consciousness.' (ib.)

Although Hegel thinks that in this way Kant begins a new epoch in the history of philosophy he regards the question that lies at the heart of Kant's philosophy to be the same as that which preoccupied Locke and Hume. In his early essay on 'Faith and Knowledge' (Glauben und Wissen) he quotes the following from the Introduction to Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding: 'For I thought that the first step towards satisfying several inquiries the mind of man was very apt to run into, was to take a survey of our own understanding, examine our own powers, and to see what things they are adapted'. This he believes might just as well have come from the Introduction to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason because that work ties philosophy to the same purpose as that revealed in Locke's Essay, 'namely, the examination of the finite understanding'.² Kant in his Critique examines, as did Locke, our cognitive faculties with the aim of discovering 'how our powers are adapted' to the comprehension of things. The prime interest of the theoretical part of Kant's philosophy is, as with the empirical philosophers, the relation of thought to things outside ourselves. But in considering this

2. Hegel. Werke Vol. 2, p. 304. The essay was published in July 1802 as a contribution to the Critical Journal of Philosophy which Hegel jointly edited with Schelling.

problem, Kant produces new results, results which Hegel believes to be extremely significant, though vitiated by the limits of the problem posed.

The starting-point of Kant's critical philosophy is, as is well known, the scepticism of David Hume. This scepticism, as ought to be clear from our consideration of Hegel's criticism of Hume, consisted in regarding all assertions concerning necessary connexions in the external world to be based on custom, not on certain knowledge. These conclusions are derived from an empirical view of experience. A view of experience that regards all our knowledge to have arisen in the 'impressions' of our senses, and Kant accepts this view as a premiss in examining our cognitive faculties: 'There is indeed' he says, 'no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience'.³ However, within that premiss he makes a distinction that he thinks was missed by the Empiricists: 'If, however, all our knowledge begins with our experience, still, it does not for that reason all simply originate in experience. For it could indeed be that the knowledge we have from experience (Erfahrungserkenntnis) was a compound of what we receive through our impressions and what our faculty of cognition (occasioned solely by sense impressions) supplies from itself, which addition we do not distinguish from the basic material until long practice... in the separation of the same.' (ib.) So, as we can see, Kant wishes to argue that in all our empirical knowledge there is an

3. Immanuel Kant. Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, Werke (Suhrkamp Verlag) Edited by Wilhelm Weischedel. Vol. 2, p. 45.

element that pertains to our understanding only. This element he calls knowledge a priori. This knowledge constitutes a part of experience since the 'common understanding is itself never without such.'⁴ Experience, then, he divides into two constituent parts. Instead of it being the one element - what we receive from our sense-impressions - it is, Kant believes, made up of two elements, sense-impressions and ideas a priori.

Kant wants to claim not only that the ordinary understanding always contains knowledge a priori but also that the theoretical sciences are constituted in the same way.⁵ This claim rests on the distinction he makes between synthetic and analytic judgements. Analytic judgements are of the general form such that the predicate B belongs to the subject A in a manner that the predicate B is already contained in A. As an example of such a judgement he gives: 'all bodies are extended'. He believes that in this judgement the notion of extension is contained in the notion of body. Synthetic judgements are, contrariwise, judgements in which the predicate B lies wholly outside the subject A. As an example of this form of judgement he gives: 'All bodies are heavy'. He argues that in the notion 'body' there is not contained the notion of weight.⁶ So the extraneous element

4. Kant. *ibid.*, p. 46.

5. 'In all theoretical sciences of reason there are contained synthetic judgements a priori as principles.' Kant. *ibid.*, p. 55.

6. '..the predicate is something totally different to what I think at all in the mere concept of a body.' *ibid.*, p. 53.

is what makes it a synthetic judgement. Furthermore, he argues that all our judgements of experience (Erfahrungsurteile) are of this synthetic nature because in such judgements our knowledge is not only clarified but extended to embrace a new content. (ib.) What he now contends then is that such judgements are employed in the theoretical sciences. For example, the simple proposition $7 + 5 = 12$ in mathematics may appear to be merely an analytical judgement. It appears that the notion 12 is contained in the notion 7 plus 5. But Kant argues that we may analyse the notions 7 and 5 and their addition as much as we will, we will never get at the notion 12 without appealing to experience.⁷ All that we have in the notion $7 + 5$ is that an unity of the two in one number is required. We cannot discover what the number is from the notion itself. Kant therefore concludes that the number 12 is not contained in that notion. To discover the number that represents the sum of 7 and 5 we have to go beyond that notion. We have to refer to our experience, to such perceptions as that of five fingers. In adding to that perception the perception of 7 similar units we derive our proposition. And it is from this that Kant concluded the 'arithmetical proposition is at all times synthetic'.⁸ For as all our experience-knowledge (Erfahrungserkenntnis) contains an element that pertains a priori to the understanding the arithmetical proposition must be a synthetic judgement a priori. Kant employs a similar argument to show that all the other theoretical sciences contain such judgements.

7. Kant. *ibid.*, p. 56.

8. Kant. *ibid.*, pp. 56 - 57.

Kant ascribes the parlous state of metaphysics to the fact that it fails to distinguish the two forms of judgement.⁹ Hume, in Kant's estimation, had come nearest to making the distinction. He had made the proper beginning with his analysis of cause and effect, but it was only a beginning. He had failed, Kant adds, to conceive the problem in its full universality and significance. (ib.) He had rather concentrated on the one synthetic proposition to prove that such a proposition a priori was impossible. The conclusions of this analysis had threatened to reduce the whole content of metaphysics to nonsense. All the necessary relations that metaphysics had discovered appeared now to derive their necessity from mere custom. However, 'he would never have arrived at such a claim which destroys all pure philosophy if he had before his eyes our task in all its universality, for he would have seen that according to his argument there could also be no pure mathematics.' (ib.) His good sense, Kant hopes, would have saved him from such an assertion.

Hume, then, had prejudiced all pure philosophy because he had failed to see that the same type of proposition whose objectivity he wished to reject in the analysis of cause and effect was implicated in all mathematical and scientific knowledge. The necessity that we predicate to the relations of two objects or events in the notion of causation is the same as the necessity we ascribe to the basic propositions of mathematics. Both are synthetic

9. Indeed, he says, this failure is solely (lediglich) to blame for the insecure position of metaphysics. See *ibid.*, p. 59.

propositions a priori. According to Kant, the crucial question of philosophy is therefore: 'How are synthetic judgments a priori possible?' (ib.) For the solution of this problem depends, Kant argues, the possibility of the use of reason in the founding of mathematics and natural science. Kant believes that in placing this question at the centre of his philosophy he is bringing about a radical change in the methodology of the theory of knowledge. This methodological change amounts, he suggests, to a reversal of its former priorities: 'Hitherto it has been assumed that all our cognition should accommodate itself to objects. However, all attempts made under that presupposition to make anything of objects with concepts a priori through which our knowledge would be extended have come to nothing. The attempt will therefore be made this once to see whether we would not advance better in the tasks of metaphysics in that we assume that objects must accommodate themselves to our cognition.'¹⁰ This reversal is analogous to a change that had to take place in the method of natural science before it could progress properly. For just as Copernicus could make no progress while he assumed the spectator to be fixed and the heavenly bodies to be in motion, philosophy in Kant's opinion, would advance no further unless it inverted its 'universe'. If we make the assumption in philos-

10. Kant. *ibid.*, p. 25. C. Lukacs in his History and Class Consciousness (English Ed., Merlin Press, 1971) mistakenly, I think, regards this methodological revolution as the problem that dominates Modern Philosophy. For this, and other miscellaneous remarks on the problem, see pp. 111 - 112. (Merlin ed.).

ophy that objects are constructed according to our mode of cognition of them, then philosophy may regain the ground it had lost in trying to make our thinking accommodate itself to objects. This ground would be regained in that the structure of the object could now be assumed to be identical with our mode of cognition of it. Thus there would be a great deal we could say a priori about objects as they were the product of the 'I think' or the I itself.

This emphasis on the role of the I in the cognition of objects is in Hegel's view the essential aspect of Kant's philosophy and follows logically from the objection that Kant levels at the sceptical empiricism of Hume. This objection to Hume's philosophy is, as we have already seen, that Hume does not allow validity to, nor even recognise, the synthetic propositions a priori contained in all our empirical knowledge. He had taken this view because in his opinion, the notions of universality and necessity were not to be found in our experience, understood as the sense-impressions we receive of an object. But Kant, Hegel claims, does not wish to confine experience in this way. As well as the sense-material (*sinnlichen Stoffes*), Kant argues, there are also included in experience universal relations (*allgemeinen Beziehungen*).¹¹ These are the synthetic

11. Hegel. Werke 8, (*Enzy. I*), p. 112. Hegel adds, ' - the thought-determinations or concepts of the understanding make up the objectivity of the experience-knowledge.' *ibid.* p. 113.

propositions a priori of the understanding. Hume's error, then, was not to have seen from the beginning that experience was made up of these two elements. Kant is prepared to grant that the sense-data have in themselves no necessary connection: they merely form a sensuous manifold. The universality and necessity indeed come from elsewhere, namely, from the I, the subject of knowledge. His answer to the question: 'Where do the synthetic propositions a priori arise?' is therefore, 'In the thinking subject himself.'¹²

'The 'universe' of the theory of knowledge has, then, to be stood on its head because the notions of universality and necessity which are absolute requirements for our knowledge are not, Kant believes, to be found in the objects of experience themselves. These notions are only to be found in the I, or what he calls the 'unity of apperception' (Einheit der Apperzeption). Opposed to that unity of apperception stands the other element of experience the 'manifold of intuition' (Mannigfaltige der Anschauung). Now, according to Kant, in order that we may experience objects at all, this manifold of intuition has to be reduced by the categories of the understanding to the unity of apperception. This suggestion, Hegel believes, is the principal achievement of the Kantian philosophy.¹³ For here Kant has not

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12. 'Because..necessity and universality is not in external things, they must be a priori, i.e. lie in Reason itself, in Reason as self-conscious Reason.' Hegel. Werke 20. p. 336.
13. 'And this unity of the manifold posited through my spontaneity, this is thought in general, the synthesising of the manifold. This is a great consciousness, an important insight (Erkenntnis).' *ibid.*, p. 344.

only made it clear that the I postulates the necessary relations within experience but also that it constitutes that experience. Our sense-impressions may well supply the content of experience, but the I, the unity of apperception supplies its form. What makes the content an object of our experience at all is the unity brought about in the manifold by the 'I think'. And the distinct manner of this relation', Hegel claims, 'are the pure concepts of the understanding: the categories'.¹⁴

Hegel, however, places an even greater significance on the 'spontaneity of the I' than Kant has indicated here. Whereas Kant has no desire to disprove Hume's thesis completely, Hegel clearly believes that the idea of the 'unity of apperception' is a wholly successful answer to the problems that beset Hume's empiricism.¹⁵ This is because it provides a more workable notion of experience. In Kant's notion of experience it is, he claims, recognised that 'perception is not yet experience.'¹⁶ What counts as experience for Kant is the synthesis of the content, of the manifold of appearance in the unity of appercep-

14. Hegel. Werke 8, p. 116.

15. This opinion Hegel probably shared with all educated Germans of his time. Certainly it is one shared by Fichte and Schelling. It is remarkable to note how the shifting of the ground of a philosophical discussion is seen as the refutation of the old system.

16. Hegel. Werke, Vol. 20., p. 347.

tion. Within the notion of experience is now contained the idea of the organisation of the sense-data: its subsumption under the categories of the understanding. This organisation of the sense-data is an activity that according to Kant the subject of knowledge must undertake in order that there may be an object of knowledge at all: 'The synthetic unity of the consciousness is therefore an objective condition of all knowledge, not simply one that I may require to know an object but under which each intuition must stand in order that to become an object for me, ..'¹⁷

This contrasts sharply with the idea of experience of the empiricists and, indeed, of the Rationalists, in that the content of experience now becomes subjective. As Hegel says, 'consciousness becomes one, it becomes my content'. In Kant's notion of experience 'I am now I', not something external to myself.¹⁸ The fact that something may be experienced implies with Kant that it has to be subsumed by the unity of the I. It has to become my content and not remain something other than myself which I have to assimilate passively. As Hegel states in his criticism of Locke's materialism, experience is now to be understood as the 'consciousness of what I have or

17. Kant. Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, op.cit., p. 140. As Körner (Kant: Penguin Original, p. 63) says: '...the mere perception of a determinate object, i.e. none which is not but could be judged to be the bearer of concepts, presupposes the synthetic unity of the object, and consequently the unity of pure apperception.'

18. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 344.

am' and not merely as the consciousness of what is.¹⁹ I have to be active in relation to the object. The notion of the unity of apperception of Kant's philosophy expresses this for Hegel. It implies that all that 'I touch must be itself constrained into this form of unity'.²⁰ This, as I have already intimated, is a much broader interpretation of the 'unity of apperception' than that of Kant. For Hegel the idea becomes an expression of correct idealism. It indicates to him that in genuine philosophy all otherness, all objectivity is overcome.

It is in this sense that Hegel thinks Kant to be deficient in his thinking. Kant, 'unfortunately', fails to comprehend his own principle in its full objective significance. He does not present it as the refutation of materialism. Rather, he is content to allow Locke and Hume their sphere within philosophy. Kant is able to do this because he regards his theoretical philosophy as transcendental. By this he means that it does not attempt to apply its conclusions to the concrete object of knowledge, to what is external to us, the 'object out there'. As Körner says, transcendental philosophy is 'concerned not so much with objects, as with the manner of our cognition of objects in so far as it is a priori possible'.²¹ Transcendental

19. See above, Chapter One pp.42.- 44.

20. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 344.

21. S. Körner. op.cit., p. 35. He continues 'more precisely, a piece of knowledge is transcendental if it is a priori and if by it we understand "that and why certain presentations (perceptions or concepts) are only a priori applied or possible".'

philosophy is to be distinguished specifically from a transcendent philosophy which would attempt to apply the categories of the understanding to areas lying beyond experience. Transcendental philosophy remains correct in that it points out the possibilities of our knowing objects whereas transcendent philosophy is wholly incorrect in that it attempts to say that such conditions pertain to 'things themselves'. It follows that the whole logical apparatus that makes possible our knowledge, that which Kant examines in his transcendental philosophy, remains for him subjective in its significance. Although it makes possible our knowledge of things it cannot provide us with the knowledge of the 'thing in itself' (Ding an sich). Thus from 'this human faculty of cognition Kant differentiates the in-itself, the thing in itself.' ²²

Hume and Locke retain then their sphere in Kant's philosophy because, Hegel argues, Kant admits as a constituent part of all knowledge the manifold of sense-experience. It was the empiricists that had shown that what this sensuous manifold was 'in itself' was unknowable. It was only known to us through our sense-impressions which, they claimed, were just as much affections in us as qualities in objects giving rise to these affections. It was therefore Kant's conclusions that we could

22. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 338. What Goldmann has to say on this point is instructive: 'Knowledge of things in themselves would only be possible through another kind of intuition qualitatively different from that of given empirical man. The understanding as a purely theoretical faculty, tied to experience, cannot determine whether such an intuition exists or is even possible.' Kant, NLB, p. 135.

only advance in metaphysics if we assumed that what constituted an object of experience was our mode of cognition. But that the object was constituted in conformity with our mode of cognition did not, as we know, imply that we knew the object apart from its experience. What it materially was 'in itself' was forever beyond our ken. This Kant concedes to the materialists. And it is this, of course, that Hegel cannot concede. In his view it is because Kantian idealism concedes this that it remains essentially at the standpoint of Locke and Hume, at their 'problem of knowledge'. Kant's philosophy is critical therefore because, Hegel claims, it has as its premiss this empiricist viewpoint that what is true can only be derived from the material thing itself.²³ This remains the standard of truth, in examining our mode of cognition the 'thing in itself' is the touchstone.

Kant does, however, undertake this examination of the cognitive faculties in a manner that meets with Hegel's approval. He sets to work in a historical fashion going 'through the main modes of theoretical consciousness.'²⁴ The first faculty or

23. 'The critique of reason is just this: not to know objects but the cognition and the principles of reason, its limits and its extent, in order that it not become transcendent (überfliegend).' Hegel Werke 20, p. 339. Also, from the early essay on 'Faith and Knowledge': '.. the whole task and content of this philosophy is not the knowledge of the Absolute but the knowledge of this subjectivity or a critique of the faculty of cognition.' Werke 2, p. 303.
24. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 339. 'Kant was the first great modern philosopher to make the threefold division: sensibility, understanding and reason'. See Lucien Goldmann op.cit., p. 159.

mode examined is intuition, the second, the understanding and the third, Reason. (The external schema of the Phenomenology of Mind is evident here.) Beginning with intuition or appearance (Anschauung)²⁵ Kant distinguishes what 'corresponds to sensation, the matter of the same' from that through which the manifold of appearance may be ordered, 'the form of appearance'.²⁶ This distinction between form and matter we have already encountered in our discussion of Kant's notion of the 'unity of appearance'. Now, in the Transcendental Aesthetic what corresponds to the matter, the content of sensation would be such qualities as smell, colour, hardness etc. However, just as did Descartes and Locke, Kant distinguishes from this ordinary matter of sensation that which gives it extension, or structure (Gestalt). Kant's idealism now consists in saying that we provide that form or structure to what appears to us: 'By means of external sense (a property of our mind (Gemüt)) we represent to ourselves as being outside ourselves objects and altogether as being in space.'²⁷

25. The translation of Kant's term Anschauung represents something of a problem. It is also a term that is of some significance in our enquiry. It is normally translated as 'intuition'. In some instances, however, this translation misses the point and terms such as 'appearance' and 'perception' are nearer the mark. It is always as well to keep in mind the literal German sense of the term 'look on at' when dealing with it.

26. Kant. Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, Suhrkamp Werke 3, p. 69

27. Ibid., p. 71. He continues: 'Therein their form, size and relationship to each other is determined or determinable.'

Space is in this way considered by Kant to be a pure intuition (reine Anschauung), something which we supply to the matter of sensation in our consciousness. Similarly, Time is a pure intuition; it is the manner in which we represent objects to ourselves with our inner sense. We provide these universal conditions for each thing we intuit. Intuition (Anschauung) is therefore wholly distinct from sensation (Empfindung). An example that Hegel gives is: hardness is my sensation; intuition is that I sense something hard, that I project the hardness as being outside myself in space. The materialists' attempt to derive all knowledge from outside myself and, even more, restrict all experience to the same, is therefore fundamentally misconceived because the 'outside myself' is my own intuition.

We would expect that Hegel would be wholly satisfied with this account which appears to be a refutation of materialism, certainly of the materialism of Locke. However, he argues that Kant has missed the point in regarding space and time as forms of 'sensuous intuition'.²⁸ He agrees that they are abstractions that do not pertain to sense-perception itself. But the abstraction space, for one, does not make the object appear outside ourselves. Kant gives this impression by regarding space and time as sensuous intuitions. According to Hegel Kant argues that 'there are things outside but without space or time. Now consciousness comes and has within itself time and space as possibilities of experience, just as in order to eat it has a mouth and teeth as the conditions necessary for eating.'²⁹ In genuine

28. Hegel. Werke 9 (Die Naturphilosophie), pp. 41 - 42.

29. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 341.

idealism, however, Hegel claims, space and time do not take on this defective subjective form. In genuine, objective, idealism they are regarded as 'external universals'. (ib.)

This requires some explanation. Hegel regards Kant as a subjective idealist in so far as the Subject provides both the form and the matter of our knowledge.³⁰ As we have seen, the matter of our knowledge is provided by our sensation, the form by our thought. So we have to conclude, if Hegel wishes to oppose this view with the view that space and time are 'external universals', that in his objective idealism the matter of knowledge is provided by things outside ourselves. To return to Hume's example, the cause and effect are not then in Hegel's epistemology simply ideas that we provide for the objects of experience, they are categories which are, he says, determinations of their objects. (ib.) Hegel is prepared to admit that it is a relationship that may only be discerned by our thought but it is still, in his view, a relationship of the things themselves. Space and time are external universals in the sense that although it is only we who know them as abstractions, we cannot conclude that they do not pertain to things in themselves. Of course, the question now arises: where then does the 'true' idealism take its place? Hegel, after all, appears to be taking a materialist stand. The concepts space and time, he argues, are external universals, concepts which are identical with features of the external world. They are the way in which things in nature are ordered. However, he stretches this

30. Hegel. Werke 8, p. 119.

argument to mean that these concepts are the features of the external world, or that they are the order of nature. Space is the order in which things are in nature; 'however it is not merely an external designation, but rather externality itself.'³¹ So the abstraction, the concept space is regarded in Hegel's objective idealism as the order itself. The concept, and this is extremely important in understanding Hegel's idealism, is the reality of the external world. Kant, he suggests, failed to attain this 'objective' view of things because he considered the notions time and space within the Lockean context. The questions he had occupied himself with were, Hegel says, Are they something external to the mind or are they in the mind alone? He had never sought to discover what they were in themselves. Had he examined the notion of space for itself, we are to presume from Hegel's account, he would have discovered that it was not just the subjective possibility of extension but that extension itself.

From Kant's account of intuition, we move on to the understanding. The understanding, according to Kant is the capability of producing conceptions,³² the spontaneity of cognition.

31. Hegel. Werke 9, p. 43. It is this conception of idealism that makes possible the much debated (and debatable) transition from the Logic to the Philosophy of Nature. The Idea, we are told, (ibid., p. 24) passes into Nature through its self-externalisation. It becomes the other of itself as space. Space is both Idea (Logic) and 'externality itself' (Nature). See also: G.R.G.Mure. The Philosophy of Hegel. Oxford University Press, 1965. pp. 149 - 153.
32. Kant. Kritik der Reiner Vernunft, op.cit., '.. the capability of producing representations (Vorstellungen) themselves, of the spontaneity of cognition is the understanding.' p. 97.

The categories produced in the understanding, as I have already said, are the form in which the I reduces the sense-data of intuition to a unity. The unity of apperception is thus simply the synthesis of the understanding, and the activity of the I in organising the manifold of appearance is commensurate with the understanding. We have therefore already encountered Kant's notion of the understanding. As I have tried to demonstrate, Hegel regards it as providing a more adequate description of experience than that provided by the Empiricists. However, this enthusiasm for Kant's notion of the understanding is tempered by his view that the manner in which Kant depicts the unity of apperception as 'accompanying' (begleitend)³³ all my conceptions is deficient. Hegel even finds it a 'barbaric' depiction of the activity of the I. It gives him the impression that the 'I think' stands to one side as though it were itself empty. The activity of the I consequently consists in uniting this empty 'I think' with the conceptions that stand to one side of it. But if 'the I, the unity of self-consciousness, is wholly abstract and fully undetermined how then', he asks, 'are the determinations of the I to be arrived at?' Now, in the philosophy of Kant these categories of the understanding are discovered in a very convenient way. 'Fortunately we find empirically given in ordinary logic the various forms of the judgement.'³⁴ Because Kant depicts the

33. Ibid., p. 136.

34. Hegel. *Werke* 8. p. 117. Hegel adds that it was, on the other hand, the 'profound service' of the Fichtean philosophy to have pointed out that 'the determinations of thought' are 'essentially to be derived'. See below, p 102.

unity of apperception as 'accompanying' my conceptions he is able to derive those conceptions (the categories) and the forms of their use simply by transferring the content of ordinary logic to his Transcendental Logic. This Hegel regards as a wholly unwarranted procedure. In simply alighting on the categories in ordinary logic Kant has, in his opinion, evaded the necessity of deducing them from the notion of the understanding itself. The categories are to be properly introduced in philosophy by their deduction from the unity of apperception itself, or what Hegel calls, in the Logic, the 'notion'.³⁵

It is, as we have seen, for its implicit attack on ~~the~~ empiricism that Hegel rates most highly Kant's account of the understanding. In his view, it settles once and for all the problems of empiricism by showing that the 'notion' is higher than self-perception. Indeed, according to Kant's interpretation of the understanding, the matter that our senses provide is not even an object, it is merely a sensuous manifold.³⁶ It becomes objective solely through the synthesis of apperception. Thus it appears to Hegel that the priorities of empiricism are

35. Ibid. That Hegel considers the two, the unity of apperception (the I) and the notion, to be more or less the same may be seen from this quotation from the Science of Logic: 'The notion in so far as it has been extended itself to such an existence which is itself free is nothing other than the I of the pure self-consciousness.' Werke 6, p. 253.
36. An 'object is' only 'that in whose concept the manifold of a given intuition is united.' 'Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, op.cit., p. 139.

reversed. 'Sense-perception', he says, 'is now in fact that which is actually dependent and secondary and thoughts are in contrast that which is truly independent and primitive.'³⁷ By way of an example, he suggests, we can consider the science of astronomy. All that the astronomist immediately perceives with his senses are the changes of position on the part of the stars. It is only when he brings his thinking to bear on this matter of intuition (Anschauung) that it is possible to explain these movements. Our knowledge of the heavens derives from the ability of the human understanding to bring the content of sense-perception into relation through the categories. The laws of the heavens clearly arise from the understanding of the astronomist not from his isolated sense-impressions. Hegel, as we would expect, does not wish to suggest with this that the laws of the heavens do not have their origin in experience. Rather, it is evidence for him that genuine experience is much higher than sense-experience. In this case it shows itself to be the content of sense-experience subsumed under laws. Implicit in this, then, is that 'what is experience should be universal, should count for all time.'³⁸

This is evidently not Kant's interpretation of the powers of the understanding. Kant, as I have already said, regarded

37. 'In this sense Kant called that which conformed with thought objective and indeed with full justification', Hegel continues. Werke 8, p. 115.

38. Hegel. Werke 20.. p. 547.

the apparatus of the understanding as providing us with knowledge which was inherently subjective. The knowledge pertained to the mode of cognition only, it was merely our orientation in the world.³⁹ Hegel suggests that Kant is 'timid' on this point because, just as did the empiricists, he only considered an individual, contingent perception and understanding. The I in the Kantian philosophy is, he says, enclosed within itself', the individual self-consciousness as such, which is opposed to the universal'.⁴⁰ So this general approach to the theory of knowledge, is the same as that of the empiricists. Kant, in Hegel's opinion, never thinks to ask whether what the understanding contains is itself true. Hence his accusation is, as ever, that Kant regards our knowledge not from the viewpoint of the abstraction of the 'thing in itself'.

This last argument of Hegel's appears to carry very little weight. The grounds of his criticism seem to be mere assertions.

39. Kant himself suggests this analogy in his essay 'what does it mean: to orientate yourself in thinking' (Was heisst: sich im Denken orientieren?). Werke 5. (Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik) pp. 267 - 283. The essential point of the essay is that we orientate ourselves geographically and logically by means of 'a subjective criterion of difference' (durch einen subjektiven Unterscheidungsgrund). See *ibid.*, pp. 269 - 270.

40. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 349. Goldmann's thesis (*op.cit.*) is interesting in this respect. He argues that the whole of Kant's philosophy depicts the limitations of man in present-day bourgeois society. He even claims that, in some ways, 'Kant lays the philosophical foundation for a most penetrating critique of bourgeois individualist society.' *ibid.*, p. 110. This limitation that Hegel discovers in the philosophy of Kant would be seen then by Goldmann as a limitation in bourgeois thinking in general.

To illuminate the grounds we have to return to his assessment of Kant's depiction of the 'unity of apperception'. The argument derives its substance from what Hegel regards to be one of the most significant results of Kant's philosophy: the proof that objective knowledge is to be derived from the activity of the I alone. Thus we can only discover what is true by appealing to the understanding. This understanding we have in common with, at the very least, other scientists and philosophers. It is not therefore 'individual' or 'contingent'. Consequently, it seems a contradiction to Hegel that Kant, who had discovered the idea of the understanding and reason should at the same time regard their products as being purely subjective, and, even more, that the standard of this subjectivity should be something that lay beyond experience: the thing in itself, or the noumenon.

This brings us to the third and last faculty, the faculty of Reason. Reason in the Kantian philosophy, Hegel tells us, is the faculty that has as its object the unconditioned, or the infinite.⁴¹ Since we know from Kant that we 'can make no adequate empirical use,⁴² of the principles that are derived from pure Reason we may assume that, if Reason has an object at all, it is the noumenon. If this is the case, then Reason has as its object something which it can never attain. In this

41. Hegel. Werke 8, p. 121.

42. Kant. Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, p. 318.

respect it would stand below the understanding. However, and this again is what Hegel finds contradictory, as opposed to the striving of Reason for the unconditioned, - the noumenon, -the knowledge which the understanding furnishes Kant regards as limited, it is 'explained to be untrue, to be only appearance'.⁴³ Reason stands above the understanding in its aim but apparently beneath it in its content.

Although Reason has as its aim the knowledge of the infinite it is unable to attain it. Hegel believes that there are two reasons for this, Firstly, he takes Kant to mean that there are no objects in our sense-experience that correspond to Reason. But this, Hegel suggests, implies a peculiar notion of experience. It would appear that 'experience, observation of the world, signifies to Kant nothing other than that there is a candlestick here and a snuff-box standing there.' Clearly, whether one discovers Reason in experience 'depends on how one looks at the world'.⁴⁴ Kant's philosophy, however, has as its basis an empirical view of experience. Experience is regarded as what I intuit here and now; never, Hegel would argue, it is regarded in its full universality. This point, as it stands, has great merit. However, whenever in Hegel's

43. Hegel. Werke 8, p. 121. 'But while the subjective claim of the unity of pure apperception was shown to be rightful, Kant means to demonstrate that the subjective claim of this so-called fundamental principle of reason is the source of antinomies and other fallacies..' Körner, op.cit., pp. 110 - 119.

44. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 352.

philosophy we have 'universality', theology is not far away. He is prepared to concede to Kant that the universality of Reason does not exist in the world considered in an empirical sense. The Infinite, or absolute universality, is not something than can be sense-perceived. It is for thought alone or, even worse, 'spirit is for spirit alone'.⁴⁵ Hegel ruins his argument for us by taking to the heavens. His secular point, however, appears to be that we will not be able to comprehend the world rationally if we conceive experience only as 'a candlestick here and a snuff-box there.' We ought, rather, he seems to be saying, to consider experience as thinking-experience involving memory as well. On the other hand, his theological point appears to be that if we consider experience in this way then the world will itself be infinite. It seems again, then, that thinking-experience is for Hegel in an Aristotelian manner, the Ideal, the Infinite itself. The contemplative life, the life of Reason is the divine life.

The second explanation that Hegel gives then for Kantian Reason being unable to attain the Infinite, the divine life, is that Kant places too low a value on our thought. He interprets Kant's account of experience to mean that our ideas are necessarily subjective. The categories of the understanding, we are told by Kant, may be and are, legitimately applied in the ordering of our sense-perceptions. This is a condition that we may have objects of experience at all. But this order-

45. '...der Geist ist nur für den Geist.' Werke 20, p. 353.

ing, we are reminded in the discussion of Reason, is our own, not that of the thing in itself. Thus in employing these categories to attain the Infinite Reason becomes Transcendent. It becomes transcendent by suggesting that the categories do in fact correspond to aspects of the real world. It is this that Hegel interprets as an underestimation of our thinking, that Reason in seeking to extend our ideas to cover all possible experience falls into contradictions: the Antinomies and makes false conclusions: Paralogisms. This according to Kant is Reason's own Dialectic. It inevitably but, falsely, attempts to draw into an unity the knowledge of the understanding in seeking the totality of conditions that condition something limited. Kant acknowledges that it is the nature of Reason to inquire after the knowledge of final causes, but because the means at its disposal, the categories of the understanding, are inherently deficient, it can never attain that end.

The solution of the antinomies of contradictions into which Reason is necessarily lead is, Hegel notes, very simple.⁴⁶ Just as it is the nature of Reason to seek the totality of all conditions underlying a contingent object of the understanding it is equally its nature that what it seeks cannot possibly pertain to experience. Reason seeks to know the world 'in itself', that is its nature, but all that is given, Kant asserts, is appearance. Reason falsely argues, then, from appearance to

46. The solution Hegel claims is as 'trivial' as the insight into the contradictory nature of experience is 'profound'. Werke 8, p. 126.

reality. So the solution is simply 'that the contradiction (i.e. the antinomies) does not fall in the object in and for itself but pertains only to the knowing Reason.' (1b.) As we would expect, this to Hegel represents a fundamental misunderstanding of contradiction or Dialectic. Kant rightly pointed out that contradictions, the antinomies that Reason discovers, are not arbitrary. They necessarily arise in the effort to discover the totality of conditions limiting an object. However, the fact that Kant referred all these contradictions to the faculty of Reason itself represents for Hegel a severe limitation in his philosophy. Rather than regard experience itself as being inherently contradictory Reason has itself to take on the burden. The thinking subject, the I, is itself responsible for bringing contradiction into experience according to Kant. Hegel is supposed to have remarked in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy: 'As it was God previously who took up all contradictions in himself, so now it is self-consciousness'.⁴⁷ Just as with the Rationalists it was God which was the drain into which all contradictions flowed⁴⁸ so now with Kant it is the I that has to take on the 'negativity' of the world. Kant, Hegel believes, shows too much tenderness to worldly things' in this, his Dialectic.⁴⁹ It is these 'worldly

47. Hegel. Werke 20, p.359.

48. See above, p.34. (Chapter I).

49. Hegel. Werke 20, p.359. See also, Werke 8, p.126. Contradiction and 'negativity' are then according to Hegel features of the real world. However, this is not in the sense (of Marx) that they become intolerable and we have to get up and change the world. But in the sense that our thinking knows the world as inherently a negative one and in this knowledge raises itself above that negativity. Reason is therefore not the demand to overthrow those negative conditions, but the rose in the cross of the present.

things', the content of experience, as he argues at length in the Phenomenology of Mind and the Logic, that are inherently contradictory. It is indeed the task of Reason to discover that Dialectic but also to hold fast to it, not as its own, but as the essence of the world. It has to raise itself above contradiction to the contemplation of its own Idea by knowing that the Idea, Dialectic, is the essence of the world.

(ii) The Critique of Fichte's Theoretical Philosophy

Kant's account of Dialectic was, just as was his general account of experience, marred for Hegel by the excessive tolerance he had shown to 'worldly things'. Hegel cannot understand why Kant had preferred the antinomies and paralogisms to fall within the I rather than within the world. It was, Hegel would argue, the world that was inherently contradictory. It was not the case that Reason, our supreme cognitive faculty, strayed of its own accord into contradiction but that the experience it sought to comprehend was dialectical. What had prevented Kant from situating the antinomies in the world in this way was the limiting idea of the 'thing in itself' (Ding an sich). Not surprisingly, therefore, it is this idea that for Hegel becomes the general indication of Kant's 'timidity' in comprehending experience. Kant's claim was, as we have seen, that we can have objective knowledge only of things that originate in our sense perceptions. As the mark of a thing in itself, were it to exist at all, would be that it did not originate in our sense-perceptions, we cannot possibly have an objective knowledge of it. We can know only phenomena never noumena. The dialectic of Reason, as I have explained previously, is that it necessarily seeks knowledge beyond the phenomenal world, a knowledge of how things are in themselves (of noumena) which is a knowledge it cannot of necessity attain. This brings us to Hegel's objections to the theoretical philosophy of Fichte. For it is Hegel's opinion that the philosophy of Fichte takes as its point of departure the Kantian dialectic, and in particular,

the apparently insurmountable contraposition of the 'I think' to the 'the thing in itself'.

It is commonly known that the principal category in Fichte's philosophy is the Ego (das Ich) or simply, what I shall call it here, the I. Hegel suggests that Fichte's notion of the I is merely a modification of the notion of the unity of apperception of Kant's philosophy. The drift of his argument would seem to be this. According to Kant, the unity of apperception is what makes possible any objective experience. It is only through our perceptions being accompanied by the 'I think' could we perceive objects at all. This may be taken to mean, Hegel adds, that in a certain manner the I, or the unity of apperception, constructs the objects of experience - the matter of the construction being supplied by our sense-impressions, the form by the categories of the understanding and 'the labour' by the unity of apperception. Now, in Kant's philosophy there remains an element which is not supplied by the I itself, namely, those things external to ourselves (Dinge an sich) that give rise to our sense-impressions. Fichte, however, and this is where he modifies Kant's notion of the I, takes one step further and argues that even those things in themselves are an attribute of the I. In the jargon of his philosophy they are what the I itself posits.

If this account of Hegel's is correct it appears that Fichte has extended Kant's theory of knowledge into an ontology. It is evident that in Kant's description of experience the I does not of itself constitute being. The unity of apperception

does indeed constitute our experience but it does not for that reason constitute all that is. In his philosophy there is, as we know, a given substratum which remains external to the I. In contrast, in Fichte's philosophy, the given itself becomes a property, or modification of the I. The I itself constitutes all being. It appears, then, that Fichte has interpreted the notion of the unity of apperception to mean not only that I conceptually construct my world but also that I construct it physically.

This ontology Fichte equates with genuine idealism. It has in his opinion to be distinguished especially from dogmatism.⁵⁰ Genuine idealism, he claims, is that philosophy which derives the whole of experience, including the 'non-ego', from the I. This is, of course, solipsism, the view that the self is the only knowable and existing thing. It is, however, a complex kind of solipsism. Fichte, as we shall see, is not concerned to place knowledge in doubt. His aim is, rather, to give it an unshakeable certainty. If this is his aim it must of necessity follow that there is something more than the self which is the object of knowledge. His solipsism is complex, then, in that he asserts a knowable world which, however, must have its ground in the self. We can perhaps see how it becomes possible for Fichte to assert this if, as I have already suggested, we regard his philosophy as a Kantian ontology. So what we have to explain is the possibility of deducing the external world

50. R. Adamson. Fichte, Blackwood Philosophical Classics for English Readers, p. 126.

from the Kantian unity of apperception. Now, as we know, it is this unity that accompanies our perceptions which, for Kant, makes possible an object of experience. What Fichte appears to do is to move from this notion of the I as the cognitive possibility of experience to a notion of the I as the real ground of experience. Thus the deduction of an external world within his solipsism presents no problem. If in our experience we know there is an external world this is because, Fichte would argue, the I has posited it as such. Any other argument concerning the nature of experience leads in his view to dogmatism.

Undeterred (or so we must believe) by this charge of dogmatism Hegel finds much to criticise in the idealism of Fichte. As we would expect the solipsism of Fichte's idealism does not escape his notice. According to him, the force of Fichte's argument is that 'Everything determinate that the I has, it has through my positing: I make a coat and boots myself in that I put them on'.⁵¹ The source of this confusion, Hegel suggests, is the manner in which Fichte expresses this doctrine. It is 'the form of presentation that is uncomfortable; I posit, so that I always have the I before my eyes'.⁵² What immediately comes to mind in Fichte's presentation of idealism is not its rationale, the Kantian unity of apperception, the synthetic activity of the I that makes the objects of experience possible, but the individual empirical I. When Fichte says that the I

51. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 404.

52. Hegel. ibid., p. 405.

posits a world external to itself as the not-I, as Hegel suggests, we immediately imagine ourselves producing things such as boots and coats by our mere act of thinking of them. In the most genuine of idealism, however, the I as understood by Fichte becomes superfluous. Thus Hegel is prepared to admit the Kantian case that it is my thinking activity that organises experience into an objective world but the essential aspect of this idea is not for Hegel the organising activity of the I but the mode or manner in which that unity of apperception is attained. Fichte, Hegel claims, concentrates on the less significant subjective side of Kant's idea of the unity of apperception. Hegel himself prefers to stress what he takes to be the objective aspect of the idea: the categories of the understanding which bring about the unity of apperception. He suggests that, if we concentrate on these concepts and their necessity, we then have genuine idealism. This is of course the view of idealism presented in his Science of Logic.⁵³

Fichte, I have argued, derives the whole of experience from the Ego or the I. He sets about this intriguing deduction in a Cartesian fashion. In his essay "Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre" he informs us that the principal problem of philosophy is the search for a principle that would be the absolute

53. We might therefore see Hegel's idealism in this way. Whereas Kant had regarded the categories of the understanding as subjective means through which we orientate ourselves in the world, Hegel regards the categories as both our comprehension of the world and the world itself. This is the conception one gets of Hegel's idealism when reading the Logic, especially the Chapter on the 'Notion' (Werke 6, pp. 243 - 269) where he comes to grips with the Kantian idea of the unity of apperception.

first principle of all human knowledge.⁵⁴ His view is that it is only by discovering such a principle that philosophy can become a science. As that principle would be the absolute principle of knowledge it would have as its characteristic that it would not be open to proof. To make it subject to proof would be to induce a circular argument since it could only be proved by itself. It follows, in Fichte's view, that that principle may only be discovered or derived. He undertakes this task in his Grundlage der Wissenschaftslehre. ~~The~~ The procedure he adopts in that work is to pose the problem, What is it in the simple proposition $A=A$ that makes it self-evidently true?⁵⁵ and then to derive the grounds for its certainty. The procedure consists in deriving from one piece of certain knowledge the certainty of knowledge in general. It is the same task that Descartes sets himself on deducing the certainty of the cognito.⁵⁶ Since then the problem is Cartesian in nature it receives not surprisingly a Cartesian reply. Fichte claims that the certainty or self-evident nature of knowledge is derived from the I itself. He reasons that A is taken to be identical with itself by analogy with the simple identity of the I am. We may accept the self-identity of A as being certain and true from the original continuity of the I in experience.

54. Fichte. Sämtliche Werke Erster Band, Leipzig, Mayer and Müller, p. 47. 'The science of knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre) he says, is itself a science. It must, however, before all else have a fundamental principle, which cannot be evidenced by itself but must for the purpose of its possibility as a science be presupposed.'

55. Ibid., pp. 92 - 93.

56. See above, p.6 .

Even in the case of a tautology the I is the ground of the certainty and truth. It follows for Fichte that 'the grounds of all the facts of the empirical consciousness' is that 'before all positing in the I, the I has itself previously been posited'.⁵⁷ Without going in to what all this might mean for Fichte, we can see the essentials of his point of view. He is arguing that the I is implicit in the positing of the world and is therefore the certainty of that world.

Hegel in his summary of Fichte's philosophy in the Lectures on the History of Philosophy suggests that this is the first of three principles from which Fichte develops his subjective idealism. The three principles are immediately recognisable as those with which Fichte opens his Grundlage. All three principles involve modifications of the I. The first principle, Hegel suggests, is that of identity or, in the terms of Fichte's philosophy Ich (I) = Ich. It is Fichte's claim that this proposition is the certainty that lies behind any empirical assertion. Hence, what is claimed is that the object external to ourselves is what it is because it derives its continuity, which is its identity, from the I itself. Now what this principle expresses for Hegel is that 'self-consciousness is not dead identity, not non-being but object which is equal to me.'⁵⁸ He is in sympathy with this view because it suggests that the I is not simply self-enclosed but is objective. What is, I think, meant by this is

57. Fichte. Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre Werke, op.cit., p. 95.

58. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 395.

that Fichte in depicting the I as the ground of the certainty of all knowledge had therefore come to regard the I, not only as a subjective power but as in itself a criterion of objectivity. Hegel contrasts this with the position in Kant's philosophy where the unity of apperception (the 'I think' that accompanies all our perceptions) constructs the objects of experience or, in the terms that Hegel employs, is the source of the identity of objects but is not an objective source of that identity. According to Kant, it is an identity that only the I furnishes. It does not pertain to things in themselves. Fichte's merit is, in Hegel's view, that he reasons that the identity is both contained in appearance and has its absolute ground in the I. This is what the first basic principle of Fichte's philosophy expresses for Hegel. It implies the view that the cognitive activity of the I is simultaneously subjective and objective. It follows for Hegel that it is appropriate in epistemology that what is objective 'be transformed into I in order that I have only my determination in it.'⁵⁹

This principle, though formally correct in Hegel's view, suffers from a deficiency, namely its lack of a concrete content. 'Therefore', he says, 'it is necessary for Fichte to posit another basic principle'.⁶⁰ And it is this principle that produces what Hegel calls difference in Fichte's system. In other words, it acts as the source of an actual content for the

59. Ibid., p. 395.

60. Ibid.

formal identity of the system. So the second basic principle of Fichte's philosophy is that the I posits itself as opposed by a non-I. It is from this principle that the external world is derived in Fichte's philosophy or what Hegel calls the 'other' of self-consciousness. Therefore in talking of things external to ourselves we are, in the terms of Fichte's philosophy, talking of a world that is established by the I itself. In his view, all externals are established by the positing of a non-I (nicht Ich) by the I. So the concrete world in his philosophy paradoxically appears as a negative affirmation of the subject. In this we can see most clearly Fichte's subjective idealism: '..all reality is posited in the I, the non-I is however opposed to the I; consequently there is posited in the latter no reality at all but pure negation; and it has therefore no reality at all in itself'.⁶¹ For even in establishing an external reality Fichte points out that it has no reality. Hegel would stop short at such an account of external reality. As we saw earlier in his account of Locke's philosophy, he considers that reality has first of all to be regarded as external or objective. Only then is it to be shown to be ideal.

The third basic principle of Fichte's philosophy is a synthesis of the two preceding ones. It is what Hegel calls the proposition of ground.⁶² As ground, he says, the first two principles are mutually determining so that the non-I that is postulated as determining me will be mediated by the self-

61. Fichte. Sämtliche Werke, op.cit., p. 132.

62. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 397.

identity(Ich = Ich) of the I. I will know the opposite, the non-I, only as my own posited oppositions. Equally, however, the I finds itself determined by the non-I such that the I is objective or non-I. Hegel then seems right in saying that the principle of ground is, in short, 'I am limited by the non-I and the non-I is limited by the I.'⁶³ It is this principle, Hegel argues, that represents Fichte's logical advance over Kant. For instead of finding the categories of the understanding conveniently to hand in formal logic as did Kant, Fichte sets about deducing them from the manifold and reciprocal relations of the I and the non-I.⁶⁴

Also Fichte suggests that, depending on how these mutual forms of limitation are viewed, we have either theoretical or practical philosophy. The theoretical proposition would be that I am object, I am limited by the non-I. But we have to remember that this is not simply the second basic principle of Fichte's philosophy since he regards this relation as a reciprocal one. In the theoretical philosophy the not-I is not merely regarded as negation but as the I's own limitation of itself. As Hegel would say, I remain I in that theoretical relation. It is intended that it should contrast with the empiricist's account of the relation between subject and object. So the relation is not to be understood as one in which I as thinking subject am merely passive but one in which I am also active. We may see it in this way. It is that in an account of the

63. Ibid.

64. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 393.

perception of an object, it is not only the limitation of the I by the object which Fichte emphasises but also that it is I who perceive that I limit the object in that way. All, therefore, that Fichte seems to be pointing out is that the theoretical relationship is a dialectical one. On the other hand, the practical proposition is that the non-I is object and I limit the non-I. But this again we have not to understand in the spirit of the first basic principle of Fichte's philosophy. That would imply that the subject were absolutely independent of the non-I. This is not the impression Fichte hopes to convey. According to him the I's practical activity cannot simply be arbitrary. I cannot determine the non-I simply as I will. This again is a dialectical relationship. In determining the non-I, I am reciprocally determined by it. Therefore when we understand the I as having an absolute causality in the world, as the first basic principle of Fichte's philosophy suggests it does, the reciprocal nature of the practical relation described has to be borne in mind. It is causality in relation to another independent world; thus we might see it not as genuine absolute causality but as a relative causality. Such then, in rough outline, is Fichte's system of philosophy.

In Hegel's opinion both these accounts, of theoretical and practical philosophy, founder on the same problem. It is the same difficulty that in Hegel's view mars the Kantian dialectic, the difficulty of knowing and thus affecting the thing in itself (Ding an sich). In the theoretical philosophy although the I and the non-I are in a reciprocal relation and, moreover, it

is the I who first establishes that relation, the non-I that it posits still remains a beyond to experience. The Kantian Ding an sich, Hegel asserts, is contained in the very proposition that sets up an external world for the I, since the I posits the non-I as being in itself independent from the I.⁶⁵ If the non-I is posited as being wholly independent of the I that element of it, at the least, must remain an 'other' for consciousness. Otherwise it would not be the negation of the I. Hegel argues therefore that it is the very nature of the non-I posited by Fichte that it remain in an intractable opposition to what posits it. Consequently although (just as in the Kantian philosophy) all the qualities of the external object are in the I there remains an element of it which the I cannot master. This much, concerning the theoretical philosophy, Hegel believes Fichte himself would acknowledge. For Fichte was known to have thought that the I as intelligence was always 'dependent on an undetermined non-I'⁶⁶ that therefore in the theoretical philosophy the dualism of subject and object could not be overcome. It was in the practical philosophy that in his view, this opposition should be surmounted. It is its intention that I should master my determination by the not-I or,

65. Plant (Hegel, Allen & Unwin) suggests that 'because of his rejection of the Kantian notion of things in themselves, Hegel regarded the work of Fichte as a considerable advance on that of Kant.' (pp. 81 - 82). My view is different. Hegel, without doubt, approved of Fichte's efforts to transcend the Kantian things in themselves but, as I have indicated, he did not think that Fichte had wholly achieved this. In other words, Fichte's philosophy did not represent a considerable advance over Kant's in this respect.

66. Hegel, Werke 20, p. 404. The quotation is from the Grundlage, op.cit., p. 248.

in Hegel's terms, that I should be at home with myself. In the theoretical philosophy according to Fichte, I allow the non-I to determine me in order that I may know the world. In the practical philosophy however, 'this barrier of the intelligence is supposed to be broken through, the I alone should be the active one'.⁶⁷ But, as we have seen, in the Fichtean philosophy simply in order that the subject may have a world in which he has an absolute causality he has to posit an independent element opposed to himself. So the actual transcendence of the opposition of the I and the non-I would in fact find the I without the world within which to have an absolute causality. The I then, and this is Hegel's point, even in the practical philosophy must have opposed to itself an undefined impediment to its own activity. This Fichte calls the infinite impediment (unendliche Anstoss). And it is this that Hegel equates with the Kantian Ding an sich.⁶⁸ For its existence implies that the I may extend its activity as much as it care, there will always remain a barrier to its freedom. Thus for Fichte moral activity is always a striving.⁶⁹

67. Hegel. *ibid.*, p. 406.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 404.

69. Hegel. Werke 2, (Differenzschrift). In Fichte's philosophy, Hegel claims, 'I ought to negate the objective world. I should have absolute causality in the non-I; this is found to be contradictory for at one and the same time the non-I would be overcome and the positing of the opposition or the positing of a non-I is absolute. This relation of pure activity to an object can only be posited as striving.' p. 68 (Hegel's emphasis). It is I think legitimate to take this as an indication of Hegel's mature position on Fichte. As Helmut Girndt in his book, Die Differenz des Fichteschen und Hegelschen Systems in der Hegelschen 'Differenzschrift'. (Bonn, Bouvier, 1965, Introduction, X) says, 'Hegel never revised the interpretation that he presents of the philosophy of Fichte in the Differenzschrift..'

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It is a striving to overcome the opposition between the I and that which is not-I. That striving becomes an eternal effort as that opposition is itself a part of existence. It is an unendliche Anstoss. This idea of striving is essentially the same notion, Hegel believes, as the ought (das Sollen) of the Kantian philosophy.⁷⁰ It is that ought that is embodied in the Kantian categorical imperative. Likewise in Kant's moral philosophy there is an element in ourselves which is beyond our control. This is man considered as phenomenon where he is subject to the same kind of natural constraints as other phenomena. Our effort as noumenal beings is to overcome this limitation of ourselves but it is inherently impossible that we do since we are both noumenal and phenomenal beings. Hegel suggests then that the same kind of infinite impediment to freedom is present in Kant's philosophy. For that reason he, like Fichte, can only point to faith as the element in which this duality or bifurcation between the I and the world may be overcome.

Hegel finds this account of experience unsatisfactory because it does not answer the need or requirement of philosophy. In his Jena essay on the 'Difference of the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy,' Hegel argues that the requirement of philosophy is that 'the opposition of rigid subjectivity and objectivity be overcome'.⁷¹ There is in each and every epoch, he says, a necessary bifurcation between the unity of mind and the broken harmony of its being or our existence. It is from

70. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 407. See Plant, op.cit., p82 -82,

71. Hegel. Werke 2, p. 22.

this necessary bifurcation that philosophy itself arises. Accordingly, Hegel suggests, 'it is the sole interest of Reason to overcome such rigid⁷² oppositions' that appear to make impossible any harmony between mind and existence. Reason or philosophy, he adds, does not have this interest in the sense that it strives to overcome opposition and limitation per se, 'since necessary bifurcation is a factor of life'.⁷³ Rather it has this interest in the sense that out of this extreme division it seeks to create the highest unity of philosophy.

Now in Hegel's view, Fichte's philosophy does not attain this highest unity which philosophy might achieve because, he claims, it is a subjective unity of thought and reality. The unity, we are told, takes on the form of a positing activity of the I alone. In the Fichtean philosophy, we are further to understand, the unity of thought and reality does not lie in the object itself, so that the object remains forever a beyond in and to experience. Therefore in experience as Fichte depicts it there is always an element of the non-I which is unknowable because, the I posits the object as something distinct from itself in the crudest sense - materially. As we have seen, there always remains something other to man himself in Fichte's derivation of experience, quite simply what he calls the non-I. We might regard this as a note of intellectual sobriety in Fichte's otherwise extravagant system. Hegel, however, looks on this 'beyond' in Fichte's notion of experience

72. Ibid., p. 21.

73. Ibid.

as a failure on Fichte's part to philosophise correctly. Experience in Fichte's philosophical account is still bifurcated. As Hegel himself would put it, in Fichte's account of experience, I am not at home with myself.

Hegel does indeed interpret Fichte's system as an attempt to overcome the bifurcation of the I and the external world. But he interprets it as an attempt that failed. Fichte's error he argues in the 'Differenzschrift' was that he sought to overcome inevitable Entzweiung by postulating on the one side of the equation of existence, Subject = Object, the I or the subject as absolute. In the Fichtean philosophy the I, as we have seen, possesses a preponderance over the external world. We might say that, in a sense, it subsumes it. But, Hegel insists, 'the opposition remains in this way because that which is posited as absolute is determined through another, so in the same fashion as it remains, the other remains as well'.⁷⁴ In order that the bifurcation in existence be genuinely aufgehoben (both transcended and preserved) Hegel asserts that 'both the opposites, subject and object must be overcome (aufgehoben) in that they are posited as identical.'⁷⁵ We shall see that Hegel's thesis is that in true philosophy (which is, of course, idealism) independent substance and the independent I are both transcended. True philosophy is for him both Substance and Subject.

