Philosophy and its History

- Hegel was the first modern philosopher to have taken the history of philosophy to be central to own philosophy.
  - Aristotle had taken the “common opinions” of earlier philosophers as his starting-point in doing metaphysics.
- The achievements of the philosophers are not individual achievements, but rather are manifestations of the spirit of their time.
- At Hegel’s point in history, the intellectual development of humanity had reached the point where all fundamental knowledge had been attained.
- So Hegel’s philosophy represents the final resting place of philosophical thinking.
- In his “Lectures on the History of Philosophy,” Hegel set out to show how all previous philosophical thinking was incorporated into his own.

The History of Spirit

- A fundamental philosophical notion is Hegel is that of “spirit” (Geist).
- Spirit is opposed to nature, in that it is thinking while nature is not.
- But spirit is like nature in that it is a kind of totality rather than being an individual mind or thinking thing.
- The development of philosophy is the work of spirit.
  - Spirit attempts to know itself.
  - In the process, spirit transforms itself.
- The history of philosophy is the history of the attempts at self-knowledge and the consequent development of spirit in time.
- Each phase of history preserves all that has come before but transforms it into a new form.
Phases of the History of Philosophy

- The history of philosophy can be divided into three phases.
  - The Greek.
  - The philosophy of the middle ages.
  - The modern philosophy.

- Greek philosophy developed the main philosophical categories, and medieval philosophy applied them in the context of Roman Catholicism.

- The Protestant Reformation led by Luther highlighted the free thought of the individual.

- The problem for modern philosophy is how individual thought (subjectivity) is related to being in general.

Realism and Idealism

- The goal of modern philosophy is to unify thought and being.

- The opposition may be overcome in one of two ways.
  - Realism.
  - Idealism.

- In realism, being is independent of thought and is comprehended by it through sense-perception.
  - Physical nature is united with thought insofar as perceptual observation is generalized to universal laws, which reflect the universal character of abstract thinking.
  - Society is understood through the discovery of the basis of rights in individual human beings.

- In idealism, being, which is the content of thinking, is found in thought itself, a priori.

The Oppositions to be Overcome

- The project of unifying thought and being requires reconciliation of three kinds of opposition.
  - Knowledge and its object.
  - Good and evil.
  - Freedom and necessity.
Being, as the ultimate object of human knowledge, is God, and so the task is to show how knowledge of God can be established \textit{a priori}.

The apparent evil in the realm of being must be explained away, given the result for thought that God exists and is good.

It is known through thought that humans are self-determining in their actions, but God knows all that will take place and the mechanisms of the natural world appear deterministic.

**Modern Philosophy Before Kant**

- The problem of modern philosophy is to reconcile the infinite being of God with the finite individuality of human beings.
- The systems of Descartes, Spinoza, and Malebranche aimed at this reconciliation but failed in their own way.
- Locke and his English followers began from experience and therefore did not have the means to understand infinite being.
- Leibniz rightly held being for thought to be the essence of truth but began from the inadequate starting point of individuality.
- Wolff philosophized in German and displaced Aristotelian philosophy with modern philosophy, but he did so from a largely empirical point of view.
- Those following Wolff slid entirely into empiricism and abandoned metaphysics.

**Kant’s Philosophy**

- In opposition to empiricism, Kant sought to establish the universality and necessity of metaphysical judgments.
- In so doing, he united the forms of thought with the object of thought, but the object is only the finite phenomenon, not infinite being, God.
- The unity he sought has three “moments”:
  - \textit{Thesis}: the being-in-itself of the object of consciousness.
  - \textit{Antithesis}: The being-for-self of consciousness, the subject.
  - \textit{Synthesis}: The unity of being-in-itself and being-for-self, of subject and object.
- But Kant fails to attain the synthesis in a consistent way.
  - Consciousness knows its objects only as they are for consciousness, leaving being-in-itself outside the scope of the laws it brings to phenomena.
Fichte's Philosophy

- Fichte tried to unite the opposing moments being-for-self and being-in-itself.
- He begins as does Descartes with the certainty of being-for-self, of the existence of consciousness.
- The existence of consciousness is the single principle on which all knowledge is based.
- Then the task is to derive all the determinate content of consciousness from consciousness itself.
- Since the content of consciousness is generated by consciousness itself, there is unity between the subject (consciousness) and the object (self-generated content).
- Thus, Fichte is an idealist.
- But his idealism is subjective: the object is only an object for consciousness and is not a being in itself, so Kant's problem is not solved.

