

The Deicides, Albert Camus

Justice, reason, truth still shone in the Jacobin heaven, performing the function of fixed stars, which could, at least, serve as guides. German nineteenth-century thinkers, particularly Hegel, wanted to continue the work of the French Revolution¹ while suppressing the causes of its failure.

Hegel thought that he discerned the seeds of the Terror contained in the abstract principles of the Jacobins. According to him, absolute and abstract freedom must inevitably lead to terrorism; the rule of abstract law is identical with the rule of oppression. For example, Hegel remarks that the period between the time of Augustus and Alexander Severus (a.d. 235) is the period of the greatest legal proficiency but also the period of the most ruthless tyranny.

¹ And of the Reformationâ "the Germans' Revolution," according to Hegel.

To avoid this contradiction, it was therefore necessary to wish to construct a concrete society, invigorated by a principle that was not formal and in which freedom could be reconciled with necessity. German philosophy therefore finished by substituting, for the universal but abstract reason of Saint-Just and Rousseau, a less artificial but more ambiguous idea: concrete universal reason. Up to this point, reason had soared above the phenomena which were related to it.

Now reason is, henceforth, incorporated in the stream of historical events, which it explains while deriving its substance from them. It can certainly be said that Hegel rationalized to the point of being irrational. But, at the same time, he gave reason an unreasonable shock by endowing it with a lack of moderation, the results of which are now before our eyes.

Into the fixed ideas of this period, German thought suddenly introduced an irresistible urge to movement. Truth, reason, and justice were abruptly incarnated in the progress of the world. But by committing them to perpetual acceleration, German ideology confused their existence with their impulse and fixed the conclusion of this existence at the final stage of the historical futureâ "if there was to be one. These values have ceased to be guides in order to become goals. As for the means of attaining these goals, specifically life and history, no pre-existent value can point the way.

On the contrary, a large part of Hegelian demonstration is devoted to proving that moral conscience, by being so banal as to obey justice and truth, as though these values existed independently of the world, jeopardizes, precisely for this reason, the advent of these values. The rule of action has thus become action itselfâ "which must be performed in darkness while awaiting the final illumination. Reason, annexed by this form of romanticism, is nothing more than an inflexible passion. The ends have remained the same, only ambition has increased; thought has become dynamic, reason has embraced the future and aspired to conquest.

Action is no more than a calculation based on results, not on principles. Consequently it confounds itself with perpetual movement. In the same way, all the disciplines that characterized eighteenth-century thought as rigid and addicted to classification were abandoned in the nineteenth century. Just as Darwin replaced Linnaeus, the philosophers who supported the doctrine of an incessant dialectic replaced the harmonious and strict constructors of reason.

From this moment dates the idea (hostile to every concept of ancient thought, which, on the contrary, reappeared to a certain extent in the mind of revolutionary France) that man has not been endowed with a definitive human nature, that he is not a finished creation but an experiment, of which he can be partly the creator. With Napoleon and the Napoleonic philosopher Hegel, the period of efficacy begins. Before Napoleon, men had discovered space and the universe; with Napoleon, they discovered time and the future in terms of this world; and by this discovery the spirit of rebellion is going to be profoundly

transformed.

In any case, it is strange to find Hegel's philosophy at this new stage in the development of the spirit of rebellion. Actually, in one sense, his work exudes an absolute horror of dissidence: he wanted to be the very essence of reconciliation. But this is only one aspect of a system which, by its very method, is the most ambiguous in all philosophic literature. To the extent that, for him, what is real is rational, he justifies every ideological encroachment upon reality.

What has been called Hegel's panlogism is a justification of the condition of fact. But his philosophy also exalts destruction for its own sake. Everything is reconciled, of course, in the dialectic, and one extreme cannot be stated without the other arising; there exists in Hegel, as in all great thinkers, the material for contradicting Hegel. Philosophers, however, are rarely read with the head alone, but often with the heart and all its passions, which can accept no kind of reconciliation.

