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IV.—THE CHANGES OF METHOD IN HEGEL'S DIALECTIC. (I.)

By J. ELLIS MCTAGGART.

MY object in this essay will be to show that the method by which Hegel proceeds from one category to another in his logic is not the same throughout, but is materially different in the later categories from the form to be found in the earlier stages. I shall endeavour to show that these changes can be reduced to a general law, and that from this law we may derive important consequences with regard to the general nature and validity of the dialectic.

The exact relations of these corollaries to Hegel's own views is rather uncertain. Some of them do not appear to be denied in any part of the logic, and, since they are apparently involved in some of his theories, may be supposed to have been recognised and accepted by him. On the other hand, he did not explicitly state and develop them anywhere, which, in the case of doctrines of such importance, is some reason for supposing that he did not hold them. Others, again, are certainly incompatible with his express statements. I desire, therefore, in considering them to leave on one side the question of how far they were believed by Hegel, and merely to give reasons for thinking that they are necessary consequences of his system, and must be accepted by those who hold it.

The passage in which Hegel sums up his position on this point most plainly is to be found in the *Smaller Logic*, Section 240, and runs as follows: "The abstract form of the continuation or advance is, in Being, another (or anti-thesis) and transition into another; in the Essence, showing or reflexion in its opposite; in the Notion, the distinction of the individual from the universality, which continues itself as such into, and forms an identity with, what is distinguished from it".

The difference between the procedure of Being and that of Essence is given in more detail in Section 3, lecture note. "In the Sphere of Essence one category does not pass into another, but refers to another merely. In Being the form of reference or connexion is purely a matter of our own reflexion: but it is the special and proper characteristic of

Essence. In the Sphere of Being, when somewhat becomes another, the somewhat has vanished. Not so in Essence: here there is no real other, but only diversity, the reference of one category to its antithesis. The transition of Essence is therefore at the same time no transition; for in the passage of different into different, the different does not vanish: the different terms remain in their connexion. When we speak of Being and Nought, Being is independent, so is Nought. The case is otherwise with the Positive and the Negative. No doubt these possess the characteristics of Being and Nought. But the positive by itself has no sense; its whole being is in reference to the negative. It is the same with the negative. In the Sphere of Being the reference of one term to the other is only implicit; in Essence, on the contrary, it is explicitly stated. And this in general is the distinction between the forms of Being and Essence: in Being everything is immediate, in Essence everything is relative."

And again, in describing the transition from Essence to the Notion, he says (*Enc.* Section 161, lecture note): "Transition into something else is the dialectical process within the range of Being; reflexion (bringing something else into light) in the range of Essence. The movement of the Notion is development; by which that only is explicitly affirmed which is already naturally and properly speaking present. In the world of nature, it is organic life that corresponds to the grade of the notion. Thus, *e.g.*, the plant is developed from its seed. The seed virtually involves the whole plant, but does so only ideally or in thought; and it would therefore be a mistake to regard the development of the root, stem, leaves, and other different parts of the plant as meaning that they were realiter present, but in a minute form, in the germ. That is the so-called 'box-within-box' hypothesis; a theory which commits the mistake of supposing an actual existence of what is at first found only in the shape of an ideal. The truth of the hypothesis on the other hand lies in its perceiving that, in the process of development, the Notion keeps to itself, and only gives rise to alteration of form without making any addition in point of content. It is this nature of the Notion—this manifestation of itself in its process as a development of its own self—which is the point noted by those who speak of innate ideas in men, or who, like Plato, describe knowledge merely as reminiscence. Of course that again does not mean that everything which is embodied in a mind, after that mind has been formed by instruction, had been present to it beforehand in a definitely expanded shape.

“The movement of the Notion is after all a sort of illusion. The antithesis which it lays down is no real antithesis. Or, as it is expressed in the teaching of Christianity, not merely has God created a world which forms a kind of antithesis to Him; He has also from all Eternity begotten a Son, in whom He, a spirit, is at home with Himself.”