Schelling's Philosophy

- Schelling began from the standpoints of Fichte and Kant, but he eventually put forward a distinctive account of the unity of subject and object.
- He took a unified subject-object as his starting point.
- We can view the subject-object from the standpoint of the subject or the standpoint of the object.
- This is similar to Spinoza's substance, which can be conceived under the attribute of thought or under the attribute of extension.
- The problem with this approach is that it begins where it should end.
  - The task of philosophy is to show how a unified, all-encompassing, subject-object (God) emerges from antithetical opposites.

Hegel's System

- Hegel attempted to unite all of philosophy under a single system.
- The system is broken down into three parts.
  - Logic (which involves primarily the concepts of metaphysics).
  - Philosophy of Nature.
  - Philosophy of Spirit.
• The system is laid out in three volumes of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*.

• In the Introduction, Hegel explains the main lines of his system and how they are related to earlier philosophy.

**Philosophy**

• To understand what philosophy is, we must begin with an undeveloped *conception* of its objects.

• Put formally, the object of philosophy is truth, which concerns the existence and determination of its objects.

• The supreme source of truth is God, and so philosophy (like religion) has God as its primary object.

• The secondary objects of philosophy are nature and the human mind, both of which are finite.

• Philosophy tries to understand two relational aspects of nature and mind:
  – How they relate to each other.
  – How they are related to their truth in God.

• In order to accomplish its end, philosophy must study these objects “thinkingly,” through *concepts* (*Begriffe*).

**Philosophical and Unphilosophical Thinking**

• Not all thinking study of objects is philosophical.

• There are two quite distinct modes of thinking.
  – Original, active thinking, which appears in the guise of feeling, intuition and conception, which give rise to law, religion, and ethics.
  – Philosophical thinking, which proceeds through concepts, and results in conceptual knowledge.

• There is a prejudice according to which feeling and thought are opposite.

• If this is so, then philosophical knowledge of God would supplant religious feeling.

• But feeling can be permeated by thought.

• Philosophical thinking is “meta-thinking,” thinking about thinking, and hence its conclusions about God are not in conflict with religious feeling.
Philosophical Thinking and Religious Belief

- Some philosophers hold that one must prove philosophically that God exists before one can believe in God’s existence.
- Proofs of God’s existence are carried out through philosophical meta-thinking.
- This is not the kind of thinking that is involved in religious feeling, and hence is not required for religious belief.
- It would be absurd to claim that one must understand all the scientific properties of food in order to be able to eat.
- Likewise, it would be absurd to claim that one must understand philosophically that God exists and what God’s nature in order to be able to believe in God.

The Form and Content of Thought

- One and the same object may be thought in different ways.
- The object is the content of the thinking, and the way of thinking the object is the form that the objects have.
- The same object as content may have the form of:
  - Feeling.
  - Intuition.
  - Image.
  - Conception.
  - A combination of these.
- Because the form is not separable from the content, different thoughts of the same object may appear to be thoughts of different objects.
- All of these forms can be called “ideas” or “conceptions.”

Conceptual Thinking

- Philosophical thinking operates with concepts, rather than conceptions.
- Conceptions are only metaphors for concepts.
  - A painting of God has God as its object, but it represents God in a determinate sensuous form, rather than an abstract conceptual form.
  - The conception of a leaf as being green is a kind of image of being and individuality.
- The difficulty of pure abstract thinking is a reason why people think that philosophy is unintelligible.
- Another reason is that when one thinks philosophically, one is unable to find the object of thought, since there are no conceptions to illustrate the concepts.
The Justification of Philosophical Thinking

- Philosophy must prove to ordinary consciousness the need for its peculiar brand of thinking.
- To religious consciousness, it must prove two things:
  - That it knows the truth of God purely through the use of concepts.
  - That its results are justified in cases where they conflict with religious conceptions.
- People believe that the purely conceptual nature of philosophical thinking allows anyone to engage in it or criticize it simply by thinking, without any training.
- But purely conceptual thinking is not so easily obtained.
- The claim that humans have “intellectual intuition” (made by Jacobi) promotes the mistaken notion that philosophical insight can be gained without bother.

