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

By J. ELLIS MCTAGGART.

THE conclusion at which we arrived at the end of the first part of this article—namely, that the dialectic, even if we assume its validity, does not completely and perfectly express the nature of thought—is startling and paradoxical. For the validity of the dialectic method at all, and its power of adequately expressing the ultimate nature of thought, are so closely bound up together, that they may well appear at first sight to be inseparable. The dialectic process is a distinctively Hegelian idea. Doubtless the germs of it are to be found in Fichte and others; but it was only by Hegel that it was fully worked out and made the central point of a philosophy. And in so far as it has been held since, it has been held substantially in the manner in which he stated it. To retain the doctrine, and to retain the idea that it is of cardinal importance while denying that it adequately represents the nature of thought, appears to be a most unwarranted and gratuitous choice between ideas which their author held to be inseparable.

Yet I cannot see what alternative is left to us. For it is Hegel himself who refutes his own doctrine. The state to which the dialectic, according to him, gradually approximates is one in which the terms thesis, antithesis, and synthesis can have no meaning. For in this state there is no opposition to create the relation of thesis and antithesis, and, therefore, no reconciliation of that opposition to create a synthesis. "Whatever is distinguished is without more ado and at the same time declared to be identical, one with another, and with the whole." "The antithesis which the Motion lays down is no real antithesis." (*Enc.* section 161.) Now, nowhere in the dialectic do we entirely get rid of the relation of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, not even in the final triad of the process. The inference seems inevitable that the dialectic cannot fully represent, in any part of its movement, the real and essential nature of pure thought. The only thing to be done is to consider whether, with this all-important limitation, the process has any longer any real significance, and if so, how much.

Since the dialectic does, if the hypothesis I have advanced

be correct, represent the inevitable course our minds are logically bound to follow, when they attempt to deal with pure thought, while it does not adequately represent the nature of pure thought itself, it follows that it must be in some degree subjective. We have now to determine exactly the meaning to be applied to this rather ambiguous word in this connexion. On the one hand, it is clear that it is not subjective in the sense in which the word has been defined as meaning "that which is mine *or* yours". It is no mere empirical description or generalisation. For whatever we may hold with regard to the success or failure of the dialectic in apprehending the true nature of thought will not at all affect the question of its internal necessity and of its cogency for us. The dialectic is not an account of what men have thought or may think. It is a demonstration of what they must think, provided they wish to deal with Hegel's problem at all, and to deal with it consistently and truly.

On the other hand, we must now pronounce the dialectic process to be subjective in this sense—that it does not fully express the essential nature of thought, but obscures it more or less under particulars which are not essential. It may not seem very clear at first sight how we can distinguish between the necessary course of the mind when engaged in pure thought, which the dialectic method, according to this hypothesis, is admitted to be, and the essential nature of thought, which it is not allowed that it can express. What, it may be asked, is the essential nature of thought, except that course which it must and does take, whenever we think?

We must remember, however, that according to Hegel thought can only exist in its complete and concrete form—that is, as the Absolute Idea. The import of our thought may be, and of course often is, a judgment under some lower category, but our thought itself, as an existent fact, distinguished from the meaning it conveys, must be concrete and complete. For to stop at any category short of the complete whole involves a contradiction, and a contradiction is a sign of error. Now our judgments can be erroneous and often are, and so we can, and do, make judgments which involve a contradiction. But there is no intelligible meaning in saying that a fact is erroneous, and therefore, if we find a contradiction in any judgment, we know that it cannot be true of facts. It follows that, though it is unquestionably true that we can predicate *in* thought categories other than the highest, and even treat them as final, it is no less

certain that we cannot truly predicate *of* thought, any more than of any other reality, any category but the Absolute Idea.

This explains how it is possible for the actual and inevitable course of thought not to express fully and adequately its own nature. For thought may be erroneous or deceptive, when it is treating of thought, as much as when it is treating of any other reality. And it is possible that under certain circumstances the judgment expressed in our thoughts may be inevitably erroneous or deceptive. If these judgments have thought as their subject-matter we shall then have the position in question—that the necessary course of thought will fail to express properly its own nature.