2. The result of this process may be summed up as follows : The further the dialectic goes from its starting-point the less prominent becomes the apparent stability of the individual finite categories, and the less do they seem to be self-centred and independent. On the other hand, the process itself becomes more evident and obvious, and is seen to be the only real meaning of the lower categories. In Being each category appears, taken by itself, to be permanent and exclusive of all others, and to have no principle of transition in it. It is only outside reflexion which examines and breaks down this pretence of stability, and shows us that the dialectic process is inevitable. In Essence, however, each category by its own import refers to that which follows it, and the transition is seen to be inherent in its nature. But it is still felt to be, as it were, only an external effect of that nature. The categories have still an inner nature, as compared with the outer relations which they have with other categories. So far as they have this inner nature, they are still conceived as independent and self-centred. But with the passage into the Notion things alter; that passage “is the very hardest, because it proposes that independent actuality shall be thought as having all its substantiality in the passage, and in the identity with the independent actuality confronting it”. (*Enc.* Section 159.) Not only is the transition now necessary to the categories, but the transition *is* the categories. The reality in any finite category consists only in its summing up those which went before, and in leading on to those which come after.

Correlative with this change, and connected with it, is another. In the categories of Being the typical form is a transition from a thesis to an antithesis which is merely complementary to it, and is in no way superior to it in value or comprehensiveness. Only when these two extremes are taken together is there for the first time any advance to a higher Notion. This advance is a transition to a synthesis which comes as a consequence of the thesis and antithesis jointly. It would be impossible to obtain the synthesis, or to make any advance, from either of the two complementary terms without the other. Neither is in any respect more advanced than the other, and neither of them can be said to

be more closely connected with the term in which both of them alike find their explanation and reconciliation. But when we come to Essence the matter is changed. Here the transition from thesis to antithesis is still indeed from positive to negative, but it is more than merely this. The antithesis is not merely complementary to the thesis, but is a correction of it. It is consequently more concrete and true than the thesis and represents a real advance. And the transition to the synthesis is not made so much from the comparison of the two previous terms, as from the antithesis alone. For the antithesis has not merely the contrary defect to the thesis, but it has to some extent corrected the mistake, and therefore has—to use the Hegelian phraseology—“the truth” of the thesis more or less within itself. As the action of the synthesis is to reconcile the thesis and the antithesis, it can only be deduced from the comparison of the two. But if the antithesis has—as it has in Essence—the thesis as part of its own significance, it will present the whole of the data which the synthesis requires, and it will not be necessary to recur to the thesis, before the step to the synthesis is taken.

But although the reconciliation can be inferred from one term of the pair without the other, a reconciliation is still necessary. For, although the antithesis is an advance upon the thesis, it is also opposed to it. It is not simply a completion of it, but also a denial, though a denial which is already an approximation to a union. This element of opposition and negation tends to disappear in the categories of the Notion. Here the steps are indeed discriminated from one another, but they can scarcely be said to be in opposition. For we have now arrived at a consciousness more or less explicit that in each category all that have gone before are summed up, and all that are to come after are contained implicitly. “The movement of the Notion is after all a kind of illusion. The antithesis which it lays down is no real antithesis.” And, as a consequence, the synthesis merely completes the antithesis, without correcting one-sidedness in it, in the same way as the antithesis merely expands and completes the thesis. As this type is realised, in fact, the distinctions of the three terms gradually lose their meaning. There is no longer an opposition produced between two terms and mediated by a third. Each term is a direct advance on the one before it. The object of the process is not now to make the one-sided complete, but the implicit explicit. For we have reached a stage when each side carries in it already more or less con-

sciousness of that unity of the whole which is the synthesis, and requires development rather than refutation.

That these changes should accompany the one previously mentioned is natural. For, as it is gradually seen that each category, of its own nature, and not by mere outside reflexion on it, leads on to the next, that next will have inherent in it its relation to the first. It will not only be the negation of the first, but it will know itself to be such. It will not only be the complement of the thesis, but it will be aware that it is a complement, and will know what it is that it completes. In so far as it does this, it will be higher than the thesis. For, although each category will see that it is essential to it that it should be connected with the other, this can do nothing in the thesis but give a general character of transitoriness to it, for it only knows that it is connected with something, but does not yet know with what. But the antithesis knows with what it is connected, for we have already passed through the thesis before we can reach it, and it is through the thesis that we have come to it. And to know that it is inseparably connected with its opposite, and defined by its relation to it, is an important step towards the reconciliation of the opposition. *À fortiori* the greater clearness and ease of the transition will have this effect in the case of the Notion. For there we see that the whole meaning of the category lies in its passage to another. The second, therefore, has the whole meaning of the first in it, as well as the addition that has been made, and must therefore be higher than the first.

