

Hegel

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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 books—one covering each of the parts of the system.
- In the Introduction to *The Science of Logic*, Hegel discusses the nature of logic and how it can be developed scientifically.

Introduction to Logic

- According to Hegel, the subject-matter of logic is “thinking, or more precisely conceptual thinking.”
- Logic is the most basic of all the sciences.
- Every other science presupposes the availability of “forms of reflection or rules and laws of thought.”
- But as logic exhibits and justifies the rules and laws of thought, it may not presuppose them.

On the contrary, this knowledge of what logic is, can only be reached as the end and consummation of the whole treatment of the subject.

- The Introduction to the science of logic, then, cannot explain what logic is.
- It can only clarify, using “some reasoned and historical examinations and reflections,” the point of view from which logic should be regarded.

Form and Content

- Logic is traditionally regarded as a purely formal science.
- The content or matter of what is thought through logic is taken to be independent of logical forms.
- As a consequence, the content of thought must have its origin elsewhere than in thought itself.
- The “real truth” is said to lie in the content of what is thought.
- Given the alleged independence of the logical forms from the content of thought, logic does not contain in itself “the real truth,” nor does it even provide a path to the real truth.

An Example of Formal Logic

- The “laws” governing thought were traditionally expressed in terms of a kind of inference known as a “syllogism.”
- Valid syllogisms are represented in a way that abstracts from the non-logical concepts they contain.
 - All A are B.
 - All B are C.
 - Therefore, All A are C.
- It does not matter what content is expressed by ‘A,’ ‘B,’ and ‘C;’ if the premises express the “real truth,” then so does the conclusion.
- But logic cannot in general establish whether All A are B; for example, whether all whales are mammals.

A Quotation from Kant

- In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant explains this traditional view of what he calls “general logic.”

*Although a cognition may be in complete accord with logical form, i.e., not contradict itself, yet it can still always contradict the object. The merely logical criterion of truth, namely the agreement of a cognition with the general and formal laws of understanding and reason, is therefore certainly the conditio sine qua non and thus the negative condition of all truth; further, however, logic cannot go, and the error that concerns not form but content cannot be discovered by any touchstone of logic.
(A60-61/B84)*

Content for Logic

- Hegel criticizes the claim that logic is purely a formal science.
- First, logic is explicitly concerned with a content, namely, the structure and rules of thinking.
- The science of logic must produce a true account of thinking, so contrary to the traditional view, logic must contain in it “the real truth.”
- Second, the traditional view is based on outmoded and largely discarded ideas.
- To dispose of these ideas once and for all, logic will be described here from “a higher point of view” and will be shown to have a structure different from the traditional one.

Ordinary Consciousness

- The nature of our “ordinary consciousness, just as it appears” embodies a separation between two aspects of our cognition of things.
 - The form or “certainty” of a cognition,
 - The content or “truth” of a cognition.
- The content or matter itself is thought of as “a finished world apart from thinking.”
- The form is like an empty vessel that becomes filled when content is added to it, resulting in a cognition.
- The cognition, then, is constructed out of the two constituents, form and content, in a mechanical way.

The Order of Merit

- On this view of cognition, the content or matter is in a way superior to the form.
 - The content is complete without form.
 - But the form is incomplete without content.
- Thought in fact must adapt itself to the material.
- Truth is regarded as the agreement of thought and the object of thought.
- So to attain truth, thought must accommodate itself to the object.

Our Example, Continued

- On the traditional view, reality is populated by things that have properties.
- Some things have the property *being a whale* and some have the property *being a mammal*.
- In the world, everything which has the property *being a whale* has the property *being a mammal*.
- To express the truth about the reality, thought is constrained to apply its form, All A are B, to whales and mammals.
- To reach the truth, thought may not apply the form, All A are B, to anything except what reality is structured so as to receive it.

The Separation of Thought and Reality

- If we understand the relations subject/object or form/matter in a definite way, we find that each is a “sphere” separate from the other.
- Thought is supposed to be merely receptive to its object and to be constrained not to go beyond itself.
- The self is modified in thought, and its “other,” the object, is not affected by it.
- Only thought can determine itself on the basis of its consciousness of itself.
- We can choose what to think, but we cannot through mere thought determine what properties objects have.

