

**Christoph Delius and Matthias Gatzemeier,  
Deniz Sertcan, Kathleen Wünscher**

**THE STORY OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT**

*h.f.*fullmann

## The Beginnings of Philosophy

# Classical Antiquity

## GREEK PHILOSOPHY

### From Myth to *Logos*

“From the beginning, wonder has made men philosophize, and it still does.” This saying of Aristotle’s, which goes back to Plato, is still valid today. Aristotle takes “philosophical wonder” to mean our amazement at inexplicable phenomena. This amazement gives rise to asking questions about causes, but it also addresses the problem of the origin and beginning of philosophy itself. It is not only academic, professional philosophy that contains philosophical knowledge, but also myth, because myth too is motivated by wondering, by questions searching for explanations. Indeed the boundaries between myth, pre-philosophical thinking and philosophy are less clear-cut than one might assume from the chapter headings of histories of philosophy. The material with which each is concerned, in other words the question of the origin of the universe, and the explanation of natural phenomena and social norms and institutions, is common to both philosophy and myth. However they do differ in the way in which they deal with these matters, or to be more precise, in the particular way each verbalizes these things. The much-quoted transition from myth to *logos* is marked by the difference between the narrative

language of stories of gods and heroes on the one hand, and strict argument on the other. Instead of using gods to explain the world, men increasingly sought a rational form of coming to terms with it. Aristotle clarifies this distinction as follows: “Mythologists only thought in the way they could understand, and paid little attention to us. For when they raise gods to the status of principles, have gods create everything, and assert that everything that does not feed on nectar and ambrosia is mortal, it is clear that they are stating something comprehensible to them, while saying something totally incomprehensible for us when it comes to the effects of these causes. But we do not need to give any serious thought to mythical insights. On the contrary, we must seek information from those who argue with proofs.” The origin of philosophy in the narrower sense is the discovery of argument.

Greek philosophy did not arise on the Greek mainland (it only arrived in Athens in the second half of the 5th century B.C., and never really settled in Sparta at all), but in the Greek colonies of Asia Minor (Miletus) and southern Italy (e.g. Croton and Elea). This is because in these places the confrontation with new questions and problems and with other ways of thinking was more conducive to theoretical discussion than in

## CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

The origins of Western philosophy are to be found in Ancient Greece. The Greeks began to express thought in philosophical terms in c. 600 B.C. This period was characterized by far-reaching economic and social change, which led to a crisis of the aristocratic state and finally to new forms of rule (tyranny, democracy).

These changes were accompanied by what is known as the **transition from myth to *logos***. In other words, mythological or religious interpretations of the world (e.g. stories of the gods which told of the origin and course of the world and its contents) were increasingly replaced by a philosophical, scientific, and rational explanation of the world. This transition was only very gradual, however, so that mythi-

cal influences are still apparent in many ancient thinkers.

Ancient philosophy begins with the **Presocratics (c. 650–500 B.C.)**, including the Milesians (Thales, Anaximander), the Pythagoreans, the Eleatics (Xenophanes, Parmenides) and the Atomists (Leucippus, Democritus).



Presocratic philosophy centers on the question of the basic principle permeating the world and the primal substance from which the world and the things in it arose.

The succeeding **classical period (c. 480–c. 320 B.C.)** was the **heyday** of Greek civilization, in which the Greeks produced their highest achievements in the visual arts (enlargement of the Acropolis under Pericles; important sculptors: Myron, Phidias, Polycletus); literature (period of the greatest representatives of Attic tragedy: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides); and philosophy (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle). Athens

**Pythagoras**, Engraving, 16th century, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

became the center of philosophy at this time, and it was here that the new form of state, the *polis* or city-state, attained its highest expression.

The **Hellenistic period (323–c. 1st century B.C.)** was the age in which a mixed culture arose as the result of the absorption of oriental elements. The Greek influence, however, remained paramount. During this period, the Greeks ruled over large areas of the Middle East as far as northern India. Science, scholarship and trade flourished. The centers of culture were Alexandria and Pergamon. Characteristic of Hellenistic art and architecture was the juxtaposition of different styles. Literature and philosophy were marked by a cosmopolitan attitude. New philosophical schools arose (Stoics, Epicureans).

# The Middle Ages

## FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

### From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages

In the 4th century, the civilization of classical Antiquity was subjected to far-reaching changes. Increasing pressure from Germanic tribes to the north, together with internal symptoms of dissolution, finally led, in the late 4th century, to the division of the Roman Empire into the Eastern and Western Empires. Some time after, Rome, the capital of the Western Empire, was sacked by barbarian tribes, and in A.D. 476, the Western Empire collapsed. The Eastern Empire, by contrast, with its capital at Constantinople, survived until 1453, when the city fell to the Turks. This period of almost a thousand years between the collapse of the two empires, Western and Eastern, is roughly what we generally know today as the Middle Ages, or medieval period.

A symbolic date for the transition from classical to medieval, that is to say Christian, philosophy is the year A.D. 529, when in the East, Plato's Academy in Athens was closed by Emperor Justinian. That very same year saw the foundation of the first great monastic order in the West, that of St. Benedict. From then on, the monasteries became the centers of scholarship and teaching in western Europe.

The beginning of the Middle Ages also marks the beginning of the spread of

Christianity in Europe. There had long been Christian congregations in the major cities of the Empire, but they played no very significant role. Things now changed. In the early 4th century, Emperor Constantine decreed that Christianity should enjoy equal status alongside the pagan religions. About a hundred years later, Christianity was made the sole religion of the state. Within another four centuries, the whole of Europe had been Christianized.

The spread of Christianity in Europe was accompanied by a change in philosophy. Medieval philosophy consists above all in an intermeshing of philosophy and theology. Its basic concern was the question of the relationship between faith and knowledge. Its foundation was Christian doctrine, which had to be defended, a position known as Christian apologetics. However, it will become clear that medieval philosophy did not represent a complete break with that of classical Antiquity. Many scholars sought to understand the philosophical theories of the Ancient World and to reconcile them with Christian teaching.