Philosophy and Reality

- Philosophy aims at truth, and its object must be what is actual.
- The concepts with which philosophy deals must be in harmony with what is real, the world.
- We first come into contact with the world through inner and outer experience.
- We learn to distinguish what is real from what is merely imaginary.
- Since the real object is the same in both the experienced and the conceptualized form, the concepts of philosophy must harmonize with empirically real objects.
- Because there is reason in the world of experience, this reason must be brought into harmony with the reason which we are conscious of using when we do philosophy.

Real is Rational

- In his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel had equated the rational with the real.
  - What is real is rational.
  - What is rational is real.
- Critics of these theses can find no support in religion or in philosophy.
- The doctrine of divine governance of the world is central to religion.
- Philosophers should know that God and God alone is actual, which implies the unity of the rational and the real.
They should also know that this kind of actuality must be distinguished from what exists merely contingently.

Thus, the doctrine of the rationality of the real does not apply to contingent beings, which are not necessarily rational.

**The Rational is Real**

- The identification of the real with the rational is criticized from the other direction, on the grounds that the rational character of concepts disqualifies them from being real.
  - Concepts are merely inventions of the mind.
  - Concepts are “ideal” and thus are too excellent to be real.
  - Concepts have no power to produce reality.

- A particularly tempting argument is that the understanding determines what *ought* to be, but that reality does not measure up to this imperative and hence is irrational.

- But the “oughts” of the understanding are conceptions only, and not concepts.

- They apply only to conditions in the experienced world that are only the “superficial surface” of actuality.

**Empiricism**

- Philosophy after Luther turned toward empirical investigation of the phenomenal world.

- It sought to find universality and lawfulness in an apparently disconnected mass of contingent objects.

- This universality and lawfulness were seen as being based in the human mind and giving content to the phenomenal world.

- The outcome of these investigations is then called “philosophy.”
  - Newton’s “natural” philosophy of physical nature.
  - Grotius’s “philosophy of international law.”
  - The new science of political economy (economics).

- But this empirical study falls short.

- It excludes God, freedom and spirit, due to their infinite content.

- But in fact, mind (*noûs*) is the cause of the world, and the feelings of ethics and religion are based on thought.
Philosophy and the Sciences

- The empirical sciences cannot do without speculative philosophy.
- The empirical method suffers from two defects.
  - The universal and lawful relations it discovers are merely associations and not real connections.
  - It begins with given data rather than deducing the data from a higher principle.
- Philosophical meta-thinking remedies these defects by supplying further categories.
- This kind of thinking respects the results of the empirical sciences but expands it in a way that allows it to be complete.

Explaining Philosophical Thinking

- The way in which philosophical thinking possesses necessity, and its claim to know God or the essence of things, must be explained.
- But the explanation is philosophical and therefore cannot be given prior to doing philosophy, except by making assumptions.
- Kant’s approach was to engage in a criticism of the powers of the human intellect.
- This approach has the same problem, in that one must carry out the investigation using the very faculties that are being investigated.
- Nor can we reach an explanation in the manner of Reinhold, by beginning with a kind of philosophy that is merely hypothetical and hoping that it will eventually discard the hypotheses.

Contradictions as an Obstacle to Meta-Thinking

- The need for philosophy arises from the fact that thought takes itself as its object.
- In the deepest sense, the mind comes to itself through the examination of thought, since thought is the principle of the mind.
- In this meta-thinking, the mind becomes ensnared in contradictions, and so is unable to come to itself.
- The mind needs to overcome these contradictions.
- It can do so by retreating from its goal of using thinking to understand thinking.
- One way to do this (recognized by Plato) is to abandon thinking as a means of discovery and to embrace “immediate knowledge.”
Philosophy as Empirical

- Historically, philosophy begins with what is discovered in experience and infers from it a supersensible reality, God.
- We might say that the sensible world is “immediately” given, while our knowledge of the supersensible depends on that of the sensible.
- We can then say that what we know of the supersensible is “mediated” by our knowledge of the sensible.
- In mediation, a higher point of view is attained, and there is a negative attitude toward the immediate data from which mediation began.
- If we claim that what is mediated is also “conditioned” by the original object, then philosophy is a merely empirical science.
- The negative attitude would then be ungrateful, since it treats negatively what is the condition of the mediated object.

