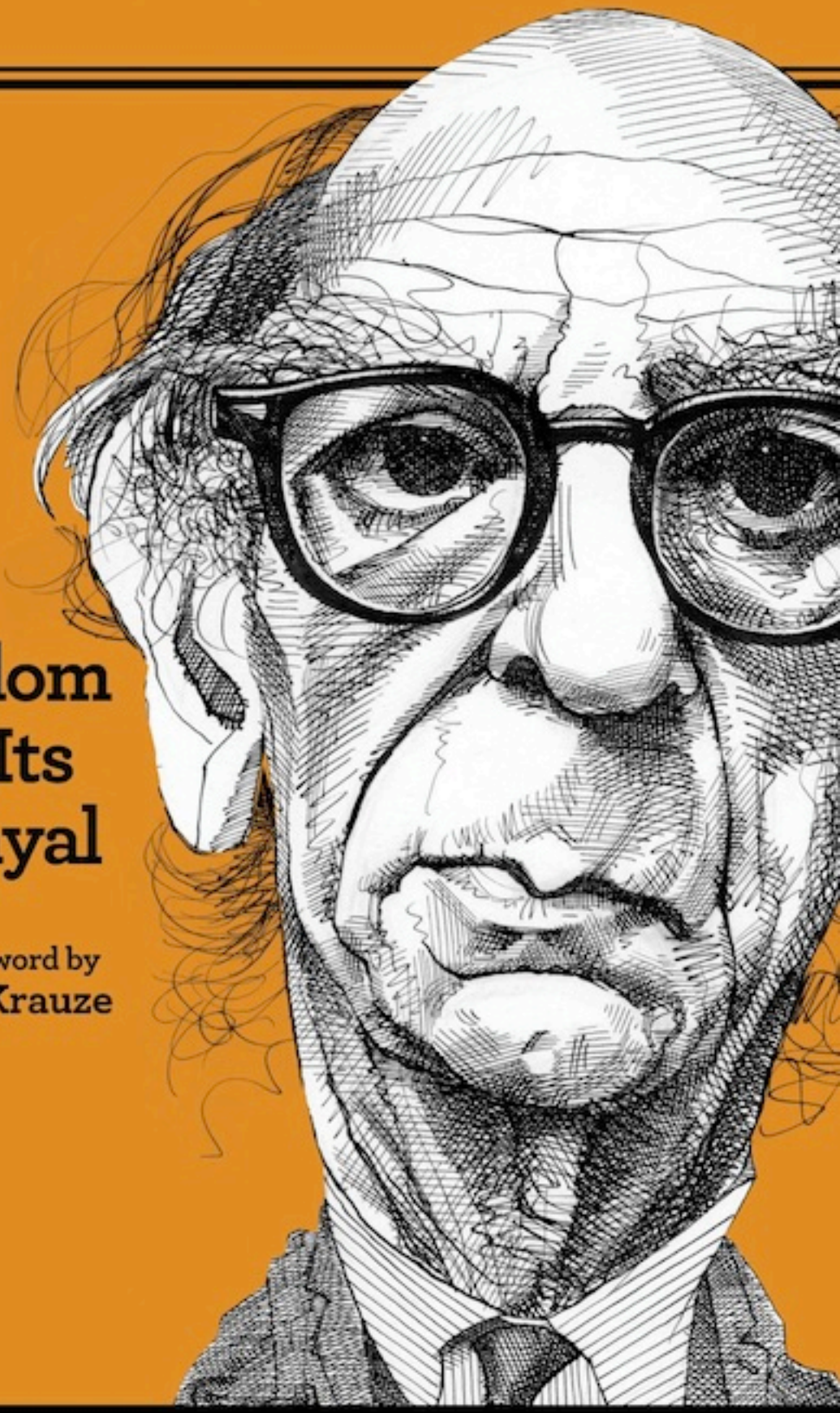
Isaiah Berlin



Freedom and Its Betrayal

With a foreword by
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Edited by Henry Hardy

Hegel

Of all the ideas that originated during the period which I am discussing, the Hegelian system has perhaps had the greatest influence on contemporary thought. It is a vast mythology which, like many other mythologies, has great powers of illumination as well as great powers of obscuring whatever it touches. It has poured forth both light and darkness – more darkness perhaps than light, but about that there will be no agreement. At any rate, it is like a very dark wood, and those who once enter it very seldom come back to tell us what it is that they have seen. Or, when they do, like those who are addicted to the music of Wagner, their ear appears permanently attuned to sounds very unlike the older, simpler and nobler harmonies which once they used to listen to. As a result it is not always very easy to understand, through the new terminology which the system seems to induce in them, what their vision really consists of.

One thing is certain. Followers of Hegel claim that, whereas previously they saw things only from the outside, they now see them from the inside. Whereas previously they saw merely the outer surface, the shell, they now see the inner essence, the inner purpose; the essential end towards which things tend. They have an 'inside' as opposed to an 'outside' view, and this difference between outside and inside is crucial to the understanding of the whole system.

When we look at material objects – tables, chairs, trees, stones – all that we see is a variety of objects, and movements among these objects, and we can describe them and classify them,

and concentrate our classifications into general formulae which enable us to describe and predict their behaviour, and perhaps say something about their past also. When one asks why things happen as they do, there are two senses of this word 'why'. In one sense natural science does answer the question. If I say, 'Why does the table not fly upwards, but on the whole stay on the ground?', a great many physical facts will be offered me about molecules and their relations, and I shall be told about the physical laws which operate on these molecules. All this does, however, is to give me very general laws about the characteristics of objects which resemble each other. Newton and Galileo showed themselves to be men of genius in reducing to a minimum the number of formulae in terms of which I can classify the behaviour of objects, so that I can do so as economically and manageably as possible.

But suppose I ask a very different sort of question. Suppose I say, 'I perfectly understand what you are telling me; you are describing what this table does; all you are telling me is that the table does not, for example, fly upwards, but stays on the ground, because it belongs to a class of entities which are in general subject to the laws of gravitation. But I want to know something rather different: I want to know why it does it, in the sense in which I ask what the meaning of its behaviour is, or rather what the purpose is of what it does. Why was the world arranged in such a way that tables do not, in fact, fly upwards? Why do trees, for example, grow while tables do not?' This 'Why?' is not answered by reciting what happens, nor even by providing very powerful laws in terms of which I can determine the position and movement of every molecule. I want to know why things happen in the sense of the word 'why' in which I ask the question, 'Why did such and such a man strike such and such another man?'

In that case you would not simply answer, 'Because certain molecules rotating in a certain manner produced a certain effect in his bloodstream which gradually affected his muscles in such a

way that his arm rose', and so forth. In a sense all this is true, and you could say it, and yet it would not be an answer to the question which I am asking. You would be answering my question much more naturally if you said that he did it because he was angry, or in order to accomplish this or that end. He did it in order to avenge himself; he did it in order to obtain the satisfaction of giving pain to the person whom he struck. It seems quite clear that, whereas we can ask that kind of question about persons, perhaps a little less certainly about animals, much less certainly about, say, trees, it is not sensible to ask such questions about material objects, or about a great many entities in the universe which do not appear to be animate.