One of these scholars was Aurelius Augustinus, who as St. Augustine has become known as the most important philosopher of the transitional period between late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. His thinking was influenced above all by Plato and the

## THE MIDDLE AGES

Medieval philosophy consists primarily of the **union of philosophy and theology**, because it was based on Christian doctrine, which it was required to defend and put on a rational foundation.

One of the main themes of medieval philosophy was therefore the question of the **relationship between faith and knowledge** and the related attempt to overcome the apparently irreconcilable difference between revealed truth and philosophical insight.

The **first period (c. 200–700)** overlaps with that of late Antiquity. Its most important representative is **St. Augustine**, who laid the foundations for the whole of medieval philosophy.

The theological and philosophical doctrine of medieval western

Europe is known as **Scholasticism** (from the Latin *schola*, "school"). This term also refers to the manner in which the verities of faith were explained (the "scholastic method" practiced in the monastic schools).

The development of Scholasticism proceeded in three stages. The first stage, that of **Early Scholasticism (c. 800–1200)**, saw the emergence of the scholastic method and the first confrontation with the writings of Aristotle, which were becoming known in this period.

**The earth as a disk surrounded by the ocean, French manuscript illumination, 15th century, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris**

The succeeding period of **High Scholasticism (c. 1150–1300)** is seen as the heyday of the movement. It is characterized by the discovery of Aristotle's remaining works, and by the attempt to **unite Aristotelian**



**philosophy with Christian teaching (St. Thomas Aquinas).**

In addition, there was a confrontation with Arab philosophy. The last period, that of **Late Scholasticism (c. 1300–1400)**, was already marked by decline.

Among the core issues of medieval philosophy was the **problem of universals**. This was concerned with whether general terms had any reality, or whether they were simply constructs of thought and language.

Important for the development of Scholasticism was the **foundation of universities** (from the 12th century), which quickly evolved into centers of intellectual life.

Understanding and Experience

## The 17th Century

### A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF SCIENCE

#### Philosophical Consciousness

The study of nature, looking beyond the closed cosmos, the idea of consciousness, and the appreciation of human individuality – all these began to emerge in the Renaissance; in the Baroque period which followed, they were enlarged upon and fleshed out, and above all, placed on new foundations. Nature now came to be studied very successfully by quantitative methods in experiments based on mathematically oriented hypotheses. The old model of the cosmos with its stationary earth at the center was now definitely obsolete, and the new model of the solar system gradually came to be taken for granted by all those who enjoyed the privilege of education.

Sober, rational thinkers no longer saw Man as occupying a special position in the history of creation, but rather as a particular species with certain affective reactions and with an innate tendency to construct social forms of living. And consciousness became a philosophical concept, a place of pure thought opposed to the world of things, seeking principles of knowledge in itself, in order to bring systematic unity into the mass of what was there to be explored.

The question concerning rationally responsible principles of knowledge was becoming

more and more urgent with the rise of natural science. For on the one hand, philosophical theses ought, it was thought, to be testable in the same way as physical hypotheses and explanations, and, taken together, shown to be compatible with reality as it was experienced. Finding and consistently applying a particular method ensured the constructive transparency of the theses. It became normal to speak of philosophical “systems,” namely those tasks whose formulations and solutions were methodologically closed, and whose meaning could be measured against their preconditions and the success of their explanations (of the world, for example).

On the other hand, while “philosophy” remained the superordinate term for science generally (Newton’s chief work on mechanics and the cosmic system, published in 1687, was entitled *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* [“Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy”] for example), in actual fact physics had already declared its independence. For this reason, philosophy now concentrated particularly on fundamental assumptions, which in the individual sciences were consciously or unconsciously acknowledged as preconditions, without their forming part of the respective subject matter.

What actually “is,” what is the “substance” which underlies appearance and

### THE 17TH CENTURY

After the end of the wars of religion which occupied the first half of the 17th century, the second half witnessed a consolidation of a **Europe of modern territorial states**. The Papacy lost its international political importance. 1625 saw the appearance of a tract entitled *On the Law of War and Peace* by Hugo Grotius, a notable foundation of modern international law.

In France, which became a leading power, Louis XIV and Cardinal Richelieu were establishing the system of **centralized absolutism**, which became the pattern for many other states, and for which Thomas Hobbes, among others, sought a philosophical justification.

The **bourgeoisie gained increasing influence** in Holland and England, but also in France.

Not least for this reason, general human reason was raised to a central principle of philosophy.

Also important were **considerations of natural law**, usually linked with theses on anthropology and the original formation of state “commonwealths” (the social contract). The foundations of natural law were often sought in the rational order of things; and there were demands that, independent of the form of government, the laws of a country should not contradict this natural law.

The **new methods of mathematical natural research** and their integration into metaphysics set the course for the development of the Western world.

Louis XIV in a painting by Hyacinthe Rigaud, 1701, Louvre, Paris

René Descartes made a major contribution to the development of modern science with his discovery of analytical geometry, and he also provided its philosophical foundation.



Following from Descartes, a **dualistic and mechanistic image of the world** became widespread, in which the world of physical extension, which functioned like a machine, was imagined as separated in substance from the world of the mind or of reason. In his “Monadology” Leibniz set up an opposing view.

Philosophical **Rationalists** (including Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) saw thought as the basis of our knowledge of reality. Systematic thought embraced not only the causes of the data of experience, but also the ultimate reasons for the structure of the world.

The **Empiricists** (including Locke, Berkeley, Hume) were decidedly skeptical toward such claims. They sought to return reason to within the boundaries of experience.

Reason and Freedom

# The Enlightenment

## RATIONAL HUMANITY

### The Light of Publicity

Probably the most famous definition of what “enlightenment” means was not restricted to any particular “era”: “Enlightenment is Man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the incapacity to make use of one’s intellect without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its causes are to be found not in a lack of intellect, but of the determination and courage to use it without the guidance of another. Have the courage to know – that is the motto of enlightenment.”

