

intuition/deduction thesis, the innate knowledge thesis states that knowledge is acquired *a priori*. According to this thesis, however, knowledge does not come from intuition or deduction; rather, it is just part of our very nature to have it. The source of the knowledge depends upon the philosopher. While some rationalists believe this knowledge comes from God, for example, others believe it to be the result of natural selection.

### The Innate Concept Thesis

This theory states that as part of our nature, humans have concepts that they employ in a specific subject. According to the innate concept thesis, some knowledge is not the result of experience; however, sensory experience can trigger the process that brings this knowledge to our consciousness. While experience can act as a trigger, it still does not provide concepts or determine what the information is. This concept is different from the innate knowledge thesis because here, knowledge can be deduced from innate concepts. With the innate concept thesis, the more removed a concept is from experience, the more plausible it is to claim it as innate. For example, a concept on geometric shapes would be more innate than a concept on experiencing pain because it is further removed from experience.

While empiricism and rationalism present two different explanations for the same question, the answers are sometimes not as black and white. For example, philosophers Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Baruch Spinoza, considered to be key figures in the rationalism movement, believed that knowledge could be gained through reason in principle. However, besides specific areas like mathematics, they did not think it was possible in practice.

# GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL (1770–1831)

## The power of others

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's father wished for his son to become a clergyman. Hegel enrolled in the seminary at the University of Tübingen in 1788 and studied theology. During his time at the University, Hegel became friends with Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich W. J. von Schelling, who would go on to become incredibly successful as a poet and philosopher, respectively. Throughout their lives, these three men would have profound impacts on one another's work.

After graduating, Hegel decided he would not pursue being a pastor and lived in Frankfurt, where he worked as a tutor. When his father died, Hegel was left with enough money to financially support himself and began to devote his time entirely to working on his religious and social philosophies. In 1800, Hegel was introduced to the work of Immanuel Kant and became very interested in Kant's philosophies. In 1801, Hegel moved with von Schelling to the city of Jena, where both were hired to teach at the University of Jena. Jena was an artistic and intellectual epicenter, and Hegel decided his philosophy would combine his influences of theology, Kantian idealism, and romanticism with contemporary politics and social issues. That same year, Hegel began publishing his philosophical texts.

Hegel published one of his most famous works, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in 1807, in which he discussed in depth his views on Spirit, consciousness, and knowledge. Hegel would later systematize his philosophical approach in his three-volume *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* of 1817 and, in 1821, his *Elements of the*

*Philosophy of Right*, where he combined his philosophical ideas with critiques of modern society and political institutions.

In the years leading up to his death, Hegel became quite influential. The impact of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel can be seen in theology, cultural theory, and sociology, and his work is often considered a precursor to Marxism.

## DIALECTIC AND SPIRIT

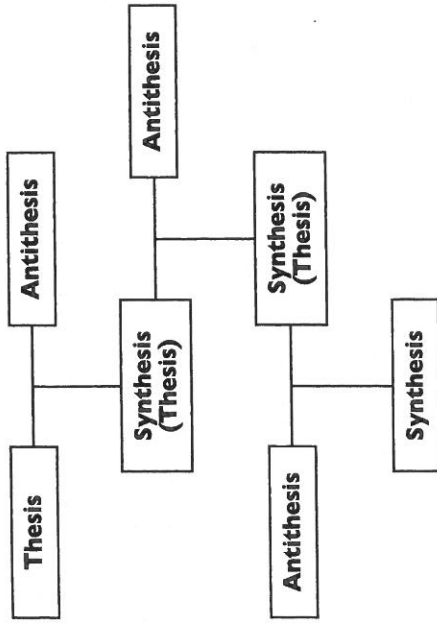
Prior to Hegel's work, the word *dialectic* was used to describe the process of arguing and refuting in order to determine the first principles (like the dialogues made famous by Socrates). Hegel, however, used the word *dialectic* in a very different way.

Like Kant, Hegel was an idealist. Hegel believed the mind only has access to ideas of what the world is like, and that we can never fully perceive what the world is. However, unlike Kant, Hegel believed these ideas were social, meaning they are completely shaped by other people's ideas. Through the use of a common language, traditions of one's society, and the religious and cultural institutions that one belongs to, an individual's mind is shaped. This collective consciousness of a society, which Hegel refers to as "Spirit," is responsible for shaping one's consciousness and ideas.

Hegel, unlike Kant, believed that this Spirit is constantly evolving. According to Hegel, the spirit evolves by the same kind of pattern as an idea would during an argument, the dialectic. First, there is an idea about the world (much like a thesis), which has an inherent flaw, giving rise to the antithesis. The thesis and antithesis eventually reconcile by creating a synthesis, and a new idea arises comprised of elements of both the thesis and the antithesis.

To Hegel, society and culture follow this pattern, and one could understand all of human history, without the use of logic or empirical data, simply by using logic.

## The Dialectic



## SOCIAL RELATIONS

Hegel agreed with Kant's notion that being conscious of an object also implies one is being self-conscious (because to be conscious of an object means there is also a consciousness of a subject, which would be oneself perceiving the object). Hegel adds to this theory by stating that self-consciousness not only involves an object and a subject; it also involves other subjects because individuals truly become aware of themselves when someone else is watching. Therefore, according to Hegel, actual self-consciousness is social. It is only