74. Ibid., p. 95.

75. Ibid.

So Hegel understands Fichte as having constructed a philosophy which like all other philosophies aims at restoring the 'shattered harmony' of temporal existence.⁷⁶ But according to his 'Differenzschrift' the dissonance between the subject and the external world can only be overcome where both the I and the world lose their independent value. Where the world is regarded as being subjective and the ego as being objective or concrete. Subject has to be equal to object and object equal to subject. This does not happen in Fichte's philosophy. Indeed the only manner in which this is to be achieved, Hegel would assert, is through the subject thinking objectively or scientifically such that the objective world is shown to conform to my thinking. This, therefore, is why scientific or systematic thinking plays such an important role in Hegel's philosophy, for it alone, in Hegel's view, is the overcoming of the inevitable bifurcation of existence. It alone meets the requirement of philosophy.

Fichte's philosophy, therefore, is not sufficiently systematic for Hegel. In his philosophy Substance and Subject are still opposed. This is so since his philosophy remains conditioned by the Kantian notion of the Ding an sich. None the less there is in Hegel's estimation much in Fichte's philosophy that adds up to ^osensible epistemology. In contrast to Kant, for instance, Fichte does insist that the 'Ego is not to be regarded as subject merely, but at once subject and object'.⁷⁷

76. Ibid., p. 20.

77. R. Adamson, op.cit., p. 126.

Kant had regarded the role of the unity of apperception as merely a subjective one. But Fichte, as I have suggested, interprets the concept of the unity of apperception far more comprehensively. For him the I both provides us with an orientation in experience and with the matter of that experience itself. He makes an effort to have done with the Kantian Ding an sich. Although Hegel judges ~~this~~ the outcome of this effort to be unsuccessful the effort itself meets with his approval. We may then be fairly certain that Hegel would be at one with the criticism that Fichte, according to Adamson, has to make of Kant that Kant had never attained genuine idealism because he had 'regarded consciousness as merely so much to be known, - as a series of states, from which nothing can possibly be extracted.' He had 'not considered how consciousness comes to be, what conditions are necessarily implied in its existence what are the laws under which it acts.'⁷⁸

To do this, in Fichte's view, philosophy has to become the reflective consciousness of the thinking activity of the I. It has to become the consciousness of consciousness itself, or what Hegel aptly describes as the 'artificial consciousness' (künstliches Bewusstsein).⁷⁹ We need hardly say that this notion of philosophy also plays an important role in the make-up of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind. Hegel suggests that we can see the beginning of this interpretation of philosophy in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. It was Kant who brought out the significance of the unity of apperception which, as he put it, accompanies the I think. It was he, then, who taught us to think about

78. Ibid., p. 127.

79. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 393.

the 'I think'. But what distinguishes the artificial consciousness he recommends for philosophy from that recommended by Fichte is that it is intended not so much as a reflection on consciousness itself as a reflection on the possibility of knowledge. His philosophy is, after all, intended to be transcendental. It is the manner of our cognition of objects which concerns it. Quite simply, as Hegel says, the context of Kant's philosophy is still that of the problem of knowledge. Fichte, however, is not wholly concerned with that problem. He is, as I have emphasised, also concerned with the problem of what constitutes an adequate account of reality. Kant's interest in the I (the unity of apperception) was aroused by his need to explain the synthetic propositions a priori he thought to be present in all our knowledge. It is in this way that he hit upon Logic. According to him it supplied the categories through which the understanding reduced the manifold of appearance into a world of objects. In doing this, Hegel says, Kant had given the impression that we were not able to investigate the origin of the content of consciousness. We can, for example, according to Kant find in consciousness the notion of causality but how it comes to be there is another matter. We cannot penetrate behind its appearance in consciousness. Fichte however (whose view is that the I constitutes being) takes the categories as the objects of a genetic investigation. This he can do since the genesis of the categories from the reciprocal relations of the I and non-I is for

him one and the same thing as the genesis of reality.⁸⁰

In contrast to Kant, the content of the 'I think' becomes his object. And it is this that Hegel depicts as the consciousness of consciousness or the artificial consciousness.

It is for this reason that Hegel maintains that, with Fichte, philosophy distinguishes itself decisively from ordinary thinking. In his view Fichte was the philosopher who had 'first brought to consciousness the knowledge of knowledge'.⁸¹ What Hegel means by ordinary thinking is not simply the reasoning of everyday life or else he and Fichte would be merely claiming the commonplace in distinguishing it from philosophy. Ordinary thinking is indeed straightforward knowledge of objects and practical objectives. But it is knowledge that is bound up with something that is external to consciousness. It is therefore knowledge which 'does not make itself its consciousness into the object'.⁸² Ordinary thought is always about something other than thought itself. The thinker does not have his thinking as his object and (and this is the most significant point for Hegel) the thinker does

80. The 'employment' of the categories ceases to be a problem for him (Fichte)...The imagination not only produces the schema of the forms of thought, as Kant has taught, not only space, time and the mathematical objects, as Maimon wanted, but also produces empirical objects as such.' R.Kroner. Von Kant bis Hegel, Mohr Verlag, p. 489.

81. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 393.

82. Ibid. 'not make itself' is admittedly an awkward rendering but note the use Hegel makes of this phrase.

not make the object into his consciousness. In other words, in ordinary thinking the object is not retracted into consciousness. Ordinary thinking is then for Hegel thinking that has as its object an 'other' to itself. It is what we can regard quite simply as being materialist thinking. It is thinking which insists that it is to an external reality it refers. Hegel is of the opinion, as we have seen, that it is the requirement of philosophy that such bifurcated thinking be overcome. Fichte's conception of philosophy as the artificial consciousness does, in Hegel's view, go some way toward achieving this. In standing 'behind my ordinary consciousness',⁸³ Hegel argues, I am in a position to raise myself above bifurcated thinking. As I have already indicated, this notion of philosophy plays an important role in the construction of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind. We may now approach that work by a consideration of the philosophy of Hegel's one-time intellectual companion Schelling.⁸⁴

83. Ibid.

84. For a short while at Jena when they were co-editors of the Critical Journal of Philosophy they did not distinguish their writings. See Caird, Hegel, Blackwood, p. 48.

Hegel's Critique of Schelling's Philosophy

I have suggested that Fichte's philosophy falls down in Hegel's opinion since it fails to overcome the bifurcation that Hegel believes to be inherent in experience. As I have suggested, Hegel regards it as the task of philosophy to overcome this bifurcation. Philosophy, in his view, has to attain that 'highest unity' in which all opposition and division is extinguished. Fichte, Hegel maintained, failed to attain this highest unity because his theoretical philosophy postulated only a subjective unity of subject and object or thought and reality. 'The subject = object therefore, he claims, 'becomes a subjective one, and it does not succeed in overcoming this subjectivity and positing itself objectively.'⁸⁵ In comparison the proper conception of philosophy is, according to Hegel, more fully worked out in Schelling's system. This is so, Hegel argues, because 'the principle of identity is the absolute principle of the whole Schellingian system; philosophy and system fall together; the identity is not lost in the parts, even less in the result'.⁸⁶ Hegel claims that in Fichte's philosophy that the identity of subject and object was only an original identity. Both subject and object did indeed have their genesis in the I but in the system itself (say when Fichte is dealing with a particular object like law), the particular falls outside that identity. On Hegel's reading, the particular in

85. Hegel. Werke 2, p. 94.

86. Ibid.

Fichte's system is simply object (falling outside the supposed unity of subject and object) a thing outside the subject, merely affecting it. We can see this, Hegel argues, in that the parts of the system are derived from the various aspects of lack of identity. For instance, he claims, the theoretical philosophy is distinguished by the precedence which the I takes over the non-I. In contrast Schelling makes the principle of identity permeate the whole of his system. In the Differenzschrift Hegel argues that Schelling understands what has to be done for the highest identity of philosophy to be attained. In particular, he sees that 'the subject and object' have 'both (to be) posited as subject-object'.⁸⁷ In that highest unity we have to regard not only the I as subject-object but also the object itself. The error of Fichte, then, was to regard the I as the only reality, to think of objectivity, solely as the negation or limitation of the I.

Schelling explains his position concisely, and certainly in a manner which is adequate for our purpose, in the essay 'Depiction of my System of Philosophy' (Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie).⁸⁸ Here he takes the view that if we are to understand the idealism of Fichte as claiming that the I is everything, we may understand his idealism as claiming that everything is the I. Schelling, then, wishes to stress

87. Ibid.

88. Schelling. Werke (Jubiläumdruck), Munich, Vol. 3. p. 5.

the order in which the subject is said to be equivalent with reality. In Fichte's philosophy, he feels, the emphasis is wrongly placed on the subjective side of the equation. He, on the contrary, wishes to place the emphasis on the objective aspect: that reality is itself subjective. By setting out from the objective pole of the subject-object equation he hopes to prove that objective experience is itself subjective. He therefore presupposes a separation of subject and object or, in Hegel's terms, an Entzweiung in experience. And it is from this point of view that their unity is to be achieved. For Schelling this unity can be achieved because everything is this identity of subject and object or the Absolute Identity.⁸⁹

For Schelling and Hegel this Absolute identity takes the place of the ordinary religious conception of God. I say 'takes the place' although this is not the manner in which Hegel interprets the identity of the Absolute with God. He sees no break with religion. It is in his view the proper comprehension of God, as his criticisms of Descartes will have indicated. There he argued that God, properly conceived, was the notion of the unity of thought and being. It is for this reason that he thinks of Schelling's system as the knowledge of God. God, Hegel asserted in his criticism of Descartes, should be depicted not as a third term mediating between subject and object but as their Absolute identity. God is where reality meets thought and thought reality, not an entity independent of either. Now it is difficult to see how, if this is the

89. Ibid., p. 15.

proper notion of God, how it may be related in any way at all to the ordinary theological conception of God. At the minimum, the notion of God must involve the notion of a being that is external to our own self-consciousness. And it is clear that the Hegelian God falls within self-consciousness. It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that, as I suggested at the outset, the break with theology is absolute with the philosophies of Schelling and Hegel. Hegel might say in his defence that the notion of the absolute identity of subject and object is the rational content of the religious experience. We might even agree with this. However this bears little relation to what the religious person actually thinks he is about.

Be that as it may, the notion of the Absolute in the guise of Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Idea and the Absolute Spirit, plays an important role in Hegel's philosophy. It is also one of its most confusing notions. One of the reasons for this is that it enters into his philosophy as one of its pre-suppositions, but that in some way it also forms its goal. What we make of this idea when it first enters the vocabulary of philosophy might then help to clear some of the confusion. There are various formulations of this idea of Schelling's, all of which require some explanation. Firstly, Schelling suggests that we regard the Absolute as follows: 'Absolute identity simply is and is as certain as the proposition $A = A$.'⁹⁰ His point of reference here seems to be the philosophy of Fichte. The certainty of the Absolute identity, Schelling appears to

90. Ibid., p. 14.

imply, is the certainty of a first principle of philosophy such as that which Fichte sought. Just as with Fichte, that principle was not itself subject to proof. With Schelling, however, it is not even open to derivation since it is a further suggestion of Schelling that we look on 'the being of the Absolute identity' as 'an eternal truth'.⁹¹ Schelling believes an enquiry into the grounds of the certainty of the Absolute is unnecessary because it is an ever-present truth. It can, he insists, only be intuited as being true. Furthermore we are to understand it as being true not only in a formal sense but also in a concrete sense. Taken in a formal sense it would merely imply that objects, when properly known were this absolute identity. Schelling wishes it to imply more. In his view, and this is the last of his formulations that we shall consider, 'Everything that is, is the Absolute identity itself.'⁹² Schelling believes that the whole of being is in itself the identity of subject and object. So, as I have said, it is not simply that when things are known that they are this Absolute but, Schelling suggests, they are in themselves Absolute. Schelling, just as did Fichte, extends a theory that has its rationale in the theory of knowledge into an ontology.

It is for this reason that Schelling's philosophy does not it seems to me, rest on sound logical grounds. His philosophy assumes what it ought to prove. Nothing is more in need

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid., p. 15.

of proof than the notion of reality as Absolute identity. Hegel, I think, shares this view of Schelling's philosophy. In his later years he would not, I believe, have defended Schelling's system on the grounds of its logical consistency. He would have defended it more on the grounds that he gives in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy, namely, that Schelling's notion of Absolute Identity met a need or requirement of contemporary philosophy. Such a view would not, of course, be incompatible with his earlier whole-hearted defence of Schelling's system against that of Fichte in the Differenzschrift. For, as we have seen, the point of view from which Schelling is defended here is that of the need or requirement of philosophy.⁹³

Hegel's view, then, is that Schelling's ontology was necessitated by the internal development of Modern Philosophy. The explanation of this runs back to Cartesian dualism. It was Descartes, Hegel suggests, who had first seen extension and thought as two distinct elements or sides⁹⁴ and so, paradoxically, first awakened the need to mediate the two. Hegel thinks, as we have seen, that Descartes had only achieved this mediation in a very unsatisfactory manner. He had attained the unity of thought and extension by the expedient of invoking God as the creator of both. It was Spinoza, Hegel argues, that undertook to unite these two ideas of extension and thought in

93. See Plant, op.cit., p.86 for a view of Hegel's position vis-à-vis Schelling in the Differenzschrift.

94. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 423.

a more systematic way. He had done this by conceiving God as Substance, as the one Substance with the two attributes of thought and extension. At least, in this mediation of thought and reality we can see that God was immanent even though as 'motionless Substance'.⁹⁵ However, this, as we have seen, was not sufficient for Hegel or, more precisely, for what Hegel calls the development of philosophy. Opposed to the motionless Substance of Spinoza there developed, partially in the philosophy of Kant and partially in the natural sciences an awareness of the significance of form (ib.). The categories of the understanding came to be recognised as important in comprehending experience. This emphasis on form, Hegel suggests, reaches its highest point in the philosophy of Fichte. In his philosophy, Hegel says, 'form was for itself as subjectivity'. From the formal I 'all determinations were supposed to develop themselves'.⁹⁶ It was from this subjectivity of the Fichtean system that the contemporary need of philosophy, of which Hegel talks, flowed. It was that philosophy be delivered from its bias for Form 'in order that it be united with objectivity and substantiality.' Hegel also takes this to mean that 'the Substance of Spinoza should not be conceived as the unmoved, but the intelligent, as a form which is in itself active. It must be conceived according to the necessity of its form, so that it is the creating of Nature but even so knowledge and

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

cognition'.⁹⁷ 'Philosophy', Hegel adds, 'is essentially to do with this point of view.' The Absolute identity then, of Schelling's system implies for him not the abstract unity of Spinoza's Substance, nor the 'subjective totality' as in Fichte's philosophy, but 'totality with infinite form!'⁹⁸

But it is still not evident what the notion of the Absolute means to him. We are perhaps clear on the point that it is simultaneously the contemporary requirement of philosophy and what philosophy is 'essentially' all about. However, the rest of his cryptic comments concerning the idea as it appears in Schelling's philosophy require some reformulation if they are to mean much to us. This need not be a difficult task since we have covered much of the ground from which the idea derives its significance for Hegel. This ground is of course Hegel's understanding of the development of Modern Philosophy. Now, it seems that the philosophies of Spinoza and Fichte represent for Hegel the two opposing poles from which the need for Schelling's notion of Absolute identity is derived. Spinoza's philosophy, Hegel suggests, is merely an abstract unity of thought and being. As we have seen him claim earlier, it is a unity of thought and extension which allows no self-differentiation or individuation within either. On the other hand, Fichte's system merely represents infinite form. It describes self-differentiation without unity or a totality.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

The requirement of philosophy is that this opposition be mediated. This entails in Hegel's opinion that the Spinozistic philosophy has to take into account the significance of form. In talking of form in this instance we know what Hegel has in mind. It is the form of the Kantian philosophy. He is referring to the manner in which Kant depicted phenomenal reality as arising in the unity of apperception, and, in particular, to Kant's view that it was the understanding in supplying the form to the matter of intuition (Anschauung), that gave us the objects of experience. This implies, then, that Hegel considers the correct philosophical point of view to be one of tension between an impersonal reality and a subject that sees in itself the origin of its world, a tension between Substance and Subject. If this is so we can see that it entails an amendment to the point of view of the Fichtean philosophy since it is in that philosophy, as Hegel points out, that the Kantian doctrine of form is given its most subjective interpretation. It entails that that philosophy be amended to allow for a world that originates independently of the I. However, there is more to Hegel's philosophical point of view (the absolute point of view) than this. As we know, he is not content to allow the inevitable tension between the independent subject and independent reality to persist. This is where Schelling comes in. The Fichtean I and the Spinozistic Substance have to be mediated, not simply confronted. It is Schelling that plays this important role in the history of philosophy. His philosophy is in conception the unity of Substance and Subject.

It is the 'Substance of Spinoza...conceived as the intelligent'⁹⁹
 It is therefore, for Hegel, as we noted earlier, the objective
 unity of Subject and Object. This is, I suggest, the origin
 of the Hegelian Absolute: Schelling's conviction that everything
 is the Absolute Identity of Subject and Object.

The manner in which this is reasoned by Schelling in his
 philosophy is not without plausibility. He begins with the
 presupposition that 'all knowledge rests on the harmony of an
 objective with a subjective.'¹⁰⁰ He then proposes that we give
 the name 'Nature' to the totality of all that is objective
 and the name 'Intelligence' (Intelligenz) to the entire subjective
 content of experience. It is normally assumed, he continues,
 that these two, Intelligence and Nature, form two opposite poles.
 The reason is because Intelligence is originally thought of as
 being conscious and Nature as not being conscious (Bewusstlose).
 Now, in any knowledge, Schelling claims, there is a meeting of
 both, of that which he describes as conscious and of that which
 he describes as not being conscious. At this point Schelling
 makes an unwarranted jump; the meeting of Nature and Intelligence
 in knowledge implies, he suggests, that they are not simply
 opposites because where they meet neither takes precedence over
 the other. Both, he insists, are equally necessary. In what
 is knowledge neither the thinking subject nor the thought object

99. Ibid.

100. Schelling. Werke Vol 2, System des Transzendentalen
 Idealismus, p. 339.

takes priority. They are simply identical.

There are two ways in which, according to Schelling, we can set about explaining this identity. The aim of both procedures has to be the same however. We may either begin from the objective pole to illustrate how it necessarily leads to the other or from the subjective pole to prove the same. In Schelling's view, it is the structure of knowledge itself which allows the alternative approaches since 'if all knowledge has two poles which mutually presuppose and require one another... there must be two fundamental sciences and it must be impossible to begin from one pole without being driven to the other.'¹⁰¹ Those two sciences would be the science of nature, which is the science that begins at the objective pole and the Transcendental philosophy which is the science that begins from the subjective pole. Consequently, what Schelling claims is that the study of nature necessarily leads us to the study of the prior conditions of knowledge and that Transcendental philosophy necessarily leads us to the study of nature. Epistemology and natural science, he seems to be suggesting, have one and the same result, namely, the identity of subject and object.

We can readily see (if not readily accept) how Schelling deduces, from the subjective pole of Transcendental philosophy the objective pole of nature. It is a deduction of natural existence that his philosophy has in common with that of Fichte.¹⁰²

101. Ibid., p. 340.

102. For the 'productive imagination' creates its object. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 426.

Nature is derived from the subjective pole through being posited by the I. As we are aware, it is seen as a non-I which is established by the subject himself. What is new, however, and of some significance in understanding Hegel's objective idealism, is the manner in which Schelling sets about deducing Intelligence from Nature. The argument that forms the deduction is intended to be illustrative rather than persuasive since, as we already know, it is an absolute presupposition of Schelling's philosophy that everything, including nature, is both subject and object. He illustrates his point in this way. Reasonably enough, he takes as the aim of natural science the explanation of the facts of nature by subsuming them under general laws. Less reasonably, but in a manner that is crucial to his argument, he describes this process of natural science as the intellectualisation of spiritualisation of nature (Natur ist vergeistigt). It would be nonsense to suppose, he suggests, that the aim of natural sciences was simply to provide us with a picture of natural objects as they appear to our senses. Its aim and object is intellectual in kind. It is to discover the laws that govern those appearances. So Schelling takes it that it is the outcome of science that we are given not concrete phenomena but simply their thought-explanation. In the most consummate form of science, he says, 'the phenomena (the material) have to fully disappear, and only the laws (the formal) remain.'¹⁰³ The most consummate form of science he implies is in its result at one with idealism. Science is what unites the conscious

103. Schelling. *ibid.*, p. 340.

subjective pole of knowledge to the unconscious objective pole. It is the manner in which nature raises itself to intelligence, in that man who is himself part of nature comes to know it as thought.¹⁰⁴

We already know from our discussions¹ of Hegel's objections to the epistemology of Locke¹⁰⁵ that Hegel regards it as the task of science to know what is experienced 'in itself'. It is in this way that science is for Hegel both the overcoming of otherness and genuine idealism. This view of science is certainly not the picture that natural scientists themselves have of their researches. It has its origin in the philosophy of Schelling, for Hegel claims, it is the great merit of Schelling to have brought out the speculative side of natural science. By this speculative side of natural science Hegel, of course, means that aspect of its explanation of the world that coincides with his idealism. This is in contrast, as I have indicated, to the scientist's own appreciation of his work, and Hegel acknowledges this. For in that 'system of Nature', Hegel says, 'it is forgotten that nature is something known; the ideal determinations ~~where~~ which nature receives in science are at the same time immanent in itself.'¹⁰⁶ Natural scientists, Hegel thinks, view the world which they intend to explain as a material reality which is external to themselves. In this, and Hegel believes it is Schelling's merit to have pointed this out, they

104. Ibid., p. 341.

105. See below, p. 46. (Chapt. 1).

106. Hegel. Werke 2, p. 100.

overlook that what they are essentially dealing with are what Hegel calls 'ideal determinations' rather than external objects. The result of their efforts Hegel believes, and we have seen Schelling argue this, is that nature becomes known or spiritualised. In thus becoming known, Nature, which the scientist conceives as something external to himself, becomes, at least for Schelling and Hegel, internal to him. It is his thought as opposed to an external world. It was the empiricists, as we have seen, who had advocated a theory of knowledge based on the method of the natural sciences and therefore shared its assumption of a world external to our thought. Schelling's philosophy then has the additional merit for Hegel of tackling the empiricist thesis on its own ground and displaying its inherent idealism. As we have seen, Hegel himself adopted this procedure in criticising the theories of knowledge of Locke and Hume.

The thesis that scientific thinking is inherently idealist then becomes a part of Hegel's own philosophy. We shall encounter this thesis again in the Phenomenology of Mind. Hegel sees it, as he does the whole of Schelling's philosophy, as a fruitful response to the problem of knowledge, because he argues 'the main thing in Schelling's philosophy is that it has to do with a content with what is true and that is conceived concretely.'¹⁰⁷ Schelling in elaborating on the 'speculative side' of natural science had contributed a view of the concrete nature of knowledge to the philosophical debate and, at the same time, Hegel

107. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 453.

thinks, he had returned philosophy to what should be its principal concern, the concern with the content of thought. In contrast to this, the Modern Philosophers preceding him had merely been concerned with the relation of thought to its object. The result had been that philosophy had neither depicted the true nature of knowledge nor come up with a concrete content for itself. This, Hegel thinks, is put right in Schelling's philosophy of identity. Preceding philosophy had not, in his view, been able to attain truth or a content because in it the objective and subjective sides of knowledge were alternately stressed. Truth, Hegel suggests, was for preceding philosophy, either Intelligence or Subject. Philosophy and epistemology in particular had revolved around the two opposing poles of materialism and subjective idealism. Schelling had overcome this opposition by arguing that the essence of nature was intelligence, he had shown that we may pass from the objective pole of knowledge to its subjective pole. In Schelling's philosophy neither subject nor object falls to one side through the one being given precedence over the other, because in his philosophy 'thought is.. in itself concrete ' conceives itself as world, but not as an intellectual world but as an intellectual-real world'.¹⁰⁸ The dualism of previous philosophy, Hegel claims, is extinguished in this Absolute identity. This, I think, is Hegel's answer to the 'problem of knowledge'. However, in the status of this principle of Absolute Identity he differs markedly from Schelling; and it is, I think, this difference that led him to write the Phenomenology of Mind.

We may carry this suggestion further by drawing a parallel between the method of Schelling's philosophy and that of Hegel in the Phenomenology. It will, at the least, serve as an indication of the philosophical context in which the Phenomenology was written. That parallel concerns Schelling's System of Transcendental Idealism. Schelling conceived the purpose of that system to be to extend Transcendental Idealism 'into what it really should be, namely into a system of the whole of knowledge.'¹⁰⁹ The Wissenschaftslehre of Fichte was to be his guide in this. The system of transcendental idealism had to undertake the subjective deduction of the world not in general but in its particulars. This was intended to be an advance over Fichte's idealism since 'the means..through which the author has sought to present Idealism in its whole extent is that he has depicted the parts of philosophy in a continuity and the whole of philosophy as what it is, namely as an ongoing history of self-consciousness, for which that deposited in experience serves only as, as it were, document and monument.'¹¹⁰ To those who are familiar with the Phenomenology of Mind this may well appear as a description of Hegel's method in that work. As we shall see, he thinks of the parts of philosophy as forming a continuity and, in the Phenomenology in particular, presents philosophy as 'the ongoing history of self-consciousness.'¹¹¹

109. Schelling. op.cit., p. 330.

110. Ibid., p. 331.

111. Both Kroner (op.cit.) and Werner Marx, Hegels Phenomenologie des Geistes, Klostermann, Frankfurt) point to this parallel between the philosophy of Schelling and Hegel. They also trace the view of philosophy back to Fichte. See Kroner pp. 372 - 375, (Zweiter Band) and Marx. pp. 14 - 15.

Schelling traces the development of the unity of apperception (the I of Fichte's philosophy) in his system of transcendental idealism in this way, through the various forms of intuition to where it reaches its highest potency. What motivates Schelling in presenting 'transcendental philosophy' as this 'series of stages of intuition' is the identity that, as we have seen, he thinks exists between nature and intelligence. It is apparent from natural philosophy, he says, 'that the same potencies of intuition which are to be found in the I can, to a certain extent, be pointed out in nature.'¹¹² The highest potency will be, as should already be evident, where intelligence and nature meet. To attain this end, Schelling suggests, the philosopher must follow self-consciousness through its various epochs depicting how the one necessarily follows from the other.

All this is reminiscent of the Phenomenology. There is however, one significant difference. Schelling, unlike Hegel, regards the highest potency (the highest identity of subject and object) as Art.¹¹³ This is fully in keeping with the spirit of Schelling's philosophy since he thinks of the Absolute Identity not only as a point of equivalence of subject and object but equally as a point of indifference. This is because neither, as we know, takes precedence over the other. The highest unity of subject and object must therefore be a unity without preference given to either pole. The special merit of Art is that it meets with this requirement. It unites the intuition of the subject and his product in the most

112. Schelling, op.cit. p. 331.

113. Ibid. p. 634.

concrete manner. In Art the object of the subjective act of intuition can be observed to exist. It is therefore, Schelling thinks, concrete evidence of the identity of subject and object. In one and the same intuition the I is conscious of itself and not-conscious. For Schelling the work of art is, as Hegel says, 'the highest manner of the objectification of Reason because there sensuous representation is united with intellectuality.'¹¹⁴

It is because Reason is given a 'sensuous existence' in this fashion that Hegel objects to the depiction of Art as the highest unity of subject and object. In taking this attitude Hegel shows himself to be more of an idealist than Schelling.¹¹⁵

114. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 433.

115. Hegel has also a sound methodological objection (which is not unrelated to his idealism) to the depiction of Art as the highest identity of subject and object. In regarding Art as the highest form of Reason Schelling, in Hegel's view, justified his own stand in respect of philosophy: that it was also a form of Art. Therefore what was in Schelling's opinion required to be a philosopher was not the ability to think systematically but rather the gift of genius. It was only such genius that made the philosopher capable of intuiting the Absolute Identity inherent in things. This, Hegel suggests, is why Schelling's philosophy takes on its oracular form. As we know, this principle of identity requires no proof, it simply is, and is everywhere. Schelling can avoid the burden of proof since the intuition of this Absolute is a work of genius. So Hegel argues that his only response to an objection to the fundamentals of his philosophy would be to say 'that you have not the intellectual intuition' that would permit you to see its truth. (Werke 20, p. 434) Thus with Schelling, Hegel thinks, 'philosophy appears as a talent for Art, genius, as though only Sunday's child had it.' (ibid., p. 428.)

He believes Schelling to have demeaned Spirit in depicting its highest potency as Art. Spirit, as he said in his criticism of Kant, is for Spirit alone. No 'sensuous existence', Hegel would say is adequate to its nature. Spirit, he insists, is only capable of identity with thought alone.¹¹⁶ The identity of thought and object has for him to come down in favour of thought. In other words, in its result it is not to be an identity; thought has to have the upper hand. Thought has indeed to be objective-real but has in the end to show itself to be higher than that objective reality. Art as the highest potency of self-consciousness, and this would be Hegel's opinion, comes nowhere near to banishing the alien object from the purview of philosophy. This task, we are to presume, remains for the Phenomenology of Mind. to accomplish.

116. Caird, op.cit., says of Schelling's identity: 'His unity ..as Hegel..said, was a unity of 'substance' rather than of spirit' and points to the notion of Geist as the point of break between Hegel's philosophy and that of Schelling. p. 55.

CHAPTER THREE
THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND:

(i) A general view of Hegel's System

In this essay I am concerned primarily to defend a point of view concerning Hegel's philosophy. That point of view, as ought to be clear by now, is that his philosophy presents a novel interpretation of the problem of knowledge that had pre-occupied Modern Philosophy. The novelty of his interpretation consists, I have already argued, in its account of experience. So far we have considered Hegel's notion of experience solely in relation to his criticism of what I have called traditional epistemology. We should now be in a position to venture on Hegel's systematic account of experience, the most comprehensive account of which we shall find in the Phenomenology of Mind.

Although I am principally concerned with this: the defence of my point of view on an aspect of Hegel's philosophy, I must nevertheless give an interpretation of his philosophy as a whole, because to argue that Hegel presents a certain view of experience is at the same time to argue that he presents a certain view of philosophy. We have already seen how closely connected the two concepts of philosophy and experience are in our review of Hegel's history of Modern Philosophy. Indeed we found that the view of experience a philosopher adopted was, in general, at one with his assessment of the scope and aims of philosophy. For instance we observed that Hume and Locke limited philosophy to the knowledge of the appearance of things to our senses as they were of the belief that our experience did not extend beyond that appearance of things. Similarly,

we found that Kant limited philosophy to the knowledge of phenomena because he thought experience to be a compound of a priori ideas and sense impressions. And, certainly, there can be no doubt that there is a significant connection between the notions of experience and philosophy in Hegel's system.

When dealing with the Phenomenology of Mind it is traditional to attempt some kind of commentary.¹ I shall follow the established tradition in this instance because, unlike some traditions, it is not without good cause. What I shall do is to attempt an exposition of what, for my purposes, are the major arguments of the Preface and Introduction and a similar, but briefer, interpretation of the first three Chapters of the work. In each case the argument will proceed with close reference to the text. This might by some be regarded as evidence for a lack of originality on the part of the author. In so far as this charge merely concerns my following the usual practice it is already partly answered. But there is a stronger charge than this implied, namely, that the practice of presenting a commentary to the Phenomenology of Mind is an evasion of the obligation to supply an independent estimation of Hegel's philosophy. But an independent estimation of Hegel's philosophy has to be one that has come to terms with

1. Findlay (Hegel: A Re-examination), Stace (The Philosophy of Hegel), Marcuse (Reason and Revolution), Mure (The Philosophy of Hegel), W. Becker (Hegel's Phänomenologie des Geistes) and, of course, Hyppolite (Genèse et Structure de la Phänomenologie de l'Esprit de Hegel) all do this.

it. This, I believe, is where the strength of the exposition or commentary lies. For such is the nature of Hegel's philosophy that anything other than an attempt at systematic commentary is an evasion of the obligation to understand it properly. This is not simply because in Hegel's work - and the Phenomenology of Mind is amongst the most difficult in this respect - the argument is always extremely condensed and often obscure. It is because (and this is Hegel's emphasis) his philosophy is to be understood only in its systematic exposition.² In other words, it is his view that philosophical truth is not to be found in a simple series of definitional or axiomatic statements. It is rather a sustained argument. An independent judgement of his philosophy might do well to respect this view. It seems to me therefore that only a sustained commentary can come to terms with such a philosophy.

At the outset I made the assertion that our review of Hegel's critique of Modern Philosophy, including his fellow German Idealists would place us in an excellent position to understand the Phenomenology of Mind. We must now support this claim. In my view Hegel's account of the history of philosophy enters into the very conception of the Phenomenology of Mind. The manner in which it does so is complex and I suggest we begin our explanation of it by considering one of Hegel's remarks concerning the history of philosophy in his Enzyklopädie: 'The history of philosophy presents in the various philosophies that appear partly the one philosophy at

2. Hegel. Phänomenologie des Geistes, Werke 3, pp 11-14. This of course, is how Hegel explains his reticence when giving a preliminary view of his philosophy in his Prefaces. See also Wissenschaft der Logik, Werke 5, p. 56.

various stages of its formation and partly that the particular principles, which only have one system as their basis, are only branches of one and the same whole.' Hegel adds - and this may be taken as applying to his own philosophy - 'The philosophy that comes last in order of time is the result of all preceding philosophies and must therefore contain the principles of all; it is therefore, if it is indeed philosophy, the most developed, the richest and the most concrete.'⁽³⁾

This, to say the least, is a startling assertion. For, not only is Hegel claiming that there is a progressive development in the history of philosophy, but that this development is teleological and, in some sense, cumulative. The development of philosophy, according to Hegel, reflects not so much the purposes of each and every individual philosopher as a purpose that transcends them all. It is accordingly not the development of a varied number of differing systems but the development of one and the same system. We are presumably to understand that somehow all the great philosophers were writing, or at least contributing to the writing of, one philosophy. There were, if we recall, indications that Hegel held such a view in the criticisms that he levelled at his contemporaries and the other Modern Philosophers. As we noted, those philosophers were criticised not from what he would take to be a particular standpoint but from the viewpoint of a systematic conception of the history of philosophy. We may remember the instance when he claimed that the deficiencies of Descartes' and Spinoza's

3. Hegel. Werke 8. p.58

philosophies were made up by the philosophies of their immediate followers in the History of Philosophy, Leibniz and Locke. There was an implication here that the development was teleological. Similarly we found that Hegel criticised Fichte not from a particular point of view but from the point of view of philosophy as a whole. His criticisms were motivated by what he thought to be the contemporary need or requirement of philosophy. The implication there again was that philosophy had an aim that was independent of the aims of the philosopher himself. Indeed Hegel's suggestion is that in reviewing the history of philosophy we are reviewing a consistent whole. This means that the various philosophical systems in so far as they are true are branches of one and the same system.

This brings us to Hegel's philosophy. It would appear that Hegel would have to resign himself to an inevitable partiality in developing his own system of philosophy. But this is not the case, for Hegel grants the most recent philosophy in the history of philosophy a privileged position. Because it is the last, it is 'the most developed, the richest and most concrete'. And it is all this, Hegel claims, because it contains within itself the correct principles of all the others. It is this idea that lies at the heart of Hegel's philosophy.

In his philosophy then Hegel attempts to synthesise the truth of all previous philosophy. It is this that makes Hegel's philosophy unique.⁽⁴⁾ No philosopher prior to Hegel,

4. To be sure, it is well-known that this is an aspect of Hegel's philosophy but in my view far too little attention has been paid to the fact. It is not, as we shall see, simply an eccentric claim that Hegel makes but one that he attempts to carry out.

or since, has consciously set himself that task. I must add, however, that Hegel himself does not hold this view. He does not regard it as a peculiarity of his own philosophy that it is an attempt to synthesise what is true in previous philosophies. One reason for his believing this is evident. If, like Hegel, we see all philosophies as making a contribution to the progressive development of the one philosophical system, then we must regard the last as being the synthesis of what is true in philosophies prior to it. We would have to admit that regardless of at what stage the chain of development of philosophy is broken off, that stage represents the distillation of all the truths of previous philosophy. This, then, is one reason why Hegel does not regard it as a peculiarity of his philosophy that it seeks to incorporate the results of the whole history of philosophy. His claim is that this happens anyway if a body of theory is indeed philosophy. It is the inevitability of this occurrence in Hegel's mind that gives us the second reason for his thinking that it is nothing peculiar to his philosophy. This synthesis is inevitable in Hegel's view because all philosophy is the work of one spirit. He says in his Enzyklopädie again: 'The architect of this work of thousands of years' which is the work embodied in the history of philosophy' is the one living spirit whose thinking nature it is to bring what it is to consciousness.¹⁵ The synthesis then is not Hegel's because it is brought about by the activity of the one spirit (Geist) that transcends any particular system of philosophy. Hegel

5. Hegel. Werke 8, p.58. The emphasis is Hegel's.

believes that he is only participating in that activity. We might say that he sees himself as the servant of spirit in the matter of philosophy. But we, of course, do not have to take this view. We may regard his philosophy to be unique in these two respects: that it is consciously regarded as the result of all previous philosophy and that therefore it regards the history of philosophy as the development of this one point of view. It is, I maintain, a peculiarity of Hegel's philosophy, and a view that lies at its heart, that it is seen as the embodiment of the correct insights of all previous philosophy.

THE PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

We are now better placed to understand the significance of what I have called Hegel's Critique of Modern Philosophy in the understanding of Hegel's first major work the Phenomenology of Mind. Hegel sees his task in philosophy as being to undertake the work of spirit: to synthesise previous philosophy and to bring it to its proper conclusion. A knowledge of the history of philosophy as Hegel understands it does, then, go a long way towards understanding the origin and content of his philosophy. Indeed I would go so far as to suggest that this historical approach to his philosophy is the most fruitful. Of course, to do full justice to such an approach we would have to examine the whole of Hegel's account of the History of Philosophy.⁶ But we might take comfort in the fact, that on Hegel's own account, the most recent philosophies contain within themselves the truths of all those preceding.

We are, in any case, concerned with the fate of Modern Philosophy in the writings of Hegel and Marx. As I have already said, Modern Philosophy was preoccupied with the Problem of Knowledge or, in Hegel's terms, the relation of thought to its object. We have examined Hegel's critique of Modern Philosophy to elucidate his approach to the problem. One of the contentions that we have sought to refute is that of Habermas: that Marx and Hegel 'demolished' traditional epistemology. It ought to be clear by now that Hegel's

6. The works of M. Foster (The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel) and Mure (Introduction to Hegel), for instance, show how valuable is the comparison with the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle.

account of the relation of his philosophy, and indeed of all philosophy, to the history of philosophy goes some way towards meeting Habermas' criticism. For, if Hegel sees the task of philosophy in general as the conscious effort to link itself to and build on the philosophical tradition, the accusation that he simply negates or ignores an achievement of previous philosophy seems, on the face of it, to be implausible; and our discussion of the relation between the History of Philosophy and the Phenomenology of Mind should make it seem even more so.

In the conclusion of the short essay entitled 'Result' with which he ends his Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Hegel says 'Accordingly (i.e. according to the outcome of the History of Philosophy-H.W.) our standpoint is now the recognition of the Idea. The knowledge of the Idea as Spirit, as Absolute Spirit which is thus opposed to another spirit - to the finite; and the principle of this spirit (or mind) is to know, so that Absolute Spirit is for it. I have tried to develop and bring before your thoughts this train of spiritual forms (Gestaltungen) of philosophy in their progression at the same time indicating their connection. This series is the true realm of spirits, the only realm of spirits that there is - a series which is not a diversity, nor does it remain a series merely as a succession, but a series just as its self-recognition into moments of the one spirit which makes itself into one and the same present-day spirit. And this long train of spirits are the only pulses which it uses

up in its life; they are the organism of our Substance. We have to give ear to its urgency - when the mole within burrows on - and give it reality. Those spirits are simply a necessary progression which express nothing other than the nature of spirit itself and live in us all. I hope that this History of Philosophy may contain for you the demand to grasp the spirit of our time which is in us naturally, to draw it out of its naturalness i.e. its taciturnity, lifelessness to the light of day and - each in his place - consciously bring it to light'.⁷ This is a remarkable, if obscure, conclusion. The interpretation of it is of some significance to our enquiry. As I have indicated, it appears that the conclusion is not only Hegel's but Spirit's as well. And to add to the confusion Spirit seems to be playing two roles in that conclusion: Absolute Spirit and finite spirit. Hegel's suggestion is that at the outcome of the History of Philosophy they bear a significant relation to each other. We are to look on them as being opposed to each other but because it is the nature of finite spirit to know, 'Absolute Spirit is for it'. What sense are we to make of this? It seems that Absolute Spirit is shorthand for the result of the History of Philosophy. It would, therefore, be the most highly developed form of philosophy of the day. If we were to couch this claim in religious terms it would be that God is the development of philosophy and in any one epoch is to be found in the most advanced philosophy. Strange though this conclusion may seem, it is what Hegel believes. He speaks of the history of philosophy as the

7. Hegel. Werke 20, pp. 461 - 2.

true theodicy and, in the same essay, as 'the revelation of God as he knows himself'.⁸ Again, as we have seen, Hegel thinks of the progressive development of philosophy as the only realm of spirit there is. We must conclude that it is the only heaven there is. It is a peculiar heaven, however, since it has an existence here on earth. The realm of spirits of the history of philosophy, according to Hegel, 'makes itself into one and the same present-day spirit.' They attain this happy state of affairs by their 'self-recognition' into moments of the one whole. It is this process that is the true theodicy and culminates with finite mind knowing it as such.

There is much we could conclude from this analysis about Hegel's views in general. For example, we could pursue the view of religion it implied or, for that matter, the view of history it implied. However these topics do not greatly concern us here. What interests us is the view of philosophy it implies and especially what view does it present us with of the relation of the History of Philosophy to Hegel's philosophy. In pursuing that aspect we must emphasize that, whatever view Hegel may have of the matter, the thoughts of dead philosophers are not the kind of things that organise themselves into a whole or are even capable of self-recognition into or within the one spirit. But Hegel thinks they are. In his view this is what distinguishes the account that the History of Philosophy gives from an account which would present

8. Ibid., p. 457.

a mere diversity of modes of thought and thinkers. Its subject-matter organises itself into a complete whole. He writes the history of philosophy, therefore, as though spirit had willed it all from the beginning. But, clearly, there is no such spirit. Hegel admits this himself, in effect, when he makes the further suggestion that this 'long succession of spirits' of the history of philosophy is the 'organism of our Substance'. Setting aside for the moment the question of the precise meaning of the notion of Substance in Hegel's philosophy (for our present purpose we might simply take the term to mean 'life') we can see that the implication of saying that the principles of previous philosophy are organic moments in the spirit of the present is that they are not consciously elements of our life. If they are not consciously present in our life Hegel has to admit that neither is their organisation into a 'spiritual whole' past or present ready at hand. As he himself says, they have to be brought to the light of day and only then, we must assume, is it possible for them to be knit into a systematic whole. This the philosopher must do because the 'spirit of the time' which is in us 'naturally' does not possess that order. That order, and this is supposed to be the demand contained in Hegel's own account of the History of Philosophy, is only to be attained by drawing out from their naturalness those spiritual forms.

This still leaves us far from clear on what is the outcome of Hegel's History of Philosophy. The ambiguity of the paragraph I quoted is, I think, typical of the general complexity

of Hegel's philosophy. He makes a number of assumptions that are simply not argued and often appears to move illegitimately from one area of discourse to another. At present there is certain to be confusion because in one and the same context Hegel invokes the "spirit of the time" and the "result of the history of philosophy". Prima facie there appears to be no direct connection between the two. Not so for Hegel, however. His assumption is, and this plays an important role in his account of experience in the Phenomenology, that 'the history of philosophy is the innermost (soul) of world history, - this work of the mind of man in his inner thought is parallel with all the stages of reality. No philosophy can go beyond its own time.'⁹ For Hegel, then, the abstractions of philosophy are abstractions from the spirit of the epoch. That is their direct connection. This, he suggests, is not to be understood in the sense that philosophy is in a dependent relation to the spirit of the time. It is rather its essence. In historical terms this means that the history of the world is distilled into the history of philosophy. The relation between historical development and the development of the history of philosophy is for Hegel the relation between an outer contingent life and its innermost soul. This is how the history of philosophy comes to be found naturally in the spirit of the time.

Armed with this insight we are now able to say with much more certainty what the result of the history of philosophy is for Hegel. As we have seen, Hegel suggests that our

9. Ibid., p. 456.

reading of his History of Philosophy might move us to grasp the spirit of our epoch in a philosophical manner. This is potentially possible because past philosophies are 'naturally' present in the culture of the day. We may find this improbable, but in Hegel's view, those past philosophies are the pulse-beats of 'the spirit of the time'. Grasping the spirit of time in a philosophical manner implies then that we draw out those pulse-beats or philosophical ideas. So the argument would appear to be this: In any one epoch the philosophy of that epoch represents its self consciousness or, more strongly, the essence of that epoch. Now, what happens in history (of the exoteric kind) is according to Hegel that one epoch succeeds another with no apparent logical connection between them. The cultural outcome is that the spirit of the preceding epoch is inherited in a contingent or natural fashion by the society of the following epoch and in this way forms a part of the ordinary man's self-awareness in the new epoch. So that the events of history themselves appear to give no sign of philosophical rigour. Nevertheless, Hegel claims, beneath the surface there lies a philosophical order. His suggestion is that both the ordinary man's consciousness and philosophy are something more than what they appear to be. That something more is in both cases supplied by history (of the esoteric kind). Hegel's view is that the ordinary consciousness is not only the natural consciousness of its time but contains within it (implicitly) the consciousness of preceding epochs. The spirit of the present is also the spirit of the past. Similarly Hegel claims that the

philosophy of an epoch has within itself, as moments, the philosophies of past epochs. Both from the viewpoint of esoteric history have an immanent order.¹⁰ However the history in which philosophy participates is of the privileged kind. Unlike the natural consciousness of an epoch it knows the reality of that epoch - it is its self-consciousness. Philosophy participates in the history of ultimate reality. It is the esoteric history of man-kind. Because it is the reality of history the study of the history of philosophy brings with it the demand that we understand our life in that way - as implicitly philosophical.

What ~~we~~ ^{we} may now conclude about the relation of Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy to the Phenomenology of Mind? We have to decide what the outcome of the former has to do with the idea of a phenomenology of mind. Those who are familiar with the Phenomenology of Mind will already have an intimation of what I have to say on this. The significance of the one for the other, in my view, lies in the account that Hegel gives in the Lectures of the relation of philosophy to the culture of time. For Hegel, as we have seen, philosophy is the self-consciousness of that culture or its essence, and it is to be distinguished from the merely natural consciousness of a culture. Philosophy, he suggests, is the systematic under-

10. I have to differentiate here between the two aspects of Hegel's view of History. Hegel cannot have it both ways. History seen as a contingent series of events (what I have called exoteric history) is entirely different from history seen as an immanently ordered series of events (esoteric history). Differentiating the two certainly makes more sense of Hegel's claims about the natural and philosophical consciousness. Whether the distinction would apply to Hegel's philosophy of history as a whole is another matter. Marx, whose concepts these are, appears to think so. See Kritik des Hegelschen Staatsrechts, Marx-Engels Werke, Dietz Verlag, Berlin p. 206.

standing and synthesis of the natural consciousness. We shall find that the same distinction is made in the Phenomenology of Mind, in that the phenomenology of mind is intended to depict the path of natural consciousness to science. Hegel, it seems, has taken his own injunction seriously 'to grasp the spirit of our time which is in us naturally' and 'draw it of its naturalness'.¹¹ From our reading of the conclusion to Hegel's history of philosophy we already have some idea of what is involved in the natural consciousness taking that path. The stages of the path to science are, according to Hegel, already to be found in the natural consciousness, for these stages are past philosophies which have been superseded and are incorporated in the culture of the time. So the path of the natural consciousness takes it through the 'realm of spirits' in so far as these 'spirits' are contemporarily present. In one way, then, Hegel's account of the History of Philosophy provides the subject-matter of the Phenomenology. It is the 'long train of spirits' which 'lives in us all',¹² which has to be critically reviewed before the natural consciousness can attain to science. However, the History of Philosophy is not per se the content of the Hegelian natural consciousness but is, I believe, its content as something dead and past. It would not do simply to repeat, in philosophy itself, the history of philosophy. Rather Hegel's position is this: 'The same development of thought which is portrayed in the history of philosophy is presented in the philosophy itself but freed from that historical externality, purely in the element of thought'.¹³

11. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 462.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Hegel. Werke 8, p. 59.

This view stands at the centre of Hegel's philosophy. It is not one that is self-explanatory however. Indeed we have yet to examine what would be the nature of such an account that aimed at bringing out the significance of various forms of superseded philosophy for present philosophy. What we are concerned with particularly is the role that such a view plays in Hegel's theory of experience The Phenomenology of Mind. And it is to this we now turn. In the Phenomenology of Mind, Hegel undertakes the task of raising philosophy to a science by tracing the path of the natural consciousness to Absolute Knowledge. His aim is, as he says, that philosophy be able to set to one side 'the name of being the love of knowledge' and 'be real knowledge'.¹⁴ This aim is consistent with what I have suggested is Hegel's general view of philosophy. Hegel's intention in the Phenomenology is to transform past and contemporary philosophy employing his understanding of both as his point of orientation. In what he has to say there is, however, one thing we might not have expected. He suggests that he is working with others to achieve his aim. This is unexpected because we have, by now, a firm picture of Hegel as a philosopher who is extremely critical of the efforts of others. But as he puts it himself: 'To show that the time has now come for philosophy to be raised to a science - this would be the only true justification of the attempts which have this purpose'. (1b.) In Hegel's view then, other philosophers - and we must assume that these are the ones immediately preceding him, Kant, Fichte and Schelling - had all but raised philosophy

14. Hegel. Weirke 3, p. 14.

to science. What Hegel has to do is simply to bring the process to a successful end. It appears then that Hegel thinks of his Phenomenology as being in a critical continuity with past and contemporary philosophy. What is more, and is perhaps more striking, Hegel thinks of the Phenomenology as itself making history. The time has come, he claims, for science to come on the scene. The sense of historical occasion which Kroner detects in the whole of German Idealist Philosophy is nowhere more evident than in Hegel's Phenomenology, and it is in the Preface, as is the case with all his Prefaces, that this sense of history comes particularly to the fore. Kroner compares this atmosphere of innovation with that surrounding the founding of the Christian Church and suggests that the same eschatological aspirations are to be found among the German Idealists.¹⁵

Whether this is true or not we have to admit that Hegel's philosophy summons up the same sort of sense of occasion. Philosophy is for him part and parcel of the historical world.

In writing the Phenomenology of Mind, then, Hegel addresses himself both to the culture of the time and to the history of philosophy, especially its most recent history. It is this that explains his twofold intention in writing the work. It is his intention, as we have seen, to raise philosophy to a science and to show that it is the demand of Spirit in his time. It is the latter that involves the examination of contemporary culture. Along with this twofold intention Hegel makes a twofold assumption. He assumes that philosophy is developing in the direction of science and the assumption that the contemporary culture has the potential for such a develop-

15. R.Kroner. Von Kant bis Hegel, p. 1 'Something of the air of eschatological hopes of the time of the birth of Christianity belonged to the period; now or never the day of truth must break, it is near, we are called to bring it about'.

ment. Since a culture is nothing without its participants the assumption that he has to make in the second instance is that the ordinary person's consciousness of the prevailing culture is implicitly scientific. He argues that the transition to science that the Phenomenology demands is overdue: 'For the rest', he says, 'it is not difficult to see that our times are a time of birth and transition into a new period. Spirit has broken with the hitherto existing world of its being and representation (Vorstellens) and is in the process of the work of transforming it and letting it sink into the past.'¹⁶ The Phenomenology requires no more of us than that we become aware of what was already in progress in our culture.

We have examined at some length the relation of the history of philosophy to the Phenomenology from the viewpoint of Hegel's depiction of the history of philosophy. As I have said, what now interests us is the role the relation plays in the Phenomenology itself. This is again extremely complex. It means that we have to unravel what Hegel intends by the notion of Spirit. We have to break it up into the many constituent parts that it has in the Phenomenology. We might begin with the 'differentiations in Spirit' that Hegel himself posits in the Preface. We have just seen that Hegel believes that, in his time, Spirit is on the point of letting the hitherto existing world of its being sink into the past and is involved in the work of transforming it. The 'differentiation of spirit' begins with refining this idea. Spirit, Hegel argues, has not for this reason attained its full reality. The transformation that it desires has been

16. Hegel. Werke 3, p.18.

achieved in concept alone and this 'like a new-born child' has no 'full reality'.¹⁷ Now, in saying this of Spirit, it is clear that Hegel is talking about spirit as philosophy since it can only be in philosophy that spirit is realised 'in concept alone', and this is only the beginning of the realisation of spirit. But, he adds, we must remember 'that the beginning of the new spirit is the product of a far-reaching revolution of numerous forms of culture (Bildung) and the prize of a very tortuous path and equally great strain and effort.'¹⁸ In other words, Hegel misses in existing philosophy an awareness that spirit is not merely conceptual but also has a concrete reality. Spirit is also, in one of its constituent parts, cultural and social reality. It may be that spirit in its concrete reality appeared overnight (I think that Hegel has in mind here the French Revolution) but he asserts, philosophy must not underestimate the transformation of culture that had prepared the ground. It was the failure of contemporary philosophy to take this point that, in Hegel's view, accounts for the fact that it bears witness only to the 'simple concept' of the great transformation. The reality of the prevailing philosophy however was not that mere concept but the 'far-reaching revolution of numerous forms of culture' of which it represented the 'prize'. It is therefore one of the principal aims of the Phenomenology of Mind to prove that 'the reality of this simple whole consists in this, that those forms which have become moments develop themselves anew in their received sense and give

17. Ibid., p. 19.

18. Ibid.

themselves form but in their new element'.¹⁹

It seems then that one of the principal aims of the Phenomenology is that contemporary philosophy be made conscious of its inheritance. Hegel recommends that it should look back at preceding forms of philosophy from the standpoint of its present achievement and work again on its received ideas to raise them all to the present level of speculation. This is one manner in which spirit might attain its full reality. This would be through what Hegel calls self-conscious spirit knowing the full implications of its 'simple concept'. However spirit, as I have already indicated, has another aspect. Hegel refers to it here as consciousness.²⁰ It is the exoteric aspects of spirit: consciousness caught up in social and historical reality, that is to say, the natural or ordinary consciousness of the time. Now Hegel says that in the natural consciousness (in contrast to self-conscious spirit) 'the wealth of preceding being is still present as recollection'.²¹ Accordingly, Hegel suggests, it misses in the new form of philosophy the 'extension and particularisation of content' and most of all the systematisation of such a content. (ib.) What it misses, above all, is a form or structure to its world. So, from this point of view, one of the principal aims of the Phenomenology is to give a structure to the world of the

19. Ibid.

20. There would appear to be little difference in the uses that Hegel makes of the terms Consciousness, the natural consciousness and the ordinary consciousness. If there is any difference at all it would be that Consciousness has a slightly more technical philosophical meaning than the other two being exclusively confined to the stages of mind of sense-certainty, perception and Understanding. Here, however, Hegel uses the term in a manner which would make it synonymous with the other two so that even that technical meaning has, it appears, to be understood in the loose sense.

21. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 19.

natural consciousness. In it Hegel intends to give consciousness a path to the full reality of the new world in mind. What he has to say of the 'reality of this simple whole' also means that philosophy must 'develop anew' for consciousness the 'numerous forms of past culture' which have 'become moments' in the existing culture. What is more, it means that this philosophical analysis of past forms in present culture is the reality of the natural consciousness. It is for this reason that Hegel's meaning is less than clear: because the full reality of spirit that the Phenomenology is supposed to attain applies to both self-conscious spirit and spirit as consciousness.

There is one possible confusion which we must be careful to avoid. We recall that, at the end of his History of Philosophy Hegel spoke of spirit differentiating itself into finite spirit and Absolute spirit. We also recall that the principle of the finite spirit was to know and the principle of the Absolute spirit that it be known as Idea. It seems then that what finite spirit has to achieve is parallel with what the natural consciousness of the Phenomenology has to achieve: science or systematic knowledge. There is a difference between the two, however. The difference is that finite spirit is able to know the Absolute whereas the natural consciousness has to be led to that goal. As we have seen, finite spirit does not have to be led to that goal because it is already there and therefore in a position to 'grasp the spirit of the time'. It is, as we know, capable of knowing the spirit that 'dwells in us all' whereas the natural consciousness misses the systematisation that such knowledge would provide. In

short, finite spirit is already self-conscious. It is self-conscious spirit or, quite simply, the consciousness of a philosopher. It is therefore at one with the reality of its time. It is this that defines self-conscious spirit for us. What spirit as consciousness or natural consciousness is, follows from this. It is spirit which is not at one with the reality of its time. In the natural consciousness there is still a bifurcation (*Entzweiung*) between itself and the world. It is not self-conscious so that the 'wealth of preceding being' is only present in it as recollection. In other words, what Hegel calls 'the spirit that dwells in us all' is only present in it unself-consciously.

This is an important conclusion because the task that Hegel sets himself in the Phenomenology of Mind is to bring this spirit to consciousness in the natural or ordinary consciousness. At the same time he hopes to prove to self-conscious spirit or philosophy that such is the full reality of its simple concept.²² As we have seen, he himself appears not to distinguish his account of the path of the natural consciousness to science from the philosophical proof of the correctness of his position and, therefore, cannot hold that the content of the natural consciousness is all that far removed from philosophy. Now it can be seen what was meant when I argued earlier that the history of philosophy is not per se the content of the Hegelian natural consciousness but its content as something dead and past. The content of the natural consciousness that Hegel analyses in the Phenomenology is indeed past philosophy but past philosophy in its present significance. It is past philosophy as it is to be found in

22. Hegel sees his way of setting about the business of philosophy in the Phenomenology as being the most convincing proof of the errors of Schelling's oracular, intuitionist approach. See *ibid.*, p.20 and above, Chapter 3, footnote 115.

the contemporary mind. And that contemporary mind is on its way to science. It goes without saying then that past philosophies are not unearthed in their historical continuity but as they contribute to the development of Absolute knowledge in the natural consciousness, It is this that is their 'new element': the element of the Absolute. As we know, Hegel believes that philosophy had reached this stage with the philosophy of Schelling. So what he thinks of himself as doing is giving Schelling's principle its 'full reality'. In the Phenomenology philosophy reaches its goal at the same time that the natural consciousness reaches its goal.²³

So the Phenomenology of Mind presents what Hegel calls 'the becoming of science in general or of knowledge'.²⁴ Its starting-point, he suggests, is thinking in its immediacy or simply self-consciousness. In order that this uneducated, naive thinking become science, a long path has to be traversed. In his own advertisement to the book (which appeared in a

23. Hegel ends the Phenomenology on this note: (a misquotation from a poem of Schiller) *nur- 'aus dem Kelche dieses Geistereiches (only out of the cup of this realm of spirit foams forth to it its infinity) schäumt ihm seine Unendlichkeit'*. Poetry aside, the force of what Hegel has to say here is that the Absolute Identity of Spirit is only to be achieved through depicting the 'realm of spirits' in its full reality. The point, as I have indicated, is being made against Schelling. Schelling, in Hegel's view, merely declares the Absolute or Infinity to exist. The point is though, Hegel claims, to prove in an examination of the 'realm of spirits' that it does exist.

24. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 31.

literary journal in Jena October 1807) Hegel describes the process in this way. 'It (the Phenomenology - H.W.) composes the various snapes (Gestalten) of mind as stations on the way through which it becomes pure knowledge or Absolute Spirit,' so that 'what at first glance presents itself as a chaos - the wealth of the appearance of spirit - is brought into a scientific order. This presents them according to their necessity in which the imperfect dissolve themselves and pass into higher appearances of spirit which constitute their next truth. The final truth they find first of all in religion and then in science as the result of the whole'.²⁵ Therefore what the philosopher does in traversing the various modes of consciousness leading to science is not simply to describe what is ready at hand in his society. It is not the natural consciousness in its naturalness that concerns Hegel for what lies ready at hand is a chaos. All that we have are the mere appearances of spirit. It is the task of the philosopher to bring order to those appearances. He has to bring out their necessary relation, or the superceded philosophies that are present in those appearances. This is why Hegel's undertaking is a phenomenology of spirit. It is only a phenomenology of spirit that in his opinion will show that there are necessary connections among the contemporary spheres of mind. His suggestion is even more radical than this, however; according to him those spheres or appearances of spirit dissolve one into the other until in their progress absolute knowledge is brought about.

25. Ibid., p. 593 under Editor's Notes.

Past philosophies, then, enter into the make-up of the Phenomenology of Mind in two ways. Firstly, they are present in the contemporary appearance of Mind that Hegel examines as actual points of view of individuals. They survive as living viewpoints and, in the case of some, as living ideologies. For example, the Unhappy Consciousness is not only an unconscious element in contemporary 'spirit' but also a conscious element in, say, a strongly religious person. Secondly, past philosophies would appear to be present in contemporary culture as superceded forms of cultural shapes or Gestalten, as Hegel calls them, which have contributed to and are superceded elements in the existing culture. For example, the stoical frame of mind is unlikely to have dominated the consciousness of any one individual in Hegel's time but it is still a stage in the development of the consciousness of the species and therefore, Hegel claims, present in it. This is another reason why there can be two individual approaches to the Phenomenology of Mind. There can be either the approach of the uneducated person of his time - this is of course spirit as consciousness or the natural consciousness - or the approach of the 'universal individual' who has to regard 'self-conscious spirit in its formation and education (Bildung)'.²⁶ This, of course, is the approach of spirit as self-consciousness or the approach of the philosopher. It is only he that is able to understand the various elements of the existing culture

26. Ibid., p. 31.

in their necessary connection. The natural consciousness being caught up in what Hegel calls the 'organism of our Substance' must approach the Phenomenology from the point of view of one of the modes of consciousness which it possesses.

This distinction between the two approaches makes the structure of the Phenomenology most complex. Hegel himself devotes a long section of the Preface to explaining and elaborating it. The particular, uneducated individual is, he argues, 'incomplete spirit' a concrete configuration, in whose whole being one determination governs'.²⁷ The other appearances of mind, he claims, exist in it only as obscured traces. The prevalence of a higher mode of consciousness in the experience of the individual expunges the lower modes. The latter becomes a moment only in the new particular point of view. We might understand better what Hegel has to say here if we consider two such particular modes of consciousness: Protestantism and Catholicism. Now there is no doubt that Protestantism originated in Catholicism; but in a particular consciousness that is Protestant the element of Catholicism in that particular consciousness, Hegel would argue, has disappeared. The particular consciousness thinks it is Protestant in so far as it is not Catholic. In other words, the Protestant likes to stand above the level of thinking that is the origin of his own outlook. He is vain about his own view and contemptuous about the Catholic view. Now Hegel generalises this to say that He, the particular or individual consciousness, likes to stand above his own intellectual

27. Ibid., p. 32.

history. He likes to think of it as something left behind. On the other hand, the universal individual approaches the various modes of consciousness without this vanity. It sees every stage as necessary so that each in its mind possesses the same value as the other. For it, each mode of consciousness is 'itself an individual whole configuration'.²⁸ As we have seen, its task is to bring to mind each particular mode of consciousness - each one in its place - and, as Hegel puts it here, survey the whole as its element. This is not to say that the individual particular consciousness does not participate in all the shapes of consciousness that precede it. They are already part of its consciousness 'because this past existence is property that has already been acquired by the universal spirit that makes up the Substance of the individual'.²⁹ Therefore as one particular consciousness, say for instance that of Morality, the individual will not only participate in the world of ethical thinking and the forms of ethical consciousness that have immediately preceded it but also, through the general culture of his epoch, he will be participating in the general process of Spirit that Hegel depicts in the Phenomenology of Mind. This does not however amount to the same level of involvement as that of the universal or self-conscious mind. Since the general process only 'appears externally' to the individual as the property of the general consciousness of the time. So it merely forms the ideological backdrop of his existence

28. Ibid., p. 33.

29. Ibid., p. 32.

or, Hegel suggests, has 'inorganic nature'.³⁰ In Hegel's view, then, we may depict the two approaches to the Phenomenology in this way: 'it consists, seen from the side of the individual, in this, that it acquires what is at hand, draws into itself its organic nature and takes possession of it for himself. This from the side of the universal spirit consists in nothing other than it give itself this its self-consciousness and bring out in itself its becoming and reflection.'³¹ What the individual or natural consciousness has to do therefore is to reappropriate its own inorganic nature. Baillie seems to be correct here when he suggests in his rendering of the phrase that the particular individual has to make his inorganic nature organic to himself.³² This is certainly what Hegel implies: that the natural consciousness become thoroughly acquainted with all that it has taken to make up its own consciousness and so make the general consciousness of the time his own. Hegel adds that this process from the point of view of the universal individual is simply the process of its coming to itself. It becomes explicitly what it implicitly is, the self-consciousness of Substance. This approach to the Phenomenology can it is clear only be open to the philosopher who has already attained the level of 'self-consciousness' of spirit. Or, as Hegel suggests here, it is only open to those who know the content of the inorganic nature of the general spirit of the time. The content of that inorganic nature is what Hegel calls the prior 'labour

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p.35.

32. J.B.Baillie. Translation of The Phenomenology of Mind (Allen & Unwin) p. 90.

of world spirit' whose essence, as we know, is the history of philosophy. It follows then that this approach can only be taken by the philosopher who knows, as Hegel claims he does, the outcome of the History of Philosophy. It is only such a philosopher who can possibly present the Phenomenology of Mind.

UNDERSTANDING AND REASON, OR THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

In order to elaborate the implications of Hegel's view of philosophy, we shall now take a look at how he describes the process of the Phenomenology. This description gives a clue to the understanding of many of the most important concepts of Hegel's system: 'science', he says, 'presents not only this educational process in its fullness and necessity but also that which in its formation has already sunk into a moment and property of mind.'³³ So what the natural consciousness undergoes in its course constitutes the educational process of the Phenomenology. And is, as we can see, the Phenomenology 'viewed from the side of the individual'. It is therefore the series of changes that leads to the inorganic nature of the natural consciousness becoming organic to itself. It is this series of changes that, Hegel suggests, revives in both the individual and philosophy what 'has already sunk into a moment and property of mind.' Saying this naturally leads Hegel to explain how it is that the educational process brings about this change. In his view it does so because 'the world spirit' has already 'had the patience to go through these forms in the long expanse of time'³⁴ and were therefore deposits in its present form. We are by now familiar with this suggestion of Hegel. What more he has to say, however, brings us on to less familiar territory. He tells us that, in that substance, the past philosophies are but abbreviations;

33 Hegel. Werke 3, p. 33.

34. Ibid., p. 34.

in other words, that those past philosophers as they are found in contemporary culture are 'realities extinguished into possibilities'.³⁵ For this reason Hegel thinks they are thoughts which have no substantial hold. They are thoughts of which we might say that they have had their day. This is what Hegel means when he says that they are present as 'recollection' only. The past forms of consciousness that he is analysing are not, he claims, present as 'being in themselves' (erinnerte Ansicht). This point is of some considerable importance because the process of the Phenomenology consists precisely in inverting these remembered 'in themselves' into the form of 'for themselves' (Fürsichseins).³⁶ It is in the light of this account that we ought to complete our picture of the role of the history of philosophy in the Phenomenology of Mind. It appears now that the Phenomenology is not simply a process of making past forms of consciousness contemporaneous but of making contemporaneous past forms of consciousness known. The Phenomenology is therefore not the history of consciousness but the consciousness of the history of consciousness in consciousness. So it is not the history of philosophy but the consciousness of the history of philosophy in the present stage of philosophy.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid. 'Already something thought the content is the property of Substance; it is no longer (required) to invert existence into the form of being in itself but only to invert that which is neither no longer merely original nor sunk in existence, rather already remembered in itself into the form of being for itself'.

We shall now see how Hegel explains the process of the Phenomenology to see whether it accords with our view. A distinction he feels we must make before we can understand this process is that between what we might call 'being familiar with something' and knowing it. Since he argues (and here the German is indispensable): 'Das Bekannte überhaupt ist darum, weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt'.³⁷ Now, bekannt sein can mean to know in German but in the sense of being acquainted with or being familiar with. For example, a Bekante is an acquaintance. So when Hegel is distinguishing genuine knowing (erkennen) from bekannt sein, as he is in this instance, he is distinguishing knowledge with which we are merely acquainted or knowledge which is regarded as well-known fact with knowledge we really do know well. The force of Hegel's epigram is then that 'the well-known just because it is well-known is not known'. The adequacy of this rendering however does depend on our remembering that well-known is only intended in the sense of being familiar with or being acquainted with. This is not a minor point. It is of some significance that we know precisely what Hegel's epigram means because Hegel thinks of the process of the Phenomenology as the overcoming of our Bekanntschaft, or the well-known nature, of the forms of consciousness that make up the contemporary spectrum of mind. In Hegel's view, we as having only an ordinary consciousness of our epoch show a vanity towards the forms of consciousness that are 'well-known'

37. Ibid., p. 35.

but have been historically superceded. An individual particular consciousness, such as we have, is thus indifferent to the past forms that make up its inorganic nature so that 'this property it has acquired still has the same character of unconceptualised (unbegriffener) immediacy, unmoved indifference..'³⁸ Therefore the particular consciousness of the day, Hegel claims, sees the superceded forms as simply something with which it is finished 'wherein therefore its activity and thus its interest no longer is'.³⁹ Hegel suggests that the interest of the universal individual, or we might simply say the philosopher, is directed against this indifference.

The task of the philosopher is to subvert our mere familiarity with the superceded forms of thinking that make up the inorganic nature of our natural consciousness. As we have seen, these forms of thinking are merely remembered in themselves (An sich) for us. More precisely, Hegel says, they are remembered in the form of Vorstellungen. The translation of this Hegelian term also presents peculiar difficulties. Vorstellung is a compound word made up of the preposition vor which means simply in front of or before, and the noun Stellung which means position or placement. Hegel will not have been indifferent to the literal meaning of Vorstellung when employing it so that in its use of it we would expect that he intends an admixture of its abstract connotation - idea or conception and thus its literal connotation - position in front of. Vorstellung, we see, Hegel employs to describe the ideas that the natural consciousness has of its inorganic

38. Ibid., pp. 34 - 35.

39. Ibid., p. 35.

nature or its Substance. The suggestion is that such an idea takes on the form of unconceptualised immediacy. This seems to rely heavily on the literal meaning of Vorstellung. For Hegel appears to be claiming that Vorstellungen are ideas of something that is positioned before me (i.e. immediate to me) and are for that reason imprecise ideas. They are, he claims, ideas that take on their form external to my thinking. We can, I think, understand this criticism of Vorstellungen in two ways. In the first place it seems that Hegel associates the thinking that consists merely of such ideas with bifurcation (Entzweiung). Bifurcated thinking, as we saw earlier, Hegel holds to be thinking that is always bound up with otherness and that is therefore unable to restore the shattered harmony of existence. — Philosophy, we also saw Hegel claim, aims at restoring that harmony and is therefore directed against thinking that is bifurcated. One aspect then of the criticism of Vorstellungen is that bifurcated thinking expresses itself in that form. Vorstellen is appropriate to that mode of thinking because it is thinking that assumes that its ideas always reflect an object external to itself. The criticism, as I have indicated, has another and more significant aspect. Here the Vorstellungen are ideas that the natural consciousness has of its inorganic nature. As we know, that inorganic nature is the past forms of culture that are superseded in the existing culture. They are inorganic to the natural consciousness because they only become part of its consciousness through the general ideology of the time. The natural consciousness simply receives ideas of those past forms as part and parcel of living in that age.

So in that sense also they are ideas which are external to their thinker. Hegel's criticism of Vorstellungen is then, in the second place, that they reflect too readily the preconceptions of the age. They tend-in this sense-to be ideological. This does not mean that Vorstellungen are merely prejudices. Hegel insists that they are ideas that take on an objective form for their thinker. If we were to employ a term which is probably nearest to the original, representation, we might say that Vorstellungen are the ideas in which the ordinary consciousness represents the world to itself. It is the world as it truly imagines it to be.⁴⁰

40. Malcolm Clarke in his Logic and System (Nijhoff, The Hague, 1971) deals at length with Hegel's notion Vorstellung. He is concerned (as the sub-title to the work indicates) with 'the Study of the Transition from "Vorstellung" to Thought in the Philosophy of Hegel'. Many of the conclusions I have drawn are similar to his e.g.

- 1) 'In translating the term Vorstellung we must, he says, not fail to convey the literal sense of the German ("setting before")' op.cit., p.27.
- ii) 'The stage of Vorstellung is therefore the first at which one may speak of objectivity...Vorstellung is thus described as neither a merely inner image (Bild) nor a merely outer existence (Dasein), but a synthesis of the two which is thereby set before the objective appreciation of the intellect...Vorstellung must be seen both as thought and the "other" of thought.' ibid., p. 28.
- iii) 'Vorstellung is a "gemeinsames Meinen" (common meaning-H.W.). It is the way in which truth may be offered to all men. Hence the transition from Vorstellung to thought is from subjective to objective and from a mass to a personal existence.' ibid., p. 32.
- iv) 'That is, when we speak of Vorstellung, we are referring to that effort of thought to rise from expression of itself, which is the uniting of an abstract signification (merely inner "image") and an experience (Dasein) which is deepened (erinnert) as the signification seeks its verification in it. But the union remains a "Synthese", a putting together from without. The signification is not fully verified in the experience, it remains abstractly outside.' ibid., p.60.

The process of the Phenomenology as Hegel describes it, is aimed at overcoming these representations that are found in the natural consciousness. As I have already indicated, the object is to transform them from being remembered in themselves (An sich) into ideas that are known for themselves (into the form of Fürsichseins). The natural consciousness is shown how to re-appropriate those external ideas in order that it may be at home with them. The Phenomenology has, then, not only to bring the ordinary consciousness out of its naturalness but also to overcome its bifurcation. The first stage of this process is the analysis of Vorstellungen. As might be guessed, what Hegel means by analysis in this context is complex. In his view this activity is the distinguishing mark of the Understanding. It involves 'breaking down a conception into its original elements' and thereby 'revoking the form of its being familiar or well-known (in its Bekanntseins)'.⁴¹ Hegel acknowledges that the ideas that we have as a result of the analysis are 'indeed' themselves 'fixed' and therefore not wholly appropriate to overcoming the natural consciousness' familiarity with the Vorstellung but they do have the advantage of bringing uncertainty to the fixed world of that consciousness. Through separating and sifting out the ideas of the natural consciousness the activity of the Understanding makes its world unreal. In Hegel's view this power of the Understanding is the 'most amazing and greatest of powers or rather the absolute power'.⁴² We are already aware of the respect that Hegel has for the

41. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 35.

42. Ibid., p. 36.

Understanding. As we know, he regards it as the particular discovery of Kant. His respect, I think, is for its power to regard the world empirically and therefore as something external and opposed to the mind. The distinction that Hegel particularly has in mind is the one that Kant makes between phenomena and noumena (the *An sich*). So that in the Understanding reality is not finished and done with as it is, Hegel believes, in a self-enclosed system of philosophy such as that of Spinoza. It is not, he reasons, subsumed under an abstract schema. Rather the Understanding 'looks the negative in the face, stays with it.'⁴³ In Hegel's view it is the power of working with the data of experience in its full complexity and richness, therefore of opposing our thinking to an external reality and maintaining that division. It is this that Hegel means in claiming here that the Understanding stays with the negative (*bei ihm verweilt*). For Hegel the negative is external reality. And it is the 'absolute power' of the Understanding which divides in this way. There is however, another aspect to the Understanding as Hegel presents it here in the Phenomenology. We are again conversant with this view of Hegel's from our review of his Critique of Modern Philosophy. This aspect is that the Understanding 'only gains its truth in that it finds itself in that absolute division' that it itself posits.⁴⁴ If we recall, it was Kant who, making the assumption that experience was split into a priori ideas and impressions of a world 'without', derived a notion of the Understanding as the unifying activity

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

of the subject or, what Hegel and Fichte simply call, the I. The import of that derivation in Hegel's view, we may again remember, was that the world 'without' was shown to be subjective. He has the same here to say of the Understanding 'that it finds itself in that absolute division'. Kant, Hegel concluded, proved that the objective world that the Understanding describes with the Categories is a world that is organised by the I itself, or the unity of apperception as Kant himself calls it. It is for this reason that Hegel here assumes that the outcome of the activity of the Understanding is that 'das Vorgestellte Eigentum des reinen Selbstbewusstseins wird', that the received and apparently external representations of the ordinary consciousness becomes the property of a pure self-consciousness.⁴⁵

This though is not the end of the process of the Phenomenology. Neither would we expect so from what we have learnt from our discussion of Hegel's Critique of Modern Philosophy. For although Hegel regards the Understanding as vitally significant for philosophy, he does not regard it as the highest form of thinking. The task Hegel sets himself in the Phenomenology of Mind is to attain the level of science for philosophy. That goal cannot be attained simply through the Understanding's revocation of the representational ideas of the natural consciousness. Rather Understanding has to be superseded by Reason. Hegel seeks to illuminate this stage in the process of the Phenomenology by contrasting the form of (philosophical) study in modern times with that practiced in Ancient Greece. In ancient times, Hegel suggests the problem was to educate thoroughly the natural consciousness. In order that this might be achieved the natural conscious-

45. Ibid.

ness was encouraged to reflect on its own activities and indeed all else that might crop up in its life. (Hegel appears to have the Socratic method very much in mind here.) On the other hand, Hegel thinks that in modern times the 'individual finds the abstract form already prepared'.⁴⁶ The individual's effort to make it his own, to understand it, is therefore not an effort to raise himself from the concrete and manifold to the abstract but make known what is already internal to himself, in other words, to make his abstract ideas concrete. What has happened with the general development of culture in Hegel's view is that the ordinary consciousness of the time is not so much sunk in its own particular existence as unaware of the existence of the general level of consciousness in itself. 'Therefore the work we have to do now is not so much to purify the individual from the immediate sensuous manner and to make him into thought and thinking Substance as much more the opposite: through overcoming fixed, determinate thoughts we have to give reality to the universal, infuse it with spirit.'⁴⁷ In Hegel's opinion the ordinary consciousness in the Modern world already has a sophisticated view of the world. It is, as we have seen, a consciousness that contains within itself, as its inorganic nature, all previous forms of culture. We have also seen Hegel suggest that these past forms exist in that consciousness as remembered in themselves. What he has to suggest here is that it is not sufficient that the understanding analyse these received forms but that they have also to be rendered fluid or infused with spirit. This is the role of

46. Ibid., p. 37

47. Ibid.

Reason. The attainment of its goal is, however, a far more difficult task than what Hegel calls education from sensuous immediacy because the activity of the Understanding itself has to be superceded; and it is in this, the thinking activity of the Understanding, that the I has its certainty. This is an obstacle to Reason because the I has a vanity towards the particular conceptions that it holds. In Hegel's view, the natural consciousness of the modern epoch will have no objection to the educational process of the Phenomenology in so far as it merely points out the content of its experience through reviving and analysing the past forms that provide its background. However it will stop short at the point where its own fixed thoughts are abrogated, where the contemporary significance of its ideas are not only questioned but also denied, because it is in those ideas, Hegel again points out, that it finds its certainty. Reason, nevertheless, has to overcome this dogmatism of the Understanding. This is achieved, according to Hegel, where thinking abstracts itself from mere certainty. What is asked is not that consciousness set to one side its Self in thinking. This would be contrary to the whole spirit of Hegel's philosophy. (As we know, reality has to have the significance of the I for Hegel). Rather what is asked is that the subject 'give up the fixity of the activity of positing itself' just as much as it 'gives up the fixity of the pure concrete'.⁴⁸ What Hegel is demanding, and this itself is part of the process of the Phenomenology, is that the subject, to transcend mere Understanding, give up the stance or assumption of the absolute division of subject and object. It is this

48. *ibid.*

assumption of a fixed subject and a fixed world which, although essential in the process of knowing, Reason has to transcend. The stance 'which is I itself in opposition to a different content'⁴⁹ is necessary in Hegel's view when we embark on science but in the course of science itself the stance is shown to be inadequate. In Reason, then, the notion of an external world is set aside and in setting aside this notion the vanity of the I is overcome or, in Hegel's words, its fixity in positing itself. This has the result that the subject's ideas become fully fluid, because its world has become fully fluid. 'It is through this movement', Hegel says, that the Understanding's 'pure thoughts become concepts and are for the first time what they are in truth, self-movements, circles, that which their Substance is, spiritual essentialities'.⁵⁰ Hegel's suggestion appears to be then that the world of Reason is simply a world of ideas and not of difference between thought and extension, subject and object. For that reason the rational subject has no desire to settle at any particular thought such as mere certainty of itself or its world because it is the thought of thought or self-consciousness.

It might well be for us to recapitulate what we have concluded this far about the process of the Phenomenology, if only to regain the critical distance which is essential in assessing

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid. Begriffe (concepts) therefore 'comprise Hegel's highest group of logical categories, which define nothing less concrete than self-conscious spirit. The Notion (Begriff) is therefore Reason and not understanding. It is thought explicitly articulating the unity of thought and being, the movement of spirit's self-negation and self-reconciliation or return upon self.' G.F.G.Mure. The Philosophy of Hegel, p.21.

such an imaginative and ambitious a thinker as Hegel. The goal that Hegel sets himself in the Phenomenology is, as we know, to raise philosophy to a science. By now we should be clearer as to what this entails. At the same time as being the proof of the scientific nature of philosophy it is the raising of consciousness or the natural consciousness to science. Why is it that the two are compatible? We have gone some way towards discovering the reason for this. They are compatible because the natural consciousness has within itself as 'recollection' the 'labour of world spirit.' The path of the natural consciousness to science is therefore one and the same as the proof of the scientific nature of philosophy since the former process consists in systematising the past forms of consciousness that form the inorganic nature contemporary consciousness whose systematic form is philosophy, or, more precisely, the systematisation of previous philosophical outlooks. The aim of raising philosophy to a science means that past forms of philosophy have to be recalled as they exist imperfectly in the contemporary mind and organised by means of the understanding superceded by reason. As we have seen, it is the understanding that Hegel regards as the 'absolute power' in this. It becomes the means of raising consciousness to science through its power of negating our familiarity with the superceded forms of thinking that exist in our culture. It teaches us, Hegel claims, that precisely because a thing is well known it is not properly known. It destroys the presuppositions that we have about our world; it therefore negates the form of thinking which Hegel calls Vorstellen. It does that through breaking up the idea of Vorstellung into its constituent parts. Now Hegel believes that in the course of that

analysis the subject discovers himself; he discovers that what he took to be objective and external to himself was simply his own activity. Hegel's suggestion is, then, that the analysis of the content of the ordinary consciousness has the result that the content analysed becomes the property of self-consciousness. This corresponds with the transition from Vorstellen to conceptual thinking, or from the Understanding to Reason. The Understanding that brings about this result has to be superseded as a means in the Phenomenology of Mind because what follows is plainly not within its province or, what Hegel calls, its principle: the division of subject and object. It cannot follow through the results of its own analysis for that is the province of Reason. Reason, according to Hegel, brooks no fixity of subject nor object. Both, it seems, have to subordinate themselves to conceptual thinking. And conceptual thinking is thinking that is not intended to be a representation of an objective reality but is that objective reality. It is thinking which does ^{not} allow a residue, such as the Ding an Sich of Kant and Fichte. It is thinking which in Hegel's view is the essence of its object. It is this that is the goal of the Phenomenology. The outcome then of raising philosophy to a science is that the notion of a subject as a contingent, self-seeking, vain, limited and egocentric individual opposed to an impersonal, external, natural, negative object is shown to be false over the whole range of apparent opposition in the contemporary mind. Science is this, Hegel says, 'pure self-recognition in absolute otherness'; it is this 'ether as such' ⁵¹ which is neither subject nor object, I nor nature, but the conceptual knowledge of them.

51. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 29.

As I have already pointed out, Hegel regards the phenomenological process that brings us to this conclusion as merely the beginning of science. It is so, Hegel says, because it always includes the 'element of immediate presence (unmittelbaren Daseins)'.⁵² What Hegel means by this is that spirit as it forms the object of Phenomenology is (a) spirit as contemporary spirit, and (b) spirit as the consciousness of a reality opposed to mind. Both are spirit in its immediate presence. It ought by now to be clear that, although the phenomenological process deals with spirit at each of its stages in this form that, its aim is the overcoming of that immediacy. Hegel regards the general result of this process of overcoming the element of immediate presence in spirit as experience. As we would expect, he is aware that this use of the notion of experience runs counter to the accepted philosophical interpretation of it; but he employs it because the accepted philosophical connotations of the word form part of his meaning. He therefore grants the conventional meaning, established by the Empiricist philosophers, which denotes mind in its 'receptivity only'. In consciousness, there are 'two moments', of knowledge and that objectivity which is the negative of knowledge'.⁵³ So experience is in the first instance, as Hegel says in his Critique of Locke, 'nothing but the form of objectivity'.⁵⁴ For indeed 'consciousness knows and comprehends nothing which is not in its experience'.⁵⁵ However

52. Ibid., p. 38.

53. Ibid.

54. Hegel. Werke 20, p. 215.

55. Hegel. Phänomenologie, Werke 3, p. 38.

in Hegel's view there is much more to experience than that. Experience, in fact, is nothing other than the whole process of the Phenomenology of Mind, that leads through the Understanding and Reason to Absolute Knowledge.

The implications of this are profound. It gives us a completely new view of experience. It is not to be doubted that Hegel himself was aware that this was one of the most important aspects of his Phenomenology of Mind. As Fulda and Heinrich have pointed out he originally intended to entitle the work The Science of the Experience of Consciousness.⁵⁶ Indeed I would argue that the Phenomenology was intended as a comprehensive reformulation of the philosophical notion of experience. If this is true it would appear that we have already examined two aspects of that reformulation. Firstly, in examining the relation of the Phenomenology to the History of Philosophy we came to the conclusion that Hegel regards his Phenomenology as the systematisation of past forms of philosophy in as much as they are part of the inorganic nature of the particular consciousness of his time. Thus if Hegel wants to regard this philosophical undertaking as the necessary content of experience, room has to be made in the notion of experience for both history and what Hegel calls science. Secondly (and the implications of this are probably more complex) in analysing the process of the Phenomenology we came to the conclusion that the individual consciousness had to undergo two transformations before it could attain science. At the hand of Understanding it has to suffer the break-up of

56. H.F. Fulda und D. Heinrich. Materialien zu Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1973, Introduction, p. 11.

its own particular conceptions and subsequently, at the hand of Reason, it had to suffer the dissolution of the fixity or objectivity of its world. All this, we now know, forms part of experience for Hegel. We would do well then to reconsider our conclusions in this light.

First, we ought to consider what role history and science play in Hegel's account of experience. We have seen that history enters into the Phenomenology in two senses: in an esoteric and exoteric sense. It comes on the scene in its esoteric sense as part of the consciousness of the philosopher who unfolds the phenomenological process. The philosopher, as we have seen, through his understanding of the History of Philosophy participates in the history of ultimate reality. The exoteric sense in which history makes its appearance is as the content of the natural consciousness. It can only be exoteric history that furnishes the inorganic nature of the ordinary consciousness. It would appear then that experience is historical, for Hegel, in these two senses. It is historical because each and every individual's consciousness is historical in the exoteric sense and because the philosopher in order to understand the ordinary consciousness must possess the appropriate historical understanding. This is not sufficient in itself, however. The philosopher's account of experience, in order that it get at the heart of experience, has to be scientific as well. The philosopher must not simply be content to enumerate past forms of thinking but must order them systematically as well. He has to show that those past and present modes of thinking form an interconnected whole which is the path of the natural consciousness to science.

That is how science enters Hegel's account of experience as both means and end. It is means as the manner in which the philosopher exhibits the proper content of experience and end as the goal that the philosopher has in mind for the experiencing consciousness.

We must now consider what role Reason and Understanding play in Hegel's account of experience. As we know the stages of Understanding and Reason form part of the process of the Phenomenology. They do so as methods of analysis. These methods have to be regarded as the content of experience. A complexity arises here. It is that these methods are the content of experience not only as the philosopher's awareness of the necessary development of a particular Weltanschauung, but also as what actually occurs in the experience of the ordinary consciousness. This is, of course, the force of Hegel's claim that Reason is the 'life of the object'. Not only is Reason the philosopher's understanding of the experience of the ordinary consciousness but it is also the person's actual experience. In its simplest form the complexity is a result of the Phenomenology having two subjects: the ordinary and philosophical consciousness. The ordinary consciousness is only implicitly Understanding and Reason whereas the philosophical consciousness is explicitly so. It appears then that we can look at experience from two angles. First of all, we can see it as the experience of the ordinary consciousness and from this point of view experience could be seen as the process of overcoming the objections to Reason and Understanding, as, in short, an educative process. In the second place, we can see it as the experience of the philosopher that both observes and brings about this

educational process. From this point of view, experience is the process of working out the full implications of Understanding and Reason. On the one hand we appear to have the intellectual biography of the ordinary consciousness, and on the other, a plain philosophical argument. They are not, however, distinct in Hegel's mind. Experience from the philosophical point of view is nothing other than the scientific knowledge of the experience the ordinary consciousness undergoes. Hence when the ordinary consciousness has experienced the phenomenology of mind it is one and the same as its mentor: the philosophical consciousness.

A CONTRADICTION IN HEGEL'S ACCOUNT OF EXPERIENCE

This, clearly, gives us a totally different view of experience from that of Locke. Where, for Locke experience was what I sense-perceive and my reflections on that perception, Hegel claims that what I experience as ordinary consciousness is both a world of ideas (Vorstellungen) and a historical world. It is a historical world because I, the ordinary consciousness, am the result of a complex and lengthy development - the development of my culture. And it is a world of ideas because that is the only way I can inherit that culture. Hegel even makes the suggestion that experience is implicitly philosophical. For his claim is, as we know, that through systematising the world of ideas of the ordinary consciousness we can attain science. Thus whereas Locke's view is that experience begins with a tabula rasa, Hegel's view is that experience in the raw sense is social, historical and potentially philosophical. What I may experience as philosopher draws out the implications of this claim. As philosopher, in Hegel's view, I am able to have systematic knowledge of the history and of the present condition of consciousness. In this way I am able to show that each mode of consciousness that has appeared forms part of an interconnected whole. In sum, then, experience is the phenomenology of mind: a knowledge of the phenomenon of consciousness in all its contemporary complexity.⁵⁷

57. It is for this reason that Kroner says in his Von Kant bis Hegel P.374, Book 2: 'Das Problem des Erkennens vertieft und erweitert sich bei ihm zum Problem des Erlebens. Zwar findet sich sonderbarerweise weder bei Hegel noch bei einem seiner Vorgänger (soweit ich sehe) dieses Wort; dennoch darf man das, was Hegel in der Phänomenologie Erfahrung nennt, auch als Erleben bezeichnen.' Kroner's point is that 'the experience that consciousness makes is not limited to the experience of the senses' even of the understanding' but expresses itself in the whole of "life".' *ibid.* p.375.

We must stress that, although experience is both the phenomenon and the reality, both the appearance of mind and the knowledge of that appearance, the appearance of mind in the process of the Phenomenology is not the true reality of experience. Its true reality is only to be found at the end of the Phenomenology of Mind in Absolute Knowledge. Hegel argues then that, in comparison with this result, the preceding development of consciousness from sense-certainty is somehow by the way. It is, Hegel assures us, merely the appearance of experience.

Before we look at the problems that are attached to this view of Hegel's about the outcome of the Phenomenology we might remind ourselves of an important feature of that work, namely, that ^{the} outcome of the phenomenological process is shared by both subjects of the process. Both the ordinary consciousness and self-conscious spirit, or the philosopher, learn that the concrete experience of mind is not its reality. They, as we already know, are the two aspects of spirit as it presents itself in the Phenomenology. So Hegel is able to depict the outcome of experience in this way. It is firstly, he says, the process in which spirit becomes object 'for it is this movement of itself becoming an other i.e. object of itself and of overcoming this other being.'⁵⁸ Here our difficulties begin again. It appears that the result of experience is the idealism of spirit or simply what Hegel would call genuine idealism. This genuine idealism, as we discovered from Hegel's Critique of Fichte, is the attempt to overcome the bifurcation (Entzweiung) that is

58. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 38.

inevitable in human experience. Since that bifurcation is inevitably an aspect of experience the philosopher in Hegel's view must recognise it and even more must stay with the 'negative'. This much is already clear to us. Philosophy has, however, the other side to it according to Hegel that whilst dwelling in alien objectivity it is able to restore 'totality in its highest vitality'.⁵⁹ Genuine idealism, we are to take it, is able to restore the broken harmony of existence. This then is the experience of spirit whose understanding troubles us. It is, according to Hegel, a process of spirit establishing itself in an external and alien existence and subsequently re-establishing its own self within that alienation so that its freedom is restored and the alienation overcome. We have to understand that alienation is a necessary aspect of the life of spirit but we have also to understand that the higher necessity is the abrogation of this alienation in the self-identity of spirit.

Thus 'experience is simply the name for this movement in which the immediate, the unexperienced, i.e. the abstract - be it of sensuous being or of the merely thought simple (das Einfache) - alienates itself and then from this alienation returns to itself and then only for the first time is its reality and truth depicted, as also that it is the property of consciousness.'⁶⁰ As this passage suggests, the diverse effects that bodies surrounding us have on our faculties have their place in Hegel's account of experience but merely

59. Hegel. Werke 2, p.21.

60. Hegel. Werke 3, p.39.

as a starting point. They are, it appears, the unexperienced element in experience not, as Locke and Hume would claim, experience itself. The 'immediate' becomes genuinely experienced in Hegel's opinion when it becomes the property of the I. We can, I think, regard this conclusion as parallel with one that Hegel draws in the Lectures on the History of Philosophy. This is the conclusion that it is only with Kant's notion of the role of the I in knowledge (as the unity of apperception) that the content of experience was properly depicted. It was then known, in Hegel's opinion, that what we thought of as merely supplied by external objects was the activity of consciousness itself. In Hegel's mind this proves that the immediate or the unexperienced comes about through consciousness alienating itself, or, in more technical terms, that the immediate is posited by consciousness and experience is therefore the process whereby the abstract form of consciousness returns to itself from its own alienation. This again we might see as equivalent to a process that Hegel thinks takes place in the history of philosophy, this time with the advent of Fichte's philosophy. Prior to Fichte, Hegel claims, experience was a notion that described the direct relation between consciousness and external objects. It was in the context of this notion that Locke came to talk of things 'by themselves', and Kant of the Ding an sich, as the raw content of experience. Fichte, however, attempted to show that such Dinge an sich, (or the abstract, immediate as Hegel calls it here) were themselves posited by the I.

Fichte ceased to regard experience as a fixed and direct relation between consciousness and the object and came to regard it as a complex dialectical relationship between the two. This is, of course, a relationship that is established by the subject, so it maintains the other vital ingredient for Hegel of the possibility of overcoming otherness. For him experience is both concrete - historical and social, if one wills - and yet ultimately ideal.

As I have suggested previously, we may readily understand this as philosophical idealism. It is, as Colletti points out, 'the point of view that denies that things, and the finite world have true reality.'⁶¹ It is clear enough that Hegel would wish to defend such a point of view. What is more difficult to comprehend is that Hegel, when dealing with thesis of materialism in his philosophy criticises it not only for maintaining that there is an external reality but also for maintaining a view which implies the alienation of the mind. Hegel, in other words, identifies philosophical materialism with alienation. To establish that there is an external world is, in Hegel's view, at the same time to establish that there is an alien external world. There is, of course, no reason at all why this should be so. Philosophical materialism says nothing directly about the nature of the external world. Indeed, as far as the thesis itself is concerned it could just as well be heaven as hell. But if Hegel's view were correct it would follow that Locke, par excellence, were the philosopher of alienation. He, in

61. L.Colletti. Marxism and Hegel, NLB, 1973, p 7.

his apparently innocuous attempt to philosophise on the Human Understanding, would have depicted mind in its alienation. And this indeed is what Hegel believes, that the Understanding represents that level of thought which corresponds with the bifurcation of experience. But why should he see the activity of the Understanding in this way? I think we would search in vain in his philosophy, or certainly his epistemology, for the reason for this. It is, as Lukacs and Marcuse have argued,⁶² simply an assumption that he takes with him to philosophy. The experience of the everyday world, the experience of the ordinary understanding, is, Hegel claims, an alien, hostile experience which is not compatible with the demands of human reason. Reason therefore, Hegel concludes, is only at home with itself as thought. It is only the rational knowledge of reality that is adequate to it. It is, therefore, but the 'rose in the cross of the present',⁶³ unable to transform reality as it stands. Hegel's philosophy is shaped by this resignation before the practical impotence of Reason. Philosophy is for him the sustained attempt - in thought alone - to rise above the negativity of existence.

What happens therefore at the end of the Phenomenology is that the whole of experience is absorbed into the Self. So that it appears that the depiction of a concrete objective experience, experience of another opposed to mind, is gratuitous. Hegel, of course, would reject the view which implies that the outcome of the phenomenological process is solely

62. What they have argued in Der Junge Hegel and Reason and Revolution, respectively, is that it is an assumption that is derived from Hegel's view of nascent capitalism.

63. Hegel. Werke 7, p. 26

negative. He argues that such a view is based on a misconception of the nature of truth and falsehood.⁶⁴ By learning what experience is not we also learn what it is. But it is not this that is in dispute. What is in dispute is whether an account of experience should have a negative outcome at all. There is indeed much to be said for the claim that the negation of the negation is also positive but Hegel cannot in this way escape the accusation of petitio principii in the manner which he depicts the experience of mind. It is assumed that the life of mind brooks no opposition, no otherness⁶⁵ but the very object of the Phenomenology is to prove this. It appears that an objective concrete experience is summoned forth merely to show the 'serene equality and unity with itself' of Mind.⁶⁶ The same suspicion is aroused in us by the account that Hegel gives of philosophy in the Differenzschrift. There he argues that the role of philosophy is to overcome the bifurcation that is inherent in human existence. But if the role of philosophy is to heal the breach between reality and mind, why does philosophy assume that the breach exists in the first place? Hegel might well answer that the breach is not of philosophy's making, that the philosopher finds it already there in the natural consciousness. But this would not be compatible with what else he wants to claim about Mind, namely that all reality is mind. If this is so there is clearly no room for the 'other' of mind, even in the ordinary consciousness. Philosophy, with Hegel, is already in itself what it intends to achieve or, in other

64. Hegel, Werke 5, p. 40.

65. Ibid., p. 24.

66. Ibid.

words, assumes what it has to prove. Hegel assumes that there is an alien existence merely in order that philosophy can transcend it. This is the contradiction in his account of experience.

If this is a contradiction in Hegel's account of experience it is, for reasons we have suggested, just as much a contradiction in his whole philosophy. Again we can see that this must be so because the Phenomenology of Mind which, as we have argued, is Hegel's account of experience, is intended to form the introduction to the system and in that system takes its place immediately preceding the Science of Logic. It is worth following out the implications of this in some detail.

In the Preface to the Phenomenology Hegel writes: 'In my view, which must only be justified through the presentation of the system itself, it all depends on conceiving and expressing the truth not as Substance but just as much as subject'.⁶⁷ We can be sure that in expressing this view of his system in general Hegel takes as one of his most important points of reference the philosophy of Spinoza. The starting-point of philosophy, he is claiming, has to be both Substance and Subject. We have already seen Hegel make the suggestion in his Lectures that Substance must form part of the starting-point of philosophy. As we saw, he insisted that we must 'all bathe in the ether of the one Substance in which everything that is held to be true perishes.'⁶⁸ Even if this

67. Ibid., pp.22-23.

68. See above. Chapter One p.17.

were not sufficient proof that in this instance Hegel does have Spinoza's philosophy in mind the question is settled beyond doubt in the passage that immediately follows where Hegel repeats a criticism he made of Spinoza in the Lectures. It is that Spinoza made a mistake in presenting Substance as a medium in which 'self-consciousness perishes only, it is not preserved.'⁶⁹ The proper view, as Hegel claims both here and in the Lectures, is that reality or Substance has to have the significance of the I. Truth, he says, has to be conceived and expressed as 'just as much subject'. As we also have a clear indication of what Hegel intends by Subject or the I from our review of his critique of Kant and Fichte we are well placed to present our views on Hegel's summary of his system. As will become evident, they will have an important bearing on our assessment of the contradiction, if it is indeed a contradiction, in Hegel's system.

Since Spinoza's notion of Substance plays an important role in the account that Hegel gives of his system he cannot wholly escape the accusation that he compromised with religion. Nor would Hegel wish to do so. Spinoza's Substance is, as we have remarked, God. Spinoza does indeed believe that he is giving an account of reality when he is depicting Substance with its attributes and modes. In his view, therefore, the account that he gives of God is also the account of how things are. This, I believe, is the attraction of his notion of God for Hegel since without giving up the obligation to explain the world it presents it as a unified

69. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 23.

whole. Indeed Spinoza's view of things accords with that of Hegel in its detail. Spinoza regards the determinate things of existence as finite infinities. In terms that Hegel would use, as finities whose very being is that they should become the opposite of themselves.⁷⁰ It is for this reason that Hegel would not repudiate the link with religion. The task of philosophy, he would maintain, just as much as that of religion is to construct an infinite reality. Philosophy, as Hegel believes Spinoza shows us, has not to accept a finite material reality external to itself. Its task, in Hegel's view, is to subsume within itself the finite and external.

This sheds some light on the 'substantial' aspect of Hegel's thesis that Substance be conceived just as much as Subject. But as I have already indicated, in order that we can discover the full significance of Hegel's notion of Subject, the other aspect of his thesis, we have to turn to his assessment of the philosophies of Kant and Fichte. Both Kant and Fichte, we will recall, regard the Subject or the I as in some way having a hand in the construction of our world. With Kant this is intended in the epistemological sense and with Fichte, as we have seen, in the ontological sense. In the Kantian view the objects of experience are constructed by bringing to bear with the 'I think' an unity in the undifferentiated data of sense-experience. Kant, as we have seen, calls that unity the unity of apperception.

70. As Colletti says: 'The finite', for Hegel, 'is simply that which must become infinite by itself as a consequence of its very nature. "The infinite is its affirmative determination, that which it truly is in itself. Thus the finite has vanished in the infinite and what is, is only in the infinite".' *op.cit.* p. 16.

We know that Hegel regards this as a great insight of Kant's; and now in an amended form he carries it into his system. He amends it in a Fichtean fashion. This, of course, accords with his interpretation of the History of Philosophy. It is wholly appropriate from Hegel's point of view that in his philosophy the Kantian philosophy be mediated by the Fichtean since both Fichte and Kant are seen as contributing to the progressive development of the one system of philosophy. What Fichte does is to see reality as centring on the individual I so that what I may find external to myself in my experience is there as a result of an original act of positing by the I. In short, there is a world because the subject decides to create it through his theoretical activity. This by now is familiar ground for us. Now, some of this solipsism, as we know, survives in Hegel's philosophy. It is clear, however, from Hegel's Critique of Fichte's philosophy that Hegel distances himself from the extreme subjectivist interpretations of the Fichtean view of the world. His claim is, as we know, that all previous philosophies are mediated by those which follow in his system. So, in this instance, the role of Fichte's system in his philosophy has to be seen in the light of Schelling's philosophy. Now, what we know from Hegel's Critique of the philosophy of Schelling is that some importance has to be placed on the order in which Subject and Object, or Subject and Substance, appear. This has an important bearing on the role of the Fichtean I in Hegel's system, because Substance, as we see,

must precede Subject. This is to show that Hegel's philosophy depicts an objective identity of subject and object and not a subjective one. For it is in this sense that Hegel acknowledges in his system that there is a substantial reality which is not merely that of the individual consciousness. Not only would this of course distinguish Hegel's idealism from that of Fichte but that of Berkeley as well. We have from the correct philosophical point of view, Hegel believes, to think initially of an external, objective world. Only then, subsequent to admitting that such a concrete world exists, are we to think of it essentially in terms of subject. Therefore we have not, as does Fichte, to think of that initial positing of the world as a subjective act. As the Materialists insist, yet is only carried out in the appropriate fashion by Spinoza, we have to think of that world as given or datum. It is only then that we are to become Fichtean and think it through as Subject.

This is the essence of Hegel's philosophical point of view. At the same time it is how he would chose to summarise his system. The mere assertion of this, however, is not in his view the proof of its validity. As he says 'it is only the system itself that must justify it'.⁷¹ For this reason he places a great deal of emphasis on this thinking through reality until (what we might call) its objective-subjectivity is derived. In the Phenomenology, for example it is only at the end of the analysis of the Understanding that consciousness is observed to recognise itself as self-consciousness. Similarly, in The Science of Logic the sub-

71. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 23.

jectivity of the Objective Logic, of being and essence is not simply assumed. There is an extremely involved and complex derivation of the subjective logic from the objective logic which Hegel claims is the immanent critique of Spinoza's notion of Substance.⁷² Indeed in that section of the Logic what, in effect, Hegel argues is that the highest reality of reality is the Subject or freedom. It is precisely in this effort to prove that reality is subject and so the identity of subject and object, that, in Hegel's view, his philosophy distinguishes itself from that of Schelling. The defect of Schelling's philosophy, he claims, is that like a shot from a pistol it simply assumes that everything is an identity of subject and object. The identity of subject and object is in Schelling's opinion a privileged intuition of the philosopher. But far from appearing to be this, Hegel argues, Schelling's presentation of the subjectivity of Substance is 'a knowledge.. that gives out its Absolute to be the night in which all cows are black'.⁷³ The kind of subject object identity that Schelling's system presents is one that in Hegel's view is indifferent to the object which is studied. The object is in advance declared to be both subject and object as though there were nothing in particular to discuss.

Hegel's system then has as its aim the justification of its approach: that Substance is just as much Subject. For, unlike Schelling's philosophy, it does not merely assume that the Absolute is Subject. Central to such a proof in Hegel's view is the assumption of an external, alien reality. Substance 'as pure simple negativity',⁷⁴ he says, has not merely to be a

72. Ibid. Werke 6, pp.250-251.

73. Hegel. Werke 3, p.22.

74. Ibid., p. 23.

hypothesis but a given in experience. To this extent Hegel acknowledges the materialist's position.⁷⁵ Difference between subject and object, he admits, is inherent in experience. Hegel believes that he is being absolutely sincere in this. But we are inclined to doubt the genuineness of Hegel's materialist premiss if as the result of philosophy we are able to disregard it. If, as so happens, we are able to discard it at any point in the argument then, quite simply, we do not need it. This, of course, makes Hegel's argument circular, he is establishing something which he has already assumed to be the case. This, as I have pointed out, is the contradiction in Hegel's philosophy. It is not though a contradiction that Hegel sought to evade. The circularity in his argument he identifies with the business of philosophy as such. The business of philosophy is, he claims, the creation of a self-enclosed system. The system, he says, 'is the becoming of itself, the circle which presupposes its end as its purpose and has it as its beginning, and only through its being carried out and its end is real.'⁷⁶ We are not in error, he believes, in assuming that the outcome of a system will be the same as its purpose. This is because reality, which the system is, is itself teleological. 'What has been said', he says, 'can also be expressed in this way: that Reason is purposeful activity. ..The result is there-

75. See above Chapter One, p.40, "'The activity of mind", Hegel argues is "first reaction; only in this way will it become conscious of its essence".' etc.

76. Hegel. Werke 3, p.23. As Clarke says: 'The "circularity" which Hegel frequently emphasised as the form of his thought at once supplies him with a ready escape from criticism and leaves him peculiarly open to it.' It supplies him with a ready escape from criticism because 'it becomes impossible to isolate from his whole system any part of it, and to submit this to a norm of "verification" which appears from "outside".' op.cit...p.194. Clarke says little about why Hegel's circularity leaves him peculiarly open to criticism. The reason is plain to see, however. If Hegel's system is circular it cannot be said that he proved it to be true. All he is establishing is what he claims to be true already.

fore only the same as the beginning because the beginning is purpose; - or the real is only the same as its concept because the immediate has in itself as its purpose the self or pure reality.⁷⁷ Hegel then believes he is sincere in his assumption of an external reality, which is however overcome in the philosophy itself, because he is convinced that that is the purpose of reality itself. The immediate is retracted into the Self at the end of the Phenomenology because, somehow, that is how things are. Concrete experience is, he suggests, of its own accord ideal experience. Hence the system is circular because what it describes is circular. The correct philosophical approach regards Substance as Subject, Hegel would say, because Substance is Subject. All his system does in his view is to depict the teleological nature of reality.

It is far from being my purpose to defend this circularity in Hegel's system. Since I regard it as a contradiction it ought to be clear that I believe it to be ultimately indefensible. My purpose is rather to explain why he might have thought this. I have argued that Hegel sees his system as the result of a complex and extensive development in the history of philosophy. I have claimed that his interpretation of the History of Philosophy enters into his system in two ways, firstly, as the standpoint from which Hegel begins his enquiries and, secondly, as the content of much of his philosophy. In order to establish how exactly it became the content of his philosophy we discussed at length the role of past philosophies in the Phenomenology. Our general conclusion was that Hegel thought of his philosophy as being

77. Hegel. Werke 3, p.26. Hegel's emphasis.

in a critical continuity with past and contemporary philosophy. This, of course, explains why he chooses to depict his system as one in which Substance is Subject. Also, I believe, it goes some way towards explaining Hegel's unquestioning acceptance of the truth of his thesis. In his view this - that Substance is Subject - is not only the principal thesis of his philosophy it is the result of the history of philosophy. He thinks it to be not only his conclusion about the nature of reality but the level to which philosophy has raised itself in his time. Spinoza, he believed, had shown that the duality between extension and thought could only be overcome by regarding reality as the one Substance. Leibniz and the Empiricists, we have seen Hegel argue, had prejudiced this holist view by showing that there was necessarily an individual, particular aspect to reality. Consequently, the task for the German Idealists: Kant, Fichte and Schelling had been, in Hegel's words, to restore unity out of difference. What Hegel thinks they did is to show that an individual, subjective view of reality was completely compatible with a holist view. Kant is the most crucial figure for Hegel in this last stage in the development of philosophy prior to his own. After Kant, he thinks, it would be impossible for philosophy to conceive of an individual, particular reality opposed to mind which was not itself the product of mind. This is so in his view because Kant had conclusively shown that empirical experience was itself constituted by the subject (or the unity of apperception).