Nevertheless, the revolutionaries of the twentieth century have borrowed from Hegel the weapons with which they definitively destroyed the formal principles of virtue. All that they have preserved is the vision of a history without any kind of transcendence, dedicated to perpetual strife and to the struggle of wills bent on seizing power. In its critical aspect, the revolutionary movement of our times is primarily a violent denunciation of the formal hypocrisy that presides over bourgeois society.

The partially justified pretension of modern Communism, like the more frivolous claim of Fascism, is to denounce the mystification that undermines the principles and virtues of the bourgeois type of democracy. Divine transcendence, up to 1789, served to justify the arbitrary actions of the king.

After the French Revolution, the transcendence of the formal principles of reason or justice serves to justify a rule that is neither just nor reasonable. This transcendence is therefore a mask that must be torn off. God is dead, but as Stirner predicted, the morality of principles in which the memory of God is still preserved must also be killed. The hatred of formal virtue "degraded witness to divinity and false witness in the service of injustice" has remained one of the principal themes of history today. Nothing is pure: that is the cry which convulses our period. Impurity, the equivalent of history, is going to become the rule, and the abandoned earth will be delivered to naked force, which will decide whether or not man is divine. Thus lies and violence are adopted in the same spirit in which a religion is adopted and on the same heartrending impulse.

But the first fundamental criticism of the good conscience the denunciation of the beautiful soul and of ineffectual attitudes "we owe to Hegel, for whom the ideology of the good, the true, and the beautiful is the religion of those possessed of none of them. While the mere existence of factions surprises Saint-Just and contravenes the ideal order that he affirms, Hegel not only is not surprised, but even affirms that faction is the prelude to thought. For the Jacobin, everyone is virtuous.

The movement which starts with Hegel, and which is triumphant today, presumes, on the contrary, that no one is virtuous, but that everyone will be. At the beginning, everything, according to Saint-Just, is an idyl; according to Hegel, everything is a tragedy. But in the end that amounts to the same thing. Those who destroy the idyl must be destroyed or destruction must be embarked on in order to create the idyl. Violence, in both cases, is the victor. The repudiation of the Terror, undertaken by Hegel, only leads to an extension of the Terror.

That is not all. Apparently the world today can no longer be anything other than a world of masters and slaves because contemporary ideologies, those that are changing the face of the earth, have learned from Hegel to conceive of history

in terms of the dialectic of master and slave. If, on the first morning of the world, under the empty sky, there is only a master and a slave; even if there is only the bond of master and slave between a transcendent god and mankind, then there can be no other law in this world than the law of force. Only a god, or a principle above the master and the slave, could intervene and make men's history something more than a mere chronicle of their victories and defeats.

First Hegel and then the Hegelians have tried, on the contrary, to destroy, more and more thoroughly, all idea of transcendence and any nostalgia for transcendence. Although there was infinitely more in Hegel than in the left-wing Hegelians who finally have triumphed over him, he nevertheless furnished, on the level of the dialectic of master and slave, the decisive justification of the spirit of power in the twentieth century. The conqueror is always right; that is one of the lessons which can be learned from the most important German philosophical system of the nineteenth century. Of course, there is to be found, in the prodigious Hegelian edifice, a means of partially contradicting those ideas.

But twentieth-century ideology is not connected with what is improperly called the idealism of the master of Jena. Hegel's face, which reappears in Russian Communism, has been successively remodeled by David Strauss, Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach, Marx, and the entire Hegelian left wing. We are only interested in him here because he alone has any real bearing on the history of our time. If Nietzsche and Hegel serve as alibis to the masters of Dachau and Karaganda,² that does not condemn their entire philosophy. But it does lead to the suspicion that one aspect of their thought, or of their logic, can lead to these appalling conclusions.

² They found less philosophic models in the Prussian, Napoleonic, and Czarist police and in the British concentration camps in South Africa.