Many modern writers have come up with general definitions of “enlightenment” in the broad sense, seeing it as a process which is constantly taking place in history or is particularly noticeable at certain periods, for example the age of Socrates and Plato, or the modern age. This process includes the abandonment of prejudices, the destruction of myths, the will to liberate oneself from natural or social fetters, and, on the part of enlightened pioneers, an actively emancipatory attitude to education.

However, more than other periods, the Enlightenment in the historical sense has a definite article and a capital “E,” and denotes a particular era, namely the 17th and 18th centuries - more particularly the latter. Indeed in the period between the English Revolution of 1688 and the French Revolution of 1789 – and these two dates provide a useful frame

for the period of the Enlightenment in the narrower sense – people were growing increasingly aware that they were living in what was, scientifically and philosophically, a new era. In France, Italy and Germany, the talk was of an enlightened century; the first concern was to cast light on “dark” and confused ideas and spirits. During the course of the 18th century, the noun “Enlightenment” came to be used. For Immanuel Kant, with whose definition we opened this chapter, independent thought and the questioning of traditional patterns included the “freedom to make public use of one’s reason in all fields.” By this he meant the reason “which someone makes use of as a scholar, before the whole reading public.” This kind of “use of reason” had, together with the “reading public” itself, expanded enormously in the course of the 18th century to reach undreamed-of heights. Throughout Europe, the public were informed by the press about wars, disasters, exotic discoveries and day-to-day politics. Above all, though, there were also “moral weeklies,” “intelligence sheets,” and scholarly journals, in which the talk was time and again of that “reason” of which Kant had spoken. This buzzword of the Enlightenment gave a name to what all men had in common, in whose sign a newly awakening “world citizenship” was to take shape. While there was no demand for the abolition of national borders, and rarely for radical change in the forms of government, the motto of the French Revolution, “Liberty,

## THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Toward the end of the 18th century, Thomas Paine, the best-known political writer of his day, who was actively involved in the **American Revolution (1773–83)** and the **French Revolution (1789–92)**, wrote two books: *The Age of Reason* and *The Rights of Man*. The first title can be used as a description of the century as a whole, while the second states one of the major themes of this period.

In his work *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), the central work of constitutional theory of the Enlightenment, Charles de Montesquieu analyzed **types of civil and political law** and their dependence on the age and the society in which they were made. One of his influential theses was that a

precondition of political freedom was the separation of powers and mutual checks and balances.

In the “enlightened despotisms” **reforms** were implemented in the fields of **law, education and the economy**. Frederick the Great in Prussia and Catherine the Great in Russia intently followed the philosophical and literary developments taking place in France.

In his *Persian Letters*, Montesquieu satirized the society of his day, describing it from the point of view of a non-European. This relativization of prevailing morality

**Frederick II (“the Great”), King of Prussia, Painting by Franz Duede, c. 1900**

and conditions was typical of the Enlightenment, and went side by side with the comparative **study of other cultures**. Thoroughgoing Enlightenment philosophy was pursued mainly in France.



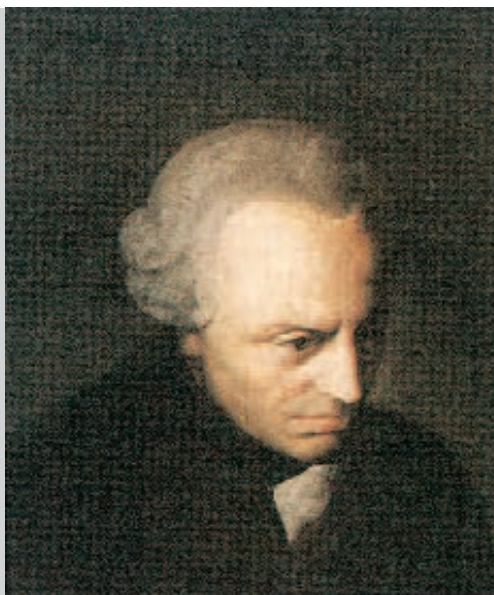
The central features here were the **rejection of all traditional authority**, the exaltation of reason (while rejecting Rationalist metaphysics), the drawing up of the foundations of a non-theological morality, the **conviction that scientific development would bring human progress**, the belief in the explicability of the soul (or the apparatus of knowledge and sensation), and the possibility of using the characteristics of matter to explain all phenomena.

In the 1780s, Immanuel Kant criticized previous epistemological theories and also rejected Enlightenment theses on this topic. His philosophy combined the opposing attitudes of Rationalism and Empiricism.

### Immanuel Kant,

Anonymous portrait, c. 1790

Kant's epoch-making *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) subjected the human faculty of cognition to a serious examination and came to the conclusion that there were certain conditions anchored in the subject himself which determined our view of the world. He argued that no statement was possible about what the world "in itself" was like (i.e. independent of the construction put on it by the subject), because Man could never see things independently of this construction. Therefore knowledge was not oriented to objects; rather, it determined the properties of objects.



misjudgment etc.). Thus the general will resembles a pantheistic God-Nature, which is One and All, projected on to society. The individual is free, in that he recognizes his own fully individual will to be subsumed in the general will and identical with it. Man is a citizen, and yet once again an individual.