Philosophy as A Priori

- Philosophy can also begin with itself as the immediate given, and the thought of itself as the mediated object.
- The concepts of philosophy are then *a priori* and are as secure as can be due to their origins in ourselves.
- There is a danger, though, of the concepts being empty formalism if they are divorced entirely from experience.
  - All is being (Parmenides).
  - Subject and object are identical (Fichte and Schelling).
- Experience is the basis for growth and advance in philosophy.
  - Its universality and lawfulness (contributed by thought) are proper for objects of philosophy.
  - The fact that thought has made a contribution removes its immediacy.

The History of Philosophy

- The history of philosophy seems to consist in a number of systems that are only accidentally related to one another.
- But the development of philosophy has always been guided by a unitary living mind (or spirit).
  - Each system is only a stage in the development of the single system of philosophy.
The principles which guide each system are branches of a single whole. Philosophy at any one point includes and is the result of the previous systems.

- The last system at any given time (if it is really philosophical) will be the most adequate.
- If one system contains all the others, philosophy cannot be criticized because of the diversity of systems.

The Idea

- Within a philosophical system there is the same process that governs the historical development of successive systems.
- This development takes place internally in thinking, without reference to any external historical facts.
- The end-product of philosophical thinking is an Idea.
  - It is the product of free and genuine thought.
  - It is concrete, rather than abstract.
- If the Idea is completely universal, it is the absolute Idea.
- An Idea is universal.
  - It provides unity to various “moments” which give rise to it.
- An Idea is concrete.
  - The “moments” that gave rise for it are retained rather than separated from it.

Philosophy as a System

- Philosophy is scientific only if it is in the form of a system.
- The contents of unsystematic philosophy are contingent and express only the personal peculiarities of the mind of the author.
- The only way a content can be justified is in its relation to a whole, to which it stands as a “moment.”
- A particular principle cannot be a system, and thus cannot be scientific.
- Genuine philosophy has as one of its principles that it must include all principles.
- A system can be seen as a circle of circles.
  - Each part of the system is itself a philosophical whole.
  - But each part goes beyond its limits and forms a wider circle.
  - The Idea can be seen as comprising the structure of the system itself.
The Encyclopedia of Philosophy

- Philosophy is a single single science, but it may be exhibited as a whole composed of parts.
- This is the method of exposition of an encyclopedia.
- In an ordinary (as opposed to philosophical) encyclopedia, the parts form a mere aggregate without a principle of unity.
- All partial sciences are excluded from an encyclopedia of philosophy.
  - Mere aggregates of information (e.g., philology).
  - Quasi-sciences which depend entirely on convention (e.g., heraldry).
  - The “positive” portions of true sciences which rest on rational principles.
- Generally, something is “positive” when its basis is not found in pure thought.

The Positive Element in the Sciences and Philosophy

- Sciences are positive in three ways.
  - They deal with contingencies, which are not determined by reason, but by chance.
  - They deal with the finite without regard to how it is contained in the infinite.
  - They have heterogeneous grounds of cognition, inference, feeling, faith, authority, based on internal and external intuition.
- Philosophy is positive in the third way when it is based on data from anthropology, psychology, or some other empirical source.
- Science and philosophy can shed some of its positivity if they are able to bring various different kinds of phenomena under universal principles.
  - The result is an external picture of (or metaphor for) the relevant concept.

Returning to the Beginning

- The starting point of philosophy is the self as object for the self.
- This beginning is not a subjective presupposition, but rather is the product of a free act of thought that gives itself as object.
- At the start of philosophy, the self is an immediate object for itself.
- At the end of philosophy, the object is a result that is mediated.
- Yet the result of philosophy is the same object with which philosophy began.
- In this way, philosophy resembles a completed circle, which ends at the starting point.
The Concept of the Concept of Philosophy

- There is a beginning in philosophy only relative to the person who studies it, and not to philosophy as a science.
- The first concept the beginner has of the science implies a separation between the object of the science and the beginner studying the science.
- The goal of the beginner is to understand the concept of the science.
- If the beginner is successful, then he will have attained the standpoint of the science itself.
- Insofar as the individual takes the standpoint of the science, it can be said that the science has gained a concept of its own concept.
- To do so is “the single aim, action, and goal of philosophy.”
- Philosophy has returned to itself and found satisfaction in itself.