From this follows the different relation to the synthesis. For the result of the more or less complete inclusion of the thesis in the meaning of the antithesis is, as we have seen, the possibility of finding all the data required for the synthesis in the antithesis alone, while the completely successful absorption of each term in its successor tends to obliterate the triple distinction altogether, in which case each term would be a simple advance on the one below it, and would be deduced from that one only.

While Hegel expressly notices, as we have seen, the increasing freedom and directness of the dialectic movement, he makes no mention of the different relation to one another assumed by the various members of the process, which I have just indicated. Traces of the change may, however, be observed in the detail of the dialectic. The three most significant triads to examine for this purpose will be the first in the division of Being, the middle one in the division of Essence, and the last one in the division of the Notion.

For, if there is any change within each of these three great divisions (a point we must presently consider) the special characteristics of each division will be shown most clearly at that point in which it is at the greatest distance from each of the other divisions. The triads in question are those of Being, Not-Being, and Becoming; of the World of Appearance, Content and Form, and Ratio; and of Life, Cognition, and the Absolute Idea.

Now, in the first of these, thesis and antithesis are on an absolute level. Not-Being is no higher than Being: it does not contain Being in any sense in which Being does not contain it, it is as easy to pass from Not-Being to Being as *vice versâ*. And Not-Being by itself is helpless to produce Becoming—as helpless as Being is. The synthesis can only come from the conjunction of both of them. On the other hand, the idea of Content and Form, according to Hegel, is a distinct advance on the idea of the World of Appearance, since in it “the connexion of the phenomenon with self is completely stated”. Ratio, again, although the synthesis of the two previous terms, is deduced from the second of them alone, while it could not be deduced from the first. It is the relation of form and content to one another which leads us on to the other relation which is called Ratio. (*Enc.* Section 134.) And, again, the idea of Cognition is a distinct advance upon the idea of Life, since the defect in the latter from which Hegel explains the existence of death is overcome as we pass to cognition. And it is from Cognition alone, without any reference back to Life, that we reach to the Absolute Idea, which is derived from the consideration of the perfect form of Cognition proper and of the perfect form of Volition—which latter also forms part of the antithesis, under the general name of Cognition.

3. Another point arises, on which we shall find but little guidance in Hegel's own writings. To each of the three great divisions of the dialectic he has ascribed a peculiar variation of the method. Are we to understand that one variety changes into another suddenly at the transition from division to division, or is the change continuous, so that, while the typical forms of each division are strongly characterised, the difference between the last step in one and the first step in the next is no greater than the difference between two consecutive steps in the same division? Shall we find the best analogy in the distinction between water and steam,—a qualitative difference suddenly brought about when a quantitative change has reached a certain point, or in the distinction between youth and manhood, which at

their most characteristic points are clearly distinct, but which pass into one another imperceptibly?

On this point Hegel says nothing. Possibly it had never presented itself to his mind. But it seems to me that traces may be observed throughout his logic which may lead us to believe that the change of method is gradual and continuous.

In the first place, we may notice that the absolutely pure type of the process in Being occurs in the first triad only. Being and Not-Being are on a level. But if we compare Being *an sich* with Being for another, the One with the Many, mere Quantity with Quantum, the Infinite Quantitative Progression with the Quantitative Relation, and the Rule with the Measureless, we observe that the second category is higher than the first in each pair, and that it is not merely the complement of the first, but to a certain degree transcends it. And the inherent relation of thesis to antithesis seems to develop more as we pass on, so that before Essence is reached its characteristics are already to some measure visible, and the mere passivity and finitude of Being itself is broken down.