It is, of course, the fact that we should never know that a particular judgment had expressed inadequately the nature of thought unless some other judgment afterwards corrected it, and enabled us to see where the mistake lay. It would be, therefore, meaningless to say that our judgments were always necessarily inadequate to the nature of thought. For if it were so, we could never find it out. But it is quite possible that, under given circumstances, our judgments may be inadequate to the nature of thought, and that we may detect this inadequacy by means of other judgments made under more favourable circumstances. And this is what I maintain with regard to the dialectic. When we are engaged in actually making the transitions from category to category, we are compelled to regard the process in a way which we afterwards see to be only partially correct, when, from the knowledge gained by the completion of the whole logic, we look back, and consider what is involved in its existing at all.

The mistake, as we have already noticed, consists in the fact that whereas the true process,—which forms the essence of the actual process in time, and which alone is preserved and summed up in the Absolute Idea,—is a direct process from one term which exists only in the transition to another, the actual process, on the other hand, is one from contradictory to contradictory, each of which is conceived as possessing some stability and independence. The reason of this mistake lies in the nature of the process, as one from error to truth. For while error remains in our conclusions, it must naturally affect our comprehension of the logical relations by which those conclusions are connected, and induce us to suppose them other than they are. In particular, it may be traced to the circumstance that the dialectic starts with the knowledge of the part, and from this works up to the knowledge of the whole. This method of procedure is

always inappropriate in anything of the nature of an organism. Now the reality denoted by the Absolute Idea is more than an organism. The Absolute Idea contains within itself the idea of organism, and transcends and completes it. The form of combination in the Absolute Idea is even more intimate and close than that of organism,—one in which the parts are still more indivisibly and essentially related to the whole. And here, therefore, even more than with organisms, will it be an inadequate and deceptive attempt if we endeavour to comprehend the whole from the stand-point of the part. And this is what the dialectic, as it progresses, must necessarily do. Consequently, not only are the lower categories of the dialectic inadequate except as mere moments of the Absolute Idea, but their relation to each other is not the relation which they have in the Absolute Idea, and consequently in all existence. These relations, in the dialectic, represent more or less the error through which the human mind is gradually attaining to the truth. They do not adequately represent the relations existing in the truth itself. To this extent, then, the dialectic is subjective.

9. And the dialectic is also to be called subjective because it not only fails to show clearly the true nature of thought, but, as we remarked above, does not fully express its own meaning—the meaning of the process forwards. For the real meaning of the advance, if it is to have any objective reality at all, if it is to be a necessary consequence of all attempts at deep and consistent thinking, must be the result of the nature of thought as it exists. Our several judgments on the nature of thought have not in themselves any power of leading us on from one of them to another. It is the relation of these judgments to the concrete whole of thought, incarnate in our minds and in all our experience, which creates the dialectic movement. Since this is so, it would seem that the real heart and kernel of the process is the movement of abstractions to rejoin the whole from which they have been separated, and that the essential part of this movement is that by which we are carried from the more abstract to the more concrete. This will be determined by the relations in which the finite categories stand to the concrete idea, when they are viewed as abstractions from it and aspects of it—the only sense in which they really exist. But the true relation of the abstractions to the concrete idea is, as we have already seen, that to which the dialectic method gradually approximates, but which it never reaches, and not that which it starts with and gradually, but never

entirely, discards. And so the dialectic advance has, mixed up with it, elements which do not really belong to the advance, nor to the essence of pure thought, but are merely due to our original ignorance about the latter, of which we only gradually get rid. For all that part of the actual advance in the dialectic, which is different from the advance according to the type characteristic of the Notion, has no share in the real meaning and value of the process, since it does not contribute to what alone makes that meaning and value, the restoration of the full and complete idea. What this element is we can learn by comparing the movement of the dialectic which is typical of Being with that which is typical of the Notion. It is the element of opposition and contradiction, the element of immediacy in the finite categories, and the negation by them of their antitheses, and (until forced, so to speak, into submission) of their syntheses. It is, so to speak, the transverse motion as opposed to the forward motion. The dialectic always moves onwards at an angle to the straight line which denotes advance in truth and concreteness. Starting unduly on one side of the truth, it oscillates to the other, and then corrects itself. Once more it finds that even in its corrected statement it is still one-sided, and again swings to the opposite extreme. It is in this indirect way alone that it advances. And the essence of the process is the advance alone. The whole point of the dialectic is its gradual attainment to the Absolute Idea. In so far, then, as the process is not direct advance to the absolute, it does not express the essence of the process only, but also the inevitable inadequacies of the human mind when considering a subject-matter which can only be fully understood when the consideration has been completed.

