CHAPTER I : HEGEL

1. Metaphysics -- Absolute and Dialectics

G. W. F. Hegel was the culmination of the great idealistic movement that started from Kant. Hegel is indebted to Kant for his conception of the relativity of being to thought. But the defect of Kantian philosophy lies in the fact that it does not carry the demonstration to its logical consequence. It still retains the idea of thing-in-itself which falls outside the realm of thought. Thus, there creeps into the system an absolutely irreconcilable dualism of sense and understanding, of phenomenal and noumenal. The Kantian dualism can be resolved only if, on the one hand, the unknown noumenal universe is left out as reality and considered as only existing in the subject, and if, on the other hand, there is an underlying principle which harmonises his pairs of opposites. If so conceived, Kant's Pure Reason will be resolved into Hegel's Absolute Reason. By admitting freedom of the acting subject the Critique of Practical Reason confirms the above derivation. In the Critique of Judgment, Kant's immanent teleology introduces the conception of evolution which is prelude to Hegel's conception of the Absolute as perpetual motion and change.

Unlike Kant, Hegel finds an underlying principle behind the world of things and beings. But this principle not only transcends reality but is also immanent in it. In Schelling things proceed from the Absolute which remains outside of them, while in Hegel the Absolute is the process itself. Unlike Bergson, Hegel thinks that the process has its law. The law which governs the process of thought and nature is Reason, the law which is immanent in the Absolute and is itself the Absolute. He says, "The only Thought which Philosophy brings to the contemplation of History, is the simple conception of Reason; that Reason is the Sovereign of the World; that the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process.-- Reason is the substance of the Universe; viz., that by which and in which all reality has its being and substance." 1

Absolute Reason which is the immanent law of the universe was implicit in nature before there was man. Its span is not measured by history alone. It becomes personified in man after passing through the successive stages of inorganic and living matter. Thus logic which is the Absolute Idea before it externalizes in nature is the science which nature and mind follow, and which history reveals.

But as mind is self-conscious, so the Absolute is conscious of itself. As in self-consciousness the mind is both the knower and the known, similarly, the Absolute both constitutes the object of its knowledge by positing itself and knows the object which it has posited. But Hegel does not think like Kant that the objects belong to a phenomenal world cut-off and separated from reality; they remain within the self-conscious unity of the Absolute which both projects and knows them.

The Absolute when conceived as perfection of personal attributes becomes God. In fact, Hegel identifies Absolute with God when he says that God's will itself is the Reality or Spirit. Obviously, God's will is not realized all at once. Rather, it manifests itself through successive steps and God's will becomes personified in man's will.

In this way arises a necessary connection between philosophy and religion. "The object of religion as well as of philosophy is eternal truth in its objectivity." Thus, they are not concerned with what is empirical but with that which is eternal. As religion, in order to occupy itself with God, renounces subjective notions, similarly philosophy, being occupied with eternal truth, deals not with the individual caprice and subjective interest but with the thinking Spirit. Thus, philosophy and religion become one. But there is also a difference between the two. While in religion, man attempts to know the truth by his instinctive intelligence or intuition, the task of philosophy is to give it a rational interpretation. In primitive society when Reason did not develop into intelligence and was implicit in instinct, men sought to know reality by means of faith.

and dogma. Later on, with the manifestation of Idea in the course of evolution human intelligence develops and men try to give a rational interpretation to their dogma. Thus, philosophy, in fact, evolves from faith or theology. Here, religious dogmas are rationalized and converted into speculative doctrines. Thus, in Christian religion Christ is said to be the incarnation of God. From the higher standpoint of philosophy, this dogma signifies the godliness of man. Jesus Christ who was a man and rose to divine holiness dispels the notion of dualism of God and man and emphasises the divine content of humanity.

The difference between religion and philosophy is thus a difference not of content but of form.

As already noted, Hegel's Absolute is not being but process. This process is not a cyclical but a spiral one. As progress is possible only out of the conflict of opposites, the Absolute is possessed within itself of a principle of progress from difference to difference which differences are not apart from the Absolute but constitute moments of it. The nature of the process is: every notion has within itself its own opposite and as each notion is one-sided it pushes on into a second which is the opposite of the first and is equally one-sided. In this way, it is seen that both the notions are only moments of a third which is the unity of its predecessors. The third notion is higher and richer as it does not exclude the other notions but contains them. This new notion which is the synthesis of the two opposite notions earlier established similarly proves to be one-sided and puts forward its opposite or antithesis thereby realizing once more a higher unity. So goes on the triadic movement along the spiral. The existence of the opposite elements of the notion within itself is the motive force for realizing a higher unity. It is the genesis of all differences and solutions. Thus the process of Absolute is the process of logical reasoning and this immanent spontaneous evolution of the Absolute is called the dialectical method. In Hegel, the dialectical method is not only a process by which logical ideas develop; it is a process by which all things and beings of the natural world develop. For, according to Hegel, the very stuff of nature is logical through
and through; the logical triad of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis is equally operative in nature, e.g., in the atomic synthesis of positive and negative charges, in the biological synthesis of opposite sexes, etc. Because this process operates both in logic as well as in nature Hegel insists that thought is reality, that not only is the dialectical method real, its discovery or unfoldment is also the reality. It is thought which discovers the law and knows the process both in logic and in nature. So Hegel comes to the conclusion that Reason or Idea is the ultimate reality.