According to the great German Romantic philosophers, the crime of eighteenth-century science, and to some extent of seventeenth-century science too, or anyway of their philosophical interpreters, was to amalgamate these two kinds of explanation; to say that there was only one kind of explanation, namely the kind which applies to material objects; to say that, in asking the question 'Why?', we mean only to ask for facts. We are asking 'What happens? When does it happen? Next door to what does it happen? What happens after what, and before what?' and never 'What purposes does it pursue? What goals? Why does it do it?' in the sense in which I can ask 'Why does a person do something?'

That is why Descartes said that history was not a science – because there were no general laws which could be applied to history. The whole thing was much too fluid, the number of differences was far greater than the number of similarities, it was impossible to collect so unstable a subject matter, about which so little was known, where there were so few repetitions, so few uniformities, into any form which could be subsumed under a few powerful formulae. Therefore he regarded history as simply a collection, ultimately, of gossip, travellers' tales, something scarcely worthy of the name of science. Indeed, the general ideal of the seventeenth-century scientists was not to concern oneself

overmuch with anything which could not be dealt with by lucid and systematic methods; and systematic methods meant the methods of natural science.

One of the great advances made in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth was to revise this conception. Perhaps this was not the last word which could be said; perhaps the question 'Why?' was more interesting than it had been made out to be. When, for example, Vico – an Italian thinker of the early eighteenth century who was unjustly neglected although he was a bold and original genius – began to write about history, he said that to treat human beings as objects, like tables and chairs and trees, was absurd; that we knew more about human beings, in a certain sense, than we knew about natural objects; and that the whole of the prestige of the natural sciences was founded on a mistake. In the case of tables and stones we could say only what they looked like to us, and also what at any given moment they consisted of, what there was before them and what there was after them, what there was next door to them – we could simply place them in a sort of inventory of the universe in time and space and number. But we could do more than this in the case of history. If we are asked why Julius Caesar acted as he did, we do not just give a physical description of his body and movements. We tend to talk about his motives. We cannot talk about the motives of tables and chairs, even assuming that we think they might have such motives, because we do not know what it is like to be a table or to be a chair, only what they look like. But according to Vico we know more than this about Caesar, by a species of imaginative insight. By analogy with ourselves we know that he possessed a will, emotions, feelings, that he was, in short, a human being. We can try to talk about historical personages as we would talk about ourselves, and explain not merely what they did, but also what their purposes were, what their ends were, what their 'inner feelings' were. It is this distinction between inner and outer which becomes of importance.

Similarly, the German eighteenth-century metaphysician Herder thought that if we try to describe the life of a nation, it is natural to ask 'What is it like to belong to such and such a nation?' Then it is natural to ask 'What does it mean to "belong" at all?' If I say 'So and so is a German', it is not enough merely to say that he was born in a certain country, in a certain climate, on a certain date, and that he has certain physiological or physical resemblances to certain other persons also called Germans. When I say that he 'belongs' to them, and still more when I say that he 'feels that he belongs' to them, that he 'feels himself to be a German', this means at least that he likes what other Germans like, likes German songs, likes the way in which Germans eat and drink, likes the way in which they live, the way in which they make their laws and the way in which they tie their shoes. To feel oneself a German is to have a certain connection with other Germans which cannot be exhausted by a mere material or physical description of outer behaviour, as a behaviourist would record it. When I say of someone that he is a German, and that he thrills to the sound of German songs, or that his heart rises when he sees a German flag fly, the very words 'German songs' are not to be analysed in a purely materialistic or scientific, physical fashion. To be a German song is to be produced in a certain way by certain people with certain purposes; and the song itself must, I will not say 'possess a certain flavour', but it must possess a certain kind of expressiveness; it must spring from or express a certain kind of character, outlook, attitude to life. This attitude to life, this specific character which a song expresses, will also be expressed by much larger and more permanent institutions – by the German system of legislation, by their political system, by the way in which they treat each other, by their accent, by the shape of their handwriting, and by everything which they do and are and feel.

What is this common quality which makes a people German? According to Herder it is belonging to a certain individual group.

What is meant by individual? Herder's point was that when you talk about purposes you need not and should not confine yourself to individuals. When you ask why so and so does this or that, you normally answer in psychological terms – 'Because he wants to', 'Because he proposes to.' But you can also ask about impersonal entities. You can say 'Why do the Germans write in Gothic script, whereas the French do not?' This kind of 'Why?' will be answered in a manner much more like the way in which I answer questions such as 'Why does so and so eat with a spoon, whereas somebody else eats with his fingers?' than like the way in which I respond when asked 'Why do these molecules have this effect, whereas other molecules have quite a different one?'

This means that we are trembling on the verge of the notion of impersonal or superpersonal or collective purposes. This, of course is the beginning of a mythology, but a very convenient mythology, for otherwise we certainly do not know how to speak about groups and societies. When we say that a nation has a peculiar genius – that the Portuguese genius is quite different from the Chinese genius – we are not saying that a given average Portuguese is a man of genius and different from a given Chinese man of genius. We are trying to say that the way in which the Portuguese build their ships, the way in which they express their views, have something in common, a kind of family resemblance or family face which pervades everything, and that it is quite different from the corresponding resemblance among the Chinese; and this indication of the family face, the analysis of what it consists in, we call historical explanation. When someone says 'Why does so and so write as he does?' we do take it for an answer if you reply that it is because he belongs to the Portuguese family of nations, because he belongs to a particular group of persons who live in Brazil or Portugal or Goa and who have a certain outlook, certain kinds of values, who feel familiar with certain kinds of experience but feel that certain other kinds of experience are wholly alien to them. This is an answer to the question 'Why?'

which is quite different from the answer given by the sciences, and this is the kind of 'Why?' which Vico and Herder dealt with. It is this which Hegel tried to generalise, his view being that all questions about the universe could be answered in this 'deeper' sense of 'Why?'

He formulated this by saying that the universe was really the self-development of the world spirit. A world spirit is something like an individual spirit, except that it embraces and is identical with the whole universe. If you can imagine the universe as a kind of animate entity possessing a soul in roughly the same sense as, but no doubt grander than, that in which individuals possess souls, intentions, purposes, wills, then you can ask 'Why do things happen as they do?' They happen as they do because they are part of a vast spiritual movement which has purposes, intentions and a direction, very much as human beings have purposes, intentions and a direction. How do we know what that direction is? Because we are parts of it. Because every individual is a finite element in an infinite whole which, collectively speaking, possesses a certain purpose and a certain direction.

