

GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL (1770 – 1831)



Born in southwestern Germany. At the age of three Hegel went to the "German School". During his adolescence Hegel read voraciously, copying lengthy extracts in his diary.

**GERMAN IDEALISM:**

THE Idealist political thought is inspired by Plato and Aristotle. It arose in Germany by the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was a reaction against the materialist rationalism which looked at human institutions as an expression of human reason.

Idealist philosophy is also called Absolutist, Philosophical, Metaphysical, or Mystical theory of state. According to the Idealist, the state is a Moral Agency. It is the guardian of morality. It is perfected rationality. It is man in fullness and perfection of development. It has a personality and will of its own. There is no limitation on the will and authority of the state. The state is the 'march of God on Earth.' The state is a moral association. It is an ethical entity. It is self-sufficing. It is not a mean to an end. The individual must place himself at the service of the state. The real significance of individual of the individual lies in his membership in the society. There is no scope for any conflict between him and the state.

Geist and Zietgeist: Georg Wilhelm Freidrick Hegel represents the climax of German Idealism. The keynote of the Hegelian ideology is the 'evolution' of ideas through a dialectical process. According him, history showed a process of evolutionary unfolding. The institutions of a period reflect the characteristics of that period. The 'Geist' or spirit of a community is reflected in its associations and institutions. The geist is objective and tangible. It is connected to the feelings and aspirations of the community. The institutions represent the 'Zietgeist' or spirit of the times. This spirit is the essence of the community. It assumes the shape of the state. The spirit may be called Idea or Reason. History of the world is the attempt by the spirit to realise itself.

Rational is real: 'Reason' is the only reality. Everything including the material world is a creation and embodiment of reason. Reason and Matter are not antithetical; but they are co ordinate. The institutions of a particular time are the embodiment of Reason. They are rational. Real is Rational and Rational is Real. Actual is Rational and Rational is Actual.

Dialectics: In the Universe, the only reality is the Idea, Reason or Spirit or the Divine Mind. The history of world is the history of the evolution of idea, reason, spirit or divine mind. Reason is reality. Reality is based on thought. To know reality, we must

know the laws of thought. The laws of thought are explained by dialectics. Dialectics is a dynamic process. It lies in becoming and not being.

Dialectics explains the evolution of Reason in human mind. It is the mechanism by which Reason or Idea evolves through a self propelling mechanism. It is self propelling because Idea contains in itself its own opposite. But the opposite of an idea is not absolute. There, reconciliation is possible.

The Triad: The dialectical evolution of Ideas evolves through a process of Thesis, Anti-thesis and Synthesis. Each thesis contains in itself the anti-thesis. The thesis and anti-thesis are then reconciled. Thus the Synthesis is formed. Synthesis contains the truth in both thesis and anti-thesis. Any synthesis in turn becomes a thesis. Thus the triad of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis continues.

The State: The state is formed out of the dialectical triad which consisted of the family, civil society and the state. Man is a social being. So he must lead a social life. Firstly, this association came in the form of family. It was based on mutual love. The basic characteristic of the family was Unity. The family then became the thesis. But it could not meet all the needs of the individual. Thus it provoked the anti-thesis, i.e. the civil society. Hegel called it the 'bourgeoisie society'. It was based on self interest. It was characterised by the principle of Universal Competition. Then, there was the competition between the thesis and the anti-thesis, the family and the civil society, the unity principle and the principle of competition. The struggle was resolved by the synthesis, the state. The state is characterised by the principle of Universality. It is in the state that Reason finds its perfect embodiment.

The state is a natural organism. The individual and other associations are part of it. The parts get their meaning by being the part of the whole. They must be subordinate to the state.

The state is the realised ethical idea. It is the creator of morality and law. It alone is the embodiment of Reason. The individual rights come from the state. It is in the state that the individual, the family and the civil society find their competition and security. It is not a means, but it is an end in itself. State is the 'March of God on Earth' it is omnipotent, infallible and absolute. "Render unto the Caesar-God what are Caesar-God's and unto the God-Caesar what are God-Caesar's".

The state composed primarily not of individuals; but of associations, corporations, guilds and estates. There cannot be any antagonism between the individual and the state. The state covers the entire gamut of the individual's life. The **sovereignty** of the state does not lie in the people but in the state as a legal person. Submission to the state means submission to the **law** of the state. The law of the state can never be wrong. ▲

T. H. GREEN ( 1836 – 1882)



Thomas Hill Green was born on Yorkshire to an Anglican person who was well known in the Church of England. He was educated at home till 19 and later joined Balliol College, Oxford and spent the rest of his life there. He worked for the liberal party. He was a member of the Oxford Town Council and School Board. He was stricken with blood poisoning and died in 1882 at the young age of forty-six.

The English Idealist School began with Green. German idealism was the greatest influence upon him.

He lived and wrote at a time when the evil consequences of the industrial revolution began to appear. The division between the rich and the poor was increasing. The industrial supremacy of Britain began to be contested by other European powers. These conditions called for a national effort. It demanded increased state activity without destroying individual liberty. All these situations found expression in English Idealism.

Self Consciousness: To ask "What is man?" is to ask "What is experience?" for experience means that of which I am conscious. According to Green, the true goal of human life is self-realisation or self-protection. The most distinguishing characteristic of man, which distinguishes him from other lower animals, is his self consciousness. Man is conscious of being conscious. He has conscious self realisation. His self realisation is possible through conscious actions. For this needs liberty. "Human consciousness postulates liberty. Liberty involves rights, and rights demand the state". The state is a necessity because man is not an isolated being. He has to seek his self perfection and self realisation along with the self perfection of other members of the society. His good is in consonance with the good of others. His good is part of common good. Therefore, the universal recognition of rights is expressed in the form of laws of the state. Rights postulate the state. State enforces the rights on the basis of common consciousness. Common consciousness creates both the system of rights and the state.

Good of Man = Good of Society or common good.

Self Consciousness → Self realisation ← Liberty ← Rights

Universal recognition of Rights → State

Therefore, consciousness results in the formation of the state.

According to Green, human consciousness, which means the consciousness of self and others demands liberty and rights. Consciousness or Will is the basis of state. Will not force is the basis of state. The state is a natural growth. It is a product of human consciousness. The state should not do anything against it. The true basis of the state is not its coercive power; but the service it renders for the maintenance of the rights. It is the business of the sovereign to enforce the laws and maintain rights. Force is only an attribute of the state and not its basis.

The World Spirit (Welt-geist) or Reason is the ultimate reality and its essence is freedom. Along with the development of World-Spirit, there is a parallel development of freedom. The state is the highest embodiment of World-Spirit.

According to Green, the state is not a definite and concrete organisation of final character; it is an institutionalized expression of general will.

Freedom is not the license to do what one likes. But it is the positive power of doing and enjoying something worth doing and enjoying. Freedom is the freedom for good will and not for animal impulses. This is called positive freedom. The good will is free; not the bad will.

The citizen has the political obligation to obey the laws of the state. Because, the state helps the individual to realize his self protection by removing the hindrances to good life. The function of the state is to hinder the hindrances to good life.

Green provides scope for the citizen to disobey the law. The individual has the right to judge whether a particular law is in conformity with common good or not. The Legislature cannot enact any law violating the common good.

### **Influence of Green's thought**

Green gave English interpretation to the philosophy of ancient Greece and the German Idealists. Green's teaching was, directly and indirectly, the most potent philosophical influence in England during the last quarter of the 19th century. He was known for his enthusiasm for common citizenship. He played a very important role in moulding modern political mind. He gave a healthy direction to English Idealist thought.