

The two conceptions which govern this method may be defined as follows:—

29.
Two con-
ceptions
in Hegel's
method.

In the first place, every thought can be expressed in a definite sentence, or thesis. The further analysis, explanation, or illustration of this thesis leads to an assertion of something else, to a distinguishing of the content of the thesis from something else outside of it. It is a process of distinguishing or differentiation. This may be termed the antithesis. And a third step may be taken, and in many cases is inevitably taken, a position is gained from which both the thesis and the antithesis, both the affirmation in the former and the negation in the latter, are brought together in a synthesis.

This represents a very common way of explaining any subject, be this a definite thing in the outer world or some abstract notion in the thinking mind. You first try in some way or other to bring yourself, your readers or hearers, face to face with the subject you are dealing with. You then direct attention to the difference of your subject from other things, and then you try to show how this single subject is comprised with other things, which it is not, in some larger complex. This process can be repeated: taking the complex subject which you have arrived at, and which exhibits many differences, you can again differentiate it from other complexes, with which it forms still larger complexes; and this process can be repeated till you have arrived at an exhaustive view of the whole, the totality of things, the universe, the world, or by whatever term you wish to define it.