

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Excerpts from *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837)

Abstract

The first edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, first published posthumously in 1837, was based on a lecture course that he taught five times between 1822 and 1831. In the following excerpt, Hegel introduces the principles that inform his influential philosophy of history and provides an overview of the phases of world history. Hegel views his own system of philosophy as the synthesis of the history of occidental philosophy from the Greeks through the ages. One of the central contentions of his thought is that what exists is right or informed by reason, thus representing the world spirit.

Source

[begun] 8. xi. 1830

Gentlemen,

The subject of these lectures is the philosophy of world history.

As to what is meant by history or world history, I need say nothing; the common conception of it is adequate, and we are more or less agreed on what it is. But what may strike you about the title of these lectures and call for a word of elucidation, or rather of justification, is that we are here concerned with a philosophy of world history, and are about to consider history from a philosophical point of view.

But the philosophy of history is nothing more than the application of thought to history; and thinking is something we cannot stop doing. For man is a thinking being, and it is this which distinguishes him from the animals. All that is truly human, as distinct from animal—feeling, knowledge, and cognition—contains an element of thought, and this applies to all historical studies. But to appeal in this way to the participation of thought in all human activities may seem inadequate, for it could be argued that thought is subordinate to being, to the data of reality, and is based upon and determined by the latter. Philosophy, on the other hand, is credited with independent thoughts produced by pure speculation, without reference to actuality; speculation, it might further be contended, approaches history as something to be manipulated, and does not leave it as it is, but forces it to conform to its preconceived notions and constructs a history a priori.

History, however, is concerned with what actually happened. Its methods would therefore seem completely at variance with the essentially self-determining activity of conceptual thought. It is, of course, possible to present events in such a way that we can imagine they are taking place directly before our eyes. Even then, however, the links between the events must be taken into account; in other words, our procedure must be pragmatic, for we have to discover the causes and reasons behind the events. But as one can imagine, this will require the assistance of concepts, which does not, however, imply that the conceptual thought involved will be at odds with its own nature. Nevertheless, in a procedure of this kind, the events will always remain basic, and the activity of the concept will be limited to the formal and general aspects of the factual material, i.e. to rules, fundamentals, and principles. It is generally accepted that logical thinking is required for all such deductions from history; their justification, however, must come from the world of experience. But what philosophy understands by conceptual thinking is something quite different; in this case, comprehension is the activity of the concept itself, and not a

conflict between a material and a form of separate origin. An alliance of disparate such as is found in pragmatic history is not sufficient for the purposes of conceptual thinking as practised in philosophy; for the latter derives its content and material essentially from within itself. In this respect, therefore, despite the alleged links between the two, the original dichotomy remains: the historical event stands opposed to the independent concept.

But [even if we disregard philosophy,] the same relationship emerges in the study of history itself as soon as we look at it from a higher vantage point. For on the one hand, we have in history ingredients and higher determinants which are remote from the conceptual world—i.e. all kinds of human arbitrariness and external necessity. On the other hand, we set up against this the idea of a higher necessity, an eternal justice and love, the absolute and ultimate end which is truth in and for itself. In contrast to natural being, this second, opposite pole is based on abstract elements, on the freedom and necessity of the concept. This opposition contains many interesting features; it comes to our notice once again in the Idea of world history. Our present aim is to show how it is resolved in and for itself in the world-historical process.

The sole end of history is to comprehend clearly what is and what has been, the events and deeds of the past. It gains in veracity the more strictly it confines itself to what is given, and—although this is not so immediately evident, but in fact requires many kinds of investigations in which thought also plays a part—the more exclusively it seeks to discover what actually happened. This aim seems to contradict the function of philosophy; and it is this contradiction, and the accusation that philosophy imports its own ideas into history and manipulates it accordingly, that I wish to discuss in the Introduction to these lectures. In other words, we must first obtain a general definition of the philosophy of world history and then consider its immediate implications. As a result, the relationship between thought and the events should automatically appear in the correct light. For this reason, and since I do not wish the introduction to become too long-winded (for the material of world history itself is so abundant), there is no need for me to spend time refuting and correcting the endless individual misconceptions and mistaken reflections—some of which are current now, others of which are periodically resuscitated—regarding perspectives, principles, and opinions on the aim and interests of historical studies, and in particular on the relationship of conceptual thought and philosophy to historical fact. I can omit all this entirely, or merely touch on it in passing.

