

V.—TIME AND THE HEGELIAN DIALECTIC. (I.)

By J. ELLIS McTAGGART.

ONE of the most interesting and important questions which arise in connexion with Hegel's philosophy is the question of the relation between the succession of the categories in the dialectic and the succession of events in time. Are we to regard the complex and concrete Absolute Idea, in which alone true reality is to be found, as gradually growing up in time by the evolution of one category after another? Or are we to regard the Absolute Idea as existing eternally in its full completeness, and the succession of events in time as something which has no part in any ultimate system of the universe?

The succession of categories in Hegel's Logic is, of course, not primarily a temporal succession. We pass from one to another because the admission of the first as valid logically requires the admission of the second as valid. At the same time there are various reasons for accepting the view that one category succeeds another in time. One of the facts of the universe which requires explanation is the existence of time, and it seems at first sight a simple and satisfactory explanation to account for it by the gradual development of the notion from Pure Being to the Absolute Idea. And Hegel certainly explains history to some extent by bringing the successive events under the successive categories.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that such a view is incompatible with the system. In the first place, the theory that time is an ultimate reality would lead to insoluble difficulties as to the commencement of the process. Secondly, the Absolute Idea must be held to be the presupposition and the logical *prius* of the lower categories. It follows that a theory which makes the appearance of the lower category the presupposition of the appearance of the higher one, cannot fully represent the ultimate reality of the process. And, finally, Hegel's language seems to be decisively on the side of the hypothesis that the Absolute Idea exists eternally in its full perfection, and that the movement from the lower to the higher is reconstruction and not construction.

Let us consider the first of these points. Hegel, of course, maintains that the universe is fully rational. Can we regard as

fully rational a universe in which a process in time is a fundamental reality? The theory before us maintains that the universe starts with a minimum of reality, corresponding only to the category of Pure Being. From this point it develops by the force of the dialectic. Gradually each of the higher categories becomes real, and this gradual evolution of logical completeness makes the process which constitutes the life of the universe. All the facts around us are to be attributed to the gradually developing idea, and when the development is complete, and reality has become an incarnation of the Absolute Idea, then the process will end in perfection. The spirituality of the universe, up till then implicit and partial, will have become complete and explicit. The real will be completely rational, and the rational will be completely real.

On this we must remark, in the first place, that the process in time by which the dialectic develops itself must be regarded as finite, and not as infinite. Neither in experience nor in *a priori* criticism can we find any reason to believe that infinite time really exists, or is anything more than an illegitimate inference from the infinite extensibility of time. Nor, if it did exist, could it form part of an ultimate rational explanation of the universe. An unending regress, whether true or not, is certainly not a solution which meets the demands of reason. More especially is it impossible that it should be accepted as part of an Hegelian theory. For infinite time would be the strongest possible example of the "false infinite" of endless aggregation, which Hegel invariably condemns as a mere mockery of explanation.

And, independently of this, it is clear that an infinite series in time would not be an embodiment of the dialectic. For the dialectic is most emphatically a process with a beginning and an end, and any series which embodies it must have a beginning and an end also. If the dialectic has any truth at all, there can be no steps before Pure Being, nor any steps after the Absolute Idea. The process must commence at a fixed point, and cannot therefore occupy infinite time.

We may take it then that the theory which imagines the dialectic to develop itself gradually regards it as doing so in a limited time. What follows from this hypothesis?

The first difficulty which arises is that every event in time requires a previous event as its cause. How then shall we be able to explain the first event of the complete series. The first term, like all the others, is an event in time, that is, it had a beginning, before which it did not exist. What determined the change which brought it into existence?

Whatever determined it must be itself an event in time, for if it had not a definite place in the time series it could not account for its effect having one. But in this case it will itself need a determining cause, which will also be an event, and we have thus lost our finite series with a definite beginning, and embarked on an infinite series, which cannot, as we have seen, be of any assistance to us in our present purpose.