The Divisions of Philosophy

- Because the system of philosophy is a whole, a division given before the system is exhibited is merely preliminary.
- The preliminary division is based on the Idea that is the source of the unity of the system.
- So we can make a preliminary division by noting the relations in which the Idea itself may stand.
  - Logic, (the Idea in itself and for itself).
  - Philosophy of Nature (the Idea in its otherness).
  - Philosophy of Mind (the Idea returning to itself from its otherness).
- The differences have to do only with the media in which the Idea is exhibited.
- It is misleading to present “divisions” of philosophy, as if there were a single object rendered into parts.
- Each “division” is related as a “moment” in an integrated system.

The Phenomenology of Spirit

- Hegel’s first major philosophical work was *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807).
- This book is the most famous and influential of all of Hegel’s writings.
- It can be seen as a preliminary investigation that sets the stage for the system of the *Encyclopedia*. 
• The study of spirit in the book is a “phenomenology” in the sense that it charts the appearance of consciousness as it assumes many forms.

• The description is not historical, but rather is based on the kinds of relations a knowing subject can have to its objects.

• The ultimate outcome is “absolute knowing,” in which consciousness has reached the maximum stage of its development and comes to know itself in its highest form.

The Stages of Spirit’s Development

• The following is a bare outline of the forms of consciousness, with the object of consciousness listed in parentheses.
  – Consciousness (something other than consciousness).
  – Self-Consciousness (the individual person).
  – Reason (nature).
  – Spirit (the ethical community).
  – Religion (the religious community).
  – Absolute Knowing (the consciousness that has assumed the prior forms).

• We will be focusing on part of the development of Self-Consciousness.

Consciousness

• Consciousness always is consciousness of and thus has an object.

• We (who are ourselves conscious) must begin our study of consciousness by observing it in its immediate relation to an object.

• The immediate object of consciousness can only be described as a particular “this,” “here,” and “now.”

• Since any particular can be a “this,” etc., the thought of the “this” is really universal.

• Thus, consciousness now has the universal as its object, and the universal presents itself in objects of perception as properties of them.

• Perception presents properties indifferently, but to grasp the object, we must find the essential properties, which are the objects of understanding.
Self-Consciousness and Desire

- The result of the stage of consciousness is that it cannot find truth in objects conceived as different from itself.
- Insofar as consciousness can grasp objects, it is only because they are objects for consciousness.
- Thus, consciousness finds itself in its objects, so that the object of consciousness turns out to be consciousness itself.
- The attitude of consciousness toward the other, in which it finds itself, is to negate its otherness and becomes one with it.
  - This attitude is desire.
  - The object is considered only negatively, as what is not one’s self.
- By unifying itself with the other (in which it finds itself), the self would unify itself.

The Emergence of Spirit

- The object of desire, in which consciousness finds itself, is a living thing.
- Experience shows that the living other is independent of one’s self.
- The self cannot of itself achieve unity with what is independent of it.
- The self can attain unity with the other only if the other attains unity with it.
- So, the unity of self-consciousness with itself can be attained only through its unity with another self-consciousness.
- “Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only through another self-consciousness” (Paragraph 175).
- The being self-conscious for another self-consciousness is the first emergence of spirit: “I that is We and We that is I” (Paragraph 177).

Acknowledgement

- The unity of one self-consciousness with another can be attained only insofar as each self-consciousness acknowledges the other as being self-consciousness.
- The acknowledgement has three double senses.
- The self has come outside itself:
  - The self has lost itself in the other.
  - The self does away with the otherness of the other by seeing itself there.
• In doing away with the otherness of the other by seeing itself there:
  – The self does away with the other.
  – The self does away with itself.

• In the process, the self returns to itself:
  – The self gets itself back from the other.
  – The self lets the other go free.

Reciprocity

• The process of finding one’s self in the other, abolishing its otherness, and regaining the self is carried out by both self-consciousnesses involved.

• Each is what it is only through the other.

• The acknowledgement is mutual acknowledgement.

• The process will be studied in the progression in which it appears for self-consciousness.

• The first way in which the opposition between the self and the other self appears is extreme: neither self acknowledges itself in the other.

• The process will end in the overcoming of the inequality and mutual recognition of the two self-consciousnesses as equals.

Life and Death

• If there are two selves which encounter each other merely as another self-consciousness, they fight each other to the death.