The merit of the dialectical method is in the fact that it is a way of dealing with what is both constant and variable. By this method, the puzzle of Zeno's arrow is solved. Zeno fails to see that both motion and existence are real and inseparable; so arises his puzzle that either the arrow does not exist or the arrow does not fly. From the application of the dialectical law it appears that neither the arrow nor the motion is real in isolation but the arrow-in-motion is the real changing entity and the puzzle is resolved.

2. Philosophy of History

Since the Absolute, like mind, is self-conscious, it cannot remain an abstract Reason but has to objectify itself into the external world. By an act of self-determination the Absolute evolves itself into the finite, concrete and particular. The particular again, in its turn, seeks to identify itself with the Absolute. Separation means bondage for the particular; by identity it attains freedom. Thus pure being or the bare abstract universality by an internal urge "passes into the particularity or abstract difference and issues in its singularity or concrete wholeness." In this way, the particular progressively realizes the Idea or Spirit. As the essence of Idea or Spirit is freedom this progress made by the particular is the progress of Idea itself towards freedom. This march of Spirit towards freedom, the passage from the particular to universal is revealed by History.

This Reason, Hegel asserts, is both the Infinite Material as well
as the Infinite Form, i.e., the substance and the power which sets the substance in motion. So long as Reason or Providence does not actualize itself in history it is a mere abstract principle. Hegel claims that Providence which is nothing but Reason manifests and applies itself in history. History is nothing but the fulfilment of Divine Will, i.e., Theodicia; and the task of philosophy is to realize and prove the conviction that whatever is intended by eternal wisdom is actually accomplished in the domain of active Spirit and that of Nature.

So, the Spirit and the course of its development are the object of the Philosophy of History. The development of Spirit is towards freedom: in other words, history is the march of Spirit towards freedom. This progress is in the nature of Spirit itself. The nature of Spirit may be understood by comparison with its direct opposite, i.e., matter. The essence of matter is gravity while the essence of Spirit is freedom. The fundamental difference between matter and spirit lies in the fact that while matter has its essence outside of itself, "Spirit is self-contained existence". This is freedom.

As Spirit involves an appreciation of its own nature in it, the subject and object are mingled together. It is Spirit itself which is the process of working out the knowledge of that which it is potentially. So, in the historical phases of events, freedom of Spirit is being actualized step by step.

Now, what is the means by which freedom realizes itself?

Though freedom is latent in a hidden undeveloped idea, the means it uses for its realization is external and phenomenal, and is perceptible to our sensations. So long as the Spirit does not actualize itself in history, it remains an abstract principle, an idea having a place in our subjective design only, "that which exists for itself only, is a possibility, a potentiality but has not yet emerged into Existence." ² Hence the second essential element which

1. Philosophy of History, p.18.
2. Ibid, p.23.
is necessary in order to produce actuality is the Will, in other words, the activity of man in the widest possible sense. It is by this activity of man that idea actualizes itself. The motive power that impels him to activity is his passion and private interest. By passion Hegel means "human activity as resulting from private interests." Thus two elements enter into the object of our investigation— one the idea, the other the complex of human passions. "The concrete mean and union of the two is liberty under the conditions of morality in a state." The state, therefore, is the best embodiment of freedom. Of course, freedom is not actualized in all states in the same measure. It is being progressively actualized through the process of political history. The Orientals did not yet attain to the conception that the nature of spirit is freedom. They were not free. They only knew that one (the king) is free. But the freedom of that man also had resulted into tyranny. The consciousness of freedom first arose among the Greeks. But they, and with them the Romans, knew that only some are free. It is only the Germans who know that man as such is free. Thus reason and history march from East to West. "The Eastern nations knew that only one is free; the Greek and Roman world only some are free; whilst we know that all men absolutely (man as man) are free." 3 Though Hegel extols the Prussian state of Hohenzollerns as the highest manifestation of freedom he does not say that it is the final embodiment of the Absolute. On the contrary, he expects America to be the land "where in the ages that lie before us the burden of the World's History shall reveal itself, perhaps in a contest between North and South America." 4