Thus thought in its relation to the object of thought does not go out of itself to the object, while the object, as a thing-in-itself, simply remains something beyond thought.

The Error Regarding Reason

- Hegel concedes that the traditional account of the relation between thought and its objects is suitable for “the ordinary consciousness just as it appears.”
- However, it does not apply to thought in its guise as reason.
- To apply the “prejudices” of the traditional account of logic to reason is erroneous.
- It is the job of philosophy to refute this wrong-headed view of the relation of reason to its object.
- This error must be renounced before proper philosophy may begin.

The Unity of Thought and Being

- More ancient metaphysics assigned to thought a loftier role than it is given by modern metaphysics.
- According to the older metaphysics, what is really true of things is what is known of them through thinking.
- The true things are those which have been taken up into the form of thought.
- Thinking and its determinations are the very essence of the objects of thought.
- Thought and the true nature of things “are one and the same content.”

Crude Common Sense

- The role traditionally assigned to reason in metaphysics was eventually replaced by “reflective understanding.”
- The understanding separates things from one another and tenaciously clings to its separations.
- It becomes “crude common sense,” with its empiricist doctrines:
 - Truth rests upon sense-reality.
 - Thoughts get their content only from sense-reality.
 - Reason only spins out idle fancies.
- But on this view, truth is lost, and knowledge becomes mere opinion.

Things in Themselves

- Reflection upon the separations made by the crude understanding leads to a recognition of conflicts between them.
- These conflicts are blamed on reason, which is said to fall into contradiction with itself.
- The reaction to this perceived defect in reason is to return to the pre-reflective world of sensible existence, which is supposed to be stable and unified.
- Thus emerges a distinction between knowable appearances and unknowable things in themselves.
- It is absurd to think that there is true knowledge of an object which is not knowledge of the object as it is in itself.
- Still, recognition of the distinction is the first step toward the restoration of the place of reason.

The Critical Philosophy

- The critical philosophy (of Kant) allows forms of the understanding to apply to appearances but not to things in themselves.
- But this makes these forms untrue.
- They do not apply to the understanding, which must be taken to be a thing in itself.
- The outcome of the critical philosophy is only to separate the forms of thinking from the object and to place them within the subject of thought alone.
- These forms are not treated as they should be—as “dialectically” opposing concepts whose conflict must be reconciled and applied to the things in themselves.

Transcendental Idealism

- Post-critical transcendental idealism (of Fichte) tries to discard the thing in itself as “an abstract shadow, detached from all content.”
- It also gives an enhanced role to reason, which it regards as producing its own determinations.
- But its point of view was purely subjective, which prevented the project from being completed.
- Transcendental idealism, then, is to be given up.

The Content of Logic

- It is a mistake to think that logic is purely formal without metaphysical import.
- The reason it has been so regarded is that it formalizes the fixed conceptual oppositions of the understanding.
- It looks outside itself for content and unity.
- But the real source of its content and unity is to be found within itself.
- This point has been missed because of a misconception about the nature of logic itself.

The Concept of the Science of Logic

- The correct concept of the science of logic is found as the outcome of its “deduction.”
- The deduction of a science shows the inevitability of its origin.
- Hegel claims to have shown in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* how science in general, including logic, is the inevitable product of consciousness.
- The method was to consider a progression of relations of thought to its object, culminating in “absolute knowledge.”
- In absolute knowledge, the certainty of the knowing subject is “equated to” the truth of the known object.
- The result is that thought (the subject) is identified with what began as a “thing in itself” (the object).
- Thus, the content of logic is pure thinking.

The True Content of Logic

- Since the object of logic is pure thought, logic has a content that is not supplied by anything external to it, but contains all the material for real and true knowledge.
- Logic is the all-encompassing system of pure reason, which contains the fundamental truth.

One may therefore express it thus: that this content shows forth God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit.

- That mind is the fundamental reality had been seen by the ancient philosopher Anaxagoras.
- The objective validity of thought lies in the fact that the laws of logic apply to the world of mind and nature.