On the other hand, to deny that the first term of such a series requires a determining cause is impossible. It is perhaps not impossible that our minds should form the conception of something on which other things depend, while it depends itself on nothing. But an event in time could never hold such a place. For an event in time has always before it a time when it was not, and this coming into existence deprives it of the possibility of being self-subsistent. Time, as Hegel expresses it, is that which is outside itself. It has no principle of unity or coherence. It can only be limited by something outside itself. Our finite series in time can only have the definite beginning which it requires by means of further time beyond it. To fix any point in time is to imply the existence of time upon both sides of it. And thus no event in time could be accepted as an ultimate beginning. On the other hand, some such event would have to be accepted as the ultimate beginning, if a finite series were to be accepted as an ultimate explanation.

If we apply this to the particular problem before us we shall find that the theory that the Absolute Idea develops in time lands us in a hopeless difficulty. Let us suppose that all the phenomena of the universe have been accounted for as the manifestations of the gradually developing Idea, and let us suppose that each of these manifestations of the Idea has been shown to be the logical consequence of the existence of the previous manifestation. Then the final and ultimate fact upon which our explanation will depend will be that at the beginning of time the first of the categories—the category of Pure Being—manifested itself in reality. And for this fact itself an external explanation is required. No such explanation, indeed, would be required for the deduction of the universe from the idea of Pure Being. If the system is correct, the categories are so inseparably connected that the existence of one stage in the dialectic process implies the existence of all, and the existence of any reality, again, implies the existence of the categories. The category of Pure Being can thus be deduced from the existence of the universe as a whole, and the existence of the universe as a

whole does not require, as it does not admit, any outside cause. But here, to account for the existence of the universe in time, we have taken as our ultimate fact the realisation of the first category at a particular time. Time is in itself quite empty and indifferent to its content. No possible reason could be given why the process should not have begun a hundred years later than it did, so that we should be at the present moment in the middle of the French Revolution. The only way of fixing an event to a particular time is by connecting it with some other event which happened in a particular time. This would lead here to an infinite regress, and, independently of this, would be impracticable. For, by the hypothesis, the dialectic development was to account for the entire universe, and there can, therefore, be no event outside it to which it can be referred in order that it can be accounted for itself. And yet the question—why it happened now and not at another time—is one which we cannot refrain from asking, since time must be regarded as infinitely extensible.

Various attempts have been made to evade this difficulty. It has been suggested that the temporal process has its root in a timeless state. If we ask what determined the first event, we are referred to the timeless state. If we ask what caused the latter, we are answered that it had no beginning, and consequently required no cause.

But how could a timeless reality be the cause of a succession in time? It could, no doubt, be the cause of everything else in a series of successive events, except of the fact that they did take place in time. But how are we to account for that? No reconciliation and no mediation is possible upon the hypothesis with which we are here dealing. According to some views of the question time might be regarded as nothing but a form assumed by eternity, or time and the timeless might be regarded as forms of a higher reality. But such a view is impossible here. The theory which we are here considering had to explain the fact of a succession in the universe, and did so by making the central principle of the universe to be the realisation of the dialectic in time. The realisation in time, according to this theory, is as much part of the ultimate explanation of the universe as the dialectic itself. By making time ultimate we certainly get rid of the necessity for explaining it. But, on the other hand, we lose the possibility of treating time as a distinction which can be bridged over, or explained away, when we wish to make a connexion between time and the timeless. If time is an ultimate fact, then the distinction

between that which does, and that which does not, happen in time, must be an ultimate distinction; and how are we to make, if this is so, a transition from the one to the other?

So far as a thing is timeless, it cannot change, for with change time comes necessarily. But how can a thing which does not change produce an effect in time? That the effect was produced in time implies that it had a beginning. And if the effect begins, while no beginning can be assigned to the cause, we are left to choose between two alternatives. Either there is something in the effect—that is, the quality of coming about as a change—which is altogether uncaused. Or the timeless reality is only a partial cause, and is determined to act by something which is not timeless. In either case the timeless reality fails to explain the succession in time, and we are no better off than we were before. It would be equally available as an explanation if the process had begun at any point besides the one at which it actually did begin, and a cause which can remain the same while the effect varies is obviously unsatisfactory.