A

[Its general concept]

The first thing I wish to say concerning our provisional concept of world history is this. As already remarked, the main objection levelled at philosophy is that it imports its own thoughts into history and considers the latter in the light of the former. But the only thought which philosophy brings with it is the simple idea of reason—the idea that reason governs the world, and that world history is therefore a rational process. From the point of view of history as such, this conviction and insight is a presupposition. Within philosophy itself, however, it is not a presupposition; for it is proved in philosophy by speculative cognition that reason—and we can adopt this expression for the moment without a detailed discussion of its relationship to God—is substance and infinite power; it is itself the infinite material of all natural and spiritual life, and the infinite form which activates this material content. It is substance, i.e. that through which and in which all reality has its being and subsistence; it is infinite power, for reason is sufficiently powerful to be able to create something more than just an ideal, an obligation which supposedly exists in some unknown region beyond reality (or, as is more likely, only as a particular idea in the heads of a few individuals); and it is the infinite content, the essence and truth of everything, itself constituting the material on which it operates through its own activity. Unlike finite actions, it does not require an external material as a condition of its operation, or outside resources from which to derive its sustenance and the objects of its activity; it is self-supporting, and is itself the material of its own operations. On the one hand, it is its own sole precondition, and its end is the absolute and

ultimate end of everything; and on the other, it is itself the agent which implements and realises this end, translating it from potentiality into actuality both in the natural universe and in the spiritual world—that is, in world history. That this Idea is true, eternal, and omnipotent, that it reveals itself in the world, and that nothing is revealed except the Idea in all its honour and majesty—this, as I have said, is what philosophy has proved, and we can therefore posit it as demonstrated for our present purposes.

The sole aim of philosophical enquiry is to eliminate the contingent. Contingency is the same as external necessity, that is, a necessity which originates in causes which are themselves no more than external circumstances. In history, we must look for a general design, the ultimate end of the world, and not a particular end of the subjective spirit or mind; and we must comprehend it by means of reason, which cannot concern itself with particular and finite ends, but only with the absolute. This absolute end is a content which speaks for itself and in which everything of interest to man has its foundation. The rational is that which has being in and for itself, and from which everything else derives its value. It assumes varying shapes; but in none of them is it more obviously an end than in that whereby the spirit explicates and manifests itself in the endlessly varying forms which we call nations. We must bring to history the belief and conviction that the realm of the will is not at the mercy of contingency. That world history is governed by an ultimate design, that it is a rational process—whose rationality is not that of a particular subject, but a divine and absolute reason—this is a proposition whose truth we must assume; its proof lies in the study of world history itself, which is the image and enactment of reason. The real proof, however, comes from a knowledge of reason itself; for reason appears in world history only in a mediate form. World history is merely a manifestation of this one original reason; it is one of the particular forms in which reason reveals itself, a reflection of the archetype in a particular element, in the life of nations.

Reason is self-sufficient and contains its end within itself; it brings itself into existence and carries itself into effect. Thought must become conscious of this end of reason. The philosophical method may at first strike us as odd; bad habits of thinking may even lead us to imagine that it is itself contingent or no more than an arbitrary whim. But anyone who does not accept that thought is the sole truth and the highest factor in existence is not in a position to pass any judgement whatsoever on the philosophical method.

Some of you gentlemen, may not yet be acquainted with philosophy. I could easily appeal to all such persons to approach these lectures on world history with a faith in reason and a thirst for knowledge of it;—and we must surely assume that a desire for rational insight, for knowledge, and not just for a collection of assorted information, is the subjective motive which inspires those who seek to study the learned disciplines. But I need not, in fact, make any such claims upon your faith. These provisional remarks and the observations I shall subsequently add to them are not, even within our own discipline, to be regarded simply as prior assumptions, but as a preliminary survey of the whole, as the result of the ensuing enquiry; for the result is already known to me, as I have covered the whole field in advance. It has already been shown and will again emerge in the course of this enquiry that the history of the world is a rational process, the rational and necessary evolution of the world spirit. This spirit [is] the substance of history; its nature is always one and the same; and it discloses this nature in the existence of the world. (The world spirit is the absolute spirit.) This, as I have said, must be the result of our study of history. But we must be sure to take history as it is; in other words, we must proceed historically and empirically. For example, we must not allow ourselves to be misled by the professional historians; for certain of them, at least in Germany (and they even include some leading authorities who pride themselves on what they call their study of the sources), are guilty of precisely what they accuse the philosophers of doing—of introducing a priori fictions into history. Thus it is a widely accepted fiction (to quote one example) that there was an original primeval people, directly instructed by God, living in perfect understanding and wisdom, and possessing a thorough knowledge of all natural laws and spiritual truth; or again, that various nations of priests at one time existed; or (to take a more specific example) that the Roman historians based their accounts of ancient history on a lost Roman epic, etc. Let us leave such a priori inventions to those ingenious professional historians, among whom (at any rate in Germany) they are not