Traditional Logic

- This characterization of the nature of logic places it beyond the “timid and incomplete” point of view of Kant and Fichte.
- Kant regarded logic to have been complete since the time of Aristotle, but this, and wrong-headed attempts to add it Aristotle’s logic, is evidence of its need for an overhaul.
- The progress of the sciences themselves, as well as that of religion and practical life, has far out-stripped the logic of Aristotle.
- Traditional logic has survived only because of traditional and a vague sense that it is needed, rather than any usefulness that it might have.
- Additions to logic have disfigured it by imposing psychological, educational and other rules that are trivial, do not lead us to the truth, and do not belong to the nature of logic.

The Dead Bones of Logic

- Traditional logic is “empty and lifeless.”
- The concepts which logic treats are rigid and are related to one another merely externally.
- They are compared in a quantitative way and subject to mere calculation.
- The method of this logic is like the method of empirical science, which defines and classifies its materials.
- Earlier philosophers, such as Spinoza, have been misled into attempting to apply a mathematical-type method to philosophy.

The True Method

- The correct method for philosophizing has already been demonstrated in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.
- It is shown there how modes of consciousness, when they appear, bring about their own negation and abolish themselves in favor of a “higher mode” that incorporates both the earlier mode and its negation.
 - In abstract negation, the result is nullity or nothingness.
 - In concrete negation, the result is the nullification of the particular form that is negated.

Since what results, the negation, is a definite negation, it has a content. It is a new concept, but a higher, richer concept than that which preceded; for it has been enriched by the negation or opposite of that preceding concept, and thus contains it, but contains also more than it, and is the unity of it and its opposite.

- The procedure just described, in which the negative carries with it the content of what it negates, is the true dialectical method.
- Classically, dialectic has been considered a means of refutation or reduction of a view to nothingness.
- Kant raised the status of dialectic from being an apparently arbitrary art to being a necessary procedure of reason.
- In Kant's treatment, dialectic has the air of a fraud perpetrated by reason, engendering what Kant himself called "transcendental illusion."
- However, Kant brought out the essential role of contradiction in reason as it attempts to know things in themselves.
- The role of contradiction should be seen positively, as indicating that thought develops its own concepts through definite negation.

Abstract Thinking

- The most important aspect of logic—and the most difficult for the unpracticed mind—is to comprehend the unity of opposites.
- Speculative knowledge is the result of this comprehension.
- There is a kind of logic that is intermediate between traditional and dialectical logic.
- It consists in abstract thinking, which abandons both:
 - Concrete sense-perception (and hence is abstract), and
 - Drawing inferences from given premises through syllogisms.
- What remains is the practice of developing systematic connections between concepts.

It would present to the mind the picture of a methodically ordered whole, although the soul of the structure, the method itself (which lives in dialectic), would not be apparent in it.

Studying Logic by Itself

- There are two ways in which the study of logic can be approached.
 - By someone who has not yet learned logic or the other sciences.
 - By someone who comes back to logic from the sciences.
- In the first instance, one finds only “an isolated system of abstractions that is self-contained and does not reach out to other knowledges and sciences.”
- Logic appears empty and as not containing within it the ultimate truth which it promises.
- The other sciences proceed through “natural logic” rather than according to the forms of logic itself, and appeal “more to our senses, feeling, impressions, and practical interests.”

The Reason for Studying Logic

- When one approaches logic with knowledge of the other sciences, one is able to appreciate its power and scope.
- Logic is seen to be a universal truth that is the essence of the content of the other sciences.
- The student of logic who lacks knowledge of the other sciences stands to benefit much from the study of logic.
 - Far removed from intuition, the senses, and the emotions, the student can find “a perfect training and discipline of consciousness.”
 - The student also operates far from the realm of unsubstantiated opinions.
 - The student’s thought becomes self-reliant, no longer depending on external input in order to develop itself.
- Logic becomes not one discipline among many, but instead the discipline whose ultimate end is absolute truth.

Being, Nothing, Becoming in Traditional Metaphysics

- The earliest attempt to comprehend being was made by Parmenides and the Eleatic philosophers.
 - Pure being is the absolute and sole truth.
 - Only being is.
 - Nothing absolutely is not.
- Buddhism makes nothing the first principle.
- Heraclitus moved beyond these pure abstractions and recognized the priority of becoming.
- Becoming is the restless passage of being into nothing and from nothing into being.
- The metaphysical principle that nothing can come from nothing undermines becoming and leads back to Parmenidean pantheism.

