



Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 3

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

THE first period embraces a space of one thousand years— from Thales, 550 B.C., to Proclus, who died 485 A.D., and until the disappearance of pagan philosophy as an outward institution, 529 A.D. The second period extends to the sixteenth century, and thus again embraces a thousand years, to pass over which we must provide ourselves with seven-leagued boots. While Philosophy has hitherto found its place in the religion of the heathen, from this time on it has its sphere within the Christian world; for Arabians and Jews have only to be noticed in an external and historic way.

1. Through the Neo-Platonic philosophy we have come into quite familiar acquaintance with the Idea of Christianity, as the new religion which has entered into the world. For the Neo-Platonic philosophy has as its essential principle the fact that the Absolute is determined as spirit in a concrete way, that God is not a mere conception. Although the Absolute is Thought, it must, in order to be true, be concrete in itself and not abstract; in what we have just seen we have, then, the first appearance of the

absolutely existent spirit. But in spite of their profound and true speculation, the Neo-Platonists still had not proved their doctrine that the Trinity is the truth, for there is lacking to it the form of inward necessity. The Neo-Platonists begin from the One that determines itself, that sets a limit to itself from which the determinate proceeds ; this, however, is itself an immediate method of presentation, and it is this that makes such philosophers as Plotinus and Proclus so tiresome. Undoubtedly dialectic considerations enter in, in which the opposites which are conceived as absolute are shown to be null ; but this dialectic is not methodical, but occurs only disconnectedly. The principle of retrospection and comprehension found with the Neo-Platonists is that of substantiality generally, but because subjectivity is lacking, this idea of Spirit is deficient in one moment, the moment of actuality, of the point which draws all moments into one, and which thereby becomes immediate unity, universality, and Being. To them spirit is thus not individual spirit; and this deficiency is made good through Christianity, in which spirit is found as actual, present spirit, immediately existent in the world here and now, and the absolute spirit is known in the immediate present as man. ...

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