But, you may say, what is the evidence for this? Certainly Hegel does not provide anything which can be called empirical or scientific evidence. Ultimately it turns out to be a case of metaphysical insight or an act of faith. If what he says were not so, he claims, then there would be too many 'brute' facts. You would be asking why stones are as they are, why plants are as they are, and the answer would be, 'In your sense of the word "why", namely, if you are asking who intended them for what, we cannot answer the question.' Vico had already said that only those who make things can truly understand their nature. The novelist understands everything there is to be understood about his characters because he creates them; there is nothing there which he does not know, because he has made them. In this sense of understanding, only God can understand the universe, for he has made it, and we can understand only those finite things

which we make. A watchmaker understands a watch as a novelist understands his characters.

But now you may ask, 'What about other human beings? Can we not understand them?' There is obviously a sense in which, when they talk to us or when they show certain moods, when they look gloomy or dejected or happy or gay or fierce, we are able to understand what they are at, in a different sense from that in which we understand stones and tables. We do not enquire about the outlooks or purposes of tables. In short, we do not think that tables are 'at' anything; they are what they are. The question 'What is a table at?' seems absurd because it appears to make the table an animated entity; it appears to make it sentient, when in fact we suspect that it is not. But we *can* ask this about other human beings, and Hegel – and the Romantics generally – suppose that this is because in some sense we participate in this one general 'spirit' of which all human beings are finite centres, and we have a species of metaphysical grasp of – quasi-telepathic insight into – what people are like, because we are human beings ourselves. Therefore history is solely an account of the experiences of human beings. Tables and chairs have no history because they have no experience. History is the story of human creation, human imagination, human wills and intentions, feelings, purposes, everything which human beings do and feel, rather than what is done to them. Human history is something which we create by feeling, by thinking, by being active in some fashion, and therefore, by creating it, we are able to understand it, which is why the understanding of history is an 'inside' view, whereas our understanding of tables and chairs is an 'outside' view.[1]

This being so, Hegel is able to say that, since the whole universe is an enormous sentient whole, we are able to understand what each part of it is doing, provided that we have a sufficiently clear

[1] With the justice of this distinction I do not here wish to deal: it would take us too far afield.

degree of metaphysical insight, such as is possessed, for instance, by the most powerful minds, the most penetrating intelligences. If it were not so, then there would be 'mere' facts which could not be explained at all. If I asked 'Why is this stone lying on the ground, whereas that stone is falling through the air?' I should have to reply that that sort of 'Why?' is not asked in the case of stones; it just is so, it is a brute fact. But for Hegel and for all the metaphysicians of his way of thinking the brute fact is an offence to reason. We cannot 'accept' brute facts because they are not to be explained, and just lie there as a challenge to our understanding. Unless we can relate them to a purposive system, unless they can be fitted into a pattern, they remain unexplained. But what is a pattern? A pattern is something which a plan has. The painting has a pattern because somebody planned it that way. The symphony has a pattern because that alone is what causes its various parts to 'make sense'; because there is a total purpose which the symphony subserves, whether in the mind of the composer who composed it, whether on the part of the musicians who play it, or on the part of the audience which listens to it, a purpose in terms of which the various elements of the symphony, namely the various sounds, function together in a pattern. Unless we can grasp the pattern, we do not 'understand'.

This is the special kind of understanding which means perception of patterns. This is the sense in which we understand what it is to be a German, what it is to be a Frenchman. To be a German is to be part of a general German pattern, a pattern which includes undergoing German experiences, German hopes and fears, the way in which a German walks, the way in which he gets up, the way in which he holds his head – everything about him. If we then ask 'Well, what part does he play in the larger pattern of which the entire universe consists?' the answer is that this can be discovered only by somebody who sees the whole. But only the whole, if it were conscious of itself, would see itself as a whole. We are confined to seeing parts. Some see greater parts,

some smaller ones, but it is in perceiving things as parts of larger things that any degree of understanding is achieved.

Here arises the further question, 'How in fact does the spirit work? What is the mechanism, what is the pattern?' Hegel thought he had found the answer to that. He said that it worked according to what he called the dialectic. The dialectic for him really makes sense only in terms of thought or artistic creation; and he applies it to the universe because he thinks that in the universe is a kind of act of thought, or a kind of act of self-creation; *self*-creation, for there exists nothing else.[1] In what way does the dialectic work? It works in a way rather like that in which people work when they try to think of answers to questions. First, an idea occurs in my mind, then this idea is qualified by other ideas and does not stay. Other ideas come into collision with it and then, out of the collision and conflict of an idea and the qualifications – the idea and the criticism of the idea, the idea and other ideas which come falling upon it, impinging upon it – something else is born which is neither the first idea, nor the idea which is in opposition to the first idea; rather it is something which retains elements of both but, as he says, rises above them, or transcends them – a synthesis. The first idea is called *thesis*, the second *antithesis*, the third *synthesis*.

So for example (though Hegel does not use this particular metaphor) in a symphonic work you have a theme consisting of a phrase of music or a melody, then you have a melody which as it were runs against it, and something happens which cannot be called the cancellation of the first theme by the second nor the continuation of the first into the second, but is rather some kind of fusion which destroys the first two ideas and produces something which is half familiar because it grows in some way out of the collision and conflict of the first two and yet is something new.

[1] For him there is no personal deity. If he was a Christian, he was a very heretical one, because he believed in the identity of the creative principle, that is God, with the whole of the universe.

This, according to Hegel, is how the universe works. It works like this because that is how patterns work in thought and in every kind of conscious activity of which we know anything – and he distinguishes the universe into conscious and self-conscious and unconscious ingredients.

Plants and animals are conscious; that is to say they have purposes of some kind, they have low-grade volitions – low-grade thoughts perhaps. Human beings alone are self-conscious, because they not only have thoughts but can watch this dialectical process in themselves. They can see this development, this collision of ideas, the irregular line which their lives follow; how they first do one thing, then half not-do it, and then the doing and the not-doing fuse themselves into a new kind of doing. They can follow this twisting, spiral process in themselves. He tries to explain whole civilisations in these terms. His point is that in the eighteenth century people were able to explain differences but not change. For example, Montesquieu was very convincing and subtle in explaining how climate affected people, Helvétius may have been very penetrating in explaining how education or environment affected them; other eighteenth-century thinkers, by making over-close analogies between human beings and insentient entities, explained how human beings came to be what they were, to some degree, certainly how their bodies came to be what they were, perhaps their nervous systems, perhaps other aspects of them. But how are we to account for change? After all, Italy in Roman days and Italy now are physically much the same country. The seas which wash it affect it in the same way, its climate has not altered abruptly, nor its vegetation. Yet modern Italians are utterly different from ancient Romans.