If, again, we compare the first and last stages of Essence, we shall find that the first approximates to the type of Being, while the last comes fairly close to that of the Notion, by substituting the idea of development for that of the reconciliation of contradictions. Difference, as treated by Hegel, is certainly an advance on Identity, and not a mere opposite, but there is still a good deal of opposition between the terms. The advance is shown by the fact that Difference contains Likeness and Unlikeness within itself (*Enc.* Section 117), while the opposition of the two categories is clear, not only in common usage, but from the fact that the synthesis has to reconcile them, and balance their various deficiencies. But when we reach Substance and Causality we find that the notion of contradiction has almost vanished, and that the notion of development has taken its place nearly as completely as could happen if we were already in the sphere of the Notion.

So, finally, the special features of the dialectic in the Notion are not fully exhibited till we come to its last stage. In the transition from the Notion as Notion to the Judgment, and from the Judgment to the Syllogism, we have not entirely rid ourselves of the elements of opposition and negation. It is not till we reach the concluding triad of the Logic that we are able fully to see the typical progress of the Notion. In the transition from Life to Cognition, and from Cognition to the Absolute Idea, we perceive that the

movement is all but completely direct, that the whole is seen as in each part, and that there is no longer a contest, but only a development.

4. Much weight, however, cannot be placed on all this, partly because of the extreme difficulty of comparing, quantitatively and exactly, shades of difference so slight and subtle, and partly because Hegel nowhere explicitly mentions any continuous process, and there is therefore some ground for supposing that the continuity, if it existed, had escaped his notice. But the fact that some traces of such a continuous development are found in his logic may be some additional support, if we are able to conclude that such a development would, in a correct dialectic, be continuous.

Before we consider this question we must first inquire whether the existence of such a development of method of any sort, whether continuous or not, might be expected from the nature of the case. We shall see that there are reasons for supposing this to be so, when we remember what we must regard as the essence of the dialectic. The motive power of the whole process is the concrete absolute truth, from which all finite categories are mere abstractions, and to which they spontaneously tend to return. Again, two contradictory ideas cannot be held true at the same time. If it ever seems inevitable that they should be, this is a sign of error somewhere, and we cannot feel satisfied with the result, until we have transcended and synthesised the contradiction. It follows that in so far as the finite categories announce themselves as permanent, and as opposed in pairs of unsynthesised contradictories, they are expressing falsehood and not truth. We gain the truth by transcending the contradictions of the categories and by demonstrating their instability. Now the change in the method, of which we are speaking, indicates a clearer perception of the truth. For we have seen that it becomes more spontaneous, and more direct. As it becomes more spontaneous, as each category is seen to lead on of its own nature to the next, and to have its meaning only in the transition, it brings out more fully what lies at the root of the whole dialectic—that truth, namely, lies only in the synthesis. And as the process becomes more direct and leaves the opposition and negation behind, it also brings out more clearly what is an essential fact in every stage of the dialectic,—that is, that the impulse of our imperfect truth is not towards self-denial as such, but towards self-completion. The essential nature of the whole dialectic is thus more clearly seen in the later stages, which approximate to the type of the Notion,

than in the earlier stages, which approximate to the type of Being.

This is what we might expect *a priori*. For the content of each stage in the dialectic is nearer to the truth than that of the stage before it. And each stage forms the starting-point and the premise from which we go forward again to further truth. And, therefore, as at each step in the forward process we have a fuller knowledge of the truth than at the last, it is only natural that that fuller knowledge should react upon the manner in which the step is made. The dialectic is due to the relation between the concrete whole, implicit in consciousness, and the abstract part, explicit in consciousness. Since the second element alters at each step, as the categories approximate to the complete truth, it is clear that the relation between it and the unchanging whole alters also, and this must affect the process. Just as the velocity of a falling body increases, because (among other reasons) each moment brings it nearer the attracting body, and increases the power of the attraction, so every step which we take towards the full truth renders it possible to proceed more easily and more directly to the next step.

Even without considering the special circumstance that each step in the process will give us this deeper insight into the meaning of the work we are carrying on, we might find other reasons for supposing that the nature of the dialectic process is modified by use. For the conception of an agent which is purely active, acting on a material which is purely passive, is a mere abstraction, and finds a place nowhere in reality. Even in dealing with physical examples we find this. An axe has not the same effect at its second blow as at its first, for it is more or less blunted. A violin has not the same tone the second time it is played on as the first. And a conception which is inadequate even to the relations of matter must be still more unfit for application to mind when engaged on its most characteristic task. Here least of all could a rigid distinction be kept up between form and matter, between instrument and materials.