It is this conviction that is most crucial in Hegel's forming the opinion which, as we can see, becomes the presupposition of his whole philosophy, that reality is itself subject. Forgotten in this of course is that Kant regarded himself as explaining the nature of a phenomenal reality, that therefore for Kant, philosophy was not circular. In his view there was a (noumenal) reality which could not be absorbed by mind. As we know, Hegel does not agree on this point. In this respect it is clear that Hegel sees Kant through the eyes of Fichte since he shares Fichte's opinion that the Ding an sich is a postulate of the subject himself. By removing the notion of Ding an sich from the Kantian epistemology the way is made clear for the whole Kantian philosophy to be made into an ontology. From such a point of view Being (or indeed Substance) can be seen to be subject. Hegel carries this presupposition into his philosophy as a result of the History of Philosophy.

The I, or the philosophical subject, therefore can regard 'what appears to be going on outside itself, an activity opposed to itself' as 'its own doing'.⁷⁸ For this is the stage that philosophy has reached with the idealism of Kant, Fichte and Schelling. But Hegel, as we know, not only regards himself as carrying in to his philosophy the result of previous philosophy but also as carrying out that result in his philosophy. So what, he says, is now required is that this result be shown to be true for the whole

78. Ibid., p.39.

of objective reality. The Phenomenology has to prove that 'what appears to be going on outside' mind is 'its own doing' and this for the whole contemporary appearance of mind. It follows that the outcome of the Phenomenology has to be that 'Being is absolutely mediated; - it is a substantial content which is even so the immediate property of the I, it is self-ish (selbstisch) or the concept.'⁷⁹ It is this conclusion, which because of the circular nature of Hegel's system was never in doubt, that forms the transition to the Logic. The task of epistemology Hegel says in the Preface to the Phenomenology is now accomplished, 'the element of knowledge is prepared.'⁸⁰ For the full account of the contemporary appearance of mind, Hegel believes, is a full account of the nature of knowing. This is experience. The experience of a reality which is the negative of itself which becomes through that experience the property of self. The nature of knowing then for Hegel is to know an other of oneself as oneself. The forms of mind, as a result, do not have the character of division of subject and object, or knowledge and truth, what is left is simply the knowledge of their process. The forms of mind, Hegel claims, then take on the 'form of simplicity'.⁸¹ They are, in his view, seen as what they are, ideas merely. They are what results from the phenomenology of mind. The Phenomenology of Mind shows the world to be merely a world of ideas. But the Phenomenology is not the appropriate form for their organisation. Rather

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid. Hegel's emphasis.

'their movement which organises them into their speculative whole is Logic or speculative philosophy.⁸²

In defending a view of Hegel's philosophy in this Chapter I have been primarily concerned with the Phenomenology of Mind. As a view of his philosophy it must, however, be of significance in the understanding of all his works. As an indication of how this might be so I should like to take a brief look at the conception that lies at the back of the Science of Logic. We can take as our starting-point this abbreviated account I have just given of the transition from the Phenomenology to the Logic. It appears that the point of transition is the stage in the experience of mind at which Mind or Spirit becomes known as a world of ideas. It is these purely essentialities, Hegel claims, that become the subject-matter of the Logic. They are not, though, as they stand wholly logical. Again, in Hegel's view, it will not do simply to enumerate those as they surface in the ordinary consciousness and philosophy. As they are found in ordinary language and formal logic they are, in his view, permeated by the same opposition of thought and reality as the modes of consciousness depicted in the Phenomenology. Therefore the same process of overcoming the objections of the Understanding to dialectical Reason has to take place in the Logic as well. The Logic has to purify the forms of thought of their opposition to show that Being ~~is~~ in its Essence is the Notion or Subject. This, stated in the briefest form possible, is the process of the Logic. It, like the Phenomenology

82. Ibid. Again Hegel's emphasis.

involves raising our thinking from the level of Vorstellen to the level of Vernunft or conceptual thinking.⁸³ The course of that transition is from Objective Logic to Subjective Logic. I would therefore argue that the concept of philosophy that informs the Phenomenology remains at the basis of what was to be the crowning glory of Hegel's system: the Logic. The effort to overcome the otherness that is inherent in experience is clearly sustained in that work as well. That effort, does, admittedly, take on a different form in the Science of Logic since it is directed at the manner in which opposition, and ultimately alienation, has permeated our language and therefore formal logic. None the less it is the same basic concern that lies at the back of Hegel's view of Logic. For this reason I believe that the Science of Logic may be seen as a phenomenology of ideas. This, I think, is the view that Hegel himself implies when he says in the Preface to the second edition of the Logic that 'the loftier business of logic is to purify these categories...which are first brought into the consciousness of spirit in an isolated fashion and therefore are changeable and confusing and so only afford it an isolated and uncertain reality, and consequently in them raise spirit to its freedom and truth.'⁸⁴ Hegel argues that ideas as they appear in the ordinary language and Aristotlean logic do not adequately depict the nature of reality. They have to be purified so that mind can be raised to its freedom. And the realm

83. 'The Objective Logic seems to be so termed because it traces, at the level of the Logic, the path of Phenomenology from a thinking that is "merely" objective ("about" experience), thinking which is at the same level of Vorstellen to 'a thought that is truly objective, in the sense that it is finally constitutive of experience'. Clarke, op.cit., p.73.

of freedom, he argues in the body of the work, is attained when Substance is shown to be Subject. The Logic consequently is the process of the Phenomenology within thought itself, without, as Hegel says, the element of immediate presence (unmittelbares Dasein). The phenomenology of ideas (the Logic) differs then from the phenomenology of mind in that the latter is directed against the appearance of an external reality in consciousness and the former at the vocabulary that makes such a conception possible. Both phenomenologies are therefore intended to establish the thesis of idealism. Both therefore, I wish to claim, exhibit the same type of circularity. The dialectic that is to show that Substance is Subject is that already.

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84. Hegel. Werke 5, p. 27. Kroner op.cit., Book two. appears to have come to the same conclusion: 'To this extent the method of Logic is therefore phenomenological, just as on the other hand the method of the Phenomenology was logical: both are dialectical.' p. 422. Hypolite Genèse et Structure de la Phénoménologie de L'Esprit de Hegel) goes so far as to say that 'there is a perfect correspondence between the Phenomenology of Mind and the Logic', since 'it is always the same content, the same determinations that present themselves in the Phenomenology under the aspect of forms of consciousness, in the Logic under the aspect of determinate concepts. p. 565.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND

(ii) Epistemology and Experience

In his seminal work Von Kant bis Hegel Richard Kroner argues that Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind represents a 'return to the problem of knowledge'.¹ His reasons for making this claim are not immediately evident but all of them, it seems, concern what Hegel has to say which is new'. In Kroner's view this may be 'compressed in the notion of Geist'.² It is worth following his reasoning in detail. Before we do so, however, we might note that Chapter Two ended in a similar vein. There we also suggested that the notion of Geist played an important role in distinguishing Hegel's system from that of other philosophers. We particularly emphasised the role it played in distinguishing Hegel's philosophy from that of Schelling. And, it will be recalled, we came to the conclusion that Hegel objected to Schelling depicting Art as the highest unity of subject and object because it was an unity which was not adequate to Geist. Geist, Hegel claimed, was higher than any sensuous existence, and therefore higher than any mere work of Art. We were therefore able to share Caird's opinion that it is Hegel's notion of Geist that takes him beyond Schelling.³ The reasoning that lies behind Kroner's suggestion that the Phenomenology represents a return to the problem of knowledge has to do with the same point. Kroner sees the Phenomenology as a return to the pre-Schellingian philosophy of German Idealism in which the

1. R.Kroner. Von Kant bis Hegel; p. 362, Book 2.

2. Ibid.

3. See above, Chapter 3, Footnote 116.

Subject has precedence over the object. But this takes place, Kroner adds, in the more objective form of Geist. This is so because Hegel only 'revives the Kantian-Fichtean subjectivity' by raising 'it to the level of absolute idealism attained by Schelling.' This return to the Kantian-Fichtean standpoint entails a return to the problem of knowledge (and this is where Kroner is unclear) because 'only in that philosophy makes the I, consciousness into its pivotal point can it avoid the cliffs of Spinozism on which Schelling foundered and set forth the truth of Spinozism itself.'⁴ It is not, of course, immediately evident that Hegel, in adopting such a position, would as a consequence have to return to the problem of knowledge. It would of course though be evident if like Kroner we assumed that the Fichtean-Kantian standpoint of Subject necessarily involves philosophy in the problem of knowledge.

It is this point that is the clue to understanding Kroner's reasoning. Kroner identifies the standpoint of Subject with the standpoint of the ordinary or natural consciousness of the Phenomenology of Mind. As we have seen, Hegel makes the natural consciousness into his object in the Phenomenology so that he can lead it to science. Now Kroner believes that this involves the resurrection of the problem of knowledge because in ordinary thinking the same presupposition is made that lies at the base of that problem, namely, that there is a separation and therefore opposition between subject and

4. Kroner. op.cit., p. 364.

object. Simply in setting out to prove that everything is an Absolute Identity, in contrast to Schelling who merely assumes that is so, Hegel, Kroner claims, has to return to the standpoint of the problem of knowledge, or as Hegel would put it, a standpoint that concerns itself with the relation of thought to its object. We can now see why it is that Kroner thinks this avoids the pit-falls of Spinozism. Hegel wishes to prove to the ordinary consciousness that all reality is an identity of subject and object. It is not simply a truth that is revealed to the individual. It is rather one in which the subject has his place and therefore, Hegel believes, preserves his freedom. As we know, Hegel claims that the unity of subject and object has to be one in which the individual's independence is not extinguished. Hegel therefore revives the problem of knowledge in order that the individual can find his certainty and certain knowledge in philosophy. This, then, is what Kroner concludes on behalf of Hegel: 'Philosophy has to begin with the theory of experience, it has to prove the certainty of knowledge; only through certainty hardened by examination is the truth of knowledge guaranteed.'⁵

We began this enquiry with a thesis of Habermas' which, if we recall, directly contradicts this conclusion of Kroner's. That thesis was that Hegel and Marx had demolished (abgebaut) the enterprise of the theory of knowledge and that very little that was positive emerged from their rejection of the problem of knowledge. I suggested, at the time, that Habermas' judgement was too bleak a view of the matter, claiming that

5. Ibid., p. 363.

the problem of knowledge is not superseded without deep reflection in the Hegelian and Marxist accounts of experience. I have since tried to show how comprehensively and conscientiously Hegel deals with the problem as it occurs in the History of Modern Philosophy. This account should be sufficient to demonstrate that the problem is not rejected out of hand by Hegel. Now we have this claim of Kroner that Hegel's first major philosophical work, one view of which we have already presented, represents a recurrence of the emphasis on the theory of knowledge within the history of German Idealism. It is this view of the Phenomenology that I wish to explore in this Chapter.

In exploring this view there is an important conclusion of Hegel's that we have to bear in mind: his conclusion that knowledge is not about reality but is reality. We have already encountered this as the view that in genuine philosophy or idealism all otherness is overcome. This view brings us to the same conclusion because of the manner in which Hegel argues his idealism. As I have pointed out, he prides himself on the objectivity of his idealism and therefore relies on the tendencies within science itself to bolster up his claim. What he, like Schelling, singles out in science to support his claim is its tendency to 'intellectualise' nature, for, in science, he claims, nature turns out to be nothing other than the scientific law we formulate about it. Scientific knowledge, he concludes, is not about the objective world

but is that world. In general, then, Hegel presupposes that in knowledge the opposition between subject and object is transcended. Since this is such an important aspect of Hegel's philosophy it is now time that we have a more formal view of the matter. And 'formally', Hegel claims, 'what has been said may be expressed in this way, that the nature of the judgement or proposition in general which includes within itself the difference of subject and predicate is destroyed by the speculative proposition..'.⁶ In Hegel's opinion, then, knowledge is the 'destructive unity of the concept' (ib.) in which thought 'loses just as much its fixed objective basis which it had in the Subject as it is thrown back on to the predicates of the same and, in this, returns not to itself but into the subject of the content'.⁷ There is little point in denying that these are obscure points. Hegel may have wished to make his system accessible to the ordinary consciousness of his time but he can hardly hope to have succeeded with such an inscrutable style. However, it is clear that what is under fire in these passages is the conventional idea of the relation of subject and predicate in a true proposition. An example from Hegel's Logic will, I think, help us here. In explaining the logical form which he believes is appropriate to convey the truth he draws our attention to the positive judgement 'the rose is red'. A positive judgement is, of course, of the form the individual is the universal, and serves to indicate for Hegel the inadequacy of the form of judgement in general for the task of imparting truth. Hegel argues

6. Hegel. Phänomenologie des Geistes, Werke 3, p. 59.

7. Ibid., p. 60.

that that positive judgement is inadequate to convey truth⁸ since such a proposition does not entail that thought corresponds with its object. For when I judge that a rose is red I have simply postulated that a relationship exists between an object and an idea. 'A mere qualitative judgement', as Mure points out, 'like "the rose is red" may be correct, but is philosophically neither true nor false'.⁹ It is neither true nor false because it does not show that there is a necessary relation between the subject and its predicate. Hegel thinks that the same is the case with any judgement or proposition. In any judgement, he suggests, subject and predicate are linked in an abstract way. They would only be linked in a concrete, true way if the subject were the predicate. But it is precisely the structure of the judgement that makes this impossible. A proposition or judgement only allows us to attribute one predicate at a time to the subject. For instance, it may be correct to say that the rose is red but it is also vaguely circular in shape, part of a plant, etc. all properties that the judgement might contain but none of which are the subject of the judgement in its totality. Mure puts it in this way: 'In "This rose is red"...S(subject) has other qualities beside red, and P (predicate) qualifies other subjects besides the rose: they outflank each other'.¹⁰ Neither the predicate is adequate to the subject nor the subject adequate to the predicate. That is why the speculative judgement has to destroy the 'difference of subject and predicate.'

8. Hegel. Wissenschaft der Logik, Werke 6, p. 263.

9. G.R.G.Mure. The Philosophy of Hegel, Oxford University Press, p. 21.

10. Ibid., p. 134.

The notion of truth that Hegel is defending, and which lies at the back of his attitude to the problem of knowledge is that it is the concrete object of knowledge itself. This is why truth, as he views it, cannot be conveyed in a single proposition or judgement.¹¹ The subject of the judgement is of course said to be the predicate but it is not, in Hegel's opinion, commensurate with it. Truth for Hegel, is the whole. Therefore, in any judgement, the fact that the predicate is incommensurate with the subject makes the judgement untrue. For a judgement to be true the predicate would have to be the subject. This brings us again to Hegel's "speculative judgement". For in the speculative judgment, Hegel claims. the subject passes into the predicate. For pass Hegel employs the verb vergehen whose implications are broader since it can also mean fade away into or even disappear into. What, I think, Hegel wishes to convey by using this term is the sense that in the course of a philosophical enquiry our concept of its subject undergoes a radical transformation. And it does so in a remarkable sense: through becoming its predicates. In becoming its predicates the subject of a philosophical enquiry loses its initial identity and gains another. This new identity, Hegel suggests, is the identity of its concrete reality. Another look at the process of the Phenomenology might help to clarify the matter. The subject that formed the starting-point was, we established, the ordinary consciousness of Hegel's time. That ordinary consciousness was at the outset merely an abstract concept for us. We were aware that it had several different aspects (or, more generally, predicates) but we were not, Hegel would

11. See Werke 3, p. 47, where he makes this, by now, famous claim.

claim, aware of its full reality. Its truth or concrete reality, could in no way be attained by simply listing its predicates e.g. the Unhappy Consciousness, Observing Reason, Morality and Religion. We can only know the ordinary consciousness of the time, Hegel concludes, through knowing it as each of its predicates. The subject, the ordinary consciousness, must become its predicates for us. It is for this reason that we might even say, as Hegel suggests, that the subject has to disappear in the predicate. It would however be false to think that this implied that the subject were somehow lost without trace. It is, of course, preserved as the subject of its predicates.

We may now see why Hegel's view of truth is that it is thought which 'loses just as much its fixed objective basis which it had in the subject as it is thrown back on to the predicates of the same and, in this, returns not to itself but into the subject of the content' (above); because it is this that is involved in making our knowledge real. Real knowing is a process in which we give up our presuppositions about an object or activity through learning what it is in and for itself. There appears to be little that is uncommon in what Hegel has to suggest here. But the story is a different one if we take a close look at how Hegel describes the outcome for the knower himself. As a result of the process of cognition we who are the knowers, according to Hegel, find our thinking to be the subject in its concrete reality. Even this appears to be an innocuous claim if we

do not examine it closely. What Hegel is claiming, though, is that if we know an object our thought is the object. This is how the speculative judgement destroys the gulf that separates thinker and object.¹²

As we know, Hegel would argue that Modern Philosophy is characterised by this dualism, this bifurcation of thought and reality. We have seen Hegel claim that Descartes first established this bifurcation in Modern Philosophy by postulating that there were two distinct substances: extension and thought. Following that, it was Spinoza who had established an abstract identity of the two by postulating that there was but One Substance. His identity, since it was abstract, had neglected what Hegel believes to be an essential aspect of reality: individuation. Locke and Leibniz, however, had pointed out this omission in Spinoza's philosophy. Locke did so by sharpening the bifurcation between thought and

12. Herbert Marcuse in his Reason and Revolution also singles out Hegel's notion of the speculative judgement as being of particular significance in the understanding of Hegel's philosophy. His view is that the notion 'strikes the decisive blow against traditional formal logic.' (p.102) This is certainly not the case in the broad sense but it is, plausibly, Hegel's view of the matter. Certainly what Hegel intends with the speculative judgement is, as Marcuse suggests, that the 'locus of truth' be shown to be 'the dynamic system of speculative judgements in which every single judgement must be 'sublated' by another, so that only the whole process represents the truth.' (ibid.) And, as I have argued, the speculative judgement is intended to contrast with 'the logic of common sense which treats propositions as consisting of a subject, which serves as a fixed and stable base and a predicate attached to it.' (p.101). The one point that Marcuse misses in making this contrast is that Hegel's speculative judgement is an integral part of his idealism. Or else he would not think that this 'protest against divorcing truth and its forms from concrete processes' was also 'a protest against severing truth from any direct guiding influence on reality.' (p. 102).

reality in his empiricism. But Leibniz went some way toward remedying this defect through presenting a system of intellectual individuation in his philosophy, the world of monads. This did not, however, meet the full requirement of philosophy, as Hegel understood that requirement, since it continued to develop along dualist lines. Berkeley and Hume set to work on the revision of Locke's materialism, the one from an idealist point of view, the other from a sceptical point of view. It is Hume's sceptical empiricism that represents the most extreme consequence of the dualism of Modern Philosophy for Hegel. Philosophy, he argued, cannot descend lower than it does in Hume's system. What irks Hegel most about Hume's philosophy is that it reduces all problems of truth to a matter of custom. Kant, as we know, takes his starting-point from this scepticism of Hume seeking to point out that knowledge does indeed have a reality. But because this is depicted as merely a phenomenal reality the bifurcation of experience is not overcome. For that reason Hegel believes that Kant remains at the standpoint of Locke and Hume. It is only with Schelling and Fichte that the proper attempt to overcome the dualism of Modern Philosophy is begun. But both, in Hegel's view, fail in this task. Fichte fails, because he has the wrong starting point in the I and Schelling because he does not attain a logical view of things, in other words, because he fails to prove his point of view. The whole history of Modern Philosophy is from this Hegelian standpoint a history of the gathering together of the conceptual equipment to overcome dualism in the theory of knowledge but of the failure to

put it to its proper use. This failure, I think, Hegel would attribute to a radical misconception of knowledge that was implicit in much of Modern Philosophy. This misconception was fundamental to the posing of the problem of knowledge. Hegel's speculative judgement is, I believe, directed at this misconception.

The misconception is this: knowledge had been seen as an instrument (Werkzeug) or a means (Mittel) with which we might attain the truth.¹³ It was therefore natural to suppose that before we enter 'on the thing itself, namely the real knowledge of that which is in truth' in philosophy that we ought to examine the instrument or means with which we were able to possess it.¹⁴ In his Introduction to the Phenomenology Hegel suggests that this apprehension appears to be correct for two reasons. In the first place we might suppose that there are various types of cognition and therefore that one mode might be more appropriate for our purposes than another. In the second place we might suppose 'in that cognition is a capability of a certain kind and scope that without the more accurate determination of its nature and limits the clouds of error will be taken hold of instead of the heavens of truth.'¹⁵ It is the second supposition that is most typically made by the Modern Philosophers and, of course, presents them with the problem of knowledge. The representative of that tradition Hegel is most likely to have in mind is Kant.

13. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 68.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

Although we cannot be certain of this, it is instructive to notice the terms in which Hegel states his point. It is Kant, of course, who regards our principal cognitive faculty, Reason, as a capability and therefore terms his whole enquiry transcendental. His aim in that enquiry is consequently to concern himself 'not so much with objects as with our mode of cognition of objects.'¹⁶ So, as we know, its use from the point of view of speculation would only be negative; it would serve, as Hegel suggests here, 'not to extend but only to purify our reason and preserve it from errors'.¹⁷ Indeed, the whole distinction that Kant makes between transcendental and transcendent philosophy is intended to prevent Reason from becoming enveloped in what Hegel aptly calls 'the clouds of error'. For Kant, 'the more accurate determination' of the nature and limits of cognition would prevent our knowledge from over-reaching itself. Hegel claims, however, that this apprehension easily transforms itself into the conviction that it is futile to hope that through cognition we can learn what the thing is in itself. There therefore develops in the mind of the thinker, now turned sceptic, an insurmountable barrier between truth and our knowledge. 'For given that cognition is an instrument with which to take possession of the absolute essence it immediately occurs to one that this employment of an instrument on a thing not so much leaves the thing as it is in itself, but rather effects a change in it and a forming of it.'¹⁸ What we have

16. Kant. Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, op.cit., p. 63.

17. Ibid.

18. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 68.

taken to be the supposition that Kant makes, Hegel claims, leads naturally to sceptical conclusions. Simply because knowledge is conceived as an instrument with which to attain reality there arises the possibility that it may in the event fall short of that reality or alter it in some way in being applied. It is, as we have seen, such apprehensions that lead Kant to distinguish between the thing in itself (Ding an sich) which would be the thing as it remains unaffected by the human cognitive faculties, and the object or phenomenon which is the thing as it is formed by the human cognitive faculties, principally the Understanding. Since Kant regards our cognitive faculties as, at best, providing us with an orientation in the world he deems the phenomenon only to be knowable. The phenomenon may indeed be all that we can know; however, it is also Kant's claim that we always aim to know the thing in itself or the noumenon. Thus as Hegel suggests, with such a view of knowledge the 'clouds of error' can never be far away. If this suggestion is correct, it would seem that the antinomies of Reason which Kant outlines in his theoretical philosophy arise from the overambitious use of our instrument of knowledge.

We might on the other hand take the view, Hegel suggests, that cognition should not be seen as a tool but rather as a passive medium. We no longer decide to see it as playing an active role in our acquisition of the truth. The view of knowledge that I think Hegel has in mind here is that of the Empiricists. We recall that Locke and Hume thought of

knowledge as the agreement of our ideas with the appearance of things to our senses. This is no more clear than in Hume's insistence on that 'as long as we confine our speculations to the appearance of objects to our senses, without entering into disquisitions concerning their real nature and operations, we are safe from all difficulties, and can never be embarrassed by any question'.¹⁹ Only 'if we carry our inquiry beyond the appearance of objects to the senses' will 'most of our conclusions..be full of scepticism and uncertainty'.²⁰ Truth, then, is conveyed to us by our sense-experience.

All that is required in our using it as a means is that we do not intervene in any way in its operation. We are required to remain passive or merely receptive. It is to this model of knowledge, then, that I take Hegel to be referring with his notion of it as a passive medium. The problem with such a notion, Hegel argues, is that according to it we receive knowledge 'not as it is in itself, but as it is in and through this medium'. For example, Locke and Hume suppose that knowledge is conveyed to us via the senses but since sense-perception is only the medium through which we attain knowledge they have to conclude that what we sense-perceive is not necessarily all true and that our faculties (the medium itself) of sense-perception are not wholly adequate to convey the truth. As Hegel says, the point is that what knowledge we would receive would only be 'through and in this medium'. If it deceived there would be no knowing how it did so as also there would be no way of knowing if there was any know-

19. D.Hume. A Treatise of Human Nature I, op.cit., p.110.

20. *ibid.*

ledge outside that medium.

Whichever position we hold, the Kantian one, that cognition is an instrument through which we achieve knowledge, or the Lockean one, that cognition is a passive medium through which 'the light of truth reaches us', Hegel believes that 'in both instances we employ a means that immediately induces the opposite of its intention (Zwecks)'.²¹ This seems to be rather a harsh conclusion. Indeed it may lead us to think that Hegel adopts a procedure which is not immanent.²² For this criticism appears to take no account of Kant and Locke's own appreciation of the drawbacks of their theories of knowledge. Kant is of course well aware that by conceiving our cognition as the mental apparatus through which we merely orientate ourselves in the world we cast doubt on the certainty of our knowledge. Indeed he concludes that if we are to have any dependable knowledge then we have to take a critical attitude to our cognitive faculties, especially our principal one, Reason. Locke, equally, is well aware that if we regard knowledge as being imparted by the passive medium of the senses we have not to accept all sense-perceptions as true. Indeed, he tries to differentiate the more dependable modes of sensing from those which are less so. But all this Hegel acknowledges in his Lectures on the

21. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 68.

22. Habermas. Erkenntnis und Interesse, op.cit.p.21. He suggests this is so because Hegel's critique of classical epistemology presupposes exactly what the latter puts in question: absolute knowledge.

History of Philosophy. So we would not expect that he now adopt a procedure which is not immanent by ignoring these reservations that Locke and Kant have about our knowledge. And, as we shall see, we will not be disappointed in this expectation.

For Hegel now suggests that we might make a few emendations to the instrument model of knowledge to take account of what appear to be its initial failings, and these emendations are, I think, of the same kind as the reservations that Kant has about our ability to know the world objectively. Hegel suggests for instance that a way out of the initial difficulty posed by the instrument model of knowledge may be found through setting ourselves the task of learning how the instrument operates. For with that knowledge, Hegel says, it would seem that we should be able to purify whatever knowledge the instrument procures. Kant adopts a similar position in undertaking the Critique of Pure Reason in that 'he flatters himself' to think that in that work he had 'ret with..all errors which had previously set reason at variance with itself in its use free of experience'.²³ He believes that through depicting the Dialectic of Reason he makes it possible to free the instrument of knowledge from the illusion that it brought about and thus provide us with a clearer view of what we can know.²⁴ The motive of his Critique is, in short, to

23. Kant. Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, op.cit. v. 13.

24. Ibid., p. 63.

separate the wheat from the chaff within our cognition. We already know what the conclusions of Kant's enquiry were. In the first place he concludes that the Understanding may legitimately claim to know phenomena but not noumena. And therefore, in the second place, that Reason makes demands on the content of our experience which corresponds with nothing in the things of experience themselves. These are the Antinomies of Reason. Hegel, as we have seen, believes it to be a sign of timidity on Kant's part that he locates the contradictions that Reason observes in Reason itself. But the objection he has to Kant's procedure in the Phenomenology is, I think, more fundamental. He is opposed to the whole critical conception that lies behind Kant's philosophy. In Hegel's opinion the notion that we can purify our cognitive faculties through separating, in cognition, what pertains to our thinking activity and what pertains to the object of thought is completely misguided, because, in his view, the supposed improvement in our instrument of knowledge would only put us back where we began; 'If, he says, we take away from a formed thing' in this instance our knowledge, 'what the instrument has done to it 'our knowledge stands in exactly the same position as before we had begun the exercise.'²⁵

Since this argument depends on an analogy we might best clarify it with an example of its working. If, for instance, we removed (if that were possible) from a completed building the effects brought about by the use of all the tools in

25. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 69.

constructing it we would simply be left with the raw materials that went into the construction. We would, of course, have no building at all. Similarly Hegel sees Kant as attempting to remove from a 'formed' body of knowledge all that we did in forming it. What results, in Hegel's view, is that we are left without a 'building' of knowledge at all. It is for this reason that Hegel believes that our knowledge is not advanced one bit by a critique of Reason.²⁶

I have suggested that Hegel has in mind the Empiricist view of knowledge when he employs the analogy with the passive medium. We would expect, then, that in what he has to say about this model of knowledge that he also take note of Locke and Hume's attempts to clarify their view of knowledge. What especially comes to mind in this respect are the endeavours of Locke and Hume to establish what comes to us through the medium of sense-perception immediately from the object and what elements belong solely to the medium itself. We may recall how Locke sought to distinguish ideas 'as they are ideas or perceptions in our minds; and as they are modifications of matter in the bodies that cause such perceptions in us',²⁷ and also Hume's attempt to distinguish between what we actually observe from what we usually infer when we are led to say that two things or events are causally related.²⁸ Indeed we found in Hume's case that such

26. Habermas. op.cit. pp. 19-20, especially Note 6.

27. J.Locke. An Essay Concerning the Human Understanding. op.cit., p. 83. Locke himself emphasises all but the 'and'.

28. See above. Chapter One, p. 59.

was his critical appreciation of the problems involved in the model of knowledge that it led him into a species of scepticism. Hegel suggests here, as he does in the Lectures, that this is an inevitable result if one holds rigorously to the Empiricist model of knowledge. In the Lectures, he pointed out that Locke is obliged to recognise that his own criterion of truth, perception, is itself untrue.²⁹ Hume, in Hegel's view, did no more than carry this Lockean standpoint to its logical conclusion. And he makes the same point in his 'Introduction' to the Phenomenology. Any attempt to improve or modify the Lockean model is, he argues, certain to end in failure. For even 'if the examination of knowledge which we represent to ourselves as a medium acquaints us with the law of its refraction there is just as much little point in removing it from the result, for knowledge is not the divergence of the ray but the ray itself through which the truth comes into contact with us.'³⁰ In Hegel's view, then, the idea 'which gave the first rise' to Locke's Essay Concerning the Human Understanding, namely, 'that the first step toward satisfying several inquiries the mind of man was very apt to run into' is 'to take a survey of our own understanding, examine our own powers, and see to what things they were adapted,'³¹ is erroneous. It is of course this idea that also gave rise to the problem of knowledge in Modern Philosophy. It is an erroneous idea in Hegel's opinion because even if we did as it recommended and learnt how our

29. See above. Chapter One, pp. 51 - 52.

30. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 69.

31. Locke op.cit., Introduction.

powers distorted our knowledge we would not know what knowing was because knowing is not the knowledge of how we distort knowledge but how we know that we have done so. In other words, we will not learn what knowledge is by examining 'our own powers, and see to what things they' are 'adapted' since it is that very adaptation of our powers. The simple point that Hegel is making is that we will not know what knowledge is through learning its scope and limitations. It is only through knowing what it is that we can know what it is. It is for this reason that Hegel forgoes the search for an absolute criterion of truth in his philosophy and with that, of course, abandons the problem of knowledge.

It might be objected that, although we do not (as Hegel suggests), know all there is to know about the process of cognition through knowing its limitations, we might arrive at that coveted position through simple inference. For if we establish what our cognitive faculties cannot do we can merely by inverting these negative statements into positive ones discover what they can do. Kant did something like this when he inferred from his conclusion that the understanding was incapable of knowing things in themselves that it was perfectly capable of knowing phenomena. Similarly, we might infer innumerable positive propositions about our knowledge through determining its scope and limitations. This is where the classical approach to epistemology derives its strength: It is felt that if we know beforehand our capability

to know then we may avoid error. This is what leads to what is often called the psychological approach of what I have called the classical epistemologists. Hume perhaps expresses their hopes best when he says: 'Here then is the only expedient, from which we can hope for success in our philosophical researches, to leave the tedious lingering method, which we have hitherto followed and instead of taking now and then a castle or village on the frontier, to march up directly to the capital or centre of these sciences, to human nature itself; which being once masters of, we may everywhere else hope for an easy victory'.³² The belief is, that by the examinations of our intellectual powers we may strengthen and secure our claims to knowledge. Hegel is of course aware of this approach to epistemology, but he believes it to be an approach that is in all essentials negative. Indeed he characterises it as an approach which fears error in human thinking; and arouses a mistrust 'in science which without the same doubtfulness sets to work and really knows'.³³ To establish this claim Hegel could well point to a conclusion that he comes to in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy in reviewing Locke's philosophy. There he points out, as we have seen, that Locke's apprehension about the limitations of our intellectual faculties leads him to doubt the results of natural science; and it is the same point that Hegel is making here: that to think a propaedeutic is necessary to science is to presuppose that the knowledge

32. Hume. op.cit., p.41.

33. Hegel. Werke 3. p. 69.

that we already have in science is open to doubt, The very approach itself creates that doubt. But if on their part those who favour such an approach think it right to accuse distrust in the findings of science Hegel believes it just as legitimate 'that inversely a mistrust is this mistrust...be established'.³⁴ Furthermore, he claims, it could well be that 'this fear to err is itself error'.³⁵ The Transcendental philosopher demands that we must know the scope of the faculty of cognition before we may know correctly. But as Hegel says, again in the Lectures, it is the old problem of the child who will not go into the water until he can swim.³⁶ What the Transcendental philosopher overlooks is that the 'examination of the faculty of cognition is itself cognising' so that ultimately it itself relies on a notion of knowledge which it has not examined. The point is simply that to know where to limit knowledge already presupposes that we know what knowledge is. A Transcendental philosophy cannot therefore remain true to its principle because, claim as it may that it is only concerned with our manner of cognition of objects, it is itself a manner of cognition of objects. Indeed, as we discovered in our review of Hegel's Critique of Modern Philosophy, it is a manner of cognition for which Hegel has a great deal of respect. The picture of Kant ransacking our faculties of cognition to get a proper view of knowledge is then one that is not without its irony for Hegel. In Hegel's view many of the ideas that lay behind that quest

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Hegel. Werke 20., p. 334.

were already true: so that much of what was sought was already to be found in the seeking. Hegel compares it to the plight of the Jews after the coming of Christ 'the spirit passed through the midst of them and they knew it not'.³⁷

37. Ibid.

THE PHENOMENALITY OF KNOWLEDGE

In Hegel's opinion, therefore, the transcendental approach to philosophy is inadequate. It has to be replaced. How then does he replace it? In other words, what is Hegel's answer to the problem of knowledge? We have, of course, now come to the core of our problem. Hegel's answer is straightforward enough. In his view knowledge is a phenomenon like any other. There is not for Hegel the doubt concerning the reality of our knowledge nor the need to establish beforehand its nature and extent because for him it is simply a fact of experience that knowledge or science (Wissenschaft) has appeared.³⁸ To use it, as does Kant, to doubt its own reality or to set limits on its reality seems then to Hegel to be the height of folly. Furthermore, that Kantian Critique assumes it to be a means, a tool or instrument that comes between the subject and object to unite them. He supposes, Hegel would claim, that on the one side there is knowledge and on the other its goal. From this point of view, the Critique is the analysis and testing of the efficacy of the human cognitive faculties in mediating the two. This is its starting point and, it is also, according to Hegel, the point of departure of the ordinary consciousness when it deliberates about knowledge. But, Hegel suggests, if knowledge is a phenomenon like any other, something which is already at hand, it will have achieved its goal already. It will already be the knowledge of an object. In other

38. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 71.

words, it will already have mediated the two opposing poles of knowledge: subject and object. Nowhere, Hegel therefore implies, will we find knowledge which is merely a means, whether we conceive it as a tool or a medium. It will already be an end in itself, already the true conception of something. We cannot, Hegel concludes, force it away from that something in order that it might act as a general means with which to attain the truth, because it is what it is only in conjunction with its object. Knowledge therefore does not exist in us as a capability which is indifferent to its supposed object so that we are able to test it against that object. It is not a capability but a state of affairs, in which the object is already implicated.

However, knowledge or science, we have seen Hegel suggest, has already appeared, and this is where his answer to the problem of knowledge becomes less than straightforward. For he now goes on to argue that since knowledge is an appearance in his time it is not only a historical fact but a fact whose potential has yet to be fully realised. What Hegel is pointing to here is of course the two senses in which we use the word appearance: in the first place to signify that something has come on the scene, and, in the second place to signify external appearance as opposed to reality or truth. It is the second sense that he wishes to stress. Knowledge, he says, in that it is with us 'is itself an appearance; its arrival' does not mean that it has yet been 'implemented and expanded into its truth'.³⁹ The task of philosophy then,

39. Ibid., p.71.

as Hegel sees it, is that it free itself from this semblance of knowledge ' that it turn itself against it' and make that appearance into a reality.(ib.) Consequently what the theory of knowledge has to achieve in Hegel's view is the subversion of the merely phenomenal existence of knowledge in our culture.

I have suggested earlier that the idea that lies at the heart of Hegel's philosophy is that all philosophy, including his own, exists in a critical continuity with the whole history of philosophy. I have tried to show that this assumption dominates his whole philosophy. We shall find that his view of knowledge is no exception to this. Knowledge, he claims, has already appeared. Who then are we to suppose is responsible for this appearance? In the 'Introduction' to the Phenomenology Hegel suggests that we can look at this appearance in two ways: either as the 'untrue knowledge' represented by those philosophies that regard knowledge as a means or, as that philosophy which possesses the true conception of knowledge but merely 'appears beside the other'.⁴⁰ Philosophy, then, in these two ways is responsible for the appearance of knowledge. In detail, what Hegel is suggesting is that we can regard the history of philosophy as the context in which knowledge appears but not in a straightforward sense: knowledge appears as a strife within philosophy. It appears that Hegel apportions the roles of the various philosophers in this strife according to the two aspects of the notion of appearance. Knowledge, he seems to be suggesting, may be seen to have appeared as an external appearance in the phil-

40. Ibid.

osophies of the Empiricists, Kant and Fichte. In his view they were the philosophers that had insisted that truth was the knowledge of an 'in itself' ultimately inaccessible to the human consciousness. On the other hand, Hegel suggests, knowledge may be seen as coming on the scene for the first time in the philosophy of Schelling. Neither faction represents the true reality of knowledge because the former faction lacks the true conception of knowledge while the latter faction lacks in its conception of philosophy the proper background for that conception. That proper background can only be acquired, according to Hegel, by uncovering the reality of knowledge as it appears in the untrue knowledge of the dualist philosophers. So, in getting at the reality of knowledge, not only do the defects of the dualist philosophers have to be made up by Schelling's notion of Identity but also the defects of the latter by the positive content of the dualist philosophies. The appearance of knowledge has to be overcome in both its aspects. It is this that has to be accomplished in the Phenomenology and is, in Hegel's view, the true reality of knowledge. Thus it appears that Hegel's answer to the problem of knowledge is the process of the Phenomenology of Mind. This process we discussed at length in the last Chapter. Hegel must make his stand on it. The full account of the phenomenality of knowledge is his only reply to those who ask how thought is related to its object.

It is, however, a peculiar reply. Hegel does not attempt to reply directly to the question posed by Locke, Hume, Kant

or, come to that, Schelling about the nature of knowledge. There is no attempt to discuss a priori the relation of thought to its object. To this extent it is true to say, as does Habermas, that Hegel abandons the problem of knowledge, and in the 'Introduction' to the Phenomenology, as we have seen, he produces strong reasons for doing this. What Hegel does take up in the body of the Phenomenology, however, is those past philosophies in so far as they are to be found in the ordinary consciousness of the time. They are subsumed under the account of the appearance of knowledge in the contemporary culture. So what we might choose to see as a problem peculiar to philosophy Hegel sees as part and parcel of the general outlook of the time. He suggests that the problem is generated by thinking which opposes thought to an An sich or mind to reality. It is again the problem posed by bifurcated thinking. What Hegel argues is that this problem pertains just as much to the 'problem of knowledge' of philosophy as to the thinking of the natural consciousness of his epoch. Thus the process of leading the natural consciousness to science is also in his view the definitive answer, if one is required, to the 'problem concerning the relation of thought to its object. We have yet another reason then why there should be two subjects to the Phenomenology. There is, as we know, the ordinary particular consciousness which has to be led from partial knowledge to science and the philosophical consciousness which has now also to be convinced

of the nature of knowledge. In other words, apart from his many other aims, Hegel wants to convince other philosophers that his epistemology is right. Philosophers may of course object to this, arguing that it is an aim that ought to be pursued separately. After all, they would claim, teaching the natural consciousness to think properly has very little to do with refuting the epistemologies of the principal Modern Philosophers. Hegel could, however, say that his education of the ordinary consciousness in the Phenomenology involved reviving those past theories of knowledge in such a manner that their most telling arguments had to be met. He might even claim that the manner in which he deals with them in the Phenomenology makes these arguments appear more convincing since they are dealt with as views of the contemporary man and not of a past philosopher. This claim is not, at first glance, a plausible one. It is however one - like Hegel's general defence of his view - on which we ought to reserve judgement until we have considered a section of the Phenomenology to which it ought aptly to apply. We shall come to such a section later.

For the moment, however, we shall stay with Hegel's argument in the 'Introduction' to the Phenomenology. For the argument now takes an interesting turn. After admitting that to all intents and purposes he will abandon the problem of knowledge Hegel confesses that there is something to be said for the apprehension felt by the Modern Philosophers about entering on philosophy without a criterion of truth.

Indeed, he says, his enquiry 'seems unable to take place without some presupposition which can be laid as its basis as a standard'.⁴¹ If it is to be an enquiry which purports to test the reality of knowledge it would appear that such a standard was essential. Hegel suggests that we might clarify our ideas about this natural apprehension of ours if we examine what we normally suppose to take place in the process of knowing. Normally we suppose that what is true about an object is what that object is in itself. In our experience, Hegel continues, this assumption amounts to the fact that we differentiate something from ourselves to which we also relate. We regard the object as something for us in thinking of it as something known, but equally we regard it as something in itself in order that something may be known. Hegel takes this latter aspect of the process of knowing to imply that the object assumes the form of being for us. Now, Hegel points out that both the object as it is for us and is in itself is something that we posit. We may distinguish the two in our experience but we have to remember that it is all our experience and that therefore it is all our doing. As it is all our doing, Hegel says, 'the in itself of the same.. would much more so be its being for us'.⁴² It would then be wrong to suppose that the standard of truth were something external to ourselves. It is most certainly, Hegel claims, internal to ourselves. By accepting

41. Ibid. , p.75.

42. Ibid., p. 76.

this view, however, we would land ourselves with the apparently insoluble problem 'that the essence or standard would fall in us and that with which it should be compared and over which the comparison should decide would not necessarily have to recognise it'.⁴³ The problem would be that we had set up a standard of truth (what the thing is in itself) which because it was ours need not necessarily have anything to do with the nature of the thing. Because it is we who posit the An sich it appears as though we have a standard of truth that is not objective. We would simply be comparing one thought with another.

It is Hegel's view that the difficulties of the classical epistemologists have their foundation in an apparent contradiction in the notion of knowledge itself, a contradiction which seemed to rule out in advance any possibility of dependable knowledge. But the same appears to hold for the Phenomenology. 'However,' Hegel argues, 'the nature of the object we are investigating transcends this division or this semblance of division and presupposition'.⁴⁴ The object that Hegel is investigating in the Phenomenology is, of course, consciousness. The standard of truth does not therefore belong merely to the investigator since the object itself is able to distinguish between what it is in itself and what it may appear to be. In this instance, then, the standard of truth

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

is one that belongs to the object as well. Consciousness can itself test the truth of what is said of it. 'For consciousness, 'Hegel argues, 'is on the one hand consciousness of the object, on the other hand consciousness of itself: consciousness of that which to it is the truth and the consciousness of its knowledge of it'.⁴⁵ Therefore in what consciousness itself declares to be true we have our objective standard of truth. However Hegel himself does not set great store by this evasion of the apparent contradiction in the notion of knowledge. Rather what he should like to see as a result of it is an extension of consciousness' own immanent standard of truth to all the sciences. If that extension took place there would, as we can see, be no contradiction in the notion of knowledge. We would do well to recall at this point that Hegel's aim in the Phenomenology is idealist. As we have seen, he wishes to prove that the 'substantial' nature of reality is that it becomes Self.⁴⁶ The Phenomenology is therefore intended to establish that there is no reality which falls outside consciousness. So it is precisely in what consciousness itself declares to be true that we have our objective standard of truth for all being and therefore all the sciences. All Being is consciousness. The contradiction or what Hegel calls the 'semblance of division and presupposition' in the notion of knowledge now falls away since what reality is in itself is thought. Since all that there is is thought, truth can only be ascertained through

45. Ibid., p. 77.

46. Ibid., p. 39.

the comparison of one thought with another.

This, then, is the view that Hegel recommends to those who have reservations about knowledge. The view, as I have stressed, is very plainly idealist. We might therefore also suppose that it is too subjective and thus likely to encourage arbitrariness in the sciences. There is however more to Hegel's view than that. We have to remember that the consciousness of which Hegel speaks in his notion of truth is the consciousness of the spirit of the time. It is therefore not an isolated, merely arbitrary consciousness. Indeed the particular consciousness that is led to science is, we will recall, a particular social consciousness. The standard of truth that consciousness carries within itself is consequently, even at its lower levels, a shared standard. The consciousness of 'what to it is truth' bears the marks of what truth is to others.⁴⁷ This is especially so for the consciousness of Absolute Knowledge, the last stage in the phenomenology of mind, which is supposed to contain within itself the reality of all the superceded modes of consciousness. Thus part of Hegel's claim is that what consciousness holds to be true shows a respect for what other individuals hold to be true.

47. Plant (Hegel, op.cit., p. 87) would appear to have the same point in mind when he says: 'Whereas for Schelling the Absolute which secured the harmony between man and the world was beyond knowledge and amenable only to a private form of intuition, for Hegel Spirit, the structuring principle of the world, showing itself both in nature and in human life and culture, can be known by reason - an intersubjective faculty. (My emphasis).

The consciousness of Absolute Knowledge does not simply discard the thinking displayed by the other modes of consciousness; it indeed seeks to raise itself above those other modes of thinking but in a manner which preserves the essentials of those modes of thinking. Hegel then has to espouse an intersubjective criterion of truth. In this sense the Hegelian standard of truth, though idealist, is not arbitrarily subjective. In his view, truth is established within the context of an intellectual community. Although that community does not establish the standard of truth for the individual it forms the background against which he decides on such a standard.

The truth-test he expects to take place in each individual's mind when confronted with a hypothesis about the world is of some importance to Hegel's account of the phenomenology of mind. As we have seen, ~~what~~ Hegel thinks takes place initially is that the individual distinguishes the object to be known in two significant ways. Firstly, there is the object as we intuit it as something for us to know; secondly there is the object as we are to know it, therefore, as it is in itself. In the first relation we are according to Hegel active and in the second passive. Hegel believes that the individual normally takes this second passive relation to be the truth. Now, as we have just seen, Hegel claims that in the science of consciousness these two aspects of truth fall together in the one object - consciousness. Consciousness is able to distinguish for itself what it is in itself. It is therefore able to test for itself whether the theory of consciousness depicts

consciousness as it is in itself. Since it is conversant with concepts (the 'for us') and is the object of the theory (the 'in itself') it is, in Hegel's words, able to test whether the concept corresponds to the object.⁴⁸ It follows that where that theory is found to be inadequate it has to be altered to correspond with its object. 'However', Hegel claims, 'in the transformation of this knowledge the object itself in fact changes, for the existing knowledge was essentially a knowledge of the object; with the knowledge it itself becomes another for it essentially belonged to this knowledge'.⁴⁹ This is an odd claim. We are first told that where the theory wrongly depicts consciousness it ought to be changed, but we are then told that this correction entails that what consciousness is both for itself and in itself has changed. What are we to make of this? We have now to understand that what consciousness distinguishes from itself the an sich that serves as the standard of truth, is subject to change. It changes apparently as the theory of consciousness is revised. But it would seem that the an sich if it is to be the standard of truth, should remain unchanged. It ought, we might suppose, to be the fixed goal of the enquiry. What Hegel appears to be saying however is that in the course of the study of consciousness the truth about consciousness alters. This is the force of his claim

48. Hegel. *ibid.*, p. 77.

49. *ibid.* p. 78.

that 'in the transformation of this knowledge the object itself in fact changes'. But, whatever Hegel's view of the matter may be, objects are not the kind of things that alter as a result of a change in our knowledge. It may well be the case, as Hegel claims, that as a result of testing the theory of consciousness our view of what our consciousness is and therefore our consciousness will be altered. None of this is to say however that what is supposed to be the object of the Phenomenology, consciousness in itself, has changed. Because what has changed as a result of new knowledge is not the object of Hegel's enquiry but merely the thinking of one of its readers. Even less will it do for Hegel to claim that just that represents a transformation in the object of his theory because the theory precisely foresaw the change. If the theory has to await a reader before its object changes it cannot itself be said to have changed its object. Therefore it is only in a misleading sense that the theory of consciousness can be said to change its object. It is even more misleading when it rests on the more general claim, as it does with Hegel, that knowledge somehow alters objects; because what is implied is that thinking through the Phenomenology will give us a new concrete object.

Indeed, the truth-test that consciousness operates in reading the Phenomenology is so important to Hegel precisely because it has that improbable result: a new object appears. Consciousness in testing the theory of itself finds that the 'object itself does not hold out'⁵⁰ because it discovers

50. Ibid. p. 78 - 79.

that what it thought it was in itself was not correct. We have already protested, however, that objects are not the kinds of things that are transformed by a change in our knowledge. It may well be that we can say that my consciousness has altered as a result of a change in what I know, but as an object it has not altered in the least since one of its properties as an object is that it is subject to change.⁵¹ We shall have to bear with Hegel on this point, however, as what he has to say about it is of central importance to our interest. Our interest is, of course, in the relation of Hegel's epistemology to his theory of experience. And it is the process of consciousness gaining a new view of itself in the Phenomenology of Mind that Hegel describes as experience: 'This dialectical movement which consciousness perpetrates on itself as well as on its knowledge and its object - in so far as a new object arises from it - is in fact that which is called experience'.⁵² We may take it that what gives rise to experience is the activity of the individual consciousness testing the truth of statements about itself. Even then it cannot be said to have 'experienced' unless, as a result of comparing the account of itself with its picture of itself, its own view of itself has changed. Only when an individual's consciousness appears in a new light to

51. Hegel's claim is of the same kind as the suggestion that because the weather has changed weather itself has changed. Weather, as we all know, does not however become a new object for us as a result of a change in it. It is the same old weather. We may for instance describe a hot spell as marking 'a change in the weather'. But we can hardly say that weather qua object has changed. Otherwise a change in the weather would almost certainly entail the end of meteorology.

52. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 78.

himself has he, according to Hegel, 'experienced'. Since Hegel associates this with the appearance of a new object he puts it in this way: since that 'new object contains a nothingness of the first, it is the experience that is made about it'.⁵³ The individual must appear in a new light to himself, then, in the sense that he has acquired a new consciousness of himself. The experience that he has of himself, therefore, is of the breaking-up of his initial estimation of himself. For this reason Hegel describes the experience of the ordinary consciousness in the Phenomenology as 'the loss of itself' for on that path 'it loses its truth'.⁵⁴ The account of experience can therefore 'be seen as the path of doubt or more precisely as the path of despair'. (ib.) But since this path of despair is also the 'conscious insight into the untruth of seeming knowledge' it is the most apposite and complete theory of knowledge. Consciousness in losing itself gains, in Hegel's view, self-consciousness, and ultimately Absolute Knowledge.

Experience and epistemology, for Hegel, coincide in the truth-test to which consciousness subjects itself in the science of consciousness. Through that test consciousness learns both the falsehood of seeming knowledge and the true nature of experience. That test is therefore all important in the make-up of the phenomenology of mind. It is the comparison of the in itself of consciousness with the theory of consciousness which is for itself which produces at each stage the new

53. Ibid., p. 77

54. Ibid., p. 72.

mode of consciousness. In other words, it is that test that is responsible for the transition from one mode of consciousness to another. It is therefore what we might call the motor of the process of the Phenomenology of Mind. It is what induces the change in the Vorstellungen in consciousness itself. It brings about for consciousness itself, Understanding and Reason, or what Hegel calls das Für-es-Sein dieses An sich: the being for itself of this in itself. Through the process the otherness of consciousness' notion of what it is in itself is subverted. From its being a consciousness of itself which is fixed and unchangeable it becomes one which it appropriates to itself and thereby gives itself a new consciousness in the Phenomenology. It drives it on because its fixed and stable view of itself becomes subject to doubt. The collapse of its old world leads it to build a new one. At the same time, however, doubt is revived by the truth-test, so the new world collapses in its turn. Hegel's theory of knowledge, indeed, shakes the world of the ordinary consciousness to its foundations with the most radical scepticism; but it offers in its place, through bringing into systematic order the various modes of consciousness, eventual peace of mind. Truth or the reality of experience is not, Hegel claims, the continued collapse of the world of the ordinary consciousness but the scientific knowledge of that process. As 'the experience that consciousness makes about itself can, according to its concept, comprise in nothing less than the whole system of consciousness or the whole realm of the truth of Mind..' ⁵⁵

With this Hegel brings to an end his criticism of the presuppositions that led to the problem of knowledge in Modern Philosophy. The reader may well breathe a sigh of relief, for Hegel's argument follows so many rapid twists and turns that it is difficult to keep in mind the essentials of his position. We might do well then to review the most important of our conclusions in order that we may ensure that we have not lost track of our theme. In the first place we may see Hegel's conclusion as a far cry from the account of experience that gave us the problem of knowledge. After all, experience in much of Modern Philosophy meant no more than what entered the mind via the senses. But it ought by now to be clear that Hegel's account of experience has everything to do with his reception of Modern Philosophy. As I have argued, the preoccupation of Modern Philosophy was with establishing the limits or reality of knowledge. This we can see in several ways: perhaps, as does Spinoza, as the attempt to discover how it is that we know what we know, or perhaps as does Hegel, as the attempt to discover how thought relates to its object. Whichever way we see it, it is still the same problem: are we really able to aspire to objective knowledge? It was supposed in this enquiry, and we can see this most typically in the epistemologies of Locke and Kant, firstly, that we as thinkers stood on the one side separated from the object to be known, and secondly, that the object was unique in itself, and thirdly, that knowledge was the meeting of subject and object through the thinker becoming acquainted with what the object was in itself. However, in Hegel's view, what the

classical epistemologists ignored in supposing all this was that what a thing is in itself can only be a thought-construction. Their standard of truth, instead of being something material 'out there', could only be an idea. On purely epistemological grounds Hegel appears to be right in claiming this, for whatever we decide to adopt as our standard of truth in an enquiry we can only adopt it as an idea. Thus the comparison that takes place in testing the truth of an explanation is always one between one idea and another. So that to postulate a thing in itself as the standard of truth, as did the classical epistemologists, has to be seen as just that: setting up an idea, albeit an idea of the objectivity of things, as a standard of truth. This means that there is a difficulty in the viewpoint of classical epistemology because it postulates as its standard of truth the object in its pristine, unthought form: and this is patently impossible. Now, Hegel's suggestion is that only by regarding knowledge as an appearance in the consciousness of our time can this difficulty be overcome. It is a sensible enough suggestion since, as Hegel himself points out, we can only know what reality our knowledge has after it has arrived on the scene. However Hegel goes on to say that since it is merely a phenomenon in our time what that reality is, is not immediately clear. For it to become clear to us we have to overcome the phenomenality of its existence. The reality of knowledge is therefore the phenomenology of the spirit of our time. It is in this context that the ordinary test of truth - and it is Hegel's suggestion that

this is all that the criterion of truth of classical epistemology amounts to - comes into its own for Hegel. The existence of the test is a positive advantage for the philosopher who seeks to lead the ordinary consciousness to real knowledge. For, if the ordinary consciousness tests the truth of the phenomenology of mind in that fashion it will, so Hegel claims, engender the dialectical process which is EXPERIENCE. Indeed it is that process that gives movement to the Phenomenology of Mind. As we have seen, the ordinary test of truth in the Phenomenology brings about a change in consciousness itself. Now this accords with the consummate scepticism of the philosophical consciousness that presents the phenomenological process because consciousness in testing the truth of what the philosopher has to say of it continually discovers that its view of itself is untrue. In the course of that testing consciousness, as we see, always changes its view of itself and it is that change that Hegel calls experience. One thing is clear then: this is not experience as the passive sense-perception of objects. Indeed far from it giving rise to problems of knowledge it is, according to Hegel, the path to the fullest concrete knowledge. It is an experience in which we participate and in which, if only as thinkers, we are active and in which, again if only in the same limited capacity, we change and develop.