uncommon.

We can therefore lay it down as our first condition that history must be apprehended accurately. But general expressions such as apprehend and accurately are not without ambiguity. Even the ordinary, run-of-the-mill historian who believes and professes that his attitude is entirely receptive, that he is dedicated to the facts, is by no means passive in his thinking; he brings⁸ his categories with him, and they influence his vision of the data he has before him. The truth is not to be found on the superficial plane of the senses; for, especially in subjects which claim a scientific status, reason must always remain alert, and conscious deliberation is indispensable. Whoever looks at the world rationally will find that it in turn assumes a rational aspect; the two exist in a reciprocal relationship.

It is perfectly correct to say that the design of the world should be distinguishable by observation. But to recognise the universal and the rational, it is necessary to use reason too. The objects are stimuli to thought; otherwise, we find that the world takes on an aspect corresponding to the way in which we look at it. Anyone who views the world purely subjectively will see it in terms of his own nature; he will know everything better than everyone else, and see how things ought to have been done and what course events ought to have taken. But the overall content of world history is rational, and indeed has to be rational; a divine will rules supreme and is strong enough to determine the overall content. Our aim must be to discern this substance, and to do so, we must bring with us a rational consciousness. Physical perception and a finite understanding are not enough; we must see with the eye of the concept, the eye of reason, which penetrates the surface and finds its way through the complex and confusing turmoil of events. Yet people say that this approach to history is an a priori procedure, and intrinsically wrong. Whether they do so or not is a matter of indifference to philosophy. In order to perceive the substance, we must apply our own reason to it. This does not mean, however, that one-sided reflections are admissible; for they distort history and arise out of mistaken subjective opinions. But philosophy is not concerned with these. Sure in the knowledge that reason governs history, philosophy is convinced that the events will match the concept; it does not pervert the truth after the fashion which is now prevalent—especially among the philologists, who employ their so-called acumen to introduce wholly a priori ideas into history. Admittedly, philosophy does follow an a priori method in so far as it presupposes the Idea. But the Idea is undoubtedly there, and reason is fully convinced of its presence.

The perspective adopted by the philosophical history of the world is accordingly not just one among many general perspectives, an isolated abstraction singled out at the expense of the rest. Its spiritual principle is the sum total of all possible perspectives. It concentrates its attention on the concrete spiritual principle in the life of nations, and deals not with individual situations but with a universal thought which runs throughout the whole. This universal element is not to be found in the world of contingent phenomena; it is the unity behind the multitude of particulars. The object of history is the most concrete of all, for it comprehends every aspect of existence; the world spirit is its individuality. What philosophy is therefore concerned with in its treatment of history is the concrete object in its concrete form, and it traces the necessary development of this object. Thus the destinies, passions, and energies of nations are not its prime consideration, with the events following on in second place. On the contrary, its chief concern is the spirit of the events themselves, the moving spirit within them, for this is the true Mercury, the leader of nations. We must therefore not imagine that the universal object of the philosophical history of the world is only one aspect of history (no matter how important this aspect might be), with other alternative determinants existing independently of it. On the contrary, the universal object is infinitely concrete, all-comprehending and omnipresent, for the spirit is eternally present to itself; it has no past, and remains for ever the same in all its vigour and strength.

The understanding must always be brought to bear on history in order that we may comprehend the causes and effects at work in it. In this way, we try to discover what is essential in world history and to disregard what is inessential. The understanding brings out everything that is important and inherently

significant. Its criteria of the essential and the inessential will vary according to the end it is pursuing in its examination of history, and the ends it sets itself can also vary enormously. Whenever a particular aim is chosen, further considerations at once present themselves, and we are compelled to distinguish between principal and secondary aims. Accordingly, when we are comparing the facts of history with the ends of the spirit, we will ignore everything which might otherwise be of interest and stick to essentials. Thus the historical content which presents itself to reason is not simply equivalent to the entire events of the past. Some ends are of essential interest to the intellect, and others to the emotions, so that we can be moved to sorrow, admiration, or joy when we read about them.