The characteristic thinkers of the eighteenth century maintained that this was due to human development. It was the result of education and government; and it was because (people like Helvétius thought) human beings were governed, or rather misgoverned – a great many knaves, or perhaps a great many fools,

misgoverned a great many fools – that the disasters occurred of which all history up to the beginning of the rational period of human existence was so full. This, for Hegel, is plainly not good enough. If human beings are as much under the influence of external causes as eighteenth-century science, needing to be materialistic, must maintain, then the vast differences, the growth and the development, cannot be explained. This can be explained only by the dialectic, namely by some process of movement, by a dynamism of some sort. This collision of thesis and antithesis, this perpetual clash of forces, is what is responsible for progress. These forces are not merely thoughts in people's heads; they 'incarnate themselves' in institutions, in Churches, in political constitutions, perhaps in vast human enterprises, in migrations of peoples, in revolutions, for example, or in vast intellectual developments, where the thesis and antithesis in their state of continual mutual inner tension grow to a climax. There is an outburst, and the synthesis comes to be born, like a kind of phoenix, from the ashes of the thesis and antithesis.

This need not take concrete physical forms. It need not take the form of a bloodstained revolution. It may take the form only of a vast cultural awakening, like the Renaissance, or some enormous artistic or intellectual or spiritual discovery. But always it takes the form of a leap forward. The process is not continuous, it moves in jumps. First the growing tension of the force and its opposite, then the climax and the enormous jump, the vast spring which the human mind – not necessarily only the human mind, but the whole of the universe – takes on to some new level, on to a new shelf. Then once more the process begins; the new creation is eaten out by its own inner opposing forces until the tension again grows to a climax and the next leap occurs. For Hegel, that is history, that is what explains the discontinuities and tragedies. The tragedies of life consist in this inevitable conflict, but unless there were these conflicts, between nation and nation, between institution and institution, between one form of art and another,

between one cultural movement and another, there would be no movement; unless there was friction, there would be death.

That is why there is something shallow, for him, something inadequate in the eighteenth-century explanation of evil, sorrow, suffering and tragedy as simply due to mistakes, bad arrangements, inefficiency, so that in the efficient universe all this would be smoothed out, and there would be complete harmony. But for Hegel conflict is the very symptom of development, growth, something occurring, the stream of life beating against the shell of some earlier experience, from which it will presently burst, thus relegating the shell to the slag-heap of those bits of experience, those bits of history, which are done with and are now consigned to some dead past.

Sometimes this development occurs in the form of national activities; sometimes there are individual heroes who personify these leaps – Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon. Certainly these individuals destroyed much; certainly they caused a great deal of suffering. That is the inevitable consequence of any kind of advance. Unless there is friction, there is no progress. Before Hegel, Kant, and before him Mandeville, and to some extent Vico, had already said something of this kind.

Now the question arises: 'What is meant by saying that history is a rational process?' For Hegel, to say that a process is rational is to say that when you grasp what it is, in the only way you can ever really understand anything, that is, by means of a faculty he calls reason, then you see that the process is inevitable. It cannot happen otherwise than as it does. Hegel's train of thought goes somewhat as follows. How do we ever learn a truth, say that twice two equals four? At first it faces us like a brute fact. The schoolboy has to learn the multiplication table by heart in the beginning; he does not understand why two times two must equal four. Hence it is a burden upon his intellect and memory, a dogma which it is his task to learn and remember. Only when he has learned the axioms and the rules of arithmetic does he realise

that two times two not merely *is* four, but cannot be other than four. He need not repeat it by rote: it has become part of his natural skill in adding or multiplying.

So, when we study history, Hegel supposes, we reach a sufficiently rational level, we rise to a certain stage of illumination in which we begin to understand that historical events not merely happened as they did, but *had* to happen as they did, necessarily; not in the sense of the mechanical causality with which physics deals but rather, for example, in the sense in which we follow the stages of a mathematical argument, where there are rigorous rules; or perhaps even of a symphony, where there are not quite such fixed rules, but we can say that each successive portion is, as it were, inevitable, or, as Hegel might say, a 'rational successor' of the previous portion, so that we say the earlier stage 'does not make sense' unless the later stage is there to complete it, in the way in which the pattern of the carpet can be traced. When we have learned arithmetic and music in this way, we move freely in the mathematical or musical world. The pattern becomes identified with our own mode of thought and feeling and action. We no longer feel it to be external or oppressive to us, or that there are grim de facto laws hemming us in to which we must adjust ourselves, but which are not part of what we are, what we want – of our own lives.

According to Hegel, the usual way in which one approaches the external world is by distinguishing between what you want – your intentions, your policies, what you are after – and, on the other hand, what is outside: the things and persons who, just by being there, obstruct the full, free development of your personality. But when you discover why everything is as it is – *must* be so – in the very act of understanding this you will lose the desire for it to be otherwise. When you learn not merely that two times two equals four, but also why, you can no longer wish it to be otherwise. You do not want twice two to be five. Twice two not merely *is* four, but you want it to be so; it is part of the

rational pattern of your thought. The rules of arithmetic become assimilated into the general rules of reasoning, into the way in which you think and act.

This notion of assimilation is vital in Hegel, because he thinks of laws not in the way in which science and even common sense tend to think of them, namely as generalisations of what happens, but rather more as rules, patterns, forms, in the sense in which arithmetic – or logic, or architecture, or music – proceeds by rules. To think of a general law as something which you do not want to be otherwise than as it is, is to think of it as a rule with which you identify yourself, the method in terms of which you naturally think, or which you naturally apply, and not as an iron law discovered to operate outside you, an unbreakable, inescapable barrier against which you beat in vain. But rules and methods presuppose users of them – persons. You employ rules, or apply them, or live by them; and if the universe obeys rules, it is not far from this to the idea of it as a vast drama in which the characters fulfil parts assigned to them. But then there must be a dramatist; and if you can now imagine the characters in the confidence of the dramatist, understanding his intentions, you will arrive at something like the Hegelian notion of how the world functions.

It is an old theological or metaphysical belief that laws, which at first seem barriers, something you cannot overcome, gradually work themselves into your very self, once you understand their purposes, and you begin using them easily and freely yourself. Thus, when you become a mathematician, you think in mathematical terms almost unconsciously; and likewise you write correctly after you have assimilated the rules of grammar, without feeling that a terrible external straitjacket of despotic rules and regulations has been imposed upon you. If you can get on such terms with nature, consciously identify with her workings so closely that her laws coincide with the rules and patterns of your own reasonings and volitions and feelings, then you obtain

the inside view. You are then said to be 'at one' with nature in her purposes, her intentions. This union, this being at one with the universe, has always been, in one way or another, the goal of all the great mystics and metaphysicians. Hegel expounds this notion in ponderous, obscure and occasionally majestic language. From it he derives his notorious paradox that liberty is the recognition of necessity.