### Immanuel Kant

#### *The Critique of Pure Reason*

Along with David Hume, to whom by his own acknowledgment he owed much, Kant jettisoned metaphysics as an alleged science of the supra-sensory, in other words as the seemingly logical and factual theory of what lies beyond experience. And yet Kant admitted to being in love with metaphysics. He was convinced it was indispensable because questions concerning the most general definitions of reality, the knowability of nature, God, freedom and the immortality of the soul cried out for an answer: "Human reason goes forth inexorably to such questions as cannot be answered by any experiential use of reason or principles based on it." Questions which cannot be answered *a posteriori* ("from what comes after"), i.e. from experience, require knowledge *a priori* ("from what came before"), i.e. on the one hand independent of experience, and on the other not consisting of statements which are true by definition (e.g. "Triangles have three sides"). Kant regarded such a sentence as this last as an "analytical judgment": the predicate ("three-sided") derives from an analysis of the subject ("triangle"). This sentence does not extend

knowledge, in contrast to a "synthetic judgment," e.g.: "Some dogs are dangerous to people." This statement is based on experience, a synthetic judgment *a posteriori*. Now metaphysics is concerned with "synthetic judgments *a priori*." Only when it speaks in such judgments about the principles of individual sciences or about certain conditions or even leitmotifs of knowledge, for example about the "idea" of the infinite (but without asserting any knowable infinite), is metaphysics possible as a science, and then as a "science of the limits of human reason." In this demarcation exercise, Kant did not follow the skepticism of Hume. In opposition to Hume, he believed that experience, which arises from the mental processing of perceptions, could not in its turn draw its principles from experience. Unlike many Rationalists, on the other hand, Kant was of the opinion that all knowledge begins with experience, and must make reference to experience in every case. It could, however, be concerned with merely "possible" experience, examining through mental processes alone the subjective acts of obtaining knowledge whose possibility precedes experience, and which are definitive for everything which could possibly become the object. This examination is the task of the "transcendental philosophy" which Kant developed. "Transcendental is the name I give to all knowledge which concerns itself not with objects, but with the way we recognize objects, to the extent that this is possible *a priori*." Transcendental philosophy is thus the formal basic structure of everything that can be reality for us. As it makes *a priori* and generally valid statements relating to necessary features of reality, Kant continued to call it metaphysics in this respect.

#### *Space and Time as Pure Conceptions*

The Rationalists were of the opinion that theorems derived mathematically or logically from definitions or from basic original concepts could be applied to the objects of perception, and at the same time say something about the world in itself as independent of our perception and thought of as a supra-sensory whole. This was possible, they thought, because thanks to the disposition of God, who does not deceive us, or for other metaphysically derived reasons, certain

## GERMAN IDEALISM

### The Beginnings of Modernity

The following chapters on German idealism take up the story directly from the preceding chapter on Kant. Nevertheless, to give the book a clear structure, a new main section is needed at this point, so the following paragraphs will comment on the transition from the 18th to the 19th century. In recent historical research, including the history of art and literature, this transition is seen as an important threshold between the eras of the “modern age” and “modernism” in its broader sense (whereas “Modernism” in its narrower sense refers rather to the 20th century).

In the second half of the 18th century, up to the Romantic period around 1800, changes in art and science came to a head which may be termed “secularization” and “humanization.” Secularization meant the opening up in biology and cosmology of new dimensions of natural history by way of evolutionary perspectives. Thus, for example, a theory developed by Kant concerning the origin of solar systems in gaseous nebulae, which also implied a theory of the formation of the earth, required the assumption of a period of time for this formation out of all proportion to the younger age of the earth that was generally assumed at the time. Also – long before Darwin’s theory of evolution – the great diversity of biological species was gradually being seen in historical terms, that

is to say it came to be understood as the result of long-term changes, as opposed to the assumption of a fundamentally unchanging number of species and varieties. The world became the product of a process extending back into the unimaginably distant past. In philology, semiotics and the theory of art, secularization is to be seen in the assumption that meaning is created by means of an individual interpretative process which necessarily proceeds by way of the synthesis of diversity as a temporal process, and, moreover, presents a different appearance at different times. Thus meaning is in a double sense not timeless.

The Baroque idea of letting the world represent itself objectively, so to speak, on a vast panel of signs, disappeared altogether. Humanization – not to be understood here as the creation of humane conditions – is to be seen in a boom in anthropology, the science of man, in medicine and philosophy, and in the beginnings of sociology.

### Johann Gottlieb Fichte

The first version of Fichte’s *The Science of Knowledge* appeared in 1794, 13 years after Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. In his own way Fichte continued Kant’s transcendental philosophy, that is to say the investigation of the preconditions that are given in the faculty of knowledge itself prior to any experience, and that make objectivity and an epistemological relationship to

From the Modern Age  
to Modernism

## The 19th Century

### THE 19TH CENTURY

After the wars of liberation against Napoleon the **age of European nation states** began, in which a strong awareness of national identity came into being helped by an increased awareness of the conditions determining any particular historical moment.

**German idealism**, the most important philosophical movement at the beginning of the 19th century, is linked to historical awareness inasmuch as it reduces nature and mankind, so to speak, to history. In this conception history is the self-unfolding of the supra-individual subjective spirit.

Karl Marx’s **materialism** was a response to idealism. His critique of the capitalist economic system was at the same time

philosophically significant as a cultural critique relating to the sphere of fundamental labor and property relations.

Marx turned his attention above all to the **consequences of the industrial revolution**, which began in England in the last third of the 18th century, advanced rapidly and led to the emergence of the proletariat.

New forms of the division of labor also arose in natural science, which began to break down into separate sciences and to shed its links with philosophy. The as yet young disciplines of **biology** and **chemistry** altered the image of inanimate and animate matter. **Darwin’s theory of evolution** constituted a revolution in the image of man.

Philosophy adopted various attitudes towards the triumphs of science. **Positivism** (Auguste Comte), continuing the Enlightenment’s belief in progress, saw the only remaining role for philosophy as being the science of science.

Wilhelm Dilthey, on the other hand, introduced the **distinction between “natural sciences” and “human sciences.”** Philosophy, as a “critique of historical reason” and an “application of historical awareness to philosophy and its history,” was to prepare the way for the “human sciences.”

Dilthey’s aim was to get closer to life itself through the fluid understanding and experience of “types

of world-view.” Hence he also spoke of **vitalism**. Henri Bergson and, to a certain extent, Friedrich Nietzsche are also regarded as belonging to this movement.