But it is not our business to discuss the various types of reflection, attitudes, and judgements, not even the ways of distinguishing the important from the unimportant (and these are the most obvious categories), or [of deciding what to emphasize most] in the unlimited material at our disposal.

[Nevertheless, we ought to give a brief account of the categories under which the historical process generally presents itself to thought.] The first category comes from our observation of the changing individuals, nations, and states which flourish for a while, capture our interest, and then disappear. This is the category of change.

We witness a vast spectacle of events and actions, of infinitely varied constellations of nations, states, and individuals, in restless succession. Everything that can occupy and interest the human mind, every sensation of the good, the beautiful and the great, comes into play; everywhere we see others pursuing aims which we ourselves affirm and whose fulfilment we desire, and we share their hopes and fears. In all these events and contingencies, our first concern is with the deeds and sufferings of men; we see elements of ourselves in everything, so that our sympathies constantly oscillate from one side to the other. Sometimes we are captivated by beauty, freedom, and riches, sometimes we are impressed by human energy, which can invest even vice with greatness. Sometimes we see the accumulated weight of a popular cause lose its impetus and finally disintegrate, to be sacrificed to an infinite complex of minor exigencies. Sometimes we see how a huge expenditure of effort can produce only a trifling result, or conversely, how an apparently insignificant thing can have momentous consequences. Everywhere we see a motley confusion which draws us into its interests, and when one thing disappears, another at once takes its place.

The negative aspect of the idea of change moves us to sadness. It oppresses us to think that the richest forms and the finest manifestations of life must perish in history, and that we walk amidst the ruins of excellence. History cuts us off from the finest and noblest of our interests: the passions have destroyed them, for they are transient. It seems that all must perish and that nothing endures. Every traveller has experienced this melancholy. Who has stood among the ruins of Carthage, Palmyra, Persepolis or Rome without being moved to reflect on the transience of empires and men, to mourn the loss of the rich and vigorous life of bygone ages? It is not a sorrow like that which we experience at the graves of those dear to us, when we lament our personal losses and the transience of our own aspirations; it is rather a disinterested sorrow at the downfall of the brilliant cultures of the past.

[...]

2. The Phases of World History

The following scheme of historical phases contains a general survey of world history. Its aim is also to make the historical process intelligible in the light of the Idea and its underlying necessity.

In the course of our geographical survey, we have already indicated the general direction of world history. The sun rises in the Orient. The sun is light, and light is universal and simple self-relatedness, i.e. universality in itself. This light, though universal in itself, exists in the sun as an individual or subject. We often imagine someone watching the moment of daybreak, the spreading of the light, and the rise of the

sun in all its majesty. Descriptions of this kind tend to emphasise the rapture, astonishment, and infinite self-oblivion which accompany this moment of clarity. But when the sun has ascended further, the astonishment diminishes, and the eye is constrained to turn instead to nature and to the self; it will see by its own light, become conscious of itself, and progress from its original state of astonishment and passive contemplation to activity, to independent creation. And by evening, man has constructed a building, an inner sun, the sun of his own consciousness, which he has produced by his own efforts; and he will value it more highly than the actual sun outside him. As a result of his activity, he now stands in the same relationship to the spirit as he originally stood to the external sun, except that this new relationship is a free one: for his second object is his own spirit. Here, in a nutshell, is the course of the whole historical process, the great day of the spirit and the day's work it accomplishes in world history.

World history travels from east to west; for Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning. World history has an absolute east, although the term east in itself is wholly relative; for although the earth is a sphere, history does not move in a circle around it, but has a definite eastern extremity, i.e. Asia. It is here that the external and physical sun rises, and it sets in the west: but it is in the west that the inner sun of self-consciousness, which emits a higher radiance, makes its further ascent. World history imposes a discipline on the unrestrained natural will, guiding it towards universality and subjective freedom.