Nietzschean nihilism is methodical. The Phenomenology of the Mind also has a didactic aspect. At the meeting-point of two centuries, it depicts, in its successive stages, the education of the mind as it pursues its way toward absolute truth. It is a metaphysical Emile.³ Each stage is an error and is, moreover, accompanied by historic sanctions which are almost always fatal, either to the mind or to the civilization in which it is reflected. Hegel proposes to demonstrate the necessity of these painful stages. The Phenomenology is, in one aspect, a meditation on despair and death. The mission of despair is, simply, to be methodical in that it must be transfigured, at the end of history, into absolute satisfaction and absolute wisdom. The book has the defect, however, of only imagining highly intelligent pupils and it has been taken literally, while, literally, it only wanted to proclaim the spirit.

³ In one sense there is a ground of comparison between Hegel and Rousseau. The fortune of the Phenomenology has been, in its consequences, of the same kind as that of the Social Contract. It shaped the political thought of its time. Rousseau's theory of the general will, besides, recurs in the Hegelian system.

It is the same with the celebrated analysis of mastery and slavery.

Animals, according to Hegel, have an immediate knowledge of the exterior world, a perception of the self, but not the knowledge of self, which distinguishes man. The latter is only really born at the moment when he becomes aware of himself as a rational being. Therefore his essential characteristic is self-consciousness. Consciousness of self, to be affirmed, must distinguish itself from what it is not. Man is a creature who, to affirm his existence and his difference, denies. What distinguishes consciousness of self from the world of nature is not the simple act of contemplation by which it identifies itself with the exterior world and finds oblivion, but the desire it can feel with regard to the world.

This desire re-establishes its identity when it demonstrates that the exterior world is something apart. In its desire, the exterior world consists of what it

does not possess, but which nevertheless exists, and of what it would like to exist but which no longer does. Consciousness of self is therefore, of necessity, desire.

But in order to exist it must be satisfied, and it can only be satisfied by the gratification of its desire. It therefore acts in order to gratify itself and, in so doing, it denies and suppresses its means of gratification. It is the epitome of negation. To act is to destroy in order to give birth to the spiritual reality of consciousness. But to destroy an object unconsciously, as meat is destroyed, for example, in the act of eating, is a purely animal activity.

To consume is not yet to be conscious. Desire for consciousness must be directed toward something other than unconscious nature. The only thing in the world that is distinct from nature is, precisely, self-consciousness. Therefore desire must be centered upon another form of desire; self-consciousness must be gratified by another form of self-consciousness. In simple words, man is not recognized and does not recognize himself "as a man as long as he limits himself to subsisting like an animal. He must be acknowledged by other men. All consciousness is, basically, the desire to be recognized and proclaimed as such by other consciousnesses. It is others who beget us. Only in association do we receive a human value, as distinct from an animal value.

In that the supreme value for the animal is the preservation of life, consciousness should raise itself above the level of that instinct in order to achieve human value. It should be capable of risking its life. To be recognized by another consciousness, man should be ready to risk his life and to accept the chance of death. Fundamental human relations are thus relations of pure prestige, a perpetual struggle, to the death, for recognition of one human being by another.

At the first stage of his dialectic, Hegel affirms that in so far as death is the common ground of man and animal, it is by accepting death and even by inviting it that the former differentiates himself from the latter. At the heart of this primordial struggle for recognition, man is thus identified with violent death. The mystic slogan "Die and become what you are" is taken up once more by Hegel. But "Become what you are" gives place to "Become what you so far are not." This primitive and passionate desire for recognition, which is confused with the will to exist, can be satisfied only by a recognition gradually extended until it embraces everyone.