• Each self regards itself only as self-consciousness, and thereby is willing to stake its natural life.

• Each self seeks the death of the other because the life of the other means no more to it than does its own life to itself.

• The staking of one’s life is a necessary condition for the development of freedom.

• If one of the combatants is killed, the goal of eliminating the other is achieved.

• But without the other as a self-consciousness, the self loses its only means of finding itself, which requires the acknowledgement of the other.

• The doing away with does not preserve what is done away with, and the negation is only abstract.
Master and Servant

- One outcome of the life-and-death combat is the recognition that life is essential to self-consciousness.
- Another outcome is that victorious self-consciousness is purely for itself, while the vanquished is for the other self-consciousness.
- The independent self-consciousness is the master and the dependent self-consciousness is the servant.
- The master relates himself to things through the servant.
- Things are another for the servant, who works on it because he cannot annihilate it.
- The master is able to enjoy the benefits of the things worked upon by the servant in a way he could not when it was merely the object of desire.
- But because the servant is subordinate, the master does not recognize himself in him.

The Mastery of the Servant

- It is in fact the servant who is able to achieve the acknowledgement of himself in the master.
- The master is what he is only through the work of the servant and is not self-sufficient.
- Fear of death at the hands of the master shakes up the servant, giving him an awareness beyond his immediate interests.
- The discipline of service and obedience directs this consciousness to work on objects.
- In improving the object of work, the servant attains mastery over it.
- The servant finds himself in the object and hence becomes self-conscious through it.

Reason in History

- The rest of the Phenomenology treats many forms of consciousness, leading ultimately to spirit which knows itself in an absolute way.
- In The Philosophy of History, Hegel shows the progress of spirit as it occurred in the actual unfolding of historical events.
- The Introduction to those lectures (known as “Reason in History”) makes Hegel’s case for the claim that history is guided by a rational world-spirit.
— “Reason is the law of the world and . . . in world history, things have come about rationally.”

- That the real is rational was proved in his systematic philosophy.
- But it is also proved in that the study of history reveals the rationality of its progress.

**Noûs and Divine Providence**

- Hegel’s claim is that conscious mind, not mere rationally comprehensible laws of nature, are the governing force in history.
- Anaxagoras first pronounced that reason (*noûs*) rules the world.
  - But he did not show _how_ reason rules the world.
- The doctrine of religion is that the world is ruled by a divine providence.
  - How peoples and nations are ruled by divine providence must be proved, not merely accepted on faith.
- The exposition of divine providence presupposes knowledge of God, the denial of which was a prejudice of Hegel’s time.
- This exposition would explain the role of evil in the world and thus would be a theodicy.

**History and Spirit**

- The history of the world encompasses both the history of nature and the history of spirit.
- Although nature plays a role in history, it is of interest only insofar as it is related to the history of spirit.
- “The realm of spirit consists in what is produced by man.”
- Spirit and nature are united in the human nature, which is a universal that applies to all human beings.
- Showing the role of spirit in history requires the explanation of three things.
  - What spirit is, considered abstractly.
  - How spirit realizes its ends in history.
  - The form of the realization of its ends—the state.
Consciousness of Freedom

- The essence of spirit is freedom, through which all its properties exist.
  - Spirit is self-conscious, and what is self-conscious exists for itself and within itself.

- However, spirit realizes its implicit freedom comes to be known only gradually through the course of history.
  - Among the Asian peoples, only the despotic ruler is known to be free.
  - The Greeks and Romans did not recognize the basis of freedom, and only some were known to be free.
  - The Germanic peoples through Christianity recognize that all are free, and that freedom of the spirit is the essence of human nature.

- Knowledge of freedom emerges unevenly, and because slavery exists, knowledge of freedom remains incomplete.

- The final purpose of the world is the actualization of the freedom recognized by spirit.

Pursuit of Private Aims Produces General Misery

- Although an internal phenomenon, freedom realizes itself through external means.

- The greatest springs of action are natural impulses, which are closest to the core of human nature.
  - Passions.
  - Private aims.
  - Satisfaction of selfish desires.

- People do not act much on the basis of universal purposes or morality, and even when they do, things often turn out badly for them.

- The result of the prevalence of natural impulse over law is an ugly spectacle of human behavior.
  - History is “the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been sacrificed.”

