

A HISTORY OF
PHILOSOPHY IN EPITOME,

BY DR. ALBERT SCHWEGLER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GERMAN, BY JULIUS H.
SEELYE.

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[Pg iii]

INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY HENRY B.
SMITH, D. D.

The History of Philosophy, by Dr. Albert Schwegler, is considered in Germany as the best concise manual upon the subject from the school of Hegel. Its account of the Greek and of the German systems, is of especial value and importance. It presents the whole history of speculation in its consecutive order. Though following the method of Hegel's more extended lectures upon the progress of philosophy, and though it makes the system of Hegel to be the ripest product of philosophy, yet it also rests upon independent investigations. It will well reward diligent study, and is one of the

best works for a

[Pg iv]

text-book in our colleges, upon this neglected branch of scientific investigation. The translation is made by a competent person, and gives, I doubt not, a faithful rendering of the original.

Henry B. Smith.

Union Theological Seminary, New York, *Nov. 6, 1855.*

[Pg v]

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Schwegler's History of Philosophy originally appeared in the "*Neue Encyklopädie für Wissenschaften und Künste.*" Its great value soon awakened a call for its separate issue, in which form it has attained a very wide circulation in Germany. It is found in the hands of almost every student in the philosophical department of a German university, and is highly esteemed for its clearness, conciseness, and comprehensiveness.

The present translation was commenced in Germany three years ago, and has been carefully finished. It was undertaken with the conviction that the work would not lose its interest or its value in an English dress, and with the hope that it might be of wider service in such a form

[Pg vi]

to students of philosophy here. It was thought especially, that a proper translation of this manual would supply a want for a suitable text-book on this branch of study, long felt by both teachers and students in our American colleges.

The effort has been made to translate, and not to paraphrase the author's meaning. Many of his statements might have been amplified without diffuseness, and made more perceptible to the superficial reader without losing their interest to the more profound student, but he has so happily seized upon the germs of the different systems, that they neither need, nor would be improved by any farther development, and has, moreover, presented them so clearly, that no student need have any difficulty in apprehending them as they are. The translator has therefore endeavored to represent faithfully and clearly the original history. As such, he offers his work to the American public, indulging no hope, and making no efforts for its success beyond that which its own merits shall ensure.

J. H. S.

Schenectady, N. Y., *January, 1856.*

[Pg vii]

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE, by Henry B. SMITH, D. D.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I.

— WHAT IS MEANT BY THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

II.— CLASSIFICATION

III.— GENERAL VIEW OF THE PRE-SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY

1. The Ionics

2. The Pythagoreans

3. The Eleatics

4. Heraclitus
5. The Atomists
6. Anaxagoras
7. The Sophists

IV.— THE IONIC PHILOSOPHERS

1. Thales
2. Anaximander
3. Anaximenes
4. Retrospect

V.— PYTHAGOREANISM

1. Its Relative Position
2. Historical and Chronological
3. The Pythagorean Principle
4. Carrying out of this Principle

VI.— THE ELEATICS

1. The Relation of the Eleatic Principle to the Pythagorean
2. Xenophanes
3. Parmenides
4. Zeno

VII.— HERACLITUS

[Pg viii]

1. Relation of the Heraclitic Principle to the Eleatic
2. Historical and Chronological
3. The Principle of the Becoming
4. The Principle of Fire
5. Transition to the Atomists

VIII.— EMPEDOCLES

1. General View
2. The Four Elements
3. The Two Powers
4. Relation of the Empedoclean to the Eleatic and Heraclitic Philo

IX.— THE ATOMISTIC PHILOSOPHY

1. Its Propounders
2. The Atoms
3. The Fulness and the Void

4. The Atomistic Necessity
5. Relative Position of the Atomistic Philosophy

X.— ANAXAGORAS

1. His Personal History
2. His Relation to his Predecessors
3. The Principle of the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$
4. Anaxagoras as the close of the Pre-Socratic Realism