One of the oldest problems of politics, as it is in life, in metaphysics and morals and everything else, is this: if I am completely determined, if some omniscient observer can foresee every single move which I make, how can I possibly be said to be free? If everything I have done in the past, am doing in the present and will do in the future can be accounted for by somebody who knows all the facts and all the laws which govern them, what is the sense of saying that I can do what I want? Am I not a wholly, rigidly determined element in some block universe? Hegel thought that this perennial problem was one which he had solved. The world, according to him, as we have seen, is something which develops, now gradually and cumulatively, at other times by explosions. The forces whose conflicts create movement, whose final clashes are cataclysmic leaps into the next phase, take the form sometimes of institutions – Churches, States, cultures, legal systems – sometimes of great inventions, discoveries, artistic masterpieces, sometimes of individuals, groups, parties, personal relationships. This is the dialectical movement.

But if I understand it, how can I oppose it? If I understand an art or a science – logic or music or mathematics – how can I want something which goes against it? To understand is not merely to accept, but actively to want what is understood, because to be understood is to become part of him who understands, part of his purposes, his goal and his development towards his goal. Of course, this is not an empirical hypothesis, not a scientific theory; no facts can falsify this Hegelian pattern. It is a vast metaphysical vision in which everything is accommodated either as a thesis

or as an antithesis. Everything can be fitted in, nothing can be excluded, because every event and person and element in the world either accords or fails to accord with every other person, event and element – and whichever it does, it fits in either by being harmonious with something or by being in discord with it. There can be no evidence against such a view, for anything which might seem contrary can be absorbed as the necessary element of contrariety.[1] For this reason it is not a scientific or rational explanation in the sense in which, say, the Darwinian or Newtonian systems are rational, because one could conceive of evidence against them; they can be tested, but the dialectic cannot; it is a kind of framework of things in general.

In this metaphysical vision, what happens to human freedom? Hegel is very triumphant on this point. What is freedom but doing what I wish to do, getting what I want to get, obtaining from life what I am seeking for? I can get this only if I do not run against the laws which govern the world. If I defy them I shall be inevitably defeated. To wish to be something is the first principle of rationality. It is irrational to wish to be annihilated, to wish to cause a state of affairs in which there are no further wishes, no further goals. If I want to do mathematics, it is self-defeating to behave as if twice two did not make four. If I want to build an aeroplane, it is suicidal to defy the laws of aerodynamics. If I wish to be effective historically, I must not set myself against the laws which govern human beings and institutions. This non-defiance is not an acquiescence which I consciously adopt with resignation, although I would rather be free. To understand why things cannot be otherwise is to want them not to be otherwise, because to understand things is to understand the reasons for them. To want things to be other than what they rationally must be is to be

[1] As someone once remarked, facts which do not fit Hegel's hypothesis can always be fitted into the category of what does not fit in, a special sort of waste-paper basket category of the not-fitting.

mad. To want the universe to be other than what it is, for Hegel, is like wanting twice two to be seventeen.

If the laws of history are assimilated into the essence of my own thought, as the rules of arithmetic are, then to want them otherwise is like wanting myself to be myself and also different from what I am, to be guided by rules and not to have them, to think and not to think. If you understand Shakespeare, you cannot want Hamlet to have the character of Falstaff, for that is not to understand Shakespeare's intentions, not to understand why he created Hamlet and Falstaff as he did. To want Charlemagne to live after Louis XIV, and to think that Cromwell could well have lived in the nineteenth century, and Bismarck in the seventeenth, is not to understand how the world is made – to want a contradiction, to be irrational. Therefore I always want to be that which I am anyway forced to be; and to have what one wants is to be free. For everything to go as you want, for nothing ever to cross you, is absolute freedom, and the only thing which has that is the absolute spirit – everything there is. The world as a whole is totally free, and we are free to the extent to which we identify ourselves with the rational principles of the world. A free mathematician is a person who naturally thinks mathematically, and a man free in history is a man who naturally proceeds according to the rational laws which govern human lives, which govern history.

To be happy, to be free, is to understand where one is and when one is; where one is on the map; and to act accordingly. If you do not act, you are acted upon, you become historical stuff, you become, as Seneca said, a slave dragged by the Fates, and not the wise man who is led by them. In Hegel, we do see history through the eyes of the victors, certainly not through the eyes of the victims. We see history in the way in which those who, in that sense, understood history have seen it; the Romans were victors, they won, and to win means to be on the right side of the historical flow. Perhaps the Cappadocians whom the Romans

defeated thought very differently about things, understood the universe differently, but if they had understood it correctly they would not have been defeated, and because they were defeated they must have misunderstood it.

Therefore to understand things correctly, to be victorious, to survive, to be, in Hegel's sense of the word, real are in some way identified. Certainly history is full of crimes and tragedies from the point of view of a given generation. That is the way of the dialectic. History, says Hegel, is not a smooth progression, not the happy fields, the bubbling brooks of Rousseau's nature – that is a very false conception. History is the 'slaughter-bench', as he calls it, 'to which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of States and the virtue of individuals have been brought as sacrifices'; 'history is not the theatre of happiness; periods of happiness are blank pages in it'. How is history made? It is made by the few, of course, and by human beings, who are the highest rational creatures. But it is not necessarily made by their conscious wishes and desires.

The great heroes of history, the people who occur at the climaxes, at the moments of synthesis, are people who may think that they are merely pursuing their own particular ends. Caesar, Alexander were ambitious men, and their principal desire was to aggrandise themselves, or to defeat their enemies, but history is wiser than they; history uses them, uses them semi-consciously, as its weapons. This Hegel calls 'the cunning of reason'. He says it is history that 'sets the passions to work for itself, while that which develops its being through such impulsion pays the penalty and suffers the loss'. In short there is a vast, single, all-embracing reason, or what he calls 'the spirit', the development of which is all that occurs. It is a development of the spirit because there exists nothing else; it is a self-development because nothing else can develop it. If we understand it we are its willing tool. If we do not understand it we struggle against it and are lost.

Not to like what you see to be rationally determined, to resist it, is mere suicidal mania, ultimate stupidity, a kind of

un-grown-up-ness, a failure to be adult. 'Subjective' for Hegel is an extreme term of opprobrium. Who cares what a schoolboy thinks of the theory of Euclid or the propositions of Newton or of Einstein? To dislike the universe, to denounce it, to resist it, to find it not to your taste, to complain about it, to say that the facts are against you, that there is a brute mass of resistance to you which you cannot pierce, to be frustrated by this, to bleed as the result of falling upon the thorns of life – that is, for Hegel, a form of being inferior, being blind, not understanding, of stupidity and, ultimately, vice.

Let me try to explain this a little more clearly. For Hegel, understanding history is really understanding the nature of things in general, and that is why it is automatically a kind of conscious self-identification with their pattern, so that to be free and to be rational are the same; to be rational is to understand; to understand is to assimilate into one's own being; to be unfree means to be resisted by outward obstacles. When you have captured the obstacle it becomes yours, just as, when a piece of property is out of bounds to you, then by purchasing it, or by invading it, you make it yours and it is not out of bounds, and you are free.