In that everyone wants equally much to be recognized by everyone, the fight for life will cease only with the recognition of all by all, which will mark the termination of history. The existence that Hegelian consciousness seeks to obtain is born in the hard-won glory of collective approval. It is not beside the point to note that, in the thought which will inspire our revolutions, the supreme good does not, in reality, coincide with existence, but with an arbitrary facsimile. The entire history of mankind is, in any case, nothing but a prolonged fight to the death for the conquest of universal prestige and absolute power. It is, in its essence, imperialist.

We are far from the gentle savage of the eighteenth century and from the Social Contract. In the sound and fury of the passing centuries, each separate consciousness, to ensure its own existence, must henceforth desire the death of others. Moreover, this relentless tragedy is absurd, since, in the event of one consciousness being destroyed, the victorious consciousness is not recognized as such, in that it cannot be victorious in the eyes of something that no longer exists. In fact, it is here the philosophy of appearances reaches its limits.

No human reality would therefore have been engendered if, thanks to a propensity that can be considered" fortunate for Hegel's system, there had not existed, from the beginning of time, two kinds of consciousness, one of which has not the courage to renounce life and is therefore willing to recognize the other kind of consciousness without being recognized itself in return. It consents, in short,

to being considered as an object. This type of consciousness, which, to preserve its animal existence, renounces independent life, is the consciousness of a slave. The type of consciousness which by being recognized achieves independence is that of the master.

They are distinguished one from the other at the moment when they clash and when one submits to the other. The dilemma at this stage is not to be free or to die, but to kill or to enslave. This dilemma will resound throughout the course of history, though at this moment its absurdity has not yet been resolved.

Undoubtedly the master enjoys total freedom first as regards the slave, since the latter recognizes him totally, and then as regards the natural world, since by his work the slave transforms it into objects of enjoyment which the master consumes in a perpetual affirmation of his own identity. However, this autonomy is not absolute. The master, to his misfortune, is recognized in his autonomy by a consciousness that he himself does not recognize as autonomous.

Therefore he cannot be satisfied and his autonomy is only negative. Mastery is a blind alley. Since, moreover, he cannot renounce mastery and become a slave again, the eternal destiny of masters is to live unsatisfied or to be killed. The master serves no other purpose in history than to arouse servile consciousness, the only form of consciousness that really creates history. The slave, in fact, is not bound to his condition, but wants to change it.

Thus, unlike his master, he can improve himself, and what is called history is nothing but the effects of his long efforts to obtain real freedom. Already, by work, by his transformation of the natural world into a technical world, he manages to escape from the nature which was the basis of his slavery in that he did not know how to raise himself above it by accepting death.⁴ The very agony of death experienced in the humiliation of the entire being lifts the slave to the level of human totality. He knows, henceforth, that this totality exists; now it only remains for him to conquer it through a long series of struggles against nature and against the masters. History identifies itself, therefore, with the history of endeavor and rebellion. It is hardly astonishing that Marxism-Leninism derived from this dialectic the contemporary ideal of the soldier worker.

⁴ Actually, the ambiguity is profound, for the nature in question is not the same. Does the advent of the technical world suppress death or the fear of death in the natural world? That is the real question, which Hegel leaves in suspense.

We shall leave aside the description of the various attitudes of the servile consciousness (stoicism, skepticism, guilty conscience) which then follows in the Phenomenology. But, thanks to its consequences, another aspect of this dialectic cannot be neglected: namely, the assimilation of the master slave relationship to the relationship between man and God. One of Hegel's commentators⁵ remarks that if the master really existed, he would be God. Hegel himself calls the Master of the world the real God. In his description of guilty conscience he shows how the Christian slave, wishing to deny everything that oppresses him, takes refuge in the world beyond and by doing so gives himself a new master in the person of God. Elsewhere Hegel identifies the supreme master with absolute death. And so the struggle begins again, on a higher level, between man in chains and the cruel God of Abraham.

⁵ Jean Hyppolite.