XI.— THE SOPHISTIC PHILOSOPHY

1. The Relation of the Sophistic Philosophy to the Anaxagorean Philosophy
2. Relation of the Sophistic Philosophy to the Universal Life of the Greeks
3. Tendencies of the Sophistic Philosophy
4. Significance of the Sophistic Philosophy from its relation to the History of the Greeks
5. Individual Sophists
6. Transition to Socrates, and characteristic of the following Period

XII.— SOCRATES

1. His Personal Character
2. Socrates and Aristophanes
3. The Condemnation of Socrates
4. The Genius of Socrates
5. Sources of the Philosophy of Socrates
6. Universal Character of the Philosophizing of Socrates
7. The Socratic Method
8. The Socratic Doctrine concerning Virtue

XIII.— THE PARTIAL DISCIPLES OF SOCRATES

1. Their Relation to the Socratic Philosophy
2. Antisthenes and the Cynics
3. Aristippus and the Cyrenians
4. Euclid and the Megarians
5. Plato as the complete Socraticist

[Pg ix]

XIV.— PLATO

- I. Plato's Life
 1. His Youth
 2. His Years of Discipline
 3. His Years of Travel

- 4. His Years of Instruction
- II. The Inner Development of the Platonic Philosophy and Writings
- III Classification of the Platonic System
 - .
- IV The Platonic Dialectics
 - .
 - 1. Conception of Dialectics
 - 2. What is Science?
 - (1.) As opposed to Sensation
 - (2.) The Relation of Knowing to Opinion
 - (3.) The Relation of Science to Thinking
 - 3. The Doctrine of Ideas in its Genesis
 - 4. Positive Exposition of the Doctrine of Ideas
 - 5. The Relation of Ideas to the Phenomenal World
 - 6. The Idea of the Good and the Deity
- V. The Platonic Physics
 - 1. Nature
 - 2. The Soul
- VI The Platonic Ethics
 - .
 - 1. Good and Pleasure
 - 2. Virtue
 - 3. The State
- XV.— THE OLD ACADEMY
- XVI.— ARISTOTLE
 - I. Life and Writings of Aristotle
 - II. Universal Character and Division of the Aristotelian Philosophy
 - III Logic and Metaphysics
 - .
 - 1. Conception and Relation of the Two
 - 2. Logic
 - 3. Metaphysics
 - (1.) The Aristotelian Criticism of the Platonic Doctrine of Ideas
 - (2.) The Four Aristotelian Principles, or Causes, and the Relation
 - (3.) Potentiality and Actuality

- (4.) The Absolute Divine Spirit
- IV The Aristotelian Physics
- .
1. Motion, Matter, Space, and Time
2. The Collective Universe
3. Nature
4. Man
- V. The Aristotelian Ethics
- [Pg x]
1. Relation of Ethics to Physics
2. The Highest Good
3. Conception of Virtue
4. The State
- VI The Peripatetic School
- .
VI Transition To the Post-aristotelian Philosophy
I.
- XVII.— STOICISM
1. Logic
2. Physics
3. Ethics
(1.) Respecting the Relation of Virtue to Pleasure
(2.) The View of the Stoics concerning External Good
(3.) Farther Verification of this View
(4.) Impossibility of furnishing a System of Concrete Moral Duties
- XVIII.— EPICUREANISM
- XIX.— SCEPTICISM AND THE NEW ACADEMY
1. The Old Scepticism
2. The New Academy
3. The Later Scepticism
- XX.— THE ROMANS
- XXI.— NEW PLATONISM
1. Ecstasy as a Subjective State
2. The Cosmical Principles
3. The Emanation Theory of the New Platonists

XXII.— CHRISTIANITY AND SCHOLASTICISM

1. The Christian Idea
2. Scholasticism
3. Nominalism and Realism

XXIII.— TRANSITION TO THE MODERN PHILOSOPHY

1. Fall of Scholasticism
2. The Results of Scholasticism
3. The Revival of Letters
4. The German Reformation
5. The Advancement of the Natural Sciences
6. Bacon of Verulam
7. The Italian Philosophers of the Transition Epoch
8. Jacob Boehme

XXIV.— DESCARTES

1. The Beginning of Philosophy with Doubt
2. Cogito ergo sum
3. The Nature of Mind deduced from this Principle
4. The Universal Rule of all Certainty follows from the same
5. The Existence of God