There is something absurd and crazy, for Hegel, in praising or in condemning the vast process in terms of which everything is explicable. To be aware of the whole objective march of history, and then to praise some parts of it because we like them, and to condemn others because they may seem to contain cruelty or injustice or waste, is a mere indulgence in subjective moods. That is an inability to rise beyond what he calls 'civil society', constituted by the economic desires of men, the ordinary private desires of men for prosperity or comfort or a happy life, which is the level at which shallow thinkers like Locke remained. To see a vast human upheaval and then to condemn it because it is cruel or because it is unjust to the innocent is for Hegel profoundly foolish and contemptible. It is like condemning the fact that the number three has no rational square root. Who can wish to know

what this or that man feels about events of cosmic importance? These dissatisfactions are trivial facts about someone's passing feelings. To be truly worthy of the occasion is to rise to its level, to realise that something immense and critical is taking place, to have a sense of a historic occasion, when perhaps a new level is being attained by humanity which will automatically transform contemplation of both facts and systems of values.

In Hegel there is a great distinction, which runs through his entire work, between on the one hand the subjective, the emotional, the personal, the utilitarian, the middle-class, the individualistic, which may be a necessary stage in human development, but which is transient and by the early nineteenth century is certainly superseded; and on the other hand the objective, the demonstratively rational, the powerful, the inexorable, the decisive, the concrete – what he calls 'the world-historical'. He is fascinated by the concept of a great man who is a maker and a breaker of societies, the being in whom for the moment history has concentrated her powerful and irresistible strength, who is at once an instrument and a goal of the remorseless march of history. For him, such questions as whether the great man, the earth-shaker, is good or virtuous or just are absolutely meaningless, and indeed petty, for the values implied by these words are themselves created and superseded by those very transformations of which the great man is the Herculean agent. For him the question of whether such a man is just or unjust belongs to the particular system of values, to the particular sphere of action, to the particular moment which is occurring in history at a given time. These are values which great men themselves have made in the past; but the martyrs of one generation are often the lawgivers of the next. Therefore to say that something is bad, wretched, wrong, monstrous, indignation-provoking in a given age is to say that it is so at the level which the great rational process has reached at that particular moment. But by the very transformation of that process by some immensely heroic act, by a revolution, by a war,

by the appearance of some vast hero who alters the thoughts and acts of mankind, the values of the previous age become automatically superseded, and what seems abominable in one generation seems virtuous in the next. Therefore let us wait, for it is only what history will make real that is going to be valuable. A value, after all, if you want it to be real, must be objective, and 'objective' means that which the world – reason, the world pattern – intends, that which it supplies next in the irresistible development, the unrolling of the scroll, the inexorable march, what Hegel calls 'God's march through the universe', which for him ultimately is the activity of the State.

The pattern matters more than the individual. For what is the individual? The individual taken by himself is as unintelligible as would be a patch of colour, an isolated sound, a word divorced from the sentence of which it is a part, for words make sense only when combined in sentences, and colours and sounds, whether in nature or in art, when seen in the unique setting in which they in fact occur. Why should this be different in the case of human beings? There are no laws which apply to a man in isolation. I am what I am, because I am uniquely situated in the social setting of my time and place. I am connected by a myriad invisible threads to my fellow beings, to members of my family and my city, of my race and religion and country, to the living and the dead and those yet unborn. I am a kind of nodal point, the focus of an infinite number of strands which centre in, and radiate from, me and everyone else who enters with me into combinations and patterns, groups of lesser or greater tightness or looseness – the great society of the living and the dead of which Burke had spoken. To understand a man, you must understand his milieu, his friends and relations, his superiors and inferiors, what he does and what is done to him, and by what and by whom, not merely because this throws light on him, but because he literally does not exist except as part of this total pattern, any more than a sound in a tune exists (except in some uninteresting sense as a

mere physical event) save as a particular ingredient of that particular tune, played on a particular instrument in the particular context in which the music is played. Hence Hegel's celebrated reduction of the individual to an abstract element of a 'concrete' social pattern; his denial that such patterns are mere arrangements of society, that the State and the laws are artificial devices designed for the convenience of individuals; and his insistence that they are networks of which the individuals, whether they will it or not, are the organically fused-together elements. Hence the celebration of the authority and the power and the greatness of the State as against the whims or individual inclinations of this or that citizen or subject.

There is no doubt much plausibility in the view advanced by Hegel's contemporaries, the historical jurists, who said that legal institutions are not so many arbitrary orders of kings or assemblies, or utilitarian devices consciously invented to procure this or that benefit for this or that person or class, but rather part of the unconscious or semi-conscious growth of societies, and expressive of their attitude to life, their half-articulate thoughts and wishes, their ideals and fears and hopes and beliefs and interests, at once the symbol and the substance of what they are and seem to themselves to be. Yet ultimately, driven to its extreme by Hegel, this view becomes a sinister mythology which authorises the indefinite sacrifice of individuals to such abstractions – for all that he calls them 'concrete' – as States, traditions, or the will or destiny of the nation or the race. The world is, after all, composed of things and persons and of nothing else. Societies or States are not things or persons, but ways in which things and persons are or come to be arranged; social patterns have no likes, no wills, no demands, no destinies, no powers. But Hegel does speak as if patterns, like States or Churches, are more real than people or things; as if it is not the houses that make the street, but the street that somehow creates the houses – which it does in a celebrated fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen.

Among all the patterns the State is supreme. It is the highest of all the patterns because, like the iron ring of which Fichte spoke, it integrates them all; because it is humanity at its most self-conscious, at its most disciplined and its most orderly, and if we believe the universe to be a march, we must believe it to be marching in an intelligible direction, we must believe it to be a patterned order; and the State is the most ordered thing there is. Whatever resists it is bound to be annihilated. Rightly, because what is right and wrong is what history promotes or rejects. The sole objective source of right is the direction of the facts themselves, not individual judgement; not any particular code of laws, not any set of moral principles, but the imperative of history itself, the demands of history. There is in Hegel perpetual talk about what history demands and what history condemns, and the way we talk today about how such and such a nation or such and such a person has been condemned by history is a typical piece of Hegelian realism. This is the imagery and worship of power, of the movement of force for its own sake. This force is, for him, the divine process itself, crushing whatever is meant to be crushed, enthroning that whose hour to dominate has struck – and this, for Hegel, is the essence of the process. This is the source of Carlyle's heroes or Nietzsche's superman, of openly power-worshipping movements such as Marxism and Fascism, both of which (in their different ways) derived morality from historical success;[1] it is the source of the great contrast which Hegel is perpetually tracing between great men and ordinary human beings, between fighters who hack their way and raise humanity to a new level and the mere ants of the human anthill who perform their task without effectively questioning whether to carry such burdens is necessary. It survives in the distinction we ourselves still draw between (what we call) realistic and

[1] Marxism is a little more faithful to Hegel, perhaps, because it assumes that it is classes that exercise power, and class is a super-human institution, whereas Fascists allow greater scope for the violent and imperious individual will.

unrealistic. 'Realistic' often means harsh and brutal, not shrinking from what is usually considered immoral, not swayed by soft sentimental moral considerations.

