

# A CRITIQUE OF HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

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"To be independent of public opinion is the first formal condition of achieving anything great."  
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

## Abstract

This paper aims at demonstrating the Hegelian concept of the philosophy of the History. The terms, Spirit, Universal History and Truth, are widely used in the Hegelian notion of the History. The unity of these terms sheds light on the route of the History which is viewed as to be pre-destined to reach a particular goal, the freedom. The freedom is only attainable if imperative stages are reached. The progress, in History, plays an indispensable role to accomplish the goal of the History. The paper ascertains the role of each notion in depth to display the overall structure of the Hegelian philosophy of the History.

## INTRODUCTION

Hegel's philosophy of the History is criticized due to its lack of tangible data and speculative content, even though it does not address the concrete existences.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, Hegel has not written on the philosophy of the historiography. The major works of Hegel concerned with the questions related to metaphysical aspects of the History such as history of philosophy. Hegel represented the history of philosophy or thought in a historical way by examining the characteristics of each well-known culture such as Chinese, Indian, Persian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman and German respectively. Hegel's philosophy of the History is somewhat similar to the philosophy of historicity which investigates the main driving forces behind the major events in history.<sup>2</sup> Hegel, by following the traits of the History demonstrated that the aim of the History is the emancipation of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Nature, in its incipient form, is the obstacle ahead of human beings to reach designed subjectivity. Nature, put the humans in the confinement of irrational environ. The Reason and Nature are in conflict on the way to the freedom. Nature must be defeated to achieve greater spiritual freedom. History is the medium of this conflict. Hegel defines the history as a rationally motivated phenomenon destined to set free itself for itself. History is the development of Spirit in time and nations can be ordered according to their present levels of the Freedom. However, Hegelian development concept takes the thought as an indicator of progress, not the time.<sup>4</sup>

Hegel's history of philosophy was the first treatment of the history of philosophy in a philosophical sense.<sup>5</sup> Hegel was ahead of his peers in terms of speculative penetration and sharpness of universal criticism.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Hegel can be classified as the most influential philosopher after Plato and Aristotle in a context of prevalence in the philosophical world.

## THE ELEMENTS OF THE HISTORY

### THE SPIRIT

Hegel argues that there exist a universal History which governs the order of the events; even, they appeared to be uneven.<sup>7</sup> The governor is called the Spirit which has its own way to overcome or lead the Nature. The Reason, as the

<sup>1</sup> David Kipp, *What is Philosophy of History*, Philosophical Quarterly 30 (October 1980), p. 271

<sup>2</sup> David Kipp, *ibid.*, p. 275-277

<sup>3</sup> Ödlem Doğan, *Tarih Felsefesi*, Say Yayınları, İstanbul:2010, p. 124

<sup>4</sup> David G. Ritchie, *Darwin and Hegel*, Macmillan & Co, New York:1893, p. 47

<sup>5</sup> Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge:2004, p. 34

<sup>6</sup> K. Rosenkranz and G. S. Hall, *Rosenkranz on Hegel's History of Philosophy*, The Journal of Speculative Philosophy, Vol. 8, No. 1 (January, 1874), p. 3-4

<sup>7</sup> G. Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Batoche Books, Ontario:2001, p. 23

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