The solution to this new conflict between the universal God and the human entity will be furnished by Christ, who reconciles in Himself the universal and the unique. But, in one sense, Christ is a part of the palpable world. He is visible, He lived and He died. He is therefore only a stage on the road to the universal; He too must be denied dialectically. It is only necessary to recognize Him as the man-God to obtain a higher synthesis. Skipping the intermediary stages, it suffices to say that this synthesis, after being incarnated in the Church and in Reason, culminates in the absolute State,

founded by the soldier workers, where the spirit of the world will be finally reflected in the mutual recognition of each by all and in the universal reconciliation of everything that has ever existed under the sun.

At this moment, "when the eyes of the spirit coincide with the eyes of the body," each individual consciousness will be nothing more than a mirror reflecting another mirror, itself reflected to infinity in infinitely recurring images. The City of God will coincide with the city of humanity; and universal history, sitting in judgment on the world, will pass its sentence by which good and evil will be justified. The State will play the part of Destiny and will proclaim its approval of every aspect of reality on "the sacred day of the Presence."

This sums up the essential ideas which in spite, or because, of the extreme ambiguity of their interpretation, have literally driven the revolutionary mind in apparently contradictory directions and which we are now learning to rediscover in the ideology of our times.

Amorality, scientific materialism, and atheism have definitely replaced the anti-theism of the rebels of former times and have made common cause, under Hegel's paradoxical influence, with a revolutionary movement which, until his time, was never really separated from its moral, evangelical, and idealistic origins.

These tendencies, if they are sometimes very far from really originating with Hegel, found their source in the ambiguity of his thought and in his critique of transcendence. Hegel's undeniable originality lies in his definitive destruction of all vertical transcendenceâ "particularly the transcendence of principles. There is no doubt that he restores the immanence of the spirit to the evolution of the world.

But this immanence is not precisely defined and has nothing in common with the pantheism of the ancients. The spirit is and is not part of the world; it creates itself and will finally prevail. Values are thus only to be found at the end of history. Until then there is no suitable criterion on which to base a judgment of value. One must act and live in terms of the future. All morality becomes provisional. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in their most profound manifestations, are centuries that have tried to live without transcendence.

One of Hegel's commentators, Alexandre Kojève, of left wing tendencies it is true, but orthodox in his opinion on this particular point, notes Hegel's hostility to the moralists and remarks that his only axiom is to live according to the manners and customs of one's nation. A maxim of social conformity of which Hegel, in fact, gave the most cynical proofs. Kojève adds, however, that this conformity is legitimate only to the extent that the customs of the nation correspond to the spirit of the timesâ "in other words, to the extent that they are solidly established and can resist revolutionary criticism and attacks.

But who will determine their solidity and who will judge their validity? For a hundred years the capitalist regimes of the West have withstood violent assaults. Should they for that reason be considered legitimate? Inversely, should those who were faithful to the Weimar Republic have abandoned it and pledged themselves to Hitler in 1933 because the former collapsed when attacked by the latter? Should the Spanish Republic have been betrayed at the exact moment when General Franco's forces triumphed? These are conclusions that traditional reactionary thought would have justified within its own perspectives. The novelty, of which the consequences are incalculable, lies in the fact that revolutionary thought has assimilated them.

The suppression of every moral value and of all principles and their replacement by fact, as provisional but actual king, could only lead, as we have plainly seen, to political cynicism, whether it be fact as envisioned by the individual or, more serious still, fact as envisioned by the State. The political

movements, or ideologies, inspired by Hegel are all united in the ostensible abandonment of virtue.

Hegel could not, in fact, prevent those who had read him, with feelings of anguish which were far from methodical in a Europe that was already torn asunder by injustice, from finding themselves precipitated into a world without innocence and without principlesâ into the very world of which Hegel says that it is in itself a sin, since it is separated from the spirit. Hegel, of course, permits the forgiveness of sins at the end of history. Until then, however, every human activity is sinful. "Therefore only the absence of activity is innocent, the existence of a stone and not even the existence of a child." Thus even the innocence of stones is unknown to us.