Being in the Science of Logic

- To illustrate the way in which logic is supposed to develop itself dialectically, we will examine the opening movements of *The Science of Logic*.
- The first main division of *The Science of Logic* is “The Doctrine of Being.”
- It begins as reflection on “what is there before us” when we know.
- “What is there before us” is *being*.
- If we reflect upon being without considering the specific ways in which it is there before us, without “filling” it in, our object is *pure being*.
- Pure being is the proper starting-point in logic, since because it is undetermined, we make no presuppositions about it.
 - “The beginning is therefore *pure being*.”

Being and Nothing

- In order to be pure, pure being cannot:
 - Contain any determinations within itself, or
 - Contain anything within itself that would distinguish it from anything else.
- “It is pure indeterminateness and emptiness.”
- Therefore, *nothing* can be thought in it.
- Since pure being has no content, it is in fact *nothing*.
- Conversely, nothing remains an indeterminate content of thought, so nothing is the same as pure being.
 - “*Pure being and pure nothing* are, therefore, the same.”

- It looks as if logic must come to an abrupt halt at this point, as its beginning notion, pure being, has been shown to be identical with nothing.
- But this is to misconstrue the relation between pure being and nothing as one of simple identity.
- The real unity of the two lies in the fact that pure being has “passed over” into nothing, and nothing passes over into being.
- Pure being and nothing are inseparable, but this is because “each immediately *vanishes into its opposite*.”
- The truth of pure being and nothing, then, is the “immediate movement” of one into the other.
- This movement is in fact a new category, that of *becoming*.
 - “A movement in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has equally immediately resolved itself.”

An Objection from Ordinary Thought

- Ordinary thought resists the identification of being and nothing: it matters whether something is or is not.

Being and non-being are the same, therefore it is the same whether this house is or is not, whether these hundred dollars are part of my fortune or not.

- The problem with this objection is that it is motivated by examples of *determinate* beings: houses, money, and my fortune.
- Because they are determinate, they are distinguished from other things, and the relations of things to other things (a hundred dollars and my fortune) are not a matter of indifference.
- However, it is a matter of indifference when we consider pure, indeterminate being, and pure, indeterminate nothing.

A Philosophical Objection

- Traditional philosophical thinking denies that there can be difference in what is identical.
- If “being and nothing are one and the same,” then there is no difference between being and nothing.
- What is identified, being and nothing, are distinguished within the proposition, so “the proposition is self-contradictory and cancels itself out.”
- But this self-cancellation is not an annihilation; it gives rise to a new notion, *becoming*.
- The propositional form is inadequate to express this higher-level result, which is why often the results of speculative philosophy appears in a “paradoxical and bizarre light” to those not accustomed to it.

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 that includes logic, philosophy of nature, and philosophy of spirit.
- 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 an other 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.

- The outcome of the division of self-consciousness between master and servant is a new mode of consciousness, *Stoicism*.
- “Universal fear and bondage,” rather than the particular fear of a master, is a necessary condition for the appearance of the Stoic form of consciousness.
- In servitude, consciousness works in a clever way, which is restricted to the particular object of work.
- A higher form of consciousness is one that thinks through notions which apply universally to objects.
- The notions are not taken from the object empirically, but rather are the free production of consciousness itself.
- The principle of Stoicism is that consciousness is a thinking reality, with itself as its essential object.
- It is thinking which gives rise to the notions of truth and goodness.

The Failings of Stoicism

- The Stoic's recognition of his freedom is possible whether the Stoic is master or slave.
- The Stoic withdraws from the world of activity and takes only pure thought as truth.
- The disadvantage of this position is the the Stoic consciousness lacks the filling of life.
- Its freedom is only the notion of freedom, not living freedom, and what is other than consciousness is not brought into consciousness.
- It is elevating to think of the good and the true in terms of reasonableness, but this abstract characterization becomes wearisome.
- Moreover, the Stoic lacks a criterion by which to distinguish the true from the false.

Skepticism

- The inadequacies of Stoicism give rise to a new form of consciousness: *skepticism*.
- Skepticism attains real freedom not by withdrawal from the world into reasonableness, but by annihilating the world altogether.
- For the skeptic, the world contains nothing but continual flux, with no basis for the application of rational principles.
- Thus, the only thing that is real for the skeptical consciousness—the only thing that is bound by rational principles—is consciousness itself.