And, as was remarked above, it also fails to express its own meaning in another way. For the imperfect type of transition, which is never fully eliminated, represents the various categories as possessing some degree of independence and self-subsistence. If they really possessed this, they could not be completely absorbed in the syntheses, and the dialectic could not be successful. The fact that it is successful proves that it has not given a completely correct account of itself, and, for this reason also, it deserves to be called subjective, since it does not fully express the objective reality of thought.

Moreover, the method in the higher categories is described as making explicit that which was implicit lower down. Now the distinction between explicit and implicit is only that between what is completely and what is incompletely

understood. The peculiarities of the method in the lower categories, therefore, must be due to the subject being as yet not fully understood. This defect cannot attach to finite categories as moments of the Absolute Idea, for as such, being seen in the light of the whole, they must be fully understood. And the Absolute Idea, according to Hegel, is completely true, and adequate to express reality, and its composition cannot, therefore, be in any way due to our want of comprehension. Now, as we have seen, the essential part of the dialectic process depends on the relation of the finite categories to the Absolute Idea. The characteristics of method from which the dialectic gradually works itself free are, therefore, to be looked on only as necessary confusions of the human mind in beginning its investigations of the nature of pure thought. And as the dialectic never quite shakes itself free from these characteristics, it always retains some amount of the confusion, and can never, therefore, perfectly represent the true nature of thought.

10. Having decided that the dialectic is to this extent subjective, we have to consider how far this will reduce its cardinal significance in philosophy, or its practical importance. I do not see that it need do either. For all that results from this new position is that the dialectic is a process through error to truth. Now we knew this before. For on any theory of the dialectic it remains true that it sets out with inadequate ideas of the universe, and finally reaches adequate ideas. We now go further and say that the relation of these inadequate ideas to one another does not completely correspond to anything in the nature of things. But the general position is the same as before, that we gain the truth in the dialectic, but that the steps by which we reach it contain mistakes. We shall see that there is no essential difference between them in this respect if we consider in more detail in what the importance of the dialectic lies.

This importance is threefold. The first branch of it depends chiefly on the end being reached, and the second two chiefly on the means by which it is reached. The first of these lies in the conclusion that if we can predicate any category whatever of a thing, we are thereby entitled to predicate the Absolute Idea of it. Now we can predicate some category of everything whatever, and the Absolute Idea is simply the description in abstract terms of the human reason, or, in other words, the human spirit is the incarnation of the Absolute Idea. From this it follows that the mind could, if it only saw clearly enough, see itself in every-

thing. The importance of this conclusion is obvious. It gives the assurance of that harmony between ourselves and the world for which philosophy always seeks, and by which alone science, morality, and religion can be ultimately justified.

Hegel was entitled, on his own premises, to reach this conclusion by means of the dialectic. And the different view of the relation of the dialectic to reality, which I have ventured to put forward, does not at all affect the validity of the dialectic for this purpose. For the progress of the dialectic remains as necessary as before. The progress is indirect, and we have come to the conclusion that the indirectness of the advance is not in any way due to the essential nature of pure thought, but entirely to our own imperfect understanding of that nature. But the whole process is still necessary, and the direct advance is still essential. And all that we want to know is that the direct advance is necessary. We are only interested, for this particular purpose, in proving that from any possible stand-point we are bound in logical consistency to advance to the Absolute Idea. In this connexion it is not of the least importance what is the nature of the road we travel, provided that we must travel it, nor whether the steps express truth fully, provided that the final conclusion does so. Now the theory of the subjectivity of the dialectic process leaves the objectivity and adequacy of the result of the dialectic unimpaired. And therefore for this function the system is as well adapted as it ever was.

11. The second ground of the importance of the Hegelian logic consists in the information which it is able to give us about the world as it is here and now for us, who have not yet been able so clearly to interpret all phenomena as only to find our own most fundamental nature manifesting itself in them. As we see that certain categories are superior in concreteness and truth to others, since they come later in the chain and have transcended the meaning of their predecessors, we are able to say that certain methods of regarding the universe are more correct and significant than others. We are able to see that the idea of organism, for example, is a more fundamental explanation than the idea of causality, and one which we should prefer whenever we can apply it to the matter in hand.