It may be objected in answer to this that, if the dialectic process is the ultimate truth of all change, the point in time at which it is to begin is determined by the nature of the case. For time only exists, when change exists. The changeless would be the timeless. Therefore the beginning of the change must come at the beginning of time, and there can be no question why it should come at one moment rather than another.

This, however, is unsound. Actual time may only have begun with actual change. But possible time stretches back indefinitely beyond this. It is part of the essential nature of time that beyond any given part of it we can imagine a fresh part—indeed we must do so. We cannot conceive time as coming to an end. And with this indefinite stretch of possible time, the question again arises—what determined the timeless to produce change at the point it did, and not in the previous time, which we now regard as possible only, but which would have become actual by the production of change in it? And again there is no reason why the series of actual time should not have been placed later in the series of possible time than it actually was. Actual time begins whenever change begins, and so cannot be regarded as a fixed point by which the beginning of change can be determined. A certain amount of the dialectic process has now been realised in time. Can we give any reason why the amount should not have been greater or less? Yet if no such reason

can be given, the present state of the universe is left unaccounted for by our system.

The difficulty lies in the fact that we are compelled by the nature of time to regard the time series as indefinitely extended, and to regard each member of it as, in itself, exactly like each other member. We may call that part of the series which is not occupied by actual change, possible time, but the very name implies that there is no reason why it should not have been occupied by events, as much as the past which actually is so. And as possible time is indefinite it is indefinitely larger than any finite time. The question we have been discussing will then take the form—why is this particular part of the time series filled with reality rather than any other part? And since, apart from its contents, one moment of time is precisely like another, it would seem that the question is insoluble.

It has sometimes been endeavoured to ignore on general grounds all attempts to show that development throughout a finite period in time cannot be accepted. Time, it has been said, must be either finite or infinite. If we accept the objections to taking finite time as part of our ultimate explanation, it can only be because we are bound to an infinite regress. An infinite regress involves infinite time. But infinite time is impossible—an unreal abstraction, based on the impossibility of limiting the regress in thought. Any argument which involves its real existence is thereby reduced to an absurdity. And since the objections to finite time as part of our ultimate explanation do involve its real existence, we may, it is asserted, safely ignore the objections and accept the principle.

The first objection which we must make to this is that the argument might as well be reversed. If the difficulties in the way of infinite time are to be taken as a reason for ignoring all difficulties in the way of finite time, why should we not make the difficulties in the way of finite time a ground for accepting with equally implicit faith the existence of infinite time?

Nor can we escape by saying that we do know finite time to exist, and that therefore we are entitled to ignore the objections to it, while we accept the objections to infinite time. For we have no more experience of finite time, in the sense in which the phrase is used in this argument, than we have of infinite time. What we meet in experience is a time series, extending indefinitely both before and after our immediate contact with it, out of which we can cut finite portions. But for a theory which makes the develop-

ment of the notion in time part of its ultimate formula, we require a time which is not merely limited in the sense of being cut off from other time, but in the sense of having none before and none after it. Of this we have no more experience than we have of infinite time, and if there are difficulties in the way of both we have no right to prefer the one to the other.

Since either hypothesis as to the extension of time leads us into equal difficulties, our course should surely be not to accept either, but to reject both. Time must be either finite or infinite, we are told. But there is a third alternative. There may be something wrong in our conception of time, or rather, to speak more precisely, there may be something which renders it unfit, in metaphysics, for the ultimate explanation of the universe, however suited it may be to the finite thought of every-day life. If we ask whether time, as a fact, is finite or infinite, we find hopeless difficulties in the way of either answer. Yet if we take time as an ultimate reality, there seems no other alternative. Our only resource is to conclude that time is not an ultimate reality.