The Failings of Skepticism

- In its attempt to abolish the world as its “other,” skepticism finds that only the individual, isolated, self remains.
- This self is caught up in the contradictions it finds in the world that is supposed to be set against it.
- These contradictions apply even to itself.
- Although it professes to abolish the world, it finds itself as particular individual enmeshed within the world.
- In words, it argues against the possibility of universal moral principles, but in deeds, it finds itself required to act according to some principles.
- In the end, the skeptic goes back and forth between itself and the world it thinks it has abolished, opposing one to the other like children.

The Unhappy Consciousness

- Skepticism is bogged down in the conflict between its attempt to abolish the world and its need to live in it.
- When consciousness becomes aware of this conflict within itself, it rises to a new attitude, which brings together the two poles that skepticism had held apart.
 - Consciousness is self-liberating, unalterable, and self-identical.
 - Consciousness is self-confounding and self-perverting.
- This new form of consciousness is the *unhappy consciousness*.

The alienated soul which is the consciousness of self as a divided nature, a doubled and merely contradictory being.

- Although it is a unitary self, it takes itself to be a divided self.

The Failings of the Unhappy Consciousness

- The problem with the unhappy consciousness is that it cannot consistently determine which of its two poles is essential to it.
- It begins by taking its unchanging side as its essence.
- But its very nature is to vacillate from side to side, so in fact it is changing, contrary to what it takes its essence to be.
- Thus it finds life to be full of pain and sorrow, since life is a changing world that is contrary to its apparent essence.
- It retreats to its unchanging essence, but recognizes that this retreat is itself contrary to its claimed essence.

- The phenomenology of mind undergoes many phases before settling into a form where there is no further opposition between consciousness and an “other.”
- The key to its development from this point onward is to recognize that there is no real opposition between the unchanging essence of consciousness and its ever-changing reality.
- The essence is a social unity which encompasses all consciousness.
- The particular changing consciousness comes to recognize its place within the universal in the form of the social community.

The [particular] consciousness . . . becomes . . . spirit, has the joy of finding itself therein, and becomes aware within itself that its particularity has become reconciled with the universal.

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 sovereign of the world [and] the history of the world therefore presents us with a rational process.”
- That the real is rational was proved in his systematic philosophy, though it only begins as a hypothesis in the study of history.
- But it will emerge that the study of history reveals the rationality of the world’s progress.

Reason and Reality

- The conclusion of philosophy is that reason is fundamental to reality in many ways.
- Reason is *substance* or *material* of the world, “that by which and in which all reality has its being and subsistence.”
- It is also the *infinite power* or *form* of the world, rather than merely an intention or idea in people’s heads.
- Reason is the *basis of its own existence*.
- It is the *aim* of the world.
- And it is capable of attaining its aim.
- “It reveals itself in the world, and . . . in that world nothing else is revealed but this and its honor and glory.”

Spirit and Nature

- The scene upon which world history develops is nature.
- Nature influences the outcome of many events, but this is the extent to which it is relevant to history.
- It is *spirit* which is the “substantial object” of world history.
- The essence of spirit is *freedom*, while that of nature is gravity.
- All the qualities of spirit exist for its freedom, which is its sole truth.
- Freedom is possible because one’s existence depends on one’s self.
- This holds for self consciousness, in which the knower and the known are one.
- History is the process of the working out by spirit of what it is potentially.

Consciousness of Freedom

- The implicit freedom of spirit comes to be known only gradually through the course of history.
- Among the Asian peoples, only the capricious despotic ruler is known to be free.
- The Greeks and Romans did not recognize the basis of freedom, and only those who were not slaves 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 history of the world is the story of the emergence of spirit's consciousness of freedom and its consequent reality.

The Nature of Freedom

- The notion of freedom must be made definite, as it is subject to misunderstanding, most especially in modern times.
- The errors in understanding freedom have given rise to “all imaginable excesses.”
- The term will not be defined here, but we must pay attention to the difference between the abstract notion of freedom and its concrete realization.
- In history, the nature of freedom is displayed as self-consciousness—freedom’s becoming conscious of itself and through this self-consciousness realizing its own existence.
- The process of world history aims at this result and is the justification for the sacrifices that have been made by humans throughout history.
- In the language of religion, the aim is God’s purpose, and the idea of freedom is God’s will.