Here also the value of the dialectic remains unimpaired. For whether it does or does not express the true nature of thought with complete correctness ; it certainly, according to this theory, does show the necessary and inevitable con-

nexion of our finite judgments with one another. The utility which we are now considering lies in the guide which the dialectic can give us to the relative validity and usefulness of these finite judgments. For it is only necessary to know their relations to one another, and to know that as the series goes further, it goes nearer to the truth. Both these things can be learnt from the dialectic. That it does not tell us the exact relations which subsist in reality is unimportant. For we are not here judging reality, but our own judgments about reality.

The third function of the dialectic process is certainly destroyed by the view of it as subjective which I have expressed. For Hegel the dialectic showed the relation of the categories to one another as moments in the Absolute Idea, and in reality. We are now forced to consider those moments as related in a way which is inadequately expressed by the relation of the categories to one another. We are not however deprived of anything essential to the completeness of the system by this. In the first place, we are still able to understand completely and adequately what the Absolute Idea is. For although one definition was given of it by which it was simply the whole series of the categories gathered into a whole, yet a more direct and independent one may also be found, by which it is described as "the notion of the idea to which the idea itself is the object"—as the mind which recognises itself in all things. Our inability to regard the process any longer as an adequate analysis of the Absolute Idea will not leave us in ignorance of what the Absolute Idea really is.

And, in the second place, we are not altogether left in the dark even as regards the analysis of the Absolute Idea. The dialectic, it is true, never fully reveals the true nature of thought which forms its secret spring, but it gives us data by which we can discount the necessary error. For the connexion of the categories resembles the true nature of thought (which is expressed in the typical transition of the Notion), more and more closely as it goes on, and at the end of the logic it differs from it only infinitesimally. By observing the type to which the dialectic method approximates throughout its course, we are thus enabled to tell what element in it is that which is due to the essential nature of thought. It is that element which is alone left when, in the typical movement of the Notion, we see how the dialectic would act if it could act with full self-consciousness. It is true that in the lower categories we can never see the transition according to this type, owing to the necessary con-

fusion of the subject-matter in so low a stage, which hides the true nature of the process to which the dialectic endeavours to approximate. But we can regard the movement of all the categories as compounded, in different proportions according to their position, of two forces, the force of opposition and negation, and the force of advance and completion, and we can say that the latter is due to the real nature of the advancing dialectical thought and the former to our misconceptions about it. In other words, the amount of error in the dialectic is inevitable, but it can be ascertained, and need not therefore introduce any doubt or scepticism into the conclusions to which the dialectic may lead us.

12. What then is this real and essential element in the advance of thought which is revealed, though never completely, in the dialectic? In the first place, it is an advance which is direct. The element of indirectness which is introduced by the movement from thesis to antithesis, from opposite to opposite, diminishes as the dialectic proceeds, and, in the ideal type, wholly dies away. In that type each category is seen to carry in itself the implication of the next beyond it, to which thought then proceeds. The lower is lower only because of the implicitness of part of its meaning; it is no longer one-sided, requiring to be corrected by an equal excess on the other side of the truth. And, therefore, no idea stands in an attitude of opposition to any other; there is nothing to break down, nothing to fight. All that aspect of the process belongs to our misapprehension of the relation of the abstract to the concrete. While looking up from the bottom, we may imagine the truth is only to be attained by contest, but in looking down from the top—the only true way of examining a process of this sort—we see that the contest is only due to our misunderstanding, and that the growth of thought is really direct and unopposed.

