Among the different parts of Hegel’s system the philosophy of history is today perhaps one of the less appealing. This is due both to a shift in the general focus of the current philosophical discussion and to the particular place that history occupies within Hegel’s thought. While the issue of “universal” or “world” history (Weltgeschichte) is one of the most widely treated between the end of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century, it is hardly of any interest in the contemporary philosophical debate. On the other hand, for general and scholarly readers alike the philosophy of history seems to catalyze many of the flaws that different interpretive traditions have attributed to Hegel throughout the years – from the charge of teleologism (or providentialism) and the triumphalism of a suspicious notion of progress bent toward the superiority of the Prussian national state and Protestant culture, to the charge of intellectualizing (even logicizing) material processes at the expense of the understanding of real historical transformations. All in all, it seems difficult today to take seriously, at least without further qualifications, claims such as: reason is in history; history is god’s unimpeded march in the world, or even that history is the worldly realization of freedom.\(^1\) While Hegel’s general thesis of the historicity of all human activity and production, in other words, of Vernunft and Geist – the seminal claim that stands at the beginning of many historicisms, such as the German and Italian historicism of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century – is often and more easily appreciated (in particular when contrasted to the ahistorical perspective of Kant’s transcendentalism), it seems much more difficult to justify and to salvage Hegel’s philosophy of history as a discipline in its own right, allegedly structured by his dialectic-speculative logic, problematically placed at the very end of the sphere of “objective spirit”
or of the *Philosophy of Right* – hence characterized by a markedly political perspective – and invested with the task of making the transition to “absolute spirit.”

In this chapter, I shall offer a new perspective on Hegel’s thinking of history. The basis of my argument is the development of the concept of “dialectical memory” and the connection between memory and history that we have been following so far from the 1807 *Phenomenology* to the mature systematic relation between the Logic and the philosophy of subjective spirit. At stake in the constellation that I have pursued so far is first the relation between collective or “ethical memory” and the history that appears in the phenomenological development of consciousness and spirit in the *Phenomenology*; second, the relation between what I called “dialectic memory” as the method of the logical unfolding of the structures of pure thinking and the psychological individual memory that in the philosophy of subjective spirit lays the foundations of spirit’s subjectivity; and, third, the relation of both dialectical and psychological memory to personal history at the level of subjective spirit. Now, I want to carry this discussion a step further, tackling the idea of world history in Hegel’s mature thought. I want to look at how the connection between memory, in all its different configurations, and history is addressed in the spheres of objective and absolute spirit; and I want to bring to light the systematic necessity that requires this further development. I have shown in the first chapter how the ethical memory that grounds history in the *Phenomenology* leads, at the end of this work, to the ahistorical dimension of the Logic, hence is no longer able, within the system, to function as the principle of history. I have also suggested, at the end of the previous chapter, that the philosophy of subjective spirit offers an insufficient basis for thinking history because of Hegel’s long-standing conviction that world history cannot be grounded on individuality, hence, ultimately, on psychological memory. And yet, given that world history belongs to the sphere of objective spirit, it remains crucial that the latter is the result of the movement of liberation of theoretical and practical spirit that concludes the Psychology, whereby it inherits the structure of spirit and its personal memory and memories. The following questions, then, should be raised at this point: What is the principle of world history, and what is the relation between world history and memory in the further development of the philosophy of spirit? And what is the memory at play in the sphere of objective spirit – is it the dialectical memory of the Logic, the individual memories of subjective spirit, their further confirmation and re-enactment within the ethical life of the political community, or what else?