This is the same principle which is at work in the dialectic itself. When we find that any category, if we analyse it sufficiently, lands us, in its application to reality, in contradictions, we do not accept one contradictory proposition and reject the other. We conclude the category in question to be an inadequate way of looking at reality, and we try to find a higher conception, which will embrace all the truth of the lower one, while it will avoid the contradictions. This is what we ought, it would seem, to do with the idea of time. If it only presents us with a choice between impossibilities, we must regard it as an inadequate way of looking at the universe. And in this case we cannot accept the development of the dialectic in time as part of our ultimate solution.

Beside these difficulties, which would equally perplex any idealistic system which adopted a time process as an original element, there is another which belongs specially to the dialectic. It appears to be essential to the possibility of a dialectic that the highest term in which the process ends shall be taken as the presupposition of all the lower terms. The passage from category to category must not be taken as an actual advance, producing that which did not previously exist, but as an advance from an abstraction to the concrete whole from which the abstraction was made—demonstrating and rendering explicit what was before only implicit and immediately given, but still only reconstructing and not constructing anything fresh.

This view of Hegel's system becomes inevitable when we consider, on the one hand, that his conclusion is that all that is real is rational, and, on the other hand, that his method consists in proving that each of the lower steps of the dialectic, taken by itself, is not rational. We cannot then ascribe reality to any of these steps, except in so far as they lose their independence and become moments of the Absolute Idea.

We are compelled, according to Hegel, to pass from each thesis and antithesis to their synthesis, by discovering that the thesis and antithesis, while incompatible with one another, nevertheless involve one another. This produces a contradiction, and this contradiction can only be removed by finding a term which reconciles and transcends them.

Now if we suppose that the dialectic process came into existence gradually in time, we must suppose that all the contradictions existed at one time or another independently, and not reconciled, *i. e.*, as contradictions. Indeed, as the time process is still going on, all the reality round us at the present day must consist of unreconciled contradictions.

This would be inconsistent with the law of Contradiction. To say that the world consists of reconciled contradictions would produce no difficulty, for it means nothing more than that it consists of things which appear contradictory when not thoroughly understood. But to say that a contradiction can exist as such would plunge us in utter confusion. All reasoning, Hegel's as much as anybody else's, rests on the law that two contradictory propositions cannot both be true. It would be useless to reason, if, when you had demonstrated your conclusion, it was as true to assert the opposite of that conclusion.

And, again, if contradictory propositions could both be true, the special line of argument which Hegel follows would have lost all its force. We are enabled to pass on from the thesis and antithesis to the synthesis just because a contradiction cannot be true, and the synthesis is the only way out of it. But if contradictions are true, there is no necessity to find a way out of it, and the advance of the dialectic loses all its force. If the contradictions exist at all, there seems no reason that they should not continue to do so. We should not be able to avoid this by saying that they are real, but that their imperfection made them transitory. For the dialectic process, even if we suppose it to take place in time, is not a mere succession in time, but essentially a logical process. Each step has to be proved to follow from those before it by the nature of the latter. It is clear that

it would be impossible, by mere analysis of a logical category, to deduce the conclusion that for some time it could exist independently, but that after that its imperfection would drive it on to another stage.

It is only on the supposition that reality always corresponds to the Absolute Idea, and is not merely approximating to it, that we can meet another difficulty which is propounded by Trendelenburg. Either, he says, the conclusion of the whole process can be obtained by analysis of the original premise, or it can not. The original premise of the whole process is nothing but the validity of the idea of Pure Being. If the whole conclusion can be got from this, we learn nothing new, and the whole dialectic process is futile. If, on the other hand, we introduce anything not obtained from our original premise, we fail in our object—which was to prove that the whole system followed when that premise was once admitted.