The movement of the dialectic may perhaps be compared with advantage to that of a ship tacking against the wind. If we suppose that the wind blows exactly from the point which the ship wishes to reach, and that, as the voyage continues, the sailing powers of the ship improve so that it becomes able to sail closer and closer to the wind, the analogy will be rather exact. It is impossible for the ship to reach its destination by a direct course, as the wind is precisely opposite to the line which that course would take, and in the same way it is impossible for the dialectic to move forward without the triple relation of its terms, and without some opposition between thesis and antithesis. But the only object of the ship is to proceed towards the port, as the

only object of the dialectic process is to attain to the concrete and complete idea, and the movement of the ship from side to side of its course is labour wasted, in so far as the end of the voyage is concerned, though necessarily wasted, since the movement forward would be impossible without the combination with it of a lateral movement. In the same way the advance in the dialectic is merely in the gradually increasing completeness of the ideas, and the opposition of one idea to another, and the consequent negation and contradiction do not mark any real step towards attaining the knowledge of the essential nature of thought, although they are necessary accompaniments of the process of gaining that knowledge. Again, the change in the ship's course which brings it nearer to the wind, and reduces the distance which it is necessary to travel to accomplish the journey, will correspond to the gradual subordination of the elements of negation and opposition which we have seen to take place as we approach the end of the dialectic.

13. We shall find confirmation for our view of the gradual change in the method of the dialectic, if we examine the all-including and supreme triad, of which all the others are moments. This triad is given by Hegel as Logic, Nature and Spirit.

If we inquire as to the form which the dialectic process is likely to assume here, we find ourselves in a difficulty. For the form of transition in any particular triad was determined by its place in the series. If it was among the earlier categories it approximated to the character given as typical of Being; it did not come till near the end it showed more or less resemblance to the type of the Notion. And we were able to see that this was natural, because the later method, being more direct and less encumbered with irrelevant material, was only to be attained when the work previously done had given us sufficient insight into the real nature of the subject-matter. This principle, however, will not help us here. For the transition which we are here considering is both the first and the last of its series, and it is impossible therefore to determine its characteristic features by its place in the order. The less direct method is necessary when we are dealing with the abstract and imperfect categories with which our investigations must begin, the more direct method comes with the more adequate categories. But his triad covers the whole range, from the barest category of the Logic—that of pure Being—to the culmination of human thought in Absolute Spirit.

Since it covers the whole range in which all the types of

the dialectic method are displayed, the natural conclusion would seem to be that one of them is as appropriate to it as another, that whichever form may be used will be more or less helpful and significant, because the process does cover the ground in which that form can appropriately be used ; while, on the other hand, every form will be more or less inadequate, because the process covers ground on which it cannot appropriately be used. If we cast it in the form of the Notion, we shall ignore the fact that it starts with categories too inadequate for a method so direct ; if, on the other hand, we try the form of the categories of Being, the process contains material for which such a method is inadequate.

And if we look at the facts we shall find that they confirm this view, and that it is possible to state the relation of Logic, Nature, and Spirit to one another, in two different ways. Hegel himself states it in the manner characteristic of the Notion. It is not so much positive, negative, and synthesis, as universal, particular, and individual that he points out. In the Logic thought is to be found in pure abstraction from all particulars (we cannot, of course, think it as abstracted from particulars, but in the Logic we attend only to the thought, and ignore the data it connects). In Nature we find thought again, for Nature is part of experience, and more or less rational, and this implies that it has thought in it. In Nature, however, thought is rather buried under the mass of data which appear contingent and empirical ; we see the reason is there, but we do not see that everything is completely rational. It is described by Hegel as the idea in a state of alienation from itself. Nature is thus far from being the mere contrary and correlative of thought. It is thought and something more, thought incarnate in the particulars of sense. At the same time, while the transition indicates an advance, it does not indicate a pure advance. For the thought is represented as more or less overpowered by the new element which has been added, and not altogether reconciled to and interpenetrating it. In going forward it has also gone to one side, and this requires, therefore, the correction which is given to it in the synthesis, when thought, in Spirit, completely masters the mass of particulars which for a time had seemed to master it, and when we perceive that the truth of the universe lies in the existence of thought as fact, the incarnation of the Absolute Idea—in short, in Spirit.

Here we meet all the characteristics of the Notion. The second term, to which we advance from the first, is to some

extent its opposite, since the particulars of sense, entirely wanting in the first, are in undue prominence in the second. But it is to a much greater extent the completion of the first, since the idea, which was taken in the Logic in unreal abstraction, is now taken as embodied in facts, which is the way it really exists. The only defect is that the embodiment is not yet quite complete and evident. And the synthesis which removes this defect does not, as in earlier types of the dialectic, stand impartially between thesis and antithesis, each as defective as the other, but only completes the process already begun in the antithesis. It is not necessary to compare the two lower terms, Logic and Nature, to be able to proceed to Spirit. The consideration of Nature alone would be sufficient to show that it postulated the existence of Spirit. For we have already in Nature both the sides required for the synthesis, though their connexion is so far imperfect, and there is consequently no need to refer back to the thesis, whose meaning has been incorporated and preserved in the antithesis. The existence of the two sides, not completely reconciled, in the antithesis, in itself postulates a synthesis, in which the reconciliation shall be completed.