The Phenomena of History

- When we contemplate the history of the world, we find ceaseless change in individuals, peoples and states.
- In the play of history, we find everything that the human soul seeks: goodness, beauty and greatness.
- Human action and suffering are predominant in history, and we identify what has happened with our own interests.
- We may be attracted by:
 - Beauty,
 - Freedom,
 - Rich variety,
 - Great energy, which makes even vice interesting.
- There is no correlation between effort and outcome.
- When one combination of events has run its course, another takes its place.

The Outcome of Change

- The vast panorama of history gives rise primarily to the thought of change.
- Change has its negative and its positive aspects.
 - When we view the ruins of an ancient people, we mourn the passing of their culture.
 - But the fall of one people always makes way for the rise of another.
- In Asian philosophy, this second aspect of change is reflected in the doctrine of metempsychosis: the rebirth of the individual after death.
- In Western philosophy, change signifies ascension to an “exalted, glorified, a purer spirit.”
- In destroying itself, spirit takes on a new form, which in turn will give way to an even higher form.

Change and Spirit

- In historical change, spirit is working on itself so as to manifest itself and perfect its powers in new ways.
- The successes of spirit are due to its own nature.
- The ends of spirit may also be frustrated by the opposition of nature or even itself.
- Every failure of spirit takes place in the context of its attempt to fulfil its own destiny.
- And even in failure, the activity of spirit is manifest.

The Spirit of a People

- The activity of spirit takes on a more concrete form when it is manifested in a particular people.
- The characteristics of spirit are to be found in its institutions:
 - Religious form of worship,
 - Customs,
 - Constitution,
 - Political laws.
- It is also to be found in the events that constitute the history of the people.
- “Nations are what their deeds are.”
- Each nation has its own characteristics.
 - The English sail the seas, extract the wealth of their colonies, and have a parliament and juries.

The Decline of a People

- The characteristics of the people are embedded in the individuals making it up.
- Being a member of a people is what gives meaning to individual existence.
- Spirit finds its satisfaction in infusing itself in the life of the individuals.
- However, every people reaches a point where its ends are exhausted.
- Although they may accomplish much afterward, their driving force has been lost.
- The state of the nation at this point is like that of the elderly human.
- Life becomes customary, and customary life is the spiritual death of a people.
- A people could avoid decline only by adopting a new purpose that urges them beyond the customary life.

The Viable Society

- We can distinguish between peoples who are carrying out the aim of spirit and those whose activities are based on mere desires.
- Only those societies which embody the “grand aim” of spirit do not die a natural death without leaving a trace.
- If the spirit of a people is world-historical, it produces a moral and political organization—the state.
- The best state is one which is self-conscious, which has a conception of itself.
- Such a people has “reduced its laws, its ideas of justice and morality to a science.”
- Spirit becomes an object of its own contemplation through thinking itself.

The Real and Ideal Existence of the Spirit of a Nation

- Thinking itself is a necessary condition for the development of spirit, but it is not sufficient.
- The spirit of a nation may exist in merely ideal form, rather than in reality.
- For ancient Greece, the self-recognition of spirit may be found in its literary works.
 - Sophocles,
 - Aristophanes,
 - Thucydides,
 - Plato.
- The self-conception of the Greek people through these authors did not manifest itself in action.
- Thus arose the belief in the mere idea of virtue rather than virtue itself.
- What really occurred was the isolation of individuals, who gave way to selfishness.

The Rise of a New Form

- Life goes on—the people perpetuate themselves through reproduction.
- But the mere perpetuation of the race does not lead to any progress.
- The only way progress may take place is through the preservation and transformation of the principle which animated the people.
- Once the principle reaches the level of “universality,” which is the level of spirit itself, it is able to transform itself and provide a new aim.
- Each phase in the increasing self-consciousness of spirit brings it closer to its self-realization.
- Nothing in the past is lost in this development, as spirit is an essential present.
- All earlier steps in history are absorbed into “a circle of progressive embodiments,” which are never left behind.