

Hot Hegel Summer Reading Group 2025

We are reading Hegel's *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*!

- You can buy it on Amazon [here](#).
- Or view/download the PDF [here](#).



Meeting & Reading Schedule

1. Wednesday, June 11 @5:00pm, Reading: Translator's introduction (pp. vii-xii) + Ch. 1, 'The Methods of History' (pp. 3-11)
2. Wednesday, June 25 @4:00pm, Reading: Ch. 2, 'Reason in History' (pp. 12-18)
3. Wednesday, July 2 @4:45 pm, Reading: Ch. 3, 'Freedom, the Individual, and the State,' Sec. I-II (pp. 19-40)
4. Thursday, July 24 @4:00 pm, Reading: Ch. 3, Sec. III, 'The State as Realization of Spirit' (pp. 40-56)
5. Thursday, August 6 @4:00 pm: Ch. 4, 'History in its Development' (pp. 57-82)
6. Date TBD, Reading Ch. 5, 'The Geographical Basis of History' (pp. 83-91)
7. Date TBD, Reading Ch. 6, 'The Division of History' (pp. 92-99)

Primary Sources

- [Kant's "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose"](#)
- [Kant's "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch"](#)
- [Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*](#)
- [Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*](#)
- [Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*](#)
- [Marx's "Introduction To A Contribution To The Critique Of Hegel's Philosophy Of Right"](#)

Secondary Resources

- [Hegel YouTube Playlist](#)
- [Robert Stern, "Hegel is considered the hardest philosopher, but his views aren't actually that outlandish"](#)

Discussion Notes & Questions

Translator's introduction (pp. vii-xii) + Ch. 1, 'The Methods of History' (pp. 3-11)

Notes:

- Hegel says there are three methods of dealing with history:
 - I. Original history
 - II. Reflective history (which is subdivided into):
 - A. Universal history
 - B. Pragmatic history
 - C. Critical history
 - D. Specialized history
 - III. Philosophic history
- Important quote: "Accordingly, if reflective history has come to pursue general viewpoints, then we should notice where they are genuine. These viewpoints are not merely the outer thread, or an external order, but rather **the inner guiding soul of the events and actions**. For, like Mercury, the conductor of departed souls, **the Idea is truly the guide of nations of the world**. And **Spirit, as its rational and necessary will, is what guides and has guided the course of events in the world**. To recognize it—in the way it guides the world—is our present aim" (p. 10).
- Hegel's aim is to clarify how *philosophic* history (i.e., a philosophy of history) is possible, since history deals primarily with what has happened – what is given – while philosophy seeks to go beyond the given, uncovering the "inner guiding soul" of the events and actions that history records.

Questions:

- Why must a history that "surveys long periods, or the entire history of the world" give up "individual presentation of a particular reality"? (pp. 7)
- Hegel writes: "what experience and history teach us is this, that nations and governments have never learned anything from history, nor acted in accordance with

the lessons to be derived from it” (p. 8). What do you think of his explanation about *WHY* that is? Do you agree with Hegel or are you closer to Hume’s view (see footnote on p. 8)?

- What is “higher criticism”? (pp. 9)

Ch. 2, ‘Reason in History’ (pp. 12-18)

Notes:

- “The only thought which philosophy brings with it, in regard to history, is the simple thought of Reason—the thought that **Reason rules the world**, and that world history has therefore been rational in its course” (p. 12). Hegel adds on the following page that the process of world history is nothing other than the “**rational, necessary course of the World Spirit**, the Spirit whose nature is indeed always one and the same, but which reveals this one nature in the world’s reality” (p. 13). This is the kernel of Hegel’s radical vision of human history: that history is not a chaotic succession of events but a meaningful, intelligible process in which Spirit comes to know and actualize itself. For Hegel, the progression of history is teleological – i.e. it moves toward the realization or actualization (self-consciousness) of Spirit in and through finite human activity, institutions, cultures, nations, states, etc.

Questions:

- Hegel discusses two precursors to his view that “Reason rules the world”. What are they? What is their relation to Hegel’s view? (pp. 14-16)
- “Reason is Thought, quite freely determining itself” (p. 16). Hegel says a lot of quirky things like this about “Reason.” What do you gather he means from the term? Pages 12-13 are helpful in this regard too.
- What’s the importance of the connection Hegel draws between his philosophic history and Christianity? (p. 17)
- Hegel says his approach to a philosophy of history is a theodicy of sorts (p. 18). What is theodicy? What are some examples? How do you think Hegel’s will differ?

Ch. 3, ‘Freedom, the Individual, and the State,’ Sec. I-II (pp. 19-40)

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