14. But it would also be possible to state the transition in the form which is used in the Logic for the lower part of the dialectic. In this case we should proceed from pure thought to its simple contrary, and from the two together to a synthesis. This simple contrary will be the element which, together with thought, forms the basis for the synthesis which is given in Spirit. And as Nature, as we have seen, contains the same elements as Spirit, though less perfectly developed, we shall find this contrary of thought to be the element in experience, whether of Nature or Spirit, which cannot be reduced to thought. Now of this element we know that it is immediate and that it is particular—not in the sense in which Nature is particular, in the sense of incompletely developed individuality, but of abstract particularity. It is possible to conceive that in the long run all other characteristics of experience except these might be reduced to a consequence of thought. But however far the process of rationalisation might be carried, and however fully we might be able to answer the question of why things are as they are and not otherwise, it is impossible to get rid of a datum which is immediate and therefore unaccounted for. For thought is only mediation, and must therefore exist in conjunction with something immediate on which to act. If nothing existed but thought

itself, still the fact of its existence must be in the long run immediately given, and one for which thought itself could not account. This immediacy is the mark of the element which is essential to experience and irreducible to thought.

If then we wished to display the process from Logic to Spirit according to the Being-type of transition we should, starting from pure thought as our thesis, put as its antithesis the element of immediacy and "givenness" in experience. This element can never be properly or adequately described, since all description involves the predication of categories of the subject and is consequently mediation; but by abstracting the element of mediation in experience, as in the logic we abstract the element of immediacy, we can form some idea of what it is like. Here we shall have thought and immediacy as exactly opposite and counterbalancing elements. They are each essential to the truth, but present themselves as opposed to one another. Neither of them has the other at all as a part of itself, though by external reasoning it can be seen that one implies the other. But each of them negates the other as much as it implies it, and the relation, without the synthesis, is one of opposition and contradiction. We cannot see, as we can when a transition assumes the Notion form, that the whole meaning of the one category lies in its transition to the other. The synthesis is the notion of experience or reality, in which we have the given immediate mediated. This contains both Nature and Spirit, the former as the more imperfect stage, the latter as the more perfect, culminating in the completely satisfactory conception of Absolute Spirit. Nature stands in this case in the same relation to Absolute Spirit as do the lower forms of spirit—as forms equally concrete but less perfectly developed.

This triad could give as cogent a proof as the other. It could be shown, in the first place, that mere mediation is unmeaning except in relation to the merely immediate, since without something to mediate it could not act. In the same way it could be shown that the merely given, without any action of thought on it, could not exist, since any attempt to describe it, or even to assert its existence, involves the use of some category, and therefore of thought. And these two extremes, each of which negates the other and at the same time demands it, are reconciled in the synthesis of actual experience, whether Nature or Spirit, in which the immediate is mediated, and both extremes in this way gain for the first time reality and consistency.

The possibility of this alternative arrangement affords, as

I mentioned above, an additional argument in favour of the view that the change of method is essential to the dialectic, and that it is due to the progressively increasing insight into the subject which we gain as we pass to the higher categories and approximate to the completely adequate result. For in this instance, when the whole ground from beginning to end of the dialectic process is covered in a single triad, we find that either method may be used, which suggests of itself that the two methods are approximate to the two ends of the series which are here, and here only, united by a single step. Independently of this, however, it is also worth while to consider the possibility of the double transition attentively, because it may help us to explain the origin of some of the misapprehensions of Hegel's meaning which are by no means uncommon.