[Pg xi]

6. Results of this Fact in Philosophy
7. The Two Substances
8. The Anthropology of Descartes
9. Results of the Cartesian System

XXV.— GEULINCX AND MALEBRANCHE

1. Geulincx
2. Malebranche
3. The Defects of the Philosophy of Descartes

XXVI.— SPINOZA

1. The One Infinite Substance
2. The Two Attributes
3. The Modes
4. His Practical Philosophy

XXVII. IDEALISM AND REALISM

—

XXVIII. LOCKE
—

XXIX.— HUME

XXX.— CONDILLAC

XXXI.— HELVETIUS

XXXII. THE FRENCH CLEARING UP AND MATERIALISM
—

1. The Common Character of the French Philosophers of this Age
2. Voltaire
3. Diderot
4. La Mettrie's Materialism
5. Système de la Nature
 - (1.) The Materiality of Man
 - (2.) The Atheism of this System
 - (3.) Its Denial of Freedom and Immortality
 - (4.) The Practical Consequences of these Principles

XXXIII. LEIBNITZ
—

1. The Doctrine of Monads
2. The Monads more accurately determined
3. The Pre-established Harmony
4. The Relation of the Deity to the Monads
5. The Relation of Soul and Body
6. The Theory of Knowledge
7. Leibnitz's Théodicée

XXXIV. BERKELEY
—

XXXV. WOLFF
—

1. Ontology
2. Cosmology
3. Rational Psychology
4. Natural Theology

XXXVI. THE GERMAN CLEARING UP
—

XXXVII. — TRANSITION TO KANT

1. Examination of the Faculty of Knowledge
2. Three Chief Principles of the Kantian Theory of Knowledge

XXXVIII .— KANT

I. Critick of Pure Reason

1. The Transcendental Æsthetics
 - (1.) The Metaphysical Discussion
 - (2.) The Transcendental Discussion
2. The Transcendental Analytic
3. The Transcendental Dialectics
 - (1.) The Psychological Ideas
 - (2.) The Antinomies of Cosmology
 - (3.) The Ideal of the Pure Reason
 - (a.) The Ontological Proof
 - (b.) The Cosmological Proof
 - (c.) The Physico-Theological Proof

II. Critick of the Practical Reason

- (1.) The Analytic
- (2.) The Dialectic: What is this Highest Good?
 - (a.) Perfect Virtue or Holiness
 - (b.) Perfect Happiness
 - (c.) Kant's Views of Religion

III Critick of the Faculty of Judgment

1. Critick of the Æsthetic Faculty of Judgment
 - (1.) Analytic
 - (2.) Dialectic
2. Critick of the Teleological Faculty of Judgment
 - (1.) Analytic of the Teleological Faculty of Judgment
 - (2.) Dialectic

XXXIX. — TRANSITION TO THE POST-KANTIAN PHILOSOPHY

XL.— JACOBI

XLI.— FICHTE

I. The Fichtian Philosophy in its Original Form

1. The Theoretical Philosophy of Fichte, his Wissenschaftslehre, &c.

2. Fichte's Practical Philosophy

II. The Later Form of Fichte's Philosophy

XLII.— HERBART

1. The Basis and Starting Point of Philosophy

2. The First Act of Philosophy

3. Remodelling the Conceptions of Experience

4. Herbart's Reals

5. Psychology connected with Metaphysics

6. The Importance of Herbart's Philosophy

XLIII.— SCHELLING

[Pg xiii]

I. First Period: Schelling's Procession from Fichte

II. Second Period: Standpoint of the distinguishing between the Philo-
Mind

1. Natural Philosophy

(1.) Organic Nature

(2.) Inorganic Nature

(3.) The Reciprocal Determination of the Organic and Inorganic World

2. Transcendental Philosophy

(1.) The Theoretical Philosophy

(2.) The Practical Philosophy

(3.) Philosophy of Art

III Third Period: Period of Spinozism, or the Indifference of the Idea
.

IV Fourth Period: The Direction of Schelling's Philosophy as Mystic
Platonism
.