Among all the phenomena of history, our true object is the state. As the state is the universal Idea and universal spiritual life to which individuals react from birth with trust and habit, in which they have their being and reality, their knowledge and volition, and through which they acquire and preserve their worth, two basic determinations are involved. Firstly, there is the universal substance of the state, the one inherently valuable spirit, the absolute power, the independent spirit of the nation; and secondly, there is individuality as such, the realm of subjective freedom. The question is whether the real life of individuals is one of unreflecting habit and custom in relation to the basic unity, or whether these individuals are reflecting personalities and subjects who exist for themselves. In this connection, we must distinguish between substantial freedom and subjective freedom. Substantial freedom is the implicit rationality of the will which is subsequently developed in the state. But in this determination of reason, individual insight and volition are not yet present; in other words, subjective freedom, which can only determine itself in the individual and which constitutes the reflection of the individual in his own conscience, has not yet come into being. Where there is merely substantial freedom, commandments and laws are regarded as firmly established in and for themselves, and the individual subject adopts an attitude of complete subservience towards them. Besides, these laws need not accord with the will of the individual, and the subjects are therefore like children, who obey their parents without will or insight of their own. But as subjective freedom arises and man descends from the realm of external reality into his own spirit, reflection creates an antithesis which contains the negation of reality. For withdrawal from the present world necessarily gives rise to an antithesis, one pole of which is God and the divine, and the other the individual subject. The sole purpose of world history is to create a situation in which these two poles are absolutely united and truly reconciled. They are reconciled in such a way that the free subject is not submerged in the objective existence of the spirit, but is accorded its independent rights; and at the same time the absolute spirit, the realm of pure objective unity, realises its absolute right. In the immediate consciousness of the Orient, the two are not yet distinct. The substantial world is distinct from the individual, but the object has not yet been located in the spirit itself.

Thus, the first form which the spirit assumes is that of the Orient. This world is based on the immediate consciousness, on substantial spirituality; its knowledge is no longer a matter of individual arbitrariness—for the sun has now risen—but of an essential will which exists independently and autonomously for itself and to which the will of the individual subject responds primarily with an attitude of faith, trust, and obedience. In more concrete terms, it is a patriarchal relationship. Within the family, the individual is a totality in his own right, but he is also a moment within the whole; he partakes of a

common purpose which, since it is common to all, has its own separate existence whereby it also becomes an object of the individual consciousness. This consciousness is embodied in the head of the family, who is the will of the whole; he acts in the interests of the common purpose, cares for the individuals, directs their activity towards the common end, educates them, and ensures that they remain in harmony with the universal end. Their knowledge and desires do not go beyond this end and its embodiment in the head of state. This is necessarily the first mode of national consciousness.

[...]

The second phase, which comprehends the world of Greece, may be likened to the period of adolescence. It is characteristic of the Greek world that it witnesses the rise of numerous states. It is the realm of beautiful freedom, and it is in the context of immediate ethical existence that individuality develops within it. The principle of individuality, of subjective freedom, has its origin here, although it is still embedded in the substantial unity. As in Asia, morality is a principle, but it is also associated with individuality, so that it is identical with the free will of individuals. The two extremes of the Oriental world—subjective freedom and substantiality—are now combined; the kingdom of freedom—not that of unrestrained and natural freedom but of ethical freedom—is now realised. Its end is not arbitrary or particular but universal, for it takes the universal end of the nation as the object of its will and its knowledge. But it is merely the realm of beautiful freedom, and its union with the substantial end is natural and unreflecting. It is the union of the ethical with the subjective will, in which the Idea is united with a plastic form: it does not exist abstractly for itself, but is immediately bound up with the real, just as the sensuous bears the stamp and expression of the spiritual in a beautiful work of art. It is not yet morality, but merely unreflecting ethical existence; for the individual will of the subject intuitively adopts the customs and habits laid down by justice and the laws. The individual is therefore unconsciously united with the universal end. Accordingly, this kingdom is truly harmonious; like a lovely but ephemeral and quickly passing flower, the Greek world is a most serene yet inherently unstable structure, in that it is destined to forfeit its purity under the influence of reflection; and since the unity between its two principles is merely an immediate one, it constitutes the greatest of contradictions within itself. The two principles of the Oriental world—those of substantiality and of subjective freedom—are here united. But their unity is purely immediate, so that they are in the highest degree self-contradictory. In the Orient, the contradiction lies in two opposite extremes which come into conflict with one another. In Greece, however, these are united, but their union cannot survive in the form it assumes in Greece. For the aesthetic existence of Greece cannot be equated with true ethical life. It has not been reborn from the struggle through which subjective freedom is itself reborn, but remains at the earliest stage of subjective freedom; as such, it still bears the mark of natural ethicality instead of being born anew to the higher and purer form of universal ethical life. The ethical life of Greece will therefore be an unstable one which works towards its own dissolution; and the reflection of its extremes within themselves must bring about the downfall of the entire realm. In this way, a new and higher form is developed, bringing with it the third phase in history. Inwardness and reflection, in their incipient stages, are indeed present as a moment within the Greek world; and the next step is taken when this inner reflection, i.e. thought and the activity of thought, liberates itself and presses forward, so preparing the way for a new universal end.