Without innocence there are no human relations and no reason. Without reason, there is nothing but naked force, the master and slave waiting for reason one day to prevail. Between master and slave, even suffering is solitary, joy is without foundation, and both are undeserved. Then how can one live, how endure life when friendship is reserved for the end of time? The only escape is to create order with the use of weapons. "Kill or enslave!"â those who have read Hegel with this single and terrible purpose have really considered only the first part of the dilemma. From it they have derived a philosophy of scorn and despair and have deemed themselves slaves and nothing but slaves, bound by death to the absolute Master and by the whip to their terrestrial masters.

This philosophy of the guilty conscience has merely taught them that every slave is enslaved only by his own consent, and can be liberated only by an act of protest which coincides with death. Answering the challenge, the most courageous among them have completely identified themselves with this act of protest and have dedicated themselves to death. After all, to say that negation is in itself a positive act justified in advance every kind of negation and predicted the cry of Bakunin and Nechaiev: "Our mission is to destroy, not to construct." A nihilist for Hegel was only a skeptic who had no other escape but contradiction or philosophic suicide.

But he himself gave birth to another type of nihilist, who, making boredom into a principle of action, identified suicide with philosophic murder.⁶ It was at this point that the terrorists were born who decided that it was necessary to kill and die in order to exist, because mankind and history could achieve their creation only by sacrifice and murder. The magnificent idea that all idealism is chimerical if it is not paid for by risking one's life was to be developed to the fullest possible extent by young men who were not engaged in expounding the concept from the safe distance of a university chair before dying in their beds, but among the tumult of falling bombs and even on the gallows. By doing this and even by their errors they corrected their master and demonstrated, contrary to his teaching, that one kind of aristocracy, at least, is superior to the hideous aristocracy of success exalted by Hegel: the aristocracy of sacrifice.

⁶ This form of nihilism, despite appearances, is still nihilism in the Nietzschean sense, to the extent that it is a calumny of the present life to the advantage of a historical future in which one tries to believe.

Another sort of follower, who read Hegel more seriously, chose the second term of the dilemma and made the pronouncement that the slave could only free himself by enslaving in his turn. Post-Hegelian doctrines, unmindful of the mystic aspect or certain of the master's tendencies, have led his followers to absolute atheism and to scientific materialism.

But this evolution is inconceivable without the absolute disappearance of every principle of transcendent explanation, and without the complete destruction of the Jacobin ideal. Immanence, of course, is not atheism. But immanence in the process of development is, if one can say so, provisional atheism.⁷ The indefinite face of God which, with Hegel, is still reflected in the spirit of the world will not be difficult to efface.

7 In any event, the criticism of Kierkegaard is valid. To base divinity on history is, paradoxically, to base an absolute value on approximate knowledge. Something "eternally historic" is a contradiction in terms.

Hegel's successors will draw decisive conclusions from his ambiguous formula: "God without man is no more than man without God." David Strauss in his *Life of Jesus* isolates the theory of Christ considered as the God-man. Bruno Bauer (*The Critique of Evangelist History*) institutes a kind of materialist Christianity by insisting on the humanity of Jesus.

Finally, Ludwig Feuerbach (whom Marx considered as a great mind and of whom he acknowledges himself the critical disciple), in his *Essence of Christianity*, replaces all theology by a religion of man and the species, which has converted a large part of contemporary thought.

His task is to demonstrate that the distinction between human and divine is illusory, that it is nothing but the distinction between the essence of humanity in other words, human nature and the individual. "The mystery of God is only the mystery of the love of man for himself." The accents of a strange new prophecy ring out: "Individuality has replaced faith, reason the Bible, politics religion and the Church, the earth heaven, work prayer, poverty hell, and man Christ."

Thus there is only one hell and it is on this earth: and it is against this that the struggle must be waged. Politics is religion, and transcendent Christianity that of the hereafter establishes the masters of the earth by means of the slave's renunciation and creates one master more beneath the heavens. That is why atheism and the revolutionary spirit are only two aspects of the same movement of liberation.