There are two aspects, in Hegel's view, to this our participation in experience. First there is that side to our participation in experience which, Hegel says, engenders a new object for us. What happens is that in comparing the theory of consciousness

with the view that we have of our own consciousness or, if one wishes, in comparing that theory with our experience, our view of our experience changes. In Hegel's terms, it becomes our new object. Second, and it is this aspect that repeats what we have already had to say of Hegel's notion of experience in the last Chapter, there is that side to our experience which undermines consciousness' objectivity. In experiencing ourselves in a new light, the previous object - the initial view we have of ourselves - is suppressed. Therefore, not only do we have to understand that a new object is generated in the course of our experience but that the old object becomes nothing for us. It is, as we would expect from our discussion in the last Chapter, this latter aspect of Hegel's account of experience that triumphs at the end. In Absolute Knowledge, the last stage in the Phenomenology of Mind, no new object is generated by the experience of consciousness. It is the point at which consciousness 'discards the appearance of being encumbered with what is alien to it',⁵⁶ and becomes simply the consciousness of the science of consciousness.

56. Hegel, Werke 3, p. 81.

SENSE-CERTAINTY AND PERCEPTION

That then is how, in my view, the problem of knowledge of Modern Philosophy issues into Hegel's radically modified account of experience: The Phenomenology of Mind. We must now examine some of the details of that work in order to substantiate our view of Hegel's account of experience and indeed our general view of his philosophy. Our view of the former scarcely requires repeating; but, it might be well, if only to refresh our memory, to indicate once again the most important of our conclusions about Hegel's philosophy in general. The most significant of our conclusions was, I think, that the view central to Hegel's philosophy is that all philosophy is in a critical continuity with past philosophies. This implies that he thinks of philosophy as being first and foremost a settling of accounts with the History of Philosophy. Doing philosophy, then, has for him the literal sense of studying and critically absorbing past philosophy. So much as Hegel's answer to the problem of knowledge is, Yes, we have dependable knowledge, it is a phenomenon in each and everyone's experience, so also is his answer to What is philosophy? matter of fact. It is, he says simply what has received that name in our culture and what is preserved for us in the works of past philosophers. The parallel goes deeper than that though - and I think this is because there is ultimately no difference in Hegel's mind between the appearance of knowledge and the course of the History of Philosophy - for just as the real problem of

knowledge consists for him in the overcoming of its apparently chaotic existence in the culture of the time, so doing philosophy consists, in his view, in the overcoming of the apparently hap-hazard appearance of philosophy in its history. The second most significant of our conclusions was, I think, that if there is a contradiction in Hegel's philosophy it is that it assumes as part of its approach that there is an alien, material external world but, on the other hand, assumes that the alien world is not. We concluded that Hegel's assumption that there was a world external to the mind is gratuitous. He appears only to assume it in order that it might be integrated into Mind.

This is an appropriate point at which to begin our analysis of the first Chapters of the Phenomenology since they begin precisely by assuming an external world, that is, 'the knowledge which is first or immediately our object..the knowledge of the immediate' or that which is.⁵⁷ What we are first presented with on looking at Mind or Spirit as it exists in consciousness, Hegel claims, is the knowledge of sense certainty (sinnliche Gewissheit). Hegel suggests that it appears to offer the richest kind of knowledge to consciousness. It offers to consciousness all the rich data of the senses, the objects of experience unimpared by any obstacle and therefore in their fullness. From all we have said about the role of past philosophies in Hegel's system it is clear

57. Ibid., p. 82.

that we can see this description of the initial experience of the ordinary consciousness as being also a description of a philosophical position. Among the Modern Philosophers, Hegel is most likely to have in mind Locke and Hume since they are the philosophers who set so much store by the knowledge imparted by our sense-experience. Like the ordinary consciousness when it begins experiencing, they take the knowledge of the immediate to be the richest kind of knowledge. Let us see, then, how Hegel tackles this position.

He characterises it as the view that truth is to be attained through our mere apprehension (Auffassung) of objects and seeks, as did Hume, to distinguish this apprehension of objects from their conceptual comprehension (Begreifen). The former mode of cognition being identified with the truth, the latter could only be seen as being less than adequate to it. We might again, as did Hume, see it as containing inferences that were only ours and nothing to do with objects themselves. Hegel is prepared to admit that there appears to be something to this position. What our senses let in, he says, seems to constitute the purest and truest knowledge. The impressions they impart appear to be what things are. And that is what knowledge should be. But would we however be correct to maintain this position? Since, Hegel continues, 'it asserts of what it knows this alone: it is; and its truth only contains the being of the thing'.⁵⁸ Is it not, he says, on the contrary the poorest kind of truth? I, this person, 'am certain of this thing' not because I have developed my ideas in connection with it or because I have analysed it from

58. Ibid.

the viewpoints afforded by its various properties - which of course place it in relation to innumerable other things - but simply because it is. It is this mere being that is most essential to sense-knowing or, as Hegel says, 'this pure being or simple immediacy constitutes its truth'.⁵⁹ We cannot rest at this, Hegel claims, since there is a great deal more implied in this initial position of consciousness than it cares to admit. Neither the I which is supposed to be certain of its object nor the object itself are as directly present (unmittelbar) as the empirical thinker suggests. Both, are, as Hegel puts it, mediated. This, we shall see, is self-evidently so, for, on the one hand, the subject is only certain of the object through its presence and, on the other hand, the object only receives its significance as a directly present object through the subject. Both are dependent for their supposed immediacy on the other and are, therefore, mediated. Hegel, in brief, is of the opinion that the certainty that the ordinary consciousness thinks to have found in the knowledge furnished by sense-experience is a mistaken certainty. It is a certainty that is based on the misguided notion that, as we have already indicated, things are revealed to us in our sense-impressions directly as they are. The faith of the ordinary consciousness is in the directness of the relation. In sense-experience, it argues, I have not interfered with what it is I have to know. Hegel's point is, however, that that relation is already an interference with what it is I have to know. Since it is a relation, no matter what, it does not reveal objects

to us directly as they are. They are as I sense-perceive them. Empiricism then, Hegel suggests, is not objective in the sense it would like to be - utterly devoid of subjective considerations. It does not enjoy the privileged immediate relation to objects that it covets. If it did enjoy that relation, it would, Hegel implies, have achieved the impossible: a relation with objects in which all notion of relation disappears. Hegel seeks to press home his point with a consideration of the 'Here' and 'Now'. In his view these are the two paramount notions on which empiricist thinking bases the certainty of its knowledge: that what is true is here and now, or simply immediate. But what is here and now, Hegel shows, is not here and now. As soon as, for instance, the statement 'Now is Midday' is made it is no longer that. As soon as we say Now that now is gone. The 'Here' is equally changeable; what is here depends on where I am. As soon as I change my position or otherwise alter my field of vision Here is not here. Indeed, Hegel adds, the fact that these so-called truths of common-sense thinking can only be expressed in language means that they transcend the here and now: they are not merely immediate. If they were, they would be inutterable. As Hegel says, we could not possibly say a 'Here' and 'Now' which was pure being. In other words, we could not ever express things in a manner which would wholly satisfy the empiricist because any saying involves a retraction of that direct relation to the objects of experience which he covets.

In a transition of the Phenomenology which only the philosophical consciousness observes, and not the experiencing consciousness, that certainty which consciousness finds in sense-certainty now comes to be lodged in the subject alone. For if, as Hegel suggests, we the observers look at the relationship in which consciousness stands as a result of discovering in the dialectic of the here and now, that it cannot say what it intends to say, we shall see that the certainty which consciousness found in sense-knowledge was all along one that was for consciousness rather than in the objects of the senses. So we as philosophical observers point out that the standard of truth: immediate sense-knowledge was one that consciousness itself had established. The experiencing consciousness will, according to Hegel, insist that 'the power of its truth now lies in the I'.⁶⁰ It asserts, in other words, that what is true is true because it sense-perceives it. Thus consciousness will insist, for instance, that now is day because I perceive it to be so. We may recall that it was Fichte who, amongst the Modern Philosophers, reduced the grounds for all certainty in knowledge to the I. In his estimation, even tautological propos-

60. ibid. p. 86. Although I have chosen to show that the first Chapters of the Phenomenology present points of view that parallel many of those to be found in the history of Modern Philosophy this does not mean that such a parallel must be confined to that. Hegel, as I have argued, enters into a dialogue with the whole history of philosophy. Thus in this instance we could just as well see him as objecting to Protagoras' theory of knowledge as to that of Fichte. Hegel himself hints as much in his review of Protagoras' philosophy in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy Vol. I. pp. 428 - 434 Werke 18.

itions were true only because of the original continuity of the I. So, as we would expect, the objection that Hegel (qua philosophical consciousness) raises to the solipsism of the ordinary consciousness is the same as the one he raises when dealing specifically with Fichte's solipsism. It is that when all being and knowledge is reduced to the I all that we are left with as knowledge is mere opinion. And, of course, that will not do. It means that the affirmation of one individual I is just as good as any other. In questions of truth, then, what I affirm to be true will be equalled and indeed cancelled out by what another individual insists is the case. The next stage in the dialectic of sense-certainty, however, removes this cause for uncertainty. It shows that what the individual I means when it says that I am certain of this, is that I as universal am certain of this, in other words, if you were in my position you would affirm the same. So that in saying 'I, this individual I' I am actually saying, Hegel claims, 'every I; everyone is that what I say: I this individual I'.⁶¹ There is no such thing as an isolated individual I: we are all individuals and subjects. Hegel therefore suggests that the task that Fichte set himself: the deduction of the world from the I, was wholly misconceived since as soon as what he deduces is said it ceases to be merely a mine and is an universal.

We have therefore got to this stage in the dialectic of sense-certainty: Consciousness, as Hegel claims, has just

61. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 87.

discovered that the essence of sense-awareness is to be found neither in the object nor in the subject. As a result of this discovery, consciousness, he suggests, comes to see the truth of sense-certainty as a whole. Thus it seeks to attribute certainty neither to the I nor to the object in sense-certainty, but rather attributes certainty to a sense-experience which 'excludes from itself...all opposition'.⁶² Consciousness reacts, then, to the dialectic of sense-certainty by attempting to avoid those one-sided positions that had led to the dialectic in the first place. According to Hegel it tries to preserve the truth of sense-certainty by positing a relationship in which there is 'no distinction of essentiality and inessentiality between the I and the object'.⁶³ In order to preserve the certainty of sense-certainty the experiencing consciousness decides to remain indifferent to the claims of subject and object for precedence within that relationship. From the way in which Hegel depicts this ruse of the ordinary consciousness, it ought to be clear that it is intended to indicate not only a reaction of consciousness to the dialectic of sense-certainty but also a reaction within the history of philosophy to the problem created by the sense-certainty model of knowledge. It is, of course, Schelling who according to Hegel's account of his philosophy in the Lectures on the History of Philosophy depicts the correct view of knowledge as the point of indifference of subject and object. In Schelling's opinion, as

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., pp. 87 - 88.

we have seen, subject and object were to be regarded as two equivalent poles which met in knowledge. They were absolutely indifferent to each other in knowledge since knowledge was an absolute identity. This is as plain an instance as any of past philosophy entering into Hegel's account of the experience of the natural consciousness. What it tells us about the role of past philosophies in the Phenomenology is, I think, that they do not play a part which would (somehow) be less than philosophical. As I said earlier, when Hegel initially makes the suggestion that the criticism of the ordinary consciousness will also bring about an adequate criticism of philosophical positions we tend to regard it as an implausible suggestion. Now, however, doubt is cast on that doubt since it turns out that the ordinary consciousness is no 'man of straw'. It appears, at least from the stages of Hegel's argument which we have analysed so far, that the path that the ordinary consciousness traverses on its way to science is itself philosophical. It is therefore settling accounts not only with what we would take to be its own naive view on knowledge but also with views of knowledge that were and are prevalent in philosophy. In other words, Hegel's suggestion that the path of the ordinary consciousness to science revives past philosophies in such a manner that their most telling arguments are met may not be entirely implausible. We may, I believe, judge this for ourselves since in its culminating stages the dialectic of sense-certainty is directed towards

what is patently also a difficulty in Schelling's philosophy. It is the difficulty that had led Schelling to predicate the certainty of immediate knowledge to neither subject nor object but to both indifferently. The error involved in that position, Hegel argues, is that it appeals to an immediacy which simply does not pertain to the relationship of subject and object. Indeed he claims there is no such thing as an abstract relationship of subject and object, or that there are such things 'as absolutely particular, wholly personal, individual things'.⁶⁴ Each relation of subject and object transcends its particular subjective or objective location. In each such relation, Hegel argues, both subject and object are universals. Thus it is no use for Schelling, to claim that philosophers are capable of a privileged intuition in which the abstract subject and object are already united since the notion of such a relation is a redundant one. The particular subject it supposes is an unreal or abstract one. There is no such thing as an isolated, unique intuiting consciousness - as soon as it utters something it acknowledges that it is at least, part of a linguistic community. Similarly, the particular object it supposes is an abstract one. An object, in Hegel's view, is not something that is merely immediate or isolated. It is what it is only in relation to other objects.

This brings us to perception. This is the second stage on consciousness' path to science. Hegel's view is that it

64. Ibid., p. 91.

is only perception that can take up the concrete content of sense-awareness because perception, unlike sense-awareness, has universality as its principle and therefore regards its object as an universal. Perception, in fact, is the outcome of the dialectic of sense certainty which showed that both the subject and object of sense-experience were mediated. This, according to Hegel, issues in perception, as 'the thing with many properties'.⁶⁵ It is at this point that the dialectic of perception begins. This dialectic is particularly complex. We shall find, however, that in pattern it follows the dialectic of sense-certainty. We found there that the positions which the ordinary consciousness traversed were in most respects philosophical positions, and I indicated what some of those philosophical positions were. The same, I believe, might be said of Hegel's account of perception. He suggests that the process of perception first appears to the natural consciousness to require that it make an attempt to apprehend an object as a 'pure one'.⁶⁶ What it does in making such an attempt is to list the various properties of the thing; it says the thing is black, round, bitter to taste, etc. However, in doing this the focus of attention of the experiencing consciousness shifts. It discovers, Hegel says, that it misconceives the thing by simply regarding it as a One. It feels it ought, since each

65. Ibid., p. 94. Hegel's emphasis.

66. Ibid., p. 97.

of the properties of the thing is an universal, to regard it as a Many. It must therefore, Hegel reasons, 'for the sake of the universality of the property take the objective essence as a community'.⁶⁷ The properties of the thing consequently find their place for consciousness in an abstract universal medium. This is because consciousness now views its object not as a single thing but as thinghood in general.⁶⁸ As it stands, there is little that we can make of this conclusion of Hegel's. Phrases like 'abstract universal medium' or 'thinghood in general' mean, at first glance, nothing at all to us. But we can, I think, throw some light on this conclusion if we reconnect it with what is most likely to be its origin, namely, Hegel's Critique of Spinoza's philosophy in his review of the History of Philosophy.⁶⁹ We will recall that Spinoza espoused a notion of what we might call 'thinghood in general'- Substance which Hegel greatly admired. Indeed we have seen that notion enter into the very conception of his philosophy. We will also remember that in that abstract universal medium of Spinoza's none of the properties, i.e. the attributes and modes, are directly related to one another. Their only relation is their community in the One Substance. Similarly, in this stage of perception the properties of the thing become sunk in thinghood in general for the experiencing consciousness. It seems as though those properties permeate that medium

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., p. 95.

69. Hyppolite's interpretation of the Chapter on Perception in his Genèse et Structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit lends support to this view.

without impinging on each other at all. But this, Hegel argues, is not the proper view of those properties which perception discovers. As Hegel indicates at the end of his Critique of Spinoza's philosophy, we have to take account of individuation in the things of perception. We cannot simply allow the properties to be referred back to the One Substance or thinghood in general. We have rather to acknowledge that they really are determinate. This is what the perceiving consciousness is asked to do in the Phenomenology of Mind: it has to isolate those properties as they appear in the abstract universal medium. Those properties have therefore to be seen as excluding ones. According to Hegel in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy it was Locke and Leibniz who had, in this way, compensated for the abstractness of Spinoza's philosophy, Leibniz especially so through developing the principle of individuation. The most significant aspect of this principle for Hegel was, the notion of self-differentiation which it implied. It implied that things are not only distinct and different for the perceiving subject but that they are distinct and different in themselves. Thus in consciousness' experience of perception, the fact that it comes to see the properties of an object as all different implies that those properties have to be viewed by it not only as excluding one another but also excluding themselves from each other. Since 'if the many determinate properties were simply indifferent and were throughout only self-related they would not be determinate properties for they only are

this in so far as they differentiate themselves....⁷⁰

This whole process, from thinghood in general to the property that is an excluding one, is in Hegel's view how the 'thing' of perception is formed for the experiencing consciousness. It is each of those moments combined into a whole. It is therefore firstly, 'indifferent passive universality'; secondly, 'the one, the exclusion of other properties'; thirdly, 'the many properties in themselves'.⁷¹ Thus, for Hegel the 'thing' of perception is the 'point of isolation in the medium of persistence emanating in multiplicity'.⁷² We can see what Hegel means by this if we keep in mind what he has to say of perception in his Critique of Modern Philosophy. But even so it is an extraordinarily complex way of defining the object of perception especially as the definition is intended to formulate what goes on in the natural consciousness on its path to real knowledge. We might be led to conclude from this that Hegel in constructing that path attends not so much to the problems of natural consciousness as to the problems that philosophers have had in defining real knowledge. This conclusion cannot lightly be brushed aside since it seems to me that it is only philosophers that can have or would have insisted that the content of perception is merely a 'point of isolation' or simply a

70. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 95.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

'medium of persistence.' A natural consciousness or what could be called a naive epistemological point of view would not, surely, articulate itself in that way. The language is too technical. If, however, we were to give Hegel the benefit of the doubt the problem that we are left with is: how is it that the epistemologically naive natural consciousness can experience philosophical points of view?

For the moment we shall postpone answering that question until we have examined more of Hegel's analysis of perception. His belief is that the ordinary consciousness' experience of perception is not confined to its definition. The isolation of the 'thing of perception' leads it into a further dialectic in which finally the thing of perception dissolves. This development may appear surprising in the context of Hegel's analysis of consciousness' experience of perception, but it can hardly appear surprising in the context of his philosophy as a whole. Our interpretation of it would on the contrary suggest that it is part and parcel of its approach. What comes to mind here, is of course, the principal thesis of Hegel's philosophy: Substance is Subject. This is Hegel's objective idealism. At one and the same time, he suggests, we are to assume that there is an external reality which involves genuine opposition and that that external reality is not or, rather, shows itself essentially to be subject. Thus, as we have seen, we can assume with the Empiricists that there is a thing of perception, but we can also show that we are misled if we believe that this thing ~~of~~ persists in the face of the philosophical

analysis of perception.⁷³

We have dissented before from Hegel's idealist conclusions, pointing out that they are based on an argument which, if not contradictory, is certainly circular. This idealism aside, however, the way in which Hegel sets about showing that the thing of perception dissolves has, I believe, much to recommend it. Again it seems to me that he takes up important positions in the history of philosophy and works them through.

The stage we have now reached in the dialectic of perception is the stage at which the ordinary consciousness has before it the thing. This thing, Hegel claims, has been created for it by its path so far. The task that the perceiving consciousness now sets itself is to apprehend the truth of that thing. Therefore it relates itself passively to it, hoping that what comes to it as a consequence is the reality of the thing. (As we have seen, in the dialectic or sense-

73. G.R.G Mure in The Philosophy of Hegel has this to say on the point: 'Hegel has no intent to criticise this attitude' that the finite is real' 'in the sense of telling the ordinary man or the scientist how to run their own business, for their business is not philosophy. For Hegel the finite is not unreal or illusory; it is as real as it must be to be the correlate of ordinary consciousness. But when we view them philosophically, ordinary consciousness and its world are a relatively undeveloped phase in the self-manifestation of Spirit. So seen the finite is only in a degree real'. (p.17) Mure is correct in his conclusion, but Hegel does not distinguish the ordinary and philosophical consciousness as radically as Mure suggests. Hegel is concerned to make the ordinary consciousness philosophical.

certainty consciousness similarly relates itself passively to the object.) Now in perception, Hegel claims, although we have to do only with universals the relation of essential to inessential persists. In the first place, consciousness takes the thing to be the essential aspect and the subject the inessential aspect. Therefore as consciousness takes itself to be the inessential aspect - the side of the perceptual relationship that ~~it~~ is now fixed and unchangeable - it occurs to it, Hegel suggests, that what it may apprehend in that relationship may misrepresent the thing.⁷⁴ It begins to believe that it may be deceived by its perception. Indeed Hegel suggests that it comes to believe that the thing as we perceive it is not the truth. Hegel assumes that to overcome its difficulties the natural consciousness will adopt, as 'its criterion of truth', 'self-sameness'.⁷⁵ Thus, when the ordinary consciousness observes a divergence in what it perceives, this counts 'not as an untruth of the object for that is self-same but of perception'.⁷⁶ Therefore what it seeks to do to get at the truth of perception is to remove from what it observes all that is not consistent with the persistence of the thing. This is of course a procedure that Descartes adopts in his epistemology. He sought, like the ordinary consciousness, to reduce to a minimum the chance

74. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 99.

75. Ibid., p. 97.

76. Ibid.

of our being deceived by what we perceive. It was as a consequence of adopting this procedure, we recall, that he was led to conclude that we could only predicate extension of objects. In his view we could not be certain that any other of their observed properties actually pertained to them.

According to Hegel, what the ordinary consciousness learns from applying this criterion of self-sameness to the content of its perception is that it itself is actively involved in perception. It learns, Hegel claims, that what it takes to be pure passivity or mere apprehension (Auffassung) is in fact its own active mediation in perception.⁷⁷ Perception, it discovers, is its own perception of the object and not pure object - whatever that might be. This experience again is similar to an experience that consciousness has at the stage of sense-certainty. There it had to 'return to itself' to learn that it was the consciousness that declared sense-awareness to furnish the most certain knowledge. It concluded as a result of this 'homecoming' that the certainty of sense-certainty was derived from the subject. Here equally the perceiving consciousness has 'returned to itself' to learn that what it took to be deception (i.e. a lack of self~~se~~-sameness in the object) was merely an error in its perception. It concludes that any inaccuracies that crop up in perception are a result of its misconception.⁷⁸ Having experienced this it now feels able to remove the sources of error in perception. Therefore it 'differentiates its apprehension of the truth from the untruth of its perception, corrects it..⁷⁹ So we

77. Ibid., p. 98. Hegel's suggestion is that consciousness returns to itself (Rückkehr in sich selbst) as a result of this reflection into self (Reflexion in sich).

78. Ibid., p. 99.

79. Ibid.

may now see the ordinary consciousness as no longer merely perceiving but also as being conscious of the nature of its perceiving. It therefore now looks upon perception as a form of thinking. This, of course, brings us back to Hegel's Critique of Descartes. Because, if we recall, one of his principal criticisms of Descartes was that he did not count perception as a form of thought. It is precisely because Descartes did not come to the conclusion to which the natural consciousness comes that, in Hegel's estimation, he has to distinguish thought from extension.

It was, in Hegel's view the Lockean philosophy that first raised Mind beyond this impasse. Locke, we recall, came to the conclusion that, if we are to perceive without exposing ourselves to deception we have to differentiate what pertains to the thing from what pertains to our perception of it. The ordinary consciousness, therefore, has to distinguish (in Locke's terminology) between the secondary and primary qualities of a thing. The ordinary consciousness therefore suggests that the thing 'is only white to our eyes, also sharp to our tongue, also cubic to our feeling'. As we can see, it now holds that if 'in the movement of perception something occurs that is contradictory this isto be recognised as my reflection'.³⁰ The many and varied qualities of a thing contradict its self-sameness. By taking on the secondary qualities of a thing, the thing preserves the form of its being one for the ordinary consciousness. Thus by adopting a procedure from Locke's epistemology, the ordinary consciousness prevents the criterion of self-sameness from reducing the content of sensation, as with

Descartes, to a nullity.

When we see that the Phenomenology of Mind may be described in these terms we are tempted to suggest that all the work amounts to is a repetition of Hegel's account of the History of Philosophy. This suggestion is plausible since, as we have said, the view that lies at the heart of Hegel's philosophy is that all philosophy is in a critical continuity with past philosophy. But Hegel, as I have suggested previously, does not intend this in the sense that each philosophy merely works anew on the history of philosophy. There is more to his view than that, as is so in this particular instance. What Hegel is doing here is giving an account of perception as one of the forms of consciousness which is prior to philosophical reasoning. In Hegel's view this entails that a number of ordinary conceptions about the nature of perception have to be shown to be untrue. One of the conceptions he feels he has to rebut in that area is that knowledge itself has merely to do with the correct perception of a thing. As it stands Hegel's account of the History of Philosophy has nothing to do with that rebuttal. It enters into the picture; and it is by providing the arguments with which the ordinary consciousness may defend its position, that the confusion arises. We can understand that Hegel, in seeking to establish the truth of his philosophy, will contend with previous and contemporary philosophers. It is the form in which he does so that causes confusion. He tackles past philosophies, as forms of thinking that appear in the natural consciousness of his time. The natural consciousness comes, so to speak, between philosophy itself and the account of its history.⁸¹ If this is so,

81. Werner Marx. Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes (Klostermann 1971)pp. 21 - 22.

might we not fairly suggest that the ordinary or natural consciousness of Hegel's philosophy has to carry too much weight? Clearly philosophical systems and the experience of the ordinary consciousness are not the same. It is possible to imagine that the common-sense thinker runs across some of the contradictions that Hegel analyses in his account of perception, but it is difficult to imagine that it can experience the whole dialectic. Surely the only place that the ordinary consciousness will experience that dialectic as a whole is in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind? In other words, Hegel has constructed an account of the experience of the ordinary consciousness which does not correspond to the experience of any actual consciousness. Indeed all that experience does correspond to is Hegel's view of the path that philosophy must take and logically must have taken for it to attain truth. This is why Hegel's account of the path of the ordinary consciousness' experience relies so heavily on the work of previous philosophers. The history of philosophy must for him be the pre-experience of the experience of the ordinary consciousness and in that capacity supply the raw material for the experience of the ordinary consciousness. If this is all that goes into the making of the Hegelian natural consciousness it appears that we have to distinguish between two things within the Phenomenology of Mind each of which may have been better done if it had been tackled separately: first, the attempt to reconstruct rationally the history

of philosophy to show the way to genuine knowledge and second, the attempt to induce the common-sense thinker to think philosophically. It is the latter, of course, which most readily comes to mind when Hegel talks of the Phenomenology as the path of the ordinary consciousness to science but it is the former, it seems, that takes precedence in his account of the experience of the ordinary consciousness.

With this in mind we shall return to our review of Hegel's analysis of perception. It will give us an indication of some of the problems that are caused by Hegel's failure to separate the two strands in the first part of his system. We can, I believe, agree with Hegel on the first point to be considered, namely the common-sense thinker will regard each and every object it perceives as being a body external to his consciousness. The man in the street is generally a materialist of this kind. But it is this conviction of the ordinary consciousness that Hegel, is seeking to undermine. In defence of its position the ordinary consciousness will adopt the view that all the properties we perceive to be part of a thing do in fact belong to it. As Hegel says, it will suggest that 'it is the thing itself which is white and also cubic, also sharp and so on'.⁸² So far, so good. However, it is not plausible to suggest that the common-sense thinker will reflect on, or indeed see, the implications of this position as Hegel describes them. It will not, I believe, notice that in its insisting that a thing

82. Hegel. Werke 3; p. 100.

is white, and also cubic, also sharp etc. that the also contradicts the unity of the thing. We cannot, Hegel says, claim that a thing is both one and many and yet still persists. This subtlety will certainly escape the ordinary consciousness qua man in the street. Our man in the street clearly would not acknowledge that it was his thinking that maintained that unity and then apportion the diversity to the thing. He will not, as does Hegel's natural consciousness, know or declare himself to be that which brings unity to the objects of experience. This sophistication can, I think, most appropriately be seen as belonging to Kant's theory of knowledge. It is he, rather than our man in the street, who claims that the 'unity of apperception' which accompanies the 'I think' gives the diverse matter of appearance its concrete structure in our experience. What he says is that in any given instance of perception the properties of the object such as white, cubic, sharp etc., are supplied by our intuition, but that it is the understanding that combines those various properties to give us the object. Thus what we perceive, in Kant's view, is always made up of the diverse data that we receive from things and the unifying manner in which our understanding deals with that data. Hegel is right to suggest, in his analysis of perception, that the problem which arises if we accept this view is that since now 'the coincidence (Ineinsetzen) of those properties' we intuit 'is due to consciousness only', it must therefore prevent them from falling into one in the thing'.⁸³ As we remember, Kant, in assenting that our Understanding was

83. *ibid*; p. 101.

able to know objects was obliged to add that it was not able to know things in themselves. Naturally the Understanding could know phenomena because it was the Understanding that gave them their structure, but in Kant's view we had to distinguish this perceptual knowledge from what the thing might be outside our experience. We could not, in his view, claim to know it as a noumenaⁿ. What Hegel however wishes to point out here is that Kant has to make this distinction simply because the Understanding is allowed to take on the unity of the thing in experience. This is a clear enough point against Kant since if Kant wants to attribute the unity of the thing of perception to the Understanding it is apparent that he has to reject any suggestion that the thing in itself is as we perceive it. However we are left wondering just what kind of point this is against the ordinary thinker. It is difficult to imagine that he will ever have thought like Kant. True enough, he will have certain views of perception but surely they will stop at the suggestion that began this stage of the dialectic, namely, the suggestion that all the properties we perceive to be an integral part of a thing are indeed so.

As we have suggested then, the experience that Hegel is examining in the Phenomenology of Mind is primarily philosophical experience. It is therefore what I shall call an abstract view of experience. For even when he refers us to a non-philosophical experience, for instance the experience of need

or the experience of life, he does so from a philosophical point of view; just as it is his habit to refer to the practical activities of animals merely to prove his idealism!⁸⁴ We have already remarked on this disappointingly abstract nature of Hegel's account of experience. We did so in our discussion in the last Chapter of the Preface of the Phenomenology. Indeed there the abstractness was even more marked since it followed on a fascinating account of the historical and scientific nature of experience. In our concluding remarks on the Phenomenology we will attempt to bring out this abstractness in Hegel's theory of experience.

84. Ibid; The argument is that animals do not treat the objects of their experience as inaccessible things in themselves. They quietly set to and eat them! In Hegel's view this shows what the 'truth of sensuous things is' their nothingness'. See Werke 3, p. 91.

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE 'THING' OF PERCEPTION

To grasp the conclusion of the dialectic of perception we have to distinguish two aspects of Hegel's analysis. These are, firstly, what I shall call the well-grounded critique of empiricism he deploys in his analysis and, secondly, the idealism of his analysis. This seems a strange distinction to make since, surely, it could be argued that Hegel's criticism of empiricism is his idealism. But this is not so, for it is possible to criticise empiricism without being an idealist. The Empiricists' theory of knowledge need not be the only one that is open to a materialist. This is an important point, for when we come to our analysis of Marx we shall find that it is the position that he adopts. Hegel's idealism then is not entirely tied to his critique of empiricism although it plays a role in that critique. It is for this reason that it becomes important to distinguish what is well-founded in his critique and what is merely idealist. Marcuse in his Reason and Revolution fails to make this distinction. He brings out the element in Hegel's analysis of perception which is a well-founded critique of empiricism, or what he calls positivism, without remarking on the other idealist element in the analysis. The result is, and this may be said in general of Marcuse's work, that we get a picture of Hegel preparing the ground for Marx in what we might call merely a linear sense. By this I mean that Marcuse sees Hegel's philosophy only in the light of its positive contribution to Marx's thinking. No mention is made of the debit side of the relationship, of which plainly Hegel's idealism is an important part.

This said, let us now see what the differentiation of the idealism and well-founded critique of empiricism in Hegel's philosophy amounts to. In the first place I take Marcuse's point that what we might call the positive aspect of Hegel's dialectic of perception is its implied criticism 'of common-sense and traditional scientific thought' which 'takes the world as a totality of things, more or less existing per se, and seeks the truth in objects that are independent of the knowing subjects'.⁸⁵ The point being of course that there are no facts of experience which are not, in Hegel's terms, mediated by the knowing subject. It is perfectly clear that one of Hegel's intentions in outlining the dialectic of perception is to show that there is no such absolute division between 'essential' and 'inessential' - the essential object and the inessential subject in this instance - as the ordinary consciousness is wont to assume. The relation of perception, as Hegel clearly proves, is a dialectical one. As a form of knowledge it is an alternating movement from subject to object without either taking precedence. Any knowledge we may gain as a result is certainly for us but it is also a knowledge of what the object is. This means that perception does offer us knowledge of things as they are but does not offer us superior-because direct-knowledge. We can not, as Hume believes, by sticking in this way to the

85. H. Marcuse. Reason and Revolution, op.cit. p. 112.

appearance of things ensure the certainty of our knowledge. Indeed it is more likely that we shall confuse ourselves as there are so many points of view from which we can perceive a thing. All this, I think, we can regard as part of Hegel's well-grounded criticism of empiricism. However, Hegel goes on to say that the viewpoint of perception as a whole is false. In his view it can only exist as a subsidiary element in knowledge and then only when its premisses have been undermined. This is where the abstract conclusion to the analysis of perception comes in. The premisses he wants removed are those which lead to the dialectic of perception: the two poles of perceiving subject and perceived object. And, as we would expect, the outcome favours the subject. Hegel therefore concentrates on showing that the thing goes to ground or, since Zugrunde gehen also means demise in German, that it perishes.⁸⁶ The argument, though idealist, has a certain plausibility. It goes as follows. Hegel takes it to be the nature of a thing that it preserves its identity through its opposition to other things. It is essential from the point of view of the thing that it be independent of other things and therefore opposed to them: This means, according to Hegel, that its existence is a contradiction. Other things are, he argues, both essential and inessential to it. It is what it is only in opposition to other things but equally wishes to be rid of those other things. Thus

86. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 103.

'directly through the absolute character and its opposition it relates itself to others and essentially is only this relating; the relation however is the negation of its independence and the thing on the contrary perishes through its essential property'.⁸⁷

This clearly is the idealist aspect of Hegel's analysis of perception. Though not separate in Hegel's mind from his criticism of empiricism it can, as I have said, be isolated from what is acceptable in his critique. It is of course true that this account of the 'perishing of the thing' is also aimed at empiricism. It misses its mark however because the materialist postulate of empiricism is one that concerns the existence of things and not what the explanation of a thing looks like. It is self-evident that the rational understanding of a thing is not material, it is nothing that exists outside our minds. An explanation is always in that sense ideal. It does not, however, follow that the things it explains are. Hegel believes that by showing that a thing is an unity of opposites: something that can only preserve its identity by being both associated with and disassociated from all other things he has shown that it perishes. But, in fact, he has only succeeded in showing that if we are to know what a thing is we have to take a perspective that is not limited to the perception of the one thing. Hegel has made the error of identifying the understanding of a thing with its existence. It may well be that in understanding

87. Ibid., p. 103.

what an apple is we do not talk about apples but more about fruit, trees, and plant life in general; but none of this means that the existence of our empirical apple is impaired. Again, of course, our analysis would break down if we relied entirely on perception but this does not mean that our empirical apple will have broken down. By concluding the opposite, however, Hegel is able to conclude his analysis of perception with the announcement of the abolition of the thing of perception. This conclusion (and the reader will not be surprised by this) I call abstract.

This distinction I have made between the idealist and well-founded aspect of Hegel's critique of idealism will, I think, serve us well in the brief look we shall now take at Hegel's account of the Understanding in the Phenomenology. It is the dissolution of the thing of perception that leads us into the understanding. The thing of perception has now become what Hegel describes as the 'unconditioned-universal'.⁸⁷ This further distinguishes itself as Force.

The plausibility or otherwise of this transition does not directly interest us here. What does interest us is the distinction that Hegel makes between what he calls the outer expression of force and its inner reality. This inner reality first arises for consciousness, Hegel claims, with the dissolution of the thing of perception. In perception, it thinks it has before it a thing whose reality is certain. But its experience of the dialectic of perception undermines

87. Ibid., p. 107.

this conviction and brings it to postulate, that behind that perception there must be some supersensible reality. The notion of force fits this experience because it has, as I have indicated, both an outer expression and an inner reality.⁸⁸ The outer expression accounts for this changeable and unstable world of perception, the inner notionally for the explanation of that unstable world. I say 'notionally' since according to Hegel when the ordinary consciousness first comes to deal with this postulate of an inner and outer certain problems arise. Although the experiencing consciousness has discovered that what it thought to be perfectly certain and objective, namely, the thing of perception, has shown itself to be the opposite, it still clings to its notion of the certainty of the perceived world. Admittedly, it no longer thinks of that world as stable or fixed. It is prepared to grant that it is the expression of another reality, beyond appearance. But because it finds its certainty in the world of appearance it is only prepared to think of that reality as an unknowable beyond. Because, Hegel says, 'the inner is still pure beyond for consciousness' 'it does not find itself in it yet'.⁸⁹ Therefore it regards the inner reality of force as a mere beyond in comparison with its concrete expression. The inner reality, Hegel says, merely expresses a void for it.

What the natural consciousness has ignored, Hegel claims, in insisting on this is that what it calls the supersensuous beyond has arisen from experience itself. It is therefore

88. Ibid., p. 110.

89. Ibid., p. 117.

mistaken, Hegel argues, to think of it as something that is forever beyond our ken. It has only appeared as a result of a development in our knowledge about the world. The development to which he refers is of course the one that led to the dissolution of the thing of perception. It is this which provides the content for the supersensuous beyond. This it does not as it appears: as what Hegel calls a mere flux or a play of forces.⁹⁰ After all, the mere dissolution of the things of appearance is no adequate content for experience. It must give rise to a new object. We shall have that new object or content to the supersensuous beyond. Hegel claims, through regarding appearance as appearance. In other words, the world beyond perception will only cease to be a mere void for us when we look on that flux of appearance as the external appearance of a more profound and deeper reality. Thus all we perceive has, according to Hegel, not to be taken at face value; we have to see it as evidence of a more permanent reality. We have to understand and not merely take note of that evidence. It is at this point that Hegel introduces the notion of Law,⁹¹ for law is the manner in which that evidence can be understood or appearance explained as appearance. Because law or the whole system of laws is the permanent reality beyond appearance, it lays to rest the play of forces for consciousness. Therefore 'with this the supersensuous world is a serene kingdom of laws indeed beyond the perceived world, for this only presents

90. Ibid., p. 119.

91. Ibid., p. 120.

the law through continuous change, however just as much present in it and its immediate peaceful image (Abbild)'.⁹² Hegel's answer then to those who, like Kant, claim that there is nothing knowable beyond appearance is this: We may know what noumena are precisely because we are able to understand what phenomena are. That knowledge is not to be discovered in phenomena per se; it only comes to light when we seek to interpret them as evidence of a noumenal reality.

Kant, as we know, rejects such a claim because he holds the Empiricists' view that knowledge of what things are in themselves may only be derived from sense-perception. And that, of course, is neither sufficiently dependable nor sufficiently informative to provide us with that knowledge. Hegel's analysis of the Understanding is then in one dimension directed at Kant's empiricism. There is however, as I have suggested another, the idealist dimension. We can see this most plainly in the conclusion of the analysis. He concludes that the supersensuous reality beyond appearance should be known as self. Here again Hegel presents us with a paradox. He provides us with a more or less convincing account of one of the aspects of scientific experience, but then he undermines what are positive conclusions by identifying that experience with self-consciousness. It seems to me that, as Hegel suggests, the experience of science does show that what is true about nature is not simply what we can perceive of it but what we know of it in our scientific laws.⁹³ We

92. Ibid.,

93. This may not seem to be saying much. If, however, we consider what flows from it: the distinction between appearance and reality, we can see the contrary is the case. Gadamer presents an analysis of this distinction or, rather, what it supposes in his essay on 'Die Verkehrte Welt' in Hegels Dialektik, pp. 70-77.

have come across this point of Hegel's before in our review of his critique of Kant's philosophy. There he made the point that our Understanding is higher than our sense-perception because, and he cites as an example our knowledge of the heavens, it is what furnishes us with our knowledge of the world. The general claim that Hegel is making is that our knowledge of the world is always conceptual in form. This claim is undeniably true and as uncontroversial a criticism of Empiricism as one could have. The same cannot be said for what Hegel goes on to claim. He goes on to claim that objective reality is therefore self. This is one claim we have to examine in detail since it is what makes Hegel's account of experience abstract.

First we ought to see how it is that Hegel in the analysis of the Understanding comes to make this claim. Self-consciousness first comes on the scene, it seems, with the explanation of the Law.⁹⁴ All the law provides itself, he claims, is a stable picture of the flux of appearance. It is, he suggests, an inner reality only in contrast to an external appearance. What occurs through the law being explained is that the aspect of consciousness' view of the law is revoked. As we see, the only identity it has initially is that it is opposed to the flux of appearance. What explaining it does, according to Hegel, is to show that law is the reality of appearance. In explaining the law, Hegel claims,

94. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 133. Also Gadamer, op.cit., p.30.

consciousness discovers that it is also a law ~~for~~ distinctions to come about in perception that are not distinctions at all. Consciousness therefore comes to the conclusion that it is useless to fall back on perception to explain anything. What appears to our senses is merely contradiction. Thus the experiencing consciousness comes to the conclusion that knowledge is not furnished by mere consciousness i.e. the mere perceptual awareness of the world outside ourselves, but by our reflection on consciousness. And this is of course self-consciousness. But there is more to it than that, since reflection on consciousness involves understanding it is also the reflection on understanding itself. Thus self-consciousness makes its appearance in the Understanding not only through its becoming the consciousness of consciousness but also through the Understanding's own reflection on itself. The Understanding first comes to see this: that the reality of experience is self-consciousness when in the course of explaining the law it realises all that it is doing is, in Hegel's words, conversing with itself. Then it knows that in the explanation of the law it 'only enjoys itself',⁹⁵ and therefore realises that the reality of appearance is not the 'play of forces' but itself.

This conclusion illustrates the solipsism of Hegel's philosophy. This solipsism is also the core of its idealist thesis. The strength of Hegel's position is that it is based on an analysis of the nature of scientific explanation.

95. Hegel. *ibid.*, p. 154.

He concludes that the reality of phenomenal 'reality' is thought or self-consciousness because, like Schelling, he identifies science's intellectualisation of nature with the dissolution and disappearance of material things external to ourselves. Natural Science for them both is idealist. Hegel, however, goes one step further than Schelling with his solipsism. He claims, at the end of his account of the Understanding, that 'it becomes apparent that behind the so-called curtain of appearance which is supposed to conceal the inner (world) there is nothing to see unless we ourselves go behind it, just as much that we can see, as that there be something behind it that can be seen'⁹⁶ His suggestion is then that science not only discovers the reality of things behind appearance but in a sense puts it there. Up to a point Hegel seems to be correct. It is clear that, as he maintains, we cannot see anything without putting ourselves in a position to see it. The scientist, we might agree, can only hope to explain natural phenomena by regarding them as such, i.e., as Hegel claims, by regarding them as evidence of a deeper reality. There would indeed be nothing to see unless he went behind the curtain of appearance. As we are all aware the explanation of natural phenomena is the outcome of the scientist's activity. Hegel, however, wishes to claim more than this. As we have seen, he suggests that all that the scientist knows with this explanation can accurately

96. Ibid. p. 135.

be called self-consciousness. Science, for him, therefore is the overcoming of all otherness. This claim would be most simple to refute if it meant simply that all that science seeks to explain is per se self-consciousness. However, the claim is that it shows itself to be self. The abstractness or solipsism in Hegel's philosophy is, as I have tried to point out, subtle. For Hegel, as we have seen, otherness is a fact. In other words, at the outset of his philosophy he is prepared to admit the materialist thesis. But at the same time, he wishes to claim that otherness is self-consciousness, albeit self-consciousness in its alienation. And this is apparent in his account of science. He acknowledges in the first instance that what it has to account for is outside consciousness. But, as I have pointed out, it is a contradiction in Hegel's whole philosophy that he assumes there is an external reality only to prove that there is no such thing. It will not do to mint a coin simply to withdraw it from circulation. If it is legal tender it has to be allowed to circulate freely. Hegel's assumption of externality or otherness is not genuine; or else it would not fall out of use. This leads to all sorts of confusion. In the case we are considering, for instance, it means that he has to contradict his own claim that the scientific law is the knowledge of appearance as appearance. He argues that as a result of the scientific explanation, we can discard any

concrete referent. But if that referent is left out, in what sense are we to regard the scientific explanation as being an explanation of anything? Hegel's distillation of experience into the self may work well in the forward direction. For instance, we might be led to believe now that science in its result, is self-consciousness. But it does not work at all in the reverse direction. If we were to work backward through experience with this hypothesis we would be faced with contradiction at each turn. If all is self, what is it that science is supposed to have explained? Indeed if all is self-consciousness what need is there for science? There can be no phenomena. There seems no possibility then that we can return from any of the higher levels of consciousness of the Phenomenology to any of the lower levels because the more advanced levels are constructed on the assumption that the lower levels no longer exist. For example, we can never return to the assumption that there is a world of sense-impressions since it has no real existence for us now. Its real existence is its result - the unconditioned universal. This is the pit-fall of Hegel's idealism that he wants there to be a world but that world has to be self-consciousness' alone. He cannot have it both ways however. He cannot assume that there is an external world and then, when it is explained, that it is no longer there.

CHAPTER FIVE

MARX'S CRITIQUE OF HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY

There is, I have argued, a difficulty in Hegel's philosophy. He postulates that there is an external world only to show that that world is Mind or Spirit. Mind (Geist), he claims, is the process of thought establishing itself as the other of itself and the re-establishing of its self-identity and freedom through the overcoming of that otherness. Nature, therefore, is 'Mind that has itself alienated itself' and the 'thinking way of regarding' it is to 'watch how Nature in itself is this process of overcoming its otherness to become Mind'.¹ Hegel, in other words, has no sooner established a Nature independent of Mind than he retracts its independence. Its apparent existence outside ourselves, he claims, is itself only an appearance of Mind. Its reality is the content of Mind: scientific knowledge. It is for this reason that I say that his account of experience is abstract. It is, as we have seen, an account of experience which though concrete in much of its detail has only one end: to show that all experience may be reduced to knowledge or 'Absolute Knowledge', as Hegel calls it. Because he believes he has shown this to be so in his Phenomenology he claims that all experience can be said to be ideal. In short, he believes that it is only the thesis of philosophical idealism that makes sense of the world.

1. Hegel. Werke 9, p. 25.

However the fact that Hegel's account of experience involves him in the difficulty I have mentioned does not mean that he is not a great thinker. We might indeed take the view that it is because of his idealism that Hegel is a great philosopher. For, it may be claimed, if we detach his idealism from his philosophy there is nothing peculiarly Hegelian about it. As the Marxist, Henri Lefebvre, says of Hegel: 'his ambition coincides with that of philosophy, with the most secret desire of the life of mind, seen as expansion and dominion: to exclude nothing, to leave nothing outside itself, to abandon and transcend every one-sided position'.² Hegelianism, he continues, 'asserts implicitly that all conflicts can be resolved, without mutilation or renunciation..; it asserts that in the life of Mind there is no need for options, alternatives or sacrifices. Innumerable conflicts are objectively experienced, but none of them last forever. Every contradiction can be transcended in a forward leap of Mind'. And again, he says, - and no greater compliment can be paid Hegel than this 'Hegelianism represents a type of spiritual life that is still valid. Not to aim at acquiescing too hastily to ourselves or to the world; not to hide from ourselves the contradictions in the world, in man and in each individual, but, on the contrary, to accentuate them, however much we may suffer, because it is fruitful to be torn asunder and because, once the contradictions have become

2 Lefebvre. Dialectical Materialism, Jonathan Cape, p. 46.

unbearable, the need to transcend them becomes stronger than any resistance on the part of the elements that are passing away; such is the principle of a spiritual life both sorrowful and joyous, wholly rational and unconfused'.³ Thus in Lefebvre's view it still makes sense to be a Hegelian. The world in which we live, he believes, is not one where we are free from moral compromise and, indeed, confusion. The Hegelian point of view, he suggests, allows us to assert an autonomy by raising ourselves in thought above the contradictions of our existence. And this thought, Lefebvre argues, has not to be this or that thought but the faithful reflection of the dilemmas of our existence. It has to be the understanding of those contradictions. Thus, it seems, we can have no need to choose alternatives or make sacrifices. We can take refuge in our knowledge of the world. But in that knowledge, as Lefebvre points out, we are 'not to hide from ourselves the contradictions of the world'. Indeed we are to accentuate them until they become almost unbearable. This, of course, is where the strength of Hegel's philosophy lies. It encourages us to be severely critical of our existing conditions, indeed to see all life as essentially negative. Hegel, therefore, is prepared to accept the worst of the world. He is to this extent a realist. His Philosophy of Right, for instance, is no mere apology for Modern Society. That much is clear

3. Ibid., p. 47.

from the most recent debates on the work.⁴ For realism, Hegel believed, was not incompatible with his idealism.

Indeed, in his Preface to the Philosophy of Right, he tells us that the task for philosophy is to 'grasp what is', and, in his view 'what is is Reason'.⁵

Whilst agreeing that Hegel is a great philosopher I should like to question Lefebvre's claim that his philosophy is rational and valid. For it is true that Hegelianism continues to exercise a hold on many theorists. Nevertheless, a rational philosophy is surely one that is free of all illusion, one in which there is no evidence of mystical or magical ideas. But, as Lefebvre himself points out, 'Hegelian speculation is still steeped in 'magical' ideas.'⁶ By positing a magical participation

4. The arguments, for and against, can be found in Hegel's Political Philosophy (Atherton, 1970) edited by Walter Kaufmann. Avineri gives a most sympathetic rendering of Hegel's political thought in his Hegel's Theory of the Modern State. Hans Friedrich Fulda's Das Recht der Philosophie in Hegel's Philosophie des Rechts (Frankfurt, 1968) contains the most rigorous analysis I have read on the topic.

5. Hegel. Werke 7, p. 26.

6. Richard Kroner (Von Kant bis Hegel, Part Two, op.cit.) goes so far as to say that 'Hegel is without doubt the greatest irrationalist the history of philosophy has ever seen'. (p.271) This again though does not lead Kroner to dismiss Hegel as a great thinker. He finds himself in the same paradox as Lefebvre that it is precisely this weak point in Hegel's philosophy that is its strength. He says: 'Diejenigen, die in dem Rationalismus des Systems ein ihm eigentümliches Kennzeichen sehen, meinen aber vielleicht nicht so sehr seine methodische Form, sondern seinen Anspruch, jedes Problem, das die Philosophie nur immer aufwerfen mag, auch philosophische bewältigen zu können, - sie meinen die Verzichtlosigkeit des Hegelschen Denkens. .. (p268) Dies ist es, was man mit Fug Hegels Rationalismus nennen dürfte. ... Aber der Name ist irreführend. Denn für Hegel bedeutet das Denken und der Begriff nichts, was sich in Gegensatz zu etwas Anderem bringen liesse, sondern etwas, was sich selbst entgegengesetzt, was sich selbst zum Anderen seiner selbst wird und im Anderen sich mit wieder zusammenschliesst. Der Rationalismus des Hegelschen Denken enthält also einen Irrationalismus an ihm selbst: der Begriff setzt sich Grenzen und ist eben nur dadurch der Begriff, dass er es ist, der sich die Grenzen setzt und die gesetzte Grenze als die von ihm an ihm gesetzte auch wieder aufhebt. Nur wenn man dies berücksichtigt, versteht man Hegels Forderung auf Universalherrschaft des Begriffs richtig, - dann aber wird man nicht mehr von Rationalismus reden.' (pp.270 - 271).

in absolute Being (conceived of as knowledge and reason), it combines the magical schema with an attempt to be more fully rational'.⁷ He himself gives the explanation for this irrationalism in Hegel's philosophy when he says:

'Hegel was not merely content to deepen the content and make it explicit in order to attain the form, he reduced it to thought, by claiming to grasp it totally and exhaust it'.⁸

Hegel's philosophy does not then represent a wholly rational point of view because it conjures away the content of our empirical experience. Our empirical experience becomes an irrelevance for Hegel because his is a system in which, as Lefebvre himself points out, 'thought...is the secret source of the content'. For an Hegelian therefore 'it is only an illusion that Mind receives its content from outside, in accordance with the unphilosophical presuppositions of observation and experience'.⁹ Ultimately then - and Lefebvre seems to agree - Hegelianism is an inconsistent doctrine because it reduces all experience to the thought of experience. We may admire Hegel for seeking to grasp the entire content of experience in his system. Yet there must always be a point at which we must curb our admiration. For as Lefebvre says again, 'it is inconceivable that the limited mind of one individual, of a philosopher, should be able to grasp the entire content of human experience'.¹⁰ There is always

7. Lefebvre. op.cit. p. 57.

8. Ibid., p. 51.

9. Ibid., p. 52.

10. Ibid., p. 48. This, for instance, is what Kroner has in mind when he refers to Hegel as an irrationalist: the claim that his Concept is the reality of reality.

something new to be found, to be explained. The forms of human and natural existence are potentially limitless. Philosophy and the sciences may, as Hegel claims, intellectualize human and natural life but both, nature and Humanity, because they are developing independently of their understanding remain unlimited sources of new knowledge. What Hegel ignores is, as Lefebvre notes, that it is not only thought that is real for us but also practice. We are not only thinking beings but also practically active beings. Thought cannot therefore encapsulate the whole of our experience, because to do that, not only would it have to be the knowledge of our consciousness but it would also have to be what we do. And for thought to be all that we do is impossible. As Lefebvre concludes, 'practice is creative, it cannot be deduced from the concept. It has its own exigencies, its own discipline - its own logic perhaps'.¹¹ Thus in his view, it is primarily the problem of the relation of practice to philosophy that Hegel's philosophy raises and leaves unanswered. It is, of course, to this problem that Marx - to whom we now turn - first addresses himself.