Thus, the principle of the third phase is that of universality, of an end which exists as such, but as yet in abstract universality; this is the era of the Roman Empire. The end with which the individuals are confronted and to which all their actions are directed is the state as such. This phase can be regarded as the manhood of history. For manhood follows neither the arbitrary will of a master, nor its own aesthetic arbitrariness; its life is one of arduous labour and service, not of the free and happy pursuit of its own end. But although the end to which man must dedicate himself is universal, it is also an inflexible one. A state, laws, and constitutions are ends, and it is these which the individual must serve: the individual is immersed in them and achieves his own end only in the universal one. (Such an empire seems destined to last for ever, especially if it also embodies the principle of subjective satisfaction, even in its religion,

as was the case in the Holy Roman Empire. Nevertheless, the Holy Roman Empire came to an end two decades ago.)

[...]

The empire of self-knowing subjectivity marks the rise of the real spirit; this is the beginning of the fourth phase in history, which, in natural terms, would correspond to the old age of the spirit. In the natural world, old age is equivalent to weakness; but the old age of the spirit is the age of its complete maturity, in which it returns to a condition of unity while retaining its spiritual nature. The spirit as infinite power contains within itself the moments of its earlier development and thereby attains its totality.

We have now reached the stage of spirituality and spiritual reconciliation; and this spiritual reconciliation is the principle of the fourth phase in history. The spirit has become conscious that the spirit itself is the truth, and it now exists as an object of thought. This fourth phase necessarily consists of two parts: on the one hand, the spirit as consciousness of an inner world—i.e. the spirit which is known as the essential being, as thinking consciousness of the highest things, or the will of the spirit—is again of an abstract nature, for it remains tied to spiritual abstraction. So long as consciousness remains at this stage, worldly existence is at odds with itself, and is given over to savagery and barbarism; it is accompanied by a total indifference towards worldly things, for the latter have no connection with the spiritual world and have not attained a rational organisation within the consciousness. Such is the nature of the Mohammedan world, in which the Oriental world reaches its highest transfiguration and its highest perception of the One. Its origin is admittedly later than that of Christianity; but it took many centuries for Christianity to achieve world importance, a process which was finally completed by Charlemagne. Mohammedanism, however, because of the abstract nature of its principle, was able to become a world empire within a short space of time; but it is a more primitive system than that of Christianity.

The second stage in the development of this spiritual world begins when the spiritual principle has translated itself into a concrete world. This principle is the consciousness and volition of subjectivity as a divine personality, and it manifests itself initially in a single subject. But it subsequently develops into an empire of the real spirit. This phase can be described as the Germanic world, and those nations on which the world spirit has conferred its true principle may be called the Germanic nations. The realm of the real spirit has as its principle the absolute reconciliation of subjectivity which exists for itself with the diversity which exists in and for itself, i.e. with that true and substantial condition in which the subject is free for itself in so far as it accords with the universal and has an essential existence: in short, the realm of concrete freedom.

From now on, the worldly empire and the spiritual empire are opposed to one another. On the one hand, the principle of the spirit which exists for itself is freedom, in its own peculiar form, and subjectivity. The individual mind seeks to be united with that which it is bound to respect. It must not be contingent, however, but rather the mind in its essential being and spiritual truth. This is what Christ has revealed to us in his religion; his own truth, which is that of the mind, is that we should posit ourselves as united with the divinity. At this point, the reconciliation in and for itself is accomplished. But since it has only been accomplished in itself, this phase of history, by virtue of its immediacy, begins with an antithesis.