The only escape from this difficulty is to be found in realising that though the validity of the lower category is the only explicit admission required for the process, it is not the only material we have before us. Categories are forms of thought which we apply to reality, and which have no meaning except as so applied. And all reality embodies, as it must do to be self-consistent and free from contradictions, the Absolute Idea, although in many cases when we experience reality much of this is only implicit. In all our consciousness, therefore, we have implicit the whole process and result of the dialectic, although in many cases only few categories are explicitly acknowledged to be valid. And it is the conjunction of the explicit partial truth with the reality which implicitly contains the whole truth, which forces the mind on to a more adequate explicit statement.

This is brought out by Mr. Bradley in his *Logic* (book iii. part i. chap. ii., §§ 20 and 21): "An idea prevails that the dialectic method is a sort of experiment with conceptions *in vacuo*. We are supposed to have nothing but one single isolated abstract idea, and this solitary monad then proceeds to multiply by gemination from or by fusion of its private substance, or by fetching matter from the impalpable void. But this is a mere caricature, and it comes from confusion between that which the mind has got before it and that which it has within itself. Before the mind there is a single exception, but the whole mind itself, which does not appear, engages in the process, operates on the *datum* and produces the result. The opposition between the real, in that fragmentary character in which the mind possesses it, and the

true reality felt within the mind, is the moving cause of that unrest which sets up the dialectical process." And again: "The whole, which is both sides of this process, rejects the claim of a one-sided *datum*, and supplements it by that other and opposite side which really is implied—so begetting by negation a balanced unity. This path once entered on, the process starts afresh with the whole just reached. But this also is seen to be the one-sided expression of a higher synthesis; and it gives birth to an opposite which co-unites with it into a second whole, a whole which in its turn is degraded into a fragment of truth. So the process goes on till the mind therein implicit finds a product which answers its unconscious idea; and here, having become in its own entirety a *datum* to itself, it rests in the activity which is self-conscious in its object."

If we hold, according to this view, that the dialectic process depends on the relation between the concrete whole and the part of it which has as yet become explicit, it is clear that we cannot regard the concrete whole as produced out of the incomplete and lower category by means of the dialectic process, since the process cannot exist without the whole which is its presupposition.

Hegel's own language appears to me to confirm this theory. There is nothing contrary to it in his attempt in the Philosophy of Religion, the Philosophy of History, and the History of Philosophy to explain various successions of events in time as manifestations of the dialectic. If the dialectic is the key to the universe, then, whenever we do view the universe under the aspect of time, the different categories will appear as manifesting themselves as a process in time. But the fact that they can appear successively, and in time, does not necessarily imply that they came into existence successively, and are fundamentally a time series.

Even in this part of his work, too, Hegel's adherence to the eternal nature of the dialectic becomes evident in a manner all the more significant because it is logically unjustifiable. In several places he seems on the point of saying that all dissatisfaction with the existing state of the universe, and all efforts to reform it, are futile and vain, since reason is already and always the sole reality. The conclusion cannot be fairly drawn from the eternity of the dialectic process. For if we are entitled to hold the universe perfect, the same arguments lead us to consider it also timeless and changeless. Imperfection and progress then may claim to share whatever reality is to be allowed to time and change, and no conclusion can be drawn, such as Hegel

appears at times inclined to suggest, against attempting to make the future an improvement on the past. But the very fact that he has gone too far in his application of the idea that the dialectic is timeless makes it more clear that he did hold that idea.

There are not, I believe, any expressions in the *Logic* which can be fairly taken as suggesting the development of the dialectic. It is true that two successive categories are named Life and Cognition, and that science informs us that Life existed in this world before Cognition. But the names of the categories must be taken as those of the phenomena in which the idea in question shows most clearly, and not as indicating the only form in which the idea can show itself at all. Otherwise we should be led to the impossible result that Notions, Judgments, and Syllogisms existed before Cognition.

The strongest expression of the eternal nature of the process is to be found in the *Encyclopædia* (§ 212, Lecture Note). "Die Vollführung des unendlichen Zwecks ist so nur die Täuschung aufzuheben, als ob er noch nicht vollführt sey. Das Gute, das absolut Gute, vollbringt sich ewig in der Welt, und das Resultat ist, dass es sich an und für sich vollbracht ist und nicht erst auf uns zu warten braucht."