Hegel is very strong about the necessity for violent action which may be condemned by the more prudish moralists in history. 'Gangrene', he says, 'is not cured with lavender water.' Progress is the work of heroes; heroes who stand above the conventional morality, because they embody the human spirit at its highest; at so high a level, at so mighty a pinnacle, that ordinary human beings can hardly discern what goes on at so lofty a height. They draw, he says, 'not from the peaceful time-hallowed tradition […] but from a spring whose contents are hidden, […] from an inner spirit still concealed beneath the surface'. Hence ordinary virtues do not apply here. Sometimes he grows sentimental about heroes: Alexander dies young, Caesar is assassinated, Napoleon is sent to St Helena. Sometimes he exults in their brutal strength. What he says about heroes, he also says about peoples. Peoples are always performing the enormous tasks which history places upon them, and when history has done with them, she rejects them. Peoples are like the garments which the great world-historical process now dons, now doffs, and casts about at will. Having quaffed the bitter draught of world history for which it yearned with infinite thirst, a people apprehends its purpose, and then it dies. A people which insists on surviving after its part is played is a mere political nullity and a bore.

History is a vast cataclysmic objective march, and those who do not obey it are wiped out by it. But why should we condone all these cruelties? Why should the mere fact of a thing having happened in the way that it did automatically justify it? *Are* we so very much against the losers, the victims of history – against Don Quixote? Against the people who are crushed by the wheels of progress? Do we think it so wicked of Don Quixote to have protested against the vulgarity, the smallness, the immorality, the shoddiness of the facts, and to have tried, however foolishly, to

erect a more noble ideal? Hegel does not burke this problem. For him the visions of the martyrs are not merely pathetic, not merely weak, not merely contemptible; for him they are vicious too, in a sense. The only thing which is bad is to resist the world process. For the world process is the incarnation of reason – when he says incarnation he means it in the literal sense – and to oppose it is immoral. Therefore he despises the utilitarians, the sentimentalists, the woolly, benevolent philanthropists, the people who want people to be happier, who wring their hands when they see the vast tragedies, the revolutions, the gas-chambers, the appalling suffering through which humanity goes. These persons are for him not merely contemptibly blind to the movement of history but positively immoral, because they resist that which is objectively good by pitting against it their subjective good; and subjective good is like subjective mathematics, it is absurd nonsense. It may obstruct the process for a little but it will be wiped out and pulverised.

Power alone is what Hegel celebrates in his dark, semi-poetical prose. There is a passage which makes this particularly clear. In 1806 Hegel was looking over the last pages of his first great contribution, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He was living in Jena at that time and saw the campfires of the French on the eve of the great battle of that name. It suddenly dawned upon him that there it was – history in its objectivity. Still more did he think so when he saw Napoleon riding through the city a few days later. He said, 'the Emperor – that world soul – I saw him ride through the town […]; it is really an odd feeling to see such a personality physically concentrated in a unique point of space, seated on horseback, while his imperious thought roams and radiates over the entire world' – a vast mind, vast strength, a great bully crushing men and things with its mailed fist. This is Hegel's conception of objective history.

What is one to say about this? One can say only that this curious identification of what is good and what is successful is

precisely what the average human being rejects. It is not what we mean by the good and the right. It is impossible to say to us that merely to pit oneself against superior force is in itself immoral. Hegel does not think it is immoral if you are ultimately going to win, if the martyr of today is the hero and the lawgiver and the dictator of tomorrow; but he thinks that to be good and to be successful, in the ultimate, vast, world-historical sense, are identical. This kind of political pragmatism, this kind of success-worship, revolts our normal moral feelings; and there is no genuine argument in Hegel which is really effective against that revulsion. It is merely that in Hegel's vision there is a vast coherent spectacle of history, with which he identifies his own worship of what are for him true values. True values for him are those which are effective; history is the big battalions, marching down a broad avenue, with all the unfulfilled possibilities, all the martyrs and visionaries, wiped out; and morality is really a specific form of bowing before the facts.

This identification of what works with what is good, of what is right with what succeeds, with that which crushes resistance, with that which deserves to crush resistance – this is the sure hallmark of the Hegelian system, whenever it is applied to politics. An unsuccessful rebellion is always bad. That is why it is not perhaps very surprising that he should have approved of the censorship decrees by which Metternich controlled the right to free speech in German universities, nor that he should have been sent for to Berlin by the King of Prussia, who certainly had no desire for any liberal in that particular post at that particular time.

Yet we must not be unfair to Hegel. He did a very great deal for the advance of civilisation. Almost single-handed he created institutional history. Although Herder and even Vico had adumbrated it, it was Hegel who impressed this truth vividly upon the imagination of his generation: that human history was the history of institutions at least as much as the history of kings, generals, adventurers, conquerors, lawgivers. Moreover it was

really he who made it plain that what people looked for in history was the individual and the unique, not the general, and that in this respect history was deeply and genuinely different from the natural sciences. Hegel's remarks on the natural sciences are often ludicrous – both ignorant and grotesquely dogmatic. But he did show great insight in conveying the idea that the natural sciences always search for that which is common to all the objects under observation, so that by finding what is uniform in many different things, atoms, tables, elephants, earthquakes, they can formulate laws which apply to an infinite number of similar instances of atoms, tables and the rest. Yet this is the last thing that one seeks from history.

When I read about Robespierre or Napoleon, I do not wish to be told what it is that Napoleon had in common with all other adventurers or with all other emperors; I do not wish to know exactly how Robespierre resembled all other lawyers and revolutionaries. What I wish to discover is that which is uniquely important about and characteristic of these two men. I want Robespierre and his life and character and acts 'brought to life' before me in their unique individuality. When I read about the French Revolution or the Renaissance, I am interested only in a minor way in what these great episodes of human civilisation had in common with developments in Babylon or among the Aztecs. This may be of interest to sociologists, it may indeed be intrinsically illuminating, but the business of historians is to convey differences more than similarities, to paint a portrait of a unique, absolutely specific set of events and persons – a portrait and not an X-ray.

Hegel applied this notion to institutions as well as to individuals. Certainly nobody before the nineteenth century conceived it possible to write the biography of an army, of a civil service, of a religious development. Hegel's treatment of history as if it were the self-development of a vast and infinite world spirit contributed greatly, for all its mythology and darkness, to the rise

of a new history, the history of the interconnection of all things. Perhaps Hegel's most original achievement was to invent the very idea of the history of thought: for certainly nobody before him had written, or conceived it possible to write, the history of philosophical or any other thought, not as a loose succession – first one sage and his system, then another – but as a continuous development of ideas from one generation of thinkers to the next, and intimately related to economic or social or other kinds of changes in a society or culture. All this is now so much taken for granted that Hegel's originality can scarcely be realised today.