Admittedly, its historical origin lies in that reconciliation which Christianity brought with it; but since this itself has only begun, and exists only implicitly for the consciousness, we find initially the greatest possible antithesis (although it is subsequently regarded as an injustice which ought to be removed). It is the antithesis between the spiritual and religious principle on the one hand and the secular realm on the other. Yet the secular realm is no longer what it formerly was, for it has now been converted to Christianity and ought therefore to accord with the truth. But the spiritual realm must also come to recognise that spirituality is realised in the secular world. But in so far as both worlds are still immediate, the secular realm has not yet cast off its arbitrary subjectivity, and the spiritual realm has not yet

recognised the secular world; consequently, the two are in conflict. The course of history is therefore not one of peaceful and unopposed development, for the spirit does not approach its realisation in a peaceful manner. In the course of history, both sides must renounce their one-sidedness, i.e. their inauthentic form. On the one hand, we find a hollow reality which ought to accord with the spirit but does not yet do so; and for this reason, it must be destroyed. And on the other hand, the spiritual realm is primarily an ecclesiastical one which has become immersed in outward secularity; and while the secular authority is suppressed by external influences, the ecclesiastical authority falls into decay. The situation to which this gives rise is one of barbarism.

As already remarked, the reconciliation is at first implicit (i.e. in itself), but it still has to become explicit (i.e. for itself). Consequently, the principle must begin with the greatest possible antithesis; and it must also be the most abstract of antitheses, for the reconciliation is absolute. As we have seen, this antithesis consists on the one hand of the spiritual principle in its ecclesiastical form, and on the other of wild and barbarous secularity. The first stage in this historical development is one of hostility between the two, although they are allied to one another inasmuch as the ecclesiastical principle is recognised by the secular realm; yet the latter does not accord with the former, although it ought, by its own admission, to do so. The secular realm, which is now forsaken by the spirit, is oppressed by the ecclesiastical authority; and the primary form of ecclesiastical authority is such that it itself lapses into secularity, thereby losing its spiritual determination and subsequently also its power. The decline of both worlds culminates in the disappearance of barbarism, and the spirit then discovers a higher form which is in general worthy of it, i.e. the form of rationality, of free and rational thought. The spirit, driven back upon itself, comprehends its own principle and produces it within itself in its free form, in the form of thought, in an intellectual shape. It is now able to coexist in harmony with external reality at large, to insinuate itself into it, and to realise the principle of rationality through the secular world itself.

Only after it has gained its objective (i.e. intellectual) form can the spiritual principle become truly congruent with external reality; only then can the spiritual aim be realised in the secular world. It is the form of thought which brings about the fundamental reconciliation: the profundity of thought is the agent by which the reconciliation is effected. This profundity of thought will then manifest itself in the world of appearance, and this subjectivity is the source of knowledge and the point at which appearance and existence coincide. Thus, the principle of reconciliation between Church and state has emerged, and the ecclesiastical world thereby discovers and possesses its concept and rationality in the secular world. In this way, the antithesis between the Church and the so-called state vanishes; the state is no longer inferior and subordinate to the Church, and the Church retains no special prerogative; the spiritual world is no longer alien to the state. Freedom has found the means of realising its concept and its truth. Thus it has happened that, through the activity of thought—i.e. universal determinations of thought whose substance is this concrete principle or the nature of the spirit itself—the realm of reality or concrete thought has come into conformity with substantial truth. Freedom discovers its concept in reality, and has developed the secular world into the objective system of a specific and internally organised state. It is this triumphant progress which gives history its interest, and the point at which reconciliation and existence for itself are reached is now an object of knowledge: reality is transformed and reconstructed. This is the goal of world history: the spirit must create for itself a nature and world to conform with its own nature, so that the subject may discover its own concept of the spirit in this second nature, in this reality which the concept of the spirit has produced; and in this objective reality, it becomes conscious of its subjective freedom and rationality. Such is the progress of the Idea in general; and this must be our ultimate point of view in history. The more detailed process whereby the Idea is realised is history proper; and that work still remains to be done in it is a purely empirical matter. In our study of world history, we have to cover more circumstantially that long route which we have just surveyed in outline, the path which history follows in realising its aim. But temporal duration is something entirely relative, and the spirit belongs to eternity. Duration, strictly speaking, does not exist for it. The further labour of history is that this principle should develop and unfold, and that the spirit should attain its reality and

become conscious of itself in the real world.

[...]

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