- Philosophical history must show the end for which all this has occurred.
Freedom and Passion

- The most basic explanatory principle of human action is that people act only insofar as their action serves some interest that they have.
- When all the desires and powers of an individual are concentrated in a single interest, it may be called a “passion.”
- Every great accomplishment in the world is the result of passion.
- The goal of philosophical history is then to show how passion serves the interest of the idea of freedom.
- People condemn actions based on passions.
- But the basis of praise or blame lies in the aim of the passion and the content of the conviction which accompanies it.

The State

- There are two essential elements in carrying out the purpose found in history.
  - The complex of passions which move it forward.
  - The idea of freedom toward which it is moving.
- The union of the passions and the idea is individual liberty in a state.
- The optimal state is one in which the private interests of the citizens coincides with the public interest of the state.
  - Each is realized and gratified in the other.
- But this kind of state is not the conscious aim of people from the beginning of history.
- The development of the optimal state is necessary, but it can only occur through the free acts of people acting in their private interests.

The Tools and Means of the World Spirit

- It might be thought that actions based on private interests serve only to further private ends.
- Individual actors are not aware of any greater purpose that their actions would serve.
- But such actions are in fact the tools and means by which spirit accomplishes its higher and broader purpose.
- This is initially a hypothesis, but it will be demonstrated in the course of the investigation of world history.
The realization of the universal, objective purpose of spirit is necessary, while that of the particular, subjective purpose of the individual takes place freely. The union of the objective and the subjective the subject-matter of logic.

**From Private Ends to Morality**

- Actions which are undertaken to fulfill private ends have consequences beyond those ends.
- Sometimes the consequences turn against the ends of the agent.
  - A person committing arson as revenge may end up being punished.
- People are rational, and as such they recognize that generally their ends are best served by the creation of a state, with its universal laws and customs.
- The laws and customs of society, in turn, define individual morality.
  - One acts morally by fulfilling one's defined role in society.
- Thus, the consequence of intention to fulfill private ends is a social system which constrains the actions of the individual in the pursuit of those ends.

**Progress Toward the Ideal State**

- Since the state defines the ethical life of its members, its replacement would constitute a new moral order.
- The ethical life of the state is unstable, due to the fact that the laws and customs are generally in conflict with individual ends.
- When a state is in decline, its members may recognize new possibilities of laws and custom which conflict with the existing order.
- When the existing state is replaced by a new state that embodies these possibilities, one moral system replaces another.
- By this process, there is a progression of states which approaches the ideal of a state in which the public interest and private interests are in harmony.

**World-Historical Individuals**

- The recognition of a possible new moral order, and its actualization by making it the object of their passion, is the work of world-historical individuals.
  - Julius Caesar overthrew the Roman government in part to satisfy his ambition for power, but also instinctively to create a new social order.
- The world-historical individual does not realize that he is serving the purpose of the world-spirit.
• He does, however, recognize what needs to be done in his situation, and he has the passion that allows them take on and defeat the existing social order.

• Because these heroes are embodying the spirit of the world, they easily find followers who feel that spirit in them.

The Fate of the Hero

• The world-historical individual attains some satisfaction for his success.

• But he does not attain happiness, because his whole life is expended in the difficult pursuit of his ruling passion.
  – Happiness can be found only in private life.

• A free person will rejoice in the existence of the hero.

• Envious people will accuse the hero of immorality, because his actions are motivated by his passion.

• It is true that the hero’s actions contravene the laws and customs of society and create great damage, and in this sense are immoral.

• But this kind of immorality should not be the basis of condemnation, as it is necessary for the advancement to a new, higher morality.

The Cunning of Reason

• The idea of freedom, toward whose actualization history progresses, is a universal.

• Movement toward freedom takes place only through the passion of individuals.

• We can say that in history, reason is “cunning.”
  – The realization of the idea is carried out by existing individuals.
  – Only those individuals have to suffer the consequences of realizing the idea.

• The individual is not, however, to be taken as merely a means for the realization of the idea of freedom.

• The person is an end only insofar as he contains the divine within him, which is independent of the vagaries of individual human existence.
Freedom, Morality and the State

- The state is the union of the particular, subjective, individual will with the universal will of the reason that governs the world.
- The individual enjoys his freedom in the state, insofar as it knows, believes and wills in conformity with the state.
- This freedom is positive.
- It must be contrasted with the negative freedom made possible by the state.
  - The state allows a limited space of freedom for the individual by constraining the actions of others.
- Only the common will has moral significance, and not the capricious will of the individual.
- The state is the manifestation of the world spirit, and it includes religion, science, and art, as well as political institutions.