11. Ibid., p. 50.

TWO 'CONTRADICTIONS' IN HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY

We shall begin with an analysis of Marx's 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy'. This essay forms part of the famous Paris Manuscripts of 1844. It is central to our interest in the end of German Classical Philosophy because in the course of his Critique Marx makes plain his differences with Hegel. In examining those differences we can, I believe, discover the reasons why Hegel's philosophy fell into disrepute so rapidly after his death and at the same time discover the transformation it undergoes in Marx's hands. It is these two 'ends' which in my view German Classical philosophy has. There is in the first place the end to which Hegel brings it in his philosophy and secondly there is the end to which Marx puts it in his philosophy, and, as I say, an analysis of Marx's Critique will acquaint us with both.

In the Critique Marx, as I have suggested, intends to settle his differences with Hegel's philosophy. Now he sees his criticism of Hegel as continuing a task that Feuerbach had begun. There are three aspects of what he takes to be Feuerbach's Critique which he regards as particularly important.¹² In the first place he takes Feuerbach's critique to be important because it proved that Hegel 'proceeds from the alienation of Substance, the absolute, fixed abstraction'.¹³

12. A. Schmidt in his The Concept of Nature in Marx (NLB) and Emanzipatorische Sinnlichkeit (Reihe Hanser) has given a most comprehensive account of this Marx's debt to Feuerbach.

13. Marx Marx-Engels Werke, Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil, p. 5/0.

For the want of a better word, Marx continues, we can call this abstraction God. And this, he claims, is what Feuerbach showed: that Hegel's starting-point was theological. Feuerbach then built on this criticism, by showing that Hegel's second move was to posit that God was no more. In other words, in the second stage of his philosophy Hegel laid emphasis on the 'actual, sensuous, real, finite and particular'.¹⁴ Feuerbach completed this important criticism, Marx suggests, by showing that in the third aspect of his philosophy Hegel 're-establishes religion and theology' by abolishing the finite and the real.¹⁵ In sum then, Marx suggests, Feuerbach had proven that there was an ambiguity in Hegel's philosophy. That ambiguity, it seems, was that Hegel was both an upholder and critic of theological notions. In secular terms, Marx claims, this means that he both acknowledged the existence of a finite particular world and denied the reality of its existence. In claiming this Marx seems to have in mind what I have called the principal thesis of Hegel's philosophy: that Substance is Subject. The thesis is, as we have seen, that reality is both the all-embracing One Substance and its limitation and particularisation as Subject. It is a thesis that, as we have seen, represents the point of view that there is a finite particular world only to show that that world is of itself infinite or divine. The infinite, Hegel claims, has to be shown to emerge from the finite. Marx refers to this aspect of Hegel's system as the 'Negation of the Negation'.¹⁶ It represents for him the 'contradiction of philosophy with itself'. But what Marx

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 570.

means by referring to it in this way is not immediately clear. It is therefore fortunate that he turns to Hegel's Phenomenology to clarify his point.

The Phenomenology now occupies his attention because, in his view, it is 'the true birthplace and the secret of the Hegelian philosophy'.¹⁷ Marx gives little indication why he thinks this to be so other than to say that, in his view, the contradictions in Hegel's philosophy appear most clearly in that work. What then are those contradictions? Marx claims that they are two in number.¹⁸ In the first place Hegel (rightly it seems) depicts the world of the ordinary consciousness as an estranged world but, Marx objects, this estrangement takes place in the thought-form alone. In other words, Marx suggests, Hegel regards alienation only as a mental phenomenon. In the second place, Hegel erroneously believes that the process of the Phenomenology can overcome alienation. In Marx's view Hegel is mistaken in this because no amount of thinking - which, after all, is all that the process of the Phenomenology represents - can overcome a phenomenon that is rooted in man's social existence. So although Marx agrees with Hegel that man is an estranged being he believes that what he calls 'man's true being' cannot be achieved through thought alone. But this, Marx claims, is what happens with Hegel 'the vindication of the objective world for man' is merely an intellectual one. Because 'the estranged object...is...only the thought of alienation, its abstract and therefore empty and unreal expression..the over-

17. Ibid., p. 571.

18. Ibid., p. 572.

coming of alienation is equally nothing other than an abstract, empty overcoming of that empty abstraction.¹⁹

The two objections that Marx has to Hegel's philosophy are, then, mutually complementary. We can readily see that if, as Marx says, Hegel conceives of alienation as merely a mental phenomenon he will conceive of its resolution in those terms as well. Equally, if we take the view that alienation can be resolved by thought alone there is every reason for us to believe that it is merely an intellectual phenomenon

Marx of course believes both ideas to be mistaken. The first, he suggests, is wrong because Hegel is mistaken in believing that alienation is only a mental phenomenon. Marx argues that the fact that it appears in the first place is dependent on certain economic conditions, notably the prevalence of commodity production. Its existence is a prerequisite of man's being alienated - as Marx conceives the notion. Thus to suggest that alienation has appeared, as Hegel does, through the mere positing of 'the opposition of an in itself (an sich) and for itself, of consciousness and self-consciousness, of object and subject'²⁰ is, in Marx's view, thoroughly misleading. The notion, Marx continues, has to do with man's social existence and not, as a reading of Hegel's philosophy would suggest, with 'the opposition of abstract thought and sensuous reality or real sensuousness

19. Ibid., p. 585.

20. Ibid., p. 572.

inside thought itself'.²¹ So, Marx claims, Hegel gives the impression that all alienation results from a theoretical error on the part of the Human Understanding. This, Marx says, is surely a basic failing in his philosophy. Hegel, in his opinion, has wholly misunderstood the problem.

However, it might be argued that it is Marx, rather than Hegel, who has misunderstood the problem. For, it could be said, his criticism of Hegel is based on considerations which, by any standards, are extraneous to philosophy. Prima facie such an objection would appear to be correct. Marx, it seems, is guilty of an ignoratio elenchi in claiming that Hegel misunderstands the phenomenon of alienation. For even if we suppose the phenomenon of alienation to be the result of a certain mode of production this still need not mean that Hegel's philosophy has failed in any respect. A philosophical argument, our critic would claim, can only be refuted by a philosophical argument; and Marx's argument is plainly an economic one. I would suggest, however, that there has to be an exception to this rule; and this would be where the philosophical argument deals with a problem that is best dealt with within the context of a different or, indeed, new discipline. This would appear to be part of Marx's claim here. However, our critic is unlikely to let the matter drop at that. He will consider that if a question is best dealt with outside the philosophical discipline then

21. Ibid.

it is not, and can never have been, a philosophical question. But are things always as clear cut as this? The boundaries of philosophy are not fixed nor for that matter are they readily discernible. This is certainly how philosophy has appeared in the past. For it is a matter of fact that it has at certain times both been subsumed under and has subsumed what are now recognised to be quite separate disciplines. One need only look at what has been its relation to theology and natural science to see this. Indeed I believe that it would be quite wrong to exclude from philosophy all arguments that are drawn from other disciplines simply because they are that. It is best, I think, to judge each particular argument, whether drawn from philosophy or not, on its own merits.

Judged in this more general sense it appears to me that Marx criticism of Hegel has some merit. Certainly his criticism does not involve him in an ignoratio elenchi. For it is Hegel himself who has identified a philosophical problem with a social problem. It is he, as we have seen, who claims that the bifurcation that is inherent in experience is reflected in philosophy. It is he, who as Marx says, reduces the problem of alienation to the philosophical or, more specifically, epistemological problem of the opposition between subject and object, the in itself and the for itself, consciousness and self-consciousness. This opposition Hegel, as we have seen, calls the alienation of mind or the loss of self, and he firmly associates it with the 'shattered harmony' of man's day to

day existence. This was most explicit in his early Differenzschrift but, as Plant and Rohrmoser have shown, it is a theme of his whole philosophy. We ourselves have found this to be true of the Phenomenology of Mind. Hegel, I argued, identifies the thesis of philosophical materialism with alienation.²² He cannot therefore escape Marx's criticism by pleading philosophical immunity. He himself invites the kind of criticism Marx puts forward. It is Hegel who suggests that knowledge can overcome alienation. And it makes sense for Marx to reply that this is nonsense. Alienation, he claims, is much more than a mere postulate of philosophical materialism. The mere idea of there being an external world can, in his view, alienate no-one. What is responsible for what Hegel calls the self's loss of its object is, according to Marx, man's real loss of his object in commodity production. What, therefore, particularly irritates him in Hegel's account of alienation is that for Hegel it is 'not that the human being objectifies himself inhumanly in opposition to himself but that he objectifies himself in distinction to and in opposition to abstract thought which counts as the posited essence of alienation and the essence which has to be overcome.'²³ And far from this being a criticism which involves what some would call a category mistake, it is one that gets at the heart of Hegel's philosophy.

22. See above. Chapter 3, p. 151.

23. Marx. *ibid*; p. 572.

We can see this more clearly, I believe, when we have a more precise idea of the nature of Marx's criticism. This will not be a simple task since Marx relies heavily on aphorism in making his points in the Critique. We can however make a beginning by examining the grounds for Marx's second principal objection to Hegel's system. The second error he detects in Hegel's philosophy is, as I have said, that it is itself supposed to represent the overcoming of man's alienation. Thus in Hegel's philosophy, Marx claims, 'the appropriation of the essential powers of man which have become objects and alien objects is to begin with only an appropriation which occurs in consciousness, in pure thought i.e. in abstraction.'²⁴ So the claim that his philosophy has, or can, overcome alienation in Marx's view represents an error on Hegel's part because it is too ambitious. In it, Marx claims, thought is over-reaching itself.²⁵ Marx, then, wants to demarcate thought and practice in such a way that it would preclude the claim that thought by itself can alter social phenomena. Hegel however, Marx implies, allows no such distinction. Indeed, he claims, Hegel's view is that the thought of a thing or an activity is the essence of that thing or activity. Marx appears to be correct in asserting that Hegel takes this view. We recall, for example that Hegel regards the history of philosophy as the essence of world history. He claims, as we have seen, that 'the

24. Ibid. p. 573.

25. Ibid. pp 580 - 1. In saying this Marx is quoting Feuerbach.

history of philosophy is the innermost (soul) of world history - this work of the mind of man in his inner thought is parallel with all the stages of reality.²⁶ In short, he implies, as Marx claims, that our reflection on our activity, or more particularly that of the philosopher, is the essence of our activity. Equally, we might recall an aspect of Hegel's general view of philosophy. Philosophy, we have seen Hegel claim, is that process which while looking on at that activity which appears to be going on external to Mind (Geist) shows that the activity of itself becomes Mind. Or, Hegel claims, we may simply see the process as 'pure self-recognition in absolute otherbeing'.²⁷ But in 'pure self-recognition' there can, as Marx claims, be no room for any distinction to be made between thought and activity. Such a philosophy has to reduce practice to the thought of it. Thus for instance the Hegelian philosophy can only contemplate 'sensuousness, religion, state-power', Marx suggests, as 'intellectual essences'.²⁸

Marx, then, stresses the abstractness of Hegel's philosophy. I have already drawn attention to this facet of Hegel's system. I have suggested that it is evidence of a fundamental difficulty, namely, that he supposes that there is an external world only to undermine that supposition. I suggested that to do this was like minting a coin simply to withdraw it from

26. See above. Chapter 3; p.145.

27. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 29.

28. Marx. ibid., p. 573.

circulation. Now, Marx I believe in this Critique of Hegel's Dialectic has in mind the same facet of Hegel's philosophy. He is, so to speak, interested in allowing this Hegelian coin of objectification (the positing of an external world) to circulate freely. To be sure, he has not in mind precisely the same notion of the abstraction in Hegel's as we; his notion is clearly more comprehensive than ours. I was concerned with a theoretical inconsistency in Hegel's system he with what appears to be an ontological inadequacy. We shall find, however, that our less ambitious notion will serve us well in the effort to understand Marx's ontological criticism of Hegel. For, as we shall see, Marx begins from the less comprehensive view of Hegel's abstractness in making those criticisms.

I have suggested that Marx in his enquiry wishes to discover the consequence of maintaining consistently the Hegelian view that the subject finds itself objectified in the external world. As we have seen, Marx thinks that Feuerbach has shown that this was the second aspect of Hegel's system, namely, that he 'abolishes the Infinite, posits the actual, sensuous, real, finite, particular.'²⁹ But in Hegel's philosophy, this aspect is superceded (as Marx again believes Feuerbach to have shown) by the restoration of the Infinite, the third aspect of Hegel's philosophy. In other words, we can see Marx's interest as being in the implications of discarding this third aspect of Hegel's philosophy. For he strongly believes that the second aspect of Hegel's system is his most lasting contribution to the development of what

29. Marx. *ibid.*, p. 570.

Marx calls man's self-knowledge. Indeed he is prepared to go so far as to say that it is 'the greatest thing about the Hegelian Phenomenology'.³⁰

We can best understand why Marx wishes to claim this if we keep in mind the view of man that lies at the back of many of Marx's criticism of Hegel. Man for Marx 'is part of nature'. And what he means by this is complex. Nature is, he suggests, 'the inorganic body of man, namely, nature in so far as it is not itself human body. Man lives from nature means: Nature is his body with which he must remain in constant process in order that he not die'.³¹ In other words, he suggests, man's productive activity is his life activity. It is his life activity not only as a means to satisfy his needs but also as the principal way he expresses himself. So, Marx argues, a man is what he does. And not only that, the whole of humanity or what Marx calls man's species life (Gattungslieben), is to be characterised by its typical activity which is, according to Marx, conscious productive activity. 'Free conscious activity', he claims, 'is the species character of man'.³² What distinguishes his productive activity from that of an animal is that his intercourse with nature is governed by his will. As a result, Marx believes, 'nature appears as his work and his reality'.³³ Man then is a natural being in a privileged sense for Marx. Because he is not only able to secure from nature his means

30. Ibid. p. 574.

31. Ibid., p. 516.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

of subsistence but is also able to control it to meet with his requirements his 'naturalness' is one that is not only in nature but above it as well.

Now, Marx, it seems, associates the second stage of Hegel's philosophy, of the Infinite being abolished and the finite and particular being affirmed, with this view of man. To discover why he does so is, of course, of some importance to us. In this instance he refers to the second stage of Hegel's philosophy as the dialectic of negativity. What he has in mind in using the term is the materialist, concrete aspect of the phenomenological process; the aspect of Hegel's approach which leads to the positing of an external world which is genuinely opposed to ourselves. Hegel himself refers to this in a famous passage in the Preface to the Phenomenology as the aspect of the life of Mind which does not 'shy away from death' but rather 'puts up with it and preserves itself in it.'³⁴ In his view, living with the negative was an essential aspect of the life of Mind (Geist). Now Marx believes that as a result of this, what he calls the dialectic of negativity, 'Hegel comprehends the self-formation (Selbsterzeugung) of man as a process, objectification as opposition, as externalisation and as overcoming this externalisation'.³⁵ It appears that in saying this Marx has

34. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 36.

35. Marx. ibid., p. 574. This is what leads Marx to say that Hegel's standpoint is the standpoint of modern Political Economy. As Avineri says, (The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx) Marx points out that what the classical economists expressed in terms of economic activity Hegel has already formulated philosophically'. But, as Avineri adds. in Marx's view 'Hegel saw only labour's creative nature and did not perceive the alienating conditions accompanying it in present society'. p. 78.

particularly in mind the section of the Phenomenology which deals with the relation of 'Master and Slave'. As this will bring us to a point which is of some importance to Marx's view of experience it is worth our while examining, if only in brief, the structure of that dialectic.

The whole dialectic, it appears, revolves around the relationship of both the master and the slave to what Hegel calls the object of desire. At the outset the master, not surprisingly, appears to be in the dominant position. He is able to call on the slave to satisfy his every need by furnishing him with the object of his desire. He is, Hegel claims, therefore the consciousness that is for itself.³⁶ At the end of the dialectic, however, the position of master and slave are apparently reversed. There 'the truth of the independent consciousness...is the servile (knechtische) consciousness'.³⁷ The dialectic has this outcome, I think, because of the way in which Hegel interprets the process of negation. Negation for Hegel is the process of what Marx calls man's objectification. As Marx indicates, for Hegel the completion of the process entails that the individual consciousness (in this instance that of the slave) must feel genuine opposition. And by this Hegel means not merely that consciousness should have felt this or that discontent but that its whole being should have been placed in jeopardy. Thus he says of the slave's objectification of himself: 'therein

36. Hegel. Werke 3; p. 150.

37. Ibid., p. 152.

he is inwardly dissolved, has trembled to the core, and everything fixed in his existence has been shaken'.³⁸ The otherness which he experiences has to be genuine or else it is not objectification that he experiences. Hegel insists on this point. He argues that the objectification of subject that takes place in his philosophy is no mere illusion. And in so far as this is true of his philosophy, Marx would suggest, it is its strength. Through presenting man's objectification as a process he had, Marx claims, come close to giving an undistorted view of man's nature. It is man's nature to be a limited, finite and indeed, suffering being who has to remain in constant intercourse with nature to secure his life. Equally it is his nature, Marx claims, to seek to overcome his limitations to seek to diminish his suffering. This Marx regards as the positive aspect of man's objectification. This aspect of objectification, he claims, did not escape Hegel's notice either. We can see this for ourselves in this instance. Because it is through this very aspect of objectification according to Hegel that the roles of master and slave are reversed. For the slave, he argues, overcomes his dependent and estranged condition through his struggle with nature. By seeking to diminish 'through labour' the opposition he feels between himself and his surroundings the slave, Hegel claims, 'comes to himself'.³⁹

38. Ibid., p. 153.

39. Ibid. For a comprehensive, if obscure, account of the notion of labour in Hegel's Phenomenology see Sok-Zin Lim, Der Begriff der Arbeit bei Hegel (Bonn 1963) A clearer view of Hegel's notion of practice is given by Reidel in his Theorie und Praxis im Denken Hegels.

He is no longer estranged. This change in the slave's Status is symbolised for him in a transformation in the object of desire. The object of desire is no longer something which he fears as the thing for which he was enslaved, it is now his own object. He comes to see it in this way because it is he that produces it. He discovers through his own objectification or negation, that it is his own labour which is embodied in the object. It would, I think, be true to say that it is this aspect of the dialectic that appeals most to Marx. For it appears to be what Marx has in mind when he says in the Critique that Hegel 'comprehends the essence of labour' and for this reason grasps 'objective man, true because real man as a result of his own labour'.⁴⁰ For in his own labour the slave, as we can see, comes to see his condition as the result of his activity; and this, Marx claims, is so not only for Hegel's account of the slave but for his whole philosophy. This assessment is, of course, influenced by Marx's own view of man but it is not only he and his followers who have pointed out this aspect of Hegel's notion of labour. What Mure in his excellent The Philosophy of Hegel has to say on Hegel's account of the Master and Slave echoes Marx's point. Although, Mure says, the slave in his work 'serves under the compulsion of an utter fear which dissolves his whole being, yet as he labours he learns. He learns to refashion his dissolved and shattered consciousness to a new self-consciousness by fashioning external things before which he does not tremble..his labour changes the world permanently,

40. Marx. *ibid.*, p. 574.

as his master's transitory satisfactions do not. His products accordingly in a measure reflect himself, and in that measure give him a free self-consciousness.⁴¹

We can now assess the validity of Marx's suggestion that in Hegel's philosophy man overcomes his estrangement in consciousness alone. It is valid I would argue because - even in this notable instance - Hegel's assumption of otherness is not, as he likes to claim, wholly genuine. In other words, there is an error in his account of negation. For what ultimately concerns Hegel in the dialectic of the master and slave is not the privation that the slave suffers as a man through being a slave but the privation that he has to put up with as self-consciousness. Man for Hegel counts only as a thinking being or, as Marx suggests, man for Hegel is only self-consciousness.⁴² It is therefore sufficient that the slave, as Mure puts it, 're-fashion his dissolved and shattered self-consciousness' for his privation to be turned into a positive bounty. He is able to recover his loss of self through the mere insight into the master's reciprocal dependence on him. Indeed Hegel claims that, through his labour the slave comes to view the 'independent being as himself'.⁴³ But this, surely, cannot be so. For even if, as Mure says, the slave gains a measure of freedom in labour he himself does not, through that labour, come to possess his product or, for that matter, himself. He is clearly still not free. To be sure, he may come to see the

41. G.R.G. Mure. The Philosophy of Hegel, pp.76 - 77.

42. Marx. *ibid.*, p. 575.

43. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 154.

world in a more universal, and if we are to believe Hegel, more human way as a result of reflecting on his work; but he has in no way recovered the actual loss of self that slavery implies. He cannot, as Hegel suggests, think his chains away. This of course brings us to the heart of Marx's case against Hegel.

For Marx, as I have said, wants to demarcate thought and practice in such a way that it would preclude the claim that thought by itself can alter social phenomena. But this is precisely what Hegel suggests, that the slave can overcome his actual dependence on his master by comprehending his situation. This clearly is an instance of, as Marx would say, thought over-reaching itself. For what Hegel does is to equate the slave's comprehension of his circumstances with those circumstances. Now Marx's point is that no matter how well the slave comprehends his circumstances that itself would cause no objective change to come about in them. The slave might, for instance, come to understand the laws that governed a slave-society like his own. As a result he may understand that it is the Master's right to put to death a runaway slave. So for that slave the public use of force in his society might cease to appear entirely arbitrary. And indeed he may gain some subjective satisfaction from this insight. However none of this would alter the fact that should he himself try to escape he himself would be subject to the same law and liable to be punished similarly. He will be no more free for knowing how it is that he can be

punished - as his actual execution will show. So, Marx would conclude, his servitude is an objective servitude which can only be overcome by objective social change. And Hegel is being thoroughly misleading in suggesting that the opposite is the case.

In the light of this it seems paradoxical that Marx insists as strongly as he does that the 'dialectic of negativity' is the greatest thing about the Phenomenology of Mind. Surely if, as it now seems, it is a prime example of the abstractness of Hegel's account of experience it can have nothing positive in it for Marx. This is a paradox that Marx resolves by referring us back again to Hegel's philosophy. In his view the paradox belongs to Hegel's system. For we can see, Marx says, that many of the sections of the Phenomenology of which the dialectic of the Master and Slave is one, 'contain the critical elements..of whole spheres, such as religion, the State, of bourgeois life'.⁴⁴ Because, therefore, Hegel regards man's existence as a negative one he is, Marx continues, able to present an account of experience which throws into question the existing state of affairs. He is, for instance, able to point to the dissemblance of the moral consciousness, to criticise the naively religious person and, in the Philosophy of Right, almost prophetically, to the chaos

44. Indeed as McLennan (Marx before Marxism, Penguin.) points out 'Marx makes the astonishing claim for the Phenomenology that 'All the elements of criticism are implicit in it, already prepared and elaborated in a manner far surpassing the Hegelian standpoint'. (p.252) I find it less astonishing than McLennan says. Certainly it appears to flow from what Marx says about the positive aspect of the work.

of capitalist production. Yet because he thinks of the negative aspects of experience as a mere denial of the freedom of self-consciousness, Hegel, Marx suggests, is able to shrug off the real denial that takes place in man's experience in modern society. Thus the paradox in Hegel's philosophy is that under his critical eye, the existing state of affairs is first dissolved and then, in a most material way it is reinstated.⁴⁵ It is dissolved, Marx suggests, when Hegel abolishes the Infinite and establishes the real, finite and particular but it is reinstated when, and at the same time as, the Infinite is re-established. And, according to Marx, this Infinite or Ideal Hegel re-establishes in Absolute Knowledge. It is the divine dialectic; the most complete knowledge of man's objectification.

45. Marx. Werke, Ergänzungsband Erster Teil, p. 573.

MARX'S NOTION OF OBJECTIVITY.

There is little doubt that this conclusion of Marx's is obscure. I said that his criticism of Hegel gets at the heart of Hegel's philosophy and I added that this would become clear when we had a more precise view of the nature of his criticism. At present we seem to be a long way from attaining this objective. However, from behind the welter of Hegelian terminology there is one view of Marx's that clearly emerges. This is his view of objectivity. And this view he constructs by persevering with this second aspect of Hegel's philosophy: the dialectic of negativity. For, in his view, that 'establishing of the finite, sensuous, real and particular' holds the clue to a correct view of man. Marx comes to this aspect of his analysis in his discussion of the last Chapter of Hegel's Phenomenology.

In that chapter, he believes, we can discover the essentials of Hegel's position. Through criticising it, therefore, he thinks that he can demonstrate in full the one-sidedness of Hegel's system. This one-sidedness Marx naturally attributes to Hegel's failure to understand completely the nature of objectivity. Therefore his philosophy is, Marx suggests, abstract. This abstractness, Marx continues, extends to its very first assumption. Now, what concerns Marx most about philosophy is its view of man. In his opinion no philosophy can fail to advance a view of man. Indeed he suggests that this is the principal way in which a philosophy can be judged.

The logical starting-point of a philosophy for him then is where it posits man. This for him has to be its very first assumption. The very first assumption of Hegel's philosophy is therefore shot through with abstraction because in it man is posited as self-consciousness. Thus the notion of objectivity that Hegel puts forward is one which is merely 'objectified self-consciousness' not real objectivity.⁴⁶ It is not real objectivity because Hegel conceives of man only as a thinking being. Because Hegel only posits man as self-consciousness, Marx says, he only conceives of his object as objects of thought or thought objects. Indeed, he argues, for Hegel 'the object of consciousness is nothing other than self-consciousness'.⁴⁷

At its base then, Marx concludes, Hegel's notion of objectivity is not concrete. This brings him back to the subject of alienation. It is now more than evident, he claims, that Hegel has misunderstood the phenomenon. For it is this initial positing of objectivity, Marx declares, that Hegel counts as the establishment of alienation. Thus not only does Hegel think of alienation as merely the opposition of subject and object but he also supposes that it is the positing of that opposition which is to blame for it. Or as Marx says here, for Hegel it is 'objectivity as such (that) counts as an alienated relation, one which does not correspond to the human nature, to the self-consciousness of man.'⁴⁸ Hegel's target

46. Ibid., p. 575.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid. p. 575.

is, as we have said, philosophical materialism. It is therefore not surprising the reappropriation of man's objective being' should have not only 'the significance of the overcoming of alienation but the overcoming of objectivity'.⁴⁹ Marx's view is of course that the reappropriation of man's objective being would involve no such thing. Alienation is not for him a mere thesis of philosophical materialism. It is first and foremost a social phenomenon; one that is closely related to the productive relations of a capitalist society. In his view, then, the reappropriation of man's objective nature would require a social and not a merely philosophical transformation. And although such a social transformation might overcome alienation, it would not in the least alter the nature of objectivity. There would, in his view, still be objects external to mind when alienation is overcome. But as I have said, Hegel believes that we alienate ourselves as soon as we establish that there is an object outside our consciousness, and in the Phenomenology he bends all his energies toward 'the conquest (Überwindung) of the object of consciousness'.⁵⁰

In Marx's view, therefore, one of the principal aims of the Phenomenology is to deny that there is from the philosophical point of

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid. As Meszaros says in one of the more lucid passages in his Marx's Theory of Alienation: 'Thus Hegel, in the end, assigns the same characteristic of untranscendable absoluteness and universality to the alienated form of objectification as to activity itself and therefore he conceptually nullifies the possibility of an actual supercession of alienation. (It goes without saying that a form, or some form of externalisation - i.e. objectification itself - is as absolute a condition of development as activity itself: a non-externalised, non-objectified activity' (pp. 90 - 91).

view such a thing as objectivity. Marx's criticism of this aim is, in one way at least, peculiar. For he is concerned not only to show that the aim suggests confused thinking on Hegel's part, but also why Hegel should come to think in such an apparently confused way. The explanation he offers is plain enough. He believes that Hegel came to think in such a confused fashion because he was too much of a philosopher. This will seem a strange claim to those of us who associate philosophy with clear thinking. But what Marx suggest here is that Hegel is too much of a philosopher in that he tends to see human problems only as philosophical problems and, contrariwise, he tends to see philosophical problems as incorporating all human problems. Indeed it seems that Marx takes Lefebvre's view that, for Hegel, philosophy properly taught can exclude in us the need for taking any options or making any sacrifices. For Marx, this is a confusion in Hegel's thinking because it involves unjustified abstraction. In the first place, he argues, why is it that Hegel finds it necessary to posit objectivity at all? From Marx's point of view there is little sense in setting out to establish that human consciousness has objects for its object. For, as far as he can see, 'it is wholly natural that a living natural being equipped and endowed with objective i.e. material essential powers (Wesenskrafte) has also both real natural objects of its essence and that its self-externalisation is the positing of a real..objective world'.

'Indeed', he continues, 'it is the opposite that would be puzzling'.⁵¹ Surely, he says, we would find it most odd if we had no objects for our consciousness. Why then go to lengths of positing them? The kind of beings we are makes it inevitable that we have objects outside ourselves. This brings us to the second reason why Marx believes Hegel's thinking to be unjustifiably abstract. For Hegel does not see man as a being who must have objects outside himself. Man for him, may happily be subsumed under the notion of self-consciousness. So just as it is clear to Marx that 'real man' should have real natural objects for his object so also is it perfectly clear to him 'that a self-consciousness through its externalisation can only posit thinghood, that is, only posit itself as an abstract thing, a thing of abstraction and not a real thing'.⁵² For Marx it is inevitable that if Hegel has at the basis of his philosophy a view of man as thinker or, indeed, philosopher only the objects with which he deals will only be thought or philosophical objects. Furthermore, Marx says, it is evident that such 'thinghood will not be independent in the least'.⁵³ By which Marx means that it will be a thinghood that is 'a mere creation (Geschöpf)' one that is as we have said merely posited by self-consciousness.⁵⁴ It is this then that happens,

51. Marx. *ibid.*, p. 577. 52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.* We would do well to recall here Hegel's positing of thinghood in the Phenomenology.

54. *Ibid.* Marcuse puts it well when he says in his essay on 'The Foundations of Philosophical Materialism' (Studies in Critical Philosophy; NLB) 'The object in Hegel is only an object for consciousness in the very strong sense that consciousness is the "truth" of the object and that the latter is only the negative side of consciousness: having been 'posited' (created, engendered) by consciousness as its alienation and estrangement, it must also be transcended by consciousness again, or 'taken back' into consciousness. The object is thus, by the nature of its existence a purely negative thing, a nullity; it is merely an object of abstract thought, for Hegel reduces self-consciousness to abstract thought.' (pp. 42 - 41.).

Marx claims, when Hegel broaches objectivity in his philosophy. He posits it and it is a positing which 'instead of confirming itself, is only a confirmation of the act of positing which for one moment fixes its energy as the product and gives to it pro forma the role - but only for a moment - of an independent, real being'.⁵⁵ The objectivity that Hegel establishes in his philosophy, Marx alleges, is a formal one merely. The object that Hegel conjures up is only real for that moment. Its reality therefore Hegel attributes to mind solely. Thus Hegel appears to assume that there is an objective, finite world external to mind only to show that it is not that. Marx, as we did, finds this to be an untenable view.

He thinks so because he believes that it rests on a mistaken view of man's nature. I have already said that what appears to concern Marx most about philosophy is its view of man. His suggestion is that no philosophy can fail to advance a notion of man. We shall see now how Marx carries out this suggestion in assessing Hegel's philosophy. Being able to assess a philosophy in such a fashion does of course in the first place depend on our having our own notion of man, and Marx, as I have already pointed out, has one such notion of man. His view of man, as we have seen, is that of man as a natural being. This, of course, he means in a sophisticated sense. By this, he does not mean that man is simply an

55. Marx. *ibid.*

animal like any other. Rather he means that to be man ~~to be~~ man has not only to survive but more importantly has to survive as a productive being. For him then man's species-life is an unique one because man appropriates nature consciously. It is tempting to regard this as Marx's ontology.⁵⁶ This we might do for two reasons. In the first place we might argue that since it is with this notion of man that Marx assesses Hegel's philosophy, which boasts an ontology, Marx's notion of man has also to be or to imply an ontology. The point being that Hegel's philosophy can be tackled only on ontological grounds. Secondly, we might claim that because Marx's notion of man plainly determines how he understands experience in general. If Marx were obliged to say where we should begin our reflections on the world he would say: with man's relationship to nature. The only difficulty with regarding this as an ontology, however, is that it attributes a greater systemisation to Marx's philosophical speculations than they perhaps possess. Be that as it may, we can see that Marx's view of man has profound implications for the notion of experience. It must also have an impact on the theory of knowledge which, as we have seen, depends on a view of experience. How, then, does Marx assess Hegel's philosophy with this view of experience? Unlike Hegel he wishes to talk of experience in terms of man's natural being and not in terms of consciousness and self-consciousness. What does this imply?

56. As do Lukacs, Mezaros and Lefebvre. Lefebvre says this in his Sociology of Marx: 'man's fundamental relation to nature may legitimately be called 'ontological'.(p40).

It implies that whereas Hegel sees man's establishing himself as a process of the objectification of self-consciousness, Marx sees it simply as the confirmation of man's objective, natural being. Thus whereas Hegel regards the appearance of objectivity to man as a result of his own act of thought, Marx takes the view that man 'produces, posits objects only because he is posited by objects, because at bottom he is nature'.⁵⁷ So, Marx claims, in suggesting objectivity it is wrong to conceive of the positing as subject; in other words, as though the objectivity originates in the suggestion itself. Rather we have to see the suggestion as an expression of our own objectivity. We ourselves, Marx says, are objects. We cannot be otherwise as we are natural beings. The objects that we intuit ourselves cannot therefore be mere constructions of mind, as 'man is immediately a natural being'.⁵⁸ Thus his very first subjective act has to be an expression of a natural, objective power. Immediacy to Marx suggests man's immediate dependence on nature unlike Hegel to whom, as we have found, it suggests merely thought as sensation.⁵⁹

Clearly this view of Marx's depends for its force on his notion of man as a natural being. And 'as a natural being', Marx continues, man 'is, in part, equipped with natural powers, with powers of life....; these powers exist in him as tendencies and capabilities, as drives; and as a natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being he is, in part, a suffering, conditioned and

57. Marx. *Ibid.*, p. 577.

58. *Ibid.* p. 578.

59. See above. Chapter 4, pp

limited being, as is also the animal and the plant, that is, the objects of his drives exist outside him, as objects independent of him; but these objects are the objects of his needs, essential objects and indispensable to the activation and confirmation of his essential powers'. (1b.) So we cannot regard what is immediate in experience as an expression of merely subjective powers. Indeed it makes no sense to Marx to talk, as does Fichte, of the immediate objects of experience as expressions of the positing activity of the I. For when we look at our subjective powers as a whole, our drives, as Marx calls them, we discover that they are not simply independent expressions of our being but that they are also an expression of our limitations as natural beings. Therefore, in Fichte's terms, we are just as much posited by nature as we posit it. For our drives correspond to limitations, limitations which would not exist in us unless they, in turn, did not correspond to objects outside us. So this, Marx suggests, is how objects first appear to us in our experience: as the objects of our conditioned, limited nature, in short, as the objects of our needs.

In criticising Hegel's notion of objectivity Marx, as I have suggested, does not intend to discard completely the thesis that lies behind it. He would not, for instance, wish to quarrel with the notion that man has to objectify himself. What he does find inadequate though is the way in which Hegel presents this process. He finds it both partial

and transient. It is partial, Marx claims, because Hegel conceives of it only as a philosophical act, and it is transient in that he thinks of it as something that ought not to be. This must be for Marx where the Hegelian point of view breaks down. For if, as Hegel acknowledges in the earlier stages of his system, 'man is a corporeal, living, real, sensuous objective being' this means for Marx that man has always and inevitably 'real, sensuous objects as objects of his being' and this for the very simple reason that he can only 'express (äussern) his life in real, sensuous objects.'⁶⁰ A life without real, sensuous objects for its objects is for Marx no life at all.

This, then, is what Marx means by objectivity. If like Hegel we assume that man, even as consciousness alone, has objects for his object we must acknowledge what flows from that assumption, namely, that not only has consciousness an object but if that is to be a real object consciousness must be an object for it. It will not do for Hegel, as he does in his account of perception, to posit a thing outside consciousness only for consciousness. If it is really to be a thing, and not dissolve, consciousness has to be a third for it. We can see more clearly what is Marx's view from an example that he gives. The example is the relationship of hunger. In that relationship, he argues, the object of our consciousness is self-evidently objective to us. It is not adequate

60. Marx. *ibid.*, p. 578.

that it merely be an object for us one, say, that I have intuited. It will not do to say that it exists merely for my consciousness; it has to be one that is outside myself for it to satisfy my need.⁶¹ And for it to be an object that is outside myself it has to be one that I not only limit but limits me. Indeed unless it limits me it will not be an object of hunger. An object of hunger limits me simply because without eating it I will remain hungry. As hunger, Marx says, 'is a natural need, it requires therefore a nature outside itself, an object outside itself to satisfy itself, in order to still itself'.⁶² This relationship is most typical of objectivity for Marx because it is a relationship of need. For that, he argues, is the way in which objects do confront man. Not as mere expressions of a subjective capability (to posit, intuit or whatever) but as an expression of our actual dependence on objects. The relationship of need is therefore not one we establish it is one in which we find ourselves. It is such relationships that constitute our objectivity for Marx.

That is how Marx positively explains objectivity. It is not a particularly lucid explanation, but what he means comes out more clearly when he returns to his criticism of Hegel. What occurs to him here is the question, what would it be if we were to take a view which was opposite to his own

61. Marx brings up the same example when dealing with the atomistic view of man in the Holy Family. 'The egoistic individual of bourgeois society', he says, 'may inflate himself in his unsensuous imagination and unlively abstraction into an atom, that is into a relationless, self-satisfying, needless, absolutely complete, blissful being'. However 'wretched sensuous reality shows no concern for his imagination, each of his senses forces him to believe in the existence of the world and the individuals outside him, and even his profane stomach reminds him daily that the world outside him is not empty but is actually what fills'. Marx-Engels Werke 2, p. 127.

62. Ibid.

and 'posit a being, which is itself neither an object nor has an object',⁶³ Marx has in mind, of course, Hegel's notion of Geist. Surely, he continues, 'such a being would in the first place be the only being, there would exist no being except for it, it would exist solitary and alone'. It would be then the unique being. This evidently, Marx says, is an unreal being. Certainly it is not objective for 'an unobjective being', he says, 'is an unbeing'. 'For as soon as there are objects outside me, as soon as I am not alone', he adds, 'I am an other, an other reality than the object outside me'.⁶⁴ This, clearly, gives a more cogent notion of what Marx means by objectivity. It evidently precludes an objectivity such as that which Hegel suggests: for Mind alone. It is a notion of objectivity which, I think, follows out consistently the consequences of our 'positing' objects - which, after all, is an Hegelian idea. Marx, unlike Hegel, points out three relationships which necessarily arise from it. Hegel would, I believe, confine his account to the first two of these relations. Firstly we can see that if we have an object for our object it is for us. Secondly, for us to have an object it has to be an in itself. Now, even this second relation does not take us beyond the subject for Marx and acquaint us with true objectivity because the object is in itself simply for us. True objectivity is only

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

established when the object ceases to be merely for us. For that to be so we have to concede a third relationship. We ourselves have to be an object for that object or, in other words, as Marx says, I have to be 'an other reality than the object'. This, I believe, Marx takes to be no more than a consequence of our positing an object in the first place. Once we have posited an object we cannot but admit as Marx has said that 'for this third object I am another reality than it, i.e. its object'. Indeed, he adds, 'a being which is not the object of another being' which denies therefore this third relationship 'presupposes..that no objective being exists'. For, Marx concludes - stressing his point again - 'as soon as I have an object this object has me for an object. However an unobjective being is an unreal, unsensuous, only thought i.e. merely imagined being, a being of abstraction'.⁶⁵

That is the kind of being that Hegel's notion of Geist conjures up for Marx. It is what he calls an unbeing (Unwesen). His notion of objectivity is in direct contrast to it. Marx suggests this example. Mind (Geist), Hegel is prepared to venture, objectifies itself as sensuousness. It is this process that gives us the stage of sense-certainty in the Phenomenology. But what Hegel does not take into account is that for Mind genuinely to objectify itself as sensuousness

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., pp. 578 - 579.

it has not only, as he says, to receive sense-data from objects outside itself but also be the kind of being which is capable of doing that. Hegel claims it is. He says that Mind as consciousness relates itself passively to the world. What it then experiences, he claims, is the apparently rich content of sense-certainty. This passivity of Mind Marx, however, regards as a mock passivity. It is a passivity, which again, is merely posited. It is posited simply in order that Mind can transcend it. Genuine passivity, Marx believes, pertains only to a being that is capable of suffering. Because for Marx 'to be sensuous is to be suffering'.⁶⁶ And man is such a being. He is a natural, therefore, limited being. Thus he has sensuous objects for his object which he not only determines but determine him.

There is something odd in this argument of Marx. It appears that he wants us to concur with his argument not only - and in some instances, it seems, - not primarily, because it is logically consistent but because it accounts most readily for our experience. It seems that it is almost beside the point for Marx that he establish logically, step by step, that in our sense-experience we are passive and therefore suffer. This is odd because to do this he need only have repeated his argument about Geist. Just as Geist, he could have said, would be nothing at all without being an object for another

66. Ib., p. 579. Suffering is a rendering of Leiden. It is the best that is possible but does not quite convey Marx's meaning. Suffering, if anything, is a bit strong. Leiden Marx means in the sense of an openness to being externally determined. Thus the characteristic of sensuousness he wishes to bring out is that aspect of it in which we are subject to the thing in sense.

so we cannot sense-experience without being genuinely passive i.e. without suffering. However, he prefers to rest his case on what he thinks to be a self-evident fact of our experience, namely, that we are limited, suffering beings. Now the question this raises is: to what notion of truth does Marx subscribe? Is it one which relies on mere formal consistency? Or has he in mind another kind of consistency altogether? The answer that he gives to these problems, we shall find, hang together with his view of objectivity. We shall see how they do so in the next Chapter.

PHILOSOPHY AND RESIGNATION

For the present we shall continue with our review of the Critique of Hegel's Phenomenology. There are some problems of detail that we have to settle. Marx's principal thesis in the essay is, as we have seen, that Hegel has misunderstood the nature of the alienation of modern man. He argues that the overcoming of alienation 'has for Hegel..the significance of the overcoming of objectivity.'⁶⁷ In this connection he rests his case on what Hegel has to say in the beginning of the last Chapter of the Phenomenology. Here, according to Marx, Hegel argues that it 'is not the particular character of the object but its objective character which for self-consciousness is objectionable and the alienation'.⁶⁸ It is for this reason, Marx argues, that Hegel describes the object or objectivity in general as the Negative. Hegel, identifies the idea of an external world with negation, and Marx's suggestion is that Hegel does this because he confuses the negativity or the inhumanity of man's existence with existence per se. This, if we remember, is what our reading of Hegel's Differenzschrift suggested: that he thought that dissonance or bifurcation is inherent in experience as such.

This indicates to Marx that the resignation that Hegel shows before the facts of experience, is one that permeates his whole philosophy, and therefore, that there 'can be no more talk of Hegel's accommodation with religion, state, etc.

67. Ibid., p. 580.

68. Ibid.

because this lie is the lie of his principle'.⁶⁹ This is why the claim at the end of the Phenomenology particularly catches Marx's eye: 'Consciousness, self consciousness is at home with itself in its other-being as such'.⁷⁰ As Marx is evidently aware this argument has a religious dimension. God in the ordinary religious consciousness is an objective being, if one wishes, an other to man. The term that Hegel uses for such an idea is, Vorstellung. God appears to the ordinary religious consciousness as something positioned before it. Now, what in Hegel's view the Phenomenology does is, to dissolve such Vorstellungen. It is intended to break them down into ideas which are clearly the property of the self. Thus, Hegel would claim, consciousness need no longer feel estranged in its religious being. It can now, he argues, know other-being as its own externalisation. For the religious person of course, such a notion would be an abomination, for it seems that it is tantamount to denying the existence of God. But, Marx says, things are not as shocking as they seem. Hegel is, after all, prepared to recognise in religion a relative truth. The Vorstellungen of the religious person are, as the idiom has it, a cut above the rest. They are the representational equivalent of Absolute Knowledge.⁷¹ Religion for Hegel, is the way in which

69. Ibid., p. 581. It is a pity that very little notice has been taken of this important view of Marx's in the discussions of Hegel's political philosophy. For, as Marx is clearly aware, the ambivalence in Hegel's political philosophy which has led to so much controversy is one that is rooted in his system as a whole.

70. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 575.

71. Ibid.

Mind or Spirit is revealed to the ordinary consciousness. All that it lacks in comparison with Absolute Knowledge is that in it Mind appears in the form of mere objectivity. Thus although religion is recognised as an alienation of self it 'nevertheless finds itself affirmed in religion as religion'.⁷² In its self-consciousness, just as it is in the other modes of consciousness, is able to be at home with itself in its other-being as such.

This for Marx is 'the root of the false positivism of Hegel or his merely seeming criticism'.⁷³ For the insight it provides into man's alienation in contemporary society is one that is shot through with resignation. All that Hegel promises, as he says in the Preface to the Phenomenology is 'pure self-recognition in absolute otherness, this ether as such'.⁷⁴ He is indeed aware of what Marx calls man's inhuman objectification in contemporary society, but all he has to offer is the knowledge that we ourselves are the authors of that condition. This uncritical positivism Marx thinks is clearest in Hegel's later work The Philosophy of Right. There, Hegel sets himself the task of depicting the State as it is. And indeed Marx seems to think that he does this with some success. For in his notes for a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right he argues that Hegel 'portrays the essence of the Modern State'.⁷⁵

72. Marx. op.cit., p. 581.

73. Ibid., p. 581.

74. Hegel. ib., p. 29.

75. Marx-Engels Werke I, p. 266.

In Marx's view therefore the 'contradictions' with which Hegel deals in the work mirror exactly the 'contradictions' in social and political relations in the Modern World. But none of this is to say that Hegel comes up with critical conclusions, because (and this is the view that Marx appears to take in the Critique of Hegel's Phenomenology) the knowledge of a contradiction as a contradiction is sufficient for Hegel. A symptom of this is that Hegel finds complete fulfilment in knowledge or Absolute Knowledge. Knowledge is ultimately all there is to experience for Hegel. That is the point at which the Phenomenology ends. At its end there appears, as Lefebvre suggests, to be no room in experience for making sacrifices or taking any difficult options. Indeed all such practical problems become non-problems because they are not part of the reality of experience. The only reality that experience has is, Hegel suggests, what we know about it. Thus, for him, to know a 'contradiction' is to experience all that is real about it. Our objective experience of a 'contradiction' as what Marx calls limited, suffering beings is not according to Hegel our true experience of it. We experience it truly, he claims, when that objectivity is retracted. Hegel therefore pays no heed to the suffering caused by the contradictions of Modern Society because he takes the view that that objective experience of them is overcome in knowledge. Reason is then the rose in the cross of the present because only it, ultimately, is real. It knows the contradictions of our experience as contradictions but, Marx suggests,

the Hegelian Reason is unperturbed by them because it is only knowing that counts for it. In that knowing the Hegelian is at home with himself. It is this resignation that Marx cannot countenance because it implies for him that 'Reason is at home with itself in unreason as unreason'.⁷⁶ This is a false positivism and merely seeming criticism of Hegel's system. The critical element in it is not sustained, Marx suggests, because Hegel believes that our true existence is not to be affirmed positively in our empirical life but in our knowledge of it. Thus it is a matter of indifference to the Hegelian whether our practical life is a rational one. If it is an irrational one, his only concern Marx argues, is that he should know it as such. He fulfils himself in the 'scientific' knowledge of the world. And 'science' for the Hegelian is philosophy. Thus for the Hegelian, Marx says, 'my true religious being is', for instance, 'my being in the philosophy of religion' and, similarly, 'my true political being is my being in the philosophy of right, my true artistic being in the philosophy of art;' finally it is clear, Marx says, that for the Hegelian 'my true human being is my philosophical being'.⁷⁷

It is to this that Marx attributes the abstractness of Hegel's thinking. Hegel is an abstract thinker because he reduces all our experience to philosophical experience. This we shall now see, is a more comprehensive claim than ours, because we attributed Hegel's abstractness primarily to his philosophical idealism. This, I think, is probably the

76. Ergänzungsband erster Teil, p. 581.

77. Marx. *ibid.*, p. 582.

sounder course to adopt, for Marx's claim here, that all philosophy is necessarily abstract, is too sweeping. Not all philosophers have tried to reduce experience to their thought of it. It is only some; and as Marx suggests Hegel is certainly one of them. Be that as it may, Marx takes ~~to be~~ the illusion to be one inherent in all philosophical speculation. The illusion arises, he suggests, because of the exaggerated value that is placed on knowledge. In saying that philosophers place an exaggerated value on knowledge he does not of course mean that they exaggerate the importance of truth. Presumably if they did so they would not be subject to illusions. Rather, Marx's point appears to be that philosophers tend to see knowledge as the essence of things. In one sense, of course, this is perfectly true. For if I know what a thing is I am obviously acquainted with its 'essence'. But philosophers, Marx thinks, tend to stress another aspect of this claim. They tend to stress that our knowledge is what the thing is in itself, and this is where the difficulties arise. For the philosopher, if Marx understands him correctly, goes on to argue that our knowledge is all that is objective about the thing. Our knowledge of it exhausts it for him. This, as I have said, Marx believes to be the essential weakness of philosophy, and for him it makes any philosophical view of the objective world an abstract one. It does not therefore know 'real man'. All it knows is man as an 'abstract thinking being'.⁷⁸ But for Marx, as

78. Ibid., p. 584.

we have seen, man is a natural being who therefore always has objects for his object. They are the objects of his need. They are necessarily then objects which are not merely thought objects. They must be tangible concrete objects. In his view it is an illusion to believe that the objects that immediately confront man are of any other kind. That, he claims, is the illusion of philosophy.

CHAPTER SIX

THE THESES ON FEUERBACHEPISTEMOLOGY AND EXPERIENCE (11)

Experience and epistemology are terms that are not often juxtaposed. I have deliberately set them side by side for two reasons. In the first place I have done so, as we recall, to challenge a thesis of Jürgen Habermas, namely, that Marx and Hegel's extirpation of classical epistemology was without positive outcome. This thesis is wrong, I have said, because, on the ruins of the old theory of knowledge Hegel and Marx built theories of experience which are in many respects convincing. I have already examined the positive aspects of Hegel's critique of "the problem of knowledge" which was, of course, the central problem of classical epistemology. I come now to Marx's contribution to the development of a new idea of experience. In the second place we have, clearly, not pursued this aim in an entirely detached way. For, I should also like to see if anything can be made of this juxtaposition of epistemology and experience that Hegel and Marx evince in their writings. Prima facie such a juxtaposition would suggest that there is a confusion in their thinking; especially so if we bear in mind the ordinary usage of the word "experience". When we talk of "our experience" we generally mean all that in the course of our existence we have come across and in which we have involved ourselves particularly, in a social and practical way. Epistemology on the other hand, is a merely theoretical activity

with little or no practical or social implications, and we would clearly distinguish it from any notion of experience. But are we correct in doing this? I believe that there is room for the view that experience, regarded as our practical involvement in society, has a great deal to do with knowledge. This, as we have seen, is the view that Hegel takes. He takes steps to bring together our ordinary view of experience and the account of the origins of knowledge. Marx, as we shall now see, continues this task, and he does so with fewer reservations. He is firmly convinced that the theory of knowledge has to be a part of a more general, practical theory of experience. It is this conviction that more than anything else brings to an end German Classical Philosophy.

The conclusion of Marx's Critique of the Phenomenology was, as we have seen, that man has to be regarded as a natural being who 'produces, posits objects only because he is posited by objects, because he is at bottom nature'.¹ To be sure, Marx says, if we see man as does Hegel, only abstractly and theoretically the opposite will appear to be the case. It will seem that man simply posits objects. In other words man has objects because, just for a moment, he supposes he does. This, Marx says, will not do. It is far more sensible to suggest that objects posit man. They are not there - present outside him - because he desires it but rather because that is simply the relationship in which man finds himself because he is a natural being. As part

1. Marx. Marx-Engels Werke, Ergänzungsband Erster Teil, p.577.

of nature, Marx suggests, man must necessarily have objects outside him. They are the objects of his needs. They are indeed "his" in so far as they correspond to his requirements but in that they are external to him, they are not "his". The proof of that is that he has to appropriate them. Marx's claim then is that objects do not primarily appear to us as objects of our intuition but as objects of our nature.