And these arguments for the existence of change in the method are also arguments for supposing that the change will be continuous. There is reason to expect a change in the method whenever we have advanced a step towards truth. But we advance towards truth, not only when we pass from one chief division of the logic to another, but whenever we pass from category to category, however minute a subdivision of the process they may represent. It would therefore seem that a change in method is to be

expected after each category, and that no two transitions throughout the dialectic present quite the same type. However continuous the change of conclusions can be made, the change of result must be equally continuous.

Besides this, we may observe that the change of method is connected with the change from one to the other of the three great divisions of the dialectic, which respectively form the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis of an all-comprehensive triad. It is thus the change from thesis to antithesis, from antithesis to synthesis, or from synthesis to a fresh thesis, which is accompanied by a change of method. But the dialectic within each of the three stages, Being, Essence, and the Notion, is not looked upon as a continuous flow of thought, but is broken up again into subordinate triads, and these are again broken up into others which are still lower. Wherever the observation of thought and its consequent division are carried closer than before, we find that it takes place only by the discovery within each member of a triad of a fresh subordinate triad, and this only ceases when we have reached the furthest point of minuteness to which we are able or willing to carry our scrutiny. Consequently the change in method which is caused by a transition from member to member of the dialectic must occur, not twice only in the whole system, but wherever any step in thought is made, however minute that step may be. Whether it is or is not correct to ascribe the change in method to the increasing truth and adequacy of each category, it cannot be doubted that in some way or other they are concomitant, and as the one has many gradations in each of the three largest divisions, we have an additional reason for supposing that such gradations may also be found in the other.

5. We may, therefore, I think, fairly arrive at the conclusion, in the first place, that the dialectic process does and must undergo a progressive change, and, in the second place, that that change is as much continuous as the process of the dialectic itself. Another question now arises: Has this change in the method destroyed its validity? The ordinary proofs relate only to characteristic of Being, which, as we have now found reason to believe, is only found in its purity in the very first triad of all. Does the gradual change to the types characteristic of Essence and the Notion make any difference in the justification of the method as a whole?

It would seem that it does not do so, because the force of the process is the same throughout. It consisted, in the first division of the Logic, of a search for completeness, and of a search for harmony between the elements of that com-

pleteness, and these two stages are separate. Later on we have the same search for completeness and harmony, but they are combined in a single operation. In Being, the inadequacy of the thesis led on to the antithesis. Each of these ideas was regarded as an immediate and self-centred whole. On the other hand each of them implied the other, since they were complementary and opposite sides of the truth. This brought about a contradiction, which had to be reconciled by the introduction of the synthesis. Now the change in the process has the effect of discarding the intermediate stage in which the two sides of the whole are viewed as incompatible and yet inseparably connected. For in the stage of Essence each category has a reference in its own nature to those which come before and after it. So far as the thesis refers to the antithesis which has not yet been reached, this is a reference to the as yet unknown, and does not much extend the positive content of the idea. But with the antithesis, in its reference to the thesis, which is already known, the thing is different. We have here a sort of anticipation of the synthesis, in the recognition that the two sides are connected by their own nature, and not merely by external reasoning. The result of this is that the harmony is, to a certain extent, given by the same step which gives us the completeness, and ceases to require a separate process. For when we have seen that the categories are essentially connected, we have gone a good way towards the perception that they are not incompatible. The harmony thus attained in the antithesis is, however, merely partial, and leaves a good deal for the synthesis to do. In the Notion, the change is carried farther. Here we have the perception that the whole meaning of the category resides in the transition, and the whole thesis is really summed up in the antithesis, for the meaning of the thesis is thus only the production of the antithesis, and it is therefore summed up and transcended in the latter. In fact the relation of thesis, antithesis and synthesis would actually disappear in the typical form of the process as exhibited in the Notion, for each term would be the completion of that which was immediately before it, since all the reality of the latter would be seen to be in its transition to its successor. That this never actually happens, even in the final triad of the whole system, is due to the fact that the characteristic type of the Notion, as the last stage of the dialectic, represents the process as it would be when it started from a perfectly adequate premise. When however the premise, the explicit idea in the mind, became perfectly adequate and true, we should have rendered ex-

PLICIT the whole concrete idea, and the object of the dialectic process would be attained, so that it could go no further. The typical process of the Notion is therefore an ideal, to which the process approximates more and more closely throughout its course, but which it can only reach at the moment when it stops completed.