The Individual and the State

- “All the value man has, all spiritual reality, he has only through the state.”
- Spiritual reality is consciousness of one’s own essence.
- The essence of the individual is to be found in a rationality that is universal.
- As the state is individual, it expresses the essence of its citizens.
- Thus, the laws of the state flow from the essence of those who would follow them.
- Our freedom consists in our recognition of the law as expressing our own essence.
- This recognition has been lost sight of in modern society, where people understand morality in terms of their own convictions about how things ought to be.

Modern Errors Concerning the State

- There are two common errors in present-day thinking about the state.
- The first is that men are free “by nature” and give up their freedom through subjugation to the state.
- This freedom is said to exist in a “state of nature” that does not exist and has never existed.
- But existing in a chaotic state of nature would lead people to aspire to true, positive freedom, which restrains the negative freedom of the subjective will.
The second error is that the state has the form of a patriarchal family.
  – Theocracies have this form, with the patriarch being a religious leader.

The error here is that a family is based on a bond of feeling among kin, while a state unites strangers under law.

The State and “The People”

- If the state is based on the negative freedom of the subjective will, then its basis must be the consent of the governed.
- In that case, all decisions would have to be made by “the people” as a whole, and there would be no use for a constitution.
- But in practice, government and administration are necessary, which requires a constitution, even in a democracy.
- This implies a distinction between those who govern and those who are governed.
- The result is a tension between two factors.
  – The need for power and strength on the side of the government.
  – The demand that as much power as possible lie in the hands of the people.

Forms of Government

- The balance of power between the government and the people is reflected in various forms of government.
  – Despotism
  – Monarchy
  – Aristocracy
  – The Republic
  – Democracy
- There can be various versions of each type and mixtures of the various types.
- The question arises as to which is the best form of government.
- Theoretically, the republic is the best form.
- But in fact, the form of government of a people is determined by the historical circumstances of that people.
- At the present time, the rational form of government is a constitutional monarchy.
Art, Religion and Philosophy

- The state is the union of the particular, subjective will and the universal, objective idea of freedom.
- It is the foundation of all cultural aspects of a people, including art, law, morality, religion, and science.
- The highest form of this union is religion.
- In religious feeling, the individual is concerned only with the universal, and not with any particular objects in the world.
- Religion is the knowledge of the union of the objective and subjective.
- Art represents the universal sensuously, and its highest form is the representation of God, which is represented in feeling by religion.
- Above all these forms is philosophy, which conceptually represents what is true.

Religion and the State

- Religion understands the idea of God in one of two ways, relative to the relation of the subjective and the objective.
  - As separate: God as separately existing lord of the universe.
  - As united: God as “the universal soul of all particulars.”
- It is in the second sense that “the idea of God is . . . the general fundament of a people.”
- The state is based on religion, as it is the embodiment of the unity of universal and particular, subjective and objective.
- In fact, every state arises originally from the religion of a people.
  - The pagan religions of the Greeks and Romans.
  - Catholicism.
  - Protestantism.

Misconceptions About Religion and the State

- There are several misconceptions about the relation between religion and the state.
- One misconception is that religion serves the state by encouraging an attitude of devotion to duty (but not so strong that religious duty can be turned against the state).
  - But this view falsely presupposes that the state exists prior to religion.
• Some believe that the state should promote religious education because religion is in danger of fading away within the state.
  
  – But this will not happen, since religion is the basis of the existence of the state.

• Some, particularly the Catholics, separate God and morality from the state.

• This leads to secular constitutions.
  
  – But these constitutions have no “real center and remain abstract and indeterminate.”

The National Spirit

• The World Spirit is manifested in history in the spirit of nations.

• Each nation has its external possessions, its history, its laws, its customs.

• The individuals in a nation find their identity in that nation and are a product of their age.

• The national spirit is the basis of the national art, religion, and philosophy.

• History unfolds a progression of states which embody the spirit of their people.

• As it makes its way through the stages, the World Spirit knows itself better and better, until finally it “attains full consciousness.”