This brings us to Marx's first thesis on Feuerbach. In my view, the Theses as a whole summarise Marx's idea of experience. I need hardly say that he arrives at that idea through a criticism of the philosophical view of our relationship to objects. He takes Hegel and Feuerbach to be representative of that view, and he thinks that its principal defect is its contemplative approach to experience. This, naturally, says little. It depends on what Marx means by contemplation; and one of the aims of this Chapter will be to elucidate his meaning. However one thing that we can say in advance is that Marx does not apportion the blame for this defect of philosophy evenly. In making his criticism he divides the Modern Philosophers into two great camps: the Idealists and the Materialists. It is, I think, his sympathy for Hegel's idea of experience that leads him to do this. For it seems to him that in his Phenomenology of Mind Hegel recognises some of the limitations of the contemplative approach. But without superceding it. Had he superceded it, he would, Marx suggests, have ceased to think of man merely as an abstract thinking being. Hegel, then, is ambivalent

on a point which is of vital importance to Marx. He both rejects and preserves the contemplative approach. We can, I think, give an example of what Marx has in mind here. In the opening chapters of the Phenomenology Hegel comes to discuss the relationship of desire (Begierde).² This, we would be inclined to think, is an intriguing departure in a philosophical work. Indeed it suggests that Hegel takes something like Marx's view of man's objectivity, for it suggests that Hegel is examining the most concrete aspects of our life in accounting for our experience. And so, in a sense, he is. As Mure says: 'At first desire', as Hegel analyses it, 'is (selfish) appetite, impulse to satisfy a felt want (of life) by absorbing into oneself an other which as such is thereby merely cancelled and destroyed (food for example).'³ But Hegel's true interest in the relationship can be seen in what follows. 'In this practical satisfaction', Mure says, 'the subject enjoys a certainty which is truth, but such satisfaction is transitory; want and its satisfaction alternate and recur endlessly. True self-consciousness is only reached when the relation of self and other develops into the reciprocal relation of two self-conscious individuals'.(1b.) In other words, Hegel's true interest is in the implications of the relationship for knowledge or 'true self-consciousness' as Mure puts it. The interest in a concrete aspect of our

2. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 139.

3. G.R.G.Mure. The Philosophy of Hegel, p. 74.

experience is merely partial. Hegel, merely posits desire in order to supercede it. To that extent, Marx would suggest, his approach is still a contemplative one.

When I say 'contemplative' I have in mind the Kantian term Anschauung. This is the term that Marx uses in his famous first thesis on Feuerbach. A great deal hinges on the meaning that we accord to this term, for on it Marx builds his view of experience. For Kant the term signified the synthesis of apprehension that takes place in the mind of each individual when confronted by the empirical manifold of experience.⁴ For that reason it is normally translated as intuition. For in Kant's view an Anschauung contains both the chaotic data of sense-experience and, implicitly, its synthesis into a Vorstellung. A Vorstellung, as we have seen, is an image that we have of an aspect of our experience or a representation. So an intuition, is in Kant's view, what goes to make up a representation. An Anschauung, is a result of merely 'looking on at' the world. That is its literal sense. Kant's use of the term is, as we have seen, closely connected with his understanding of the philosophy of the empiricists. He held it to describe accurately what they meant by experience: our looking on at the world or our observation of it. There is, however, an important distinction that he wanted to bring out, namely, that no matter what Hume or Locke may suggest our 'letting in reality' through the senses itself involved a synthesis. Hume and Locke, insist that sense-

4. I. Kant. Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, pp. 162 - 163.

experience is 'pure'. In other words, it is their conviction that it acquaints us directly with the nature of objects. There is no intervention on our part. But Kant's view is that even our sense-observation of the world involves a certain amount of selection and ordering on our part. His object in proving this was to demonstrate that the goal of metaphysics was misconceived. In his view, because of this synthesis that always takes place in our experience, we are never able to know things in themselves or noumenally. We can know them only as appearances or phenomena. It follows, therefore, that Anschauung has two prime significations for Kant. Firstly, it represents his assessment of the view of experience of the materialists Locke and Hume and, secondly, it represents his criticism of that view. If we translate this into more readily understood terms we can see the close connection with our original notion of the term. For it is, on the one hand, our apprehension of the world in our sense-experience and, on the other, the fashion in which we synthesise that experience in our minds. Intuition (Anschauung) for Kant is therefore both a manner of "looking on at" experience and of knowing it.

MARX AND TRADITIONAL MATERIALISM

Marx, as I have already said, regards man as an objective, sensuous and natural being. It is therefore central to his thesis that there should be objects outside the mind. In the plainest terms, he must show that the objects we sense are "there". This, by Marx's own reckoning, must put him in the materialist camp in philosophy; but it would be misleading to conclude that he is therefore an empiricist. For, as we shall see, he places far greater emphasis on the objectivity of our knowledge than the classical empiricists did. One could say that he rehearses the materialists' position not from their point of view but from the point of view of Kant's Critique. 'The main defect of all previous materialism', he says, (and that for him includes that of Feuerbach) 'is that object, reality, sensuousness is only grasped under the form of object or of intuition (Anschauung); not as sensuous human activity, practice; not subjectively. Therefore, the active side was developed abstractly by idealism in opposition to materialism - idealism - which naturally does not know real, sensuous activity as such'.⁵ Marx's objection moves in two directions. First he criticizes what I have called Lockean materialism and then, surprisingly, suggests an objection to his criticism apparently to leave us in no doubt that he is not himself an idealist. Because Marx has in mind the Kantian term there is a marked similarity between his criticisms and those of Kant. In the first place he points out, as does Kant, that the Lockean account of experience ignores our intervention in the apprehension of reality. Our

5. Marx. 'Theses on Feuerbach', Marx-Engels Werke 3, p. 5. It is true that Marx's reference to idealism points to Hege^l rather than Kant, but it seems to me that, because of the significance of the Kantian notion of Anschauung in Marx's objections to traditional materialism, Kant is the more important figure in this instance.

minds are not simply blank when we sense-experience. We are clearly involved in our apprehension of an object. In the second place he points out, like Kant, that, from the first, our relation to an object is an active one. Marx of course means this in a much more comprehensive sense than Kant. He is not only referring to a theoretical synthesis in the form of intuition but to 'sensuous human activity, practice'. It is in this comprehensiveness of our active involvement that Marx differs from the Idealists. They, he claims, and here he echoes what he has to say of Hegel in his Critique of the Phenomenology, do not know 'real sensuous activity as such'.

Let us now take a closer look at the two aspects of Marx's criticism of traditional materialism. Traditional materialism had, he suggests, only taken hold of reality 'under the form of object or of intuition', not under the form 'of sensuous human practice'. It is not immediately clear what this means. Indeed on the face of it there is something quite confusing in saying that an "objective" view of reality is one that regards it "subjectively" as 'sensuous human practice'. But we may perhaps clarify Marx's point with an example. The kind of example that we require would involve a comparison of Marx's view of 'object, reality' and that of previous materialism. For Marx's view we need go no further than his Critique of Hegel's Phenomenology; and for the empiricist view, Locke's account of the sun will serve. The idea of the sun is for Locke 'but an aggregate of those several simple ideas, bright, hot, roundish, having a constant regular motion, at a certain distance from us, and perhaps some other: as he who thinks and discourses of the sun has been more or less accurate in observing those sensible qualities, ideas, or properties,

which are in that thing he calls the sun'.⁶ What Marx would say of this idea of the sun is that it is clearly a contemplative one. Locke is concerned with the origin of our 'Complex Ideas of Substances'.⁷ He believes they arise from our observation of the substance in question, in this case the sun. Through observing the sun we receive sense-impressions of it or what Locke calls, simple ideas, and our complex idea of the sun is nothing 'but (the) aggregate of those several simple ideas'. Now, it would be to misunderstand Marx to say that his quarrel was primarily with this account of the origin of our complex ideas. His quarrel is with the relationship that Locke invokes between ourselves and the world (or object) in giving that account. The object, the sun, is merely an intuited one. The object, Marx would argue, is not seen as it actually confronts man as a natural being. Indeed in Locke's terms, the ideas of that object are the ideas of a being who 'thinks and discourses of the sun'. This, we know, is Locke's view of experience: it is the filling that is given to our minds through our sense-perception, of, and reflection, on the world. But that is not Marx's view of experience. For him experience is, indeed, sensuous and of objects; but it is not merely passive and contemplative. As he puts it (in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts): 'The sun is the object of the plant - an indispensable object to it, confirming its life - just as

6. J.Locke. Essay Concerning the Human Understanding, op.cit., p. 177.

7. Ibid. Locke heads the Chapter in that way.

the plant is an object of the sun, being an expression of the life-awakening power of the sun, of the objective essential powers of the sun'.⁸ Experience, he suggests, is not simply passive and contemplative, because our immediate relationship with objects is one of natural interdependence. It is, therefore, most sensible he claims to see our general relation to reality in the terms that this insight demands: as sensuous human practice.

This view of experience has, I believe, very important implications for epistemology. Our immediate reaction to Marx's claim would, I think, be to join Habermas in accusing Marx of overthrowing epistemology to little good effect. Locke, we would say, may have misconceived the nature of experience but he does at least have the merit of pursuing his enquiry into the foundations of our knowledge. There is, however, more to Marx's view than meets the eye. His suggestion is, as we have seen, that objects immediately confront man as objects of his nature. This for him is what it means to be objective. For us to be objective implies for him that we have not merely intuited an object or that we are simply observing it; Rather he would say that the object of our Anschauung (intuition, perception) has to be seen as part of another more significant relation of man to his objects. Objects, he says, are as they first appear to us mediated by our nature or nature itself. And our nature

8. Marx. Werke, Ergänzungsband, op.cit., p. 578.

for Marx is, as we have seen, without doubt to be sensuously humanly active, in other words to produce: to transform our environment in accordance with our needs. This, we would say, is where Marx's view is thoroughly subjective. How, we will ask, can our knowledge of the world possibly be objective if our overriding relationship to it is a practical one? The answer is that for Marx this inevitable subjectivity of our experience is not a one-sided one. His claim is that our subjectivity, or if one wishes, our nature, is the nature of the world. Our drives, he argues, do not derive from mere one-sided wishes but from our natural limitations. Our desires in general exist not simply because we are selfish creatures but because without their continual satisfaction we would not survive. They are not therefore, Marx would argue, mere expressions of our nature, they are also how the objective world impinges on us. So he would suggest that the classical empirical materialists had made an error in trying to exclude from our knowledge of objects what was the result of their impact on our merely subjective faculties. Because, in Marx's view, we have no merely subjective faculties. To take up again Marx's discussion of the sun: 'the sun is the object of the plant' as 'an expression of the life-awakening powers of the sun, of the sun's objective essential powers'. Thus, just as the plant as a natural object experiences its object, the sun, as it really is, we as natural objects experience through our (apparently merely subjective) faculties objects as they are in themselves. What he implies therefore is that

our practical human sensuous relation to object, reality, as he says in the first thesis, is at one and the same time an expression of the objective nature of reality.

This, of course, will not do to establish Marx's position as a serious critic of classical epistemology. We can perhaps see it as a plausible account of the subject-object relation but its precise implications for epistemology are, as yet, unclear. A slight digression on Hegel will, I think, help us here. As we have seen it is also Hegel's contention that our understanding of the world is not, simply because it is ours, unobjective. The manner^{by which} he substantiates this is, however, altogether different from that of Marx. He does so, we recall, through an analysis of science. For him, the human being qua scientist puts himself right into his object in this way, he says, negating its 'self-subsistence'. Thus the object as scientifically known is for Hegel both subjectively his and objectively as it is. This for him is how subject and object coincide. The subject subsumes the object in scientific knowledge. This is the role of the scientific law. The scientific law, Hegel suggests, encapsulates reality (the in itself) for us. Now Marx would object to Hegel's account of the coincidence of subject and object on the grounds that it disregards man's natural objectivity. Man, we have seen Marx say, is not merely an abstract thinking being. So even his being qua scientist is but part of a natural being. But since Idealism, and Hegel's idealism

in particular, 'does not know real, sensuous activity as such', Hegel reduces man to scientific man or, more precisely, knowledge. The coincidence of objectivity and subjectivity in man's experience is, Marx believes, more basic than that which takes place in knowledge.

This conclusion of Marx has all to do with the way in which he conceives objectivity and, above all, man's objectivity. He says, again in the Critique of Hegel's Phenomenology, 'to be objective, natural, sensuous and both to have outside oneself, object, nature, sense or to be oneself object, nature, sense for a third is identical.'⁹ So, in Marx's view, there is this third aspect to being objective, and, it is this third aspect that ensures that our subjective relation to the object is one that corresponds to its objective nature. This third aspect is that we are an object for it. Now, what Marx claims is this: if we are an object for it it must be an object for us as it objectively is. Indeed it is his view that there is no other way that it can be an object for us other than as it objectively is. As it stands, this is nothing but a claim for Marx. But again the analogy with the sun will serve to establish his point. The 'sun is the object of the plant', he says, as 'the plant is the object of the sun'. We must be careful to take this sentence literally. Marx is claiming that the way in which the plant relates to the sun mirrors precisely the way in which the sun relates to the plant. The plant is to the sun in their natural (biological) relation what the sun is to it. What the sun

9. Ibid.

is to it in that relation is what it objectively is. In other words, Marx is claiming that the sun seen from the plant's point of view appears just as it is in itself. The natural relation does not distort for the plant what the sun is in itself. For the sun's principal objective quality is, Marx would argue, the energy it transmits. This is the sun as it is in itself. But, and this is Marx's point, the plant is also in itself an expression of that energy of, as he says, 'the life-awakening powers of the sun'. Man's objectivity, Marx argues, is of this kind. This is because objects are always objects of our nature. Objects are to us as natural beings what we are to them, we are their object just as they are our objects. In other words, I relate to it just as it objectively is. For, for them to be our objects is the same as for us to be their objects. We can see now where classical materialism breaks down for Marx. It confronts its objects as we have seen as objects of Anschauung (intuition, perception). This relation cannot be adequate to objectivity (which is of course the central materialists thesis) as Marx understands it. For if I intuit an object I confront it - if only mentally. Now, for me to confront it properly as an object, Marx suggests, it has to be to me what I am to it. But what am I to it: a merely passive intuiting being? Clearly this is not so. But this is what the classical materialist suggests: that I experience it merely by 'looking on at' it. If I am to confront the object properly in my mind I have,

Marx suggests, to take into account what I am for it. And what I am for another object, Marx says, is plainly and clearly an active, sensuous, human being. That I am conscious of this, Marx suggests, is a prerequisite for my coming into an objective relation with the objects outside myself. Therefore that I see myself in such a way is not in the least bit incompatible with my knowing the objects of my experience as they objectively are.

This brings us to the second aspect of Marx's criticism of previous materialism. Because previous materialism conceived experience as Anschauung it had not, according to Marx, viewed reality as sensuous human activity, Praxis. The development of this side of our relationship to objects had therefore fallen to idealism. Indeed, as we have seen, Marx claims that Hegel had, like him, seen that our subjective relation to the world was also an objective one. He has to add however that the Hegelian view of our active relation to reality was not properly founded. Because it developed in opposition to the passive materialist view of experience, it was necessarily abstract. To illustrate this point we may take another look at the process of Hegel's Phenomenology. I have tried to show that, in that work, Hegel sets out to overcome (Aufheben) what he calls the materialists' 'opposition of consciousness'. So, in one sense, his aim is the same as that of Marx: he wished to refute the view that experience is simply to be seen as passive sense-experience. In doing this, as I have

already pointed out, Hegel introduces concepts from our practical and social life into the theory of knowledge. (One such concept is, as we have seen, the concept of Desire (Begierde).) But in so doing, he fails to get beyond what Marx calls an abstract approach to experience. Hegel's failure lies in the manner in which he introduces practical concepts to epistemology. Rather than seeking to give epistemology a practical significance he seeks to give the practical concepts an epistemological significance. Desire, for instance, he presents not as one of our mundane practical relationships to objects but 'as the movement wherein this opposition is overcome and self-consciousness becomes to itself its equality with itself'.¹⁰ In other words, Hegel presents the concept of desire as the point at which self-consciousness is itself assured of the untruth of the materialists' thesis. The aim of the process of the Phenomenology is, then, indeed to show that experience is not properly conceived when conceived as Anschauung; and in pursuing this aim it develops the practical side of our relationship to objects. But it does not, as Marx points out, make practice the primary aspect of experience. This is because its aim is to oppose materialism, to show that there are no real, sensuous objects but rather that all are merely thought objects. If all idealism has before it are thought objects it must follow, Marx suggests, that its view of practice is an abstract one.

10. Hegel. Werke 3, p. 139.

Marx's attitude to idealism is undeniably ambivalent. On the one hand he claims that idealism contributes to our understanding of objectivity and, on the other, that it hinders our understanding of it. Moreover, he praises idealism for seeing the significance of practice in our relation to objects yet criticises it for not understanding that significance. Part of the reason for this is that, common to the German Idealists, there is what I shall call a convergence of theoretical philosophy (epistemology) with practical philosophy (ethics). This, admittedly, takes on different forms. With Kant and Fichte, for instance, theoretical and practical philosophy are distinct yet inter-related. With Hegel, on the other hand, there is from the beginning no distinction between the two. The pattern with Kant and Fichte is that the theoretical philosophy comes first in order that they may establish what we can reasonably hope to know; and that sets the scene for the practical philosophy. For instance, the distinction that Kant makes between phenomenon and noumenon in the Critique of Pure Reason is carried into his moral and political philosophies. Indeed, it is of major significance in his political theory, for his whole notion of property depends on it. In Hegel's philosophy, however, epistemology and ethics converge completely. In fact, his Phenomenology of Mind is both an ethic and a theory of knowledge. Now Marx also wants to put forward an account of experience in which, epistemology and ethics are seen to converge. However, he wants to distinguish his

account from that of his idealist forerunners. It is this that explains his ambiguous attitude to them. He approves of the conflation of the theory of knowledge and ethics in their philosophies yet disapproves of the way in which it is done. This is because he thinks, that with the Idealists, theory or, more generally, thought has the upper hand over practice.

A great deal turns on what we take Marx to mean by this. There is very little indication in the 'Theses on Feuerbach' themselves of why Marx thought that the Idealists had developed the active side of our relation to reality in an incomplete way. We can, however, shed light on the matter by looking at the objections he raises to Hegel's view of practice in the Critique of Hegel's Phenomenology. We will recall that Marx discusses Hegel's notion of activity whilst praising Hegel for his insight into the significance of labour for the 'self-development of man'. For, in Marx's view, Hegel had shown that the essence of man was evinced in his productive activities. Unfortunately, however, Hegel only understands it as the essence of man thought. In other words, Marx suggests, it is, for Hegel, no more than a theoretical insight. For if the truth be known, Marx continues, 'the only labour which Hegel knows and acknowledges is the abstract intellectual'.¹¹ This conclusion of Marx's need hardly surprise us. We have already seen him claim that Hegel red-

11. Marx. Ergänzungsband, op.cit., p. 574.

uces all aspects of our life, religion and art for instance, to the philosophy of those various aspects. Hegel does this, Marx suggests, because he sees the objectification that takes place in our experience merely as an externalisation of self-consciousness. Thus the active side of our experience that Hegel develops is only 'an active side thought'. So he only takes note of labour as the thought of it, or as it affects self-consciousness. Indeed, Marx claims, there is nothing else left in experience of which to take note as Hegel conceives it: as the experience of consciousness. Because, Marx says, 'the way in which (the Hegelian - H.W.) consciousness is and in which something is for it, is knowledge. Knowledge is its sole act. Something is therefore for consciousness in so far as as it knows this something. Knowledge is its sole objective relation'.¹² This is what Marx means when he says Hegel offers a merely theoretical insight into our active relation to reality: that his analysis recognises only one kind of object, and that is knowledge. As we have seen, nothing else is real for Hegel other than the rational. And what he means by the rational, is the precise scientific knowledge of the present. Thus what Marx calls sensuous, human practice is, to that extent, unreal for him. What is real about practice is for Hegel the theoretical understanding of it. So in that sense, then, theory subsumes practice. Hegel, as Marx says, does not know real objects, just thought objects.

12. Ibid. p. 580.

It was Feuerbach's great merit, Marx argues, that he had stressed the reality and materiality of the objects of our senses. Indeed, Marx describes Feuerbach as the true conqueror of the Hegelian philosopher.^{13*} To achieve his conquest he had to bring down the Hegelian notion of Geist, and he did so by introducing to philosophy a view of nature, and of man's nature, hostile to the principal thesis of idealism. He believed that much of the appeal of idealism rested on a defamation of nature. Idealism in his view had seen nature, the world external to mind, simply as the negation of man's freedom. Negation is of course an appropriate term for Feuerbach to use because, as we have seen, the whole of reality external to mind is for Hegel the negative. But, Feuerbach argues, this is to slander nature. Nature, he points out, has not only to be seen as furnishing us with the 'common workshop of the stomach' but also 'the temple of the brain'.^{14*} Nature, he argues, has to be seen as the foundation of our humanity, and the return to nature as the proper foundation of our freedom. For this reason, Feuerbach, as Marx says, 'wants sensuous human objects'.^{15*}

But there is, Marx believes, something odd in the way in which Feuerbach appeals to sensuous objectivity. He stresses the impact that objects have on all our five senses without, Marx claims, comprehending that 'human activity' is itself 'objective activity'.^{16*} This is odd, Marx thinks, because in stressing the sensuous aspect of our experience Feuerbach all but attains a proper view of objectivity. As we have

* See over for references.

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13. Ibid.
14. Feuerbach. 'Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie', Sämtliche Werke, p. 203.
15. Marx. MEW 3, p. 5. Feuerbach says in his 'Preliminary Theses Towards the Reform of Philosophy' that 'the essential implements, organs of philosophy are the head, the source of activity and freedom, of metaphysical infiniteness, of idealism, and the heart, the fountain head of suffering, of finiteness, of needs, of sensualism - theoretically expressed; thought and sense perception. For thought is the need of the head; perceiving, sensing, the need of the heart. Thought is the principle of the School, of the system; sense perception is the principle of life. In sense-perception I am determined by the object, in thought I determine the object, in thought I am I, in sense perception not - I. Only through the negation of thought, through being determined by the object, from passion, the fountain-head of all pleasure and need is brought forth true, objective thought, the true objective philosophy. Sense perception gives that which is immediate and identical with its existence, thought essence which mediated through separation, abstraction from existence. It is only there, therefore, where essence is united with existence, thought with sense perception, activity with passivity, the scholastic phlegm of German metaphysics with the anti-scholastic, sanguine principle of French sensualism and materialism, only there will you have life and truth'. Sämtliche Werke, Eds. Bolin & Jodl, p. 235. Apart from illustrating Marx's point this Thesis gives a splendid indication of the main themes of Feuerbach's philosophy: sensualism and anti-scholasticism.
16. Marx. ibid.

seen, a proper view of objectivity for Marx is one where it is acknowledged that an object is not only there in itself and for us but also that we are there for it. The way that we can confirm this view of objectivity, Marx suggests, is through paying heed to our sense-experience. This, of course, is what Feuerbach does. As I have said, he stresses our sensuousness. We become certain that we have the correct view of objectivity in our sense-experience, Marx suggests, because sense-experience is itself an example of the third, most neglected, aspect of objectivity. Clearly we only sense-experience because we are the object of another object. For without an external stimulus there can be no sensation. Somehow, Marx suggests, the significance of this aspect of sense-experience escapes Feuerbach. He sees clearly, Marx says, that for us to experience objects they have to be more than thought objects for us. But he fails to grasp that in addition to their being objects for us, we have to be objects for them. Only then do we see that sensuous human activity is itself objective.

It is not easy to see how the discussion of this third aspect of objectivity leads Marx into a discussion of practice. But it is important that we understand the matter because it is here that we have the transition from epistemology to ethics or what I have called the transition from an abstract epistemological view of experience to a concrete, practical notion of it. From the point of view of this study then it represents

the end of Classical German Philosophy. Now Marx's point is that when we come to see our relation to objects as one in which we both have objects in themselves and for us, and we are their object, we shall see how objects confront us in our practice. This is not an obvious point. Our practice, we might argue, does not simply consist of having objects for our object nor indeed being their object. We would say that it consists of our intentionally transforming an object or objects, and nothing is transformed, we would argue, through our mere confrontation with an object. But it is axiomatic with Marx that the relationship is a practical one. Practice does not enter into our relationship with objects from outside for Marx. It inheres in the relationship of objectivity itself. It does so, it seems, because he views the relationships between ourselves and objects as determining ones. I have an object for my object, reads for him as: I determine it. Contrariwise, I am the object of another object, reads for him: it determines me. Thus, for Marx, for me to confront an object is for me to determine it and it to determine me. What more is there to practice than this? it seems that he would say. There is for him no relation to objects that is not ultimately a practical one.

This view is axiomatic to Marx because of his view of man. As I have said, he regards man as a natural being who therefore necessarily has objects for his object. For Marx it is not a mere contingency that leads us to be confronted with objects in our experience. They are the counterparts

of our natural limitations. As natural beings we require other objects in order that we might survive. We have to live off them. So that objects characteristically confront us as objects of our needs. And our needs we can only quell through appropriating those objects. So the way in which we as natural beings relate to the objects that confront us is practically. We confront them as beings 'energetically bent' on satisfying our needs. That is why in Marx's view it is the principal defect of previous materialism, including that of Feuerbach, that it fails to grasp the object, reality, sensuousness as sensuous human activity. Its failure was its failure to see that our immediate relationship to the objects of our sense-experience was one of need. This is not to say that Marx thinks that the way in which we immediately confront objects or are immediately confronted by them is merely animal. His is a complex notion of need, as I have already indicated. It has to be so to be compatible with his view of man's nature. For if, as he says, man is essentially a social and productive being it is scarcely possible for man's needs to be merely animal. Objects immediately confront us then, Marx suggests, as objects of our human needs. And what they are is what man's development has made them. Human needs themselves, Marx says, are the results of history. They are living embodiments of a long process of civilisation. They are natural needs which have been civilized. We must, therefore, add another important dimension to our account of Marx's theory of experience. For he views man's immediate

relation to objects not only as a natural practical and social relation but also as a historically determined relation. As we shall see, this last aspect of Marx's view of experience comes to the fore in the German Ideology, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

MARX AND THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

For the present, however, I should like to concentrate on the narrower epistemological implications of Marx's view of experience. This, after all, is the principal concern of the 'Theses on Feuerbach.' In those 'Theses' Marx briefly wishes to give his grounds for dismissing the problem of knowledge. It is his view as it was Hegel's that it is fruitless to pursue the problem concerning the reality of our knowledge. The question: How is it that we know what we know? is without interest for him. The same goes for all questions about the certainty of our knowledge. They are for him, as they were for Hegel, queries that arouse an unnecessary distrust in our knowledge. But because he develops this view as a criticism of Hegel's philosophy his grounds for dismissing the problem have to be radically different from those of Hegel. Hegel, we have seen, dismissed the problem of knowledge with the assurance that knowledge or science had appeared. He rested his case on the fact of knowledge. This is, of course hardly proof that the Modern Philosophers had been wasting their time in trying to establish the certainty of our knowledge. We shall require more than a mere assurance if we are to believe that anything can come of rejecting a traditional concern of philosophy. Marx, however, is more convincing on the matter. Once again, his attitude to the problem is determined by his view of objectivity. This is the most penetrating and lasting insight of his early work. At the risk of excessive repetition, let us remind ourselves of the three aspects of Marx's view of objectivity. 'To be objective, natural, sensuous', he says, 'and both to have outside oneself

object, nature, sense or to be oneself object, nature, sense for a third is identical'.¹⁷ 'For', he adds, 'as soon as there are objects outside me, as soon as I am not alone, I am an other, another reality, than the object outside me. For this third object I am thus an other reality than itself, that is, I am its object. Thus to suppose a being which is not the object of another being is to presuppose that no objective being exists. As soon as I have an object, this object has me for an object'.¹⁸ It is this third aspect of his notion of objectivity that governs Marx's response to the problem of knowledge. This third aspect, is that as well as our having an object that object has us for an object; and evidently that object has us for an object as it is in itself. We then have it for an object as it in itself has us for an object. In other words, it is our object as it objectively is. The formal conditions for the objectivity of our thought are, according to Marx, satisfied by this relation, for in it there is a congruence between what the object is for me and what it is for itself. Marx however does not want to see it as a merely formal relationship. The reason, the ground for the formal congruence is, in his view, that our relation to an object is a natural one. Natural relations, he argues, are determining ones. In a natural relation an object impinges on another. The only way it can impinge on another is as it objectively is. It would make little sense to suggest,

17. Marx. Ergänzungsband, op.cit., p. 578.

18. Ibid.

or indeed it would be nonsense to suggest, that an object in nature has an observable impact on another through a merely subjective property. If that were the case there would of course be no observable impact. Equally it would be nonsense to suggest, for instance, that the rain wet us not because the rain is wet, but simply because of a propensity on our part to get wet. We do indeed get wet because we are the kinds of beings that are potentially subject to that discomforture, but we also get wet because one of the objective, natural properties of rain is wetness. So for Marx there is in our natural relations a congruence between what things subjectively are for us and what they objectively are in themselves. For him what natural relations are all about is the correspondence of the in itself and the for itself.

It is only with some difficulty that we can extricate a view of knowledge from this account of objectivity, or natural relations. We should like to discover from all this what is Marx's notion of truth, and we can best set about it by a process of elimination. We know already that, for Marx, formal criteria are not in themselves sufficient. It would not do for instance that an account of an aspect of our experience simply correspond to the facts of the matter. Nor, on the other hand, would it do to put forward what is a merely coherent account of our experience. In some respects, for example, the political economists present an analysis of contemporary social experience that correspond to the facts

of the matter. Yet Marx criticises them. Equally we cannot fault Hegel for his lack of coherence in accounting for experience in his philosophical system. His system is, it could be argued, fully consistent internally. Yet Marx voices his objections to that system. It is extremely difficult to say what, in both instances, are his grounds for doing so. But it is only by pursuing Marx's account of objectivity or natural relations that we shall succeed, since it is because of his view of objectivity that he finds formal criteria of truth inadequate. For, as we have seen, it is Marx's opinion that things objectively are as we subjectively find them, in other words, as we as natural beings experience them. This view of truth differs from the correspondence notion of truth according to which we establish what things objectively are by discounting what they are to us. Locke, for instance, sought to eliminate the secondary qualities of things which for him were 'in truth nothing in the objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us'.¹⁹ This Marx cannot countenance. And neither can he countenance a coherence account of truth. For such an account, if Hegel's philosophy is anything to go by, does not require that there be any objects to know. All that it requires us to deal with are thought objects. But, Marx claims, we must deal with the concrete, sensed objects of our experience. Truth concerns our relationship to them. This does not, however, bring us back to an empiricist notion of truth. Because Marx is

19. John Locke. Essay Concerning the Human Understanding, p.85.

not concerned with objects as they might appear in their pristine condition outside their relationship to us. He is concerned with them as they relate to us subjectively and, conversely, we as we relate to them objectively or practically. Truth, then, for Marx concerns objects as we practically find them and ourselves as we are naturally determined by objects. This is why he responds to the problem of knowledge in this way: 'The question whether human thought will attain objective truth - is not a question of theory, but a practical question. In (the) practice man must prove the truth i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness (Diesseitigkeit) of his thought. The dispute about the reality or unreality of thought - which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question'.²⁰

These, baldly stated, are the grounds for Marx's rejection of the problem of knowledge. It is his view, as I have said, that all our subjective relations, (including, it goes without saying, our knowledge) are precise expressions of the objective nature of reality. The implication is that each and every one of our thoughts, past or present, are true - and that in the formal sense of truth. The relationship of our thought to its object, like all natural relations, is one that coherently reflects the correspondence of what the object is in itself with what it is for us. Our ideas, if we are to take Marx seriously, are always objective ideas. This would appear to land Marx in the most intractable epistemological problems. For, we might ask, what about the thoughts of the madman?

20. Marx. MEW 3, p. 5.

Are they also objective? Marx's answer would have to be: Yes. But this would place little strain on his argument. Because what he says is that what things naturally are to us (in this instance the madman's thoughts) is what things naturally are in themselves. What things are in the madman's thoughts ~~are~~ is, of course, confused but if we look at his natural and social environment, we find that it also is confused. Thus in the formal sense the madman's thoughts are true. Marx's argument does not of course depend on this example. The implications of it is, however, that he must deal with each and every idea or all thought as evidence for, or more strongly, as an accurate reflection of some objective circumstance or other. It follows, as I have said, that for him that all theories, judged on formal grounds alone, must be true. This would appear to leave Marx with absolutely no criteria on which to judge a theory. If he thinks that all theories reflect the facts or that all theories are coherent then it appears that there are none that he can readily reject. But there is of course many an instance of his doing precisely that in his works. His rejection of many of the views of political economists are cases in point. Indeed, Capital is a 'Critique of Political Economy'. What we must explain at this point, therefore, is how Marx without adhering to formal criteria of truth, can nevertheless discard the theories of others.

Marx sketches his position on the issue in the second Thesis on Feuerbach. Since it is only a sketch, we shall have to do some of the reasoning for him in answering our

question. What Marx does in that Thesis is, as I have already suggested, to reject the problem of knowledge as it was formulated by the classical epistemologists. He rejects the manner in which they pose it because it is posed as a merely theoretical question. In Marx's view it can have no satisfactory theoretical answer. I have suggested that Marx holds this view because of his conviction that, judged on formal grounds alone, all theories would be true. With his view of objectivity he implies that all theories are, in one way or another, coherent and correspond with the facts. Now, our problem is: given this view of Marx, how is it possible for him to suggest that one view of the world, namely, his own, is the correct one? The answer to this is not one that can be readily deduced. But it seems that it is at this point that practice plays an important role for Marx. One thing that we can be sure of, I think, is that it does not play that role in the same way that it does for the pragmatist. Marx will not allow existing practice to decide for him what is true. Indeed, nothing would be further from his mind than to suggest that theories and ideas should be judged upon their usefulness in overcoming practical problems. What he does wish to suggest, however, is something far more radical than that. He wants to suggest to us that the whole problem of knowledge is a practical one. 'The question whether human thought will attain objective truth', he says, 'is not a question of theory, but a practical question.' This is, clearly, distinct from what the pragmatist has to say because the pragmatist offers his notion of truth as a way of side-

stepping or avoiding the problem concerning the objectivity of our thought. The pragmatist's notion of truth is a flat rejection of the problem of knowledge along the lines that Habermas has in mind. Marx, as I indicated earlier, offers us a more constructive criticism. He does not reject the whole question of the objectivity of our thought out of hand. Indeed he suggests that, in a certain context, it is a sensible question to ask. Marx, then, does not want us to believe, as does the pragmatist, that there are as many truths as there are technical problems to be solved. For him, it seems, as for the classical philosophers, there is one overriding truth about the world. And that truth, he argues, concerns our practice. This is where Marx believes that he departs from philosophy. The philosophers, Marx thinks, believed that the question of truth was a purely theoretical question. Those who had first posed the problem of knowledge, he suggests, had thought that theory of itself could decide the issue. But in Marx's view whether or not my thought is objective does not let itself be decided by thought alone. Rather it is practice that holds the key to the issue.

This, however, is not to say that the criterion for the truth of an idea or theory is its practical efficacy. The criterion of truth, for Marx, is objectivity. Marx, like all theorists worthy of that name, rejects or accepts views about reality on the basis of their objectivity. The point is, however, that with him objectivity is a practical objectivity. As I have pointed out Marx's notion of truth does not rely on formal criteria alone. It depends also on his view

of man or, more precisely, of man's objectification. His notion of truth is therefore at its base both formal and ethical. It is now that we see the point of my oft repeated analysis of Marx's notion of objectification or objectivity. Objectivity for him, as we have seen, turns out to be a threefold determining relationship between man and his objects. It is for that reason a practical relation in Marx's view. It is a practical relation because objectification is a natural relation. It is the relation that we as natural beings have with the objects that confront us in our experience. The objects of our experience, Marx says, confront us as objects of our needs. If, then, we are to depict reality objectively, we have to depict it in this way. We must confront the objects we analyse as objects of need. We must see them therefore as limiting ourselves as natural beings and ourselves as natural beings energetically bent on alleviating this dependency. That, for Marx, is what it is to be objective in our thinking. Objective thinking is practical thinking. It is practical or ethical thinking for him because, as we can see, it carries within itself a prescription. Objective thinking, he claims, through viewing man as a natural being struggling to overcome his dependence on objects contains within itself the value and motive that that struggle be waged in the most rational and effective possible way. Now, it is in this fashion, I suggest, that ethics and epistemology converge and coincide in Marx's theory. This is the much vaunted unity of theory and practice that Marx proposes. By it, I take him to mean that an objective view of reality is a practical

or revolutionary one.²¹ This, possibly, is the most difficult point in his thinking for us to understand. Yet he himself sees no problem in it at all. Theory and practice are as intimately linked in his mind as are bread and butter. We can see this most clearly when he comes to discuss the relation of his views to those of the French Materialists in the Holy Family. 'No great acumen is required', he says, 'to see the necessary connection between the theories of the materialists of the original goodness and equal intellectual endowment of men, the omnipotence of experience, habit, education, habit, the influence of external circumstances of man, of the great significance of industry,

21. Those who are familiar with the work of Kolakowski will, I am sure, have already noted the similarity between his analysis of Marx's notion of cognition in his essay on 'Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth' (in Marxism and Beyond, Paladin) and my own. In particular, I have concurred with Kolakowski on these points. 'The basic point of departure of Marx's epistemological thought is', he says, 'the conviction that the relations between man and his environment are relations between the species and the objects of its need, it also concerns the cognitive contact with things. Marx's thinking can be summarised in the following observations: 1. The world of things exist for man only as a totality of possible satisfactions of his needs. 2. 'And nature, conceived abstractly, in and of itself, perpetuated in its separation from man is nothing to him'. 3. If various objects, like the objects of science or art, are only part of his consciousness, then in practice they are only a part of his life and activity. Nature constitutes man's inorganic flesh'. (op.cit. pp 64 - 65) Also Kolakowski says, (and this is of most significance here) for Marx 'to ask how the world would be seen to an observer whose essence was pure thinking and whose consciousness was defined exclusively by a disinterested cognitive effort, is to ask a barren question, for all consciousness is actually born of practical needs, and the act of cognition itself is a tool designed to satisfy these needs. ...Nature appears as the opposition encountered by human drives, and all possible cognition is man's realisation of the contact between conscious man and the external resistance he experiences'. (ibid. p. 64 - 65.).

the justification of enjoyment and communism and socialism. If man forms all knowledge and feeling from the world of sense and from experience in the world of sense what therefore matters is that the empirical world be so ordered that he experiences in it (and becomes accustomed to) what is truly human, that he experiences himself as a man'.²² The theories of the materialists contain, in his view, the elements of an objective understanding of experience. For, he argues, simply to see (as they did) that education, for instance, was of such vital importance in the forming of a man's character put them on the threshold of a socialist view of experience, because for Marx that view implies both that education should form an important aspect of a youth's life and that that education be as human as possible. And, he argues in the same vein, to know, as the French Materialists appeared to do, that I derive all my feelings and sensations from my experience in the sensuous world means that I must advocate action that will ensure that I experience only that which is human in the sensuous world. As we can see, then, prescription follows from description for Marx. So, for instance, he would claim that if I know that a disease is destructive of life it is necessary that I take steps to control it should it take hold in my district. Clearly, there would be no logical necessity involved in this. From the point of view of logical thinking or reasoning as such it makes no sense to say that it would be false to abstain from acting. However, from

22. Marx. MEW 2, p. 138.

Marx's point of view we would be making an error should we not act on the description. This is because, as I have already pointed out, Marx's notion of truth transcends all formal criteria of truth. The objective, true way of seeing a dangerous disease would for him in its very conception be a practically active one. Object, reality has, he suggests in the first thesis, to be grasped as Praxis. Thus an objective description of reality, in this instance of the disease, is for him conditioned by an interest. That interest is the natural, human one that suffering be avoided. There is a necessity then that we act on the description because, Marx argues, that description must itself be occasioned by a practical concern. So, not to act on the observation would contradict the initial reason for making it.

This is an important point. Marx's view is that there are no descriptions which are not in some sense prescriptions. There is no doubt that at a logical level this cannot be so. If I describe the weather as bad I have in no way suggested that we do anything. To make that description into a prescription I would have to add some exhortation, or other such as: the weather's bad, let's not go out today. But, as I have suggested, Marx is not making his point at this level. He is concerned with the context within which we use language. He argues that it is always employed in some practical context or other. No-one, he suggests, simply observes that, for instance, the weather is bad. There is clearly some motive for the observation. Maybe the observer had intended to go

out for a stroll some time in the day and the bad weather prevents him. Whatever the motive the observer must act on his observation. The prescription follows from the description because the description takes place in a prescriptive context, in other words, because the description is made by a practically active human being.

Marx's notion of truth is then, I suggest, of this kind. Theory, he believes, always reflects and is given rise to by our practical experience. We turn to it, he claims, because we have a practical problem. Or, more strongly, Marx's view is that our whole experience, including our thinking, is a natural, practical one. Theory, he argues, is always caught in this nexus. Whether it is true or one-sided, as he puts it, cannot therefore be decided with reference to theory alone. This, Marx suggests, is simply because any theory has its origins in an objective set of circumstances. For Marx there is no idle theorist. Each and every theorist, in his view, depicts some reality or other, and each thinker, he believes, is in a measure correct. It appears to him therefore that by its nature no merely theoretical dispute can be resolved, because the merely theoretical or contemplative attitude is not itself objective. The attitude that Marx sees as promoting truth is the theoretical attitude that has man at its centre and concerns itself with objects as he experiences them as a suffering, limited being. It is only this attitude, he implies, that can give an unambiguous content to truth. Because theories

that are put forward from this point of view can show themselves to be true in the course of man's practical experience. The converse can of course be shown to be true if the theory is a mistaken one. Thus, Marx might say, I suggest a theory that is patently wrong, such as this: man is an inanimate object. We know that this is patently wrong, and this is the burden of Marx's argument, because we know that in practice we cannot get far by espousing such a theory. This is not to say that, for Marx, practice proves it to be wrong. According to him it simply shows us that the view is an incorrect one. He does not suggest that we take practice as our criterion of truth. Rather, what he suggests is that we derive our criterion of truth from the observation of practice. It is not therefore my practice that tells me a theory is incorrect but my reflection on practice.²³ I can see that it is wrong. It is here that formal criteria of truth such as correspondence and coherence still have a role to play for Marx. They are not discarded by him because his claim is, I repeat, not that practice be the criterion of truth but that all truth concerns our practice. It is only in the context of practice that the question of truth makes sense for him. Once we acknowledge this, however, we have to acknowledge that the objectivity of our thought does not depend entirely on formal criteria. Practice also imposes its own criteria. Foremost amongst these, Marx suggests, is that we establish in practice the appropriateness of our ideas. We have to realise that it is not enough to argue our theory.

23. Marx, MEW 3, p7) says as much in Thesis 8. 'All mysteries', he says, 'which occasion theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice'. For all mysteries would for him have their solution in practice if our reflection on it did not play the role I suggest in his theory.

We have to act on it. Only then will we have the opportunity to prove, by the criteria that practice itself imposes, that our theory is objective. Thus in establishing the objectivity of a theory formal criteria do indeed count for Marx but, because he sees truth as being concerned with practice, what counts, in his eyes, is that it be proved to hold true in our active experience. Then, Marx claims, we are assured of the objectivity of our theory. So, as I have already suggested, a theory that is true in all its formal characteristics is only partially true for Marx. A true theory is one which, superadded to that, has successfully altered the world. This is what leads him to lament, in the last thesis of all, that 'the philosophers have only variously interpreted the world, what matters is, is to change it'.²⁴ For if we think, as does Marx, that truth concerns our active experience we must conclude that it is not sufficient to expound a theory we think to be true. We must, above all, act on it, and philosophers he blames for not having done this.

Marx's analysis of the problem of knowledge brings him therefore to the theory of experience and practice. The question as to whether my knowledge is objective is, he claims, a practical one. Marx, I have argued, does not mean practice merely in its narrow technical sense. As with his Idealist forerunners, it also signifies for him ethical action. The question concerning the objectivity of our knowledge is, in

24. Marx. *ibid.*

other words, an ethical question. What is real or objective for Marx is not, as it is with the merely theoretical thinker, a rational explanation of a thing or event, but our relation as natural beings to the world outside ourselves. So, in his view, thought will not be objective or have attained reality where it simply explains what is going on in the world. To think that it will is the error of philosophy. Reality, for Marx, is our practical productive relation to the world. Marx therefore wants to think about truth in those terms. True thought is thought that comprehends the practical (objective) circumstances of man and in comprehending them indicates how they might be changed for the better. This, of course, appears to be an odd kind of truth at which to aim. Marx's notion of objectivity, it seems, takes no account of genuine theoretical objectivity which we normally take to involve an element of detachment from practical concerns. We would be wrong to think this however. Marx does have a place for theoretical objectivity in his system. But, in his view, it all depends on what is meant by 'detachment'. If all that is meant by detachment is that to give an objective account of an aspect of our experience we must abstract from this or that practical concern, he would agree. For it stands to reason that we cannot give an objective account if we allow ourselves to be distracted by our day to day affairs. But this does not mean that to take an objective view we have to abstract from human practical concerns in general. That, in Marx's view, would be the detachment of the philosopher, who prefers to contemplate experience rather than know it.

This kind of detachment leads to no truth at all. Because experience is essentially practical, truth, Marx believes, must also concern practice. In other words, he sees no reason why his view of objectivity should be incompatible with genuine theoretical objectivity.

It is only with some unease, however, that we should accept Marx's view of the truth. For as it stands it is the merest sketch of an epistemological position which though both serious and challenging raises difficult and as yet unanswered philosophical problems. It is of course beyond the scope of this work to attempt to answer all those problems. But we have attempted to raise those amongst them which are most pressing in their claims to be answered, and at the same time to clear away some of the more obvious misconceptions surrounding Marx's views. Since the principal difficulty we have encountered with that view of truth concerns Marx's notion of the unity of theory and practice we might do well now to close this Chapter with some reflections on those Theses on Feuerbach where that notion comes particularly to the fore. It does so where Marx in Thesis 3 and 4 gives two examples of its application. He says in Thesis 3: 'The materialist doctrine of the alteration of circumstances and education ignores that circumstances must be transformed by men and the educator must himself be educated. It must therefore separate society into two parts one of which is superior to the other.'

'The coincidence of the alteration of circumstances and human activity of self-transformation can only be grasped and

rationaly understood as revolutionary practice.' And in Thesis 4: 'Feuerbach proceeds from the fact of religious self-alienation, the duplication of the world into a religious and secular one. His work consists of this, that he dissolves the religious world into its secular base. However that the secular base lifts off from itself and fixes itself an independent kingdom in the clouds is only to be explained from the self-disruption and self-contradiction of this secular base. This itself must therefore both be understood in its contradiction and be practically revolutionised. Thus, for instance, after the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the Holy Family the first must now itself be theoretically and practically destroyed.'²⁵ Marx's claim is, as I have said, that theoretical objectivity is not of itself sufficient. In his view, as we can see, there is more to truth than that. For him for a theory to be truly real it has to show itself to be so in practice. This is the point of these two Theses. Both argue that objective theory must issue in practice. Earlier, I brought out the connection that Marx saw between his views and those of French Materialists. It need hardly be said that he drew conclusions from those materialist theories which were not the conclusions of their authors. In Thesis 3 he gives us an indication why he did so. It hinges of course, on his view of the unity of theory and practice. He acknowledges that the materialists,

25. Ibid. p. 6.

like himself, prescribe on the basis of their materialist description of experience. They had not, however, seen that prescription is itself part of a practical understanding of experience. They had, he suggests - unwittingly or no - drawn a distinction between their theoretical understanding and their practical prescriptions. Their materialism, Marx argues, is only a contemplative materialism (anschauende Materialismus). Theory and practice remain unconnected. On the basis of their understanding the materialists had, indeed, advocated that men should be educated differently, be brought up under different circumstances, and generally be made more conversant with what is truly human. But this, for Marx, falls short of being an objective view of experience because a theory that separates prescription and description is not a faithful reflection of our circumstances. In particular, Marx says, it fails to bring out the connection between transformation of the world and self-transformation. Amongst other things this connection implies, for Marx, that my objective knowing of the world can only be seen as a process of self-transformation brought about through my being actively involved in the world. Had therefore the materialist seen their knowledge in this way, Marx continues, they would not have believed that the world can be changed simply through the better education of people. For, Marx concludes, proper education goes hand in hand with the alteration of our circumstances. We can understand and transform society along human lines only when we see this coincidence of theory and practice. We must, therefore, first be revolutionarily active to be potent theorists.

This, indisputably, is a controversial view of knowledge. One thing it does not mean, however, is that Marx wishes to discard theory in favour of practice. However much it seems so at first, he does not wish to replace the philosophical search for truth with the view that the exigencies of practical life may press on us. Theory and truth, as I have argued, have an important place in his system. All that Marx claims is that knowledge and truth must, if they concern anything at all, concern our practical life. Theory can, Marx suggests, furnish us with the objective knowledge of reality. Feuerbach, for instance, shows us convincingly that the secret of the Holy Family is the earthly family. But this of itself, does not furnish us with truth. For it is our practice that places before us the objects of our knowledge and only practice, Marx claims, can give a content to truth. The knowledge of religious self-alienation is not, therefore, the truth of Feuerbach's philosophy of religion. For Marx, as we know, objectivity is not of that kind. Truth for Marx, is both the accurate knowledge of the world and the conviction that that world be ordered in the most human way possible. So he says of Feuerbach's philosophy of religion 'after the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the Holy Family, the first must now itself be theoretically and practically destroyed.' The objective knowledge of circumstances has to be the spur to action or else, Marx suggests, we do not have an accurate view of experience. Here, most clearly, we can see how the theory of knowledge and ethical theory coincide in Marx's thinking. Knowledge and truth Marx views - true to his notion of objectivity in the Paris Manuscripts - as

integral parts of a general theory of action. This, of course, brings us to his theory of ideology.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE THEORY OF IDEOLOGY

In his Sociology of Marx, Henri Lefebvre makes what is an interesting observation on Marx's theory of ideology. He tells us 'that the term "ideology" originated with a philosophical school (empiricist and sensationalist, with a tendency to materialism) which enjoyed considerable influence in France at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to the philosophers of this school (Destutt de Tracy is the best known), there is a science of ideas, i.e. of abstract concepts, which studies their genesis and can reconstruct it in full starting from sensations (a conception that goes back to Condillac). This science was called "ideology" and the philosophers who practised it called themselves "ideologists".'¹ He adds that, in the German Ideology, 'the original meaning was not entirely lost sight of: Marx aimed at formulating a theory of general, i.e. social representations: he defined the elements of an explanatory genesis of "ideologies" and related the latter to their historical and sociological conditions'.² This observation is one that is doubly significant for us. In the first place, it sets in the right kind of context Marx's view on ideology. We, as ought by now to be clear, are concerned with that theory of ideology as an account of experience and, in particular, we are concerned with it as an account of experience that

1. H.Lefebvre. The Sociology of Marx, Penguin University Books, 1972, pp.59 - 60.

2. Ibid., p. 60.

contrasts sharply with that of the Empiricist philosophers. What Lefebvre's remark does is to suggest that we are not entirely alone or mistaken in persisting in this view. In the second place, his observation is of significance to us because we also argue that Marx, in constructing his account of experience, does not lose sight of those problems originally posed by the Empiricists. Indeed, I have suggested that such traditional epistemological problems are in the forefront of Marx's mind when he comes to present his theory of action in the German Ideology. But in doing this I have always held in mind a view that is widely accepted, and one that Marx himself did much to foster, namely that Marx breaks very early with philosophy and is therefore, in the main, not a philosopher. What then, above all else, is intriguing about Lefebvre's observation is that it suggests that Marx's more mature work, seen even on a superficial level, has its point of departure in epistemology. Marx is like the Empiricist philosophers trying to explain the origin of our ideas in his theory of ideology. He is reviving the approach of thinkers like Condillac and Destutt de Tracy in a novel context. This is, of course, the Lockean approach to the theory of knowledge. We recall that Locke in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding attempts to establish that our ideas have their origin in our experience, and that he did so after first rejecting the notion of innate or inborn ideas. But we found at the time - and here we agreed with Hegel - that his notion of experience was too narrow to account for the complexities of our knowledge.

He failed to convince us therefore that ideas do have their origin in experience. It is of some interest to us now, therefore, whether Marx has any greater success in such an enterprise.

Though there may be an important similarity between Marx's theory of ideology and Locke's epistemology, there can be little doubt that Marx's conclusions will be radically different from those found in the Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Much of this simply follows from Marx's theory of ideology being, as I have said, a theory of action. Locke argues in his Essay against the notion of action being included in an account of experience. As we have seen, he conceives of our experience as 'our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds..'³ And it is here, he argues, that all ideas have their origin. We can hardly expect that Marx will hold to this view, especially so now that we have established from the 'Theses on Feuerbach' that Marx accepts the idealist critique of the Lockean position. Equally we cannot now expect that the theory of knowledge will play the same role for Marx as it does for Locke. For we have also learned from the 'Theses' that what for Locke is a major problem, the problem concerning the reality of our knowledge, is no problem at all for Marx. Indeed Marx sees it as a different problem altogether. Locke thinks it to be a theoretical question, but,

3. J.Locke. Essay Concerning Human Understanding, op.cit. p.61.

for Marx, it is one that concerns practice. Real knowledge, he argues, will be shown to be real by our practice. Thus, in so far as Marx has an answer to the question posed by Locke it is one that is inconclusive. All knowledge, he argues, is objective according to Locke's criterion, for all thinking corresponds to some aspect of reality. So, Marx suggests, we have to turn to a practical theory of knowledge to indicate knowledge which will be conclusively real. It is this view, I suggest, that underlies his decision to compose, with Engels, the theory of ideology.

THE PREMISSES OF THE THEORY: REAL INDIVIDUALS

The occasion for writing the German Ideology was the crisis of the Young Hegelian movement in their homeland. The movement was rapidly disintegrating under the weight of both Prussian censorship and criticism from without and within. Marx and Engels had themselves been part of that movement, however their intention in intervening was not to save the movement but to deliver the coup de grace. Whether they would have succeeded we shall never know, for, in the event, the German Ideology was not published until long after the occasion had passed and both the authors had died. It is nevertheless important to remember in discussing their ideas on ideology, that the Young Hegelians are the ideologists they have principally in mind. Marx and Engels find one major defect in the thinking of the movement, of which they find evidence in the writings of even its most advanced representative, Ludwig Feuerbach. The Young Hegelians, they argue, share the illusion of their past mentor and teacher, Hegel, that ideas or theories can of themselves transform the world. They therefore rebel not so much against existing conditions but 'against the tyranny of ideas',⁴ for they take mistaken ideas and theories to be the source of all the miseries of mankind. Men, they suggest, have organised their affairs according to these misconceptions. So (according to Marx and Engels) they regard rebelling against the tyranny of ideas as rebelling

4. K. Marx and F. Engels. Die Deutsche Ideologie, Marx-Engels Werke, Vol. 3, p. 13.

against existing conditions: 'teach men, says one, to exchange these imaginings with thoughts that correspond to the essence of man, teach them to relate critically to themselves, says the other, teach them to put them out of their minds, says a third and -existing reality will collapse'.⁵

Later on in their lives Marx and Engels were to say that their intention in writing the German Ideology was to settle accounts for once and for all with their philosophical consciences. They believed therefore that the book had served its purpose even though it had not been published. Clearly their philosophical heritage, like that of their opponents, was the Hegelian system; so, in a sense, it is true to say that the book is more about Hegel than the Young Hegelians. Although Marx and Engels make reference most often to the works of the Young Hegelians (and, in Stirner's case, copiously so) the principal issues they raise, I shall argue, are those to which Hegel's system gives rise. Certainly, the anecdote with which they conclude their Preface refers just as much to Hegel as to the Young Hegelians. For it concerns a 'worthy man' who placed too high a value on thought. That worthy man, Marx and Engels tell us, was obsessed by the idea that men drowned because they were possessed by the idea of weight. Now, it was his firm conviction that if only men could dismiss from their minds this idea they would be rid of all danger

5. Ibid.

of drowning. Thus 'his whole life long' the worthy man 'fought the illusion of weight of whose deliterious effects each statistic gave him new and abundant proof' only at the end to meet with frustration and disappointment.⁶ Hegelianism, Marx and Engels suggest, gives rise to literary heroes of the kind that believe they have only to announce a new idea in one of their journals and the world will be transformed. In this the Young Hegelians are only the old Hegel in a new garb.