Johann Gottlieb Fichte  
Caricature by Gottfried Schadow



**Arthur Schopenhauer,**  
1788–1860, Painting by  
Angilbert Göbel, 1859,  
Staatliche Kunstsammlung, Kassel

In the very title of his *magnum opus*, *The World as Will and Idea*, Schopenhauer made the fundamental idea of his philosophy clear. Schopenhauer agreed with Kant's view that man experiences and knows the world only within his own idea of it. That is to say, the world is conditioned by the subject's mode of knowledge. However, there was for him, in contrast to Kant, something on which these ideas are based and which is thus independent of all experience and knowledge, which Schopenhauer called the "Will." The Will is not a goal or an intention but a kind of all-pervading force, the inner essence of things and the driving force of nature. As a "thing in itself", the Will is the basis of reality in its entirety, but it always appears in individual phenomena of the will, which are manifestations of this one Will.

**Philosopher**, Etching by Max Klinger,  
sheet 3 of the series *Opus XIII*, –  
*Death, Part II*, First impression  
1898–1909

With literary virtuosity, Schopenhauer again and again explained the specific goals, aspirations and actions of particular individuals in terms of a few basic drives, leaving events on earth at the mercy of the fateful pull of the supra-individual will, which is not benign. Max Klinger, fascinated by Schopenhauer, adopted this view of things in a series of graphic works, some of which have a dramatic "action." Klinger's "philosopher" arrogantly reaches out beyond the real stream of life and beyond nature, here symbolically fused with the figure of a reclining woman, to a metaphysical foundation of all things. But this is seen to be a mirror, the philosopher finds only himself. The exact location of the mirror (and hence any certainty as to what is reflected and what is directly visible) is left deceptively unclear – a somewhat pessimistic image of philosophy.

### *Ideology*

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point however is to change it." This famous proposition is the last of 11 brief notebook entries in which Marx formulated his view of Feuerbach and which are known today as the "Feuerbach theses." If philosophy is part of the "superstructure," as was pointed out in the previous section, and merely involuntarily reflects the "base," then it falls short of reality and is unable to change anything. Marx and Engels used the word "ideology" to describe the conviction, which in their view was erroneous, that theories and the changes of consciousness brought about by them, could affect the course of history. (In 1845–1846 they wrote a book, *The German Ideology*, which remained unpublished at the time.) This use of the word does not entirely accord with the way it is used today. But then as now "ideology" included ideas that are put forward in the above conviction: "Ideology is a process which is carried out consciously by the so-called thinker, but his consciousness is a false consciousness. The real driving forces which govern him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process." (Engels)

Feuerbach, according to Marx, wished to transform the "false consciousness" of religion into a true self-consciousness of man. To that extent his intentions were at one with Marx's own. For Marx "the reform of consciousness consists 'only' in making the

world aware of its consciousness, in awakening it from its dream of itself, and 'explaining' its own actions to it." It is a matter of "the reform of consciousness not through dogmas but through the analysis of that mystical consciousness which is obscure to itself."

But according to Marx, Feuerbach had himself undertaken this analysis in what was still an ideological manner by remaining on the level of reason, of the correct use of the intellect. Marx's concern was to explain the contents of ideologies in terms of antagonistic historical conditions, of class conflict.

## **NEW QUESTS FOR MEANING – TRANSVALUATION OF VALUES**

### **Arthur Schopenhauer**

Like Hegel and like numerous thinkers before him, Schopenhauer developed a philosophy with the ambition of providing an all-embracing account of things. His concern was similar to that of Goethe's Faust: "what holds the world together in its innermost parts." But two of the principal approaches in his thought set him apart from the metaphysical tradition. Schopenhauer neither begins nor ends with God, with Being, with the isolated consciousness or its experiences and concepts, but with man. Man's relationship to the world is, it is true, illuminated philosophically, epistemologically, from the outset, but his knowledge is seen in conjunction with his physical being, his needs and his involvement in the endless mechanisms of life and its relationships. Schopenhauer sees this involvement as vulnerability, as suffering, and with this as its starting point – this too is a breach with the European tradition – his entire doctrine is pessimistic. (Pessimism is here not to be understood primarily as hopelessness regarding the future, but as a negative, critical attitude of rejection towards the world, towards life in general.)

The title of Schopenhauer's principal work *The World as Will and Idea* (1818) expresses, as he himself stated, "the single idea" around which all his writings revolve. The "and" of the title contains part of the point of this idea, for it is a matter of the connection between two aspects of the world, of how we are to experience and interpret it.





The End of Philosophy?

## The 20th Century

### LIFE

#### From the 19th to the 20th Century

20th-century philosophy is no longer confident of its right to exist. The catastrophes of our age have not only affected philosophers' own lives in many ways, but have also dealt a more lasting blow to their faith in the reality of reason, far more so than the experience of the estrangement between the old and the new in the age of revolutions was able to do. Philosophy has therefore, unlike classical idealism, lost confidence in its ability to heal that estrangement in the realm of thought. On the contrary, its most significant voices proclaim their own abdication, whether in favor of art, science or politics. More than in any previous age, the great philosophers now vociferously and unanimously sought salvation outside philosophy. Paradoxically this manifest self-negation goes hand in hand with an unprecedented determination to make philosophy into an academic subject with a "scientific" basis. Never before have there been more people in the universities and academies of the world for whom philosophy is their main occupation, never before have there been so many separate individual philosophical disciplines – disciplines which now need specialists to survey them in their entirety.