Thus it will be seen that the change may be expressed as the gradual disappearance of the explicit synthesis from without of two complementary truths which apart from that synthesis would be contradictory. This disappearance is due to the fact that the terms are gradually seen with greater and greater clearness, only to exist, first if related to one another, and then as related to one another, and consequently to carry their synthesis and harmony in themselves. No element in the original process is left out, and no fresh one introduced, but the two operations which had at first to be performed independently, and almost, as it were, in opposition to one another, the second destroying the contradictions which it seemed the chief result of the first to produce, are now seen to be inherently connected. If, therefore, any proof which may be given of the validity of the dialectic method in its earlier stages be correct, we are entitled to say that for the same reasons it is valid through all its changing forms.

6. From this change in the method some very important inferences may be drawn. The first of these is one which we may fairly attribute to Hegel himself, because, although he does not explicitly mention it anywhere, yet it is clear from the deduction of the categories as given by him. This is the subordinate place held by negation in the whole process. Independently of this change we could observe that the importance of negation in the dialectic is by no means primary. In the first place, Hegel's logic is very far from resting, as is supposed by some people, on the violation of the law of contradiction. It rather rests on the impossibility of violating that law, on the necessity of finding, for every contradiction, a reconciliation in which it vanishes. And not only is the idea of negation destined always to vanish in the synthesis, but even its temporary introduction is an accident, though an inevitable accident. The motive force of the process lies in the discrepancy between the concrete and perfect idea implicitly in our own minds, and the abstract and imperfect idea explicitly in our minds, and the essential characteristic of the process is in the search of this abstract and imperfect, not after its negation as such, but after its complement as such. It happens

that its complement was also its contrary, because it happens that a concrete whole is always analysable into two direct contraries, and therefore the process always does go from an idea to its contrary. But it does not go to it because it seeks denial, but because it seeks completion.

But this can now be carried still further. Not only is the presence of negation in the dialectic a mere accident, though a necessary one, of the gradual completion of the idea. We are now led to consider it as an accident which is necessary indeed in the lower stages of the dialectic, but which is gradually eliminated in proportion as we proceed further, and in proportion as the materials from which we start are of a concrete and adequate character. For in so far as the process ceases to be from one extreme to another extreme equally one-sided, both of which regard themselves as permanent and as standing in a relation of opposition towards one another, and in so far as it becomes a process from one term to another which is recognised as in some degree mediated by the first, and as transcending it,—in so far as the negation of each category by the other disappears. For it is then recognised that in the second category there is no contradiction to the first, because, inasmuch as the change has been completed, the first is found to have its meaning in the transition to the second.

The presence of negation, therefore, is not only a mere accident of the dialectic, but not even an invariable accident. Its presence, when it does occur, is indeed necessary, but it vanishes as the process goes further, and the subject-matter is more fully understood. It has, therefore, no inherent connexion with the dialectic at all, since its introduction is due to our misapprehension, in the lower categories, of the true nature of the movement.

7. Here, however, we come upon a fresh question, and one of very great importance. We have seen that in the dialectic the relation of the various finite ideas to one another in different parts of the process is not the same—the three ideas of Being, Not-Being, and Becoming standing in different relations among themselves to those which connect Life, Cognition, and the Absolute Idea. Now the dialectic process professes to do more than merely to describe the stages by which we mount to the Absolute Idea—it also describes the nature of that idea itself. In addition to the information which we gain about the latter by the definition given of it at the end of the dialectic, we also know that it contains in itself as elements or aspects all the finite stages of thought, through which the dialectic

has passed before reaching its goal. It is not something which the dialectic reaches, and which then exists independently of the manner in which it was attained. It does not kick down the ladder by which we mount to it. It pronounces the various finite categories to be partly false and partly true, and it sums up in itself the truth of all of them. They are thus contained in it as moments. What relation do these moments bear to one another in the Absolute Idea?