Marx and Engels say therefore that 'the latest of them have found the right expression for their activity when they maintain that they are only fighting against "phrases". All they forget is that they also oppose those phrases with nothing but phrases and that they are in no way fighting the real, existing world when they fight the world with those phrases'.⁷ The Young Hegelians may differ from the old Hegel in that they address themselves more readily to social problems. But in the manner in which they do so they show that they differ not one whit from the master in their approach to the world. For in addressing themselves to social problems, Marx and Engels argue, the Young Hegelians do not leave the ground of philosophy. What Marx and Engels mean by philosophy is, I believe, what Marx earlier calls abstract thinking. This, as we have seen, is thinking which he believes has only itself i.e. thought for its object. So the Young Hegelians, according to Marx

6. Ibid., pp 13 - 14.

7. Ibid., p. 20.

and Engels, believe that to tackle social problems at their root what they have to tackle are ideas. As they put it in the Holy Family (written about the same time), the Young Hegelians have 'learnt from the Hegelian Phenomenology the art of transforming real, objective chains existing outside myself into merely ideal, merely subjective chains simply existing in me and therefore the art of transforming all external, sensuous conflicts into pure thought conflicts'.⁸

The object of Marx and Engel's criticism in the German Ideology is, as it is in the Holy Family, Hegel's idealism. What they particularly wish to deny therefore is that 'all reality is thought'. With that, of course, they have to argue another view of reality: one which cannot be completely subsumed under thought. In other words, they have to argue a view of experience in which thought is itself seen as part of a larger whole. It is this view, I suggest, that we have already found in embryonic form in Marx's Critique of the Phenomenology and the 'Theses on Feuerbach'. There is little need for me to repeat the conclusions of the last two Chapters here. All I need remind the reader is that we dealt with Marx's nascent view of experience under the heading of his notion of objectivity. In the German Ideology Marx and Engels come to fill out that notion. They expand it into a complete view of experience and, as I have suggested, the background against which they do so is again the Hegelian system and, in particular its notion of reality.

8. Die Heilige Familie, Marx-Engels Werke, Vol. 2, p. 87.

We can see now why Marx and Engels place such emphasis on premisses and assumptions in beginning their discussion of ideology. They are putting forward a view of reality which is intended to contrast sharply with the Hegelian one. It is Hegel's proud boast that his system has neither beginning nor end. It is, he claims, a circle or, more precisely, a circle of circles. The beginning, he says, presupposes the end as, equally, the end presupposes the beginning.⁹ We will recall that his account of experience in the Phenomenology of Mind follows such a plan. Geist, Hegel argues, at the beginning externalises itself to give us the sensuous world of the ordinary consciousness, but because it is Geist it presupposes that in the end this externalisation will be retracted and it will be restored to its initial unity with itself. So the premiss of the account contains the outcome of the account, or, more precisely, the outcome is the premiss. Now, Marx and Engels are of the opinion that German philosophy is still in the grip of that Hegelian view of experience. Its premisses, they therefore suggest, are still unreal ones. They therefore intend to begin with real premisses from which, they say, 'we can only abstract in our imagination'. These premisses are, they continue, 'real individuals, their actions and their material life circumstances, both those which are already established and those produced by their own activity'.¹⁰

9. Hegel. Werke (op.cit.) Vol. 6, pp. 570 - 571.

10. Marx-Engels Werke, Vol. 3, p. 20.

These premisses, they feel, in no way presuppose their end. The experience of real individuals is not circumscribed by their positing.

However there is a real difficulty raised by this view, a difficulty which is not touched on by Marx and Engels. This is that, no matter how much they strain language, they can never claim to have set down on paper concrete, physical individuals. What they have set down has to be the thought of those 'real individuals', just as they have only presented us with the idea of 'their material life'. Their premisses can, at best, be concrete or real ideas. Marx and Engels must know this to be so, but they do not deal with the problems it raises. Be that as it may, Marx and Engels go on to tell us what these real individuals that they bring to our attention look like. Naturally, they say, they are human individuals, and human individuals 'one can distinguish from animals through consciousness, through religion, through whatever else one wills. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is determined by their physical organisation'.¹¹ These are, we might note, the real individuals that Marx has in mind when outlining his notion of objectivity in the Paris Manuscripts. They are individuals who necessarily have objects external to themselves because they are natural, limited creatures. They are natural beings though, as I have suggested before, in a privileged sense. This is because men appropriate nature

11. Ibid., p. 21.

consciously. This is a point that Marx brings out again in Capital. For, he says in discussing the human labour process, it is indeed true that 'a spider conducts operations that resemble those of the weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her wax-cells. But what from the very beginning distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect has constructed his model in his imagination before he constructs it in wax'. Therefore what distinguishes the human labour process from the similar activities of animals is that at 'its end we have a result which already existed at the beginning in the imagination of the worker, therefore existed already ideally'.¹² This view, I suggest, Marx sees as fundamental to an idea of reality. It is this, added to the notion that objects always confront us as objects of our needs, that constitutes the subjective aspect of experience. We now have a clearer view of Marx's first thesis on Feuerbach. For in outlining in that thesis his conception of the essential subjectivity of experience he goes only so far as to say that reality is always a sensuously (human) practical one. The way in which he understands it to be a sensuously practical one is, we are now able to see, as the object of our consciously undertaken labour. This comes out in what he and Engels have to say next in the German Ideology. They say that 'men by producing their means of subsistence indirectly produce their material

12. K.Marx. Das Kapital Vol 1, Marx-Engels Werke Vol 23, p.193.

life itself'.¹³ In other words, they suggest that men in their consciously undertaken labour create reality. By this of course they do not mean that we, in our labour, create the sun, the moon, the stars etc. for there has always to be a natural material substratum to form the raw material of our production; rather they mean that we, in our labour, create the objects of our experience. Even the heavenly bodies, then, are our objects in this way. For, Marx would argue, how we relate to them at any one time itself depends on the level of development of production and industry. To the primitive man, for instance, they are divine objects; whereas to modern man, himself a product of industrial capitalist society, they are objects of science. We have to understand, therefore, that our production is not merely an aspect of our experience. It is, Marx suggests, what constitutes our experience. The world that is given to us in our experience is one, he is convinced, that human labour has itself created.

But, self-evidently, it is not one that we have entirely chosen to create. Since we are real individuals, we do not constitute our experience in an arbitrary fashion. We are not solitary Fichtean Egos who by our mere theoretical activity bring the world into being. For, Marx and Engels argue, the way in which 'real individuals' produce 'their means of subsistence' depends in turn 'on the state of the given (and to be reproduced) means of subsistence'.¹⁴ According to Marx, therefore, we just as much form our experience by our labour as we are formed by it. What we are depends on the

13. Marx-Engels Werke Vol. 3, p. 21.

14. Ibid., p. 21.

material conditions under which we produce just as what they are depends on how we have previously organised and continue to organise our production. We determine them just as they determine us. This, of course, brings us back to Marx's notion of objectivity. For, as we can see, the formal structure of the relationship in which 'real individuals' immediately find themselves in is objective in his sense. For 'these individuals' are his and Engels' premisses 'not as they may appear in their own or others' imagination, but as they really are, that means, as they work, materially produce. Thus as they - under definite material limitations, presuppositions and conditions all independent of their will - are active'.¹⁵ The individuals they have in mind therefore are active individuals who, like Fichte's Ego, posit the world for themselves in production but are themselves, unlike Fichte's Ego, posited and limited by that material world. They are indeed consciously active individuals but active under conditions that are not dependent on their will.

Although we can now see what Marx and Engels have in mind when they propose we look at 'real individuals', there are still some difficulties with their view. A major difficulty is raised by the question: Why should we accept their view of individuals rather than any other? Here they seem to brush the question aside by saying that the individuals who are their premisses 'are not as they may appear in their own or others' imagination'. They are, supposedly, individuals as they 'really'

15. Ibid., p. 25.

are. But, it seems to me, we are all in a position to say that we only see individuals as they really are. Need we accept that Marx and Engels' vision is clearer than ours? Clearly, therefore, Marx and Engels have to do more to establish their view. This they seek to do, I believe, with one of the principal theses of their theory of ideology, namely, the thesis in which they suggest that intellectual life has to be seen as part and parcel of man's natural productive activity. Ideas and theories, they argue, are themselves products. Indeed, in their view, it makes sense to talk of intellectual production and, also, the production of consciousness. I need hardly say that this goes against what is still a widely accepted view that thinking and theorising is not and should not be enmeshed in practical activity. Marx suggests as much as this in his 'Theses on Feuerbach' but his reasons for holding this view again stem, I believe, from his Critique of the Phenomenology. There he considers the traditional metaphysical problem of what comes first in experience. His response, as we have seen, is to suggest that objects always confront us as objects of our nature. So not only does he suggest that that relationship is the first we experience but that it bears on all our experience. It has a bearing, therefore, on our thinking experience. For he argues that our theorising about the objects of our experience is always overlaid by this natural relation. We can, he suggests, and indeed must, only think of things which are our objects as needy, limited human beings. We are therefore always, even in our theoretical activity, enmeshed in a prac-

tically active relation. So, Marx argues, even qua philosophers we cannot but confront objects in this way. Indeed he argued that all other notions, such as the contemplative philosophical one, of the relation of man to his objects were abstract or mere imaginings. This argument is sustained in the German Ideology and, on it, is built Marx and Engel's confidence in the correctness of their view. For they are in no doubt as to the fact that 'men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas' but that as 'real active men, as they are determined by a definite development of their productive powers'. For consciousness, they argue, 'can never be anything other than conscious being, and the being of men is their life process'.¹⁶ By man's life process Marx and Engels mean their production of their means of subsistence and, as they put it, the mode of intercourse (Verkehrsform) that goes hand in hand with it. So it is this, they suggest, which is the context in which men always think. Theory is the product of consciousness. And consciousness is the product of life. For, Marx and Engels conclude, it is 'not consciousness that determines life but life determines consciousness'.¹⁷

Taken on its own this may appear to be a very commonplace suggestion. However, I should like to make the historical point that what is obvious to us need not have been so to the contemporaries of Marx. Marx and Engels stress that consciousness is the consciousness of existing life because they are

16. Ibid., p. 26.

17. Ibid., p. 27.

dealing with an intellectual tradition in which the opposite view has a powerful hold. As we have seen, Hegel argues, in the Phenomenology of Mind, that consciousness first develops itself into self-consciousness through scientific understanding and, subsequently, through traversing the whole appearance of Mind, into the consciousness that is Absolute Knowledge. Now the consciousness that is Absolute Knowledge, Hegel argues, knows itself as the sole content of experience. It knows being, therefore, not as the being of which it is the consciousness but as the being which is the other of itself. Consciousness then, he suggests, is not the consciousness of life because all life is consciousness. The Marxian view of consciousness would, in Hegel's view, be a mere expression of the alienation of Mind. For Hegel, consciousness knows no bounds. It is simply all there is. As it changes, then, so does reality. Mind (Geist) which is the consciousness of consciousness is the spring of all life. Hegel's thesis is, in short, the reverse of that of Marx and Engels who claim that in the German Ideology 'quite the contrary to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven'.¹⁸ For their hope is to explain consciousness or mind from earthly, mundane, practical life and not practical life from consciousness.

It is then a principal thesis of Marx's theory of ideology that what we think at any one time may be explained as the outcome of the practical material relations of which we are inevitably part. Marx can see no other way in which to deal with consciousness. In his view Mind has no independent being. 'Pure consciousness' therefore is a term which makes no sense

18. Ibid.

to him. For 'from the beginning', he and Engels argue in the German Ideology, "Mind" has the curse on itself to be "afflicted with" matter which appears here in the form of agitated layers of air, sound, in short, language. Language is as old as consciousness - language is the practical consciousness, real consciousness which exists for other men as well, real consciousness therefore which also exists for the first time for myself. And language first arises, like consciousness from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men'.¹⁹ Consciousness, whose product is thought, is, they argue, intertwined from the very beginning with our practical activity. It is only made possible, Marx and Engels suggest, by its material, perceptible expression in language. And language is a means which does not have its origin and spring in Mind itself. It is rather the outgrowth of our material, productive activity and of the consequent necessity for society and intercourse with other men. Those therefore who, like the Hegelians, suggest that consciousness or Mind is autonomous are making an unrealistic suggestion. They are in effect claiming that there is, somehow, a private world. They claim rightly - that consciousness 'is my relationship to my surroundings', but then they argue that those surroundings are themselves the product of consciousness. But, Marx and Engels suggest, in claiming that consciousness is always the consciousness of some relationship, the Hegelians already admit that it is a public world, a relationship only exists for me because

19. Ibid., p. 30.

consciousness is a social product. This is a remarkable argument and not one that is simple to follow: 'Where a relationship exists', they say, 'there it exists for me, the animal "relates" to nothing and not at all. For the animal, its relationship to others does not exist as a relationship. From the outset therefore consciousness is a social product and remains so as long as men exist at all'.²⁰ At first sight it appears that Marx and Engels' have drawn a conclusion their premisses can not bear. All they appear to have established is that animals have no notion of relationship, and that we do. The conclusion, therefore, that consciousness is always a social product is somewhat unexpected. We have to bear in mind at this point, however, their suggestion that language is consciousness which exists for me and other men. So, in their view, the use of a language can never be an exclusively private affair. But, as they suggest, what makes a relationship exist for me is the notion of a relationship. I only have that notion at my disposal, however, because I am a user of language; because therefore, in Marx and Engel's terms, I possess that 'practical consciousness' which is consciousness as it comes into being for me, and that because it exists for others. I would not be conscious could I not use a language and in using that language I become part of a social world. Consciousness therefore is always a social product because the very medium which makes it possible is itself a social relation.

Nowadays this would be regarded as an uncontroversial view. Wittgenstein's views on language imply as much, for

20. Ibid., p. 30.

instance. Not so, however, Marx's resultant views on ideology. Marx and Engels link their concept of ideology with their views on the social nature of language because they believe contemporary men to be more prisoners than masters of that circumstance. Language, they argue, arises from man's social intercourse. The words that make up our language have their origin in some practical circumstance or other. So our ideas, in their view, always reflect what is going on in the practical world. But, contemporary men, Marx and Engels argue, fail to realise the limitations of their consciousness and, most important of all, fail to see this connection between their consciousness and the practical material lives they lead, and philosophers, in their view, are more guilty than most of this failing. Their systems, Marx and Engel argue, suffer from a basic defect of all ideology, namely, the conviction that the thinking that they evince consists of timeless and universal truths. For it is a basic trait of the ideological thinker to imagine that his thinking is not anchored to any particular social and material circumstances.²¹ Through believing themselves to be immune from any particular material and social circumstances, philosophers lay themselves open to precisely those empirical influences they believe to avoid. This, Marx believes, is how the Young Hegelians had seen their ideas and doctrines: as the autonomous creations of their minds. For that reason, he and Engels

21. Ibid., p. 27.

suggest, they had not thought to examine the relation between those ideas and doctrines and the actual state of affairs in Germany.²² Had they done so, they might have seen the close connection that existed between the backwardness of their ideas and doctrines and the underdeveloped nature of social and economic relations in Germany.

However we still do not know what it is to be an ideological thinker. All thinking, Marx and Engels argue, is socially conditioned thinking, reflecting real material circumstances. And ideological thinking, it appears, is thinking which believes itself to be above reflecting real material circumstances but which at the same time cannot be: in that measure then, they suggest, that it seeks to be above reality, yet is part of it, does it present a distorted picture of things. But is not this in turn too simple a view of the matter? What in particular appears to be lacking is some more precise yardstick of ideological illusion or distortion. In other words, what has to be filled out are the terms 'above reality' and 'part of it'. We should know then what constitutes a real account of experience for Marx and Engels. This, I suggest, is where for them history comes in, for they argue, in effect, that by seeing the present as history we shall have our measure of ideological distortion.

22. Ibid., p. 20.

HISTORY AS A MEASURE OF IDEOLOGY.

There are many objections that can be made to this use of History but the most serious concerns the kind of context in which it makes sense to expound a philosophy of history. Marx and Engels of course intend that their theory of ideology be an important contribution to the understanding of history. And it would seem that events have proved them to be correct: their historical materialism, as it is now called, has had an important impact both on the idea of History itself and indeed on the writing of history. But still the objection may be raised that Marx and Engels are hoping to use a view of history to explain what can not be explained in such a way. What they are hoping to explain is not simply the past but our thinking itself, and we cannot at one and the same time theorise adequately about both history and our thought.²³ Thinking is always a present activity. There is no past thinking that is actually taking place. History, on the other hand, is always concerned with

23. In a peculiar way Marx receives some support on this point from modern Idealists. Collingwood, in particular, takes the view that 'Historical knowledge..has for its proper object thought: not things thought about, but the act of thinking itself.' (R.G.Collingwood. The Idea of History, p. 305 Oxford Paperbacks, 1966 - my emphasis) But Collingwood argues this because he believes that all history is the history of thought. So in one sense he suggests that history is the product of thought. Marx, of course, wants to argue the opposite: that our thinking is a product of history. For a discussion of some of the problems that Collingwood's 'Idea' of History raises see W.H. Walsh. An Introduction to the Philosophy of History (Hutchinsons, 1951) pp. 48 - 59.

past events. So it is difficult to see how a historian, or a philosopher of history, can have anything to say about our thinking. There is little doubt that Marx and Engels would have to accept that History attempts to explain past events and that thinking is a present activity; but they would not, for that reason, see them as being unconnected, for they suggest that thinking is an activity whose content or matter is furnished by History. As we have seen, it is their view that our real material circumstances determine our consciousness and not the reverse. They further argue that what these circumstances are and therefore what kind of lives we lead depend on historically established conditions and it is the task of the historian to explain these conditions. The historian will therefore be able to tell how we are most likely to think. For he will have explained precisely those conditions which give rise to our thinking about the world.

This may be an overambitious claim but it is hardly one, I suggest, that represents an abuse of History. We shall grant for the present, then, that 'the present as history' may be an appropriate measure of ideological distortion. It is, of course, Marx and Engel's materialist notion of experience that suggests to them this view of History. But even without that stimulus the idea of the 'present as history' would make immediate sense to them because of their Hegelian background. In the Preface to the Phenomenology, Hegel argues that History finds a place for itself in the ordinary consciousness of the time through the spirit of the epoch, for the

spirit of the epoch embodies, in a hap-hazard way, the results of previous philosophy. Indeed it is a kind of vulgar custodian of the history of philosophy. Hegel sees it as his task in the Phenomenology to unravel those results of previous philosophy 'embedded' in the ordinary consciousness and present them in a systematic form. This might look, now, very much like a theory of ideology. He suggests, as do Marx and Engels, that the ordinary person's understanding of the world is less than adequate that, therefore, it distorts the real world in some measure. He also claims that he has the key to understanding this phenomenon. The ordinary consciousness, he argues, is content with the mere appearance of Mind (Geist), whereas the philosophical consciousness has attained the reality of Mind. Not content with the historically determined, therefore relative, position of the ordinary consciousness it claims Absolute Knowledge as the consciousness of consciousness.

It would however be a mistake to believe that this is the goal of Marx and Engels in The German Ideology. They wish to see the present as history, not to raise themselves above it, but to gain a greater understanding of the implications of such a view. In doing so, they are still responding to problems that Hegel poses and therefore are not prepared to dispense entirely with his views. In the first place, they find his suggestion that consciousness is itself a historical phenomenon to be sound. Consciousness, as I have pointed

out, they see as the product of innumerable generations' production and social intercourse. Equally they deal with that consciousness, as does Hegel, as a phenomenon. In other words, they deal with it as the appearance of a deeper reality. Their aim, therefore, is not wholly dissimilar to that of Hegel in the Phenomenology: they intend to indicate to us the reality of Mind. But the difference lies in the manner in which they carry out this aim. For what, they argue, lies behind this appearance of consciousness is man's natural productive life and not Mind, not even in its more systematic Hegelian form. The Hegelian "Geist" is not the reality of consciousness at each stage in our development. But rather, Marx and Engels argue, at each stage in our development, 'there is to be found a material result, a sum of productive forces, a historically created relationship to nature and of individuals to each other which is inherited by each succeeding generation from its predecessor, a mass of productive forces, capitals and circumstances which is indeed on the one hand modified by the new generation but, on the other, also prescribes its own life conditions and gives it a specific development, a particular character...This sum of productive forces, capitals and modes of social intercourse each individual and each generation finds before it as something given is the real ground of what the philosophers have conceived to themselves as "Substance" and "the essence of man", of what they have apotheosized and fought, a real ground which will not be disturbed in the least in its effects and influences on the dev-

elopment of men by these philosophers rebelling against it as "Self-consciousness" and the "Unique".²⁴ The history that lies behind consciousness therefore has, as we can see, little in common for Marx and Engels with the esoteric history of Hegel's system. They are not talking about the history of Mind but real, material history, or what Marx calls exoteric history. This, they argue, is the real ground for all social life.²⁵ It makes no sense for them to see philosophy as its essence. Rather it, like all consciousness, has to be viewed as an out-growth of exoteric developments. There is no question in their minds then that the ordinary consciousness is not a phenomenal consciousness simply because it has failed to raise itself to philosophy. It is indeed, as Hegel suggests, a consciousness that is confused in its bearings about the world. But it is so because exoteric historical developments make it so. It is trite to suggest, as do the Hegelians, that ordinary people are confused in their thinking about the world because they are bad philosophers. They do not get hold of the wrong end of the stick for that reason but because their real life circum-

24. Marx-Engels Werke, Vol. 3, p. 38.

25. Marx-Engels Werke, Vol 2, pp. 89-90. In Marx and Engels' view 'Hegel's conception of history presupposes an abstract or absolute spirit which develops itself in such a way that mankind is only a mass which consciously or unconsciously carries it along. Within the empirical exoteric history he has therefore take place a speculative, esoteric history. The history of mankind transforms itself into the history of the abstract - what therefore is to the real man -other-worldly spirit of mankind'. (ibid.).

26. Marx-Engels Werke, Vol 23, p. 87.

27. Ibid., p. 86.

28. Ibid., p. 87

29. Ibid.

stances will not allow them to see the world other than in a confused way.

This point comes out most clearly in Marx's discussion of 'Fetishism' in Capital. Here Marx makes the distinction between the appearance and reality of economic relations in a capitalist society. The purpose of making this distinction is to show that the confused ideas of ordinary men in contemporary society are not mere illusions. In particular, he wants to establish that the confused, almost mystical appearance of the commodity is a product of the commodity-form itself. This is the argument he employs. 'In general', he says, 'objects of use only become commodities because they are the product of private acts of labour (Privatarbeiten) pursued independently of each other. The complex of these private acts of labour forms the collective labour of society. Since the producers first come into social contact through the exchange of these products of their labour the specific social character of their labour also appears for the first time within this exchange. Or, in fact, the private acts of labour first participate in the collective social labour through those relations in which exchange transfers the products of labour..'.²⁶ So the mystery of the commodity-form 'consists in this, that it reflects back to men, as the objective character of the product of labour itself, as social natural properties of these things, the social character of their own labour. Thus also it reflects, as a social

26. Marx-Engels Werke, Vol. 23, p. 87.

relation of things existing outside them, the social relations of the producers to the collective labour.'²⁷ Hence it would make little sense to suggest that the ordinary individual fetishises commodities because of a theoretical oversight on his part. The producers, Marx suggests, do not have a confused or distorted view of their social relations because they are muddled thinkers. 'Rather', he adds, 'this fetish character of the world of commodities arises from the actual social character of the labour which produces the commodities'.²⁸ To the producers 'the social relations of their private acts of labour appear as what they are, i.e., not as immediate social relations of the persons in their labour but rather as thing-like relations of the persons and as social relations of things'.²⁹ The material point for us is, of course, that the social relations which give rise to fetishism indeed appear as what they are. So, in Marx's view, the ordinary individual has a distorted view of things because his real social relations obscure the objective nature of the world.

This, as we can see, goes just as much for the philosopher as for the ordinary consciousness. The confused ideas of philosophers, Marx and Engels suggest, also have their origin in confused historical material circumstances. Where they are wrong in their orientation - as are all philosophers in some measure, - that can be explained from some real

27. Ibid., p. 86

28. Ibid., p. 87.

29. Ibid.

circumstance or other. However, although philosophical thought fails to achieve what it intends, it does, according to Marx and Engels, hint at the real ground of history with such notions as "Substance" and "the essence of man". It distorts the truth, but it is nevertheless the truth that it distorts. To clarify this suggestion we must return to Marx's view of our natural attributes and powers in the Paris Manuscripts. Our natural attributes and powers when expressed, Marx argues, are themselves expressions of objective conditions. We may take as an example the natural attribute of sight. With our eyes, Marx would argue, we see the world not only as it subjectively impinges on us i.e., as an image at the back of the eye, but also as it objectively is, in other words, the image at the back of the eye is an image of the objects that come into our view. When we see, we see those objects that surround us. Any other vision is, at best, a mirage, at worst, an hallucination. What we see, therefore, corresponds with that there is to be seen in the world, in other words, our sight gives us a coherent image of the real world. Indeed any other view of our natural attribute of sight would fail to make sense. This view of the expression of our attributes and powers Marx extends to our thinking. He argues that all thinking reflects some reality because it is the expression of one of our powers as natural limited beings. So when people express themselves in thought we can see at work some objective external stimulus. And it is of course this kind of reasoning that lies behind his and Engel's suggestion that the philosophers did not

entirely miss the mark with their systems. Indeed, according to Marx's view of thinking, they could not. Therefore Hegel, for one, may be seen to have erred in the construction of his system but still to have hit on important ideas concerning experience. The instance that Marx picks out in the German Ideology is Hegel's use of the term "Substance". Hegel had used the term in the Phenomenology in discussing how culture was handed down without interruption from one generation to the other. We recall that he is vague in his use of this term, seemingly not pointing to anything in particular, but emphasising it nevertheless as being of prime significance in preserving historical continuity. Now, what Marx thinks Hegel really had in mind in using the term was the notion of productive forces. For they, the capitals and accumulated skills that one generation hands over to the other, are, he supposes, the real, palpable source of the continuity of a culture. Hegel, however, because he was ideological in his thinking no more than hinted at this.

We may well agree that, on some points, Hegel's reasoning shows signs of confusion but we are unlikely to think of him as an ideologist. Marx and Engels, however, do; for they argue that an ideological thinker is one who fails to see the connection between his thinking and his historically determined circumstances. And Hegel, they suggest, is one such thinker. For, although he realises that consciousness in his time is a mere appearance, he fails to grasp the connection between the phenomenon and the real ground of history.

Thus he fails to see his own consciousness as a historically limited one. He does indeed see the consciousness of others as limited and infinite, but to his own, the consciousness of a philosopher, he accords a greater worth. The philosopher, through his scientific efforts, is able to participate in Geist. Mind or spirit is a force above History or, rather, it is the moving force of history. The philosopher therefore need not see his consciousness as a limited, finite one; it is, Hegel suggests, an infinite one or Absolute. For Marx and Engels, this is no more than a fantasy. They are, of course, particularly opposed to Hegel's position because it slurs over what they take to be the real cause of the phenomenality of consciousness. In their view, 'if in all ideology men and their circumstances appear as though in a Camera obscura stood on their head this phenomenon springs just as much out of their historical life process as does the inversion of objects in the retina from their immediate physical life process'.³⁰ Consciousness is the mere inverted appearance of reality for them because reality is constituted in such a way as to give rise to that appearance. There is little suggestion of this in Hegel's view of things. For him it is simply the case that Mind appears as it does in the ordinary consciousness. But for Marx and Engels, there is no question of representing the half-truths, the confusion and indeed, by Hegel's own reckoning, the distortion of the culture of the time simply as mistaken thinking to be cured

30. Marx-Engels Werke 3, p. 26.

by philosophical reason. For, as Marx argues in the Poverty of Philosophy, 'the same men who establish their social relations in conformity with their material productiveness produce also their principles, ideas and categories in conformity with their social relations',³¹ so that if those principles and ideas are confused it stands to reason that those social and material relations to which they conform are the cause. It also follows that philosophical thinking on its own is no cure for that distortion of reality. Ideological thinking will cease to have a hold, Marx and Engels argue, only where those material circumstances giving rise to it are removed.

Marx and Engels attribute the powerful hold that ideology has in their society to the division of labour. Indeed, in their view, the division of labour gives rise to what we might call the 'original sin' of ideological thinkers: the pretence that thinking is something more than the consciousness of existing practice. For, they say, 'the division of labour first of all becomes real division from that moment on where we have a division of intellectual and material labour' and 'from this moment', they continue, 'consciousness can imagine itself or something other than the consciousness of existing practice, really conceive something, without conceiving anything real - from this moment on consciousness is in the position to emancipate itself from the world..³² But they

31. Marx-Engels Werke 4, p. 130.

32. Marx-Engels Werke 3, p. 31.

suggest the division of labour not only makes ideological distortion possible. It is also the direct cause of the confusion that reigns in men's minds about their real circumstances. They argue that, up until the present, the division of labour has itself determined production and not production the division of labour, instead of the producers themselves controlling production, the course of production has controlled the producers. As Marx says in Capital 'the division of labour is a system of production whose threads were weaved behind the backs of the producers of commodities and continues to be so'.³³ So, they suggest, it is only natural that the conceptions that men create 'in conformity' with these relations themselves bear witness to this confusion and indeed, at most times, foster it. It is at this point, as we shall see later, that Marx introduces the notions of class and revolution into his theory of ideology.

33. Werke 23, p. 121.

THE CHARACTER OF MARX'S THEORY

Before we come to that point, however, there is still some important ground we have to cover in our discussion of the measure of ideological distortion that Marx and Engels propose. We may agree that Marx's notion of history makes some sort of sense as a measure of ideological distortion; but we must also acknowledge that Marx does nothing to establish the empirical validity of his claim. Indeed he gives the impression that it would be beside the point for him to do so. But this is not because, as Acton claims, 'Marxists tend to regard the theory as one that any candid person is bound to accept as soon as he understands it, or one that the whole creation conspires to proclaim..'.³⁴ It is because, quite simply, Marx's theory of ideology is not an empirical theory. An empirical theory (and I follow Popper here) is one that can give rise to second order testable hypotheses. These if proved to be true can corroborate the theory for us. They must themselves pass a stringent test, however, if they are to be regarded as testable hypotheses. They (again following Popper) have always to be open to falsification or, in the positivists' own jargon, they have to be such that the category of possible falsifiers remains open. And these falsifiers must always consist of empirically observable facts or events. No great insight is required to see, however, that no such testable hypotheses can be derived from Marx and Engels' theory of ideology. From the Popperian point of view

34. H.B.Acton. The Illusion of the Epoch, pp 141 - 142.

the category of possible falsifiers of their theory always remains closed. Indeed Marx and Engels are not in the least concerned to predict what any one individual will be observed to think at any one time or to establish what in particular caused that train of thought. They are rather concerned to establish the parameters within which we think. Such parameters are, of course not the kinds of thing that can be empirically observed nor, even less so, are hypotheses about them open to empirical falsification. Marx and Engels therefore would not wish that their theory be tested in that sense. They do indeed suggest, as do the Empiricists, that we refer to our experience to verify their theory. But they do not intend experience in the Popperian sense. When Popper talks of experience he means scientific experiment and observation. Marx and Engels, however, have in mind something far broader when they appeal to experience. They have in mind our active productive experience and what we might call the collective wisdom to which it has given rise. Whatever else this might make their theory of ideology to be, it does not make it an empirical theory in the accepted scientific sense.

This is of course a conclusion that we have been led to expect. I have argued that what brings Marx to compose his theory of ideology is his conviction that all truth concerns our practical activity. He is convinced of this because he considers that the only real orientation in experience is the practically active one. Accordingly, his prime interest is in why, how and under what conditions we act; and, as we have

seen, his view is that we act as natural but consciously productive beings under historically determined conditions. At the same time, - and this is what excludes a positivist interpretation of their views - he and Engels are concerned to point out how we should act. This conclusion is a bit surprising, for Marx and Engels assure us that theirs is not a moralistic standpoint. It is, indeed, true that they are not moralists in the accepted sense, i.e. moralists above everything else; but it does not mean that they dispense altogether with the moral view. For what they seek to do is to integrate a morally correct view of experience with an objective view of it. They see themselves therefore as deriving their moral imperatives from men's actual state of affairs. This we saw clearly in Marx's Critique of the Phenomenology. For no sooner does he argue a view of man than he is suggesting that the world be organised in such a way as to accord with that view. It remains for us to establish that that view still prevails in the German Ideology.

There is little doubt that it does and that, therefore, the one consequence of the view of activity that Marx and Engels propose in the German Ideology is itself a prescription for action. Indeed this is an aspect of their view of experience that Marx and Engels themselves stress. They particularly wish to stress it in the German Ideology in order to distinguish their views from those of Ludwig Feuerbach. Feuerbach himself had suggested at one point that 'the hitherto

existing development of speculative philosophy from the abstract to the concrete, from the ideal to the real is muddled' and, therefore, 'the transition from the ideal to the real has its place only in practical philosophy'.³⁵ He had also suggested - and may even have stimulated Marx and Engels to think in the same way - that an adequate account of reality is one that is already practical. But they claim, in the German Ideology, that Feuerbach does no more than put forward this suggestion. It is not one that is successfully carried out in his philosophy. We can see this, they suggest, in the attitude that Feuerbach takes to Communism and Socialism. 'It can be seen how much Feuerbach deceives himself', they argue, 'when he declares himself, courtesy of the qualification "common man" to be a Communist. He therefore transforms the word Communist into a predicate "of the" man, the word which in the existing world denotes a particular revolutionary party he believes to be able to transform again into a category'.³⁶ This particular weakness in Feuerbach's reasoning, they suggest, rests on the general weakness that in his philosophy Feuerbach reduces each and every activity to the thought of it. By this Marx and Engels mean that all Feuerbach contemplates when he contemplates the world are our thoughts about it and not its natural sensuous impact on our-

35. Ludwig Feuerbach. Preliminary Theses Toward the Reform of Philosophy, Vol. 2, Sämtliche Werke, p. 231.

36. Marx-Engels Werke 3, p. 41.

selves. Therefore, it appears to Marx and Engels that, when Feuerbach is engaged in advocating, for instance, Communism he has in mind not that the Communists should make real political advances but the Communist theories should take a hold on Ethics. For they argue that Feuerbach shares the illusion of the whole Hegelian tradition, namely, that a change in our consciousness of the world transforms the world. It is therefore not surprising that Marx and Engels go on to claim that 'Feuerbach's whole deduction bearing on the relation of men to one another only goes so far as to prove that men have need of each other and always have done. He wishes to establish a consciousness of this fact, wishes therefore just like the other theoreticians only to bring about a correct consciousness concerning an existing fact, whilst what matters for the real communist is to overthrow the existing state of affairs. For the rest, we completely acknowledge that Feuerbach in striving to produce the consciousness of this fact goes as far as a theoretician can possibly go without ceasing to be a theoretician and philosopher'.³⁷ They find that Feuerbach sets as his aim the proper understanding of our relationship to one another because he thinks that sufficient to bring about a situation where we do in fact properly relate to one another.

For Marx the drawback of Feuerbach's position is therefore clear. As with Hegel, Feuerbach wishes men both to have

37. Ibid., p. 42.

an awareness of the realities of man's condition and yet not to act on that where it contradicts a humanist view of man. As an example of this 'simultaneous recognition and failure to appreciate (verkennen) the existing state of affairs', he says in the German Ideology, 'let us recall the point in the 'Philosophy of the Future' where he "elucidates" that the being of a thing or man is at the same time his essence, that the particular conditions of existence, mode of life and activity of an animal or human individual is that wherein it finds its "essence" satisfied. Here each exception is expressly understood as an unlucky accident, as an abnormality which is not to be changed'.³⁸ This represents a lack of understanding of the present state of affairs for Marx and Engels because it is not an active revolutionary view of things. The proper way to comprehend man is not simply passively, as does Feuerbach. We ought, if we see man's essence as depending on the particular conditions of his existence, to recommend that those conditions of existence reflect what is truly human. This, Marx and Engels suggest, ought to be part of our objective understanding of things. So we are not, for instance, like the short-sighted person who observes that the whole mass of the working class is discontented with its circumstance and yet concludes that it should do nothing about those circumstances. For Marx and Engels there is no step at all between description and prescription in an objective understanding of the world. To know how, why and under what conditions we act is, for

38. Ibid.

them, at the same time to know how we should act.

So here again, in the German Ideology, we find that Marx argues that an objective account of the world is a practical, revolutionary one. For this also is part of his measure of an ideology. Ideological thinking, is thinking that is not premised on practical, revolutionary activity.³⁹ This of course would make vast categories of thought to be ideological. Indeed the suggestion is that all thinkers who do not think like Marx and Engels are ideologists. Now, although this is an ambitious claim, we would be wrong to condemn it as mere arrogance on their part. As I have tried to show, Marx does not arrive at his views without having first reflected seriously on traditional epistemological problems. He does so in the first instance by confronting his views with those of Hegel and, subsequently, by confronting them with those of Feuerbach. And now again in the German Ideology he comes back to the views of Feuerbach. He returns, in fact, to the point that he made in the first 'Thesis on Feuerbach'. Namely, that Feuerbach like all other materialists conceived reality only as Anschauung or the object of intuition. 'Feuerbach's "conception" of the sensuous world', he says 'confines itself on the one hand to the mere apprehension of the same and, on the other, to mere feeling...'⁴⁰ At no time, therefore, he suggests does Feuerbach raise himself above

39. 'A second important feature of the Marxist theory is that the "ideological" thinker is held to be not only theoretically, but also practically, misleading and misled.' H.B.Acton, op.cit.pl29

40. Marx-Engels Werke 3, p. 42.

the position of a mere interpreter of the world. Indeed he cannot do so simply because what the world is for him is what impresses itself on the senses, and that sensuous world is (for Feuerbach) both what is real and morally desirable. But he soon finds, Marx suggests, that this will not do, for 'in the first place in the apprehension of the world he necessarily comes across things which contradict his consciousness and his feeling, which disturb what he assumes to be the harmony of all parts of the sensuous world and in particular of man with nature'.⁴¹ What he fails to see is 'how the sensuous world surrounding him is not an immediate, something given from all eternity, a thing that is constantly self-same, but the product of industry and the state of society, and indeed in the sense that it is a historical product, the result of the activity of a whole series of generations each of which has stood on the shoulder of the other, has developed further its industry and commerce and has modified its social order according to changed needs'.⁴² What is missing in Feuerbach's account of experience, is a view of the objects of our experience not as isolated, self-same objects, given somehow from all eternity, but as historical products. For, as Marx says, 'the objects of the most simple "sense-certainty" are given to him only through social development, industry and commercial intercourse. The cherry tree, like all fruit trees was, as is well known, only transplanted to our zone a few hundred years

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., p. 43.

ago by trade and was therefore first only by this action of a particular society at a certain time given to "the sense-certainty" of Feuerbach'.⁴³

It is most important that we look at this remark in the right context. This context is clearly that of this study as a whole. In this study, I have shown how the notion of epistemology and experience are connected in the thinking of Marx and Hegel. In particular I have illustrated how they transform a narrow, merely epistemological notion of experience into a wider social and historical notion. This view that Marx expresses about the objects of sense-certainty represents the culmination of that development. Indeed, it brings out precisely the change I have traced. We recall from the first Chapter that the English materialists, Locke and Hume, conceived experience, as does Feuerbach, as our sense-perception of the world. The objects of experience were for them what Marx and Hegel call 'immediate' and what Marx calls 'given from all eternity'. But for Marx it makes no sense to talk about objects or experience in this way. Objects, he argues, are never 'constantly self-same things' but always the products of the existing state of society and industry. So 'the candle-stick here, the snuff box there', as Hegel puts it, of the experience of the classical epistemologists are hardly part of a somehow pristine sense-experience

43. Ibid.

of the world. They are, as Marx would point out, only to be found in the more commercially advanced societies. Thus even that reflective view of experience was only made possible by a reasonable level of advancement in industry and comfort. It makes sense for Marx to talk of the objects of our experience in this way because it is of course his view that they immediately confront us as objects of our needs, and that we are from the beginning practically active in relation to them. Experience is always a practical experience. And since objects are not given to us in a manner compatible with our needs we have always to transform them into our products through our labour. It is these of course that the contemplative view of experience intuitively grasps: the products of human industry.⁴⁴ Experience for Marx though begins prior to that. It is, as I have said, the experience of need whose satisfaction, and what is required for its satisfaction, depend on the level of advancement of society. Our experience is therefore always a natural, social and historical experience. For as soon as we open our eyes to the world (both in the natural and intellectual sense) we open our eyes to a natural, limiting, socially created and therefore historically limited world. This is what constitutes experience for Marx.

44. Marx is making a similar point when he says in Capital that 'Reflection (Nachdenken) about the forms of human life, also therefore its scientific analysis, takes in general an opposite path to that of the real development. It begins post festum and therefore with the finished results of the process of development. The forms which stamp the product of labour as commodities and therefore are presupposed by commodity circulation already possess the fixity of natural forms of social life before men seek to give an account of themselves, not of the historical character of these forms, which already count as immutable for them, but of their content (Gehalt). MEW, Vol. 23, pp. 89 - 90.

And, as I have suggested, he is keenly aware of how this view contrasts with the traditional materialists view of experience. And he misses no opportunity, to drive home his point. 'So much is this activity, this continuous sensuous work and creation, this production the basis for the whole sensuous world as it now exists that even if it were only interrupted for a year Feuerbach would not only find a huge alteration in the natural world but also in the whole human world and he would very soon miss his own means of apprehension (Anschauungsvermögen), indeed his own existence'.⁴⁵ It makes little sense for him to take a timeless, passive view of experience because what makes our ability to intuit objects at all possible, is itself dependent on the continuous labour and production of mankind. We can only intuit because we are practically active in sustaining our life. This therefore, Marx suggests, must be the way to comprehend our experience, not as our individual practical life but the 'sensuous world as the combined living sensuous activity of the individuals that make it up'.⁴⁶

45. Marx-Engels Werke 3, p. 44.

46. Ibid., p. 45.

IDEOLOGY AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

Ideologies, then, are systems of mistaken ideas concerning our activity. And Feuerbach's philosophy is one such system of ideas. We have seen that Marx attributes their development and hold to the division of labour within society. As a system of production that has developed behind the backs of the producers and therefore controls the lives of the producers instead of being controlled by them, it inevitably gives rise to misconceptions in the minds of producers about the nature of their activity and their relation to one another. Ideas, Marx and Engels argue, have their origin in our experience. But this, they argue, is not an abstract experience, the experience that philosophers have invoked. It is our experience as consciously productive social beings. We form our ideas therefore, they argue, in accordance with the manner in which we reproduce our lives. All that Marx's theory of ideology says, therefore, is that where that system of reproduction is confused or disorganised our conceptions will be similarly confused or disorganised.

We can now see how Marx's sometimes confusing ideas about class and ideology enter into his account of experience and, in particular, his and Engels' strange sounding claim that their ideas, indeed the whole of Marxian system, is but the theoretical expression of the real life position of the working class. For it is Marx's conviction that man - and this includes man qua philosopher or theorist - is not a being

squatting outside society, we know not where. He is the sum of his social relations. It follows therefore that there can be no ideas which have no real basis in society. They must be the expression of some practical material claim or other. And where those ideas concern society as a whole they must be the expression of the practical interests of one or other group. Evidently then Marx and Engels, if they are not to condemn themselves as abstract thinkers, have to include their ideas under this head as well.

I hardly need to say at this point that it is an axiom for Marx and Engels that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.'⁴⁷ So that when they come to talk of the social groups whose interests are reflected in systems of thought they do so in terms of class. The class relationship itself, they argue, is very clearly derived from the nature of the property relations in any given epoch. We have masters and slaves, they claim, where the masters own both the means of production and the labourer; lords and serfs where the lords own both the means of production and the serf's labour time; and capitalists and wage-workers where the capitalist class owns the means of production but buys the labour-power of the worker. It is self-evident from such an analysis, they argue, that the dominant class at any one time is the dominant power in production. Now, as Marx and Engels firmly believe that ideas have their origin

47. Communist Manifesto, MEW, Vol 4, p. 462.

in such real social relations, it is perfectly clear to them that material dominance in any epoch must be reflected in intellectual dominance, hence, that 'the ideas of the ruling class are in each epoch the ruling ideas'. This they argue must be so because 'the class which has the means of material production at its disposal with that disposes at the same time over the means of intellectual production. Thereby the ideas of those who do not have the means of intellectual production are on average subordinate to it'. Furthermore, they say, 'those ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the ruling material relations, the ruling material relations conceived as ideas; therefore just the relations which make one class into the ruling class are the ideas of their dominance'.⁴⁸ Contrary to general opinion, then, Marx and Engels do not see the ruling class in one epoch as conspiring to delude either themselves or their subordinate classes. It is simply, they argue, that people think as they live. And if a person is a member of a ruling class he thinks as one such member. So it is only natural that he should encourage the spread of the ideas of his class and attempt to ensure that they prevail in society at large. For it is no more than a consequence of his desire to perpetuate his being. Marx and Engels further suggest that with the development of society and the subsequent increase in the division of labour

48. MEW 7, p. 46.

the ruling class may spawn a special class of intellectual producers to carry out that task for them. These people they do not hesitate to call ideologists. And when Marx uses the term in its most perjorative form he has in mind those individuals who 'make it the chief branch of their livelihood the development of the illusions of this class about itself'.⁴⁹

If this is so, there is one final question that Marx's theory of experience raises: Who then can possibly not be an ideologist? Or, what is simply the same question in a sharper form, are not Marx and Engels, by their own admission, themselves ideologists? It is orthodox nowadays to think so. For, it appears, a system of ideas expressing the practical interests of the working-class can be nothing but that. This, however, is not an opinion that Marx would share. The preoccupation with truth and objectivity is one that is sustained right through his system. His theory of ideology is not, therefore, one that is intended to sustain ideology but to bring it to an end. What is odd about this however, is his belief that the manner in which this is to be achieved is through the practical, material ambitions of the working-class being fulfilled. Somehow Marx comes to the conclusion, then, that truth and objectivity can coincide with the aims of the working-class socialist movement. How does this come about? We already know that Marx's view of truth or objectivity is one that is practical. Truth, therefore, is what coincides

49. Ibid,

with men's needs, What remains to be seen though is how these needs are reduced to the needs of the working-class.

The reason is that the working-class is, Marx argues, the only class that is in a position, and ever has been in the position, to control man's productive relations and therefore to put an end the domination of the producers by the productive process itself. This will at the same time bring to an end ideological thinking, he believes, because those confused social relations which give rise to it will have ceased to exist. This large claim again arises from Marx's conviction that what, at base, is responsible for ideological thinking is the division of labour and the class relations that have grown up alongside it. Ideological thinking is therefore in his mind inseparable from present capitalist society, because the division of labour comes into its own with commodity production, where production is decisively separated from consumption. That development heightens the control exercised by the productive process over the producers and entails, Marx argues, that the relations of production still appear in a natural form to the producers themselves. Under capitalist production, therefore, as under all other previous modes of production the relations of production appear to the producers not as ones they themselves create and perpetuate but ones that have been created for them and that perpetuate themselves. However Communism, which is the mode of production that most corresponds to the needs of the working-class, 'differs from all previous movements in that it revolutionises the basis of all previous production and commercial

relations and deals with all naturally developed premisses consciously as the creations of previous men, thus strips off their naturalness and subordinates it to the power of united individuals'.⁵⁰ By dealing with the existing productive relations consciously and at the same time ending class division the Communist movement will bring to an end ideology. For, Marx claims in Capital, 'the structure of the social life process i.e. the material production only strips off its misty veil when it stands as a product of free socialised men under their conscious planned control'.⁵¹ Up until that point, Marx suggests, the life-process of society will appear in a distorted way to the producers themselves. They will both be, and be subject to, ideological thinkers.

Socialist revolution therefore plays a role that philosophy could not, to Marx's satisfaction, play. It can, in his view, prove the objectivity of his view of experience. It can both dispel the 'clouds of error' from our thinking and give us one conclusive answer to the question of truth. It will therefore be the end of philosophy because it fulfils the end of philosophy.

50. Ibid., p. 70.

51. MEW, Vol 23, p. 94.

CONCLUSION

THE END OF PHILOSOPHY?

It is generally agreed that socialist revolution, as Marx envisaged it, has not occurred. It seems then, that Marx's views on philosophy have not been finally put to the test, and indeed that Adorno's suggestion in Negative Dialektik: 'Philosophy which at one time seemed obsolete, remains alive because the opportunity for its realisation was missed'¹ may be entirely in order. Philosophy, if we were to follow Adorno's suggestion, has a continued relevance because we have passed over the opportunity to realise Marx's aims. It is my view, however, that there is little need to adopt such an expedient to sanction present philosophical discussion, for at no time do Marx's arguments threaten philosophy itself. What Marx's views threaten is not philosophy as such, but one particular conception of it, namely, that of Hegel.

This we can see when we look at Marx's major objection to philosophy. As we have seen, his major objection to philosophy is that it represents abstract thinking. By this Marx means thinking which, like that found in the Hegelian Phenomenology, ends up without an object. In other words, it is to Hegel's philosophical idealism that Marx objects. The grounds for this conflict of views come out in an analysis of their respective notions of experience. Experience Hegel describes as that process in which Mind (or Spirit) first externalises

1. Adorno. Negative Dialektik, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1970, p. 13.

itself to establish the sensuous world but, subsequently, re-establishes itself in its self-sufficiency by knowing the sensuous world as the other of itself. So, in his view, experience is this process of the externalisation or objectification of Mind and the retraction of that alienation.

It is this notion of experience which, in Hegel's opinion, justifies the view that Mind is absolute and the essence of all finite things. Marx, however, finds little justification for this view of experience. Indeed he argues, as we have seen, that it is not a view that stands up to internal examination. For a full explanation of the notion of objectification shows, Marx believes, that our objectification is not something which we can retract. We cannot, he argues, experience objects without our becoming their object, in other words, without the relationship existing in such a way that it does not depend entirely on our consciousness of it. But once we acknowledge this we have to propose a different view of experience; and it is, of course, in proposing such a new view of experience that Marx thinks he is superceding philosophy.

It is this that explains the seemingly paradoxical title of Marx's first major published work: The Poverty of Philosophy. For it must be granted that on first sight the book seems badly entitled. Because, on glancing through it, we discover no general discourse on the various branches of philosophy, for instance, logic, ethics and epistemology - all of which we might expect in a book supposedly about the 'poverty of philosophy' - but rather a critical account of the work of

a popular French economist.² Nevertheless, Marx intends the work to be a serious challenge to philosophy because in it he attacks the metaphysical method which he takes Proudhon to have derived from Hegel. This method of Proudhon's, because it is Hegel's method, is for Marx the method of philosophy. So in criticising it he believes himself to be criticising philosophy and, indeed, in bringing it down believes himself to have brought down philosophy. The philosophical method, in Marx's view, reduces every object to the thought of it, and, he says, 'are we to be surprised that in the final abstraction - for we are concerned with abstraction and not analysis - each thing presents itself as a logical category? Are we to be surprised that if we let drop bit by bit all that makes up the individuality of a house, disregarding first of all the building materials of which it consists, then the form which marks it out we finally have only a body in front of us; and that when we disregard the outlines of this body we have finally a space alone; and that when we ultimately abstract from the dimensions of this space that in the end we have no more left, other than quantity in itself, the logical category of quantity?'³ So 'by dint of abstraction' we can with the Hegelian absolute method transform 'everything into a logical category'.

2. It is indeed true that the work to which Marx addresses himself in particular was called the Philosophy of Poverty and that Marx has not missed the opportunity for a play on words.

3. Marx. Marx-Engels Werke 4, p. 127.

There can be no doubt that this, for Marx, represents the 'poverty of philosophy'. Hegel, he argues, thinks 'he is constructing the world by means of the movement of thought whereas', in fact, 'he is only reconstructing systematically and classifying according to the absolute method the thoughts which are in the minds of all'.⁴ Philosophical thinking, therefore, has the basic defect of regarding thought as the essence of reality. The philosopher indeed comprehends the world in a more sophisticated manner than the ordinary man but at the same time mistakenly believes that this understanding exhausts experience. We are by now clear that this view of Marx is one that fits in well with Hegel's idealism. I need hardly point out, however, that philosophy is not tied to any particular philosophy nor indeed any philosophical thesis. So philosophical pursuits such as logic and ethics will remain unaffected by any criticism that Marx has to offer of one particular philosophy. Marx, however, so wrapped up was he in Hegelian philosophy, failed to see this. For him, to reject Hegelianism was to reject philosophy.

However we would be wrong to condemn him for this. As Hegel aptly pointed out, each person is a child of his time. Philosophy at the time Marx was reaching his intellectual maturity was dominated by Hegelianism. We should not be surprised, therefore, that Marx believed himself to have rejected philosophy in rejecting Hegel's account of experience. We, however, with the benefit of hindsight, can see that he was not rejecting philosophy itself. As I have said, he is simply rejecting one view of philosophy.

4. Ibid. p. 130.

Marx can, however, be criticised on one score, namely, that as a consequence of his belief that he was going beyond philosophy he left untouched many of the most important problems that are raised by his view of experience. In other words because he took the view that philosophy deals only with scholastic questions, he neglected what we can now see to be serious philosophical problems attendant on his views. He wishes, for instance, to argue a practical theory of knowledge which clearly has profound implications for the notion of truth. But questions of truth are, of course, inherently philosophical. Marx, however, has no desire to follow out these implications because he sees himself as superceding philosophy. Consequently he ignores what, to us, are pressing problems in his view of experience. So Marx, far from bringing an end to philosophy, raises new and important philosophical questions.

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