Another important piece of evidence is his treatment of his own maxim: "All that is real is rational". To the objections to this he replies, firstly, by saying that reality does not mean the surface of things, but something deeper behind them. Besides this he admits occasionally, though apparently not always, that contingency has rights within a sphere of its own where reason cannot demand that everything should be explained. But he never tries to meet the attacks made on his principle by drawing a distinction between the irrational reality of the present and the rational reality of the future. Such a distinction would be so natural and obvious, and would, for those who could consistently make use of it, so completely remove the charge of a false optimism about the present, that we can scarcely doubt that Hegel's neglect of it was due to the fact that he saw it to be incompatible with his principles.

Hegel's treatment of time, moreover, confirms this view. For he considers it merely as a stage in the Philosophy of Nature, which is only an application of the Logic. Now if the realisation of the categories of the Logic only took place in time, time would be an element in the universe, correlative with the Logic, and of equal importance in it.

Both would be equal elements in a concrete whole. Neither could be looked on as an application of, or deduction from, the other. But the treatment of time merely as one of the phenomena which result from the realisation of the Logic is incompatible with such a theory as this, and we may fairly conclude that time had not for Hegel this ultimate importance.

We have thus arrived at the conclusion that the dialectic is not for Hegel a process in time, but that the Absolute Idea must be looked on as eternally realised. We are very far, however, from having got rid of our difficulties. We seem, indeed, to be brought to a *reductio ad absurdum*. For if the other theory was incompatible with Hegel, this seems to be incompatible with the facts.

The dialectic process is one from incomplete to complete rationality. If it is eternally fulfilled, then the universe must be completely rational. Now, in the first place, it is certain that the universe is not completely rational for us. We are not able to see everything round us as a manifestation of the Absolute Idea. Even those students of philosophy who believe on general grounds that the Absolute Idea must be manifested in everything are as unable as the rest of us to see how it is manifested in a table or a thunder-storm. We can only explain these things by much lower categories, and we cannot, therefore, explain them completely. Nor are we by any means able to eliminate completely the contingency of the data of sense, without which the categories are void and meaningless, and a universe which contains an ultimately contingent element cannot be held to be completely rational. It would seem, too, that if we are perfectly rational in a perfectly rational universe, there must always be a complete harmony between our desires and our environment. And this, too, is not invariably the case.

But if the universe appears to us not to be perfect, can it be so in reality? Does not the very failure to perceive the perfection destroy it? In the first place, the Absolute Idea, as laid down by Hegel, is one of self-conscious rationality—the Idea to which the Idea itself is “Gegenstand und Objekt” (*Encyclopædia*, § 236). If any part of reality sees anything, except the Absolute Idea, anywhere in reality, this ideal can scarcely be said to have been fulfilled.

And, more generally, if the universe appears to us to be only imperfectly rational, we must be either right or wrong. If we are right, the world is not perfectly rational. But if we are wrong, then it is difficult to see how we can be perfectly rational. And we are part of the world. Thus it

would seem that the very opinion that the world is imperfect must, in one way or another, prove its own truth.

If this is correct, we shall be confronted with a difficulty as hopeless as that which encountered us when we supposed the dialectic to develop itself in time. For these latter were due to our hypothesis being found incompatible with the system, while our present view is untenable because, though a logical development from the system, it appears incompatible with the facts. The result with regard to the first is that we come to the conclusion that the development in time cannot be part of Hegel's philosophy. The result of the second would at first sight seem to be that Hegel's philosophy must be abandoned, since it leads to such untenable conclusions.