The first major blow to its self-confidence to which 20th-century philosophy responded came above all from the work of three men: Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund

Freud. Marx had shown that the capitalist economic system is governed by laws of its own which cannot be controlled by reason and which create the potential for an imminent crisis. Nietzsche had unmasked the belief of the Enlightenment in human self-determination as nothing more than the product of the desire for power. Finally Freud proceeded to cast doubt on man's rational ability to control his own inner self, his emotions and instincts, by describing them as the forms taken by a ubiquitous sexual drive. All these ideas radically questioned the power of reason: in central areas of man's self-understanding it had turned out that it was not the self-assured subject but rather blind forces that were in control. The response of philosophy to this challenge varied: in some cases it led to the abdication of reason, in others to a radical restatement of the goals and beliefs of the Enlightenment, in order to face up to the powerful onslaught to which they had been subjected by those great enlighteners Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche. Even as regards the broad general public, by the late 19th century the belief that the world could be shaped by reason had begun to crumble as man was compelled to see himself, with fewer and fewer reservations, as part of the functional network of modern industrial societies. The First World War merely brought out into the open once and for all the fact that there was nothing left in the bourgeois notion of progress with which to oppose the destructive forces of the present.

### THE 20TH CENTURY

The historian Eric Hobsbawm called the 20th century the **Age of Extremes**. Indeed, in no century have progress and regression, war and peace, enlightenment and barbarity co-existed so closely, both temporally and spatially, as in the 20th century.

The two major ideologies of the century, **fascism** and **communism**, brought men under the sway of the belief that they could control the course of history. The Second World War unleashed by Germany and the murder of European Jews constituted a break with civilization which gave the lie once and for all to the promise of political salvation for the Western world. The struggle between the opposing systems of capitalism and communism was eventually won by capitalism.

In the field of culture, an avant-garde art and literature began at an early stage to break the autonomous, enlightened bourgeois subject of the 19th century down into its component parts.

By the end of the 20th century, thanks to electricity, gramophone records, the telephone, television, PCs and the Internet, a **commercialized mass culture** had reached even the remotest corners of the earth. Since the student protests of the 1960s, conceptions of life geared to the existential experience of the self have to an increasing degree replaced the inflexible role models of modern industrial society. The **theory of relativity** and **quantum theory**

**Thales of Miletus**, Hans Arp, 1952, private collection

along with the discovery of **DNA** were the central scientific discoveries of the 20th century.

Philosophy faced up to the upheavals of the age. The certain-



ties of the Enlightenment and Positivism were questioned. **The new topics of Life, Language and Society** moved into the center of **philosophical reflection**. Language became the principal topic of philosophy, because it seemed that the unity of experience within the multiplicity of possible perspectives could only be found, if at all, in linguistic communication. The guiding concept of "Life" took into account that, with the irreversible breakdown of traditional communities, a source of spontaneous vital energy had also been blocked off. Finally, society became a topic of philosophy because the multifaceted dependence of each individual on the world could no longer be credibly described in terms of theological concepts.

## GLOSSARY

Terms in **bold** can be found under their own heading in the glossary

**A priori, a posteriori** (Latin, from [what came] before; from [what comes] after): With reference to an Aristotelian distinction (hys-teron versus proteron), a pair of epistemological terms introduced by the **Scholastics**. A priori knowledge can be obtained through reason alone, independent of human experience. Kant summarizes under "a priori" the conditions that make knowledge possible in the first place, i.e. logically necessary and strictly general knowledge such as space and time, **analytical decisions, categories**, and concepts of reason. A posteriori knowledge, by contrast, comprises all the rest, e.g. sense-perceptions, with no claim to general validity.

**Agnosticism**: (Greek a-gnoein = not to know): An **epistemological** concept coined by T. Huxley, meaning that only the outward appearance of what exists can be known, not its true being. Agnosticism disputes the possibility of solving the **metaphysical** problem of truth. The ancient Sophists and Skeptics were agnostics, as were later, among others, J. Locke, D. Hume, and H. Spencer. Nietzsche was critical of agnosticism on the grounds that the position of "not being able to know" the truth presupposed the knowledge of that very truth, which meant, he argued, that the frontier to the **Transcendental** had been crossed.

**Agora**: Name given in ancient Athens both to the assembly of citizens and to the place where they met (the market-place). Political discussion (agorein) was one of the most important civic duties in Athenian public life. Every male citizen was both entitled and indeed required to take part. The agora was thus an expression of the basic idea of the polis, namely that the state was founded on direct participation by its citizens in political life.

**Academy** (Greek akademeia): Originally the name of a temple area outside Athens named for the hero Akademos. It was here in 385 B.C. that Plato founded his philosophical school of the same name, which remained until 529 A.D., when it was closed by the Emperor Justinian. Even in Antiquity, the Platonic Academy was already the model for other schools (**Peripatos, Stoa**), and it influenced the educational system of the Middle Ages. In 1440 Cosimo de' Medici founded an "Academia

Platonica" in Florence. Since then, academy has been a general term for a university, college or learned society.

**Analytic and synthetic judgments**: In the introduction to his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant distinguishes "judgments" (i.e. statements) according to the relationship between the subject and predicate (what is said about the subject). Analytical judgments are those in which the predicate is already contained in the definition of the subject, e.g. "All bodies possess extension" or "A bachelor is unmarried." Synthetic judgments by contrast give additional information about the subject in the form of knowledge gained from experience, e.g. "All bodies have weight," or "The Amazon is over 4000 miles long."

**Archimedean firm place**: An imaginary immovable fulcrum outside the confines of the Earth (or any system), and by extension, a foundation of knowledge beyond all possible doubt, from which all other knowledge can be supported or undermined. The term goes back to a saying by the Greek mathematician and engineer Archimedes (287–212 B.C.): "Give me a firm place on which to stand and I shall move the Earth."

**Axiom** (Greek axioma = demand, axioein = regard as true): General statement that cannot be proved itself but forms the basis for the proof of other statements. Euclid's geometry for example is founded on axioms, and there are axioms of logic (e.g. a statement cannot be true and false at the same time). In the natural sciences, an axiom is a statement confirmed by experience, but unprovable.