The ethical substance of the state is the nation, i.e., the community united by morality and morality law. In every age, a world-historical nation occupies the forefront of history and carries the banner of reason. "The nation to which is ascribed a moment of the idea in the form of a natural principle is entrusted with giving

1. Ibid, p.25.
complete effect to it in the advance of the self-developing self-consciousness of the world mind. This nation is dominant in world history during this one epoch, and it is only once that it can make its hour strike. In contrast with this its absolute right of being the vehicle of this present stage in the world mind’s development, the minds of other nations are without rights, and they, along with those whose hour has struck already, count no longer in world history.¹

As Reason has the right to exist in laws and institutions, the world-historical nation having superior laws is justified to conquer and dominate inferior nations. The civilized state has the right to treat as barbarian those who lack the moments of state.

To guide the nation along the path set for it in history appear world-historical individuals such as Caesar, Alexander and Napoleon. Hegel lays great emphasis on them because they are, in his opinion, the bearers of the ideal towards the actual. It has been already noticed that individuality with Hegel is nothing but the vehicle of universality. Nothing great can be achieved without passion and passion, as understood by Hegel, is activity which is directed towards particular interests and ends. The particular is thus the vehicle of the universal and men by the very pursuit of their private ends realize universal ends. The importance of great men lies in the fact that they, while seeking to fulfill their own interest, serve a great social purpose.

Take for instance, the case of Caesar. He was contending for the maintenance of his position. But while the power of his opponents included the power over the Roman Empire Caesar’s victory secured for him the conquest of the Roman Empire itself; and this conquest involves the consolidation of the small states in the Roman State, — a great political change accomplished towards the freedom of Reason while Caesar was biding for his self-interest. Similarly, Napoleon was fighting for imperial power but thereby he prepared the ground for the evolution of a homogeneous German state. In this way, Hegel shows that while world-historical personages seek the fulfilment of their own interest their actions achieve more than their conscious intentions and thereby fulfill...

¹. Philosophy of Right, Trans. T. M. Knox, pp. 217-6
the intention of Reason which avails itself of them. This is the cunning of Reason. The cunning of Reason is nothing but a rhetorical phrase which denotes all sorts of irrational activities done by man consciously or unconsciously in order to serve the purpose of Reason. The heroes believe that they obey the impulse of their own sentiment but the action done by them leads to universal results. Great men take the very will of Reason, accomplish what is real and substantial in the needs of their time. Thus they are the men of affairs of the World-Spirit.

3. Theory of State

Hegel's theory of state is, in the main, compatible with his general metaphysics though not necessitated by it. Analysing the world process Hegel finds one common principle,— the principle of Reason operating everywhere. The essence of Reason is freedom. The power through which freedom of Idea is realized is human subjective desires and passions. This subjective will attains objectivity by its union with the rational will, for, truth is the unity of the universal and the subjective will. Art, morality, religion, philosophy, etc., are but different phases of the Idea through which it seeks the identity of the particular with the universal. Idea corporealizes itself in arts, sciences, religions and philosophies. But the highest embodiment of the Idea is the state.

The state comes into existence in the process of historical development of the Spirit or idea. Hegel thinks that the state is the instrument of Spirit to attain its freedom, because freedom which is the essence of Spirit, originates in Will and Will contains two elements: the element of pure indeterminacy, i.e., universality and the element of determination and differentiation, i.e., particularity. Freedom consists in the unity of these two moments and Hegel thinks that the attainment of this unity is possible only in the state. "Truth is the unity of universal and subjective will and the universal is
to be found in the State, in its laws, its universal and rational arrangements." The individual has conflicting impulses. "The satisfaction of one is unavoidably subordinated or sacrificed to the satisfaction of another." To preserve the interest of the individual and at the same time to establish the social interest over private interest is the goal of Spirit. This desire of the individual is described by Hegel as morality. The peculiarity of morality lies in the fact that here one's own conviction does not bear away. It is the outward manifestation of what is subjectively demanded by Reason. The moral consciousness of man always demands that man will realize his potentiality and at the same time give opportunity to others to develop their personality. "Be a person and respect others as persons" is the imperative of right itself. But ordinary men, in whom Spirit is yet to be manifested, are so much engaged with their private interests that they forget their social interest and to make their rational will manifest laws of the state are necessary. So, law is nothing but the outward manifestation of morality.