Moreover, Hegel seemed to place immense stress on history and the value of history, and the fact that everything in it matters and nothing else matters at all. More emphatically even than Herder he spoke as if facts could not be clearly distinguished into the historically relevant and irrelevant; since the way in which people wear their clothes or eat their food, sail the seas or sing their songs, their handwriting, their accent, may be more illuminating than many of their more official acts – their wars, their treaties, their constitutions. There is no telling what may not be useful towards explaining the total process of history, in which this or that people played its part, appeared on the stage at its destined moment and duly left it after its hour had struck.

Hegel's attack upon the old moralising history which looked to the past mainly to learn about errors and vices, his condemnation of blame and praise, his invitation to rational men to identify themselves with the great moving forces as such, while they may have led to the worship of power, to a peculiarly brutal form of political realism, did also contribute to making all historical facts appear of equal and incalculable value. For the solution to all questions now seemed to lie in history – a priori history, it is true, and spiritual history, but still history. History was now as important in telling men how to live as theology once was. It was the new theodicy – the interpretation of the ways of God to men. And in this way it discredited eighteenth-century history, which classified

facts in terms of some subjective criterion of good and bad, and it weighted the scales in favour of that scrupulous factual history which treated all facts as being on the same level, and was prepared to look for them in the most unlikely corners. History was supremely important; everything in it deserved notice, for it might throw light by laying bare the essence of that unique network, that concatenation of elements which forms the individual personality, in this case the universe, of which men are elements and limbs.

Furthermore, Hegel drew attention to unconscious factors in history: the dark forces, the vast impersonal urges, what he liked to think of as the semi-conscious strivings of reason seeking to realise its being, but which we may call simply the half-unconscious forces, the occult psychological causes which we now think at least as important as the conscious intentions of generals or kings or violent revolutionaries. This too helped to de-personalise and, if I may put it so, de-moralise history.

There is a further respect in which Hegel's method is valuable, namely in its application to works of art, to the sense of artistic greatness and beauty, and to the aesthetic field generally. He thought he was reducing the confused language of the Romantics to something disciplined and rigorous. This was an illusion. The form acquired a specious kind of technicality but the content remained thoroughly dark. Despite all his efforts the concepts remain loose. All the Romantic terminology which he and other German metaphysicians and poets of this period employed – the notions of transcendence and integration, of inner conflict, of forces which at once destroy and fuse with and fertilise each other; the notion of a unity which is at once the purpose and the principle, the pattern and the goal, and the essence of something which is at the same time an entity and a process, a being and a becoming – all this, which has led to such vagueness, and often nonsense, when applied in logic or history or the sciences, has a unique part to play in describing the indescribable: beautiful objects, psychical processes, works of art.

Romantic terminology generally is best at describing not easily analysable experiences precisely because it is evocative, imprecise, indefinite, and has a rich vagueness of association and a rich use of imagery and metaphor. How are we to describe a poem, a symphony, an aesthetic experience of almost any kind? Perhaps it is best to say nothing: but if we wish to speak, then the lucid, intelligible public language used by really clear elegant thinkers such as Hume and Voltaire, or even Helvétius, is of little use here. In music, for example, it does sometimes make a kind of sense to speak of a dialectical growth – a tune which clashes with and flows into other musical phrases, leading to their mutual annihilation and yet not: also to their transcendence, to the integration of the conflicting forces into something richer and, if you like, higher, more perfect than the original ingredients. Here one can speak of the obscure semi-conscious growth of forces which burst out suddenly in some splendid, golden shower. The turbid and infinitely suggestive language of Hegel, and still more of other Romantic philosophers, of Schelling, the brothers Schlegel, Novalis, and indeed of Coleridge and to some degree of Carlyle, really does at moments penetrate by its use of musical and biological imagery to something like the heart of the creative process.

Such language can do something to convey the essence of what the development of a pattern is like, the impalpable yet very real interrelation of sounds and feeling – and even moral purposes – in a symphony, or an opera, or a Mass; and with a greater risk of clouding the issue, such a semi-poetical way of talking may give a far more vivid sense of the contours of a culture, of the ideals of a school of artists or philosophers, the attitude of a generation – something not to be analysed by the more precise, more logically coherent, more tough-minded terminology which alone, with its standards of integrity and scholarship, guarantees truth and clarity in fields amenable to more exact treatment. In literary criticism and in the history of art, in the history of ideas and the

analysis of civilisation, in every discipline in which there is poetry as well as prose, the Hegelian prescription – the thesis–antithesis method, the description of everything as perpetually passing into its opposite, as an unstable equilibrium of mutually conflicting forces – genuinely transformed both the European sensibility and its modes of expression.

Hegel's real error was to suppose that the whole of the universe – everything – was a kind of work of art which was creating itself, and therefore that this kind of half-biological, half-musical terminology was what described it best. As a result he imposed upon mankind a great many erroneous views; for example, that values were identical with facts, and that what was good was what was successful – which all morally sensitive persons, long before and after his day, have rejected, and rightly rejected. His great crime was to have created an enormous mythology in which the State is a person, and history is a person, and there is the one single pattern which metaphysical insight alone can discern. He created a school of a priori history which ignored the ordinary facts because the philosopher, armed with superior insight, can deduce what happens by a species of rational double vision, a kind of clairvoyance which enables him to tell in a mathematically certain way what has occurred, as opposed to the sadly empirical, imperfect, fussy way in which the ordinary historian has to proceed.

In spite of all his vices Hegel created an immense system which for a long time dominated the minds of mankind. As for liberty, there can be none in a tight pattern. There can be no liberty where obedience to the pattern is the only true self-expression, where what you call liberty is not the possibility of acting within some kind of vacuum, however small, which is left for your own personal choice, in which you are not interfered with by others. Hegelian liberty simply consists of conquest or possession of that which obstructs you, until you have conquered and possessed everything, and then you are identical with the

master of the universe. Until you have done that, the best that you can do is to try to understand why you must be as you must be, and instead of groaning and moaning and complaining about the appalling burdens upon you, welcome them joyously. But the joyous welcome of burdens is not liberty.

There have always been people who have wanted to be secure in some tight establishment, to find their rightful secure place in some rigid system, rather than to be free. To such people Hegel says a word of comfort. Nevertheless, fundamentally this is a vast confusion, a historically fatal identification of liberty, as we understand it, with security – the sense of belonging to some unique place where you are protected against obstacles because you can foresee them all. But that is not what we call liberty: maybe it is a form of wisdom, of understanding, of loyalty, of happiness, of holiness. The essence of liberty has always lain in the ability to choose as you wish to choose, because you wish so to choose, uncoerced, unbullied, not swallowed up in some vast system; and in the right to resist, to be unpopular, to stand up for your convictions merely because they are your convictions. That is true freedom, and without it there is neither freedom of any kind, nor even the illusion of it.