**Being, to be** (Greek on, ousia; Latin esse, ens): The meanings of these controversial basic concepts of philosophy can be divided into three: (1) existence, (2) identity, and (3) the logical relation between two terms, expressed by the copula "to be." Parmenides was one of the first to define being as permanence, non-transitoriness, as opposed to appearance, becoming and disappearing. By contrast, for Heraclitus there was no permanent being, all being was becoming. Aristotle thought of being as the existence of the existent thing. **Ontology** usually understands being as the existence of things as such. Heidegger's existential ontology, on the other hand,

conceives Being itself not as something that is, but as a "process of de-concealment" (Entbergungsgeschehen) of what is.

**Categories** (Greek kate-gorein = to make a statement): Concepts of existence. A term introduced by Aristotle for the various kinds of statement which can be made about an object. Aristotle distinguished ten categories (substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action, and affection), while Plato distinguished only four (identity, difference, persistence, and change). For Kant, the categories were both definitions of objects and **a priori** forms of knowledge, in other words mental concepts, which he derived from possible kinds of judgment. In this way, he arrived at twelve different categories, which he divided into four groups.

**Categorical imperative**: A general principle of behavior which Kant, in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, formulated as follows: "Always act in such a way that the maxims of your will could at all times constitute the principles of a general law."

**Causality**: The relation of cause and effect between two events taking place at different times. The principle of causality states that every event has a cause, and, conversely, that every cause has an effect.

**Consciousness**: Awareness of one's (spiritual or mental) existence. The term is understood in widely differing ways by philosophers, but is generally interpreted as the capacity to imagine objects. It comprises the total content of sensory perception, sensation, emotion, will and thought. The term in its modern sense is due to Descartes; in his **Methodical Doubt**, consciousness is the knowledge of the doubter that his doubt is beyond doubt. Descartes saw in this certainty of self the foundation of his concepts of existence and knowledge. With his concept of "transcendental consciousness," Kant introduced the connection between self-awareness and the unity of objects of experience: the subject is aware of his identity and of changing mental states, but is also aware of the unity of an object which can be seen in different ways. For Kant, "transcendental consciousness" is the basic condition of the possibility of knowledge. The **phenomenology** of Husserl defines consciousness as a consciousness that is always directed towards something and in this sense intentional. All reality is only such to the extent that it

relates to a perceptible, thinking, and remembering consciousness. For Husserl, the world is the correlate of acts of consciousness.

**Copernican revolution**: In the narrower sense, the revolution in cosmology resulting from the replacement by Copernicus of a **geocentric** universe by a heliocentric universe. By extension, any radical intellectual shift. Thus Kant regarded his theory that the "knower" imposed his mental structures on the objects of knowledge as a Copernican revolution in philosophy.

**Cynics**: A school of philosophy founded by Antisthenes (444–368 B.C.). The Cynics lived according to their ideal of an entirely untrammelled existence, despising all cultural values and notions of property. The modern use of the word goes back to their disregard for all social conventions and to their provocative pronouncements.

**Deduction** (Latin deducere = to lead down): Derivation of the particular from the general; obtaining a new statement from other statements by logical conclusions. See **Syllogism**. (see **Induction**.)

**Deism** (Latin deus = god): System of natural religion current in the **Enlightenment**. It recognized a God as creator and origin of the world, but not as a being which intervened in the affairs of the world, either through miracles or through revelation.

**Dialectic** (Greek dialékein = art of conversation): The **logic** of contradiction; method of philosophizing. As early as the Eleatics (Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno), also later in Socrates, dialectic was regarded as the art of investigating truth through dialogue. For Plato, dialectic is knowledge that arises from conflicting opinions. Kant described dialectic as the "logic of appearances," the art which invests falsehood with the appearance of truth. He used dialectic as a method of exposing sophistry. For Fichte (theory of science) and Hegel (science of logic), dialectic was that form of thought which includes contradiction (**negation**) of a thought or **idea** in itself. Their dialectical method shows how any concept (thesis) can turn into its opposite (antithesis), and how from the contradiction between these two a higher concept (synthesis) emerges, which is then subject to the same fate.

**Empiricism** (Greek empeiria = experience): The epistemological and philosophical standpoint which sees **experience** as the only source of knowledge. For the representatives of classical

Empiricism (Hobbes, Locke, Hume), there were no innate **ideas**; the whole content of consciousness was due to sensory experiences which could be collated into empirical knowledge by the principles of similarity and **causality**. Accordingly, permissible scientific methods for empiricists are observation and experiment. (See **Sensationalism**.)

**Encyclopedia** (Greek enkyklios = circular, paideia = teaching): The universal learning of the **Sophists**, comprising grammar, rhetoric, **dialectics**, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. The modern encyclopedia aims at providing a written summary of current knowledge. In 1751, Diderot and d'Alembert, together with 142 authors ("encyclopedists") set about a systematic compilation of all human knowledge, a project concluded in 1772 with the *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*.

**Energeia** (Greek activity, reality, realization): According to Aristotle, *energeia* is the principle that realizes potential. Taking the example of teacher and pupil, he explains the relationship between *dynamis* (movement, ability) and *energeia*. By imparting knowledge, a teacher can change the ability of a pupil, if the latter has the capacity to learn. As long as the pupil does not apply the knowledge he has acquired, he is only a potential "knower." Only when he implements this knowledge does this activity become *energeia*. It is defined as the realization of those aspects of *dynamis*, of the capacity to have an effect, of potentiality.

**Enlightenment**: A European intellectual movement of the 18th century, which sought to liberate itself from the ideas handed down by medieval and ecclesiastical authorities. While for Descartes it was still the radiant power of God that helped reason to discover truth, for the Enlightenment it was mankind itself whose own reason determined the rational and political order of the world. The leading philosophers of the Enlightenment were, in Great Britain and Ireland, Locke, Berkeley and Hume; in France, the **encyclopedists** Diderot, d'Alembert, Montesquieu, Rousseau; in Germany, Wolff, Lessing and Kant. Kant defined Enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity" and urged accordingly: "Sapere aude!" (Dare to use your brain). With their trust in **empiricism**, **reason** and the evolutionary progress of society, the Enlightenment however ran the risk of ushering in a new

immaturity, namely blind faith in the universal authority of science.