We may, in the first place, adopt the easy and simple solution of saying that the relation they bear to one another as moments in the Absolute Idea is just the same as that which they bear to one another as finite categories in the dialectic process. In this case to discover their position in the Absolute Idea it is only necessary to consider the dialectic process, not as one which takes place in time, but as having a merely logical import. The process contemplated in this way will be a perfect and complete analysis of the concrete idea which is its end, containing about it the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And this, apparently, would have been Hegel's answer, if the question had been explicitly presented to him, which does not appear to be the case. For he asserts, clearly and undoubtedly, that the dialectic expresses the deepest nature of objective thought.

But this conclusion seems open to doubt. For the change of method results, as we have seen, from a gradually growing perception of the truth which is at the bottom of the whole dialectic,—the unreality of any finite category against its synthesis, since the truth and reality of each category consists only in its reference to the next, and in its passage onwards to it. If this was not true all through the dialectic, there could be no dialectic at all, for the justification of the whole process is that the truth of the thesis and the antithesis is contained in the synthesis, and that in so far as they are anything else but aspects of the synthesis they are false and deceptive. This, then, is and must be the true nature of the process of thought forwards, and must constitute the real meaning and essence of the dialectic. Yet this is only explicitly perceived in the Notion, and at the end of the Notion—or rather, as I said above, is never completely perceived, but is only an ideal to which we approximate as our grasp of the subject increases. Before this the categories appear always as in their own nature permanent and self-centred, and the breaking down of this self-assertion; and the substitution for it of the

perception that truth is only found in the synthesis, appears as opposed to what went before, and as in contradiction to it, although a necessary and inevitable consequence of it. But if this was really so the dialectic process would be impossible. If there really was any independent element in the lower categories, or any externality in the reconciliation, that reconciliation could never be complete and the dialectic could never claim, as it does undoubtedly claim, to sum up *all* the lower elements of truth.

The very existence of the dialectic thus tends to prove that it is not in every sense objectively correct. For it would be impossible for any transition to be made, at any point in the process, unless the terms were really related according to the type belonging to the Notion. But no transition in the dialectic does take place exactly according to that type, and most of them according to types substantially different. We must therefore suppose that the dialectic does not exactly represent the truth, since if the truth was as it represents it to be, the dialectic itself could not exist. There must be in the process, besides that element which actually does express the real notion of the transition, another element which is due to our own subjective mistake about the character of the reality which we are trying to describe.

This agrees with what was said above—that the change of method is no real change, but only a rearrangement of the elements of the transition. It is, in fact, only a bringing out explicitly of what is implicitly involved all along. In the lower categories our data, with their false appearance of independence, obscure and confuse the true meaning of the dialectic. We can see that the dialectic *has* this true meaning, even among these lower categories, by reflecting on what is implied in its existing and succeeding at all. But it is only in the later categories that it becomes explicit. And it must follow that those categories in which it is not yet explicit do not fully represent the true nature of thought, and the essential character of the transition from less perfect to more perfect forms.

The conclusion at which we are thus compelled to arrive must be admitted, I think, to be quite un-Hegelian. Hegel would certainly have admitted that the lower categories, regarded in themselves, gave views of reality only approximating, and, in the case of the lowest, only very slightly approximating, to truth. But the procession of the categories, with its advance through oppositions and reconciliations, he apparently regarded as presenting absolute truth—

as fully expressing the deepest nature of pure thought. From this, if I am right, we are forced, on his own premises, to dissent. For the true process of thought is one in which each category springs out of the one before it, and not by contradicting it, but as the expression of its deepest nature, while it, in its turn, is seen to have its deepest reality in again passing on to the one after it. There is no contradiction, no opposition, and consequently no reconciliation. There is only development, the rendering explicit what was implicit, the growth of the seed to the plant. In the actual course of the dialectic this is never attained. It is an ideal which is never quite realised, and from the nature of the case never can be quite realised. In the dialectic there is always opposition, and therefore always reconciliation. We do not go straight onward, but more or less from side to side. It seems inevitable, therefore, to conclude that the dialectic does not completely and perfectly express the nature of thought. I shall next endeavour to consider the further consequences of this admission.