We rejected the hypothesis of the development of the Absolute Idea in time upon two grounds. The first was that we had to choose between a false infinite and an uncaused beginning. Each of these hypotheses left something unexplained and contingent, and was consequently incompatible with a system which demanded above all things that the universe should be completely rationalised, and which believed itself to have accomplished its aim. Our second objection was due to the fact that the development of the dialectic at all, upon Hegel's principles, presupposed the existence of its goal, which could not therefore be supposed to be reached for the first time by the process. But our difficulty now is not at all incompatible with the system. It is one which must arise from it, and which must, in some form or another, arise in any system of complete idealism. Every such system must declare that the world is fundamentally rational and righteous throughout, and every such system will be met by the same difficulty. How, if all reality is rational and righteous, are we to explain the irrationality and unrighteousness which are notoriously part of our every-day life? We must now consider the various attempts which have been made to answer this question.

Hegel's answer has been indicated in the passage quoted above from the *Logic* (§ 21). The infinite end is really accomplished eternally. It is only a delusion on our part which makes us suppose otherwise. And the only real progress is the removal of the delusion. The universe is eternally the same, and eternally perfect. The movement is only in our minds. They trace one after another in succession the different categories of the *Logic*, which in reality have no time order, but continually coexist as

elements of the Absolute Idea which transcends and unites them.

This solution can, however, scarcely be accepted, for the reasons given above. How can we account for the delusion that the world is partially irrational, if, as a matter of fact, it is completely rational? How, in particular, can we regard such a delusion as compatible with our own complete rationality?

To this it may be possibly objected that our argument is based on a confusion. That a thought is a delusion need not imply that it, or the being who thinks it, is irrational. Everything which, like a thought, is used as a symbol, can be viewed in two aspects—firstly as a fact, and secondly as representing, as a symbol, some other fact. In the first aspect we say that it is real or unreal; in the second that it is true or false. These two pairs of predicates have no intrinsic connexion. A false judgment is just as really a fact as a true one.

Now the conclusion from the Hegelian dialectic was that whatever was real was rational. We are, therefore, compelled to assert that every thought, and every thinking being, are completely rational—can be explained in a way which gives entire rest and satisfaction to reason. But, it may be said, this is not in the least interfered with by the fact that many real thoughts are defective symbols of the other reality which they profess to represent. The false can be real—indeed, must be—for a thought cannot misrepresent reality unless it is itself real. Till it is real it can do nothing. And if it can be real, why can it not be rational? Indeed we often, in every-day life, and in science, do find the false to be more or less rational. It is as possible to account, psychologically, for the course of thought which brings out an erroneous conclusion as for the course of thought which brings out a correct one. We can explain our failures to arrive at the truth as well as our successes. It would seem then that there is nothing to prevent ourselves and our thoughts being part of a completely rational universe, although our thoughts are in some respects incorrect symbols.

But it must be remembered that the rationality which Hegel requires of the universe is much more than complete determination under the category of cause and effect—a category which the dialectic maintains to be quite insufficient, unless transcended by a higher one. He requires, among other things, the validity of the idea of final cause. And if this is brought in, it is difficult to see how delusions can

exist in a rational world. For a delusion involves a thwarted purpose. If a man makes a mistake, it means that he wishes to know the truth, and that he does not know it. Whether this is the case or not, with regard to simple perception of the facts before us, it cannot be denied that wherever there is a long chain of argument, to which the mind is voluntarily kept attentive, there must be a desire to know the truth. And if this desire is unsuccessful, the universe could not, in Hegel's sense, be completely rational.

This becomes more evident if we look at Hegel's definition of complete rationality, as we find it in the Absolute Idea. The essence of it is that reality is to be conscious of its own rationality. The idea is to be "Gegenstand und Objekt" to itself. If this is the case, it follows that the rationality of spirit as an existent object depends upon its being a faithful symbol of the rationality expressed in other manifestations of spirit. The delusion to which Hegel reduces all imperfection will of course prevent its being a faithful symbol of that rationality, and will therefore destroy the rationality itself. In so far as we do not see the perfection of the universe, we are not perfect ourselves. And as we are part of the universe, that too cannot be perfect. And yet its perfection appears to be a necessary consequence of Hegel's position.