V. Fifth Period: Attempt at a Theogony and Cosmogony, after the M
.

(1.) The Progressive Development of Nature to Man

(2.) The Development of Mind in History

VI Sixth Period
.

XLIV.— TRANSITION TO HEGEL

XLV.— HEGEL

I. Science OF Logic

1. The Doctrine of Being

(1.) Quality

(2.) Quantity

(3.) Measure

2. The Doctrine of Essence

(1.) The Essence as such

(2.) Essence and Phenomenon

(3.) Actuality

3. The Doctrine of the Conception

(1.) The Subjective Conception

(2.) Objectivity

(3.) The Idea

II. The Science of Nature

1. Mechanics

2. Physics

3. Organics

(1.) Geological Organism

(2.) Vegetable Organism

(3.) Animal Organism

III
Philosophy of Mind

1. The Subjective Mind

2. The Objective Mind

3. The Absolute Mind

(1.) Æsthetics

[Pg xiv]

(a.) Architecture

(b.) Sculpture

(c.) Painting

(d.) Music

(e.) Poetry

(2.) Philosophy of Religion

- (a.) The Natural Religion of the Oriental World
- (b.) The Religion of Mental Individuality
- (c.) Revealed, or the Christian Religion
- (3.) Absolute Philosophy

[Pg 11]

A HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY.

SECTION I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY.

To philosophize is to reflect; to examine things, in thought.

Yet in this is the conception of philosophy not sufficiently defined. Man, as thinking, also employs those practical activities concerned in the adaptation of means to an end; the whole body of sciences also, even those which do not in strict sense belong to philosophy, still lie in the realm of thought. In what, then, is philosophy distinguished from these sciences, *e. g.* from the science of astronomy, of medicine, or of rights? Certainly not in that it has a different material to work upon. Its material is precisely the same as that of the different empirical sciences. The construction and disposition of the universe, the arrangement and functions of the human body, the doctrines of property, of rights and of the state—all these materials belong as truly to philosophy as to their appropriate sciences. That which is given in the world of experience, that which is real, is the content likewise of philosophy. It is not, therefore, in its material but in its

[Pg 12]

form, in its method, in its mode of knowledge, that philosophy is to be distinguished from the empirical sciences. These latter derive their material directly from experience; they find it at hand and take it up just as they find it. Philosophy, on the other hand, is never satisfied with receiving that which is given simply as it is given, but rather follows it out to its ultimate grounds; it examines every individual thing in reference to a final principle, and considers it as one link in the whole chain of knowledge. In this way philosophy removes from the individual thing given in experience, its immediate, individual, and accidental character; from the sea of empirical individualities, it brings out that which is common to all; from the infinite and orderless mass of contingencies it finds that which is necessary, and throws over all a universal law. In short, philosophy examines the *totality* of experience in the form of an *organic system* in harmony with the laws of thought. From the above it is seen, that philosophy (in the sense we have given it) and the empirical sciences have a reciprocal influence; the latter conditioning the former, while they at the same time are conditioned by it. We shall, therefore, in the history of the world, no more find an absolute and complete philosophy, than a complete empirical science (*Empirik*). Rather is philosophy found only in the form of the different philosophical systems, which have successively appeared in the course of history, advancing hand in hand with the progress of the empirical sciences and the universal, social, and civil culture, and showing in their advance the different steps in the development and improvement of human science. The history of philosophy has, for its object, to represent the content, the succession, and the inner connection of these philosophical systems.

The relation of these different systems to each other is thus already intimated. The historical and collective life of the race is bound together by the idea of a spiritual and intellectual progress, and manifests a regular order of advancing, though not always continuous, stages of development. In this, the fact harmonizes

with what we should expect from antecedent probabilities. Since, therefore, every philosophical system is only the philosophical

[Pg 13]

expression of the collective life of its time, it follows that these different systems which have appeared in history will disclose one organic movement and form together one rational and internally connected (*gegliedertes*) system. In all their developments, we shall find one constant order, grounded in the striving of the spirit ever to raise itself to a higher point of consciousness and knowledge, and to recognize the whole spiritual and natural universe, more and more, as its outward being, as its reality, as the mirror of itself.