We saw above that the dialectic more closely represented the real nature of thought in the later categories, when it appeared more direct and spontaneous, than in the earlier stages, when it was still encumbered with negations and contradictions. Of the two possible methods of treating this particular transition—that which Hegel actually adopted, and that which we have just seen to be also possible—it would appear beforehand that the former would be that which would be the most expressive and significant. On inquiry we shall find that this is actually the case. For there is no real opposition between thought and immediacy; neither can exist without the other. Now, in the method adopted by Hegel, the element of immediacy comes in first in Nature, and not as an element opposed to, though necessarily connected with, the mediation of the logic, but as already bound up with it in a unity, which unity is Nature. This expresses the truth better than a method which starts by considering the two aspects as two self-centred and independent realities, which have to be connected by reasoning external to themselves. For by the latter, even where they are finally reconciled in a synthesis, it is done, so to speak, against their will, since their claims to independence are only forced from them by the *reductio ad absurdum* to which they are reduced when they are seen, as independent, to be at once mutually contradictory and mutually implied in each other. In this method the transitory nature of the incomplete categories, and their movement forward of their own essential nature, are not sufficiently emphasised.

And we shall find that the subject-matter of the transition is too advanced to bear stating according to the Being-type without showing that that type is not fully appropriate

to it. Logic and immediacy are indeed as much on a level as Being and Not-Being. There is no trace whatever in the former case, any more than in the latter, of a rudimentary synthesis in the antithesis. But the other characteristic of the lower type—that the thesis and the antithesis should claim to be mutually exclusive and independent—cannot be fully realised. Being and Not-Being, although they may be shown by reasoning to be mutually implicated, are at any rate *primâ facie* distinct and opposed. But mediation and immediacy, although opposed, are nevertheless connected, even *primâ facie*. It is impossible even to define the two terms without suggesting that each of them is, by itself, unstable, and that their only real existence is as aspects of the concrete whole in which they are united. The method is not sufficiently advanced for the matter it deals with, which compels it to modify its form.

15. It is, however, as I endeavoured to show above, *a priori* probable that neither method would fully fit this particular case. And not only the one which we have just discussed, but the one which Hegel preferred to it, will be found to some degree inadequate to its task here. The latter, no doubt, is the more correct and convenient of the two; yet its use alone, without the knowledge that it did not in this case exclude the concurrent use of the latter as equally legitimate, may lead to grave misconceptions of the system.

For the use of that method which Hegel does not adopt—the one in which the terms are Logic, Immediacy, and Experience—has at any rate this advantage, that it brings out the fact that Immediacy is as important and ultimate a factor in reality as Logic is, and one which is irreducible to it. The two terms are exactly on a level. In point of fact we begin with the Logic and go from that to Immediacy, because it is to the completed idea of the Logic that we come if we start from the idea of pure Being, and we naturally start from that idea, because it alone, of all our ideas, is the one whose denial carries with it at once and clearly, self-contradiction. But the transition from Immediacy to Logic is exactly the same as that from Logic to Immediacy. And as the two terms are correlative in this way, it would be comparatively easy to see, by observing them, that neither of them derived their validity from the other, but both from the synthesis.

This is not so clear when the argument takes the other form. The element of Immediacy here never appears as a separate and independent term at all. It appears in Nature for the

first time, and here it is already in combination with thought. And Nature and Logic are not correlative terms, from either of which we can proceed to the other. The transition runs from Logic to Nature—from thought by itself, to thought combined with Immediacy. It is not unnatural, therefore, to suppose that Immediacy is dependent on, and deducible from, pure thought, while the reverse process is not possible. The pure reason is supposed to make for itself the material in which it is embodied. "The logical bias of the Hegelian philosophy," says Pro. Seth, "tends . . . to reduce things to mere types or 'concretions' of abstract formulæ." (*Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 126.) It might, I think, be shown that other considerations conclusively prove this view to be incorrect. In the first place, throughout the Logic there are continual references which show that pure thought requires some material, other than itself, in which to work. And, secondly, the spring of all movement in the dialectic comes from the synthesis towards which the process is working, and not from the thesis from which the start is made. Consequently, progress from Logic to Nature could, in any case, prove, not that the additional element in nature was derived from thought, but that it co-existed with thought in the synthesis which is their goal. But although the mistake might have been avoided, even under the actual circumstances, it could scarcely have been made if the possibility of the alternative method of deduction had been known. Immediacy would, in that case, have been treated as a separate element in the process, and as one which was correlative with pure thought, so that it could scarcely have been supposed to have been dependent on it.