Infinite universal will as existing in the individual is infinite in form but finite in content. This individual will is not free because the desires of one in the process of actualization come into conflict with those of others. Of course, arbitrary will can change its course but it cannot get rid of its finitude. So, it always negates the abstract infinite will. Individual finite will can get back its original universal nature by rationalizing and purifying its impulses. This is the work of morality. Hegelian ethics steps in to reconcile the conflict of individual desire and universal will as embodied in social interest. The State can come into existence only when the ethical basis is prepared in society. The moral principle takes a concrete shape in the external world through the laws of the state. So, with Hegel, law is nothing but the rational will of man. The peculiarity of the State morality is that it is based on the "principle of abiding by one's duty to the State at large". In this way Hegel tries to reconcile the inwardness of morality with the

1. Philosophy of History, p. 41
2. Philosophy of Right, p. 26
externality of law.

In opposition to this ethical and absolute view of state, philosophers like Rousseau are of opinion that the state is an unwanted means of tyranny, that man is free by nature. His essential nature requires no law and government because they curtail individual freedom. They point out examples from savage life. But, says Hegel, there is no freedom in the life of the savage. As it is marked with brutal passion, such natural freedom restrains freedom itself. Freedom, though it is the essence of man is not revealed in the beginning and remains implicit in nature. It must be sought out and won. Limitation is certainly imposed by state on the individuals belonging to it, but it limits the mere brute passions or selfish instincts. In fact, the state has the double relation to the individual. On the one hand, the individual must be aware that the state is external to him, deterring him and even constraining him. The state must stand above every private interest within and must have power to mould any of its factors. To it any member may appeal for protection and defence against any other; it is the supreme judge and has the supreme right. On the other hand, the individual must know that the state is not an alien power but the expression and realization of his own rational principle. It is only his caprice which is constrained, his genuine will is emancipated and fulfilled. Against the arbitrary subjective will, the state upholds the real or rational will which is the universal immanent in the individual. In the state the individual is universalised; his purposes obtain their content and significance from the social world, and the ends which he seeks are social. Consequently, he achieves these ends in their fullness, only, if he takes account of the nature of society and the principle by which it is constituted. An anti-social act attacks its own substance and is opposed to itself. Obviously, to realize the ideal of freedom, law and government are essential.

If right is nothing but the individual consciousness of having an object in common with others it is clear under what conditions these are enjoyed and under what conditions these are forfeited. Hegel thinks that crime is an infringement of right as right and justice demands the negation of such infringement by force. So, punishment...
is inherently just. The state can punish the individual because by punishing him it helps to establish his rational will. Capital punishment is justified only when the criminal is permanently incapable of rights, i.e., rational exercise of his will.

Of course, the individual does not lose his identity in becoming aware of his universal character. Rather, the differences of nature are, up into the state and by virtue of preserving them the state can claim loyalty of the citizen. But this is not an argument to the effect that freedom rests among the individuals of a state all agreeing in its arrangements; if so, then only the subjective aspect of freedom is respected, and the natural inference from this principle would be: no law can be valid without the approval of all. Hegel thinks that this principle is dangerous because in that case nothing can be done for the state unless all the members of the state have given their sanction. This brings the constitution to a stalemate.

The constitution involves the distinction between those who command and those who obey. To what extent the state will be able to embody the idea depends upon its internal constitution. Hegel prefers constitutional monarchy to every other form of government. He affirms that sovereignty resides in the state as a legal person although that personality must find expression in an individuality and a well-trained monarch becomes the true bearer of state-personality. Hegel gives no logical analysis of monarchy. He simply says that all intellectual capabilities of a nation will be concentrated in a family and the monarch will come from this family. Of course, the philosopher does not depend entirely on heredity. Rather, he admits that the monarch must be trained and advised by an intellectual aristocracy. These men, in order to work for the common interest of the people, must possess private property in land. Otherwise, if they have to spare their time and interest for earning their maintenance, they may fail in their attention to the affairs of state. Thus, Hegel's theory approaches the Platonic doctrine of state.

In its external relations Hegel thinks that each state is independent and subject to no law. Agreements made among states are by nature provisional. The object of a treaty would be to secure the
exclusive interest of the state in question. A treaty is violated and ignored if the interests of a state so require. If the states disagree, the matter can only be settled by war. Hegel even thinks that perpetual peace leads to internal corruption. Through war "the ethical health of peoples is preserved in their indifference to the stabilization of finite institutions; just as the blowing of the winds preserves the sea from the foulness which would be the result of a prolonged calm, so also corruption in nations would be the production of prolonged, let alone 'perpetual peace.'" Since the state is the basis of all progress and since the state grows through war, war is a necessary condition of social progress. Like world-historical individuals, states and nations also are unconscious tools of the world mind at work within them. In the onward march of Spirit the state which has embodied the Idea at its best comes into the forefront with its superior nationality. But gradually it proves itself incompetent to cope with the onward development of Spirit and a new state takes charge of the banner of progress. In this dialectical way the development of state goes on.

1. Ibid, p.210