**Entelechy** (Greek *entelecheia* = having oneself as a goal): An expression which goes back to Aristotle, who stated that any existing thing contains the goal of its development already within it, as for example a seed has as its goal the fully-grown plant. The first entelechy of a viable organism is, for Aristotle, the soul. Leibniz described the **monads** as entelechies, as the purpose of their realization is contained within them.

**Epicureanism**: the teaching and way of life propounded by Epicurus (341–270 B.C.), in which happiness and a life of pleasure are seen as the greatest good. To attain to this good, Epicurus recommended a life of withdrawal and political abstinence.

**Epistemology** (Greek *episteme* = knowledge, understanding): The theory of knowledge. Epistemology is one of the basic philosophical disciplines; it is concerned with questions of the origins of the meanings, principles, methods and limitations of knowledge. Philosophical epistemology (in contrast to the philosophy of science) necessarily questions the validity of existing, scientific knowledge. Since, following the tradition of Descartes, a boundary exists between the understanding subject and the object to be understood, it is necessary to agree about understanding as a means. While Kant, in his epistemology, examines metaphysical knowledge, which is supposed to be independent of all **experience**, Fichte raises the question of whether science is possible at all. According to how these preconditions are interpreted, epistemology remains to this day divided between logical, psychological and transcendental-phenomenological schools.

**Esthetics** (Greek *aisthetikós* = relating to what is perceptible): Originally the theory of sensory perception; later, as one of the cardinal philosophical disciplines, narrowed down to the theory of art and beauty. Philosophical esthetics investigates the conditions under which judgments of taste arise, the effect of beauty on the beholder, and the relationship between art and reality. Esthetics has not been confined to any particular epoch in its pursuit of the connection between the sensuous and sense-formation: Plato and Plotinus understood beauty as the radiance of the Platonic **ideas** shining into the world; Aristotle saw order, regularity, and discrimination as the sources of beauty. With his *Aesthetica*

(1750) A. E. Baumgarten became the first to attempt to create a basic science of sensory experience. In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant explained beauty as the symbolic visualization of the supra-sensory in the sensory; for Schelling, it was the finite representation of the infinite. Hegel and Schopenhauer understood art as truth made visible; according to Adorno, art aims for truth in the sense of a rescue of the Other, Non-identical.

**Ethics** (Greek *éthos* = custom): Moral philosophy. Ethics investigates the preconditions and the effects of human actions. In contrast to autonomous ethics, authority-based ethics denies that individuals have the capacity to formulate the maxims of their own behavior (an example would be the theological ethics represented by the Christian commandments). Normative ethics aims to formulate universally binding values and standards. **Utilitarianism** sees utility and the maximization of happiness as the only moral principles. The Stoics held that ethics was derived from a law of nature. Kant developed this idea in his **categorical imperative**. In place of the determination of man by nature, he proposed an autonomy of the will, which makes a law for itself. This enables the individual to justify the reasons for his actions. Practical ethics (P. Singer) develops options of action for problem situations, especially those arising from technological progress in medicine.

**Existentialism**: Philosophy of existence and being. Existentialism wishes to restore a connection between abstract thinking and the individual's concrete experience of the self and the world. This awareness of one's own self is created in extreme situations such as fear, guilt, and death. The main exponents of Existentialism are Kierkegaard, Jaspers and Heidegger (**ontology**). In France the term "existentialisme" denotes philosophical movements which, unlike essentialism, accept the primacy of existence over essence. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre explained this primacy as signifying that man first exists, encounters himself, appears in the world, and then defines himself accordingly.

**Experience** (Greek: *empeiria*, Latin: *experientia*): Knowledge of the particular. Aristotle defined experience as the ability to recognize and judge things correctly. The precondition of every experience is memory. It takes many memories to create the faculty of forming general concepts on the basis of individual experiences. In

modern times (cf. **Empiricism**) experience has been regarded as the basis of scientific knowledge. Francis Bacon used the word "experientia" in the sense of exploration, meaning the process of learning, the method of obtaining general statements. The Empiricists (e.g. Locke) identified experience with perception. Locke distinguished external experience (sensation), the registration of the external world through the sense organs, from internal experience (reflection), the "inner life" of man accessible to mental capacity. Kant usually identified experience with empirical knowledge. For **Phenomenology** it is the relationship of experience to the practical life-world that is important, as it is the foundation for all scientific statements and for knowledge.

**Frankfurt School**: A school of thought concerned with the critique of society and science which takes its name from the Institute for Social Research founded in Frankfurt in 1923. Of its members, the authors Horkheimer and Adorno with their "critical theory" are associated with a program of analysis of social power structures. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno exposed the veiled power-seeking of the Enlightenment and its shift into **myth**, while, however, also reflecting on their theory itself as part of the blindness of the Enlightenment. Marcuse and Habermas also belong to the tradition of the Frankfurt School.

**Genealogy** (Greek: *genealogia*): The study of origins and descent. In its narrower sense genealogy denotes the theory of human ancestry; in its broader sense it demonstrates the fundamental connections between ideas which are interrelated in their historical development, as did Nietzsche, for example, in his *Genealogy of Morals*.

**Geocentric, heliocentric** (Greek *ge* = earth, *helios* = sun): The view, current until the end of the Middle Ages, that the Earth was at the center of the universe, is termed geocentric. Copernicus ushered in the heliocentric view, whereby the Sun was at the center of the planetary system.

**Hedonistic** (Greek *hedon* = pleasure): The view of life which sees enjoyment and the pleasures of the senses as the aim and goal of human action (see **Epicureanism**).

**Hellenism** (Greek *hellen* = Greek): That period of classical Antiquity, between the 4th century B.C. and the rise of the Roman Empire, in which Greek



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