The more developed method, again, tends rather to obscure the full meaning and importance of the synthesis, unless we realise that in this method part of the work of the synthesis is already done in the second term. This is of great importance, because we have seen that it is in their synthesis alone that the terms gain any reality and validity, which they did not possess when considered in abstraction. In the earlier method we see clearly that pure thought is one of these abstractions, as mere immediacy is the other. It is, therefore, clear that each of these terms, taken by itself, is a mere abstraction, and could not possibly, out of its own nature, produce the other abstraction, and the reality from which they both come. From this standpoint it would be impossible to suppose that out of pure thought were produced Nature and Spirit.

Now, in the type characteristic of the Notion, the same

element appears both in thesis and antithesis, although in the latter it is in combination with a fresh element. There is, therefore, a possibility of misunderstanding the process. For an element which was both in thesis and antithesis might appear not to be merely a one-sided abstraction, but to have the concreteness which is to be found in the synthesis, since it appears in both the extremes into which the synthesis may be separated. When, for example, we have Logic, Nature, and Spirit, we might be tempted to argue that pure thought could not be only one side of the truth, since it was found in each of the lower terms—by itself in Logic, and combined with immediacy in Nature, and hence to attribute to it a greater self-sufficiency and importance than it really possesses.

This mistake will disappear when we realise that the only reason that pure thought appears again in the second term of the triad is that the synthesis, in transitions of this type, has already begun in the antithesis. It is only in the synthesis that thought appears in union with its opposite, and, apart from the synthesis, it is as incomplete and unsubstantial as is immediacy.

But the change in the type of the process is not sufficiently emphasised in Hegel, and there is a tendency on the part of observers to take the type presented by the earliest categories as that which prevails all through the dialectic. And as, in the earlier type, one of the extremes could not have been found in both the first and second terms of a triad, it is supposed that pure thought cannot be such an extreme, cannot stand in the same relation to Spirit, as Being does to Becoming, and is rather to be looked on as the cause of what follows it than as an abstraction from it.

16. I have endeavoured to show that the view of the dialectic given in this paper, while we cannot suppose it to have been held by Hegel, is, nevertheless, not unconnected with his system. The germs of it are to be found in his exposition of the change of method in the three great divisions of the process, and the observation of the details of the system confirm this. But it was not sufficiently emphasised, nor did Hegel draw from it the consequences, particularly as regards the subjective nature of the dialectic, which I have tried to show logically result from it.

But there is, nevertheless, justification for our regarding this theory as a development and not a contradiction of the Hegelian system, since some such view is really a condition of the existence of any dialectic system at all. And we have seen that it will affect neither of the great objects which

Absolute Idealism claims to have accomplished—the demonstration that the real is rational and the rational is real, and the classification, according to their necessary relations and intrinsic value, of the various categories which we use in ordinary and finite thought.

Many other questions might be raised, and indeed must be raised before even the formal validity of the Hegelian system could be finally determined. Perhaps the most important of these is the relation of the dialectic process to the movement of time. How far Hegel regarded the Absolute Idea as already realised and how far only as an ideal, how the fundamental rationality of the universe is related to the obvious imperfections, either in the world or our judgments about it, which exist round us, and what amount of objective or subjective reality can be ascribed to the incomplete dialectic process—these are points of vital importance. Not less important is the consideration of the nature of the Absolute Spirit which gives reality to the whole process, and which is treated by Hegel in a manner which would require careful criticism. But with these points it is impossible for me to deal here.

The dialectic system is not so wonderful or mystic as it has been represented to be. It makes no attempt to deduce existence from essence; it does not even attempt to eliminate the element of immediacy in experience, and to produce a self-sufficient and self-mediating thought. It cannot even, if the view I have taken is right, claim that its course is a perfect mirror of the nature of reality. But although the results which it attains are comparatively commonplace, they go as far as we can for any practical purpose desire. For, if we accept the system, we learn from it that in the universe is realised the whole of reason, and nothing but reason. Contingency, in that sense in which it is baffling and oppressive to our minds, has disappeared. For it would be possible, according to this theory, to prove that the only contingent thing about the universe was its existence as a whole, and this is not contingent in the ordinary sense of the word. Hegel's philosophy is thus capable of satisfying the needs, theoretical and practical, to satisfy which philosophy originally arose, nor is there any reason to suppose that he ever wished it to do more.