That is the answer to the question which is always being asked: why has the revolutionary movement identified itself with materialism rather than with idealism? Because to conquer God, to make Him a slave, amounts to abolishing the transcendence that kept the former masters in power and to preparing, with the ascendancy of the new tyrants, the advent of the man-king.

When poverty is abolished, when the contradictions of history are resolved, "the real god, the human god, will be the State." Then *homo homini lupus* becomes *homo homini deus*. This concept is at the root of the contemporary world. With Feuerbach, we assist at the birth of a terrible form of optimism which we can still observe at work today and which seems to be the very antithesis of nihilist despair.

But that is only in appearance. We must know Feuerbach's final conclusions in this *Theogony* to perceive the profoundly nihilist derivation of his inflamed imagination. In effect, Feuerbach affirms, in the face of Hegel, that man is only what he eats, and thus recapitulates his ideas and predicts the future in the following phrase: "The true philosophy is the negation of philosophy. No religion is my religion. No philosophy is my philosophy."

Cynicism, the deification of history and of matter, individual terror and State crime, these are the inordinate consequences that will now spring, armed to the teeth, from the equivocal conception of a world that entrusts to history alone the task of producing both values and truth. If nothing can be clearly understood before truth has been brought to light, at the end of time, then every action is arbitrary, and force will finally rule supreme. "If reality is inconceivable," Hegel exclaims, "then we must contrive inconceivable concepts." A concept that cannot be conceived must, perforce, like error, be contrived. But to be accepted it cannot rely on the persuasion innate in order and truth, but must finally be imposed.

Hegel's attitude consists of saying: "This is truth, which appears to us, however, to be error, but which is true precisely because it happens to be error. As for proof, it is not I, but history, at its conclusion, that will furnish it." Such pretensions can only entail two attitudes: either the

suspension of all affirmation until the production of proof, or the affirmation of everything, in history, which seems dedicated to success force in particular. And both attitudes imply nihilism. Moreover, it is impossible to understand twentieth-century revolutionary thought if we overlook the fact that unfortunately it derived a large part of its inspiration from a philosophy of conformity and opportunism. True rebellion is not jeopardized on account of the distortion of these particular ideas.

Nevertheless, the basis of Hegel's claims is what renders them intellectually and forever suspect. He believed that history in 1807, with the advent of Napoleon and of himself, had come to an end, and that affirmation was possible and nihilism conquered. The Phenomenology, the Bible that was to have prophesied only the past, put a limit on time. In 1807 all sins were forgiven, and time had stopped.

But history has continued. Other sins, since then, have been hurled in the face of the world and have revived the scandal of the former crimes, which the German philosopher had already forgiven forever. The deification of Hegel by himself, after the deification of Napoleon, who would henceforth be innocent since he had succeeded in stabilizing history, lasted only seven years. Instead of total affirmation, nihilism once more covered the face of the earth. Philosophy, even servile philosophy, has its Waterloos.

But nothing can discourage the appetite for divinity in the heart of man. Others have come and are still to come who, forgetting Waterloo, still claim to terminate history. The divinity of man is still on the march, and will be worthy of adoration only at the end of time. This apocalypse must be promoted and, despite the fact that there is no God, at least a Church must be built.

After all, history, which has not yet come to an end, allows us a glimpse of a perspective that might even be that of the Hegelian system but for the simple reason that it is provisionally dragged along, if not led, by the spiritual heirs of Hegel. When cholera carries off the philosopher of the Battle of Jena at the height of his glory, everything is, in fact, in order for what is to follow. The sky is empty, the earth delivered into the hands of power without principles. Those who have chosen to kill and those who have chosen to enslave will successively occupy the front of the stage, in the name of a form of rebellion which has been diverted from the path of truth.

The end