Hegel was the first to utter these thoughts and to consider the history of philosophy as a united process, but this view, which is, in its principle, true, he has applied in a way which would destroy the freedom of human actions, and remove the very conception of contingency, *i. e.* that any thing should be contrary to reason. *Hegel's* view is, that the succession of the systems of philosophy which have appeared in history, corresponds to the succession of logical categories in a system of logic. According to him, if, from the fundamental conceptions of these different philosophical systems, we remove that which pertains to their outward form or particular application, &c., so do we find the different steps of the logical conceptions (*e. g.* being, becoming, existence, being *per se* (*fürsichseyn*) quantity, &c.). And on the other hand, if we take up the logical process by itself, we find also in it the actual historical process.

This opinion, however, can be sustained neither in its principle nor in its historical application. It is defective in its principle, because in history freedom and necessity interpenetrate, and, therefore, while we find, if we consider it in its general aspects, a rational connection running through the whole, we also see, if we look

solely at its individual parts, only a play of numberless contingencies, just as the kingdom of nature, taken as a whole, reveals a rational plan in its successions, but viewed only in its parts, mocks at every attempt to reduce them to a preconceived plan. In history we have to do with free subjectivities, with individuals capable of originating actions, and have, therefore, a factor which does not admit of a previous calculation. For however

[Pg 14]

accurately we may estimate the controlling conditions which may attach to an individual, from the general circumstances in which he may be placed, his age, his associations, his nationality, &c., a free will can never be calculated like a mathematical problem. History is no example for a strict arithmetical calculation. The history of philosophy, therefore, cannot admit of an apriori construction; the actual occurrences should not be joined together as illustrative of a preconceived plan; but the facts, so far as they can be admitted, after a critical sifting, should be received as such, and their rational connection be analytically determined. The speculative idea can only supply the law for the arrangement and scientific connection of that which may be historically furnished.

A more comprehensive view, which contradicts the above-given Hegelian notion, is the following. The actual historical development is, very generally, different from the theoretical. Historically *e. g.* the State arose as a means of protection against robbers, while theoretically it is derived from the idea of rights. So also, even in the actual history of philosophy, while the logical (theoretical) process is an ascent from the abstract to the concrete, yet does the historical development of philosophy, quite generally, descend from the concrete to the abstract, from intuition to thought, and separates the abstract from the concrete in those general forms of culture and those religious and social circumstances, in which the philosophizing subject is placed. A *system* of philosophy proceeds synthetically, while the *history* of

philosophy, *i. e.* the history of the thinking process proceeds analytically. We might, therefore, with great propriety, adopt directly the reverse of the Hegelian position, and say that what in reality is the first, is for us, in fact, the last. This is illustrated in the Ionic philosophy. It began not with being as an abstract conception, but with the most concrete, and most apparent, *e. g.* with the material conception of water, air, &c. Even if we leave the Ionics and advance to the being of the Eleatics or the becoming of the Heraclitics, we find, that these, instead of being pure thought determinations, are only unpurified conceptions, and

[Pg 15]

materially colored intuitions. Still farther, is the attempt impracticable to refer every philosophy that has appeared in history to some logical category as its central principle, because the most of these philosophies have taken, for their object, the idea, not as an abstract conception, but in its realization as nature and mind, and, therefore, for the most part, have to do, not with logical questions, but with those relating to natural philosophy, psychology and ethics. Hegel should not, therefore, limit his comparison of the historical and systematic process of development simply to logic, but should extend it to the whole system of philosophical science. Granted that the Eleatics, the Heraclitics and the Atomists may have made such a category as the centre of their systems, and we may find thus far the Hegelian logic in harmony with the Hegelian history of philosophy. But if we go farther, how is it? How with Anaxagoras, the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle? We cannot, certainly, without violence, press one central principle into the systems of these men, but if we should be able to do it, and could reduce *e. g.* the philosophy of Anaxagoras to the conception of “the end,” that of the Sophists to the conception of “the appearance,” and the Socratic Philosophy to the conception of “the good,”—yet even then we have the new difficulty that the historical does not correspond to the logical succession of these categories. In fact, Hegel himself has not

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